

Alston Area Profile

September 2015

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About Alston

Alston lies within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is the highest market settlement in England, at about 1,000 feet above sea level. It is also remote, about 20 miles from the nearest town and is surrounded by extensive areas of moorland. It has a steep cobbled main street with a distinctive market cross, and many stone buildings dating from the 17th Century. The town is accessed via the A686, which runs from Penrith, through Alston and down onto the A69 about 5 miles before Hexham.

The area is rich in mineral resources (primarily lead and zinc) and lead was mined from Roman times until the 1980s. At its peak in the first half of the 19th Century the town's population stood at around 7,000, more than three times what it is now. The town was affected by changes in the steel industry which led to the loss of its main employer in 1980, which removed a quarter of all jobs in the town. However, although there has been job loss there is a high proportion of businesses in creative industries and a strong sense of community spirit and participation within the town, and a number of thriving businesses that trade well beyond the locality. In the summer of 2013, Alston Moor became the world's first Social Enterprise Place. For its size, Alston Moor has a huge and varied social enterprise sector, with one social enterprise for around every 50 households.

Alston lies within the Parish and ward of Alston Moor.

Key Statistics For Alston Moor	
Population at 2011	2,088
% Population change 2001-11	-3.3%
Number of dwellings	1,139
Number of long term empty dwellings 2014	39
Second and holiday homes 2014	87
% Second and holiday homes 2014	7%
Median household income 2012 (ward)	£21, 372
Median house price (ward)	£163,955
Median house price to household income ratio (ward)	7.7
Lower quartile house price to household income (ward)	11.1
Affordable housing need	14
Households with no cars or vans	166

Table 1 - Key Facts - Alston Moor¹

¹ Source: Office of National Statistics, Census 2011, Council Tax Data, CACI, Alston Housing Needs Survey 2008.

Detailed Site Assessment - Allocated Sites

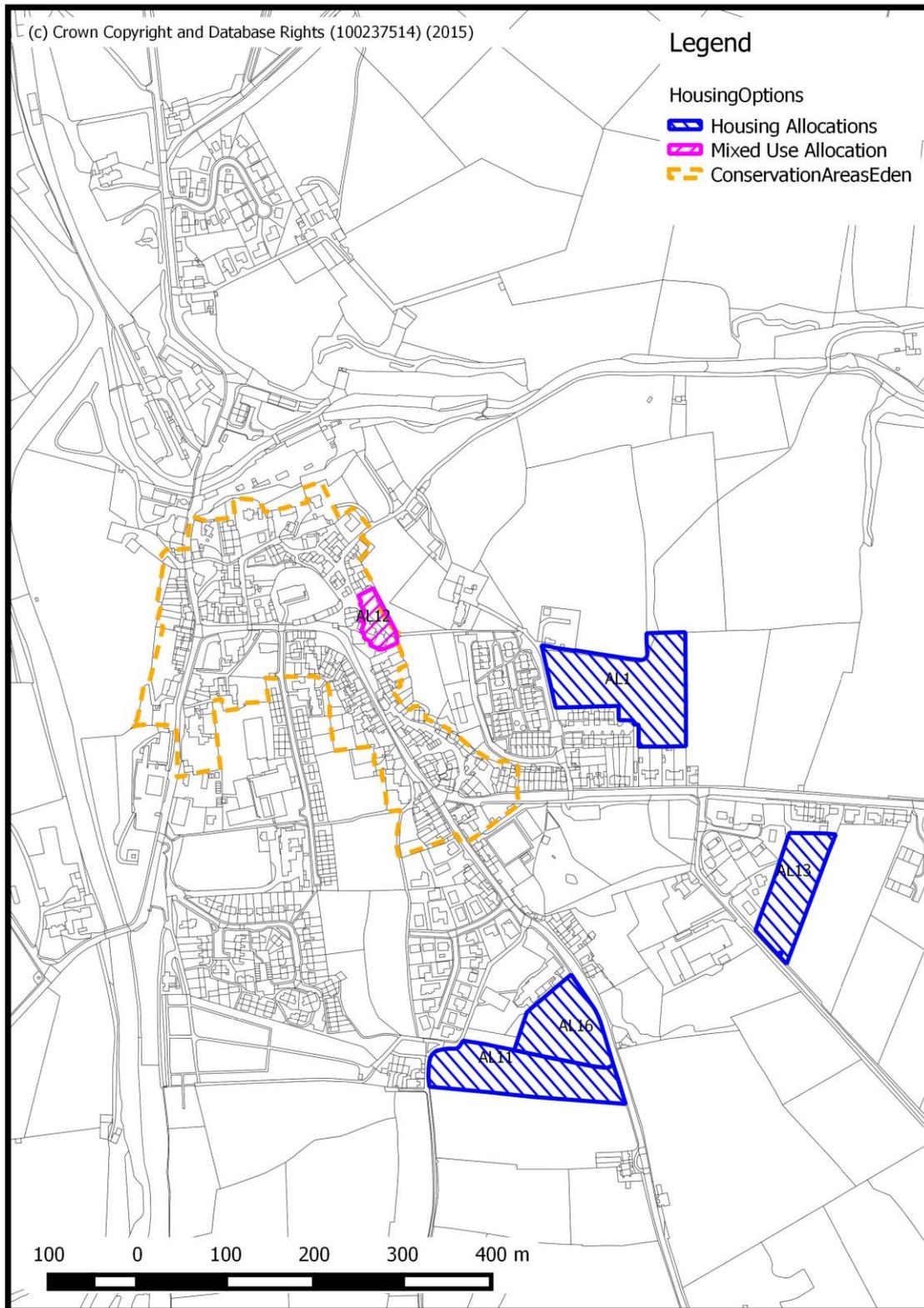


Figure 1 - Allocated Sites in Alston

Site AL1 - Jollybeard Lane

Site Information	
Topic	Comments
Site Name	Land at Jollybeard Lane
Site Ref	AL1
Size (ha)	1.32
Current Use	The site is currently in agricultural use.
Proposed Use	Residential - 40 dwellings.
Summary Description	This is a greenfield site which is slightly sloping but with limited topographical constraints. The surrounding uses are residential and agricultural fields, with an electric substation to the north. The site is located at the edge of the settlement of Alston and within 100m of the Conservation Area.

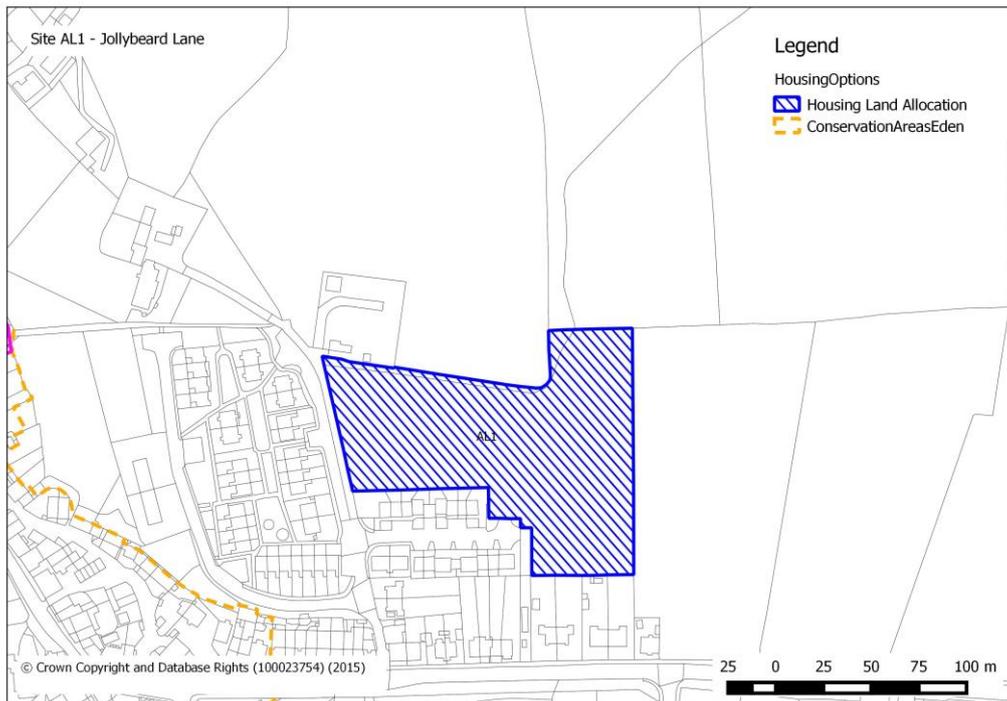


Figure 2 - Site AL1 - Jollybeard Lane

Suitability and Deliverability of Site		
Topic	Assessment	Score
Location	The site is located at the edge of the settlement of Alston and 80m from the Conservation Area. The site is a greenfield site in agricultural use on the north eastern edge of Alston. The site adjoins existing residential development to the south and west.	
Accessibility	There is a bus stop on Front Street is 619m from the site. There is a Public Right of Way which is adjacent to the northern edge of the site.	
Suitability for Proposed Use	The site was allocated for housing development in the 1996 Local Plan so the principle of residential development on the site has been established previously through the existing development plan. Alston is located within the North Pennines AONB.	
Fit with Strategic Policy, Objectives and Direction	The site is well located within the Market Town of Alston. In the emerging local plan 'Market Towns' are identified as the "focus for moderate development appropriate to the scale of the town". Though the settlement is spatially remote, the town and potential sites are well located to facilities, services and employment areas.	
Physical Infrastructure Capacity	It is considered that this site would result in too many additional houses for the existing sub-standard access off the A689. The existing junction is restricted. Access improvements will therefore be required.	
Service Infrastructure Capacity	Alston Primary School is located 551m from the site and Samuel King's Secondary School is 773m from the site. Alston GP/Hospital is located 883m from the site.	
Availability?	Land owner confirmed availability in February 2015. The site is allocated in 1996 Local Plan.	
Achievability?	The site hasn't come forward for development since allocated in 1996 Local Plan. Developer interest unknown, although it is not considered unreasonable to assume the site could come forward and be developed in the plan period.	

Potential Impacts of Development: SEA		
Topic	Comments	Score
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	There are a number of key species potentially on site, including black grouse and water vole.	
Population	The site would provide new housing, including affordable housing to meet local need.	
Human Health	The site is greenfield, and there are no known contamination issues on the site. The site is located on the edge of the town; improvements would need to be made to encourage walking or cycling into the town centre.	
Soil	Grade 4 Agricultural land classification. The site is a greenfield site with no known contamination issues.	
Water	A flood risk assessment would be required based on the site size and surface water drainage and flooding issues in the vicinity. Northumbrian Water have confirmed that there are no capacity issues.	
Air	There are no known air quality issues.	
Cultural Heritage	The site is located within 100m of the Alston Conservation Area boundary; as such care will need to be taken to ensure there are no negative impacts. However, the site offers the opportunity to provide a high quality urban frontage leading into the conservation area.	
Landscape	Classified as 'Dales' landscape under Cumbria toolkit, which can be vulnerable to intrusive skylines into the valley. The site is located within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.	

Site AL11 - Land South of Primary School

Site Information	
Topic	Comments
Site Name	Land South of Primary School
Site Ref	AL11
Size (ha)	1.01
Current Use	Grassed area – could be used for grazing/
Proposed Use	Residential - 10 dwellings.
Summary Description	Steeply sloping greenfield site to the south of Alston Primary School, on the southern edge of Alston.

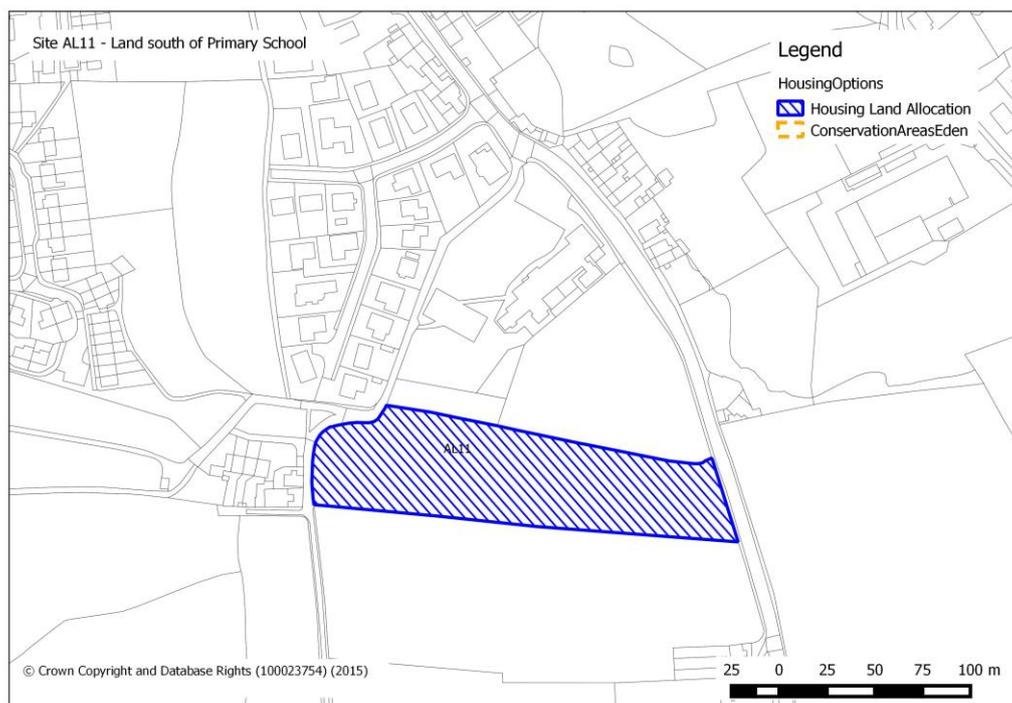


Figure 3 - Site AL11 - Land to South of Alston Primary School

Suitability and Deliverability of Site		
Topic	Assessment	Score
Location	Steeply sloping greenfield site to the south of Alston Primary School, on the southern edge of Alston. Open countryside to the south.	
Accessibility	There is a bus stop within 183m of the site, located on the B6277. There is a Public Right of Way adjacent to the site.	
Suitability for Proposed Use	The site is not well related to Alston in visual terms, as it lies beyond the built extent of the town on elevated ground. However, part of the site is likely to be suitable subject to a more detailed assessment of landscape impacts and topographical constraints. The development of the site up to the road frontage would significantly impact upon this key approach into Alston and remove open views across the town and to the hills beyond. Development would likely need to be restricted on the elevated parts of the site to minimise the landscape and visual impacts. The site is within the North Pennines AONB and landscape impacts will require further detailed consideration given the sensitivity of the area. Topographical constraints are likely to significantly restrict development capacity. There are likely to be drainage issues in dip of site.	
Fit with Strategic Policy, Objectives and Direction	The site is well located within the Market Town of Alston. In the emerging local plan 'Market Towns' are identified as the "focus for moderate development appropriate to the scale of the town". Though the settlement is spatially remote, the town and potential sites are well located to facilities, services and employment areas.	
Physical Infrastructure Capacity	Possible access and highways constraints, the current access lies on a national speed limit road with no footpath on the western side. Highways and access improvements including extending the 30mph zone and providing a safe pedestrian route would likely be required. Northumbrian Water has confirmed that there are no capacity issues.	

Service Infrastructure Capacity	Alston Primary School is located 168m from the site, with Samuel King's Secondary School located 835m from the site. Alston GP/Hospital is located 929m from the site.	
Availability?	Confirmation received in June 2014 from the Parish Council on behalf of the landowner (who is a trust in the ownership/care of the Parish Council) that the site is available for development, but only for affordable housing.	
Achievability?	Uncertainty over the viability of the site given the physical constraints, challenging local housing market, and owner's intention for affordable housing only. Unknown whether any affordable housing provider would be able to viably develop the site.	

Potential Impacts of Development: SEA		
Topic	Comments	Score
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	<p>Potentially key species on site, including black grouse and water vole.</p> <p>A greenfield site to the south of Alston the closest European Site is the Tyne and Nent Gravels SAC of which the closest area is approximately 1.5km upstream. The interest feature of the site is Calaminarian grasslands which are unlikely to be affected by the proposed site.</p> <p>Moor House, Upper Teasdale SPA and the North Pennines Moors SPA are approximately 3km from the site. There are no direct impact pathways to the site and it is not considered likely that the allocation would affect the interest features.</p>	
Population	The site would provide new housing, including affordable housing to meet local need. The Parish Council have expressed a wish for this to be a 100% affordable housing scheme, which could be delivered subject to viability.	
Human Health	<p>The site is greenfield, and there are no known contamination issues on the site.</p> <p>The site is located on the edge of the town, improvements would need to be made to encourage walking or cycling into the town centre.</p>	

Soil	The site is a greenfield site; however the land is classified as Grade 4 (Poor Quality) agricultural land.	
Water	The site is not located in an area of known flood risk, however there are likely to be drainage issues in dip of site.	
Air	There are no known air quality issues.	
Cultural Heritage	<p>Site located in relatively open countryside beyond the edge of the settlement and, although a fair distance to the south of the Conservation Area. There is potential for any development to break the skyline in views out from Conservation Area.</p> <p>Any impact capable of being modified by design mitigation that pays attention to building form, massing and roofscape, while material finish of any elevations facing north towards Conservation Area should be high.</p>	
Landscape	The site is a prominent site located within the AONB. Development on the site is likely to interrupt the skyline, and as such result in some impact to the AONB.	

Site AL12 - High Mill

Site Information	
Topic	Comments
Site Name	High Mill
Site Ref	AL12
Size (ha)	0.12
Current Use	Disused Mill Complex
Proposed Use	Mixed Use including 6 dwellings.
Summary Description	Historic disused mill complex in Alston town centre and Conservation Area including a Grade II* listed building and range of unlisted associated historic buildings.

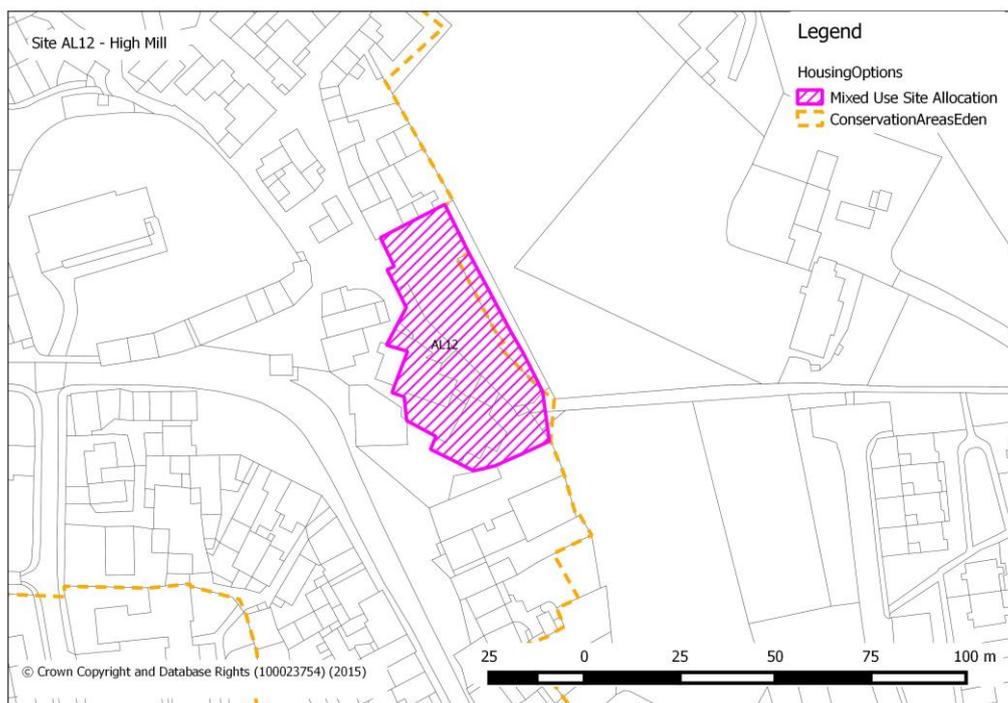


Figure 4 - Site AL12 - High Mill

Suitability and Deliverability of Site		
Topic	Assessment	Score
Location	Historic disused mill complex in Alston town centre and Conservation Area including a Grade II* listed building and range of unlisted associated historic buildings.	
Accessibility	The site is located within the town centre.	
Suitability for Proposed Use	<p>This site offers a regeneration opportunity that would restore a listed building and potential to enhance the town centre and Conservation Area.</p> <p>The site lies within Alston Conservation Area and contains a Grade II* listed building. The conversion and redevelopment of the site therefore provides opportunities for positive enhancement of the character and appearance of the listed building and its Conservation Area setting, dependent on an appropriate scheme.</p> <p>Potential contamination given historic industrial uses. Within the North Pennines AONB, although within the town so landscape impacts minimal. The site has restricted access to Front Street and a transport statement would be required.</p> <p>There are no known major physical/ environmental constraints.</p>	
Fit with Strategic Policy, Objectives and Direction	<p>The site is well located within the Market Town of Alston. In the emerging local plan 'Market Towns' are identified as the "focus for moderate development appropriate to the scale of the town".</p> <p>Though the settlement is spatially remote, the town and potential sites are well located to facilities, services and employment areas.</p>	
Physical Infrastructure Capacity	<p>There is restricted access to Front Street (A689), due to this the Highways Authority would request a transport statement to be submitted in support of any application for redevelopment.</p> <p>Northumbrian Water has confirmed that there are no capacity issues.</p>	
Service Infrastructure Capacity	Alston Primary School is located 714m from the site and Samuel King's Secondary School is located 447m from the site.	

	Alston GP/Hospital is 684m from the site.	
Availability?	Owner has intention to develop the site for mixed use and is actively exploring options at present.	
Achievability?	Owner is currently pursuing funding opportunities to enable the scheme. Its deliverability therefore hinges upon the availability of funding eg through English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Funding.	

Potential Impacts of Development: SEA		
Topic	Comments	Score
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Potential roost sites in building, though none recorded.	
Population	The site would provide new housing, including affordable housing to meet local need.	
Human Health	Potential contamination from past industrial uses.	
Soil	The site is a brownfield site, with potential for contamination from past industrial uses.	
Water	Site away from flood zones, however surface water noted on site area. Northumbrian Water have confirmed that there are no capacity issues.	
Air	This is a town centre site; however there are no known air quality issues in Alston.	
Cultural Heritage	High Mill is now a Grade II* listed building, listed on 4 September 2014. This is an extract from Historic England: "This water-powered corn mill of later C18 by John Smeaton, extended by 1775 and subsequently raised in height, is listed at Grade II* for the following principal reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date: as a later C18 corn mill, the building sits firmly in the period when there is a presumption in favour of listing; • Historic interest: it is considered to be the only extant water-mill designed by the eminent C18 engineer John Smeaton; • Intactness: although extended, Smeaton's original 	

corn mill retains its integrity and is readable; the extended building retains its C18 footprint and interventions are relatively minor in nature or do not detract from its overall interest;

- Architecture and process: it is a good example of a relatively small scale later-C18 water-driven corn mill constructed to supply a local market, whose form visibly illustrates its former industrial function;
- Machinery: the almost complete 1817 cast-iron and timber water wheel of genuine pitchback design with associated features is a fine example of extreme interest;
- Documentary evidence: original drawings of the mill survive.”

If an employment use is the preferred option then small workshop/retail uses would be the most appropriate for the ancillary blocks with small scale manufacturing or new retail uses being located in the new build elements to the rear and south edge of the site. No decision on any new employment use for the main mill itself should be considered until a better understanding is reached of the internal significance of its layout or any surviving plant. The small block on the higher level to the south that faces Front Street would be well suited to a conversion to a small retail use.

If housing is the preferred use then all of these buildings should be fairly easy to adapt without compromising their special interest. Car parking and delivery access are likely to be major issues whatever form of use is agreed, with access from the north of the site being the best way to service the rear and southern parts of the site. Retaining pedestrian access and permeability through the site would be a significant public benefit of any scheme that would be more likely through an employment use than a housing outcome.

No scheme for the conversion of the interior of the High Mill building should be approved until the building's heritage significance has been properly analysed and a detailed statement of heritage significance prepared to inform any decisions. New openings to the front should be resisted and any new interventions confined to the rear wall and roof and to the south end. The brick built part of the rear block could be replaced with a new build component of better materiality and form, a storey higher perhaps, but with a similar sense of massing, and with a pitched slate roof.

	<p>The next part might also be capable of replacement if a building of better design quality can be realised but this would need to be kept to 2 stories so as to retain the physical independence of the taller block immediately to the north. The two northernmost parts should be retained for new uses, with very modest new fenestration to the taller block and the reconstruction of a more domestic arrangement, or the incorporation of shopfront display windows for retail use, in the ground floor.</p>	
Landscape	<p>No landscape impact.</p> <p>Urban site which has the potential to enhance character of area, the building is well integrated into the townscape.</p>	

Site AL13 - Land at Clitheroe

Site Information	
Topic	Comments
Site Name	Land at Clitheroe
Site Ref	AL13
Size (ha)	0.66
Current Use	Undeveloped greenfield land.
Proposed Use	Residential - 21 dwellings.
Summary Description	A greenfield slightly sloping site in agricultural use on the eastern fringes of Alston. Surrounding uses include existing residential development to the west and north, an agricultural field to the east, with a small collection of workshop units further east (Skelgillside).

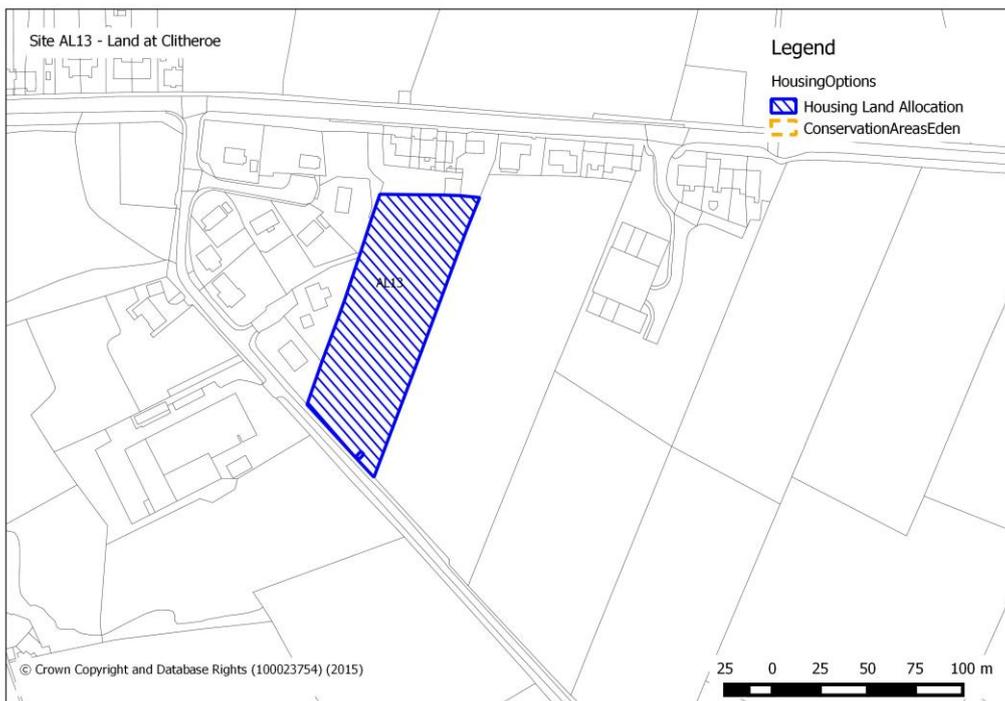


Figure 5 - Site AL13 - Land at Clitheroe

Suitability and Deliverability of Site		
Topic	Assessment	Score
Location	The site is located on the eastern fringes of Alston. The surrounding uses include existing residential development to the west and north, an agricultural field to the east, with a small collection of workshop units further east.	
Accessibility	There is a bus stop within 922m of the site. There are no Public Rights of Way affecting the site.	
Suitability for Proposed Use	Suitable subject to appropriate access solution being found. No known major constraints. The site would extend the settlement on to undeveloped greenfield land however the site is relatively well contained due to topography and surrounding built development.	
Fit with Strategic Policy, Objectives and Direction	The site is well located within the Market Town of Alston. In the emerging local plan 'Market Towns' are identified as the "focus for moderate development appropriate to the scale of the town". Though the settlement is spatially remote, the town and potential sites are well located to facilities, services and employment areas.	
Physical Infrastructure Capacity	This site may require upgrading to Potters Lane which should be achievable within the existing highway corridor. The visibility right out of Potters Lane, onto A689 appears restricted for cars – this should be investigated and improved if necessary. Footways / footpaths will need extending. The site is located off an adopted highway U3107. This road is seen as unable to allow additional dwellings to take access without improvement. Improvements should include strengthen and widening works (widening to 5.5m and footways on both sides (2m wide each side). Northumbrian Water has confirmed that there are no capacity issues.	
Service Infrastructure Capacity	Both Alston Primary School and Samuel King's Secondary School are located within 1.2km of the site. Alston GP/Hospital is located within 1.2km of the site.	

Availability?	The site was confirmed as available by an agent on behalf of the landowner in March 2014.	
Achievability?	The site was put forward recently (2013 consultation) so known recent interest in developing the site. Greenfield site with no major physical constraints so reasonable to assume it should be achievable in plan period, but given the local housing market there is still a degree of uncertainty.	

Potential Impacts of Development: SEA		
Topic	Comments	Score
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	Number of key species potentially on site, including black grouse and water vole.	
Population	The site would provide new housing, including affordable housing to meet local need.	
Human Health	<p>The site is located opposite Bonds foundry and employment area at Skellgillside.</p> <p>The site is greenfield, and there are no known contamination issues on the site.</p> <p>The site is located on the edge of the town; improvements would need to be made to encourage walking or cycling into the town centre.</p>	
Soil	The site is classified as Grade 4 Agricultural land.	
Water	The site is not located in a flood zone; however surface water has been noted on site.	
Air	<p>The site is opposite Bond's Factory and employment area at Skelgillside.</p> <p>There are no known air quality issues within Alston.</p>	
Cultural Heritage	No perceived conflicts with the built historic environment.	
Landscape	<p>Classified as 'Dales' landscape under Cumbria toolkit, which can be vulnerable to intrusive skylines into the valley. There are possible landscape considerations as site protrudes into the open countryside. Moderate to significant impacts in Alston landscape impact assessment. The site is located within North Pennines AONB.</p> <p>Site moving away from town, diluting the vernacular of the area, and affecting the setting within the AONB.</p>	

Site AL16 - Land Adjacent to Alston Primary School

Site Information	
Topic	Comments
Site Name	Land adjacent to Alston Primary School
Site Ref	AL16
Size (ha)	0.7
Current Use	The site is currently in agricultural use.
Proposed Use	Residential - 11 dwellings.
Summary Description	This is a greenfield, relatively steeply sloping site on the south eastern entrance to Alston, directly to the south of the primary school. The site sits on the edge of the town with open countryside to the south.

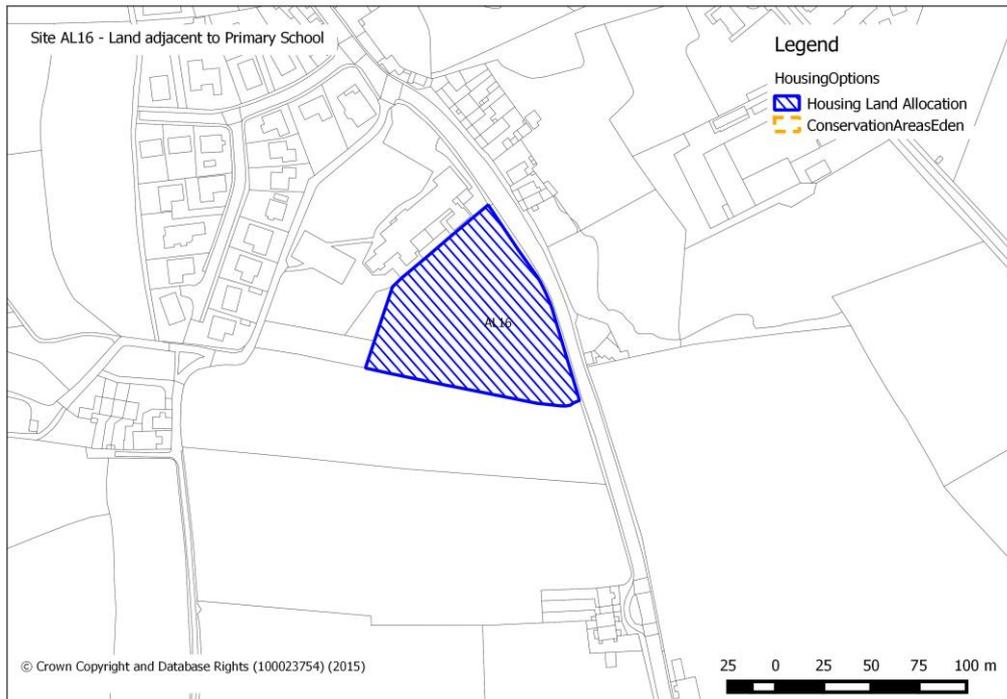


Figure 6 - Site AL16 - Land to South of Alston Primary School

Suitability and Deliverability of Site		
Topic	Assessment	Score
Location	Greenfield relatively steeply sloping site on the south eastern entrance to Alston, directly to the south of the primary school. The site sits on the edge of the town with open countryside to the south.	
Accessibility	There is a bus stop within 183m on the B6277.	
Suitability for Proposed Use	Suitable in part, if development is restricted to the lower parts of the site to minimise landscape and visual impacts. The site is located on greenfield agricultural land to the south of the built extent of the town so its development would extend the town into surrounding countryside. The site becomes elevated towards its south east corner and development in this part would significantly affect the character of this approach into Alston as it would inhibit open views across the town and to the fells beyond. The site's steep topography is likely to constrain the development potential of the site. Within the North Pennines AONB so landscape impacts are an important consideration.	
Fit with Strategic Policy, Objectives and Direction	The site is located to the southern edge of the Market Town of Alston. In the emerging local plan 'Market Towns' are identified as the "focus for moderate development appropriate to the scale of the town". Though the settlement is spatially remote, the town and potential sites are well located to facilities, services and employment areas.	
Physical Infrastructure Capacity	An appropriate access onto the B6277 appears difficult due to the topography. (Appears to have only one site boundary adjacent to the highway) Site may be better served from adjacent Bruntley Meadows. The site is located next to the School and will take access onto the 30mph section of the B6277 that does not have a footway. The site access should provide for splays informed by the speed limit (ideally 2.4m by 90m) and should provide for a footway linking to the existing footway to the school. The typography of this site will create some drainage issues that will need to be resolved at application	

	stage. Northumbrian Water has confirmed that there are no capacity issues.	
Service Infrastructure Capacity	Alston Primary School is adjacent to the Northern Boundary and Samuel King's Secondary School is located 795m from the site. Alston GP/Hospital is located within 929m of the site.	
Availability?	The site is being promoted by Cumbria County Council and was confirmed as available in their representation to the Preferred Options Local Plan.	
Achievability?	The County Council has an intention to dispose of the site for redevelopment. Reasonable to assume it could be delivered in the plan period although given the local housing market characteristics viability could be challenging.	

Potential Impacts of Development: SEA		
Topic	Comments	Score
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	There are a number of key species potentially on site, including black grouse and water vole.	
Population	The site would provide new housing, including affordable housing to meet local need.	
Human Health	The site is greenfield, and there are no known contamination issues on the site. The site is located on the edge of the town; improvements would need to be made to encourage walking or cycling into the town centre.	
Soil	The site is classified as Grade 4 agricultural land. The site is currently in agricultural use and there are no known contamination issues.	
Water	No evidence of flooding; however there has been a history of standing water on site.	
Air	There are no known air quality issues.	
Cultural Heritage	Site located in relatively open countryside beyond the edge of the settlement and, although a fair distance to the south of the Conservation Area. There is potential for any development to break the skyline in views out	

	<p>from Conservation Area.</p> <p>Any impact capable of being modified by design mitigation that pays attention to building form, massing and roofscape, while material finish of any elevations facing north towards Conservation Area should be high.</p>	
Landscape	<p>Classified as 'Dales' landscape under Cumbria toolkit, which can be vulnerable to intrusive skylines into the valley. Possible landscape considerations as site protrudes into the open countryside. Moderate to significant impacts in Alston landscape impact assessment. Site within North Penninesw AONB Prominent site which would interrupt the skyline of Alston, impacting on the AONB.</p>	

Appendix 1 - Alston Sites (ALL)

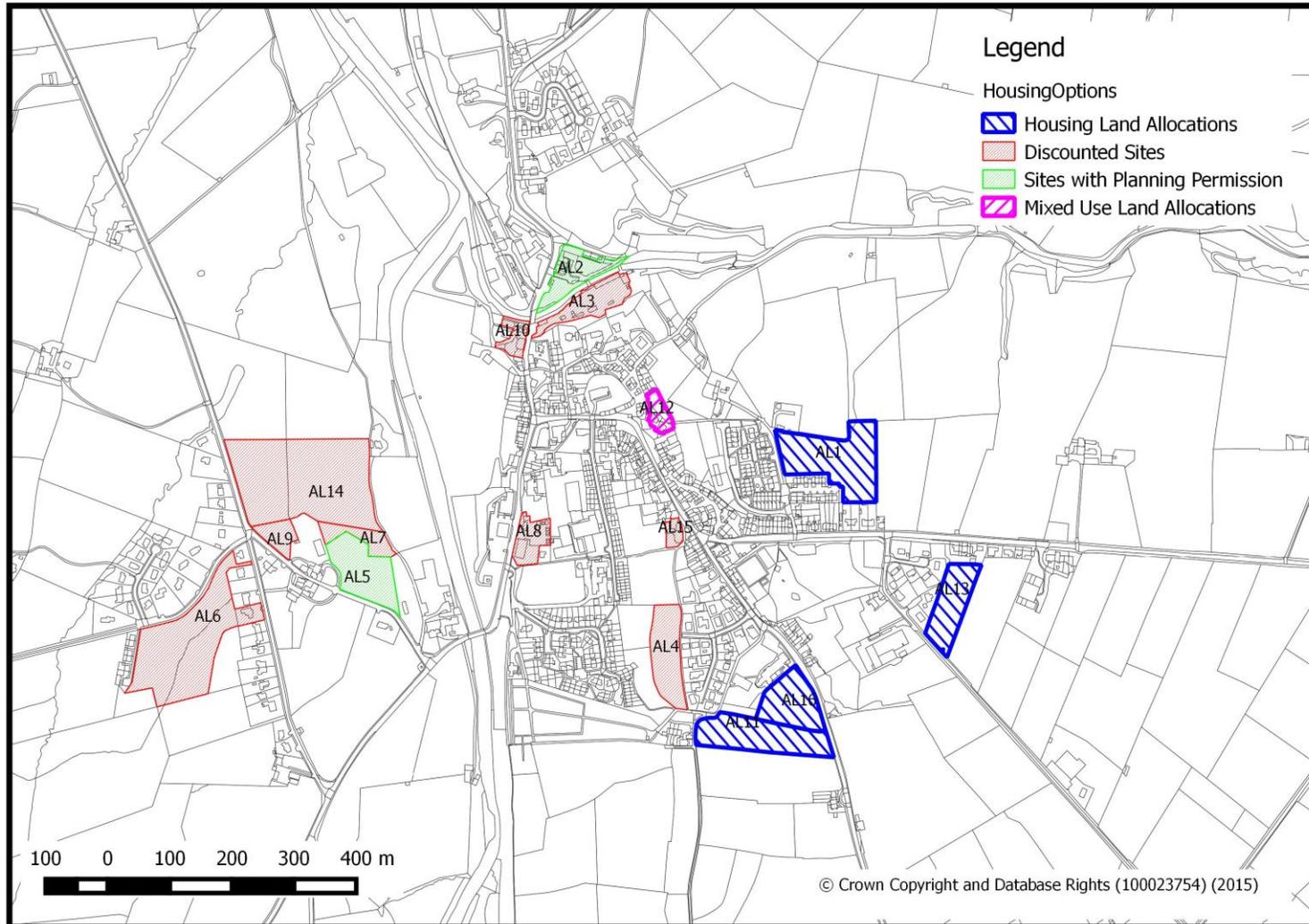


Figure 7 - Map Showing All Sites Considered in Alston