

# Northumberland County Council

## Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion on the Allendale Neighbourhood Development Plan

### Introduction

European Directive 2001/42/EC requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of all government local plans and programmes likely to have significant environmental effects, (see [EUR-Lex Website](#)). The objective of the 'SEA Directive' is: *'To provide for a high level of protection to the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of the plans...with a view to promoting sustainable development'*

This document is a Screening Opinion offered by Northumberland County Council to Allendale Parish Council on whether the Allendale Neighbourhood Development Plan requires SEA.

### Background

Government guidance states that not every neighbourhood plan will need an environmental assessment of the type produced for local plans. It entirely depends on whether what is proposed in the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects. Even if it is assessed that there is a risk that there will be such effects, the advice is that gathering evidence for and, if necessary, addressing the risks, can be built into the process of producing the neighbourhood plan.

In light of this, and as part of the support package for neighbourhood planning front runners, the Parish Council applied for and received support for an independent sustainability review of the Pre-Submission Draft Plan. The review was to be conducted with the support of Planning Aid England and is the subject of reports prepared by PAE setting out their methodology and outcomes from a workshop event along with a final version of their Sustainability Review Report. Prior to the Sustainability Reviews the Plan had been through its statutory stage of publicity and consultation for a six week period in early 2013. The need for a Sustainability Review arose from an earlier pre-submission health check undertaken by Locality. The purpose of the Sustainability Review was to establish that the plan meets the Basic Conditions in respect of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

The review was finalised in September 2013 and its overall conclusion was that: *"The results of the sustainability review of the Allendale Neighbourhood Plan suggest that introducing the Plan, albeit with a minor amendment, will help to contribute to sustainable development."* The minor amendment suggested relates to draft policy ANDP10, where there was *"a fear that a continuous process of addition of extensions to dwellings could lead to overdevelopment, so some consideration should be given to the introduction of additional safeguards to address this point"*. It is understood that it is the intention of the Parish Council to address this minor point in the submission version of the Plan.

### Consideration

Notwithstanding the above, it remains necessary to carry out this Screening Opinion as part of the statutory process. It is important to bear in mind that the sustainability

review has not necessarily examined the environmental effects in isolation from social and economic consequences of the draft policies, against which they have been balanced.

Appendix A to this screening opinion considers each of the assessment criteria set out in Annex II of European Directive 2001/42/EC. The screening opinion given considers the likelihood that implementation of the Allendale Neighbourhood Development Plan would give rise to significant environmental effects. Appendix A also provides an opinion on whether the possibility of any such effects occurring has been satisfactorily addressed in the recommendations arising from the Sustainability Review and/or in the separate screening opinion on the need for Appropriate Assessment which was carried out to comply with requirements set out in the Habitats Regulations.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion it is the opinion of the Council that **it is not necessary to undertake a separate Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Allendale Neighbourhood Development Plan** prior to publication of the submission version of the document subject to the following measures being taken:

- The amendments to the Plan agreed by Allendale Parish Council in September 2013 are made;
- The Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010, currently in draft, is agreed;
- The recommendations of the independent Sustainability Review carried out by Planning Aid England are implemented, including that proposing the need for additional wording stating that there will be safeguards associated with draft Policy ANDP 10;
- A section on Monitoring and Review of the Plan is inserted; and
- No material alterations to the plan's policies are made other than the above.

**Date:** 12 September 2013

**Approved by:** Karen Ledger  
Head of Development Services

## APPENDIX A

Determination of the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) of European Directive 2001/42/EC, applying criteria set out in Annex II of that Directive

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?		If “yes” whether addressed in the sustainability review or Appropriate Assessment
	yes / no	Justification	
<b>1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>			
(a) The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	<b>NO</b>	The main framework will continue to be at the Core Strategy level which is itself subject to SEA as a matter of course. At most, the policies provide minor adjustments to this framework. The draft plan does not make any land allocations for development and all aspects seek to support the integrity of the AONB that covers the area and other designations within the Neighbourhood Plan area. Therefore, while there may be some localised environmental effects, these will not be significant	N/A
(b) The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy	<b>NO</b>	It is possible that the Neighbourhood Plan could inform future supplementary guidance in the Allendale area. However, this does not seem likely in the foreseeable future. The present draft document makes reference to and seeks to adhere to existing AONB guidance, which, while not supplementary to the Local Plan, is in conformity with it.	N/A

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?		If “yes” whether addressed in the sustainability review or Appropriate Assessment
	yes / no	Justification	
<b>1. (continued) The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>			
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	<b>YES</b>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to promote sustainable development overall but introduces some relaxations to principles in the development plan that are designed to prevent increases in homes in isolated locations. However the considerations behind these changes appear, in themselves, to be sustainable – e.g. keeping existing buildings in use, allowing people to work from home and allowing people to continue living in their existing home through larger extensions being allowed. This locally specific approach recognises the characteristic settlement pattern.</p> <p>The net effect of this should be to be neutral but would require monitoring over time.</p>	<p><b>ADDRESSED</b></p> <p>The sustainability review has considered these issues applying a methodology similar to a Local Plan SA and has adjusted “on-paper” conclusions in accordance with local input from residents at a workshop. The overall conclusion is that the policies will contribute to sustainable development. Any concerns regarding cumulative effects have been satisfied in terms of the fact that the scale and amount of new development is likely to be low. With regard to the one remaining concern in the sustainability review – i.e. the long term effects of ANDP10, this will be addressed through additional explanatory text.</p>
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	<b>NO</b>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to address any existing significant environmental problems in the area, nor are there significant environmental problems that it may exacerbate.</p>	N/A

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?		If “yes” whether addressed in the sustainability review or Appropriate Assessment
	yes / no	Justification	
<b>1. (continued) The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>			
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection)	<b>NO</b>	The draft Neighbourhood Plan should not affect any of these types of plan or programme. In the unlikely event that a proposal were to come forward that was in accordance with the ANDP but would not have been in accordance with the Local Plan, and it would adversely affect a Schedule 2 Development such as a large scale agricultural drainage scheme, then it could be refused on those grounds.	N/A

**2. Characteristics of the effects of 'c' above and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:**

<p>(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p>	<p>In the unlikely event that certain provisions in the plan were to lead to significant environmental effects in terms of the sustainability of planning in the area, the reversibility would depend on a review of the A.N.D.P. This means that the Plan will require monitoring over time.</p>	<p><b>ADDRESSED</b> Addressed in the sustainability review in terms of foreseeable impacts. There may be some merit in adding a paragraph within the draft ANDP document to make clear that the cumulative effects of policies over time will be monitored and the plan reviewed if necessary.</p>
<p>(b) the cumulative nature of the effects</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p>	<p>In the unlikely event that certain provisions in the plan were to lead to significant environmental effects in terms of the sustainability of planning in the area, the cumulative effects may well be neutral. however this would require careful monitoring over time</p>	<p><b>ADDRESSED</b> Addressed in the sustainability review in terms of foreseeable impacts. There may be some merit in adding a paragraph within the draft ANDP document to make clear that the cumulative effects of policies over time will be monitored and the plan reviewed if necessary.</p>
<p>(c) the trans-boundary nature of the effects</p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>	<p>There are no trans- boundary effects arising from the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)</p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>	<p>There will be no risks to human health or the environment arising from the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?		If “yes” whether addressed in the sustainability review or Appropriate Assessment
	yes / no	Justification	
<b>2. (continued) Characteristics of the effects of ‘c’ above and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>			
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	<b>NO</b>	The type of effects on sustainable development of any additional development resulting from the plan will be localised and, due to the dispersed nature of the population will not have significant environmental effects on large numbers of people.	N/A
(f (i)) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage	<b>YES</b>	In the unlikely event that certain provisions in the plan were to lead to significant environmental effects in terms of the sustainability of planning in the area, the fact that the plan area is part of the AONB and the fact that there are various other important designations will mean that careful monitoring of any net negative effects (individually or cumulatively over time) against the AONB’s special environmental qualities and other relevant impacts will be needed.	<b>ADDRESSED</b> Effects on Internationally important habitats addressed in Appropriate Assessment. All other aspects addressed in the sustainability review in terms of foreseeable impacts. There may be some merit in adding a paragraph within the draft ANDP document to make clear that the cumulative effects of policies over time will be monitored and the plan reviewed if necessary.

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?		If “yes” whether addressed in the sustainability review or Appropriate Assessment
	yes / no	Justification	
<b>2. (continued) Characteristics of the effects of ‘c’ above and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>			
(f (ii)) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values	<b>NO</b>	This would not be likely to result from the proposals	N/A
(f (iii)) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to intensive land use	<b>NO</b>	This would not be likely to result from the proposals	N/A
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.	<b>YES</b>	In the unlikely event that certain provisions in the plan were to lead to significant environmental effects in terms of the sustainability of planning in the area, the fact that the plan area is part of the AONB and the fact that there are various other important designations will mean that careful monitoring of any net negative effects (individually or cumulatively over time) against the AONB’s special environmental qualities and other relevant impacts will be needed.	<b>ADDRESSED</b> Effects on Internationally important habitats addressed in Appropriate Assessment. All other aspects addressed in the sustainability review in terms of foreseeable impacts. There may be some merit in adding a paragraph within the draft ANDP document to make clear that the cumulative effects of policies over time will be monitored and the plan reviewed if necessary.