

**Northumberland**

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**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDERS  
SUSTAINABILITY  
APPRAISAL  
SCOPING REPORT**

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August 2012

**Northumberland**  
Northumberland County Council

[www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)



# 1. PURPOSE OF THIS SUSTAINABILITY SCOPING REPORT

1.0 Northumberland County Council is currently developing Local Development Orders for three sites. A first draft scoping report was prepared to allow the statutory bodies and other interested parties to be consulted in relation to their particular social, environmental, or economic responsibilities to verify that the Sustainability Appraisal of the Orders would cover the key sustainability issues. Comments on the first draft Scoping Report were taken into consideration in undertaking the Appraisal.

1.1 The Sustainability Appraisal process is an iterative process and the remaining stages will be completed alongside the drafting and refining of the Local Development Orders, thereby insuring they are informed by sustainability considerations.

## **Consultation**

1.2 The SEA Directive requires Local Authorities to consult with statutory environmental bodies. Article 5[3] of the SEA Directive states that: “The competent authority shall consult the environmental authorities and/or bodies deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental statement”.

1.3 The consultation, in particular seeks to:

- Ensure the methodology for the proposed sustainability appraisal is comprehensive to support the Local Development Orders.
- Advise on the key sustainability issues.

## Northumberland Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal

1.4 It should be noted that full consideration has been given to the representations received to a consultation exercise on the Northumberland Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (December 2011). Moreover, as described further below, the Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy will form the basis of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Development Orders.

1.5 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Development Orders is proposed to be adapted to the scale and nature of the Orders and seeks to avoid duplication of proceeding Sustainability Appraisals.

## **2. BACKGROUND TO LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDERS**

- 2.1 Northumberland County Council is seeking to adopt simplified planning approaches for sites located around Blyth Estuary, which have been granted Enterprise Zone status.
- 2.2 Effectively this means giving greater freedom from planning control by speeding up and streamlining the planning process for certain sites, as part of the wider package of incentives.
- 2.3 The principal mechanism for planning simplification, being strongly advocated by DCLG is the use of Local Development Orders (LDOs).
- 2.4 An LDO grants automatic planning permission for development specified in the Order, and by doing so removes the need for a planning application to be made by a business / developer. An LDO can offer significant benefits, including providing certainty to developers, by defining up front what development is acceptable; and saving the time and cost implications of submitting a planning application.
- 2.5 The Council has elected to prepare two Local Development Orders. One will cover two sites at East Sleekburn and the other will cover one site referred to as the Bates site (see appendix A).

### **Context to Sustainability Appraisal**

- 2.6 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments is European Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment' - also known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA Directive. The Directive was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or SEA Regulations, supplemented by guidance originally published in 2005.
- 2.7 The statutory obligation to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the above legislation is not clear cut for the purposes of Local Development Orders.
- 2.8 Under Article 3(3) and 3(4), environmental assessment is required for certain categories of plans and programmes only where they are determined to be likely to have significant environmental effects. Plans and programmes in these categories are:
  - Plans and programmes of the types listed in Article 3(2) which determine the use of small areas at local level, or which are minor modifications to plans and programmes;
  - Plans and programmes of types which are not listed in Article 3(2), which set the framework for future development consent of projects (not limited to projects listed in the Annexes to the EIA Directive).

2.9 A Local Development Order could be considered to fall within one of the above criteria, as a site specific form of policy. Furthermore the key criterion for the application of the Directive, is not the size of area covered but whether the plan or programme would be likely to have significant environmental effects. A screening exercise was therefore undertaken and is illustrated in figure 1 in accordance with the SEA Regulations Criteria (from Annex II of SEA Directive).

Screening Criteria	Application	Further Assessment
<p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 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.</li> <li>- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy,</li> <li>- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development,</li> <li>- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.</li> <li>- 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).</li> </ul>	<p>The LDOs will set a framework for development – however they do represent a policy allocation nor do they seek to prevent certain forms of development which could be applied for through regular planning procedure and assessed under existing policy.</p> <p>Not applicable</p> <p>The LDOs potentially have a key role in achieving sustainable forms of development and addressing particular environmental problems.</p> <p>The LDOs potentially have a key role in implementing community legislation on the environment.</p>	<p>The designation of the LDO sites will be addressed through the Local Development Plan. The overarching document – the Core Strategy – has been subject to SEA up to issues and options stage.</p> <p>Not applicable</p> <p>Further assessment required to fully explore environmental considerations and potentially prescribe development conditions or requirements.</p> <p>Further assessment required and potentially prescribe development conditions or requirements in accordance with plans and programmes.</p>
<p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects,</li> <li>- the cumulative nature of the effects,</li> <li>- the transboundary nature of the effects,</li> <li>- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents),</li> <li>- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),</li> <li>- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- special natural characteristics or cultural heritage,</li> <li>- exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values,</li> <li>- intensive land-use- the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The LDO sites are principally previously developed sites. Depending on the nature of developer requirements their development is potentially long term and reversibility / remediation of sites will depend upon site considerations. E.g. the need for structures and foundations.</p> <p>There are three sites subject to LDOs and a further two sites which also have Enterprise Zone status - potential for cumulative effects e.g. with regard to traffic, and noise.</p> <p>Potential impacts as a result of development progressing under the LDO – e.g. employment beyond LA boundary, export of products produced on the sites</p> <p>Bates site within HSE consultation zone</p> <p>Environmental standards not thought to be exceeded. Key issues in respect of SSSI, SPA and RAMSAR designations around coast and Estuary</p>	<p>Further assessment required as part of LDO preparation or by developer in advance of development.</p> <p>Further assessment required as part of LDO preparation or by developer in advance of development. Also being assessed through EIA and HRA screening</p> <p>Further assessment required as part of LDO preparation or by developer in advance of development.</p> <p>HSE to be consulted.</p> <p>Further assessment required.</p> <p>Further Assessment required. Also being assessed through EIA and HRA processes.</p>

Figure 1: SEA screening exercise

2.10 In summary, the screening exercise recognises that the proposed Local Development Orders would potentially have significant environmental impacts. They seek to permit development in an area of considerable ecological importance; notably an area with SSSI, SPA and Ramsar designations.

- 2.11 Furthermore, they potentially allow for development that falls within Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.
- 2.12 As indicated in figure 1 it is considered such impacts require further consideration and assessment as part of the work to draft LDOs. In addition, such impacts will be more fully assessed by an Ecological and Habitat Regulation Assessment Screening Exercise and an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Determination, in advance of adopting the LDOs.
- 2.13 Certain impacts cannot be tested through the LDO drafting processes but may be addressed through the imposition of conditions and development requirements that a developer will be required to fulfil before development commences. For example, where there is uncertainty around the environmental impacts of a particular development, further testing may be required and appropriate mitigation measures implemented.
- 2.14 As Northumberland County Council wishes to ensure that sustainable development principles are at the heart of the Local Development Orders it was elected to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal which would cover the SEA Directive requirements and wider economic and social impacts.

### **Scope**

- 2.15 Sustainability Appraisals need to be adapted to the scale and nature of the plan or programme, its place in any hierarchy or sequence of plans or programmes, and the stage reached in the decision-making process. They should avoid duplication of assessments.
- 2.16 Whilst an LDO does not need to be in conformity with a Local Development Plan<sup>1</sup>, the proposed LDOs for the Northumberland sites are largely in accordance extant development plan policies and the emerging Core Strategy. Furthermore they could be described as form of site specific policy, which sits below higher level development plan documents at least in spatial terms.
- 2.17 To avoid duplication Appendix B demonstrates existing planning policy which applies to the sites subject to the LDOs and the findings of SEA/SA of those policies. It goes on to provide specific comments in the context of appraising the sustainability of the LDOs. In summary the following has been taken into account:
- The Bates site is within the boundary former Blyth Valley district. The Blyth Valley Core Strategy and the Blyth Valley Development Control Policies

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<sup>1</sup> Primary legislative provision for Local Development Orders amended by Section 188 of the Planning Act 2008 which commenced in June 2009. The effect of the amendment was to remove the requirement that LDOs must implement Local Plans.

Development Plan Document were subject to a final SEA/SA report in April 2006. The relevant policies and objectives are largely unchanged by the introduction of the LDO for the Bates site. The Blyth Estuary area is already promoted for mixed use development and economic regeneration specifically focussing on brownfield sites.

- The East Sleekburn sites are within the boundary of the former Wansbeck district. The Wansbeck District Local Plan was subject to a final SEA/ SA report in August 2005. The Plan identifies the Cambois area of economic opportunity and also an area for Port related development. The policies are similar to that proposed by the LDO, allocating the eastern site for employment related uses. However, the westerly site is not allocated for employment use. It is white land with no designation. This reflects the plan's emphasis upon developing brownfield land ahead of greenfield.
- Following Local Government Reorganisation work is underway to develop the Northumberland Local Development Plan. The first document to be prepared as part of the overarching plan is the Core Strategy. At the time of this report, the Northumberland Core Strategy Issues and Options document and associated SEA / SA had been issued for consultation. The Core Strategy Issues and Options document puts forward an option to allocate employment land specifically for the low carbon and environmental sector and identifies the Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone, within which all of the LDO sites fall.

2.18 The appraisal of the LDOs will not repeat the proceeding SEA / SA's in relation to the higher level policy documents, but will refer to them and focus on the more site specific considerations. Notably the previous SEA/SAs identify some uncertain effects on the environment and specific considerations to be addressed at a more local level. The LDOs will therefore focus on these specific considerations.

### 3. APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Scoping Report has taken into account the *Sustainability Appraisal Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents* and the specific Planning Advisory Service guidance entitled *Sustainability Appraisal Advice Note* published in June 2010.
- 3.2 As identified above, the principles of the LDOs largely conform with the saved policies of existing policies of the Blyth Valley Core Strategy, and Development Control Development Plan Document; and the Wansbeck Local Plan. Moreover they conform with the overarching objectives of the emerging Northumberland Core Strategy which they will sit below. This Scoping Report therefore will not duplicate what has already been subject to consultation. It should instead be read in conjunction with other appraisals and most notably the Core Strategy Sustainability appraisal.
- 3.3 According to the guidance the process has five stages which should be implemented in turn. Stage A explains the process used in this Scoping report and is summarised below.

**Task A1: Identify other relevant plans, programmes, strategies and initiatives and sustainability objectives that will influence the LDOs** - *defines how the plan is affected by outside factors and suggests ideas for how any constraints can be addressed.*

**Task A2: Collect relevant social, environmental and economic baseline/ environmental information** – *provision of an evidence base for sustainability issues, affects prediction and monitoring.*

**Task A3: Identify key sustainability/ environmental issues for the SA / LDOs to address** – *used to focus the Sustainability Appraisal and streamline the subsequent phases, including baseline information analysis, setting of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework, prediction of effects and monitoring.*

**Task A4: Devise the SA framework, consisting of objectives (and sub-objectives / criteria where appropriate)** - *a process to enable the sustainability of plan to be appraised.*

**Task A5: Produce a scoping report and consult relevant authorities, the public and other key stakeholders on Tasks A1-A4** – *carried out with statutory bodies and other relevant organisations with social, environmental or economic responsibilities to ensure the appraisal covers the key sustainability issues.*

Figure 2: SA Scoping process

## 4. TASK A1 RELEVANT PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

- 4.1 Of the Plans, policies and programmes identified in the Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, there are some which are more applicable than others, some more up to date and some which are not relevant. Policies which are relevant (to varying degrees) to the LDOs, are as follows:

### Plans, Policies and Programmes

#### International

- I1 Kyoto Climate Change Protocol, 1992
- I2 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992
- I3 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, 2007
- I4 Local Action 21, 2002
- I5 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, 1971

#### European

- E1 EU Sustainable Development Strategy, 2004
- E2 European Climate Change Programme, 2000
- E3 EC Council Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC)
- E4 EC Council Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC)
- E5 The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003
- E6 Floods Directive 2007 (2007/60/EC)
- E7 The 2006 Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)
- E8 European Landscape Convention 2007
- E9 EC Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection 2006
- E10 EU Waste Directive 2008/98/EC
- E11 EU Landfill Directive 1999/31/EC (Consolidated)
- E12 EU Mining Waste Directive 2006/21/EC
- E13 EU Renewable Energy Directive 2009

#### National

- N1 Securing the Future - UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy, Mar 2005
- N2 Planning for a Sustainable Future: White Paper, 2007
- N3 Building for the Future, UK Sustainable Communities Plan, 2003 & North East Regional Action Plan
- N6 Planning for Town Centres: Practice Guidance on need, impact and the sequential approach 2009
- N9 Delivering a sustainable transport system
- N16 UK Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act, 2006
- N17 UK Climate Change Act, 2008
- N18 UK Low Carbon Transition Plan 2009
- N19 Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and N Ireland, 2007
- N21 Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009
- N22 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010
- N23 Future Water: the Government's water strategy for England 2008
- N24 The Pitt Review – lessons learned from the 2007 floods



- N25 EA: CLR11, Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination (2004)
- N26 EA: Dealing with Contamination in England and Wales
- N27 Safeguarding our soils – a strategy for England
- N28 Construction Code of Practice for Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites 2009
- N29 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended), 1981
- N30 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010
- N32 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC), 2006
- N33 Working with a Grain of Nature – A Biodiversity Strategy for England, 2002
- N34 UK Biodiversity Action Plan, 2002
- N35 ODPM Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their impact within the planning system; ODPM Guide to Good Practice: Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- N36 State of the Natural Environment, 2008
- N37 Keeper’s of Time – A Statement of policy for England’s ancient and native woodland
- N38 A Strategy for England’s Trees Woodlands and Forests, 2008
- N39 Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979
- N42 The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future, 2001
- N43 Heritage White Paper: Heritage Protection for the 21st Century, 2007
- N44 Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide
- N45 Mineral Extraction and the Historic Environment, 2008
- N46 Mineral Extraction and Archaeology: A Practice Guide, 2008
- N47 Meeting the Energy Challenge, UK Energy White Paper, 2007
- N48 UK Renewable Energy Strategy, July 2009
- N50 National and regional guidelines for aggregates provision in England, 2005–2020 (2009)
- N51 Waste Strategy for England 2007
- N53 Natural Environment White Paper: The Natural Choice, securing the value of nature, 2011
- N54 Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystems services, 2011
- N55 The UK Marine Policy Statement, March 2011
- N56 The Plan for Growth, March 2011
- N57 National Policy Statements for Energy Infrastructure, July 2011
- N58 The European Landscape Convention-The English Heritage Action Plan for Implementation 2009
- N59 Historic Landscape Characterisation-Taking Stock of Method English Heritage 2003
- N60 GP3 (Groundwater Protection Policy and Practice) Environment Agency
- N61 GPLC1 The Environment Agency’s ‘Guiding Principles for Land Contamination’ EA 2010
- N62 The Localism Act 2011
- N63 Making Space for Nature: A Review of England’s Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network’ Lawton 2010
- N64 Circular 02/2007 Planning and the Strategic Road Network 2007
- N65 National Planning Policy Framework 2012

## **Regional**

- R1 Integrated Regional Framework for the North East, 2008
- R5 Better Health, Fairer Health 2008
- R6 Health inequalities in the North East: Summary of issues arising, Audit Commission, Deloitte & Touche, PWC 2006
- R8 Leading the Way-The Regional Economic Strategy for the North East 2006-11
- R10 North East Climate Change Adaptation Study, 2008
- R11 Climate Change Action Plan for North East England, 2008
- R13 State of the Natural Environment Report for the North East, 2008
- R14 North East Strategy for the Environment, 2008
- R15 Northumbria River Basin Management Plan 2009
- R18 Wansbeck and Blyth Catchment Flood Management Plan
- R22 A Biodiversity Audit for the North East, 2001
- R23 Trees, Woodlands, Forests and People: The Regional Forest Strategy for the North East of England, 2005
- R24 The North East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS), 2008
- R25 The Northumberland Rivers Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy 2003 (update 2008)

#### **Local**

- L1 Northumberland Minerals Local Plan, Written Statement and Proposals Map, March 2000 (as amended by Secretary of State's Direction 2007)
- L2 Northumberland Waste Local Plan, Written Statement and Proposals Map, December 2001 (as amended by Secretary of State's Direction 2007)
- L4 Northumberland Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document, 2007
- L9 Blyth Valley Borough LDF Core Strategy DPD and Proposals Map, September 2007 and District Local Plan and Proposals Map, May 1999 (as amended by Secretary of State's Direction 2007)
- L12 Wansbeck District Local Plan July 2007 (as amended by Secretary of State's Direction 2007)
- L13 Northumberland National Park LDF Core Strategy
- L14 Northumberland National Park Management Plan
- L16 Northumberland Coast AONB and Berwickshire & North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site Management Plan 2009-2014
- L17 South East Northumberland New Growth Point Programme of Development, October 2008
- L18 Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy, March 2011
- L19 Northumberland Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – Baseline Position 2008-09
- L20 Northumberland Housing Strategy, 2010-11
- L28 Healthy lives, healthy communities: a strategy to improve health and well-being in Northumberland, 2009
- L32 Northumberland Strategic Partnership, Poverty, financial exclusion and health in Northumberland
- L34 Northumberland Economic Strategy 2010-15
- L35 Northumberland Tourism Business & Workforce Development Plan 2005-2010, Impact Research & NSP
- L36 NCC Higher Education Strategy, October 2009

L38	Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2011-2026
L39	The Heat is on - Northumberland Strategic Partnership – Strategic Framework for Climate Change Planning, 2007
L40	Northumberland County Council Climate Change Action Plan, 2008
L41	Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan, 2008
L42	A Geodiversity Audit & Action Plan 2004-09 for the North Pennines AONB
L43	Northumberland and North Tyneside Shoreline Management Plan 2 - Scottish Border to River Tyne
L4	Northumberland Renewable Energy Strategy, 2003
8	
L4	Northumberland Joint Municipal Waste Strategy, 2003
9	

Figure 3 Plans policies and programmes

## **5. TASK A2 COLLECTING SUSTAINABILITY BASELINE INFORMATION**

- 5.1 It is important that the LDOs and the accompanying SA are based upon a robust set of baseline information. The baseline information collected for the Northumberland Core Strategy SA process has been interrogated in order to identify key issues arising for the LDOs.
- 5.2 An evidence base across a wide range of topics, will be used to inform LDOs . A number of specialist studies are available including site investigation information. Such information will be made available to developers upon request although for reasons of commercial confidentiality some information cannot be disclosed.
- 5.3 Along with the higher level baseline information identified in the Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal, and the various site investigation information and technical studies, a wealth of information available from a variety of sources will also form part of the evidence base, including but not exclusively:
- Blyth-Cambois Wader Study, SKM Enviros, July 2011
  - North Blyth Biomass Project, Proposed North Blyth Biomass Power Station Environmental Statement
  - Bird Surveys, Survey Report, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, May 2007
  - Cambois Ecological Survey and Management Brief, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, 2006
  - Bates Draft Development Framework
  - The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, September 2010
  - The Northumberland Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, (working draft)
  - Northumberland Employment Land Review January 2011
  - Northumberland Poverty and Worklessness Assessment – 2012 Update (June 2012)
  - North Eastern LEP – Enterprise Zone proposition 2011

## 6. TASK A3 IDENTIFYING THE KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

- 6.1 The identification of key sustainability issues is an important part of the SA process. Key sustainability issues identified for the Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal (based on the review of the plans, policies and programmes, including the utilisation of existing local knowledge on past local plans and strategies; the analysis of the baseline information and on-going consultation with relevant stakeholders and members of the public ) have been reviewed. The following summarises the key sustainability issues identified as part of that process, which have relevance to the LDOs. However, it focusses more specifically upon sustainability issues for the LDOs.

### **The socio-economic challenge**

#### Unemployment

- 6.2 The LDO sites lie within the former districts of Wansbeck and Blyth Valley where unemployment is highly concentrated. The two districts represent 65% of all Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimants in the county. While JSA claimant numbers are high; ESA (Employment Support Allowance) and IB (Incapacity Benefit) numbers exceed the numbers of job seekers. ESA and IB are 50% more than JSA claimants at 5m and almost double at 10m. Welfare reforms aim to move many on IB towards looking for work. This policy shift will increase the number of individuals actively seeking work and is likely to increase competition for jobs in the local labour market and 'squeeze' low / non-skilled individuals further from work.
- 6.3 Mirroring national and regional levels, male JSA claimant counts are double female levels in 5/10m areas although of the 39,700 people of working age resident in the former Wansbeck district area (2010 figures, ONS via NOMIS), 50% are male. The economic information indicates that there may be specific challenges in supporting working age men into employment within the 5/10m radius. Youth unemployment (as indicated by JSA levels for 16-24 year olds) is a particular concern in the former Blyth Valley and Wansbeck districts (around double the number for 25-64 year olds). Both are significantly higher than regional and national figures. As a group already struggling to find employment, there may be further significant economic and social impacts of the closure on younger men with regards to their prospects and ambitions and a corresponding impact on young families.

#### Impacts of the closure of Alcan and public sector restructuring

- 6.4 The closure of Alcan will have significant impacts on Northumberland's economy. The density of Alcan workers' residence within 10m of the site

suggests that unemployment impacts will be concentrated within an area already experiencing high levels of unemployment. Modelling a 'worst case scenario' in respect of a shift from Alcan employment to JSA indicates that the 5m zone would be disproportionately affected were employees to follow a straight transition from employment to JSA, with up to an 11% increase in claimant numbers were both the smelter and the power station to close.

- 6.5 The economic impact of Alcan's closure on the local economy may be compounded by the re-structuring in the public sector. The public sector provides over one third of Northumberland's jobs. Furthermore, one third of Northumberland's residents commute into Tyne and Wear where one third of all jobs are in the public sector. The Government's objective to reduce the national deficit is leading to a reduction in the size of the public sector in Northumberland. For every 1,000 jobs lost from the public sector, an additional 340 jobs will be lost from the private sector. There is a real risk of a further, significant disequilibrium of skills demand and supply in the local labour market.

#### Deprivation

- 6.6 In respect of deprivation Blyth Valley and Wansbeck are the most deprived former districts within Northumberland, with Wansbeck being ranked amongst one of the most deprived districts in England. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) shows the percentage of children in each Super Output Area (SOA) that live in families that are income deprived. In Northumberland, 9 SOAs are ranked within the 10% most deprived in the country, 7 of these are within the former Wansbeck district.

#### Skills

- 6.7 Just over 70% of Northumberland's population aged 16-64 are qualified to NVQ level 2 and above, this is a higher proportion than the North Eastern LEP area average (66%), the North East region (66%) and England (67%). Northumberland has a slightly higher proportion of people aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications (12%) than England (11%) but lower than the North Eastern LEP and North East areas (13%). Northumberland's latest figure for young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) of 6.7% is one of the lowest in the North East area (second only to North Tyneside at 6.2%) and has been classed as "the best comparative position for our young people yet achieved". The North East's latest NEET figure is 8.8%, England's is 6.1%.

#### **The Environmental Challenge**

- 6.8 There is a need to enhance the existing quality and character of the varied and valuable landscapes of Northumberland and to continue to recreate landscape

and remediate previously developed land, particularly the remaining major former industrial areas. There is a need to encourage the enhancement and creation of conservation habitats increasing biodiversity and tree cover and to resist any unsympathetic development. There are a large number of features in Northumberland that are protected for their heritage value and should be carefully managed.

- 6.9 New development should add to rather than detract from overall environmental quality and should accommodate sustainability principles and acknowledge the climate change agenda. Climate change may bring an increased risk of flooding and therefore sustainable flood risk management must be a priority.
- 6.10 Notably, the Blyth Estuary is part of the Northumberland Shore SSSI (designated for its value to overwintering wading birds including Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Sanderling and Redshank) and the sites are close to the Northumbria Coast SPA/Ramsar Site (designated in this location for overwintering Turnstone and Purple Sandpiper). There are legislative requirements to ensure the protection of such sites whilst the value of biodiversity on previously developed land, must also be valued.

### Summary of other Key challenges

- **Population**
  - More than half the county's population lives in the south east.
  - The largest proportion of the County's population is in the 'working age' group but within that range there is a marked decrease in 24-34 year olds.
  - The County's population as a whole is ageing. This puts additional pressure on services.
- **Deprivation**
  - South East Northumberland has the greatest overall concentrations of deprivation.
- **Health and well being**
  - The health of people in Northumberland is generally similar to the rest of England but life expectancy for women is slightly worse. Health inequalities across the county mean that life expectancy for men is lower in deprived areas than in the least deprived areas; and there are varying rates for number of people with limiting long-term illness. This puts additional pressure on services.
- **Crime**
  - While the overall number of recorded crimes in Northumberland has decreased there has been a significant increase in violent offences since 2008. It is essential that the crime statistics continue to improve and that the population continues to feel safer in Northumberland.
- **Housing**
  - A mix of high quality accommodation which meets the needs of all groups must be available.

- There is a need to deliver a sufficient quantity of new housing in sustainable locations, including an uplift in new dwelling construction as part of the South East
- **Transport and communications**
- There is significant out commuting from areas of Northumberland to the Tyne and Wear City Region for employment purposes.
- ITC, including broadband, is important to the economic prosperity of Northumberland
- **Economy**
- The former Blyth Valley district has the highest percentage of working people with no qualifications.
- There is a need to ensure adequate educational and skills base to support economic activity.
- The Northumberland economy has experienced fundamental change for many years with jobs lost in traditional industries particularly deep coal mining and agriculture. While job losses have been partially offset by new jobs in manufacturing and the service sector overall unemployment rates are higher than the average for Great Britain but less than for the North East.
- **Environment**
- There is a need to embed climate change mitigation and adaptation measures within spatial planning policies, to assist in ensuring reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the likely predicted consequences of climate change.
- Flooding in Northumberland is most likely to occur along the river valleys and on estuarine and coastal frontages.
- A precautionary approach should be followed towards the location of new development to avoid areas at risk of flooding. The use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other sustainable management systems should be promoted.
- There may be sites where historic uses will have resulted in land affected by contamination, which will need to be addressed as part of any redevelopment.
- Northumberland should continue to make effective use of land by re-using land that has previously been developed.
- There is a need to recognise that previously developed land has a role to play in terms of nature conservation, biodiversity and heritage. Some previously developed sites are important wildlife habitats and heritage assets as well as providing local recreational opportunities. This is particularly significant in the south east of the County.
- Need to protect areas of best and most versatile agricultural land from development.
- Northumberland is an important area for biodiversity with a large number of protected sites.
- Northumberland is meeting the Government's target of 95% with 99.11% of SSSI land being classed as in 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition. This needs to be maintained and enhanced where possible.
- The majority of the County has a high landscape quality, including the Northumberland Heritage Coast and should be conserved and enhanced.
- Opportunities must not be missed to enhance the landscape through restoration of new or former development sites



- There are a large number of assets within Northumberland that are protected for their heritage value and need to be preserved and enhanced.
- There is a need to protect and enhance the historic environment and historic assets, which may or may not derive significance from their settings, from potential threats including development activities, climate change, coastal erosion and other forms of harm.
- Improving existing poor quality built environments and areas of derelict land.
- Northumberland is rich in a number of mineral deposits including coal. Minerals are finite resources and need to be used in a sustainable way to ensure there are sufficient supplies for tomorrow.
- Businesses in Northumberland produce waste that requires management. There is a need to maintain adequate waste disposal sites for the County.

Figure 4 – summary of key issues –derived from issues identified for the Core Strategy

## 7. TASK A4 THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

- 7.1 The LDOs need to be tested against sustainability considerations. This will be achieved through the applying the Sustainability Appraisal Framework as established through the Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.
- 7.2 The SA Objectives making up the framework address a full cross-section of sustainability issues, including social, economic and environmental factors.
- 7.3 As identified under Tasks A1 – A3, the plans, policies and programmes, baseline position and key sustainability issues that are applicable to the appraisal of the LDOs are less extensive than those identified for the Core Strategy. It is therefore inevitable that certain objectives will have less relevance to the LDOs. The appraisal will be completed accordingly.

<b>Sustainability Appraisal Objectives</b>
1. To improve health and well-being and reduce health inequalities
2. To ensure good air quality
3. To protect and enhance Northumberland's cultural heritage and diversity
4. To ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home
5. To avoid or reduce flood risk to people and property
6. To deliver safer communities
7. To ensure resilience to the effects of climate change through effective adaptation
8. To strengthen and sustain a resilient local economy
9. To deliver accessible education and training opportunities
10. To increase the diversity and quality of employment opportunities
11. To improve the quality, range and accessibility of community services and facilities
12. To reduce the need for travel and improve transport integration
13. To protect and enhance the quality, distinctiveness and diversity of Northumberland's rural and urban landscapes
14. To ensure prudent use and supply of natural resources
15. To protect and enhance Northumberland's biodiversity and geo-diversity
16. To protect and enhance the quality of Northumberland's ground, river and sea waters
17. To mitigate climate change by reducing of greenhouse gas emissions
18. To reduce the amount of waste that is produced and increase the proportion that is reused, recycled and composted
19. To increase public involvement in decision making and participation in community activity, especially amongst under represented groups
20. Promoting innovative solutions for restoration of minerals and waste sites

Figure 5 Sustainability Appraisal objectives

- 7.4 The assessment is designed to identify if the development to be permitted by the proposed LDOs would be likely to cause significant sustainability effects (either positive or negative). Effects are considered in terms of their spatial scale, likelihood, timescale and permanence. Where effects are identified, an evaluation of their significance is to be made along with evidence to justify and support the conclusions made. Where significant sustainability effects are identified possible mitigation measures will also be considered.
- 7.5 A scoring system has been developed as a tool in the assessment process. This is summarised below:

### Sustainability Framework Scoring System

Significance of effect		Description of effect
++	Major positive	LDO approach will have a major positive effect in the SA objective when compared to the current and future baseline conditions
+	Minor positive	LDO approach will have a positive effect in the SA objective being assessed when compared to the current and future baseline conditions. Minor adverse effects may result but the overall effect will be positive.
0	Neutral	LDO approach being assessed is unlikely to create any significant impact (positive or negative) at present or in the future
-	Minor negative	LDO approach will have a negative effect on the SA objective being assessed when compared to the current and future baseline conditions. Minor positive effects may result but the overall effect will be negative
--	Major negative	LDO approach will have a major negative effect on the SA objective being assessed when compared to the current and future baseline conditions
?	Unknown/uncertain	There is insufficient information about the implications of the LDO approach to make a robust assessment. OR where the option has significant positive and negative effects
X	No relationship	LDO approach not relevant to SA objective.
Timescale		Description of timescale
Short term		The effect of the LDO approach would have within the initial 0-5 years
Medium term		The effect of the LDO approach would have within the initial 5-10 years
Long term		The effect of the LDO approach would have within beyond 10 years

Figure 6 scoring system

- 7.6 It is possible 'Unknown/uncertain' results will emerge reflecting the nature of the LDOs particularly where the objective is less relevant in the context of the LDOs. Furthermore the exact form of development that could ultimately be delivered under the provisions of the LDOs is not known until a developer comes forward. For the purpose of the assessment, significant effects are defined as those which have been identified as major positive (++) or major negative (--) in the assessment.

7.7 The SA is intended to identify any potential adverse effects and consider ways in which these can be mitigated or avoided; and to identify potential positive effects and ways in which these can be maximised, through particular wording and specifically through development criteria and conditions within the LDOS, including in the context of:

- Protection of the natural and built environment including protected species and habitats and the historic environment;
- Flood risk minimisation and mitigation
- Protection of local amenity

## **8. TASK A5 CONSULTING ON THE SCOPE OF THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL**

- 8.1 The SEA Directive requires Local Authorities to consult with statutory environmental bodies. In England, the three statutory environmental bodies are:
- English Heritage
  - Environment Agency
  - Natural England
- 8.2 The purpose of this consultation exercise is to provide an opportunity for interested individuals and organisations to make comments on the range and scope of the sustainability issues that will be considered during the appraisal of the LDOs. The consultation, in particular seeks to:
- Ensure the methodology for the proposed sustainability appraisal is comprehensive and of an appropriate scale.
  - Provide an opinion on the suitability of applying the sustainability appraisal objectives identified for the purposes of the Core Strategy.
  - Advise on the key sustainability issues.
  - Provide advice to ensure the baseline data is appropriate and sufficient.

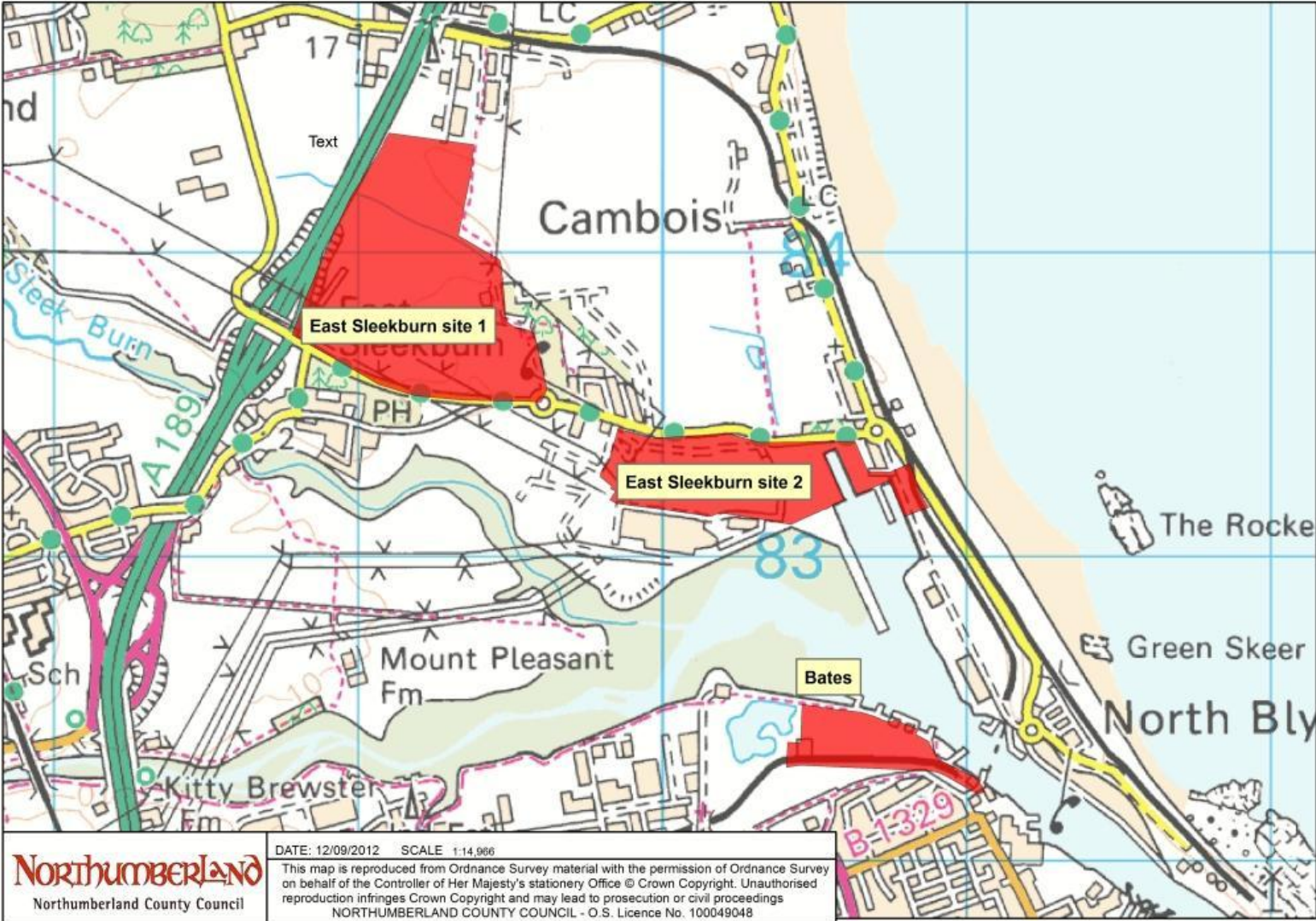
## **9. INFORMATION ON NEXT STEPS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL PROCESS**

- 9.1 Following consultation on this Scoping Report, the Council will consider any comments received and amend the SA approach as required.
- 9.2 The integration of the Sustainability Appraisal process with the LDOs is fundamental to the document drafting process. The remaining drafting stages will therefore be completed alongside and the appraisal.
- 9.3 The Local Development Orders, Sustainability Appraisal and associated assessments will then be subject to formal consultation and amended as appropriate, before being submitted to the Secretary of State and ultimately formally adopted.

### **Monitoring**

- 9.4 The Council will be required to monitor any significant effects identified through the SA process. Proposals to monitor the sustainability effects of implementing the Local Development Orders will be identified and implemented under subsequent stages of the SA process. As part of the monitoring process the following will be checked:
- That the prediction of significant effects was accurate.
  - That the plan is contributing to the achievement of SA objectives and targets.
  - That mitigation measures are performing as well as can be expected or require modifying.
  - Whether any remedial measures are necessary to mitigate any adverse significant effects which had not been identified previously.
- 9.5 If monitoring reveals adverse or unexpected effects then actions should be taken to address these effects.

Appendix A – LDO Site Plan



## Appendix B – Existing Development Plan Policies and SEA / SA Findings and resulting LDO SEA/SA considerations

Bates			
Plan	Policy /objective	SEA/ SA findings	Site specific LDO SEA/ SA considerations
Blyth Valley Core Strategy 2006	<p>Policy SS1 outlines proposals for the Regeneration and Renaissance of Blyth Valley including through the regeneration of Blyth town centre and Quayside; Mixed use regeneration of the Blyth Estuary; Promoting Blyth as a centre of excellence for renewable energy; Protecting existing and providing a range of new employment land to meet the needs of businesses and residents; and Directing new development towards previously developed sites before greenfield.</p> <p>Policy SS3 – specifies Sustainability Criteria including accessibility; no unacceptable adverse impact on the natural environment, historic and cultural heritage and community assets; that new development would help to build communities by sustaining community services and facilities; and that new development will reflect the principles of sustainable design and applications for major developments will be expected to be accompanied by Transport Assessments and/or Green Travel Plans.</p> <p>Policy ENV1 seeks to ensure the protection and enhancement of internationally and nationally important sites and species (including the Northumbria Coast SPA and Ramsar Site, and Blyth Valley's SSSIs), capitalising upon Blyth Valley's natural assets;</p> <p>Policy REG 3 refers to Regional Brownfield Mixed Use Development of Blyth Estuary. It states the Blyth Development Plan Document will allocate the Blyth Estuary as a brownfield mixed use development taking into account the factors such as the need to integrate with Blyth town centre; Appropriate infrastructure improvements; Measures to protect and enhance the local environment, with particular regard to protected species and international and national nature conservation designations, The need for an environmental impact assessment; and the need for a transport assessment.</p>	<p>A key feature of the Local Development Framework will be ensuring sufficient employment land is available to support and attract businesses.</p> <p>A key regeneration theme is that of regenerating Blyth. Regeneration of the Estuary area would offer opportunity of raising profile of Blyth and making it more attractive to live and work – with knock on economic impacts.</p> <p>Environmental and social benefits from opportunities for redeveloping previously developed land and reducing need to travel.</p> <p>May need to be mitigation to prevent negative environmental impacts on neighbouring areas and sites designated for nature conservation interest i.e. SSSI, SPA and Ramsar.</p>	<p>The proposed LDO continues a long standing policy objective to deliver employment uses on brownfield land around the Estuary with a view to deliver sustainable economic growth. Specifically as part of wider Enterprise Zone initiative the LDO is intended to be a kick start to growth, triggering wider improvements / investor confidence in the area.</p> <p>The LDO could be argued as moving slightly away from previous policy objectives around delivering mixed use development although policy applies to the wider Estuary area rather than Bates site. The focus of the LDO is to deliver employment uses, although allowance has been made for some limited/ancillary uses.</p> <p>Development requirements and conditions will be carefully worded to mitigate impacts such as upon neighbouring residential amenity and have been checked against the criteria of existing policy. However, it is recognised that there is an important balance to be struck between sustainability / policy objectives. The purpose of the LDOs are to incentivise development by streamlining the planning process. More specifically the LDOs in Northumberland are, as part of the Enterprise Zone initiative focussed on delivering economic and social benefits. Orders which are highly prescriptive and conditioned are likely to be less favoured by developers and ultimately could fail to bring about such benefits.</p> <p>Associated Habitat Regulations</p>
Blyth Valley Development Control Development	<p>Plan identifies specific development criteria including in respect of proposals for new offices falling within Class B1 to be situated within industrial estates or in subsequent settlement based DPDs and assessed against the sequential tests.</p>		



<p>Development Plan Document</p>	<p>Policy DC11 states that new development will not be permitted unless it meets criteria in respect of sustainable travel including: Minimising distances travelled and Encouraging the use of public transport by ensuring that new development is within 400m of existing bus services and that improvements to existing public transport infrastructure/facilities are provided at the developer's expense where necessary.</p> <p>Specific policies in respect of nature conservation and biodiversity include Policy DC14. It states where development is within or outside an SSSI is likely to have an adverse effect on an SSSI, alone or in combination with other developments, planning permission will not be permitted unless the reasons for development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site. In such cases, conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to mitigate the harmful aspects of the development.</p>		<p>Assessment Screening exercise and Environmental Impact Assessment screening exercise will specifically consider environmental impacts and mitigation measures and will further inform specific development considerations and potential mitigation measures, including around protecting the nearby ecological / environmental designations.</p> <p>Specific consideration to be given to the sustainable locations of offices and the potential need for sequential tests.</p>
<p>Northumberland Core Strategy Issues and Options May 2012</p>	<p>Document asks whether additional provision should be made for growth of low carbon sector – proposes Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone strategic employment area</p>	<p>Provision of new employment land to support sector is considered likely to have major positive economic and social benefits and create employment opportunities. However risk that due to specialist nature of industries employment will be taken up by skilled workforce outwith area. Consideration to be given to training opportunities.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to how proposals link physically and socially with communities in Blyth.</p> <p>Mixture of positive and negative and uncertain effects on the environment identified. On global scale positive impacts e.g. furthering the deployment of renewables whilst on local scale pressures on environment e.g through increased traffic and pollution – to be addressed through planning application stage.</p> <p>Sites should be exemplar of low carbon and renewable technologies.</p> <p>Blyth town well served by public transport – accessible by sustainable means.</p> <p>The potential impact on adjacent SSSI, SPA and RAMSAR will need to be fully assessed working with Natural England to ensure appropriate safeguards and mitigations measures – to be considered in more detail.</p>	<p>Wording of LDOs need to consider sector specific focus. Potential for extending focus beyond the low carbon, renewable sectors for example to other off-shore industries and advanced manufacturing.</p> <p>Potential issues for enhancing public access to the Quay sites as potential conflict with nature conservation objectives – e.g. reducing disturbance to birds using the Estuary.</p> <p>Skills issue being considered through other means e.g. partnerships with education providers but important consideration in terms of ensuring socio-economic impacts benefit the local community.</p>

## East Sleekburn

Plan	Policy /objective	SEA/ SA findings	Site specific LDO SEA/ SA considerations
Wansbeck Local Plan	<p>The Plan identifies the Cambois area of economic opportunity and also an area for Port related development.</p> <p>Policy EMP3 states that land at Cambois, , is designated for development by businesses requiring large sites in non-estate locations. Proposals for development in classes B1, B2 or B8 will be permitted provided that certain criteria are met including: in the case of proposals for greenfield development, there are no suitable alternative previously developed sites within the zone; and the development will be carried out in a well planned and co-ordinated manner.</p> <p>Policy EMP5 relates to Port Related development stating the continued operation and development of the Port of Blyth will be supported. Land at Battleship Wharf is designated as a port related employment area. Development in classes B1, B2 and B8 will be permitted provided that development is port related.</p>	<p>The SEA/SA mostly positive impacts but raises some uncertainty in respect of nature conservation designations, water quality and archaeology and recommends further investigation.</p>	<p>The proposed LDO continues a long standing policy objective to deliver employment uses on brownfield land around the Estuary with a view to deliver sustainable economic growth. Specifically as part of wider Enterprise Zone initiative the LDO is intended to be a kick start to growth, triggering wider improvements / investor confidence in the area.</p> <p>The westerly site is not allocated for employment use. It is white land with no designation. This reflects the emphasis upon development of brownfield before greenfield.</p> <p>Development requirements and conditions will be carefully worded to mitigate impacts such as upon neighbouring residential amenity and have been checked against the criteria of existing policy. Consideration will also be given to further investigative requirements such as in respect of archaeology and conditioned accordingly. Such requirements could potentially be undertaken by a developer pre commencement or in advance by Northumberland County Council to front load the process – if this is viable.</p> <p>Further consideration to be given to potential criteria around phasing ensuring a coordinated approach to development.</p> <p>Recognised that there is an important balance to be struck between sustainability / policy objectives. The purpose of the LDOs are to incentivise development by streamlining the planning process. More specifically the LDOs in Northumberland are, as part of the Enterprise Zone initiative focussed on delivering economic and social benefits. Orders which are highly prescriptive and conditioned are likely to be less favoured by developers and ultimately could fail to bring about such benefits.</p>

			Associated Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening exercise and Environmental Impact Assessment screening exercise will specifically consider environmental impacts and mitigation measures and will further inform specific development considerations and potential mitigation measures, including around protecting the nearby ecological / environmental designations.
Northumberland Core Strategy Issues and Options	<p>Document asks whether additional provision should be made for growth of low carbon sector – proposes Blyth Estuary Renewable Energy Zone strategic employment area.</p> <p>Proposes redesignation of c. 175 ha of expansion land north of the River Blyth – not currently included in general employment land supply.</p>	<p>Provision of new employment land to support sector is considered likely to have major positive economic and social benefits and create employment opportunities. However risk that due to specialist nature of industries employment will be taken up by skilled workforce outwith area. Consideration to be given to training opportunities.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to how proposals link physically and socially with communities in Blyth.</p> <p>Mixture of positive and negative and uncertain effects on the environment identified. On global scale positive impacts e.g. furthering the deployment of renewables whilst on local scale pressures on environment e.g through increased traffic and pollution – to be addressed through planning application stage.</p> <p>Sites should be exemplar of low carbon and renewable technologies.</p> <p>Area to north of Estuary is not well served by public transport and therefore consideration needed to how this can be overcome to mitigate impacts. Strong policies to support public transport provision and walking and cycling and contributions sought to improve connectivity.</p> <p>The potential impact on adjacent SSSI, SPA and RAMSAR will need to be fully assessed working with Natural England to ensure appropriate safeguards and mitigations measures – to be considered in more detail.</p>	<p>Wording of LDOs need to consider sector specific focus. Potential for extending focus beyond the low carbon, renewable sectors for example to other off-shore industries and advanced manufacturing.</p> <p>Potential issues for enhancing public access to the Quay sites as potential conflict with nature conservation objectives – e.g. reducing disturbance to birds using the Estuary.</p> <p>Skills issue being considered through other means e.g. partnerships with education providers but important consideration in terms of ensuring socio-economic impacts benefit the local community.</p> <p>Poor connectivity of sites to be fully considered and means of enhancing accessibility appraised. Specific consideration to be given to the sustainable locations of offices and the potential need for sequential tests.</p>

