**“Low cost housing – what it could mean for Riding Mill”**

Steve Robson opened the discussion by explaining how Northumberland County Council had developed the Core Strategy for Northumberland following consultations and they were currently updating the evidence gathered before producing the final plan. (The Core Strategy will provide the overarching planning policies that will guide where future development takes place). Once this was completed a “Delivery” document would be produced which would set out in much more detail how these aims would be achieved e.g. actual areas would be identified for development. Currently the Core Strategy only outlined the scale and distribution of housing. The proposals for the Central area were as follows:

Hexham – 900 new dwellings

Morpeth – 1500 new dwellings

Prudhoe – 1000 new dwellings

Corbridge – 300 new dwellings

Ponteland – 850 new dwellings

Rest of delivery area – 1720 new dwellings

Riding Mill would come under the 300 dwellings identified for Corbridge.

Of these developments, NCC anticipate that 30% will be targeted for affordable housing and any residential development of 2 or more units will have to make a contribution to this target if there is a defined need.

Green belt – this is likely to be reviewed before the publication of the Delivery document – different interpretations of the rules have been applied previously in different areas – a new standardised approach will be used throughout the County.

Overall the Core Strategy supports development which:

* Is of an appropriate scale for the settlement
* Maintains and enhances local services and facilities
* Meets defined needs
* Protects the countryside from widespread new development

Without Green Belt review affordable housing could only be delivered on rural exception sites in Riding Mill.

Neil Turnbull, Affordable Housing Senior Officer, explained how his role was to identify possible sites and work with communities, providers and house builders to deliver affordable housing for Northumberland. Affordable housing is homes that are rented out or offered under shared equity either by the Council or registered providers such as ISOS. Low cost housing are homes that are sold below market value. A number of homes were currently being built in various locations and a second phase of locations had been identified for development but were still awaiting planning permission.

***Key discussion points following presentation:***

* Despite media reports the Green Belt rules were not being relaxed – boundaries would only be altered in exceptional circumstances
* Residents felt it was difficult to define affordable housing – affordable housing is cheaper in County Durham than in Northumberland
* Difficult to obtain information on local housing needs. It requires people to register with the Northumberland Home Finder scheme but if a person knows there are no affordable homes offered in Riding Mill they will never express a preference for this.
* Who gets affordable homes? They should always be offered to local people first (see point above though)
* Local businesses – workers cannot afford to live in the village.
* Sustainability – affordable homes should be offered in settlements with certain provisions – shop, post office, school, community hall etc.
* Is NCC considering longer term plan? Needs in 15 years time different to current needs.

Response: all homes are being built to be “life time” homes – more space to allow wheelchairs or lifts if necessary to allow people to stay in the home for life.

* Has there ever been affordable housing in Riding Mill?

Yes, one family house (now currently on the market) and old peoples’ bungalows.

* PC could form a development company to build and manage an affordable housing development.

***At the end of the discussion Cllr. Reid asked residents to write to the Parish Council to help guide the Planning Sub-Committee’s response to future planning applications.***

**Further clarification was sought after the meeting on future development areas and below is Steve Robson’s response:**

The preferred level of growth for the Corbridge ‘small area’ is identified as 300 dwellings. Given that we would expect the majority of the housing to be located in the larger settlements, and that there is sufficient available land in Corbridge without the need to review Green Belt boundaries, the Core Strategy proposes to allocate the 300 dwellings to the settlement of Corbridge. In order to accommodate development of a significant scale in Riding Mill or any of the smaller villages in the ‘small area’, Green Belt review would be required. If Green Belt review around Riding Mill is required, it is proposed that this will be undertaken in Delivery Document.

Therefore, while the Core Strategy is not proposing to set out housing numbers for settlements below the Service Centre level, in terms of Riding Mill’s proposed contribution to housing supply, this is included within the 300 allocated to Corbridge, not the 1720 for the ‘Rest of the Delivery Area’. The ‘Rest of the Delivery Area’ figure will be derived from the Hexhamshire, East Tynedale, Hartburn and Longhorsley and the Morpeth Hinterland small areas.

We would envisage that there would be some development in Riding Mill as one of the larger villages in the Tyne Valley. If any sites were to be allocated for housing in the village, and if Green Belt review is required, this will be done through the Delivery Document.