

ALNWICK AND DENWICK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Topic chapter – Housing

1. Context

1.1 Description

Alnwick is a popular and attractive place to live and retire to, accessible to Tyneside and with an enviable natural and built heritage which means there is a healthy demand for housing from outside the area as well as demand from an anticipated growth in the number of households locally. It also has a thriving tourism economy resulting in a significant demand for second and holiday homes.

The town and its surroundings has historically had a constrained housing supply for various reasons plus currently a depressed construction sector as a result of the recession. These factors together mean housing needs generally are not all met and the price of housing is high relative to incomes.

The continuing gap between household income levels and house prices results in much of the local resident population being unable to purchase or rent property on the open market, - a particular problem for young people. The area also is seeing an increase in the average age of the population which raises issues at the other end of the age spectrum in terms of elderly persons' housing needs and under-occupation of existing stock.

Alnwick is characterised by fairly rapid change in the housing sector whereas Denwick is typified by very small incremental change to the existing housing stock and very little new build.

The Neighbourhood Plan will play a key role in ensuring that sufficient housing land is delivered to meet housing requirements identified in the Northumberland Core Strategy in the period up to 2025, and local housing needs identified by housing needs surveys. It will seek to guide new housing development to sustainable locations in Alnwick. It will also seek to target the use of previously developed land where available whilst respecting the character and scale of the surroundings. A broad mix of housing types suitable for different households will contribute to the creation of a mixed and sustainable community.

1.2 Constraints for the Plan

- The overall development strategy for Alnwick in terms of the Northumberland Local Development Framework (LDF) is not yet clear.
- Physical development constraints – the historic landscape constraints north of the town and the A1 corridor means that most development options for housing in Alnwick are to the south and east of the town.
- Infrastructure/Services capacity – infrastructure - in particular water and sewerage services may require to be boosted if significant development in Alnwick is to take place.
- Marketability and deliverability- the limited strength of Alnwick as a housing market means that new housing may have to be phased in terms of its release onto the market.

1.3 Current Planning Approach

1.3.1 National Policy and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Neighbourhood plans have to work within the context of planning legislation and the NPPF. Neighbourhood planning as developed within the Localism Act requires that neighbourhood plans must be consistent with Northumberland's Development Plan and as far as housing is concerned must at least provide for the level of housing set out in the development plan although it may provide for more.

The NPPF looks to boost the supply of homes and requires local planning authorities to ensure that plans meet the full need for market and affordable housing consistent with NPPF policies. The NPPF requires a 5 year supply of deliverable sites to be maintained and identified sites sufficient where possible for up to 15 years ahead. The NPPF requires that plans provide for a mix of housing catering for different groups and where an affordable housing need has been identified plans should provide for it. Plans should also make sure that empty vacant stock is brought back into use including the use of CPO powers.

The NPPF places significant importance on ensuring quality sustainable design in development and ensuring that housing reflects local distinctiveness and improves the character of the area.

1.3.2 Northumberland Core Strategy

The Issues and Options stage of the Core Strategy in terms of housing identifies Alnwick as within the North Northumberland delivery area and Alnwick is a tier one settlement meaning that it will be the focus of development in its surrounding area.

The core strategy proposes 3 options for the quantity and distribution of housing which are discussed in the issues below and a continuation of the strategy of focussing development in key settlements including Alnwick.

The Issues and Options paper proposes a countywide affordable housing target of 30% recognising that this will be easier to achieve in areas of higher value housing such as in North Northumberland. It proposes that the majority of provision (80%) should be social rented stock.

1.3.3 Alnwick District Core Strategy (ADCS)

For the present and until the Northumberland Core Strategy is adopted, the former Alnwick District Core Strategy remains the principal policy document. The ADCS is reflected in the emerging Northumberland Core Strategy in that it proposes to focus housing development in the main settlements of Alnwick and Amble and sets out a tiered approach to development giving priority to previously developed land, then other sites within Alnwick before suitable sites adjoining the built up area.

The ADCS was required to restrict housing growth in response to restrictions in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). However the demise of the RSS and the greater flexibility proposed in the Northumberland Core Strategy means that a higher housing requirement than that proposed in the ADCS (30 per year in Alnwick up to 2016 and 17 units per year up to 2021) may be deliverable.

The ADCS put in place a strong affordable housing policy requiring 35% provision on sites of 10 or more dwellings in Alnwick and over 0.33 hectares in extent.

2. Neighbourhood Plan Housing Objectives

- Provide sufficient land to meet Alnwick and Denwick's housing requirements to 2026 particularly the need for affordable housing.
- Provide a choice of sizes, types and tenure of quality housing particularly creating opportunities for young people and the elderly.

3. Issues and Options

3.1 Understanding the extent of housing need and demand

3.1.1 The Issue

Northumberland Core Strategy Issues and Options work pulls together a number of evidence strands in Table 6.1 to inform the likely housing requirement for the North Northumberland delivery area in which Alnwick sits. (See extract at Appendix 1). The North Northumberland delivery area broadly relates to the strategic transport network and strategic housing market areas identified in 2010.

It is clear from the table that the previous housing requirement set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy sought to suppress the supply significantly below the level of projected household growth in the north of the County. However despite this, actual completion rates have been much closer to projected household growth. Even in that situation however there are still signs in Alnwick of 'overheating' in the housing market where supply has not been able to meet needs.

To assist in getting an up to date picture of need in the County, Northumberland County Council commissioned David Coultie Associates (DCA) to carry out a Countywide Housing Needs Survey which reported in summer 2012. The study has reported down to sub area level although on request results can be obtained to parish level. In the North Northumberland sub-area the study suggests as a total that 2040 already existing households were requiring to move in the next five years and were seeking to do so within North Northumberland. Clearly not all of this demand equates to a need for new housing as the existing stock will provide for a large proportion of these moves. However the study also identifies 640 concealed households looking to move to housing in the North Northumberland area in the next 5 years which by implication will necessitate new housing stock.

A further indication of current need is the Council's Homefinder register. This provides an indication of need in the Alnwick and Denwick postcodes of c 230 households currently in priority, high and medium need and a total of c 500 in priority, high and medium need requesting Alnwick and Denwick as an area of preference. (See Appendix 2)

It is difficult in the absence of a specific housing needs assessment for Alnwick to accurately predict the housing requirement for Alnwick and Denwick but in addition to meeting local housing needs we also need to provide open market stock that will attract younger economically active in-migrants to the benefit of the towns economy and services. In addition we also need to meet provide for some open market demand as failure to do that will put more pressure on existing stock from retirees and other in-migrants making it less accessible for the local population. We need therefore to agree a level of supply that will meet identified needs as well as some market demand but is sustainable in terms of Alnwick socio-economic and environmental context.

We need to ensure that we get the housing supply right for a number of reasons – too little and the problems above of unmet needs arise – too much and the development of Alnwick is unlikely to be sustainable. Too much could simply result in Alnwick becoming a dormitory settlement for Tyneside. Housing growth needs to be supported by jobs growth and by the right level of service provision.

3.1.2 Options

The Northumberland Core Strategy looks at 3 options in terms of the housing requirement :-

- A - the existing strategic approach,
- B - a lower rate of development than in recent years and
- C - a targeted increase in development based on population growth trends for the area but with Alnwick receiving slightly more than its pro-rata share. This would mean a figure around 18% of the North Northumberland total.

Given that the existing strategic approach has not resulted in housing needs being met there seems little point in either continuing to follow that option or reducing the level of housing.

Option C of the core strategy, incorporating a targeted increase, is justified in order to ensure more housing is delivered where there is access to services and to encourage employment growth in the same location. This would provide a range of housing provision in each 5 year period as follows:-

2011-16	160-255
2016-21	145-255
2021-26	160-220

Given the indications regarding need and concerns that Alnwick needs to grow to sustain its current level of services it is proposed that the upper level of this range in each 5 year period should be adopted as the housing requirement for Alnwick. This would equate to about 700 new houses in the plan period and an increase in population of c 1600.

3.1.3 Questions

- Do you agree that the level of housing provision should be a total of about 50 units per year up to 2025 – i.e. a total of about 700 new dwellings?

3.2 Catering for Specific Needs

3.2.1 The Issue

Existing housing models and market delivery are not responding to specific needs for example from young people, the elderly and disabled. There is a need for the Plan to really make its mark by innovative approaches to produce working housing models for these groups.

Homelessness is becoming a serious issue amongst young people particularly. For the first time in Alnwick 2012 has seen 7 cases of young people homeless and sleeping rough. 59 young people are registered as seeking housing related support.

At the other end of the age spectrum population projections between 2008 and 2025 indicate there will be a 50% increase in the over 65s with the number of over 85 year olds doubling in the same period. This means that housing provision will have to change to see higher levels of sheltered and extra care housing. The David Coultie Study of Alnwick District in 2008 set a requirement of 491 units of sheltered accommodation and 123 units of extra care housing of which to date in Alnwick only a small number of sheltered units at Bondgate Without and Parkview have been provided.

3.2.2 Options

In respect of both age groups there will be a need for innovative models of housing provision. This goes beyond what a development plan can normally achieve but the Neighbourhood Plan needs to identify new methods of delivery. We need to work with Registered Providers, Trusts and other partners to ensure that the community of Alnwick and Denwick can support its young and elderly populations with appropriate types of housing with appropriate levels of support.

The Plan could identify specific sites in appropriate and accessible locations for extra care and sheltered housing for the elderly and supported housing through a registered provider for young people and ensure they are developed for those occupiers.

3.2.3 Questions

- Do you think specific sites should be identified in the Neighbourhood Plan for specific housing needs and held for that purpose?

3.3 The spatial distribution and location of new housing

3.3.1 The Issue

The Core Strategy proposes to focus development in North Northumberland in sustainable settlements. Alnwick is one such location with a high level of services, employment, community services and facilities and transport networks for a town of its size. The core strategy, as stated above, suggests that a sensible option is to maximise on these advantages that will help achieve sustainable residential development.

In recent years the town has achieved a high level of housing supply from previously developed sites (PDL) and whilst this is a valid strategy to continue as far as possible, the reality is that the amount of PDL is diminishing as sites are built out and greenfield sites will also be required to meet the housing requirement.

The constraints on Alnwick particularly as a result of the historic landscapes to the north of the town of Hulne Park and the Pastures and landscape character generally to the north and west essentially means that most of the greenfield development possibilities are mainly to the south and east of the town although to the east the A1 corridor is also a constraining factor.

This specifically will result in some new development being more remote from the town centre although conversely closer to employment land, the planned new High School and shopping and leisure facilities at Willowburn. Provided planning of these new housing developments is carried out in a way that ensures good communication links by public transport and by pedestrian/cycle green corridors it is unlikely to be problematic in a town the size of Alnwick.

3.3.2 Options

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) just completed in Northumberland is intended to have identified all possible housing sites of any size and will be the main source of sites to be identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, it was completed before the decision with regard to the Duchess High School. The relocation of the school means that by 2015, if the school replacement timetable is adhered to, the current main site or parts of it will become available for redevelopment.

The SHLAA identifies those sites that are potentially deliverable and developable within certain time frames. (See Appendix 3). Taken together, if all these sites were to be developed (discounting sites completed before 2011 and since the SHLAA commenced) sufficient land is available for about 400- 450 new homes. Final numbers will depend on decisions made regarding redeveloping parts of the former school sites affected by the relocation of the High School to Greensfield.

If we are to accommodate 700 new homes up to 2025/26 as suggested above we therefore need to identify land sufficient for c 250-300 further homes from other sites identified in the SHLAA. This is achievable using some of the so-called 'uncertain sites' in Appendix 3. However, some of these have been identified as seriously constrained in respect of highways access and will require significant investment to be delivered. Of those areas, also not so constrained by landscape sensitivity, development of the new High School accessed from Willowburn Avenue provides the possibility of some additional housing land to the south of the town at Greensfield using that new access. The other area of lower landscape value is east of Windy Edge where potentially a housing site of sufficient size could be provided to secure necessary transport improvements.

3.3.3 Questions

- Do you agree we should continue to prioritise previously developed land for housing including the high school site once vacated and other deliverable and developable sites identified in the SHLAA as first priority for housing land?
- Additionally would you support further development :-
 - South of the town at Greensfield
 - East of Allerburn Lea and Westacres
 - Both areas
 - Neither area

3.4 Ensuring choice of housing – types, size and tenure

3.4.1 The Issue

Providing an appropriate quantity of housing is only part of the story. The NPPF makes it clear that there must be a choice of housing to ensure that people can occupy housing that is best suited to their needs.

For some time in Alnwick in the years before and after the millennium new build housing was pretty restricted to family housing for sale on larger estates such as Allerburn Lea and Fairfields. It is true to say however that, particularly with the development of some of the brown field sites in the centre of the town, there has been a switch to the development of smaller units in apartment and townhouse formats. There are mixed views in the town as to whether the pendulum has swung too far in this direction with a large number of apartments coming on the market at the same time with the development of the Gentoo sites under the Homes and Communities Agency Kick Start programme. However, the take-up of these smaller units indicates that their provision was needed. The reality is that the Plan needs to deliver choice and selection in the size, type and tenure of housing.

External factors can have major implications on the housing market in different and unexpected

ways. For example the ongoing recession and difficult employment prospects, coupled with devalued pensions means that people both in their working lives and in retirement may not be able to afford owner-occupation. It is not difficult to foresee a scenario, as a result of these factors, where there is a steep increase in the need for both social rented property and quality privately rented stock as an alternative to owner occupation. Another unknown is the effect that changes to the benefit system will have on housing choice. In recent years single bedroom properties in the Alnwick area have dropped out of favour almost entirely with all households wherever possible opting for the flexibility offered by a second bedroom. However the benefit changes may force an end to this greater flexibility and see a return to the construction of one bedroom units.

3.4.2 Options

If the Plan adopts a do-nothing option in respect of providing choice in the housing it provides the result will be that the market will dictate what is provided on the basis of what sells best. Inevitably this will not result in needs being satisfactorily met.

It would be possible to consider a policy response in the Neighbourhood Plan that requires certain sizes, types and tenures of housing for example a certain percentage of houses with less than 3 bedrooms. However, the problem with these type of policies is that they need to be based on sound and detailed housing needs evidence which currently we don't have available. In addition there is a danger of these types of policies simply reducing the flexibility of the plan to respond to differing needs over time.

The alternative is for a more enabling type of policy that encourages a range of provision and therefore choice in the type of housing developed in Alnwick.

3.4.3 Questions

- Do you agree that the Plan should promote housing choice by encouraging a range of size, type and tenure of dwellings.

3.5 Delivering affordability

3.5.1 The Issue

Prior to the recession house prices nationwide, and in Alnwick District, rose sharply. Country Life magazine voted Alnwick town the best place to live in the UK in 2002. This contributed to a dramatic and rapid increase in the demand for, and hence prices of, property in and around the town. Pressure arose in particular as a result of people looking to acquire second / holiday homes or homes for retirement. With people from further afield having a stronger purchasing power, the local house-buyer found it very hard to compete. Although the recession has resulted in a slowing of the market and a slight drop in prices it has also discouraged construction leading to a reduced supply of new stock. With employment uncertainties this has also made it harder for people to afford housing. So the need for affordable housing is as urgent as ever.

The strong demand for housing in the district, coupled with a restricted supply as a result of previous structure plan and regional planning policy, means the average house price in Alnwick and Denwick has been high. Prices peaked in late 2007 with above inflation and above average rapid price increases although they have dropped slightly since. Nevertheless the ratio of prices to

household income – a ratio of about 8:1 – continues to cause a severe affordability problem for Alnwick and Denwick. The operation of the housing market alone will not resolve this without planning intervention. We need to view affordable housing as an integral part of the market not, as currently, - an add on.

Northumberland County Council commissioned David Couttie Associates (DCA) to carry out a Countywide Housing Needs Survey which reported in summer 2012. The study used 3 sub areas as identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Alnwick forms part of the North Northumberland sub-area. The key issues identified by the assessment were the declining affordability in the housing market and the role that housing can play in regeneration. The assessment identified that increased house prices and low wage levels were effectively pricing out the resident population from the owner occupied housing market. It suggests that these residents are looking to adjacent 'urban markets' to fulfil their needs for low-cost housing or access to social housing.

DCA also carried out an earlier housing needs survey for Alnwick in 2008, which demonstrated, an outstanding need (after allowing for expected affordable supply levels) for approximately a further 480 affordable homes in the Alnwick District area by 2012 or approximately 96 units per year. The corresponding figure for Alnwick itself was not available from the study but is likely to be not less than 50 units per year. The Homefinder information also provides an indication of all need (not just affordable need) in Alnwick and Denwick of c 500 households currently in priority, high and medium need in Alnwick and Denwick. (See Appendix 2)

Recent affordable delivery in Alnwick was given a major boost as a result of the Gentoo developments at Ropery Court and Towergate under the Homes and Communities Agency Kickstart programme. However affordable housing need remains an issue and further detailed data from the DCA Northumberland 2012 study at parish level or the carrying out of a separate parish housing needs study for Alnwick and Denwick will be required to provide the firm evidence base required for the Plan. This would allow accurate estimates of the total affordable need and separate targets for social rented and intermediate housing as well as requirements on size and type of affordable housing to be established for the Neighbourhood Plan. Currently the Strategic Housing Market Assessment suggests the affordable need is for about 80% social rented housing and 20% intermediate affordable housing for sale.

If not responded to, the affordability problem could result in difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly younger or lower skilled workers on whom the tourism and caring professions depend. Both sectors are significant employers in the Alnwick economy. This would simply reinforce the district population profile of declining younger age groups and an increasing older population perpetuating an imbalanced housing and population structure. The Neighbourhood Plan will need to address this position by increasing the amount of affordable housing and seeking to deliver smaller housing units appealing to the younger and first time buyers who wish to live and work in the district.

Affordable housing is provided through a subsidy to enable the price or rent of the house to be substantially lower than the prevailing market prices or rents in the district. Typically this was achieved previously through grant support to registered providers. This has been significantly reduced from the previous level of c £65,000 per unit to £17,000 and what grants are available are increasingly being focussed in London and the SE. This means that registered providers are highly nervous about embarking on development, a problem that is compounded by the threat to revenue

and income from rents as a result of benefit reform leading to cash flow problems and banks renegotiating loans to registered providers. As well as solving the problem of providing sufficient affordable housing a mechanism also needs to be in place to ensure the housing remains affordable for those who cannot compete in the existing housing market.

3.5.2 Options

The extent of current housing need for affordable homes means that for the Plan to do nothing is not an option.

It is considered the most likely means of delivering affordable housing units, particularly in Alnwick, will continue to be through cross subsidy in mixed developments of market housing although other innovative methods will be considered. That means that developers of new market housing schemes will have to provide some affordable housing as part of their scheme – thereby ensuring that the community benefits from new residential developments and secures an increase in the stock of affordable housing.

The basis for this will have to be a robust policy in the Neighbourhood Plan setting out the size of site that this requirement would relate to with some flexibility in terms of development viability. The current Alnwick Core Strategy requires 35% provision on sites of 10 units or more or on sites of 0.33 hectares or over. The Northumberland Core Strategy proposes a minimum of 30% provision across the County and the Affordable Housing Viability Assessment assumes a 30% rate is deliverable without grant support in north Northumberland given land values. The problem with any threshold approach in the past has been that some developers seek to adjust the capacity of development on site to remove the need for affordable provision. Also, as many sites in Alnwick are below the threshold of 10 dwellings anyway, a large amount of housing potentially is provided with no affordable element.

The alternative option would be to establish a tariff system on all housing developments as well as a threshold approach for larger sites where open market housing can cross-subsidise affordable housing. In this way even individual house developments would be required to provide a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing provision in Alnwick and Denwick. Work done elsewhere by BNP Paribas on Community Infrastructure Levy viability work establishes a base rate of £50 per m² of floorspace which may vary up or down depending on the market values that can be obtained in particular locations. The advantage of such a scheme is that developers have certainty up front about the impact of the tariff on their developments. The down side is that, to be successful, it requires the funds to be able to be applied to other affordable housing developments in the Alnwick area. It would however quickly generate considerable funds for Northumberland County Council to apply to housing programmes by building up in effect a local subsidy scheme. This together with NCC's recent decision to begin charging full council tax on second homes and channelling funds to affordable housing delivery could make a substantial difference in encouraging Trusts and registered providers to invest in affordable housing in the town.

Whatever method is chosen to require the provision of affordable housing a clear and robust policy must ensure that the housing goes to people in housing need and remains affordable. For the time being this would be secured through legal agreements but in order to ensure units remain affordable it may also require the removal of permitted development rights to enlarge homes.

3.5.3 Questions

- Do you support the continuation of a policy requiring sites larger than 10 units to provide affordable housing as part of the development?
- Do you support maintaining at least 35% as a minimum affordable contribution on larger sites subject to some flexibility where financial feasibility is marginal?
- As well as requiring larger market housing sites to provide affordable housing units do you support a tariff system so that smaller housing developments (including individual houses) should contribute funds towards the provision of affordable housing?

3.6 Delivering quality in housing design and local distinctiveness

3.6.1 The Issue

Given the landscape character and heritage quality of Alnwick, if new housing is going to be successfully incorporated into the town, particularly on its periphery, we have to address the quality of design and local distinctiveness. The town has not had a prestigious past in this respect with the larger housing estates prior to the millennium being constructed to developer standard styles and not considering what complements and enhances the Alnwick townscape nor considering how new housing integrates with the town and its community. Since 2000 and on smaller brownfield sites, development has been more successful in fitting with Alnwick's urban grain. Opportunities on previously developed sites however are decreasing and, if housing needs are to be met, the Neighbourhood Plan will have to allocate sites on the periphery of the town much of which could be in exposed locations. This means that the design and landscaping of new housing will be critical if it is to integrate with the existing fabric and develop a sense of place.

The NPPF stresses that good design is not however just about the way housing looks - it is about design as a whole – we must provide housing that provides a quality of life and that is sustainable for the future e.g. ensuring homes are energy efficient and affordable to heat and run. Design Council CABE are currently working on a new version of the *Building for Life* assessment which provides a robust basis to assess the quality of housing design. This together with the Government's *Code for Sustainable Homes* will give objective means to assess new housing and ensure that we can provide sustainable housing that will both complement Alnwick and Denwick as a place to live and contribute to its distinctiveness.

3.6.2 Options

Failure to secure sustainable housing to high standards of design would be environmentally irresponsible. A status quo or do nothing option is therefore unacceptable.

The Plan could develop design principles that seek designs that capture what is distinctive about Alnwick and ensure that new living environments integrate with the facilities and context of the town. All developments would need to be accompanied by design and access statements demonstrating how the housing complied with the principles.

As design and its assessment is a subjective matter it would be helpful for the policy to be based on a robust standard such as *Building for Life* and *Code for Sustainable Homes* and for the policies to propose a minimum standard which all housing in Alnwick and Denwick including the development of individual plots would have to achieve before it could be recommended for approval. However, this places the onus on Northumberland County Council to have in place Building for Life Assessors

who can carry out the assessment or at least validate assessments carried out by developers when submitting their applications.

3.6.3 Questions

- Do you think the Plan should introduce a strong design policy setting out principles of good sustainable design?
- Do you think this should be backed up by a requirement that all new housing development should be assessed against and satisfy *Building for Life* and *Code for Sustainable Homes* standards?

3.7 Making more effective use of existing stock

3.7.1 The Issue

In addition to providing new build housing stock it is important that the plan ensures that the existing housing stock is used effectively to help meet housing needs. In Alnwick, as elsewhere, there are cases where the existing stock is under-occupied as a result of the household reducing in size for example elderly households continuing to occupy large family housing. However more seriously in Alnwick there is a problem of properties being deliberately left vacant. A certain level of vacancy is necessary for the housing market to operate but in Alnwick there are currently (2012) 157 vacant units - a rate of over 4%. When second and holiday homes are taken into account on top there starts to be a significant amount of the existing stock that is either unused or underused. Stock that is held vacant is often in poorer condition and in need of refurbishment particularly in respect of its energy efficiency. If we can tackle some of these problems we can ensure the existing stock can assist in meeting needs more effectively.

3.7.2 Options

Failure to ensure the existing stock is maintained and used effectively will make the supply of housing in Alnwick and meeting needs more problematic. Therefore a do nothing option in response to this issue is not realistic.

Ensuring a good supply and choice of housing units will encourage households currently under-occupying large family housing to downsize to occupy space more effectively. Innovative housing models, for example sheltered and extra care units that are attractive to the elderly for safer independent living, may encourage elderly households to downsize.

Encouraging owners to make underused or vacant property particularly in the town centre available to a housing trust or association for refurbishment and subsequent rental will have the twin benefits of helping to meet housing needs and also regenerating the town centre.

It is also open to the County Council to use Compulsory Purchase powers as advocated in the NPPF to acquire vacant housing stock, refurbish it and bring it back into use.

3.7.3 Questions

- Do you agree the Plan should encourage the acquisition & refurbishment of existing stock?

3.8 Other Issues

3.8.1 Housing in the Rural Area

The expectation regarding housing in the Neighbourhood Plan area is that it will be provided essentially within and on the outskirts of Alnwick in the most sustainable locations. However it is recognised that in drawing the neighbourhood plan area wider than the town, rural housing needs will be an issue.

The NPPF requires planning authorities to avoid new isolated homes in the open countryside other than in special circumstances and the Northumberland Core Strategy has rejected any question of a dispersed pattern of development. There is no justification for the Neighbourhood Plan to take a different approach. However, it is important that essential housing needs for rural workers for example in agriculture to be near their place of work is catered for and that opportunities for conversion of rural buildings to the benefit of the landscape character of the area are taken.

Depending on the content of the Northumberland Core Strategy a specific policy in the Neighbourhood Plan may not be necessary and this will be kept under review.

3.8.2 Gypsies and travellers

The former Alnwick District Council identified one unauthorised site within the district which commenced in April 2007 and is owned by the occupying family. Subsequent planning applications and appeals have established this as a permanent authorised site for the siting of three caravans.

The District Council also identified two unauthorised sites which have been occupied in recent years. These sites are located close together at Willowburn and the Lionheart Enterprise Park. In each case the sites were occupied for only short periods by Gypsies of Irish descent. The groups, consisting of approximately 6 caravans in each case, were employed in construction in the immediate area and were moved on after a few days.

The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment identified a need for one permanent site in the former Alnwick District Area which has now been met by grant of permanent planning permission on the site referred to above. The assessment found no hard evidence requiring a transit site in the Alnwick Area.

It is not therefore proposed that the Neighbourhood Plan should identify a specific site in the Alnwick and Denwick area.

3.8.3 Questions

- Do you agree that at present it is unnecessary to identify any permanent or transit site for gypsies and travellers in the Alnwick and Denwick Neighbourhood Plan area?

4. Evidence Base

4.1 Documents

Northumberland 2012 Housing Needs Survey - David Couttie Associates

Northumberland 2012 Housing Needs Survey Sub Area Report - David Couttie Associates

Alnwick Housing Needs Survey 2008 – David Couttie Associates

National Planning Policy Framework March 2012

Alnwick District Local Development Framework - Core Strategy - July 2007

Alnwick District Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document May 2010

Northumberland Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Document - May 2012

People and Planning Five Year Housing Land Supply 2012 – 2017

Northumberland Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment - May 2012

Northumberland Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Alnwick Locality Profile – Northumberland Infonet

Northumberland Annual Monitoring Report 2010/11

Northumberland Local Investment Plan 2010-2020

Rural Community Profile for Alnwick (Parish) -ACRE Rural evidence project - January 2012

Rural Community Profile for Denwick (Parish) -ACRE Rural evidence project - January 2012

4.2 Partner Discussions

John Turnbull - Housing Enabler North Northumberland NCC

Brian Watson – Housing Consultant

Brian Renforth – Johnnie Johnson Housing

Appendix 1

Northumberland Housing Requirement Options - North Northumberland Delivery Area and Alnwick

Options of evidence for establishing housing requirements	No. of dwellings per annum in North Northumberland Delivery Area	Number of dwellings per annum in Alnwick by distribution option		
		Option A - By spatial distribution of population (Alnwick allocated 13.7 % of North Northumberland housing figure)	Option B - Disperse development to smaller settlements (Not being pursued by NCC as not sustainable)	Option C - Existing spatial strategy (Alnwick allocated 18% of North Northumberland housing figure)
2011-16				
RSS Requirement 2011-16	180	25	TBC	32
Projected Household Growth (incl. NCC Calculation)	275	38	TBC	50
Average completion rates 2004-11	285	39	TBC	51
Five year housing land supply projection 2011-16	205	28	TBC	37
2016-2021				
RSS Requirement 2016-21	160	22	TBC	29
Projected Household Growth (incl. NCC Calculation)	275	38	TBC	50
Average completion rates 2004-11	285	39	TBC	51
2021-2026				
RSS Requirement 2004-21	175	24	TBC	32
Projected Household Growth (incl. NCC Calculation)	245	34	TBC	44
2026-2031				
Projected Household Growth (incl. NCC Calculation)	210	29	TBC	38

Option A - based on 2001 Census Data (LSOA)

Appendix 2 - Alnwick & Denwick Housing Need Snapshot

Northumberland County Council - July 2012 (Source: Homefinder)

1. Housing Need Alnwick by Postcode as at 12th July 2012

	Priority		Band 1 High Need		Band 2 Med Need		Band 3 Low Need		Total
	GP	AP	GP	AP	GP	AP	GP	AP	
1 Bed	1	2	14	10	60	18	38	17	
2 Bed			14	6	68	6	67	21	
3 Bed	2		3		14		15		
4 Bed			4		5		1		
5 Bed			1		1				
Total	3	2	36	16	148	24	121	38	

2. Housing Need Denwick by Postcode as at 12th July 2012

	Priority		Band 1		Band 2		Band 3		Totals
	GP	AP	GP	AP	GP	AP	GP	AP	
1 Bed							1		
2 bed						1		1	
3 Bed									
4 Bed									
Total						1	1	1	

3. Housing Need Alnwick & Denwick by area of preference (Tables 1 and 2 needs are within totals for Table 3)

	Priority		Band 1		Band 2		Band 3		Total
	GP	AP	GP	AP	GP	AP	GP	AP	
1 Bed	1		12	22	127	42	99	49	
2 Bed	2		26	8	122	38	184	63	
3 Bed	1		5		51		56		
4 bed	1		4		26		11		
5 Bed			5		4		4		
6 Bed			2						
Total	5		54	30	330	80	354	112	

Appendix 3 Alnwick Housing Sites Identified in Strategic Housing Land Availability Study 2012

Please note that the identification of sites in the SHLAA does **not** indicate that all sites will be developed, merely that these are expected to be the bank of sites from which housing will be provided over the next 15 years.