

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, confirms decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The primacy of the development plan is reaffirmed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Also, paragraph 12 states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development doesn't change the status of the development plan as the starting point for decisions. The statutory development plan relevant to this application is Wansbeck District Local Plan Material considerations include the emerging Northumberland Local Plan and NPPF. Policies within the WDLP are relevant to the determination of the planning application. Key to assessing acceptability of principle of the proposed development are policies GP1 (settlement limits) and REC1 (strategically important parks and open spaces). Policy GP1 focuses new development within settlement limits, part 'c' of the policy only supports development in the open countryside where specific criteria are met. The application site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and does not meet the criteria specified within the policy. Policy REC1 requires the safeguarding of the network of strategically important parks and open spaces. It states planning permission will not be granted for development on a designated site unless: the predominantly open character of the area is maintained and the development is incidental and beneficial to the recreational or amenity use of the land. The application site is allocated as a strategically important area of open space. Clearly the development of housing will not maintain the open character of the area, nor is it incidental or beneficial to the recreational or amenity land use,. The application site lies outside the Bedlington settlement boundary proposed within the emerging Northumberland Local Plan (NLP - policy STP1) and on land that's proposed to be retained as protected open space (policy INF5). Policy STP1 requires new development within settlement boundaries. Paragraph 4.37 of the emerging NLP states that settlement boundaries are intended to provide a high degree of certainty to communities regarding future development. They are designated to: help protect the countryside from adhoc development and encroachment; prevent settlement mergers; maintain the character of settlements; and protect historic and ecological assets. Criterion 'G' of Policy STP1 identifies when development may be acceptable in the open countryside. The proposed development does not meet the identified criteria. Policy INF 5 requires the protection of allocated open space, . The NPPF highlights the importance of access to a network of high quality open spaces (paragraph 96). Paragraph 97 is clear that existing open space should not be built on n; The planning statement submitted seeks to justify the principle of the development by referring to 'a serious health and safety risk' from the proximity of the current driving range to residential properties. Reference is made to 'a comprehensive risk assessment'. Further details of the 'serious health and safety risk' and the 'comprehensive risk assessment' are not available. No details are provided to explain the need for a replacement driving range.. The town council strongly dispute the need for additional new homes. A significant level of development has taken place in the town over recent years and the county council can demonstrate a 11.2 year supply of housing land. The provision of

new homes does not therefore override the substantial conflict with both the adopted and emerging development plan. The town council note the disparity within the submitted planning statement which first states that the proposed residential development would form part of the settlement but then refers to the housing being enabling development i.e. that which may not ordinarily be acceptable in planning terms. It is therefore submitted that the applicant acknowledges that the principle of the residential redevelopment of the site is not acceptable.. The town council submits that the open spaces assessment is not fit for purpose., It fails to acknowledge the site is allocated as part of a network of strategically important parks and open spaces and then seeks to undermine the value of the application site as being 'undeveloped open space that is not utilised as part of the Golf Course.' It also fails to undertake any assessment of the quality of the site itself, course.. , No assessment has been included to seek to demonstrate that the need for any new provision clearly outweighs the loss of the existing open space. The town council submits that the application should be refused as being clearly contrary to the provisions of the development plan and there are no material considerations to justify approval.