# Residents worry housing plans will compromise village charm



Residents of Middleton St George, a village in Darlington, are expressing concerns regarding recent approvals for housing developments that they believe will compromise the semi-rural charm of their community. On Wednesday, planning applications submitted by housing developers Bellway Homes and Avant Homes received official approval for a large-scale project that will see the construction of up to 330 homes.

The developments, located on land adjacent to Yarm Road, are split into two separate projects, comprising 96 and 230 homes respectively. This initiative is part of a broader housing masterplan for the area, which was originally approved in 2019. The new homes will feature a variety of accommodation, including one to five-bedroom properties, and will encompass 50 affordable housing units.

Despite intentions to provide more housing options, local residents voiced strong opposition to the plans, stressing that the ongoing expansion threatens the character of Middleton St George. Helen Boston, a recent resident of the nearby Oak Meadows development, articulated her concerns, stating, "The semi-rural status of the village is what makes it attractive and a lovely place to live. Further building would increase this even further to the point where local amenities couldn't cope." She further warned that the community risked evolving into a large housing estate rather than retaining its village identity.

Amy Robinson, another resident, echoed the sentiment, cautioning against the rapid transformation of the village into an overly populated area. She cited concerns over current infrastructure capabilities, expressing apprehension that the new developments would render the village "a scarily busy town that just could not withstand the number of vehicles and people with its current infrastructure."

The Middleton St George Parish Council has also raised alarms regarding the potential impacts of the housing developments. In a formal statement, they described the expansions as "significant and major," highlighting the effects on the village centre, pedestrian safety, and traffic flows. They underscored the necessity of addressing additional pressures on local services, specifically pointing to the need for increased school capacity, primary health care services, and enhancements to utilities infrastructure, including sewage and drainage systems.

Additionally, within the proposed development area, plans for several commercial units and a primary school were included. However, discussions surrounding the establishment of a new school have been postponed. David Coates, the head of planning for the council, explained, "The clear evidence is that a school in this location, at this time, isn't required."

In light of the school's indefinite status, parish councillors suggested repurposing the site for community use, proposing a multi-use games area or green space to serve residents.

As the local population is projected to increase from approximately 5,000 in 2021 to around 7,000 by 2030, concerns regarding the developmental trajectory of Middleton St George continue to mount, with many residents apprehensive about the implications of such rapid growth on their community’s lifeblood and identity.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.placenortheast.co.uk/darlington-330-home-scheme-makes-it-to-council/> - This article discusses the approval of housing plans in Middleton St George, detailing the split of the project between two developers, Bellway Homes and Avant Homes, and confirming the number of homes planned, which aligns with the claims about recent approvals in the original article.
2. <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/14714/msg-neighbourhood-plan-submission-draft.pdf> - The Neighbourhood Plan outlines community concerns about the impact of development on local character and infrastructure, echoing residents' fears that the new housing projects will undermine the semi-rural charm of Middleton St George.
3. <https://microsites.darlington.gov.uk/media/1759/middleton-st-george-pc-m5.pdf> - This document includes information from the Middleton St George Parish Council regarding the developments and acknowledges the importance of affordable housing units included in the housing plans, supporting the claim about the nature of the new developments.
4. <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/14714/msg-neighbourhood-plan-submission-draft.pdf> - The neighbourhood plan outlines objectives for sustainable development that includes community engagement and local facility enhancements, which supports the concerns raised by residents about preserving community identity amidst rapid growth.
5. <https://www.darlington.gov.uk/media/14714/msg-neighbourhood-plan-submission-draft.pdf> - The document underscores the concerns regarding local services and infrastructure, validating the worries expressed by residents like Amy Robinson about traffic and service capacity affecting the community as it grows.
6. <https://www.placenortheast.co.uk/darlington-330-home-scheme-makes-it-to-council/> - This source notes community discussions around the potential establishment of a school within the development area, corroborating the claim about postponement of decisions regarding educational facilities in the original article.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMingFBVV95cUxOa1VGUDJQc3JyUTZzT2tvWWxlOU5abjUzRTh3UENSNVg0R1lzUkozMzNQeWVWLTl1cm9tZ2pOUEthWUR3VU1Ga2VnNURRdHZ2MWhqYV9yNVRTTjdoOExfTGQ4WXBwMzBZUmJUOWFUVldHNHJXZXAxdl9YS21HeTdaVFp6SmZ1NU9kVnV1ZF93MUltM0Jyb0NVYW1VR3VIZ9IBowFBVV95cUxOMVJHdzkydldXaUZJNTNiU3pHdWZBTlVRWnlOSklLWW1sa25ZZ043NFRPbWxBdE9BQTFPVG9lX09sUGFxWk9nVTBSWktWeHdDOHFYeDBqLTZjRkxwczZidkYyNV91RU8xTnJ1Vkt6YWt2am43QUsxeG1xT1RqZUFWZzRJRExWUkFwYmNxX3NjNVpEVlJvNnpfR3hWM21sYlRtUFZz?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data