

WNP Housing Background Paper

This paper brings together the evidence about the housing situation in Wooler, and the comments made during consultations in 2017. It was produced in late 2017 and used as an input to the *CAN Housing Needs Study 2018*, and the *AECOM Housing Sites and Housing Needs Assessments* undertaken in 2018¹.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Purpose of this paper is to provide an evidence base for the housing policies in Wooler Neighbourhood Plan. It summarises previous reviews and studies, comments received in surveys and consultations undertaken for *Wooler Neighbourhood Plan*, reviews the present housing stock and sites available for new housing, and summarise the key needs and aspirations for our community which arise from this material. These issues were then tested in the CAN and AECOM studies in 2018.

2. Overview of issues and trends

2.1 The population of Wooler Parish as recorded in the census in 2011 was 1983, an increase of 126 (6.8%) since 2001, when the census recorded 1857 people living in the parish. There were 974 households, an increase of 93 since 2001.

2.2 Wooler parish has 1095 housing spaces recorded in the 2011 census. 974 were occupied at the time. Of these, 59% were owner-occupied, 24% social rented, and 17% privately-rented. (See Table 1). 37% of housing spaces were occupied by one person only. Residential rates data for Wooler Parish in 2015 recorded 1123 residential properties, of which 404 (35.98%) were single person occupants. This suggests that the growth in Wooler households and in single person households continues.

¹ It was prepared by Patsy Healey, Sue Welch, David Bull and Lynne Pringle, with input from Pam Ratcliffe and Diane Perry.

Table 1: Housing in Wooler Parish, Glendale and Northumberland: Census 2011

		Wooler Parish	Glendale	Northumberland
Population		1983	5836	
Households		974	2755	
Housing Units:				
Tenure:	Owned outright	37.8%	32.9%	
	Owned with a mortgage etc	21.5%	17.9%	
	Shared ownership (part owned/part rented)	0	0.1%	
	Social rented	24.0%	14.2%	
	Private rented (including living rent free)	16.7%	35.0%	
Household Composition	One person households	37.2%	32.2%	
	One family only	59.8%	63.9%	
	Other	3.1%	3.8%	
Housing units with no residents		121	581	

2.3 There has been an increase of 180 housing spaces since the 2001 Census, and a fall in the proportion of one-person households (44.2% in 2001). The main shift in tenure has been in the privately rented sector. There was a slight fall in the social housing sector. (see Table 2).

Table 2: Housing in Wooler Parish: 2001 and 2011

	2001	2011
Population	1857	1983
Households	882	974
Housing Spaces	915	1095
Vacant/second homes	33	121
Owner occupied	58.4%	59.3%
Local authority/housing Association (social rented)	29.0%	24.0%
Privately rented	12.5%	16.7%

(% are of occupied housing spaces)

2.4 121 housing spaces were recorded as vacant in 2011, 11% of the total stock. (In Glendale as a whole, the proportion was 17%). The amount recorded as vacant is higher than a decade ago. The higher amount of vacancy in 2011 is likely to be due to several factors: slower market turnover following the recession, houses coming onto the market at Fenton Grange (all now occupied), vacancies in the 40-bed sheltered housing unit at Horsdonside, and perhaps a small increase in second homes and holiday homes.

2.5 Wooler parish is within a wider housing market area (Glendale) with distinctive characteristics. There is a high level of privately-rented accommodation across Glendale, especially in the smaller villages and hamlets. The proportion of people in older age groups is relatively high, and incomes for many are relatively low. Between 2001 and 2015, an increase of 195 housing spaces was recorded in Wooler Parish, or around 20 per year. Since then, the rate of development has slowed down. The calculations for the now withdrawn NCC Core Strategy estimated that around 14 units per year have been added to the housing stock in Wooler since the mid-2000s. This includes Fenton Grange (54 units in total, with some social rented and equity-share), continuing development of Bridgend Residential Park (dedicated to the over 55s), the conversions of properties in Wooler Town Centre (mostly social-rented) and other small developments. There was also the loss of 21 units of occupied sheltered housing at Horsdonside, closed in 2012, replaced by 2015 with 14 socially-rented units.

2.6 Demand for housing units in Wooler comes from:

- people living in Wooler seeking affordable options, especially for growing families,
- those seeking to downsize, in Wooler and from people elsewhere in Glendale seeking to move nearer to services,
- people moving into the area from other parts of the country.

There is also a small amount of stock used as second homes or let as holiday homes.

2.7 There are outstanding planning permissions for around 135 new housing units.

3. Previous studies

3.1 There have been several reports and studies of housing conditions in the Glendale area in the past decade.

- *Glendale Community Plan 2011* (based on 2001 census data and material from the national Info Net data)
- *Glendale Study Housing Assessment 2012*, undertaken by DCA Associates for Four Housing Group (using 2001 census data)
- *Northumberland Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2015)*, undertaken by NCC, for the emerging Core Strategy, (based on 2011 census data)
- A study of housing needs in 3 parishes undertaken for a landowner (2015) (confidential)

3.2 The *Glendale Community Plan 2011*

This noted the high level of privately-owned rental stock across Glendale, related to the large estates within the area, and the gap between the relatively low incomes in the area and the average cost of homes to purchase. It also noted problems of fuel

poverty and that poor decency standards in privately-rented accommodation in the outlying areas generated a demand for affordable accommodation in Wooler².

3.3 Glendale Housing Needs Assessment 2012

This was based on a household questionnaire. It noted:

- “The Glendale area stock tenure balance is unusual, both in Northumberland County and national terms, with a significantly high level of private rent at 37%, nearly four times that in the County. This sector does however appear to operate effectively both in the adequacy in housing condition terms and as a tenure of choice of over a quarter of both existing and concealed households moving.
- Households moving show an extremely strong sense of family / community. 75% of concealed households and over 60% of existing households intend to move within Glendale. Family reasons are significantly the major factor in their choice of location.
- There is a high proportion of older households with over three quarters over the age of 50, creating high levels of under-occupation affecting half of all three bedroom properties” (DCA 2012 para 1.8).
- Of their sample, “20.3% of households had moved to their current location within the past 5 years. 36.6% (of these) had moved into the area from outside the County and 63.4% had moved from within Northumberland”. 62.2% of households who moved had lived previously in Glendale, and 46.1% who moved had previously lived in private rented accommodation. The main reasons given for existing households moving into Glendale within the last 5 years were family reasons, employment / access to work, financial reasons and quality of the neighbourhood (DCA 2012 para 1.3)

The Study concluded that there was a need for 253 additional housing units ‘over the next three years’, mainly of two and three bedrooms, and that 44% of overall demand for new properties was for social rent.

3.4 Northumberland Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2015³

This identified Wooler Parish in the context of the North Housing Market Area centred on Berwick. For this area,, it concluded:

- “Generally, the characteristics of those seeking property in the area were noted as the elderly seeking bungalows, families looking for 2/3 bed family homes with large amounts of floor space and first time buyers seeking properties available through schemes such as ‘Help to Buy” (para 6.120, p. 114)
- “The demand levels for those seeking social rented housing was identified as being impacted by many varying factors; these included a lack of suitable transport to more rural locations and local employment opportunities within an area. the consensus was that older person accommodation is key to future development and sustainability” (para 6.121, p. 114)

² GCP Summary section 7.

³ Note that there have been subsequent updates of the NCC SHMA. Key points from this material fed into the 2018 studies, and WNPSG discussions with NCC about housing sites.

- “majority of market houses for sale in North Northumberland which are affordable to the general local household are ex local authority properties, which average between £70-100k” para 6.122, p.115

3.5 Housing Needs in 3 Glendale Parishes⁴

This study was undertaken through a sample survey in January 2015, to support a planning application. It looked at housing needs in three parishes in Wooler Ward. It noted:

- Household size was relatively small, and proportionately to other areas, many more people experienced fuel poverty
- Few houses had been sold in the past two years, and there had been ‘virtually no new house-building’ in that period.
- There was a demand within the parish for more housing units over the next three years, “for sale or rent, with the focus on two and three bedroom properties suitable for people looking to move to smaller, easier to manage homes that are easier to keep warm, and for starter homes for younger people” (3 Parishes Housing Needs Survey 2015, p.4)

4. Surveys and consultations undertaken for WNP

WNP undertook a survey of households in summer 2016, and of young people linked to the Wooler Drop-In Centre. A survey of businesses was also undertaken in late 2016/early 2017 (see website for summaries of both). A number of consultation events were also held throughout 2017 (on website, for summary?).

4.1 Household and Drop-In Surveys

- The Household Survey 2016
 - *Housing provided should be affordable and flexible*
 - *Priority should be given to small scale developments of social housing, multiple occupancy housing, flats and sheltered housing. Encourage self-build.*
 - *Need to consider flood areas, water supplies and drainage*
- The Young People’s views 2016
 - *More housing options for young people needed*

4.2 Business Survey 2016/17

- *Providing more desirable affordable housing would attract more people to Wooler*
- *Wooler needs more people, including young people*

⁴ This Report is confidential to the commissioner, who has kindly allowed us to use this summary.

4.3 Consultation events: Comments made by members of the public at different events etc

Feb 27th Post it Notes

Sheltered housing & care home so residents can stay in Wooler
Sheltered housing for the future
More housing social for young families and older people
Need more affordable housing – for young people with children to keep schools going
3-bedroom houses needed for rent. Stops young families being moved out
Sheltered housing would be good.
Need affordable housing for young families, Three bedrooms.
Sheltered housing for when I'm old.
Apartment provision for the over 60s
Accommodation with a warden for older people – maintain independent living with someone on site for reassurance

Comments made from Newton's shop event April 2017

Affordable housing needed.
Wooler to be kept as it is. Do not start spreading out with building.
More houses for old and young.

Comments made at Glendale Festival event July 2017

More affordable 3-bed housing needed NOW for families
More housing needed for young people
Housing for older people needs to be well-designed and spacious – NOT small and pokey!
Do we need to control new development so not too many second homes and holiday homes?

Comments generated at Glendale Show (August 2017) and the September Workshop on Sites

First School site for housing wouldn't impose on landscape
Haugh Head Wooler land mix housing and other planned properly
Drainage problems can be overcome
Western boundary needs to be flexible , possibility of screening a development if it would be beneficial to Wooler ie provide jobs etc,
Flexibility is the key for all sites
Access on to Burnhouse Rd not wide enough
If infill housing Ryecroft Cresc and Victoria Rd have existing plots for sale
Land at Turveylaws for Housing. Land on Chatton Rd, why restrict to housing, keep options open
Small developments for housing, piecemeal not big estates
Developers to put in infrastructure as opposed to money into community ie new roads, footpaths cycleways
Larger housing development with proviso to improve community infrastructure
Keep the use of land flexible
Affordable housing for sale for younger people needed

Plans for housing at Common Rd ?

Be flexible with all sites, can't afford to turn away development that will bring new people and sustain jobs/ provide labour etc if the plan says Housing Only here.

Do not fill up all the green space with building. That is part of Wooler's attraction
Fergusons Yard needs urgent work & rebuild into something useful.

5. Housing Stock and Housing Sites

5.1 The most common type of housing available in Wooler Parish was a semi-detached or terraced property (see Table 4). Since then, the numbers of detached properties has increased, with the completion of Bridgend Residential Park and a few properties on sites within the built up area of Wooler. The Fenton Grange development, now completed, has a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terrace properties, some for social rent, and the Greendale development at Horsdonside provides housing for social rents⁵, some designed for those with disabilities. There have also been conversions to flats above shops in Wooler High Street, several for social rent.

Table 3: Accommodation type in Wooler Parish, as recorded in the 2001 and 2011 censuses

Accommodation type	Census 2001 Total	%	Census 2011 Total	%
TOTAL hh spaces	915		1095	
Detached house/bungalow	177	19.3	215	19.6
Semi-detached house/bungalow	616	67.3	422	38.5
Terrace house/bungalow	"	"	263	24.0
Flat, maisonette or apartment	122	13.3	128	11.7
Caravan/other mobile or temporary structure	0	0	67	6.1

(Note: The numbers refer to all household spaces in Wooler, including those with no residents)

5.2 There were 33 (3.6%) dwelling units recorded as vacant in 2001, which had risen to 121 household spaces (11%) in 2011.

⁵ This provides 14 housing units, replacing the 22 occupied bedsits in the demolished Horsdonside sheltered housing building.

5.3 Work undertaken for the now-withdrawn NCC Core Strategy estimated that on average 14 housing units p.a. had been added to the Wooler parish stock in the decade prior to 2016. Our observations suggest that new housing completions in 2016 and 2017 have been less than this. The rates data for 2015 (see para 2.2) suggests a growth rate more like 10 units pa, and some of these may have been occupation of previously vacant units. We therefore estimate a build rate during the WNP Plan period of at least 10-14 units p.a. (ie: 150-210 units over 15 years). A higher build rate might be possible if sufficient demand from outside North Northumberland came about.

5.4 There are active planning permissions for the sites listed in Table 4⁶. If developed, these would provide an additional 139 homes over the next five years. See Table 5.3. Thus there is more than enough capacity in live planning permissions to meet demand for the next five years (2018-2023).

Table 4: Active planning permissions. Wooler Parish: as of 2017⁷

Site	Permission Date	Nos of units proposed	Comment
North of Weetwood Road	2013	81 (51 houses and 30 apartments) originally.	SHLAA 2017 estimates 60 in first five years; 21 in later period
Old Vicarage Field	2016	7 bungalows for older people; start on site anticipated spring 2018	Greenfield site adjacent to Old Vicarage Care Home to be expanded to 24 units (from 17)
Ryecroft Hotel	2017	10 apartments and bungalows	conversion
High Fair	2017	36 houses	
Other small developments within Wooler built up area		c. 5	

5.4: During 2017, WNPSG members undertook a review of all possible housing sites in Wooler Parish. This drew on NCC's SHLAA and added in a few more sites, including the First School site. We estimated that, in total, in a ten year period, there was a capacity for 170-180 units on sites already in discussion for housebuilding, or 17-18 units per year.⁸

⁶ These figures are based on planning permission data from NCC, updated by observation.

⁷ Note that the 36 units at High Fair were not included in the version of this report circulated to CAN and AECOM.

⁸ Note that the AECOM Sites Review also concludes that there are more than enough sites for house building in and around Wooler.

5.5 The challenge for Wooler's expansion is in the longer term. The town could develop in several directions, but each would require further significant investment in infrastructure, both on site and off site.

5.6

In the past few years, there have been no significant larger investments in expanding Wooler's housing stock, despite the existence of active planning permissions. If Wooler is to continue to grow, it is therefore important to encourage landowners and developers to come forward with appropriate housing schemes, within the context of the other policies in WNP. The existence of WNP itself should act as a stimulus to such investment.

6. Interim conclusions on housing demands, needs and available sites

6.1 Wooler Parish provides housing for those within the Parish, for those living nearby in Glendale, and for those from elsewhere, both from other parts of the North East, and other parts of the country.

6.2 Our particular demographic means that we need:

- to make an effort to create housing opportunities which allow young people to stay and make a home in our area; and
- provide for the particular needs of an increasing number of older people.

6.3 Our assessment of current planning permissions and other potential housing development sites suggests that there is enough land to accommodate a modest amount of growth in the housing stock of the Parish, at least in the short to medium term.

6.4 The main issues for our community are to make sure that new housing is targeted at permanent residents and that new supply helps to meet the needs and aspirations identified in the above studies and consultations.

6.5 A key issue is to provide sufficient social affordable housing for rent. The withdrawn Core Strategy argued for a 15% requirement for developments of 10 housing units or more. Our Housing Needs Assessment should confirm this level or suggest an alternative.

6.6 In summary, these needs and aspirations emphasise the following:

- Affordable options – in social housing, private rented housing and for purchase.
- Manageable housing units for older people seeking to downsize, and for those with disabilities
- Affordable housing for young people, especially those just leaving home
- Live-work opportunities for those starting a business or working from home (see also the *Local Economy* background report)
- Self- build plots
- A smallscale Extracare housing complex (in addition to, or expanding from, The Old Vicarage).