

Northumberland Local Plan

**Local Development Scheme
2023 to 2026**

March 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS should set out what Development Plan Documents, which will comprise the Local Plan for an area, are to be produced by the Council, their content and broad timetable for preparation. The purpose of this LDS is to explain how and when the Council will prepare documents which form part of the Local Plan for Northumberland.
- 1.2 This Northumberland LDS covers the period 2023 to 2026. It replaces the Northumberland LDS which came into effect in March 2021.

What is a Local Plan?

- 1.3 All local planning authorities are required to have an up-to-date Local Plan. The Local Plan sets out the strategic priorities for development of an area and covers housing, commercial, transport development and environmental protection. They must plan positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area to meet the strategic priorities. A Local Plan also includes a Policies Map which illustrates the geographic extent of policies and proposals on a map base.
- 1.4 In addition, there are a number of documents which support a Local Plan, including:

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| Local Development Scheme (LDS) | The timetable for the preparation of local development documents (this document). |
| Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) | Sets out the Council's approach to engaging with local communities during plan preparation and when consulting on planning applications. |
| Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) | Provide additional advice and information relating to specific policies or proposals in a Development Plan Document (DPD). |
| Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) | Sets out the progress in terms of producing DPD and implementing policies. |

- 1.5 Through the Localism Act the Government introduced a new tier of plans called 'Neighbourhood Plans'. These are prepared by Town and Parish Councils or by specially designated neighbourhood forums in areas without a Parish. There is not a statutory requirement for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. The scope of the

plan is determined by the Town and Parish Council in consultation with their communities. Neighbourhood Plans must take account of national planning policy and be in general conformity with the Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans are not Development Plan Documents and therefore cannot be included in this LDS. However, once made, or approved by referendum, they will form part of the Development Plan for the area. Further information on Neighbourhood Plans currently being prepared within Northumberland can be found on the Council's website¹.

What is a Local Development Scheme?

- 1.6 The LDS provides the starting point for local communities and stakeholders to find out about the Council's timetable for preparing the various documents which the Council intends to produce as part of the Northumberland Local Plan over a three year period. The LDS describes:
- The content and geographic area to which each of the documents relates;
 - The timetable and key milestones in their preparation; and
 - The interrelationships between each document.

What is the existing Northumberland Development Plan?

- 1.7 The Northumberland Development Plan comprises the Northumberland Local Plan which was adopted on 31 March 2022, which covers the whole of County, excluding the Northumberland National Park, which is a separate local planning authority; and a number of neighbourhood plans. At the time of writing there are 20 'made' neighbourhood plans across Northumberland.
- 1.8 Planning law states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications.

2. The Northumberland Local Plan

What DPDs will be produced and what will they contain?

- 2.1 Northumberland County Council is focussing on the preparation of a Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan, and a partial review of the NLP in so far as the Plan relates to open space, sport and recreation facilities. The profile for the proposed Development Plan Documents, including a brief description of the role, content and the key milestones in their preparation are set out in Appendices 1 and 2.

¹ <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Neighbourhood.aspx>

- 2.2 In light of matters raised through the independent examination of the Local Plan (by the Planning Inspectorate), the Council has committed to preparing a separate Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan. This plan will:
- Set spatial planning policy to guide provision for the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities within Northumberland;
 - Identifying areas of search for longer term needs and/or allocating land for shorter to medium term needs, in line with identified future accommodation requirements of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople during the period of the Local Plan and;
 - Set out criteria based policies that guide the determination of any planning applications for future accommodation or related requirements that are specific to the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities.
- 2.3 Once adopted the Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan will supersede Policy HOU 12: Provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities, in the Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022).
- 2.4 The Northumberland Local Plan is set to be subject to an early partial review, in so far as the Plan relates to open space, sport and recreation facilities. In light of matters raised through the independent examination of the Local Plan (by the Planning Inspectorate), the Council has committed to carry out a new assessment of open space. The new assessment will underpin a review and any resulting required changes or update to the Northumberland Local Plan.
- 2.5 The open space assessment work will:
- Update the key open space evidence comprising the Northumberland PPG 17 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment (2011) and the Northumberland Open Space Assessment Review (2018); and
 - Review and potentially update policies of the Local Plan, in so far as they relate to open space, sport and recreation.
- 2.6 In addition to the above, the Council is committed to an early partial review of the Northumberland Local Plan to consider any necessary amendments to reflect changes in national planning policy, which came about towards the end of the examination process. Given that additional changes to the NPPF are proposed in the spring of 2023, and that further changes are expected to the planning system following the enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the Council considers it prudent to not embark upon this partial review at this stage, but to wait until there is greater certainty in relation to national planning policy.
- 2.7 Northumberland has seen significant inward investment since the Northumberland Local Plan was prepared, and the re-introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line (programmed to start at the end of 2023), has the potential to bring about transformational change in southeast Northumberland. As such, the

Council may take the opportunity to assess the impact of these changes and consider whether this warrants any early review of the Local Plan.

- 2.8 When there is greater clarity regarding the need for any review or partial review of the plan, the LDS will be updated.
- 2.9 As explained in section 1, the Council can produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), which provide additional advice and information relating to specific policies or proposals in a Development Plan Document. To date the Council has identified a series of potential SPDs, including a Design Guide SPD. The Council has also identified a number of matters which would benefit from additional informal guidance. This is likely to include web based resources on matters such as Affordable Housing; Hot Food Takeaways; and Renewable Energy.
- 2.10 Provisionally, the Council has identified scope for other SPDs, including potential for an SPD addressing Planning Obligations and an SPD addressing Open Space. Other SPDs may be identified in the future and the aforementioned guidance may be advanced and incorporated in to SPDs, if this is deemed appropriate.
- 2.11 There are no requirements to set out the details on the production of SPDs within the LDS. However, the Council will publish information and updates on its webpages.

How will the Development Plan Documents be prepared?

- 2.12 The Government does not set out precise details of how the Council should prepare Development Plan Documents. Regulations² do however prescribe certain stages where the public are to be consulted. The Government stresses the importance of early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. The Regulations include a requirement for public participation at an early stage in plan preparation before the Development Plan Document is finalised with the detail left for local authorities to determine. They also specify that the final document should be published for formal consultation prior to it being submitted for independent examination. The various stages of the preparation of a Development Plan Document are summarised in Table 1. The prescribed stages are also applicable to the partial review of the Northumberland Local Plan.

² [Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 SI 2012 No. 767](#)

Table 1: Stages in the preparation of a Development Plan Document

| Stage | Community Involvement |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Plan Preparation (Regulation 18) | This stage involves the Council gathering evidence including concerns and proposals the community may wish to make regarding planning issues. The Council will normally consult on issues and options, where appropriate in the early stages of this process and will continue to engage with stakeholders and the community on preferred options throughout this stage. This stage also involves consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. |
| Publication Stage (Regulation 19) | This stage involves a formal consultation on the final draft version of the document, when the Council will invite all interested parties to submit representations. |
| Submission (Regulation 22) | The Council will formally submit the document to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination. |
| Examination (Regulation 24 and 25) | Interested parties can seek to make representations to the independent Planning Inspector. Following the examination, the Planning Inspector will produce a report and may recommend changes. |
| Adoption (Regulation 26) | This is a formal process for Northumberland County Council to adopt the documents as part of the Northumberland Local Plan. |

3. Supporting information

3.1 The Government expects local authorities to use effective programme management techniques to progress the delivery of Local Plans. This section of the LDS explains the arrangements that are in place to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of the Northumberland Local Plan. Key areas are:

- The development of a sound and robust evidence base;
- The approach to community and stakeholder engagement;
- Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment;
- Resources;
- Programme management;
- Risk assessment; and
- Monitoring and review.

Evidence base

- 3.2 The Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan, and any Partial Review of the Northumberland Local Plan in relation to matters of open space, sport and recreation, must be based on a sound and robust evidence base. A number of specialist studies and research projects have been or are being undertaken/ updated, or will be commissioned to inform the Local Plan documents. Consultants will be used for this work, if the Council does not have the specialist skills required, or the capacity needed to undertake the work. This evidence base will also provide baseline data to help inform the monitoring and review process of the Local Plan documents.
- 3.3 The Council is required to work with neighbouring local planning authorities and stakeholders when preparing Local Plans. The Government expects Councils to plan strategically across administrative boundaries under the Duty to Co-operate³. The Council will seek to undertake joint evidence base work with adjoining authorities where appropriate.
- 3.4 The key evidence base studies to support the Local Plan documents will be presented on the Council's website.

Community engagement

- 3.5 Greater and more effective community involvement is a key feature of the planning system. The Government stresses the importance of early and meaningful engagement and collaboration in plan preparation. Northumberland County Council adopted a revised Statement of Community Involvement in February 2015. This sets out the arrangements for public consultation on both plan preparation and all planning applications made to the Council.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 3.6 The preparation of Development Plan Documents will continue to be informed by a Sustainability Appraisal. This is an iterative process that develops alongside the preparation of a Development Plan Document (or partial review thereof) through which the economic, social and environmental effects of the plan being prepared are assessed. It incorporates the requirements of the Strategic Environment Assessment.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 3.7 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is undertaken on all emerging Development Plan Documents (or partial review thereof) in order to ensure that policies and proposals will not, either individually or cumulatively, have a significant effect on the integrity of European designated sites.

³ [National Planning Policy Framework, July 2021, Paragraphs 24 to 27](#)

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.8 Councils are also required by legislation to prepare an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to ensure that policies in Development Plan Documents (or partial review thereof) do not discriminate against protected groups and that opportunities are taken to promote quality. The EqIA will also run parallel with each of the stages of a Development Plan Document being prepared or reviewed.

Resources

- 3.9 The Planning Service is responsible for the preparation of the Local Plan documents and all related guidance. Planning Policy Officers provide the resources to support the delivery of the Development Plan Documents identified within the LDS. External consultants will be commissioned where the need for specialist services, additional capacity or the need to provide a critical friend are identified.
- 3.10 Partnership working across the Council will be essential to the success of the Local Plan documents being prepared due to the cross-cutting nature and relationship with other plans and strategies. Specialist staff from other functions of the authority will also contribute to the Local Plan documents such as strategic housing.
- 3.11 The cost of producing the Development Plan Documents (and any partial review thereof) identified within the LDS will need to be met from existing and future service budgets. This budget however is not unlimited and any opportunities to secure additional funding and support will be exploited. The Council will use shared financial resources wherever possible to produce evidence base studies that will be required both across Council Services and with adjoining Local Authorities.

Programme management

- 3.12 The Council's Cabinet is responsible for authorising the preparatory stages of the Local Plan process, for example approval of Development Plan Documents for consultation and Full Council is responsible for the decision making stages such as submission and adoption of Development Plan Documents.
- 3.13 The Local Plan Member Working Group makes recommendations to and offers advice to the Cabinet on the preparation of Local Plan documents.

Risk Assessment

- 3.14 A risk assessment has been prepared that is monitored and reviewed during the period of the LDS by senior managers. The risk assessment includes proposed mitigation and contingency measures that may need to be implemented in order to ensure that sound Development Plan Documents are prepared and developed in a timely manner.

Table 2: Local Plan risk assessment impacts and proposed actions

| Impact | Proposed action(s) |
|--|---|
| Staffing Issues: Staff recruitment, retention and vacant posts; Lack of suitably trained staff; Reduced capacity (long term absence) (un-programmed work) | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in quality and quantity of evidence base ● Increased risk to soundness of documents, or High Court Challenge ● Increased workload for existing staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apply council HR policies including appraisal, recruitment and sickness management ● Provide staff training and development ● Second appropriately experienced staff ● Use consultants and other temporary solutions as appropriate ● Commission specialised studies ● Local Plan recognised and prioritised as a Corporate Policy |
| Financial Resources: Budget insufficient for planned expenditure | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in quality and quantity of evidence base ● Reduced ability to commission specialist studies ● Increased risk to soundness of documents, or High Court Challenge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local Plan recognised and prioritised as a Corporate Policy ● Expand partnership working to draw upon skills and resources within other organisations ● Monitor closely expenditure on commissioned studies and other work |
| Corporate Issues: Change in Council priorities; amendments to decision making process | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Additional work to evidence base and redrafting of documents ● Increased workload and costs for unprogrammed work ● Increased number of representations to consultation documents ● Increased risk to soundness of documents, or High Court Challenge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local Plan recognised and prioritised as a Corporate Policy ● Cross party member Local Plan Working Group established ● Commission specialised studies ● Ensure that Council plans and strategies, including the Corporate Plan and Local Plan are aligned |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility of plan making process | |
| <p>External Influences: Failure of partners to deliver to agreed programme; changes in national or regional policy</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional work to evidence base and redrafting of documents • Increased time without policy coverage • Increased risk to soundness of documents, or High Court Challenge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close liaison with partners in preparation of LDS and work programme • Engage partners commitment to deliver through joint working and linkages with other strategies, programmes and projects • Maintain liaison with Planning Inspectorate • Review LDS if necessary |

Monitoring and review

3.15 The Council has a duty to monitor its activities and to report on those activities to its residents and other interested parties by way of an Authority Monitoring Report.

3.16 Rather than presenting a single annual report containing a wide range of complex information, a number of smaller topic based releases will be published on a continual basis at the earliest opportunity.

Glossary

Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) - Reports on how the Council is performing in terms of the Local Plan. It includes a review of the Local Development Scheme's timetable and monitors the success of Local Plan policies.

Development Plan - This includes adopted council development plan documents such as the Northumberland Local Plan and any 'made' neighbourhood plans setting out the policies for the development and use of land.

Development Plan Documents (DPDs) - DPDs are adopted plans and documents that form part of the development plan. Once adopted, planning decisions must be made in accordance with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise. DPDs include Local Plans.

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Undertaken to ensure that equality issues are taken into account throughout the Local Plan process, and that it promotes equality and diversity and does not adversely affect or discriminate against any of the protected Equality groups.

Evidence Base - The information and data gathered by local authorities and used to inform policy development. It includes a wide range of numerical data and other information, including, surveys, studies, discussions and consultations.

Habitats Regulations - A set of government regulations (currently the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)), which sets out requirements within England regarding the protection and enhancement of important natural assets, giving expression to various international Conventions and national statutes.

Independent Examination - The process by which an Independent Planning Inspector publicly examines a Development Plan Document to ensure that it is 'sound' in terms of factors such as the evidence on which it is based, national policy, consultations undertaken etc.

Inspector's Report - A report issued by an Independent Planning Inspector regarding the planning issues debated at the independent examination of a development plan or a planning inquiry. For DPDs it will contain recommendations to the authority on changes to the plan and an opinion as to whether it is a sound plan.

Local Development Scheme (LDS) - A three year programme identifying the development plan documents to be produced and the timetable for their production.

Local Plan - The documents and maps that make up the plan for the future development of a local area such as Northumberland.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - A Government document that sets out nationally important planning issues..

Neighbourhood Plan - A plan prepared for a defined area by a “qualifying body”, a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum. When made a neighbourhood plan will form part of the Development Plan.

Northumberland National Park - Designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, the designation seeks to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park, and to promote opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. The Park sits entirely within the boundary of Northumberland but is a separate local planning authority area.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) – This sets out the Council’s approach to involving the community in the planning process and development management decisions.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) - Non-statutory documents which add further detail to the policies in statutory documents such as the Local Plan – e.g. providing guidance on design in general or on the development of specific sites. SPDs are capable of being a material consideration but do not form part of the development plan.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - The process of weighing and assessing policies for their global, national and local sustainability implications in relation to the environment, the economy and society, incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

Appendix 1

Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan profile and timetable

| Profile of the Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan | |
|--|---|
| Title | Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan |
| Role and content | <p>The Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set spatial planning policy to guide provision for the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities within Northumberland, with particular reference to the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Current and forecast accommodation and related ancillary requirements on permanent and/or transit sites and yards; ○ Patterns of movement and migration including unauthorised stopping; ○ Opportunities and constraints arising from sustainable planning considerations; and ○ The wider role of the Council and other agencies in provisioning for these communities. • Identifying areas of search for longer term needs and/or allocating land for shorter to medium term needs, in line with identified future accommodation requirements of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople during the period of the Local Plan. • Set out criteria based policies that guide the determination of any planning applications for future accommodation or related requirements that are specific to the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople communities. <p>The Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Plan will include a policies map identifying any detailed land allocations.</p> |
| Status | Development Plan Document (DPD) |
| Chain of conformity | Consistent with national planning policy - specifically the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015) - as well as Northumberland County Council policy documents. |
| Geographic coverage | Northumberland County, excluding the Northumberland National Park area. |

Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan Timetable and Milestones

| STAGE | DATES |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Plan Preparation (Regulation 18)</i> Evidence base preparation including initial survey work Call for sites Consultation on draft GTTS Local Plan</p> | <p><i>March 2021 to September 2023</i> March 2021 to March 2023 October 2022 to November 2022 July 2023 to September 2023</p> |
| <p><i>Publication of Draft GTTS Local Plan (Regulation 19)</i></p> | <p><i>December 2023</i></p> |
| <p><i>Submission of GTTS Local Plan (Regulation 22)</i></p> | <p><i>March 2024</i></p> |
| <p><i>Examination Hearings</i></p> | <p><i>June 2024</i> (subject to PINS)</p> |
| <p><i>Adoption of GTTS Local Plan (Regulation 26)</i></p> | <p><i>September 2024</i> (subject to GTTS Local Plan examination /PINS)</p> |

Note: Key Milestones are in ***bold italics***

Arrangements for production

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Organisation lead | Director of Planning Services |
| Political management | Cabinet and Full Council with input from LP Member Working Group throughout production |
| Resources | Planning Policy Team, with technical, legal and administrative support from other teams (including the Strategic Housing team) as required |
| Community and stakeholder involvement | To be undertaken in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement but with participation throughout of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Communities and input from key stakeholders |

Appendix 2

Northumberland Local Plan Partial Review – Protected Open Space profile and timetable

| Profile of the Northumberland Local Plan Partial Update – Open space, sport and recreation | |
|--|--|
| Title | Northumberland Local Plan Partial review – Open space, sport and recreation |
| Role and content | <p>The Northumberland Local Plan Partial review will review the Plan in so far as it relates to open space, sport and recreation. It will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Policy INF 5 of the Northumberland Local Plan, which addresses: the protection of open space, sport and recreation facilities; the provision and enhancement of open space, sport and recreation facilities; and the standards for open space, sport and recreation as part of new development; Review other supporting policies of the Local Plan, in so far as they relate to open space, sport and recreation. |
| Status | Development Plan Document (DPD) |
| Chain of conformity | Consistent with national planning policy - as well as Northumberland County Council policy documents. |
| Geographic coverage | Northumberland County, excluding the Northumberland National Park area. |

| Northumberland Local Plan Partial Review –Open space, sport and recreation | |
|---|--|
| STAGE | DATES |
| <i>Plan Preparation (Regulation 18)</i> Evidence base preparation including mapping and Site survey work | <i>February 2023 – September 2023</i> |
| <i>Consultation on sites / and or key issues</i> | <i>October 2023</i> |
| <i>Publication of Draft Partial Local Plan Review (Regulation 19) if deemed appropriate, on the basis of the evidence.</i> | <i>February 2024</i> |
| <i>Submission of Partial Local Plan Review (Regulation 22) if deemed appropriate on the basis of the evidence.</i> | <i>July 2024</i> |

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|--|--|
| <i>Examination Hearings (subject to above)</i> | <i>September 2024</i> |
| <i>Adoption of Local Plan Review (Regulation 26) (subject to above)</i> | <i>February 2025</i> (subject to Local Plan examination /PINS) |

Note: Key Milestones are in ***bold italics***

| Arrangements for production | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Organisation lead | Director of Planning Services |
| Political management | Cabinet and Full Council with input from LP Member Working Group throughout production |
| Resources | Planning Policy Team, with specialist consultancy support, and technical, legal and administrative support from other teams as required |
| Community and stakeholder involvement | To be undertaken in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement and with participation of open space, sports and recreation providers/regulators, including Town and Parish Councils |