

Background to neighbourhood planning

Scope of the Newbiggin by the Sea
Neighbourhood Plan



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Structure

Part 1

- Overview of neighbourhood planning;
- What is development;
- Key stages in preparing a neighbourhood plan;
- How to write good planning policies;
- Community actions.

Part 2

- Key issues for the Newbiggin by the Sea Neighbourhood Plan;
- Draft vision, objectives, policy themes and community action themes;
- Next steps.



Part 1 - Background



What is a neighbourhood plan?

- Part of the development plan – same status as the local plan once it has passed referendum;
- Planning law requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise;
- Preparation of a neighbourhood plan allows the community to play a much stronger role in shaping their area;
- Enables communities to set out a positive vision for development in their area over the next 15-20 years;
- Provide local detail – particularly important in Northumberland;
- Meeting local needs and the plan should make sense to local people.



What can neighbourhood plans include?

- Should support the delivery of the strategic policies set out within the local plan – currently Wansbeck Local Plan;
- The town council can decide on the scope of the plan – it does not need to have a policy about everything;
- Must include planning policies – can only relate to matters which require planning permission;
- Can also include wider community aspirations for things that do not need planning permission e.g. public transport provision, parking restrictions;
- Cannot include policies that relate to minerals and waste development or nationally significant infrastructure projects.



What is development?

Set out in law:

- Building, mining, engineering or other operations and also material changes in the use of land or buildings;
- All development requires planning permission, however some is deemed 'permitted development'.



Key stages in preparing a plan

- Stage 1: designating the neighbourhood area (TC & NCC)
 - TC submits and application to NCC to designate an area;
 - NCC publicises and consults on the application for 6 weeks;
 - NCC designates the area.
- Stage 2: preparing a draft neighbourhood plan (TC)
 - Gather evidence and information;
 - Speak to those living and working in the area and others with an interest in proposals e.g. service providers;
 - Talk to landowners and the development industry and consider options;
 - Determine if the plan is likely to have significant environmental effect;
 - Start to prepare draft plan and supporting documents.



Key stages in preparing a plan (2)

- Stage 3: pre-submission consultation (TC)
 - Publicise the draft for at least 8 weeks and invite comments;
 - Consult statutory bodies e.g. NCC, Natural England, Historic England, Environment Agency;
 - Consult on strategic environmental assessment and/ or habitats regulations assessment (if required);
 - Consider feedback and amend the draft plan and supporting documents.
- Stage 4: submission of plan to the LPA (TC & NCC)
 - TC submits the plan and supporting documents to NCC;
 - NCC checks the plan complies with legislation, if it does, NCC:
 - Publicises the plan for 8 weeks and invites comments;
 - Notifies the consultation bodies;
 - Appoints an examiner (with the agreement of the TC).



Key stages in preparing a plan (3)

- Stage 5: independent examination (NCC)
 - NCC sends the plan and any comments received to the examiner;
 - Examiner undertakes examination and issues a report to NCC and TC;
 - NCC considers report and decides if legal requirements met and issues decision on whether the plan can proceed to referendum.
- Stage 6: referendum
 - NCC organises referendum and polling takes place.
- Stage 7: making the neighbourhood plan
 - If more than half of those voting, vote in favour of the plan, it comes into legal force.



The legal tests – ‘basic conditions’

Only a draft neighbourhood plan that meets all of the basic conditions, can be put to referendum and ‘made’. These are that the plan:

- Has had regard to national policies and advice issued by the secretary of state (NPPF, NPPG);
- Contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan; and
- Does not breach and is otherwise compliant with EU obligations.



What makes a good planning policy?

- There are different types of planning policies:
 - Generic policies - apply to the whole area e.g. that new development should conserve and enhance biodiversity;
 - Criteria based – with a set of requirements that should be met by development proposals e.g. design criteria;
 - Site specific – where a plan allocates land for a particular type of development or protection e.g. housing allocation, local green space designation;
- Policies must be clear, precise and supported by robust evidence;
- National policy requires neighbourhood plans to plan positively to support local development e.g. planning permission will be granted if... rather than development will be refused unless...



What are community actions?

Community actions cover matters that don't require planning permission and normally include those matters covered by parish plans e.g.

- Measures to reduce speeding traffic;
- Changes to parking restrictions;
- Improving frequency of public transport services;
- Review of conservation area boundaries;
- Specific environmental or other community projects;
- Control/ management of dog fouling;
- Tackling incidents of antisocial behaviour.



Any questions on part 1?



Part 2 – Preparing your plan



Key issues identified through consultation

1. A clear separation of settlements to enhance the character and distinctiveness of Newbiggin;
2. New 'wildlife corridors' to protect natural habitats, incorporating sustainable drainage for the Ashington developments and former Alcan ash lagoons;
3. Regeneration of the town through endorsing employment and providing appropriate infrastructure and start-up units;
4. Improved visitor attractions are needed to sustain visitor growth and contribute to commercial sustainability;
5. Improved pedestrian and cycle routes to public transport and a new link road to the strategic network from Woodhorn Roundabout;
6. Housing growth and improved choice to retain and attract families.



Vision

The vision for a neighbourhood plan should:

- Describe how the plan area will look, if the policies within the plan are successful;
- Be shaped by community feedback;
- Inform the plan objectives, planning policies and community actions.



Possible draft vision

“In 2036 Newbiggin by the Sea will be successful, thriving and sustainable. A place where people want to live and work because of the rich and distinctive environment, range of services and facilities, leisure opportunities, access to high quality housing, employment and protected open spaces.

New employment opportunities have reduced the number of residents commuting out of the town for employment and they have access to sustainable modes of transport.

The town centre is vibrant, with a range of shops, social and leisure facilities. The services, facilities and leisure opportunities have resulted in a growth in visitor numbers who support the success of the local economy.

New development ensures the protection and enhancement of the area and safeguards the amenity of the local community.”



Draft objectives

To deliver the vision, three draft objectives have been identified:

- 1. **Distinctive place:** Achieving a balance between development and maintaining the clear separation of settlements, conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment, as well as protecting important open spaces;*
- 2. **Sustainable and thriving community:** Supporting new development which meets the needs of existing and future residents. This includes providing the right types of housing, supporting investment in employment space and the visitor economy, as well as strengthening the role of the town centre;*
- 3. **Well connected:** Promoting access to sustainable modes of transport which connect people to a wide range of services, facilities and employment opportunities. As well as enhancing opportunities for safe and active travel.*



Draft planning policy themes

Objective 1 – distinctive place:

- Separation – identification of a settlement boundary;
- Identification of the green infrastructure network and wildlife corridors;
- Policy to protect and enhance the natural environment;
- Policy on good design – including design codes;
- Policy to protect and enhance the historic environment, could include the identification of local heritage assets;
- Identification of local green space/ protected open space.



Draft planning policy themes

Objective 2 – sustainable and thriving community:

- Allocation of housing sites;
- Policy to identify the type and mix of housing that is needed;
- Policies to support new economic and tourism development;
- Allocation of sites for economic development;
- Policy to protect and enhance the town centre – could define a town centre boundary;
- Policy to protect and enhance services and facilities.



Draft planning policy themes

Objective 3 – well connected

- Policy to ensure highways issues are considered as part of new development proposals;
- Support for the delivery of the link road;
- Allocate, protect and enhance active travel routes.



Draft community action themes

Objective 1 – distinctive place:

- Environmental enhancement projects;
- Maintenance of open spaces;
- Work with NCC to update conservation area guidance;
- Supporting projects to celebrate the diverse heritage of the area.



Draft community action themes

Objective 2 – sustainable and thriving community:

- Town centre enhancement projects;
- Visitor welcome projects;
- Projects to deliver new community services and facilities.



Draft community action themes

Objective 3 – well connected:

- Maintenance of public rights of way;
- Working with NCC on highways projects;
- Management of parking.



Key next steps

1. Discuss and agree vision, objectives and themes for planning policies and community actions;
2. Consider if there should be further early engagement;
3. Agree the need for additional evidence depending on the scope of the plan e.g. housing needs assessment, housing site assessment, design codes, business needs survey, local green space;
4. Draft policies and discuss with NCC the need for habitats regulations assessment and strategic environmental assessment (if allocating sites this is highly likely to be required).



Any questions on part 2?



Any comments on the draft vision, objectives, policy themes and community action themes?

