

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Newbiggin by The Sea Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

January 2023

Quality information

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| V1 | February 2022 | Internal Review | Ian McCluskey | Associate Director |
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Non-technical summary

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Newbiggin by the Sea Neighbourhood Plan (submission draft) (NNP) 2021-2036. The NNP is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the adopted Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022) (NLP).

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. Central to the SEA process is publication of an Environmental Report alongside the draft plan that presents certain required information. The aim is to inform the consultation and, in turn, plan finalisation.

Preparing the Environmental Report essentially involves answering three questions:

1) What has plan-making / SEA involved **up to this point?**

- including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.

2) What are the SEA findings **at this stage?**

- i.e. in relation to the draft plan.

3) What happens **next**

This Environmental Report NTS

This is the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the Environmental Report for the NNP, in which the three questions are answered in turn. Firstly, there is a need to set the scene further by answering: *What's the scope of the SEA?*

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is reflected in a list of topics and objectives, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological ‘framework’ for assessment. The SEA framework summary is presented below:

Table A: The SEA Framework summary

| SEA topic | SEA objective |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Biodiversity | Protect, maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity habitats and species; achieving a net environmental gain and stronger ecological networks. |
| Climatic Factors (adaptation) | Avoid and manage flood risk and support the resilience of the Newbiggin Neighbourhood Plan area to the potential effects of climate change. |
| Historic environment | Protect, enhance and manage the integrity, distinctive character and setting of heritage assets and the wider built environment. |
| Landscape | Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and appearance of landscapes. |
| Water | Protect and enhance water quality |
| Population and housing | Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing which meets the needs of occupiers throughout their lives. |

Plan making/SEA up to this point

An important element of the required SEA process involves assessing **reasonable alternatives** in time to inform development of the draft plan, and then publishing assessment findings in the Environmental Report.

As such, Part 1 of this report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a ‘reasonable’ range of alternative approaches to the allocation of land for housing, or **housing growth scenarios**.

The process of arriving at housing growth scenarios involved a process of considering the strategic context (‘top down’ factors), alongside understanding of the sites available and in contention for allocation (‘bottom up’ factors). The process is set out in Section 5, and summarised in a flow diagram.

Ultimately two housing growth scenarios were identified as reasonable and so warranting formal assessment under the SEA framework – see Table B.

Table B: The reasonable housing growth scenarios
N.B. figures are for the NCC Local Plan period (2016-2036)

| | Scenario 1 | Scenario 2 |
|--|----------------|-----------------|
| Supply | (NNP) | |
| (i) Newbiggin housing requirement figure (HRF) | 360 | 360 |
| (ii) Housing delivery – current position (Table 5-2) | 279-309 | 279-309 |
| (iii) Residual housing requirement (i-ii) | 51-81 | 51-81 |
| (iv) Total new supply to 2036 | 144-173 | 368-442 |
| (v) Net growth, over and above residual requirement (iv-iii) | 63-122 | 287-391 |
| Percentage uplift on HRF (v/i x 100) | 18%-34% | 80%-109% |

Table C presents the assessment. Presented subsequently is Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council's response to the assessment, i.e. reasons for supporting the preferred approach, which is **Scenario 1**.

Assessment methodology:

Within each row of Table C (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right hand firstly rank the scenarios in order of preference and then, secondly, highlight instances of a predicted significant positive (**green**), minor positive (**light green**), minor negative (**amber**), moderate negative (**pink**), significant negative (**red**) or neutral (**no colour**) effect on the baseline. Also, ' = ' is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par (i.e. it is not possible to differentiate between them).

Table C: Housing growth scenarios assessment

| Topic | Scenario 1 | | Scenario 2 | |
|-------------------------------|------------|---|------------|---|
| Biodiversity | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Climatic factors (adaptation) | 1 | | 2 | |
| Historic environment | = | | = | |
| Landscape | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Water (quality) | 1 | | 2 | |
| Population & housing | 2 | | 1 | |

Key: Within each row, for each of the topics, the columns to the right hand side seek to both **categorise** the performance of each scenario in terms of ‘significant effects’ on the baseline (using **red**, **pink**, **amber** and **light green**, **medium green** and **dark green**)¹ and also **rank** the alternatives in order of performance. Also, ‘=’ is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par (i.e. it not possible to differentiate between them).

Summary discussion

The assessment shows a mixed picture, with both scenarios associated with pros and cons. Scenario 1 is the best-performing with a significant positive (population and housing) and no significant negatives. Scenario 2 also performs well generally, with a significant positive for population and housing but it also has a significant negative with respect to biodiversity due to the larger scale of growth proposed and the location of the bulk of this growth in close proximity to designated biodiversity sites along the coast. Having said that, it does not automatically follow that Scenario 1 is best-performing overall, as the topics are not assumed to be of equal importance. It is for the decision-maker (also consultees), not this assessment, to assign weight to the various pros and cons and then arrive at a conclusion on which scenario is best-performing overall.

The plan-makers responded to the growth scenarios assessment as follows:

“The preferred approach is to take forward Scenario 1 as the basis for the NNP. This approach is considered to broadly align with the findings of the assessment, which finds Scenario 1 to perform well with respect to the majority of key sustainability issues, both in absolute terms and relative terms.”

Assessment findings at this stage

Part 2 of the Environmental Report presents an assessment of the NNP as a whole, as it stands at the current time (submission plan).

Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the SEA framework. The assessment reaches the following overall conclusions:

¹ Red indicates a significant negative effect; pink a moderate negative and amber a negative effect that is of limited or uncertain significance; light green indicates a positive effect that is of limited or uncertain significance; medium green a moderate positive and dark green a significant positive effect. No colour is assigned where effects are considered to be neutral or uncertain.

Overall, the Plan appraisal has served to highlight the potential for both positive and negative effects of varying degrees of significance.

Significant positive effects are anticipated in relation to the population and housing SEA theme as a result of the growth strategy, which will meet and potentially exceed strategic growth targets set in adopted Local Plan (NLP adopted 2022) and the most recent assessment of local housing need (AECOM HNA report 2021). This will help improve choice and potentially affordability in the market. The additional growth also serves to provide a buffer to better secure housing delivery. This is particularly important in Newbiggin as a substantial proportion of the housing stock is of poor quality. The scale of growth proposed along with NLP policies promoting well designed new development is likely to deliver good quality housing likely to help attract investment and engender population growth.

Mixed effects are predicted for biodiversity; **moderately negative effects** are likely due to the proposed housing growth south of Newbiggin where it is likely to lead to increased disturbance and recreational pressure on the coastal biodiversity designations (Northumberland Shore SSSI/ Ramsar and SPA). These effects would be reduced if the recommendations made herein are taken into account though. Policy N3 has the potential for **minor positive effects** as it serves to protect areas of green/ open space which are beneficial to biodiversity, particularly when the effects are considered in combination with the POS sites designated at strategic level through the NLP.

Minor long term positive effects are recognised for climate change adaptation as the Plan allocates development in areas at low risk of flooding and includes policies that seek to protect and enhance open green space.

Minor positive effects are expected for the historic environment as a result of policy N4 which seeks to protect and enhance the character of the Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area and Policy N3 which safeguards spaces and views that make a major contribution to the character of the historic townscape and landscape of Newbiggin.

The Plan is expected to have mixed effects on landscape; the proposed scale of growth to the south of the NP area will substantially and permanently alter the character of the landscape here leading to **moderate negative effects**. On the other hand, **moderate positive effects** are anticipated through policies promoting well designed development, that takes into account the character of the existing built environment and offering protection to the CA and key views.

Given the relatively modest scale of growth proposed in the NNP and strategic level policies seeking to ensure that there will be no adverse effects on water quality from new development and requiring infrastructure upgrades to the sewerage network and treatment capacity, **neutral** effects are predicted with respect to water quality.

Next steps

This Environmental Report is published alongside the submission version of the NNP. The 'submission' version of the Plan will then be submitted to NCC (alongside this Environmental Report). The Plan and supporting evidence will be then published for further consultation, and then submitted for examination.

If the outcome of the Independent Examination is favourable, the NNP will then be subject to a referendum, and the plan will be 'made' if more than 50% of those who

vote are in support. Once made, the NNP will become part of the Development Plan for Northumberland.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Neighbourhood Plan ('NNP') 2021–2036.
- 1.2 The NNP is being prepared in the context of the adopted Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022).
- 1.3 The NNP will be used to guide and shape development within the Plan area.
- 1.4 SEA is a required process for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to minimising negative effects and maximising positive effects.²

SEA explained

- 1.5 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.6 In-line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that “*identifies, describes and evaluates*” the likely significant effects of implementing “*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*”.³ The report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.7 More specifically, the Report must answer the following three questions:
 1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
- including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
- i.e. in relation to the draft plan.
 3. What happens next?

This Environmental Report

- 1.8 This report is the Environmental Report for the NNP. It is published alongside the 'submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).
- 1.9 This report answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn, to provide the required information.⁴ Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.10 However, before answering Q1, two further introductory sections are presented to further set the scene.

² Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an environmental report; or, B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process. The NNP was subject to screening, on the basis of which it was determined that there is a requirement for SEA (i.e. the plan was 'screened-in').

³ Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

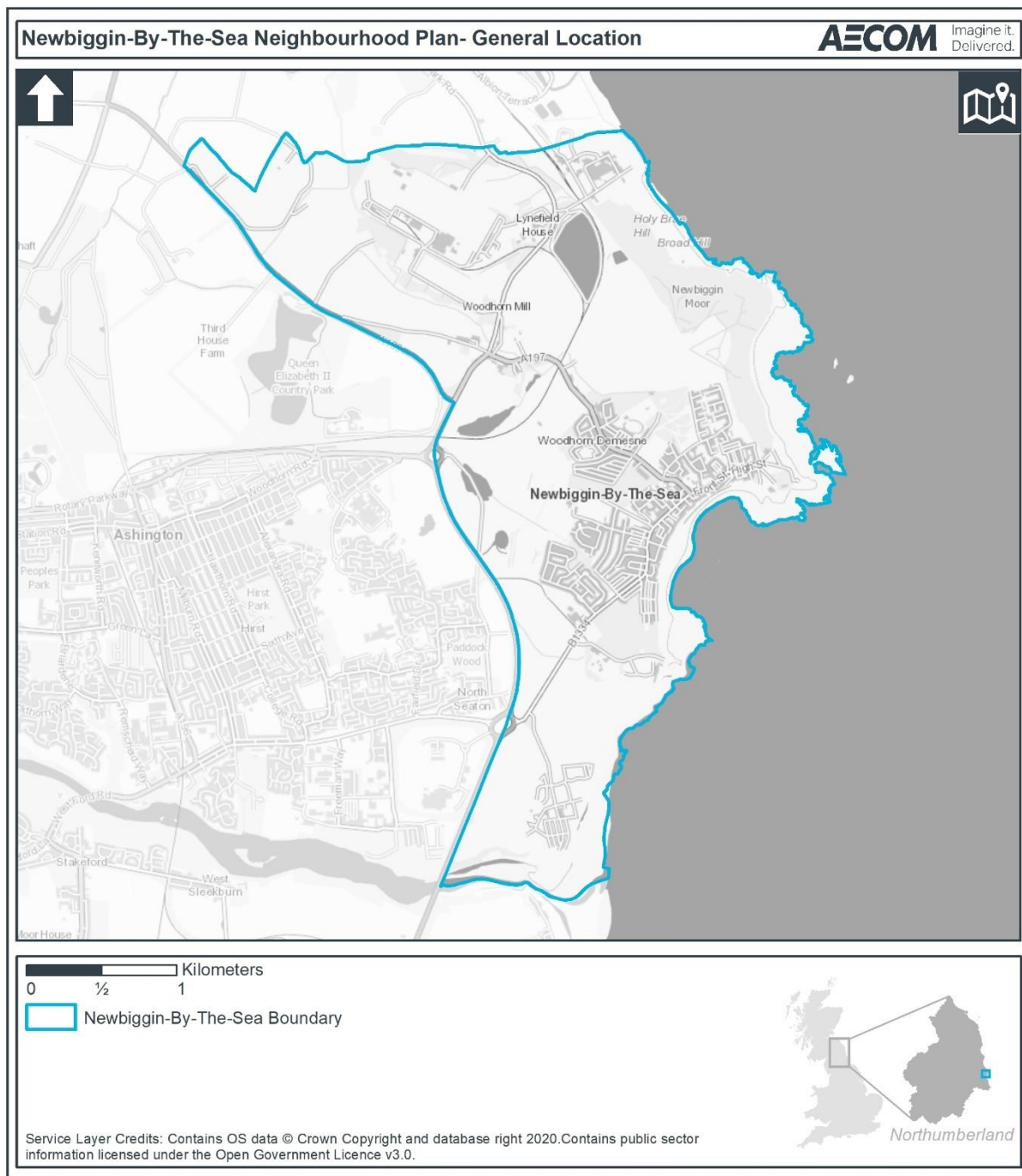
⁴ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the report structure including its regulatory basis.

2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

Introduction

- 2.1 This section considers the context provided by the adopted Northumberland Local Plan (NLP), before setting out the established NNP vision and objectives. The Plan area is shown in Figure 2.1.
- 2.2 The recently adopted NLP is a single new Local Plan which covers the whole of Northumberland with the exception of the area of the Northumberland National Park, which is a separate local planning authority. It sets out the strategic planning policies, general scale and distribution of new development, provides planning principles and allocations to meet Northumberland's needs to the year 2036. Newbiggin-by-the-Sea is located in the South East Northumberland Delivery Area and is designated as a Service Centre, which is the second tier of the main settlement hierarchy. Northumberland County Council considers that Newbiggin-by-the-Sea is an important service centre for both residents and surrounding communities. Therefore, it is a suitable location to accommodate employment, housing and services that maintains and strengthens its role.
- 2.3 NLP Strategic Policy HOU3 (Housing requirements for neighbourhood plan areas) sets a housing requirement figure (HRF) of 360 homes in the NP area over the period 2016-2036. The policy also allocates the following three sites for housing:
 - The former Moorside School site at Woodhorn Rd. (up to 66 units)
 - Land NW of Spital House Farm, North Seaton Rd. (55-85 units)
 - Site adjacent to the Arts Centre at Woodhorn Rd. (13 units)
- 2.4 NLP Policy HOU5 sets out that a range of good quality, energy-efficient homes, including affordable homes, will be provided to deliver a more balanced mix of tenures and housing types and sizes, alongside supported specialist housing for older and vulnerable people. Development proposals will be assessed according to how well they meet the needs and aspirations of those living in and seeking to move to Northumberland, as identified in the most up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment or local housing needs assessment.
- 2.5 NLP Policy HOU6 states that major development proposals of 10-or-more units or 0.5 hectares will be expected to provide Affordable Housing (AH) according to a tiered requirement ranging from 10% to 30% depending on area value and development size. Within low and medium value areas, developments of 10 to 29 units are exempt from making a contribution.
- 2.6 These are to be provided as 100% affordable home ownership. However, In low value areas developments of less than 30 dwellings are exempt from making an affordable housing contribution.

Figure 2-2-1 The NNP area



2.7 The NNP adopts the following vision;

‘By 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, as well as access to high quality housing, employment and protected open spaces with linked wildlife corridors.

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

The town centre will be vibrant, with a range of shops, social and leisure facilities. These services, facilities and leisure opportunities will be fully accessible, contributing to health and well-being and will result in a growth in visitor numbers who will support the success of the local economy.

New development will ensure the protection and enhancement of the area and safeguard the amenity of the local community.’

2.8 The NNP encompasses the following set of objectives;

Table 2-1 Objectives of the NNP

Objective 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.

Objective 2 – Sustainable, thriving and healthy 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, strengthening the role of the town centre and improving infrastructure to support health needs.

Objective 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 and ensuring access for all.

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e. the sustainability themes and objectives that should be a focus of the SEA. Supplementary information is presented in Appendix II.

Consultation

- 3.2 The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. As such, these authorities were consulted over in early 2022 and the responses received are detailed in the SEA Scoping Report.

The SEA framework

- 3.3 Table 3.1 presents a summary of topics and objectives that together form the backbone of the SEA scope. Together with the supporting appraisal questions they comprise a ‘framework’ (see SEA Scoping Report) under which to undertake assessment; derived from an understanding of policy context and baseline conditions. Only topics with the potential for significant effects to arise have been included in the framework, meaning that it focuses on the important issues.

Table 3-1 Summary of the SEA framework

| SEA topic | SEA objective |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Biodiversity | Protect, maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity habitats and species; achieving a net environmental gain and stronger ecological networks. |
| Climatic Factors (adaptation) | Avoid and manage flood risk and support the resilience of the Newbiggin Neighbourhood Plan area to the potential effects of climate change. |
| Historic environment | Protect, enhance and manage the integrity, distinctive character and setting of heritage assets and the wider built environment. |
| Landscape | Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and appearance of landscapes. |
| Water | Protect and enhance water quality |
| Population and housing | Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing which meets the needs of occupiers throughout their lives. |

Part 1: What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point?

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 Work on the NNP has been underway for some while, with early engagement activities starting in March 2019, followed by further engagement in 2020 to early 2021. The results of the consultations are available on the Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council [website](#).
- 4.2 This is important context; however, the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive explanation of work to date. Rather, the aim is to explain work undertaken to develop and appraise **reasonable alternatives**.
- 4.3 More specifically, this part of the report presents information on the consideration given to reasonable alternative approaches to addressing a particular issue that is of central importance to the plan, namely the allocation of land for housing, or **housing growth scenarios**.

Why focus on housing growth scenarios?

- 4.4 The decision was taken to develop and assess reasonable alternatives ('scenarios') in relation to the matter of housing growth in light of the Plan objectives (see para 2.7), and because there is the likelihood of being able to differentiate between the merits of alternatives/scenarios in respect of 'significant effects'. National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that SEA should focus on matters likely to give rise to significant effects.

Who's responsibility?

- 4.5 It is important to be clear that:
- **Defining scenarios** - is ultimately the responsibility of the plan-maker, although the SEA consultant (AECOM) is well placed to advise.
 - **Assessing scenarios** - is the responsibility of the SEA consultant.
 - **Selecting a preferred scenario** - is the responsibility of the plan-maker.

Structure of this part of the report

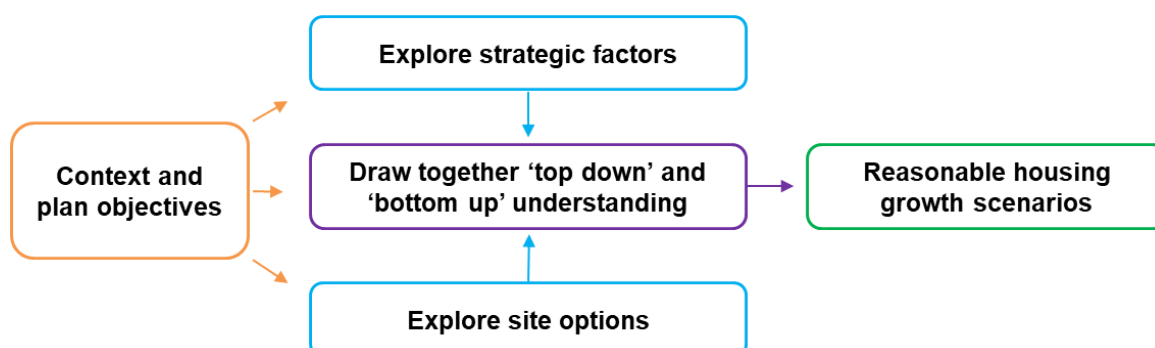
- 4.6 This part of the report is structured as follows:
- **Chapter 5** - explains the process of defining scenarios;
 - **Chapter 6** - presents the outcomes of assessing scenarios;
 - **Chapter 7** - explains reasons for supporting the preferred approach.

5. Defining scenarios

Introduction

- 5.1 The aim here is to explain a process that led to the definition of a reasonable range of housing growth scenarios for assessment, and thereby present “an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with”.⁵
- 5.2 Specifically, there is a need to: **1)** explain strategic factors with a bearing on defining scenarios; **2)** discuss work completed to examine site options (i.e. sites potentially in contention for allocation); and then **3)** explain how the ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ understanding generated through steps (1) and (2) were married together in order to arrive at reasonable housing growth scenarios.

Figure 5.1: Defining scenarios



Strategic factors

- 5.3 The aim of this section is to explore the strategic factors with a bearing on the establishment of reasonable housing growth scenarios. Specifically, this section of the report explores:
- Quantum – how many new homes must the NNP provide for?
 - Broad distribution – broadly where is more/less suited to allocation?

Quantum

- 5.4 The NLP identifies Newbiggin by the Sea as a Service Centre within the ‘South East Delivery Area’, and allocates an ‘*indicative*’ requirement of 360 new dwellings (18 units/annum) there, over the 20-year period between 2016 and 2036. Three sites are allocated to deliver between 134 and 164 dwellings, since the start of the plan period, 46 dwellings have been delivered, 92 dwellings have planning permission and there are two pending applications (which includes two local plan allocations) which would deliver 86 dwellings. The strategic housing land availability assessment identifies that there is capacity within the town to deliver the remaining indicative requirement of 360.
- 5.5 The Town Council commissioned AECOM to carry out a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for Newbiggin which concluded that there is a need of 424-521 dwellings over the period 2021-2036 (28-35 dwellings per annum). The

⁵ Schedule 2(8) of the SEA Regulations.

figure represents around 18 to 45% uplift to the indicative NLP housing requirement figure.

Broad distribution

- 5.6 Newbiggin by the Sea has several environmental designations, including the Northumbria Coast and Northumberland Marine SPA, Northumberland Shore SSSI, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI and the Coquet to St Marys Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). The Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) associated with the SSSIs covers the entirety of the NP area.
- 5.7 In addition to the international and national designation above, there are locally designated sites such as local nature reserves and part of the South East Northumberland Wildlife Network.
- 5.8 There are heritage designations including a conservation area comprising the historic core of the town centre and old fishing village. There are several listed buildings such as St Bartholomew Church and Woodhorn Church museum, various buildings and memorials.
- 5.9 The coastal, low-lying, open topography of much of the NP area render the landscape sensitive to change due to extensive vistas, within and outside of the area.
- 5.10 In terms of flood risk, there is a narrow band of flood zone 3 along the entire coastal area. Apart from the coastal areas there is an area of fluvial flooding risk (Flood Zone 3) along the River Wansbeck at the southern boundary of the NP area. Otherwise, most of the NDP area is at low risk of flooding.

Site options

- 5.11 Having discussed strategic, 'top-down' factors with a bearing on establishing housing growth scenarios, the next step is to consider the site options that are in contention for allocation.
- 5.12 A key starting point is the NP Housing site assessment background paper (HSAP), which examines potential sites, assessing their suitability according to a set of criteria. The assessment considers all the sites within the NP area that were considered in the Northumberland Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (as revised in April 2022), other sites with planning permission (including those pending consideration), sites put forward as part of the NP process and sites identified by the Town Council.
- 5.13 The sites were then filtered (initial sieve) removing sites considered to be clearly in conflict with NPPF and strategic policies. This resulted in the exclusion of 3 greenfield sites located in the countryside, separated from the current built areas of the town. Additionally, SHLAA site 8061 was discounted due the scale of the site in relation to Woodhorn and SHLAA site 5105 was excluded due to flood risk.
- 5.14 Sites allocated in the NLP (SHLAA 5059, 5115, 5129, 9052) and 8 sites with planning permission (SHLAA 5066, 6779, 5032, 10809, 6984, 11117, 10738, 12464) were also excluded from further assessment. Sites suitable for 1 dwelling were also excluded.
- 5.15 The remaining sites (Table 5-1) were subjected to the site assessment process.

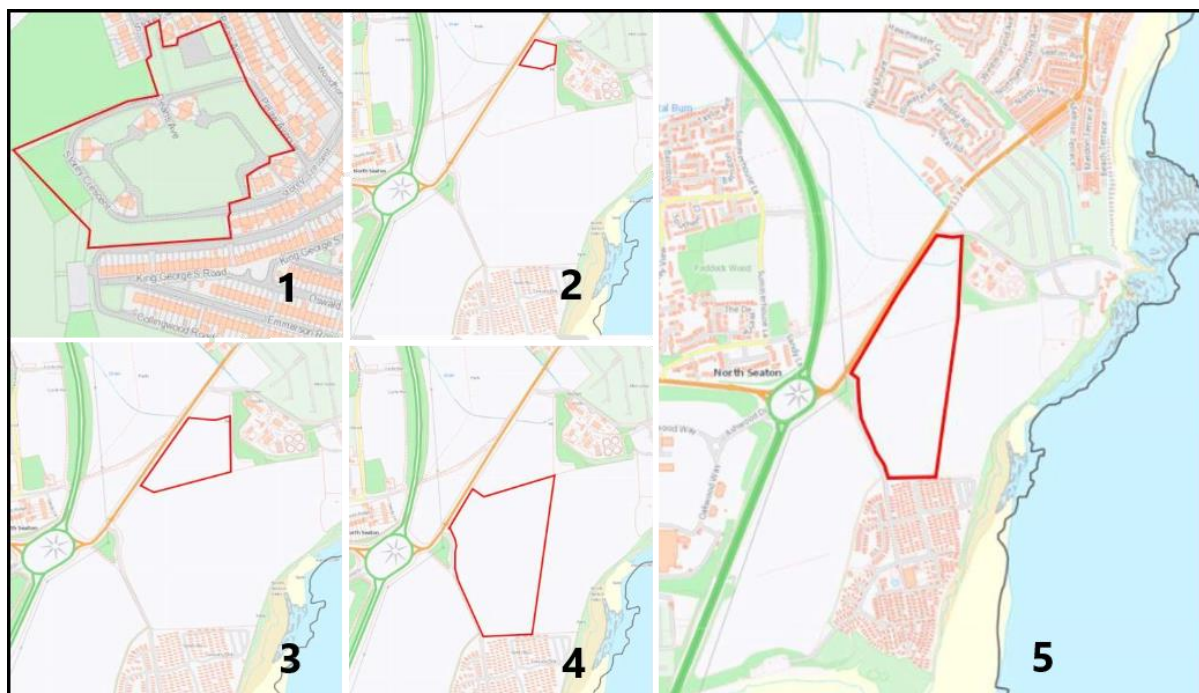
Table 5-1 Sites subjected to the site assessment process

| SHLAA Ref. | Name | Assessment outcome |
|-------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| 5021 | Pembroke Court | Not available |
| 5028 | West End Service Station, North Seaton Road | Not available |
| 5030 | The Needles | Not available |
| 5090 | Storey Crescent | Suitable, available, achievable |
| 5116 | Woodhorn Road | Not available |
| 5142 | Land to the west of Store Farm Road | Not available |
| 5143 | Land to the west of Woodhorn Road | Not available |
| 5179 | 126 Front Street | Not available |
| 6766 | Woodhorn Demesne | Not available |
| 9175 | North of B1334 and west of Spital Road | Not available |
| 9222 | Land south of Beach Terrace | Not available |
| 9231a (part) | Land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea | Suitable, available, achievable |
| 9231b (part) | Land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea | Suitable, available, achievable |
| 9231c (part) | Land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea | Suitable, available, achievable |

5.16 Since the start of the NLP period (2016) there have been 46 completions in Newbiggin. There are also sites with extant planning permissions and sites with pending applications (Table 5-2). The NLP allocations (excluding pending applications add a further 55-85 units. Therefore, a figure of 279-309 represents the current position pertaining to housing delivery in the NP area.

Table 5-2 Housing delivery - Current Position

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Housing delivered (2016-2021) | 46 dwellings |
| Sites with planning permission | 92 |
| Pending applications (including two NLP allocations) | 86 |
| Local Plan allocation (excluding above) | 55-85 |
| Total | 279-309 |

Figure 5-1 Sites assessed suitable, achievable and available⁶**Key**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | NNP ref. H1-Storey Crescent |
| 2 | NNP ref. H2-Land south of Newbiggin by the Sea Phase 1 |
| 3 | NNP ref. H3-Land south of Newbiggin by the Sea Phase 2 |
| 4 | SHLAA ref. 9231c Land south of Newbiggin by the Sea Phase 3 |
| 5 | Sites 2+3+4 combined; Land south of Newbiggin by the Sea |

Sites not to scale

⁶ Source: NNP Housing site assessment background paper (Dec. 2021)

5.17 The capacity of sites assessed as suitable, available and achievable is shown in Table 5-2 below

Table 5-3 Potential housing capacity

| SHLAA Site | Capacity |
|---|-----------------|
| 5090 – Storey Crescent | 40-50 |
| 9231a - Land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea – phase 1 | 11-14 |
| 9231b - Land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea – phase 2 | 93-109 |
| 9231c - Land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea – phase 3 | 224-269 |
| Total | 368-442 |

The reasonable scenarios

5.18 The NNP (Policy N5) allocates the first three sites in Table 5-3. These would deliver 144-173 new dwellings. When added to completed dwellings, sites with planning permission, sites with pending applications and the NLP allocations (see Table 5-2) a total figure of 423 to 482 is produced.

5.19 The submission draft of the NNP does not allocate site 9231c but may consider allocating it in a future review of the NNP. If the site is allocated now, the total housing deliverable would rise to 647-751.

5.20 In conclusion, on the basis of the discussion above (i.e. all of Section 5, read as a whole), these are the potential housing growth scenarios for assessment:

- Not to allocate any further development in Newbiggin as the LNP allocations plus completions since the NLP start period (2016) plus sites with permissions and pending permission would provide up to 309 dwellings representing just over 86% of the growth requirement (and could therefore rely on windfall development to meet remaining target). Given the higher locally assessed housing need this is considered an unsustainable option and therefore does not constitute a reasonable alternative.
- The position outlined in the NNP (the Plan approach) which allocates the Storey Crescent site and the Land to South of Newbiggin-by-the-Sea phases 1 (H2) and 2 sites (H3). Giving a total growth of 423-482 dwellings
- Pursue a higher growth scenario developing all the sites in Table 5.3, maximising growth to help meet identified housing need and potentially improve affordable housing provision. This would produce 647-751 units (when NLP allocations, commitments and completions are included).

6. Scenarios assessment

Introduction

- 6.1 The aim of this section is to present assessment findings in relation to the two reasonable housing growth scenarios introduced above, and set out in Table 6.1.

Table 6-1 The reasonable housing growth scenarios

| | Scenario 1 (NNP) | Scenario 2 |
|--|---------------------|-----------------|
| Supply | | |
| (i) Newbiggin housing requirement figure (HRF) | 360 | 360 |
| (ii) Housing delivery – current position (Table 5-2) | 279-309 | 279-309 |
| (iii) Residual housing requirement (i-ii) | 51-81 | 51-81 |
| (iv) Total new supply to 2036 (through NNP) | 144-173 | 368-442 |
| (v) Net growth, over and above residual requirement (iv-iii) | 63-122 | 287-391 |
| Percentage uplift on HRF (v/i x 100) | 18%-34% | 80%-109% |

Assessment findings

- 6.2 Table 6.1 presents assessment findings in relation to the two scenarios.
- 6.3 With regards to methodology: Within each row (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right hand side seek to both **categorise** the performance of each scenario in terms of ‘significant effects’ on the baseline (using **red**, **pink**, **amber** and **light green**, **medium green** and **dark green**)⁷ and also **rank** the alternatives in order of performance. Also, ‘ = ’ is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par (i.e. it not possible to differentiate between them).
- 6.4 The appraisal matrix is followed by a discussion, setting out reasons for the appraisal conclusions reached, with reference to available evidence.

⁷ Red indicates a significant negative effect; pink a moderate negative, amber a minor negative effect that is of limited or uncertain significance; light green a positive effect that is of limited or uncertain significance, medium green an effect of moderately positive effects and dark green a significant positive effect. No colour is assigned where effects are considered to be neutral or uncertain.

Table 6-1: Housing growth scenarios assessment

| Topic | Scenario 1 | | Scenario 2 | |
|-------------------------------|------------|---|------------|---|
| Biodiversity | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Climatic factors (adaptation) | 1 | | 2 | |
| Historic environment | = | | = | |
| Landscape | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Water | 1 | | 2 | |
| Population & housing | 2 | | 1 | |

Biodiversity – mixed effects are considered likely for both scenarios; the proposed housing site allocations could lead to increased disturbance and recreational pressure on the coastal biodiversity designations (Northumberland Shore SSSI/ Ramsar and SPA) leading to **moderately negative effects** for Scenario 1. Furthermore, sites 9231b and 9231c are currently under a countryside stewardship agreement, which means areas should be contributing positively to the natural environment at present. Change in use to residential could undermine these benefits.

On the other hand, Policy N3 has the potential for **minor positive effects** (for both scenarios) as it serves to protect areas of green/ open space which are beneficial to biodiversity, particularly when the effects are considered in combination with the POS sites designated at strategic level through the NLP. Scenario 2 would include an additional, substantially larger site (SHLAA ref. 9231c Land south of Newbiggin by the Sea Phase 3) in the same location as sites H2 and H3. The same adverse effects as those under Scenario 1 would be likely, but these would be amplified in magnitude due to the additional growth. Scenario 2 would result in a growth of up to 392 (compared to up to 123 under Scenario 1) at the South of Newbiggin location. Consequently, **significant negative effects** are likely for Scenario 2 due to much larger growth at this location which is in close proximity to the Northumberland Shore SSSI/ Ramsar and SPA sites.

Climatic factors (adaptation) – the key consideration is flood risk. The NNP places development in areas of low flood risk and none of the sites in question are subject to significant constraint. Policy N3 which seeks to protect green open space (through LGS designation) is likely to produce favourable effects on adaptation as the designated LGS should help reduce flood risk and act as carbon sequesters; contributing directly to a reduction in atmospheric CO₂ concentration. Scenario 2 would involve substantially larger growth on the greenfield site south of Newbiggin which would reduce permeability and lead to the loss of some flood retention capacity, making Scenario 2 slightly less preferable. However, overall, both scenarios are predicted to produce **minor long-term positive effects** on climate change adaptation as both include the same level of LGS and allocate development in areas at low risk of flooding. It could also be argued that development presents the opportunity to enhance climate resilience by introducing natural drainage systems and green infrastructure. However, in the case of site 9231c, this is considered unlikely given that it is entirely greenfield and therefore already serves a flood management function.

Historic environment

There are generally limited sensitivities associated with the sites allocated for development under both Scenarios. As such, none of the sites are anticipated to produce significant effects on the historic environment. Policy N4 which offers protection to the character of the Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area is likely to have positive effects and would apply to both scenarios. Similarly, Policy N3 which designates LGS, including areas that make a substantial contribution to the historic fabric of the town and its character, is positive and applies to both Scenarios.

Therefore, both scenarios perform on par, rated **minor positive** with respect to historic environment.

Landscape

Mixed effects are envisaged; the cumulative effects of proposed development, through the NLP and NNP and the location of Sites H2 and H3 will substantially alter the landscape at the southern boundary of the town leading to **minor negative effects** for Scenario 1. On the other hand, **moderately positive effects** are anticipated (both scenarios) through policies promoting well designed development, that takes into account the character of the built environment and offering protection to the CA and key views. Under Scenario 2 the negative effects are amplified due to the substantially higher growth proposed (up to 392 for Scenario 2 compared to 123 under Scenario 1) across the three sites South of Newbiggin (H2, H3 and SHLAA 9231c) potentially leading to **significant negative effects**. This would also substantially extend the built up area of Newbiggin southward in a linear fashion that does not relate well to the existing form of settlement. There are also views across this site towards the sea / coastal landscapes, which would likely be affected. Consequently, Scenario 1 is deemed preferable to Scenario 2.

Water

New developments would require connection to existing foul and stormwater conveyance network and the incorporation of SuDS where practicable. Additionally, policies such as WAT1 in the adopted NLP offer protection to water bodies and bathing waters within the County requiring the avoidance of any reduction in the high-status of certain water bodies and requiring assessment of effects of development on designated bathing waters. The NLP's Policy WAT2 requires that assurance is obtained from water utilities that adequate resources exist in terms of water supplies and sewerage capacity to accommodate new development. Policy WAT4 states that SuDS would be required for any new development where necessary to manage surface water drainage. NNP Policies such as N1 (Design) also seek to protect water bodies in the NP area supporting development that will not result in unacceptable levels of water pollution. Overall, the effects on wastewater treatment capacity are predicted to be neutral for both scenarios (given the NLP policies discussed). However, scenario 2 would involve substantially more growth than Scenario 1 and most of the additional growth would be concentrated on sites close the coast and Newbiggin South designated

Bathing Water. This would produce more surface water run-off which may adversely impact the nearby designated bathing waters. Therefore, Scenario 1 is preferable in this instance (**neutral effects**) whilst Scenario 2 is predicted to have potentially **minor negative effects** on water quality due to the additional growth concentrated close to the coast and the designated bathing waters of Newbiggin South.

Population and housing

The primary consideration is meeting the housing need in Newbiggin by the Sea. On this basis, both scenarios would exceed the strategic HRF (360 dwellings) fulfilling and potentially exceeding the most recently produced housing need assessment (AECOM HNA report of April 2021). The latter concluded that there is a need for 424 to 521 dwellings between 2021 and 2036. When the current housing delivery position (sites with extant planning permission, pending applications and strategic allocations as shown in Table 5-2) is added to the NNP proposed allocations; Scenario 1 would produce a total of 423-482 dwellings, which is within the range of the HNA estimate. Scenario 2 would produce 647-751 units, which substantially exceeds the HNA estimated need. This level of growth is likely to create more choice of dwelling types, sizes and tenures in the local housing market. It would also facilitate the provision of affordable housing (AH) as sites H2 and H3 (Scenarios 1 and 2) and site 9231c (Scenario 2) all exceed the threshold required for AH provision. The growth proposed and the potential for AH provision help ensure the long term sustainability of Newbiggin's community enabling younger residents and young families to remain in the area. In conclusion, both scenarios perform **significantly positively** as they would provide sufficient homes to meet the HNA estimated need, but Scenario 2 is preferable due to the higher housing growth and social infrastructure this could bring.

7. The preferred approach

Introduction

- 7.1 The aim of this section is to present the plan-makers reasons for supporting the preferred approach, in light of the scenarios assessment presented above.

Reasons for supporting the preferred approach

- 7.2 The preferred approach is to take forward Scenario 1 as the basis for the NNP. This approach is considered to broadly align with the findings of the assessment, which finds Scenario 1 to perform well in terms of the majority of key sustainability issues, both in absolute terms and relative terms.
- 7.3 With regards to Scenario 2, the assessment highlights that it does not perform as well in terms of biodiversity, landscape, climate resilience and water. Conversely, this option performs better in terms of population and housing. In any case Town Council may decide to allocate SHLAA site 9231c for housing in a future review of the NNP.
- 7.4 The process of defining and assessing growth scenarios serves to highlight that the key choice to make between scenarios 1 and 2 relates to the trade-off between the additional benefits in terms of housing growth (Scenario 2) and the better performance against a range of environmental factors associated with Scenario 1. The latter would still achieve significant positive effects in terms of housing. The Council considers that Scenario 1 is most appropriate on balance in terms of sustainable development and the objectives of the Plan.

Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

- 8.1 The aim of this section is to present an assessment of the current submission draft of the NNP which includes 8 policies to guide development in the Neighbourhood Plan area. These are set out in Table 8.1 below.

Table 8-1 NNP policies

| Policy no. | Title |
|------------|---|
| N1 | Design |
| N2 | Coastal Mitigation |
| N3 | Local green space |
| N4 | Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area |
| N5 | Housing site allocations |
| N6 | Community services and facilities |
| N7 | Sustainable transport and new development |
| N8 | Rights of way |

Methodology

- 8.2 The assessment identifies and evaluates ‘likely significant effects’ on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.1) as a methodological framework.
- 8.3 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a ‘no plan’ scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g. in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict ‘significant effects’, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 8.4 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. For example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e. the potential for the NNP to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes and projects. These effect ‘characteristics’ are described within the assessment as appropriate.

9. Assessment of the NNP

Introduction

- 9.1 The assessment is presented below under eight topic headings, reflecting the established assessment framework (see Section 3). A final section (Chapter 10) then presents overall conclusions. Throughout the assessment consideration is given as to whether measures can be implemented to mitigate negative effects and maximise positive effects. The appraisal in this section builds upon the assessment of strategic scenarios outlined in Section 8, but brings into consideration of all the plan policies that were subsequently drawn up.

Biodiversity

- 9.2 There are several international, European and nationally protected biodiversity sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area. These include: the Northumberland Coast and Northumberland Marine SPAs, Northumberland Coast Ramsar, Northumberland Shore SSSI, Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI. There are also two Marine Conservation Zones: the Coquet to St Mary MCZ and the Berwick to St Mary MCZ. The MCZs support regionally and nationally important numbers of common eider in the breeding and non-breeding seasons.
- 9.3 There are locally designated sites in the vicinity of the NP area such as the Queen Elizabeth Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which is adjacent to the NW boundary of the NP area. Paddock Wood LNR is around 200m from the SW boundary and the Cresswell Dunes LNR is just over 500m from the northern boundary of the NP area.
- 9.4 In terms of housing sites, the majority of the eastern half of the NP area falls within SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) associated with the Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI and the Northumberland Shore SSSI. A sites check (GIS data in Magic Map) of the three proposed residential sites indicates that developments of 50 or more residential units outside of the existing settlements / urban areas would require consultation with Natural England on likely risks. The Storey Crescent site is allocated up to 50 units, but lies within the built up area. The two sites south of Newbiggin Phase 1 and 2 (up to 173 units) are outside the current built up area of the town and are with 500m of the Ramsar and SSSI sites. Whilst effects are unlikely on the Cresswell and Newbiggin Shore SSSI⁸, notified for its importance as a coastal geological site, development can potentially have adverse effects on the Northumberland Shore SSSI (also a Ramsar). In addition to being a SSSI, the latter is also notified for being a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar convention. It is also a Special Protection Area (SPA). The site provides important wintering grounds for shore birds, and it is of international, or national significance for six species, purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover, ringed plover and redshank. The area is also used by a wide variety of other shorebirds in winter, including curlew, oystercatcher, dunlin, knot, bar-tailed godwit and lapwing. Arctic and little terns breed on the shore during the summer. The inter-tidal zone is also favoured all year round as a feeding area for eiders, which are present along the coast in nationally important numbers. Natural England's views about

⁸ According to Natural England: 'The key management principle for is to maintain exposure of the geological interest by allowing natural processes to proceed freely. Inappropriate construction of coastal defences can completely conceal rock exposures and result in the effective loss of the geological interest.'

management state that ‘the birds that use the foreshore for feeding and roosting are vulnerable to disturbance from human activities, for example, bait digging, dog walking and wildfowling. Therefore, developing the two sites south of Newbiggin could place increased pressure on the coastal Ramsar/ SSSI sites due to the increase in population and associated increase in disturbance from recreational activities. The coastal biodiversity sites are also sensitive to changes in water quality which could be affected by polluted surface water runoff from residential developments. When considered in conjunction with development at strategic level (NLP), the cumulative effects are potentially significantly negative due to the additional recreational and disturbance impacts on the designated sites. However, effects are partly moderated by policy N2 (Coastal mitigation) which requires new development resulting in net increase in residential/ tourist unit, within 7km of the coast, to contribute to the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service (NCMS) or provide other effective mitigation. Similarly, major development within 7 to 10km of coast would be required to contribute to the NCMS. The latter employs coastal wardens who educate and advise recreational users (e.g. dog walkers, joggers, horse riders and sea anglers) as to how they can enjoy the coast without causing excessive disturbance to important bird populations. Development proposals within 7 km of the coast, resulting in a net increase in residential or tourist units would be required to contribute to the NMCS. Overall, the potential for significant negative effects due to recreational and disturbance impacts on coastal biodiversity sites is reduced to **moderately negative** with the proposed mitigation in place.

- 9.5 Policy N3 (Local green space) seeks to protect areas of local green spaces through the designation of Local Green Space (LGS). The LGS designation proffers the same level of protection as that afforded to the land within the green belt. The designation serves to protect these important areas of open space from future development. Urban green spaces provide habitats that support biodiversity, often acting as biodiversity stepping stones linking to wider biodiversity networks. When combined with other areas designated as Protected Open Space (POS) in the NLP, the LGS and POS provide an extended, connected network of green /open spaces helping reduce habitat fragmentation caused by development. Therefore, **minor positive effects** are expected.
- 9.6 Overall, mixed effects are considered likely; the proposed housing site allocations are likely to lead to increased recreational pressure on the coastal biodiversity designations (Northumberland Shore SSSI/ Ramsar and SPA) leading to **moderately negative effects**. On the other hand, Policy N3 has the potential for **minor positive effects** as it serves to protect areas of green/ open space which are beneficial to biodiversity, particularly when = the effects are considered in synergy with the POS sites designated at strategic level through the NLP.

Climate change (adaptation)

- 9.7 In terms of climate change adaptation, the NP area falls predominantly within Flood Zone 1. There is a stretch of Flood Zone 2 and 3 running along the coastal areas and the River Wansbeck along the southern boundary of the NP area. There is potential for surface water flooding to occur across the NP area, although areas susceptible to this are scattered amongst areas with lower risk of fluvial flooding. The shore is under threat from rising sea levels and associated

coastal erosion. Though there are coastal defences in place, the risk is likely to increase over the plan period and beyond.

- 9.8 In terms of housing site allocations; none of the sites allocated for housing development are within areas at significant risk of flooding. There is an area of Flood Zone 3, around 250m from the northern, tip of the site H2. However, the site is separated from the flood risk area by allotments and areas of green open space. In this respect, neutral effects are anticipated but it would be important to ensure that new development does not increase flood risk to neighbouring areas.
- 9.9 LGS allocated in policy N3 is potentially positive; open spaces and green infrastructure can make a valuable contribution to managing surface water runoff. The effects of climate change are anticipated to include increased frequency of heavy rain events. Open spaces and green infrastructure can form part of critical flood risk management by providing space for managed flooding, protecting built up areas. The areas designated as LGS along the coast (Promenade and Quay Wall and Church Point) also help to safeguard space for future coastal defences to protect against further coastal erosion (e.g. rock berms), preventing the need for future (expensive) roll back⁹/ leaseback¹⁰ schemes.
- 9.10 Whilst the Plan is not predicted to have significant effects on climate change mitigation, policy N7 (sustainable transport and new development) is beneficial as it promotes sustainable transport by requiring that new development prioritise pedestrian and cycling provision. It also promotes public transport and the provision of EV charging points. This will help offset some of the inevitable increase in car traffic generated by the proposed development.
- 9.11 Overall, the avoidance of placing development in areas of high flood risk, alongside measures to increase climate resilience through the protection, enhancement and provision of green open space are considered to have **minor long-term positive effects** on climate change adaptation.

Historic environment

- 9.12 The NP area contains 17 listed buildings including the Grade I Church of St Mary Woodhorn, which is on the heritage at risk register. There are numerous locally listed heritage assets. Parts of the conservation area are in disrepair and the character of the CA has been eroded over the years through unsympathetic extensions, use of incongruent modern materials and signage.
- 9.13 In terms of housing site allocations, the eastern most boundary of the Storey Crescent Site (H1) is around 260m from the Newbiggin War Memorial (Grade II). The site is separated from the Memorial by an existing residential estate and the A197 therefore development is not expected to impact the setting of the War Memorial. There are no designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the two remaining sites south of Newbiggin (H2 and H3). Overall, the housing site allocations are not expected to give rise to significant effects on the historic environment (**neutral effects**).
- 9.14 The Newbiggin Conservation Area (CA) comprises includes the historic town centre and old fishing village and later suburban extension. It encompasses Church Point and the Promenade. Memorial Park, a post WWI gardens with Art

⁹ the relocation/replacement of at risk property and infrastructure to areas inland away from the eroding coastline.

¹⁰ the process of purchasing an at-risk property and leasing it out for the remainder of its economic life.

Deco elements, forms an important area of open space in the CA. In this context policy N3 (Local Green Space) is likely to have positive effects on the setting of the CA as it designates these areas (Memorial Park, Church Point and Promenade and Quay Wall) as LGS thus safeguarding them from future development. The sites form an intrinsic part of the character of the CA, therefore the policy is likely to have **minor positive effects** with respect to the historic environment.

- 9.15 Policy N4 (Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area) supports development that preserves / enhances the character of appearance of the CA and its setting. Development proposals would be required to consider impacts of on buildings (key buildings listed in policy) and views forming important elements of the character/ appearance of the area. The policy requires that development maintain the distinct character of the CA through the use of appropriate materials, forms and density reflecting the local vernacular. Development likely to lead to harm or loss of significance of aspects of the CA would only be supported in circumstances where it can be demonstrated that substantial public benefits (from development) would outweigh such harm or loss. The policy is likely to have long term, **minor positive effects** as it offers protection to the CA, associated heritage assets and their settings. Similarly, policy N1 (Design) is expected to have positive effects, as it reinforces policy N4, requiring development to maintain and enhance the character of the locality with respect to appearance, scale, density and materials. It also requires development to conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and their setting.
- 9.16 A primary Plan objective is for Newbiggin by the Sea to conserve and enhance the built and historic environment. The cumulative effects of growth on the historic environment could also have negative implications, particularly as a result of increased traffic and congestion. The Plan seeks to combat this through well located (for facilities and services) and well connected developments that prioritise pedestrian and cycle paths within developments and linking to surrounding streets, spaces and access to sustainable transport.
- 9.17 Overall, the potential for **minor positive effects** is recognised, namely through the policies seeking to preserve the character and settings of the historic environment including the CA and the designation of LGS.

Landscape

- 9.18 The spatial strategy in the NNP allocates 3 housing sites, the Storey Crescent site (H1) is within the existing built area, whilst the other two (South of Newbiggin sites H2 and H3) are outside the current built-up area and relate somewhat less well to the existing settlement. Sites H1 and H2 are adjacent to a sewage treatment plant to the East, the B1334 to the west and an extensive area of open fields to the south stretching down to a Caravan Park. Once fully developed the two sites (H1 and H2) would be less than 200m from the neighbouring parish of Ashington but coalescence is unlikely due to the A189 which represents a strong permanent barrier between the two parishes. Given the relatively flat, rural, open landscape, developing sites H2 and H3 could significantly alter the landscape character here with the potential for adverse effects. Having said that the existing adjacent land uses such as the sewage plant and the caravan parks to the west and south of the sites, render the landscape less sensitive here. Therefore, **moderately negative effects** are anticipated, as a result of allocating sites H2 and H3.

- 9.19 Intervisibility from surrounding areas into, and out of, development sites is an important consideration when assessing impacts on the landscape surrounding new development. In this context policy NNP policy N1 (Design) is potentially positive as it requires development to take into account of the topography and natural features of the site including the impact from outside the site. It also requires design to include appropriate boundary treatments and roof lines that are in keeping with the street scene.
- 9.20 Policy N3 (Local Green space) seeks to protect areas of green space within the town. Areas such as Church Point, Newbiggin Piazza, the Promenade and Memorial Park make a major contribution to the landscape character and town scape of the NP area. Therefore, the policy is **moderately positive** as it will help protect these important areas into the long term. This will have beneficial impacts on the landscape character of Newbiggin, serving to protect keys aspects of the landscape such as open green spaces and important view and vistas.
- 9.21 Policy N4 (Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area) is also likely to have **minor positive effects** on the landscape as it seeks to protect the historic townscape associated with the CA and seeks to protect significant views that are important to the character and landscape of the town such as the extensive views from Church Point and the Bay.
- 9.22 Overall, mixed effects are envisaged; the level of proposed development, through the NLP and NNP and the location of Sites H1 and H2 will substantially alter the existing landscape at the southern gateway to Newbiggin, leading to **moderate negative effects**. On the other hand, **moderate positive effects** are anticipated through policies promoting well designed development, that takes into account the character of the built environment and offering protection to the CA and key views.

Water

- 9.23 Wastewater is currently collected through a combined sewer network and treated at the wastewater treatment plant south of Newbiggin and the treated effluent is discharged into the north sea through long sea outfall. This area is designated as Bathing Water and the quality recently declined from 'Excellent' (2018) to 'Good' (in 2019/ 2021). Developing the sites would require coordination with Northumbrian Water (the water and wastewater utility) to ensure that there is sufficient treatment capacity to treat the additional flows from new development. The NLP states that the *'Council will work with Northumbrian Water, prospective developers and key stakeholders to identify where strategic solutions to water-related infrastructure investment may be required in order to support the strategic aims and expectations of this Plan. This will mostly relate to the provision or upgrading of waste water treatment works, but it will also apply to assurances over the supply of water in certain areas where there are issues in its guaranteed continuity.'* Whilst some of the proposed sites are in close proximity to the coast, the scale of growth proposed is unlikely to produce significant effects on water quality in the designated bathing waters and local water bodies. New developments would require connection to existing foul /stormwater conveyance network and the incorporation of SuDS where practicable. Additionally, policies such as WAT1 in the adopted NLP offer protection to water bodies and bathing waters within the County requiring the avoidance of any reduction in the high-status of certain water bodies and requiring assessment of effects of development on designated bathing waters. The NLP's Policy WAT2 requires

that assurance is obtained from water utilities that adequate resources exist in terms of water supplies and sewerage capacity to accommodate new development. Policy WAT4 states that SuDS would be required for any new development where necessary to manage surface water drainage. NNP Policies such as N1 (Design) also seek to protect water bodies in the NP area supporting development that will not result in unacceptable levels of water pollution. Overall, given the protection offered to water quality at strategic level through the NLP and the limited scale of development proposed in the NNP, **neutral effects** are predicted.

Population and housing

- 9.24 The NLP designates Newbiggin by the Sea as a Service Centre, the second tier of the settlement hierarchy. The town is considered an important service centre, suitable to accommodate employment, housing and services that maintain and strengthens its role. NLP policy HOU3 sets a housing requirement figure of 360 dwellings for Newbiggin over the NLP period (2016-2036). It allocates three sites for housing at: former Moorside School on Woodhorn Rd. (up to 66 units), land NW of Spital House Farm North Seaton Rd. (up to 85 units) and site adjacent to Arts Centre on Woodhorn Rd. (13 units). Policy HOU6 stipulates that development within low value areas (includes NP area) must contribute 10% affordable housing provision *'except developments of 10 or more, but less than 30 dwellings which are exempt from making an affordable housing contribution'*. All the affordable housing is to be provided as affordable home ownership tenures. Policy HOU5 sets out a requirement for residential development to provide a range of good quality dwellings, including affordable homes, delivering a balanced mix of tenures and housing types and sizes, alongside supported specialist housing for older and vulnerable people. The policy adds that *'development proposals will be assessed according to how well they meet the needs and aspirations of those living in and seeking to move to Northumberland, as identified in the most up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment or local housing needs assessment.'*
- 9.25 NNP policy N5 (Housing site allocations) seeks to deliver around 144-173 new homes across the following 3 sites:
- H1 Storey Crescent for 40-50 dwellings
 - H2 Land south of Newbiggin by the Sea Phase 1 for 11-14 dwellings
 - H3 Land south of Newbiggin by the Sea Phase 2 for 93-109 dwellings.
- 9.26 When taking into account completions since the start of the NLP period (46 dwellings), sites with planning permission (92), pending applications (86) and strategic allocations (see Table 5-2) a total of 279-309 units are likely to be delivered. When added to NNP allocations a total of 423-482 new homes would be delivered. This represents around 93%-100% of the most recent housing need assessment (AECOM HNA, April 2021). The NNP is therefore expected to give rise to **significantly positive effects**, fulfilling most of the assessed local housing need. This level of growth is likely to create more choice of dwelling types, sizes and tenures in the local housing market. The policy would also facilitate the provision of affordable housing (AH) as sites H1 and H2 exceed the 30 dwelling/ 0.5ha threshold. These would potentially deliver up to 16 affordable dwellings. The policy should also help create sustainable communities by

providing affordable options to younger residents and young families enabling them to remain in the area by offering them more affordable housing options.

- 9.27 Policy N6 (Community services and facilities) supports development that enhances the provision of community services and facilities and seeks to protect existing valuable community facilities (e.g. Newbiggin Health Centre, Sports and Community centre, Maritime Centre, WI Hall etc.). Development resulting in loss of such facilities will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for them or a replacement service of equivalent quality/ size is to be provided or it would not be economically viable to retain the service or facility. The policy is likely to have **minor positive effects** as it serves to protect and enhance community facilities and services within the NP area. Such facilities often serve to reduce social isolation thus improving the health and wellbeing of the community, and they also play an important role in the development of vibrant neighbourhoods by creating a sense of place and providing opportunities for people to meet and interact socially.
- 9.28 Policy N8 (Rights of way) is also predicted to have beneficial effects as it supports the improvement/ extension of the rights of way network thus facilitating walking and active travel which are associated positive impacts on health and wellbeing.
- 9.29 Green space provides multiple health and wellbeing benefits to communities, encouraging active travel, outdoor recreation, providing visual amenity and tranquillity. In this context policy N3 (Local green space) is likely to have beneficial effects on the local population as it designates important areas of green space as LGS, safeguarding them from future encroachment.
- 9.30 Overall, **significant long-term positive effects** are anticipated as a result of the growth strategy, which will meet a significant portion of Newbiggin's' housing needs, thus securing housing delivery and potentially delivering more choice and flexibility in the local housing market. The provision of affordable housing is also likely to help younger residents to remain in the area ensuring the long-term sustainability of Newbiggin's community.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

- 10.1 Overall, the Plan appraisal has served to highlight the potential for mostly positive effects. **Significant long-term positive effects** are anticipated in relation to the population and housing SEA theme as a result of the growth strategy which will meet most of the most recently assessed housing need for Newbiggin, helping to improve choice and potentially affordability. The additional growth (to that proposed in the NLP) also serves to provide a buffer to better secure housing delivery. The larger sites will also improve the provision of affordable housing helping younger adults to get a foothold on the property ladder through affordable tenures through affordable housing tenures (e.g. discounted First Homes).
- 10.2 Mixed effects are predicted with respect to biodiversity; whilst **minor positive effects** are predicted in relation to the allocation of LGS, potentially **moderate negative effects** are predicted due to the spatial strategy which could adversely affect important biodiversity sites along the coast. The location of sites H2 and H3 may lead to increased recreational pressures on the Northumberland Shore SSSI/ Ramsar and SPA. It is recommended that the Plan includes the following:
- Include the requirement that proposals will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that they would not result in adverse impacts on the Northumberland Shore SSSI/ Ramsar and SPA.
 - New residents on allocated housing sites (H2 and H3) to be provided homeowner packs identifying disturbance sensitivity of the bird species relying on the habitats provided within the Northumberland Shore SSSI/Ramsar, encouraging responsible dog ownership and identifying alternative accessible greenspace that could be used for visiting and dog walking.
- 10.3 With these measures in place, the negative effects would likely be reduced.
- 10.4 Mixed effects are also predicted for the Landscape topic. The cumulative effects of proposed development and the location of Sites H1 and H2 will substantially alter the existing landscape at the southern gateway to Newbiggin, potentially leading to **moderate negative effects**. Whilst **moderately positive effects** are anticipated through policies promoting well designed development that conserves local distinctiveness and policies seeking to protect the CA and key views.
- 10.5 New development would require connection to the existing sewerage/ surface water collection and treatment infrastructure. Strategic level policies requiring coordination with the utility provider to ensure adequate treatment capacity and requiring the incorporation of SuDS for new development to manage surface water drainage should mitigate any potential effects on water quality. Given the modest scale of development proposed and the protection offered by NLP policies **natural effects** are predicted on water quality.
- 10.6 **Minor positive effects** are anticipated with respect to climate change adaptation as the spatial strategy places development in areas of low flood risk. The Plan also designates areas of open green space which potentially enhances the Neighbourhood Area's flood resilience.
- 10.7 **Minor positive effects** are also envisaged for the Historic environment through policies seeking to preserve the character and setting of the Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area. Additionally, the NP designates areas such Memorial

Park, Church Point and Promenade and Quay Wall as LGS thus helping to preserve the character and settings of the historic environment.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

11. Plan finalisation

- 11.1 This Environmental Report accompanies the submission draft of the NNP for consultation.
- 11.2 The 'submission' version alongside this environmental report will then be submitted to NCC. The Plan and supporting evidence will be then published for further consultation, and then submitted for examination.
- 11.3 If the outcome of the Independent Examination is favourable, the NNP will then be subject to a referendum, and the plan will be 'made' if more than 50% of those who vote are in support. Once made, the NNP will become part of the Development Plan for Northumberland.

12. Monitoring

- 12.1 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report.
- 12.2 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by NCC as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
- 12.3 The SEA has not identified any potential for significant negative effects that would require closer monitoring.
- 12.4 A significant positive effect is predicted for the population and housing theme. It is suggested that the following monitoring measures be included in the AMR:
- Annual net housing completions.
 - Affordable housing delivery.

Appendices

Appendix I: Meeting the Regulations

As discussed in Chapter 1 above, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. Table AI.1 links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst Table AI.2 explains this interpretation. Table AI.3 identifies how and where within this report the requirements have been met.

Table AI.1: Questions answered by this report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

| | Questions answered | | As per regulations, the report must include... |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
| Introduction | What's the plan seeking to achieve? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes |
| | What's the SEA scope? | What's the sustainability 'context'? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level ▪ Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance |
| | | What's the sustainability 'baseline'? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan ▪ The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be affected ▪ Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance |
| | | What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment |
| Part 1 | What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach) ▪ The likely significant effects associated with alternatives ▪ Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan |
| Part 2 | What are the SEA findings at this current stage? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan ▪ The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan |
| Part 3 | What happens next? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A description of the monitoring measures envisaged |

Table AI.2: Interpretation of the regulations

| Schedule 2 | Interpretation of Schedule 2 |
|--|---|
| <i>The report must include...</i> | <i>The report must include...</i> |
| (a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes; | <div data-bbox="778 389 1114 499">An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes</div> <div data-bbox="1121 389 1398 499">i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i></div> |
| (b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan | <div data-bbox="778 521 1114 719"> Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level </div> <div data-bbox="1121 521 1345 719">i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i></div> <div data-bbox="778 725 1114 900"> The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected </div> <div data-bbox="1121 725 1345 900">i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i></div> <div data-bbox="778 907 1114 1104"> Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal </div> <div data-bbox="1121 907 1345 1104">i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i></div> <div data-bbox="1353 521 1398 1104" data-kind="parent" data-rs="4">i.e. answer – <i>What's the scope of the SA?</i></div> |
| (c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected; | |
| (d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC; | |
| (e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation; | |
| (f) the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors; | <div data-bbox="778 1126 1114 1236">An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')</div> <div data-bbox="1121 1126 1398 1453" data-kind="parent" data-rs="2"> i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report] </div> |
| (g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan; | |
| (h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information | <div data-bbox="778 1243 1114 1453"> The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan. </div> <div data-bbox="1121 1243 1398 1453" data-kind="parent" data-rs="2"> i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report] </div> |
| (i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring. | |
| | <div data-bbox="778 1471 1114 1543">The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan</div> <div data-bbox="1121 1471 1398 1664" data-kind="parent" data-rs="2"> i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report] </div> <div data-bbox="778 1550 1114 1664"> The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan </div> |
| | <div data-bbox="778 1682 1114 1771">A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring</div> <div data-bbox="1121 1682 1398 1771"> i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report] </div> |

Table AI.3: ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements are met

| Regulatory requirement | Discussion of how requirement is met |
|---|--|
| A) The Environmental Report must present certain information | |
| 1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes; | Chapter 2 (‘What is the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information. |
| 2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme; | These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report. |
| 3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected; | The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA?’). |
| 4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.; | More detailed messages, established through a context and baseline review are also presented in Appendix II. |
| 5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation; | The SEA framework is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA’). Also, Appendix II presents key messages from the context review. With regards to explaining “ <i>how...considerations have been taken into account</i> ”, Chapter 7 explains ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e. explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives assessment. |
| 6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects); | Chapter 6 presents alternatives assessment findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area). Chapters 9 presents an assessment of the draft plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions. |
| 7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme; | The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned when finalising the plan, and specific recommendations are made in Section 9 and 10. |

| Regulatory requirement | Discussion of how requirement is met |
|---|--|
| 8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information; | Chapters 4 and 5 deal with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options. Also, Chapter 7 sets out reasons for selecting the preferred option (in-light of alternatives assessment). |
| 9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10; | Chapter 12 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring. |
| 10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings | The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report. |
| B) The Report must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan | |
| Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2) | At the current time, this Environmental Report is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Neighbourhood Plan, with a view to informing Regulation 14 consultation. |
| C) The report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan | |
| The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure. | This Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, will be taken into account when finalising the plan. |

Appendix II: SEA Scoping Report

