

11. Taylor Wimpey and Durham County Council – effective consultation with the community to meet local needs

An effective partnership between Durham County Council and Taylor Wimpey enabled delivery of a high quality residential scheme of 100 homes in Barnard Castle (70 private and 30 affordable), that delivered a significant amount of the affordable housing required to meet local need.

The success of the partnership highlights the benefits of engaging in early pre application engagement, both with the council and wider community.

The scheme evolved through a partnership led development management approach where consultee views and feedback from public consultation helped shape the proposal at the pre-application stage so that by the time the application was submitted, issues had been identified and resolved and it received very little resistance.

The council and Taylor Wimpey worked together to establish an understanding of the sensitivity of the site and local feeling.

The response to local community input at pre-application stage included:

- A modification of both the scheme and the council's requirements for a percentage of affordable housing in order to provide intermediate tenure housing to meet the needs of first time buyers
- delivery of 30 per cent affordable housing catering for different groups, including elderly accommodation, starter homes for young families and social rent
- Designing at an appropriate density for the edge of settlement site,
- provision of green infrastructure and open space on the site, and
- inclusion of a sustainable drainage scheme,

By engaging with the community in this way, the development will meet the local needs of the area.

A simple planning performance agreement managed the process through to the signing of the section 106 agreement and the council has taken a flexible approach to the timing of the discharge of conditions to ensure the development could start quickly on site.