



Coxhoe Parish Council

Durham County Council Consultation Responses

January 2011

What is the purpose of this document?

1. In December 2010 the County Council issued the following documents for consultation:
 1. County Durham Settlement Study
 2. Durham City Green Belt Assessment Phase 2
 3. Towards a Minerals Delivery Strategy for County Durham
 4. Towards a Waste Delivery Strategy for County Durham
 5. Need for a North West Durham Green Belt
 6. Towards a Waste Delivery Strategy for County Durham
 7. Energy Minerals
 8. Proposed new Minerals and Waste Sites
2. The County Council initially set a deadline of mid January to respond to this plethora of consultations. However, due to immediate concerns expressed by Coxhoe Parish Council and others the consultation date has been extended to 11th February 2011.
3. The aim of this document is to assist Coxhoe Parish Council in determining its views on the current consultation. The County Council consulted the Parish Council by a series of e-mails and these have been circulated to all Members. The consultation directs Members to a web based document system. The document summarises, as far as possible, bearing in mind the scale and detailed nature of the consultations, the nature of each document and likely implications to Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill. The document was approved in full at the Monthly meeting of Coxhoe Parish Council on 26th January 2011.

County Durham Settlement Study

4. The County Durham Settlement Study assesses the extent to which all 268 settlements in the County are accessible to a range of services and facilities such as schools, employment or shopping. It therefore gives an indication of this one aspect of the sustainability of each settlement. This work will inform the settlement hierarchy, which informs the distribution of new development, in the Core Strategy together with two further pieces of evidence, which are currently underway:
 - work to establish relationships between settlements and identify 'clusters'; and
 - consultation with communities to identify their aspirations for the future development of their settlement.
5. Public consultation over the summer on the previous draft of the Settlement Study resulted in a number of representations which suggested amendments. These amendments have now been made and the County Council take the view that they now need to test whether the document is now robust.
6. Coxhoe Parish Council has previously made detailed comments in respect of the County Durham Plan Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper and related consultations, including the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Its position with regard to any new housing provision in the village of Coxhoe is that

no significant development ought to take place prior to any significant social infrastructure improvements in the village. The current local infrastructure including the lack of local school places and health facilities means that the village cannot sustain any increased population until these issues are resolved. The Parish Council is not against additional development in Coxhoe in principle. In terms of Quarrington Hill the Parish Council has expressed the view that development at an appropriate scale ought to be encouraged to ensure the sustained vitality and viability of that village.

7. In respect of the previous consultation on the Settlement Study the Parish Council made a detailed submission. That consultation envisaged that there are five tiers of settlement within the county. These were:

- First tier -Main Towns;
- Second Tier – Larger Villages and Larger Towns;
- Third Tier – Villages with access to more facilities;
- Fourth Tier – Villages with access to some facilities; and
- Fifth Tier – Small villages with limited or no facilities.

Due to the scoring methodology in that document Coxhoe was identified as a third tier settlement and Quarrington Hill a fourth tier settlement. The views expressed at the time by the Parish Council included the following:

In respect of the scoring mechanism at the time:

'While Coxhoe Parish Council does not necessarily disagree with where the study proposes Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill in the hierarchy it cannot agree with the weighting mechanism. The Parish Council does not understand how a pub can be weighted three times more than a district leisure centre for example when they already have a higher score.'

In respect of the settlement grouping at the time:

'Coxhoe Parish Council has no objections to the way settlements are grouped. If the Parish Council were to place were Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill in a five tier pattern as set out in the study and County Durham Plan, without any scoring mechanism it would have selected Coxhoe as borderline between tier 2 and tier 3 and Quarrington Hill firmly within tier 4. This is the exact conclusion of the study despite the Parish council's reservation about the scoring matrix and weighting mechanisms. In terms of Coxhoe the study identifies Coxhoe with 69 points, one point short of a tier 2 classification. Coxhoe could compare itself with Bowburn in that it may have a better range of pubs, shopping facilities and leisure facilities while Bowburn has a much bigger population, significant industry and a library. The Parish council feels that the SHLAA further confuses the issue as it suggests a site in Coxhoe capable of achieving 200 houses which would more likely reflect the scale of development that would be permitted in a tier 2 settlement than a tier 3 settlement as the latter would only likely to be able to sustain smaller infill development.'

Coxhoe Parish Council has made representations in terms of the County Durham Plan in respect of the hierarchy. While it would not object to the SHLAA site being developed in

principle it is firmly of the view that this ought not take place without significant social infrastructure being put in place first. It has sought clarification to the position of Coxhoe in the hierarchy accordingly.

Coxhoe Parish Council has no objections to Quarrington Hill being a tier 4 settlement. However, it is again firmly of the view that there need to be adequate policies in the County Durham Plan to ensure the enhancement of their viability, vitality and sustainability and that the future of these settlements are sustained. In particular it feels that policies should be flexible and not unreasonably limit the scale of infill development (e.g. policies for housing should not limit infill development to a maximum of 10 houses).'

8. The County Council has reviewed the settlement study as a result of consultations throughout the summer. It sets out the need for a settlement hierarchy as follows;

'Ultimately the main reason for establishing a settlement hierarchy is to promote sustainable communities by locating new development in proximity to services and facilities. It makes sense for most of our new housing to be built in larger settlements which have a better range of facilities and services, because then more people have easy access to shops, schools and public transport. However, the Council recognises that smaller villages need some new housing too; to provide homes for new households which might form as young people leave home, older people move to smaller houses and people move to the area - and to ensure that there are enough people in a village to keep facilities and services going.'

9. In terms of the scoring matrix the County Council have re-assessed the scoring methodology. For example, they appear to have increased the score for sports facilities, although not the subsequent weighting applied to them. In terms of the settlement hierarchy, it has become apparent to the County Council that in practise the nature of settlements relates more closely to one of six settlement types that display similarities in their relative level of service provision and patronage. The groupings are shown below:

- First Tier -Main Towns: 90 points plus.
- Second Tier -Secondary Settlements: 70 – 89 points
- Third tier - Local Service Centres: 55 – 69 points
- Fourth Tier - Larger Villages: 40 - 54 points
- Five tier- Small Villages: 25 - 39 points
- Sixth Tier - Hamlets: under 25 points

10. As a result of the overall changes to the scoring methodology Coxhoe has now been identified as a second tier settlement (with 74 points compared with 69 previously) and Quarrington Hill becomes a fifth tier settlement with 38 points. In terms of Quarrington Hill the implications probably remain the same. The village would have a similar footing to Cassop, for example, and it is felt that the Parish Council ought still to request the County Council to ensure that appropriate policies are placed within the County Durham Plan to maintain flexibility ensure that the vitality and viability of Quarrington Hill is sustained in the future.

11. The implications for Coxhoe may be a little more complex. Coxhoe has in effect been moved from a third tier settlement in a five tier settlement hierarchy to a second tier settlement in a six tier hierarchy. That been said, under the previous scoring matrix Coxhoe was borderline and the Parish Council accepted that in its formal response. The new position identifies Coxhoe as comparable to Bowburn. There are advantages and disadvantages with the outcome of the review. On the positive side, as a second tier settlement Coxhoe would be in a much stronger position to secure development which would assist in its overall sustainability. The down side is that development interest could be significantly for housing development. Taking into account the greater range of potential sites set out in the recent consultation on the SHLAA this could have significant social infrastructure implications.
12. It is felt that being a second tier settlement is in overall terms in the interests of the village, its business and residents. However in order to achieve the reasons for the settlement hierarchy and ensure a sustainable community in Coxhoe it makes it more important that no significant housing development ought to take place until its social infrastructure is improved particularly in terms of health facilities, school places and appropriate social housing.
13. The County Councils implied commitment to working with communities to identify their aspirations for the future development of their settlement the County Council is to be welcomed. This is an ideal time for such work to be undertaken as work has begun in earnest on Parish Plan 2. There is an opportune moment here for Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill to work closely with the Local Planning Authority to not only set out aspirations but to secure a clear understanding of the way forward. The County Council have already agreed to engage in Parish Plan 2 and have separately agreed to come along shortly to a meeting of the Parish Council to discuss SHLAA issues. This opportunity ought to be grabbed by all parties.

It is recommended that:

- (i) The Parish Council offer no objection to the proposed hierarchy, scoring methodology, weighting or any of the resulting hierarchy positions.
- (ii) That the Parish Council maintains its strong views that they have consistently presented to the County Council that no significant housing development ought to take place in Coxhoe without appropriate social infrastructure improvements particularly in terms of health facilities, school places and appropriate social housing. and that the vitality and viability of Quarrington Hill ought to be secured through appropriate and flexible policies on development within the village
- (iii) That the Parish Council welcomes the County Council's commitment to working with communities to establish their aspirations for future development and requests that the County Council treats Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill as a priority in the consultation process in view of its position in terms of commencing work on Parish Plan 2.

Durham City Green Belt Assessment Phase 2

14. Phase 2 of the Green Belt Assessment provides a detailed assessment of the eight Green Belt sites identified as potential locations for the new housing proposed in the Core Strategy Issues and Options Report. The Assessment identifies those sites with the least constraints that can be taken forward for more detailed concept planning to establish their capacities and an order of preference for their development. The Assessment also gives detailed justification for those sites that will not progress. The five sites taken forward are:
 - Sniperley;
 - North of Arnison;
 - Sherburn Grange;
 - Sherburn Road; and
 - Mount Oswald/Merryoaks
15. The County Council consider that the publication of the Assessment will provide transparency on the site selection process and give land owners, developers and the wider community the opportunity to agree or disagree with the approach taken and sites that have been chosen or not chosen.
16. The Parish Council has previously supported the concentration of housing around Durham City and has accepted the implications on the Green Belt. It is not considered that either of the above sites would have any adverse implications on Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill.

It is recommended that:

Coxhoe Parish Council offer no objections to the proposals contained in the 'Durham City Green Belt Assessment Phase 2' Consultation Document.

Need for a North West Durham Green Belt

17. The North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) originally advocated the need for a Green Belt to be designated in North West Durham to protect the Derwent Valley from development pressure and to prevent the sprawl of the Tyne and Wear conurbation. It was therefore expected that the Core Strategy would go on to define the strategic extent of the new Green Belt.
18. In response to the consultation on the Issues Options some respondents queried the need for a Green Belt in this location and given that RSS had been revoked. This paper therefore questions the principle of a North West Durham Green Belt and asserts that existing planning policies have successfully protected this area since the proposal for a Green Belt was first put forward in 1993.

19. Although RSS is now again part of the Development Plan following the recent legal decision, the Government has made it clear that RSS will be revoked as part of the imminent Localism Bill. It is likely that this will be enacted before the Core Strategy is adopted so asking a question over the principle of the Green Belt is still thought to be valid.
20. It is not felt that this has any implications for Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill.

It is recommended that:

Coxhoe Parish Council has no comments to make on the 'Need for a North West Durham Green Belt' Consultation Document.

Towards a Minerals Delivery Strategy for County Durham

21. The County Council consider that the County Durham Plan Core Strategy must be clear in how much mineral working is needed, where it is located, when it is needed and who will deliver it. Following on from the Issues and Options stage, this report will seek to address these important matters. It will set out the County Council's views on the scale of aggregates and non aggregates extractions required over the plan period and develop an approach to where new working could occur in the future.
22. The report confirms the County Council's view that no further magnesian limestone and high grade dolomite sites will be required (over and above those already permitted and those which members have resolved to grant). However it is likely to indicate that a new brick clay site at Todhills is required and that significant quantities of carboniferous limestone and sand and gravel will be needed in order to guarantee the availability of the range of minerals that are required. These decisions will have clear implications for the future of a number of existing magnesian limestone sites which will close over the plan period as production shifts to other existing sites and for other areas of the County where further working will need to be delivered.
23. The Parish Council made no significant comments on Minerals issues in the consultation on the Core Strategy during the consultation last summer. The proposals are unlikely to have any direct implications to Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill.

It is recommended that:

Coxhoe Parish Council has no comments to make on the 'Towards a Minerals Delivery Strategy for County Durham' Consultation Document

Towards a Waste Delivery Strategy for County Durham

24. This report will clarify the position on the need for new waste management facilities for all waste types and will consult further on where and when new waste development should take place.
25. The County Council advise that the report clarifies that significant new waste recovery capacity is needed to manage future municipal waste (MSW) arisings, in order to meet waste recycling and recovery targets and requirements to divert waste from landfill. Further detailed modelling work is continuing in relation to the waste procurement process and will only become clearer later in that process. It may be that at least in the short to medium term, some of this capacity can be met through waste treatment capacity that is already permitted and available outside the County.
26. Facilities will need to be identified to offer additional capacity to manage waste arisings from those areas that will receive the highest amount of population growth within the County, with a particular emphasis on Durham City as the main focus of development. However the County Council may need to consider whether it is desirable to seek a greater concentration around the County's larger centres, or seek to build on the current pattern of facilities by expanding or co-locating facilities. The report sets out these issues in more detail.
27. The Parish Council offered no significant views on waste issues in the consultation on the Core Strategy during the consultation last summer. The proposals are unlikely to have any direct implications to Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill.

It is recommended that:

Coxhoe Parish Council has no comments to make on the 'Towards a Waste Delivery Strategy for County Durham' Consultation Document

Energy Minerals

28. Following the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy this paper sets out the County Council's approach to surface mined coal, including whether there are any issues and options for coal, the need and scope of a locally distinctive surface mined coal policy, and the approach the County Council could take to provide guidance on areas where coal extraction could be guided by developing a constraint based approach.
29. In addition, it considers the potential approach to a variety of new technologies to recover energy from deep coal including Underground Coal Gasification. Given that it is vital to be clear in how the County Council addresses the legacy of coal mining the report sets out how they intend to address this matter.
30. The Parish Council offered no significant views on such issues in the consultation on the Core Strategy during the consultation last summer. The proposals are unlikely to have any direct implications to Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill.

It is recommended that:

Coxhoe Parish Council has no comments to make on the 'Energy Minerals' Consultation Document

Safeguarding Mineral Resources for the future

31. National Policy requires the County Council to safeguard economically important minerals through the through the designation of Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs). It also requires the County Council to safeguard other mineral handling, processing and transportation infrastructure. The report undertakes further consultation on the approach to safeguarding and consider how safeguarding can be delivered through the County Durham Plan.
32. The Parish Council offered no significant views on mineral resource issues in the consultation on the Core Strategy during the consultation last summer. The proposals are unlikely to have any direct implications to Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill.

It is recommended that:

Coxhoe Parish Council has no comments to make on the 'Safeguarding Mineral Resources for the future' Consultation Document

Proposed new Minerals and Waste Sites

33. The County Durham Plan Core Strategy will allocate only new strategic minerals and waste sites where they are of strategic significance and central to the delivery of the Plan. All other new sites would need to be considered through the preparation of the County Council's Minerals and Waste Policies and Allocations DPD. This report
 - provides an update on sites proposed by operators and landowners;
 - reconsiders the suggested criteria for identifying strategic sites;
 - consults further on a number of 'operator proposed' sites;
 - clarify how the county Council intend to address non-strategic sites; and
 - undertakes a further call for mineral and waste sites to be considered as non strategic allocations.
34. The Parish Council offered no significant views on mineral and waste site issues in the consultation on the Core Strategy during the consultation last summer. The proposals are unlikely to have any direct implications to Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill.

It is recommended that:

Coxhoe Parish Council has no comments to make on the 'Proposed new Minerals and Waste Sites' Consultation Document

Ian Forster, Assistant Voluntary Parish Clerk
Coxhoe Parish Council
11th January 2011