



# Referendum Version

September 2017



*P*onteland Town Council

Milbourne

Medburn

Prestwick

Kirkley



## Foreword

Planning decisions in the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan area are made by Northumberland County Council (NCC). This Neighbourhood Plan aims to help NCC make decisions that are informed by locally prepared policies, relevant for the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan area.

Ponteland Town Council wants the wishes of those who live and work within the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan area to be effectively reflected in decision making at NCC. The Localism Act provides the opportunity for local communities to shape development in their areas and in autumn 2012, a Steering Group was set up to produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the Ponteland area. The Steering Group includes representatives from the Civic Society, Ponteland Town Council, the Darras Hall Estate Committee, Business Forum, the Ponteland Green Belt Group, Ponteland Community Partnership and Northumberland County Council.

This Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to reflect the views of Ponteland residents, businesses, stakeholders, landowners, organisations and Councillors. Since 2013, a series of consultations has been held. The content of the Plan has been explained, views sought and modifications made. The Draft Plan passed independent examination in July 2017, subject to some minor modifications recommended by the Examiner. This Referendum Version of the Plan is the final outcome of the plan-making process.

From early engagement with residents it became clear that protection of the Green Belt and housing numbers matter very much to Ponteland people. Readers will notice however that these issues are not covered in this Plan because Green Belt boundaries can only be altered through a review of the County Council's Local Plan. This Neighbourhood Plan cannot seek to extend Green Belt boundaries or allocate areas of land for development within existing Green Belts as this is a role for NCC through the preparation of their Local Plan.

What this Plan does do, however, is to create a set of policies which will allow homes and businesses to develop with local needs and hopes. Emphasis has been placed for example on the type of housing required, environmental considerations and conservation of the character of our area.

It is a requirement that the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with both national policy and guidance and the adopted Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan has been written to work with these policies to help the planning decision making process across the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan area.



Ponteland Town Council is very grateful to the team of volunteers, particularly the chair and vice chair of the Steering Group, who have contributed years of time and thought to produce the Neighbourhood Plan. We also thank all the residents, stakeholders and businesses who attended and commented in consultations. We believe that Ponteland's wishes have been recognised by this Plan as it will help to inform decisions that are made for our area.

Carl Rawlings  
Former Mayor of Ponteland Town Council.

We were appointed as an independent chair and vice chair for the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in the autumn of 2012. This group was created by the Town Council with a wide membership including representation from: local business, the Community Partnership, the Civic Society, the Darras Hall Estate Committee and the Ponteland Green Belt Group. All of the members of the Steering Group are volunteers who share an interest in the area and who care passionately about its future.

The Steering Group wanted to develop a Neighbourhood Plan that clearly identifies what makes the area special, to ensure that planning decisions are taken in the appropriate context, and so the unique character of the area as a whole can be maintained and enhanced. The mix of buildings and the unique rural atmosphere reflect the area's history and define its character.

Our Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges any changes must respect and understand the special qualities of the area. We believe the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan reflect this.

Alma Dunigan  
Chair  
Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Will Moses  
Vice Chair  
Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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*Photographs within the document are courtesy of the various groups and individuals that have been involved in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the preparation of neighbourhood development plans.
- 1.2 Policies within neighbourhood plans cannot block development that is already part of the Local Plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.
- 1.3 Once a neighbourhood plan is agreed at the referendum stage and is ‘made’ (brought into legal force) by the Local Planning Authority it becomes part of the statutory development plan<sup>1</sup>. Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material planning considerations<sup>2</sup> indicate otherwise.

### Planning context

- 1.4 Neighbourhood plans have to meet a number of ‘basic conditions’ to ensure they are legally compliant. They must:
  - Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
  - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the statutory development plan;
  - Contribute to sustainable development; and
  - Be compatible with European obligations.

#### *National planning policy and guidance:*

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

#### *Statutory Development Plan:*

- 1.6 Currently the statutory development plan for Northumberland consists of the saved policies of the former Local Planning Authorities that made up Northumberland before Local Government Reorganisation in 2009. For the Ponteland Neighbourhood Area, these are the saved policies of the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (2003). Given the time that has elapsed since the preparation of the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan, and as it was prepared to cover the period 1991 – 2006, some elements of it are out of date. It therefore does not provide a wholly appropriate strategic context for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.7 Northumberland County Council (NCC) is currently preparing a new Local Plan which will replace the existing saved planning policies. This will set out the strategic policies for Northumberland in due course.
- 1.8 The preparation of the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) has been informed by both the adopted Castle Morpeth District Local Plan and work undertaken on the emerging Local Plan for Northumberland. The Plan recognises and reflects policies contained in the current Local Plan including those concerning protection and enhancement of the historic environment, management of flooding, protection of biodiversity and community facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> The current Development Plan for the area covered by the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan consists of the saved policies of the Castle Morpeth Local Plan (2003). Northumberland County Council (NCC) are currently preparing a Countywide Local Plan Core Strategy which will replace the strategic planning policies of the Castle Morpeth Local Plan.

<sup>2</sup> Material Planning considerations are matters that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

Additionally, it is recognised that the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan covers strategic matters that this Plan is in general conformity with, although they cannot be addressed within it, including proposals for a strategic relief road to the east of Ponteland Village. It is also recognised that Ponteland Parish is within the Green Belt and that any modification to Green Belt boundaries can only be addressed through a review of the Local Plan because this is a strategic matter that cannot be covered in a neighbourhood plan.

*Sustainable development:*

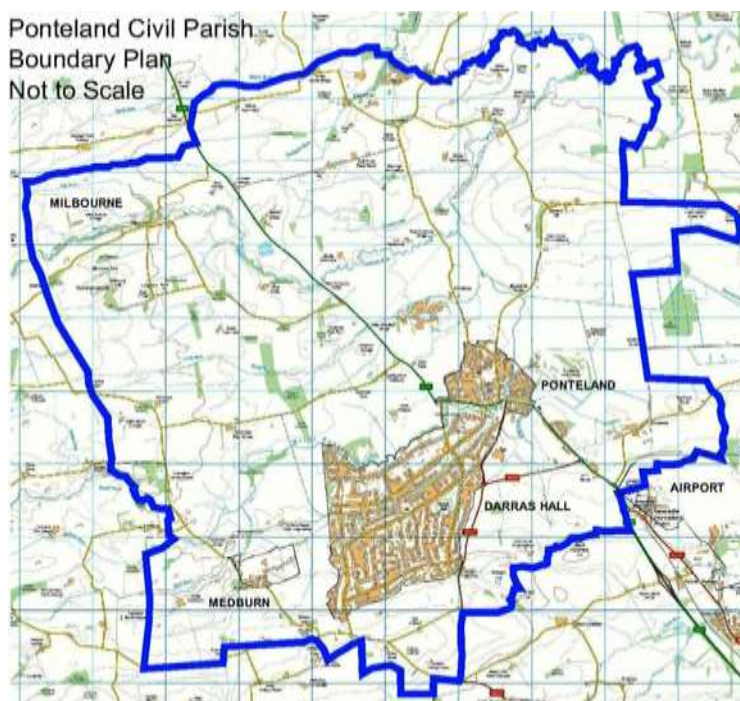
- 1.9 The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development as defined by the NPPF. This specifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be the basis for every plan and every planning decision. In brief, ‘sustainable development’ is about positive growth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

*European obligations:*

- 1.10 Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with, and not breach, EU obligations. This includes the need to consider environmental and other impacts of introducing the Plan. These matters have been addressed in the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment screening opinions submitted with the Plan to the County Council.

## **Background to the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan**

- 1.11 The process of preparing the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan began in Autumn 2012. The whole of the Civil Parish of Ponteland was formally designated as a Neighbourhood Area by Northumberland County Council on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013. The relevant documents relating to these matters are available on the Northumberland County Council website<sup>3</sup>.



**Figure 1: Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Area**

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Neighbourhood.aspx#neighbourhoodplans>

1.12 Since 2013 the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, made up of local volunteers, has worked on behalf of the Town Council to develop the Plan. During this time the group have followed a process to ensure the Plan reflects what the community in Ponteland want whilst also seeking to ensure that the Plan will meet the 'basic conditions'.

1.13 There have been extensive areas of work including:

- A number of rounds of community engagement;
  - January 2013 – Plan area wide survey;
  - May 2013 – engagement with students at the High School;
  - June 2013 – Party in the Park event;
  - November 2013 – Plan area wide survey;
  - September 2014 – vision and objectives consultation;
  - June 2015 - Party in the Park event;
  - October 2015 – Stakeholder event;
  - April 2016 – Revised vision, objectives and policy options;
  - June 2016 - Party in the Park event;
- Identification of existing evidence to inform policies;
- Commissioning of additional evidence including;
  - Community Character Statement (2015);
  - Housing Needs Survey (2016);
  - Estate Agents Survey (2016);
  - Landscape Character Appraisal (2016).
- Preparation of topic/ background papers all of which are available on the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan website.

1.14 This work has informed the preparation of the Plan which identifies:

- The context in which the Plan has been prepared – an overview of Ponteland, the **opportunities and challenges** for the Plan to address;
- A **positive vision and objectives** for the future of the Neighbourhood Plan area;
- How the vision and objectives 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 and objectives 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.

1.15 The period covered by the Plan is to 2031. During this period, the Plan will be reviewed and updated where required.

1.16 The background documents that have informed the preparation of the Plan are available online at [www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk).

1.17 The Plan has been modified having regard to the outcome of consultation and engagement and it has been subject to independent examination. The independent examination concluded with a report published on 30 June 2017 which recommended various minor modifications to policies in the Plan. These modifications have been included in the Plan which is now presented for local referendum.

## **2. Ponteland – its history and future**

### **Ponteland – a brief history**

- 2.1 The majority of the Neighbourhood Plan area comprises a working, rolling landscape made up of a mixture of land uses. There is a lot of arable farming across the Plan area, predominantly in small fields that have been established for hundreds of years. Areas of arable farming are interspersed with grassland supporting livestock farming of both sheep and cattle. There is also a network of mainly thorn hedgerows around most of the local fields and areas of established woodland which helps to give the local countryside its amenity and character.
- 2.2 The landscape around Ponteland is particularly attractive due to the River Pont and the many smaller streams which divide up the area. The River Pont flows from the south-west of the area to join the River Blyth at the north eastern boundary. The land is in the main gently undulating but rises towards the south giving views across Northumberland to the Simonside and Cheviot Hills.
- 2.3 Over the past 50 years, the area has seen a move from predominately dairy and livestock units to more specialist arable units growing wheat, barley, and oil seed rape. Most of the area is in either Entry Level or Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Schemes. There are now no dairy farms left in the Neighbourhood Plan area and the permanent pasture is grazed by cattle and sheep. There has been an increase in farm sizes due to the amalgamation of farms and blocks of land which is the direct result of improved farming systems and the loss of traditional farm steads to both housing and commercial units.
- 2.4 Many of the local farms are occupied by families who have farmed the same land for generations. There are both owner occupied and tenanted farms throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area. There are currently 20-22 farms farmed by farmers who live on the farm with another 20-25 farms or blocks of land, farmed by either farmers who live within the Plan area or further afield. Farms that have diversified have been primarily into horse livery yards, commercial units including offices and storage units. These uses bring ever closer the connections between the local landscape and the people who live in the Plan area.
- 2.5 A major ecological feature straddling the eastern boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area is Prestwick Carr; a lowland raised bog designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), with an area of surrounding grazing marsh. Prestwick Carr is owned and run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The Plan area also contains a number of small ponds and lakes. Many species of wildlife thrive in the mixed countryside across the Plan area. There are wild deer, foxes, badgers and red squirrels living and breeding locally. There is also a wide range of bird life such as pheasants, grey partridge, hedge sparrows, geese duck of varies kinds on the waterways, buzzards, sparrow hawks, crows and rooks. The River Pont is also an important habitat for a number of species including otters, water voles and kingfishers.
- 2.6 There is an extensive network of footpaths right across the Plan area which gives public access to our local countryside. Ponteland and the surrounding area have a network of minor roads which are used by many cycle riders to appreciate and enjoy the green spaces and interesting countryside in the local area. The only major transport route is the A696, a single carriageway road running from the south-east to the north-west.



2.7 The main settlement, Ponteland village with the adjoining Darras Hall Estate, lies at the crossing point of the A696 and the River Pont. The Neighbourhood Plan area also contains several hamlets: Milbourne, Medburn, Prestwick, Berwick Hill, High Callerton, Smallburn and Kirkley.



2.8 The Civil Parish boundary changed very little from medieval times, when it covered the Townships of: Milbourne, Milbourne Grange, Higham Dykes, Coldcoats, Kirkley, Little Callerton, Darras Hall, Ponteland, High Callerton, Prestwick, Berwick Hill, Horton Grange, Brenkley, Mason, Dinnington.

2.9 However, towards the end of the 19th century some major changes took place:

- Dinnington was constituted as a separate Parish to include Horton Grange, Brenkley, Mason and part of Prestwick (Prestwick Pit Houses, Prestwick Terrace and Prestwick Mine);
- High Callerton at this time was transferred to the new Parish of Whalton but at some later (possibly after 1930) it reverted back to Ponteland;
- Sometime after 1924 Dissington North and South were transferred to Ponteland from Newburn Parish along with Woolsington and part of the Gosforth All Saints Parish (Kenton Bank Foot);
- In the 1974 Local Government re-organisation Castle Morpeth Borough Council replaced Castle Ward RDC and Ponteland Civil Parish regained that part of Prestwick, lost earlier to Dinnington. Woolsington was incorporated within the boundary of the City of Newcastle;
- The current Civil Parish of Ponteland was then established to include: Dissington (North and South), Milbourne (Milbourne & Milbourne Grange), Kirkley, Berwick Hill, Higham Dykes, Ponteland, Darras Hall and Prestwick.

### Ponteland village and Darras Hall



*Ponteland 1842*

2.10 Ponteland was historically a small settlement surrounded by agricultural land and centred on St Mary's Church, which has stood in its current position since the 12th century. Ponteland grew around the crossing point of the River Pont, having evolved from a rural community of around 350 people in the 1800s to a bustling, attractive town on the periphery of the Tyneside conurbation today.

2.11 Around the time of the arrival of the railway in 1905, approximately 410

hectares (1014 acres) of farmland south of Ponteland was bought and the whole area divided into small plots, enabling plans for a 'Garden City' at Darras Hall to be realised. With roads marked and services supplied, plots were auctioned off in 1911 for buyers to build their own homes and grow their own flowers and vegetables to supply markets in Newcastle. Careful

planning went into the infrastructure of the Darras Hall Estate and the Trust Deed laid down standards still maintained today. Darras Hall and the arrival of the railway in 1905 and its subsequent extension to Darras Hall in 1913 did little to increase the overall resident population, which stood at around 1,000 in the 1940s. The railway line was closed in the late 1960s.

- 2.12 Some ribbon development occurred along the North Road, the West Road and Cheviot View on the Newcastle Road, both between and following the wars. Council housing was built in the 1950s in fields behind the Blackbird public house.
- 2.13 It was in the 1960s that a growing need for housing led to a surge in development, with Ponteland offering an attractive alternative to city living. The building of the Merton Way Shopping Centre along with the Thornhill Road housing was a major departure from the ribbon development of the 1930s and further development followed in: Jackson Avenue, Ladywell Way, Dunsgreen, Fairney Edge, Eland Haugh and the Lairage.
- 2.14 The Coates Endowed School in front of St. Mary's Church was replaced by a new Coates Middle School on Thornhill Road and the building demolished in 1968 to create a very attractive village green. A middle and high school campus developed off Callerton Lane. Comprehensive sports facilities were built and supplemented the well-established provision for tennis, golf and bowls.
- 2.15 The construction of the Rotary Way link road to the new Woosington Bypass has led to the area taking on its current form today. There is now a population of around 11,000 in the Neighbourhood Plan area, of which the majority live within Ponteland village and Darras Hall.

### The wider Civil Parish

- 2.16 Beyond the Village, there are a number of smaller settlements and buildings which are an important part of the character of the Plan area.
- 2.17 New uses for the local countryside have been established over the past 20 or so years. Many farm steads have been converted into housing bringing a greater population into the countryside. There are business parks at: Park Farm, Berwick Hill, Pont Park, and Prestwick Park, all boosting the local economy and bringing local jobs. There are various businesses located in the countryside providing services to the local community, not just for horse riders but dog kennels, catteries, cycle repairs shop and even a gym in a barn.
- 2.18 Local pubs and restaurants are located in the attractive countryside across the Plan area. Pubs such as the Waggon Inn, the Highlander and the Badger all bring in custom due to their location. Dissington Hall is a prestigious conference and events centre and there is also a successful garden centre at Dobbies. The area is also seeing an increase in tourism and leisure developments, particularly linked to the Reivers Way National Cycle Route.

### ***Medburn:***

- 2.19 The hamlet of Medburn, a small linear settlement, a mile to the west of the Darras Hall Estate comprises a mixture of original village housing, small farms and some small home based business as well as newer executive homes. Medburn has grown significantly in the last 10 years largely due to back land development; however it has no village facilities or amenities.

***Milbourne:***

- 2.20 A small hamlet centred around East Town Farm, approximately 2 miles north west of Ponteland. It was formerly a 'pick your own' soft fruit farm and shop.

***Smallburn and the Police HQ:***

- 2.21 The Cottage Homes were established in 1903, designed by Newcastle architects Oliver, Leeson and Wood for the Newcastle Board of Guardians, initially taking in children from the workhouse on Westgate Road to the west of Newcastle. Originally there was a superintendent's house which included stores and an office, four blocks of semi-detached cottages and a half block, initially intended to be an isolation hospital, arranged around an oval green. Each cottage was supervised by a 'house-father' or 'house-mother' and accommodated between thirty and forty children, about 300 in all. The homes, which were extended in 1913, eventually included a school, infirmary and workshops on site. The latter would have been used for general upkeep and maintenance in the homes and also for training the boys in specific skills.
- 2.22 During the early 1960s the whole site was taken over and established as the Northumberland Teacher Training College. This was closed in 1981 and acquired by Northumbria Police for their Headquarters.

***Berwick Hill:***

- 2.23 Located at the edge of the Neighbourhood Plan boundary, the area has a rifle range and office units. The central point is the farm and several cottages originally for agricultural workers in the area.

***Kirkley Hall:***

- 2.24 The Ogle family owned Kirkley Estates from 1632 until 1922. The Grade II Listed Hall was damaged by fire in 1929 and rebuilt on a smaller scale to designs by Newcastle architects Burns, Dick and MacKellar. It is located approximately 3 miles to the north of Ponteland. In 1946 the estate was acquired by Northumberland County Council and in 1951 Kirkley Hall Farm Institute was established.
- 2.25 In 1999 the estate became the land studies campus of Northumberland College. The campus has specialist resources and continues to diversify and expand. Approximately 90 people are currently employed on the site. Facilities include:
- An equestrian centre with indoor and outdoor riding arenas, 25 horse stable yard and specialist equine facilities;
  - Kirkley Hall Zoological Gardens with over 120 species;
  - A veterinary centre and grooming parlour;
  - An outdoor activity centre with high ropes and zip wire and sailing base at Blyth;
  - Two farms; one at Kirkley the other in the Coquet Valley;
  - Victorian walled gardens, over 1,330m<sup>2</sup> of greenhouses and a garden design studio;
  - Cyber Café;
  - A Learning Resource Centre devoted to the land-based sector which includes an IT suite; and
  - Halls of residence facilities.

**High Callerton:**

2.26 High Callerton is a small community that adjoins Ponteland. The settlement grew up around a range of farm buildings, manor halls and farmhouses. Some of the original traditional farm buildings were converted into residences in mid-1970s and 1980s. These changes have involved alteration, demolition and extension of existing structures. The result is the current built form of the settlement.

**Prestwick:**

2.27 Berwick Hill and Prestwick have a variety of units offering professional, retail and cafes outlets. Many of the farm steads have diversified into B&Bs, livery, kennels, catteries, farm shops and holiday lets.

2.28 Mining around the Prestwick area has a long history as far back as the 13<sup>th</sup> century with bell pits at first and deep mining from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. There were offices, canteens and pithead baths when underground mining finished in 1966. From 1951 until 1990 an area near the railway was used as an explosives depot by ICI. Storage was in soil-covered bunkers on low-lying ground and the railway remained open for the trains carrying explosives. In 1995 Ward Bros took over the site and it is now being used for landfill.

**Ponteland Today**

2.29 Today, based on the 2011 Census, the population of Ponteland Civil Parish is around 11,000 and the demographics, compared to the County, North East Region and England, are shown in table 1.

Description	Ponteland Civil Parish	%	Northumberland Local Authority	%	NE England	%	England	%
Population	10,921		316,028		2,596,886		53,012,456	
Population (16- 64)	6,238	57.12	198,858	62.92	1,684,964	64.88	34,329,091	64.76
Population (65+)	2,918	26.72	63,304	20.03	449,485	17.31	8,660,529	16.34
Households	4,713		148,043		1,179,194		23,044,097	
Detached Houses	3,045	69.74	37,247	28.48	184,614	17.31	5,128,552	25.08
Homes owned outright or with a mortgage	3,851	81.71	91,207	61.61	698,595	59.24	13,975,024	60.64
2 cars or van in household	1,772	39.5	36,916	26.6	238,160	21.1	5,441,593	24.7
Level 4 qualifications and above	4,030	44	67,024	25.6	473,382	22.2	11,769,361	27.4
Managers, Directors, Senior Officials or Professional	2,179	45.8	38,266	26	274,645	23.8	7,135,275	28.4
Higher or Lower Managerial, Admin & Professional	3,704	48.1	70,830	30.4	497,667	25.9	12,177,930	31.3
Retired	1,833	23.8	43,897	18.8	307,240	16	5,320,691	13.7

Table 1: Key statistics from Northumberland Knowledge<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Campaigns/Knowledge.aspx>

- 2.30 The information in table 1 shows the population having a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over than the national average. The proportion of detached houses is substantially more than the national average and home ownership is also much greater. The percentage of the population with Level 4 qualifications or above or who are Managers, Directors and Professionals in the 'Managerial' Socio-Economic class is also significantly more than the national average.
- 2.31 According to the rightmove website<sup>5</sup>, the average price of houses sold in Ponteland during 2016 was £489,570. The zoopla Zed-Index<sup>6</sup> has the average house price at £468,531. Both figures are more than double the national average house price recorded by the Land Registry<sup>7</sup>.
- 2.32 Ponteland is recognised as providing services to a wider rural area, although not to the same extent as Morpeth and Hexham which are the closest market towns to the village. Ponteland mostly looks to Newcastle upon Tyne for its main retailing, services and employment. It provides an attractive living location for those commuting to Tyneside and the wider region.

### **Views of the local community**

- 2.33 As part of the early engagement on the Plan we asked for feedback on what the main things were that people liked about the Neighbourhood Plan area, comments included:
- The mix of buildings and the unique rural atmosphere reflect the history of the area and give it a very special character;
  - The 'green approaches' to Ponteland are an essential aspect of the village character;
  - Important green/ open spaces including Ponteland Park and other informal spaces;
  - There are a number of important wildlife corridors, including: the disused Railway Line and the River Pont;
  - Special landscapes across the Neighbourhood Plan area e.g. Milbourne Hall, Dissington Hall, Birney Hall and their settings;
  - There are a number of important wildlife sites with a wealth of protected species;
  - Memorial Hall is an important community facility.
- 2.34 Early engagement also provided feedback on the main things that the local community disliked about the Neighbourhood Plan area. Comments included:
- The unique character of Darras Hall Estate is being eroded by the construction of increasingly large replacement dwellings and the removal of boundary planting;
  - Need to reduce the proliferation of advertising boards, signage and street clutter within the Conservation Area;
  - Location of Meadowfield Industrial Estate location within the village centre;
  - Poor parking provision;
  - Inadequate supply of housing for older people;
  - Lack of suitable and accessible transport for older people;
  - Poor access to local GP services;
  - Accessibility of infrastructure for those with mobility problems;
  - Lack of toilet facilities/rest areas for the elderly in Ponteland;
  - Poor leisure facilities;
  - Need to maintain and enhance community facilities;
  - Traffic congestion;

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/Ponteland.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/ponteland/street/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/ukhpi> in October 2016 at £216,674

- Inadequate provision for cyclists (cycle routes and cycle parking), public transport provision unreliable.

2.35 As part of the early engagement the local community were also asked to identify what things they felt should be changed or improved:

- The Conservation area should be reviewed and extended;
- The need to protect green spaces, trees and the approach roads to Ponteland;
- There should be restrictions on the type of front boundaries permitted in order to maintain and enhance wildlife corridors;
- Conservation Area management issues identified in the Community Character Statement;
- Appropriate design, number and size of shop and other commercial signs, limit size of sign, size as proportion of shopfront area and size of lettering;
- Promote wildlife along the River Pont by creating a 'buffer' where it does not conflict with other uses;
- Designate Tree Preservation Orders in order to protect trees which are important to local amenity;
- Roadside verges in the Neighbourhood Plan area should be better managed for wildlife;
- There is a need for cemetery expansion;
- Need for more housing for older people;
- There should be less building in back gardens, and that the low density/green character of some parts of Darras Hall should be preserved;
- Need to retain and improve existing retail at Broadway and Merton Way;
- Bring back under-used/empty buildings into use;
- Improve car parking provision in town centre locations;
- Re-locate industrial uses in Meadowfield Estate out of the centre of Ponteland;
- Use Quarry Site for industrial uses;
- Establish community hub using library and other public buildings;
- Maximise the use of the Memorial Hall;
- Protect retail/office uses in the commercial centres from changes of use to residential;
- The need for a bypass/ relief road for Ponteland;
- Improve access for pedestrians (particularly school children);
- Inadequate provision for cyclists (cycle routes and cycle parking);
- Public transport provision unreliable;
- Airport expansion and impacts on road network;
- The traffic impacts of the school run;
- Accessibility;
- Poor local infrastructure in some places making access difficult for those with mobility impairments;
- Reducing flooding – impact of future development on flooding;
- The need to ensure that the schools can accommodate the numbers of new pupils likely as a result of development in Ponteland;
- The need to protect existing recreational space for young people;
- The need to improve existing facilities for young people;
- Maximise the use of existing buildings/spaces for youth and community uses;
- Ensure that new development provides appropriate space for further recreational provision or mitigates loss if facilities are to be lost as a result of new development.

- 2.36 These issues have all helped to inform the Vision and Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan and the Planning Policies and Community Actions which are set out in the remainder of the Plan.
- 2.37 The Plan has been informed by several rounds of publicity, consultation and engagement. The feedback from consultation has helped to shape the final version of the Plan.
- 2.38 Further information on the engagement exercises carried out and the feedback received over the preparation of this Plan can be found in the Consultation Statement that accompanied the Submission Draft Plan.

### 3. Our Vision for Ponteland

- 3.1 The Vision and Objectives for the Plan have developed following consideration of key issues raised by residents in a series of consultations and community engagement events during 2013, 2014 and 2015. Consultation on the draft Vision and Objectives for the Plan took place during April 2016. There was overwhelming support from the local community for the proposed Vision and Objectives<sup>8</sup>.

#### The Vision

- 3.2 The Vision sets out what the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve, it informs all of the policies in the Plan.

Vision
<i>‘Ponteland will maintain its identity as a sustainable, thriving community, accessible to people of all ages. A gateway to Northumberland, which values its rural setting, rich heritage, natural environment and open spaces. It will remain visually distinct and separate from the Newcastle/Tyneside conurbation, meeting the needs of the current population and community of the future, without compromising this distinction. The special identities of Darras Hall, the historic core of Ponteland village and the small settlements in the Plan area will be maintained and enhanced for future generations, making the Civil Parish of Ponteland a desirable place to live, work and visit.’</i>

#### The Objectives

- 3.3 To deliver the Vision, seven Objectives have been developed. The Objectives clearly relate to the issues identified through early engagement. The planning policies and community actions included within the Plan have been identified to deliver the Objectives.

Objectives
<p><b>Objective 1 – The Built Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that new development contributes positively to the built, natural and historic environment of the Neighbourhood Plan area.</li></ul>
<p><b>Objective 2 - The Natural Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Plan area.</li></ul>
<p><b>Objective 3 – Local Economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support the sustainable creation and protection of employment opportunities in the Neighbourhood Plan area, and the vitality and viability of its Village and Local Centres.</li></ul>
<p><b>Objective 4 - Housing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create and maintain a balanced and sustainable community by providing a positive policy framework that recognises the different types of homes that all current and future residents of the Neighbourhood Plan area need.</li></ul>

<sup>8</sup> Feedback from the consultation is available here <http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk/public-consultation/reviced-vo-consultation/>



**Objective 5 – Community Wellbeing**

- Contribute to community wellbeing by ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan area’s community, especially its older and younger people, have access to the services and facilities they need.

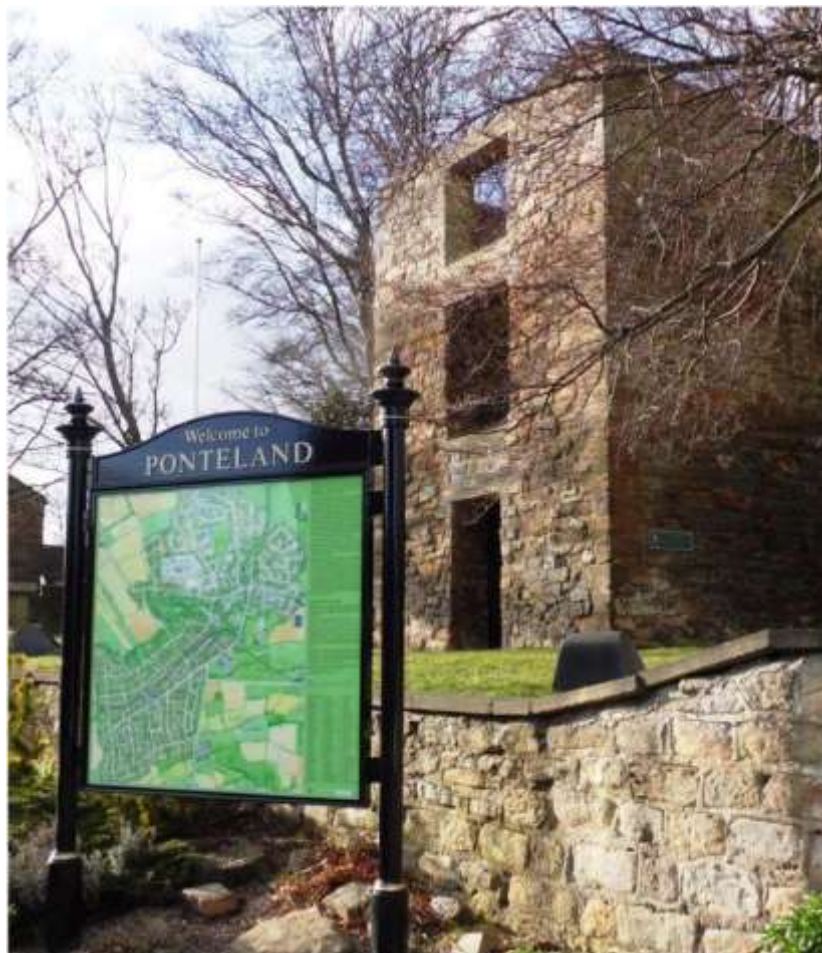
**Objective 6 – Flooding and Sustainable Drainage**

- To reduce the causes and risk of flooding in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

**Objective 7 – Transport and Movement**

- Manage the transport network of the Neighbourhood Plan area to be safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly for all users, whilst ensuring adequate parking is available to meet the needs of residents, visitors and businesses.

3.4 The following two sections of the Plan set out the planning policies and community actions which have been identified to deliver the Objectives.



## 4. Delivering the vision and objectives – Planning Policies

### Introduction

4.1 This section sets out the **planning policies**, which together will support and deliver the Plan’s Vision and Objectives. The policies are grouped under the topics defined below that support the Objectives of the Plan, in addition to an overarching policy on the delivery of sustainable development:

- Built and historic environment;
- Natural environment;
- Housing;
- Local economy;
- Transport;
- Flooding;
- Community Wellbeing.

4.2 The Policies Map illustrates geographically the policies in the Plan.

### Sustainable Development principles

4.3 The NPPF is clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The NPPF includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This presumption underpins the Vision and Objectives of the Plan; it is a cross cutting theme which has informed the preparation of all of the policies in the Plan.

4.4 The sustainable development principles not only underpin the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, but also form the basis of individual decisions on planning applications. Policy PNP1 seeks to take a positive and proactive approach to new development whilst identifying the key criteria that should be considered when determining a planning application.

#### **Policy PNP 1: Sustainable Development Principles**

Unless specifically addressed by other policies within the Development Plan, a presumption in favour of sustainable development will be exercised in the determination of all development proposals. In seeking to ensure development is sustainable it will be necessary to demonstrate how the development would:

- a. Minimise the impact and mitigate the likely effects of climate change particularly by using opportunities offered by that development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding;
- b. Minimise its impact on amenity for new and existing residents, businesses and other land uses in the vicinity of the development;
- c. Make efficient use of land taking into account land instability;
- d. Have regard to protecting or enhancing the significance of heritage assets and their setting;
- e. Support the health, social and cultural well-being of the current and future community;
- f. Minimise its impact on biodiversity and geodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible; and
- g. Ensure that all infrastructure necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms is either in place or can be provided prior to the development being brought into use.

## The Built Environment

4.5 The growth of Ponteland from an agricultural settlement to a village of almost 11,000 people<sup>9</sup> has helped define its unique character. Whilst the largest amount of development has taken place since the 1950s, it is hidden behind the historic plan form. The distinctiveness of the Plan area gives local people a sense of belonging and identity and a feeling of pride in place. Early engagement on the Plan identified that the built environment of the Neighbourhood Plan area is hugely valued by the local community. Plan Objective 1 therefore seeks to ensure that new development contributes positively to the built and historic environment of the area.



4.6 The NPPF defines the historic environment as: *'All aspects of the environment resulting from interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora'*.

4.7 Ponteland has a rich built environment, including:

- Two Conservation Areas:
  - Ponteland – which incorporates a large number of Listed Buildings: Grade I – Church of St Mary the Virgin; Grade II\* - The Old Rectory and The Blackbird Inn; and Grade II – The Smithy, The Pele Tower, Neasham House, The Seven Stars, Eland Lodge, Old Rectory Gate Piers and Brick Wall, as well as various tombstones. Within the Conservation Area, the mix of uses and the variety of shop fronts creates vitality and variation. Mature trees and green spaces within the Conservation Area continue the rural appearance of the approach to the village, right into its centre;
  - High Callerton – which includes the Listed Buildings of Callerton Hall, Callerton House, Rebellion House and Newton Cottage;
- The Neighbourhood Plan area includes over 70 Grade II Listed Buildings and structures, four at Grade II\* and two at Grade I;
- The Vicar's Pele Scheduled Monument - a medieval tower house located on the north side of Main Street;
- A wealth of non-designated heritage assets, including buildings, features and spaces;
- The Darras Hall Estate - where future development is controlled via a Trust Deed; and
- Rural buildings and estates which are part of the important agricultural history of the area.

4.8 The Built Environment policies seek to provide a positive policy framework for the conservation and enjoyment of the unique historic environment of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

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<sup>9</sup> 2011 census – population of the Plan area.

### High quality and inclusive design

- 4.9 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The NPPF attaches great importance to achieving high quality and inclusive design through the planning process, this approach was strongly supported through early engagement on the Plan.
- 4.10 Policy PNP 2 is cross cutting and will help to deliver all of the Plan objectives. Good design is not only about creating visually attractive buildings that do not adversely impact on their neighbours, it is also about how people experience buildings and places. A well designed building and place should be accessible to all potential users, where they should feel safe and secure. Embedding sustainable design is also important as it will improve energy efficiency; reducing both running costs and carbon emissions.

#### **Policy PNP 2: High Quality and Inclusive Design**

Development will be supported where it demonstrates high quality and inclusive design. All new development should make a positive contribution to their surroundings. Proposals will be supported where development:

- a. Creates a sense of place by protecting and adding to an area's quality, distinctiveness and character;
- b. Respects the character of the site and its surroundings in terms of its location, layout, proportion, form, massing, density, height, size, scale, materials and detailed design features;
- c. Takes account of the potential users of the development, ensuring safe, convenient and attractive links are provided within the development and to existing networks for people and that the development is accessible to all;
- d. Where required, ensures that servicing and delivery arrangements meet the reasonable needs of business through off-street servicing and loading facilities;
- e. Will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenities of occupiers of nearby properties;
- f. Where feasible, incorporates sustainable design and construction techniques and renewable and low carbon energy technology;
- g. Includes appropriate provision for the storage of waste and recyclable materials;
- h. Helps to create a safe and secure environment.

Where a Design and Access Statement is required as part of a planning application the above matters must be fully addressed within it.

### Infrastructure

- 4.11 New development can bring significant benefits to the local community, including new homes and jobs. However, it can also have negative impacts, most notably where additional demand is placed on infrastructure, facilities and services, such as the road network and equipped areas for play. Planning obligations, known as Section 106 agreements, may be used to secure infrastructure or funding from a developer. For example, a planning obligation may be used to secure a financial contribution towards improving existing recreational facilities.
- 4.12 Whilst the infrastructure requirements created by new development will vary depending on the characteristics of each development, potential infrastructure that could be required or added to could include: open space; public transport; leisure provision; and medical facilities.

### Policy PNP 3: Infrastructure

To ensure no significant adverse infrastructure impacts arise from the proposal, development will be supported where:

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

#### Darras Hall

- 4.13 The Darras Hall Estate covers an area of approximately 410 hectares (1014 acres); it was founded in 1910 by a group of individuals who became the 'Trustees of the Estate'. Joseph W Wakinshaw, one of the founders of the Trust Deed, had a vision for the potential development of the 'railway' and introduction of the 'motor vehicle' to allow families to reside away from the city boundaries into greener locations. Today, the management of the Estate is controlled by 'The Trust Deed' and bye-laws implemented by the Estate's Committee. The Estate was originally divided into plots of approximately 2 hectares (5 acres) in size. Over time it has been subdivided into various plot sizes; the minimum allowed in most cases by the Trust Deed is 0.10 hectare (1/4 acres)<sup>10</sup>.



- 4.14 The Estate is by far the largest built development in the Civil Parish and it dominates the settlement of Ponteland. It has a Garden City character with mature trees present within curtilages and maintains relatively strong green links to the surrounding countryside. *'Among the characteristics which make the Darras Hall Estate unique are the low level density of dwellings, the large plot sizes and open spaces, together with a high percentage of greenery throughout the Estate creating a relaxed and comfortable street scene'*<sup>11</sup>. Some areas, particularly the north side of the estate centred around Runnymede and Darras roads, have a lower dwelling density, deeper and wider plot sizes, more extensive areas of woodland and substantial roadside hedgerows. The Broadway Shopping Centre may be seen as an important feature in the development of the Darras Hall Estate and a significant departure from the restriction on commercial properties within the Estate by the original Trust Deed.
- 4.15 All these features could easily be eroded by insensitive development. The whole area has such special and distinctive qualities that they need to be retained.
- 4.16 The Castle Morpeth District Local Plan includes two detailed policies which seek to control future development on the Darras Hall Estate; policies PH2 and PH3. Despite the existence of

<sup>10</sup> Three areas of the Estate are exempt from this standard – see background paper available at [www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)

<sup>11</sup> Introduction to the guidance notes on the Darras Hall Estate Byelaws, Darras Hall Estate Committee

the Trust Deed and the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan policies, the unique character and tranquil, rural atmosphere of the Estate is being eroded.

- 4.17 The Estate has evolved over the last 100 years and most of the original plots are fully developed. Most applications for covenant consent to the Estate Committee are now for replacement dwellings, modifications and limited infilling. Large houses have replaced small dwellings, which may well have become in need of significant repair or updating but some are built on smaller plots of land where the scale and massing overpowers the street scene. Many of the front boundaries have been subject to changes where existing soft landscaping and hedgerows are removed and replaced with a solid wall and high gates. This area is undergoing significant change that potentially may change the character of the Civil Parish as a whole.
- 4.18 Further information on the impact of development on the unique character of the Estate is set out within the Darras Hall background document and the Community Character Statement<sup>12</sup>.
- 4.19 Policy PNP 4 will help to deliver both Objective 1, by ensuring that new development contributes positively to the built, natural and historic environment of the Neighbourhood Plan area; and Objective 4 which seeks to ensure that new housing developments provide the types of homes those current and future residents of the Neighbourhood Plan area need.
- 4.20 Policy PNP 4 provides a positive approach which seeks to ensure that: the diverse and varied character of the Darras Hall Estate is maintained and enhanced; that future development on the Estate does not adversely impact on residential amenity; and that future development on the Estate protects existing trees and hedgerows.

#### **Policy PNP 4: Residential Development in Darras Hall**

Proposals for the development of new and replacement dwellings, as well as extensions to dwellings within the Darras Hall estate, as defined on the Policies Map, will be supported where they conform to the following criteria:

- a.
  - a. The proposed dwelling or extension should be respectful of the scale and massing and separation of adjacent dwellings and the street scene, particularly in relation to the frontage of the application site to the highway;
  - b. The layout of the proposed dwelling or extension should demonstrate the necessity for any removal of existing boundary features of amenity value such as hedgerows, walls, fences or water courses;
  - c. The siting of the proposed dwelling or extension should reflect the strongly established and prominent building lines and frontages of adjacent dwellings; and
  - d. Development proposals must demonstrate the necessity for loss of any tree or hedgerow of significant local amenity value and, in those circumstances, include equivalent compensatory planting. Loss of aged or veteran trees will only exceptionally be supported where it is demonstrated the need for, and benefits of development clearly outweigh the loss.

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<sup>12</sup> Available at [www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)

### Heritage Assets

- 4.21 Heritage assets can either be designated or non-designated. Designated assets have statutory status within the Neighbourhood Plan area and include Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape of lesser significance.
- 4.22 The NPPF defines a heritage asset as: *‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).’* The NPPF is clear that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. 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 significance.



4.23 The Neighbourhood Plan area has a strong and diverse heritage, incorporating both individual assets and designated areas afforded protection through their Conservation Area status. The Neighbourhood Plan area contains a number of heritage assets including two Conservation Areas, one Scheduled Monument and many Listed Buildings. The heritage assets are important to both the character and appearance of the area and its community.

- 4.24 Through early engagement on the Plan there was strong support to ensuring the protection and enhancement of heritage assets across the Neighbourhood Plan area. Even small changes, such as inserting windows, installing satellite dishes and solar panels on heritage assets have the potential to impact on their significance. Policy PNP 5 will therefore assist in the delivery of Plan Objective 1 by ensuring that new development contributes positively to the built and historic environment of the Plan area.
- 4.25 Policy PNP 5 seeks to sustain and enhance heritage assets, whilst appropriately recognising the significance of the heritage assets in the decision making process.

#### **Policy PNP 5: Heritage Assets**

Proposals that affect heritage assets or their settings will be supported where they sustain, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance of the heritage asset.

Where development proposals impact on heritage assets, the applicant is required to describe the significance of the heritage assets affected. . Proposals will be supported that:

- a. Conserve built fabric and architectural detailing that contributes to the heritage asset’s significance and character;
- b. Repair damaged features or reinstate missing features and architectural detailing that contributes to the heritage asset’s significance, where appropriate;
- c. Conserve and enhance the spaces between and around buildings including gardens,

- boundaries, driveways and footpaths, where they contribute to the significance of the heritage asset;
- d. Remove additions or modifications that are considered harmful to the significance of the heritage asset;
- e. Ensure that extensions and additions to heritage assets and those proposed within its setting do not harm the significance of the heritage asset;
- f. Where appropriate, demonstrate how heritage assets at risk will be brought into repair and, where vacant, re-use, and include phasing information to ensure that works are commenced in a timely manner to ensure there is a halt to the decline.

#### Heritage Assets and Highway works

- 4.26 New developments are expected to comply with highway design standards such as road widths, visibility splays, parking provision and service access requirements. Where development is associated with a heritage asset there can sometimes be a conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing heritage assets and the implementation of highway standards. Policy PNP 6 allows for the relaxation of highway design standards to mitigate the impact on the heritage asset. The Policy is clear that this would only be appropriate where it can be demonstrated that highway safety would not be compromised.

#### **Policy PNP 6: Heritage Assets and Highway works**

Where development would require works to the highway or a means of access to the highway that could significantly and adversely impact on the significance of a heritage asset, in order to mitigate the impact to the significance of the heritage asset support may be given to an appropriate relaxation of highway design standards provided that it can be demonstrated that highway safety would not be compromised.

#### Heritage Assets and Advertisements

- 4.27 The Town and Country Planning Act (1990) defines an advertisement as: *‘Any word, letter, model, sign, placard, board, notice, awning, blind, device or representation, whether illuminated or not, in the nature of, and employed wholly or partly for the purposes of, advertisement, announcement or direction’*. The definition includes not just the sign but also any hoarding or similar structure used or designed for the display of advertisements. It does not, therefore, just cover commercial adverts.
- 4.28 The display of insensitively designed or sited adverts can harm the appearance of a heritage asset. The erection of a new sign or advert of any size on or attached to a Listed Building would almost always require Listed Building consent as it is very likely to be considered an alteration that could affect its character. Scheduled monument consent may be needed for any advertisement that attaches to or otherwise physically affects a scheduled monument. If the advertisement is in a Conservation Area, the Local Planning Authority must also pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character of appearance of that area.
- 4.29 It is normal that businesses operating across the Neighbourhood Plan area wish to advertise their presence. Advertisements, by their nature, need to be noticeable and as a result they can have a marked effect on the character of heritage assets both individually and cumulatively. A proliferation of advertisements, whether they be on buildings or on the ground can often result in a confused and cluttered appearance that ultimately detracts from



the character of the area. It may also lead to an escalation in signage with other traders demanding larger, brighter and more garish signs to attract more customers to their business. In 2010 the Ponteland Civic Society prepared a report on Street Clutter<sup>13</sup>. This identified significant concerns regarding the large number of A-boards and advertisements in general which were impacting on the character of the village.

- 4.30 In accordance with Plan Objective 1, Policy PNP 7 therefore supports proposals for advertisements which are sensitively and sympathetically designed and displayed so as to protect heritage assets. In order to assess the acceptability of the advertisement, the following guidance, informed by Policy C31 of the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan has been supported through the preparation of the Plan.

Advertisements and heritage assets - guidance:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Suitably designed illuminated signage will be permitted where such signs advertise goods or services available to the public within evening hours.</li><li>b. Only one projecting sign fixed rigidly to a bracket per commercial frontage would be permitted, where it:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Is erected at fascia level;</li><li>ii. Should not project more than 750mm from the face of the building;</li><li>iii. Should not be more than 750mm measured vertically;</li><li>iv. Should not have more than two faces;</li><li>v. Should be no lower than 2.4 metres above footway level.</li></ul></li><li>c. Advertisements should not be located above ground floor shop fascia level;</li><li>d. Panel fascia signs should not project more than 50mm from the building frontage</li><li>e. On buildings with stone frontages, the use of individual letters fixed directly to the masonry is encouraged;</li><li>f. On other buildings the use of painted timber fascia signs is encouraged;</li><li>g. All signage and illumination shall be static and shall not include any moving element.</li></ul>

#### **Policy PNP 7: Heritage Assets and Advertisements**

Applications for advertisements affecting heritage assets or their settings will be supported where their size, scale, proportions, design, colour, position, number, materials and illumination do not detract, either individually or cumulatively, from the significance of the heritage asset or its setting.

#### Building Security

- 4.31 Part 7, Class A of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order (2015) requires planning permission to be obtained for the installation or replacement of a security grill or shutter on a shop front.
- 4.32 Feedback from the consultation has identified concern that the appearance and character particularly of the village centre could be harmed by poorly designed and unsympathetic building security measures. Shopping streets should be attractive and visually lively even after the shops have closed. Some types of security shutters, particularly external ones have a deadening and depressing effect on the character of a shopping street when the shops are closed. They also reduce natural surveillance and increase the fear of crime.

<sup>13</sup> Available at [www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)

- 4.33 There are a number of shutters available that can protect goods and preserve the character of the host building/ local area such as internal perforated lattice grilles. If a completely new shopfront is being designed, then security measures should be considered from the outset and fully integrated into the new design.
- 4.34 In accordance with the NPPF, which attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, Policy PNP 8 therefore seeks to ensure that security measures cause no significant harm to the appearance and character of the building or streetscape, in accordance with Plan Objective 1.

#### **Policy PNP 8: Building Security**

Proposals for the installation of open weave roller shutters and roller shutter boxes that do not project in front of the main elevations of buildings will be supported.

The following criteria will be considered when the proposal would affect a heritage asset or its setting:

- a. The installation of external shutters and roller shutter boxes will not be supported unless there are clear and demonstrable overriding practical constructional difficulties that necessitate them being on the outside of the building and their installation would not harm the significance of the heritage asset;
- b. Where established need for external shutters has been fully demonstrated, their installation will not be supported unless they would be colour treated and constructed to allow the window display to be visible from outside the premises and their installation would not harm the significance of the heritage asset; and
- c. Proposals for solid or slotted shutters on doorways may be supported if they are treated as a design feature incorporating appropriate decoration or colour treatment that would not harm the significance of the heritage asset.

#### Canopies and Awnings

- 4.35 Traditional canvas roller blinds were a common feature of Victorian shopfronts in order to protect goods from damaging sunlight and customers from bad weather. The inclusion of a roller blind in new shopfronts has the potential to enhance an area so long as it can be integrated into the overall design and the blind fully retracts into a recessed blind box behind the shopfront fascia. Insensitively designed canopies and awnings can dominate and radically change the appearance of buildings, as a result the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan includes a policy which seeks to protect the character of the host building and street scene. Despite the existence of this policy, there are examples within the Plan area of inappropriate awnings. Permission will be required for new canopies and awnings installed on or fixed in front of business properties and may sometimes be required for residential properties.
- 4.36 Policy PNP 9 therefore seeks to ensure that canopies and awnings cause no significant harm to the appearance and character of the building or streetscape, in accordance with Plan Objective 1.

### Policy PNP 9: Canopies and Awnings

Proposals for the installation of canopies and awnings will be supported where they would not have a significant adverse impact on the general nature and character of the locality and the appearance of the building and the street scene, especially where the building or area is a heritage asset.

## The Natural Environment

4.37 The Neighbourhood Plan area's natural environment is enormously valued by the local community; this has been confirmed throughout all of the early engagement on the Plan. There were significant levels of support for improvements to the natural environment, open spaces and habitats from the local community. The engagement also highlighted the importance of the landscape of the Plan area, particularly that:



- The village is mostly hidden from view in the river valley;
- The majority of the land surrounding the village is actively farmed, therefore keeping a distinctive rural character; and
- The wedge of open countryside which separates the south eastern edge of Ponteland from Darras Hall is a living link to Ponteland's agricultural past.

4.38 Plan Objective 1 recognises the importance of the natural environment to the wider built environment, seeking to ensure that new development contributes positively to the built, natural and historic environment of the Neighbourhood Plan area. Objective 2 aims to plan positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

### Green Infrastructure

4.39 The NPPF defines Green Infrastructure as: *'A network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities'*. It is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. As a network it includes: parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include: streams, canals and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls. Green Infrastructure plays an important role in creating ecological networks, providing open space, allowing for sustainable drainage, contributing to climate change adaptation, and providing attractive and safe environments for sustainable modes of transport.

4.40 The Green Infrastructure across the Neighbourhood Plan area is varied and multifunctional. It consists of a number of different elements, including:

- Wildlife networks and corridors, such as: historic hedgerows, green frontages and woodlands; footpaths and cycleways and other car free routes; the River Pont and catchment and other smaller watercourses (River Blyth, Callerton Burn, Fairney Burn,

Prestwick Carr, Med Burn, Small Burn, Coldcoats Burn and the March Burn; green frontages to residential properties and gardens particularly in Darras Hall; highway verges;

- Open spaces, such as: Ponteland Park; small 'greens'; allotments; Darras Hall SSSI Grassland; playing fields and recreational spaces; cemeteries;
- Landscape corridors and linkages to the wider countryside.



4.41 Policy PNP10 seeks to protect and where practical and viable improve and extend green infrastructure and provides a framework for the assessment of planning applications. Any new planting should be of native species; the Northumberland Wildlife Trust has produced guidance on this<sup>14</sup>. Policy PNP10 will assist with the delivery of Plan Objective 1 by seeking to ensure that new development contributes positively to the natural environment, and in addition Objective 2 by planning positively for the

creation, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure networks.

#### **Policy PNP 10: Green Infrastructure**

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

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

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

<sup>14</sup> *Notes on Tree Planting and the use of Native Species in North East England*, S.Lowe, N.Repper, L. Miles and S.G.Wallace, Northumberland Wildlife Trust (May 2012)

### Landscape

- 4.42 The landscape of the Neighbourhood Plan area is highly valued by the local community. Paragraph 109 of the NPPF 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.
- 4.43 The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA - 2010) describes the essential landscape characteristics of the various parts of the County and the Northumberland Key Land Use Impact Study (2010) looks at the sensitivity of Northumberland's landscape character areas to a number of key land uses and major changes that may threaten their character.
- 4.44 The Northumberland LCA identifies that the landscape around Ponteland is characterised by:
- The wooded valley of the River Pont and surrounding undulating farmland which rises away from the river, bounded by hedgerows, trees and some shelterbelts;
  - Localised areas of former opencast workings to the east of the settlement that have been restored to farmland; and
  - The parkland landscape of Birney Hall to the south and nearby historic buildings, including Callerton Hall.
- 4.45 In terms of landscape sensitivity, the Northumberland County Council Key Land Use Impact Study (2010) sets out recommendations to ensure that development respects the sensitivities of certain elements of the landscape in the Ponteland area. It identifies that:
- That the landscape surrounding Ponteland Village is locally characterised by parkland landscape and historic estates, which are considered to be of higher landscape sensitivity; and
  - The River Pont valley is also of higher sensitivity due to its importance as a landscape feature.
- 4.46 As a result of the importance of the landscape of the Plan area to the local community, a local Landscape Character Appraisal (LCA) was commissioned. The Ponteland Civil Parish LCA:
- Defines and describes the characteristics of each landscape character area and sets out its key landscape characteristics and visual attributes;
  - Provides guidance on the condition and value of each character area and highlights particular sensitivities;
  - Evaluates the contribution of landscape settings to the Conservation Areas and other historic features; and
  - Identifies particular pressures for development and suggests management approaches.
- 4.47 Policy PNP11 therefore seeks to support development which maintains and where appropriate enhances important elements of landscape character as defined within the Ponteland Civil Parish LCA. This approach will support the delivery of Plan Objective 1, by ensuring that new development contributes positively to the built, natural and historic environment of the Neighbourhood Plan area; and Objective 2 by ensuring development protects and enhances the green infrastructure of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

### **Policy PNP 11: Landscape**

Development proposals should maintain and where appropriate enhance landscape character. In meeting this requirement, applicants should demonstrate how they have addressed and sought to maintain or enhance the condition and strengths of the Neighbourhood Plan Area's landscape as defined in the Ponteland Parish Landscape Character Assessment.

#### Green Approaches

- 4.48 The green approaches to Ponteland are an important characteristic that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the village. Both this, and the relationship between Ponteland and the nearby smaller settlements, is highly valued by the local community. The Ponteland Civil Parish LCA identifies the need to protect and enhance the important green approaches to Ponteland.
- 4.49 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF 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. Policy C4 of the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan identifies Landscape Corridors which seek to both enhance the quality of the environment and character of communities. The Castle Morpeth District Local Plan is clear that this designation does not seek to preclude development, but require a landscaped zone for the frontage of any development site, with no development in the landscaped zone.
- 4.50 Policy PNP 12 therefore seeks to support proposals within the Green Approaches where they do not adversely affect character and amenity. This policy will support the delivery of Plan Objective 1, by ensuring that new development contributes positively to the built, natural and historic environment of the Neighbourhood Plan area; and Objective 2 by ensuring development protects and enhances the green infrastructure of the Neighbourhood Plan area.



### **Policy PNP 12: Green Approaches**

Development proposals affecting the Green Approaches identified on the Policies Map will be supported where they do not significantly adversely affect the character and amenity created by the grass verges, trees and hedgerows in these areas.

### Biodiversity

4.51 The Neighbourhood Plan area boasts a wide range of species and habitats, within the Neighbourhood Plan area there are<sup>15</sup>:

- Nationally designated sites comprising:
  - Darras Hall Grassland Site of Special Scientific Interest:
    - Habitats are species rich semi natural grassland with wet flushes;
    - Species: rich flora, includes plant species rare or uncommon in Northumberland: saw-wort; dyer's greenweed; pepper saxifrage; yellow loosestrife; purple loosestrife; and common reed.
  - Prestwick Carr Site of Special Scientific Interest (part of which is within the Neighbourhood Plan Area):
    - Wetland habitats including tall fen, carr woodland and raised mire:
    - Species: diverse flora includes locally rare: slender-tufted sedge; tubular water-dropwort; greater spearwort; and bog rosemary;
- Locally designated sites comprising:
  - Dissington Brick Pond Local Wildlife and Geological Site:
    - Habitats – fishing pond surrounded by willow scrub and broad-leaved woodland and marshy grassland;
    - Species: Rigid hornwort;
  - Benridge Bog Local Wildlife and Geological Site:
    - Habitats – alder and willow carr with areas of fen/ sedge swamp;
  - Blyth and Pont Rivers Local Wildlife and Geological Site:
    - Habitats – wetland habitat around river channels and banks, grasslands and semi-natural woodlands;
    - Species: banded demoiselle; white-clawed crayfish; sand martin; and otter
  - Prestwick Carr Local Wildlife and Geological Site (area surrounding SSSI):
    - Habitats – semi-natural ancient dene woodland, deciduous woodland and species poor lowland grassland;
    - Species – grassland areas used by large numbers of migrating wildfowl.

4.52 The NPPF is clear that in order to contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity the planning system should minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. In accordance with the NPPF the Plan seeks to promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations.

4.53 The Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (latest version dates from 2008) is available on the Northumberland Wildlife Trust's website.

4.54 Policy PNP 13 will deliver Plan Objective 2 by planning positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of biodiversity networks.

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<sup>15</sup> Information obtained from: the Environmental Records Information Centre for North East England; Natural England (Magic Map); Environment Agency; Northumberland Wildlife Trust.

### Policy PNP 13: Biodiversity

All development proposals should conserve the biodiversity value of land, species, buildings and habitats, and maximise opportunities for creation, restoration, enhancement and management of biodiversity.

Proposals that are likely to cause unacceptable harm to nationally or locally designated sites, protected species, or priority species and habitats (as identified in the current Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan) will only be supported where the applicant has demonstrated the proposal cannot be located on an alternative site with less harmful impacts and that benefits of the development in that location clearly and demonstrably outweigh any direct or indirect adverse impacts on biodiversity. All identified adverse impacts must be addressed through appropriate mitigation measures, reinstatement of features, or, as a last resort, compensation to enhance or create habitats should form part of the proposals on or off site.

#### Wildlife Corridors

4.55 The NPPF highlights that to minimise impacts on biodiversity planning policies should identify and map components of local ecological networks, this includes wildlife corridors. A wildlife corridor is an area of habitat that connects wildlife populations and interacts with the wider landscape. They can be many things, such as rivers and burns, railway lines, cycle ways, ancient and/ or species rich hedgerows.

4.56 There are a number of important biodiversity networks across the Neighbourhood Plan area that, are already identified in the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan. Support for the continued protection and enhancement of these corridors was confirmed through early engagement on the Plan. An additional wildlife corridor was also identified following the route of the former railway line within Darras Hall. The former railway line passes along the bottom of gardens, which are fringed with trees and often have boundaries open to the passage of wildlife. A wide range of species can be found including many birds, red squirrels, hedgehogs, several species of bats and other small mammals and invertebrates. Wildlife corridors identified as being important across the Neighbourhood Plan area are defined on the Policies Map.





- 4.57 Policy PNP 14 will deliver Plan Objective 1 by seeking to ensure that new development contributes positively to the natural environment, and in addition Objective 2 by planning positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of networks of biodiversity.

#### **Policy PNP 14: Wildlife Corridors**

To be supported, development proposals relating to land within the wildlife corridors identified on the Policies Map must demonstrate any significant harm to biodiversity quality and connectivity cannot be avoided through locating proposals to an alternative site; or will be adequately mitigated; or as a last resort, will be compensated for. All development proposals should demonstrate opportunities to create new links and habitats to reconnect isolated sites and facilitate species movement have either been incorporated in the design, or are clearly shown to be not viable or deliverable.

#### Local Green Space

- 4.58 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 or richness of wildlife. Uncontrolled changes to green spaces can irrevocably alter their special character or intrinsic value.



- 4.59 The NPPF enables the Plan to designate areas of Local Green Space (LGS) for special protection, thereby preventing new development on these sites other than in very special circumstances. LGS does not need to be publicly accessible, although the designation must not be applied to an extensive tract of land and the site must be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves. The land must be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance.
- 4.60 The sites listed in Policy PNP 15 and shown on the Policies Map are designated as Local Green Space as they meet the respective criteria. A background paper outlines the reasons why the sites are of particular importance to the character of the Neighbourhood Plan area and explains the process that led to their designation<sup>16</sup>.
- 4.61 The designation of LGS will assist with the delivery of Plan Objective 2 which seeks to plan positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure across the Neighbourhood Plan area.

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<sup>16</sup> Available at [www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)

#### **Policy PNP 15: Local Green Space**

As shown on the Policies Map, the following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces and will be protected from development due to their particular local significance or community value:

- a. Ponteland Park;
- b. Coates Green;
- c. The Green, Northumbria Police HQ;
- d. Coates Institute Garden; and
- e. Old Railway Line from Darras Hall through Ponteland towards the airport.

Development on land designated as Local Green Space will only be permitted where very special circumstances can be demonstrated in accordance with national Green Belt policy for example, where local transport infrastructure can demonstrate a requirement for such a location.

#### Allotments

- 4.62 Within the Neighbourhood Plan area there are 24 allotments at Prestwick which are owned by the Town Council. These allotments are valued by the local community and are part of the green infrastructure of the Neighbourhood Plan area. As the allotments are owned by the Town Council they have statutory status which means that if allotment land is lost, then it must be replaced with suitable alternative land. In addition, there are privately owned allotments in the village, behind The Diamond Inn public house.
- 4.63 Policy PNP 16 seeks to ensure that existing allotment provision is retained and protected. This policy will assist with the delivery of Plan Objective 2 which seeks to plan positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure across the Neighbourhood Plan area.

#### **Policy PNP 16: Allotments**

Existing allotment sites, as identified on the Policies Map, should be retained and protected. Where development that would result in the loss of allotment land is unavoidable, it will only be supported where suitable land, of at least equivalent quality and quantity, in a convenient location for the users, is provided fit for use, prior to the loss of the allotment land or any part of it.

#### Cemetery

- 4.64 Cemeteries are part of an area's green infrastructure. Prestwick Cemetery is located close to the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, near Newcastle Airport. It is estimated that the space available for internments is likely to be used within approximately 7-9 years. Policy PNP 17 therefore supports proposals to extend the existing cemetery or the development of a new cemetery in a suitable location. The Castle Morpeth District Local Plan protects a route for a relief road to the east of Ponteland Village. Any cemetery extension should be mindful of this strategic objective.

### Policy PNP 17: Cemetery

Proposals to extend the existing Cemetery at Prestwick or the creation of a new Cemetery in a suitable location to meet future needs will be supported.

## Local Economy

4.65 Ponteland provides services and employment to a wider rural area. However, its proximity to Tyneside, and Newcastle upon Tyne in particular, has strongly influenced its current economic role. Within the village there is almost 5,500m<sup>2</sup> of retail floor space and 14.8 hectares of developed employment land. Of those aged 16 to 74 in the Neighbourhood Plan area, 59% are in employment, 2.1% are unemployed and 23.8% are retired. The proportion of people in employment and those unemployed is lower in the Neighbourhood Plan area than Northumberland as a whole. However, the retirement rate is higher.

4.66 In addition to employment provided within the village, the surrounding countryside also has an important role. In addition to agriculture there are business parks at: Park Farm; Berwick Hill; Blagdon Estate; Pont Park; Horton Park; and Prestwick Park. All of which boost the local economy and bring local jobs. There are also various businesses located in the countryside that provide services to the local community, not just for horse riders but dog kennels, catteries, cycle repairs shop and even a gym in a barn. In addition, local pubs, restaurants, Dissington Hall and garden centres provide local employment. The area is also seeing an increase in tourism and leisure developments, particularly linked to the Reivers Way National Cycle Route.

4.67 Early engagement on the Plan identified some important planning issues that the local community wanted it to address, including:

- The need to retain and improve existing retail at Broadway and Merton Way;
- Bring back under used and empty buildings into use;
- Improve car parking provision in the village centre;
- Relocate industrial uses in Meadowfield out of the centre of Ponteland – potential for the quarry site (opposite the airport) to be used for industrial uses. This proposal is not a reasonable option at this time. The quarry site is within the designated Green Belt and its removal from the Green Belt would be a matter for Northumberland County Council to address in their Local Plan.

4.68 Plan Objective 3 therefore seeks to support the sustainable creation and protection of employment opportunities in the Neighbourhood Plan area, and the vitality and viability of its Village and Local Centres.



## Economic Development

4.69 The Northumberland Employment Land Review (ELR - 2011) identified that there was an absence of available employment land in Ponteland, despite reasonable levels of market demand. Industry consultation highlighted that Ponteland's excellent access to the strategic road network, Newcastle International

Airport and the Tyneside market meant that there was scope for additional land allocations to provide for office and light industrial development. The conclusions of the ELR were reinforced in the Northumberland Employment Land and Premises Demand Study (2015). This concluded that there was a pressing need for land for both industry and offices. Consultation with the industry identified that the market viewed Meadowfield Industrial Estate as not providing for modern needs and also that it was at capacity. It also showed that the market would particularly benefit from further high quality office development, and that the most appealing area for the market would be to the east of the town, maximising the good local transport links.

- 4.70 Ponteland Village has one main employment site, at Meadowfield Industrial Estate, which is 4.6 hectares in size. As at January 2017, there was no available space on Meadowfield. The Prestwick Park office development, which is allocated as employment land in the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan is at capacity with all 15 units occupied as at January 2017. This illustrates that constrained nature of the local market. The current constrained nature of the market is illustrated by the very low rates of new development in recent years with no land taken up in the 1999-2014 period and only 0.53ha developed for other uses.
- 4.71 Future employment development within the Neighbourhood Plan area is constrained by the Green Belt, therefore the Neighbourhood Plan is limited in its scope.
- 4.72 There are some employment growth opportunities within the Plan area and its vicinity that illustrate a positive future economic role for the Ponteland area. Northumberland College is investing £9.5 million into a campus upgrade at both its Ashington and Kirkley Hall sites. At the Kirkley Hall campus there will be new arboriculture and tractor workshops, a new-build education block with eight classrooms, open learning suite and learning resource centre. The improved facilities will greatly enhance the teaching and learning facilities for students. Newcastle International Airport, located to the immediate south of the Civil Parish boundary, directly supports approximately 4,100 jobs across the region (2012 figures). Airport expansion plans are expected to see this increase by 2021 to 5,650 jobs and by 2030 to around 10,000. In the longer term, proposals to introduce a wider range of employment uses on the site are expected to contribute 2,150 additional jobs<sup>17</sup>.
- 4.73 Through Objective 3, the Plan seeks to support the sustainable creation and protection of employment opportunities in the Neighbourhood Plan area. Policy PNP 18 therefore seeks to support the above and any further appropriate proposals which will result in sustainable economic growth.

**Policy PNP 18: Economic Development**

Development proposals that support the creation or protection of job opportunities and the sustainable development and economic growth of the Neighbourhood Plan area will be supported where they can be achieved without significant adverse impact on the built and natural environment and residential amenity.

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<sup>17</sup> Newcastle International Masterplan 2030, <http://www.newcastleairport.com/Media/masterplan-and-development/newcastle-airport-masterplan-2013-low-res.pdf>

### Ponteland Village and Local Centres

4.74 Early engagement highlighted strong support for the Plan to seek to enhance, diversify and improve the range of shops and services in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

4.75 The County Council commissioned a Northumberland Town Centre and Retail Study which was last updated in March 2016. For Ponteland this identifies that:

- The proportion of A1 units (shops) in Ponteland village centre was 33%, 20% lower than both the north east and national small town averages. This increased by 1% since 2013;
- Ponteland retained 8% more A2 uses (financial and professional services) in 2015 than the north east small towns average and 7% more than the national small towns average;
- Ponteland had a high proportion of food and drink uses in 2015 (17%), drinking establishments (6%) and non-residential institutions (11%) when compared to the regional and national averages for a centre of its size;
- Ponteland was identified as having a particularly strong convenience<sup>18</sup> sector. The proportion of A1 units in convenience goods use in 2015 (27%) was 3% higher than the north east small towns average and 6% higher than the national small towns average;
- The proportion of comparison goods<sup>19</sup> units increased from 57% in 2013 to 73% in 2015, with the split more akin to the regional and national small towns averages;
- Ponteland's vacancy rate increased sharply from 7% in 2013 to 11% in 2015. The vacancy rate was two percentage points higher than the north east small towns average and three percentage points higher than the national small towns average.

4.76 The Study illustrates that, at 2015, the Ponteland area had a lower retail market share, probably due to the proximity of facilities in neighbouring Newcastle. The establishment of Waitrose however saw a rise in local retail spend. The study concluded that there was no need to plan for more retail units in Ponteland centre, but also did not suggest a need to de-allocate existing units.



4.77 Since the preparation of the original Town Centre and Retail Study in 2015, there has been some change within Ponteland Village Centre that would result in an increased vacancy rate to that identified in the study published in 2016. Two banks on Main Street have both closed and remain vacant. A retail unit on West Road has also closed and the property is being marketed as a residential property. A former restaurant at The Broadway is still vacant but it is understood there is interest in that property from another restaurant operator.

### Village Centre and Local Centre

4.78 The NPPF seeks to ensure the vitality of town centres by requiring planning policies to be positive and promote competitive town centre environments. Feedback received through early engagement on the Plan highlighted the importance of the Village Centre of Ponteland and Darras Hall Local Centre to the local community, with feedback suggesting there was a

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<sup>18</sup> Convenience shopping is the provision or purchase of everyday essential items, such as food, drink, newspapers etc.

<sup>19</sup> Comparison shopping is the provision or purchase of items that are not bought on a frequent basis and where potential purchasers often wish to compare different goods or providers e.g. clothing, footwear, household and recreational goods.

need to improve both centres. Concern was expressed over the lack of retail outlets and the increasing number of cafes and estate agents. This feedback reflects the findings of the Northumberland Town Centre and Retail Study.

- 4.79 Policy PNP 19 therefore seeks to support the vitality, viability and competitiveness of Ponteland Village Centre and Darras Hall Local Centre to maintain or increase the quality of the retail offer in accordance with Objective 3 of the Plan.

#### **Policy PNP 19: Village Centre and Local Centre**

Proposals within Ponteland Village Centre and Darras Hall Local Centre, as defined on the Policies Map, that diversify and enhance the range of local shops, services and community facilities and create jobs, strengthening the vitality and viability of the centres will be supported.

Proposals for the change of use of ground floor premises from existing A1 shops to other town centre uses will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the change of use would not harm the vitality and viability of the Centres. Proposals should demonstrate that they will add to the attractiveness of the centre to shoppers and other users, and will not have an adverse impact on the amenity and operation of neighbouring properties and business.

#### Village Centre and Local Centre Regeneration

- 4.80 An area of concern raised through the early engagement on the Plan was the poor state of both the Merton Way shopping area and Broadway Local Centre in Darras Hall, both of which were built during the 1960s and 1970s. Proposals for the redevelopment of Merton Way have been discussed since the late 1990s/ early 2000s. The concern for the condition of the area was also highlighted through the Market Town Benchmarking Report (2013)<sup>20</sup> and the Ponteland Business Confidence Survey Report (2014)<sup>21</sup>.
- 4.81 Policy PNP 20 therefore provides a positive policy framework to support the regeneration of both Ponteland Village Centre and Darras Hall Local Centre. This policy will assist with the delivery of Plan Objective 3 which seeks to support the vitality and viability of the Village and Local centres.



<sup>20</sup> <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Northumberland-Knowledge/NK%20place/Parishes%20and%20towns/Towns%20and%20town%20centres/Ponteland-2013-AMT-Town-Benchmarking-Report.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Ponteland-2014-Business-Confidence-Survey-Report.pdf>

### Policy PNP 20: Village Centre and Local Centre Regeneration

Within Ponteland Village Centre and Darras Hall Local Centre identified on the Policies Map, proposals for physical revitalisation that would realise an improved physical appearance to both the buildings and the public realm will be supported.

## Housing

4.82 The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should positively support the strategic policies for the area and should not promote less development than is required by the Local Plan. As the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan covered the period 1991 to 2006 the policies on housing provision are out of date.

4.83 A key role of the Plan therefore is to include a policy framework that will support the provision of a mix of new homes that will contribute towards meeting the defined needs of residents across the Neighbourhood Plan area. Plan Objective 4 seeks to create and maintain a balanced and sustainable community by providing a positive policy framework that recognises the types of homes that current and future residents of the Neighbourhood Plan area need. In order to do this, as part of the preparation of the Plan existing evidence has been reviewed and new evidence work commissioned. This is summarised below.



Northumberland County Council evidence documents:

#### *Northumberland Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015)*

4.84 The Northumberland Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was prepared to assist the County Council to understand how many homes will be needed over the period 2011-2031. It also considers the housing needs of specific groups. Given the strategic nature of the SHMA, it does not provide information to the Ponteland Neighbourhood Plan Area level. It provides some information around house prices, for example Ponteland wards have higher house prices than Northumberland as a whole (approx. £234k to £365k compared to £140k).

#### *Strategic Land Review – Central Northumberland Delivery Area (June 2016)*

4.85 NCC prepared a Strategic Land Review (SLR) to provide evidence regarding the capacity of the settlements across the County to accommodate housing and employment development. The SLR provides an overview of the demographics of the Neighbourhood Plan area, key points:

- The 2011 Census recorded that there were 10,921 usual residents in the Ponteland area; an increase of 50 people since 2001;
- Between 2001 and 2011 the proportion of the population of core working age (16- 64 years) decreased from 60.2% to 57.1%, while the proportion aged over 65 increased from 22.5% to 26.7%;

- The 2012 based Sub National Population Projections indicate that the population of the Neighbourhood Plan area will decrease by 2.7% between 2011 and 2031;
- Between 2011 and 2031 the number of people of core working age is projected to decrease significantly by 17.4%. In contrast, the population aged over 65 years is projected to increase, with a 54.6% increase in those aged over 75;
- In 2011:
  - 85.8% of households were living in owner occupied properties, 5.1% in social rented housing and 9.0% in the private rented sector;
  - 48.5% of households occupied properties with four or more bedrooms (19.5% County), 19.1% of homes had fewer than three bedrooms (37.3% County), and 32.4% have three bedrooms (43.2% County);
- In comparison to Northumberland as a whole, the Neighbourhood Plan area contains a significantly smaller proportion of low value properties, and significantly more high value properties. The area is characterised by having significantly more owner occupiers, and fewer households living in social rented properties. The housing stock is of a particularly large average size;
- Amongst the population aged 16 to 74, 59.2% are in employment, 2.1% unemployed, and 23.8% retired. The proportion of people in employment and in unemployment is lower in Ponteland than Northumberland as a whole; however, the retirement rate is higher. It is seen as especially important to aim to reverse the projected decline in the proportion of the population who are of working age.

Locally commissioned evidence:

*Ponteland Household Needs Survey (2016):*

- 4.86 The overall conclusion of the survey suggests an ageing population that may require smaller properties and perhaps younger family members who wish to have their own home. The most desirable property type to those current residents within the Neighbourhood Plan area who are wishing to move are: 2 and 3 bedroomed properties. Bungalows were identified as being popular for those where the whole household wished to move (presumably downsizing older couples) but not for those when it was just part of the household wishing to move (presumably younger people moving away from their families).

*Estate Agents Housing Enquiries Survey (2016):*

- 4.87 This survey is based on enquiries received by Estate Agents from residents outside the Neighbourhood Plan area who want to purchase or rent in the Neighbourhood Plan area. All seven local Estate Agents were invited to take part in a survey based. Nearly all inquirers wish to live in Darras Hall and Ponteland Village rather than the wider rural Civil Parish. The majority of enquiries come from families. The survey results indicate that demand is greater than supply. The preference for families is for 2-3 bedroom detached properties, with gardens, access to local schools, shops and facilities. 2 bedroomed properties are desired by couples (young and old) and single people. Bungalows are desired but in short supply.

Housing Mix

- 4.88 The NPPF is clear that Local Planning Authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community, including housing for older people and vulnerable groups<sup>22</sup>. Housing for older and vulnerable people could include bungalows, smaller homes, flats with lifts and homes with level access.

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<sup>22</sup> Vulnerable people include: older people, people with disabilities, people at risk from domestic violence and homeless people.



4.89 Both the evidence produced at the County and Neighbourhood Plan area level identify a need to support the provision of smaller homes, that is, 2 and 3 bedroom properties, particularly to deliver housing that meets the needs of an ageing population and to provide an opportunity for the current and future population of the Neighbourhood Plan area to secure housing which is more affordable. Policy PNP 22 recognises that housing needs may change over time, therefore evidence will need to be periodically reviewed.

4.90 Policy PNP 21 therefore aims to help create and maintain a balanced and sustainable community across the Neighbourhood Plan area. It will support the delivery of Plan Objective 4 which seeks to ensure that the Plan supports the provision of the types of homes that current and future residents need; and Objective 5 which seeks to ensure that the Plan contributes to community wellbeing.

#### **Policy PNP 21: Housing Mix**

To create and maintain a balanced and sustainable community, new housing development should include a mix of dwelling types, sizes and tenures to meet the needs of different sectors of the current and future community. The mix on an individual site should have regard to:

- a. The character and density of the surrounding development; and
- b. Evidence of the housing needs of the population of the Neighbourhood Plan area, including the most up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment and local housing needs studies.

Proposals should demonstrate how these matters have influenced the proposed dwelling mix.

The provision of housing to meet the needs of older people and vulnerable groups is supported, particularly at locations in close proximity to services and facilities.

### **Community Well-being**

4.91 The NPPF identifies that the planning system has an important role to play in creating healthy, inclusive communities. NPPG defines a healthy community as a good place to grow up and grow old in, a community which supports healthy behaviours and supports reductions in health inequalities. A healthy community should enhance the physical and mental health of the community and where appropriate, encourage:

- Active healthy lifestyles that are made easy through the pattern of development, good urban design, good access to local services and facilities, green open space and safe places for active play and food growing, and is accessible by walking and cycling and public transport; and
- The creation of healthy living environments for people of all ages which supports social interaction. It meets the needs of children and young people to grow and develop, as



well as being adaptable to the needs of an increasingly elderly population and those with dementia and other sensory or mobility impairments.

4.92 During the early engagement on the Plan, local communities identified the following important issues:

- Impact of an increasing ageing population;
- Inadequate supply of housing for older people;
- Need to maintain and enhance community facilities;
- The impact that future development will have on the capacity of existing facilities such as schools and medical facilities;
- Poor leisure facilities.

4.93 Objective 5 of the Plan therefore seeks to contribute to community wellbeing by ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan area's community, especially its older and younger people, have access to the services and facilities they need. Objective 4 is also relevant to this area of the Plan as it seeks to ensure that the correct types of homes are provided to meet identified needs.

#### Community Infrastructure

4.94 Community infrastructure provides for the health and wellbeing, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community provided through a wide range of venues. Community infrastructure could include places of worship, schools, heritage venues, libraries, museums, cinemas, shopping centres, pubs and cafés, streets and town squares, industrial and business premises, community centres (including health centres and hospitals), parks and open spaces, and other public venues.



4.95 Across the Neighbourhood Plan area there are a wide variety of formal activities taking place. There is currently a greater provision for adults, particularly older adults, reflecting both the demographic and available leisure time. Young people have the smallest provision. There are number of important venues where recreational activities take place across the Neighbourhood Plan area, including: Ponteland Leisure Centre, Methodist Church, St Mary's Church, United Reform Church, Catholic Church, Library, Memorial Hall, Merton Hall, St Mary's Hall, Dalton Village Hall and Kirkley Hall Agricultural College.

4.96 In addition, there are a number of clubs and societies operating across the area, including: Local History Society, Civic Society, Rotary Club, Lions Club, Golf Club, Ponteland United, Archery Club, Rugby Club, Cricket Club, Tennis Club, Bowling Club, Ponteland Runners and Ponteland Tri. Further details are provided in a background paper<sup>23</sup>.

4.97 These facilities make a significant contribution to the vitality and viability of the Neighbourhood Plan area and have a positive impact on the sustainability of the village of Ponteland, enhancing the quality of life and often providing an important focal point for social interaction. Through early engagement on the Plan there was strong support expressed for

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<sup>23</sup> Available at [www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.pontelandneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)

the need to include a positive policy framework to support the development of new community infrastructure such as further GP provision at Darras Hall.

- 4.98 The Localism Act (2011) allows District and Unitary Councils to maintain a list of Assets of Community Value, which can either be land or buildings, nominated by local community groups or Parish Councils. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, the Act then gives local community groups the time to develop a bid and raise the money to bid to buy the asset when it comes on the open market. The scheme is also known as the Community Right to Bid.
- 4.99 Parish Councils and community organisations may nominate local assets to the Local Authority (the District or Unitary Council) to be included in their list of community assets. If the Local Authority decides that the nomination meets the criteria, it must be entered on to its list of Assets of Community Value. Properties remain on the list for five years, unless they are sold under the Right to Bid process. Once an asset is included on the list, it is then up to the Local Planning Authority to decide whether its listing is a material planning consideration.
- 4.100 Both the NPPF and Castle Morpeth District Local Plan indicate that the development of new community facilities should be supported and that valued community facilities should be retained where appropriate. However, planning permission is not always required to change the use of a building or land and this restricts the opportunity to examine the possibility of securing the continued use of a facility threatened with closure. Notwithstanding this, Policy PNP 22 will contribute towards the delivery of Plan Objective 5 which seeks to ensure that the community within the Neighbourhood Plan area have access to the services and facilities they need.
- 4.101 Policy PNP 22 makes reference to proposals which could impact on Assets of Community Value, whilst at the time of writing there are no Assets of Community Value within the Neighbourhood Plan area, it was considered important to include this within the policy should assets be listed in the future.

#### **Policy PNP 22: Community Infrastructure**

Proposals for the provision of new community infrastructure will be supported where the proposal would not have unacceptable adverse effects on the built and natural environment and residential amenity.

Proposals to redevelop or change the use of community infrastructure will only be supported where one of the following conditions is met:

- a. It has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the community's ability to meet its day to day needs for those services or facilities is not reduced, or there is no longer a community need for that service or facility; or
- b. A replacement facility of sufficient size, layout and quality to compensate for the loss of the existing facility is to be provided on an alternative suitable site within the Neighbourhood Plan area within an agreed timeframe; or
- c. It has been satisfactorily demonstrated that it would not be economically viable or feasible to retain the existing community facility and there is no reasonable prospect of securing an alternative community use of the land or building.

Where proposals for planning permission affect a designated Asset of Community Value, the applicant must demonstrate that the land or buildings could not viably remain in continued

or similar use, having been marketed for a six week period and, if a community group has expressed an interest in being treated as a potential bidder for the site, a six month period has passed.

#### Open and Recreation Space Provision

4.102 The NPPF identifies that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities. It highlights that planning policies should be based on robust and up to date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The NPPG offers the following guidance on what constitutes open space: *'Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure, as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development'*.

4.103 The Northumberland PPG17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (2011) looks at existing provision of open spaces across the County and their quality and proposed standards.

4.104 Policy PNP 23 seeks to ensure that the minimum levels of open and recreation space are provided in new developments in accordance with up to date relevant guidance. At the time of the submission of this Plan, the guidance produced by Fields in Trust<sup>24</sup> should be considered the appropriate guidance. Policy PNP 23 will therefore contribute towards the delivery of Plan Objective 5 which seeks to ensure that the community within the Neighbourhood Plan area have access to the services and facilities they need.

#### **Policy PNP 23: Open and Recreation Space Provision**

To be supported, development proposals must demonstrate provision of open and recreational space, by quantity, type and walking distance, to meet the Fields in Trust guidance (2015) or equivalent later revised guidance. This should be on site, or where this is not appropriate or achievable, direct off-site provision or an appropriate financial contribution should be made to deliver off-site provision in a suitable accessible location or to adequately improve existing facilities to manage any additional demand the development would create.

#### Protection of Open Space, Sports and Recreational Land

4.105 The NPPF is clear that existing open space, sports and recreational land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or recreational land to be surplus to requirements; or
- The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

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<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/PAD/FINAL%20ONLINE%20Planning%20Guidance%20for%20Outdoor%20Sport%20and%20Play%20Provision%20Oct%202015.pdf>

- The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

4.106 Early engagement has identified a significant level of concern from the local community and sports groups that future major development proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan area could result in the loss of open space, with established groups unable to have future access to facilities.

4.107 Policy PNP 24 therefore seeks to protect defined areas of existing open space and recreational land across the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **Policy PNP 24: Protection of Open Space, Sports and Recreational Land**

Existing open space, sports and recreational land, including playing fields as defined on the Policies Map at:

1. Thornhill Road Green;
2. Jackson Avenue/ Pont View;
3. The Green;
4. Kirkley Drive;
5. Simonside View;
6. east of Dunsgreen;
7. west of Dunsgreen;
8. south of Ponteland Bridge;
9. land adjacent to the Ponteland Club and Institute (CIU Club);
10. land adjacent to the Ponteland Leisure Centre;
11. land adjacent to the Ponteland Memorial Hall;
12. land adjacent to the Ponteland Community High School and Ponteland County Middle School sites.

should be protected from loss to development unless:

- a. the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision, in terms of quantity and quality, in a suitable location and in an agreed timescale; or
- b. An excess of provision in quantitative and qualitative terms is clearly demonstrated.

#### **Public Toilet Facilities**

4.108 A lack of public toilet facilities was identified through early engagement as one of the main reasons that many elderly residents do not go out in their local areas. Toilet facilities are not provided at the library, leisure centre or in local shops. The only toilet facilities are in the Merton Way Car Park and the Merton Hall (during opening hours).

4.109 Policy PNP 25 therefore provides a positive approach which would support the development of new public toilet facilities and the improvement of existing facilities. This policy will help to support Plan Objective 4 which seeks to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan area's communities have access to the services and facilities they need.

#### **Policy PNP 25: Public Toilet Facilities**

The development of new public toilet facilities and/or the improvement of existing facilities will be supported.

## Flooding and sustainable drainage

4.110 Flooding is an issue of great concern to a number of residents of the Neighbourhood Plan area. There is particularly concern over the impact new development could have on flood risk and also concerns regarding sewer capacity.

4.111 While most of the Neighbourhood Plan area is not at risk from fluvial flooding, the Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – Level 2 (SFRA - 2015) identifies that the River Pont presents the main fluvial flood risk to the Neighbourhood Plan area; in addition, a number of minor water courses in the area including Small Burn, Fairney Burn as well as unnamed water courses also present some flood risk. The SFRA also identified risks from surface water flooding.



4.112 The SFRA includes policy recommendations to help guide future development in Ponteland:

- Where applicable roll back development from the River Pont, Fairney Burn and Small Burn watercourses to outside Flood Zone 3a to create 'blue corridors' which provide public open space and recreation areas near watercourses and enhance green infrastructure. Development should not encroach within 5m of the River Pont, Small Burn and Fairney Burn, which is the Environment Agency by-law distance for Main Rivers. This would be beneficial both in terms of flood risk and maintenance access;
- Mixed-use (mixed vulnerability) development that follows the principles of the NPPF sequential approach should be applied within the area. For example, the proposed residential building uses should firstly be situated in Flood Zone 1. The remaining 'less vulnerable' uses should be located within Flood Zone 1, then Flood Zone 2 and only when justifiable, Flood Zone 3. This approach can also be applied within buildings, for example, commercial development located at ground floor level and residential development above ground floor level in flood risk areas. However, access and egress must still be made available for residential uses;
- Development on or near Main Rivers must apply to the Environment Agency for a flood defences consent;
- The Environment Agency must be consulted early on in the design process if structures are going to cross above an existing watercourse;
- Surface water flood risk should also inform the site layout, such that 'highly vulnerable' development is avoided in locations that are shown at the greatest risk of pluvial flooding; and
- For those sites which are primarily greenfield, development has the potential to significantly increase surface water runoff. SuDS should be considered at all stages of the planning and design of new developments to reduce runoff rates and volumes from the developed sites, thus reducing the resultant flood risk posed to the sites and adjacent/downstream areas. Development should, where reasonably possible, aim to reduce surface water runoff to less than greenfield run off. If this is not possible then greenfield runoff rates should be achieved by the proposed mitigation measures.

4.113 The SFRA also recommended that a Surface Water Management Plan was prepared for Ponteland.

4.114 In accordance with the NPPF, Plan Objective 6 seeks to reduce the causes and risk of flooding across the Neighbourhood Plan area.

#### Flood Alleviation

4.115 The Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the Wansbeck and Blyth Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP) area. The CFMP identifies that within the catchment, the main consequences of flooding occur in the urban areas of Morpeth, Ponteland and around Blyth. As flood risk is not the same across the catchment it has been divided into seven sub areas which have similar physical characteristics, sources of flooding and level of risk. The CFMP then identifies the most appropriate approach to managing flood risk in each of the sub areas. Ponteland lies within sub area 6. It identifies that sources of flooding are river and surface water, with risk from the River Pont, Prestwick Carr Cut and other drains. The CFMP highlights that there are currently flood defences in Ponteland which reduce the risk of flooding from the River Pont and a pumping station which reduces the risk of flooding from the Callerton Burn.



4.116 The CFMP identifies that Ponteland is likely to be at risk from surface water flooding in the future as a result of rainfall intensity, and the likelihood of convective storms in summer, may increase as a result of climate change.

The CFMP identifies that work will be carried out to maintain the existing flood defences and investigate improvements to the current standard of protection. Work on new defences will be considered with the aim of reducing the risk to the existing developments. The Environment Agency will work with NCC and Northumbrian Water to investigate and address the surface water flooding risk.

4.117 Policy PNP 26 therefore provides a positive policy framework which supports the development of flood prevention and alleviation schemes, provided they represent the most sustainable solution. This approach will help to deliver Plan Objective 6 which seeks to reduce the causes and risk of flooding across the Neighbourhood Plan area.

#### **Policy PNP 26: Flood Alleviation**

Proposals for flood prevention and alleviation schemes, including sustainable drainage systems will be supported where they demonstrate that they represent the most sustainable solution that viability permits, and that their social, economic and environmental benefits outweigh any adverse environmental impacts caused by new structure(s) including increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.

#### Flood Risk

4.118 The NPPF is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

4.119 As explained above, flooding is an issue of great concern to a number of residents of the Neighbourhood Plan area. There is particularly concern over the impact new development could have on flood risk and also concerns regarding sewer capacity.

4.120 Policy PNP27 therefore provides the criteria which are required to be considered to demonstrate how development proposals will minimise flood risk in accordance with the NPPF. The policy also makes reference to ‘urban creep’ which is the conversion of permeable surfaces to impermeable over time e.g. impermeable surfacing of front gardens to provide additional parking spaces, extensions to existing buildings, creation of large patio areas. The consideration of urban creep is best assessed on a site by site basis and is limited to residential development.

#### **Policy PNP 27: Flood Risk**

To be supported, development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they will minimise flood risk to people, property and infrastructure from all potential sources by:

- a. Avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, directing development away from those areas at highest risk;
- b. Assessing the impact of the development proposal on existing sewerage infrastructure and flood risk management infrastructure, including whether there is a need to reinforce such infrastructure or provide new infrastructure;
- c. Pursuing the full separation of foul and surface water flows within the development;
- d. Ensuring that development proposals separate, minimise and control surface water runoff, with sustainable drainage systems being the preferred approach. Surface water should be disposed of in accordance with the following hierarchy, where surface water should be directed to:
  - i. Infiltration (i.e. a soakaway), unless it can be demonstrated that is not feasible due to underlying ground conditions or site constraints;
  - ii. A watercourse, unless there is no alternative or suitable receiving watercourse available;
  - iii. A surface water sewer;
  - iv. A combined sewer as the last resort once all other methods have been explored.
- e. Where greenfield sites are to be developed, the surface water run-off rates must match the equivalent greenfield run-off rate for the same rainfall event and wherever possible should aim to reduce the existing greenfield run-off rate;
- f. Where previously developed sites are to be developed, surface water run-off rates shall discharge surface water at the equivalent greenfield run-off rate. Where it can be demonstrated that this cannot be achieved, discharge rates shall, subject to viability, be reduced as close to the greenfield run-off rate as possible, but not less than a minimum of 50% of the existing site run-off rate;
- g. Demonstrating, through the design of the drainage system, an appropriate allowance for urban creep over the lifetime of proposed residential development. This could be through designing in additional capacity in the drainage system and restricting the amount of impermeable area within the development.



### Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 4.121 The NPPF requires that when determining planning applications Local Planning Authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Sustainable drainage systems, also known as SuDS, are an important part of any new development to protect against on-site flooding and to ensure that flood risk across the wider water catchment area is minimised. Additionally, they can also provide benefits in terms of water quality, biodiversity and amenity for residents. Sustainable drainage systems include features such as ponds, porous road surfaces and shallow drainage channels (swales), which are designed to absorb rainwater where it falls, or slow water down to reduce the levels entering the drainage system.
- 4.122 Different proposals will require different types of sustainable drainage systems. Proposals for sustainable drainage systems should be designed and integrated within development proposals at the earliest stage taking advantage of landscape features and topography.
- 4.123 The Neighbourhood Plan area is within the 13km safeguarding zone for Newcastle International Airport and is particularly close to the departing/approach flight path to the west of the runway. One of the main safety concerns for aircraft this close to the airport is the risk of a bird strike. Therefore, within the safeguarding zone there is a presumption against the creation of open bodies of water as they are likely to be attractive to birds and in particular hazardous species such as gulls, geese and other waterfowl. It is crucial therefore that SUDS are designed to deter the attraction of additional bird life so that the risk of a strike occurring is not increased. Reducing potential sources of food through the deepening of water, and reducing nesting habitat by removing perimeter vegetation, islands and enclaves in the pond shape, can help reduce the impact on bird strike risk. On-going management of the site is also needed to create deterrents. Most importantly however the amount of open water should be reduced to a minimum through dense planting with netting in the interim whilst the planting is established, as well as swift drain down times to discourage standing water during periods of flooding. Applications that potentially present an increased risk of bird strike should be consulted with Newcastle Airport and be accompanied by a bird strike risk assessment and management plan.
- 4.124 Policy PNP 28 therefore supports the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems into new development, supporting the delivery of Plan Objective 6 which seeks to reduce the cause and risk of flooding across the Neighbourhood Plan area.

#### **Policy PNP 28: Sustainable Drainage Systems**

To be supported, development proposals must incorporate sustainable drainage systems, including arrangements for ongoing management and maintenance, in order to separate, minimise and control surface water run-off unless it can be clearly demonstrated:

- a. That sustainable drainage systems are not technically, operationally or financially deliverable or viable and that any surface water drainage issues resulting from the development can be alternatively mitigated; or
- b. That the sustainable drainage scheme would adversely affect the environment or safety, including where ponds could unavoidably increase the risk of bird strike close to Newcastle International Airport.

Robust management and maintenance arrangements must be put in place for the lifetime of the sustainable drainage system.

## Transport and Movement

- 4.125 The principal mode of transport for residents of the Neighbourhood Plan area is by car, van, motorcycle or taxi, with 76%<sup>25</sup> of the working population using these methods to travel to work. The NPPF encourages a reduction in congestion and greenhouse gas emissions through the introduction of measures which promote a reduction in the number of journeys made by car. Whilst the preparation of transport policy at a local level is primarily a matter for the highway authority, there are a wide range of areas where the Plan can have an influence on transport and movement: new development; active travel routes; public rights of way and access; parking and public transport.
- 4.126 As part of the early engagement on the Plan, local communities identified a number of issues including: the need for a bypass/ relief road; the need to improve access for pedestrians – particularly school children; inadequate provision for cyclists – cycle routes/ parking; congestion at school times; and the impact of airport expansion on the road network.
- 4.127 Plan Objective 7 therefore seeks to manage the transport network of the Neighbourhood Plan area to be safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly for all users, whilst ensuring adequate parking is available to meet the needs of residents, visitors and businesses.

### Transport and New Developments

- 4.128 The NPPF identifies that planning policies should support a range of transport modes, with priority given to walking, cycling and public transport as well as consideration of disabled access.



- 4.129 Ponteland suffers from some congestion issues, primarily caused by the only vehicular crossing over the River Pont in the town centre and localised journeys. This is compounded by a roundabout junction located immediately to the west of the bridge and a signal controlled junction immediately to the east of the bridge which results in queues backing up along the A696, North Road and Callerton Lane during peak periods. There has been a longstanding aspiration from many local residents to support a new Ponteland bypass/ relief road and reduce through traffic at this junction. NCC is undertaking further assessment/ consideration of all existing bypass lines, including the Ponteland bypass/ relief road.
- 4.130 Ponteland is considered to suffer from poor access to public transport services, with no rail service and relatively limited bus services to Newcastle. However, potential exists to extend the Tyne and Wear Metro system to Ponteland.
- 4.131 At present, Northumberland County Council implement parking standards in accordance with 'Car Parking Standards in Northumberland 1996', which sets out the number of parking spaces required as part of new developments along with guidance on how the standards should be implemented. The Plan supports the implementation of these standards.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Northumberland-Knowledge/NK%20place/Parishes%20and%20towns/Parish%20fact%20sheets/FactSheetParishPonteland.pdf>

4.132 Policy PNP 29 therefore identified the key considerations for development proposals across the Neighbourhood Plan area which reflects the feedback obtained through early engagement on the Plan. The policy will assist in the delivery of Plan Objective 7.

#### **Policy PNP 29: Transport and New Developments**

Development proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- a. The cumulative impact on traffic flows on the highway network will not be severe, or that appropriate mitigation measures can be secured and are undertaken;
- b. Existing or new public transport services can accommodate development proposals, and where necessary, new accessible public transport routes and/or improvements to the existing services and facilities can be secured;
- c. They incorporate or create new active travel routes or improvements to existing routes to serve the development that integrate into wider networks and provide safe and effective routes to services and facilities; and
- d. Where the development would create a new or extended education facility, active travel and public transport options should be provided so as to avoid severe impacts on the highway network and parking facilities, as illustrated in a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan.

#### Active Travel Routes

4.133 Active travel routes are those routes that are used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders. They can include established pathways and cycle routes, Public Rights of Way, Bridle Paths and paths of a more informal nature. The Green Infrastructure network within the area often plays an important role in providing active travel routes. Historically, a branch line of the North Eastern Railway (later part of LNER) connected the historic core of Ponteland to Newcastle. Disused since 1929, along with Ponteland and Darras Hall stations, this now provides two traffic-free, tree lined cycle routes Public Rights of Way through the settlement and its surroundings. Route 10 of the National Cycle Network passes through the Civil Parish, following the disused railway line west to east and continuing on further traffic-free trails east of Ponteland. The identified active travel routes are:



- The disused railway line which runs from near Newcastle International Airport, to the village centre;
- The disused railway line which runs from the village centre, through Darras Hall and out towards Dissington and Dalton; and
- The footpath which runs from North Road, past The Cloggs and along the west side of the River Pont to open countryside north of the village;
- Other well used footpaths include:
  - The footpath in Ponteland Park following the river, linking Dunsgreen and the High School to the northern edge of Darras Hall along Fox Covert Lane;

- The public bridleway north of Eland Hall and the golf course which provides an important link to Prestwick Carr and Dinnington; and
- The public footpath linking the south east of the village along Cheviot View to Prestwick Business Park and Prestwick village.

4.134 Policy PNP 30 therefore seeks to support proposals to improve and extend existing active travel routes as well as protecting existing routes. The policy will support the delivery of Plan Objective 5 which seeks to contribute to community wellbeing and Objective 7 which seeks to effectively manage the transport network of the Neighbourhood Plan area.

#### **Policy PNP 30: Active Travel Routes**

Proposals will not be supported unless they protect active travel routes (all statutory footpaths and bridleways, including those within the former railway line corridors and at the Riverside Walk identified on the Policies Map), or where there is clear and demonstrable justification for the loss of the route, a suitable alternative public route will be provided prior to the loss of the existing route.

Proposals to improve active travel routes to provide a network of safe, convenient, direct and accessible routes for pedestrians, cyclists, horse-riders and users of other non-motorised modes of transport will be supported. Such proposals could include:

- a. Creating new routes that would enhance or create effective connections within and beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area; and
- b. Supporting proposals for new and improved cycling infrastructure and associated facilities that would increase the opportunities for, and attractiveness and safety of, cycling as a sustainable mode of travel.

#### Public Car and Cycle Parking

4.135 Parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area experience practical and environmental problems due to insufficient parking provision. Areas where parking is particularly problematic include areas in the vicinity of the schools at the beginning and end of the school day. Ponteland High and Middle Schools creates parking problems along Callerton Lane and Dunsgreen, Darras Hall First School along Broadway and Ponteland First School and Coates Endowed Middle School along Thornhill Road.

4.136 The availability of public car parking was identified as an issue by local businesses through the Ponteland Business Confidence Survey – where 84% of respondents stated that they would like to see more car parking availability in the village centre and the same figure for Broadway. This issue could therefore impact on the type of businesses that want to locate in the Village Centre. There are a number of businesses that have car parks to the rear of their premises that have previously informally been used by the wider public and the opportunity for these to potentially become formal public car parking would be supported.

4.137 It is essential that the existing car parks, particularly in the way they provide for residents, workers and shoppers should be retained. It is also essential that there are sufficient parking spaces with easy access to shops within the Village Centre. Appropriate management that ensures a suitable level of turnover of some spaces to aid access to shops and services could be useful.

- 4.138 Policy PNP 31 therefore supports proposals for new public parking provision to support Village Centre uses, this policy will support the delivery of Plan Objective 3, which seeks to support the vitality and viability of the Village Centre.

**Policy PNP 31: Public Car and Cycle Parking**

Development proposals for new public car and cycle parking provision to support Village Centre uses in Ponteland will be supported where it would not have unacceptable adverse effects on the built and natural environment, residential amenity or highway safety.

Where there is an identified need, proposals for the loss of public car and cycle parking will not be supported unless it would be replaced, within an agreed timescale, by other provision with at least the equivalent numbers of spaces in a suitable location that would cause no adverse impacts on the built and natural environment, residential amenity or highway safety.

Public Transport

- 4.139 The timetabling and funding of public transport services is not a land use planning matter and is therefore outside the scope of the Plan. However, whilst it cannot directly influence public transport issues, Policy PNP 32 provides a positive planning policy framework for improvements to facilities and networks.

**Policy PNP 32: Public Transport**

Development proposals to improve the attractiveness of public transport services as a sustainable mode of travel will be supported.

## Annex 1: Delivering the vision and objectives – Community Actions

A1.1 Through the process of developing the Neighbourhood Plan some areas of community concerns cannot be covered by planning policy however as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process they can become 'Community Actions', supported by Ponteland Town Council. These proposals can also be delivered in conjunction with other local organisations. Three Community Actions have been identified as part of the preparation of the Plan, these are described below.



### Community Actions

#### Conservation Areas

##### **Community Action 1: Conservation Areas**

To work with Northumberland County Council to review the Ponteland Conservation Area boundary and to develop and adopt a Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan for Ponteland and High Callerton Conservation Areas.

- A1.2 This community action has two distinct parts:
- Reviewing the existing Ponteland Conservation Area Boundary with the intention of adopting a Conservation Area Character Appraisal; and
  - To seek to work with NCC and all interested parties to develop an acceptable Management Plan for the future.
- A1.3 Through community engagement, residents have clearly supported the creation of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Ponteland. Currently, Ponteland does not have such an appraisal. This Action is supported by the Ponteland Civic Society who wishes to take it forward on behalf of the community, working with the Town Council, to produce a Conservation Area Character Appraisal and seek consideration of possible revisions to Conservation Area Boundaries.
- A1.4 Northumberland County Council would adopt any revised Conservation Area boundary. For any modification there must be support as laid down in guidelines relating to special architectural or historic interest.

#### Local List of Heritage Assets

##### **Community Action 2: Local List of Heritage Assets**

To work with Northumberland County Council and the local community to support the preparation and adoption of a Local List of heritage assets of local value.

- A1.5 During the process of consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan residents expressed concern for a number of local features which they value as part of the character of the Civil Parish. Many of these are of architectural or historic interest. The Ponteland Civic Society is particularly keen to take the lead on putting a list together and have outlined a draft to take this forward.
- A1.6 The criteria used for the draft purposes are applied in a Local, rather than a National context, and may be summarised as follows:
- a) Architectural interest;
  - b) Historical interest;
  - c) Landscape or Leisure value;
  - d) Social, Religious or Community relevance;
  - e) Mixture of (a) to (d) above.

### Youth Forum

<b>Community Action 3: Youth Forum</b>
To create a Youth Forum to promote the needs of the young people in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

- A1.7 Our evaluation throughout the neighbourhood planning process has seen the need to engage with the young people of Ponteland and find out their views on what it is like to be young and live in Ponteland. To make any improvement for them there is a need for a means to achieve this.
- A1.8 The Town Council contribute to the youth service provision and have supported the work of the Ponteland Community Partnership (PCP) in putting forward projects specifically for the youth. In 2015, the PCP hosted a Democracy Week event in the Memorial Hall inviting residents to attend, with the support of our local MP, Mayor and Councillors on a panel against the Debating Society of the High School on youth issues. This gave the students the opportunity to debate in public rather than just with their peers.
- A1.9 The Community Partnership aims are:
- To identify the things that really matter to people who live and work in Ponteland Civil Parish that will improve the quality of life;
  - To work with all interested or involved parties to develop acceptable ways of meeting these needs.
- A.10 As the Community Partnership membership includes a Town Council representative this would be seen as the best placed group to encourage a Youth Forum. Recently, they have appointed a Youth Ambassador to seek young members to join the group and get involved

## **Future Community Actions**

- A.11 Work is ongoing on further Community Actions; these are described below as it is considered that they may be suitable for consideration by the Town Council in the future:
- To liaise with landowners and other stakeholders to safeguard land needed as flood storage areas;
  - To work with NCC on the possible implementation of Article 4 Directions on areas of the neighbourhood Plan area where it would be desirable to remove permitted development rights for front boundary changes;
  - To work with NCC and local businesses to reduce and standardise the amount of street clutter, including advertisements, street furniture and signage;
  - To continue to work with NCC on the possibility of a future relief road for Ponteland
  - To support the Bus Users Group in Ponteland with the aims of promoting accurate information, improving accessibility of public transport in the neighbourhood plan area;
  - To work with local groups and NCC to identify key 'accessibility hot spots' accessibility for those with mobility impairments could be improved;
  - To work with NCC to seek improvements to cycle infrastructure in the Neighbourhood Plan area;
  - Work with NCC to implement a 20mph limit in some appropriate areas, such as schools, in the Neighbourhood Plan area;
  - To improve accessibility to public transport for all;
  - Work with NCC to establish the viability of a link bus from Ponteland centre to Callerton Parkway and seek means of funding;
  - Work with NCC to establish new linkage routes and make more effective those existing linkage routes between Ponteland Village Centre and nearby facilities and car parking;
  - To influence and work with GP and all service providers to meet the additional needs of residents including accessibility to healthcare in the Neighbourhood Plan area;
  - To establish the viability of a 'Community Hub' at a central location in Ponteland Village, which could provide a new location for the Town Council, NCC hot desk, Social Services, Citizen Advice, small business hot desk facility, library and other facilities and services for the wider community;
  - Work in collaboration with local shops and community facilities to develop a Community Toilet Scheme where toilets are made available for public use during opening hours.



## References

The following list contains the sources that have been used to help prepare this Plan.

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