

Acklington Neighbourhood Plan

2023-2036

Acklington Parish Council

Foreword

In late 2021, following public consultation, a steering group was set up by Acklington Parish Council to prepare a neighbourhood plan for the parish. Further rounds of consultation have taken place and the members of the steering group believe that the plan contains policies that fairly reflect the aspirations of the majority of the people who commented.

Section 4 of the plan explains that we still have a long way to go. Even so, thanks are due:

- to the Parish Council and its clerk, Clair Lewis, for supporting the work of the steering group,
- to Jenny Ludman (our planning consultant) and to Rob Naples (our NCC adviser) who have guided us through the complexities of the planning process,
- to the members of the steering group, who have given their

time to formulate the plan, and

- **finally to the community for expressing their views with a clarity and vigour that show how much people care about the place where they live.**

**Bill Byatt
Chairman
Steering Group**

May 2023

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Introduction

Acklington Neighbourhood Plan

The Localism Act 2011 introduced new powers to allow local communities to shape development in their areas. One of these powers was the ability for local communities to produce their own development plan for their area by preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. This Neighbourhood Plan (hereafter referred to as the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) sets out a vision for the parish of Acklington (the neighbourhood area) and includes planning policies for the use and development of land. It will form part of the statutory planning framework for the area, and the policies contained within it will be used to determine planning applications submitted to the Council within the neighbourhood area. A Neighbourhood Plan must be prepared in close consultation with the local community. Although the Parish Council carry out the drafting of the Neighbourhood Plan, this is done on behalf of the local community.

The ANP has been compiled by a Steering Group appointed by, and partly comprising

members of, Acklington Parish Council. The Steering Group have been assisted by a planning consultant and have had support from officers at Northumberland County Council. This neighbourhood plan establishes a vision for the future of the neighbourhood area over the plan period (up to 2036) and a set of objectives. This plan period is designed to align with the Northumberland Local Plan (adopted March 2022) which covers the same period.

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Background

Acklington village is the main settlement in the neighbourhood area and is identified in the Northumberland Local Plan as a 'small village'. Acklington village has seen significant levels of new development on the fringes of the village with approximately 69 dwellings built and/or given planning permission since 2019.

Residents feel that it is important to influence the future of development in the neighbourhood area to ensure that it responds to local character and local needs. It was felt that a Neighbourhood Plan, with a set of locally specific policies would help ensure that planning decisions reflect what the community would like to see happen in the neighbourhood area.

Acklington Parish Council applied for the designation of the parish as a neighbourhood area for the purposes of preparing a neighbourhood plan. Northumberland County Council formally designated the neighbourhood area on 17th February 2018. Detailed public consultation followed to establish the views of the local community, and in late 2021 a steering group was set up to prepare a draft neighbourhood plan.

The Acklington neighbourhood area, designated for the purposes of section 61G(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, comprises the Parish of Acklington as shown on the Policies Map. The Neighbourhood Plan relates only to the Parish of Acklington.

Consultation Process and Community Engagement

There have been several stages of consultation leading to the production of the ANP. An initial consultation event was held in October 2020. Following this, a more detailed consultation was carried out to get feedback from the community on a proposed vision and objectives, with ideas for planning policies to address these objectives.

Local evidence has been produced, and evidence compiled by Northumberland County Council to support their Local Plan has also been used. A list of this evidence is included in Appendix B. All these documents, as well as the results of the public consultation, will form the Evidence Base for the neighbourhood plan.

Many of the issues raised by residents during the consultations have been addressed through the policies in the ANP. Protection of the existing settlement boundary in Acklington has been a key concern, with support for new housing development which is more directly related to the housing needs of people living in the neighbourhood area. Other matters that were raised in the consultation related to the community, community facilities, and the conservation of the historic environment and the Guyzance Conservation Area.

Some issues raised in the consultations, were not matters that could be addressed through planning policies.

This Regulation 14 Plan

This is the Regulation 14 (pre-submission consultation) version of the ANP, and comments are invited from all consultation bodies, local businesses and residents in the neighbourhood area on its content. The consultation period will take place for 6 weeks.

Once this stage of consultation has finished, the Steering Group and Acklington Parish Council will review all comments made and make amendments to the ANP as necessary. The ANP will then be submitted to Northumberland County Council who will publicise the Plan

for another 6 weeks. Following this, an independent examiner will be appointed by the Parish Council, and the ANP will be examined to ensure it meets the basic conditions (see Part 5 below) set out in legislation governing the neighbourhood planning process. Following recommendations from the examiner, the ANP may be further modified before proceeding to a referendum.

If the ANP is accepted by the majority of residents at a referendum, the ANP will form part of the Development Plan for the area, and policies within it will be used to determine planning applications in the neighbourhood area, alongside other policies in the Development Plan (the Northumberland Local Plan 2022).

Planning Policy Background

Neighbourhood Plans must pass a series of tests prescribed in legislation through the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. These tests are collectively known as ‘The Basic Conditions’. The Basic Conditions are:

- **having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the Neighbourhood Plan;**
- **the making of the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;**
- **the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the Development Plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);**
- **the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations; and**
- **prescribed conditions are met in relation to the Plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the Neighbourhood Plan. The following prescribed condition relates to Neighbourhood Plans:**
- **Regulation 32 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets out a further Basic Condition in addition to those set out in the primary legislation: that the making of the neighbourhood plan is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site (as defined in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012) or a European offshore marine site (as defined in the Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007) (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects). (See Schedule 2 to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)).**

How the ANP meets these requirements will be set out in detail in the Basic Conditions Statement which will be submitted with the ANP to Northumberland County Council at Submission (Regulation 15) stage.

Local Development Plan

Strategic policies in the Development Plan (NLP) for the neighbourhood area are the policies with which the ANP must be in general conformity. Strategic policies in the Development Plan are those policies identified as ‘strategic’ in the Northumberland Local Plan 2022. National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provide the most up to date planning policy and advice from central government. They contain guidance on the purpose of neighbourhood plans, and the contribution they can make at a local level to the planning system.

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Sustainable development is defined as ‘meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

How sustainable development can be achieved for planning purposes is contained in Chapter 2 of the NPPF. This identifies three overarching objectives to achieve sustainable development: Economic objectives (helping to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy), Social objectives (to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities) and Environmental objectives (to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment).

Policies in the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan focus on social and environmental objectives; although there are economic objectives identified, these objectives are met by existing policies in the Northumberland Local Plan, and it was considered unnecessary to repeat them further in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Paragraph 11 sets out how planning policies should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that plans should ‘positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change’.

Paragraph 13 states that neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.

Environmental Impact and EU Obligations

Directive 2001/42/EC relates to the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. This is often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. This directive is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the ‘SEA Regulations’) and it is these regulations that the plan must be compatible with to meet the Basic Conditions.

A request for a screening opinion to determine whether the Plan required a Strategic Environmental Assessment has been submitted to Northumberland County Council. The outcome of this screening opinion will determine whether the ANP will need to be assessed against the Habitats Regulations and whether it will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Acklington Parish

History of Acklington Parish

Acklington Civil Parish in Northumberland includes the settlements of Acklington, Guyzance, Brainshaugh and Acklington Park. Historically, Acklington and Acklington Park were both townships in the ancient Parish of Warkworth, whilst Guyzance was an extra-parochial district which also included Brainshaugh. These later became 3 separate civil parishes, until 1st of April 1955, when Acklington Park and Guyzance were merged into Acklington Civil Parish. Acklington Village is the main settlement in the parish. Other hamlets in the area are Guyzance and its surrounding areas of Brainshaugh, Bank House and Guyzance Bridge. There are other small farmstead groupings at North Broomhill, Cheevelly Steading and Cavil Head.

Neolithic ring carvings, Bronze Age human bones, an Iron Age settlement and a relic of a major Roman road bear testament to the early existence of human activity in this area.

Aecceley or Acklington, as it is now called, first came into being as a village when an Anglo Saxon farming family named Aeccel built their homes on this spot. Accurate records of the parish have been kept since these times.

Guyzance has existed since around 1242 when Robert de Hilton was its owner. The name is thought to be derived from a priory, built nearby for nuns in 1147, which was dedicated to St Wilfred of Gysnes. It is likely that the Norman settlement was located south of its current location by the river meander.

The Normans built Warkworth Castle in the 12th Century. Acklington and Guyzance were included within the parish of Warkworth and the inhabitants of both became bond tenants of the Lords of Warkworth. It was not until 1859 that Acklington became a parish in its own right.

During the 14th Century Northumberland fell victim to violent incursions from north of the Border. Acklington was left devastated, plundered and razed to the ground on many occasions. Worse was to follow with the arrival of the Black Death. It ravaged the area already laid low by the constant savagery from the Scots. Gradually the area recovered.

Modern History: Acklington

The Industrial Revolution came to the parish when a foundry was built in 1779 on the banks of the Coquet in Acklington Park. A curved dam designed by John Smeaton, even today considered to be the finest in Britain, was also constructed in order to provide power for the mill. In 1980, after several other manufacturing uses, the building was finally converted into private housing, now known as the Dye House indicating one of its former uses.

During Queen Victoria's reign Acklington saw the Railway Station, Village School and Parish Church erected. It was after the building of St John the Divine that Acklington gained its own parish.

Throughout the middle ages, and continuing right up to the present day, farming has been the enduring economic activity. A leading cattle mart, mainly auctioning prime cattle and sheep, also selling farm machinery, has been at Acklington for over a century.

Coal has been mined in the parish since the 18th Century. The last open cast mine closed in 1991 and the land restored to farming use.

In 1916 a small field, made into a landing strip, just south of Acklington, was used by the first biplanes during WW1. After 1918 it expanded and became known as RAF Acklington. It was to play a major part in the 2nd World War, particularly in the Battle of Britain.

A housing estate was built on the eastern side of the village to accommodate the officers and their families. Even today, although most houses are privately owned, it is locally referred to as 'The Married Quarters'.

After the war the importance of the airfield declined until finally Acklington prison was developed on the site of the RAF station in 1972. Apart from the Church which still holds a Sunday morning service, Acklington Village Hall, opened in 1925, provides the central hub, not only to the village, but for the wider community at large.

Modern History: Guyzance

By the 17th century, there were two rows of dwellings in Guyzance, and the common land had been enclosed by 1685. The evidence is not conclusive, but it would appear that the centre of the hamlet had moved northwards by this time, and the southern location abandoned. The present terraces of Guyzance Village were built in the 18th century and remodelled in the early 19th century.

The 1890s saw the creation of a country house at Barnhill Farm, by J.D. Milburn, an industrial entrepreneur and ship owner from Newcastle. The country residence became Guyzance Hall, taking its name from the adjacent village.

The village cottages became part of the Guyzance Hall estate in the 1920s, bought from the Duke of Northumberland, however this was a relatively short tenure with all cottages being

sold to private individuals from the 1960s onwards.

The hamlet of Guyzance has remained superficially unchanged since the 18th century with the exception of two houses built in the 1980s on allotment plots on the north side of the village. Guyzance was given Conservation Area status in 2008, recognising its distinctive and special atmosphere, not mirrored elsewhere in south Northumberland.

Acklington Parish Today

Acklington village is the main settlement in the neighbourhood area and has seen a significant amount of development in recent years, relative to its size. Acklington village has limited services and facilities, with the village hall, and church being the only ones (the school was closed in 2018). Most people in Acklington travel to Amble and beyond for local services.

Acklington has a relatively tightly drawn settlement boundary (see next section) which will limit further market housing development on the edge of the village.

Recent development in Acklington village has taken place over the last few decades (see Figure 3). In total, 69 new dwellings have been given planning permission in Acklington alone since 2019. This represents quite significant and rapid growth for what is a small village.

Most of the recent housing that has been permitted in Acklington has consisted of larger executive style homes. There are no restrictions on occupancy of this new housing, and several of those dwellings are now second homes or holiday homes. The community feel strongly that the type of housing delivered in recent years has not necessarily met the needs of people in the parish, with most housing remaining unaffordable for young families who would like to remain living in the area.

There are a number of listed buildings within the older part of Acklington, most notably the church, vicarage, old smithy and school. This part of Acklington is defined as a non-designated heritage asset in this Plan.

There are also several designated heritage assets (listed buildings) within the neighbourhood area, particularly in the village of Guyzance. The historic landscape in and around Guyzance is designated as a conservation area.

The whole neighbourhood area, although not within the Dark Sky Park, nevertheless benefits from low levels of light pollution. The nearby Northumberland National Park and most of Kielder Water and Forest Park became England's first International Dark Sky Park in 2013. Local people value the dark skies in the area, thanks to Acklington's proximity to the Dark Sky Park, and its rural position.

The rural character of the parish is reflected in the main area of business, farming. Farmland surrounds Acklington Village, much of it contract farmed. Acklington Mart is a busy auction venue, dealing in livestock and farm equipment sale. Local farms which have diversified include Acklington Park Farm with their brewery Rigg & Furrow supplying businesses in Northumberland and Tyneside. Coal Houses Farm has a touring caravan site and The Railway Inn has expanded its business to include holiday lets and a caravan and camping site.

Community consultation

Consultation events have been held by the Parish Council with local residents. A number of key issues were identified in the neighbourhood area which are summarised below:

- **There has been a significant amount of major housing development provided in recent years. These developments have not benefitted from good design and have not addressed a local housing**

- need.
 - Residents would like any future housing to be well integrated, smaller in scale and well-designed, meeting a need for young families and local people. A need for older people's housing and housing to meet Lifetime Homes Standard has also been identified.
 - There was a strong desire to conserve the character and historic setting of the village of Guyzance from inappropriate development.
 - The vast majority of people consulted felt it was really important to protect the natural environment, biodiversity and wildlife in the Parish, and retain the rural feel of the area.
 - There was a strong desire to support the needs of the local community by supporting the retention of existing community facilities and supporting local business, both new and existing.
 - Finally, there was a strong desire to ensure that new development is of high-quality design and sympathetic to the local environment.

Vision, Objectives, and Introduction to Planning Policies

Vision

The identification of these key issues led to the creation of a vision for Acklington Parish. The vision, which was consulted on with the local community is as follows and forms the core intention of this Neighbourhood Plan.

Acklington Neighbourhood Plan – Vision

That the parish of Acklington remains an attractive and sustainable place to live and work and that future development respects the quiet rural environment, the dark skies, and is in keeping with the historic character of the diverse settlements in the parish.

Objectives

To deliver this vision, a number of objectives have been identified:

Objective 1: To ensure that new development is sustainable, meets local needs, and is in keeping with the scale and design of existing buildings and places and preserves the beauty of the open countryside, valued local landscapes and dark skies.

Objective 2: To support the local community by the protection of existing, and the encouragement of new community facilities and by the maintenance of green spaces, outdoor recreation areas and the network of local footpaths and bridleways.

Objective 3: To support and encourage new local services and businesses, while protecting the tranquil rural character of the area and the amenity of residents

Objective 4: To enhance the natural environment by ensuring that new development delivers a net gain for biodiversity and that areas of value to wildlife are protected.

Objective 5: To ensure that new development preserves and enhances the character and integrity of the historic environment in the parish.

- Policies

There are 7 policies proposed in the ANP to deliver these objectives, recognising that there

are limitations to how many of these objectives can be achieved through planning policies alone.

- - **Policy ANP1 is about proposals for development in Acklington Village, identifying the character areas within the village, and how new development can reflect that special character.**
- - **Policy ANP2 is about principal occupancy dwellings in the neighbourhood area and restricts all new development to principal occupancy where the percentage of second/holiday homes and holiday lets is over 20% of the total number of dwellings.**
- - **Policy ANP3 identifies community facilities that will be protected and supported.**
- - **Policy ANP4 sets out the protection of the natural environment proposed in the ANP in relation to trees, hedgerows, and ancient woodland. It also seeks to enhance provision for biodiversity in the neighbourhood area.**
- - **Policy ANP5 lists the Local Green Spaces which are proposed for protection in the Parish. These have been identified by the local community as special places that they would like to see protected and a background paper explains the rationale for these in detail.**
- - **Policy ANP6 is specifically about development within the Guyzance Conservation Area and the supporting information identifies key parts of the historic landscape which are important to the conservation area and its setting.**
- - **Policy ANP7 is about development which affects non-designated heritage assets identified in the plan, including the historic core of Acklington.**

Reading the Neighbourhood Plan

It is essential that this Acklington Neighbourhood Plan is read as a whole document. All policies should be read alongside all other relevant policies in the ANP. This means that any proposal should be assessed and considered in accordance with the ANP as a whole and in accordance with the Northumberland Local Plan 2022.

Before each policy, under the policy title, is a section of explanatory text. This text consists of descriptive and explanatory matter in respect of the policies. The text is relevant to the interpretation of each policy to which it relates. Although the supporting text is not policy, it does assist with clarifying what the policy is trying to achieve, and the intention of that policy.

The next section sets out the planning policies in relation to specific local matters. There are 7 policies in total.

Development in Acklington village (ANP1)

A settlement boundary is already defined for the village of Acklington in the Northumberland Local Plan (2022). This is shown on the policies maps (and below for information). The landscape around Acklington is highly valued by people living in the area and the existing settlement boundary will conserve these landscapes by retaining a relatively tightly drawn boundary.

Figure 1: Settlement boundary for Acklington as defined in the Northumberland Local Plan 2022

The Parish Council, after consultation with the local community consider that the boundary should remain as it is in the Northumberland Local Plan, as it delivers the objectives set out by the local community of protecting the landscapes around the village and ensuring that the rest of the neighbourhood area is considered to be open countryside for planning purposes. The decision has been taken not to extend the settlement boundary, as the community feel that the village has absorbed enough development to satisfy the market housing need in this area.

The community do consider that there could be a need for more affordable housing in Acklington; however, this could be delivered on the edge of the settlement outside the boundary as ‘rural exceptions sites’ (that is, affordable housing for identified local needs) and this would be managed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with Local Plan policy already set out in the Northumberland Local Plan.

Due to the number of planning permissions given for new housing in Acklington over the last 5-6 years, the housing requirement to be provided in the neighbourhood area is zero. Whilst the housing requirement is not a ‘maximum’ figure, the Parish Council and residents feel that Acklington cannot accommodate more large-scale housing within the Plan period.

The ANP therefore does not allocate any additional sites for further housing development. However, there may be small sites available within the village for new housing, as well as opportunities for conversions within the village and elsewhere in the neighbourhood area that could contribute to the local housing supply.

Although there is not considerable scope for new housing development in the village, there are some potential areas where new development can be provided, and it is also likely that there will be planning applications for other development (for example extensions to existing development, householder applications, changes of use applications, etc.)

This policy seeks to ensure that proposals for development in Acklington reflect the grain and character of the settlement. Different parts of Acklington have different characters depending on when the housing was built. At the core of the settlement is the historic area of the original village. The historic core of Acklington is defined on the policies map. Until relatively recently Acklington mainly consisted of two main character areas: the original historic core, and the mix of 20th century housing (see aerial photograph below taken in 2003).

Figure 2: Aerial photograph of Acklington prior to 21st century housing development (2003)

20th century housing

20th century housing

21st century housing

21st century housing

Historic Core (18th/19th century)

Historic Core (18th/19th century)

Figure 3: Character areas in Acklington village

The three main phases of development are shown on the map above. The historic core of the village consists of buildings mainly constructed during the 19th century. There are several listed buildings in this area. To the east (shaded blue) is a mix of 20th century housing. Some of these houses were built just after the war for RAF officers and their families and is

still locally referred to as ‘The Married Quarters’. with some more recent development (towards the centre of the village) built in the 1990s. The red areas are areas of housing that have been built very recently; much of which has been built within the last 5-10 years. Policy ANP1 identifies these areas as distinct character areas in the village.

The map below shows Acklington in the 1860s. Little has changed in terms of layout since that time, in the older part of the village, with the same long burgage style plots leading north from the dwellings situated on the main street frontage. The burgage plots to the east have now been lost to accommodate a new housing development which did little to respect the original historic plot layouts. On the south side of the main road sits the parsonage, church and graveyard. All the older farm buildings have either been converted or demolished to create new small estates (Dairy Court Field House Farm plots). Elsewhere in the village, the historic pattern of fields remains, and some of these are designated as Local Green Spaces (identified later in the Plan under Policy ANP5). The older part of Acklington remains relatively intact, and it is this area that is identified on the Policies Map as the ‘historic core’ of Acklington and shown above as the Historic Core character area.

Figure 4: Map of Acklington 1860s

This policy seeks to ensure that new development in Acklington respects the distinct character of each of these areas as set out in the policy, and also seeks to ensure that the trees, verges and open spaces in Acklington that are special to its character are conserved and where possible enhanced.

Part a) of the policy refers specifically to the historic core of Acklington. Many of the dwellings are characterised by the following materials and design:

- **Random rubble stonework with a lime mortar mix**
- **Small dormer windows on single storey cottages/modest cottages**
(see photograph below)
- **larger dormer windows on grander storey properties**
- **Sandstone parapet coping stones on roof gables**
- **Terrace arrangements with long front and back gardens**
- **Natural slate roofs**
- **Stone chimneys with terracotta pots**
- **Timber windows (originally sash)**
- **Front gardens with a low walled frontage and paths leading to the houses.**
- **To the north, the dwellings have long burgage plots which form a key element of the character of this part of the village, which originally had similar long field plots to the east (now lost to new housing development).**
- **Trees hedgerows and greenery are a key part of the character of the village**

Figure 5: Stone single storey cottages, front gardens with low stone wall. Coping stones and larger dormers on larger houses

Policy ANP1 seeks to ensure that new development in Acklington will respect the special character of different parts of the village. In other parts of the village the character is different: The ‘Married quarters’ area to the east comprises a mix of render/brick properties set back with small front gardens. Open spaces are an important element of this part of Acklington, with play areas and a number of smaller green spaces and verges incorporated into the development.

Figure 6: OS Map published in 1957 showing RAF quarters in Acklington

Figure 7: 1950s housing in Acklington – old RAF quarters

Other areas of Acklington tend to have distinct visible characters; for instance the 1950s development along Acklington Drive and Quarry Avenue comprise distinctive 1950s style and materials, with spacious front gardens and large amounts of green space incorporated into the development.

Some other areas in Acklington have been redeveloped from older farm buildings/farmsteads, for example Field House to the south.

In all areas, trees, hedgerows and verges are an important and highly valued feature, and this is reflected in the policy. Some parts of the village are better connected by public footpath links than others, and the policy seeks to support proposals to improve off-road footpath links between housing development and the rest of the village.

Policy ANP1 – Development in Acklington Village

Proposals for development in Acklington village must have special regard to the following elements:

a) Proposals for development within the and historic core of the village as defined on the policies map, must be carefully designed to reflect the historic character of the area. Special regard will be had to materials, design and layout of development proposals in this area. Trees, hedgerows and the remaining traditional burgage plot layouts along the northern part of the village must be incorporated into any design for new development.

b) In other areas of the village which have been more recently developed in the 20th and 21st century, new development must respect the existing density and layout of development and seek to reflect the materials and character of the area in which it is situated. Opportunities should be taken wherever possible to improve landscaping along the boundaries of development sites, particularly where this is adjacent to the open countryside.

c) Existing trees, hedgerows and other open spaces must be retained within the village and any proposals for development in Acklington village must incorporate significant new planting and landscaping to improve biodiversity and habitats within the village, particularly where the development site shares a boundary with a Local Green Space, green verges and hedgerows.

d) The construction of new footpath links to improve links between existing housing development and improve connectivity within the village will be supported.

Principal Occupancy Housing Policy (ANP2)

This policy is proposed in response to the increase in the number of second and holiday homes in some parts of the neighbourhood area. While it is understood that in some cases holiday homes can bring financial benefits to areas by the way of local spending by holiday makers, the lack of year-round, and or permanent occupancy means that some places, such as Guyzance, Cavil Head and Bank House are beginning to lose their sense of community.

The following policy ANP2 is specifically about principal occupancy dwellings and limits all new housing to principal occupancy dwellings, where the net number of non-principal occupancy dwellings (second homes, holiday homes and holiday lets) in that area exceeds 20% at the time of the application.

For the purposes of this policy, the principal occupancy areas are broken down into three

distinct areas as set out below:

- **Acklington village (within the settlement boundary defined in the Northumberland Local Plan 2022),**
- **Guyzance Conservation Area as defined on the policies map,**
- **the rest of the neighbourhood area (including the hamlets and farmsteads, excluding Acklington and Guyzance areas cited above)**

At the time of drafting, Guyzance Village (within the Conservation Area boundary) has approximately 29% second homes/holiday lets, and Acklington village has an estimated 4%. Unless it can be demonstrated otherwise, any new dwellings, either new-build or conversions within the Conservation Area boundary for Guyzance will be principal occupancy only.

Policy ANP2 - Principal Occupancy Dwellings

All new dwellings proposed in the neighbourhood area will be for principal occupancy only where the non-principal dwelling occupancy rates in the defined areas of Acklington, Guyzance and the rest of the neighbourhood area exceed 20%.

Community Facilities Policy (ANP3)

There are a limited number of community facilities in the neighbourhood area. At one time Acklington had a school, police station, post office and church. The only facilities remaining within the village are the village hall and the church. Nearby is the Railway Inn, which is a well facility just outside the village. These facilities that were identified as being of value by the local community are listed in Policy ANP3 and are shown on the Policies Map.

The NPPF promotes the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Policy ANP3 will ensure local businesses and services are retained and will only be redeveloped when there is genuinely no longer a need for them.

The Parish Council may separately consider registering certain businesses and facilities as Assets of Community Value which would give the community the right to bid for those assets should they come on the market.

Policy ANP3 – Community Facilities

The following community facilities are identified on the Policies Map.

CF1: Acklington Village Hall

CF2: St John the Divine Church and Graveyard (Acklington)

CF3: Railway Inn (Acklington)

Development proposals resulting in the loss of any of these community facilities will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the facility is either no longer required by the community, or no longer economically viable. In order to demonstrate that a facility is no longer economically viable, the facility must be marketed for freehold or leasehold purposes for the existing use at a reasonable commercial price for at least six months without an appropriate offer being received.

Green Infrastructure Policies (ANP4 and ANP5)

This section contains policies on local green spaces, trees and hedgerows and biodiversity and wildlife.

The consultation with the community showed that the green network of footpaths and bridleways were particularly important to residents.

ANP4: Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows and Wildlife Corridors

The NPPF states that plans should identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national

and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

To achieve this, the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan includes the identification of designated ancient woodland areas, re-planted ancient woodland, Priority Habitat Woodland and the River Coquet SSSI. It also identifies the habitat improvement zones identified by Natural England. Paragraph 180 c) of the NPPF states that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons. The wholly exceptional reasons relate to national infrastructure projects; there are none planned or likely in the neighbourhood area, so the policy is clear that any development involving the loss or damage to ancient woodlands will be refused.

Figure 8: Ancient Woodland along the River Coquet SSSI, Guyzance

To support connectivity, the policies map shows the identified habitats, and the policy seeks to improve the connectivity between them. The policy also seeks to support smaller scale connectivity for instance through the provision of hedgerows in development. Existing hedgerows are important for biodiversity and are protected through the Hedgerows Regulations.

Veteran trees also provide an irreplaceable habitat and also have significant amenity value in some cases. This is particularly the case in Guyzance, where there are a significant number of veteran trees as part of the wider woodland areas. Proposals that involve the loss of veteran trees will not be supported as they are by definition irreplaceable, being in some instances, hundreds of years old. Proposals for the loss of other trees will also be strongly resisted except in exceptional circumstances, such as where a tree is diseased or dangerous, or where the amount of new habitat to be created as a result of the development outweighs the loss of the trees. Where the loss of a tree is unavoidable then replacement trees at a ratio of 3:1 should be planted on site. Trees make a huge contribution to the character of the Guyzance Conservation Area:

‘They appear in many different landscape combinations and enhance the appearance of the plateau and valley. They have been planted as parkland, the traditional visual foil to the English country house, as avenues enhancing the approaches to such houses, and as amenity stands of trees that break up and add interest to the valley views and spaces. Dense woodland softening the drama of tributary ravines and providing a network of woodland walks also characterises the area.’

The River Coquet is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It rises at Coquet Head on the Scottish border and flows generally eastward, draining the southern flanks of the Cheviot Hills, meanders through the neighbourhood area, at times forming the parish boundary, before finally discharging to the North Sea at Amble. The Warkworth Dam marks the tidal limit.

The River Coquet is an excellent, clean river system of high conservation and ecological value. The river is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as part of the National Programme of 27 river SSSI's. Bankside habitats range from woodland fringed lower river and wooded lowlands through the hay meadows, herb rich valleys and gravel haughs of lower Coquetdale to the upper moorlands of the Cheviots. This relatively undisturbed environment provides excellent habitats for wildlife including several protected species. Within the Coquet catchment there are 10 other SSSI's which directly influence or

are influenced by the water environment. The principal habitats protected are hay meadows, woodland, and the estuary.

Finally, the policy seeks the delivery of at least 10% measurable biodiversity net gain as part of any development proposal. This requirement will soon be enshrined in law through the Environment Act, and the delivery of biodiversity improvements is already a requirement in planning policy. The measurement of biodiversity net gain will be carried out using the 'biodiversity metric' which is currently being developed by DEFRA. There will be some exceptions to the BNG requirement, for instance, developments which would have a negligible impact on biodiversity, developments which are permitted by virtue of the General Permitted Development Order, householder developments and applications for change of use. Policy ANP4 – Woodlands, Trees, Hedgerows and Wildlife Corridors

Planning permission will not be given for development which involves the loss of any areas designated as ancient woodland, ancient re-planted woodland and areas that comprise the Woodland Priority Habitat Network as shown on the Policies Map.

Within a 10m buffer of ancient woodland and re-planted ancient woodland, proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they provide additional habitat or contribute to connectivity of existing ancient woodland.

Planning permission will not be given for proposals that involve the loss of mature hedgerows. Proposals for new development should, where feasible, include new planting by way of tree and hedgerow planting to link existing hedgerows and woodlands and improve wildlife connectivity throughout all parts of the neighbourhood area.

Proposals for development which involve the loss of veteran trees will not be supported. Proposals for development which involve the loss of other mature trees will only be supported in exceptional circumstances and where any trees lost are replanted at a ratio of 3:1.

Wildlife Corridors and the Network Enhancement Zone are shown on the Policies Map. Proposals for development in these areas must demonstrate how they contribute to the improvement of biodiversity in these areas.

Development within the River Coquet SSSI identified on the Policies Map, or areas likely to have an impact on it will not be supported unless the benefits of the development in the location clearly outweigh both the likely impact on the features of the SSSI and the impacts on the national network of SSSIs.

All new development (except those identified as exceptions in the Environment Act) will be expected to deliver at least 10% measurable biodiversity net gain.

ANP5: Local Green Space Policy

Paragraphs 99 and 100 of the NPPF give local communities the opportunity to identify and protect areas of green space which are special to the local community. Several criteria must be met, and many green spaces which have been identified by the community will not be suitable for allocation as Local Green Space. For example, fields and areas of farmland might be valued for their landscape value, but they (in most instances) do not meet the tests set out in the NPPF. Only those spaces that meet the criteria are allocated in Policy ANP5. For land to qualify as Local Green Space it must meet the following tests as set out in the NPPF (2021):

- Be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- Be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a

particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

- Be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

Once identified, these Local Green Spaces will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of Green Belts, and planning applications in these areas will be determined in accordance with Green Belt policy. The Local Green Spaces identified in Policy ANP5 are of particular significance to the local communities in the areas in which they are situated. These spaces are shown on the Policies Maps. Each Local Green Space identified has been assessed to ensure it meets the criteria set out in the NPPF. A full description of the sites and their value is provided in the Local Green Space evidence report.

Policy ANP5: Local Green Spaces

The sites listed below and shown on the Policies Map are designated as areas of Local Green Space which will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt:

LGS1: Land north and east of St. Omer Road (Acklington)

LGS2: Land and play area to the north of Churchill Way (Acklington)

LGS3: Land to the southwest of Churchill Way (Acklington)

LGS4: Rigg and Furrow fields on the north side of B6345 (Acklington)

LGS5: Open space in Guyzance Village

Historic Environment Policies (ANP6 and ANP7)

Policy ANP6: Guyzance Conservation Area

In accordance with strategic and national planning policy, new development within the Guyzance Conservation Area must either preserve or enhance its character. In order to identify what is important about the conservation area, the appraisal identifies what is known as its 'special interest'.

The form, layout and size of the conservation area makes it particularly vulnerable to change. The layout of the hamlet known as Guyzance Village is a single simple street orientated east-west.

Figure 9: Guyzance Village layout looking east

There is no definable development grain, and its density is low, all of which give it a simple, rural character. The plots of agricultural land on the south side of Guyzance Village open on to the street and reflect the hamlet's agricultural origins. These areas are designated as Local Green Space. The interplay of historic buildings and small fields is a vital part of the hamlet's rural character, and any change to this historic pattern would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Policy ANP6: Guyzance Conservation Area and Guyzance Village

Proposals for development within the Guyzance Conservation Area must preserve or enhance the special interest of the conservation area in terms of its historic, architectural, industrial, agricultural and landscape value as defined in the Guyzance Conservation Area Appraisal and respect the prevailing density and form of the conservation area.

Any proposals which would result in harm to the special interest of the conservation

area must provide clear and convincing justification. Where less than substantial harm arises, a clear public benefit must be demonstrated.

Proposals for development which result in the loss of individual trees, areas of woodland and hedgerows in the Guyzance conservation area will not be supported.

Due to the importance of open spaces within the Guyzance Conservation Area, all proposals within the main built form of the settlement of Guyzance will be limited to proposals comprising the sympathetic conversion, extension or redevelopment of existing buildings.

All proposals for residential development, including conversions, within the Guyzance Conservation Area must comply with Policy ANP2 which secures principal occupancy.

ANP7: Non-designated heritage assets

A number of buildings, landscapes and places have been identified as non-designated heritage assets. These assets are of local historic interest, and the supplementary 'non-designated heritage assets' report contained in the evidence base contains more information about the special interest of each of these buildings or places.

The non-designated heritage assets are shown on the policies maps, and include the Acklington Historic Core area.

Figure 10: Pillboxes in Acklington, identified as non-designated heritage assets

ANP6: Non-designated Heritage Assets

Non-designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area are identified on the Policies Map and listed in Appendix A. Development proposals affecting any non-designated heritage asset or its setting, must be sensitively designed having regard to the historic significance of the heritage asset and its setting.

Monitoring and Review

- Monitoring

The Acklington Neighbourhood Plan sets out the long-term spatial vision for the area with objectives and policies to deliver that vision in the period up to 2036.

Effective monitoring by Acklington Parish Council is essential to ensure the ANP is truly achieving sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. It also provides information to establish whether policies are effective, and whether there are changes needed to policies in the longer term.

The Parish Council will undertake regular monitoring of planning applications, particularly regarding Policy ANP2, and the percentage of holiday lets in the neighbourhood area. When/if the figure exceeds 20% for the village of Acklington and/or the rest of the neighbourhood area, the Parish Council will inform NCC so that they can be informed in their decision-making and ensure that any new residential development following that time has a principal occupancy agreement imposed.

Decision making on planning applications still rests with Northumberland County Council who have their own monitoring procedures in place. Acklington Parish Council will, however, undertake its own monitoring to evaluate the level of progress being made towards delivering the wider vision of the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan.

- Review

It may be necessary to review the ANP in light of any significant policy shifts in the future.

APPENDIX A:

West House, Guyzance

Water Pump in field to south of Guyzance

Ridge and furrow fields to the south of Guyzance Village

Ridge and furrow fields to the north of Guyzance Village

Ridge and furrow fields to the east of Guyzance Village

Pill box north of Brainshaugh

North Lodge, Guyzance

Pill Box at south end of viaduct over River Coquet

Pill Box Acklington Type 22

Pill Box Acklington Hexagonal

Acklington village historic core

Acklington village water pump

Well in Acklington

Cow byre south of Waterside Cottage

WWII memorial at Smeaton dam

Hemmel to south of Barnhill Farm

Bank House, Bank House Farm and Bank House Cottages

Acklington airfield

Acklington RAF runway, chapel and hanger

APPENDIX B: EVIDENCE AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

National Planning Practice Guidance (as updated)

Northumberland County Council Local Plan (2022)

Northumberland County Council Strategic Housing Availability Land Assessment (2019)

Northumberland County Wide Housing Needs Survey Final Report (updated 2015)

SEA Screening Report 2023 (NCC to be issued)

Habitats Regulations Screening Report 2023 (to be issued)

Guyzance Conservation Area Appraisal (NCC)

Topic Paper 1: Acklington Parish Council Local Green Space Assessment (October 2022)

Topic Paper 2: Acklington Parish Council Non-Designated Heritage Assets Report (including Acklington Historic Core) (October 2022)

Topic Paper 3: Community Facilities

Topic Paper 4: Biodiversity and Woodland in the Neighbourhood area

Topic Paper 5: Second homes in the Neighbourhood area

Acklington Parish Council Consultation Record and Responses

Glossary of Terms

Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) **Affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

b) **Starter homes:** is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

c) **Discounted market sales housing:** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership:** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

Amenity: A positive element or elements that contribute to the positive character of an area, such as lack of noise and disturbance, openness, landscape, townscape, opportunities for recreation etc.

Basic Conditions: The Localism Act (the Act) sets basic conditions that neighbourhood development plans or orders must meet. These are that the plan or order must: a) have appropriate regard to national policy and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, b) must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development c) must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area and d) must not breach, and be otherwise compatible with, EU and Human Rights obligations

Biodiversity: The whole variety of life encompassing all genetics, species and ecosystem variations, including plants and animals.

Community Facilities: Local services and facilities that benefit the community, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Density (of development): The amount of building within an area of land. For housing it is expressed as the number of dwellings per hectare.

Development: Defined under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act as 'the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any building or other land.'

Development Plan: The complete set of statutory land use policies and proposals for an area, used in making planning decisions. It includes adopted council development plan documents such as Local Plans, Core Strategies and Neighbourhood Plans. In this Neighbourhood area the Development Plan consists of the Castle Morpeth Local Plan (2003) until it is superseded by the Northumberland Local Plan (due to be 'made' in 2020) and the Neighbourhood Plan when 'made'.

Environmental report: The report that documents the assessment of the draft Plan and accompanies the draft Plan for pre-submission consultation. The environmental report needs to contain certain information as set out in Schedule 2 to the SEA Regulations 2004.

Evidence base: The information and data gathered by local authorities and used to inform policy development. Evidence base data is also gathered to prepare a neighbourhood Plan and is submitted to the Examiner along with the other Examination Documents.

Habitat: An area or natural environment in which an organism, species or population normally lives. Habitats take many forms and should not be considered in isolation as they are linked and overlap with each other.

Habitats Regulations Assessments (HRA): This is a general term which describes the full step-wise process required in making assessments of the impacts on European sites under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, including the steps of screening for likely significant effects and making appropriate assessments.

Heritage Asset: 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).

Independent Examination: The process by which an independent person examines a plan document to ensure that it is 'sound' (in the case of a Local Plan) or meets Basic Conditions (in the case of a neighbourhood Plan).

Infrastructure: The physical entities (for example roads, railways, sewers, pipes, telecommunications lines) that are necessary for communities to function and move around.

Landscape Character: The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.

Local Green Space: A designation that provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. They can be identified through Local Plans or by communities in Neighbourhood Plans.

Local Plan: The documents and maps that make up the plan for the future development of a local area.

Material consideration: A matter that should be taken into account in making a planning decision.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): A Government document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): The Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2018 and the National Planning Practice Guidance is regularly updated. Together, the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance set out what the Government expects of local authorities.

Neighbourhood area: Acklington Parish has been designated as the Neighbourhood area.

Neighbourhood Plan: A Plan by a Parish or Town Council - the 'qualifying body' - for a particular Neighbourhood area. Once it has been accepted by the local community through a Referendum, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan.

Northumberland County Council: The unitary authority for Northumberland as of 1st April 2009.

Northumberland Local Plan: The Northumberland Local Plan was adopted in March 2022 and forms the Development Plan for this area alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

Previously Developed Land (PDL) or Brownfield Land: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Rural exception site: Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Site of Special Scientific Interest: Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems): A sequence of water management practices and facilities designed to drain surface water in a manner that will provide a more sustainable approach than more conventional practices, such as routing run-off through a pipe to a watercourse.

Sustainable development: Defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Also defined in the NPPF states in paragraph 7 that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

Sustainable transport modes: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.