



# brandon masterplan

phase one summary

**believe**  
housing

## believe housing is developing a masterplan that will set out proposals to regenerate the central part of Brandon. This masterplan aims to deliver innovative development that will:

- Address issues of out-dated homes that are no longer attractive or fit for purpose.
- Deliver new, carbon neutral homes for 2050.
- Provide wider benefits to the community of Brandon, such as energy efficiency improvements for existing homes, training and employment opportunities and a regenerated location where people want to live.
- Significantly improve the appearance and facilities of the area, through high quality design, better use of land, enhanced open spaces and improved connectivity. This aim would be explored with other key partners and stakeholders, such as Durham County Council.
- Attract new residents, growing and diversifying the local community.



The first phase of the Brandon masterplan has been carried out by URBED, an experienced urban design consultancy. This early work has established a base of key information, including the views of the community on what is good about Brandon, and how it could be improved.

The report from URBED is available on our website [believehousing.co.uk](http://believehousing.co.uk). Some of the main points are summarised below.

### Engagement

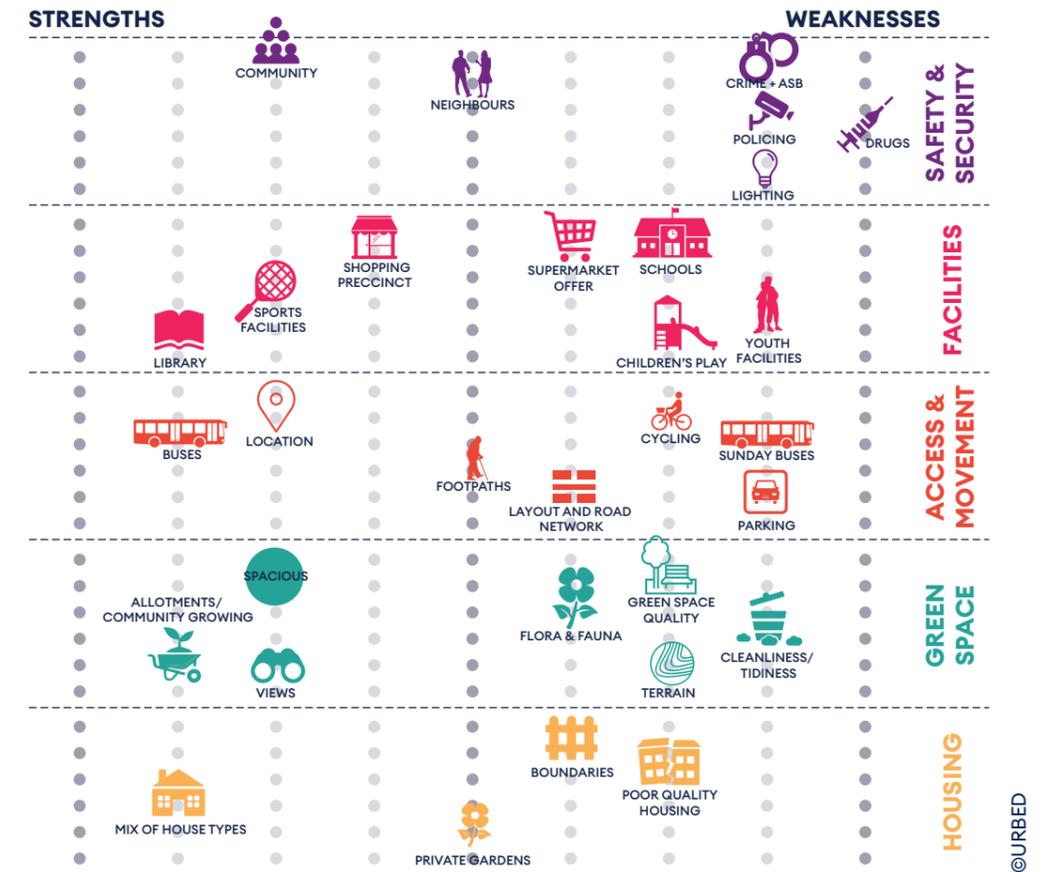
URBED carried out research and consultation from August to October 2021. The URBED team:

- Reviewed Central Brandon and surrounding area to learn about the community and the location.
- Gathered views and opinions from local residents by providing a questionnaire. This was available to complete online and as a printed document which was delivered by believe housing staff to homes in central Brandon and the nearby surroundings.
- Held a series of in-person workshops to inform the community, encourage their involvement and gather their views.

The consultation was open to everyone in Brandon – not just residents of Central Brandon – to find out how the local population feel about the area as it is now.

## Findings

Based on the research and consultation, URBED has begun to set out Brandon's strengths, weakness, opportunities, and areas for future focus. The aim is to engage with local residents, stakeholders and partners in order to identify the main challenges facing the community, and develop strategies to overcome these.



Brandon is a place with substantial character and is surrounded by attractive countryside. It has many life-long residents who are proud of where they live and understand its strong points and its challenges. Others are less positive about Brandon, identifying anti-social behaviour as a regular occurrence, which negatively affects this quiet, rural settlement.

Some features of Brandon were highlighted as significant strengths, such as the library and its services, the attractive green spaces and views. For many older residents, community is seen as a particular asset; much of the original mining community still live in Brandon. Most people also spoke positively of weekday bus services.

Residents also felt that Brandon offers a very good mix of housing types. They would like to see this maintained in any future plans, to include bungalows and family homes.

The main challenges seen by the local community relate to safety and security: issues around crime and antisocial behaviour were repeatedly highlighted during workshop conversations and in survey questionnaires. The perceptions of local residents and stakeholders are backed up by census and population information gathered by Urbed in their research..

There is a direct link between safety and security and other aspects of Brandon that residents see as weaknesses. These include lack of facilities for young people and areas for safe play for younger children, as well as low quality and poor maintenance of existing green spaces.

While the mix and variety of housing types is a strength of Brandon, the poor quality of some homes is seen as a weakness. This is largely due to the age of the properties. Many people considered that refurbishment work would greatly help to tackle housing problems.

## URBED feedback

Brandon has many assets: the availability of green spaces and beautiful views of surrounding landscape. However, there is a lack of facilities to allow these assets to be used by local residents in a way that would have a positive effect on their lives.

Regeneration projects can bring lasting positive changes, through urban design and landscape plans that address the needs of an area. Brandon provides low density homes with large areas of open space, reflecting the thinking at the time of the development. It is now understood that for developments to provide a good quality of life and be sustainable, they need to offer a housing mix and density that will attract sufficient residents in order to:

- Create a vibrant and varied community of all ages.
- Support key facilities and amenities.
- Support improved public transport services.
- Offer added safety and security through the principles of ‘passive surveillance’ – meaning lighting and design that allows people to see and be seen – and ‘eyes on the street’ – meaning the more people out and about, the safer everyone is.

believe housing is preparing proposals to demolish some of the poor quality housing within Brandon and replace it with new, fit-for-purpose housing. URBED has recommended that further community-based research is carried out. This would be the first step, with the participation of local residents and stakeholders, towards producing a masterplan to increase the density of housing in the area.

The vast amount of green space, some of which appears to be under-used and difficult to manage, could offer the opportunity to deliver additional housing. At one of the in-person workshops, examples of modern housing were shared with the local residents and stakeholders. Many responded favourably to the idea of introducing new types of housing to the area. Different housing tenures could be considered, with affordable rents balanced with housing offered at market rates. This would help to create a more varied community and strengthen the local economy.

Suggestions to improve the look and use of the attractive green spaces in the area can be explored in the next phase of the project. These could include ideas for landscape design, such as tree planting, to enhance the site’s natural assets.

Building on positive feedback to ideas discussed so far with the local community, concepts could be developed to meet a wide range of needs and wishes. Improved landscape spaces could provide:

- A place for people to meet, enhance health and wellbeing, grow food together, hold events, combat loneliness and improve the sense of community.
- An accessible environment with safe paths through well overlooked, attractive public spaces, that connect the neighbourhood and encourage walking and cycling.
- Seating for enjoyment of the impressive views from the site and as resting points across the steep terrain.
- An opportunity for children to play and be active, and experience nature and wildlife, in a pleasing environment that adults can also enjoy.
- A sociable ‘hang out’ area for young people, with activities designed to reduce boredom, anti-social behaviour and conflict between different age groups.
- A sustainable, healthy and beautiful environment, that conserves and diversifies the existing habitat and wildlife, supports effective water management and improves air quality.

Facilities should be aimed at a range of age groups, activity levels and needs, such as sensory planting, play and sports equipment and benches. It will be important to consider the sturdiness and maintenance of the facilities, to encourage ‘passive surveillance’ and to promote a sense of ownership that will help protect and care for new amenities, and deter vandalism.

### Next steps

believe housing is considering these findings from URBED in the first phase of the Brandon masterplan, and will feed these into the development of phase 2 which will start in Spring 2022.

believe is committed to continuing to engage with residents throughout the planning process. We will keep residents informed about progress and further opportunities to comment and engage.

**The full report is available on our website [believehousing.co.uk](https://believehousing.co.uk)**