

**WHORLTON VILLAGE
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

2015 – 2035

Prepared by Whorlton & Westwick Parish Council

'Made' (adopted) by Durham County Council 19th July 2017

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1 STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF WWPC

I am delighted to present the proposed Whorlton Village Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan covers the extent of Whorlton Village Conservation Area as shown on the plan below. I hope that it will help to make the village a better place to live in for years to come.

The decision to proceed with the Plan was taken by the Parish Council at their meeting on 4 March 2014, following a presentation and continuing advice by the Durham County Council planning team.

A working sub-committee was formed which includes representatives from the Whorlton Village Community Association (WVCA which is a registered charity no 1003340), the WI, the PCC and WWPC.

Following comment from WWPC on DCC County Durham Plan (CPD) dated 16 Nov 2013 and the WVCA public consultation regarding future housing developments in Whorlton as per their letter of 22 Nov 2013 it was decided to accept the challenge of forming the Neighbourhood Plan in order to let local people to decide their future in the spirit of the Localism Act.

George Stastny
Chairman WWPC



2 BASIC CONDITION STATEMENT

2.1 The right for communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans was established by the Localism Act 2011, which was accompanied by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. As a result, Neighbourhood Plans are required to meet a number of basic conditions which are detailed within schedule 4B of the 1990 Act, as inserted by the provision of Schedule 10 of The Localism Act. The basic conditions are addressed in the Basic Conditions Statement and require that:

- a) The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is prepared having regard to national policies and advice issued by the Secretary of State.
- b) The making of the NP contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- c) The making of the NP is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area.

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) notes that there are three elements to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental and as such the planning system (of which this NP will form part) needs to perform the three roles:

- a) The economic role means contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available to support growth and innovation.
- b) The social role is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating high quality built environment with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well being.
- c) The environmental role means contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

2.3 The NPPF para 55 sets out policies for development in rural areas, which should be sustainable and enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

2.4 The NPPF states that the three elements should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependant. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards and well designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solution.

2.5 Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvement in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including but not limited to:

- a) Making it easier for jobs to be created
- b) Moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for the future
- c) Replacing poor design with better design
- d) Improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure
- e) Widening the choice of high quality homes

2.6 General Assessment of WVNP with national guidance

NPPF Core Principle	WVNP Vision and Objectives	Policies / Decision Criteria
Plan-led based on a positive local vision	All WVNP objectives apply	The plan has developed a vision and objectives for the village based on consultation that will help deliver the communities aspirations
Enhance and improve places in which people live	To make Whorlton village a better and sustainable place to live	The plan has policies for new housing (WP1, WP2) with development required to respect the environment of Whorlton
Economic development and delivery of homes and infrastructure	To make Whorlton village a better and sustainable place to live	The plan has policies for new housing (WP1, WP2) as well as promotion of working from home.
High quality design and standard of amenity	To make Whorlton village a better and sustainable place to live	Policy WP1 requires development to be in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings, and not adversely affect the amenity of residents in the area.
Promote the character and vitality of communities	To maintain and enhance the character of the village	Policy WP6 seeks to protect existing amenities within the village, which will help to maintain the vitality of the community.
Climate change, flood risk and reduced carbon usage	To make Whorlton village a better and sustainable place to live	Policy WP3 relating to home working will reduce the need to travel by car.
Conserving and enhancing the natural environment	To maintain and enhance the character of the village	Policy WP1 requires development to be in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings. Inappropriate development proposals will be resisted.
Using brownfield land	Not covered by vision and objectives	Not covered by any policy but none in NP Areas
Promoting mixed use	Not covered by vision and objectives	Not covered by specific policy but Policy WP3 permits working from home
Conserving heritage	To maintain and enhance the character of the village	The Plan included a Policy (WP5) to protect and conserve heritage assets
Encourage sustainable transport	Not covered by vision and objectives	Policy WP6 seeks to maintain the existing bus links and frequency to nearby settlements.
Health and social and cultural well being	To make Whorlton village a better and sustainable place to live.	The plan seeks to maintain existing amenities and facilities (policy WP6) within the village.

3 WHORLTON VILLAGE: AN OVERVIEW

3.1 Whorlton village consists currently of 70 dwellings situated around a large registered village green, with a pub, a church and a village hall providing the main amenities. The 2011 Census which collected data for the whole of Whorlton Parish identified 122 dwellings in the Parish. As the dwellings outside the Whorlton village are mainly farmhouses with different demographics interpolating the data for Whorlton only is meaningless.

An informal mini-census of the village only was carried out by volunteers in February 2015, which confirmed that the 70 dwellings are occupied by 128 people, of which only 8 are under 18 years of age. Out of the 120 adults 61 are of retirement age. The housing stock consists of 46 houses and 24 bungalows/flats. 5 dwellings were for sale and 4 were unoccupied.

The setting is in a picturesque confluence of the river Tees and Whorlton Beck, on a high plateau to the north of the river, surrounded by woodlands to the south and east. The Tees Way footpath passes through the village on the north bank of the river.

3.2 The main employer is Danshell providing residential care to the disabled and a Pub. One of the village farms has now been relocated away to the east of the village and the former site has been developed for housing, the other farm is at the NW corner of the village. There are several small businesses operating from the private dwellings.

3.3 Public transport links are poor relying on sporadic bus connections of some three daily connections to Barnard Castle and four to Darlington. The public transport is further restricted by a 3 T weight limit on Whorlton Bridge across the Tees to the south.

3.4 The housing stock relates to the origins of the village of several large houses and small dwellings serving the large ones. This reflects in the imbalance of the population of predominantly single people or couples in the small dwellings and lack of family sized dwellings for families with children etc.

3.5 Apart from the Conservation Area status the Plan area contains one scheduled monument, Whorlton Bridge, also grade II* listed, and 18 grade II listed buildings/structures.

3.6 The village is very popular as a retirement place and a commuter place for people in work, resulting in above average property prices for the region and resulting pressure on housing development. The saved Local Plan from the former Teesdale District Council has drawn up very tight development limits preventing practically any new buildings in the village. The 2009 Local Government Review saw the creation of the unitary Durham County Council. It is preparing a Local Plan but at the time of writing that Plan is being refreshed following its withdrawal from examination after an interim Inspector's Report was quashed in the Courts. As such there is no up to date strategic context for the WVNP to follow at present.

4 HOW THE PLAN WAS PREPARED AND CONSULTATION STATEMENT

4.1 The Plan was prepared by the working sub-committee led by WWPC chairman who is a practicing chartered architect and who lived in Whorlton for forty years. The committee consisted of the following members:

Cllr George Stastny - chairman

Cllr Roger Foster

Cllr Ian Wilkinson

Cllr Trevor Honeyman

Mrs Anne Woodward (representing the Whorlton Women Institute)

Mrs Linda Alderson (representing the Whorlton Parochial Church Council)

Mr Peter Bigge (representing the Whorlton Village Community Association(WVCA))

4.2 The preparation of the Plan was guided and supported by the planning department of DCC.

4.3 The sub-committee has placed great value to seeking views from the village community by including representatives from the local public bodies, listed above, In order to reach the general public good use was made of the local monthly publication "The Flyer" which is sponsored by the WVCA and distributed free of charge to every home.

4.4 General views were sought in The Flyer November 2014 issue, only two replies were received, one related to housing only and the other containing lengthy views from a former councillor. (appendix 1A, 1B, 1C & 2A) Both responses were considered by the committee and as their main point concerned provision of affordable housing Policy WP1 was revised accordingly.

4.5 Future housing development in the village was of prime concern to the residents. The WVNP committee has therefore arranged for a public consultation in November 2014 by means of a questionnaire reaching all households in the village, receiving 28 replies. (see appendix 3 & 3A)

4.6 Apart from the consultation bodies listed in 4.1 above whose views were given verbally at committee meetings and included in the NP the following consultation bodies and individuals were consulted on 29 June 2015:

a Northumbrian Water

b Environment Agency

c Natural England

d Historic North East

e Teesdale Disability Access Forum

f Teesdale Development Company

g Durham Community Action

h DCC Cllr George Richardson

i DCC Cllr James Rowlandson

j Residents of Whorlton (formal consultation following invitation of comments by The Flyer –see item 4.4 above)

k Durham County Council (SEA & HRA Screening Opinion)

4.7 Response to consultations and amendments of NP.

Responses were received from the following bodies:

b Environment Agency.

The EA expressed concern about building in Flood Zones 2&3 but as the NP does not allocate any specific housing sites no change was proposed.

Their concern regarding the proposed cemetery extension is covered by the extant planning permission.

e Historic England

Suggestion was made to consider preparation of Character Appraisal and Habitat Assessment, including review of the Conservation Area boundary and Policy 7.5.8 was added to the NP

k DCC has produced very thorough Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report* but in Conclusion note para 4.8 stated that the WVNP will not result in likely significant effect upon any of the relevant sites. No further action was therefore taken.

*Included at Appendix 6

5 WHAT THE PLAN AIMS TO ACHIEVE

5.1 The sub-committee is aware of the small area of the Plan area and it's small population limiting the number of issues which can be addressed and also of the limited human resources to prepare the Plan.

5.2 However, regardless of these limitations the residents have shown their strong desire to influence their future in certain key areas such as future housing, village facilities and environment ensuring sustainable future.

6 THE VISIONS AND OBJECTIVES

6.1 The vision and objective of the Plan is to make Whorlton village a better and sustainable place to live.

6.2 The village enjoys strong community cohesion and friendly disposition. This character should be maintained and enhanced.

6.3 The objectives of the NP, which have been highlighted though community consultation and the natural progression of the NP are detailed under item 7 (Policies), including the issues and how the policies are to be implemented.

7 POLICIES

7.1 Planning decisions are guided by planning policies when planning applications are made to Durham County Council. The Localism Act 2011 has allowed communities to develop their own policies against which any development will be considered through the NP planning process.

Provided that the policies are based on sound evidence, community input and the proper principles of planning they will become a statutory part of the Development Plan for the area.

7.2 Housing

7.2.1 Two public consultations have been carried out with adequate response indicating opposition to large scale housing developments preferring organic growth over the Plan period of small developments of one to three dwellings in appropriate locations. Second public consultation established the desired number and type of the dwellings consisting of 3 bungalows and 7 family houses, one of which is “low cost”, giving 10 dwellings in total. This attitude resonates with the views of the renowned architectural historian Ian Nairn in his publication Nairn’s County Durham, who said Whorlton had “the feel of an estate village but without the regimentation, a natural and organic plan, trimmed up and put on parade. It must never overflow beyond the boundaries of the Green” (appendix 5)

7.2.2 There is concern with empty properties or underused holiday properties in the village, diminishing the available housing stock.

7.2.3 The majority of land surrounding the NPA is classified as Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land, any loss of good agricultural land for housing should be resisted.

7.2.4 Northumbrian Water Ltd has confirmed that the proposed number of dwellings can be serviced from the existing network. (see appendix 4)

POLICY WP1: Housing provision

Permission will be granted for infilling and small scale residential development within the existing built up area of Whorlton Village, if it:

- a. is in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings;
- b. does not significantly adversely affect the amenities of residents in the area, including daylight/sunlight, privacy, air quality, noise and light pollution;
- c. has safe and suitable access to the site for all people.
- d. is not on an area of undeveloped land, including residential curtilage, that contributes to the character of the village.

In addition, support will be given to affordable homes.

Efforts should be taken to prevent rise in numbers of empty or underused properties in the village.

The Plan does not promote specific sites for development, in addition to the criteria set out in Policy WP1 proposals will also be expected to address flood risk issues, including sequential testing of sites, if appropriate.

7.3 Employment

7.3.1 Whorlton is not suitable for any new, large scale employment, however, it is suitable for “working from home” option. Using home as a working base for at least part of the week can offer business opportunities. Working from home does not necessarily need planning permission as long as the home remains mainly a home.

Live/work units can be also envisaged accommodating artists or craftsmen.

POLICY WP3: Working from home

Planning permission for development that enables home working will be granted if the development:

- a. is in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings;
- b. does not significantly adversely affect the amenities of residents of the area;
- c. has a safe and suitable access to the site for all people.

7.4 Internet connection

7.4.1 Good Internet connection is driving business and employment opportunities and helping people access services. Providing good internet connection speed is essential for the future.

POLICY WP4: Superfast broadband

All new dwellings should wherever feasible incorporate ducting capable of accepting fibre to enable Superfast Broadband.

7.5 Protection of environment and heritage

7.5.1 Whorlton village is fortunate to offer environment of exceptionally high standard, however, it is important to protect, maintain and where possible enhance the standard. The Conservation Area and Listed Building Status offers some protection to buildings and trees but some features such as stone walls where these are not within the curtilage of a listed building, gates, hedges, village pump and fountain, red phone box etc are not protected and some were lost in the past.

7.5.2 There is an ancient ferry crossing to Wycliffe downstream from the suspension bridge consisting of a ruinous Ferryman’s Cottage and iron bolts with steps down to the river, operating from at least 1691.

7.5.3 The NP area includes one Local Wildlife Site (LWS) at Whorlton Banks and provides high potential for population of protected species such as Great Crested Newts and Bats.

River Tees water is of good biological and chemical quality which is locally maintained by a recently extended and improved sewage plant. Whorlton Beck is liable to flooding but the causes of this are outside the remit of the NP.

7.5.4 Some properties are badly maintained becoming an eyesore or wrecked cars are parked on private land but in full view from public areas.

7.5.5 Whorlton NP area contains large number of trees. These are protected by the planning requirements of the Conservation Area status and the LWS status of Whorlton Banks.

7.5.6. The draft WVNP has been screened by DCC Sustainability Strategy Team (refer to Screening Report dated February 2015) which confirmed that the NP is not likely to have any significant environmental effects, including effects on European Protected Sites. (appendix 6)

7.5.7 DCC should consider imposing stricter environmental control using Article 4 Direction of the Planning Act.

7.5.8 The NP will be reviewed in conjunction with of a Conservation Area Character Appraisal and review of Neighbourhood Plan boundaries. Durham County Council will be responsible for any future review of the Conservation Area boundaries.

7.5.9 For list of designated heritage assets (protected through specific legislation such as Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) and non-designated heritage assets (protected by Planning Practice Guidance) please refer to Durham County Council Historic Environment Records (HER) and WVNP Appendix dated 02/05/2017, listing the current assets. This list is not exhaustive and will be adjusted during the lifespan of the Plan.

POLICY WP5: Protection of the historic environment

Development proposals will be required to respect the setting and/or character of designated and non-designated heritage assets such as stone wall, Whorlton Church, Ferryman's Cottage and associated structures, Village Green pumps and stone bridge over Whorlton Beck .

Inappropriate development proposals that cause substantial harm or total loss will be resisted and those that cause less than substantial harm will be weighted against the public benefits.

Development will be expected to sustain the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets, including any contribution made by their setting. Development proposals should contribute positively to the built and historic environment, and should seek opportunities to enhance and better reveal the significance and understanding of heritage assets. The more important the asset, the greater weight should be given to its conservation.

The National Planning Policy Framework advises that harm to the significance of heritage assets will only be permitted where this is clearly justified and outweighed by the public benefit of the proposal. So for example substantial harm or total loss to the significance of a designated heritage asset (or archaeological site of national importance) will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances. There is a general presumption in favour of preservation of non-designated heritage assets. In the case of non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, these will be considered subject to the same policies as those for designated heritage assets and in accordance with the MPPF.

For clarity over designations please refer to the County Council Historic Environment Records (HER) and the same data that is maintained by Historic England.

7.6 Protection and provision of amenities

7.6.1 Whorlton offers limited range of public amenities such as the Village Hall, The Church, The Pub, Children Play Area, Village Garden and the Registered Village Green. The last feature is protected by legislation but the other ones are under pressure due to falling and elderly population.

7.6.2 Due to the number of dwellings without suitable gardens there is a demand according to the last count for allotment gardens.

7.6.3 The Whorlton Church burial space is near its full capacity and cemetery extension will be needed in the near future.

7.6.4 The village has a high dog ownership and is popular with walkers with or without dogs from outside of the area. Provision of litter bins and dog litter bins is essential.

7.6.5 Street lighting of the village is poor, bearing in mind large proportion of the elderly and does not extend to cover the area of recent housing "The Steadings"

7.6.6 Some areas of the Village Green are hard paved in unsuitable materials, difficult to maintain resulting in injury risk to pedestrians.

7.6.7 Whilst we appreciate that public transport will be limited due to the size of the population of the village it is important to people relying on the existing transport links with the larger towns that these links are maintained.

Suitable public transport should be available even to those who have access to private transport on account of sustainability, reducing the reliance on fossil fuels.

POLICY WP6: Amenities

Existing amenities will be protected and any proposals resulting in the loss of them shall be resisted, exploring all avenues leading to their retention.

Planning permission for provision of allotment gardens and cemetery area extension will be granted if the development:

- a. does not significantly adversely affect the amenities of nearby residents.
- b. has a safe and suitable access to the site for all people
- c. in the case of the cemetery area extension, has the appropriate consent from the Environment Agency.

Suitable proposals to upgrade the hard paved areas of the Village Green to a satisfactory standard will be supported.

The existing bus links and frequency should be maintained and reduction of these links should be resisted.

Where necessary developers will be expected to enter into a planning obligation with the local Planning Authority to deliver improved amenity facilities in the village resulting from the additional needs generated by the development.

WHORLTON AND WESTWICK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

DESIGNATED AND NON-DESIGNATED ASSETS (paragraph 7.5.9 of WVNP)

Prepared 02/05/2017

DESIGNATED ASSETS

Whorlton Bridge II* and Scheduled Monument

The Bridge Inn II

1,2,3,4,5,6&7 Whorlton Grange Terrace II

1,2&3 The Green II

Font adjacent to Church of St Mary II

Lilac Cottage II

Whorlton Croft II

Toll Hoise at NW end of Whorlton Bridge II

1,2&3 Whorlton Grange Cottages I

Whorlton Conservation Area

NON-DESIGNATED ASSETS

Whorlton Church of St Mary

Stone walls, hedges and gates not within curtilage of a listed building

Village pump and fountain

Cherished views

Phone box

Ferryman's cottage (ruins)

Stone bridge over Whorlton Beck

