NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

CONSULTATION DRAFT

July 2018

1.0   Introduction

1.1   Statement by Chair of Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan (NP) sets out the future development strategy for Oakenshaw.   It has been developed by the community of the village, so that their voice is heard in the determination of planning applications, which directly impact on their lives.

This Consultation Draft Neighbourhood Plan (including Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map) represents a significant milestone on the road to adopting the Neighbourhood Plan and provides an opportunity for the community and other key stakeholders to input into the plan preparation process.

On behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed into the plan making process. We also invite comments on this document, so as to ensure that this document is as robust as possible in providing a relevant planning policy framework for Oakenshaw for the next 15 years.

1.2   Basic Condition Statement

The right for communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans was established by the Localism Act 2011, which was accompanied by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. As a result, Neighbourhood Plans are required to meet a number of basic conditions which are detailed within schedule 4B of the 1990 Act, as inserted by the provision of Schedule 10 of The Localism Act. The basic conditions are addressed in the Basic Conditions Statement and require that:

- The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is prepared having regard to national policies and advice issued by the Secretary of State.
- The making of the NP contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- The making of the NP is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area.

1.3   The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) notes that there are three elements to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental and as such the planning system (of which this NP will form part) needs to perform three roles:

- The **economic role** means contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available to support growth and innovation.
- The **social role** is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural wellbeing.
- The **environmental role** means contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states:

> *'At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking'.*

NPPF para 55 sets out policies for development in rural areas, which should be sustainable and enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

The NPPF states that the above three elements should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependant. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards and well-designed buildings and places that can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions.

Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvement in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including but not limited to:

- Making it easier for jobs to be created;
- Moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for the future;
- Replacing poor design with better design;
- Improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure;
- Widening the choice of high quality homes

1.3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF

This Neighbourhood Plan has been conceived to directly address the policy context provided by the NPPF. This includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The structure of the Neighbourhood Plan directly addresses the three tenets of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) identified in paragraph 7 of the NPPF. These are:

- Chapter 3.0 Village Community (social role).
- Chapter 4.0 Village Environment (environmental role); and
- Chapter 5.0 Village Economy (economic role).

The Neighbourhood Plan also addresses the issue of housing (Chapter 2.0) which is a focus for national planning policy and a key issue in the future development of Oakenshaw.

1.4   Overview of the Village

Oakenshaw is a small village in County Durham, situated a mile and a half from Willington to the south, and Brancepeth to the east. It's unique industrial archaeology has shaped the main settlement areas, the surrounding landscape and economic activity to the present day. The Neighbourhood Plan Area is identified in Figure 1.
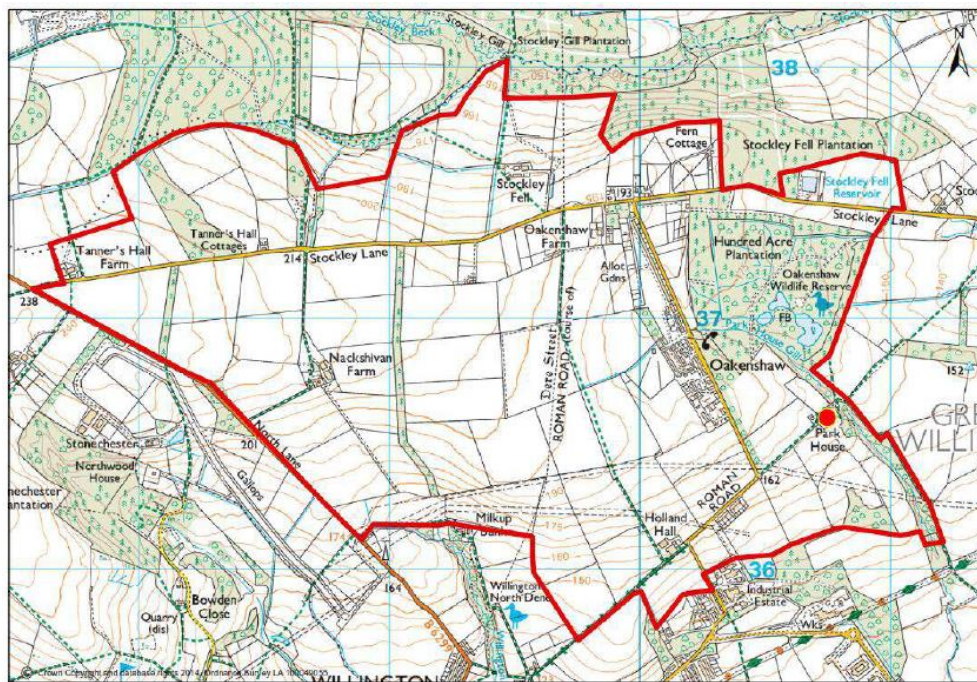
FIGURE 1: OAKENSHAW NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Oakenshaw area was famous before the introduction of coal mining as an area of forest. Oaks have been grown and felled in this area for centuries, and more recently trees were planted to supply pit props. Oaks still exist in the woods today.

The village was built from the 1850's as a colliery village for workers at the pit owned by Messrs. Straker & Love. The village retains features from its industrial past such as the pit entrance situated at the junction of Reed Avenue with Stockley Lane now converted into a private home. It also retains to this day what may be the longest continuous row of pit cottages remaining in County Durham. The long gardens of

New Row were originally bound by a solid wall the other side of which the wagonway ran taking coal and slag to Willington. This was later replaced by a road and an aerial flight for the wagons which ran parallel to the east of the road. Today gates in the wall allow access to the main road to Willington (Marked as Reed Avenue on ONS explorer map 305).

Whilst the colliery was operating the village enjoyed many amenities including the miner's institute, chapels, a shop, a school, a garage, the working men's club, a cricket pitch, and small home enterprises operating out of back doors including two sweet shops. Designated for no further development after the pit closed approximately fifty years ago (Category D), several rows of housing were demolished, the remainder sold off to private ownership. It lost all local amenities when finally, the working men's club which fell into disrepair, was burnt down in an arson attack in 2002. Oakenshaw Community Association meetings are now held in Willington as there is no community meeting place in Oakenshaw.

During the post Second World War years the Coal Board and private companies carried out extensive open cast mining between Tow Law and Brancepeth. Open cast coal extraction occurred on three sides of the main Oakenshaw settlement, some areas being reopened twice. In the 1980's the 'bleak wasteland' (Report prepared to object to further opencast development) created by the cumulative impact of continuous mining slowly recovered. Restoration of the Nackshivan open cast to agricultural land, the closure of the pit and conversion of pit head buildings, reclamation of the waste heap, the removal of the aerial flight and landscaping of the land following it's course down the hill to Willington, created an open rural environment. The field opposite New Row (grid ref NZ 20119 37352) was restored and protected by covenant for agricultural use only as recompense for the long term impact of open casting on the quality of life of residents and remains a valued green space.

In 1991 open cast mining was recommenced to the North of Park House Farm despite considerable opposition by residents concerned about the resumption of extraction causing noise, dust and the repeated decimation of the countryside. After this was discontinued in 1993, a nature reserve (grid reference 20594 37023) was created with three small lakes surrounded by commercial woodland. The nature reserve was officially opened by Tony Blair MP in 1996 and has since increased in biodiversity of flora, fauna and fungi. This is a highly valued public amenity giving Oakenshaw a unique quality. It is used by residents and visitors interested in its diverse wildlife, for walking and is popular with dog owners.

1.4.1   Population Growth and Change in Age Demographics

Despite its category D status following the closure of the pit, the population of Oakenshaw has grown. The Wear Valley District Local Plan (1997) cites the population of Oakenshaw as 264, based on the 1991 census. Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakenshaw, County_Durham) cites the 2001 census data, showing the population had grown to 470. As the area became more desirable,

incomers to the village, mainly moving to new housing areas built at the southern end of the village, led to a further population increase. Using the census output area which includes a few dwellings not within the NP boundary, the 2015 census shows a further rise in the population to 565. Whilst these figures are based in slightly different output areas, census data indicates a steady rise in population. Not only has the population grown, but the composition of it has altered. The age profile of the village population has changed as follows:

- A decrease in the proportion of children aged 0 to 15 years from 21% to 15%
- An increase in the proportion of older people over 65 from 11% to 19%
- A slight decrease in the proportion of people of working age (16 to 64) from 68% to 66%

1.4.2   Indices of Multiple Deprivation

Current indices of multiple deprivation (IMD) indicate that Oakenshaw (post codes DL15 0TE and DL15 OTB) are on the 4th decile overall, scoring lower for health and wellbeing (3rd decile) and barriers to housing (2nd decile). These lower scores may be explained in terms of the age of the population, and the age of some of the housing stock in those post code areas. Levels of education tend to be higher (6th decile), reflecting the number of professionals and retired academics resident in the village who may have skewed the results.

1.4.3   Amenities

Despite the steady rise in population, indoor public amenities previously lost have not been restored or developed in response to demographic change.

New outdoor amenities have been developed. Following the cessation of open cast mining to the east of the village in 1993 a Wildlife Nature Reserve was created on restored land consisting of woodland and pond areas. The reserve is surrounded by commercial woodland which also supports wildlife habitat. The village also has a large, public, open field (referred to as 'the green' although it has not been designated as a village green) which runs parallel to New Row with a small football pitch, multiple use games area and children's play area. West of this field are allotments, one of which has been designated a community orchard garden with sheltered seating areas, providing residents with the opportunity to engage in communal gardening. The IMD index for the living environment is rated above average at the 7th decile.

Public transport is limited necessitating high levels of car ownership. The village is served by an hourly bus to Bishop Auckland which does not run after 5.15 in the evening or on Sundays. To get to Durham or Crook, it is necessary to change buses in Willington; buses running every 20 minutes from Willington.

1.4.4 *Oakenshaw Community*

There is a strong community, underpinned by the work of the Oakenshaw Community Association (OCA). In recent years residents have organised bulb planting, planters throughout the village, litter picks and open air events to bring the community together. They have taken pride in the appearance of the village. The OCA has raised over £200,000 both within the village from the residents and through external grants. With this money new local amenities have been created such as a Play area, Multiple Use Games Area (MUGA), tree planting and a community orchard. The Association has recently negotiated income for the next twenty years, to use for community benefit, from a new wind turbine development. Residents have been asked how they would like to spend this money using a survey and at regular meetings. The key areas identified for expenditure through the community consultation were considered when developing the NP. Some of these projects have already been completed. The remaining projects will be incorporated into a broader plan for the village.

The residents feel proud of their achievements and can see direct benefits. These efforts have made Oakenshaw a desirable village to live in, have attracted new residents and the development of new built homes.

1.5 How the Neighbourhood Plan Was Prepared

1.5.1 *Steering Group*

Oakenshaw has a very active and well organised community association that was keen to support the development of the NP. Two Oakenshaw Community Association (OCA) committee members and a representative of Greater Willington Town Council formed a steering group that met regularly to project manage the development of a plan. It was agreed that the OCA members of the steering group should act independently of the OCA as not all village residents belonged to the association. The OCA provided practical support such as delivering flyers, offered information and advice, providing an established infrastructure to disseminate information and to report progress in a variety of ways including: at meetings, in the newsletter, on the village noticeboards, via facebook and the website. Other residents, were co-opted into the steering group to help with tasks such as defining the perimeter of the neighbourhood area, hosting focus groups and providing IT support.

Two successful grants enabled us to commission expert advice and guidance from a planning consultant who ran workshops, developed one topic area to provide a template for preparing the evidence for other topics, reviewed topic papers written by the steering group, advised and carried out a health check to ensure consistency during the development of the final policies.

The steering group produced and continually revised a Project plan and GANTT chart to time-manage the project and tasks, according to each stage of the process. There

has been a degree of slippage in time to completion as the complexities of neighbourhood planning became understood by the group.

1.5.2 Consultation Strategy

The steering group decided not to survey residents to elicit ideas for the NP, as a survey had recently been carried out to determine spending priorities, instead the consultation strategy used an iterative process of gathering opinions and ideas at any event where residents met, such as the OCA AGM, and social events. Residents were asked to write ideas on post it notes and these were transcribed and copied into a master document for analysis. Following the initial round of consultations, the cumulative ideas were fedback to residents using presentations at meetings and at an NP open day held on December 3rd 2016.

In addition to informal information gathering, a systematic consultation was conducted using nine focus groups hosted by residents in their homes in different parts of the village. For each focus group invitations were issued to all residents living in the same area, thus all villagers were invited to a focus group at some stage. Those attending were asked what they would like to preserve, improve or develop in the village. They generated and discussed ideas often reaching consensus within each group. Ideas were noted down on post it notes which were transcribed and a summary of these ideas was delivered to all those originally invited, whether they had attended the focus group or not. Contact details of the steering group were provided so that other comments could be emailed or left on an answer machine. These ideas were added to the master document for analysis. Every resident in the village had been invited to attend a focus group and informed of the outcomes of the group they had been invited to attend excepting two landowners, and three local small business owners who were all seen separately. One caveat is that summating the comments provides only an approximate indication of the level of endorsement as not everyone wrote down their ideas, especially where another group member had already recorded the same idea. If anything, summation underestimates those endorsing an idea, but the data is better used qualitatively to capture the range and content of the ideas.

All ideas that had been transcribed and recorded on the master document were analysed and grouped by subject matter. For each of the objectives the transcribed comments were organised to show the level of support or opposition to the ideas expressed and categorised according to its suitability for planning policy or a community action project. These organised issue tables are shown in the appendix for each topic paper.

Progress on the NP was reported in newsletters and at all public meetings.

1.6 What the Neighbourhood Plan Hopes to Achieve

Oakenshaw will be subject to the broader provisions of the emerging Durham County Plan. Whilst the NP would be concordant with the broader DCC plan and the extant Wear Valley Local Plan (1997), there is no planned provision specific to the issues raised by the residents of Oakenshaw, and no clear guidelines for economic regeneration of the NP area.

There is now a need to consider a development plan for the village to coordinate current local activity, protect and improve green space, and identify new areas for development. We seek to build on the current strengths and interests of the village, and the work of the community association to maintain and enhance the appearance of the village, restore amenities and create a vibrant future within a pleasant environment.

1.7 Vision & Objectives

1.7.1 *Vision*

The overall Vision for Oakenshaw that this Neighbourhood Plan seeks to achieve is:

> *'That Oakenshaw retains and reinforces its character as an environmentally friendly village in a distinctly open rural setting. The green spaces and environmental assets of the Neighbourhood Area will be protected and enhanced and support given to providing the facilities, amenities and opportunities that help promote a flourishing community and economy.'*

This overall vision seeks to build on the village's key attributes (rural character and setting, open spaces, historic sense of community and embracement of sustainable energy) with an understanding that these are positive characteristics to be sustained and developed.

1.7.2 Visions for Housing, Village Community, Village Environment and Village Economy.

Four Visions concerning Housing, Village Community, Village Environment and Village Economy are detailed in Chapters 2.0 to 5.0 of this Neighbourhood Plan. They distill the Overall Vision detailed above. These are then expanded into a set of Objectives and Development Policies that will help shape development management decisions in the Neighbourhood Plan Area. The specific Vision for each topic is detailed below:

> **Housing -** *'To support housing development of an appropriate scale, type and location to meet the identified needs of the community, whilst respecting the essential character and distinctly open rural setting of the village.'*

Village Community - *'That Oakenshaw retains its village character and support is given to providing the facilities, amenities and opportunities that help promote a flourishing community.'*

Village Environment – *'Protect and enhance the valued green spaces and environmental assets of the village and wider Neighbourhood Area for the important roles they fulfil (a) providing an amenity for residents, (b) maintaining separation between Oakenshaw and Willington, and (c) defining the character of Oakenshaw as a linear village set in open countryside with strong demarcation between built fabric and open countryside.'*

Village Economy - 'Support the village economy by facilitating home working, self-employment and small-scale business opportunities (including tourism), which are appropriate to their setting and the nature of neighbouring uses. To improving connectivity (both electronic, wireless and transport) beyond the village and to maintain an income stream for the use and benefit of the community.'

1.8   Structure of the Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan is structured as follows:

Chapter 2.0   Housing

Chapter 3.0   Village Community

Chapter 3.0   Village Environment

Chapter 4.0   Village Economy

Chapter 5.0 provides an assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan's compliance with National Planning Policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.0 Housing

2.1 Introduction

The population of Oakenshaw was estimated to be 565 in 2015. This is almost double the 1991 population of 264. Much of this population increase has resulted from inward migration to the village that has been accommodated to a large extent in new residential development. This has typically been in the form or individual dwellings or small clusters of new houses. Noticeable trends in population change in the Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Area since 2001 have been –

- a steady decrease in the proportion of children (0-15 years) from 21% to 15%
- a steady increase in the number of older people (65+) from 11% to 19%
- a marginal decrease in the number of working age (16-64) people from 68% to 66%

In simple terms, the trends in the age profile of residents show that families with young children have declined, whilst the number of older people have increased. This has implications for the type of housing required in the village which is more suited to older people.

The resident population of Oakenshaw is accommodated in 223 dwellings. This equates to 2.5 persons per dwelling, which is slightly higher than the national average of 2.3 persons per dwelling. There are 127 'older' houses and 96 'new build' houses in Oakenshaw. Older houses are generally terraced houses, while new build houses are detached, semi-detached or bungalows.

Information from Durham County Council's planning records show that, over the period 2005-2012, planning permission was granted for a total of 12 new dwellings (of which 3 were from a conversion scheme). All 12 of the approved dwellings have since been built.

The SHLAA is a study to identify sites within County Durham which have the potential for housing development (NB – this does not automatically mean that they will come forward for development). Reference to the mapping part of the 2013 SHLAA shows that there are no identified sites within the Neighbourhood Plan Area of Oakenshaw.

2.2 Overall Vision - Housing

The overall vision for the development of Housing in Oakenshaw is that it will continue to grow along the lines of the development of the village since the 1990s. While it is not anticipated that the community will double in size as it has since the 1990s, there is potential that increase may occur. It is also notable that this is likely

to be driven significantly by newcomers to the village as well as seeking to retain existing residents. In response to this, the Housing Objective for Oakenshaw is defined below.

2.3   Housing Development Objective

The housing development objective in Oakenshaw is defined as follows:

> *'To support housing development of an appropriate scale, type and location to meet the identified needs of the community, whilst respecting the essential character and distinctly open rural setting of the village.'*

The approach adopted to housing development addresses the built up area of Oakenshaw within the defined Settlement Limits to Development identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map. It also addresses the area outside of the built up area of the village which contribute to the distinctly open rural setting of the village and separation from surrounding settlements. These are identified and safeguarded from housing development.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has established a far more positive and supportive stance towards development in general and housing in particular, which needs to be carried through into local and neighbourhood planning.

In response to this, the Neighbourhood Plan preparation process has sought to proactively identify where new housing development in Oakenshaw could be provided over the period of the plan.

The population of Oakenshaw approximately doubled between 1991 and 2015. The historic build rate since the 1980 has been approximately 15-20 new housed every 10 years. This rate of growth is considered reasonable and in accordance with maintaining the character of the village through 'organic' growth.

In response to this a 2.24 ha area of undeveloped land has been included within the defined Settlement Limits to Development identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map. This is located to the south of South Acre. This could accommodate in the region of 50 new houses (residential density of 25 units / ha). However, given the site's sloping topography, occurrence of overhead power lines, and the objective that any development in this area must include significant landscaping, boundary, highway and improvement works, it is anticipated that this area will accommodate a maximum of 30 houses. This is sufficient to accommodate all of the anticipated new housing growth in Oakenshaw over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This site is considered the most sustainable location for new housing development in Oakenshaw for the following reasons:

1. It provides a continuation of the established linear form of Oakenshaw predominately located to the west of the main road.
2. It will act to connect Park View to the main settlement of Oakenshaw and strengthen its identity as part of the village.
3. The sloping topography of the site means that with appropriate design, landscaping and layout, it will be possible to mitigate any impact on views to the surrounding countryside from South Acre.
4. It will facilitate highway and footpath improvements on the main road and particularly the bend at the entrance to Park House Farm.
5. It will accommodate new housing in Oakenshaw in a location which will not detract from the character of Oakenshaw as a linear settlement set in open countryside. It will mean that there is no need to accommodate housing development on the sensitive Village Character / Environmental Asset areas located to the east, west and south of the village as identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map (Policy ENV 1).

It is noted that this area is unlikely to experience significant impacts associated with the existing wind turbine which are in excess of those experienced at existing houses in the village.

While housing development may provide the most significant potential for development of this site, its position within the defined Settlement Limits to Development identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map, means that other land uses may be suitable to be accommodated on the site. Any development proposals will need to pay particular attention to landscape impact resulting from the sloping topography of the site.

2.4 Development Policies

Housing development policies defined in this plan are intended to address three issues. These are:

1) The type of new housing (meeting identified local needs)
2) The amount of new housing
3) The location of new housing

The Plan does not promote specific sites for development, in addition to the criteria set out in Policy H1, proposals will also be expected to address flood risk issues.

Policy H1 - Housing Development within the Existing Built-up Area of Oakenshaw.

Permission will be granted for infilling and small scale residential development within the existing built up area of Oakenshaw, provided it:

- is in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings;

- does not significantly adversely affect the amenities of residents in the area, including daylight/sunlight, privacy, air quality, noise and light pollution;
- has safe and suitable access to the site for all people.
- is not on an area of undeveloped land, including residential curtilage, that contributes to the character of the village.
- New housing development will not be permitted on green spaces identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map other than in exceptional circumstances.

In addition, support will be given to affordable homes.

Policy H2 - Housing Development Outside of the Existing Built-up Area of Oakenshaw.

Housing development outside of the built up area of Oakenshaw will only be permitted in locations which do not detract from the linear character of Oakenshaw and which protect and enhance the landscape context of Oakenshaw set in open countryside. Housing development will not be permitted outside of the defined Settlement Limits to Development identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map. Restricting housing development outside of the defined Settlement Limits to Development identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map contributes to the distinctly open rural setting of the village, linear form, and separation from surrounding settlements.

Policy H3 Support for Accommodation designed for Older Persons

Housing development designed to support the needs of older people will be supported if they also accord with Policy H1, Policy H2 and other policies contained in this Plan.

3.0   Village Community

3.1   Introduction

Oakenshaw is a former colliery village which has experienced significant change over the past 40 years. It retains a strong community spirit, building on its industrial heritage.

The population of Oakenshaw was estimated to be 565 in 2015. This is almost double the 1991 population of 264. Much of this population increase has resulted from inward migration to the village rather than growth from within the existing population. This has typically been accommodated in individual dwellings or small clusters of new houses.

Today the community is characterised by those who have historic ties to the village that go back many decades. This is coupled with newcomers to the village attracted by the rural setting and location of Oakenshaw, close to Durham City.

Since the 1980s, the village has lost a number of key facilities which acted to support community cohesion. This included the village primary school, the Working Men's Club, public house, village shop / post office and cricket club. There is currently no indoor facility or amenity in the settlement which acts as a focus for the village.

3.2   Overall Vision – Village Community

The overall vision for the development of community in Oakenshaw is defined as follows:

> *'That Oakenshaw retains its village character and support is given to providing the facilities, amenities and opportunities that help promote a flourishing community.'*

This vision is translated into the following Village Community Objectives.

3.3   Village Community Objective

From this Overall Vision, an overall Community Objective has been defined that specifically focuses on supporting facilities and amenities that promote a strong community in Oakenshaw. While this focuses on the development of facilities and amenities as a specific means of enhancing a sense of community, it is also recognised that sustaining and developing the other key elements of the Overall Vision (rural setting, open spaces and environmental sustainability) are important in sustaining the community of the village. A key challenge for the development of Village Community is integrating newcomers into the social fabric of the village.

The Village Community Objective is defined as follows:

1   Support the provision of the facilities and amenities that promote a flourishing and cohesive village community.
2   Support development that accommodates the needs of all members of the community.
3   Support physical development which integrates all areas of the village into a single settlement.

3.4   Development Policies

Realising the overall Vision and Community Objective for Oakenshaw requires the adoption of development policies that shape development management decisions in respect of proposals for development in Oakenshaw.

The main driver for establishing the specific policies has been the views of residents of the village coupled with national and local planning policy. The Policies for the development of Village Community in Oakenshaw are intended to address four main issues:

1.   Provide a Village Hub that can act as a focus for community events and interaction within the village.
2.   Support the development of amenities in the village including small scale retail facilities and other services (such as a community café / bar) that will foster community engagement and interaction.
3.   Support residential development that will accommodate the whole spectrum of the community including families and older people.
4.   That all new development within Oakenshaw contributes to a sense of community cohesion and interaction within the village.

These policies are intended to guide proposals for new development in the village and their subsequent determination in the development management process.

Policy VC.1:   Community Hub

This Neighbourhood Plan supports the development of a Community Hub in Oakenshaw to be used to accommodate community based activities and events that contribute towards fostering a strong sense of community in the village. The Community Hub should be situated in an accessible location within the village.

Policy VC.2:   A Sustainable Community

Proposals for activities that act to provide services for the village and have the potential to increase community engagement and interaction will be supported. This includes a range of housing options suitable for all elements of the community.

Policy VC 3: Community Cohesion

All new development proposals in Oakenshaw requiring planning permission are required to demonstrate how they contribute towards the Objective of increasing a sense of community and cohesion within the village or identify how this objective is not relevant to the proposal.

4.0   Village Environment

4.1   Introduction

Green spaces in the form of amenity areas, screening and sustaining openness are of critical importance to quality of life in Oakenshaw and the setting of the village in open countryside.

4.2   Overall Vision – Village Environment

The overall vision for the Village Environment in Oakenshaw is defined as follows:

> *'Protect and enhance the valued green spaces and environmental assets of the village and wider Neighbourhood Area for the important roles they fulfil (a) providing an amenity for residents, (b) maintaining separation between Oakenshaw and Willington, and (c) defining the character of Oakenshaw as a linear village set in open countryside with strong demarcation between built fabric and open countryside.'*

This vision is translated into the following Village Environment Objectives.

4.3   Village Environment Objective

A number of Objectives have been identified to realise the overall vision for the Village Environment. These are:

1. To retain the distinct rural identity of Oakenshaw by identifying green areas surrounding the village that are integral to maintaining its character as a linear village set in open countryside with strong demarcation between built fabric and open countryside.
2. To retain, maintain and improve the green spaces within the village.
3. To use tree planting to reduce noise and pollution from the main roads.
4. Protect the nature reserve and surrounding woodland to enable wildlife to flourish.
5. Integrate Park View within the village.

These objectives specifically address the Overall Vision for Village Environment in Oakenshaw. They also seek to manage the environment of the village in order to retain its character as a distinct linear form settlement where the open rural context and strong settlement boundaries are integral to its form.

High regard is given to the value of green spaces as an amenity for residents in terms of recreation and views from the village to the open countryside, which is a key characteristic of the village.

There is also specific reference to the Nature Reserve and its immediate setting which are of significant value as an environmental resource.

4.4   **Development Policies**

Realising these specific objectives for Environment in Oakenshaw requires Development Policies. These policies are intended to guide proposals for new development in the village and their subsequent determination in the development management process.

Policy ENV 1 – Maintaining the Open Rural Character of Oakenshaw and Protecting Ecological Assets.

Development which has the potential to detract from the open character and linear form of Oakenshaw as a distinct settlement in open countryside will not be permitted in locations outside of the defined Settlement Limits to Development identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map. These areas have an important role defining the character of Oakenshaw as a distinct linear village in open countryside or accommodate specific environmental assets (eg. Nature Reserve) Areas of particular importance to maintaining the character and linear form of Oakenshaw and/or accommodate significant environmental assets are identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map.

Policy ENV 2 – Protecting Green Spaces within Oakenshaw as Amenity and Ecological Assets.

Green spaces within the built area of Oakenshaw and Identified on the attached Oakenshaw NP Proposals Map will be safeguarded from development which detracts from their role as an environmental and recreational amenity for residents (eg. the Village Green). Proposals in these areas will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that proposals will result in significant community benefit.

Policy ENV 3 – Improving Environmental Quality

Initiatives to improve the environmental quality and diversity of Oakenshaw will be supported. This includes retaining areas of woodland which act to screen noise and particulate pollution from the surrounding road network and other sources of pollution.

5.0   Village Economy

5.1   Introduction

The origin of Oakenshaw is as a pit village, where residents worked in the local colliery. This closed approximately 50 years ago and residents now generally seek employment outside the village, occasionally working from home.

There are a small number of self-employed people running their businesses from home including two landscape gardeners, beauty treatments, distribution of chemicals for quality control testing, antique restoration, and a cattery. In addition, the Oakenshaw Community Association has taken advantage of government subsidies to erect a wind turbine, in collaboration with a local landowner, and gain an annual income stream from this to be used for the benefit of the community for the next twenty years.

To ensure a thriving future economy for the village, this Neighbourhood Plan provides policy that supports small local business and job creation opportunities, improved telecommunications and transport connections, and seeks ways of generating income for the benefit of the village beyond the income stream from the turbine. At the same time new proposals should not change the quiet rural character of the village.

5.2   Overall Vision – Village Economy

The overall vision for the Village Economy in Oakenshaw is defined as follows:

> *'Support the village economy by facilitating home working, self-employment and small-scale business opportunities (including tourism), which are appropriate to their setting and the nature of neighbouring uses. To improving connectivity (both electronic, wireless and transport) beyond the village and to maintain an income stream for the use and benefit of the community.'*

This vision is translated into the following Village Economy Objectives.

5.3   Village Economy Objectives

A number of Objectives have been identified to realise the overall vision for the Village Economy. These are:

1. To enhance opportunities to engage in the tourist economy.
2. To improve electronic connectivity.
3. To seek and implement opportunities for income generation for the benefit of the community.

4. To support home working, micro business, and the development of community enterprises with the potential to offer skills training.
5. To discourage the development of large scale industrial buildings.

These objectives specifically address the Overall Vision for Village Economy in Oakenshaw.

There is a focus on the tourism economic potential of Oakenshaw in County Durham which is seeking to develop a vibrant and dynamic tourism offer.

Within the village there is a clear focus on fostering small scale enterprise and home working.

There is clear support for building on the success of the community wind turbine and sustaining income generating initiatives for the betterment of the village. There is however recognition that any proposals must protect the amenity of residents and should be of a scale commensurate with the character of Oakenshaw as a village in a rural setting.

5.4   Development Policies

Realising these specific objectives for Economy in Oakenshaw requires Development Policies that are intended to guide proposals for new development in the village and their subsequent determination in the development management process.

Policy Econ 1   Tourism Development

Proposals to develop small scale tourism focused activities, including dedicated holiday accommodation, will be supported in locations which comply with all other relevant policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy Econ 2   Improving Electronic Connectivity

The provision of infrastructure to support the development of electronic connectivity in the village will be supported in locations which comply with all other relevant policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy Econ 3   Community Income Generation

Proposals to develop appropriate scale income generating initiatives, including renewable energy provision, will be supported in locations which comply with all other relevant policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Any proposals for new or replacement wind turbines must demonstrate significant community support and address any potential negative impacts on residents in excess of those generated by the existing turbine.

Policy Econ 4   Supporting Appropriate Scale Economic Development

Appropriate scale business focused development will be supported in locations which comply with all other relevant policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. This includes small scale extensions to residential properties to accommodate home offices. Large scale industrial buildings will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances.

6.0   Policy Compliance with National Planning Policy Framework

6.1   Introduction

The policies contained within this Neighbourhood Plan are required to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.2   Neighbourhood Plan Compliance with the NPPF

An assessment of the compliance of these policies with the NPPF is provided in Table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1: Neighbourhood Plan Compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework	
Policy	**Comment**
2.0 Housing	
Policy H1 - Housing Development within the Existing Built-up Area of Oakenshaw. Permission will be granted for infilling and small scale residential development within the existing built up area of Oakenshaw, provided it: • is in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings; • does not significantly adversely affect the amenities of residents in the area, including daylight/sunlight, privacy, air quality, noise and light pollution; • has safe and suitable access to the site for all people. • is not on an area of undeveloped land, including residential curtilage, that contributes to the character of the village. • New housing development will not be permitted on green spaces identified on Figure 4.1 other than in exceptional circumstances.	TBC – New NPPF Issues 24 July 2018

In addition, support will be given to affordable homes.	
Policy H2 - Housing Development Outside of the Existing Built-up Area of Oakenshaw. Housing Development outside of the built up area of Oakenshaw will only be permitted in locations which do not detract from the linear character of Oakenshaw and which protect and enhance the open landscape context of Oakenshaw set in open countryside. Housing development will not be permitted outside of the defined built up area in locations which contribute to the distinctly open rural setting of the village and separation from surrounding settlements and are identified on Figure 4.2.	
Policy H3 Support for Accommodation designed for Older Persons Housing development designed to support the needs of older people will be supported if they also accord with Policy H1, Policy H2 and other policies contained in this Plan.	
3.0 Village Community	
Policy VC.1: Community Hub This Neighbourhood Plan supports the development of a Community Hub in Oakenshaw to be used to accommodate community based activities and events that contribute towards fostering a strong sense of community in the village. The Community Hub should be situated in an accessible location within the village.	
Policy VC.2: A Sustainable Community	

Development proposals for activities that act to provide services for the village and have the potential to increase community engagement and interaction will be supported. This includes a range of housing options suitable for all elements of the community.	
Policy VC 3: Community Cohesion All new development proposals in Oakenshaw are required to demonstrate how they contribute towards the Objective of increasing a sense of community and cohesion within the village.	
4.0 Village Environment	
Policy ENV 1 – Maintaining the Open Rural Character of Oakenshaw and Protecting Ecological Assets. Development which detracts from the open character and linear form of Oakenshaw as a distinct settlement will not be permitted in locations identified on Figure 4.2. These areas have an important role defining the character of Oakenshaw or accommodate specific environmental assets (eg. Nature Reserve)	
Policy ENV 2 – Protecting Green Spaces within Oakenshaw as Amenity and Ecological Assets. Green spaces within the built area of Oakenshaw and Identified on Figure 4.1 will be safeguarded from development as they provide an environmental and recreational amenity for residents (eg. the Village Green). Development in these areas will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that proposals will result in significant community benefit.	

Policy ENV 3 – Improving Environmental Quality Initiatives to improve the environmental quality and diversity of Oakenshaw will be supported. This includes retaining areas of woodland which act to screen noise and particulate pollution from the surrounding road network and other emitters.	
5.0 Village Economy	
Policy Econ 1 Tourism Development Proposals to develop small scale tourism focused development, including dedicated holiday accommodation, will be supported in locations which comply with all other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.	
Policy Econ 2 Improving Electronic Connectivity The provision of infrastructure to support the development of electronic connectivity in the village will be supported in locations which comply with all other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.	
Policy Econ 3 Community Income Generation Proposals to develop appropriate scale income generating initiatives, including renewable energy provision, will be supported in locations which comply with all other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.	
Policy Econ 4 Supporting Appropriate Scale Economic Development Appropriate scale business focused development will be supported in locations which comply with all other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. This includes small scale extensions to residential properties to accommodate home offices. Large scale industrial	

buildings will not be permitted other than in exceptional circumstances.	