

# Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan (2022-2036)

## Referendum Version

June 2022



**Middleton St George  
Parish**

## Foreword

### **Your plan for Middleton St George Parish!**

The Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision, set of objectives and a range of policies for our parish for the period to 2036. It has been shaped by community engagement. The preparation of our plan has been led by the Parish Council, with most of the work being undertaken by a small steering group of Parish Councillors. The work on the plan has been supported by an independent planning consultant, paid for by a grant from Locality, a Government Body which helps local communities to develop their plans. In addition, the Parish Council has received further technical support to assist with important evidence base documents on housing need and design.

Once approved by the community it will be adopted by Darlington Borough Council and used to decide whether to approve or refuse planning applications in the neighbourhood area. For example, anyone wishing to build houses in the parish will be expected to accord with the policies within it. It will also help to protect our heritage and natural assets.

The steering group have put in a huge amount of work to get to this point and on behalf of Middleton St George Parish Council I would like to thank all those who have inputted to it.

Cllr Hazel Bullock  
Chair, Middleton St George Parish 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. They 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 line 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 European obligations.

### National planning policy and guidance

- 1.5 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the national planning policy framework and national planning practice guidance respectively.

### Development plan – strategic policies

- 1.6 The strategic policies of the development plan for Darlington are included within the Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 which was adopted in February 2022 (available at <https://microsites.darlington.gov.uk/local-plan/> ).
- 1.7 The Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan ('the plan') has been informed by both the adopted Darlington Local Plan 2016-2036 and associated evidence base.

Sustainable development

- 1.8 The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development as defined by the national planning policy framework. 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 accompanies this plan, explains how the implementation of the plan is expected to contribute to sustainable development.

Legal obligations

- 1.9 Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with legal obligations, specifically the strategic environmental assessment regulations and habitats regulations, through an appropriate assessment. The strategic environmental assessment process is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of policies are taken into account before plans are brought into force. The appropriate assessment process aims to ensure that the plan will not result in significant damage to internationally important nature conservation sites. Darlington Borough Council provided a screening opinion on whether a strategic environmental assessment and/ or appropriate assessment was required for the plan. The screening opinion is available on the Darlington Borough Council website. The conclusion was that the neighbourhood plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental impacts and as such does not need a strategic environmental assessment. In addition, that the neighbourhood plan will not have a significant effect in relation to the habitat regulations.

**Background to the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan**

- 1.10 On 14 May 2019, the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Area was designated by Darlington Borough Council. The plan area comprises the parish of Middleton St George, excluding land at Teesside International Airport, see figure 1. The process of preparing the plan began in the spring of 2019, when residents were asked for feedback on a draft vision and objectives for the plan. This was informed by earlier work undertaken by the former Middleton St George Parish Council that existed prior to parish boundary changes in 2016.
- 1.11 Early engagement informed the preparation of a pre-submission draft plan, which was subject to consultation from September to November 2020. The draft plan identified:
- The context in which the plan has been prepared – an overview of Middleton St George, the **opportunities and challenges** for the plan to address;
  - A **positive vision** for the future of the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan 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.
- 1.12 The period covered by the plan is to 2036, this aligns with the emerging Darlington Local Plan. During this period, the neighbourhood plan will be reviewed and updated where required.
- 1.13 The plan was amended to take account of the representations received on the pre-submission draft plan and submitted to Darlington Borough Council for examination. A consultation statement has been prepared, this sets out how engagement has informed the submission draft



plan and is available on our website alongside the other background documents that have informed the preparation of the plan: <http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

- 1.14 In January 2022, Darlington Borough Council appointed an examiner to conduct the examination of the plan. The examination concluded that the plan met all necessary legal tests, subject to some modifications being made. Those changes are incorporated into this version of the plan, which will now be the subject of a local referendum in which people eligible to vote in Middleton St George Parish will be given the opportunity to decide whether the plan should be brought into legal force and then used in making decisions on planning applications.

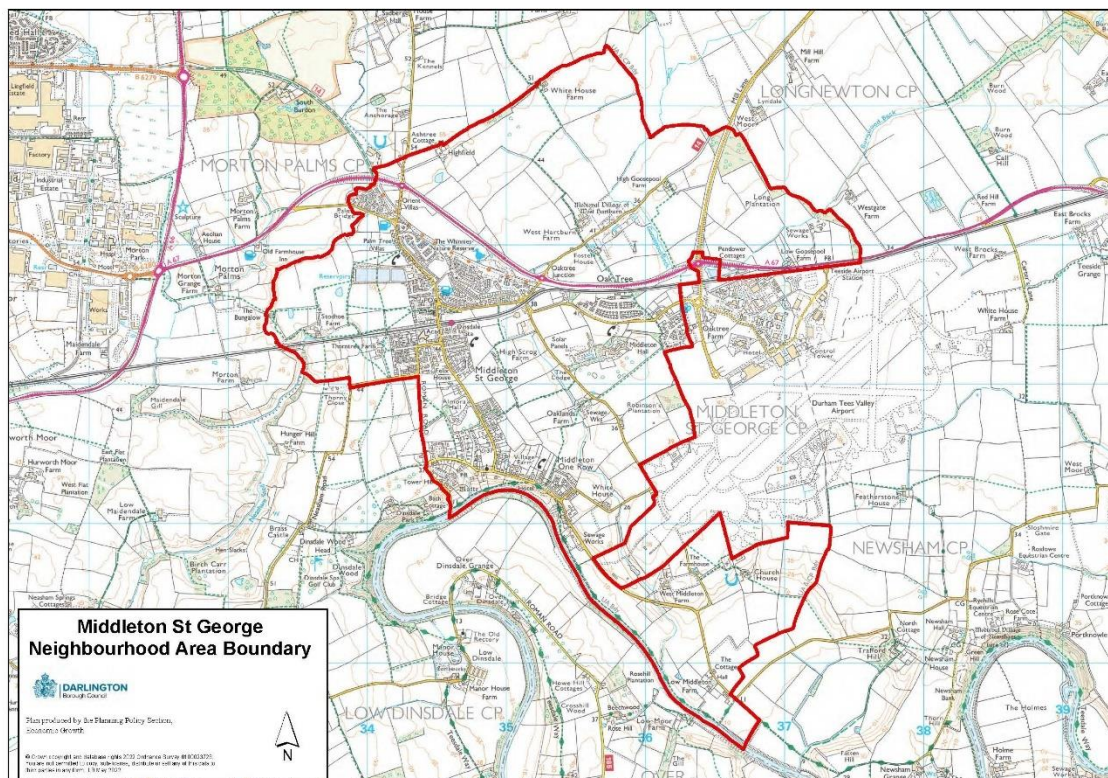


Figure 1: Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan Area

## 2. The key issues for the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan

### Background to Middleton St George

#### The growth of the parish

- 2.1 Middleton St George is located approximately five miles to the east of Darlington Town Centre and 10 miles to the west of Stockton and Middlesbrough. Development in the plan area is largely a product of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although it has much earlier origins. The village of Middleton St George developed following the opening of the Stockton and Darlington railway, the route of which lies to the northern side of the village. The Stockton and Darlington Railway was the first public steam railway in the world and opened in 1825. Part of the route through the plan area is a public bridleway. Middleton St George maintains its railway link with Dinsdale Station on the branch line from Darlington, via Middlesbrough to Saltburn.
- 2.2 Various phases of the development of the parish followed, including the creation of RAF Middleton St George, which was built to the east of the village during the Second World War. The RAF continued to use the base after the war but withdrew in 1964. It was reopened as Teesside International Airport in 1966, later renamed Durham Tees Valley Airport and now renamed Teesside International Airport. The airport still operates and provides limited services to Aberdeen and Amsterdam as well as being the home for local flying clubs and aviation companies.
- 2.3 Middleton St George has significant historical interest. The village has an industrial past with a substantial foundry and several other factories having been situated there. Over time, these have disappeared and those employed in Darlington and Teesside primarily inhabit the area. Middleton St George is now predominantly residential.

#### Population and housing

- 2.4 Until the mid-1990s, the parish of Middleton St George was relatively small, with a population of approximately 1,800. However, following the demise of industry and the availability of brownfield sites, the population grew rapidly. The population at the time of the 2011 census was 4,337.
- 2.5 The 2011 Census reveals that the parish has a higher proportion of people in the 45-65 and 85 and over age categories than both Darlington and England. The 65-84 age group is roughly in line with Darlington and England, but it is the 0-15 and 16-24 age groups where Middleton St George has a lower population than those wider areas. So, while the parish population may be expected to age faster than the borough, its chief demographic challenge is the deficit in the younger replacement population.

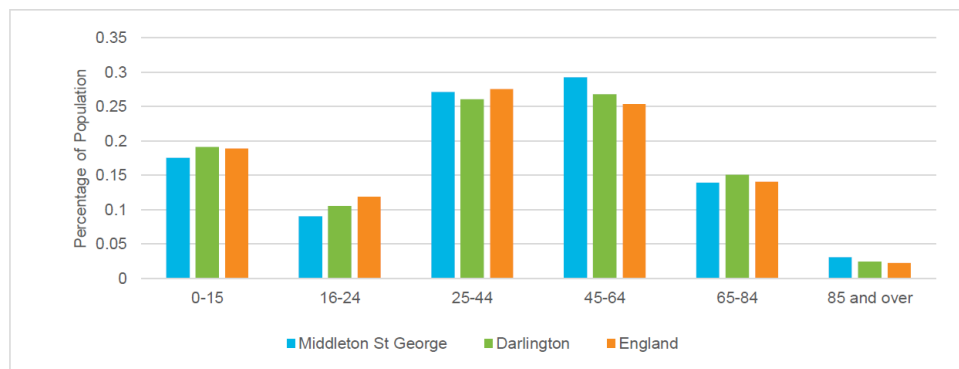


Figure 2: Age structure (2011 census)

- 2.6 With regard to household composition, the parish differs from Darlington Borough, as there are lower numbers of one person households and more families. However, the plan area has a notably higher proportion of family households with no children.

Table 1: Household composition (by household) 2011

Household composition		Middleton St George	Darlington	England
One person household	Total	24.9%	32.4%	30.2%
	Aged 65 and over	9.5%	13.1%	12.4%
	Other	15.4%	19.2%	17.9%
One family only	Total	70.9%	62.9%	61.8%
	All aged 65 and over	8.8%	8.3%	8.1%
	With no children	23.4%	18.5%	17.6%
	With dependent children	29.1%	27.1%	26.5%
	All children Non-Dependent	9.6%	9.1%	9.6%
Other household types	Total	4.2%	4.7%	8.0%

- 2.7 In terms of dwelling type, the 2011 census shows that there were 1811 households in Middleton St George, living in 821 detached houses, 496 semi-detached, 335 terraced houses and 153 flats. The plan area is characterised by a proportion of detached houses that is almost twice as large as Darlington's with significantly lower proportions of semi-detached and terraced homes.

Table 2: accommodation type, 2011

Dwelling type		Middleton St George	Darlington	England
Whole house or bungalow	Detached	60.2%	31.1%	22.4%
	Semi-detached	22.8%	31.5%	31.2%
	Terraced	12.9%	24.9%	24.5%
Flat, maisonette or apartment	Purpose-built block of flats or tenement	2.1%	10.0%	16.4%
	Parts of a converted or shared house	1.4%	1.3%	3.8%
	In commercial building	0.5%	0.9%	1.0%

### Services, facilities and connectivity

- 2.8 The plan area has a number of shops. The primary one is a small Londis convenience store, which also houses a post office. There is also a second small convenience store, the Country Harvest. Other shops include a small pet shop, a picture framer, a barber, two hairdressers and a betting shop. Other services and facilities include: a GP surgery; veterinary surgery; takeaways; three public houses; and a hotel.
- 2.9 Schooling is provided for 4- to 11-year-old children at the St George's Church of England Academy, which is a voluntary aided school. The school is relatively modern, having been constructed on the site of the previous school, which was destroyed by fire in 2003. Secondary education is available for 11- to 16-year-old children at Hurworth School which is located approximately 4.6 miles from the village (outside the plan area) and to which children from the village are transported by bus. Secondary education for 11- to 16-year-old children is also available at St Aidan's Church of England Academy in Darlington (also outside the plan area), which is located approximately four miles from the village.
- 2.10 A range of leisure and amenity facilities are available in the plan area. There is a recreation ground, which incorporates a children's play area and football pitch. In addition, there is a well-established cricket club and a community centre, which offers a range of leisure pursuits. The



community centre is close to the water park. The water park consists of three former reservoirs, which have been decommissioned and are now used for pursuits such as fishing and model boating. There is also a multi-use games area which used to be one of the reservoirs.

- 2.11 The plan area has a number of rights of way, including one which follows the route of the original 1825 railway line (National Cycle Route 14) and runs through the Whinnies Local Nature Reserve. The Teesdale Way long-distance footpath also follows the river close to Middleton One Row.

### Environment

- 2.12 Residents of the plan area benefit from easy access to a wealth of green spaces, including: the water park; the Whinnies Nature Reserve; Haxby Road and Station Road play areas and sports field; The Front; and three allotment sites. There are a number of important environmental designations within the plan area, including the Whinnies Local Nature Reserve, woodland priority habitat and land on the national forest inventory. The Neasham Fen Site of Special Scientific Interest lies just outside the plan area in Neasham Parish.
- 2.13 The plan area sits within two landscape character areas. The area surrounding Middleton St George and Oak Tree is categorised as 'Middleton Farmland', which is a largely flat, farmed plateau north of the River Tees. To the south, from Middleton One Row, the area lies within the 'Tees Valley' character area, with a dramatic incised valley cut in by the River Tees, with views over the flood plain and valley. Key landscape features across the plan area include woodland, the River Tees and its associated riverbanks.
- 2.14 Part of Middleton St George and Middleton One Row is a Conservation Area, the character is provided by large gardens and open spaces which run down from The Front at Middleton One Row to the banks of the River Tees, Middleton Lane is also an important part of the special character of the area. The plan area contains 16 listed buildings, all of which are grade II apart from one, Low Middleton Hall, which is grade II\*. Tower Hill motte castle is a scheduled monument, which includes a well-preserved Norman motte, situated in a prominent position overlooking the River Tees. There is also a deserted medieval village (of West Hartburn) north of the A67, which is also a scheduled monument. A historic Roman Road links Tower Hill Earthworks and Pounty's Bridge in Middleton One Row with Middleton St George.

### **Key issues**

- 2.15 Early engagement identified that there were a number of important issues for the neighbourhood plan to look to address, including the:
- Importance of the natural and built environment and the heritage of the area;
  - Impact of insensitive new housing development on the character of the area;
  - Lack of affordable housing;
  - Concern over the level of development coming forward and lack of infrastructure to support it;
  - Traffic levels/ highway safety;
  - The need to protect important open spaces from development; and
  - Impact of the ageing population.
- 2.16 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 Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2036, it informs all of the policies and community actions contained within this referendum version of the plan.

Vision
<p><i>By 2036 the Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan Area will comprise a sustainable and cohesive community. Improvements will have been made to the local environment and the management of traffic, which enhance the quality of life of residents.</i></p> <p><i>Middleton St George will provide accessible local facilities and its communities will be well-connected, via sustainable transport routes, to Darlington Town Centre and the wider Tees Valley area, whilst remaining visually distinct and separate from the conurbation.</i></p> <p><i>The historic and natural environment of the area will have been maintained and enhanced for future generations by ensuring new development is of an appropriate scale and design.</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 referendum version of the 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 and embeds sustainable construction techniques and renewable energy; maintains and enhances local distinctiveness; and contributes positively to the built, historic and natural environment of the plan area.</li> </ul> <p><b>Objective 2 - Community well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building on the diverse needs of existing and future residents. Supporting the provision of different types of housing that people can afford and meet identified needs and ensuring the local community have access to the services, infrastructure and facilities they need.</li> </ul> <p><b>Objective 3 - Sustainable economy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the economy of the plan area, particularly small-scale enterprises.</li> </ul> <p><b>Objective 4 - Connectivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that the environmental quality of the plan area is protected by effectively managing traffic as well as promoting access to sustainable modes of transport, which connect people effectively and efficiently to the social, economic, educational, recreational and cultural facilities which they require on a day-to-day basis.</li> </ul>

## 4. Quality of life

### Background

- 4.1 The quality of life within the plan area is highly valued by local residents, this was confirmed during early engagement on the plan. The local community 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 plan objective 1.

### Sustainable development

- 4.2 National planning policy explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It highlights three overarching objectives (economic, social and environmental) which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. National planning policy therefore includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The neighbourhood plan has an important role in supporting the delivery of sustainable development. Policy MSG1 requires all new development proposals to be determined in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This policy will support the delivery of all the objectives of the plan.

#### Policy MSG1: Sustainable development

A presumption in favour of sustainable development will be exercised in the determination of planning applications. In seeking to ensure that development is sustainable, it will be necessary to demonstrate how development, where appropriate, would:

- a. Make efficient and effective use of land, by encouraging the re-use of previously developed land and buildings where possible;
- b. Minimise the impact and mitigate the likely effects of climate change;
- c. Minimise any impact on amenity for new and existing residents, business and other land uses in the vicinity of the proposed development;
- d. Protect or enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings;
- e. Support the health and well-being of the local community;
- f. Ensure the quality of biodiversity, as well as the natural and water environment is maintained and enhanced;
- g. Address contamination or land instability issues; and
- h. Ensure that all infrastructure necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms is either in place or can be provided. Planning permission will only be granted subject to suitable enforceable measures being secured for the provision of new or improved infrastructure in a timely manner, when it is required, in order to serve the development.

### Design

- 4.3 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 will ensure that new development contributes positively to the local environment and therefore enhances the quality of life of the local community.

- 4.4 As part of the evidence base supporting the preparation of the plan, the consultancy AECOM prepared a design guide<sup>1</sup> to inform policy development. The design guide explains the evolution of the settlement pattern of the parish, describes movement and streets, landscape and heritage, neighbourhood structure as well as its built form and character. The design guide also includes design codes which are incorporated as annex 3 to this plan. The design vision identified as part of the work on the design guide is set out below, as are the design aims.

### The design vision

*The standard of all new housing schemes will improve significantly with thoughtfully designed new homes that contribute to the overall character and local distinctiveness of the parish. These homes will sit well in their landscape, movement and built-form contexts adding to the sense of place with modern but sensitive designs based on local precedents.*

*The local community and the parish council will be engaged by developers and have their ideas for how and where to develop the village listened to. The local authority will have this clear evidence to inform their decisions on planning applications.*

*The village and community will take significant strides towards being carbon neutral and will welcome any exemplar schemes following on from the Waterside bungalows example. A diverse range of sustainability measures will be promoted by different developers and these houses should prove popular due to unique designs and low energy costs. Most measures will be on a home by home basis for new build rather than area wide solutions.*

*The village will continue to benefit from a great array of facilities and activities. The village will also display its identity and diverse history in several key focal spaces including the park, community hub and the Square through public art, landscaping schemes and signage. Welcoming pedestrian and cycling environments and long-distance cycle connections will see cyclists visit the Square and use the local cafes and pubs, using the more welcoming outdoor seating space.*

*Development on the primary routes through the villages will improve and establish a rich and diverse building frontage that provides a good sense of enclosure to these main streets. The three sub-settlements will remain separated by green gaps and hold on to their unique identity and different roles within the parish. The public realm will be reclaimed as a place for people not cars via key public realm projects.*

*Development on the edge of the village will respect its landscape context and retain significant green corridors around public rights of way that allow for views outwards and pleasant walking and cycling leisure routes back into the village, creating a multi-functional green network for recreation use.*

### Design aims – making Middleton St George Distinctive

1. A parish of historic character, not a village-suburb to Darlington
2. A 'green village' with a variety of green spaces and planting that is progressing towards being carbon-neutral, with an innovative outlook;

<sup>1</sup> <http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

3. A parish of three sub-settlements: Middleton One Row, Middleton St George and Oak Tree;
4. A diverse parish community with high quality affordable housing that meets local needs; and
5. An attractive, safe and characterful parish with a range of strong, distinctive identities.

- 4.5 The design vision, aims and codes relate to all new development within the plan area. The design codes seek to ensure that the parish grows sensitively and that it does so in consultation with the local community. The sensitive growth of the plan area, as a series of unique settlements within the wider parish, will only be realised by a strong commitment to detail design, sustainability and the focus to deliver developments that respond to the unique character of the plan area and are not just add-on housing estates.
- 4.6 Policy MSG2 therefore encourages high quality and sustainable design. It also defines the key principles that should be addressed as part of proposals for new development, whilst seeking to ensure the plan does not place unnecessary restrictions on new development. The policy is cross cutting and will help to deliver all plan objectives.

#### Policy MSG2: Design

Development should conserve local distinctiveness by demonstrating high quality design which both respects and responds to the existing character of the area, it should accord with the requirements of the Middleton St George Design Code (annex 3). Development will be supported where it:

- a. Maintains and where possible enhances the character of the locality, paying particular attention to appearance, size, scale and density;
- b. Uses materials which complement those of adjoining and surrounding buildings;
- c. Conserves and where possible enhances the significance of heritage assets and their setting;
- d. Takes account of the topography and natural features of the site and considers the impact of the development when viewed from surrounding areas of countryside;
- e. Respects established building lines and creates boundaries and roof lines that are in keeping with the street scene;
- f. Demonstrates a commitment to sustainable design to minimise energy use;
- g. Provides adequate refuse and recycling storage, which is incorporated into the scheme to minimise visual impact;
- h. Adopts the principles of sustainable drainage, where appropriate;
- i. Ensures the development will not prejudice the amenity of its future occupiers or that of adjacent properties in terms of overshadowing, loss of light, dominance, loss of privacy, noise or general disturbance;
- j. Ensures that lighting associated with the development will not have a significant effect on residential amenity or wildlife;
- k. Would not result in unacceptable levels of noise, air or water pollution; and
- l. Creates a safe, accessible and well-connected environment that meets the needs of its users.

Where a design and access statement is required as part of a planning application, there should be a clear demonstration of how the proposal has responded to the above principles, as well as the design codes, as an integral part of the design process.



## Embedding energy efficiency and renewable energy

- 4.7 The building regulations address the standard of energy efficiency in new buildings. However, neighbourhood plans can provide further guidance to seek to ensure that energy efficiency considerations have guided the design process. This includes the consideration of opportunities to incorporate passive design measures, such as maximising the potential for solar gain and natural ventilation through the siting, orientation and layout of development. Other key considerations include the potential to incorporate renewable energy, water cycling and waste reduction.
- 4.8 It is acknowledged that many forms of renewable energy generation can be installed on existing properties under permitted development rights, such as ground source heat pumps and solar panels. Policy MSG3 provides a positive framework which supports new developments that maximise the ability to embed energy efficiency and renewable energy measures. It should be noted that the policy is not seeking to apply new technical standards, it identifies criteria on how new development can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in accordance with paragraph 154 of the NPPF. This approach should support the delivery of plan objectives 1 and 2.

### Policy MSG3: Embedding energy efficiency and renewable energy

Developments which embed a commitment to sustainable design and construction will be supported. In order to assess this commitment, where appropriate and viable, consideration should be given to how the development:

- a. Incorporates passive design measures to improve the efficiency of heating, cooling, ventilation and lighting;
- b. Includes measures to reduce waste generated during construction and ensures there is appropriate storage space and segregation facilities for recyclable and non-recyclable waste;
- c. Ensures that energy and water efficiency measures are incorporated;
- d. Aims to meet appropriate technical standards;
- e. Incorporates on-site energy generation from renewable sources; and
- f. Reduces energy demands of historic buildings, subject to compliance with other relevant policies on historic assets.

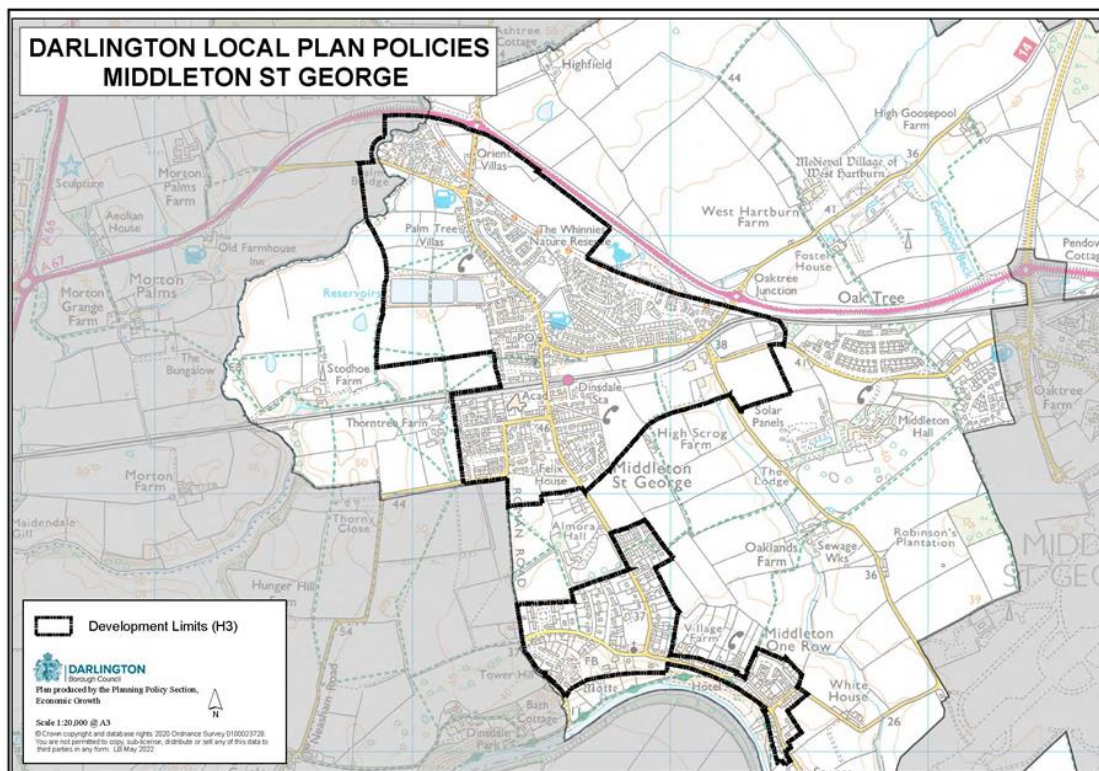
Where a design and access statement is required as part of a planning application, there must be a clear demonstration of how the proposal has responded to the above as an integral part of the design development process.

## General location of new development

- 4.9 The adopted Darlington Local Plan defines development limits for Middleton St George and Middleton One Row which include the Local Plan site allocation at Maxgate Farm and current housing commitments. These are shown on map 1.
- 4.10 Development Limits are not defined in the Local Plan for Oak Tree. Local Plan Policy SH1 on settlement hierarchy states that “Only those places with defined Development Limits are classified as settlements for the purposes of this Policy. All areas outside the Development Limits are to be regarded as ‘countryside’ unless specifically identified for other uses in the plan (including Policies E1, E2 and E3)”. Development proposals in Oak Tree will be considered against the relevant policies on development in the countryside.

- 4.11 The purposes of development limits are to manage the location of new development and protect the countryside from unsuitable development, preventing the merger of settlements and maintaining their character. National planning policy identifies that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless specific criteria are met.
- 4.12 The Darlington Local Plan includes strategic Policies E4 on economic development in the countryside and H7 on housing development in the countryside. The development of new community facilities will be considered against Darlington Local Plan Policy IN10.

Map 1: Darlington Local Plan Development Limits



### Green infrastructure

- 4.13 The national planning policy framework 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 and 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. 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.
- 4.14 Policy MSG4 therefore seeks to protect and where practical improve the green infrastructure network of the plan area, supporting the delivery of plan objectives 1 and 2. The identification

has been informed by allocations within the adopted and emerging development plan, including the Darlington Green Infrastructure Strategy<sup>2</sup>.

- 4.15 The green infrastructure identified on the policies map (annex 1) includes: wildlife networks and corridors, green wedges, open spaces including parks and informal open spaces, playing pitches, allotments, public rights of way, transport corridors including railway routes (both active and abandoned), trees and woodlands, private gardens and linkages to the wider countryside. The green infrastructure network has a strong link with the public rights of way network and therefore provides vital linkages from the built-up area to the countryside. The key elements of the green infrastructure network include: The Whinnies, the water park, the route of the former Stockton and Darlington Railway, Almora Hall, The Front, Teesdale Way and the banks of the River Tees.

#### Policy MSG4: Green Infrastructure

New development should seek to protect and where practical, improve and extend green infrastructure. The following green infrastructure is identified in the Darlington Local Plan:

- The rural gaps between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row, Middleton St George and Oak Tree;
- The green corridors along the River Tees and the A67;
- The historic route of the Stockton Darlington railway; and
- The rural parkland of Middleton Hall.

The Policies Map in the MSG Neighbourhood Plan (annex 1) defines other locally important green infrastructure.

Development affecting green infrastructure will be assessed against policies in the Darlington Local Plan, in particular Policies ENV3 and ENV4.

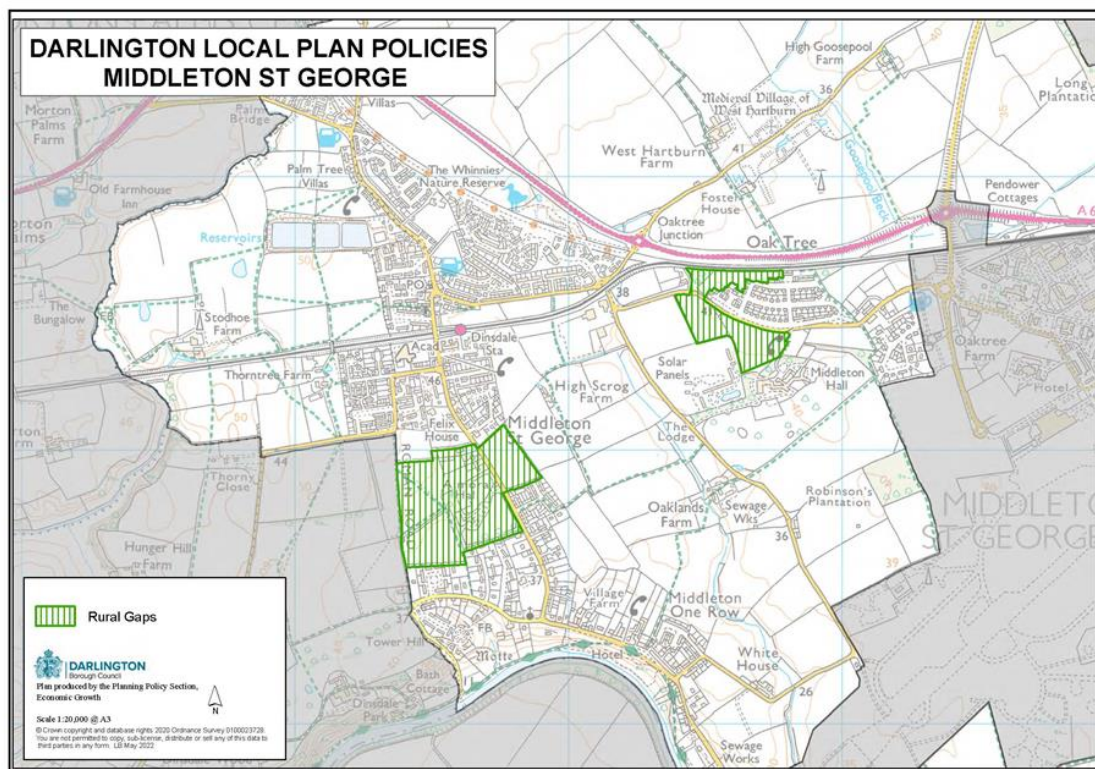
#### Rural Gaps

- 4.16 The Darlington Local Plan defines Rural Gaps between Middleton St George and Middleton One Row and secondly between Middleton St George and Oak Tree (see Map 2). The villages in the plan area have developed separately over time and these gaps remain important to the rural settlement pattern, to the character of the rural area and to its residents. Darlington Local Plan Policy ENV3 together with Policy H7 and Policy E4, will protect the rural gaps, conserving the character, openness and links to the wider landscape in order to maintain the attractiveness of the Borough's settlements and their settings.
- 4.17 The Middleton St George Design Code recognises the importance of the gaps between the settlements to maintaining their separate identities.
- 4.18 The Middleton One Row Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2010) highlights the importance of the open green area along Middleton Lane to the character of the Conservation Area.
- 4.19 Darlington Local Plan Policy ENV1 seeks to safeguard the open areas within conservation areas and states "Development will not be permitted that would lead to the loss of public or private

<sup>2</sup> <https://microsites.darlington.gov.uk/local-plan/document-library/darlingtons-green-infrastructure-strategy/>

open spaces within or adjacent to conservation areas where the existing openness makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area or its setting, including landscape and townscape and views into or from the area, unless the public benefit demonstrably outweighs the harm.”

Map 2: Darlington Local Plan Rural Gaps



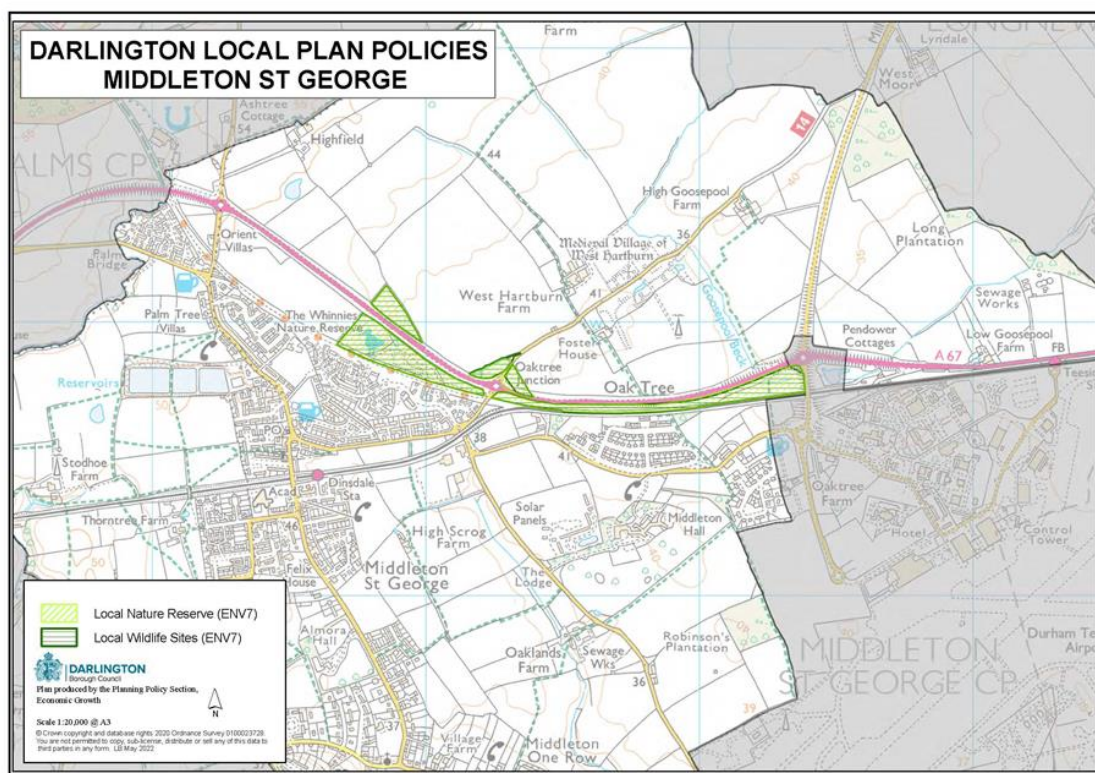
## Biodiversity

- 4.20 The plan area includes a wide range of species and habitats<sup>3</sup> including: The Whinnies Local Nature Reserve, woodland priority habitat and land on the national forest inventory. The Whinnies can be seen on Map 3 below (extract from the Darlington Local Plan Policies Map) which is also a designated Local Wildlife Site. There are also many sites within the plan area which provide important habitats, such as: The Waterpark, the former Stockton and Darlington Railway route trackbed, The Front, the three allotment sites and the field at Almora Hall. There have been a number of bird, flora and fauna surveys undertaken at The Front, which identify that there is a plethora of fauna and flora and the site is visited by a number of birds.
- 4.21 Policy MSG5 therefore seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity across the plan area and will support the delivery of plan objective 1.

<sup>3</sup> Information obtained from: Natural England (Magic Map)



Map 3: Darlington Local Plan Local Nature Reserve & Local Wildlife Site



### Policy MSG5: Biodiversity

Development should protect and enhance biodiversity. Proposals should demonstrate how a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gains will be achieved. There should be no loss or significant harm to biodiversity sites, protected species or their habitats. Where development would result in the loss or significant harm to biodiversity, applicants will be required to demonstrate that the adverse impacts will be adequately mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for.

Development proposals will be assessed against Darlington Local Plan Policies ENV7 and ENV8.

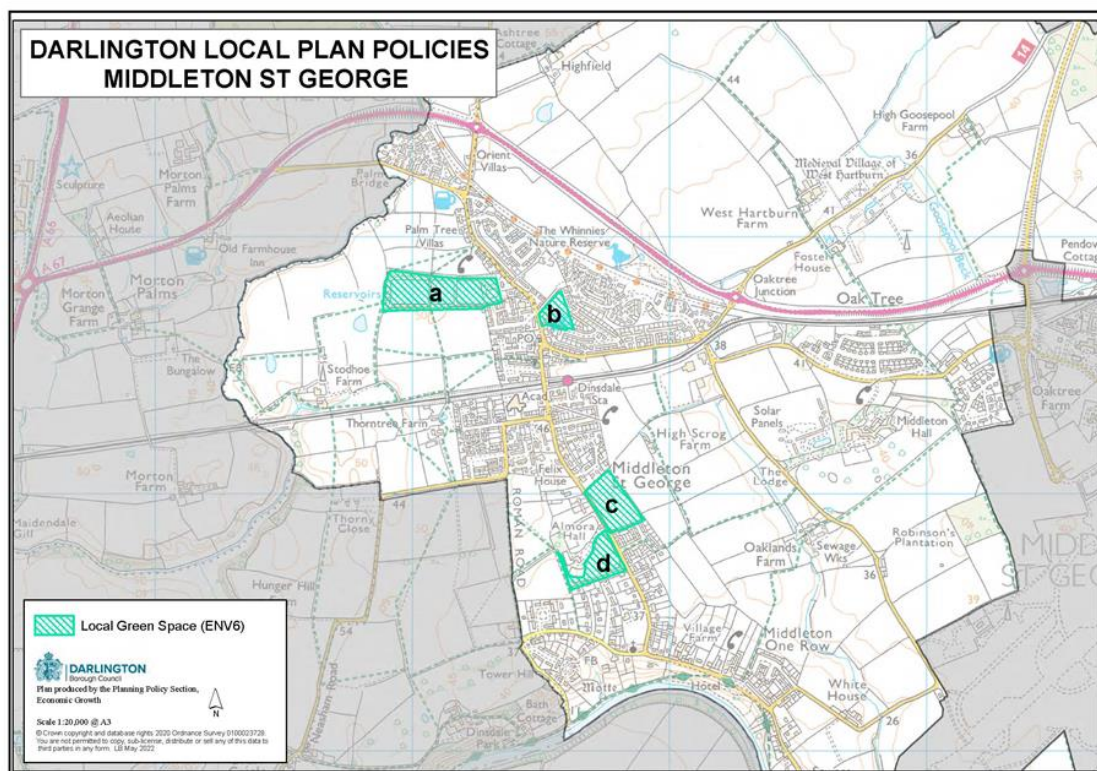
### Local green space

- 4.22 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.
- 4.23 National planning policy 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 to them, holding a particular local significance. The designation cannot be applied to an extensive tract of land.



- 4.24 The sites listed in policy MSG6 and shown on the policies map (annex 1) are 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 designation<sup>4</sup>. The designation of the sites assists with the delivery of plan objectives 1 and 2.
- 4.25 The following sites shown on Map 4 have also been designated as Local Green Space in the Darlington Local Plan: a. Water Park, Station Road b. Station Road Playing Field and Playground c. Land off Middleton Lane, after Pine Tree Grove d. Almora Hall field, off Middleton Lane.

Map 4: Darlington Local Plan Local Green Space



### Policy MSG6: Local Green Space

The following areas, as defined on the policies map (annex 1), are designated as local green space which will be protected from development in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt:

- LGS01 The Whinnies
- LGS02 Former Stockton and Darlington Railway Route and Trackbed in MSG
- LGS03 Haxby Road Play Area and former cornmill site
- LGS04 Tower Hill to The Front, Middleton One Row
- LGS05 The War Memorial and Garden
- LGS06 The Front, Middleton One Row
- LGS07 St George's Church and Grounds
- LGS08 Belle Vue Allotments, Belle Vue Terrace
- LGS09 Killinghall Row Allotments, Killinghall Row

<sup>4</sup> <http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

**LGS10 Sadberge Road Allotments**

Management of any development within these local green spaces must be consistent with national policy on Green Belts. Development of the land will not be permitted other than where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the local green space by reason of inappropriateness and other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

**Protected open space**

- 4.26 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 criteria for designation as local green space.
- 4.27 The sites listed in policy MSG7 and shown on the policies map (annex 1) are proposed to be protected as they are important to the local community. A background paper has been prepared to outline the reasons why the sites are important and to explain the process that led to their designation<sup>5</sup>. The designation of the sites assists with the delivery of plan objectives 1 and 2.
- 4.28 The policy sets out how open space should be provided as part of new development in accordance with standards set out in Darlington Local Plan Policy ENV5. The Local Plan policy requires that developments of 20 dwellings (or 0.2 hectares) or more, or non-residential developments of 1,000m gross floorspace or more will be expected to deliver new green infrastructure to meet the additional need generated by the development. This is subject to the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing provision and based on a calculation which has regard to the standards and costs contained in the adopted Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, or its replacement. For smaller development schemes, in areas of open space deficiency, financial contributions will be sought towards the improvement of green infrastructure in the local area. The policy and supporting text provide further guidance and a standard formula to calculate the contribution required.

**Policy MSG7: Protected open space**

The following areas of open space, as defined on the policies map (annex 1), have been identified as contributing to local amenity and character and will be protected from development:

- POS1 The green at the Greenway
- POS2 The green at Grendon Gardens
- POS3 The green at Hunters Green
- POS4 The green at Woolsington Drive
- POS5 The green at Ropner Gardens
- POS6 The Cricket Field and Bowling Green
- POS7 Oak Tree Estate
- POS8 St Georges' C of E Academy playing fields
- POS9 North of Alexandria Drive, Virginia Estate

<sup>5</sup> <http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

Development that would result in the loss of protected open spaces will be considered against Darlington Local Plan Policy ENV4g.

New open space should be provided as part of new development in accordance with the Green Infrastructure Standards set out in Darlington Local Plan Policy ENV5.

### Heritage assets

- 4.29 Heritage assets can either be designated or non-designated. Designated assets have statutory status within the plan area and include scheduled monuments, 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 do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.
- 4.30 The glossary of the national planning policy framework 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).’*
- 4.31 National planning policy highlights that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and requires them to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Also, that planning decisions 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.
- 4.32 Middleton St George has a diverse heritage, most notably its links with the Stockton and Darlington Railway and Roman occupation, as well as the RAF base. Local heritage is important to the local community, not only its designated heritage assets. The early origins of the village have resulted in the parish containing fascinating archaeology, including the scheduled Norman motte and bailey castle at Middleton One Row. There is also the deserted medieval village of West Hartburn, north of the A67, which is also a scheduled monument. As a result, there is a high potential for important archaeological remains to survive in the parish, particularly around the scheduled monuments and the area to the south towards the lost Pountney’s Bridge and the Roman Road, Rikenild Street.
- 4.33 Middleton One Row is designated as a conservation area and the plan area contains 16 listed buildings, all of which are grade II apart from one, Low Middleton Hall, which is grade II\*. The Middleton One Row Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2010) 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 character appraisal explains that the landscape setting of the area has a major impact on its character. It describes the impact of Roman occupation and links with the Normans and Saxons. It also highlights that there is high potential for archaeological remains, particularly within the conservation area.
- 4.34 The parish council supports the objectives and delivery programme of the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone and is seeking ways in which the local community can be involved. As part of the heritage action zone, a pilot conservation area is being considered based on the track bed between the A66 Darlington Bypass and Mill Lane. In addition, the parish council established the Middleton St George Stockton and Darlington Heritage Steering Group with the assistance of the Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway. The group is assembling a package of enhancement projects around the former station which will collectively

create the Fighting Cocks Rail Heritage Hub. It is hoped that all of the work will help to rejuvenate and restore the route of the historic railway and to help realise its potential to become a major heritage attraction and visitor destination in the build up to its 2025 bicentenary. The heritage assets of the Stockton and Darlington Railway are described in the 2016 historic environment audit. Appendix 5 of the audit describes the route within the parish and makes recommendations for the protection and management of its assets.

- 4.35 Early engagement on the plan identified strong support for the protection and enhancement of heritage assets across the plan area. Policy MSG8 therefore seeks to ensure that appropriate weight is given to the impact of a development proposal on the significance of a heritage asset, supporting the delivery of plan objective 1.

#### **Policy MSG8: Heritage assets**

Where a development may impact on a heritage asset, applicants should provide information that describes the significance of any heritage assets affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting. In the determination of development proposals:

- a. Great weight will be given to the conservation of a designated heritage asset and any harm or loss to its significance will require clear and convincing justification in accordance with national policy; and
- b. A balanced judgment will be required to fully consider the effects of any development proposals affecting a non-designated heritage asset, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Development proposals that affect a designated or non designated heritage asset will be considered against Darlington Local Plan Policy ENV1.

## 5. Community well-being

### Background

- 5.1 National planning policy highlights that the planning system has an important role to play in creating healthy, inclusive communities. A healthy community is defined 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 mix, including affordable housing

- 5.3 National planning policy requires neighbourhood plans to positively support the strategic policies for the area and should not promote less development than is required by the local plan. A key role for the plan is to provide a policy framework to support the provision of a mix of homes to meet local needs. In order to inform the preparation of the plan, the parish council commissioned a housing needs assessment, prepared by AECOM consultants, as part of the government's technical support programme<sup>6</sup>.
- 5.4 The housing needs assessment was prepared prior to the adoption of the Darlington Local Plan. The element of the assessment that considered the level of housing needed in the area has been superseded by Darlington Local Plan Policy H1, which sets a neighbourhood area housing requirement of 860 dwellings for Middleton St George. The requirement is based on the number of dwellings that are expected to be built on housing allocations and commitments in the neighbourhood plan area between 2021 and 2036. It includes one housing allocation and five housing commitments (sites with existing planning permission). Key issues from the housing needs assessment were:
- The plan area is characterised by an unusually high proportion of home ownership, as opposed to private and social renting;
  - The annual income required for a market sale home, in terms of mortgage availability and not including the cost of the deposit, is 77% higher than the average net household income locally;
  - The rate of private renting in Middleton St George increased by 250% in the decade between 2001 and 2011;
  - The social rented sector in the plan area is small. As this is the only secure tenure within reach of single-earning households on lower quartile incomes the number of social or affordable rented homes should be increased wherever possible; and
  - There is a need to improve affordability in the plan area across all tenures. Therefore, new residential development should ensure a substantial proportion of smaller dwellings. Increasing the proportion of smaller homes and more affordable types should help to rebalance the housing stock in favour of options that are both suitable to the population profile as it evolves over time and that will combat growing affordability challenges.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>



- 5.5 To seek to ensure that a range and choice of housing is available, a mix of house sizes, types and tenures will be required to be provided through new development. The plan does not propose specific requirements for different housing types, tenures and sizes as it is acknowledged that the need for this can change over time. However, it is noted that Middleton Hall Retirement Village is an important facility which provides accommodation for the older population. An important element of the assessment of current housing needs is set out within the Middleton St George Housing Needs Assessment (2020) and the Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2020). These documents should be used to guide decisions on planning applications. Policy MSG9 requires consideration of the need for particular house types and tenures in accordance with Darlington Local Plan Policies H4 and H5 as part of the assessment of development proposals, helping to deliver plan objective 2.
- 5.6 National planning policy requires that affordable housing provision should not be sought on residential developments that are not major (less than 10 dwellings). However, where major development is proposed there is the expectation that at least 10% of the homes should be available for affordable home ownership, unless this would exceed the level of affordable housing required in the area or significantly prejudice the ability to meet the identified affordable housing needs of specific groups.
- 5.7 The information contained within the housing needs assessment identifies the significant affordability issues across the plan area. The provision of affordable housing is considered to be vital to allow young people and young families to get on the housing ladder and stay within the local community. Affordable housing could be available to buy or for rent.
- 5.8 Darlington Local Plan Policy H5 will be used to advise on the requirements for affordable housing in the plan area. This will support the delivery of plan objective 2.

#### Policy MSG9: Housing mix

Proposals for housing development will be encouraged to provide an appropriate mix of housing types, sizes and tenures which have regard to local needs as identified within the most up to date Middleton St George Housing Needs Assessment and the Darlington Strategic Housing Market Assessment or other relevant evidence, in accordance with Darlington Local Plan Policy H4.

In order to meet the needs of people who are not able to access the general housing market, the provision of affordable housing will be expected in residential development schemes of 10 or more dwellings in accordance with Darlington Local Plan Policy H5. Within the plan area, 20% of housing development should be affordable housing which should be provided within the development site in order to support the needs of the community and to support the development of a balanced community.

#### Community facilities

- 5.9 Community facilities are identified in the national planning policy framework 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.
- 5.10 There are a variety of community facilities across the plan area, including: shops; a GP surgery; primary school; veterinary surgery; three public houses; a hotel; a recreation ground with

football pitch and play area; cricket club; community centre; and a multi-use games area. In addition, there are a large number of community groups, clubs and societies that operate across the plan area, including: local history group; walking group; WI; cricket club; fishing club; model boats club; baby groups; as well as scouts and guides.

- 5.11 The availability of the current level of facilities within the plan area are essential to support the strong sense of community that exists. Policy MSG10 therefore supports the provision of new and enhancement of existing community facilities, as well as seeking to resist the loss of existing facilities, this will assist with the delivery of plan objective 2. Policies MSG6 and MSG7 support the safeguarding of open spaces and will be used to consider any development proposals affecting them.

#### Policy MSG10: Community facilities

Development proposals to enhance the provision of community facilities will be supported in accordance with Darlington Local Plan Policy IN10C and subject to the following criteria:

- 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 safety; and
- c. Access arrangements and sufficient off-street parking can be satisfactorily provided where practical without negatively impacting on adjoining uses.

Proposals that result in the loss of a community facility will be considered against Darlington Local Plan Policy IN10B and subject to points d, e and f.

- d. The facility is no longer needed in its current form;
- e. A replacement facility of sufficient size, layout and quality is to be provided on an alternative suitable location; or
- f. It would not be economically viable or feasible to retain the facility and there is no reasonable prospect of securing an alternative community use of the land or building.

#### Allotments

- 5.12 There are three allotment sites in the plan area at Belle Vue, Killinghall Row and Sadberge Road, all are located within accessible locations in the heart of the local community. The allotments are valued by allotment holders and their families. The range and diversity of allotment holders has improved significantly in recent years. Allotments 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 MSG11 seeks to ensure that existing allotments are protected, which will assist with the delivery of plan objective 1 and 2.

#### Policy MSG11: Allotments

The following allotment sites, as defined on the policies map (annex 1), will be protected from development:

- A1 Belle Vue;
- A2 Killinghall Row; and
- A3 Sadberge Road.

Development resulting in the loss of any of the allotment sites identified would only be supported where:

- a. The development provides significant social and, or economic benefits which outweigh the importance of retaining the allotment; and
- b. 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.

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

### **Infrastructure**

- 5.13 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 parish council has particular concern over the impact of traffic within the area which is causing highway safety issues and congestion. This is most notably as a result of the width of the roads and their ability to cope with increasing traffic levels, this is made worse as a result of inappropriate parking. The community have expressed concern over the access to the GP surgery since it moved from its previous central location, however it is still a valuable local resource.
- 5.14 Policy MSG12 therefore seeks to ensure that no significant adverse infrastructure impacts arise as a result of new developments, supporting the delivery of all of the plan objectives.

#### **Policy MSG12: Infrastructure**

New developments will be required to provide or contribute to the infrastructure requirements that are related to them. The necessary infrastructure, including improvements to existing infrastructure, should be made available to serve the development within an agreed timescale.

## 6. Sustainable 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 support the economy of the plan area, particularly small-scale enterprises.

### Employment and economic growth

- 6.2 The economy of the plan area grew around its links to the railway and the ironworks. There were a number of factories, which have now gone. As a result, most residents have to travel elsewhere to access employment. The 2011 census identifies that most residents were employed in human health and social work activities (15%), followed by wholesale and retail trade (14%), education (10%), manufacturing (10%) and public administration (9%). In addition, those living in the parish are highly qualified, with 34% having level 4 qualifications and above. There is also a high level of self-employment in the parish (13%).
- 6.3 Sustainable economic growth will be encouraged and supported in the plan area in accordance with Darlington Local Plan Policies on the economy, built and natural environment and residential amenity.

### Tourism and leisure

- 6.4 Despite the historic and natural assets of the plan area, there is little tourism development. However, the parish council are keen to support appropriate facilities to develop the tourism and leisure industry. The parish council, as part of their involvement in the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone working group, particularly support tourism and leisure proposals linked to the railway to help realise its potential to become a major heritage attraction and visitor destination.
- 6.5 Policy MSG13 therefore support proposals for tourism and leisure development, whilst balancing this against the need to protect and enhance the distinctive and valued environment, supporting the delivery of plan objective 3.

#### Policy MSG13: Tourism and leisure

The development of new visitor attractions and leisure facilities, including the expansion of existing tourism and leisure businesses, should accord with Darlington Local Plan Policy E4 and should be focused in the development limits of Middleton St George and Middleton One Row. Such development will be supported where:

- a. The siting, scale, materials and design respect the character of the surrounding area and conserve and where possible enhance heritage assets and their setting, as well as any natural assets;
- b. The proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on amenity of adjacent uses; and
- c. The proposal is acceptable in terms of highway safety.

In the open countryside tourist attractions and leisure facilities will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposed location is required to meet the needs of the business.

Tourism development proposed as part of a farm diversification scheme should ensure that the primary agricultural function of the farm is retained.



## 7. Connectivity

### Background

- 7.1 National planning policy 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 neighbourhood plans can influence accessibility including, supporting the protection and enhancement of active travel routes and accessibility in new development.
- 7.2 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.

### Transport and new development

- 7.3 National planning policy 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 MSG14 therefore identifies the key considerations for development proposals across the plan area which will assist in the delivery of plan objective 4.

#### Policy MSG14: Transport and new development

Development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it:

- Will provide safe vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian access and which, where appropriate, connects to the wider walking and cycling network;
- Will not significantly impact on traffic flows on the highway network or that appropriate mitigation measures can be secured and are undertaken; and
- Makes satisfactory off-road parking provision.

### Rights of Way

- 7.4 The walking and cycling network include those routes that are used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders. They provide recreation and leisure opportunities and also promote healthy living. Routes can include public footpaths, cycle routes and public bridleways.
- 7.5 Policy MSG15 seeks to support proposals to improve or extend the walking and cycling network within the plan area, as well as protecting existing routes. This supports the delivery of plan objective 4.

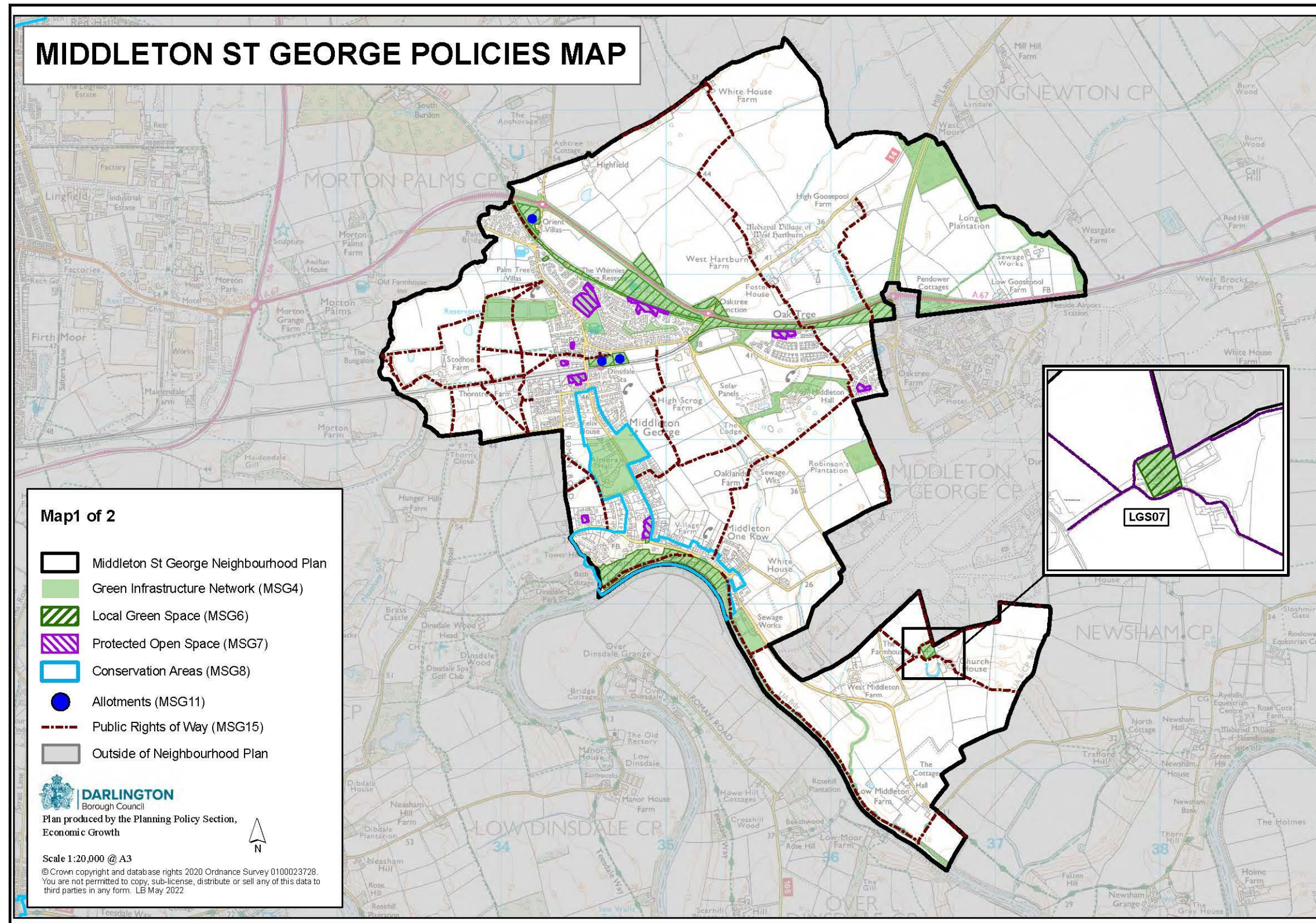
#### Policy MSG15: Rights of Way

Proposals to create, improve or extend the rights of way network within the plan area will be supported. The network, as identified on the policies map (annex 1) will be protected from development, unless:

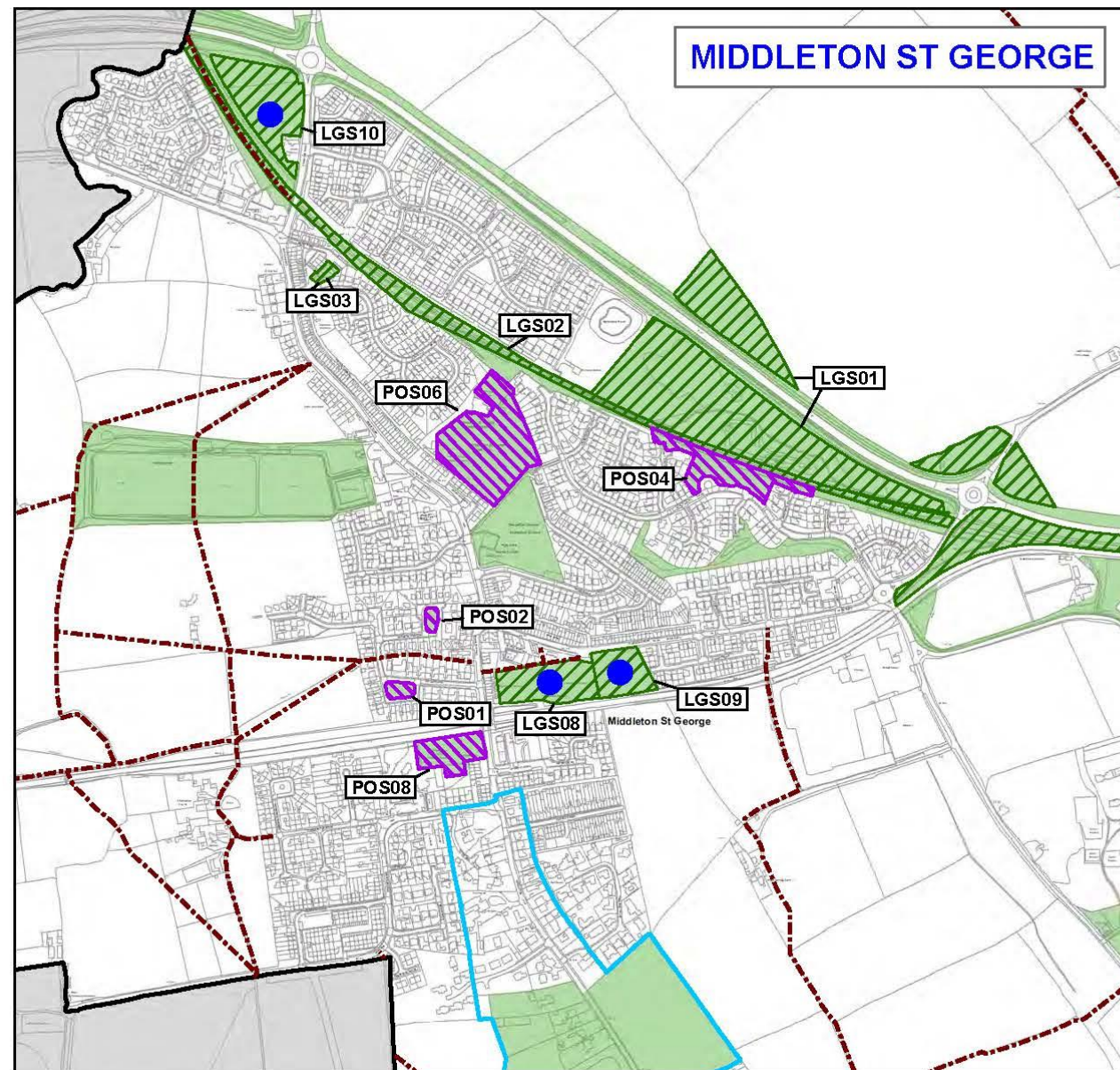
- There is a clear and demonstrable justification for the loss of the route; and
- A suitable alternative route will be provided within an agreed timescale.



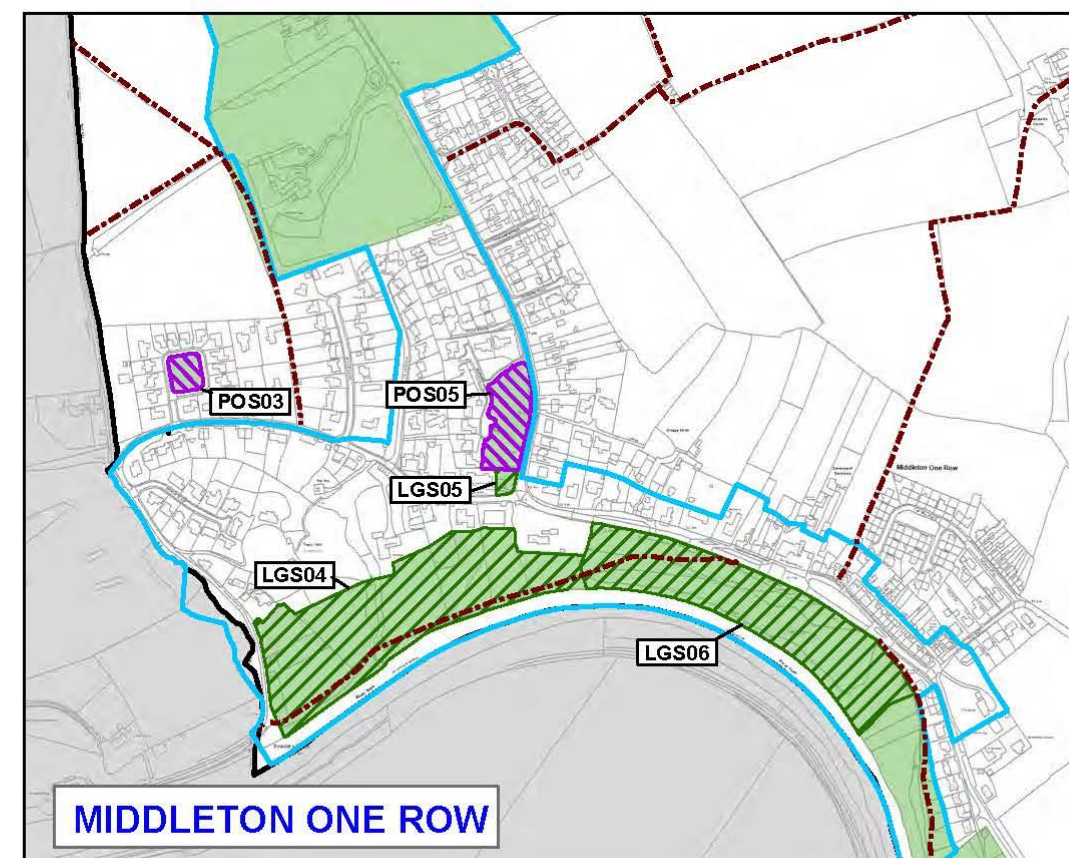
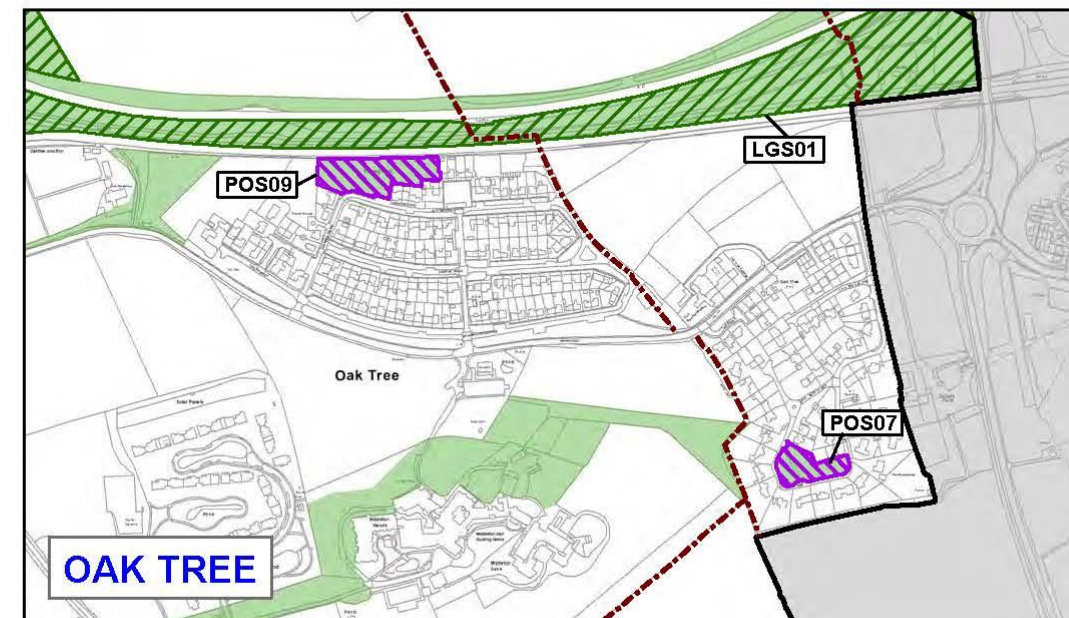
## Annex 1: Policies Maps







## MIDDLETON ST GEORGE POLICIES MAP



### Map2 of 2

- Middleton St George Neighbourhood Plan
- Green Infrastructure Network (MSG4)
- Local Green Space (MSG6)
- Protected Open Space (MSG7)
- Conservation Areas (MSG8)
- Allotments (MSG11)
- Public Right of Way (MSG15)
- Outside of Neighbourhood Plan



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Economic Growth  
Scale 1:20,000 @ A3  
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## Annex 2: 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 Middleton St George Parish Council. These proposals can be delivered in conjunction with other local organisations.

### Quality of life:

#### Community action 1: Wildflower meadow

The parish council will explore options to create wildflower areas, such as along Sadberge Road, next to the allotments, along Yarm Road towards the airport and on other roadside edges.

#### Community action 2: Stockton and Darlington Railway

The parish council will contribute to the delivery of the Heritage Action Zone programme to further improve the route of the former Stockton and Darlington Railway. This includes green corridor and access improvements. The parish council will also continue to work to deliver the Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub project and has set up the Middleton St George Stockton and Darlington Heritage Steering Group to progress this. Although separate from the Heritage Hub project, Platform 1 Pub (formerly the Fighting Cocks), has been included because of the pub's strong railway heritage. It has been listed as a Community Asset (Asset of Community Value) under the Localism Act, and a Community Group has been set up to help secure its future as such. The parish council will, where possible, continue to support the community group together with the Friends of Stockton and Darlington Railway as part of the overall Fighting Cocks Heritage Hub project

#### Community action 3: Interpretation boards

The parish council will explore options to install information boards at key parts of the parish, including: The Water Park; The Front at Middleton One Row; and along the route of the former Stockton and Darlington Railway line.

#### Community action 4: Dog fouling

Work with Darlington Borough Council to better control dog fouling across the plan area, including awareness raising, increasing bin provision and increasing patrols.

#### Community action 5: Overhead cables

Work with Darlington Borough Council to see the removal of overhead cables throughout the village.

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**Community action 6: Joint working with Middle Oak Management Ltd on community wildlife projects**

The parish council will work with Middle Oak Management Ltd to identify community wildlife projects which will be delivered in partnership.

**Community action 7: Net Zero Carbon Future**

The parish council will work with key stakeholders, including community groups, to seek to achieve a net zero carbon future for the parish.

**Community well-being:**

**Community action 8: Play area improvements**

To explore options for improvements to the current play area, including installation of equipment that can be used by people with disabilities, new seating, surface improvements and new lighting/cameras.

**Community action 9: Water park improvements**

The parish council will explore options to: make improvements to street lighting (to provide lighting as far as the boating club building); clear undergrowth on the reservoir banks, following the structural survey of the three ponds; extend and improve the trails; working with the community centre committee to improve both the access to and the increase in size of the car park that is used by many waterpark and community centre users; and improve external security/ lighting for the parish council building.

**Community action 10: Facilities for young people**

The parish council will explore options to provide more facilities for young people, including the creation of a bike track/ trail.

**Community action 11: Facilities for older people**

The parish council will explore options to provide more facilities for older people.

**Community action 12: Improvements to the multi-use games area**

The parish council will explore options to make improvements to the multi-use games area, including installation of sensitive lighting and security measures. Hold discussions with Middleton Rangers Junior Football Club, Darlington Borough Council and Durham Football Association.

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**Community action 13: Community garden**

The parish council will explore options to create a community garden for all residents to enjoy. This could include growing areas.

**Community action 14: Antisocial behaviour**

Work with Darlington Borough Council and the police to tackle issues of antisocial behaviour more effectively.

**Connectivity:****Community action 15: Highway safety and traffic management**

To work with Darlington Borough Council to implement measures which improve the safety of the highway network across the plan area. Particularly: opening up the three-way junction and improved lighting at High Scroggs Farm and railway bridge at Yarm Road which are linked to recent planning approvals, in addition ensuring action is taken against the parking of vehicles on double yellow lines and roadside footways. In order to monitor the highway network in the future the parish council will seek to purchase an additional traffic monitor and explore options for the installation of speed cameras

**Community action 16: Integrated approach to bus service provision**

To work with Darlington Borough Council, transport providers and other stakeholders such as Age UK, to seek to develop innovative schemes which improve accessibility to key services and facilities. Particularly, increasing the frequency of bus services to key locations, such as the GP surgery.

**Community action 17: Permissive Accesses**

Work with Darlington Borough Council to deliver improvements to paths at Sadberge Road and Belle Vue allotments and also the creation of a new lit path from the entrance to the airport on the A67, parallel to The Whinnies Nature Reserve.

**Community action 18: Road improvements**

The parish council will explore options to make improvements to the unadopted road leading to the cricket club from Station Road

**Community action 19: Accessibility enhancements**

The parish council, through input to the development management process, will seek to ensure that development provides appropriate path and cycleway links from estate roads to the existing footpath and cycleway network.



## Annex 3: Design Codes

MIDDLETON ST GEORGE DESIGN GUIDE

# 5.0 DESIGN CODES

### 5.1. Introduction

The distinguishing features of design codes in this report can be described as follows. (adapted from Preparing Design Codes, CABE 2016):

- *They are set of graphic, and to a lesser extent, written, rules that are technical in nature;*
- *They establish with precision the design considerations of a development or area;*
- *They are based on a design vision such as a masterplan or other form of design framework for a site or area;*
- *They are three dimensional in scope, and focus primarily on urban design considerations;*
- *They focus on the essential and mandatory design characteristics of a particular development; and*
- *They can also include provisions which are advisory or optional.*

Due to the non-site specific nature of these codes, a general written code form that can be applied to existing and new development is highly appropriate for this circumstance.

### 5.2 The National Design Guide

The National Design Guide is now available and together with Building For Life 12 provides an excellent set of tools to guide projects from the strategic through to the detail. The topics in this Design Code are mapped against it below and further detail to refer to is available here.

#### The Rules of Assembly and Character Response

Across the whole village area we have determined some key 'rules of assembly' for how to build in context and also positive and negative spatial characteristics that will be helpful in generating locally distinctive and contextually sensitive development.

As such the Codes propose how development must integrate generally in both spatial terms but also in character terms, focussing on the sense of place in the three sub-settlements. As such the codes are not site specific and they refer to a variety of different situations, including potential infill and extensions to the village areas.

### The Design Codes (DC)

DC.1 All of the following codes must be taken into consideration in the development of design proposals. The codes are not intended to stifle designers' creativity and cannot cover all circumstances and potential responses and therefore departures or exceptions will be required to be justified in line with the spirit of the code and resolved via consultation.

#### Community Consultation (CC)

CC.1 Consultation with the community and regular communication and liaison with community groups must form a key part of the design process from an early stage through to submissions.

#### Building for Life 12 and National Design Guide Statement

SS.1 Major Developments must provide both an ongoing/ updated Building for Life 12 Assessment and a statement to show how each of the National Design Guide topics has or will be taken into account within the design process.

Distinctly Darlington (2009) Characterisation Criteria	National Design Guide topics	IDENTITY
CONTEXT	CONTEXT	
LANDSCAPE	NATURE	
SPACE + MOVEMENT	MOVEMENT / PUBLIC SPACES	
GRAIN + DENSITY	BUILT FORM	
HEIGHT + SKYLINE	BUILT FORM	
MASSING + ROOFSCAPE	BUILT FORM	
MATERIALS	HOMES AND BUILDINGS	
DETAILS	HOMES AND BUILDINGS	
• See National Design Guide	USES	
• See National Design Guide	LIFESPAN	
• See National Design Guide	RESOURCES	

Figure 15: Table comparing Distinctly Darlington (2009) characterisation criteria to the National Design Guide (2018) topics

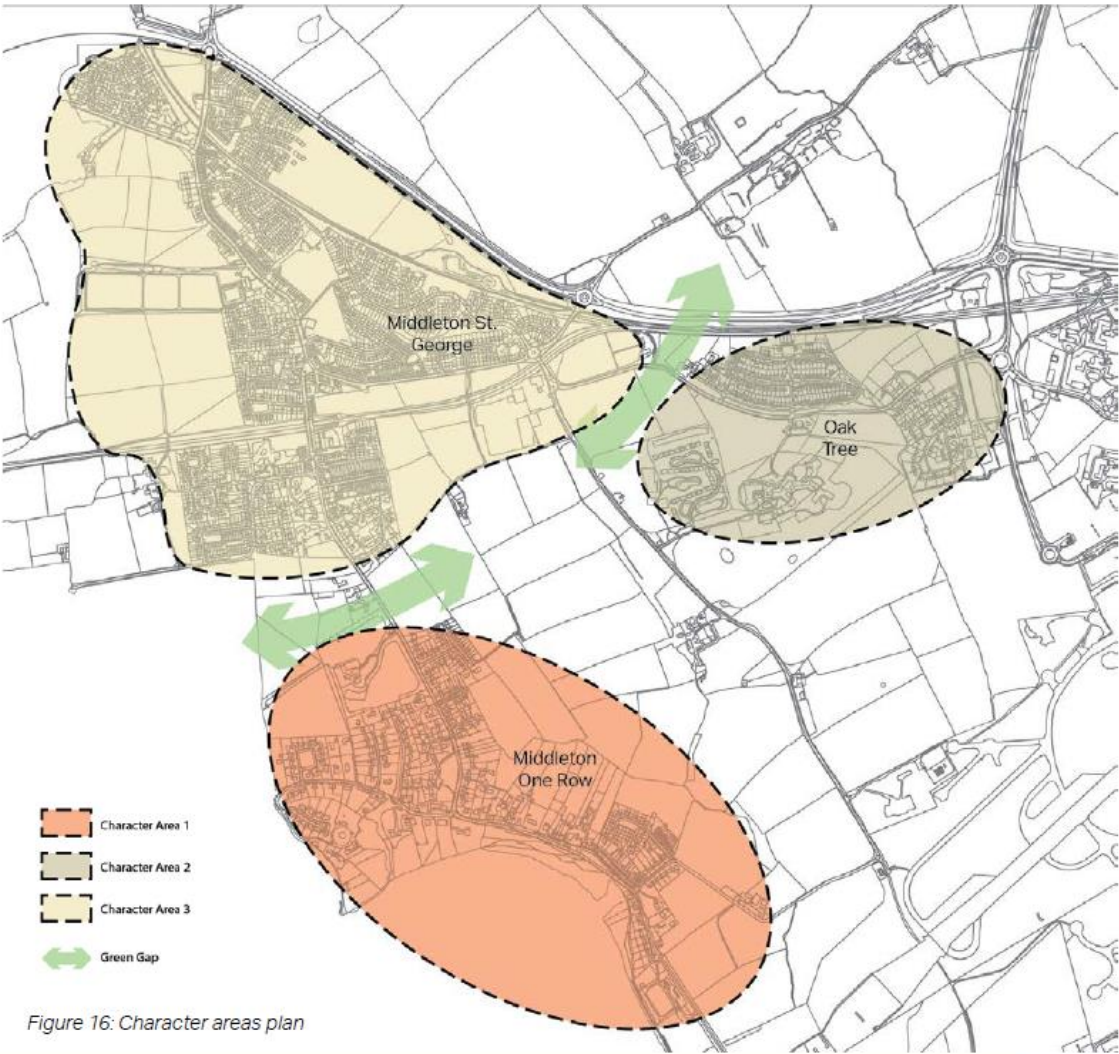


Figure 16: Character areas plan

# CONTEXT (C)

## C.1 Mitigate Air Quality and Noise issues

Mitigate the potential negative issues associated with bypass traffic, including noise and air quality to the north through building frontage, garden orientation and envelope design.

## C.2 Retain Green Gap 1

Maintain a Green Gap between Middleton St. George and Oak Tree to the east in order to preserve the distinct identity and sense of place whilst integrating them through ease of movement and connectivity in all of its many senses.

## C.3 Retain Green Gap 2

Maintain a Green Gap between Middleton St. George and Middleton One Row to the south for the same reasons as the above but with the added imperative of protecting and enhancing the significance of the conservation area.



C2 Green Gaps between settlements

## C.4 Response to Landscape Character

Respond to the landscape character adjacent to the villages, which is predominantly Middleton Farmland on most sides which can be used as a design cue for facing development. Likewise at One Row then the southern edge must be informed by the River Tees Valley landscape (see 2.2.1).

## C.5 Operational safety of Tees Valley Airport

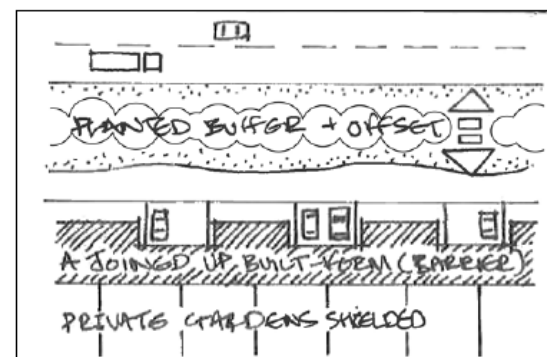
Development must not affect the operation and safety of the Tees Valley airport through reflectivity, lighting, protrusion or any other material way.

## C.6 Reference Parish history

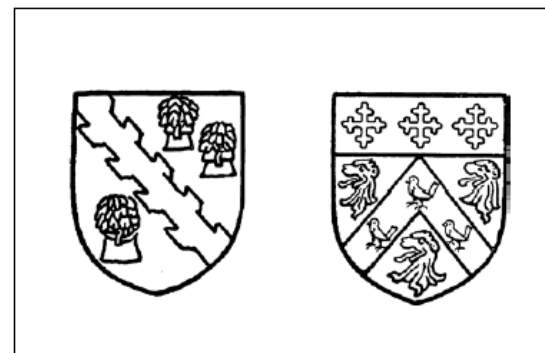
Enhance the appreciation and understanding of local history, strengthening and opening up further opportunities to create and display local identity by design. Public art, signage and interpretative material must all be explored.



C3 Green Gaps between settlements



C.1 Mitigate potential air quality and noise issues



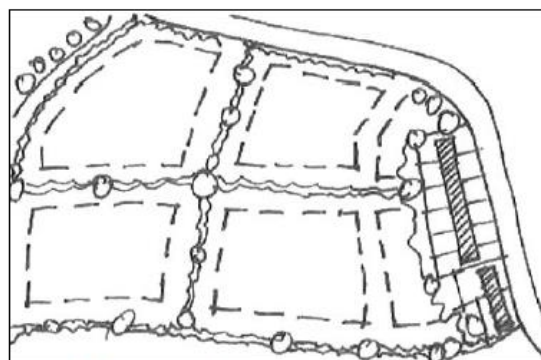
C.6 Insignia: Reference Parish history



# LANDSCAPE (L)

## L.1 Landscape structure

Development must respond to the pattern of field enclosure, hedgerow and other landscape features adjacent to the village. Often this will tie in with the drainage patterns, topography and public rights of way which can structure development and provide green breaks leading into and around the village.



L.1 Landscape structure

## L.2 Views and vistas

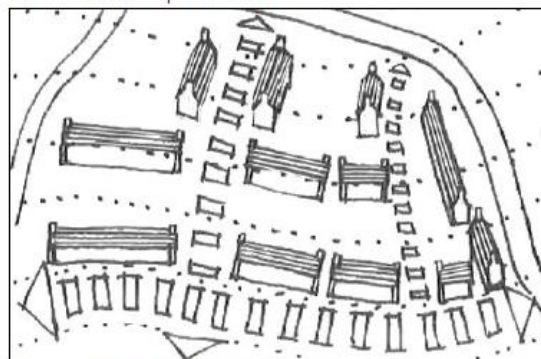
Development must retain identified views and vistas to the surrounding landscape (see Figure 4 and also the Conservation Area Character Appraisal). These may be modified to extend streets but the principle should be to retain a view at the end of a street that already has one or keep a close sense of connection to the countryside. If development covers a green field site then a clear and legible green route (see also L5) should be provided out.



L.2 Views and vistas - see page 9 for views in context

## L.3 Topography

Development must respond to the natural form of topography. For example, streets and buildings must be oriented to run either with the contours (along the slope) or against the slope, i.e. uphill (give or take 30° each way).



L.3 Topography

## L.4 Access to the countryside

Access to the countryside must be maintained and legible via green and pleasant routes where it exists currently or where there is opportunity to create one (see also L2). Green routes should be a minimum of 6-12m landscape corridor not including built development except multi-paths.



L.4 Access to the countryside - Thorn tree Gardens

#### L.5 Multi-functional green network

Green spaces, landscape features and planting must be linked to form multi-functional green network for ecological connectivity and recreation. Links can be delivered in a variety of forms and at a variety of scales but must connect in order to serve any ecological needs such as bat and mouse foraging routes.

#### L.6 Community Forest

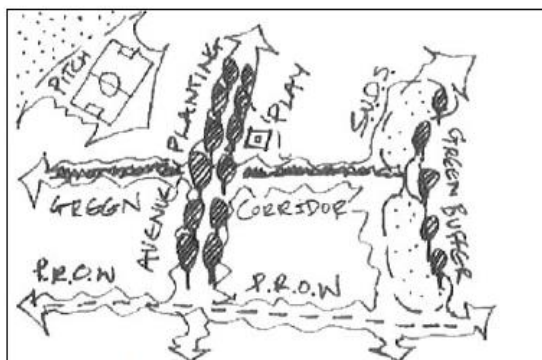
Locate opportunities to plant new woodland within major development based on the non-statutory land based designation of Community Forest. This can help to return the area to a pre-agrarian level of tree cover and biodiversity.

#### L.7 Landscape Character design response

Transform an understanding of landscape character into locally distinctive design. For example, woodland can inform the character of development both in a relational sense (the setting) or by designing a local woodland-housing typology.

#### L.8 Trees a Focal Points

Trees should be planted as a way to generate a sense of place in new development over the longer term, for example a single mature tree, not overpowered by an over-engineered road layout can form a key focal point.



L.5 Multi-functional green network



L.6 Community Forest



L.7 Landscape Character design response



L.8 Trees a Focal Points



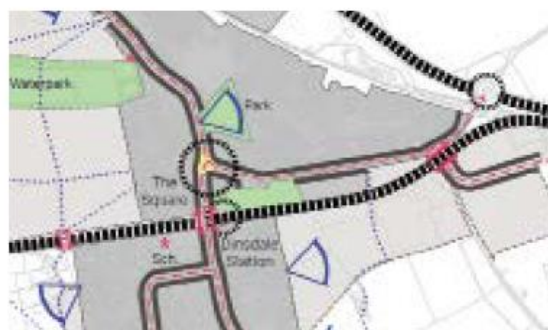
# SPACE + MOVEMENT (S/M)

## S1. Main streets / main frontage enclosure

The main frontages follow the main village streets (see diagrams) and have the most bearing on perceived character of the village to people moving within or through. Development sites which include a main frontage must provide an attractive built-frontage to give enclosure to streets as is typically found, ie. close to the back of pavement. Where buildings are set back further (max. 10m) boundary treatments will be critical to maintaining a joined-up front.

### Negative examples:

- *Garages or parking courts must not form the frontage along main streets; parking to the front of homes is prohibited on these streets unless within a walled courtyard with gates / piers or already existing;*
- *Single-storey dwellings must not be positioned along these streets as these do not provide sufficient enclosure (over the longer term single storey dwellings along main streets should be development options);*
- *Rear plot boundaries must not face onto these streets and if they do so boundaries must not be simply closed board timber fence or any type of security fencing. Extensive blank facades will not be allowed.*



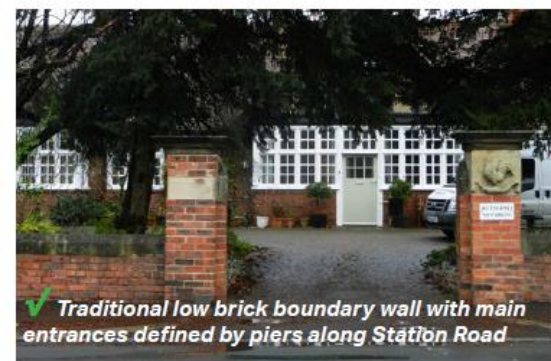
S.1 Main streets / frontages - see page 11 for full diagram



**X** Poor enclosure - parking court facing Station Road (main street) with single storey dwellings



**X** Poor built-form frontage: single storey dwellings facing main street (Yarm Road)



**✓** Traditional low brick boundary wall with main entrances defined by piers along Station Road

### Positive examples:

- Two and occasional three-storey buildings must face the main streets to provide proper enclosure and a joined up built form is also required;
- Terraced, semi-detached and detached buildings must face these streets and furthermore be attached via walls or built boundaries;
- Buildings must create a rhythm to the street front that is human in scale and wider buildings broken down into segments to add interest.
- Buildings must be set close to the back of pavement or with small front gardens (max. 10m) and where set back include boundary treatments.





## S2. Key Nodes and Minor Nodes

Nodes are spaces where main routes come together and have significance, above simple a junction. They are a major focus for identity within the village, often attracting the main local services and extra expenditure on the public realm.

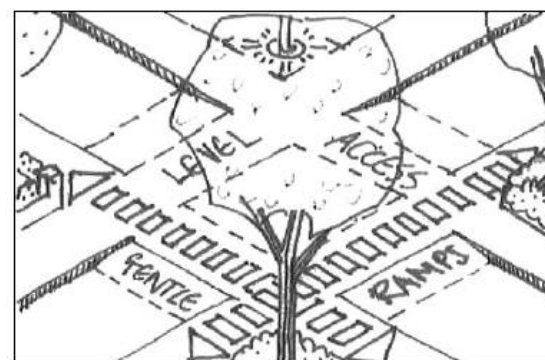
Development on the main nodes should aim to reinforce the identity of the village through the design of the public realm and possibly public art. They are important points for wayfinding and legibility also, as well as meeting places and resting places. They should attract and advertise the village to those passing through and serve the needs of residents.

### Negative examples:

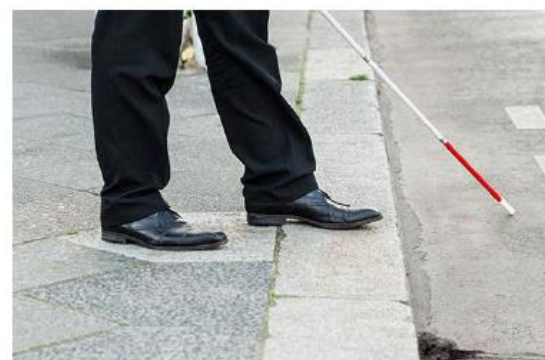
- *Highways infrastructure and associated signage / street furniture must not dominate these spaces, a comfortable and attractive place identity is key in these spaces which must be a focus for village life / services;*
- *Turning circles and vehicle tracking must be demonstrated to reduce space allocated to vehicles and so reduce traffic speeds alongside;*
- *Shared space design must not impair the ability of guide dogs to navigate safely around the public realm (60mm kerb minimum).*



S2. Key Nodes and Minor Nodes - The Square



S2. Key Nodes and Minor Nodes - Poynton precedent



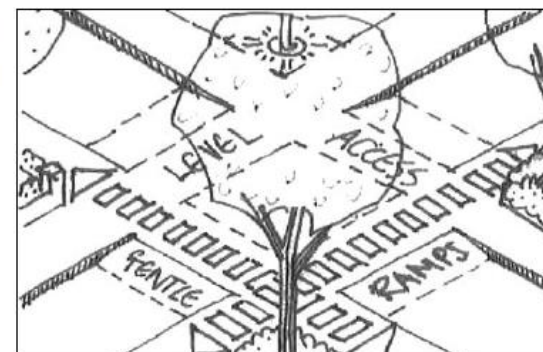
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**Positive examples:**

- Public space should be rebalanced for pedestrian/ wheelchair users and comfortable bicycle/mobility scooter movement over vehicles;
- Street design should produce informal, intimate village spaces for all, where people can rest, interact and enjoy watching the world go by.
- Provide spill out space (for cafes and shops) and street furniture for rest to enable a range of social activity to occur in the public realm.

**M1. Level access**

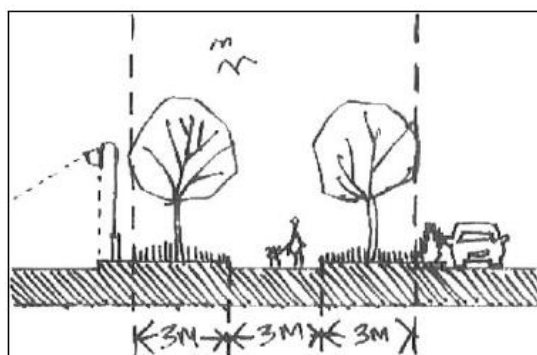
All streets must be improved for pedestrians/ wheelchair users and for comfortable bicycle/ mobility scooter movement alongside vehicles and particularly at junctions and crossings where raised tables are beneficial.



M1 Level access

**M2. Public Rights of Way in new development**

Where new development runs alongside a Public Right of Way then it must be incorporated within a generous landscape corridor to maintain legible links to the countryside and retain the amenity and enjoyment of the existing PRoW.



M2. Public Rights of Way incorporated in Green Corridor

**M3. Street type and hierarchy**

New street design must integrate with the existing hierarchy and will generally provide lower order, intimate streets for the purposes of residential access.



M3. Extract of route hierarchy - see page 11 for full diagram



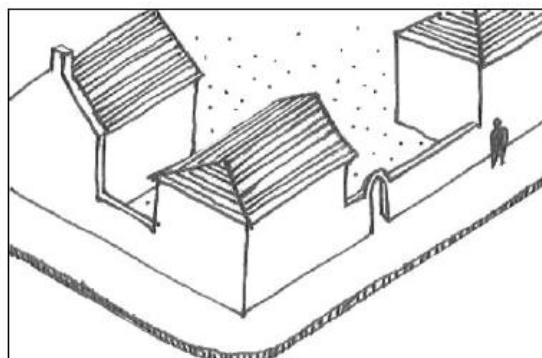
# GRAIN + DENSITY (G/D)

## G.1 Variety in plot sizes

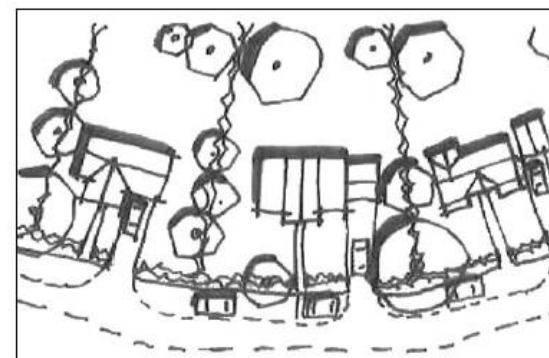
Plot and garden sizes should vary with building sizes. Likewise gaps between buildings should vary depending on building type and size. This is a very basic lesson of setting out residential areas with character and 'not just another estate', too often perceived as cramming housing on a site with no appreciation for the setting. Putting houses close together or joining them is not a bad thing in itself but it is more complex than that to make a street with character.

### Positive examples:

- The villa types typically found in Oak Tree have a plot that is larger and this allows the landscape to show through, providing a setting to the building and a character context to the neighbourhood based on it;
- The narrow plots of the joined-up terraces along the main streets in Middleton St. George give a strong level of definition to the street and therefore a more enclosed village setting that has its own character;
- The Virginia estate has relatively wide plots with front gardens and verges which alter the setting, providing green, spacious streets but can be car dominated.



G.1 Variety in plot sizes - Joined up built-form



G.1 Variety in plot sizes - Larger villas set within landscaping



✓ Small setback on terraced street (strong enclosure)



✗ Close set detached houses appear cramped



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G.2 Variety in Building Types

Terraces, semi-detached and detached houses should be used in carefully considered combinations and places to create a considered, joined-up street scene and reinforce character without creating mono-cultures of single types. For example; detached houses make good header buildings that terminate a street vista; pairs of semi-detached can create a more formal rhythm and a terraced row can help create a more enclosed intimate street or courtyard.

G.3 Building footprints

Building footprints must typically be residential in scale but varied in size to help create diverse new developments that serve a range of housing needs.

D1. Density ranges

The density of any major development must respond to the existing ranges identified for each of the sub-settlements, compliant with policy minimum;

- Middleton St. George: up to 40 Dwellings per Hectare;
- Oak Tree: up to 25 Dwellings per Hectare;
- One Row; Up to 25 Dwellings per Hectare;

D2. Density Setting

The density of development must consider the adjacent development that it shares boundaries and/ or frontage onto the public realm with so as not to overwhelm or underwhelm, whilst also complementing the street scene.



G.2 Building types variety



D.1 Building types variety



# HEIGHT + SKYLINE (H/S)

## H.1 Storey Heights

Storey heights should be between 1.5 - 2.5 storeys where half-storeys must be in the roofspace. 'Single-storey' dwellings must either have rooms in the roofspace or potential for conversion. 3 storey buildings will be exceptions for example in the local centre where there may be alternative ground floor uses.

## S1. Breaking the Skyline

Only special buildings (ie. community, institutional or other distinct uses for the benefit of the wider community) should penetrate the typical skyline and be of sufficient architectural merit to warrant the exceptional circumstance.

## S2. Heights Variation

Adjacent buildings should not vary in height by more than a half storey (max. 2m between eaves heights) in new development, also where development continues from existing buildings.

## S.3 Vistas and horizons

Views to the countryside from from development streets should not be closed off but retained to keep the sense of connection. Retaining paddocks for this purpose can help create a semi-rural feel. Where new development extends it should aim to keep these view corridors or meet existing homes with an open green space to reduce loss of amenity.



H.1 Storey Heights



S.2 Breaking the Skyline - St. Laurence, One Row



S.2 Heights variation



S.3 Vistas and horizons - Chapel Street view out to a site that has planning permission for 330 houses



# MASSING + ROOFSCAPE (Ma/R)

## Ma.1 Context

New residential buildings should neither overwhelm nor underwhelm their neighbours in order that there is some continuity in frontage, scale and enclosure that does not compromise amenity on any side of the building.

## Ma.2 Massing

Similarly massing must relate to; the plot size; level of street hierarchy; sense of enclosure and importance of the building (following the street hierarchy is the starting point to understand this as we move from the more upright and enclosed main streets to the more low key and intimate minor street types).

## R.1 Roofscape

Roofscape must relate to each other in composition and take into account the gaps between buildings and level of formality that is to be achieved, e.g. a more formal uniform street such as the iron worker terraces or a high variation street such as Station Road. Generally informality will be the prevailing scene.



M1. These buildings are on the same main street (Yarm Road)



M2. Massing - good proportions in massing along The Front



R1. Roofscape - Station Road exhibits some gentle variety

# DETAILS + MATERIALS (D/M)

## D1. Boundary definition

Boundary treatments must be used to create clearly defined public/ private realm where buildings are set back from the pavement or has a front garden, in order to create some defensible space. Commercial uses are exceptional.

## D2. Choice of boundary treatments

Acceptable boundary treatments should draw on the existing area or for new development implement a consistent application based on street hierarchy and character; utilising low walls, hedges, railings and timber fences by area (see Table 2 over page for details and materials by area).

## D3. Boundary character

In all circumstances a front boundary treatment, either built- or landscaped, will be required to prevent the appearance of characterless suburban sprawl. The quality must be sufficient to complement the existing positive character.

### Positive examples:

- On the Yarm Road in Oak tree and cross-beam timber fence boundary treatments provide a rural charm based around the restored cottages;
- Very low walls/ stone kerbs (sometime with railings) define the private realm along The Front in One Row to good effect with minimal effort.

### Negative examples:

- Timber fencing on the Virginia estate is characteristic and somewhat charming as are open boundaries to gardens, over time as people are enclosing their front gardens they must continue to use timber fence not masonry in order to preserve the character and positive change.
- Station Road from Fighting Cocks to The Square is a mixed-bag for front boundaries and low brick walls must be the focus to improve.



D.1 Boundaries definition



D.2 Boundary character



D.3 Boundary character



M1. Follow the predominant building materials, use precedents to justify usage and give priority to following traditional and historic usage in application and detailing but not to the detriment of contemporary design which can actually be more authentic than copying the past and mimicking historic styles poorly.

M2. See Characterisation and the adjacent table for typical materials and details found within each area (this is by no means exhaustive and precedents that are in keeping with the historic character may be considered too).

M3. Select alternative complementary materials that add to the positive character of the area and create rich but harmonious street scenes without detracting from or overwhelming the existing core characteristics such brick or paint.

M4. Materials within and facing the public realm must be sufficiently robust and durable to give an impression of solidity and quality and not degrade easily, e.g. boundary treatments facing the public realm must not only consist of timber board fence except where the rural character justifies in Oak Tree.





Villages	Openings			Rooflines		Boundary treatment				Materials		
	Lintels	Soldier courses	Bay windows	Dormers	Parapet gables	Wall	Native Hedge	Railings	Timber cross-beam fence	Brick	Render	Paint / Whitewash
Middleton One Row	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Middleton St. George	•		•	•		•	•			•	•	•
Oak Tree	•					•	•		•	•		



Figure 21: Table 2. Reflecting the individual design features in Middleton St. George's sub-settlements. The following design features will be appropriate to each (adapted from the Design of New Development, Supplementary Planning Document 2011, p.68)

