

WITTON GILBERT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Submission Draft Version

**Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Questions
by Independent Examiner, Rosemary Kidd**

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Following my initial assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan and representations, and my site visit, I would appreciate clarification and further evidence on the following matters from the Qualifying Body and/or the Local Planning Authority. In order to ensure openness and transparency of the examination process, these questions and the responses should be published on the Council's website.

1. Under the Sustainable Framework, paragraph 7.1.4 states that an overarching sustainable development policy is proposed with more specific policies on specific topics. There does not appear to be a policy on the subject of sustainable development. Is it intended that this section should provide a framework for the whole plan? In which case I will suggest revising the paragraph to read "***This section provides an overarching framework for the sustainable development of the Plan area. The plan contains specific planning policies on.....***"
2. Does the final paragraph of Policy 1 (concerning not giving rise to unacceptable harm) relate to development outside the settlement boundary or throughout the Plan area?
3. The Policies Maps show a number of sites outside the settlement boundary. What is the status of these sites? Are they commitments or listed buildings? I will suggest that they are shown on a separate map as they do not relate to policies in the Plan.
4. Reference is made in 7.3.5 to affordable housing on site 1. However, this is a small site and may only be delivered for affordable housing if it were delivered as 100% affordable by a housing provider. Would the QB confirm that this proposal is deliverable. The only site likely to be large enough to attract affordable housing as part of a mixed tenure development is H2. Should this be included in this section too?
5. The first paragraph of Policy 3 is unclear. Is it intended that 10% of the new dwellings on a site of 10+ dwellings should be provided as older people's housing? If so, would you comment on the following wording: "***On sites of 10 or more dwellings, 10% of the dwellings shall be provided as dwellings suitable for older people. Appropriate house types considered suitable to meet this requirement include:***"
6. Paragraph 7.3.7 recognises that neighbourhood plans cannot include new technical standards. Examiners have been advised that the appropriate route is for Parish Councils to encourage their inclusion in Local Plans. It is suggested that this should be included in the Plan as a Community Action.
7. Is it intended that Policy 4 should apply only to the site identified on the Policies Map as the H2 development site? Criterion b) relates to development in the Historic Zone and may therefore be better positioned in Policy 5.
8. Northumbrian Water has commented that there are public sewers and two trunk water mains crossing the H2 site. Would the QB / LPA consider whether these will affect the form of development and deliverability of the development on land to the south of Front Street. Would the QB/LPA agree a form of wording to be added to Policy 4 to raise awareness of these constraints.

9. Natural England has noted that there is no reference in the plan to the Witton Dene woodland being ancient semi-natural woodland. Is this the same area covered by Policy 8? If so, would you provide me with wording to include in the policy and/or justification. Do the strategic policies provide adequate safeguards?
10. Proposed LGS sites G1, G2 and G5 are in the Green Belt. Their designation as LGS would recognise the importance of the sites but would not give any further protection. Does the QB consider that their designation is necessary?
11. Sites G3, G6, G7, G8, G12 and G15 are amenity verges on the entrance to the village or within the historic core of the village. Whilst they all provide attractive areas that enhance the amenity of the village, the evidence that they are sufficiently “demonstrably special” to the community within the definition of the NPPF is not convincing. It is suggested that they should be safeguarded under a new paragraph in the policy as “Local Amenity Areas” with a policy that would support their safeguarding and enhancement as local amenity areas.
12. Policy 10 a) refers to the “land or buildings no longer being physically suitable for use as a public house or general store”. It is more usual to refer to the need to demonstrate that the business is no longer viable rather than any physical limitations of the buildings/land. Would the LPA and QB discuss the wording of this part of the policy and agree a form of wording suited to the local context.
13. Policy 15 and section 7.10.8 refers to avoiding the loss of best and most versatile land. Does the QB have evidence that there is such land (Grade 3a and better) within the parish to make this necessary?
14. Would the LPA and QB consider the comments made by the Crime Prevention Unit. Is the topic adequately addressed in strategic policies? Are any of the revisions proposed necessary?
15. Would the LPA and QB consider the comments made by Historic England. Should the revisions proposed to Policies 2a) and 5 and the justifications to Policies 5 and 6 be made? I note from the Consultation Statement that this refers to the inclusion of a Community Action under Policy 5 to seek to identify further the features and characteristics of the Historic Zone that contribute to its significance, in order to better protect them in the future with this policy. For Policy 6 the suggestion is that it should extend local distinctiveness beyond buildings to landscape character, such as the impact of historic hedgerows and or other field boundary patterns and materials.

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