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**The County Durham Plan**  
**Planning the Future of County Durham**  
**Settlement Study**  
County Durham Local Development Framework

**Consultation Response of Coxhoe Parish Council**

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The basis for this document was agreed by the Coxhoe Parish Council County Durham Plan Working Group on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 and formed the basis of recommendations to the Full Council meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2010. This document was formally approved at that meeting.

# The County Durham Plan

## Planning the Future of County Durham

### Settlement Study

#### County Durham Local Development Framework

#### Summary

The settlement study supports the development of the County Durham Plan Issues and Options Paper proposals. This study provides a detailed assessment of each of the settlements in County Durham, this is with the overall aim of providing the evidence to support a recommended settlement hierarchy in the Durham Local Development Framework and specifically to outline this within the Core Strategy. This Settlement Study will form part of the compendium of evidence base for the Local Development Framework.

The settlement hierarchy will feed into the Core Strategy establishing a framework to help inform where new developments such as housing, employment and community facilities should be planned for. The key role of the Core Strategy is to set out a spatial development framework for County Durham which will guide future development.

At a basic level the settlement hierarchy seeks to understand the role of settlements within County Durham. The range and number of services within a settlement is usually, but not always, proportionate to the size of its population. The services within a settlement will generally determine a settlement's sphere of influence and help to inform decisions about the scale and location of new development across the County. Ultimately the main reason for establishing a settlement hierarchy is to promote sustainable communities by locating services and facilities closer together to help reduce the need to travel.

Over the past few decades the concept of “sustainable development”, which balances social, economic and environmental goals, has become increasingly important in planning: PPS1 states that it is “the core principle underpinning planning.” A related policy aspiration, translated into law via the Sustainable Communities Act 2007, is the desire to achieve “sustainable communities.”

Much has been written on what constitutes a “sustainable community”. The Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003) lists “some of the key requirements” of a sustainable community. They should have a flourishing local economy; strong leadership, effective engagement and participation by local people; a safe and healthy local environment; good public transport; good quality public services; and a diverse, vibrant and creative local culture. The built environment should be of “the right layout to support basic amenities” and should include “decent homes of different types and tenures”.

This study is designed to look at parts of this list of requirements: it looks at the amenities possessed by the settlements across County Durham, including public transport, public and private services, and access to jobs. The “social cohesion” elements of leadership, engagement and participation, and local culture fall outside the remit of this study; however, it could be claimed that social cohesion is supported by the presence of local jobs and amenities.

Determining the sustainability of settlements is useful in two respects: firstly, because it helps to identify those settlements which are lacking in amenities, and where, therefore, a policy aim might be to support the development of new ones; secondly, because it helps to identify those settlements which have the services and infrastructure necessary to accommodate growth and cater for new residents.

The Study sets out a scoring and weighting mechanism. The scoring matrix is based on the range of facilities in a settlement including health, education, shopping, post offices, sport/leisure, community facilities, distance to district centres and access by public transport. The weighting mechanism is based on the premise that different categories of facility have different level of importance. The proposed mechanism, for example gives a greater weight to Health facilities than pubs. It does however feel that pubs are three times more important than leisure centres?

The study suggests that there are five different types of settlement in their proposed hierarchy. These are as follows;

- 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.

Coxhoe, by one point in the scoring system is seen to be a third tier settlement within the study while Quarrington Hill is seen to be a fourth tier settlement.

The study asks a series of questions to ascertain views on the nature of the study and its results.

Comments should be received by no later than **4.30pm on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2010**. The basis for this document was agreed by the Coxhoe Parish Council County Durham Plan Working Group on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 and formed the basis of recommendations to the Full Council meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2010. This response document was formally approved at that meeting.

The following table summarises the issues. Members have been provided with access to the full document.

Qu. No.	Issue and Summary Implication	Response of Coxhoe Parish Council
1	<p><b>Is the list of facilities used correct or are there others we could use ?</b></p> <p>The types of facility covered under our final methodology are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>health facilities;</li> <li>schools;</li> <li>shopping facilities;</li> <li>post offices;</li> <li>pubs;</li> <li>built sports facilities;</li> <li>community centres;</li> <li>industrial estates;</li> <li>proximity to nearest larger town; and</li> <li>public transport services.</li> </ul>	<p>Coxhoe Parish Council support the range of facilities. However it would query what consideration ought to be given to the size of population or a settlements ability to accommodate or sustain any significant development.</p>
2	<p><b>Do you agree with the scoring matrix established?</b></p> <p>The scoring matrix is set out in Annexe 1</p>	<p>While Coxhoe Parish Council does not necessarily disagree with where the study proposes Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill in the hierachy it cannot agree with the scoring matrix. The Parish Council does not understand how a pub can be more important than a district leisure centre for example.</p>
3.	<p><b>Do you agree with the weighting applied to each of the scores?</b></p> <p>Since it was felt that different categories of facility had different levels of importance, weightings were applied. Scores were multiplied by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health facilities: 5</li> <li>Schools: 5</li> <li>Shopping facilities: 5</li> <li>Post offices: 2</li> <li>Pubs: 3</li> <li>Built sports facilities: 1</li> <li>Community centres: 2</li> <li>Industrial estates: 3</li> <li>Distance to the nearest larger town: 4</li> <li>Public transport services: 5</li> </ul>	<p>While Coxhoe Parish Council does not necessarily disagree with where the study proposes Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill in the hierachy 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..</p>

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4	<p><b>Do you agree with the way we have grouped settlements?</b></p> <p>It was judged that the settlements were divisible into the following groupings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Small villages with limited or no facilities: under 25 points</b></li> <li>• <b>Villages with some facilities: 25- 49 points</b></li> <li>• <b>Villages with access to more facilities: 50 – 69 points</b></li> <li>• <b>Larger villages and smaller towns: 70 – 89 points</b></li> <li>• <b>Main Towns: 90 points plus.</b></li> </ul> <p>The dispersed settlement pattern throughout the County has created a natural order of villages and towns that serve surrounding hinterlands and smaller settlements. This pattern of development is considered the most sustainable for supporting service provision and ensuring vital communities.</p> <p>It was considered the above groupings reflect the relative scale and level of service/facilities provision within the settlements. Though ostensibly arbitrary, the scores have been grouped to create five discernibly different settlement types that display marked differences in their relative level of service provision and patronage.</p>	<p>Coxhoe Parish Council have 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 as to the position of Coxhoe in the hierarchy accordingly.</p> <p>Coxhoe Parish Council have 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</p>

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		<p>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)</p>
5	<p>Is the scoring for the Small Villages with Limited or no Facilities correct?</p> <p>The document provides a full list of tier 5 settlements</p>	<p>Coxhoe Parish Council have no objections in principal to how this tier has been grouped but as indicated in relation to previous questions has reservations about the scoring matrix and weighting mechanism.</p>
6	<p>Is the scoring for the Villages with Access to Some Facilities correct?</p> <p>The document provides a full list of tier 4 settlements</p>	<p>Coxhoe Parish Council have no objections in principal to how this tier has been grouped but as indicated in relation to previous questions has reservations about the scoring matrix and weighting mechanism.</p> <p>Coxhoe Parish Council have 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)</p>
7	<p>Is the scoring for the Villages with Access to More Facilities correct?</p> <p>The document provides a full list of tier 3 settlements</p>	<p>Coxhoe Parish Council have no objections in principal to how this tier has been grouped but as indicated in relation to previous questions has reservations about the scoring matrix and weighting mechanism.</p> <p>In particularly the Parish Council would seek clarification about where Cochoe should lie in the hierachy.</p> <p>In terms of Coxhoe the study identifies Coxhoe with 69 points, one point short of a tier 2 classification. Coxhoe could compare itself</p>

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		<p>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.</p> <p>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 as to the position of Coxhoe in the hierarchy accordingly.</p>
8	<p>Is the scoring for the Larger Villages and Smaller Towns correct?</p> <p>The document provides a full list of tier 2 settlements</p>	<p>Coxhoe Parish Council have no objections in principle to how this tier has been grouped but as indicated in relation to previous questions has reservations about the scoring matrix and weighting mechanism.</p> <p>In particular the Parish Council would seek clarification about where Coxhoe should lie in the hierarchy.</p>
9	<p>Is the scoring for the Main Towns correct?</p> <p>The document provides a full list of tier 1 settlements</p>	<p>Coxhoe Parish Council have no objections in principle to how this tier has been grouped but as indicated in relation to previous questions has reservations about the scoring matrix and weighting mechanism.</p>

## Annex 1 Scoring Matrix

The scoring matrix eventually determined was as follows:

<b>Health</b>	
Hospital within settlement or within 800m	4
Health centre or larger GP surgery within settlement/ 800m	3
GP surgery within settlement/800m	2
No health facilities within settlement/800m	0
<b>Education</b>	
Primary and secondary school within settlement/ 800m	3
Primary school only within settlement	2
No schools within settlement	0
<b>Shopping</b>	
Defined local centre (as in district LP) within settlement / 800m	4
Three or more shops within settlement/800m but no local centre	3
One/two shops within settlement/800m	2

No shops within settlement/800m	0
<b>Post offices</b>	
Post office within settlement/800m	2
No post office within settlement/ 800m	0
<b>Public Houses</b>	
Public house within settlement/800m	2
No public house within settlement/ 800m	0
<b>Sports/Leisure provision</b>	
Built public sports provision (leisure centre, swimming baths) within settlement/800m	2
Built sports provision within 800m - 3 km of settlement centre	1
No built sports provision within 3 km of settlement centre	0
<b>Community facilities</b>	
Village hall or community centre with good facilities within settlement/800m	3
Simple village hall (i.e. hall, kitchen and toilets) within settlement/800m	2
No village hall or community centre within settlement	0
<b>Employment</b>	

Larger or district industrial estate (as defined in district LPs) within the settlement or within 800m	3
Local industrial estate within the settlement/800m	2
No employment within the settlement /800m	0
<b>Distance to nearest district or town centre*</b>	
RSS town centre within settlement or within 800m	3
RSS town centre 800m - 3km from settlement centre	2
RSS Regeneration Town Centre 3km - 6km from settlement centre	1
RSS Regeneration Town Centre over 6km from settlement centre	0
<b>Access by public transport</b>	
Train station and frequent buses (more than every 30 minutes on most frequent route)	4
Frequent buses (more than every 30 minutes)	3
Less frequent buses (30-60 minutes)	2
Infrequent buses (60 minutes or less)	1
No bus service to settlement	0