**POLICY 3: Older People’s Homes**

We strongly support the intent of this policy which is aimed at helping to meet the needs of the County’s aging population and is consistent with the intent of the NPPF. However, we have a number of detailed comments relating to the wording of the justification.

**Justification:** It will be helpful, and necessary for the Inspector to be clear about the evidence being used to support this policy. Significant relevant evidence is included in the County Durham, Issues and Options Stage, Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Part 1) 2016. The document is on the web page which can be found through the link: <http://durhamcc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/cdpev/> . References in the document that are likely to be particularly relevant in justifying requirements for older people’s housing in neighbourhood plans are included in the attached Appendix (slightly amended from the version sent to your forum previously). It might be particularly useful for the Inspector if the justification for your policy referred to information in Table 5.8 of this assessment which establishes that 15% of households moving in the open market in County Durham expect to move to a bungalow and 10% expect to move to a flat. Table 5.9 shows there are insufficient bungalows or flats available to buy to meet these expectations, suggesting significant shortages in these house types. Reference to this information in your plan would demonstrate that your 10% policy requirement for these house types is modest relative to relevant evidence.

Given that the policy relates to private and inter-mediate housing, it would also be useful to the Inspector if your reasoned justification highlighted that the majority of older households in your neighbourhood planning area are owner occupiers. It is appreciated that it is very difficult to get all relevant evidence you might like from data sources that do not match the boundary of your neighbourhood plan. The attached link might be useful in this respect as it breaks down a range of information into parish areas <http://rsnonline.org.uk/observatory/neighbourhood-planning>. The household tenure information shows that 69% of households in Witton Gilbert are owner occupiers. Added to this, the most recent English Household Survey 2015/2016 shows that those aged over 55 are more likely to own their own home than other age groups ( [https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/tenure-trends-and-cross-tenure-analysis#live- Table FA1201 (S106): age of household reference person by tenure).](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/tenure-trends-and-cross-tenure-analysis#live-      Table FA1201 (S106): age of household reference person by tenure).) ) Taken together this evidence strongly suggests that upwards of 70% of older owner occupiers in Witton Gilbert are likely to be owner occupiers – the vast majority.

You have included useful information on the mismatch in bungalows in the social sector relative to private ownership on page 6 of your neighbourhood plan. Again, it would be useful to an Inspector at an Inquiry if this information was moved to the reasoned justification for policy 3. Your plan identifies 92 social rented bungalows and 70 rented bungalows in Witton Gilbert which itself suggests a mismatch in the supply and demand of bungalows by tenure, given that most older households are likely to be owner occupiers.

You have also stated on page 6 that ‘there is no current shortage of supply for any particular types of housing in the housing market area’. This finding would not help to support policy 3 and is inconsistent with the findings of the Council’s Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Paragraph 5.8 of this assessment identifies a shortage of bungalows across the housing market in County Durham. It also states that estate agents across the County highlight that with an aging population, demand for this type of property continues to increase yet supply is inadequate when aiming to cater for this. It would therefore be surprising if a similar shortage wasn’t evident in Witton Gilbert at the present time. In the light of this, you may wish to reconsider your conclusions on the likely adequacy of the supply of bungalows in Witton Gilbert, unless you have specific evidence which suggests the opposite.

It is noted that the last paragraph of page 25 makes reference to ‘the Lifetime Homes Standard’ Government advice makes clear that this standard should not be applied in the future. This standard has been replaced by Building Regulation Requirement M4 (2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings) and referencing in your neighbourhood plan needs to be changed accordingly.

You might also consider it relevant in the reasoned justification of this policy and elsewhere in the plan to refer to dementia, with age being the biggest factor affecting the prevalence of this disease. Several of the AAP’s have, or are in the process of, setting up Dementia Friendly Communities projects which would involve support officers from the Alzheimer’s Society working with local towns and villages on this issue.

**General Points Relating to Older People and the Disabled**

We note that the plan has a series of ‘Community Actions’ which cover local issues. Evidence shows that most older households will remain in their own homes, regardless of how unsuited these homes may be to progressing disability, symptomatic of old age. It may be that the neighbourhood forum could initiate a pro-active project to encourage older people to ‘future proof’ their homes to insure against future disability. The age profile of the population suggests there is a great need for this type of initiative. An effective approach could well achieve a great deal, perhaps helped by initiating actions with relevant partners like local tradesman and the AAP. Given the limited amount of new development envisaged by the plan in Witton Gilbert, this could perhaps achieve at least as much as Policy 3 on older persons housing, building on the objectives of this policy.

It is also noted from policies, community actions, consultation and descriptive text in your neighbourhood plan that the forum is concerned with the quality of the pedestrian environment in Witton Gilbert, including access issues for residents and visitors. The Village Centre Project is highlighted with respect to this. There is also an intent to promote a healthy and active lifestyle. A broad range of community actions related to traffic and transport are listed on page 43 with one specifically aiming to ‘ensure the needs of disabled people are taken into account, whether as pedestrians, public transport users or motorists’.

Disabled access is an increasing issue in the context of an aging population and there does seem to be an opportunity to give greater emphasis to this in a number of policies in the neighbourhood plan and their related justification. The need for development plans and decision making in planning to focus on this issue is highlighted in the Government’s Womens and Equalities Committee Report ‘Building for Equality and the Built Environment’. The link to this is: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/news-parliament-2015/disability-and-built-environment-report-published-16-17/> It may be that some community actions could include some elements that focus specifically on this – say, for instance, promoting the availability of disabled toilets in existing facilities, aiming a few recreational footpath routes and greenspaces at wheelchair/mobility scooter users, including raised beds suitable for the disabled in one of the allotments etc.

Policies, along with their reasoned justification, where there seems to be an opportunity to focus increased emphasis on disabled access include:

Policy 2: New Housing Development in Witton Gilbert Village

Policy 4: Development in or Adjacent to the Historic Core and Associated Site H2

Policy 5: Historic Core of Witton Gilbert

Policy 6: Sustainable Design

Policy 10: Protecting and Supporting Community Assets

Policy 11: Safety and Improvements on the Road Network

Policy 12: Improvements to Cycling and Walking Network

Appendix on Character and Infill Development

**APPENDIX : County Durham, Issues and Options Stage, Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Part 1) 2016: Older People’s Housing**

A number of references in this document are likely to be relevant in supporting policy requirements for older people’s housing in neighbourhood plans:

Para 5.12: Relates to household type, and highlights that information from the household survey informing the SHMA suggests that 41.85 of singles and couples surveyed are owner occupiers over the age of 60.

Para 5.58: Identifies a shortage of bungalows across the housing market in County Durham. Estate agents highlight that with an aging population, demand for this type of property continues to increase yet supply is inadequate when aiming to cater for this.

Table 5.8 establishes that of households moving in the open market, 15.2% expect to move to a bungalow and 10.3% expect to move to a flat. Table 5.9 illustrates that there are insufficient bungalows or flats available in the housing stock in County Durham to meet this expectation. Indeed, it shows there is a bigger shortfall in these types of private sector properties relative to expectation than any other house type.

Table 5.12: This ranks key stakeholder priorities, showing that they consider that building properties designed for older people is by far their highest priority.

Para 6.8: Highlights that a major strategic challenge for the Council is to ensure a range of appropriate housing provision, adaptation and support for the areas older population. It quotes PPG Paragraph 2a-2, ‘the need to provide housing for older people is critical given the projected increase in the number of households aged 65 and over accounts for over half of new households’

Para 6.9: Makes clear that across County Durham the number of residents aged 65+ is projected to increase by 45.7% between 2015 to 2037. By deduction, it establishes that a sizable 35% of households of 55+ are interested in moving in the future.

Para 6.11 and Table 6.2: The SHMA concludes that evidence suggests a need to continue to diversify the range of older persons housing provision. Additionally, providing a wider range of older person’s accommodation has the potential to free up larger family accommodation.

Para 7.13: Establishes that the number of people aged over 65 is expected to increase faster than the rate of population growth estimated in the ONS 2012 population projections between 2015 and 2037.

Para 7.26: The SHMA concludes that range of houses available to older people needs to be diversified, for instance through the development of open market housing for older people and the development of Extra Care Accommodation and co-housing.