

# The County Durham Plan

## Consultation Report Durham City Green Belt Assessment Phase 2

December 2010



*Altogether better*





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## 1 Introduction

**1.1** In June 2010, Durham County Council published a Green Belt Assessment Scoping Paper. The paper accompanied the County Durham Plan Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper and both papers were made available for public consultation.

**1.2** The Green Belt Assessment Scoping Paper described the methodology for identifying and assessing potential development sites in the green belt around Durham City. The Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper described the reasons for identifying these potential development sites.

**1.3** Responses to consultation exercises continue to inform the development of the County Durham Plan and a number of further papers will be published for consultation over the coming months, as the Plan continues to develop.

**1.4** This paper completes the second phase in the assessment of potential green belt sites around Durham City. It is published for consultation and provides a detailed assessment of each of the sites that were identified in the scoping paper, recommending those that should be taken forward for detailed examination, as described in the Green Belt assessment methodology.

## 2 Methodology

**2.1** As described in the Green Belt Assessment Methodology and Scoping Report, the methodology includes the following stages:

- Stage 1. Scoping and primary screening
- Stage 2. Analysis of potential sites and shortlisting
- Stage 3. Detailed analysis and concept planning of shortlisted sites

### Stage 1 - Scoping and Primary Screening Stage

**2.2** The Stage 1 report was published in July 2010 and is available <sup>(1)</sup> The report describes how the environmental and logistic constraints were taken into consideration in the selection of broad areas of search for development resulting in the eight locations identified in the Core Strategy Issues and Options.

### Stage 2 - Analysis of potential sites and short listing

**2.3** This report provides a detailed analysis of the eight potential sites in order to identify those to be taken forward for more detailed analysis and concept planning. There are a number of aspects of each site to be considered:

- those affecting the value of the site in its undeveloped state, such as the site's historic, landscape, or nature conservation value;
- those relating to the feasibility of development, such as flood risk, transport access, and topography;
- those relating to the sustainability of the location, for instance, whether it is accessible to community facilities and public transport; and
- those relating to the functions of the Green Belt as outlined in PPG2, including the impact on the World Heritage Site.

The relevant considerations included:

### History and Archaeology

**2.4** The historic and archaeological features of a site were assessed with reference to the Historic Environment Record and the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project. The first of these resources is a comprehensive database of information regarding all forms of heritage asset ranging from ancient monuments, archaeological sites and historic buildings through to the find-spots of individual artefacts. The second is a record of historic land-use and changes in the landscape over time. Decisions as to whether or not to permit the loss of, or harm to, any element of the historic environment must take into account its particular significance and the value it holds for both the current and future generations as set out in PPS5.

**2.5** Development engendered excavations in recent years have demonstrated quite intensive ancient settlement on higher ground in and around Durham City ranging from Early Bronze Age to Romano-British. Occupation in at least some of the suggested areas

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1 to view on the County Durham Plan Consultation Pages: <http://durhamcc-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/>

can be anticipated and in some cases there is aerial photographic evidence of sites/features. In all cases the usual process of assessment and evaluation excavation would be applied and would reveal the extent, nature and complexity of any archaeological remains.

### Landscape

**2.6** The analysis of each site will take into account the character, sensitivity and value of the existing landscape and the potential impacts of development. This will include analysis of the visibility of the site, and potential visual impacts including impacts on the setting of the World Heritage Site and the city's historic core.

**2.7** The impacts of built development and associated infrastructure on the landscape and the visual environment are complex and can only be evaluated fully through detailed assessment of individual proposals. Some broad constraints can be mapped as a guide to the selection of development scenarios and these are described below and shown on Map 1.

#### Landscape Character

**2.8** The County Durham Landscape Character Assessment (2008) divides the landscape of the Green Belt in the study area into three broad landscape types: Incised Lowland Valley, Lowland Valley Terraces and Coalfield Valleys. Of these the Incised Lowland Valley landscapes – made up of steeply sloping valleys, gorges, floodplains and wooded bluffs are the most sensitive built development and are mapped as a constraint on Map 1.<sup>(2)</sup>

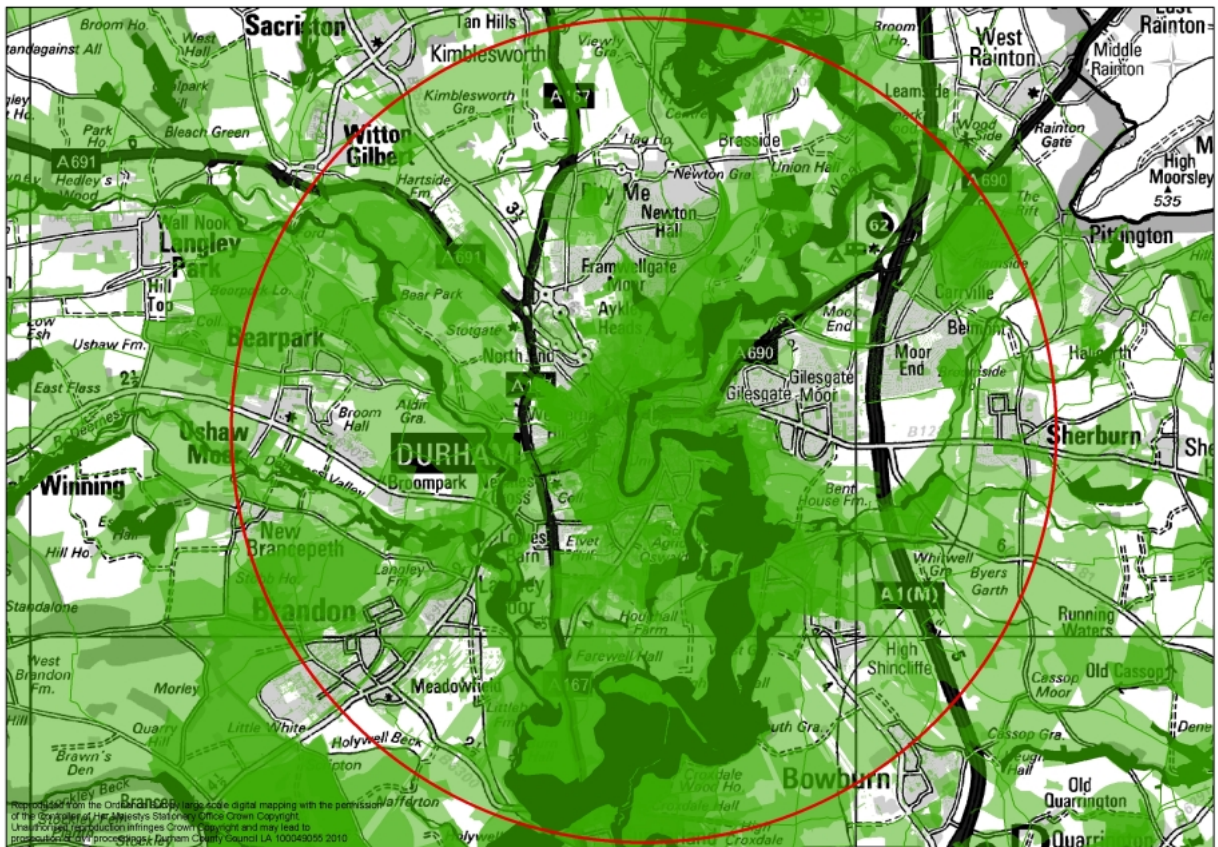
#### Landscape Strategy

**2.9** The County Durham Landscape Strategy (2008) identifies Landscape Conservation Priority Areas and Landscape Enhancement Priority Areas. Landscape Conservation Priority Areas – areas where the adopted strategy is to conserve, conserve and restore or conserve and enhance the existing character of the landscape – are mapped as a constraint on Map 1.<sup>(3)</sup>

2 Boundaries between broad landscape types are rarely clearly defined or unambiguous. The boundaries shown in the CDLCA and reproduced on Map 1 are indicative only and may need detailed review when assessing individual scenarios.

3 The Landscape Spatial Strategy is based on an assessment of the attributes of local landscape types and involves a degree of generalisation. Strategies are indicative rather than prescriptive and do not have regard to existing allocations.

Map 1 Environmental constraints around the City of Durham, showing the area within a 5km radius of the City Centre



## Flooding

**2.10** The Council has a responsibility to consult the Environment Agency in relation to areas identified as being at risk of flooding. As well as considering the present flood risk, the potential for development to add to flood risk due to its impermeable surfaces should also be taken into account and the impacts of Climate Change should also be considered.

## Landscape and heritage criteria for identifying development scenarios

**2.11** While the historic core of the City of Durham lies within the incised valley of the River Wear, the development of the City during the C20th has been largely accommodated on the less sensitive, and less visible, valley terraces on either side of it (Crossgate Moor, Framwellgate Moor, Newton Hall, Belmont and Carrville). Scenarios should be chosen to avoid sites within the incised valley landscapes, and to avoid Landscape Conservation Priority Areas where possible, although in some cases the weight attached to the landscape strategy may need to be carefully evaluated.

**2.12** In assessing individual development scenarios a number of criteria will need to be considered.

- Physical impacts on topography and landscape features.
- Impacts on landscape character.
- Visibility and appearance in public and private views.
- Visibility and appearance in views of the World Heritage Site<sup>(4)</sup>.
- Relationship with existing urban built form.
- Impacts on the perceived separation of settlements.
- Scope to mitigate landscape and visual impacts.
- Potential contribution to the City's Green Infrastructure.
- Secondary impacts arising from associated infrastructure.
- Affect of flooding and required mitigation.

### Flooding

### Biodiversity

**2.13** The impacts of built development on biodiversity are complex and may potentially have effects on individual species, habitats, landscape permeability and species dispersal. Similarly impacts may be direct and physical or indirect through effects such as pollution, disturbance or incidental through secondary works such as supporting infrastructure.

**2.14** A full evaluation of the potential impact of built development can only be achieved through the detailed assessment of individual proposals carried out against best practice criteria. Some broad constraints can be mapped as a guide to the selection of development scenarios and these are described below and illustrated on the accompanying biodiversity constraints map. It should be borne in mind however that, in Durham, knowledge of biodiversity is restricted to previously surveyed areas and that some biodiversity data may be dated.

**2.15** The analysis considers whether protected species and habitats are found on site. As well as species which are specifically protected by law, the analysis will consider those species and habitats given priority within the County Durham Biodiversity Action Plan. It also considers connectivity of habitats, particularly BAP habitats, within the landscape and the risk that development of a given site might lead to their fragmentation.

**2.16** There is an ongoing process of mapping and updating biodiversity data in Durham which is not yet complete. It is not yet possible to map all biodiversity constraints and opportunities across the county. What can be mapped are protected sites and the known location of protected species.

### Applicable Legislation

**2.17** Durham County Council has an obligation to deliver biodiversity action plans for species and habitats under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This gives a blanket duty to preserve and enhance biodiversity, through all of the authority's actions including built development and the development of infrastructure to support built

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<sup>4</sup> Views of the World Heritage Site are also mapped as a constraint in the Cultural Heritage section.



development. More specific pieces of legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Habitats Regulation 1994 and the Badgers Act 1992 place direct legal obligations on the County Council to preserve and protect some species, their places of dwelling and the habitats which support them. Protection of habitat is enshrined in legislation for species such as badgers and great crested newts and such protection may extend over extensive areas of land, possibly sterilising or severely restricting development in these locations. Licences may be required for developments which impact on these species and their habitats, requirements to meet any licence application will include an assessment of whether the impact is necessary, the governments preferred position being that avoidance is preferable to licensed disturbance or destruction.

### Biodiversity Criteria for Identifying Development Scenarios

**2.18** Locations for development should be chosen to limit possible negative impacts on biodiversity and to provide opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. Opportunities for landscape scale biodiversity enhancements should be taken into account and the passage of species through the landscape should be considered avoiding the fragmentation of habitats. Scenarios for development should be chosen which will avoid protected sites including secondary impacts on protected sites such as increased tipping and disturbance.

**2.19** Sites should be assessed against their potential for protecting and enhancing biodiversity, positive selection can be achieved by choosing sites where:

- Avoidance of direct and secondary impacts on biodiversity action plan species and habitats is possible on the primary site and any associated supporting areas
- Protected species and their habitats are avoided
- Compliance with protective legislation is easiest
- Retention of the existing biodiversity resource within the development scenario is possible
- Creation of new biodiversity action plan habitats is possible
- It is possible to have regard to landscape scale biodiversity issues and retain or create habitat links for species dispersal
- Linking habitat management/creation to green infrastructure proposals and landscape designs can take place
- Linking habitat creation to sustainable transport, green corridors such as cycle routes and footpaths is possible

### Biodiversity Specifics for Durham City

**2.20** High risk areas for biodiversity tend to follow stream and river valleys and areas with diverse landscapes. Avoidance of such areas for major developments would be a good starting point and if infrastructure works to support development are required, particularly anything which would need to cross rivers and streams or ancient woodland then careful locational planning will be needed.

**2.21** There are two major clusters of protected species and habitats around Belmont and Brasside which combined, cover large areas of land and which may be major constraints to development.

### Access and Recreation

**2.22** In 2009 an Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA) of County Durham was completed. It consisted of an audit of all areas of public open space in the County, looking at both quantity and quality.

**2.23** The OSNA then went on to formulate provision standards for the County. It proposed that each 1000 people should have access to 1 hectare each of allotments, amenity open space, outdoor sports space, parks and gardens, and semi-natural open space, and 0.2 ha of children's play areas. Private sports space, space owned by educational establishments, golf courses, private open space, and churchyards and cemeteries, were also audited but standards were not set for these types of space. Standards have not been formally adopted but are useful at this stage for assessing whether provision in a given area might be thought to be sufficient.

**2.24** Population data can be used to calculate the appropriate standard of provision for each ward or AAP area (etc.) of the County; thus, Pelaw and Gilesgate ward has 4694 residents, so they might expect to have access to 4.69 ha each of most types of open space for which there are standards and 0.99 ha of play areas.

**2.25** If any public open spaces or common land would be affected by the site's development, the analysis uses the quality and quantity data from the OSNA to determine the site's worth. It considers what types of open space are affected; how much of a supply there is of this type in the area; its quality; and its potential for improvement? It looks at whether the provision of different types of open space in the immediate area meets the standards which the OSNA suggests at present, and whether development would lead to a deficiency.

**2.26** Existing rights of way, land to which there is permissive access, and permissive paths are taken into account. Where development would affect a right of way or permissive path, the local authority has a duty to protect the existing route or ensure that a good alternative is provided, but permissive paths need not be replaced and the amenity of the routes in question is also a consideration; the public would suffer if a well-used rural route was made to run between industrial units, for example. The analysis also considers how the affected routes contribute to longer routes and the network as a whole, and whether that network would be undermined by development.

**2.27** Transport modelling will be carried out for each of the short listed sites. This will indicate whether a proposed development is likely to lead to a requirement for additional transport infrastructure. All the sites indicated on the plan are likely to add to the traffic levels on roads linking the sites with the centre of Durham, if only because of local trips. Whilst this can be reduced by means of careful travel plan measures and enhancements to pedestrian, cycle and public transport facilities, there will be residual demand for car-borne trips to and from the centre.

**2.28** Peak hour commuting trips are more likely to increase trips on a wider range of road links and consequently add to the justification of the proposed Western and Northern Relief Roads.

**2.29** The number of dwellings or floor space of commercial development; an indication of type and size of dwellings; and where and how the new residents are likely to travel to work. The availability of water and sewerage infrastructure will also need to be taken into account, as should community infrastructure such as schools and health facilities.

#### Topography and Contamination

**2.30** Many of the ancient woodlands which have survived in County Durham occupy steep-sided denes. They have survived precisely because they are hard to cut down and their sites hard to build on. Topography and the possible presence of contamination will also be assessed.

#### Planning and Sustainability

**2.31** In line with the requirements of PPS1, PPS3 and PPG13, new development should be sited where it can be served by modes of transport other than the private car, and where there is easy access to jobs, community and other facilities. In determining the sustainability of a location one should consider how well it fits this description, and how accessible it is – in particular, whether it can be reached by modes of transport other than the private car. All of the suggested sites are within easy reach of the city centre of Durham, so, arguably, they are fairly sustainable. However, some are easier to access than others, some are further away from the centre than others, some are close to local facilities and some are not and some are disconnected from the rest of the built-up area by main roads.

#### Purposes of the Green Belt

**2.32** A significant proportion of the land within 5 miles of Durham has been considered as part of this Study and much of it is currently Green Belt. and most of the sites which have so far been suggested for development in this study, are currently within the Green Belt.

**2.33** PPG2 lists the following purposes of green belt designation:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

**2.34** The first four of these are discussed below in relation to each site. Interpretation of the fifth purpose of Green Belt was an important aspect of the development strategy for the former City of Durham District, established in the City of Durham Local Plan (2004). This development strategy was fundamental to the Plan which confirmed that the most appropriate location for new development that could not be located in Durham City, was in the larger surrounding villages where urban regeneration could be promoted. The Green Belt boundary was therefore drawn tightly around the urban form of Durham City and the long standing strategy to constrain new housing development in the City was confirmed. The County Durham Plan Issues and Options Report describes why this historic policy approach is now being reconsidered.

### Concept Planning and Mitigation

**2.35** The final stage of the Green Belt Review is to assess the environmental and social impacts of development. The contribution that it could make to urban regeneration, townscape and the creation of sustainable communities must also be considered. Therefore once the sites for development have been short listed, attention will be given to the planning the concept of development on each site. It will consider:

- **Housing** - The type of housing likely to be required to critical to address the needs of the people of Durham City and the aspirations of the population of County Durham as a whole. The existing and updated SHMA should provide this data.
- **Urban Design and Planning for Sustainability** - We know that good urban design can affect residents' behaviour and whether there is pride in an area. New development should be attractive, legible, and locally distinctive, incorporate pedestrian and cycle routes which are direct and safe, and contain the appropriate amenities for a neighbourhood. Open spaces should be user-friendly and able to be maintained. Efforts should be made, where appropriate, to limit the severance effects of new or existing roads, and the development should be serviceable by public transport. New dwellings should aspire to high levels on the Code for Sustainable Homes and layouts should score highly on the Building For Life Standard. The use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems will be required in all cases.
- **History and Archaeology** - The information gained from the assessment of a heritage asset's significance should be used to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and development proposals. The desirability should be considered of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and utilising their positive role in place-shaping and contributing to sustainable communities and economic vitality.
- **Biodiversity** - Identified habitats, existing trees, hedges and water features, should be retained and new ones created where possible. Connectivity of habitats should be preserved, taking into account the role of private gardens, public open space and SUDS.
- **Open Space and Public Rights of Way** - The recommendations of the County Durham Open Space Needs Assessment should be used to determine additional open space requirements. New development should include provision to meet that need. Where rights of way or permissive access would be affected, efforts should be made to ensure either that the existing routes are retained and continue to provide safe and attractive access routes, or, if routes must be diverted, that the new routes are safe and attractive. New development should be connected to its surroundings, urban or rural, by good pedestrian routes. Opportunities to create or upgrade existing routes will be explored.
- **Transport Infrastructure** - Opportunities to upgrade existing or to provide new transport infrastructure such as roads or public transport improvements will be examined.

### Sustainability Appraisal

**2.36** A full sustainability appraisal has been carried out on all of the suggested development sites. This process assesses the impact, positive or negative, that a given project or policy would make with regard to a set of sustainability objectives, covering

social, environmental and economic considerations. As such, it covers much of the same ground as this report, but presents them in a rigorous way which enables projects (or, in this case, sites) to be scored against one another and against the null option. The recommendations of the sustainability appraisal are included in this report.

### 3 Comparison of Sites

#### Site 1 - Sniperley

Map 2 Site 1 - Sniperley



#### Capacity

**3.1** The site has a gross area of 80ha and could therefore theoretically accommodate 2402 dwellings at an average density of 30 dwellings per hectare.

#### Archaeology and History

**3.2** There are some features of unidentified form and date known from aerial photographs. This area no longer has a strong character of the former post-medieval planned enclosure and piecemeal enclosure, because the former field boundaries have been grubbed out to create large modern fields.

**3.3** The adjacent Sniperley Hall is a listed building of some significance. Its attractive walled gardens and parkland with trees and a ha-ha survive. Sniperley Farm, formerly part of the Hall, is an attractive group of farm buildings.

**3.4** Therefore the historic character of the site has not survived, but there are some features of historic interest adjacent to the site.

**Ecology**

**3.5** There is a record of a protected species, identified in schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, on part of Site 1(iii).

**3.6** Between Site 1(ii) and Site 1(iii) is a local wildlife site - the former reservoir – and much of Folly Plantation. Streams run from the reservoir to the plantation, which follows a small dene. Whilst the site is protected, it's ecosystem could be undermined by the impact of development via flooding and surface water pollution restricting the movement of species, and by increased recreational pressure on the site.

**3.7** The eastern edge of Site 1(ii) is just within the 500m buffer zone around a great crested newt site. However the newts would have to cross the A167 at the edge of their range to reach the site. This is unlikely to be a significant risk.

**3.8** Although few field boundaries remain on the site, those that exist appear to be along lines that are recognisable from nineteenth-century maps and they may therefore be 'important' hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

**3.9** Many trees and a long strip of woodland at Sniperley Hall and Sniperley Farm are covered by a Tree Protection Order (TPO). Several of the trees, and much of the woodland, is on the border of Site 1(i)

**Landscape**

Broad Landscape Type	Lowland Valley Terraces
Local Landscape Types	Terrace farmland: open arable Terrace farmland: open pasture Parks and recreation grounds
Local Landscape Sub-type	Surveyor enclosed Playing fields & urban green space
Landscape Strategy	Enhance: Landscape Improvement Priority Area Conserve & Enhance: Landscape Conservation Priority Area

**Landscape description**

**3.10** This tract of gently undulating arable farmland lies west of the A167 between the Sniperley and Pity Me roundabout's. It is bounded to the south-west by the wooded parkland of Sniperley Hall and to the north by Potterhouse Lane, beyond which lies farmland of similar character. It is crossed by the B6532.

- 1(i) South and west of the B6532 the landscape is visually open, being made up of large amalgamated arable fields, but strongly influenced visually by the woodlands bordering onto it, giving it an attractive wooded character.
- 1(ii) South and east of the Folly Burn the landscape is more enclosed with a substantial plantation along the shallow valley of the burn in the north and woodland on an abandoned colliery site (Caterhouse Pit) in the south. The area contains a number of tall hedges with frequent hedgerow trees, an isolated field pond and the remains of a tramway running east from the colliery. The southern part of the site is occupied by playing fields. It is crossed by a number of overhead services including one high voltage (lattice tower) and two low voltage (timber pole) lines.
- 1(iii) North and west of the Folly Burn the landscape is more open with a relatively fragmented hedgerow network with sporadic, locally abundant, hedgerow trees. It is crossed by two low voltage overhead lines.

#### Landscape sensitivity

**3.11** The site has a robust and simple landform. It contains a number of mature features that could be vulnerable to development impacts. It has an essentially rural character which becomes increasingly semi-rural or urban-fringe closer to the A167 in views towards the settlement edge, while remaining essentially rural in views out from the A167 and the northbound B6532. Views towards the Sniperley Park woodlands across open farmland are susceptible to obstruction by development in 1(i).

*Landscape sensitivity: 1(i) medium-high, 1(ii) & (iii) medium.*

#### Landscape value

**3.12** The southern part of 1(i) forms part of an area identified in the City of Durham Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value which largely covers the Browney Valley but extends in this area to take in Sniperley Park and its immediate visual context. The site as whole has value as part of a wider tract of open countryside preventing the coalescence of Durham City and Sacriston Village.

*Landscape value: medium rising to medium-high in 1(i) and 1(ii)*

#### Visual Sensitivity

**3.13** The site does not form part of the backdrop to the World Heritage Site, and is not part of the visual environment of the historic core, being generally screened from view by intervening topography and buildings. There are views across the site of the cathedral tower rising above the settlement edge in views from Findon Hill to the north-west and along the B6532 and particularly across 1(i).

**3.14** The site is visible in views from the A167 although views are generally screened or heavily filtered by roadside vegetation. The southern part of 1(i) is open to view from the A167 in the vicinity of the Park & Ride. The site is generally open to view from the B6532 – particularly 1(i) and the eastern parts of 1(ii) and 1(iii). In views from the north



(Findon Hill, B6532 north and Potterhouse Lane) the site as a whole is visible, 1(i) and the northern parts of 1(iii) particularly so, with 1(ii) partially screened or filtered by vegetation.

*Visual sensitivity: medium rising to medium-high and high in 1(ii)*

#### Potential Landscape Effects

**3.15** Physical Features - The gently undulating landform of the site is such that impacts on the natural topography would be low provided that the minor valley of the Folly Burn was avoided and retained. Major woodland blocks (Folly Plantation, Caterhouse Pit) could readily be retained as part of structural landscaping as could significant hedges, hedgerow trees, field ponds and the former waggonway, although some losses could be anticipated.

**3.16** Character - The greater part of the area is in agricultural use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character within the development footprint. The site is large and complex and impacts on the local landscape would depend on the physical extent of development and the degree to which it eroded the rural character of the landscape west of the settlement edge. Impacts would be higher in 1(i) and 1(iii).

**3.17** Potential landscape effects: 1(i) without mitigation: high, with mitigation: high-medium. 1(ii) without mitigation high-medium, with mitigation: low-medium. 1(iii) without mitigation high, with mitigation: medium

#### Potential Visual Effects

**3.18** Public Views - The site is relatively open visually and built development would be highly visible from the surrounding road network until such time as structural landscaping became effective (see below). Development in 1(i) would be particularly visible from the A167 and would obstruct attractive views towards the woodlands of Sniperley Hall Park. Development up to the woodland edge would be visible in views from the south-west through the woodland. Development in 1(ii) would be easier to screen in wider views. Development in 1(iii) would be widely visible for a lengthy period until structural landscaping became effective.

**3.19** Private Views - There are few private views of the area from residential properties although there may be views from some first floor windows in Framwellgate Moor / Pity Me across or through vegetation along the A167. There would be some views of the northern part of 1(i) and 1(iii) from Hartside Farm. Development up to the woodland edge of 1(i) would be visible through the woodland from Sniperley Hall and Sniperley Farm.

*Potential visual effects: 1(i) without mitigation high, with mitigation high. 1(ii) without mitigation medium-high, with mitigation low-medium. 1(iii) without mitigation high, with mitigation high falling to medium-high*

#### Indirect or Secondary Impacts

**3.20** If development of any scale in this area contributed significantly to the need for a western relief road, the impacts of that infrastructure would need to be considered as being in some degree a secondary impact of the housing development.

### **Open Space and Rights of Way**

**3.21** The site contains 7ha of college playing fields, but there is currently no public access.

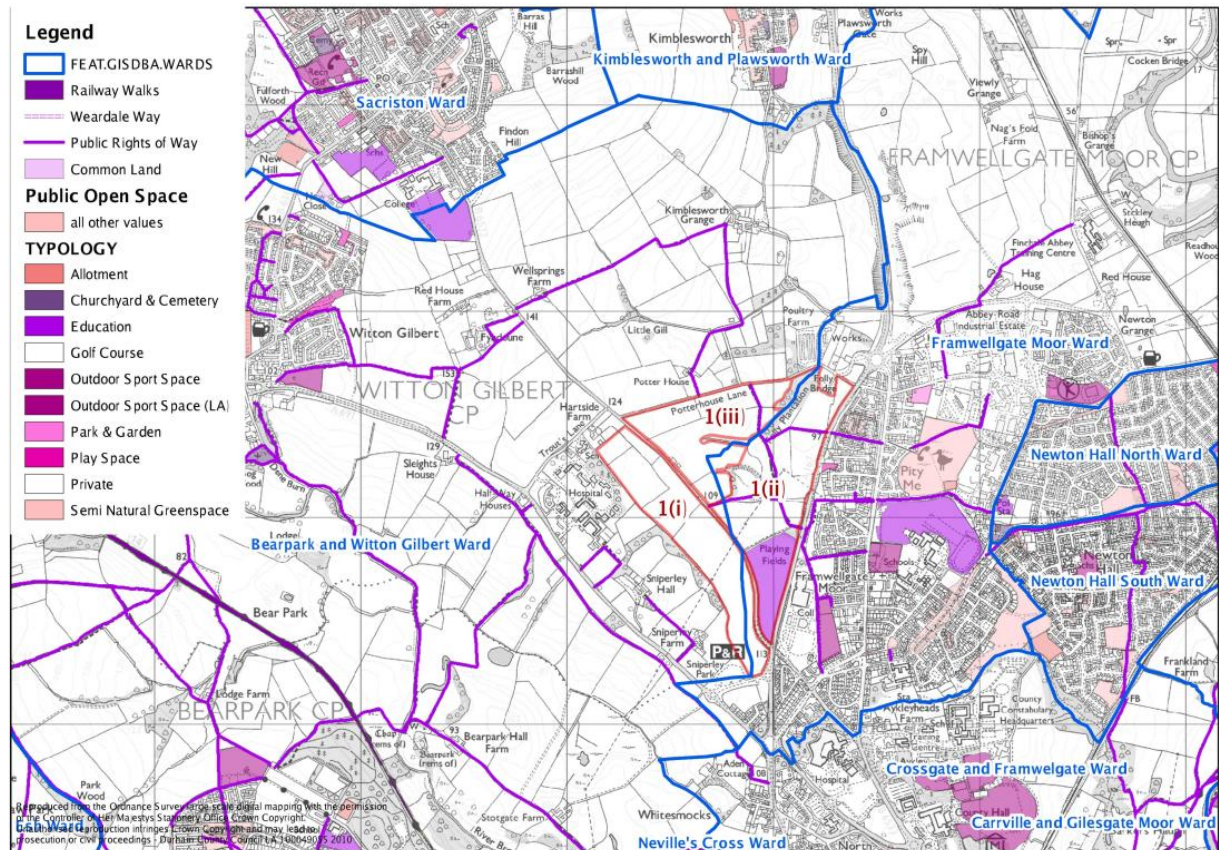
**3.22** Part of the site is within Framwellgate Moor ward and the site is adjacent to the urban area which makes up the core of this ward. According to OSNA requirements this should have 6.2ha each of amenity open space, allotments, parks and gardens, outdoor sports space and semi-natural open space, and 1.24ha of children's play areas. At present this ward takes in a large area of countryside as well as Framwellgate Moor and Pity Me itself. It has an over-supply of semi-natural open space (29.58ha) and sufficient amenity open space (6.89ha), play areas (1.24ha) and outdoor sports space (7.21ha). However, the supply of allotments (0.25ha) and parks and gardens (0.73ha) is significantly below requirements, which is significant as the urban grain is dense. There is also a large area of educational open space (17ha).

**3.23** The rest of the site is within Bearpark and Witton Gilbert ward. In this ward the requirement for most types of open space is 4.41ha, for play space 0.88ha, and there is an oversupply of amenity open space, outdoor sports space and play areas (7.46, 8.14 and 1.43ha) an under supply of allotments (1.29ha) and no parks and gardens or semi-natural open space at all. There is also a large supply of education open space (13.05ha). It should be borne in mind, however, that all of the open space within this ward is within the settlements of Bearpark and Witton Gilbert, which are not adjacent to, or well-related to, the site.

**3.24** The most sustainable part of the site, in the sense of being accessible to services and close to the crossing point over the A167, is the playing field. However, to develop the playing field – even if the college agreed to this – would have social and environmental implications.

**3.25** The site is crossed by footpaths 97 and 95, which link Framwellgate Moor and Pity Me to the surrounding countryside.

Map 3 Site 1 showing public open space



## Flood Risk

**3.26** There is no identified flood risk. No recent planning applications have been made regarding the site which might require an Flood Risk Assessment. However, consideration would have to be given to how development might affect existing streams or increase the risk of flooding.

## Contamination

**3.27** Historical maps show some old coal shafts are present but the site does not appear to have been otherwise developed.

## Transport

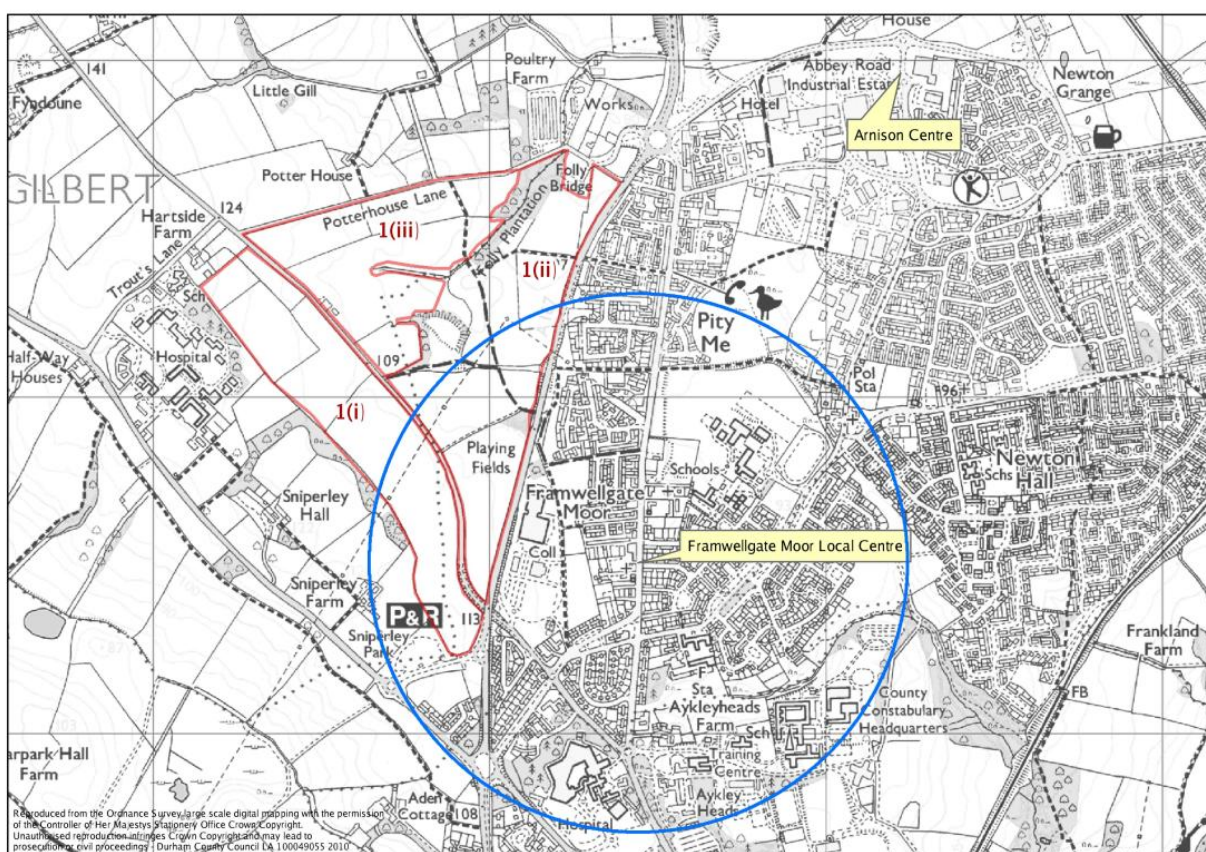
**3.28** This site is separated from Pity Me by the A167, Pity Me Bypass which is a substantial barrier. A pedestrian underpass links the site to Pity Me and this would encourage pedestrian travel to Pity Me, its local facilities and excellent public transport links. There are also good public transport facilities along the B6532. Vehicular traffic would be most likely to use an access from B6532 which would impact on the Aykley Heads area. Potterhouse Lane would come under increased pressure and it likely that a new road link will be needed between A691 and A167 at Pity Me roundabout. A new access onto Pity Me Bypass could be considered and this could be beneficial if this were to link to B6532. The Western and Northern Relief Roads would be required to lessen the effect on the local road network.

## Sustainability Considerations

**3.29** As stated above, there is the potential for new residents, particularly those in the southern part of site 1(ii) to use the local centre and public transport services in Pity Me and Framwellgate Moor; New College, Durham is also close to the site, and the urban fabric of Framwellgate Moor/ Pity Me is relatively permeable with several routes from the A167 to Front Street. However, the severance impact of the A167 would be significant for much of this site, partly because it is a fast road with only a few crossing places and limited potential for others and partly because a tree belt and embankment lines the road for much of its length, providing a physical and visual barrier: at present this provides the useful function of screening the road from residential areas. Walking routes from Site 1(iii) and from parts of Sites 1(i-ii) would be over 800m from the local centre and bus routes.

**3.30** Many new residents on this site would, therefore, be dissuaded from walking or cycling to the local centre; if driving, they would find it easier to visit the Arnison Centre/ Abbey Road district centre. It seems more likely that students living on the site would walk or cycle to New College Durham, as it is more of a destination and students are less likely than some other groups to have access to a car.

Map 4 Site 1 showing 800m radius of the Framwellgate Moor Local Centre and the Arnison Centre



**3.31** There is a good bus service along Framwellgate Moor Front Street to Durham; ¼-hourly services to Darlington and Newcastle. An existing half-hourly service to/from Newcastle and Durham runs along the B6532, which goes through the site. However, since the Newcastle route goes via Stanley, Burnopfield, etc., it's unlikely to be useful for commuting.

**3.32** The southern tip of site 1(i) is adjacent to the Sniperley park-and-ride site, whence there are frequent and rapid bus services to Durham itself.

**3.33** The site extends from the existing boundary of the urban area over a kilometre into the countryside. From its southern tip to the centre of Durham is some 2.5km; from its furthest edge, some 3.7km.

### **Green Belt Functions**

**3.34** The site does not form part of the backdrop to the World Heritage Site, and is not part of the visual environment of the historic core, being generally screened from view by intervening topography and buildings. However, there are views across the City, with the Cathedral tower rising above the settlement edge, in views from Findon Hill to the north-west and along the B6532 and particularly across 1(i).

**3.35** The settings of Sniperley Hall and Sniperley Farm would be affected by the development. They would become rural buildings in a suburban setting.

**3.36** Development would mean an extension to the urban area beyond the A167. At this point, the A167 forms a very definite boundary to the city, which is emphasised by the tree belt and embankment which screen Pity Me and Framwellgate Moor from the road. Spanning this neat boundary would emphasise the incursion into the countryside.

**3.37** Development here would not lead to the coalescence of neighbouring towns, but it would bring Sniperley Hall and Earl's House Hospital effectively within Durham and would decrease the distance between Durham and the settlements of Sacriston and Witton Gilbert.

### **Mitigation and Concept Planning**

#### **Archaeology**

**3.38** As there is no archaeological character to lose the only mitigation known to be necessary would be full excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense, as elsewhere.

**3.39** The design of the development around Sniperley Hall and Sniperley Farm should have regard to their character and the character of their settings, including the parkland around Sniperley Hall.

## Ecology

**3.40** The existing Folly Plantation and former reservoir should be protected within the development process and incorporated within the layout. Consideration should be given to: how the ecosystems within them could be protected from air or water pollution, drought or flood, fly-tipping, and damage due to recreational use; and how the inevitable fragmentation of habitats could be mitigated by the creation of linkages between these habitats and the wider countryside.

**3.41** Particular care might have to be taken to avoid development during the breeding season; given that there have been barn owls on site in the past. An appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to development applications being made. Trees and hedgerows on site should be retained wherever possible.

**3.42** Care should be taken around the boundary of site 1(i) to ensure that the TPO trees and woodland at Sniperley Hall and Farm are not affected by development

## Landscape

**3.43** Potential losses of landscape features could be compensated for in some degree by either structural landscaping or off-site planting in adjacent areas. General impacts on the character of the local landscape could be mitigated in some degree by structural landscaping to reduce the visibility of built development. Substantial perimeter woodland belts and interior belts consolidating existing vegetation would help screen the development in views from the B6532 and break up the development roof-scape in views from higher ground. These would be in keeping with the wider Valley Terrace landscape which is well wooded in places. These would take some time (>10 years) to have a substantial screening effect. Landscape effects would be easier to mitigate in 1(ii) where development could be more readily screened by consolidating existing features. Larger scale development would require a more substantial and comprehensive network of woodland planting which would have the effect of shifting the character of the landscape towards a more heavily wooded and enclosed character in the longer term (>10years).

## Enhancement Potential

**3.44** Most of the site lies in a Landscape Improvement Priority Area. The area between the edge of the City and Sacriston has some potential for improvement given its general lack of landscape features and the lack of connectivity between existing features. Key areas for potential include:

- new native woodland planting along the Folly Burn and Little Gill;
- enhanced management of Caterhouse Pit;
- restoration of hedgerows on areas of open arable farmland.

**3.45** A potential 'least impact area' of around 24ha is shown below which could have impacts mitigated reasonably successfully by structural landscaping.

**3.46** A larger scale development would entail a very substantial impact on the character of the landscape between Durham and Sacriston. Development of this scale would require large scale structural landscaping to reduce the visibility of built elements.

**3.47** Higher impact scenarios are shown below to indicate the scale of structural landscaping assumed in the assessment above.



### **Access and Recreation**

**3.48** The existing Public Rights of Way across the site would have to be retained and enhanced.

**3.49** Working on the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling, the site could accommodate 5524 people. Working on the OSNA's recommended provision standards, this would mean about 5.52ha each of parks and gardens, semi-natural open space, amenity space and allotments, and 1.11ha of children's play space on or off the site – a total of 23.2ha. (of which the semi-natural open space element could be met by Folly Plantation and the former reservoir). The wards of Framwellgate Moor, and Witton Gilbert and Bearpark, both have significant under-supplies of parks and gardens and allotments, which would need to be taken into account

**3.50** The existing 7ha of college playing fields could remain in place to supply some of this requirement. However, this part of the site is arguably the most sustainable, because it is the closest part of the site to New College and other facilities. Therefore it might be more appropriate to put some of the residential development here and distribute the open space throughout the site. The need for the existing playing pitches will be assessed as part of the upcoming Playing Pitch Study due for completion early next year.

### **Planning and Sustainability**

**3.51** The severance impact of the A167 would be a significant factor affecting the potential for non-car modes being used for local journeys. As discussed above, although the local centre is relatively near to some parts of the site, it would be difficult to put in place a series of crossing points along the road to the extent that new development would be easily connected to the existing urban fabric.

**3.52** Depending on the size of the site eventually developed, efforts should be made to ensure that some community facilities are provided, particularly convenience retail, particularly towards the far end of the site. The OSNA recommends that one small community hall should be provided for each 1,000 people.

**3.53** Although the entire site is in flood zone1, there are streams on site and so there would be a certain amount of water which would have to be dealt with.

### **Planning History**

- The adjacent Earl's House Hospital is classed as a major developed site within the green belt. There have been a number of minor applications for alterations here, and a major application for new wards (07/00920/FPA). The latter was permitted because it took the form of single-storey blocks around a courtyard, within the footprint of the existing development. It was therefore judged not to have an unacceptable impact on the openness of the green belt. A car park was outside the site's footprint in 2006 (06/00663/FPA) on the grounds that, although it was in the green belt, it was small in scale, screened by existing buildings and a tree belt, and did not include any buildings.
- The Park and Ride development at Sniperley was permitted in 2003.
- An application for 30 flats on the site adjacent to the Park and Ride site was rejected in 2006 (06/00643/OUT) because: it constituted inappropriate development in the green belt; because highways access would be problematic; and because there had been 23 letters of objection.
- The conversion of barns at Sniperley Farm to accommodation (9/00718/FPA) is still pending consideration.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

**Sustainability Appraisal Recommendation** - Take site forward as Priority 1 to be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy. Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The preferred development scenario takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.

#### Sustainability Appraisal Summary

#### Site 1: Sniperley Park

##### Main implications of option: Pros and cons

##### Pros:

- Overall the site has potential to provide a strategically important level of housing in County Durham over the plan period (nearly 5% of the total County requirement).
- This site is close to the city centre and therefore to jobs, facilities and transport links to other locations.



### Site 1: Sniperley Park

- It is also close to retail, schools and other local services in Framwellgate Moor.
- It is also close to New College Durham and therefore could bring further education within reach of a greater number of people.
- The site is close to the Park and Ride site and therefore residents upon the site might have less reliance upon the private car.
- Potential increase in local population is likely to improve the case for developing a district heating network for Durham City.
- Proposed housing would support proposals to develop a new business district in the north of Durham City (Aykley Heads) and would contribute to the sustainability of local businesses in Framwellgate Moor.
- In the preferred development scenario a significant part of the site is proposed for structure planting (approx. 38.62 ha), which will go some way to mitigate against the loss of greenfield land, habitats, and landscape assets, as well as protecting soil resources.
- The site is outwith the 4km 'visual setting' of the World Heritage Site.

#### Cons:

- Built development at this site would entail a fundamental change in character of the currently rural landscape – i.e. a significant loss of open space and greenfield land/ green belt.
- The benefits of the location would be lost if the severance effects of the A167 were not adequately addressed and if the site were not masterplanned in such a way as to include safe and legible routes across the site and through to the surrounding areas and the city centre.
- Disturbance to public rights of way across the site would make it harder for residents of Framwellgate Moor to access the open countryside.
- Potential increase in local population could put pressure on essential services, facilities, and transport links/ congestion.
- The development would affect the "planned landscape" around Sniperley Hall and Farm.
- It is likely that because of the size of the development and the potential traffic it will generate schemes to address congestion and enable sustainable transport in and around Durham city will need to be considered.
- Development is likely to increase traffic and congestion levels and so increase local air and noise pollution as well as carbon emissions. Fast moving traffic on the A691 and the link past Earl's House to the A167 (which would be improved in parallel with the development) would pose safety issues if not addressed.
- Wildlife and habitats of interest would be affected by development on this site. Significantly, the cluster of habitats which bisect the site - the local wildlife site at the former reservoir, the Folly Burn and Folly Plantation – could be affected by water pollution, changes in hydrology, and increased footfall.
- The development entails the loss of a significant area of grade 3 agricultural land.

Site 1: Sniperley Park	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p><b>Take site forward as Priority 1 to be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The attached preferred development scenario takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.</b></p>
<b>Mitigation suggested</b>	<p>Carry out a full archaeological excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense, as elsewhere.</p> <p>Ensure that the design of the development around Sniperley Hall and Sniperley Farm has regard to their character and the character of their settings, including the parkland around Sniperley Hall.</p> <p>Ensure that the existing Folly Plantation and former reservoir are protected within the development process and incorporated within the layout. Consideration should be given to: how the ecosystems within them could be protected from air or water pollution, drought or flood, fly-tipping, and damage due to recreational use; and how the inevitable fragmentation of habitats could be mitigated by the creation of linkages between these habitats and the wider countryside.</p> <p>Particular care might have to be taken to avoid development during the breeding season, given that there have been barn owls on site in the past. An appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to masterplanning. Trees and hedgerows on site should be retained wherever possible.</p> <p>Care should be taken around the boundary of site 1 (i) to ensure that the TPO trees and woodland at Sniperley Hall and Farm are not affected by development.</p> <p>Ensure that losses of landscape features are minimised or compensated for in some degree by either structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent areas. General impacts on the character of the local landscape could be mitigated in some degree by structural landscaping to reduce the visibility of built development. Substantial perimeter woodland belts and interior belts consolidating existing vegetation would help screen the development in views from the B6532 and break up the development roof-scape in views from higher ground. These would be in keeping with the wider Valley Terrace landscape which is well wooded in places. These would take some time (&gt;10 years) to have a substantial screening effect. Landscape effects would be easier to mitigate in 1(ii) where development could be more readily screened by consolidating existing features. Larger scale development would require a more substantial and comprehensive network of woodland planting which would have the effect of shifting the character of the landscape towards a more heavily wooded and enclosed character in the longer term (&gt; 10years).</p>

### Site 1: Sniperley Park

The attached plan of a preferred development scenario shows the suggested layout of development / structured planting areas, taking into account issues concerning the local landscape and assets within it. Further information on the appropriate mitigation of impacts on the Local Wildlife site are needed.

The area between the edge of the City and Sacriston has some potential for improvement given its general lack of landscape features and the lack of connectivity between existing features. Key areas for potential include:

- new native woodland planting along the Folly Burn and Little Gill;
- enhanced management of Caterhouse Pit;
- restoration of hedgerows on areas of open arable farmland.

Ensure that the site is adequately masterplanned to generate an attractive townscape which takes into account local distinctiveness and the need to respect the setting of Sniperley Hall and Farm.

Making use of accurate data on household composition and income, and predictions for the future, ensure that the development provides an appropriate mix of dwelling type, size and tenure.

Ensure that the site includes some community facilities, particularly convenience retail, particularly towards the far end of the site. The OSNA recommends that one small community hall should be provided for each 1,000 people.

Put in place measures to reduce the need to travel and to provide viable alternatives to the private car: ensure that there are adequate public transport services through and around the site itself, connecting it to the city centre and other destinations; ensure that there are adequate, safe and legible pedestrian and cycle routes to the City Centre, Framwellgate Moor and New College Durham, and the park-and-ride, which are linked to the existing network; extend park and ride facilities to include routes to other destinations around Durham city, rather than just the city centre.

Ensure that the development contains adequate and good-quality public open spaces and other types of green infrastructure, both for the residents of the site itself and to address the potential needs of the people of adjacent wards. The wards of Framwellgate Moor, and Witton Gilbert and Bearpark, both have significant under-supplies of parks and gardens and allotments, which would need to be taken into account

Address the issue of flood protection, particularly with reference to the streams on site.

Consider potential schemes to reduce local congestion, and in and around Durham city, so that 'hotspots' do not worsen and the city is not adversely affected by the increase in traffic generated by the site.

### Site 1: Sniperley Park

	<p>Consider carrying out capacity needs assessments on essential services to ensure the needs of existing and new residents are met as the potential size of development could put pressure on them - considering the size of the proposed development, this may involve including some facilities within the site – e.g. GPs, schools, convenience shops, post office, etc. However, if housing is phased gradually this may not need to be done until a later date.</p>
<p><b>Any residual impacts to take into account</b></p>	<p>Even if mitigation is taken forward, the following issue are likely to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current economic recession and slow-down in the house building sector may mean that the scale of proposed development may not be fully realised – at least in the short term. This is likely to have positive and negative effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Most importantly, it may mean that the housing need for Durham city, and indeed Durham County, is not met.</li> <li>• This site will increase traffic levels in this area and therefore potentially increase air and noise pollution and congestion in and around Durham City and potentially on the A1.</li> <li>• If the development proposed around Durham City were to, cumulatively, be considered to require the construction of the northern and / or western relief roads, this would have a significant negative impact on attempts to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce the causes of climate change, since their main effect would be to promote and facilitate the use of the private car. The roads would also have a significant negative effect upon features of biodiversity, landscape, and historic/archaeological interest. It is also likely that the generation of Community Infrastructure Levy (or similar) funding for this infrastructure from housing development would prevent the allocation of funding to other improvements in and around the development areas.</li> <li>• Development of this site will increase urban sprawl, delete a large area of the Durham City Green Belt, and erode the ‘rural’ quality that currently characterises this area.</li> <li>• Overall, CO2 emissions will rise. Mitigation in the form of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy and sustainable transport provision should contain the overall increase and may result in reduction of CO2 emissions per household.</li> <li>• Even with mitigation, the effects upon landscape and biodiversity would be strongly negative, as described above.</li> <li>• This extension to Durham City may encourage further outward development of the city in the future, which is likely to put pressure on the surrounding landscape and environmental assets, and therefore potentially have a negative impact on them.</li> </ul>

## Site 2 - North of Arnison Centre and Newton Hall

Map 5 Site 2 - North of Arnison Centre and Newton Hall



### Capacity

**3.54** Sites 2 (i – iii) have a gross area of 72.9ha and could therefore theoretically accommodate 2186 dwellings at 30 dwellings per hectare. Sites 2(iv-v) are 45.93ha gross which could accommodate 1378 dwellings.

### Archaeology and History

**3.55** The line of the Roman road known in modern times as Cade's Road potentially crosses this area. Again, some features of unidentified form and date have been identified from aerial photos.

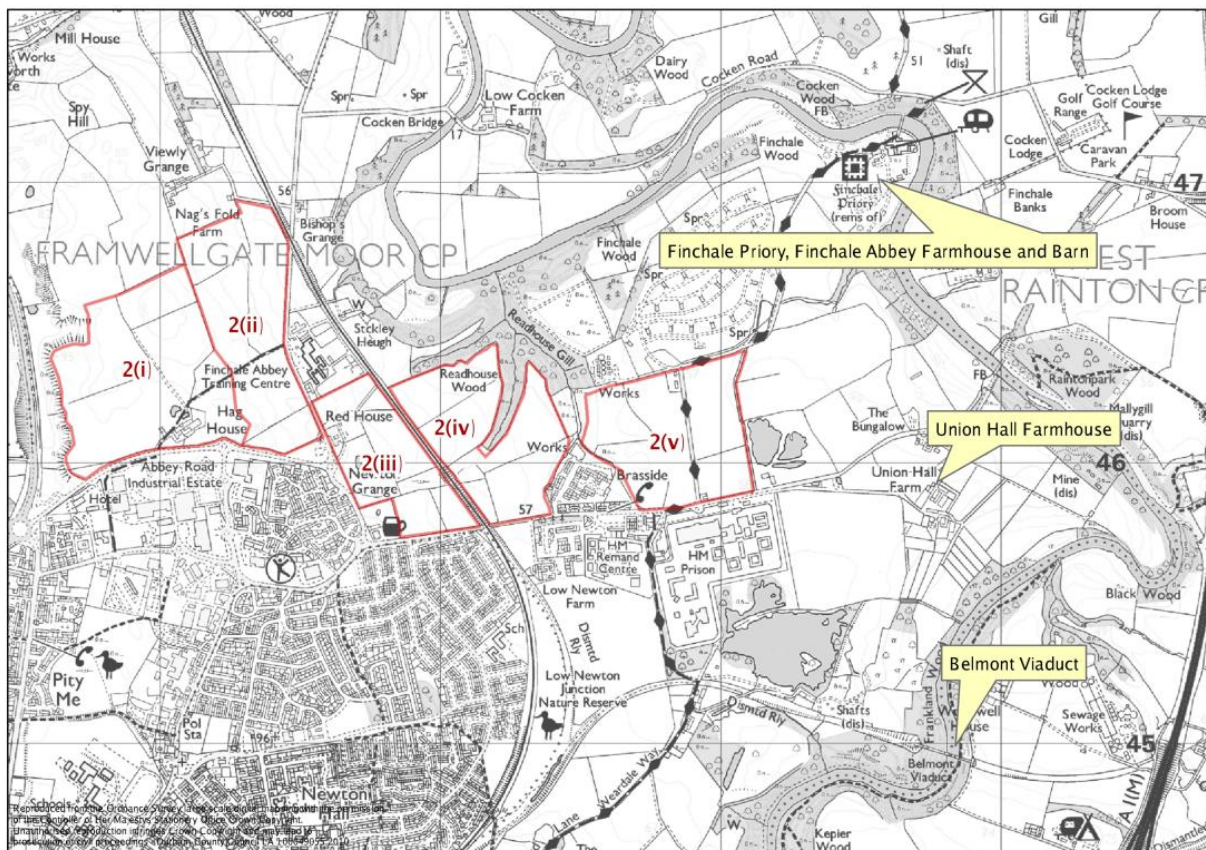
**3.56** Medieval field systems were once present in parts of this area but later parliamentary enclosures have eradicated most traces of these. The site is now characterised mainly by post-medieval planned enclosures and modern field amalgamation – where former boundaries have been grubbed out to create large fields.

**3.57** Site 2(v) is close to a cluster of listed buildings whose settings would be affected by development: Finchale Priory (grade I listed), Finchale Abbey Farmhouse, (Grade II\*); Finchale Abbey Barn and gin-gang (grade II) and Union Hall Farmhouse (grade II).

**3.58** Development would significantly affect the setting of Belmont Viaduct (grade II) because of its prominence.

**3.59** Two other groups of buildings which are not listed but which are of some value would be affected by development here: the Red House Farm group, which is an attractive farmhouse and vernacular farm buildings in a semi-rural setting, and the Newton Grange public house, which is of some townscape value.

Map 6 Site 2 showing nearby sites of archaeological and historic interest



**3.60** It is concluded that there is no historic character remains on the site itself to lose. However, there are a number of significant historic structures adjacent to the site whose settings would be affected.

### **Ecology**

**3.61** There is 1 record of white-clawed crayfish adjacent to site 2. This species features on schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and therefore: it must not be 'killed or taken' and any 'structure or place' which it uses for protection must not be disturbed. There are several ponds on it, which are Durham BAP habitats, few of which exist in the County.

**3.62** The northern boundaries of sites 2(iv) and (v) are formed by two protected habitats: Finchale Wood, an ancient woodland, protrudes into site 2(iv), and the local wildlife site at the Brasside former stores lies adjacent.

**3.63** Those field boundaries that remain on site appear to be along the same lines as field boundaries found on historic maps and may therefore be 'important' hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

**3.64** The Wear Valley at this point is the focus of one of the Wildlife Trusts' 'Living Landscape' projects, which seek to restore semi-natural habitats on a landscape scale. The project seeks to 'create a continuous corridor of rich woodland and a riverside environment worthy of a World Heritage site along the 12km stretch of the River Wear between Chester-le-Street and Durham.'

**3.65** There is the potential for increased residential development in this area to have an impact upon the ecology of the Wear Valley in between Brasside and Durham due to increased footfall and, potentially, fly tipping and vandalism. The valley contains the Brasside Pond SSSI and several stretches of ancient woodland designated as County Wildlife Sites (Rainton Park, Frankland and Kepier, Moorhouse, and Hopper's Woods) Much of it also falls within the 500m buffer zone around great crested newt sites and there is a record of water vole near The Sands.

**3.66** There are no TPOs on site.

**Landscape**

Broad Landscape Type	Lowland Valley Terraces (2(i), 2(v)) Incised Lowland Valleys (2(ii), 2(iii), 2(iv))
Local Landscape Types	Terrace farmland: open arable (2(i), 2(ii)) Valley farmland: wooded arable (2(ii)); pasture (2(iii)); wooded pasture (2(iv)) Dene pastures (part 2(iii) and part 2(iv))
Local Landscape Sub-type	Old enclosure; Surveyor enclosed (2(iii))
Landscape Strategy	Enhance, Restore or enhance: Landscape Improvement Priority Area (2(i), part 2(iii), 2(iv) and 2(v)) Conserve and enhance, Conserve and restore: Landscape Conservation Priority Area (2(ii), part 2(iii), 2(iv) and 2(v))

**Landscape description**

**3.67** A complex site running along the northern edge of the City from the A167 Pity Me roundabout to Brasside. It is bounded to the south by the settlement edge and in the north by open countryside of similar character, and the wooded valley of the River wear and Brasside Ordnance Site.

- 2(i) A low ridge of gently undulating arable farmland with a fragmented network of low clipped hedges and few trees. It is defined in the west by the steep slopes of a glacial landform (Sacriston Sub-glacial Channels Local Geological Site) which forms a minor valley along which the A167 runs. In the east the land rolls progressively over into the valley of the River Wear (1(ii)). A single farm group at Hag House lies on the southern edge of the area.
- 2(ii) Sloping arable farmland with a fragmented network of low clipped hedges and few trees. The land falls at moderate gradients (1:10-1:15) towards the wooded valley of the River wear. It is bounded to the east by the C12.
- 2(iii) Rolling sloping mixed farmland between the settlement edge and the East Coast Main Line. Field boundaries are variable in character: some overgrown and gappy, others rich in hedgerow trees. The area is crossed by the shallow head of a dene enclosed by gappy hedges and containing some mature trees and rush pasture. In the centre of the site is a long-established field pond. A converted farm building group (Red House) lies on the western edge of the area. Open skyline views out across Wear Lowlands
- 2(iv) Gently sloping arable farmland falling towards the River Wear. The site is divided by a wooded dene (Readhouse Wood). Hedgerows in the south of the site contain frequent hedgerow trees. The area is bounded to the west by the railway line and in the east and north by woodlands of the branching Readhouse Gill. The area abuts the hamlet of Brasside in the south-east.
- 2(v) Open, almost flat, arable farmland. The south-western corner of the site is made up of disturbed land (former Newton grange brick and tile works) now naturally re-vegetated as scrub/woodland. The site is crossed by an unclassified road (also followed by the Weardale Way) bounded by gappy, low clipped hedges with occasional trees. The area is bounded to the south by the Prison, to the north by the Brasside Ordnance Site, and to the east by a fishing lake (former clay-pit) and open countryside of similar character.

#### Landscape Sensitivity

- 2(i) A simple landform with few mature features. The landscape is strongly rural in character. Parts of it are prominent in the wider landscape forming the skyline in near views and overlooked in distant views from high ground to the west.
- 2(ii) A simple landform with few mature features. The landscape is strongly rural in character. Parts of it are prominent in the wider landscape in middle distance views.
- 2(iii) A rolling landform with some mature features susceptible to development impacts. Has a semi-rural or urban fringe character in some views. Affords long distance views out across the Wear Lowlands from the road / settlement edge which development would obstruct.
- 2(iv) A rolling landform with some mature features susceptible to development impacts. Essentially rural in character although with a semi-rural or urban fringe quality in views towards the railway line.
- 2(v) A simple landform with few mature features (assuming areas of mature scrub are omitted from development area). Has a semi-rural or urban fringe character in views south towards the prison or north towards the ordnance site and sewerage works.



*Landscape sensitivity: 2(i) medium, 2(ii) medium-high, 2(iii) medium-high, 2(iv) medium-high, 2(v) low.*

#### Landscape Value

- 2(iv) forms part of an area identified in the City of Durham Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value which covers the incised valley of the River Wear north of the City. Areas 2(i), 2(ii) and 2(iii) have value as open countryside preventing the coalescence of Durham City and Kimblesworth/Plawsworth to the north. Although 2(iii) and 2(iv) help maintain a degree of separation from Brasside to the east, this is already almost contiguous with Newton Hall and is a recent settlement associated with the prison and remand centre. The area has relatively low recreational value having few footpaths.

*Landscape value: 2(i), 2(ii), 2(iii) medium, 2(iv) medium-high, 2(v) low-medium*

#### Visual Sensitivity

**3.68** The site does not form part of the visual envelope of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core.

- 2(i) The top of the ridge is visually contained in most near views although overlooked from higher ground to the west (Findon Hill). The edge of the ridge forms a strong skyline in views from the A167, and to a lesser extent from the Leamside road in the east.
- 2(ii) The site falls towards and is visible from a number of public and private receptors including the Leamside road, Finchale Abbey TC, Low Moor Cottages and Redhouse.
- 2(iii) The site is visible from the existing settlement edge and the East Coast Mainline (ECML) and affords long distance views out across the Wear Lowlands
- 2(iv) The site is visible from the Brasside Road and the ECML from which there are panoramic views eastwards across the Wear Lowlands. The site is visible in filtered views (winter) from properties on the edge of Brasside. It does not figure prominently in the wider landscape being screened by topography and woodland in views from the north and east
- 2(v) The site is visible from adjacent minor roads and from the Weardale Way that follows them. It is visible from isolated properties within the site.

*Visual sensitivity: 2(ii), 2(iii) medium-high, 2(i), 2(iv) medium, 2(v) low-medium*

### **Potential Landscape Effects**

#### Physical Features

**3.69** The gently undulating landform is such that impacts on the natural topography would generally be low provided that the minor valley running through 2(iii) and 2(iv) was retained. Development on sloping or rolling ground in 2(ii) and 2(iii) could involve fairly substantial earthworks for development platforms. Mature scrub in 2(v) could be retained or excluded from the site. Mature trees and hedges scattered across the site would be more vulnerable. In principle some could be retained as part of structural landscaping but some losses might be anticipated – particularly in the southern parts of 2(iii) and 2(iv).

## Character

**3.70** The greater part of the area is in agricultural use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character within the development footprint. The site is large and complex and impacts on the local landscape would depend on the physical extent of development and the degree to which it eroded the rural character of the landscape between the settlement edge and settlements to the north. Impacts on the character of the local landscape would be highest on the skyline edges of 2(i), the slopes of 2(ii) and through effects on wider views across the site in 2(iii) and 2(iv).

*Potential landscape effects: 2(i) without mitigation high, with mitigation low; 2(ii) without mitigation high, with mitigation low; 2(iii) without mitigation high, with mitigation medium; 2(iv) without mitigation high, with mitigation medium; 2(v) without mitigation medium, with mitigation low.*

## Potential Visual Effects

### **3.71** Public Views:

- 2(i) Development in the western parts of 2(i) would form a conspicuous and prominent urban skyline in views from the A167 in an otherwise rural setting. Development towards its eastern edge would have similar impacts in views from vantage points to the east – although filtered in places by roadside vegetation.
- 2(ii) Development could be relatively conspicuous being on rising ground falling towards eastern viewpoints.
- 2(iii) The development edge would be visible from the adjacent road and settlement edge and would become effectively an ‘interior’ urban view. Development would obscure views out across the rural landscape of the Wear lowlands. Development would be visible from the ECML, effectively acting as a continuation of the urban edge experienced passing Newton Hall to the immediate south.
- 2(iv) The development edge would be visible from the adjacent road and would become effectively an ‘interior’ urban view. Development would be visible from the ECML, effectively acting as a continuation of the urban edge experienced passing Brasside / Frankland to the immediate south, obscuring views out across the rural landscape of the Wear lowlands.
- 2(v) Development edges would be visible from the adjacent road and prison frontage and would become effectively ‘interior’ urban views, obstructing views across the wider rural landscape.

### **3.72** Private Views:

- 2(i) Development would not have substantial impacts in private views other than from immediately adjacent properties at Hag House.
- 2(ii) Development would have some impact on the rural outlook of residential properties at Low Moor Cottages, Redhouse, Viewly Grange and Nag’s Fold Farm, and views from housing at Newton Grange which would have an effectively ‘interior’ urban view.
- 2(iii) Development would have some impact on the rural outlook of residential properties at Redhouse and Newton Grange Cottage, and views from housing at Newton Grange which would have an effectively ‘interior’ urban view.

- 2(iv) Development would not have substantial impacts in private views other than in views filtered by vegetation from housing on the western edge of Brasside.
- 2(v) Development would not have substantial impacts in private views other than in views from immediately adjacent properties (Greenacres and un-named property in the north of the site).

*Potential visual effects: 2(i) without mitigation high, with mitigation low; 2(ii) without mitigation high, with mitigation medium; 2(iii) without mitigation high, with mitigation high; 2(iv) without mitigation medium, with mitigation medium; 2(v) without mitigation medium, with mitigation low.*

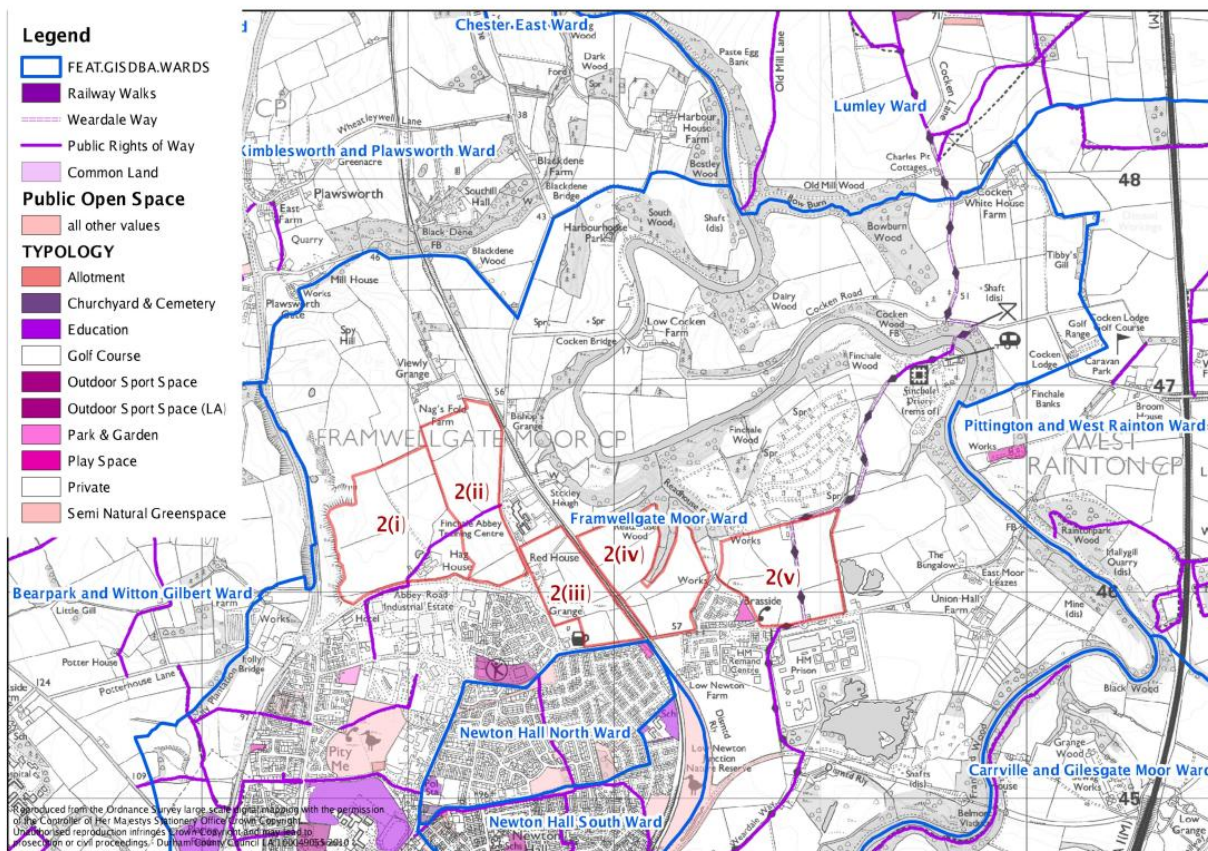
### **Indirect or Secondary Effects**

**3.73** If development of any scale in this area contributed significantly to the need for a western or northern relief roads, the impact of that infrastructure would need to be considered as being in some degree a secondary impact of the housing development.

### **Open Space and Rights of Way**

**3.74** There are no areas of designated public or private open space on the site at present. The site falls within Framwellgate Moor ward at present. According to OSNA requirements this should have 6.2ha each of amenity open space, allotments, parks and gardens, outdoor sports space and semi-natural open space, and 1.24ha of children's play areas. At present this ward takes in a large area of countryside as well as Framwellgate Moor and Pity Me itself. It has an over-supply of semi-natural open space (29.58ha) and sufficient amenity open space (6.89ha), play areas (1.24ha) and outdoor sports space (7.21ha). However, the supply of allotments (0.25ha) and parks and gardens (0.73ha) is well below requirements, which is significant as the urban grain is dense. There is also a large area of educational open space (17ha). The adjacent Newton Hall North ward should have 3.16ha of most types of open space and 0.63ha of play space but it only has an adequate supply of amenity open space (4.31ha); it has no allotments, parks and gardens, or outdoor sports space (apart from educational open space, 1.96ha); 0.36ha of play space and 2.04ha of semi-natural green space.

Map 7 Site 2 showing public open space and rights of way



- Site 2(i) is crossed by a footpath linking Abbey Road with the Finchale Abbey training centre; it is not linked to any other PROWs (apart from roads).
- Site 2 (iv) is crossed by the Weardale Way, which emerges from the countryside to the north and then continues along the Wear Valley to the City Centre. Development on this part of the site would have a significant impact on this route, which currently runs from Chester-le-Street to Durham entirely through non-urban terrain. Since the most logical pedestrian route to the city centre is through the valley, along the Weardale Way, development here might increase the pressure on its environment.

### **Flood Risk**

**3.75** The western edge of the site is within flood zone 3. However, this only affects a small area of the site. There have been no major planning applications affecting the site of late and therefore no Flood Risk Assessment.

### **Contamination**

**3.76** The only industrial sites shown on historic maps in the vicinity are the clay pits and brickworks on the site adjacent to site 2(v). These are now an SSSI and are not developable.

## **Transport**

**3.77** Sections 2(i) and (ii) could link closely with the facilities of Newton Hall and Arnison Park although enhanced pedestrian links across the first stage of the Northern Relief Road (Rotary Way) will be essential. There are good public transport facilities at Arnison Park and it should be possible to extend these services into the new housing area. Vehicular access should be from the roundabout on Rotary Way. Site 2 (ii) east of Red House roundabout would be bisected by the northern relief road and therefore access would have to be taken from Finchale Road or the road C12. Without the Northern Relief Road, there would be an unacceptable strain on links through the city.

**3.78** Access to this area is currently difficult due to the poor state of the access roads and the remoteness from existing centres. Part of the site is required for the Northern Relief Road and this will be needed before this site can be adequately accessed. Footpath links towards Newton Hall will need to be improved. There are public transport facilities nearby associated with the prison.

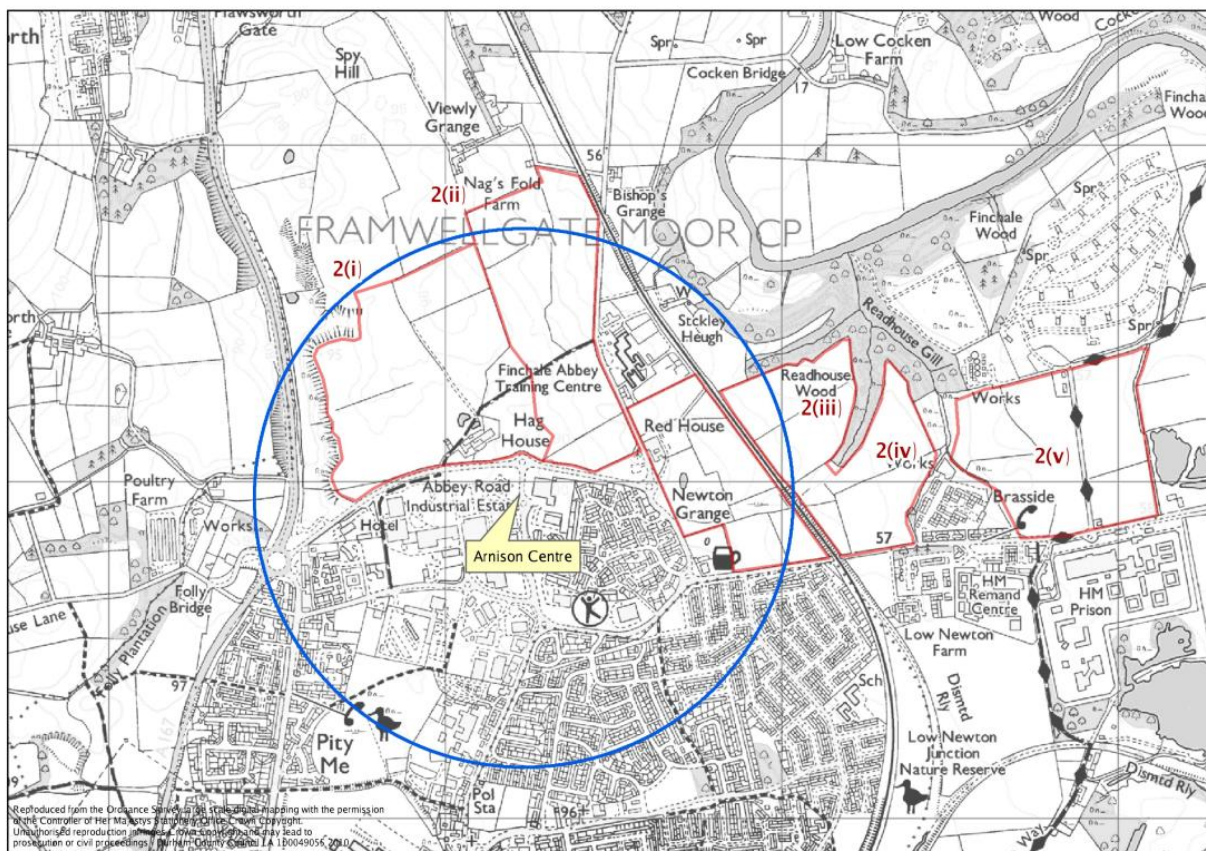
## **Sustainability Considerations**

**3.79** Most of sites 2(i)-(iii) are close to the district centre, the Arnison Centre. It could be that their development might help to consolidate this and change the centre's role from an out-of-town shopping park to a district centre. However, the current urban form does not lend itself towards this. The Arnison Centre, together with Dragon Lane/Durham City Retail Park, was established specifically to provide bulky goods retail space to prevent leakage of this type of trade to other centres, and its layout reflects this. It is accessed from the north by a circular road from which a feeder road loops round and accesses the large car-parks around which the retail units are arranged. Its townscape quality is poor, because of the expanses of car-park, large utilitarian units, and lack of local distinctiveness, but for car-borne visitors it is convenient.

**3.80** Furthermore, the encircling road to the north of the Arnison Centre is heavily trafficked with no pedestrian crossing points. If sites 2(i- ii) were to be developed the existing road layout would need to be modified if the centre was to be more accessible by transport modes other than the private car or that its character would change as desired.

**3.81** Sites 2(i-iii) are close to the Abbey Road Industrial Estate and to the adjacent sports centre. Again, due to the layout of the urban fabric, pedestrian or cycle access is likely to be relatively difficult, but they are within walking distance of most of the site.

Map 8 Site 2 showing the area within an 800m radius of the Arnison Centre



**3.82** From the nearest point, site 2(i-iii) is 4.2km from the centre of Durham (along major roads – the intervening railway and the Wear valley prevent a direct route). From the furthest point it is 5.1km. Sites 2(iv) and (v) are slightly closer, because there are few crossing points over the railway, it would be necessary to travel via a dog-leg through Newton Hall. It would therefore be about 4.8km from the nearest point.

**3.83** There are frequent buses along the A167 towards Newcastle, Durham, Darlington, Bishop Auckland, etc. However, it's not clear how accessible they would be to new residents due to the severance effects of the road and adjacent topography.

**3.84** The development of sites 2(iv) and (v) would extend Brasside, which has few facilities apart from the prison. Because it would lead to a straggling settlement boundary, it would extend the footprint of the City more significantly than would other sites which facilitate a compact city. Although it is close to the facilities of Newton Hall, these are relatively inaccessible because of the severance effect of the railway. Sites 2(iv) and 2(v) would not be sequentially preferable to site 2(i- iii).

### **Green Belt Functions**

**3.85** The site does not form part of the visual envelope of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core. However, there are a number of historic sites in the vicinity of the site whose settings would be affected by development here. Those which

are most significant with reference to the history of the City of Durham are Finchale Priory, which is associated with its monastic past, and Belmont Viaduct, which bears witness to its nineteenth-century industrial past.

**3.86** Development would mean a northwards extension to the urban area, beyond the road circling Abbey Road Industrial Estate and Newton Grange, which hitherto has been a boundary to the built-up area. When this road was constructed it formed a new northern boundary to the city, which has since been filled in. This is the most northerly point of the urban footprint at present; an extension northwards from it would make the city's footprint less compact.

**3.87** Development of sites 2(iv) and 2(v) would augment Brasside rather than Durham. To develop them without site 2(i-iii) could be considered to be urban sprawl because it would mean a subordinate and almost detached settlement growing disproportionately to the city as a whole and would therefore lead to a more dispersed settlement pattern. If site 2(i-iii) were already developed, however, the development of sites 2(iv-v) - especially site 2(iv), between the railway and Redhouse Gill - would not be illogical. It might be seen as infilling gaps between adjoining parts of the same settlement and therefore consolidating it.

**3.88** Development on site 2(i) would leave only a small gap – and the A167 – between Durham and Kimblesworth. It would decrease the amount of space between Durham and Chester Moor, particularly as perceived from the A167.

**3.89** The development of sites 2(iv) would leave no gap between Newton Hall and Brasside. The distance between them is very small at present, although they are effectively separated by the intervening railway. The question is whether they are seen as entities separated by green space at present. The apparent coalescence of the two could be said to have already taken place.

### **Mitigation and Concept Planning**

#### **Archaeology, History and Urban Design**

**3.90** As there is no historic character to lose the only mitigation known to be necessary would be full excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense, as elsewhere.

**3.91** Development would need to be sensitive to the settings of the significant groups of buildings adjacent to the site, particularly Finchale Priory and Belmont Viaduct. Around Red House Farm, development should be more limited and sensitive than elsewhere to retain some of its rural character.

**3.92** The existing character of the settlement fringe at Brasside is not particularly attractive, lacking in any real character. Brasside provides a poor entrance into the City. In the case of development here, it would be important to improve the overall image of the area.

## Ecology

**3.93** Sites 2(iv) and 2(v) would both need to be planned around the adjacent nature conservation areas. Consideration should be given to how the adjacent sites might be affected by residents accessing the site and disturbing flora and fauna, and how development and associated pollution might alter hydrology and affect soil, air and water. Consideration should also be given to the potential impacts of the development on the ecosystems of the Wear Valley in between Brasside and Durham.

**3.94** An appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to development applications being made. Further investigation would be necessary to determine whether the hedgerows on site are “important.” Trees and hedgerows on site should be retained wherever possible.

## Landscape

**3.95** Potential losses of landscape features could be compensated for by either in structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent areas. General impacts on the character of the local landscape could be mitigated in some degree by structural landscaping to reduce the visibility of built development. Development in 2(i) could be kept away from skyline edges and screened by what would need to be very substantial structure planting. Development in 2(ii) could be screened by perimeter structure planting along the Leamside road in the north. Development in 2(v) could be screened in views from the east by perimeter planting.

## Enhancement Potential

**3.96** Parts of the site (ii, iii, iv) lie within a Landscape Conservation Priority Area where there is little need or scope for landscape improvement. Other parts lie within a Landscape Improvement Priority Area. Areas of potential include:

- new native woodland planting or heathland creation along the steep slopes of the local geological site adjacent to the A167 to restore its character.
- restoration of hedgerows on adjacent areas of open farmland.

**3.97** A potential ‘least impact area’ of around 44 ha is shown below which could have impacts mitigated reasonably successfully by structural landscaping – although it should be noted that 2(i) is heavily dependent on the scale of planting and the precise limit of development which would need further work to identify accurately.

*Capacity: medium*



Map 9 Site 2 - Area of Least Impact



### Potential least impact area

**3.98** The potential landscape and visual effects of housing development are difficult to assess in 2(iii) and 2(iv) as it would depend in some degree on the impacts of a northern relief road should this go ahead. The least impact area shown above accommodates the draft route of the northern bypass on the basis that development would either take place in association with a northern bypass, or wouldn't be desirable if it would prevent the future possibility of a northern bypass. An additional area of land with potential for infill development along the route of the bypass has been added south of Brasside Lane.

**3.99** A stand-off distance of around 150m has been maintained in 2(v) from the sewerage works.

### Open Space and Recreation

**3.100** Working on the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling, the site could accommodate 8196 people. Working on the OSNA's recommended provision standards, this would mean about 8.2ha each of parks and gardens, semi-natural open space, amenity space and allotments, and 1.6ha of children's play space on or off the site – a total of 34.42ha.

**3.101** There is an insufficient supply of allotments and of parks and gardens in the vicinity at present and this should be taken into account when planning new open space on this site.

**3.102** Consideration should be given to mitigating the impact of development upon the Weardale Way as it passes through site 2(v). Attempts should be made to retain its essentially rural nature.

### **Planning and Sustainability**

**3.103** Careful planning would be needed to incorporate new development on sites 2(i-iii) with the existing urban area and encourage the development of the Arnison Centre as a district centre. This would be difficult, because the existing industrial estate may act as a form of severance and the Arnison Centre is not designed as a district centre but as a retail park: essentially car-borne, with large car parks between the shops and the roads that serve them. Whether the aspirations for the Arnison Centre are realistic or not, it would be appropriate to ensure that at least some retail and community facilities are provided on site; because the site is large, residents in its northern half would be outside walking distance from the Arnison Centre, even as the crow flies. The existing Finchale Abbey Training Centre would need to be incorporated spatially and stylistically within its surroundings.

**3.104** On sites 2(iv) and (v), since there are at present very limited facilities in Brasside, apart from the prison, and developing links with Newton Hall would be difficult because of the intervening railway, the aim should be to consolidate Brasside and make it possible to support some local retail and other facilities.

### **Planning History**

**3.105** The various farms and other institutions on this site have submitted a variety of applications for projects of various significance. Among the more notable are:

- 04/03/00099/OUT: replacement of demolished agricultural building at Hagg House with a dwelling. This was rejected on green belt grounds. The applicants appealed; the inspector dismissed the appeal on the grounds that it would harm the character of the rural area. However, he concluded that as the LP had not been adopted, the site was not within the green belt at the time of application.
- 05/00056/FPA: demolition and replacement of the Newton Grange public house. Permitted because size, scale and use of the new building would be near-identical to the existing and therefore the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the green belt than the existing building.
- 07/00473/FPA: timber-frame extension to the Newton Grange public house. Rejected because it would “represent inappropriate and therefore harmful development in the Durham green belt and would fail to have regard to the character of the existing building”.
- 10/00033/FPA: extension of car-park at the prison: withdrawn.

## Sustainability Appraisal

**Sustainability Appraisal Recommendation:** Sites 2(i) (ii) and (iii) can be taken forward as Priority 1 to be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.

Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The preferred development scenario takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.

Sites 2(iv) and (v) should be classed as Priority 3, that is, they should no longer be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.

They are not capable of making a strategic contribution to the delivery of new housing, either on their own or in combination with other sites. In planning terms they should remain in the green belt and outside settlement boundaries.

A preferred development scenario, as described above, has been developed after consideration of necessary mitigation of impacts on the landscape and assets within the landscape.

### Sustainability Appraisal Summary

#### Summary of Site 2: Newton Grange (North of Arnison Centre without parts iv & v)

##### Main implications of option: Pros and cons

##### Pros:

- Overall the site has potential to provide a strategically important level of housing in County Durham over the plan period (over 5% of the total County requirement).
- This site is in a central location, and a theoretically a sustainable location, close to facilities and services at the Arnison Centre and good public transport links to Durham City – a major centre and regional transport hub.
- This site provides opportunities to increase accessibility and link up existing networks (i.e. walking and cycling routes, green infrastructure, open space, roads, etc) in the Arnison Centre area.
- Proposed housing would support proposals to develop a new business district in the north of Durham City (Aykley Heads)
- Potential increase in local population is likely to improve the case for developing a district heating network for Durham City.
- Increased congestion may encourage people to seek alternative and more sustainable modes of transport.
- In the preferred development scenario a significant part of the site is proposed for structure planting (approx. 38.62 ha), which will go some

	<p>way to mitigate against the loss of greenfield land, habitats, and landscape quality / character, as well as protecting soil resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little or no negative impact on the historic environment; most notably the site is outwith the 4km 'visual setting' of the World Heritage Site.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cons:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built development at this site, as at other Greenbelt sites, would entail a fundamental change in character of the currently rural landscape – i.e. a significant loss of open space and greenfield land/ green belt.</li> <li>• The potential benefits of the location would be lost if the severance effects of main roads/ existing townscape (i.e. the A167, A167/ Arnison Centre link road, and Abbey Road Industrial Estate) and the related accessibility and safety issues of the site are not adequately addressed.</li> <li>• Due to the layout of the local urban fabric, pedestrian and/ or cycle access is relatively difficult, despite facilities at the Arnison Centre being within walking distance of most of the site. Significant improvements would be needed</li> <li>• Potential increase in local population could put pressure on essential services, facilities, and transport links/ congestion over the lifetime of the plan. However, the timescale involved should mean these can develop in parallel with housing, as necessary</li> <li>• Development is likely to increase traffic and congestion levels and so increase local air and noise pollution as well as carbon emissions. Schemes to address congestion in and around Durham city will need to be considered over the plan period. These would have to be phased appropriately with new housing development.</li> <li>• If built, vehicular traffic from the proposed northern relief road, which will start at the Red House roundabout and will link to the A 1 (M), is likely to so compound the negative impact on severance / air quality by funnelling a high volume of fast-moving traffic (including HGVs) along the existing road that runs to the south of the site.</li> <li>• The development includes a significant area loss of grade 3 agricultural land (104.37 ha).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation</b></p>	<p><b>Take site forward as Priority 1 to be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The attached preferred development scenario takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.</b></p>
<p><b>Mitigation suggested</b></p>	<p>Remove site 2(iii) from considered area due to landscape issues combined with effects of East Coast Main Line and potentially Northern Relief Road on its viability.</p> <p>Ensure there are accessible and sustainable transport options available to link the site with essential facilities, services, employment, and public transport network – e.g. re-route bus services to accommodate new housing; develop new footpaths/cycleways and link them up with the existing network</p>

(particularly the Weardale Way); extend park and ride facilities around Durham city; extend the public transport facilities to cover the new housing area. The two neighbouring wards of Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall have significant variations in levels of car use for journeys to work (60% and 73% of the working population using a car to get to work, respectively). Masterplanning should aim to enable any new housing development to mirror the Framwellgate Moor scenario rather than the Newton Hall North scenario.

It is essential that pedestrian crossing points are improved (particularly over the A167/ Arnison Centre link road) to ensure residents' safety and access to existing communities, facilities, services and transport links. Good footpaths/ bridges/ cycleways will also help to ensure that the new housing site is neither physically nor socially cut-off from Newton Hall and Brasside, which will help to minimise any potential social tension and negative impact of the new development; particularly in relation to pressure on services and facilities.

Consider potential schemes to reduce local congestion and enable sustainable transport usage in and around Durham city, so that 'hotspots' do not worsen and the city is not adversely affected by the increase in traffic.

Consider carrying out capacity needs assessments on essential services to ensure the needs of existing and new residents are met as the development could put pressure on them over time. The potential size of the proposed development (if working on the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling the new development would generate 3,620 people) this may involve including some facilities within the site – e.g. GPs, schools, convenience shops, post office, etc. over the lifetime of the plan.

Ensure good masterplanning of the site to include a significant amount of structural landscaping and open space (including parks/ gardens and children's play areas). Potential losses of landscape features, green infrastructure, and potentially habitats could also be compensated for either in structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent sites.

The attached plan of a preferred development scenario shows the suggested layout of development / structured planting areas, taking into account issues concerning the local landscape and assets within it, as listed below:

- Site 2 (i) – Development in the western parts of the area would form a conspicuous and prominent urban skyline in views from the A167 in an otherwise rural setting. Development towards its eastern edge would have similar impacts in views from vantage points to the east
- Site 2 (ii) – Development could be relatively conspicuous being on rising ground falling towards eastern viewpoints.
- Site 2 (iii) – The development edge would be visible from the adjacent road and settlement edge and would become effectively an 'interior' urban view. Development would be visible from the ECML, effectively acting as a continuation of the urban edge experienced passing Newton hall to the immediate south. This, in combination with noise and vibration from the railway and the potential bisection of the site by the Northern Relief Road has resulted in it being left out of the preferred

	<p>development scenario, apart from some small areas of in-fill development to the southern edge of the potential route of the Northern Relief Road.</p> <p>An appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to masterplanning to establish the importance of habitats and species on the site and inform the incorporation of green infrastructure on the site. Trees and hedgerows on site should be retained wherever possible.</p> <p>Ensure the existing Finchale Training Centre, and the Arnison Centre where possible, are incorporated spatially and stylistically within their surroundings and the new development.</p> <p>Ensure there is a full excavation of potential archaeological/ historic environment assets and features, followed by recording and publication of results, at developer's expense as elsewhere.</p> <p>Some parts of the site, mainly 2 (i), are susceptible to surface water flooding. Ensure appropriate measures are taken forward to reduce the risk of flooding – e.g. SUDS.</p> <p>The site is on a minor aquifer; has high groundwater vulnerability; and, at its nearest point, is approx 0.4km from the River Wear. This should not be a significant constraint on housing development; however, it is a significant point for developers to note so that appropriate measures can be put in place to protect water resources during construction.</p> <p>A small area on the western edge of site 2 (i) is within flood zone 3. This is incorporated within the structured planting area on the preferred development scenario. This area is unsuitable for housing development anyway, due to topography and the proximity to the A167.</p> <p>High levels of energy efficiency should be incorporated in the housing developed along with the incorporation of renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions associated with domestic energy use. There is potential for the development to be enabled for integration with a Durham City district heating system, and/or act as a trigger for the commencement of development of such a system.</p>
<p><b>Any residual impacts to take into account</b></p>	<p>Even if mitigation is taken forward, the following issue are likely to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current economic recession and slow-down in the house building sector may mean that the scale of proposed development may not be fully realised – at least in the short term. This is likely to have positive and negative effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Most importantly, it may mean that the housing need for Durham city, and indeed Durham County, is not met.</li> <li>• This site will increase traffic levels in this area and therefore potentially increase air and noise pollution and congestion in and around Durham City and potentially on the A1.</li> <li>• Overall, CO2 emissions will rise. Mitigation in the form of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy and sustainable transport</li> </ul>

	<p>provision should contain the overall increase and may result in reduction of CO2 emissions per household.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of this site will increase urban sprawl, delete a large area of the Durham City Green Belt, and erode the 'rural' quality that currently characterises this area.</li> <li>• If the development proposed around Durham City were to, cumulatively, be considered to require the construction of the northern and / or western relief roads, this would have a significant negative impact on attempts to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce the causes of climate change, since their main effect would be to promote and facilitate the use of the private car. The roads would also have a significant negative effect upon features of biodiversity, landscape, and historic/archaeological interest. It is also likely that the generation of Community Infrastructure Levy (or similar) funding for this infrastructure from housing development would prevent the allocation of funding to other improvements in and around the development areas.</li> <li>• This extension to Durham City may encourage further outward development of the city in the future, which is likely to put pressure on the surrounding landscape and environmental assets, and therefore potentially have a negative impact on them – e.g. further development may infringe upon and damage the quality of such assets as Brasside Pond (SSSI); local BAP habitats; several stretches of ancient woodland (inc. Finchale Wood, Rainton Park, Frankland and Kepier, Moorhouse, and Hopper's Woods); Belmont Viaduct; Finchale Priory (Grade I), Finchale Abbey Farmhouse (Grade II*), Finchale Abbey Barn (Grade II), and Union Hall Farmhouse (Grade II).</li> </ul>
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## Sustainability Appraisal Summary

**Summary of Site 2: Brasside (parts iv & v)****Main implications of option: Pros and cons****Pros:**

- This site is in a central location, and a theoretically a sustainable location, close to facilities and services at the Arnison Centre and good public transport links to Durham City – a major centre and regional transport hub.
- There are great opportunities for physical regeneration and improve the quality and character of environment as part of the development. This is because parts of the site lie within a Landscape Improvement Priority Area and the existing character of the settlement fringe at Brasside is not particularly attractive, lacking in any real character, and so provides a relatively poor entrance into the city.
- Increased congestion may encourage people to seek alternative and more sustainable modes of transport.
- Due to its location and ability to link up with new and existing residential areas, is likely to improve the case for developing a district heating system for Durham, which in turn will have a very positive impact on reducing the causes of climate change and the County's reliance on non renewable energy.
- In the preferred development scenario a significant part of the site is proposed for structure planting (approx. 11.56 ha), which will go some

way to mitigate against the loss of greenfield land, habitats, and landscape quality / character, as well as protecting soil resources.

- Little or no negative impact on the historic environment; most notably the site is outwith the 4km 'visual setting' of the World Heritage Site.

**Cons:**

- Built development at this site, as at other Greenbelt sites, would entail a fundamental change in character of the currently rural landscape – i.e. a significant loss of open space and greenfield land/ green belt.
- Due to the layout of the local urban fabric and the intervening ECML railway, pedestrian and/ or cycle access is relatively difficult, despite facilities at the Arnison Centre and Newton Hall/ Framwellgate Moor being within walking distance of most of the site. Significant improvements would be needed.
- The significant severance effect of the ECML railway also makes site 2 (iv) and (v) detached from the existing urban environment (development here is more an extension of Brasside than of Durham city); therefore it would be isolated and a greater encroachment on the countryside.
- Currently the A167/ Arnison Centre link road is a rapid road, and consequently likely to negatively impact the roads that bound the site (Finchale Road/ Avenue). Without mitigation, such as developing pedestrian crossing points, there is likely to be a negative impact on community safety. Moreover this will be exacerbated by increased traffic levels generated from the new site and, potentially, the proposed northern relief road (if it is taken forward). The ECML may also be a safety issue for new residents.
- Potential increase in local population could put pressure on essential services, facilities, and transport links/ congestion over the lifetime of the plan. However, the timescale involved should mean these can develop in parallel with housing, as necessary
- Development is likely to increase traffic and congestion levels and so increase local air and noise pollution as well as carbon emissions. Schemes to address congestion in and around Durham city will need to be considered over the plan period. These would have to be phased appropriately with new housing development.
- If built, vehicular traffic from the proposed northern relief road, which will start at the Red House roundabout and will link to the A 1 (M), is likely to so compound the negative impact on severance / air quality/ landscape character by funnelling a high volume of fast-moving traffic (including HGVs) along existing roads.
- There are variety of protected environmental assets that are in very close proximity to the site which are highly likely to be adversely affected by increased footfall and potentially vandalism due to development at this site: e.g. Finchale Wood (ancient woodland); North Brasside Claypit (local wildlife site) and Brasside Pond (SSSI), both of which are Durham BAP habitats that include records of white-clawed crayfish, great-crested newts, and water vole.
- Development on this part of the site would have a significant impact on the Weardale Way (PROW), which currently runs from Chester le Street to Durham entirely through non-urban terrain.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development on this site may generate air or water pollution and/ or changes in local hydrology, which may affect the quality of air, water, and soil resources.</li> <li>• The development includes a relatively significant area loss of grade 3 agricultural land (46.46 ha).</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p><b>The site should be classed as Priority 3, that is, it should no longer be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>It is not suitable to make a strategic contribution to the delivery of new housing, either on its own or in combination with other sites. In planning terms it should remain in the green belt and outside settlement boundaries.</b></p> <p><b>The Preferred Development Scenario developed after consideration of necessary mitigation of impacts on the landscape and assets within the landscape is attached.</b></p>
<b>Mitigation suggested</b>	<p>Remove parts of site 2(iv) from considered area due to landscape issues combined with effects of East Coast Main Line and potentially Northern Relief Road on its viability (see preferred development scenario map).</p> <p>Site 2 (iv) and (v) should not be developed without site 2 (i-iii) as the former is not sequentially preferable to the latter. Without development at site 2 (i-iii), connectivity and accessibility to/ from parts (iv) and (v) would be decreased even further as well as there being a greater encroachment on the countryside.</p> <p>Ensure there are accessible and sustainable transport options available to link the site with essential facilities, services, employment, and public transport network – e.g. re-route bus services to accommodate new housing; develop new footpaths/ cycleways and link them up with the existing network (particularly the Weardale Way); extend park and ride facilities around Durham city; extend the public transport facilities to cover the new housing area. The two neighbouring wards of Framwellgate Moor and Newton Hall have significant variations in levels of car use for journeys to work (60% and 73% of the working population using a car to get to work, respectively). Masterplanning should aim to enable any new housing development to mirror the Framwellgate Moor scenario rather than the Newton Hall North scenario.</p> <p>It is essential that pedestrian crossing points are improved (particularly over the A167/ Arnison Centre link road and Finchale road) to ensure residents' safety and access to existing communities, facilities, services and transport links. Good footpaths/ bridges/ subways/ cycleways will also help to ensure that the new housing site is neither physically nor socially cut-off from Newton Hall and Brasside, which will help to minimise any potential social tension and negative impact of the new development; particularly in relation to pressure on services and facilities.</p>

Since there are at present very limited facilities in Brasside and developing links with Newton Hall would be difficult because of the intervening railway, the aim should be to consolidate Brasside and make it possible to support some local retail and other facilities.

Consider potential schemes to reduce local congestion and enable sustainable transport usage in and around Durham city, so that 'hotspots' do not worsen and the city is not adversely affected by the increase in traffic.

Consider carrying out capacity needs assessments on essential services to ensure the needs of existing and new residents are met as the development could put pressure on them over time. The potential size of the proposed development (if working on the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling the new development would generate 570 people) this may involve including some facilities within the site – e.g. GPs, schools, convenience shops, post office, etc. over the lifetime of the plan.

Ensure good masterplanning of the site to include a significant amount of structural landscaping and open space (including parks/ gardens and children's play areas). Potential losses of landscape features, green infrastructure, and potentially habitats could also be compensated for either in structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent sites. Ensure development of this site includes improvements to the landscape and local environment, with particular focus on the existing character of the settlement fringe at Brasside.

Attempts should be made to retain the Weardale Way's essentially rural character and minimise the impact that a built environment would have on it as it passes through site 2 (v).

Consideration should also be given to the potential impacts of the development on the ecosystems of the Wear Valley in between Brasside and Durham. Site 2 (iv) and (v) would both need to be planned around the adjacent nature conservation areas (ancient woodland and LWS). Particular consideration should be given to how these sites, as well as the nearby SSSI (Brasside Pond) might be affected by residents accessing the site and disturbing ecology/ habitats, and how development and associated pollution might alter hydrology and affect soil, air and water.

Ensure there is a full excavation of potential archaeological/ historic environment assets and features, followed by recording and publication of results, at developer's expense as elsewhere.

An appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to masterplanning to establish the importance of habitats and species on the site and inform the incorporation of green infrastructure on the site. Trees and hedgerows on site should be retained wherever possible.

High levels of energy efficiency should be incorporated in the housing developed along with the incorporation of renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions associated with domestic energy use. There is

	<p>potential for the development to be enabled for integration with a Durham City district heating system, and/or act as a trigger for the commencement of development of such a system.</p> <p>The incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, in combination with green infrastructure, will help to reduce flood risk associated with the site and reduce potential to adversely affect local water courses</p>
<p><b>Any residual impacts to take into account</b></p>	<p>Even if mitigation is taken forward, the following issue are likely to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current economic recession and slow-down in the house building sector may mean that the scale of proposed development may not be fully realised – at least in the short term. This is likely to have positive and negative effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Most importantly, it may mean that the housing need for Durham city, and indeed Durham County, is not met.</li> <li>• This site will increase traffic levels in this area and therefore potentially increase air and noise pollution and congestion in and around Durham City and potentially on the A1.</li> <li>• Overall, CO2 emissions will rise. Mitigation in the form of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy and sustainable transport provision should contain the overall increase and may result in reduction of CO2 emissions per household.</li> <li>• Development of sites 2 (iv) and (v) would augment Brasside rather than Durham. This would mean a subordinate and almost detached settlement growing disproportionately to the city as a whole and would therefore lead to a more dispersed settlement pattern. Development of this site will increase urban sprawl, delete a large area of the Durham City Green Belt, and erode the ‘rural’ quality that currently characterises this area.</li> <li>• If the development proposed around Durham City were to, cumulatively, be considered to require the construction of the northern and / or western relief roads, this would have a significant negative impact on attempts to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce the causes of climate change, since their main effect would be to promote and facilitate the use of the private car. The roads would also have a significant negative effect upon features of biodiversity, landscape, and historic/archaeological interest. It is also likely that the generation of Community Infrastructure Levy (or similar) funding for this infrastructure from housing development would prevent the allocation of funding to other improvements in and around the development areas.</li> <li>• This extension to Durham City may encourage further outward development of the city in the future, which is likely to put pressure on the surrounding landscape and environmental assets, and therefore potentially have a negative impact on them – e.g. further development may infringe upon and damage the quality of such assets as Brasside Pond (SSSI); local BAP habitats; several stretches of ancient woodland (inc. Finchale Wood, Rainton Park, Frankland and Kepier, Moorhouse, and Hopper’s Woods); Belmont Viaduct; Finchale Priory (Grade I), Finchale Abbey Farmhouse (Grade II*), Finchale Abbey Barn (Grade II), and Union Hall Farmhouse (Grade II).</li> </ul>

### Site 3 - Whitesmocks

Map 10 Site 3 - Whitesmocks



### Capacity

**3.106** The site has a gross site area of 44.9ha and could therefore theoretically accommodate 1348 dwellings at 30 dwellings per hectare.

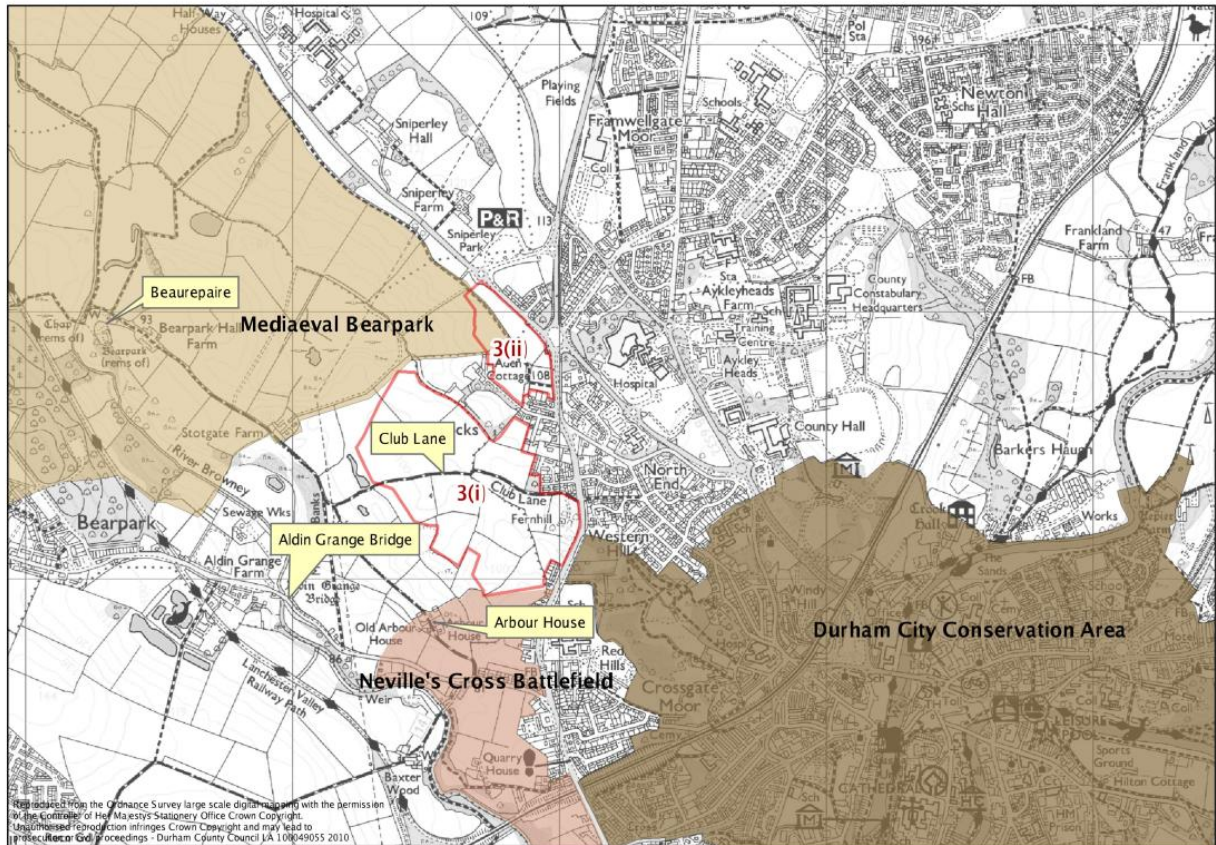
### Archaeology and History

**3.107** This is an area with a lot of archaeological and historic interest. It includes areas of modern amalgamation (grubbed out fields), post-medieval planned enclosure, but also areas of what is thought to be fossilised medieval field strips associated with the medieval estate at Bearpark (in the north of the area by Aden Cottage) and an area of post-medieval farm fields associated with a still functioning farm at Arbour House. This field system may in fact be quite an early post-medieval or even late medieval system. The field system is still very visible as a character of the area, as is the farm it is associated with. That this whole area is also on the edge of the 'defined' battlefield of Neville's Cross is also important in terms of setting and historical interest.

**3.108** There are a number of listed buildings of significance in the area, notably the Beaurepaire cluster near Bearpark. This is the site of the manor used as a retreat for the priors and monks of Durham Cathedral from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and parts of it, including the boundary wall of the manor house itself,

are Grade I listed. The setting of the remains, including Club Lane, which was the route used by the monks to travel from Durham to Beaurepaire, would be affected by the development of this site.

Map 11 Site 3 showing places of archaeological and historic interest



**3.109** Site 3 showing Beaurepaire, Club Lane, Neville's Cross Battlefield and the mediaeval Bearpark

### **Ecology**

**3.110** There is a recorded badger sett in the vicinity of site 3(i). Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 it is an offence to kill, injure or take a badger, or to damage or interfere with a sett unless a licence is obtained from a statutory authority. There are also a number of ponds, streams and native hedgerows on site, which are habitats identified in the Durham Biodiversity Action Plan and therefore should be protected. Because, as noted below, the field boundaries are of considerable age, the hedgerows are likely to count as 'important' hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and their removal would have to be authorised by the Council.

**3.111** The presence of Flass Vale, to the east of the A167, is another important consideration. Flass Vale is an area of common land and a County Wildlife Site. Currently, it forms part of a continuous band of open space from the city to the countryside, broken

only by the A167. Were Site 3 to be fully developed, Flass Vale would be isolated. Flass Vale's ecology could also be affected by extra recreational visits by new residents, air and water pollution, and changes to hydrology.

**3.112** There is a group of TPO trees at the end of Whitesmocks Avenue, within Site 3(i).

### Landscape

Broad Landscape Type	Lowland Valley Terraces Incised Lowland Valleys (part of 3(i))
Local Landscape Types	Terrace farmland: pasture (3(i), part 3(ii)) Terrace farmland: open arable (part of 3(ii))
Local Landscape Sub-type	Old enclosure
Landscape Strategy	Conserve and restore: Landscape Conservation priority Area (3(i) and part 3(ii)) Enhance - Landscape Improvement Priority Area (part of 3(ii))

### Landscape description

**3.113** This is an area of undulating, largely pastoral farmland, west of the A167 and south of the A691. The area is bounded to the south and west by the steeper slopes of a shallow glacial valley running north of Arbour House, which penetrates into the southern part of 3(i), and to the east by housing in the Whitesmocks area. It is bounded in the west by the line of the proposed western relief road. The area is divided in two by a small area of wooded parkland associated with Aden House, the northern area being bounded by the A691 and the A167.

**3.114** The landscape of area 3(i) is intimate in scale with an undulating landform and largely intact medieval or early post-medieval field system of hedges with frequent hedgerow trees and scattered field ponds, becoming more open to the north-west. It is crossed by an ancient green lane (Club Lane) which historically linked the city with the medieval priory and deer park of Beaurepaire. A number of field boundaries on the site are ancient parish/township boundaries. The area also includes the landscaped grounds of a detached property at Fernhill which is bounded by mature trees, and a small area of woodland west of Whitesmocks Avenue.

**3.115** The landscape of area 3(ii) is more variable, including areas of arable farmland immediately south of the A691 and a series of small paddocks and a linear shelterbelt immediately west of the A167. Field boundaries vary in age and character. The hedge

dividing the arable fields in the north is an ancient parish boundary, probably also marking the edge of the medieval deer park. The remaining boundaries date from the enclosure of Framwellgate Moor in the early C19th and are more fragmented.

#### Landscape Sensitivity

- 3(i) The presence of an intact early field system, frequent hedges and hedgerow trees and scattered field ponds all strongly related to the undulating topography make this site particularly vulnerable to development impacts. Despite its settlement edge location the site has a strongly rural character.
- 3(ii) The site contains a number of features vulnerable to development impacts including the historic parish/deer park boundary. Although essentially rural it has an 'urban fringe' quality due to the prominence of the settlement edge at Sniperley Park and the adjacent park and ride, the 'garden' scale of the paddocks adjacent to the A167, and highway structures, signage and traffic levels on the A691 / A167.

*Landscape sensitivity: 3(i) high, 3(ii) medium.*

#### Landscape Value

**3.116** The site forms part of an area identified in the City of Durham Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) which covers the predominantly rural Browney Valley to the west of the City.

- 3(i) The landscape is in good condition with intact historic field boundary networks and has a relatively high scenic quality. The area forms part of a 'green wedge' of undeveloped land crossing the A167 at this point and taking in Flass Vale to the east. The area has recreational value being an area of attractive open countryside with strong historic and cultural associations. In addition to being crossed by a well-used and promoted historic trail to Beaurepaire, it forms an important part of the context of the Neville's Cross historic battlefield to the immediate south. Some trees in the area are subject to TPOs.
- 3(ii) The landscape is in variable condition with some intact and significant features. The area form part of a tract of rural land west of the A167 which provides a clear edge to the settlement – although interrupted in the locality by housing at Sniperley Park and the park and ride. The area has some recreational value being crossed by a footpath which follows the historic parish / deer park boundary.

*Landscape value: 3(i) high, 3(ii) medium.*

#### Visual Sensitivity

**3.117** Parts of 3(i) fall within the visual envelope of the World Heritage Site. The site lies in the backdrop of the cathedral in views from Whinney Hill, largely screened at ground level by woodland in Flass Vale. There are views back towards the cathedral tower from parts of the site along Club Lane although again the cathedral is largely screened by vegetation.

- 3(i) Much of the area is on elevated ground which is widely visible from the northern and southern flanks of the Browney Valley in views where the existing settlement

edge is reasonably well assimilated by vegetation. It is prominent from stretches of the A691 on the western approach to the city, parts of the road through Bearpark, from housing areas in Bearpark village, from the Lanchester Valley Walkway and footpaths and bridleways across the valley. The eastern part of the site is visible from the A167 north of Edge Moor.

- 3(ii) Eastern parts of 3(ii) are visible from the adjacent A167. Western parts are visible from a stretch of the A691 on the western approach to the city,

*Visual sensitivity: 3(i) high; 3(ii) medium.*

### Potential Landscape Effects

#### **3.118** Physical Features:

- 3(i) The gently undulating landform in the north of the area is such that impacts on the natural topography would be generally low. Towards the south the land becomes more strongly undulating and impacts would be higher. While some individual mature features (green lane, hedges, hedgerow trees, field ponds) could be retained, their density is such that they would heavily constrain layouts and losses could be anticipated. Development immediately west of Whitesmocks Avenue would be likely to result in the loss of trees subject to TPO.
- 3(ii) The gently undulating landform is such that impacts on the natural topography would be generally low. Some individual mature features could be retained though again they would constrain layouts and some losses could be anticipated.

#### **3.119** Character:

- 3(i) The site is predominantly in agricultural use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character. The historic character and 'time-depth' of the landscape would be lost. Development would not relate well to the existing built form in the area and would be a prominent urban incursion into the rural landscape west of the city.
- 3(ii) The site is largely in agricultural use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character. Development that obscured the historic boundary of the deer park would erode its historic character. Development of parts of the site could relate reasonably well to the existing built form in the area, consolidating the settlement edge west of the A167.

### Enhancement Potential

**3.120** The site lies in a Landscape Conservation Priority Area where there is little need or scope for landscape enhancement.

*Potential landscape effects rating: 3(i) without mitigation high, with mitigation high. 3(ii) without mitigation medium-high, with mitigation medium*



## Potential Visual Effects

### **3.121** Public Views:

- Development over much of 3(i) would be widely visible from the northern and southern flanks of the Browney Valley and would be prominent from stretches of the A691 on the western approach to the city, parts of the road through Bearpark, from the Lanchester Valley Walkway and footpaths and bridleways across the valley. Development would be visible at close quarters from the A167 replacing the existing rural view. Roof-scape could be visible on the otherwise wooded skyline in the backdrop of the cathedral in views from the Whinney Hill area. Views from the Club Lane pilgrim's route/bridleway would become urban in character. Development in 3(ii) would be visible from the adjacent section of the A167 and from a stretch of the A691 on the western approach to the city.

### **3.122** Private Views:

- Development in 3(i) would be visible at close proximity from properties along the edge of Whitesmocks and Moor Edge, from some properties on Tollhouse Road and from Aden Cottage, obstructing the rural outlook of those properties directly adjacent. Development would be visible from further afield from properties in Bearpark and isolated properties such as Arbour House, Stotgate Farm and Sniperley Farm.

*Potential visual effects: 3(i) without mitigation high; with mitigation high. 3(ii) without mitigation medium-high; with mitigation falling to medium-low.*

## Open Space and Rights of Way

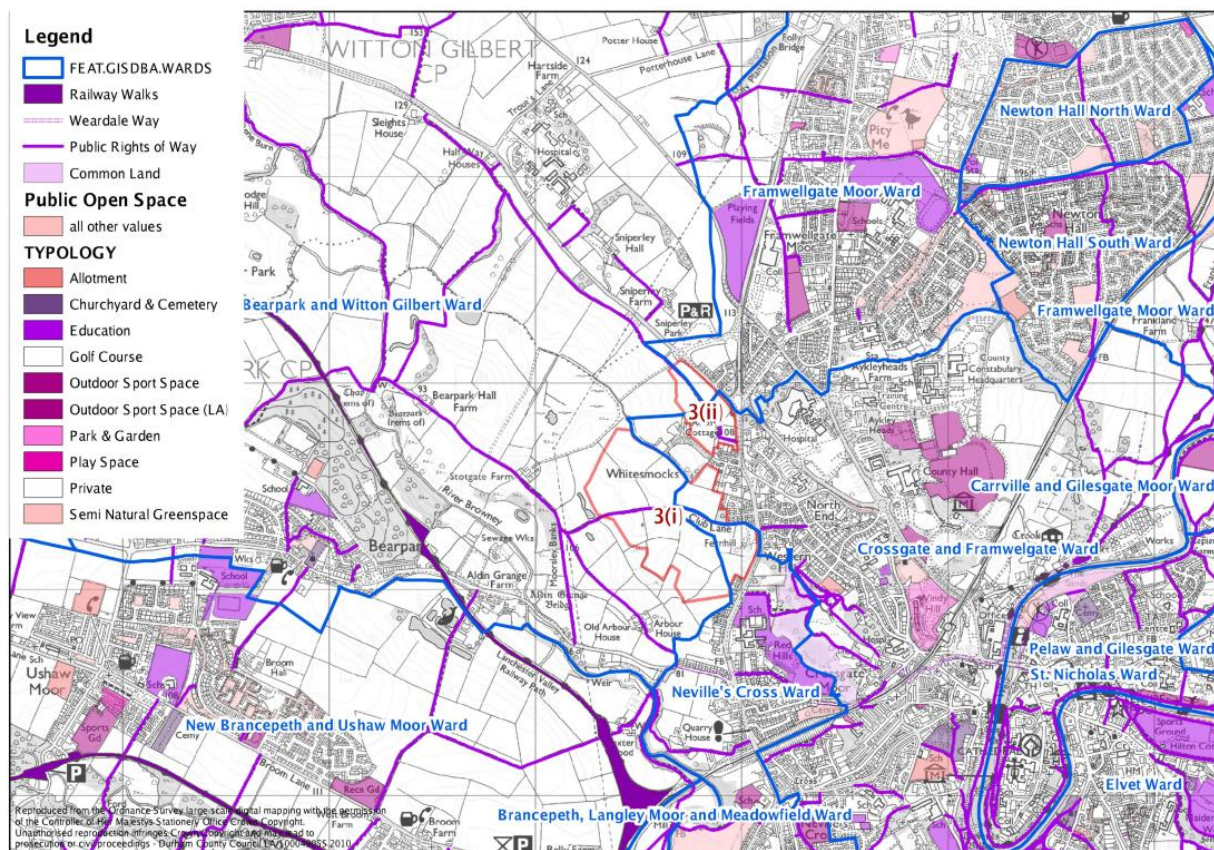
**3.123** There are no areas of public or private open space on the site at present. However, the site is close to the Flass Vale area of common land.

**3.124** The site straddles the boundary of the Crossgate and Framwelgate, and Bearpark and Witton Gilbert wards. Crossgate and Framwelgate should have 4.76ha of most types of open space and 0.95ha of play space. Provision of allotments, amenity open space and play space is below this standard (2.94, 2.02 and 0.56ha respectively); provision of parks and gardens and semi-natural greenspace (4.8 and 6.94ha) is slightly above the standard. There is only 2.84ha of general outdoor sports space but this is augmented by ample private sports space and educational grounds (14.24 and 9.06ha).

**3.125** Within Bearpark and Witton Gilbert ward the requirement for most types of open space is 4.41ha, for play space 0.88ha. There is an oversupply of amenity open space, outdoor sports space and play areas (7.46, 8.14 and 1.43ha) an undersupply of allotments (1.29ha) and no parks and gardens or semi-natural open space at all. There is also a large supply of education open space (13.05ha). It should be borne in mind, however, that all of the open space within this ward is within the settlements of Bearpark and Witton Gilbert, which are not adjacent to, or well-related to, the site.

**3.126** The site is crossed by two footpaths. The one on site 3(i) is the historic track to Beaurepaire, which links Crossgate Moor to the surrounding countryside. That on site 3(ii) links North End to the countryside, following the historic parish/deer park boundary. Another PROW crosses the site's northern edge, linking Whitesmocks with the countryside and Witton Gilbert.

Map 12 Site 3 showing open space in the vicinity



## Flood Risk

**3.127** The site is adjacent to flood zone 3 but no parts are within it. A Flood Risk Assessment was carried out in 2008 with regard to development at Fernhill which found that it was unlikely to be affected by current or future flooding or cause flooding elsewhere. However, as stated, there are streams and ponds on site and therefore the water they manage would have to be taken into consideration in development.

## Contamination

**3.128** No evidence of industrial development on site.

## Transport

**3.129** Site 3(ii) could only be accessed from the A691 or A167 but these junctions would be too close to Sniperley roundabout. Access to site 3(i) from the A167 would be difficult due to the topography and the lack of a suitable junction position on this section of A167. Access may be feasible from the Western Relief Road which is adjacent to the western boundary of the site. However it is unlikely that such an access would be permitted.

## Sustainability and Planning

**3.130** Site 3 is close to Aykley Heads and Dryburn Hospital, and to Durham Johnson School. At its nearest point and along main roads, the site is 2km from the centre of Durham; at its furthest point it is another 600m away. Therefore, it is close to all facilities and services. However, the severance effect of the A167 would be significant. At this point the A167 is a fast dual carriageway with limited crossing places. Pedestrian or cycle access to the City from many parts of this site would therefore be difficult. There are no local retail facilities within 800m: the nearest are the local centre in Framwellgate Moor, which is just over 800m from the northern boundary of site 3(ii). This would increase car dependency for new residents if the development included no new facilities, particularly for new residents at the western end of the site.

**3.131** An hourly bus runs along the A167, circulating Crossgate Moor and Newton Hall. The northern part of site 3(ii) is adjacent to the Sniperley park and ride and therefore has access to very frequent buses to the city centre. Much of site 3(i), however, is over 800m from the park and ride site. It may not be possible to put in place very direct routes from some of site 3(i) to the park and ride because inclines are steep and the grounds of Aden Cottage intervene.

## Green Belt Functions

**3.132** Development would mean a western extension of the built-up area, beyond the A167, which acts as a boundary at present. Previously undeveloped areas of countryside of considerable historic and landscape value would be developed.

**3.133** Development here might have a particularly significant urbanising effect for the City as a whole, for two reasons:

- Firstly, as stated above, the development would be prominent from stretches of the Browney Valley, A691 and A167. Because what development there is along the A167 at Whitesmocks is low-density, with intervening green spaces, the character of the road remains semi-rural whereas further along into Crossgate Moor, where there are fewer breaks in the development lining the road, it feels distinctly urban. Development here might also lead to some of the roadside trees having to be felled to provide visibility splays for drivers.
- Secondly, development here would separate Flass Vale from the surrounding countryside. At present, apart from the road, there is an unbroken ribbon of green space from the heart of Durham to the surrounding countryside.

**3.134** The development would decrease the distance between Durham and Bearpark. These two settlements are very close at present, but there is enough countryside between them to denote their separation. As stated above, development would be prominent from the A167 and A691 and from the road through Bearpark. The distance between the two would be visibly reduced.

### **Mitigation and Concept Planning**

#### **Archaeology, History and Urban Design**

**3.135** Because many of the valuable archaeological features are land-forms, it would be difficult to retain them within the context of a housing development. Therefore archaeological expertise would be necessary to prevent damage to archaeological features wherever possible and to record what was found on the site.

**3.136** Proposals for development on this site should take account of the settings of the significant historic structures at Beaurepaire, including the route from Durham via Flass Vale and Club Lane. Development around Fernhill should take account of the style and character of this house and its grounds.

#### **Ecology**

**3.137** The impact on Flass Vale would have to be considered in planning the site. A connection between the city and the surrounding countryside, via Flass Vale would have to be provided through any new development. Some types and configurations of development might isolate or obscure Flass Vale – visually or ecologically – more than others.

**3.138** Trees, hedgerows and other Durham Biodiversity Action Plan habitats on site should be retained wherever possible, particularly if the hedgerows are 'important'. Consideration should be given to how such habitats could be protected from the pressure of development around them, including footfall, vandalism, air and water pollution, and changes to hydrology. As elsewhere, an appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to development applications being made.

**3.139** Care should be taken around the western boundary of site 3(i) to ensure that the TPO trees and woodland at the end of Whitesmocks Avenue are not affected by development.

#### **Landscape**

**3.140** Some historic field boundaries, mature trees and field ponds could be retained within lower density housing layouts although their meaning as landscape features may be lost. Impacts on the rural character of the landscape could be reduced in some degree by structural landscaping although this would take some time (>10 years) to become effective and for much of 3(i) would be only partly effective.

**3.141** A potential 'least impact area' of around 1.5ha is shown below. Given the small areas involved and their relative isolation west of the A167 the impacts of development may not be outweighed by any benefits.

Map 13 Site 3 - Area of Least Impact



### Potential least impact area

**3.142** A slightly larger area is shown below giving an overall development area of around 4ha. This would entail a larger impact until structural landscaping became effective (<10years). The developed area remains small and isolated by the A167 with poor access and its impacts may not be outweighed by any benefits.

Map 14 Site 3 - maximum developable area



### Open Space and Recreation

**3.143** On the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling, the site could accommodate 3099 people. The OSNA's provision standards indicate that this would mean about 3.01ha each of parks and gardens, semi-natural open space, amenity space and allotments, and 0.619ha of children's play space on or off the site – a total of 12.642ha. The existing under supply of allotments, amenity open space and children's play space should be taken into account.

**3.144** The existing Public Rights of Way across the site would have to be retained and efforts made to ensure their continued attractiveness as part of a larger recreational network. However, it is unlikely that their historic character and significance could be adequately maintained.

### Planning and Sustainability

**3.145** It will be important to put in place measures to counteract the severance effect of the A167 and, as far as possible, ensure pedestrian and cycle connectivity with the city centre and with Durham Johnson School. Because there are no local retail facilities within easy walking distance and because the development would be, to some extent, isolated behind the road it would be important to incorporate local community and retail facilities within the site.

### Planning History

- A number of applications have been received regarding Fernhill, of which the most significant was 08/00523/FPA – 12 houses in the grounds plus replacement of existing lodge. This has now been withdrawn.
- 96/00763/FPA: COU of land at Arbour House Farm to quad bike course – refused on green belt /amenity grounds.
- 00/00908/FPA: variation of existing planning permission from 1998 to allow staff at Dryburn Hospital to use a temporary car park, which had been permitted for the use of contractors working on the new building. It was granted on the understanding that, when the hospital was completed, there would be adequate parking within the hospital grounds and the land could revert to agricultural use.
- 07/01123/FPA: erection of bungalow at 18, St. Nicholas Drive. Refused on green belt grounds and also because 'the location is not especially sustainable with regard to services/ transport other than personal vehicles.' No Flood Risk Assessment was carried out. The applicants appealed. The inspector agreed with the decision but he did comment that the green belt boundary at this point was possibly inadequate as it did not relate to 'any clear physical feature in this location, running through the rear gardens of the dwellings on the north side of St Nicholas Drive.'

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

**Sustainability Appraisal Recommendation:** The site should be classed as Priority 3, that is, it should no longer be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.

It is not capable of making a strategic contribution to the delivery of new housing, either on its own or in combination with other sites. In planning terms it should remain in the green belt and outside settlement boundaries.

The preferred development scenario shown above was developed after consideration of necessary mitigation of impacts on the landscape and assets within the landscape.

## Sustainability Appraisal Summary

## Summary Site 3: Whitesmocks

## Main implications of option: Pros and cons

**Pros:**

- This site is close to the city centre and therefore to jobs, facilities and transport links to other locations.
- In the preferred development scenario a significant part of the site is proposed for structure planting which would go some way to mitigate against the loss of greenfield land, habitats, and landscape assets, as well as protecting soil resources.

**Cons:**

- The Preferred Development Scenario for this site recommends that only a small area of the site is developable due to the landscape constraints, therefore development on this site would be unlikely to make a strategically important contribution to the provision of dwellings for the population of Durham.
- Built development at this site would entail a fundamental change in character of the currently rural landscape – i.e. a significant loss of open space and greenfield land/ green belt. This particular site is within a Landscape Conservation Priority Area and is of high landscape value and visual sensitivity. It is on elevated land, so that development here would be visible from many viewpoints and would have a particularly significant effect upon the character of the countryside in between Durham and Bearpark.
- Built development at this site would have a significant detrimental effect upon the following features of historic or archaeological interest: the zone of visual influence of the World Heritage Site; the ancient green lane (Club Lane) linking Durham to Beaurepaire; the contexts of Beaurepaire, the Bearpark and Neville's Cross Battlefield; the grounds and setting of Fernhill; and areas of mediaeval field boundaries. Since many of these features are land forms they could not be adequately preserved. These impacts are in some part addressed in the Preferred Development Scenario which reduces the development area to small patches in the north and east of the overall site.
- Development here would affect the following habitats and species of interest: recorded badger setts and foraging areas; bat foraging areas; ponds and streams, possibly habitats for great crested newts; native hedgerows, probably "important" given the age of the field boundaries; and trees with TPOs. Flass Vale, a County Wildlife Site which currently links the city centre with the open countryside, would lose its continuity with surrounding habitats and would be affected by increased footfall and pollution. These impacts are in some part addressed in the Preferred Development Scenario which reduces the development area to small patches in the north and east of the overall site.
- The accessibility benefits of the location would be lost if the severance effects of the A167 were not adequately addressed and if the site were not masterplanned in such a way as to include safe and legible routes across the site and through to the surrounding areas and the city centre.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturbance to public rights of way across the site would make it harder for residents of Whitesmocks and Crossgate Moor to access the open countryside. An increase in population would put pressure upon the amenities of Flass Vale. These impacts are in some part addressed in the Preferred Development Scenario which reduces the development area to small patches in the north and east of the overall site.</li> <li>• Accessibility to/from the site from either the A167 or A691 would be problematic.</li> <li>• Development is likely to increase traffic and congestion levels and so increase local air and noise pollution as well as carbon emissions. Measure to reduce congestion and enable sustainable transport usage would need to be considered.</li> <li>• The development entails the loss of a significant area of grade 3 agricultural land.</li> <li>• There are few local retail facilities within easy reach of the site.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p><b>The site should be classed as Priority 3, that is, it should no longer be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>It is not suitable to make a strategic contribution to the delivery of new housing, either on its own or in combination with other sites. In planning terms it should remain in the green belt and outside settlement boundaries.</b></p> <p><b>The Preferred Development Scenario developed after consideration of necessary mitigation of impacts on the landscape and assets within the landscape is attached.</b></p>
<b>Mitigation considered</b>	<p>Carry out a full archaeological excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense, as elsewhere. Because many of the valuable features are land-forms, it would be difficult to retain many of them within the context of a housing development. Therefore archaeological expertise would be necessary, not only to save damage to archaeological features wherever possible, but to record what was to be damaged.</p> <p>Proposals for development on this site should take account of the settings of the significant historic structures at Beaurepaire, including the route from Durham via Flass Vale and Club Lane. However, the impact would be severe and difficult to mitigate. Development around Fernhill should take account of the style and character of this house and its grounds.</p> <p>Consider the impact on Flass Vale in planning the site. It is unlikely that it would be possible to retain the connectivity between the city and the surrounding countryside, via Flass Vale, which currently prevails. However, some types and configurations of development might isolate or obscure Flass Vale – visually or ecologically – more than others.</p> <p>Retain trees, hedgerows and other DBAP habitats on site wherever possible, particularly if the hedgerows are “important”. Consideration should be given to how such habitats could be protected from the pressure of development around them, including footfall, vandalism, air and water pollution, and</p>

changes to hydrology. As elsewhere, an appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to development applications being made.

Retain TPO trees and woodland at the end of Whitesmocks Avenue and ensure that they are not affected by development.

Ensure that losses of landscape features are minimised or compensated for in some degree by either structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent areas. Some historic field boundaries, mature trees and field ponds could be retained within lower density housing layouts although their meaning as landscape features would be lost. Impacts on the rural character of the landscape could be reduced in some degree by structural landscaping although this would take some time (>10 years) to become effective and for much of 3(i) would be only partly effective.

Because the site is in a Landscape Conservation Priority Area there is no need for landscape enhancement or improvement.

Ensure that the site is adequately masterplanned to generate an attractive townscape which takes into account local distinctiveness and the townscape through Crossgate Moor and Whitesmocks.

Making use of accurate data on household composition and income, and predictions for the future, ensure that the development provides an appropriate mix of dwelling type, size and tenure.

Ensure that residents have access to community facilities, particularly convenience retail, preferably by ensuring that some facilities are incorporated within the site development, since the site would be isolated behind the A167.

Put in place measures to reduce the need to travel and to provide viable alternatives to the private car: ensure that there are adequate public transport services through and around the site itself, connecting it to the city centre and other destinations; ensure that there are adequate, safe and legible pedestrian and cycle routes to the City Centre and other destinations. It will be important to put in place measures to counteract the severance effect of the A167 and, as far as possible, ensure pedestrian and cycle connectivity with the city centre and with Durham Johnson School.

Ensure that the development contains adequate and good-quality public open spaces and other types of green infrastructure, both for the residents of the site itself and to address the potential needs of the people of adjacent wards. The existing under supply of allotments, amenity open space and children's play space should be taken into account.

Retain the existing PROWs across the site and make efforts to ensure their continued attractiveness as part of a larger recreational network. However, it is unlikely that their historic character and significance could be adequately maintained.

	<p>Address the issue of flood protection, particularly with reference to the streams on site.</p> <p>Consider potential schemes to reduce local congestion, and in and around Durham city, so that ‘hotspots’ do not worsen and the city is not adversely affected by the increase in traffic generated by the site.</p> <p>Consider carrying out capacity needs assessments on essential services to ensure the needs of existing and new residents are met. However, if housing is phased gradually this may not need to be done until a later date.</p>
<p><b>Any residual impacts to take into account</b></p>	<p>Even if mitigation is taken forward, the following issues are likely to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current economic recession and slow-down in the house building sector may mean that the scale of proposed development may not be fully realised – at least in the short term. This is likely to have positive and negative effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Most importantly, it may mean that the housing need for Durham city, and indeed Durham County, is not met.</li> <li>• Development on this site would increase traffic levels in this area and therefore potentially increase air and noise pollution and congestion in and around Durham City. Vehicular accessibility is likely to cause problems on the A167 or the A691, whichever is used</li> <li>• The impact upon landscape could not be entirely mitigated, even if only a very small area were developed, as recommended. Development would erode the ‘rural’ quality that currently characterises this area.</li> <li>• Development of this site will increase urban sprawl and make incursions into the Durham City Green Belt.</li> <li>• The impact on wildlife and habitats of importance could not be fully mitigated or compensated for as some features, such as “important” hedgerows, which might be lost, are irreplaceable. The impact upon Flass Vale would be gradual and hard to mitigate, as it would be caused by many incremental impacts.</li> <li>• The impact upon features of archaeological and historic interest, if it could not be avoided, could not be compensated for, because archaeological artefacts by their nature are a finite resource and, once gone, are lost forever. It would be hard to avoid damaging many of the features of interest on the site as they are land forms.</li> <li>• If the development proposed around Durham City were to, cumulatively, be considered to require the construction of the northern and / or western relief roads, this would have a significant negative impact on attempts to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce the causes of climate change, since their main effect would be to promote and facilitate the use of the private car. The roads would also have a significant negative effect upon features of biodiversity, landscape, and historic/archaeological interest. It is also likely that the generation of Community Infrastructure Levy (or similar) funding for this infrastructure from housing development would prevent the allocation of funding to other improvements in and around the development areas.</li> <li>• This extension to Durham City may encourage further outward development of the city in the future, which is likely to put pressure on the surrounding landscape and environmental assets, and therefore potentially have a negative impact on them..</li> </ul>

### Site 4 - Ramside

Map 15 Site 4 - Ramside



### Capacity

**3.146** The site has a gross area of 31.1ha and could therefore theoretically accommodate 933 dwellings at 30 dwellings per hectare.

### Archaeology and History

**3.147** There is some evidence for prehistoric occupation. Re-landscaping of the golf course has erased most traces of the parkland associated with Ramside Hall on and above site 4(i).

**3.148** The rest of the area is somewhat unclear from current analysis. It is possible the area is post-medieval in origin, but it is thought the Broomside Farm may have medieval origins and if this is the case then the area may in fact have medieval farm field origins. Whichever it is, the area no longer shows any clear character. Further investigation using sources not available to the Historic Landscape Characterisation project would be needed to potentially identify the character of the area.

**3.149** A cropmark enclosure is clearly visible in the area, which has the form usually associated with Iron Age settlement sites, suggesting an amount of Iron Age activity in the area.

**3.150** While some parts of this area have proved difficult to interpret, the potential Iron Age site would clearly need further investigation as part of the pre-application planning process.

### **Ecology**

**3.151** All of the section of this site north of Pittington Lane and much of the section to the south are within 500m of great crested newt sites. Great Crested Newts are on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Annex II and Annex IV of The Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994. As such, they and their habitats are protected.

**3.152** There is at least one pond on the site, which is a Durham Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat. Although section 4(i) has been re-landscaped and many field boundaries removed from section 4(ii), comparison of historic maps indicates that those field boundaries which do remain, including the ones which form the boundaries of the site, were present in the nineteenth century and therefore some hedgerows on site may be 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. As stated below, some show signs of being ancient in places.

**3.153** There are no Tree Preservation Orders on site.

### **Landscape**

Broad Landscape Type	Lowland Valley Terraces
Local Landscape Types	Parkland (4(i)) Terrace farmland: open arable (4(ii))
Local Landscape Sub-type	Golf course (4(i)) Old enclosure (4(ii))
Landscape Strategy	Conserve & enhance: Landscape Conservation Priority Area (4(i)) Enhance: Landscape Improvement Priority Area (4(ii))

### **Landscape description**

**3.154** The site is made up of two distinct areas.

- 4(i) The northern compartment forms part of a golf course and contains greens, fairways, bunkers and ponds together with areas of immature tree planting. It is bounded in the west by the Leamside railway line, in the south east by a minor road (Pittington Lane) and in the north partly by a mature shelterbelt.
- 4(ii) The southern compartment is made up of a low ridge of arable farmland bounded to the west by the railway line, to the north by Pittington Lane and to the south by the

incised valley of the Pittington Beck. The Farmsteads of Hilltop Farm and Fatfield House Farm lie on the boundary of the site overlooking the valley.

### Landscape Sensitivity

**3.155** The site has a relatively robust and simple landform and few mature features that would be vulnerable to development impacts.

- 4(i) The site forms part of a relatively recent extension to the golf course which lies outside of the boundary of the historic Belmont Hall parklands. The settlement edge of Belmont is visible in the west giving the site an urban fringe or suburban quality - although increasingly screened in places by maturing perimeter vegetation. The site contains areas of immature but maturing structural landscaping which could be retained as part of any development. The site is generally well screened from Pittington Lane by a tall and dense roadside hedge and doesn't have much role in the character of the wider landscape.
- 4(ii) The roadside hedge on the southern side of Pittington Lane is a parish boundary and shows signs of being ancient in places (sections rich in hazel) including a cross-field hedge running to Fatfield House Farm. The south-eastern boundary hedge and the cross-field hedge to Hilltop also show signs of being medieval or early post-medieval. The landscape has a strongly rural character. It forms a low ridge forming an intermediate horizon above the incised Pittington Beck Valley in views from the south and east.

*Landscape sensitivity: 4(i) medium; 4(ii) medium-high*

### Landscape Value

**3.156** The site forms part of an area identified in the City of Durham Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value which follows the Old Durham / Sherburn house / Pittington Beck around the eastern edge of the city. The site forms part of a tract of land of strongly rural character that maintains the separation of Durham City and Pittington / Low Pittington. The area has a relatively low recreational value, 4(i) being a private golf course and 4b being agricultural land – although 4(ii) is crossed by a footpath giving access to a wider footpath network in the Pittington Beck Valley in which 4(ii) itself figures prominently in some views as part of an attractive area of open countryside within easy access of the settlement edge.

*Landscape value: 4(i) medium, 4(ii) medium-high*

### Visual Sensitivity

**3.157** The site does not form part of the visual envelope of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core. 4(i) is visually contained by the settlement edge to the west, mature vegetation of the golf course to the north and east, and a tall mature hedge along Pittington lane and the rising ground of 4(ii) to the south. 4 (ii) is more visually open in views from Pittington Lane, prominent in views from Lady's Piece Lane to the south-east, and is overlooked from higher ground along the escarpment at distances of >1.5km.

*Visual sensitivity: 4(i) low, 4(ii) medium-high*

### Potential Landscape Effects

Physical Features:

**3.158** The gently undulating landform of the site is such that impacts on the natural topography would be low.

- 4(i) Existing mature and maturing planting and ponds could be incorporated into structural landscaping for lower density housing. Some losses of young features might be anticipated.
- 4(ii) Few features would be affected by development. Boundary and cross-field hedges could be retained. Boundary hedges could be affected by sight lines at entrance points but could be trans-located in those circumstances

Character:

**3.159** The site is in either recreational or agricultural use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character.

- 4(i) The area is visually contained and does not have a big influence on the character of the wider landscape. Development impacts could be relatively low.
- 4(ii) Development would be visually prominent and would not relate well to the existing settlement edge which is generally well contained in views from this area. Development would read as an isolated ribbon of housing along a minor ridgeline unrelated to other development in the view and would erode the essentially rural character of the local landscape. Impacts would be lower at the western end of the area where development would be partially screened by existing woodland on the valley slopes around Hilltop Farm.

**3.160** *Potential landscape effects: 4(i) without mitigation medium, with mitigation: low. 4(ii) without mitigation high, with mitigation high falling to medium-high over around 15-20 years.*

### Potential Visual Effects

**3.161** Public Views:

- 4(i) Development would be visually contained in views from public vantage points: impacts would be low.
- 4(ii) Development would be highly visible from a number of public vantage points including Pittington Lane and Lady's Piece Lane (from where it would form a conspicuous developed skyline) and footpaths in the locality, as well as from vantage points on higher ground on the escarpment.

**3.162** Private Views:

- Development in 4(i) and the western part of 4(ii) would be visible across the Leamside railway line from properties on the edge of Belmont. Views would be screened or

filtered by vegetation along the railway line. Development in proximity to Hilltop and Fatfield House farms would be visible from those properties.

*Potential visual effects: 4(i) without mitigation low-medium, with mitigation low. 4(ii) without mitigation; high, with mitigation; high falling to medium-high over around 15-20 years.*

### **Indirect or Secondary Effects**

**3.163** It seems likely that development would not require significant off-site infrastructure and therefore secondary impacts would be likely to be low.

### **Summary**

**3.164** The site has some limited potential for development in 4(i) but development of any scale in 4(ii) would entail substantial impacts on the rural character of the landscape between Durham City and the Pittingtons which would be difficult to mitigate in the short or medium term.

### **Open Space and Rights of Way**

**3.165** The top part of the site is currently part of a golf course. The southern section does not have any areas of public or private open space upon it.

**3.166** The site is related to three wards. Site 4(i) falls within Carrville and Gilesgate Moor. Site 4(ii) is within Pittington and West Rainton but is actually more closely related to Belmont and to Carrville and Gilesgate Moor, being a continuation of the urban area of these two wards. In Carrville and Gilesgate Moor, the standard for many types of open space is 5.26ha and for play space 1.05ha. There is an oversupply of outdoor sports space (16.09ha plus 5.86ha of education open space and 3.26ha of private open space) but an undersupply of allotments, amenity open space and play space (1.19, 3.56 and 0.89ha) and no parks and gardens or semi-natural open space at all.

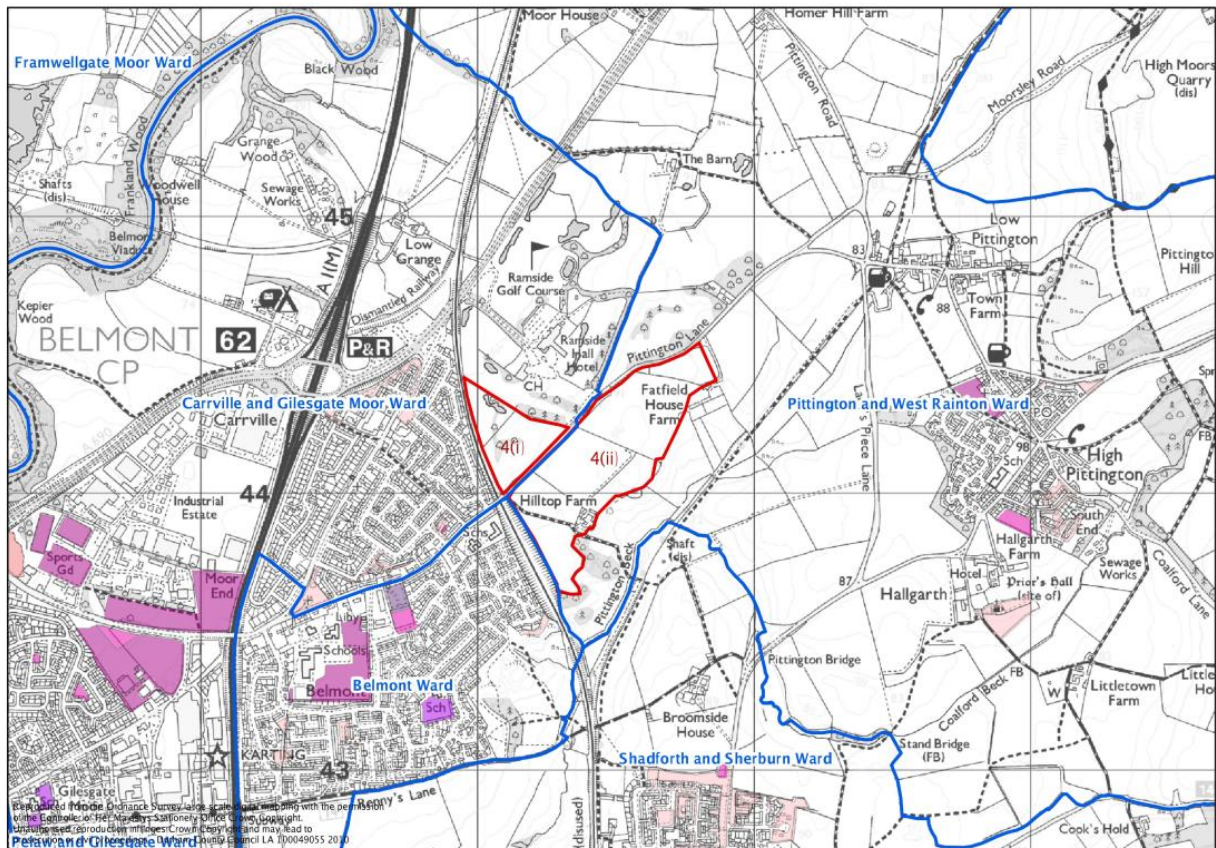
**3.167** In Belmont the standard is 3.68 for many types of open space and 0.74ha of play space; it has an under supply of everything apart from outdoor sports space (3.91ha). There are no allotments, parks and gardens, or semi-natural open space, 0.98ha of amenity open space and 0.61ha of play space.

**3.168** In Pittington and West Rainton, where the standards are 3.84 and 0.77ha, there is an oversupply of amenity open space, sports space and play areas (10.18, 4.37 and 1.77ha), an undersupply of allotments(0.27ha), and no parks and gardens or semi-natural open space. However, all the open space in this ward (apart from the golf course at Ramside) is in the villages outside the main urban area so wouldn't be accessible to new residents of site 4.

**3.169** The site is crossed by a footpath which links to other footpaths leading to Sherburn and Pittington.



Map 16 Site 4 showing open space in the vicinity



### **Flood Risk**

**3.170** No parts of the site are within a flood zone and it is not adjacent to one. However, the presence of many ponds and streams on the Ramside site as a whole indicates that there would be a significant amount of water on site which would need to be sustainably managed in the case of development.

### **Contamination**

**3.171** No evidence of industrial development on site.

### **3.172 Transport**

**3.173** This site is detached from the rest of Belmont/Carrville by the railway. The site would have poor pedestrian/cycle links to facilities. It is split by Pittington Road which could provide vehicular access. However Pittington Road is rural in character and would need improvement. Traffic would add to the pressure on routes through Gilesgate.

### **Planning and Sustainability**

**3.174** Most of site 4(i) and a part of 4(ii) are within 800m of the local centre in Belmont and near to the schools in the area. There are also some local facilities in Carrville. However, the local centre is not adjacent to any part of the site and is within an adjacent neighbourhood, set slightly back from Broomside Lane, which would be the natural route

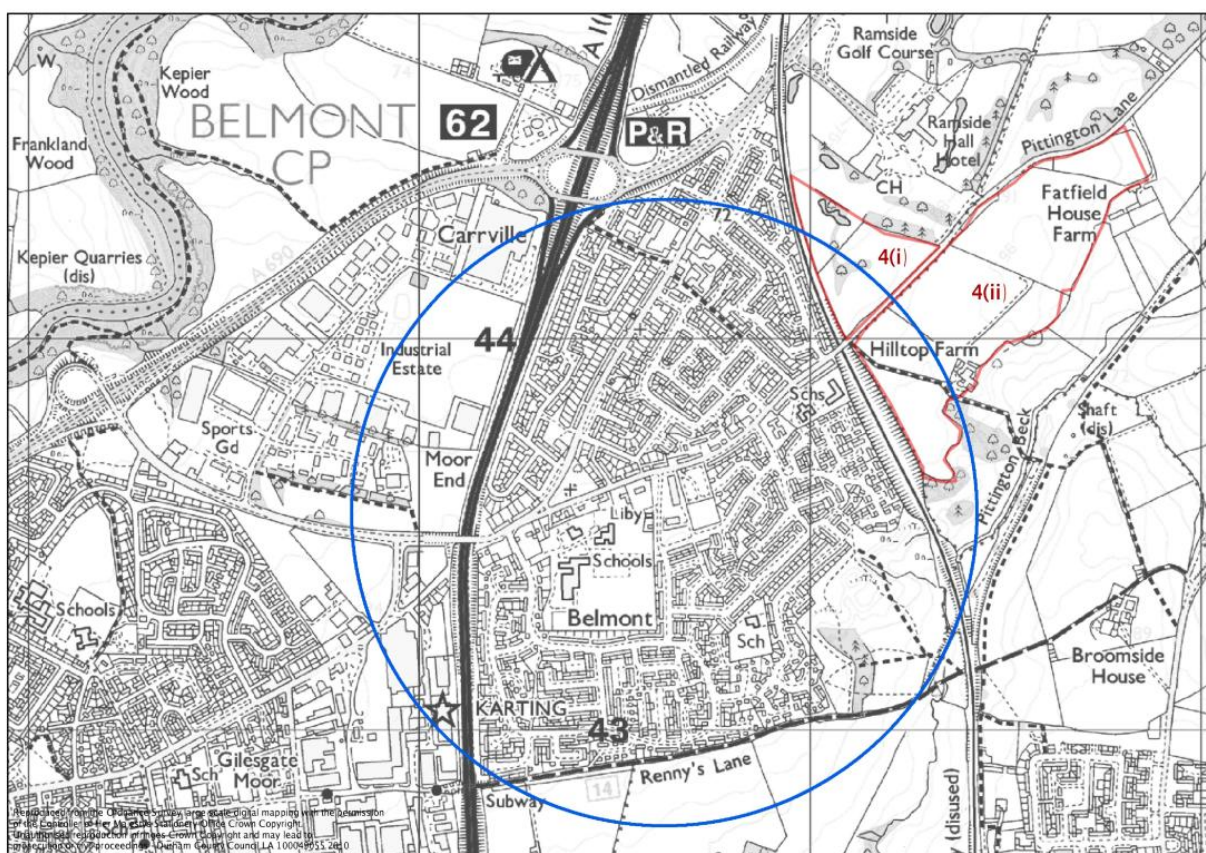
used by new residents. The potential for new development on this site to be meshed together with the existing urban area is limited because of the railway, which has only got one crossing point.

**3.175** The road to Pittington/Hetton already runs straight through the site and across the railway.

**3.176** There are three buses per hour (across several services) to Durham and hence to services and facilities and to public transport links to elsewhere.

**3.177** The site is 4km from the City Centre at the nearest point and 5km at the furthest.

Map 17 Site 4 showing the area within an 800m radius of Belmont local centre



### Green Belt Functions

**3.178** The site does not form part of the visual envelope of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core.

**3.179** Development would mean an eastern extension of the built-up area beyond the railway, which acts as the boundary of the city at this point. For its size, it would encroach upon the countryside more than development on a site which supports a compact settlement footprint.

**3.180** As stated above, development on site 4(ii) would have a substantial impact on the rural character of the landscape between Durham City and the Pittingtons. It would be particularly visible from the escarpment, Pittington Lane and Lady's Piece Lane. From the latter, the city is at present almost invisible; development would greatly increase the area within which the presence of the urban area is obvious.

**3.181** The development would not lead to the merger, or near-merger, of any settlements. However, because the site stretches along the existing road from Durham to Pittington/Heddon, its character would be changed from rural to urban. It would therefore have a greater impact on the apparent distance between them than would a more compact site.

### **Mitigation and Concept Planning**

#### **Archaeology**

**3.182** The potential Iron Age settlement would need clear and comprehensive investigation, in advance of planning consent before any development took place.

#### **Ecology**

**3.183** It is not clear at this time whether it would be possible to develop much of the site due to the presence of great crested newts. Given that this site is only one of several alternatives it would be problematic to argue that the disturbance would be necessary. If a licence for their removal were to be granted, it would be important to retain the ponds, hedgerows and any other BAP priority habitats as far as possible. Consideration should be given to how they could be protected from the pressure of development around them, including footfall, vandalism, air and water pollution, and changes to hydrology. As elsewhere, an appropriate level of ecological assessment of any affected part of the site would be necessary prior to development applications being made.

#### **Landscape**

- 4(i) Areas of maturing structural landscaping could be retained as part of a lower density development. Visual effects could be reduced further by additional structural landscaping which would be in keeping with the adjacent parkland landscape.
- 4(ii) Mature boundary and cross-field hedges could be retained. Structural landscaping around the perimeter of the site would reduce impacts on the rural character of the wider landscape although this would take some time to be effective and belts would need to be very wide to compensate for the rising ground of the ridge in views from the south and east. Visibility from Pittington Lane could be reduced by a combination of hedgerow restoration and perimeter tree belts.

**3.184** The site lies in a Landscape Improvement Priority Area which covers the site itself and open pasture and arable to the east. The area has some potential for improvement. Key areas of potential for off-site enhancement include:

- new native woodland planting along the Pittington Beck;

- restoration of hedges and hedgerow trees in areas of open farmland;
- up-grading of the former branch line in the valley bottom as a multi-user route connecting Low Pittington to Belmont.

**3.185** A potential 'least impact area' of around 4ha in 4(i) is shown below. It may be possible to identify a potential least impact area of around 4ha in 4(ii) subject to further work on visibility modelling to ensure that impacts in views of the attractive valley below were not high.

*Capacity: 4(i)a medium, 4(ii)b low / none*

Map 18 Site 4 - Area of Least Impact



Potential least impact area

### **Open Space**

**3.186** As elsewhere, the development should include appropriate open space. On the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling, the site could accommodate 2146 people. The OSNA's provision standards indicate that this would mean about 2.146ha each of parks and gardens, semi-natural open space, amenity space and allotments, and 0.429ha of children's play space on or off the site – a total of 9.01ha. In this case, consideration should be given to the links between this site and Ramside golf course, whether or not the golf course is open to the public. Such links would be important for wildlife and for mitigating the visual impact of the new development by limiting the contrast between parkland and new housing.

**3.187** The neighbouring wards of Carrville and Gilesgate Moor, and Belmont, already have a significant under-supply of most types of open space, particularly parks and gardens, allotments and semi-natural open space. This should be borne in mind when planning for new development.

**3.188** The existing PROW across the site would have to be retained within the context of a larger recreational network.

### **Planning and Sustainability**

**3.189** It would be important to put in place appropriate community facilities and ensure that the development can be laid out in such a way as to encourage a sense of neighbourhood. The existing road through the site would have to become a suburban thoroughfare, with a low speed limit and access to facilities.

**3.190** Consideration should be given to how new residents might access the existing facilities of Belmont and Carrville, particularly the local centre. Because it is set back from Broomside Lane new residents would be less likely to be aware of its existence than if it were along the road itself.

### **Planning History**

**3.191** There have been many applications associated with Ramside Hotel and golf course, of which the main one is 04/00836/OUT: 56-bed extension, redevelopment of ballroom, new leisure facilities, golf course lodges, car park, etc. It would entail 10,100m<sup>2</sup> extra floorspace. Subsequent reserved matters applications have added further details.

**3.192** An application was submitted in 2008 for the change of use of barns at Hill Top Farm to dwellings (08/00207/FPA) but this was subsequently withdrawn.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

**Sustainability Appraisal Recommendation:** The site should be classed as Priority 3, that is, it should no longer be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.

It is not capable of making a strategic contribution to the delivery of new housing, either on its own or in combination with other sites. In planning terms it should remain in the green belt and outside settlement boundaries.

The Preferred Development Scenario shown above was developed after consideration of necessary mitigation of impacts on the landscape and assets within the landscape.

## Sustainability Appraisal Summary

## Summary Site 4: Ramside

## Main implications of option: Pros and cons

**Pros:**

- This site is quite close to the city centre and therefore to jobs, facilities and transport links to other locations.
- The site is already on a bus route into town.
- In the preferred development scenario a significant part of the site is proposed for structure planting, which will go some way to mitigate against the loss of greenfield land, habitats, and landscape assets, as well as protecting soil resources.
- The site is outwith the 4km zone of visual influence of the World Heritage Site.

**Cons:**

- The preferred development scenario, which takes into account the need to mitigate against landscape issues and assets within the landscape, reduces the development area of this site to a maximum of 9 hectares (270 houses) which will not make a strategic contribution to the delivery of new housing development in County Durham.
- This site is relatively far from the city centre (compared to other sites under consideration) and, because of its elongated shape, its furthest point is at a much greater distance.
- There are few local facilities within easy reach of the site; those that exist are hidden within adjacent quarters and are not obviously accessible from Broomside Lane, the only route to and from the site.
- The severance effect of the railway, which could not be easily mitigated, would make it difficult to link up the new site with existing built-up areas. It would be functionally isolated, except for one access route. This would isolate new residents socially from the community of Belmont and would make some journeys longer than they needed to be, thus discouraging pedestrian journeys.
- The development would be likely to increase traffic flows along Broomside Lane and would therefore have a detrimental effect upon the urban environment of Belmont, through traffic hazards, air pollution, noise, and impact upon townscape and “liveability”. This could undermine a sense of community in this area.
- Built development at this site would entail a fundamental change in character of the currently rural landscape in between Durham and the Pittingtons. Development of site 4 (ii) would have a particularly significant urbanising effect because its topography makes it very visible from many vantage points.
- Although many features of historic interest have been obliterated, development here could still affect historic field boundaries and potential Iron Age settlement.
- Development on this site would affect the habitats of great crested newts, some ponds and native hedgerows, some of which are likely to be “important”.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturbance to public rights of way across the site would affect access to the open countryside for existing residents. Because there is a significant under-supply of most types of open space in the vicinity, development here could increase the pressure on the space that does exist and it might not be possible to incorporate enough open space on site to make up the deficiency.</li> <li>• Because it is recommended that only a small area of the site should be developed, it is unlikely to make much of a contribution towards the provision of dwellings for the population of Durham.</li> <li>• Because the ambition is to generate large amounts of revenue for infrastructure projects, it is unlikely that there would be enough money for the development to include appropriate amounts of affordable housing and well-planned open space, and for sustainable building techniques to be used.</li> <li>• Potential increase in local population could put pressure on essential services, facilities, and transport links/ congestion.</li> <li>• Development is likely to increase traffic and congestion levels and so increase local air and noise pollution as well as carbon emissions. This site is more likely than other sites under consideration to generate additional private car journeys – because it is relatively far from the city centre, especially at its far end; because local facilities are absent or obscure; because there is only one crossing point over the railway; and because, in the area, the vast majority who travel to work do so by car. Measures to tackle congestion and enable the use of sustainable transport would need to be considered.</li> <li>• The development entails the loss of an area of grade 3 agricultural land and of an area of golf course which has the potential for productivity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation</b></p>	<p><b>The site should be classed as Priority 3, that is, it should no longer be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>It is not suitable to make a strategic contribution to the delivery of new housing, either on its own or in combination with other sites. In planning terms it should remain in the green belt and outside settlement boundaries.</b></p> <p><b>The Preferred Development Scenario developed after consideration of necessary mitigation of impacts on the landscape and assets within the landscape is attached.</b></p>
<p><b>Mitigation considered</b></p>	<p>Carry out a full archaeological excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense, as elsewhere. The potential Iron Age settlement would need clear and comprehensive investigation, in advance of masterplanning and any planning consent being considered.</p> <p>Attempt to preserve and protect wildlife and habitats on site. It is not clear that it would be possible to develop much of the site due to the presence of great crested newts. Given that this site is only one of several alternatives it would be problematic to argue that the disturbance</p>

would be necessary. If a licence for their removal were to be granted, it would be important to retain the ponds, hedgerows and any other BAP priority habitats as far as possible. Consideration should be given to how they could be protected from the pressure of development around them, including footfall, vandalism, air and water pollution, and changes to hydrology. As elsewhere, an appropriate level of ecological assessment of any affected part of the site would be necessary prior to masterplanning.

Ensure that losses of landscape features are minimised or compensated for in some degree by either structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent areas. In 4(i), areas of maturing structural landscaping could be retained as part of a lower density development. Visual effects could be reduced further by additional structural landscaping which would be in keeping with the adjacent parkland landscape. In

4(ii), mature boundary and cross-field hedges could be retained. Structural landscaping around the perimeter of the site would reduce impacts on the rural character of the wider landscape although this would take some time to be effective and belts would need to be very wide to compensate for the rising ground of the ridge in views from the south and east. Visibility from Pittington Lane could be reduced by a combination of hedgerow restoration and perimeter tree belts.

The site lies in a Landscape Improvement Priority Area which covers the site itself and open pasture and arable to the east. The area has some potential for improvement. Key areas of potential for off-site enhancement include:

- new native woodland planting along the Pittington Beck;
- restoration of hedges and hedgerow trees in areas of open farmland;
- up-grading of the former branch line in the valley bottom as a multi-user route connecting Low Pittington to Belmont.

Making use of accurate data on household composition and income, and predictions for the future, ensure that the development provides an appropriate mix of dwelling type, size and tenure.

Ensure that the site includes some community facilities, particularly convenience retail, particularly towards the far end of the site. The OSNA recommends that one small community hall should be provided for each 1,000 people.

Put in place measures to reduce the need to travel and to provide viable alternatives to the private car: ensure that there are adequate public transport services through and around the site itself, connecting it to the city centre and other destinations; ensure that there are adequate, safe and legible pedestrian and cycle routes to the City Centre and other destinations, which are linked to the existing network.



	<p>Ensure that the site is adequately masterplanned to generate an attractive townscape which takes into account local distinctiveness, includes community facilities and is laid out in such a way as to encourage a sense of neighbourhood. The existing road through the site would have to become a suburban thoroughfare, with a low speed limit and access to facilities.</p> <p>Consider how to make the existing facilities of Belmont and Carrville, particularly the local centre, accessible to residents of the Ramside site, by signage or development of new routes to the centre.</p> <p>Ensure that the development contains adequate and good-quality public open spaces and other types of green infrastructure, both for the residents of the site itself and to address the potential needs of the people of adjacent wards. In this case, consideration should be given to the links between this site and Ramside golf course, whether or not the golf course is open to the public. Such links would be important for wildlife and for mitigating the visual impact of the new development by limiting the contrast between parkland and new housing. Planning for open space should also take into account the significant under-supply of most types of open space, particularly parks and gardens, allotments and semi-natural open space, in adjacent wards.</p> <p>Retain the existing PROW across the site would have to be retained within the context of a larger recreational network.</p> <p>Address the issue of flood protection, particularly with reference to the ponds on site.</p> <p>Consider potential schemes to reduce local congestion, and in and around Durham city, so that 'hotspots' do not worsen and the city is not adversely affected by the increase in traffic generated by the site. Mitigate the impact of through traffic along Broomside Lane on the residents of Belmont.</p> <p>Consider carrying out capacity needs assessments on essential services to ensure the needs of existing and new residents are met. However, if housing is phased gradually this may not need to be done until a later date.</p>
<p><b>Any residual impacts to take into account</b></p>	<p>Even if mitigation is taken forward, the following issues are likely to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current economic recession and slow-down in the house building sector may mean that the scale of proposed development may not be fully realised – at least in the short term. This is likely to have positive and negative effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Most importantly, it may mean that the housing need for Durham city, and indeed Durham County, is not met.</li> <li>• This site will increase traffic levels in this area, with a particularly significant impact upon Broomside Lane in terms of air and noise</li> </ul>

pollution, traffic hazards, severance and congestion. There could be knock-on effects elsewhere in the City.

- Overall, CO2 emissions will rise. Mitigation in the form of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy and sustainable transport provision should contain the overall increase and may result in reduction of CO2 emissions per household.
- It would not be possible to mitigate the severance effect of the railway and so the Ramside site would remain socially and functionally separated from Belmont.
- Because the ridge in site 4(ii) is very prominent it would not be possible to completely mitigate the landscape impact of development on this site and development here would still have a particularly significant urbanising effect.
- The loss of protected habitats and species could not be mitigated completely and could not be compensated for because some, like “important” hedgerows, are irreplaceable.
- Features of archaeological interest on site might be damaged whose loss could not be compensated for, since historic assets are a finite resource.
- If the development proposed around Durham City were to, cumulatively, be considered to require the construction of the northern and / or western relief roads, this would have a significant negative impact on attempts to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce the causes of climate change, since their main effect would be to promote and facilitate the use of the private car. The roads would also have a significant negative effect upon features of biodiversity, landscape, and historic/archaeological interest. It is also likely that the generation of Community Infrastructure Levy (or similar) funding for this infrastructure from housing development would prevent the allocation of funding to other improvements in and around the development areas.
- Development of this site would constitute urban sprawl because it would encroach upon the countryside more than development on a site which supports a compact settlement footprint. and delete a large area of the Durham City Green Belt,
- This extension to Durham City may encourage further outward development of the city in the future, which is likely to put pressure on the surrounding landscape and environmental assets, and therefore potentially have a negative impact on them.

## Site 5 - Sherburn Grange

Map 19 Site 5: South of Belmont



### Capacity

**3.193** Site 5(i) has a gross site area of 51.71ha and could therefore theoretically accommodate 1551 dwellings at 30 dwellings per hectare (dph). Site 5(ii) is 30.63ha and could therefore accommodate 919 dwellings at 30 dph.

### Archaeology and History

**3.194** There is some evidence for prehistoric occupation in the area to the east of the A1. These are now characterised by modern amalgamation – large ‘prairie’ fields formed from grubbing out early boundaries. Much of the area was originally thought to have been enclosed in the medieval period as strip fields associated with Sherburn medieval village, although this is no longer visible as a character. There is therefore no historic character remaining on this site.

### Ecology

**3.195** Site 5 has few hedgerows or other features of nature conservation interest on site but those that do remain appear to be along the lines of those existing in the nineteenth century and may therefore be ‘important’. An interesting feature is the small copse in the centre of site 5(i), associated with a spring. It is isolated at present in between large fields, but would be more isolated if surrounded by development.

**3.196** Site 5(ii) is adjacent to the Sherburn Hospital County Wildlife Site.

### Landscape

Broad Landscape Type	Lowland Valley Terraces. <sup>(5)</sup>
Local Landscape Types	Terrace farmland: open arable. <sup>(6)</sup>
Local Landscape Sub-type	Old enclosure. <sup>(7)</sup>
Landscape Strategy	Enhance: Landscape Improvement Priority Area

### Landscape description

**3.197** A tract of gently undulating open arable farmland lying east of the A1(M) and south of Belmont and crossed by the A181 and B1283. The land falls gently to the south and east where it is bounded by the steeper slopes of the minor valley of the Sherburn house Beck – with which it merges more gradually in the northern part of 5(i). It is bounded in the north by the southern edge of Belmont, and on its western edge by the A1(M), backed in the north by Dragonville industrial estate.

**3.198** The landscape is broad in scale and generally lacking in features being made up of large amalgamated arable fields. The boundary network is heavily fragmented and reduced to a small number of isolated hedges. There is a single small copse and a line of isolated trees on a relic boundary following a minor valley in 5(i). There is a single farm group at Sherburn Grange and a small pumping station in the field to its east. The area is bounded in the north-east and crossed in the south-east by the remains of a railway - the Durham, Elvet and Murton branch line.

### Landscape Sensitivity

**3.199** The site has a robust and simple landform and few mature features that would be vulnerable to development impacts. It has an essentially rural character in the west and south which becomes increasingly semi-rural or urban-fringe closer to the A1M and Dragonville industrial estate to the east.

*Landscape sensitivity: low-medium rising to medium-high in the south and east.*

### Landscape Value

**3.200** The site forms part of an area identified in the City of Durham Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value which follows the Old Durham/Sherburn house Beck around the eastern edge of the city. The site forms part of an open arable plateau between the valley landscapes of the Beck and the city's urban / industrial edge and is generally in poorer condition than, and of a lower scenic quality than, the valley landscapes. It

5 The south-eastern edge of 5(ii) falls within an area identified in the CDLCA as Incised Lowland Valleys but the area defined belongs more to the Lowland Valley Terraces type.

6 The south-eastern edge of 5(ii) is identified in the CDLCA as Valley farmland: open arable but is indistinguishable from the remainder of area 5(ii).

7 The area was originally a mixture of early and late post-medieval enclosures. The field boundary network is so heavily fragmented that enclosure period is not a significant contributor to landscape character.

nevertheless has value as part of the visual context of the valley, with which it merges seamlessly, particularly towards the south and the east, and as open countryside preventing the coalescence of Durham City and Sherburn Village.

*Landscape value: low-medium rising to medium-high in the south and east.*

#### Visual sensitivity

**3.201** The site does not form part of the visual envelope of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core. The southern part of the area 5(ii) forms part of the setting of listed buildings at Sherburn Hospital, towards which there are good views from the B1283. The landscape is visually very open and crossed by public highways including the A1(M) from which it is generally open to view. It is not crossed by any public rights of way although it is bounded in the north by the Renny's Lane bridleway. The northern part of the site is visible from properties along the southern edge of Belmont which enjoy views out across open countryside. Much of the site is visible from properties and public footpaths on the western edge of Sherburn, and from Sherburn Hospital at distances ranging from 300m to 1500m. The site is overlooked from higher ground along the escarpment at distances of >1.5km.

*Visual sensitivity: medium rising to high in the south and east.*

#### Potential Landscape Effects

##### **3.202** Physical Features:

- The gently undulating landform of the site is such that impacts on the natural topography would be low provided that the minor valley running through 5(i) was retained. The small number of mature trees and woodland in 5(i) could readily be retained as part of structural landscaping.

##### **3.203** Character:

- The greater part of the area is in agricultural use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character within the development footprint. The site is large and complex and impacts on the local landscape would depend on the physical extent of development and the degree to which it eroded the rural character of the landscape between the settlement edge and the valley of the Sherburn house Beck. Those impacts would be higher south of the B1283 5(ii) and towards the eastern and southern edges of 5(i).

*Potential landscape effects g: 5(i) without mitigation: high, with mitigation: medium. 5(ii) without mitigation high, with mitigation: high*

#### Potential Visual Effects

##### **3.204** Public Views:

- The site is visually open and built development would be highly visible from the surrounding road network – the A1(M), A181 and the B1283 – until such time as any

structural landscaping became effective (see below). Development in 5(ii) would obstruct views towards Sherburn Hospital. Development in the east of 5(i) would be prominent in views from footpaths on the edge of Sherburn. Development in proximity to Renny's Lane would be visible from it and obstruct views to the south.

### 3.205 Private Views:

- Development in proximity to Renny's Lane would be visible from properties in Belmont facing onto it, although screened in varying degrees by existing vegetation. Development in 5(ii) would be prominent in views from Sherburn Hospital. Development in the east of 5(i) would be prominent in views from properties on the eastern edge of Sherburn. Development in 5(i) would be visible in varying degrees from Sherburn Grange and Naysmith Cottage.

*Potential visual effects: 5(i) without mitigation: high, with mitigation: medium. 5(ii) without mitigation high, with mitigation: high.*

### **Indirect or Secondary Impacts**

**3.206** It seems likely that development would not require significant off-site infrastructure.

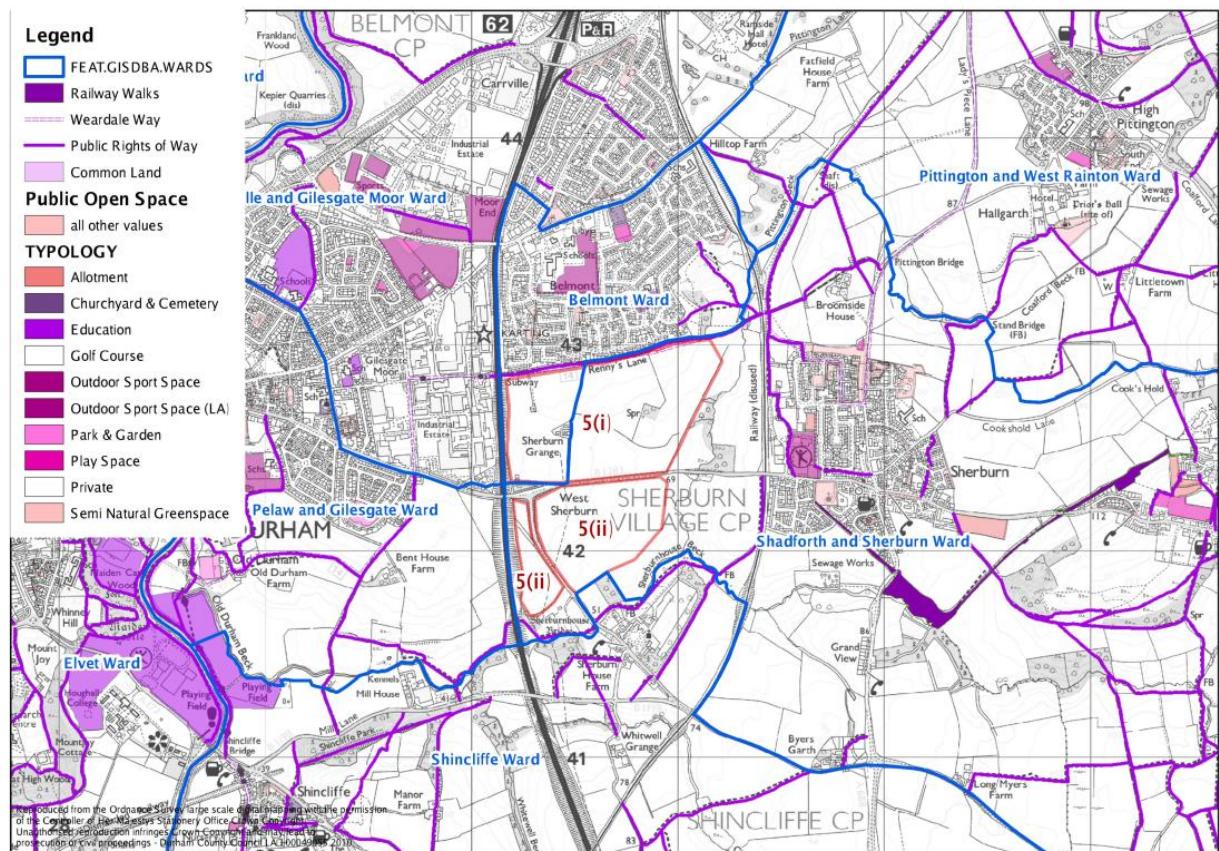
### **Open Space and Rights of Way**

**3.207** There are no areas of open space or public rights of way on the site at present.

**3.208** Most of the site is within Shadforth and Sherburn ward; some is within Belmont. However, residents of the new development might be unlikely to use at least some of the open spaces within either ward: parts of Shadforth and Sherburn are well away from the site and the urban form of Belmont is almost completely impermeable. Besides, Belmont has an under supply of every type of open space apart from outdoor sports space (3.91ha). The standard here is 3.68ha for many types of open space and 0.74ha of play space. There are no allotments, parks and gardens, or semi-natural open space, 0.98ha of amenity open space and 0.61ha of play space.

**3.209** Shadforth and Sherburn has well over the standard (4.96 and 0.99ha) provision of allotments, amenity open space and play space (15.4, 10.92 and 4.38ha respectively) and enough sports space (5.49ha) but no parks and gardens nor semi-natural open space. It is possible that some new residents on the site might be able to share some facilities with residents of Sherburn, since the distance between them is small.

Map 20 Site 5 showing open space in the vicinity



## Flood Risk

**3.210** No parts of the site are within a flood zone. Sherburn house Beck has a small flood zone immediately around it but this should not affect the site. However, there is a spring on site 5(i) associated with the small copse and a number of issues and sinks near it. The water that these contain would need to be dealt with in the case of development.

## Contamination

**3.211** No evidence of industrial development on site.

## Transport

- Site 5 (i) –South of Renny’s Lane. Apart from pedestrian links via Renny’s Lane, the only access is via B1283. There are good public transport links on B1283 and facilities could be improved near this site. A vehicular access can be formed from B1283. Again, pressure would be increased on links into the city. However this would be reduced partly by the Northern Relief Road.
- Site 5(ii) – Sherburn House. This site would have poor pedestrian and cycle connectivity with Sherburn Road area due to the motorway. Public transport would be good and facilities could be improved on B1283 and A181. Vehicular access could be obtained from both roads. Again, extra pressure would be imposed on routes into the city.

### **Planning and Sustainability**

**3.212** At their western ends, the sites are within 800m of the district centre at Dragon Lane, but they are severed from it by the A1 and by the intervening industrial estate, which, together, would make it a difficult journey on foot. At their eastern ends, the sites are reasonably close to local services in Sherburn, including the leisure centre.

**3.213** Both parts of the sites are an appropriate distance from Durham for cycling, and although the natural route would be along a major road its suburban character closer to town would make it pleasanter than many.

**3.214** The top end of Site 5 is close to services at Belmont, including its schools, but the impermeable nature of Belmont's layout would make it hard to make these accessible to residents of the new development without them having to execute a dog-leg along Dragon Lane.

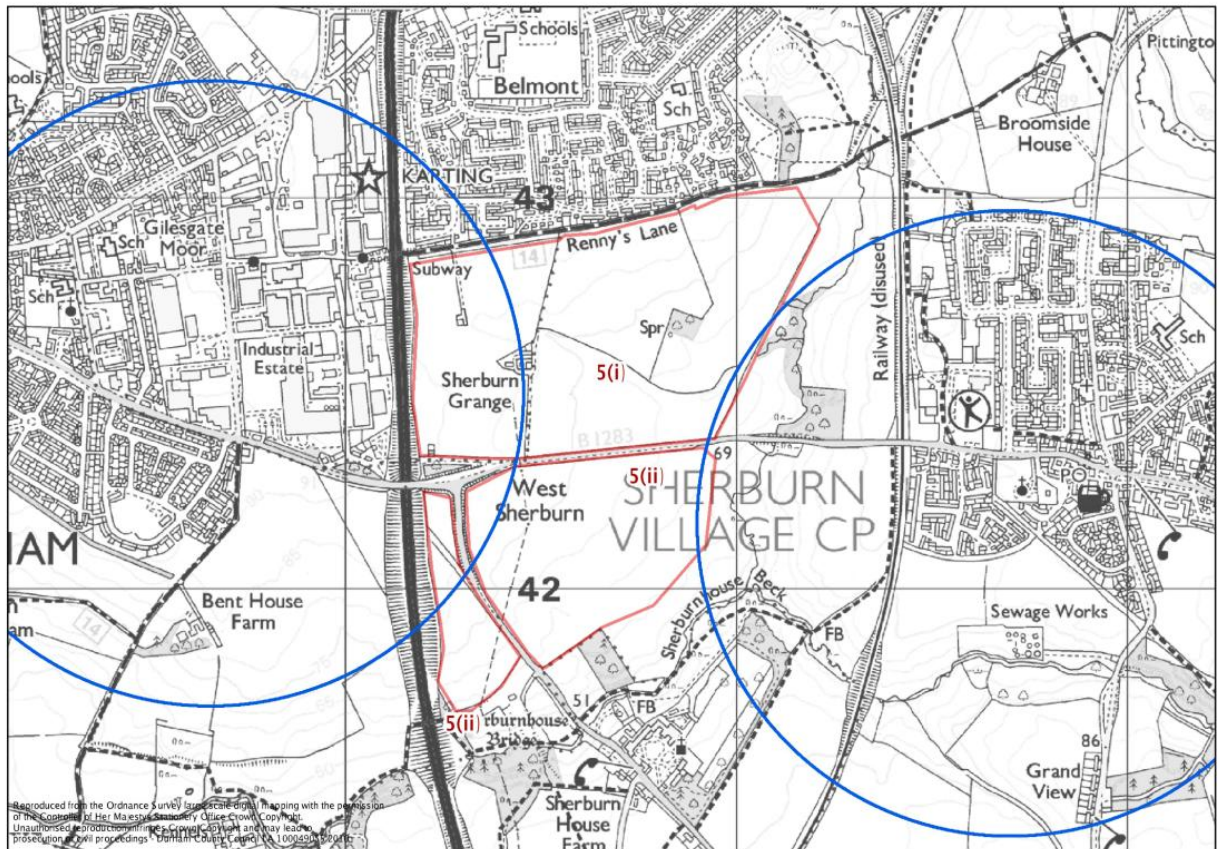
**3.215** There are already pretty frequent (five buses per hour) services to Durham along Sherburn Road. They provide access to jobs, services and transport links.

**3.216** If Site 5(ii) were built on without Site 5(i), it would not be adjacent to the existing built-up area on any side. It would therefore be difficult to develop pedestrian connectivity between it and other residential areas. It would also have a greater visual impact than development of a site tending to support a more compact settlement footprint, because it would appear to extend the city more.

**3.217** At their nearest point the sites are 2.8km from Durham. At the furthest point of site 5 it is 4km from Durham.



Map 21 Site 5 showing the areas within 800m radius of the Sherburn local centre and of Dragon Lane district centre



**3.218** Sites 5(i) and (ii) showing circles of 800m radius around the local centre in Sherburn and the district centre at Dragon Lane

### **Green Belt Functions**

**3.219** The site does not form part of the visual envelope of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core. However, the southern part of 5(ii) in varying degrees forms part of the setting of listed buildings at Sherburn Hospital .

**3.220** Development of site 5 would mean an western extension of the built-up area beyond the motorway, which acts as the boundary of the city at this point. Areas of the countryside which have not previously been developed would be encroached upon.

**3.221** Site 5(ii) would not be connected to any other built-up area if it were built upon without Site 5. Its development would mean a new built-up area south of Sherburn Road, which is not at present developed extensively east of the railway (even when Sherburn and Sherburn Hill are taken into account)

**3.222** The development would lead to the near-merger of Durham and Sherburn, which at present are perceived to be clearly separate, although they are very close, because the area in between the road and the railway is undeveloped.

## **Mitigation and Concept Planning**

### **Archaeology**

**3.223** As there is no historic character to lose the only mitigation known to be necessary would be full excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense, as elsewhere.

### **Ecology**

**3.224** Sherburn house Beck valley and Sherburn Hospital County Wildlife Site might be affected by this site's development via footfall, vandalism or fly tipping, pollution of air or water, or changes in hydrology. Consideration should be given to how this could be managed.

**3.225** As elsewhere, an appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to development applications being made. Further investigation is necessary to determine whether the remaining hedgerows are "important."

**3.226** Trees and hedges on site should be retained within the development where possible, as elsewhere. The small copse in site 5(i) should be incorporated within the development, but would be detrimentally affected; efforts should be made to connect it to the Sherburn house Beck valley and to other similar habitats.

### **Landscape**

**3.227** Mitigation Potential:

- Potential losses of landscape features could be compensated for by either in structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent areas. General impacts on the character of the local landscape could be mitigated in some degree by structural landscaping to reduce the visibility of built development. Substantial perimeter woodland belts (and interior belts if the area was developed to its full extent) – while out of keeping with its present open character – would be in keeping with the wider Valley Terrace landscape which is well wooded in places. These would take some time (>10 years) to have a substantial screening effect. Landscape effects would be easier to mitigate in the north and west of the site: development could be more readily screened and the openness and rural character of the landscape more readily retained in views from the B1238. Larger scale development would require a more substantial and comprehensive network of woodland planting which would have the effect of shifting the character of the landscape towards a more wooded and enclosed character in the longer term (> 10years)
- Development would be difficult to screen from the A1(M) where it travels on an elevated embankment: acoustic issues might be more significant here requiring either a visual / acoustic baffle on the existing embankment or a separate earthwork occupying a large footprint.

**3.228** Enhancement Potential:

- The site lies in a Landscape Improvement Priority Area. The area between the edge of the City and the Sherburn house Beck has considerable potential for improvement

given its general lack of landscape features and the lack of connectivity between existing features. Key areas for potential include:



- new native woodland planting along the Sherburn house beck from Belmont Scrambles to Sherburn Hospital;
- a southward extension to Belmont Scrambles Local Wildlife Site;
- development of the former branch line as a multi-user route linking to both the new development area and Belmont;
- restoration of hedgerows on remaining areas of open arable farmland.

**3.229** A potential 'least impact area' of around 25 ha is shown below which could have impacts mitigated reasonably successfully by structural landscaping.

Map 22 Site 5: Area of Least Impact



**3.230** Larger scale development would entail a very substantial impact on the character of the landscape between Durham and Sherburn. Development of this scale would require large scale structural landscaping to reduce the visibility of built elements and reinforce the rural character of the Sherburn house Beck valley. Higher impact scenarios are shown below.

Picture 3 Site 5: Medium impact scenario	Picture 4 Site 5 - Maximum developable area
	
<i>31 ha development</i>	<i>45 ha development</i>

### Open Space

**3.231** On the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling, the site could accommodate 5685 people. The OSNA's provision standards indicate that this would mean about 5.6841ha each of parks and gardens, semi-natural open space, amenity space and allotments, and 1.136ha of children's play space on or off the site – a total of 23.86ha. As stated above, there is the potential for the development of a new multi-user route.

### Planning and Sustainability

**3.232** Site 5(ii) should not be developed without Site 5(i) because connectivity could not be achieved and because it would appear to be a greater encroachment upon the countryside.

**3.233** At present, development on site 5(i) would be separated from other residential areas along Sherburn Road by the intervening Dragonville Industrial Estate.

**3.234** Provision of local services would have to be achieved by a combination of means: firstly, by putting in place environmental improvements and traffic calming/pedestrian crossings to facilitate access to the district centre at Dragonville; secondly, by provision of local facilities on site; thirdly, by encouraging links to the local centre in Sherburn.

**3.235** The layout of any development would need to leave a clear gap between Durham and Sherburn, with appropriate landscaping and planting to denote their separation. Consideration should be given to pedestrian and cycle access to Sherburn, particularly to the leisure centre, because there are fewer leisure centres than other types of facility.

### Planning History

**3.236** There do not appear to have been any recent applications relating to site 5.

## Sustainability Appraisal

**Sustainability Appraisal Recommendation:** Take site forward as Priority 2 with the potential to provide a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.

Priority 2 sites have the potential to contribute to overall housing need, if required, whilst also benefiting related objectives. In this case Site 5 has the potential to contribute to the regeneration and physical improvement of the district centre at Dragon Lane and the Carrville area of Durham City. Any Community Infrastructure Levy (or equivalent funding) generated by the development would need to be used for this purpose. Sequentially, Site 5(i) is of a significant size, is preferable to Site 5(ii), and could be considered on its own.

Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The preferred development scenario, shown above, takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.

### Sustainability Appraisal Summary

#### Summary: South of Belmont (Site 5)

##### Main implications of option: Pros and cons

##### Pros:

- Overall the site has potential to provide a strategically important level of housing in County Durham over the plan period (nearly 5% of the total County requirement).
- There is the potential for Site 5 (i & ii) to link closely with the existing communities in Belmont and possibly Sherburn, as well as with the district centre on Dragon Lane. Cultural / social links with Sherburn should not be reflected in the physical environment, as structure planting will be needed to ensure Sherburn remains separate from the extension to Durham City that development of site 5 would provide.
- This site is in a theoretically sustainable location, close to facilities and services at the Durham City retail park and Dragonville industrial estate and with good public transport and a cycling / walking route to Durham City – a major centre and regional transport hub. Good masterplanning, including structured planting and multi-user routes, is needed to increase the positive impact on the environment and accessibility.
- Adjacent to site 5, to the west of the A1 (M), residential areas along the A181 are deemed to be in the top 5% of the most deprived nationally. Development therefore could contribute to regeneration in the area if combined with appropriate employment development and improvements to the district centre on Dragon Lane.
- There are great opportunities for landscape enhancement given the site's general lack of landscape features and the lack of connectivity

between existing features. Key areas for potential include: new native woodland planting along the Sherburn house beck from Belmont Scrambles to Sherburn Hospital; a southward extension to Belmont Scrambles Local Wildlife Site; development of the former branch line as a multi-user route linking to both the new development area and Belmont; and restoration of hedgerows on remaining areas of open arable farmland.

- The preferred development scenario for site 5 (i & ii) includes 44.56 ha of structured planting out of total of 96.23 ha. With this green infrastructure integrated into the design a significant level of carbon absorption will remain within the site, despite the loss of green infrastructure/ arable land for the development itself.
- Development on this site will generate employment for different sectors during the construction period, which may be over the long-term dependent on the phasing of the house development, and thereby provide some support to the local economy.
- Such a large site is likely to support those who provide services to homes (e.g. window cleaners and maintenance tradesmen) and sustain existing local business and services (e.g. at the Durham City retail park and Dragonville industrial estate); and perhaps have a wider effect on economy at a sub-County level.
- The majority of services that would help to reduce health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles (physical and mental health) are within the ideal 800m of new development (from the nearest point of Site 5 as the crow flies).
- The new housing development may improve physical access to local employment – dependent on master planning and improvements to routes such as Renny's Lane. This site also provides a good opportunity to increase accessibility and link up existing networks (i.e. PROW, green infrastructure, open space, roads, etc) around Durham city.
- The site does not form part of the visual setting of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core of Durham City.
- In general this site is relatively free of environmental constraints as the majority of the proposed development area is intensive arable farming. Sensitive masterplanning and the incorporation of structure planting can ensure adverse impacts on the adjacent Sherburn Hospital site are minimised to an acceptable level.

**Cons:**

- Development of this site would entail a very substantial impact on the character of the landscape between the settlement edge and the valley of the Sherburn house Beck and erode the rural character of the site. It also takes the settlement edge of Durham City towards Sherburn.
- Sensitive environmental assets (such as 2 LWS, an area of HLV, and a cluster of Grade II listed buildings) are closer than the ideal distance to new development.
- Potential increase in local population could put pressure on essential services, facilities, and transport links/ congestion over the lifetime

	<p>of the plan. However, the timescale involved should mean these can develop in parallel with housing, as necessary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is likely that new housing development will increase traffic and congestion levels, and therefore reduce the local air quality and increase noise pollution. Congestion on the A181 is likely to significantly increase.</li> <li>• It is likely that because of the size of this development and the potential traffic it will generate schemes to address congestion in and around Durham city will need to be considered in order to ensure that congestion 'hotspots' do not worsen – e.g. A690/A181 roundabout (Gilesgate Bank approach).</li> <li>• Development on the site may be difficult to screen from the A1 (M) where it travels on an elevated embankment.</li> <li>• The total extent of site 5 (i &amp; ii) is 96.23 ha and so involves a significant area loss of arable farmland.</li> <li>• There is a spring on site 5 (i) associated with the small copse (to the south) and a number of sinks near it, and the water that these contain may need to be dealt with in the case of development. This should not be a significant constraint on housing development.</li> <li>• The benefits of the location would be lost if the severance effects of the A1 (M), A181 and B1283 are not adequately addressed – e.g. pedestrians and cyclists would be dissuaded and residents with private cars would be more like to drive than use other modes of transport to access services.</li> <li>• Due to the layout of the local urban fabric (particularly Belmont), pedestrian and/ or cycle access is likely to be relatively difficult, despite some facilities being within walking distance of most of the site. Significant improvements would be needed.</li> <li>• A line of electricity pylons crosses the site, to the west of site 5 (i) and (ii) from north to south, and these may put a constraint on development due to height and safety restrictions.</li> <li>• Development may potentially generate air or water pollution and/ or changes in local hydrology, and this should be mitigated through masterplanning and approaches to construction</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation</b></p>	<p><b>Take site forward as Priority 2 to be considered as potentially providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy, providing its development is directed in a way which contributes to specified wider objectives.</b></p> <p><b>Priority 2 sites have the potential to contribute to overall housing need, if required, whilst also benefiting related objectives. In this case Site 5 has the potential to contribute to the regeneration and physical improvement of the district centre at Dragon Lane and the Carrville area of Durham City. Any Community Infrastructure Levy (or equivalent funding) generated by the development would need to be used for this purpose. Sequentially, Site 5(i) is of a significant size, is preferable to Site 5(ii), and could be considered on its own.</b></p>

	<p><b>Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The attached preferred development scenario takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.</b></p>
<p><b>Mitigation suggested</b></p>	<p>Ensure there are accessible and sustainable transport options available to link the site with essential facilities, services, employment, and transport network – e.g. potentially re-route bus services to accommodate new housing; improve/ enhance current footpaths and cycleways (Renny’s Lane), as well as creating new ones, to make them more pleasant and accessible for a variety of users to increase patronage; and ensure multi-user routes are adequately linked to existing network.</p> <p>It is essential that pedestrian crossing points are improved (most importantly over the A181 and B1283) to ensure residents’ safety and access to existing development, communities, facilities, and services. Safe and secure footpaths, cycleways, bridges, and underpasses (which are necessary to traverse the A 1(M)) will help to ensure that the new housing site is neither physically nor socially cut-off from Belmont, Sherburn or the district centre at Dragon Lane, which will help to minimise any potential social tension and negative impact of the new development; particularly in relation to pressure on services and facilities.</p> <p>Consider potential schemes to reduce local congestion and enable sustainable transport usage in and around Durham city, so that ‘hotspots’ do not worsen and the city is not adversely affected by the increase in traffic.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to pedestrian and cycle access to Sherburn, (particularly to the leisure centre) and to Durham City. Linking the development with National Cycle Network Route 14 at appropriate points will help to achieve this</p> <p>Ensure there is an adequate provision of local services to serve the new development. This could be achieved by a combination of environmental improvements and traffic calming/ pedestrian crossings to facilitate access to the district centre; creating new local facilities on the site; and encouraging links to the local centre in Sherburn. Measure that help improve the environment of and diversify the retail and employment offer of the district centre around Dragon Lane should be pursued.</p> <p>A development of this scale would require large scale structural landscaping to reduce visibility of built elements, reinforce the rural character of the Sherburn house Beck valley and prevent the sense of coalescence with Sherburn as well as to buffer adjacent environmental assets.</p> <p>The attached plan of a preferred development scenario shows the suggested layout of development / structured planting areas, taking into account issues concerning the local landscape and assets within it including: local wildlife sites, areas of high landscape value, copse/spring, trees, hedgerows, and listed buildings. The substantial perimeter woodland</p>



belts proposed (and interior belts if the site was developed to its full extent) – while out of keeping with its present open character – would be in keeping with the wider valley terrace landscape which is well wooded in places.

An appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to masterplanning to establish the importance of habitats and species on the site and inform the incorporation of green infrastructure on the site. Trees and hedgerows on site should be retained wherever possible.

Ensure the small copse in Site 5 (i) is incorporated within the development and efforts should be made to connect it to the Sherburn house Beck valley and to other small habitats in order to minimise the negative impact from the development.

As development may be difficult to screen from the A1 (M) where it travels on an elevated embankment, acoustic issues might be more significant here, either a visual/ acoustic baffle on the existing embankment or a separate earthwork occupying a large footprint may be required.

Consider carrying out capacity needs assessments on essential services to ensure the needs of existing and new residents are met as the development could put pressure on them over time. The potential size of the proposed development (if working on the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling the new development would generate 3,132 people) this may involve including some facilities within the site – e.g. GPs, schools, convenience shops, post office, etc. over the lifetime of the plan.

Ensure there is a full excavation of potential archaeological/ historic environment assets and features, followed by recording and publication of results, at developer's expense as elsewhere.

As there is a spring on site 5 (i) associated with the small copse (to the south) and a number of sinks near it, the water that these contain may need to be dealt with in the case of development. Although this should not be a significant constraint on housing development it should be ensured that appropriate measures are taken forward to reduce the risk of flooding – e.g. SUDS. This could be linked with the provision of green infrastructure on the site.

A line of electricity pylons crosses the site, to the west of site 5 (i) and (ii) from north to south, and these may put a constraint on development due to height and safety restrictions. Suggest developing an access road or multi-user route through the site along this line to minimise impact and potentially improve connectivity – i.e. by linking up with Renny's Lane.

High levels of energy efficiency should be incorporated in the housing developed along with the incorporation of renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions associated with domestic energy use. There is potential for the development to be enabled for integration with a Durham City district heating system, and/or act as a trigger for the commencement of development of such a system.

	<p>The incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, in combination with green infrastructure, will help to reduce flood risk associated with the site and reduce potential to adversely affect local water courses</p>
<p><b>Any residual impacts to take into account</b></p>	<p>Even if mitigation is taken forward, the following issues are likely to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current economic recession and slow-down in the house building sector may mean that the scale of proposed development may not be fully realised – at least in the short term. This is likely to have positive and negative effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Most importantly, it may mean that the housing need for Durham city, and indeed Durham County, is not met.</li> <li>• This site will increase traffic levels in this area and therefore potentially increase air and noise pollution and congestion in and around Durham City. Congestion on the A181 is likely to be significantly increased.</li> <li>• If the development proposed around Durham City were to, cumulatively, be considered to require the construction of the northern and / or western relief roads, this would have a significant negative impact on attempts to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce the causes of climate change, since their main effect would be to promote and facilitate the use of the private car. The roads would also have a significant negative effect upon features of biodiversity, landscape, and historic/archaeological interest. It is also likely that the generation of Community Infrastructure Levy (or similar) funding for this infrastructure from housing development would prevent the allocation of funding to other improvements in and around the development areas.</li> <li>• Development of this site will increase urban sprawl, potentially merge Durham city with Sherburn, delete a large area of the Durham City Green Belt, and erode the 'rural' quality that currently characterises this area.</li> <li>• Overall, CO2 emissions will rise. Mitigation in the form of energy efficiency measures, renewable energy and sustainable transport provision should contain the overall increase and may result in reduction of CO2 emissions per household.</li> </ul>

## Site 6 - Sherburn Road

Map 23 Site 6: South of Sherburn Road



### Capacity

**3.237** Site 6 has a gross site area of 23.37ha and could therefore theoretically accommodate 701 dwellings at 30 dwellings per hectare.

### Archaeology and History

**3.238** There is some evidence for prehistoric occupation in the area to the east of the A1. This area is now characterised by modern amalgamation – large ‘prairie’ fields formed from grubbing out early boundaries. There is a cluster of premises of historic significance at Old Durham, to the west of the site: the Tithe Barn, a retaining wall and gazebo, which are Grade II listed, and Old Durham Gardens, which is grade II on English Heritage’s list of historic parks and gardens. Development of this site would have a limited impact upon their setting. There is little remaining archaeological on the site but development could have some impact upon the setting of Old Durham.

### Ecology

**3.239** There is only one hedge on site and no other features which appear to be of nature conservation interest. There is a group of TPO trees at Bent House Farm, adjacent to the south-western boundary of the site.

## Landscape

Broad Landscape Type	Lowland Valley Terraces
Local Landscape Types	Terrace farmland: open arable
Local Landscape Sub-type	Old enclosure. <sup>(8)</sup>
Landscape Strategy	Enhance  Landscape Improvement Priority Area

### Landscape description

**3.240** This is an area of gently undulating open arable farmland lying west of the A1(M) and south of the A181. The land falls gently to the south and east where it is bounded by the steeper slopes of the valley of the Old Durham Beck. It is bounded to the north by the southern edge of Dragonville industrial estate, to the west by Sherburn Road Estate and to the east by the A1(M) which runs in a deep cutting.

**3.241** The landscape is broad in scale and generally lacking in features being made up of large amalgamated arable fields. The boundary network is heavily fragmented and reduced to a single isolated hedge. There is a single farm group at Bent House on the edge of the site.

### Landscape sensitivity

**3.242** The site has a relatively robust and simple landform and few mature features that would be vulnerable to development impacts. The single hedgerow crossing the site in the east is a parish / township boundary: its morphology suggests it is a late post-medieval hedge associated with the enclosure of Sherburn Moor rather than an ancient boundary. The site as a whole has an essentially rural character in views out from the settlement edge, but more urban fringe in views back towards it where the settlement edge is influential in the view.

*Landscape sensitivity: medium.*

### Landscape Value

**3.243** The site forms part of an area identified in the City of Durham Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value which follows the Old Durham/Sherburn house Beck around the eastern edge of the city. The site forms part of an open arable plateau between the valley landscapes of the Beck and the city's urban/industrial edge and is generally in poorer condition than, and of a lower scenic quality than, the valley landscapes to the south. It nevertheless has some value as part of the visual context of the valley with which it merges

<sup>8</sup> The area of the site itself was originally enclosed by late post-medieval enclosures. The field boundary network is so heavily fragmented that enclosure period is not a significant contributor to landscape character.

seamlessly. The area has no recreational value, being arable farmland free of footpaths, but provides an open rural outlook from housing along Bent House Lane which is also a bridleway.

*Landscape value: low-medium*

### Visual Sensitivity

**3.244** The site lies in the backdrop to the World Heritage Site in some views from the west (Nevilledale Terrace/Briarville area) although largely screened by existing housing in the Sherburn Road area. It does not otherwise form a significant part of the visual environment of the historic core. As it occupies an elevated site it forms part of the skyline in views northwards across the Old Durham valley – including views from the A1(M) A177, the B119, the Weardale Way, and the footpath network between it and High Shincliffe to the south. It is visible at close quarters from housing along Bent House lane and from the bridleway itself. The site is overlooked from higher ground along the escarpment at distances of >2km.

*Visual sensitivity: medium*

### Potential Landscape Effects

**3.245** Physical Features:

- The gently undulating landform of the site is such that impacts on the natural topography would be low. The only mature landscape feature to be potentially affected would be the former parish boundary hedge which is a low and gappy feature which no longer forms part of a legible field system.

**3.246** Character:

- The site is in agricultural use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character. Development would relate reasonably well to the existing built form in the area and would have a relatively low impact on the wider landscape provided that the relationship between its southern edge and the skyline in views from the south was handled well (see below).

*Potential landscape effects: without mitigation medium, with mitigation low.*

### Potential Visual Effects

**3.247** Public Views:

- The southern development edge would be visible on the skyline in a wide range of views to the south. The precise location and character of the skyline would vary according to the orientation and elevation of the viewpoint. For many of the lower viewpoints the break in slope at around the 80m contour is the current skyline although views penetrate further for some closer or more elevated viewpoints such as the A1(M) embankment over the beck. Built development on or below the 80m contour would form a hard settlement-edge skyline. Impacts would generally be of medium

or low order of magnitude, although higher from the A1(M) embankment at closer proximity.

- Built development would be open to view from the immediately adjacent section of the A181 to the north in an urban fringe context where the impacts of additional development in the view would be low.

### **3.248** Private Views:

- Development would obstruct views of open countryside for properties along Bent House Lane and from Bent House Farm.

*Potential visual effects: without mitigation medium, with mitigation low.*

### **Indirect or Secondary Effects**

**3.249** It seems likely that development would not require significant off-site infrastructure and therefore secondary impacts would be likely to be low.

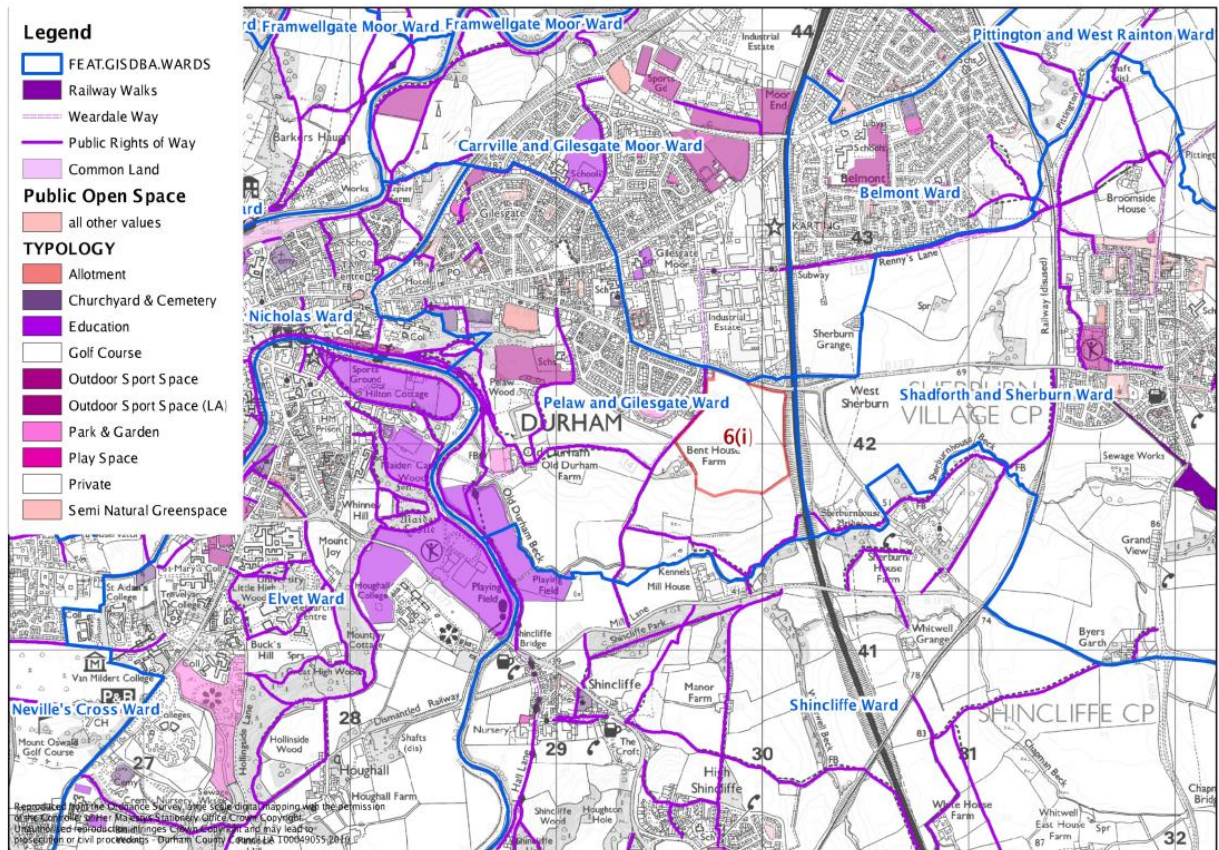
### **Open Space and Rights of Way**

**3.250** There are no areas of open space or public rights of way on the site at present. However, there is a PROW along Bent House Lane which links to other routes to Shincliffe and Old Durham.

**3.251** The site is entirely within Pelaw and Gilesgate ward at present. It is adjacent to Carrville and Gilesgate Moor ward but new residents would be unlikely to share open space facilities with residents of this ward, partly because the shopping centre and industrial estate intervene between the site and residential areas, and partly because Carrville and Gilesgate Moor has a shortage of every type of open space apart from outdoor sports space (16.09ha). The standard for many types of open space here is 5.26ha and 1.05ha play space. There is an undersupply of allotments, amenity space and play space (1.19, 3.53 and 0.89ha) and no parks and gardens nor semi-natural open space.

**3.252** Pelaw and Gilesgate ward, likewise, has a shortage of most types of open space apart from outdoor sports space (6.34ha, plus 18.31ha education open space). However, it is, in general, easier to get to from the site than open space in the adjacent ward. The standard here is 4.96ha for most types and 0.99ha play space: it has no semi-natural open space and an under supply of everything else (1.88ha allotments, 3.54 amenity open space, 2.45 parks and gardens, 0.56ha play space.)

Map 24 Site 6 showing public open space in the vicinity



**Flood Risk**

**3.253** No parts of the site are within a flood zone.

**Contamination**

**3.254** No evidence of industrial development on the southern part of the site. The northern part of the site is derelict at present, having been used for industrial units, but as there is an extant planning permission on this section anyway this may not be significant.

**Transport**

**3.255** Whilst this site would have good pedestrian, cycle and public transport links, the traffic signals at the junction with Dragon Lane are unlikely to have capacity for extra traffic from this direction.

**Planning and Sustainability**

**3.256** Almost all of Site 6 is within 800m of the district centre at Dragon Lane. The only severance factor is Sherburn Road itself, but, as this is already a signalled road with pedestrian crossings it would be less of a hindrance than some other barriers in the vicinity.

**3.257** Site 6 is on a route with frequent (seven per hour) buses into Durham. There are additional services to Dragon Lane. The site is an appropriate distance for cycling, as stated above.

**3.258** The site is immediately adjacent to an existing residential area; its layout would permit the development of connectivity between the two areas.

### **Green Belt Functions**

**3.259** The site lies in the backdrop to the World Heritage Site in some views from the west (Nevilledale Terrace / Briarville area) although largely screened by existing housing in the Sherburn Road area. Development of this site would have some impact on the setting of Old Durham Farm and Gardens. The site does not otherwise form a significant part of the visual environment of the historic core.

**3.260** Development of this site would extend the developed area south of Sherburn Road. However, it would not extend beyond the motorway, which acts as a settlement boundary at present, and, because it is bounded by the motorway on one side and by development on two other sides, it is closer to an infill site than any of the other suggested development sites. Arguably, it makes the settlement more rather than less compact.

**3.261** The development would diminish the area of undeveloped land between Durham and Shincliffe. This would be particularly evident from Bent House Lane. However, there would still be a few undeveloped fields between them. Shincliffe would still be closer to the settlement boundary at Whinney Hill.

### **Mitigation and Concept Planning**

#### **Archaeology**

**3.262** As there is no historic character to lose the only mitigation known to be necessary would be full excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense, as elsewhere.

#### **Ecology**

**3.263** As there are fewer features of nature conservation interest on site than elsewhere the only mitigation known to be required would be an appropriate level of ecological assessment prior to development applications being made. Trees and hedgerows around the perimeter of the site should be retained wherever possible.

**3.264** Care should be taken around the south-western boundary of the site to ensure that the group of TPO trees at Bent House Farm are not affected by development.

#### **Landscape**

**3.265** Mitigation potential:

- Potential losses of landscape features could be readily compensated for by either in structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent areas. Impacts on the skyline of views to the south could be mitigated in some degree by careful selection of the



southerly extent of development and structural landscaping in the form of a substantial perimeter belt of native woodland. This would need to be reasonably robust and blocky or irregular in form to be in keeping with the wider valley landscape and would take some time (>10 years) to have a substantial screening effect.

- Residual impacts would be highest in the view from the A1(M) embankment close to the site where the additional height of the bank would reduce the impact of perimeter planting.
- The eastern development edge could be screened from the A1(M) by observing a stand-off from the top of the motorway cutting which is clothed by established woodland. Additional structure planting along this boundary would help assimilate the settlement edge in wider views from the west.
- Visual effects along the eastern and northern perimeters do not need landscape mitigation other than good urban design, although structure planting along the A181 would reinforce the sense of separation between the urban areas of Durham and Sherburn in successional views along the A181 / B1132.

### 3.266 Enhancement Potential:

- The site lies in a Landscape Improvement Priority Area which covers the northern flanks of the valley of the Old Durham Beck. The area has considerable potential for improvement given the general lack of landscape features and connectivity. Key areas of potential for off-site enhancement include:
  - new native woodland planting along the Old Durham Beck and in the old Durham Colliery area;
  - restoration of hedges and hedgerow trees in areas of open arable farmland;
  - up-grading of Mill Lane, Old Durham Lane and/or the former Durham Elvet and Murton branch line as multi-user routes (the latter in association with development in site 5).

**3.267** A potential 'least impact area' of around 15ha is shown below, which could have impacts reasonably successfully mitigated by structural landscaping.

Map 25 Site 6 - Area of Least Impact



Potential least impact area

### **Open Space and Recreation**

**3.268** On the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling, the site could accommodate 1612 people. The OSNA's provision standards indicate that this would mean about 1.61ha each of parks and gardens, semi-natural open space, amenity space and allotments, and 0.3ha of children's play space on or off the site – a total of 6.77ha. The two adjacent wards have a shortage of all types of open space apart from outdoor sports space; this should be taken into consideration when planning for new development in the vicinity.

**3.269** The PROW along Bent House Lane should be retained and attention given to how its attractiveness and useability for walkers could be maintained, given the likely impacts of urbanisation upon it in terms of character and traffic.

### **Planning and Sustainability**

**3.270** Provision of local services could be achieved by traffic planning and provision of pedestrian-friendly layouts to link new development to the Dragon Lane district centre. Layouts should ensure permeability between the new development and the Sherburn Road estate. This could help in the regeneration of this estate – either by linking it to a better urban environment, or by developers' provision of physical improvements.

**Planning History**

**3.271** There have been a number of planning applications at Bent House Farm: two concerned the erection of a greenhouse. The others were:

- 6/00054/TPO: felling of trees within a woodland. Deferred to the Forestry Commission as it involves more than 5m<sup>3</sup> of timber. In planning terms, it was stated that the woodland is an intrinsic part of the landscape, screens the barn conversions and settlements from views to the South, and screens dwellings from wind. However, the project was judged acceptable for woodland management purposes, as it would encourage other trees to grow.
- 03/01104/FPA: conversion/rebuilding of an agricultural building into a dwelling. Refused as green belt policy permits conversion, but not replacement, of agricultural with residential buildings and one wing of the building in question had collapsed. However, it was permitted at appeal.

**Sustainability Appraisal**

**Sustainability Appraisal Recommendation:** Take site forward as Priority 1 to be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.

Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The preferred development scenario, shown above, takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.

This site would be particularly likely to generate cumulative impacts if developed in combination with the nearby Site 5(i) and/or Site 5(ii). These would be negative in relation to traffic generation and related issues and landscape, but may have positive implications in relation to the potential to regenerate the district centre and the broader area

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

Summary: South of Sherburn Road (Site 6)	
<b>Main implications of option: Pros and cons</b>	<p><b>Pros:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall the site has potential to provide a strategically important level of housing in County Durham over the plan period (over 1% of the total County requirement).</li> <li>• There is the potential for Site 6 to be linked closely with the existing communities in Carville and Gilesgate Moor, as well as with the district centre on Dragon Lane; which are adjacent to, less than 0.5km, and less than 0.4km away respectively.</li> <li>• This site is theoretically in a sustainable location and does reduce the need to travel as it is close to facilities, services and transport links in</li> </ul>

Durham City, the Durham City Retail Park and Dragonville industrial estate.

- Access to services and facilities should be relatively easy with potentially good pedestrian, cycle and public transport links. Cycle links provide access to the district centre, Durham City and Sherburn (Leisure Centre).
- The site is an appropriate distance from Durham city for cycling and walking, and there is a pleasant off-road walking / cycling route to Durham City via Old Durham
- There are also several PROW in the area that could provide decent access to other settlements/ services/ facilities in Shincliffe, Durham city, Sherburn, and Belmont; particularly if up-graded to multi-user routes: e.g. Bent House Lane, Mill Lane and the former Durham Elvet and Murton branch line (the latter would have to be in association with development at site 5).
- The only severance factor is Sherburn road (A181) itself, but as it is already a signalled road with pedestrian crossings it would be less of a hindrance than some other barriers in the vicinity.
- There are particular opportunities to enhance the district centre on Dragon Lane and adjacent residential area of Carville. Pedestrian-friendly layouts that provide permeability between the new development and Carville could help with regeneration by linking it to a better urban environment or by developers' provision of physical improvement.
- The new housing development is close to local employment areas at Dragonville Industrial Estate, Belmont Industrial Estate / Business park and the Durham City Retail Park
- Development on this site will generate employment for different sectors during the construction period. The site is also likely to sustain existing local business and services (e.g. at the Durham City retail park and Dragonville industrial estate); and perhaps have a wider effect on economy at a sub-County level.
- The proposed development scenario for site 6 includes 14.96 ha of structured planting out of total of 23.38 ha. With this green infrastructure integrated into the design a significant level of carbon absorption will remain within the site, despite the loss of green infrastructure/ arable land for the development itself.
- Although the site as a whole is on a minor aquifer, the groundwater vulnerability is low. As it is on an elevated site no parts of the site are within a flood zone.
- In general this site is relatively free of environmental constraints as the majority of the proposed development area is intensive arable farming.
- There are great opportunities for biodiversity and landscape enhancement given the site's general lack of ecological and landscape features and the lack of connectivity between existing features.
- Development would relate reasonably well to the existing built form in the area and would have a relatively low impact on the wider landscape provided that the relationship between its southern edge and the skyline in views from the south was handled well.
- The site does not form a significant part of the visual environment of the historic core of Durham city.

**Cons:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The potential impact of an increased local population may contribute to the need for new essential facilities on or near to the site (e.g. GPs/ health centres, school classrooms, leisure centres, convenience shop, newsagent, post office etc) to meet the needs of residents. This would be exacerbated if the Site was developed in combination with Site 5(i) and/or 5(ii). However, it should be possible to phase provision in parallel with the phasing of housing development.</li> <li>• Local air and noise pollution is likely to increase with the new development through increased traffic, which will can a negative impact on physical and mental health.</li> <li>• The benefits of the location may be reduced by the potential severance effect of the A181/ Sherburn Road – e.g. pedestrians and cyclists may be dissuaded and residents with private cars would be more like to drive than use other modes of transport to access services. Schemes to enable and encourage cycling and walking would be needed.</li> <li>• It is likely that the potential cumulative impact of an increased local population and the potential traffic it will generate schemes to address congestion in and around Durham city will need to be considered in order to ensure that congestion ‘hotspots’ do not worsen – e.g. A690/A181 roundabout (Gilesgate Bank approach).</li> <li>• The greater part of the area is in agricultural use (intensive arable farming) and built development would entail a fundamental change in character within the development footprint.</li> <li>• Development on the site may be difficult to screen from the A1 (M) where it travels on an elevated embankment.</li> <li>• The site lies in the backdrop to the WHS in some views from the west (Nevilledale Terrace/ Briarville area) although largely screened by existing housing in the Sherburn Road area (i.e. Carville).</li> <li>• Although development of this site would have a limited impact on the setting of historic environment assets (Grade II listed building and listed historic park/ garden), with such assets in close proximity to the site and with several PROW providing access they may be adversely affected by the site’s development via footfall and vandalism.</li> <li>• The total extent of site 6 is 23.38 ha and so involves a fairly significant area loss of grade 3 agricultural land.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mitigation suggested</b></p>	<p>Ensure there are accessible and sustainable transport options available to link the site with essential facilities, services, employment, and transport network – e.g. improve/ enhance current footpaths and cycleways, as well as creating new ones, to make them more pleasant and accessible for a variety of users to increase patronage; and ensure multi-user routes are adequately linked to existing network. This particularly important as (if the previous ward trend is to be relied upon) the majority of households may not own a car – 2001 census demonstrated that 50% of households in Pelaw and Gilesgate did not own a car or van.</p> <p>Pedestrian crossing points could be improved (namely over the A181) to ensure residents’ safety and access to existing development, communities, facilities, and services. Safe and secure footpaths, cycleways, bridges, etc will help to ensure that the new housing site is neither physically nor socially cut-off from Belmont or the district centre at Dragon Lane</p>

Provision of local services could be achieved by traffic planning and provision of pedestrian-friendly layouts to link new development to the Dragon Lane district centre. Layouts should ensure permeability between the new development and the Sherburn road estate. This could help in the regeneration of this estate – either by linking it to a better urban environment or by developers' provision of physical improvements.

Ensure good masterplanning of the site to include a significant amount of structural landscaping to minimise the impact on the landscape and important assets – e.g. any local wildlife, areas of high landscape value, trees, hedgerows, listed buildings, and listed gardens/ parks. A development of this scale would require large scale structural landscaping to reduce visibility of built elements and reinforce the rural character of the Old Durham Beck. For instance, substantial perimeter woodland belts while out of keeping with its present open character would be in keeping with the wider valley terrace landscape which is well wooded in places.

Impacts on the skyline of views to the south could be mitigated in some degree by careful selection of the southerly extent of development and structural landscaping in the form of a substantial perimeter belt of native woodland. This would need to be reasonably robust and blocky or irregular in form to be in keeping with the wider valley landscape and would take some time to have a substantial screening effect.

The attached plan of a preferred development scenario shows the suggested layout of development / structured planting areas, taking into account issues concerning the local landscape and assets within it.

Potential losses of landscape features could be readily compensated for by either in structural landscaping or off-site planting in adjacent sites. Trees and hedgerows around the perimeter of the site should be retained where possible. Care should also be taken around the south-western boundary of the site to ensure that the group of TPO trees at Bent House Farm are not affected by development. Ensure trees and hedges on site are retained within the development where possible.

An appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to masterplanning to establish the importance of habitats and species on the site and inform the incorporation of green infrastructure on the site. Trees and hedgerows on site should be retained wherever possible.

The PROW along Bent House Land should be retained and attention given to how its attractiveness and usability to walkers could be maintained, given the likely impacts of urbanisation on it in terms of character and traffic.

Consider carrying out capacity needs assessments on essential services to ensure the needs of existing and new residents are met as the potential size of development, and the cumulative impact of the proposed neighbouring site south of Belmont (site 5), could put pressure on them – e.g. GPs, schools, convenience shops, post office, etc. However, if housing is phased gradually this may not need to be done until a later date.

	<p>High levels of energy efficiency should be incorporated in the housing developed along with the incorporation of renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions associated with domestic energy use. There is potential for the development to be enabled for integration with a Durham City district heating system, and/or act as a trigger for the commencement of development of such a system.</p> <p>The incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, in combination with green infrastructure, will help to reduce flood risk associated with the site and reduce potential to adversely affect local water courses</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p><b>Take site forward as Priority 1 to be considered as providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy.</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The attached preferred development scenario takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.</b></p> <p><b>This site would be particularly likely to generate cumulative impacts if developed in combination with the nearby Site 5(i) and/or Site 5(ii). These would be negative in relation to traffic generation and related issues, but may have positive implications in relation to the potential to regenerate the district centre and the broader area.</b></p>
<b>Any residual impacts to take into account</b>	<p>Even if mitigation is taken forward, the following issue are likely to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current economic recession and slow-down in the house building sector may mean that the scale of proposed development may not be fully realised – at least in the short term. This is likely to have positive and negative effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Most importantly, it may mean that the housing need for Durham city, and indeed Durham County, is not met.</li> <li>• This site will increase traffic levels in this area and therefore potentially increase air and noise pollution and congestion in and around Durham City. These impacts would be exacerbated by the cumulative effect of developing Site 6 and Site 5(i) and /or 5(ii) nearby.</li> <li>• If the development proposed around Durham City were to, cumulatively, be considered to require the construction of the northern and / or western relief roads, this would have a significant negative impact on attempts to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce the causes of climate change, since their main effect would be to promote and facilitate the use of the private car. The roads would also have a significant negative effect upon features of biodiversity, landscape, and historic/archaeological interest. It is also likely that the generation of Community Infrastructure Levy (or similar) funding for this infrastructure from housing development would prevent the allocation of funding to other improvements in and around the development areas.</li> <li>• Development of this site will increase urban sprawl, delete a considerable area of the Durham City Green Belt, and erode the ‘rural’ quality that currently characterises this area.</li> </ul>

## Site 7 - Mount Oswald and Merryoaks

Map 26 Site 7: Merryoaks and Mount Oswald



### Capacity

**3.272** Site 7 has a gross site area of 45.81ha, of which 13.67ha is Merryoaks (site 7(i)) and 32.14 Mount Oswald (sites 7ii-iii). It could therefore theoretically accommodate 1374 dwellings at 30 dwellings per hectare.

### Archaeology and History

**3.273** Evidence from aerial photos is suggestive of prehistoric activity or occupation.

**3.274** Mount Oswald Golf Course, unlike more modern golf courses, did not go through a very rigorous re-landscaping when it was created and as such it still retains the post-medieval ridge and furrow from former fields, although the field boundaries themselves were of course grubbed up to make way for the golf course. The area opposite the golf course is of modern field amalgamation. The former post-medieval fields systems are no longer visible.

**3.275** Mount Oswald House itself is grade II listed. This late Georgian classical house (built 1830, designed by Ignatius Bonomi) is of some architectural and historic interest. The parkland around the house was principally developed between 1830 and 1915. While



the area immediately around the house has been excluded from consideration in this study, insensitive development of sites 7(ii) and (iii) could have a severe impact upon the setting of the house and its gardens.

**3.276** While few field boundaries remain in this area, the character of post-medieval enclosure has been retained through the ridge and furrow still extant within the golf course. Development of sites 7 (ii) and (iii) should be carefully planned to protect the setting of Mount Oswald House and its gardens.

**Ecology**

**3.277** There is a record of badger setts in the vicinity of site 7(ii). The north-east corner of site 7(ii) is within the 500m buffer zone of a great crested newt pond.

**3.278** Because the site was re-landscaped to form the golf course many features were removed. However, some features of nature conservation interest may have emerged as the site has developed.

**3.279** There are many TPO trees, groups of trees and small woods on Sites 7(ii) and (iii). There are others immediately around Mount Oswald itself, including bands of woodland which encircle the house and form the inner boundaries of sites 7(ii) and (iii). There are other TPO trees and woodlands at St. Cuthbert’s Hospice, on the northern boundary of site 7(i), and at Stonebridge, the valley to the east of site 7(i), including the strip of woodland which forms the site’s eastern boundary.

**Landscape**

Broad Landscape Type	Lowland Valley Terraces. Incised Lowland Valleys (parts of 7(ii) and (iii)).
Local Landscape Types	Terrace farmland wooded pasture (7(i)). <sup>(9)</sup> Parks and recreation grounds (7(ii) and (iii)).
Local Landscape Sub-type	Old enclosure. <sup>(10)</sup>
Landscape Strategy	Conserve and enhance. Landscape Conservation priority Area.

9 Identified in the CDLCA as ‘wooded arable’ the site is now under pasture.  
10 The area was largely enclosed in the C18 but parts were enclosed earlier. No field boundaries remain from either period: the sub-type based on enclosure history is not a significant factor here.

### Landscape description

**3.280** The site is characterised by a broad ridge-top, tapering to the south, between the valleys of the Browney and the Wear. The site is divided by the A167. It is bounded in the north by housing and University colleges, in the east by the A177, and in the west by the steep wooded slopes of the Browney valley. In the centre west of the site it borders onto wooded parklands surrounding Mount Oswald Manor (currently a golf course club-house). The northern site boundary follows Millhill Lane – a lane laid out in the enclosures of Elvet Moor in the late C18 and still in use as a footpath. It is crossed by another enclosure lane running from the A167 to Mount Oswald, also in use as a footpath, which is flanked by mature trees.

- 7(i) A relatively flat area of ridge-top grazed as pasture with no hedgerows, trees or other features.
- 7(ii) The northern part of Mount Oswald golf course. The topography is almost flat in the west, falling gently in the east. The area contains typical golf course features - greens, fairways and bunkers – and scattered young or semi-mature trees and a small number of mature trees. Relics of rig and furrow cultivation are found across the site. These are straight and respect the lines of C18th enclosure hedges grubbed out in the 1950s which indicates a late C18<sup>th</sup> or C19<sup>th</sup> origin.
- 7(iii) The southern part of Mount Oswald golf course. The topography is flat or gently sloping, divided by a shallow valley in the south. Similar in character to 7(i) but also containing some more mature copses and shelterbelts, remnants of an early C20<sup>th</sup> expansion to the small parkland of Mount Oswald Manor. There are some mature trees scattered across the area, relics of former hedges, and a long established pond. Rig and furrow cultivations are found across the site. North of the beck these are straight and respect the lines of C18th enclosure hedges indicating a late C18<sup>th</sup> or C19<sup>th</sup> origin. South of the beck they are less regular and their origins less clear although they could be from the same period.

### Landscape Sensitivity

- 7(i) The site has a robust and simple landform and few mature features that would be vulnerable to development impacts. It has an essentially rural character.
- 7(ii) The site has a robust and simple landform. It has some mature or semi-mature features that would be vulnerable to development impacts (mature and semi-mature trees, C19th rig & furrow). The site has the ornamental / recreational character of an urban park.
- 7(iii) The site has a robust and simple landform. It has a number of mature or semi-mature features that would be vulnerable to development impacts (mature and semi-mature trees, C19th rig & furrow, pond, watercourse). The site has a mature parkland character.

*Landscape sensitivity: 7(i) medium, 7(ii) medium, 7(iii) medium-high.*

### Landscape Value

- 7(i) The site forms part of an area identified in the City of Durham Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) which covers the undeveloped parts of the lower Browney and Deerness Valleys to the west of the City. The landscape of the site itself is featureless but its scale is balanced by woodlands to the west making it scenically attractive. It has value as open countryside maintaining the separation of Durham City and Langley Moor, but little recreational value being devoid of footpaths.
- 7(ii) and 7(iii). These areas do not lie within the AHLV. The site has an attractive parkland character, more so in the south (7(iii)) where there are more mature parkland features. Its contribution to the openness of southern approaches to the City is recognised in Policy E5 of the City of Durham Local Plan which seeks to protect that quality while accommodating the low density development (10%) envisaged in Policy EMP3. It has recreational value as a private golf course and is crossed by two footpaths giving local communities visual access to green-space which is not available in the countryside to the west which lacks footpaths.

*Landscape value: 7(i) medium-high, 7(ii) medium, 7(iii) medium-high*

### Visual Sensitivity

**3.281** The site does not play an important role in the setting of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core. It lies behind the cathedral in views from the north-north-west which coincides with the alignment of the valley of the Wear north of the city. It therefore lies behind the cathedral only in distant views from where the land rises again in the Frankland area, in which it is largely concealed by an area of higher ground around St Aidan's College. There are views of the cathedral tower seen against the sky from parts of the site, although often obscured or filtered by vegetation.

- 7(i) The site is open to view from the A167 on the main southern approach to the city from where there are panoramic views out across the Browney valley. The site is visible from across the lower Browney and Deerness valleys to the west although its flat ridge-top location is such that it is generally not visible from lower ground, and is screened further by woodlands along the adjoining slopes. It is open to view from areas of higher ground such as the higher parts of Brandon and Brandon Hill. In most views the site is visible in visually complex panoramas.
- 7(ii) and 7(iii). There are views into the site from adjacent sections of the A167 and A177. Perimeter woodland belts and overgrown hedges afford a degree of visual containment although the effectiveness of this varies considerably, being lowest along sections of the A167 in the north and south where hedges are thin. The site does not figure prominently in views of and from the wider landscape.

*Visual sensitivity: 7(i) high; 7(ii) medium; 7(iii) medium*

### **Potential Landscape Effects**

#### **3.282** Physical Features:

- 7(i) The relatively flat landform is such that impacts on the natural topography would be low. There are no mature features within the site.
- 7(ii) The relatively flat or gently sloping landform is such that impacts on the natural topography would be low. Development would remove some, or all, of the late post-medieval rig & furrow. Mature and, more commonly, semi-mature trees are scattered across the site at a relatively high density. While some could be retained in any development, substantial losses might be anticipated.
- 7(iii) The relatively flat or gently sloping landform is such that impacts on the natural topography would be low provided that the shallow valley running through Money Slack was avoided. Development would remove some, or all, of the largely late post-medieval rig & furrow. The landscape infrastructure is more robust and 'blocky' than 7(ii) and could be more readily retained in a typical housing layout. Some losses of mature features might be anticipated.

#### **3.283** Character:

- 7(i) The site is in agricultural use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character. Development would read as an urban extension into open countryside on the southern approach to the City.
- 7(ii) and 7(iii) The site is in recreational use and built development would entail a fundamental change in character. The site currently reads as an attractive undeveloped tract of green space between the isolated development at Oswald's Drive / Cock of the North and the edge of the city at Merryoaks and the University Campus. Much of this is appreciated in filtered views into the edges of the site rather than open views across it. Housing development would shift its character towards that of a 'leafy suburb' reducing the penetration of undeveloped green space into the City on its southern approach.

### **Potential Visual Effects**

#### **3.284** Public Views:

- 7(i) Development would be prominent in views from A167 until such time as structural landscaping became effective (>10 years). Open views out from the A167 would be lost. Development would be intermittently visible from across the Lower Deerness and Browney valleys although typically in visually complex views and screened or assimilated by vegetation in varying degrees.
- 7(ii) and 7(iii). Development would be visible in near views from adjacent sections of the A167 and A177, partially screened by existing vegetation, and in more open views from public footpaths bordering and crossing the site.

#### **3.285** Private Views:

- 7(i) Development would be visible from some properties close to the site in Kings Grove and Deyncourt.

- 7(ii) Development would be visible from properties bordering onto the site in Copperfield and Nickleby Chare although largely (and increasingly) screened by intervening vegetation. It would also be visible in some views from Van Mildert and St Aidan's colleges and the BusinessSchool, although again screened in many views by intervening vegetation.
- 7(iii) Development would be visible from properties bordering onto the site in St Oswald's Drive (7(iii)).

Potential visual effects: 72(i) without mitigation high, with mitigation falling to medium. 7(ii) without mitigation medium, with mitigation falling to low. 7(iii) without mitigation medium-high, with mitigation falling to low

### **Indirect or Secondary Effects**

**3.286** If development of any scale in this area contributed significantly to the need for a western relief road, the impacts of that infrastructure would need to be considered as being in some degree secondary effects of the housing development.

### **Open Space and Rights of Way**

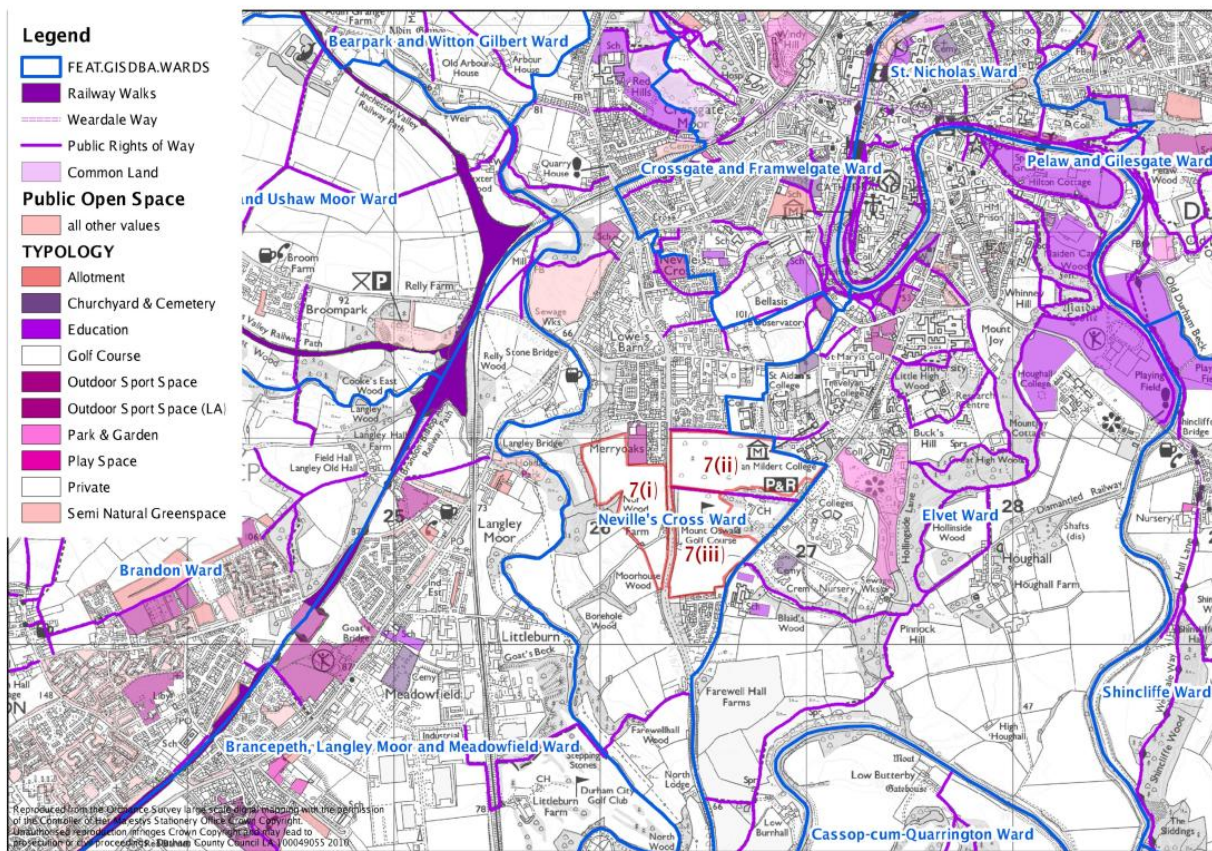
**3.287** The site is within the Neville's Cross ward. Sites 7(ii) and 7(iii) are currently a golf course. Unusually, Neville's Cross also has a large area of private open space, around Burn Hall; there are no standards for these types of open space.

**3.288** The standard here is 3.06ha for many types of open space and 0.61ha for play space. Like many wards, Neville's Cross has an under supply of many types of open space but an oversupply of sports space (3.3ha, plus 6.49ha education open space and 3.3ha private sports space). However, it does have ample semi-natural open space (9.11ha of Flass Vale). It has 1.57ha amenity open space, 0.02ha play areas, and no allotments or parks and gardens.

**3.289** To the east of the site is Elvet ward. The standard here is 5.05ha for most types and 1.01ha play space. There is sufficient park and garden space (9.77ha) but insufficient amenity open space and play space (3.4 and 0.19ha) and no allotments nor semi-natural open space. Sports space proper is non-existent but this is counterbalanced – in some respects - by an immense supply of education open space – the University's sports pitches at Maiden Castle (38.1ha) and some private sports space (3.14ha)

**3.290** The site is crossed by a PROW which links South Road level with Howlands Farm to the A167. Another PROW runs along the top of the site.

Map 27 Site 7 showing open space in the vicinity



## Flood Risk

**3.291** No parts of the site are within a flood zone.

## Contamination

**3.292** No evidence of industrial development on the site apart from 'old coal shafts' mentioned on historic maps of the early C20th.

## Planning and Sustainability

**3.293** The site is an appropriate distance from Durham for cycling, and the natural route is already used as such, partly due to the presence of the University. Its topography is not so extreme as many routes into Durham.

**3.294** There are already frequent bus services to Durham along South Road to the east of the site and the A167 to the west. They provide access to jobs, services and transport links. The site is also very close to the park-and-ride site at Howlands Farm.

**3.295** The site is not particularly close to any local retail centre or even local shops. It is adjacent to the University, which on the one hand is a facility in itself, but on the other means that the capacity for providing services not associated with the University, nearby, is limited.

## **Transport**

**3.296** The main site to the east of the A167 has previously been examined for employment and residential development but the scale was so great that the existing highway network, particularly Nevilles Cross and New Inn junctions, could not cater for the expected traffic. A modest sized housing scheme could probably be accommodated without much impact. The vehicular access would preferably be on A177. Good pedestrian, cycle and public transport links are in existence. The site to the west of the A167 would be harder to access and may need a full scale traffic signal junction or roundabout which would also access the main site to the east. Any large development will need the Western Relief Road to free up capacity at Nevilles Cross.

## **Green Belt Functions**

**3.297** As stated above, the site does not play an important role in the setting of the World Heritage Site or the visual environment of the historic core. However, the setting of Mount Oswald House and its grounds could be severely affected by insensitive development.

**3.298** The Merryoaks, site 7(i) would be a small encroachment into the countryside.

**3.299** The Mount Oswald site (sites 7ii-iii) is not within the Green Belt at present. It is within settlement boundaries, surrounded by development and has been allocated for business use in the City of Durham Local Plan. This site's development, therefore, would have less of an impact upon the surrounding countryside than any of the other sites. However, it is of a verdant character which blends into the countryside beyond it and, therefore, its development could have an urbanising effect.

**3.300** The development of site 7 would reduce the distance between Durham and Langley Moor as the crow flies but this would not be obvious because the site is not adjacent to the road linking the two settlements and because of the intervening valley.

## **Mitigation and Concept Planning**

### **Archaeology, History and Urban Design**

**3.301** The remaining historic features on site are land-forms and as such might be difficult to retain within the context of a medium-density housing development. However, efforts should be made to retain them where possible as it would be a great pity to lose them. Full excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense would be required, as elsewhere.

**3.302** The character of the immediate area would be greatly altered by the development of Mount Oswald. In the vicinity, development - whether academic or residential - tends to be rather low-density, with ample intervening green space and trees. Mount Oswald, as a large green space, contributes to this verdant character. Therefore, to develop it with high-density housing might be judged inappropriate. Careful planning and the retention of trees and copses would be necessary. Any new development would also have to be sympathetic, in terms of layout, character and density, to the setting of Mount Oswald House and to the area of parkland immediately around the club house.

## Ecology

**3.303** Because site 7 (ii) and (iii) are intensively managed and no protected species are known on site it may not be as ecologically sensitive as other sites. However, as elsewhere, an appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to development applications being made. In this case it should cover whether the protected species just off the site would be affected by development here. The perimeter hedge around site 7 (i) should be retained where possible.

**3.304** Development on site 7 (ii) and (iii) should be carefully planned to avoid damage to the many trees and copses covered by TPOs which are present. Care should be taken around the boundaries of all parts of site 7 to avoid damaging TPO trees and woodland on adjacent sites.

## Landscape

**3.305** Mitigation Potential:

- 7(i) Impacts on the rural character of the landscape could be reduced in some degree by structural landscaping although this would take some time (>10years) to become effective.
- 7(i) and 7(ii) Some mature landscape features could be retained within a typical housing layout or 'campus' development. Impacts on the undeveloped character of the site could be reduced by the use of structural landscaping to screen development. To be effective this would need to be visually dense and of a scale similar to the structure planting between the A167 and St Oswald's Drive/Blaidwood Drive. Existing vegetation would provide a degree of screening in the short term: additional screening would take some time to become fully effective (>10 years). A campus form of development with green-space retained along the perimeter and between buildings would retain a perception of the site as 'open' to a greater degree than higher density housing.

**3.306** Enhancement Potential:

- The site lies in a Landscape Conservation Priority Area where there is little need or scope for landscape enhancement.
- A potential 'least impact area' of around 14ha is shown below corresponding to area 7(ii). Development in this area would be visible from relatively short sections of the A177 and A167 and have a lower impact on the openness of southern approaches to the City than development in 7(i) or 7(iii). The eastern part of 7(ii) in particular may have potential for a campus form of residential development given its relationship with the existing University campus.

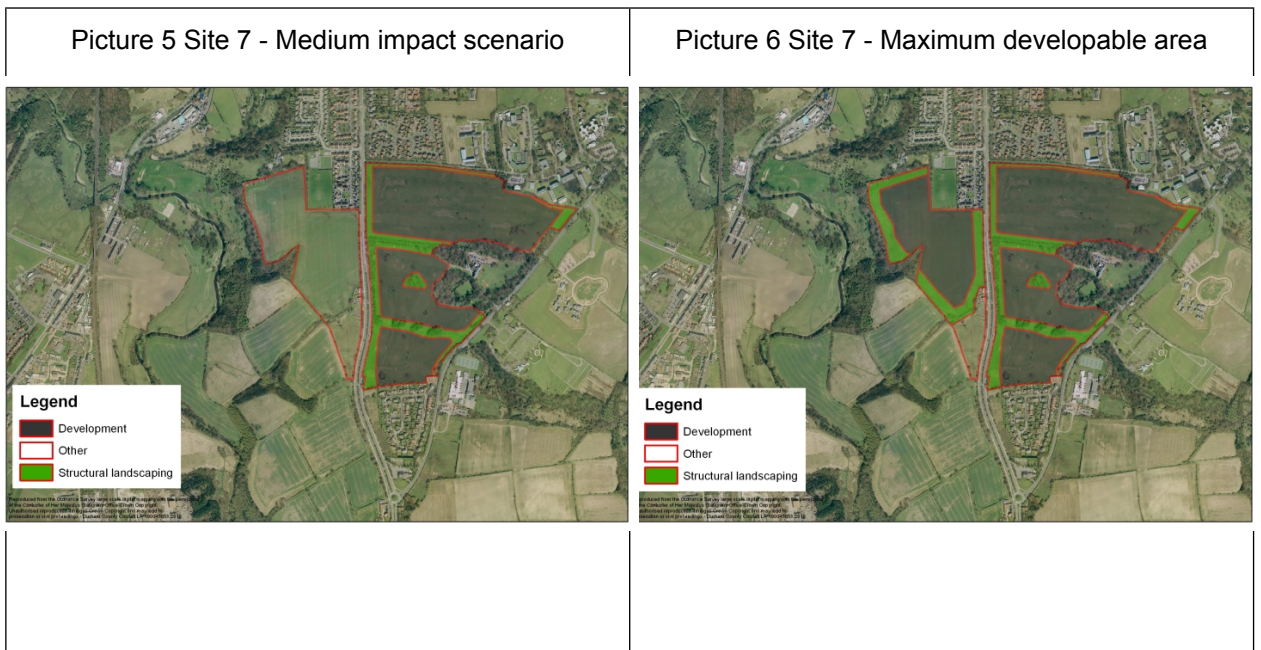


Map 28 Site 7 - Area of Least Impact



Potential least impact area. *Capacity: medium*

**3.307** Higher impact scenarios are shown below to indicate the scale of structural landscaping assumed in the assessment above.



<i>24 ha development</i>	<i>32 ha development</i>
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### **Open Space**

**3.308** As elsewhere, the development should include appropriate open space. Because the development of sites 7(ii) and 7(iii) would remove a large area of open space which is at any rate accessible to the public, as it is crossed by a PROW, some attention would have to be paid to making up for this deficit elsewhere. The existing PROW should be retained and attention paid to how their attractiveness to walkers could be maintained.

**3.309** Open space provision in the area is variable: there are very large areas of unusual types of open space (private space, golf courses, and university grounds) but an under-supply of many types of open space for which there are standards.

**3.310** On the basis of 2.3 people per dwelling, the site could accommodate 3161 people. The OSNA's provision standards indicate that this would mean about 3.16ha each of parks and gardens, semi-natural open space, amenity space and allotments, and 0.36ha of children's play space on or off the site – a total of 13.28ha.

### **Planning and Sustainability**

**3.311** Consideration should be given to how local retail services could be provided, either on the site or in a location which could also serve the University.

**3.312** The severance impacts of South Road and the A167 should be addressed, with regard to facilitating access:

- between site 7(i) and site 7(ii, iii);
- between site 7 and the University area; and
- to other locations via public transport, walking or cycling, which would all require using or crossing the flanking roads.

### **Planning History**

**3.313** The planning status of site 7 is as follows. It was allocated for business development in the 1988 and 2004 Local Plans, specifically for a low-density, high-quality science park development. A development brief was drawn up which limited the proportion of land which could be developed and specified that trees and woodland on site should be retained.

**3.314** The significant applications relating to this site are:

- 07/00944/OUT: offices and 30 executive homes with associated roads and landscaping. A FRA was done; the site is in flood zone 1. Rejected because: it conflicted with the LP; it would harm the landscape and parkland setting; additional traffic would have a detrimental effect on traffic flows and highway safety; it would

- involve development of greenfield for housing; and information on archaeology and protected species was limited.
- 08/00956/OUT: offices, student accommodation, 12 houses, shop, pub, and community facilities with associated landscaping. The same FRA was submitted. The application was withdrawn.

**Sustainability Appraisal**

**Sustainability Appraisal Recommendation:** Take site forward as Priority 2 to be considered as potentially providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy, providing its development is directed in a way which contributes to specified wider objectives.

Priority 2 sites have the potential to contribute to overall housing need, if required, whilst also benefiting related objectives. In this case Site 7 has the potential to contribute to the provision of student accommodation in a campus-style layout which would have wider benefits for the availability of housing in Durham City.

Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The preferred development scenario shown takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

**Conclusion – Durham City Green Belt**

**Site 7: Mount Oswald**

**Main implications of option: Pros and cons**

**Pros:**

- Overall the site has potential to provide a strategically important level of housing in County Durham over the plan period (over 3% of the total County requirement).
- Unlike all of the other sites under consideration for new housing in the vicinity of Durham, half of the site (Site 7ii and iii) is not within the green belt. It is almost surrounded by built development. Therefore, its development would have a less significant impact upon the openness of the green belt than other sites and would not constitute urban sprawl.
- This site is close to the city centre and therefore to jobs, facilities and transport links to other locations. A PROW runs through the site to the University area
- It is close to the University and offers the potential to deliver student accommodation in a campus-style development, reducing the need for students to occupy housing in the City Centre and suburbs.
- It is not far from Aykley Heads, where it is proposed to develop a new Business District

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site is close to the Park and Ride site and therefore residents upon the site might have less reliance upon the private car. There are other good bus services along the A177 and A167.</li> <li>• Vehicular access onto the A167 is likely to be possible at this location.</li> <li>• The site does not play an important role in the setting of the World Heritage Site.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cons:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site is within a Landscape Conservation Priority Area. Built development at this site would entail a fundamental change in character of the landscape from rural to urban or suburban. Development on this site, if insensitively done, could have a significant effect on the spacious and leafy townscape in the area. Development would have some effect on the openness of the green belt.</li> <li>• Development would affect the recreational route through the site, which is known to be highly valued by nearby residents. It would also remove a large area of golf course.</li> <li>• Development could affect some features of historic or archaeological interest on site.</li> <li>• Development could affect badgers and great crested newts near the site and TPO trees on site, although there is potential to use structural planting / green infrastructure to buffer appropriate areas.</li> <li>• The benefits of the location would be lost if the severance effects of the A167 and A177 (particularly for residents of site 7 (iii)) were not adequately addressed, and if the site were not masterplanned in such a way as to include safe and legible routes across the site and through to the surrounding areas and the city centre.</li> <li>• There are few schools and GP surgeries in the immediate area. Potential increase in local population could put pressure on essential services and facilities.</li> <li>• Development is likely to increase traffic and congestion levels and so increase local air and noise pollution as well as carbon emissions.</li> <li>• The development entails the loss of an area of grade 3 agricultural land and an area of land which is currently in use as a golf course.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mitigation suggested</b></p>	<p>Full excavation, recording and publication at developer's expense would be required, as elsewhere. The remaining historic features on site are land-forms and as such might be difficult to retain within the context of a medium-density housing development. Lower density development would offer more opportunity to retain a proportion of them.</p> <p>To develop the site with high-density housing would be inappropriate, because of the verdant, low-density character of the site and its surroundings. Careful planning and the retention of trees and copses would be necessary. Any new development would also have to be sympathetic, in terms of layout, character and density, to the setting of Mount Oswald House and to the area of parkland immediately around the club house.</p>

As elsewhere, an appropriate level of ecological assessment would be necessary prior to masterplanning or development applications being made. In this case it should cover whether the protected species just off the site would be affected by development here. The perimeter hedge around site 7 (i) should be retained where possible. Development on site 7 (ii) and (iii) should be carefully planned to avoid damage to the many trees and copses covered by TPOs which are present. Care should be taken around the boundaries of all parts of site 7 to avoid damaging TPO trees and woodland on adjacent sites

Ensure that losses of landscape features are minimised or compensated for in some degree by either structural landscaping or in off-site planting in adjacent areas. In 7(i), impacts on the rural character of the landscape could be reduced in some degree by structural landscaping although this would take some time (>10years) to become effective. In 7(ii) and 7(iii), some mature landscape features could be retained within a typical housing layout or 'campus' development. Impacts on the undeveloped character of the site could be reduced by the use of structural landscaping to screen development. To be effective this would need to be visually dense and of a scale similar to the structure planting between the A167 and St Oswald's Drive / Blaidwood Drive. Existing vegetation would provide a degree of screening in the short term: additional screening would take some time to become fully effective (>10 years). A campus form of development with green-space retained along the perimeter and between buildings would retain a perception of the site as 'open' to a greater degree than higher density housing. The eastern part of 7(ii) in particular may have potential for a campus form of residential development given its relationship with the existing University campus.

The site lies in a Landscape Conservation Priority Area where there is little need or scope for landscape enhancement.

Consider how local retail services could be provided, either on the site or in a location which could also serve the University.

Put in place measures to reduce the need to travel and to provide viable alternatives to the private car. The site is already close to local bus services and the Park and Ride site. The severance impacts of the A177 and the A167 should be addressed, with regard to facilitating access a) between site 7(i) and site 7(ii- iii) b) between site 7(iii), the University area and the Park and Ride c) to other locations via public transport, walking or cycling, which would all require using or crossing the flanking roads. Ensure that there are adequate, safe and legible pedestrian and cycle routes to the City Centre and other destinations, which are linked to the existing network; extend park and ride facilities to include routes to other destinations around Durham city, rather than just the city centre.

Ensure that the development contains adequate and good-quality public open spaces and other types of green infrastructure, both for the residents of the site itself and to address the potential needs of the people of adjacent wards. Because the development of sites 7ii and 7iii would remove a large area of open space which is at any rate accessible to the public, as it is crossed by a PROW, some attention would have to be paid to

	<p>compensating for its loss – although it is difficult to see how this could be done satisfactorily. Open space provision in the area is variable: there are very large areas of unusual types of open space (private space, golf courses, and university grounds) but an under-supply of many types of open space for which there are standards. The existing PROW should be retained and attention paid to how their attractiveness to walkers could be maintained.</p> <p>Address the issue of flood protection on site and put in place measures to reduce the impact of run-off into the Browney from site 7(i).</p> <p>Consider potential schemes to reduce local congestion and enable sustainable transport usage, in and around Durham city, so that ‘hotspots’ do not worsen and the city is not adversely affected by the increase in traffic generated by the site.</p> <p>Consider carrying out capacity needs assessments on essential services to ensure the needs of existing and new residents are met; since there are few schools and GP services in the area, even a modest development could have an impact on those that do exist.</p>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<p><b>Take site forward as Priority 2 to be considered as potentially providing a strategic site for new housing in line with housing options in the County Durham Plan Core Strategy, providing its development is directed in a way which contributes to specified wider objectives.</b></p> <p><b>Priority 2 sites have the potential to contribute to overall housing need, if required, whilst also benefiting related objectives. In this case Site 7 has the potential to contribute to the provision of student accommodation in a campus-style layout which would have wider benefits for the availability of housing in Durham City.</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation is dependent on the mitigation measures proposed below being incorporated. The attached preferred development scenario takes into account characteristics of and assets within the local landscape and is key to the proposed mitigation.</b></p>
<b>Any residual impacts to take into account</b>	<p>Even if mitigation is taken forward, the following issue are likely to remain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current economic recession and slow-down in the house building sector may mean that the scale of proposed development may not be fully realised – at least in the short term. This is likely to have positive and negative effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Most importantly, it may mean that the housing need for Durham city, and indeed Durham County, is not met.</li> <li>• Development would have an effect upon a recreational route and an area of open space which are known to be highly valued.</li> <li>• There would be some residual impacts upon wildlife and habitats on the site.</li> <li>• Since many of the features of historic or archaeological interest on site are land-forms, their loss could not be entirely prevented in the context of built development.</li> </ul>

- Even if low-density development were constructed, as recommended, the character of site 7 (ii-iii) would still be fundamentally changed with a negative impact upon the landscape and verdant townscape in the immediate area.
- The development of site 7 (i) would read as an urban extension into open countryside on the southern approach to the City and would be prominent in many views until structural landscaping became mature.
- If the development proposed around Durham City were to, cumulatively, be considered to require the construction of the northern and / or western relief roads, this would have a significant negative impact on attempts to promote sustainable transport modes and reduce the causes of climate change, since their main effect would be to promote and facilitate the use of the private car. The roads would also have a significant negative effect upon features of biodiversity, landscape, and historic/archaeological interest. It is also likely that the generation of Community Infrastructure Levy (or similar) funding for this infrastructure from housing development would prevent the allocation of funding to other improvements in and around the development areas.
- This site will increase traffic levels in this area and therefore potentially increase air and noise pollution and congestion in and around Durham City.
- The development of site 7 (i) could encourage further outward development of the city in the future, which is likely to put pressure on the surrounding landscape and environmental assets, and therefore potentially have a negative impact on them.

## 4 Conclusions

**4.1** As a result of the detailed assessment of each of the sites identified in the Core Strategy Issues and Options undertaken in this Study; the following sites will be taken forward for a more detailed assessment in the Stage 3 Green Belt Assessment:

### **Site 1 - Sniperley (all parts)**

**4.2** The site is adjacent to the existing built-up area of Durham City and is close to the City Centre and the proposed new employment at Aykley Heads. The site has good transport links and is adjacent to the park and ride scheme at Sniperley. Although the A167 acts as a barrier to some local amenities, including New College Durham, in Framwellgate Moor, it will be possible to create linkages across it. The site is relatively free of environmental constraints and those that do exist could be reasonably mitigated. The site will have no impact on the setting of the World Heritage Site.

**4.3** The site's development will however, change the character of the countryside between Durham and Witton Gilbert/Sacrison and therefore any development must be sensitive to potential impacts, particularly on the County Wildlife Site and Folly Plantation.

### **Site 2 - North of the Arnison Centre and Newton Hall (parts i, ii, iii)**

**4.4** This site is adjacent to the existing built-up area and to the extensive facilities provided at the district retail centre at the Arnison Centre (although the existing road does have a severance effect, which would be exacerbated if the Northern Relief Road goes ahead). Parts of the site are in a landscape conservation area, however the visual impact could be mitigated by appropriate landscaping. Otherwise, the site is free from significant environmental constraints

### **Site 5 - Sherburn Grange, south of Belmont (part i)**

**4.5** This site is relatively free of environmental constraints, is close to the District Centre and industrial estates at Dragonville and is on a main bus route to the City Centre. However it is severed from the existing built-up areas of Durham and Sherburn by the A1 to the west and the East Coast Main Line to the east. The layout of Belmont, to the north, is also currently impermeable so it may be difficult to establish good connectivity with the adjacent urban area. Its development would also have to be designed in a way that avoids coalescence with the nearby settlement of Sherburn. These issues will be investigated further at the next Stage of the Green Belt Assessment.

### **Site 6 - South of Sherburn Road**

**4.6** This site is relatively free from environmental constraints, is on a main bus route into the city centre, and is well connected to the existing built-up area, including the significant facilities at the District Centre and the industrial estates at Dragonville.



**Site 7 - Merryoaks and Mount Oswald (all parts)**

4.7 Sites 7ii and 7iii - Mount Oswald - are not currently within the Green Belt and have been allocated for business use for several years. All parts of the site are well-connected to the existing built-up area, particularly the University, the park and ride site at Howlands Farm, and bus and cycle routes into the City Centre. The sites are however, within a landscape conservation area and Mount Oswald also contains many protected trees and the setting of Mount Oswald House. Any development would need to reflect all of these important features. The highway network adjoining the site may also be insufficient for a high density scheme and may be more suitable for low-density development, such as executive housing or student accommodation. These issues will be investigated further at the next Stage of the Green Belt Assessment.

**Question 1**

Do you agree that the sites listed above should go forward to the next stage of the Green Belt Assessment?

4.8 The following sites will not be progressed at this time:

**Site 2 - North of the Arnison Centre and Newton Hall (parts iv, v - Brasside)**

4.9 This site is unsuitable because it is physically detached from the main built-up area of Durham. Its development would therefore have the character of sprawl and could undermine the aim of developing Durham itself. Although the site is relatively devoid of significant environmental constraints, parts of 2 (iv) are in a landscape conservation area and it contains a number of ponds and hedgerows. Development would also affect the settings of historic structures and buildings. It would also sever the Weardale Way and might increase the pressure on the Wear Valley north of Durham city centre

Site 2 - Detailed Reasons

Constraint	Detailed Reasons
Archaeology and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The line of the Roman road known in modern times as Cade's Road potentially crosses this area.</li> <li>Site 2(v) is close to several listed structures whose settings may be unacceptably affected by development: Finchale Priory (grade I listed), Finchale Abbey Farmhouse, (Grade II*); Finchale Abbey Barn and gin-gang (grade II); Union Hall Farmhouse (grade II) and Belmont Viaduct (grade II).</li> </ul>
Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 record of white-clawed crayfish.</li> <li>Several ponds, which are Durham BAP habitats.</li> <li>Some native hedgerows</li> <li>The Wear Valley at this point is the focus of one of the Wildlife Trusts' 'Living Landscape' projects, which seeks to restore semi-natural habitats on a landscape scale along the 12km</li> </ul>

Constraint	Detailed Reasons
	<p>stretch of the River Wear between Chester-le-Street and Durham.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development in this area could have an unacceptable impact upon the ecology of the Wear Valley in between Brasside and Durham. This valley contains the Brasside Pond SSSI and several stretches of ancient woodland designated as County Wildlife Sites. There are records of great crested newts and water vole.</li> </ul>
Landscape	<p>Site 2(iv) has the following features of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some mature features susceptible to development impacts.</li> <li>Essentially rural character.</li> <li>Within the area identified in the City of Durham Local Plan as an Area of High Landscape Value.</li> </ul>
Open Space and Rights of Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site 2 (iv) is crossed by the Weardale Way, which emerges from the countryside to the north and then continues along the Wear Valley to the City Centre. Development on this part of the site would have a significant impact on this route, which currently runs from Chester-le-Street to Durham entirely through non-urban terrain.</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to this area is currently difficult due to the poor state of the access roads and the remoteness from existing centres.</li> </ul>
Sustainability Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are currently few facilities, other than the prison, at Brasside. The development of this area would not form a logical extension to the existing built up area.</li> <li>Although sites 2(iv) and (v) are close to the facilities of Newton Hall, these are relatively inaccessible because of the severance effect of the East Coast Mainline railway. Sites 2(iv) and 2 (v) would not be sequentially preferable to site 2(i- iii).</li> </ul>
Green Belt Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are a number of historic sites in the vicinity of the site whose settings would be affected by development here.</li> <li>Development of sites 2(iv) and 2(v) would augment Brasside rather than Durham. This would mean a subordinate and almost detached settlement growing disproportionately to the city as a whole and would therefore lead to a more dispersed settlement pattern.</li> <li>The development of sites 2(iv) would leave virtually separation between Newton Hall and Brasside.</li> </ul>

## Question 2

Are the reasons robust for not progressing Site 2, North of Arnison Centre and Newton Hall (parts iv, v) to the next assessment stage?

**Site 3: Whitesmocks (all parts)**

**4.10** This site contains features of archaeological and historic significance and its development would damage the historic context of the City. It is a continuation of Flass Vale, an area of semi-natural open space which links the city with the surrounding countryside, and contains a number of ponds, streams and hedgerows, and a badger sett. Parts of the site are within the zone of visual influence of the World Heritage Site. The site is also of high landscape and visual sensitivity and is prominent from the A167, the A691 and from Bearpark. Its development would therefore have a significant visual impact. Although it is relatively close to the City Centre, there are limited facilities nearby and the A167 is a significant barrier between the site and the rest of the City. A suitable vehicular access to the site may be unachievable.

Site 3 - Detailed Reasons

Constraint	Detailed Reasons
Archaeology and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-medieval planned enclosure fields at Bearpark and Arbour House.</li> <li>• Areas of what is thought to be fossilised medieval fields strips associated with the medieval estate at Bearpark.</li> <li>• The Beaurepaire cluster: the site of the manor used as a retreat for the priors and monks of Durham Cathedral from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and parts of it, are Grade I listed.</li> <li>• Club Lane, the route used by the monks to travel from Durham to Beaurepaire.</li> <li>• Fernhill, a large Victorian house which has, unusually, retained all of its extensive grounds.</li> <li>• The site is also on the edge of the ‘defined’ battlefield of Neville’s Cross.</li> </ul>
Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recorded badger sett.</li> <li>• A number of ponds and streams.</li> <li>• Native hedgerows along ancient boundaries, which are likely to count as ‘important’ hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.</li> <li>• A group of TPO trees at the end of Whitesmocks Avenue, just outside the boundary of site 3(i).</li> <li>• The site is part of an almost continuous band of open space from the countryside to the City, culminating in Flass Vale, an area of common land and a County Wildlife Site. Its ecology could be affected by extra recreational visits by new residents, air and water pollution, and changes to hydrology.</li> </ul>
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Within the visual envelope of the World Heritage Site.</li> <li>• Much of the site is of high landscape and visual sensitivity.</li> <li>• Parts of the site are within a Landscape Conservation Priority Area.</li> </ul>

Constraint	Detailed Reasons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Intact early field system, frequent hedges and hedgerow trees and scattered field ponds all strongly related to the undulating topography.</li> <li>● Strongly rural character.</li> <li>● Part of a 'green wedge' of undeveloped land crossing the A167 at this point and taking in Flass Vale to the east. The site's development would separate Flass Vale from the surrounding countryside.</li> <li>● An area of attractive open countryside with strong historic and cultural associations.</li> <li>● An important part of the context of the Neville's Cross historic battlefield to the immediate south.</li> <li>● Widely visible from the northern and southern flanks of the Browney Valley in views where the existing settlement edge is reasonably well assimilated by vegetation.</li> <li>● Visible from parts of the A691 and A167, parts of Bearpark, the Lanchester Valley Walkway and footpaths and bridleways across the valley.</li> <li>● Historic parish/deer park boundary.</li> <li>● The site is part of a tract of rural land west of the A167 which provides a clear edge to the settlement.</li> <li>● Eastern parts of 3(ii) are visible from the adjacent A167. Western parts are visible from a stretch of the A691 on the western approach to the city.</li> </ul>
Open Space and Rights of Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The site contains two footpaths: on site 3 (i), the historic track to Beaurepaire, which links Crossgate Moor to the surrounding countryside; on site 3 (ii), a track which links North End to the countryside, following the historic parish / deer park boundary. Another PROW crosses the site's northern edge, linking Whitesmocks with the countryside / Witton Gilbert.</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Site 3(ii) could only be accessed from the A691 or A167 but these junctions would be too close to Sniperley roundabout.</li> <li>● Access to site 3(i) from the A167 would be difficult due to the topography and the lack of a suitable junction position on this section of A167.</li> <li>● It is unlikely that access would be permitted from the Western Relief Road which is adjacent to the western boundary of the site.</li> </ul>
Sustainability Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Although site 3 is close to the centre of Durham, Durham Johnson School and Dryburn Hospital, the severance effects of the A167 would be significant.</li> <li>● There are no local retail facilities.</li> </ul>
Green Belt Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development on this site would have a significant impact on the setting of the World Heritage Site and on historic features, such as Club Lane, Neville's Cross Battlefield, and Beaurepaire, within it.</li> </ul>

Constraint	Detailed Reasons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development would mean a western extension of the built-up area, beyond the A167, which acts as a boundary at present. It would be prominent from stretches of the Browney Valley, A691 and A167 and would change the character of the A167 at Whitesmocks from semi-rural to urban.</li> <li>• The development would reduce the distance between Durham and Bearpark and would be prominent from the A167 and A691 and from the road through Bearpark.</li> </ul>

### Question 3

Are the reasons robust for not progressing Site 3, Whitesmocks (all parts) to the next assessment stage?

### Site 4: Ramside (all parts)

**4.11** Much of this site is close to the habitats of great crested newts and parts of it are within landscape conservation areas and the zone of visual influence of the WHS. There is at least one pond and several hedgerows on site. It is relatively far from the city centre compared with other sites. It is not well-connected to the existing built-up area, due to the severance effects of the railway. This and the fact that the site is a narrow band extending either side of the road, means that development here would constitute sprawl or ribbon development. It is prominent from several routes into and around Durham and would therefore have a particularly significant urbanising effect.

Site 4 - Detailed Reasons

Constraint	Detailed Reasons
Archaeology and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although many features of historic interest have been lost, development here could still affect historic field boundaries and a potential Iron Age settlement.</li> </ul>
Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development on this site would affect the habitats of great crested newts, some ponds and native hedgerows, some of which are likely to be 'important'.</li> </ul>
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built development at this site would entail a fundamental change in character of the rural landscape between Durham and the Pittingtons. It would have a particularly significant urbanising effect because its topography makes it very visible from many vantage points.</li> </ul>
Open Space and Rights of Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disturbance to public rights of way across the site would affect access to the open countryside for existing residents.</li> <li>• Because there is a significant under-supply of most types of open space in the vicinity, development here could increase</li> </ul>

Constraint	Detailed Reasons
	the pressure on the space that does exist and it might not be possible to incorporate enough open space on site to make up the deficiency.
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development is likely to increase traffic and congestion levels and so increase local air and noise pollution as well as carbon emissions. This site is more likely than other sites under consideration to generate additional private car journeys; because it is relatively far from the City Centre; because local facilities are absent or obscure; because there is only one crossing point over the railway; and because, in this area, the vast majority who travel to work do so by car.</li> </ul>
Sustainability Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The severance effect of the railway, which could not be easily mitigated, would make it difficult to link up the new site with existing built-up areas. It would be functionally isolated, except for one access route. This would isolate new residents socially from the community of Belmont and would make some journeys longer than they need to be, thus discouraging pedestrian journeys.</li> <li>The development would be likely to increase traffic flows along Broomside Lane and would therefore have a detrimental effect upon the urban environment of Belmont, through traffic hazards, air pollution, noise, and impact upon townscape and 'liveability'. This could undermine a sense of community in this area.</li> </ul>
Green Belt Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to the elongated shape of the site it would encroach upon the countryside more than would a site of a similar size which supported a more compact settlement footprint.</li> <li>Development on this site would lead to a reduction in the separation between Durham City and the Pittingtons.</li> </ul>

### Question 4

Are the reasons robust for not progressing Site 4, Ramside (all parts) to the next assessment stage?

### Site 5 - South of Belmont (part ii)

**4.12** Many of the considerations which apply to site 5 (i) also apply to this one: it is relatively free of environmental constraints, is close to the District Centre and industrial estates at Dragonville and is on a main bus route to the City Centre. However, it is severed from the existing built-up areas of Durham and Sherburn by the A1 to the west and the East Coast Main Line to the east. Its development would also have to be designed in a way that avoids coalescence with the nearby settlement of Sherburn. In comparison with site 5 (i), landscape constraints are more significant, there is more of an impact on the settings of listed buildings, and more potential impact upon protected wildlife sites.

Site 5 - Detailed Reasons

Constraint	Detailed Reasons
Archaeology and History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The southern part of 5(ii) in varying degrees forms part of the setting of listed buildings at Sherburn Hospital.</li> </ul>
Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is adjacent to the Sherburn Hospital County Wildlife Site within the Sherburn house Beck valley; there is the potential for it to be affected by pollution or footfall.</li> </ul>
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lower part of site 5 (ii) is within a Landscape Conservation Priority Area and an Incised Lowland Valley. Landscape effects would be high, even with mitigation.</li> </ul>
Open Space and Rights of Way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no public open space nor rights of way on the site at present but development here would affect the character of the minor road leading to Sherburn House, which links to PROWs across the open countryside.</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The top half of the site is relatively easy to service by public transport at present, but the lower parts of the site would present problems. A large increase in population here could lead to congestion along Sherburn Road. This site would have poor pedestrian and cycle connectivity with Sherburn Road area due to the motorway.</li> </ul>
Sustainability Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It would be difficult to generate a sense of connectivity with neighbouring areas due to the severance effects of the railway and motorway. If this site were developed without site 5 (i) it would be unconnected to the existing built-up area on any side.</li> </ul>
Green Belt Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The development of this site would lead to the near-coalescence of Sherburn and Durham.</li> </ul>

**Question 5**

Are the reasons robust for not progressing Site 5, South of Belmont (part ii) to the next assessment stage?

**Question 6**

Do you agree that the sites listed above should not go forward to the next stage of the Green Belt Assessment?

**A Historic Landscape Characterisation of the Green Belt**

**A.1** The County Durham and Darlington (CD&D) Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has been used to produce the above map and following data, based on a geographical search of the HLC against the area of the Durham Green Belt. A total of 6212 ha<sup>(11)</sup> were selected, numbering 547 polygons, and it is upon these results that basic analysis has been undertaken.

**A.2** The following are the 10 broad classifications for the HLC into which all polygons are assigned:

CD&D HLC Broadclass types

Broadclass types	
1. Coastal	2. Military
3. Enclosed Land	4. Recreational and Ornamental
5. Industrial	6. Settlement
7. Infrastructure	8. Unenclosed Land
9. Inland Water	10. Woodland

**A.3** However by splitting the second, ‘Enclosed Land’ broadclass into it’s subclasses of ‘Medieval’, ‘Post-medieval’, ‘Modern’ and ‘Other’ enclosure, a clearer idea can be formed as to the historic character of the Green Belt.

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11 This is the total coverage of the polygons, some of which have area outside of the green belt.



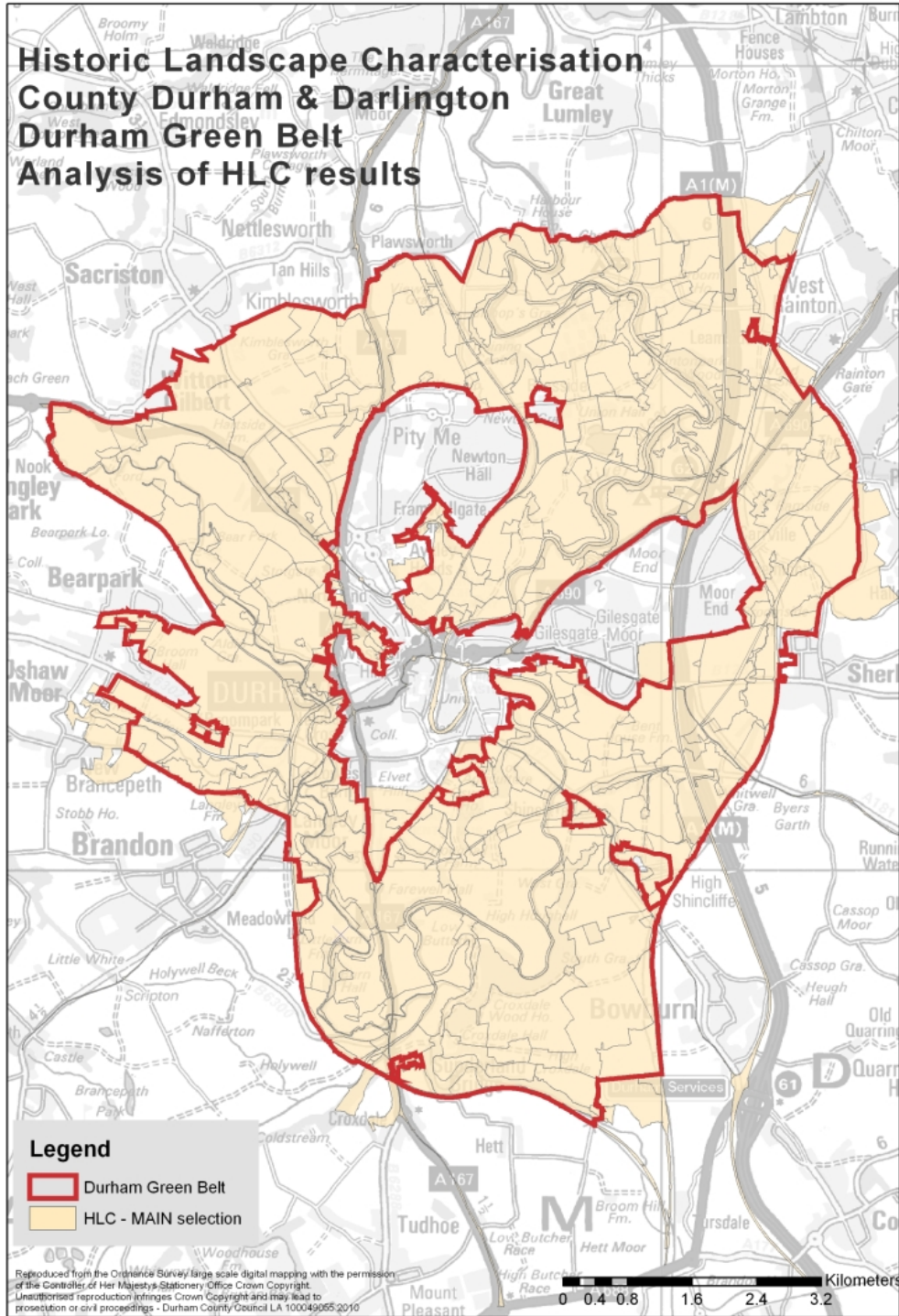
**A.4** The following table shows the main broadclasses, (subclasses for Enclosure) against the number of polygons of that classification within the Green Belt. A better idea of coverage can be formed when looking at hectarage rather than the number of polygons as the latter can be any size up from 0.5ha upwards, thus are not as comparable. Percentages have also been calculated to simplify the data.

Broadclass polygons and hectarage

Classification	Total polygons	Percentage polygons	Total ha	Percentage ha
EncLndMed	<b>11</b>	2.01%	<b>135.4766983</b>	2.18%
EncLndPM	<b>103</b>	18.83%	<b>2228.712871</b>	35.88%
EncLndMod	<b>80</b>	14.63%	<b>1625.039414</b>	26.16%
EncLndOther	<b>9</b>	1.65%	<b>21.92265694</b>	0.35%
Industrial	<b>13</b>	2.38%	<b>53.62085349</b>	0.86%
Infrastructure	<b>44</b>	8.04%	<b>325.9196094</b>	5.25%
Inland Water	<b>16</b>	2.93%	<b>155.3190577</b>	2.50%
Military	<b>1</b>	0.18%	<b>29.71891202</b>	0.48%
Rec & Orn	<b>43</b>	7.86%	<b>489.854821</b>	7.89%
Settlement	<b>125</b>	22.85%	<b>441.4884639</b>	7.11%
UnencLand	<b>1</b>	0.18%	<b>2.301004037</b>	0.04%
Wood	<b>101</b>	18.46%	<b>702.4637181</b>	11.31%
	<b>547</b>	100.00%	<b>6211.838079</b>	100.00%

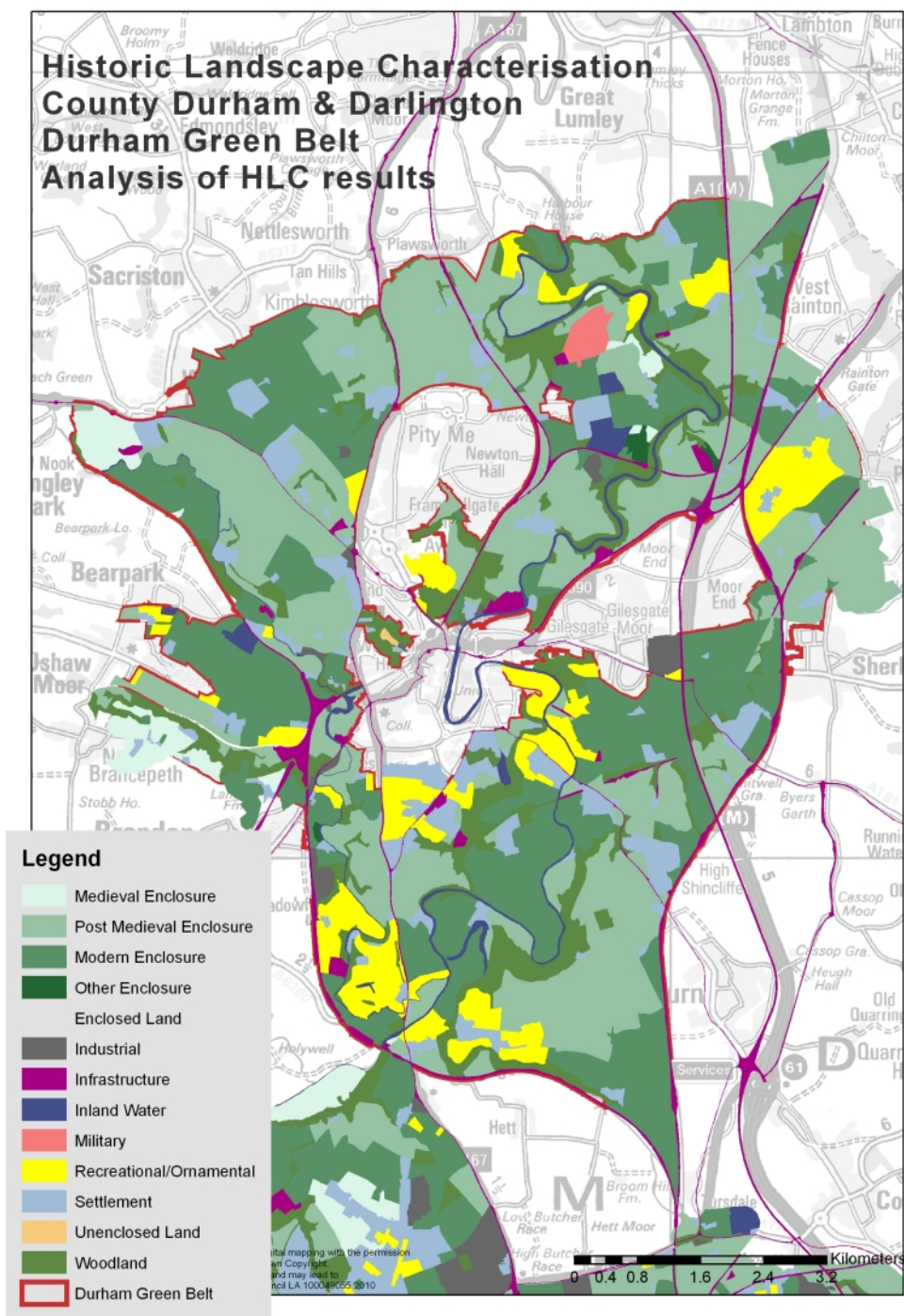
**A.5** The figure below shows the Green Belt area superimposed on the CD&D HLC, the latter rendered to show the different broadclasses, and subclass in the case of Enclosure.

Figure 1 Historic Landscape Characterisation Extent of the Green Belt



**A.6** It can be seen in Figure 2 that enclosure and woodland make up the main parts of the Green Belt, with areas of Recreation and Ornamental also predominant. Post medieval enclosure makes up over one third of the area, with just over one quarter being characterised by modern enclosure. Eleven percent is woodland, and 7% is recreation and ornamental (Parks, sports fields and golf course mainly). Of the Green Belt area, less than 3% is still characterised by medieval enclosure.

Figure 2 Percentage of HLC broadclass within Green Belt



**To find out more about the County Durham Plan contact:**

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