

Responses to queries raised by Nigel McGurk (3rd July 2020)

1. Compliance with EU regulations

DCC can confirm they are happy the NP meets these requirements.

2. Optional response from Greater Willington Town Council

Greater Willington Town Council have had an opportunity to respond to all representations and comments during the pre-submission consultation by the working group at the end of 2019. They approved the plan with amendments and the responses sent to those making representations. This was minuted at their monthly committee meeting on November 12th 2019 (<http://gwtc.co.uk/assets/gwtc-minutes-201922.pdf>) and February 11th 2020 (<http://gwtc.co.uk/assets/gwtc--2020.pdf>)

This did not include the representation by Richard James to allocate land for building East of the village as this was only presented at an open meeting held on February 19th 2020, after the presubmission public consultation and after the last council meeting. Due to Covid-19 council have not met since and meetings have been suspended until further notice. In order to elicit their opinions an email was sent to them explaining Richard James proposal and they were asked to respond to this by Friday 19th June. There have been queries but no further comments nor any responses to suggest any change to the plan.

3. Policy H3

We have spent some time considering the exact phraseology for policies and referred to online guidance (<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/write-planning-policies-neighbourhood-plan/?type%5B%5D=policy-writing#primary>) which has changed over the last few years, so it is difficult to get right. During review with the DCC it was recommended that we change the wording from 'would not support' or 'should not' to 'will not be permitted' to remove any ambiguity. In the case of H3 we have specified that developments 'will not be permitted' on the areas marked in green on the proposals map. If the policy can only recommend, then we would 'not support' development on these sensitive areas. However, our understanding is that the plan having been developed in close consultation with Durham County Council to ensure concordance with the County Plan will carry equal weight and together with the County Plan will form the statutory planning policy framework for future planning decisions for Oakenshaw.

With reference to the white areas we did not want to repeat existing policy which restricts development in agricultural areas already included in the Wear Valley, County Durham Plan or the National Policy Planning Framework as explained in the justification below the policy. Perhaps it should be made clear in the policy that development would also have to accord with national and County policy. Whilst we did not want to prevent farmers diversifying or

building for workers, residents definitely did not want housing development on agricultural land.

The additional policies in H3 which refer specifically to Oakenshaw were based on consultation with residents including a local farming family who own almost all agricultural land to the West of Oakenshaw and comments made during focus groups. In these residents were clear that they did not want development on agricultural land creating satellite housing estates which were not integrated into the village. They wanted to contain development within the built-up settlement area. There were strong, frequently expressed opinions about maintaining the distinct rural character of the village, valued views identified by residents as of high importance and a wildlife corridor which is consistent with another policy ENV1. Residents views have been the basis of policy and some of the comments from focus groups are shown below.

Evidence

18.10.16 Holland Hall Farm

No housing or any more piecemeal development opposite New Row this land should be kept rural and agricultural. Same for Stockley Lane no more development off the lane (*White area*) unless well planned and cohesive rather than piecemeal as with Blackthorn farm and Harles. This includes requesting planning permission to convert wooden barns.

Housing in the field above Park View would be acceptable if well planned and the road system adapted to suit extra traffic. It would connect the two ends of the village (*linear form*), but it is important to maintain the views residents currently enjoy.

Focus group 1: Meeting held on the 17th February 2016 from 6.30 to 8.00

- Housing should be integrated with the village.

Focus Group 2: Meeting held on the 23RD February 2016 from 7.00 to 8.30

- New housing development should be small scale and integrated into the village; not a satellite estate.

Focus Group 7: Meeting held on the 13th June 2016 from 6.30 to 8.00

- Preserve and keep green open land immediately South of Park View houses.
- Preserve wildlife corridors which join Oakenshaw with other areas and which encourage and protect wildlife.

Things valued about living in Oakenshaw and Park View

- It is a wildlife corridor
- Views
- Large field to look out on to the south

Things to preserve in the village

- Maintain wildlife corridor (e.g. deer in the field)
- Preserve the countryside
- Keep the view
- Park View value is all about the South field. Don't think any resident would want it to be built on.

Focus Group 8: Meeting held on the 20th June 2016 from 6.30 to 8.00

- Love the quietness and openness of Oakenshaw
- Like the village feel

Open spaces

- Open fields outside our house were the second reason I moved to Oakenshaw
- Moved here because of the field behind us was said never to be built on
- The open space behind us with lots of wildlife
- Preserve the fields behind country view
- Extend covenant on brown field sites – no building on fields

Focus Group 9: Meeting held on the 4th July 2016 from 6.30 to 8.00

- Prevent any further building on agricultural land – other than barns
- Maintain open spaces around Oakenshaw

4. Policy H4

This is a community aspiration. The Community Association has started to consider this as a result of the consultation. It has commissioned some feasibility work to consider the deliverability and viability of such a development and is examining sources of funding, but there are no firm proposals as yet.

5. Policy H5

The minimum standards are quoted exactly from the source cited. Many houses in Oakenshaw have no off road parking provision and this is a problem. We anticipate that 2 bed and 3 bed houses might accommodate two adults and children and the adults would likely own a car each. We accept that no visitor parking has been specified for one bedroom housing which may be a concern with regard to H4 (Housing for older or disabled residents)

where we have already discussed the need for extra parking. However, we have only specified the minimum standards only.

The term 'curtilage' has been used as per the definition 'an area of land attached to a house and forming one enclosure with it'. The group's requirement here is for parking to be off road and next to the dwelling house it serves, and would be concerned that 'development site' may not ensure this for developments of multiple units.

6. Policy VC1

The feasibility study is in progress and requires a community survey to be carried out once restrictions are lifted.

7. Policy VC2

In the past, benefit to the community has been defined by SMART action plans prioritised by the community from a survey. This is our intention for future community plans. Clear outcomes and priorities will be determined by a village survey to be conducted as soon as possible after lifting of current restrictions. Also, we did not want to clash with the ONP referendum, but as this will not now take place until 2021 it is now our intention to complete the survey this year.

8. Policy Econ 1

In the policy we refer to small-scale extensions within the settlement boundary only, but outside the settlement boundary conversions would be permitted to support rural business and diversification in accordance with the County Durham Plan provided they minimise visual impact. We have not specified what kind of conversions or extensions might be needed on agricultural land.

9. Policy Econ 4

The whole of this policy refers to community aspirations that emerged from the consultation. Given that the community have in the past achieved the erection of a wind turbine that provides the village with a regular income, this policy aims to enable these aspirations to be realised.