

# West Bedlington Neighbourhood Plan

## Pre-Submission Draft

September 2025

2025-2040



## Foreword

The West Bedlington Neighbourhood Plan sets out the opportunities and challenges for our plan to address. It includes a positive vision, strategy and range of policies that will guide development in West Bedlington for the period to 2040. These include, but not limited to, the quality of life for our residents, community well-being, local economy and accessibility.

This draft West Bedlington Neighbourhood Plan has been drawn up by a working group of town councillors with input from residents and community groups. The preparation of the plan was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We undertook consultation on a draft plan during spring 2021. However, following the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan as well as feedback, we decided to undertake further work on design, green spaces and heritage. This work has informed this updated draft plan.

Our draft plan looks forward to 2040 and suggests policies and proposals that we believe will sustainably and effectively manage the future growth and development of West Bedlington particularly by ensuring our heritage and environmental assets are protected and enhanced.

Once adopted, the policies within the West Bedlington Neighbourhood Plan will be used by planning officers at Northumberland County Council to determine planning applications. The plan will also be used by planning inspectors when deciding planning appeals. It will be part of the statutory development plan for the area and will provide further details to the strategic policies set out within the Northumberland Local Plan.

The working group have put in a huge amount of work to get to this point and on behalf of West Bedlington Town Council I would like to thank all those who have inputted to it.

The town council look forward to receiving comments on the draft plan.

Councillor Christine Taylor  
Chair of West Bedlington Town Council

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# 1. Introduction

## Background to neighbourhood planning

- 1.1 Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood plans are community-led, prepared by town and parish councils and in areas without town or parish councils they are prepared by neighbourhood forums. Neighbourhood plans set out guidance on how new development will be managed. They do this by creating land use 'planning policies'. Plans can deal with a wide range of issues like housing, employment, heritage and transport. In some cases, they may only focus on one or two issues that are of particular importance in a local area. Policies within neighbourhood plans cannot block development or support less than already committed in the statutory development plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.
- 1.2 Neighbourhood plans can also cover issues which are not related to the use and development of land. They can provide a useful document in which a town or parish council can establish priorities for action to improve their area. These are often referred to as 'community actions'. However, the main purpose of a neighbourhood plan is to set policies for the use and development of land.
- 1.3 Once a neighbourhood plan has been: examined by an independent examiner; agreed at the referendum stage by the local community; and 'made' (brought into legal force) by the local planning authority it becomes part of the statutory development plan. Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.

## Planning context

- 1.4 As they are part of the development plan, neighbourhood plans must be prepared in accordance with legal requirements. The way in which neighbourhood plans are prepared and the policies they contain are tested by an independent examiner who assesses whether the plan meets the 'basic conditions' to ensure they are legally compliant. Neighbourhood plans must:
  - Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
  - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan;
  - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
  - Be compatible with legal obligations.

### National planning policy and guidance

- 1.5 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

### Development plan

- 1.6 The development plan for Northumberland comprises the Northumberland Local Plan ('the local plan'), which was adopted by Northumberland County Council (NCC) in March 2022. The West Bedlington Neighbourhood Plan ('the plan') has been informed by the local plan and its evidence base.

### Sustainable development

- 1.7 The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development as defined by the NPPF. This specifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be the basis for every plan and every planning decision. In brief, 'sustainable development' is about

growth which delivers economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. The basic conditions statement, that will accompany the submission plan, will explain how the implementation of the plan is expected to contribute to sustainable development.

#### Legal obligations

- 1.8 Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with legal obligations, specifically strategic environmental assessment (SEA) regulations and habitats regulations assessment (HRA). A SEA is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of policies are taken into account before plans are brought into force. The HRA process aims to ensure that the plan will not result in significant damage to internationally important nature conservation sites. Where the potential for likely significant effects cannot be excluded, an appropriate assessment (AA) must be undertaken.
- 1.9 NCC provided a screening opinion on whether a SEA and/or AA was required for the plan. the conclusion of the screening opinion for the SEA was that based on the policies and proposals within the draft plan and the characteristics of the plan area, in the opinion of NCC, the plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and SEA is therefore not required. The HRA screening opinion was that the plan would not have a likely significant effect on European Sites within 10km of the plan boundary, either alone or in combination.

### **Background to the West Bedlington Neighbourhood Plan**

- 1.10 On 3 May 2016 the parish of West Bedlington was designated as a neighbourhood area for the purposes of neighbourhood planning, see figure 1. The process of preparing the plan began in the spring of 2016, when residents were asked to respond to a survey about the local area. During 2016 and 2017, the work on the plan was led by the Bedlington Partnership, overseen by the town council. In Autumn 2018 the town council made the decision to take the lead on the preparation of the plan.
- 1.11 There have been four rounds of early engagement to obtain views of the local community and other stakeholders on the scope of the plan.
- Spring 2016 – online survey to capture issues for the plan to address;
  - Autumn 2018 – sought further feedback on issues for the neighbourhood plan to address;
  - Spring 2019 – engagement on a draft vision, objectives and policy themes for the plan; and
  - Autumn 2019 – engagement on areas to be identified as local green space and protected open space.
- 1.12 In spring 2021 the town council consulted on a pre-submission draft plan. This consultation was due to take place in spring 2020, however because of the COVID-19 pandemic it was delayed for a year. Since the consultation on the draft plan in spring 2021, the Northumberland Local Plan was adopted in March 2022. The local plan contains a wide range of policies that do not need to be repeated within the neighbourhood plan. Therefore, following feedback from NCC and other stakeholders, the town council decided to undertake further work on the neighbourhood plan and seek further feedback prior to its submission for examination.
- 1.13 The early engagement and updated evidence base informed the preparation of this document, which is the revised pre-submission draft plan. This draft plan identifies:
- The **context** in which the plan has been prepared – including an overview of West Bedlington and the **opportunities and challenges** for the plan to address;

- A **positive vision** for the future of the West Bedlington Neighbourhood Area;
- How the vision of the plan will be **delivered through planning policies** i.e. the policies that **will be used to determine planning applications** within the plan area – providing a framework for sustainable development; and
- How the vision of the plan will be **delivered through community actions** i.e. measures which are **intended to encourage action and influence decisions** taken by relevant bodies.

1.14 Full details of the engagement undertaken and how this has informed the preparation of the plan will be included within a statement of consultation which will accompany the submission draft plan.

1.15 The period covered by the plan is to 2040, during this period, the neighbourhood plan will be reviewed and updated where required.

1.16 The background documents that have informed the preparation of this pre-submission plan are available online at: [westbedlington.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/](http://westbedlington.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/).

### **How to get involved**

1.17 The draft plan has been informed by community engagement and evidence work. We need your input to ensure the plan and policies we have drafted fully reflect the views of local people.

1.18 You can let us know your views on this draft plan in the following ways:

- By email to: [nplanwbtc@gmail.com](mailto:nplanwbtc@gmail.com) ; or
- By letter to: West Bedlington Town Council, Bedlington Community Centre, Front Street West, Bedlington, NE22 5TT.

1.19 Comments must be received **by noon on Monday 3 November 2025**.

### **Next steps**

1.20 Following the end of the consultation period the town council will review the responses received and identify if any changes need to be made to the plan and its evidence base.

1.21 The current timetable for the next stages of the plan making process is:

- Submission of the plan to NCC for examination: winter 2025/26;
- Consultation on the submission plan: spring 2026;
- Examination of the plan by an independent examiner: spring/summer2026;
- Referendum: summer/autumn 2026; and
- Neighbourhood plan 'made' by NCC: autumn 2026.



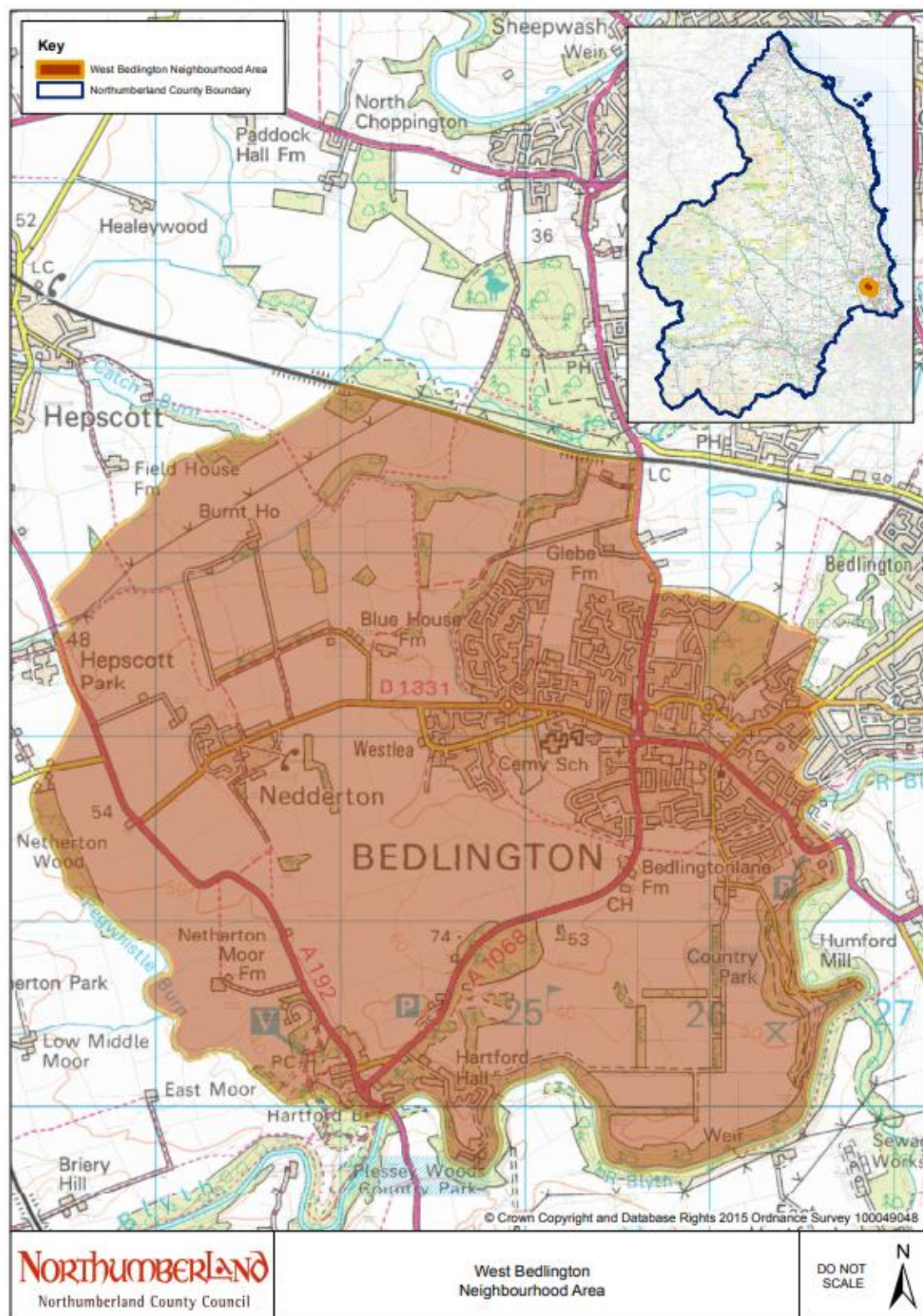


Figure 1 - West Bedlington Neighbourhood Area

## **2. The key issues for the West Bedlington Neighbourhood Plan**

### **Background to West Bedlington**

#### The growth of the town

- 2.1 West Bedlington has a long history with Saxon origins. There is a suggestion that the remains of St Cuthbert rested at the site of St Cuthbert's church in 1069. Bedlington was previously part of County Durham, until 1844 when it was made part of Northumberland.
- 2.2 In the 1730s the market town began to change its focus to that of the industries of ironstone and coal. Bedlington became pivotal to infrastructure production for the new railway industry led by the Stephenson's of Newcastle. Commerce, industry and housing flourished, plus churches, schools, institutions and many pubs were developed. By the late 1900s, collieries and miners' terraces were added to the town, as well as upmarket housing.
- 2.3 During the late twentieth century, modern housing and low-density development was built to the north. Over the last 5 years there has been a number of large sites granted planning permission for residential development to the north (Glebe Farm – 500 units) and west (Blue House Farm – 180 units) of the plan area.

#### Population and housing

- 2.4 The Census identifies that in 2021, the parish had a population of 9,920 residents, living in 4,493 households. With regard to the age profile: 60% of residents were aged between 16 and 64; 24% aged 65 and over; with 16% of the population aged 15 and under.
- 2.5 In 2021, 90% of housing was described as a whole house or bungalow and 10% of the accommodation stock was described as flats, maisonettes or apartments. 338% of households owned their homes outright, with 33% owned with a mortgage or loan, 15% of households were in the social rented sector and 14% private rented.
- 2.6 Of those aged 16 or over, 55% were economically active, with 2.5% unemployed. The main industries that residents were employed in 2021 were: professional occupations (18%), associate professional and technical occupations (14%), managers, directors and senior officials (12%), administrative and secretarial occupations (11%), caring, leisure and other service occupations (11%) and skilled trades occupations (11%).
- 2.7 Parish level health information illustrates that in 2021, 45% of the community considered they were in very good health, 33% considered themselves to be in good health, 16% in fair health, 5% in bad health and 1% in very bad health.

#### Services, facilities and connectivity

- 2.8 The plan area provides a number of services and facilities to meet the day to day needs of local residents, including: schools, convenience stores, public houses and social clubs, cricket and golf clubs, a community centre and churches. However, residents rely on neighbouring towns such as Cramlington and Morpeth to gain access to a wider range of services and facilities. The town centre includes a large vacant brownfield site with proposals for its redevelopment to improve the retail offer of the town now being taken forward.
- 2.9 West Bedlington is well connected to the strategic road network, with the A189 located to the east, this connects Bedlington to Ashington and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea in the north and



Cramlington and the Tyneside conurbation to the south. The A1068 also connects Bedlington to Ashington, while the A193 provides a link to Blyth to the east. The B1331 links Bedlington to the A192, connecting the town to Morpeth.

### Environment

- 2.10 Residents of the plan area benefit from easy access to a wealth of green spaces, including Humford Woods, Attlee Park, Plessey Woods, Gallagher Park and Doctor Pit Park. There are also important environmental designations within the plan area, including ancient woodland, local nature reserves and local wildlife sites. The centre of Bedlington is designated as a conservation area and the plan area contains 33 listed buildings, three of which are grade II\*.

### **Key issues**

- 2.11 Early engagement on the plan identified that there were a number of important issues for the neighbourhood plan to look to address through planning policies, including the:
- Importance of conserving and enhancing the valued natural and built environment, particularly green spaces/ networks and the heritage of the area;
  - Need to support the creation of new employment opportunities;
  - Lack of services and community facilities, as well as protecting existing facilities;
  - Concerns over whether the provision of infrastructure will keep pace with the level of development across the plan area, particularly roads, school and health care capacity;
  - Lack of affordable housing;
  - Need to support improvements in the town centre – more attractive shops and restaurants; and
  - Importance of allotments.
- 2.12 In addition, feedback suggested that the following matters should be considered through the development of appropriate community actions:
- Need to continue to celebrate the important heritage of the area;
  - Desire for improvements to the local environment e.g., townscape enhancements;
  - Concern over increased levels of dog fouling;
  - Management of antisocial behaviour;
  - Protecting community facilities as assets of community value;
  - Parking; and
  - Access to toilets.
- 2.13 The feedback from early engagement informed the preparation of the vision and objectives for the neighbourhood plan as well as the planning policies and community actions, which present opportunities to tackle the issues identified.

### 3. Vision and objectives

#### Vision

- 3.1 The vision sets out what the West Bedlington Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2040, it informs all the draft policies and community actions contained within this pre-submission plan.

| A Vision for West Bedlington   |
|--|
| <p><i>By 2040 West Bedlington will comprise a sustainable and cohesive community. There will be an appreciation of the importance of the heritage of the area, which is vital to the areas sense of place, as well as giving local communities a sense of belonging.</i></p> <p><i>Improvements will have been made to the local environment, employment opportunities, services and facilities which will enhance the quality of life of residents. Communities will be well-connected, via sustainable transport routes to major employment opportunities as well as greater services and facilities beyond the plan area.</i></p> <p><i>The important environmental and historic character of the area will have been maintained and enhanced by ensuring new development is of an appropriate scale and design, as well as reflecting the rural setting of the plan area. Important green spaces will be protected for the benefit of current as well as future generations.</i></p> |

#### Objectives

- 3.2 To deliver the vision, four objectives have been developed. The objectives clearly relate to the issues identified through early engagement. The planning policies and community actions contained within this pre-submission plan will deliver the objectives.

| Objectives  |
|---|
| <p><b>Objective 1 – Quality of life</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensuring new development is sustainable, contributing positively to the built, historic and natural environment of the plan area. New development will be managed to ensure that important green spaces are protected.</li></ul> <p><b>Objective 2 – Community well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Building on the strong sense of community across the plan area and recognising the diverse needs of existing and future residents, by: supporting the provision of different types of housing that people can afford and meet identified needs, including those of an ageing population; and ensuring the local community has access to the services and facilities they need.</li></ul> <p><b>Objective 3 – Local economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Supporting both existing and the creation of new employment opportunities across the plan area. Protecting and enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre as an important source of local employment and service centre.</li></ul> <p><b>Objective 4 – Accessibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Promoting access to sustainable modes of transport which connect local communities to employment as well as the services and facilities which they require. Ensuring that the environmental quality of the plan area is protected by effectively managing traffic.</li></ul> |

## 4. Quality of life

### Background

- 4.1 The quality of life within the plan area is highly valued by local residents, this has been confirmed during early engagement on the plan. Local residents want to ensure that new development contributes positively to the built, historic and natural environment of the plan area. As well as achieving a balance between development and protecting important green spaces. This is recognised within objective 1 of the neighbourhood plan.

### Design

- 4.2 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, it creates better places in which people live and work. It is fundamental to what the planning and development process should deliver and ensures that new development contributes positively to the local environment and therefore enhances the quality of life of local residents. The NPPF highlights the importance the government attaches to good design, recognising the significant role that neighbourhood plans<sup>1</sup> can play in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in new development.
- 4.3 In addition, that national design guide<sup>2</sup> sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. The national model design code provides further detailed guidance to promote successful design. There are several good practice guidance documents that can help inform the design of development, such as Building for a Healthy Life<sup>3</sup>, which is a government endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. Local communities, local authorities and developers are encouraged to use it to guide discussions about creating good places to live.
- 4.4 The importance of the built environment of the parish was one of the key issues highlighted through early engagement. To inform the approach to the design of new development, the West Bedlington Design Guidance and Codes Document (2024 DGDC) was prepared by AECOM, through the governments technical support package for neighbourhood planning. The DGDC document provides an analysis of the special characteristics of the parish and identifies design approaches to illustrate how future development can preserve and enhance local distinctiveness.
- 4.5 The DGDC document includes an analysis of the plan area and identification of different place types, which were informed following a consideration of different attributes of the area, including: the street pattern/urban grain, context/local character, plot shapes/sizes, public/open spaces, green infrastructure, boundary treatment/building lines, and building sizes/scale. The following five place types were identified:
- Town centre: A focal point offering amenities and services. Linear streets, flanked by shops or houses. Public spaces usually have historical significance and provide community activities. Buildings reflect development periods, ranging from medieval to Victorian or Edwardian. Include landmarks such as religious buildings or civic buildings with features such as monuments, street lighting, storefronts or signage. Typically a

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 132

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Building-for-a-Healthy-LifeJuly-2020.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Building-for-a-Healthy-LifeJuly-2020.pdf)

strong mix of uses and generally with terraced or semidetached housing or flats above retail units.

- Inner suburbs: Radiate from a core or linear street. Often served by an urban grid of connecting streets with terraced or semi-detached housing. Houses generally face the street with small front gardens. On-street parking is often a feature. Local shops and amenities are in proximity. Parks and public spaces are not typically present.
- Outer suburbs: Residential areas with detached, semi-detached, bungalows, and terraced houses, often with driveways and gardens. They have wide roads, grassed verges, street trees and cul-de-sac street patterns. On-plot parking is typical and there is a lack services within walking distance. Architectural styles are often postwar or contemporary. Outer suburbs often transition to green belt and countryside
- Retail and employment: Include industrial uses such as warehousing, storage, and manufacturing but excludes noxious or hazardous risk activity. Areas of retail and business parks are often located at the edge of settlements. Public services are located within proximity to centres.
- Open countryside: Often areas in a rural context with a scenic quality - used for farming or left in its natural condition. Hamlets set among a patchwork of field boundaries are a feature, which are sparsely populated with farmsteads or isolated dwellings. They may include woodlands and scheduled monuments



Figure 2 - Place Types

- 4.6 For each of the place types the DGDC document describes the connections within the area, built form, natural environment and land uses, as well as highlighting areas of good design. As the local plan includes several detailed policies on design, in particular QOP1 (design principles), QOP2 (good design and amenity), QOP3 (public realm design principles), QOP4 (landscaping and trees), QOP5 (sustainable design and construction) and QOP6 (delivering well-designed places), it is not necessary for the neighbourhood plan to repeat these provisions. However, as the DGDC document provides an important analysis of the character of the area, as well as design codes and guidelines policy WB1 requires new development to have regard to it. The policy is cross cutting and will help to deliver all the plan objectives.

## Policy WB1: Design

To protect and enhance local distinctiveness of the Parish, new development should have regard to the requirements of the West Bedlington Design Guidance and Codes (2024).

Where a design and access statement is required as part of a planning application, this should demonstrate how the proposal has responded to the Design Guidance and Codes as an integral part of the design process.

### Location of new development

- 4.7 The Northumberland Local Plan defines a settlement boundary for Bedlington in order to manage the location of new development and protect the countryside from unsuitable development, prevent the merger of settlements and maintain their character. The boundary seeks to maintain the separation between the settlements of Bedlington, Nedderton and Hartford Bridge. The NPPF identifies that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless specific criteria are met.
- 4.8 Land to the west of the plan area lies within the Green Belt. The Green Belt boundary excludes Nedderton and properties at Hartford Bridge, however properties at Hartford Hall are included within the Green Belt. Development proposals in the Green Belt will be considered against the requirements of the NPPF and local plan policies (particularly STP8). The town council do not consider it is necessary to repeat the longstanding provisions of Green Belt policy within the neighbourhood plan, neither is it necessary to repeat policies contained within the local plan. The settlement hierarchy defined within the local plan (policy STP1) and the associated settlement boundary will protect the countryside from inappropriate development.

### Green infrastructure and the natural environment

- 4.9 West Bedlington benefits from a rich natural environment, with a wide range of species and habitats including: Bedlington Country Park Nature Reserve, ancient woodland, deciduous woodland, woodland included on the national forest inventory and a traditional orchard (which is a priority habitat). Whilst there are no sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) within the plan area, the Willow Burn Pasture SSSI lies just outside the boundary, within Choppington Parish. The plan area lies within a priority area for targeting curlew and lapwing and is important for both farmland and sea birds. In addition, part of the south-east Northumberland Wildlife Network lies within the parish (figure 3).

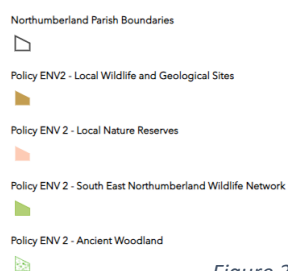


Figure 3: Natural Environment Designations

- 4.10 Green infrastructure encompasses wildlife networks and corridors, open spaces and landscape corridors and linkages to the wider countryside. The NPPF defines green infrastructure as: ‘*A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity*’. As a network, green infrastructure can include: parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens. It can also include: streams, canals and other water bodies and features such as green roofs and walls.
- 4.11 As green infrastructure is close to where people live, it can play a key role in supporting the health of the local community. It also supports wildlife, climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as helping to improve air quality.
- 4.12 The local plan includes policies to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural environment as well as green infrastructure networks and assets, particularly policies ENV1 and ENV2. The neighbourhood plan has an important role in identifying and protecting spaces which are of importance to the local community and providing other important local detail.

### **Local green space**

- 4.13 Green spaces are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy community and are of great importance to the character and identity of a place. They are valued for a wide range of reasons including: visual amenity; historic significance; recreational value; tranquillity; and richness of wildlife. Uncontrolled changes to green spaces can irrevocably alter their special character or intrinsic value. Through early engagement the local community identified several valued spaces across the plan area.
- 4.14 The NPPF enables neighbourhood plans to designate areas of local green space for special protection, thereby preventing development on these sites other than in very special circumstances. These spaces do not need to be publicly accessible but must be in reasonably close proximity to the community they serve, as well as being demonstrably special them, holding a particular local significance. The designation cannot be applied to an extensive track of land, so should be local in character.
- 4.15 The sites listed in policy WB2 and shown on the policies map are proposed to be designated as local green space as they meet the criteria set out within national policy and guidance. A background paper has been prepared to outline the reasons why the sites are of particular importance to the local community and to explain the process that led to their proposed designation<sup>4</sup>.
- 4.16 The local green space and protected open space background paper includes an assessment of each of the sites which are included within policy WB2. The background paper follows the guidance set out in both national planning policy and planning practice guidance, regarding the purposes of designation and the reasoning behind the designation and the reasoning behind the designations of each site through the plan. Appendices 1 and 2 of the background paper set out the site assessments and the reasons why each site is considered to be demonstrably special.

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<sup>4</sup> [westbedlington.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/](https://westbedlington.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/)



- 4.17 The NPPF states that the designation of land as local green space allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. It states that designating land as local green space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services; the Parish Council considers that the Neighbourhood Plan strikes a balance between planning for growth in terms of new housing within the parish, together with protection of important local green spaces. These have been carefully assessed and considered to be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. The designation of the sites will assist with the delivery of plan objectives 1 and 2.
- 4.18 Development within local green spaces should be managed in a way that is consistent with national Green Belt policy. Policy WB2 does not disallow categories of development that would be permitted in the Green Belt. Rather, a further level of requirement is added to ensure that proposals deemed not inappropriate in the Green Belt, would not undermine the reasons for the designation of the site as local green space. Development that is 'not inappropriate' in the Green Belt will be supported on local green spaces where it complies with the criteria set out in Policy WB2. All other development will only be permitted where very special circumstances exist in accordance with national Green Belt policy.

#### Policy WB2: Local green space

1. The following areas, as defined on the policies map, are designated as local green space:
  - LGS1 Front Street West;
  - LGS2 Front Street East;
  - LGS3 South Park/ 20 Acre Playing Field;
  - LGS4 St Cuthbert's Churchyard and grounds;
  - LGS5 Bedlington Cemetery;
  - LSG6 Market Place;
  - LGS7 Bedlington Country Park/ Humford Wood;
  - LGS8 Attlee Park;
  - LGS9 Doctor Pit Park;
  - LGS10 Gallagher Park;
  - LSG11 Acorn Bank; and
  - LGS12 Green letch adjacent to Hazelmere Estate.
2. Development that is not inappropriate in the Green Belt, excluding provisions relating to grey belt and previously developed land, will be supported on Local Green Spaces, providing:
  - a. It would be compatible with the reasons for designation as set out in the Local Green Space and Protected Open Space Background Paper; and
  - b. It would not undermine the designation of the local green space.
3. Development that does not comply with part 2 of this policy, and development that is inappropriate in the Green Belt, will only be permitted where very special circumstances exist in line with national Green Belt policy.

## Protected open space

- 4.19 There are many areas of open space which are valued for their local amenity value and for formal and informal recreational purposes, but which do not meet the detailed allocation criteria for designation as local green space.
- 4.20 The sites listed in policy WB3 and shown on the policies map are proposed to be designated as protected as they are important to the local community. The local green space background paper outlines the reasons why the sites are importance and explains the process that led to their proposed designation<sup>5</sup>. The assessment takes account of the areas that are identified for inclusion within the local plan as protected open space (see figure 4) and does not repeat this designation.
- 4.21 Policy WB3 requires that any loss of protected open space resulting from new development should be replaced by at least equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality, including amenity value. Importantly, the new provision should be in a suitable location. It is expected that when considering whether a location for the replacement open space is 'suitable', that a key consideration is whether the new space is easily accessible by the local community. It should therefore be in the near vicinity of the protected open space that it will be replacing. The designation of the sites will assist with the delivery of plan objectives 1 and 2.

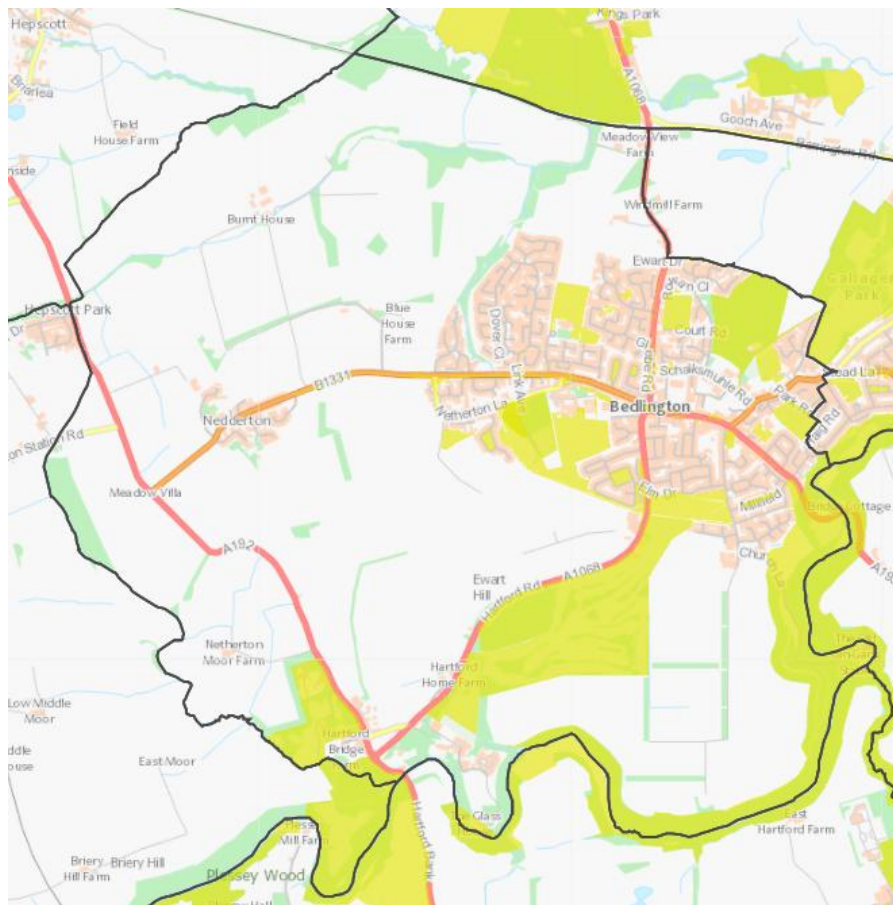


Figure 4: Protected open space identified in the local plan

<sup>5</sup> [westbedlington.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/](http://westbedlington.org.uk/neighbourhood-planning/)

### Policy WB3: Protected open space

1. The following areas of open space, as defined on the policies map, have been identified as contributing to local amenity and character and will be protected from development:
  - POS01 Gallagher Park extension;
  - POS02 Edinburgh Drive;
  - POS03 West of Warwick Grove;
  - POS04 Skipton Court;
  - POS05 Alnwick Drive;
  - POS06 Alnwick Drive/ B1331;
  - POS07 Dunstanburgh;
  - POS08 Hessop Way (north);
  - POS09 Hessop Way (south);
  - POS10 Coverdale;
  - POS11 Milfield;
  - POS12 Schalksmuhle Road;
  - POS13 Adjacent to cricket club;
  - POS14 Hirst Head;
  - POS15 West Lea/ Netherton Lane.
2. Development that would result in the partial or complete loss of protected open space will be supported where the applicant has demonstrated that the:
  - a. Open space is surplus to requirements; or
  - b. Loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by open space of equal or better value in terms of quantity and quality, including amenity value, in a suitable location; or
  - c. Development is for alternative recreation provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss of the open space.

### Bedlington Conservation Area

- 4.22 As explained in section 2, West Bedlington has a rich history. Planning policies have an important role in protecting heritage assets, which can be designated or non-designated. Designated assets have statutory status and include listed buildings and conservation areas. A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which does not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.
- 4.23 The glossary of the NPPF defines a heritage asset as:  
*'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. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).'*
- 4.24 The NPPF states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and requires them to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Also, that planning decision affecting a heritage asset are required to be based on a sound understanding of the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposal on that significance.
- 4.25 West Bedlington has a diverse heritage, with Saxon origins and links to St Cuthbert. Originally a market town, the focus of the town shifted to the industries of ironstone and coal in the 1730s.

Bedlington played a pivotal role to infrastructure production for the new railway industry led by the Stephenson's of Newcastle. Local heritage is important to the local community, not only its designated heritage assets.

- 4.26 The centre of Bedlington is designated as a conservation area and the plan area contains 33 listed buildings, three of which are grade II\*. There are also many non-designated heritage assets, these include 193 current entries on the Northumberland Historic Environment Record. Local plan policies ENV7, ENV8 and ENV9 provide protection to designated and non-designated assets across Northumberland, the significance of which could be affected by new development. It is not necessary to repeat this protection withing the neighbourhood plan. However, it is appropriate for a neighbourhood plan to provide additional detail to that contained within the local plan. There is the opportunity to provide this detail to guide future development within the Bedlington Conservation Area, informed by the character appraisal<sup>6</sup> and management strategy<sup>7</sup>.
- 4.27 The Bedlington Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2011) provides an overview of the historical development of the area, spatial and character analysis as well as information of loss, intrusion and damage to the conservation area. The appraisal identifies three distinct parts to the conservation area (West, Market and East) however it explains that these do not vary sufficiently in detailed character to be defined as distinct sub-areas. The conservation area is described as having one long core street with an elbow at the central Market Place, creating three distinct parts. The special interest of the area is described as the modest residential scale and a uniformity of style and materials, providing a coherent and significant layout and form. Reference is also made to the importance of architectural features, particularly windows, doors and shop front openings
- 4.28 Several individual buildings are identified within the character appraisal as being of importance to its significance:
- Public houses: Northumberland Arms (112 Front Street East), Sun (25 Front Street West), Market Tavern (8 Market Place), Blue Bell (34 Front Street West), Dun Cow (11 Front Street East), Black Bull (25 Front Street East) Red Lion (Hartford Road) and the (former) Kings Arms (68 Front Street West - grade II listed);
  - Churches: St Cuthbert's Church (Front Street East - grade II\* listed) and vicarage (grade II listed), St Bede's Catholic Church and Priests House (Catholic Row), Former Primitive Methodist Chapel and attached Manse (The Old Church House, Front Street West)
  - Former Barclays Bank (2-3 Market Place – grade II listed)
  - Front Street West: Bedlington Community Centre, Windsor House, The Cottage and Demesne Farm,;
  - Hartford Road: Masonic Lodge, Former police station and courthouse.
- 4.29 The character appraisal also describes important views. It explains that there are few hilltop vistas or panoramas due to the mostly tight enclosure of buildings along each side of the street. It is possible to get occasional glimpses of distant views through narrow gaps. The only key views are those to and from Market Place, along Front Street in both directions. The character

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/Conservation/Bedlington-CACA.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Consolidated%20Planning%20Policy%20Framework/Section%20B/Part%201%20-%20Adopted%20LDDs%20\(Not%20Statutory\)/Bedlington%20SPD/Bedlington-Conservation-Area-SPD.pdf](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Consolidated%20Planning%20Policy%20Framework/Section%20B/Part%201%20-%20Adopted%20LDDs%20(Not%20Statutory)/Bedlington%20SPD/Bedlington-Conservation-Area-SPD.pdf)

appraisal explains that as part of this view, visual containment is almost unbroken, creating strong enclosure. The composition and protection of these views is described as being critical to the character of the conservation area as they define its experience.

- 4.30 The management strategy seeks to guide the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area. It provides information and guidance on a number of matters including: locally important buildings; demolition; permitted development rights; enforcement; areas of archaeological sensitivity; design; building maintenance and repair; regeneration and enhancement opportunities; and public realm, green spaces and trees.
- 4.31 Policy WB4 seeks to ensure that new development in or affecting the Bedlington Conservation Area will preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and its setting.

#### **Policy WB4: Bedlington Conservation Area**

1. When paying special attention to the impact of development on the character or appearance of the Bedlington Conservation Area and its setting, development proposals should have regard to the Bedlington Conservation Area Character Appraisal. The following are key considerations when assessing the impact of development, the development, where appropriate should:
  - a. Maintain the distinct scale and a uniformity of style and materials, providing a coherent and significant layout and form;
  - b. Reflect locally distinctive architectural characteristics, vernacular building forms and materials; and
  - c. Preserve or enhance the key views to and from Market Place, along Front Street in both directions.
2. Special attention should be paid to the impact of development on key (unlisted) buildings (identified on the policies map) and their role in contributing to the significance of the Bedlington Conservation Area:
  - CA1 11 Front Street East (formerly The Dun Cow)
  - CA2 25 Front Street East (The Black Bull)
  - CA3 112 Front Street East (The Northumberland Arms)
  - CA4 8 Market Place (formerly the Market Tavern)
  - CA5 Bedlington Community Centre, Front Street West
  - CA6 25 Front Street West (The Sun)
  - CA7 Windsor Cottage, Front Street West
  - CA8 The Cottage, Front Street West
  - CA9 Demesne Farm, Front Street West
  - CA10 The Old Church House (Former Methodist Chapel and attached Manse)
  - CA11 34 Front Street (The Blue Bell)
  - CA12 The Red Lion, Hartford Road
  - CA13 Masonic Lodge, Hartford Road
  - CA14 Former Police Station and Courthouse, Hartford Road
  - CA15 St Bede's Catholic Church and Priests House, Catholic Row.

### Shop fronts in Bedlington Conservation Area

- 4.32 There are a number of shops within the Bedlington Conservation Area. They are very prominent and comprise a large part of the floor space. The conservation area character appraisal highlights the impact of poorly designed shop fronts to the significance of the area. Good design of any replacement shop fronts is important not only to the character of the area but also to ensure the town centre remains an attractive place for businesses to locate.
- 4.33 As a result of the potential impact, the former Wansbeck District Council prepared a shop front design guide for Bedlington and Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Areas, which was adopted as supplementary planning guidance<sup>8</sup>. This guidance, along with the conservation area character appraisal and management plan have informed policy WB5, which identifies criteria to guide the assessment of proposals for new or replacement shop fronts within the conservation area, supporting the delivery of plan objective 1.

#### Policy WB5: Shop fronts in Bedlington Conservation Area

1. New or replacements shop fronts in Bedlington Conservation Area will be supported where the proposed development reflects the architectural style, scale, proportions, materials and colour of both the host building and the surrounding conservation area. Development should have regard to shop front guidance contained within the West Bedlington Design Guidance and Codes (2024).
2. Proposals must be supported by sufficient information to demonstrate how, where appropriate:
  - a. It retains shop fronts and other features which are of architectural or historic interest. Where it is not possible to retain the whole shop front, development proposals should aim to retain features which contribute positively to the character of the building and surrounding conservation area. Surviving historic features and archive research should inform the design of new shop fronts;
  - b. The design and decoration of the shop front complements the proportions, scale and characteristics of the host building and has been informed by the characteristics of the surrounding conservation area;
  - c. The design of the shop front takes into account the rhythm, lines and key characteristics of the street;
  - d. Where a shop occupies the ground floor of more than one building, the design and proportions of each shop front relates to each individual building;
  - e. The shop front does not obscure any existing architectural features or decoration of the upper floors;
  - f. The proportions of the fascia, signage area and glazing are appropriately balanced with the shop front frame and upper-floor windows;
  - g. Where security measures are needed, they have been designed as an integral part of the shop front, avoiding the use of external roller shutters. If there is no alternative to an external roller shutter, ensure that it is open weave and the shutter box is contained behind the fascia.

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Consolidated%20Planning%20Policy%20Framework/Section%20B/Part%202%20-%20Adopted%20PPDs%20\(Not%20Statutory\)/Wansbeck/WDC-Shop-Front-Design-Guide.pdf](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Consolidated%20Planning%20Policy%20Framework/Section%20B/Part%202%20-%20Adopted%20PPDs%20(Not%20Statutory)/Wansbeck/WDC-Shop-Front-Design-Guide.pdf)



## **5. Community well-being**

### **Background**

- 5.1 The NPPF identifies that the planning system has an important role to play in creating healthy, inclusive communities. NPPG defines a healthy community as a good place to grow up and grow old in, a community which supports healthy behaviours and supports reductions in health inequalities.
- 5.2 Plan objective 2 seeks to build on the strong sense of community across the plan area, whilst recognising the diverse needs of existing and future residents. It acknowledges that supporting the provision of different types of housing that people can afford, as well as that which meets identified needs, can support community well-being. In addition, objective 2 seeks to ensure that the local community has access to the services and facilities it needs.

### **Housing**

- 5.3 The NPPF states that neighbourhood plans should positively support the strategic policies for the area and should not promote less development than is required by the local plan. As the Northumberland Local Plan allocates sufficient land to meet the identified housing needs of the plan area, it was concluded that there was not a need for further allocations within the neighbourhood plan.
- 5.4 Feedback from early engagement highlighted concerns regarding the impact of an ageing population across the plan area and considers it is vitally important to look for ways which allow people to remain living independently within the community for as long as possible. In addition, the town council considers that it is important that the plan supports the provision of housing for young families and for affordable housing.
- 5.5 The local plan includes several policies to ensure that a mix of house sizes, types and tenures are provided to meet needs:
- Policy HOU5 refers to housing types and mix, including specialist housing for older and vulnerable people, affordable housing, community led and self-build housing;
  - Policy HOU6 requires all new housing developments of 10 or more homes to provide affordable housing. In the majority of the parish the requirement would be to provide 15% affordable housing;
  - Policy HOU7 supports the development of affordable homes on sites not allocated for housing adjacent to an existing settlement where there is evidence of need for such homes. It also includes a number of other criteria that must be met; and
  - Policy HOU11 supports the provision of homes for older and vulnerable people.

### **Community services and facilities**

- 5.6 Community facilities are identified in the NPPF as: local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. These facilities enhance the sustainability of local communities and residential environments.
- 5.7 There are a wide variety of community facilities across the plan area, including: schools, convenience stores, public houses, social clubs, cricket and golf clubs, a community centres and churches. These facilities are essential to support the strong sense of community that exists across the plan area.

- 5.8 The NPPF is clear that the planning system should support the development of new community facilities and that valued community facilities should be retained where appropriate. Policy INF3 of the local plan provides protection against the loss of local village convenience stores and public houses. It is however acknowledged that planning permission is not always required to change the use of a building or land and this therefore removes the ability to retain a valued facility.
- 5.9 Policy WB6 therefore supports the provision of new and enhancement of existing community facilities, as well seeking to resist the loss of existing facilities, this will assist with the delivery of plan objective 2.

#### **Policy WB6: Community services and facilities**

1. Development proposals to enhance the provision of community services and facilities will be supported where the following criteria are met:
  - a. The proposal will not generate unacceptable noise, fumes, smell or other disturbance to adjoining properties;
  - b. The proposal will not have an adverse impact on highway operation or safety; and
  - c. Access arrangements and sufficient off-street parking can be provided to the satisfaction of the local planning authority without negatively impacting on adjoining uses.
2. A development that would result in the loss of a building or land which provides a community service or facility will be required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that:
  - a. It is no longer needed in its current form;
  - b. A replacement service or facility of sufficient size, layout and quality is to be provided on an alternative suitable location; or
  - c. It would not be economically viable or feasible to retain the service or facility and there is no reasonable prospect of securing an alternative community use of the land or building.

#### **Allotments**

- 5.10 There are two allotments in the plan area at Ridge Terrace and Doctor Pit. The allotments are valued by allotment holders and their families. They provide significant physical and mental health benefits as well as the provision of flowers, fruit and vegetables. Allotments are also part of the green infrastructure of the area. Policy WB7 seeks to ensure that existing allotments are protected, which will assist with the delivery of plan objective 1 and 2.

#### **Policy WB7: Allotments**

1. The following allotment sites, as defined on the Policies Map, will be protected from development:
  - A1 Ridge Terrace; and
  - A2 Doctor Pit
2. Development resulting in the loss of any of the allotment sites identified will be required to demonstrate that a replacement allotment of at least equivalent quality and quantity,

in a convenient location for the users, is provided fit for use, prior to the loss of the allotment land or any part of it.

3. The provision of new allotments will be supported to meet locally identified demand.

### **Infrastructure**

- 5.11 The infrastructure requirements of new development will vary depending on the type, scale and nature of the proposals. It could include the provision of: open space, public transport, education, leisure and medical facilities. The town council has particular concern over: the current provision of medical facilities; the lack of suitable indoor leisure provision; lack of provision for cycling across the plan area; and poor public transport connections in some parts of the plan area, particularly access to rail connections.
- 5.12 Local plan policy INF1 requires that to ensure development is acceptable, proposals must demonstrate that there is sufficient physical, community, social and green infrastructure capacity both on and off site, to support the needs arising from the development. It is therefore not necessary to repeat these requirements within the neighbourhood plan.

## 6. Local economy

### Background

- 6.1 National policy requires significant weight to be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. Plan objective 3 seeks to ensure that the plan supports both existing and the creation of new employment opportunities across the plan area, as well as protecting and enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre.

### Employment

- 6.2 The economy of the plan area is diverse, ranging from retail, farming and some industry. There is also employment in the local schools, police station and magistrates' court. The businesses on Front Street provide a large amount of local employment to people who live in the area. However, most residents travel elsewhere to access employment.
- 6.3 The local plan includes policies which will ensure, where planning permission is required, the retention and growth of local businesses as well as protecting employment land from non-employment generating uses. Policy ECN1 seeks to deliver economic growth, whilst safeguarding the environment and community well-being. The policy supports: the delivery of employment development to meet identified requirements; existing and new businesses; town centres as locations for employment and businesses; regeneration of existing employment areas; alongside the training and upskilling of the workforce. Policy ECN11 supports businesses located in built up areas as well as homeworking, where specific criteria can be met.
- 6.4 As a result of the detail contained within the local plan, it is considered that the neighbourhood plan could not add anything further to that contained within the local plan. The local plan also includes several policies which will maintain and reinforce the role of Bedlington as a main town.

### Bedlington town centre

- 6.5 The local plan identifies Bedlington Town Centre as a 'main town - smaller centre' and highlights that a positive approach is needed to facilitate modern retail floorspace on a modest scale. Specific reference is made to the need to consider new town centre development to the north of Front Street within the constraints of the conservation area designation. Policy TCS2 defines the town centre boundary (figure 5).



Figure 5: Bedlington Town Centre Boundary

- 6.6 Policy TCS3 seeks to maintain and enhance the role of centres across the county. It recognises their role as community and service hubs as well as being vital and viable centres for shopping, business, culture and leisure as well as places to live, work and visit. Policy TCS4 seeks to resist proposals for town centre uses outside the defined town centre boundary to protect the vitality and viability of the centre. Policy TCS5 supports development within town centres which would encourage people to visit and improve their environment. As a result of the detail contained within the local plan, it is considered that the neighbourhood plan could not add anything further to that contained within the local plan.

## 7. Accessibility

### Background

- 7.1 The private car provides the principal mode of transport for residents of the plan area, with the 2021 Census identifying that 59% of the working population travelled to work by this method. However, it should be noted that the census took place during the Covid 19 pandemic, when there were much higher levels of home working (26%)
- 7.2 The NPPF encourages a reduction in congestion and greenhouse gas emissions through the introduction of measures which promote a decrease in the number of journeys made by car. Whilst the preparation of transport policy at a local level is primarily a matter for the local planning authority, there are a wide range of areas where the plan can have an influence on accessibility including supporting the protection and enhancement of active travel routes and accessibility in new development.
- 7.3 Plan objective 4 therefore seeks to promote sustainable modes of transport, to connect local communities to the services and facilities they require, whilst ensuring the environmental quality of the plan area is protected by effectively managing traffic.

### Sustainable transport and new development

- 7.4 The NPPF identifies that planning policies should support a range of transport modes, with priority given to walking, cycling and public transport as well as consideration of disabled access. Policy WB8 therefore identifies the key considerations for development proposals across the plan area which will assist in the delivery of plan objective 4.

#### Policy WB8: Sustainable transport and new development

Development will be required to demonstrate that it maximises the use of sustainable modes of transport. Applicants must demonstrate, where relevant to the proposal, how it has been designed and located to support sustainable transport choices, reducing the need to travel, giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

Development will improve or extend the walking and cycling network, particularly that which provides greater access for all between existing housing areas, the town centre, green spaces, the countryside and neighbouring towns.



## Annex 1: Community actions

As part of the process of developing the neighbourhood plan, some areas of community concerns were identified that cannot be addressed through the planning system. However, as part of the neighbourhood planning process they can become 'community actions', which are supported by West Bedlington Town Council. These proposals can be delivered in conjunction with other local organisations.

### **Community action 1: Celebrating our heritage**

To develop a programme of community activities and initiatives to raise awareness of and continue to celebrate the important heritage of the plan area.

### **Community action 2: Townscape enhancements**

Informed by the Bedlington Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Strategy prepare a town enhancement programme. This will also consider issues outside the conservation area, including matters such as path/ cycle route maintenance.

### **Community action 3: Dog fouling**

Work with Northumberland County Council to better control dog fouling across the plan area, including awareness raising, increasing the provision of bins and increasing patrols.

### **Community action 4: Antisocial behaviour**

Work with Northumbria Police and Northumberland County Council to more effectively tackle incidents of anti-social behaviour.

### **Community action 5: Assets of community value**

Work with the local community to compile a list of potential assets of community value for submission to Northumberland County Council.

### **Community action 6: Parking management**

Work with Northumberland County Council to assess options for the introduction of parking restrictions, including residents only parking schemes, to improve parking management across the plan area.

### **Community action 7: Public toilets**

Work in collaboration with local shops and community facilities to develop a 'community toilet scheme' where toilets are made available for public use during opening hours.