

NCC Case Officer Initial Comments (on earlier draft – Jan 2023)

Policy ANP1: Settlement Boundary for Acklington

Policy ANP1 identifies a settlement boundary for Acklington and describes how development within and outside that boundary will be treated. However, the adopted Northumberland Local Plan includes a settlement boundary for Acklington which I believe would be duplicated by the Neighbourhood Plan. Local Plan Policy STP 1 sets out the spatial strategy for development in the County and identifies Acklington as a "small village". Policy STP 1(d) states that "Small villages...will support a proportionate level of development...". STP 1(e) goes on to state that "sustainable development will be supported within Green Belt inset boundaries and within settlement boundaries defined on the Local Plan policies map or in neighbourhood plans". Since the settlement boundary is already included on the Local Plan policies map, it is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan need not repeat this as it does not offer any additional protection over and above that which already exists in adopted planning policy.

Policy ANP2: Principal Occupancy Dwellings

This policy seeks to ensure that all new housing development is for principal residency only, where non-principal occupancy is above 20%. It states that these areas will be defined in the Plan. Currently, a 20% threshold (as set out in Local Plan Policy HOU 10) needs to be met before requiring any new Use Class C3 dwellings to be occupied solely as a principal residence, and not be used as a second or holiday home. It is important to note that, at present, the Local Plan Policy relies on the 2011 census information, which places Acklington below the 20% threshold. Currently therefore, Policy HOU 10 does not apply to Acklington Parish. When the 2021 census data is published, it will allow an updating of the table that Policy HOU 10 relies upon, and the Policy would henceforth be applied to any parish that meets the 20% threshold.

The Parish Council would therefore need to provide robust evidence to show that the percentage of non-permanent occupancy has crept above the 20% threshold within a defined area. Subject to sufficient supporting evidence, this could be seen to be in general conformity with the Local Plan.

Policy ANP3: Community Facilities

Is there a background paper or any form of evidence sitting behind this policy? It would be useful to be able to see how the PC has selected the community facilities included within the Plan as well as any which may have been considered but not included and any reasons for this.

Policy ANP4: Woodlands, Trees, Hedgerows and Wildlife Corridors

As we come to map these on the Policies Map, it would be good to see exactly where these are and what evidence sits behind wanting to designate these. It probably wouldn't be appropriate to include every wooded area in the Parish on the policies map so there would need to be some justification for the inclusion of the ones that are selected.

Policy ANP5: Local Green Space

The map included below shows the extent of County Council land ownership in respect of the land north of the B6345 to the east of Acklington Village (identified as site LGS5 in the policy). This land is part of the highway and as such, the County Council's Strategic Estates are likely to object to its inclusion in the Plan as Local Green Space as this would likely cause issues regarding any highway works in future. It is therefore our opinion that LGS5 should be removed from the policy. The land shaded orange is Freehold and the small pink area is showing as having been disposed of, so is no longer in NCC ownership.

In addition, the highway verge opposite the Village Hall and Cheviot Meadows is also in NCC ownership. I've included this below too.

I feel that it is important to point out that Planning Practice Guidance provides some guidance

on Local Green Space with regard to land ownership. I have included an extract below, which should be helpful regarding the site west of 14 Churchill Way:

- *A LGS does not need to be in public ownership. However, before any land is proposed for designation as LGS it is essential that landowners are made aware of that intention at an early stage of plan preparation. Landowners will have opportunities to make representations in respect of proposals in a draft plan. (Paragraph 019 Reference ID: 37-019-20140306)*

Policy ANP7: Guyzance Conservation Area

It is recognised that this policy is not yet finalised. However, it is considered that the policy should include key characteristics/features from the Conservation Area Character Assessment and provide a clear policy relating to these. For instance, regarding criterion (c), it should clearly set out which trees/hedgerows are particularly important to the setting of the conservation area.

Policy ANP8: Non-Designated Heritage Assets

In relation to the historic core, is there a background paper relating to this and the wider non-designated heritage assets? It would be useful to see what has informed this and what criteria are being used to identify and evaluate the non-designated heritage assets which will be included within the Plan.

In addition to the above, it is noted that the coastal mitigation policy has not yet been added to the Plan; the County Council's advice is that this should be included prior to consultation on the Plan.