

Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Natural Environment Background Paper

October 2021

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1. Background

- 1.1 This document is one in a series of background papers prepared by the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It sets out the relevant national and local policy and guidance that is informing the Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan ('the plan'). The background paper also identifies and explains the relevant evidence base and feedback from early engagement, it then explains how the preferred policy approach has been identified.
- 1.2 The vision and objectives for the plan define what it aims to achieve. The vision for the parish in 2036 is:

A vision for Haydon Parish in 2036
<i>Haydon Parish will be a great place for all generations to live, work and flourish both now and in the future.</i>
<i>It will be a successful sustainable community committed to addressing climate change.</i>
<i>It will have a distinct identity, which attracts a growing number of visitors to Haydon Bridge and surrounding countryside to support the local economy.</i>

- 1.3 Neighbourhood plan objectives one and three are most relevant to the natural environment:

Objective 1 – Sustainability and climate change:

Focusing the majority of development within the settlement boundary and ensuring all new development is sustainable and takes a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. This includes:

- *Embedding a commitment to sustainable design, construction and use;*
- *Fully understanding and addressing the current and future implications of flood risk;*
- *Contributing to reducing the carbon footprint of the parish; and*
- *Prioritising energy efficiency and use of renewable energy in existing as well as new development and reducing fuel poverty.*

Objective 3 – Natural environment:

Protecting and enhancing the distinctive character of Haydon Parish, especially in relation to the landscape.

Planning positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.

Safeguarding spaces that are important to the community and the character of the area.

Encouraging and supporting community led projects that enable Haydon Parish to both reduce its carbon footprint and enhance biodiversity.

- 1.4 The main areas covered by this background paper are:

- The national and local policy context for the natural environment;
- An overview of other relevant documents and evidence;
- Environmental designations that cover the plan area;
- Consideration of feedback received as part of the early engagement on the plan; and
- Explanation of the evolution of the preferred policy approach.

- 1.2 As part of the consultation on the pre-submission draft plan comments were invited on the issues identified within this background paper. The paper has been updated where appropriate following feedback.

2. Strategic Planning Context

Background

- 2.1 As neighbourhood plans are part of the development plan, they have to meet defined legal requirements. The way in which neighbourhood plans are prepared and the policies they contain are tested by an independent examiner. In order to pass an examination and proceed to referendum, neighbourhood plans must meet a number of 'basic conditions'. To ensure they are legally compliant they must:
- Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan;
 - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
 - Be compatible with national obligations.

National planning policy and guidance

- 2.2 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The NPPF is clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.
- 2.3 The NPPF makes a clear commitment to conserving the natural environment through the planning system. The natural environment is regarded as having a key role in achieving sustainable development (paragraph 8).
- 2.4 Section 8 of the NPPF deals with healthy communities. It stresses the importance of accessibility to high quality open spaces and the need for plan policies to be informed by up to date assessments. It also introduces the concept of local green spaces. These are areas of open space, which are important to local communities and can be recognised and protected through local green space designation. The protection is as strong as it is for land in the Green Belt. The spaces must meet three prescribed criteria to be successfully designated (paragraph 102).
- 2.5 Section 12 stresses the importance of good design, requiring planning policies to: create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses including the incorporation of green and other public space; address the connections between people and places; and integrate new development into the natural environment.
- 2.6 Section 14 sets out how the planning system should be meeting the challenge of climate change. Paragraph 153 requires plans to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, as well as the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. It highlights that policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts. Paragraph 155 identifies that plans should help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat.
- 2.7 Paragraph 159 identifies that development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. Also, that all plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development.

- 2.8 Section 15 deals with the natural environment and states that local plans should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, by:
- Maintaining the objective of sustainable development;
 - Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
 - Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
 - Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible;
 - Planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks;
 - Identifying and recording all components of the ecological network;
 - Including policies to conserve and enhance the natural environment;
 - Identifying areas where development may be inappropriate;
 - Containing a clear strategy for enhancing the natural environment;
 - Retaining and enhancing all publicly accessible open space unless prescribed tests are met.
- 2.9 The NPPG also contains guidance on the natural environment and is subdivided into sections on landscape, biodiversity, green infrastructure, soils and agricultural land.

Local Plan

Adopted policies

- 2.10 The development plan for Northumberland consists of the saved policies of the former local planning authorities that made up Northumberland before local government reorganisation in 2009. For Haydon Parish, these are: the Tynedale District Core Strategy (2007 - TDCS) and the saved policies of the Tynedale District Local Plan (2000 - TDLP).
- 2.11 As a small part of the parish lies within Northumberland National Park, the relevant Northumberland National Park Authority planning policies are also referred to. This element of the review is proportionate to the size and nature of the part of the national park that is included within the parish. The current development plan policies for land within the national park are contained within the Northumberland National Park Local Plan (2020).
- 2.12 Table 1 provides a summary of the relevant Tynedale Core Strategy policies:

Table 1: Relevant Tynedale Core Strategy Policies

Policy	Description
NE1: principles for the natural environment	Defines a number of principles for the natural environment, to: protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape and biodiversity giving particular protection to areas and sites recognised for their environmental interest; minimise risk of environmental damage; avoid the urbanisation of the countryside; maintain good air quality and the quality of ground and surface water; protect and enhance ancient woodland and other habitats; avoid the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land; protect the landscape quality, wildlife and geological value of the AONB; protect the special qualities of the national park; enable people to experience the natural

Policy	Description
	environment; and protect areas of open space.
Policy GD5: Flood risk	Highlights that flood risk should be taken into account when meeting development needs and that a flood risk assessment should be undertaken where the development is likely to: increase the risk of flooding; reduce the capacity of flood plains to store water; or increase the number of people or properties at risk.

2.13 Table 2 provides a summary of the relevant saved policies from the Tynedale Local Plan:

Policy	Description
NE15: Development in the North Pennines AONB	Gives priority to the protection and enhancement of the landscape qualities of the AONB. States that development within or adjacent to the AONB which adversely effects the specific scenic quality will not be permitted. In addition, any large scale development within or adjacent to the AONB will only be permitted when it is proven to be in the national interest.
NE18: Protection of agricultural land	Protects the best and most versatile agricultural land.
Policy NE19: Protection of internationally important nature conservation sites	Protects RAMSAR sites, special protection areas and special areas of conservation, including candidate sites, from development which would adversely affect the site.
NE20: Protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Protects sites of special scientific interest from the adverse impact of development.
NE21: Protection of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance	Protects sites of nature conservation importance from the adverse impact of development.
Policy NE22: Protection of Nature Reserves	Protects local nature reserves from the adverse impact of development.
NE25: Protection of wildlife corridors	Protects identified wildlife corridors from development which would threaten their integrity.
NE26: Protection of habitats of special importance to wildlife	Protects habitats from development which may destroy or adversely affect their value for nature conservation.
NE27: Protection of protected species	Protects species from development which may harm them.
NE33: Protection of trees, woodlands and hedgerows	Protects trees, woodlands and hedgerows from development which may have an adverse effect on their character, amenity, nature conservation and landscape value.
NE35: Tree preservation orders	States that healthy trees, which contribute to the amenity and landscape or wildlife interest and are under threat will, in appropriate cases, be protected by a TPO.
NE37: landscaping in developments	Requires landscaping schemes to be submitted as part of appropriate development proposals.

2.14 The allocations (from the local plan), which cover the plan area, are illustrated in figure 1.

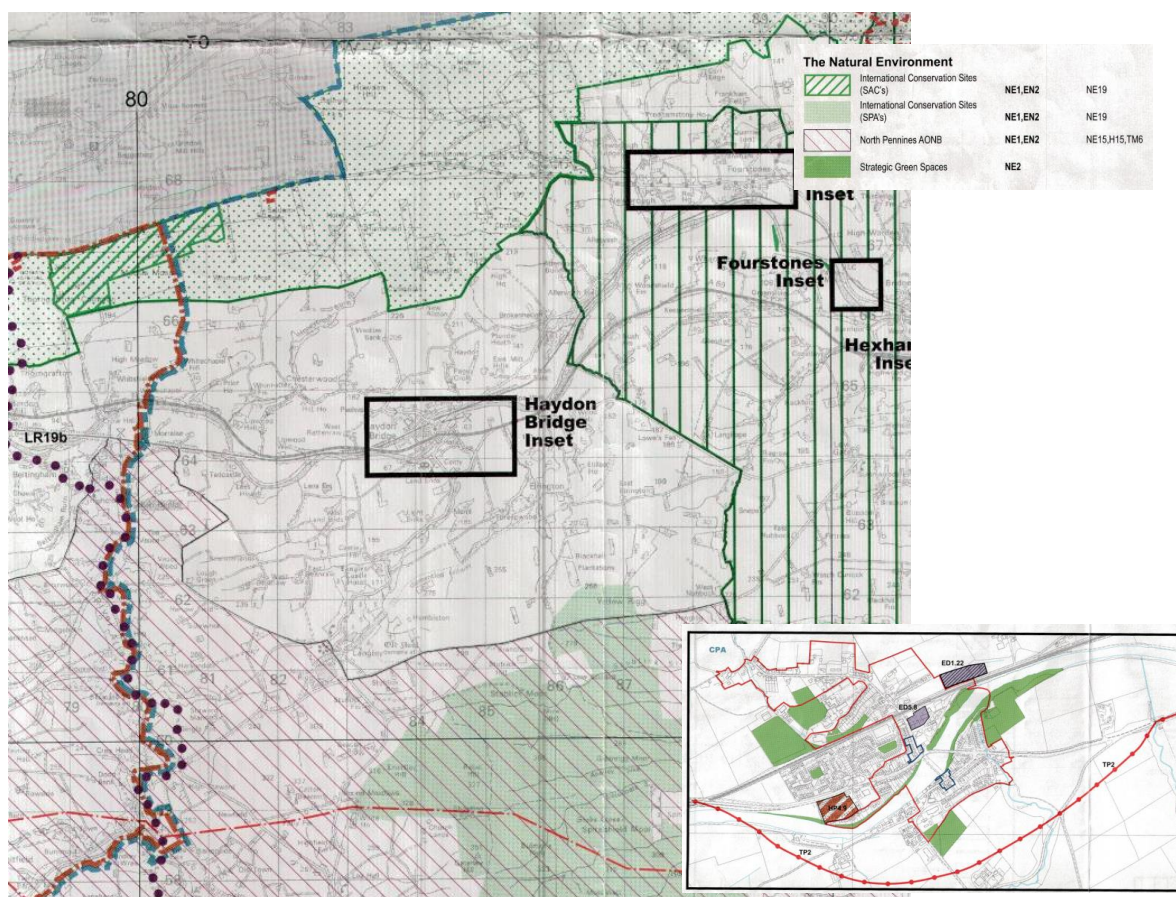


Figure 1: Extract from Tynedale Local Plan Proposals Map

2.15 The adopted Northumberland National Park Local Plan contains a number of policies that are relevant to the natural environment theme. The relevant strategic policy is ST1: Sustainable development which includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The policy requires the protection and enhancement of landscape character, improving biodiversity and the conservation of the quality of natural resources.

Emerging Northumberland Local Plan

2.16 Northumberland County Council (NCC) has prepared a new draft local plan which, once adopted, will replace the existing saved planning policies of the former district council. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in May 2019 and is now undergoing examination.

2.17 Those policies of relevance to the natural environment elements of the neighbourhood plan are:

- Policy STP2: Presumption in favour of sustainable development (strategic policy) requires a positive approach to the determination of applications in accordance with the presumption contained within the NPPF;
- Policy STP3: Principles of sustainable development (strategic policy) gives guidance on the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and defines the key economic, social and environmental factors to consider;

- Policy STP4: Climate change mitigation and adaptation (strategic policy) requires new development to both mitigate and adapt to climate change;
- Policy STP6: Green infrastructure (strategic policy) seeks to protect, improve and extend the green infrastructure network across the county;
- Policy ENV1: Approaches to assessing the impact of development on natural, historic and built environment (strategic policy) includes criteria to ensure that the character and significance of the county's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environments are conserved, protected and enhanced;
- Policy ENV2: Biodiversity and geodiversity (non-strategic policy) requires development proposals that affect biodiversity and geodiversity to minimise their impact and to secure net gains for biodiversity. It also refers to the hierarchy of designated sites and the ecosystem approach;
- Policy ENV3: Landscape (non-strategic policy) identifies the importance of the contribution of the landscape to the county's environment, economy and communities. The policy refers to the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment and states that great weight should be given to the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities and statutory purposes of the AONBs;
- Policy ENV4: Tranquillity, dark skies and a sense of rurality (non-strategic policy) seeks to limit the urbanising effects of development on open countryside landscapes, natural habitats and the settings of historic/ cultural assets and to conserve or enhance tranquillity;
- Policy ENV6: North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (non-strategic policy) requires the special qualities of the AONB to be conserved and enhanced. The policy highlights: the important sensitivity of the local landscape; intervisibility between the AONB and areas to its north and east; interdependency between the landscape quality and the natural functioning of the environment; the need to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets; and a sense of remoteness, wildness, tranquillity and dark skies. The policy requires, that as far as possible the AONB should be recognised as a living, working area by allowing small scale developments that do not impact on the special qualities of the area;
- Policy WAT3: Flooding (non-strategic policy) requires development proposals to demonstrate how they will minimise flood risk to people, property and infrastructure from all potential sources. Reference is made to the application of the sequential text and if necessary, the exceptions test, as well as the need for flood risk assessments;
- 2.89 Policy WAT4: Sustainable drainage systems (non-strategic policy) requires sustainable drainage systems to be incorporated into all developments where necessary in order to separate, minimise and control surface water run-off;
- Policy POL1: Unstable and contaminated land (non-strategic policy) requires assessments to demonstrate that development can be delivered on sites where there is a risk of contamination and land instability;
- Policy POL2: Pollution and air, soil and water quality (non-strategic policy) identifies criteria for the assessment of planning applications which may result in pollution;
- Policy POL3: Agricultural land quality (non-strategic policy) resists the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land unless it can be demonstrated that: there are no suitable alternative sites on lower quality land; the need for the development outweighs the need to protect such land in the long term; or the land would be reinstated to its pre-working quality;

2.18 Figure 3 provides an extract from the draft policies map:

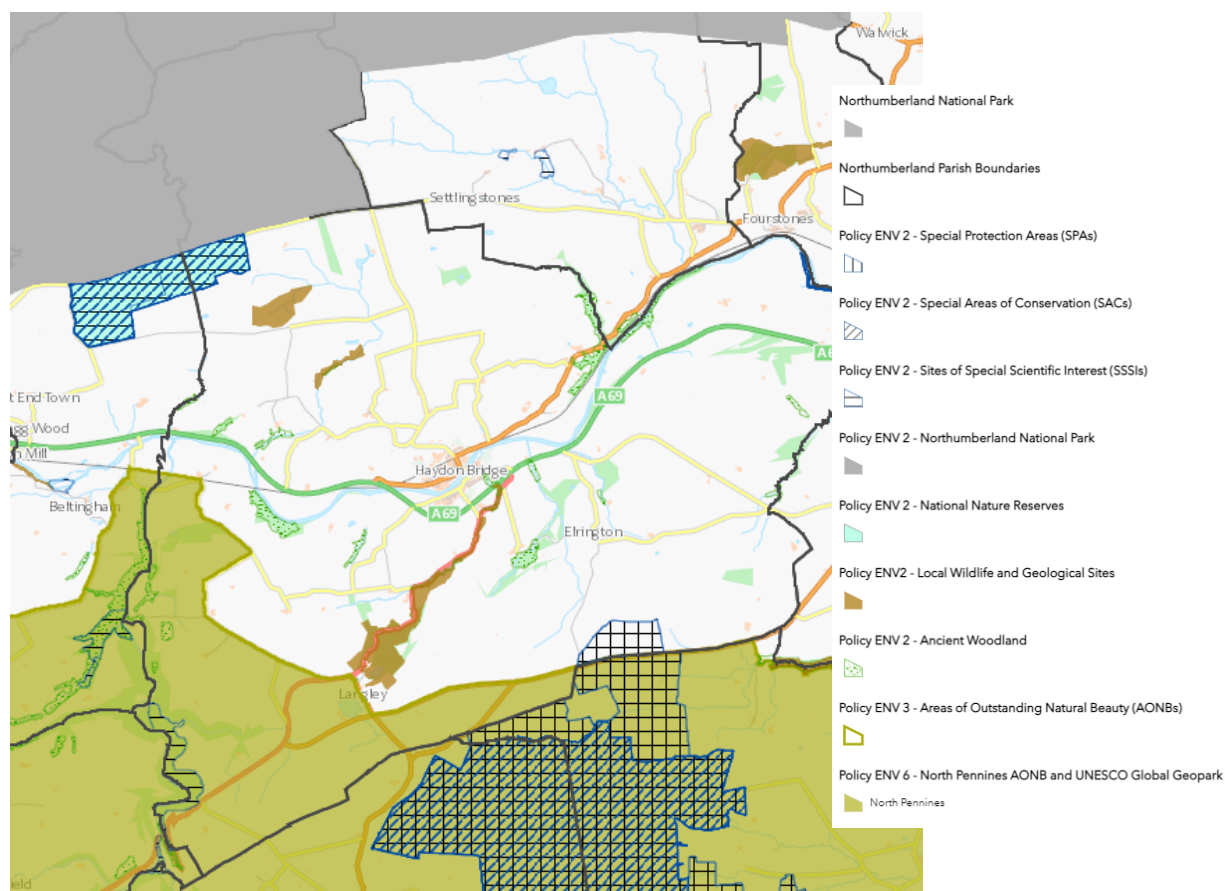


Figure 2: Extract from draft NLP policies map

Summary

2.19 The NPPF emphasises that the planning system should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. In addition, that allocations of land for development should prefer that which is of lesser environmental value. This approach is reflected within both the current and emerging development plan policies.

3. Other strategies and plans

- 3.1 In addition to the strategic planning framework, there are a number of other documents and evidence available to inform the preparation of the natural environment elements of the neighbourhood plan.

National level

Environment Bill (2020)

- 3.2 The Environment Bill was re-introduced into parliament in January 2020, following the general election. It sets out how the government intends to protect and improve the natural environment. The key change for the planning system would be a new duty for developers to deliver ten percent net biodiversity gain in new schemes, this toughens the current requirements in the NPPF.
- 3.3 The bill also obliges councils to produce local nature recovery strategies. The strategies will support better spatial planning for nature recovery by setting out priorities and opportunities for protecting and investing in nature within a local area. The strategies would be supported by a local habitat map which would illustrate existing nature assets and identify key opportunities for enhancement.
- 3.4 It is proposed that a new public body, the office for environmental protection, would be established to regulate the UK's environment after the European Commission ceases to have jurisdiction.

Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services

- 3.5 This strategy was prepared following the Natural Environment White Paper, with the overarching objective to halt biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.
- 3.6 It identified four areas where action is particularly needed:
- A more integrated large-scale approach to conservation on land and at sea;
 - Putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy;
 - Reducing environmental pressures; and
 - Improving our knowledge.

Regional level

Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership

- 3.7 The Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership (NUCLNP) encompasses Northumberland National Park, North Pennines AONB, Yorkshire Dales National Park, Nidderdale AONB and the Forest of Bowland AONB. It also includes the extensive National Nature Reserves of Kielderhead and Whitelee Moor as well as Kielder Forest and Water, and the 'Tyne gap' - a narrow corridor of land - centred on the river Tyne - that separates the uplands of the North Pennines from the Border Moors of Northumberland.
- 3.8 The NUCLMP aims are to:

- Help to create a place where our special natural qualities, including our breeding wading birds, our blanket bogs, our hay meadows, our tumbling rivers and our upland woodlands, are valued for their beauty, and for their contribution to the nation's economic, physical and spiritual well-being; and
- Support a living and working upland landscape, a place where an environment-based economy thrives and where development and growth take place in balance with the conservation of the natural world on which they are reliant.

3.9 The NUCLNP objectives are to:

- Conserve and enhance the natural heritage of the northern uplands, increasing resilience and ensuring these landscapes can meet the challenges of the future;
- Support the economic and social well-being of our upland communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty;
- Promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of these areas, encouraging people to take action for their conservation;
- Value, sustain and promote the benefits that the NUC provides for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being.

Northumberland level

Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (2008)

3.10 The Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) was prepared to enable partners to focus resources and develop local projects in order to conserve and enhance threatened habitats and species across Northumberland. A list of specific action plans makes up the NBAP and cover the following habitats and species:

- Habitats: blanket bog; brownfield land; built environment; calaminarian grassland; coastal heathland; fen, marsh and swamp; gardens and allotments; heather moorland; lowland heathland; lowland meadows and pastures; maritime cliffs and slopes; native woodland; ponds, lakes and reservoirs; recreational and amenity spaces; reedbeds; rivers and streams; rocky shire, reefs and islands; saline lagoons; saltmarsh and mudflat; sand dunes; transport corridors; trees and hedges; upland hay meadows; and whin grassland;
- Species: barn owl; bats; black grouse; coastal birds; common seal; dingy skipper; dormouse; farmland birds; freshwater fish; freshwater pearl mussel; garden birds; great crested newt; grey seal; hedgehog; otter; red squirrel; river jelly lichen; upland waters; violet crystalwort; water rock bristle; water vole; and white clawed crayfish.

Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010) and Northumberland National Park Landscape Character Assessment (2019)

3.11 The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (NLCA) describes the essential landscape characteristics of the county and the national park document does the same for the part of Northumberland that lies within the national park. The plan area lies within the Tyne Gap national character area and falls within four local landscape types (see figure 3).

3.12 Haydon Bridge is located within LCT Glacial Trough Valley Floor, described as the flat floodplain and lower valley slopes above the River Tyne. In landscape character area 31a (Haltwhistle to Newbrough), the valley is predominantly pastoral, with a relatively narrow and

yet well-defined valley floor. Between Haltwhistle and Haydon Bridge the valley floor narrows further, cutting into the bedrock to form a wooded gorge.

- 3.13 Haydon Bridge lies within the narrow, distinctive corridor centred on the River Tyne which separates the North Pennines from the Border Moors and Forests. The landscape is made up of a mosaic of arable and pastureland, conifer plantations, deciduous woodlands along with the more fertile lowland corridor of the river flood plain. The valley sides surrounding Haydon Bridge are composed of mainly pasture or uplands, interspersed with woodland. The northern reaches of the Neighbourhood Plan Area lie within Northumberland National Park and include part of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation also lies within the boundary to the south west.
- 3.14 The assessment identifies that as a result of the existing settlement pattern, the area is under pressure for further development. Therefore, the overall approach should be to manage change while seeking to conserve and enhance character, taking advantage of opportunities offered by new development. The development guidelines identify the need to discourage new built development from extending onto the valley floor and encourage the creation of strong settlement boundaries. Also, that the approach routes, key views and gateways to settlements should be given particular consideration. Furthermore, the creation of open space adjacent to existing settlements presents opportunities to enhance the setting of the town, strengthen distinctiveness and reinstate or reinforce characteristic landscape patterns.
- 3.15 LCT Glacial Trough Valley Sides includes historic estates such as Langley Castle and is described as the valley sides of the glacial trough which carries the Rivers South Tyne and Tyne. In landscape character area 31b (Haltwhistle to Bridge End) the valley sides are characterised by a strong pattern of hawthorn hedges with hedgerow trees and areas of ancient semi-natural woodland in deep gullies which drain the upland to the north. In places the hedgerows are well trimmed and they are sometimes gappy. The land use is pastoral, and valley floor settlements have expanded into this area around Haltwhistle and Haydon Bridge. Pylons cross the landscape and are visually significant.
- 3.16 As with the Glacial Trough Valley Floor LCT, the assessment identifies that the area is under pressure from development and there is a need to strengthen existing characteristics, managing pressures for change. The development guidelines identify that new built development should be discouraged from extending onto the upper valley sides. Similarly, to the Glacial Trough Valley Floor LCT, it offers encouragement of the creation of good settlement boundaries and the importance of open space adjacent to existing settlements. It highlights the new development should not substantially alter the character, scale or form of existing settlements, with all development respecting local vernacular styles and materials.
- 3.17 LCT Upland Commons and Farmland is located above the valley slopes of the Rivers South Tyne and North Tyne, being a transitional landscape to the upland moorland and forest landscapes beyond. Landscape character area 34c (Grindon Common) is described as forming an important setting for the North Tyne valley and for the north side of the South Tyne valley and Hadrian's Wall, which runs through the eastern half of the area. It is an upland relatively flat landscape with a strong geometric pattern of stone walls and notable blocks and belts of mixed woodland plantation. The scale is large and beyond the immediate influence of the plantations it is open and bleak. The drainage pattern is weaker than elsewhere, and there are occasional loughs or dams set within shallow hollows.

- 3.18 To the north lies LCT Parallel Ridges and Commons, showing a marked pattern of elevated ridges and shallow troughs with a strong east-to-west alignment. Its gently rolling, open moorland extends from Greenhead in the west to Wall in the east. Landscape character area 32b (Haltwhistle, Melkridge and Ridley Commons) is defined by the strong geological east-west axis, most dramatic at the Whin Sill. This area lies to the south of the Whin Sill, where a series of stepped terraces supports small pastures divided by stone walls. Throughout this area there are overt signs of Roman occupation associated with Hadrian's Wall including camps and signal stations. Visitor infrastructure and signage is also prominent in parts.

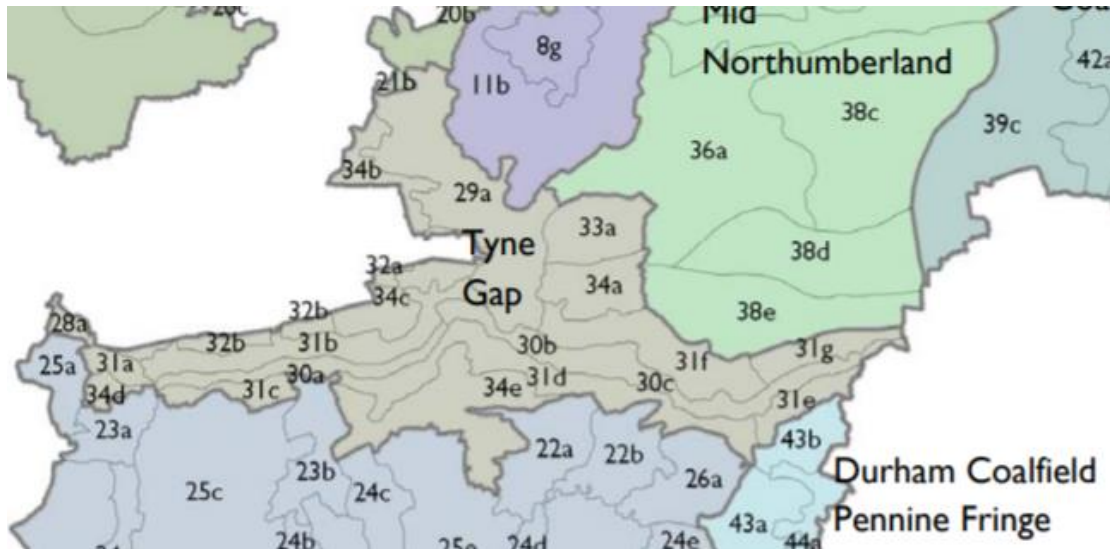


Figure 3: Landscape character types

Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – Level 1 (2010) and Level 2 (2015)

- 3.19 The Northumberland Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) provides a detailed picture of areas susceptible to different types of flooding and identifies risks across the County. It suggests dividing the sequential test into a series of detailed stages, which will be applied when considering future land allocations and for individual proposals.

Northumberland Outline and Detailed Water Cycle Studies (2012 and 2015)

- 3.20 The Northumberland Water Cycle Study examined the capacity for existing water supply and sewerage infrastructure to cope with new development across the county. No specific issues are identified for the plan area.

Local level

North Pennines AONB Management Plan

- 3.21 As part of the plan area lies within the North Pennines AONB, the management plan is a relevant consideration. The management plan describes the special qualities of the area which includes:
- The area is **remote, wild and tranquil** which gives the area much of its character;
 - Its **people and place** – the lead and other mining industries shaped much of the landscape and settlement patterns;
 - The **landscape pattern** – particularly the dry stone walls and the buildings and settlement, which are an integral part of the landscape;
 - The **Tyne, Tees and Wear** rivers which start in the fells;

- **Word renowned geology** which has given rise to dramatic landscape features;
- Native **woods** which are important examples of woodland types and distinctive features of the landscape;
- **Wildlife and habitats** – with a high concentration of nationally and internationally important conservation sites and areas;
- **Land and livelihood** – farming in particular plays an important role in the lives of local communities and in managing the landscape;
- **Exploring** – an area that can be accessed by walking, cycling and horse-riding.

3.22 The management plan also identifies a number of forces for change. These include: wind energy development, communication masts, increasing traffic, changes in agriculture, mineral developments and military uses of the area. There is also the gradual erosion of rural character that accompanied unsympathetic management of roads, out of keeping conversion of traditional buildings and the gradual loss of historic features, as well as the need for the sensitive management of tourism.

Northumberland National Park Management Plan

3.23 As part of the plan area lies within the Northumberland National Park, the management plan is a relevant consideration. The management plan describes the special qualities of the national park which are:

- A **distinctive landscape character** which has been created by its topography, geology and the complex interaction of many different factors;
- A **landscape rich in biodiversity and geology** the park contains many nationally and internationally important habitats and species, with 31% of its area priority habitats;
- A **rich cultural heritage** including Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, the park has an exceptional range of archaeology which provides the evidence of human activity for several millennia. It also has an important cultural legacy; and
- A true sense of **tranquillity** the national park is the most tranquil place in England, with its dark skies contributing greatly to this, it has been designated as an International Dark Sky Park.

3.24 Challenges and opportunities are also described:

- The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre – delivery of substantial economic benefits to the area;
- Woodland and Forestry – sustainable growth and development of the forestry sector without impacting on the special qualities of the national park;
- Recreation, access and tourism – ensuring adequate infrastructure is in place to enable access to areas within the national park by a diverse range of visitors;
- International Dark Sky Park – commitment to reduce light pollution as well as building on the opportunities of the dark sky park status;
- Public sector funding – need to prioritise activities;
- Provision of rural services – lack of broadband and mobile phone coverage.

4. Natural environment designations

- 4.1 This section of the background paper summarises the natural environment designations and other relevant information across the plan area. Mapping has been obtained from the Defra Magic Map¹.

Statutory land based designations

- 4.2 Figure 4 highlights the statutory land based designations which lie within the plan area. This includes: internationally designated sites (North Pennine Moors Special Protection Area (SPA) and Border Mires, Kielder-Butterburn Special Area of Conservation (SAC)); nationally designated sites (Muckle Moss site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR), Stawardpeel Woods SSSI, Roman Wall Escarpments SSSI and Hexhamshire Moors SSSI; and locally designated sites (Gees Wood Local Wildlife Site)

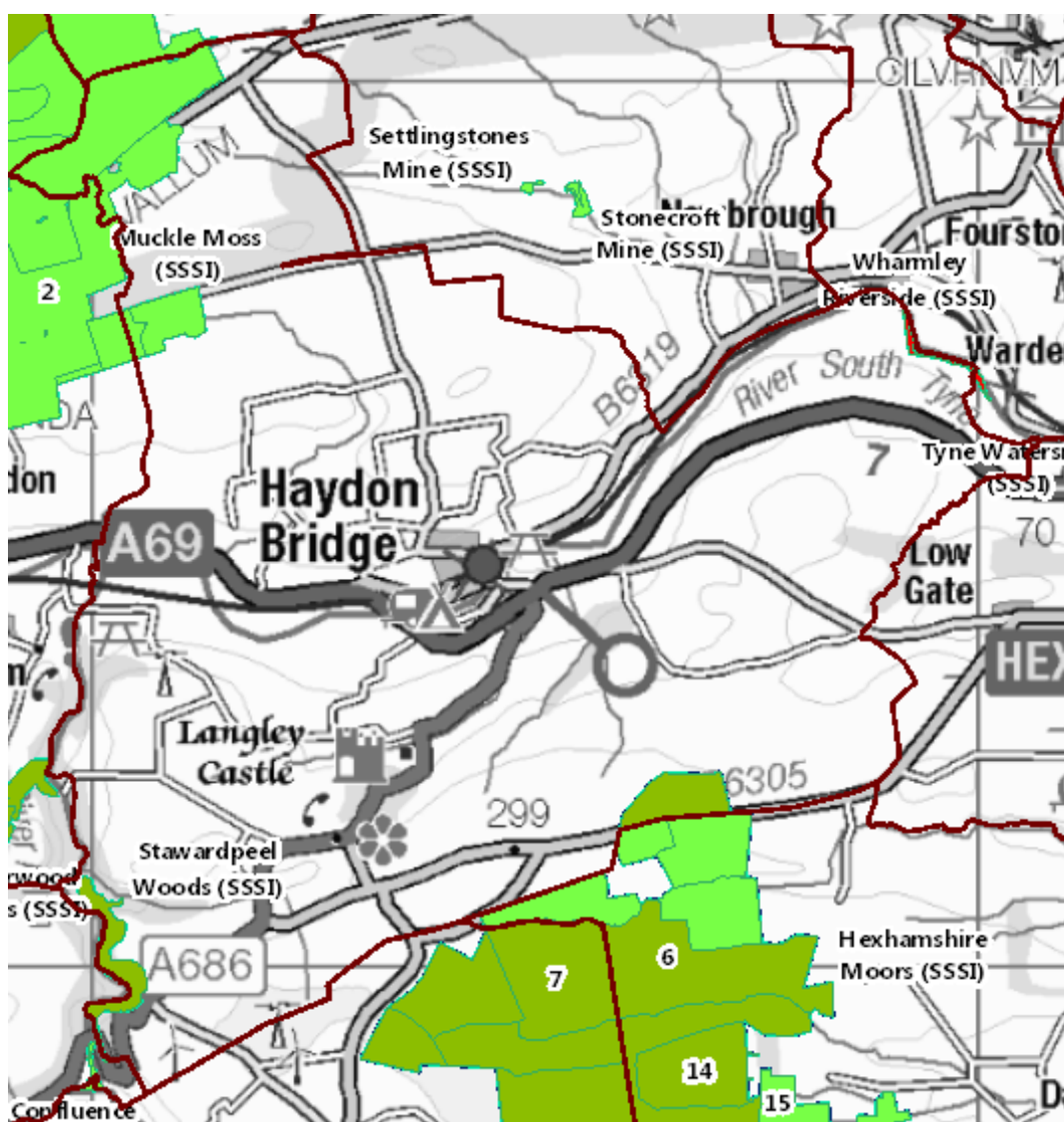


Figure 4: Land based designations

¹ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Habitats

- 4.3 The plan area contains a number of priority habitats as defined by the Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory (North England) (figure 5). These include priority grassland types such as calaminarian grassland – an unusual habitat which forms on nutrient-poor soils with high levels of toxic heavy metals. Calaminarian grassland can form naturally but is generally associated with old mine workings or quarries. It is found in a wide variety of locations, though there is only an estimated 450 hectares of this habitat in the UK. Areas of blanket bog, flushes, fens and swamp occur on the higher ground in the north of the plan area. Notable amongst these is Muckle Moss SSSI - a type of valley mire having very good species diversity and of importance for its species of butterfly.

MAGiC

Haydon Bridge - Priority Habitats

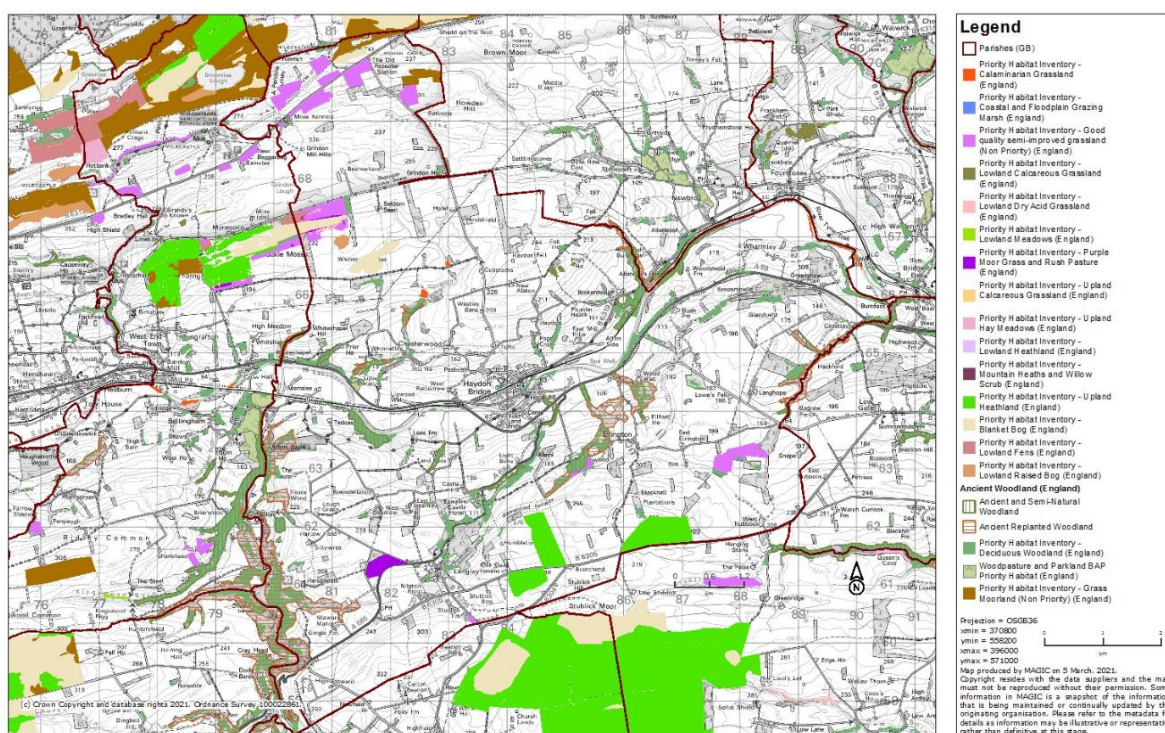


Figure 5: Priority habitats

Woodland

- 4.4 Figure 6 illustrates that the plan area contains areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland and figure 7 identifies the land included on the national forest inventory.

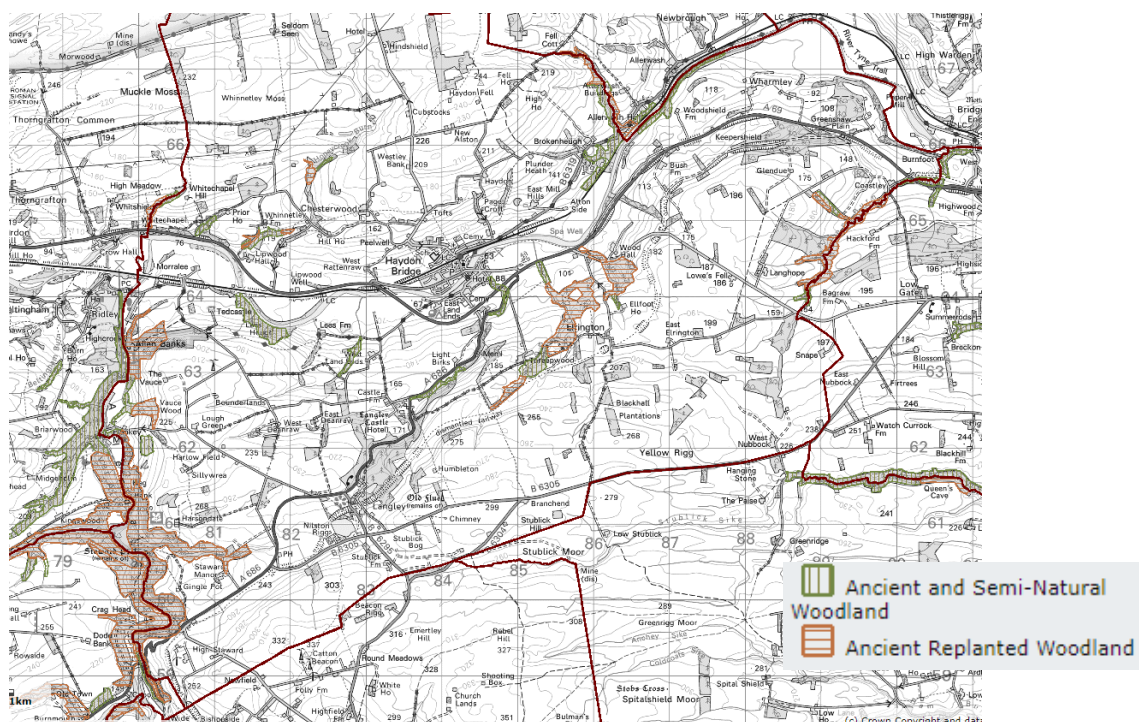
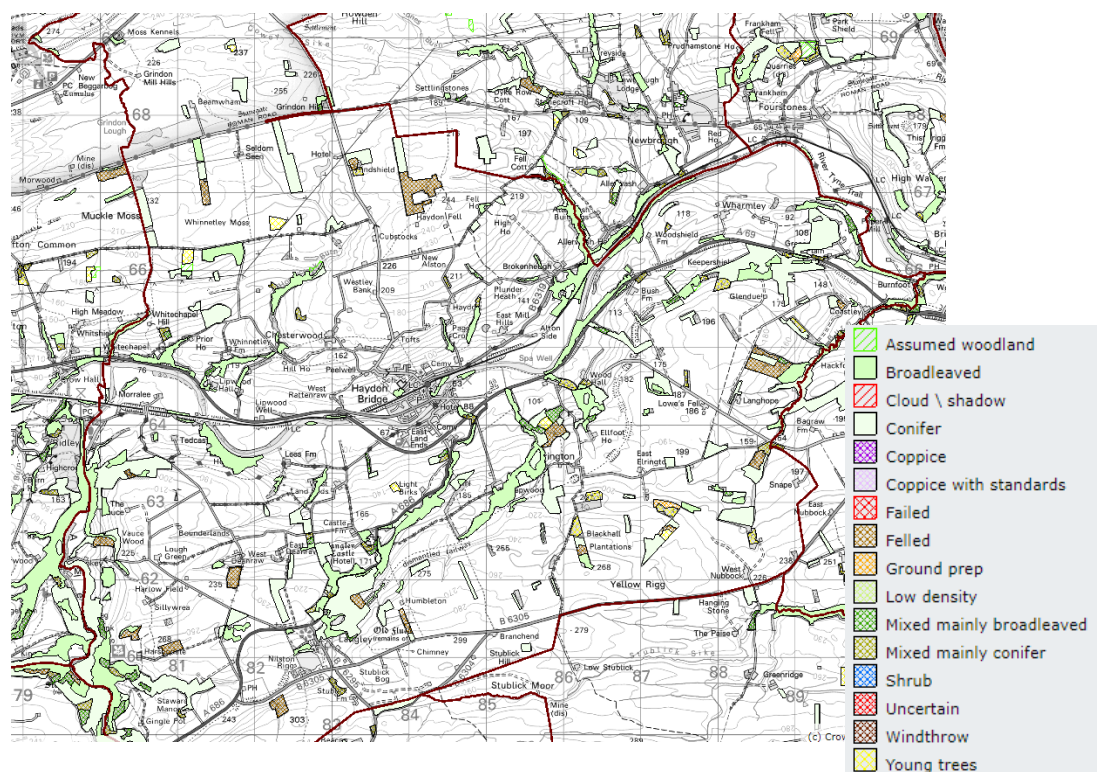


Figure 6: Ancient and semi-natural woodland

Figure 7: National forest inventory



Species

- 4.5 Biodiversity records provided by the Environmental Records Information Centre North East show that an extensive list of protected and notable species (as well as more common species) have been recorded in the plan area. These include mammals such as red squirrel, otter, water vole and bat species. Waterbodies such as Grindon Lough and Langley Dam, provide habitat for a high numbers of water birds, particularly in the winter months. The River South Tyne is important for migratory and non-migratory fish species, supporting Atlantic salmon, migratory and non-migratory trout, European eel and lamprey species. The extensive areas of unimproved pasture provide habitat for birds that rely on these open habitats for breeding. These include a suite of wading bird species, most notably, curlew, which is considered one of the most urgent bird conservation priorities in the UK.
- 4.6 The riverside area, most highly valued by the local community in the household survey, supports a variety of breeding birds species including dipper, goosander, oystercatcher, grey wagtail and kingfisher and a resident population of geese. Birds are a key part of the biodiversity of the built environment of the plan area. Buildings provide nest spaces for both resident and summer visitors, including house sparrows, starlings, house martens and swallows. Most notable is the Haydon Bridge population of breeding swifts, a species whose UK population is in serious decline, largely due to a loss of suitable nest spaces as old buildings are renovated or demolished.

Flooding

- 4.7 As Haydon Bridge is located on the flood plain, it has historically suffered from flooding. Most recently experiencing two major flooding events (2006 and 2015) in the last 15 years and other flooding incidents in years in between. The flooding relates to both fluvial and pluvial flooding. In the 2016 floods, 43 properties (both homes and businesses) were flooded by the River South Tyne and others damaged by surface water flooding – more than 50 properties in all. Figure 8 provides an extract from the Environment Agency Flood Map, with flood zone 3 shown in dark blue and flood zone 2 in light blue. It should be noted that the flood map does not always give a full picture of historic flooding.

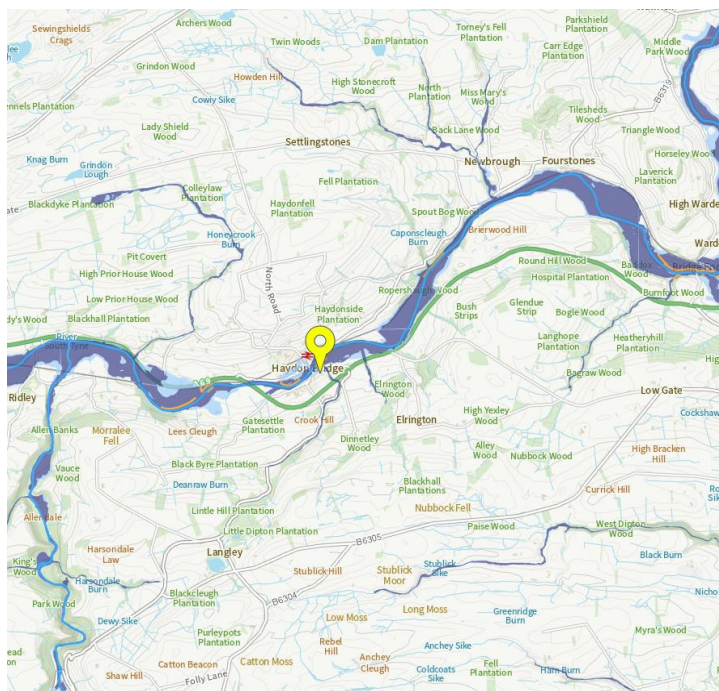
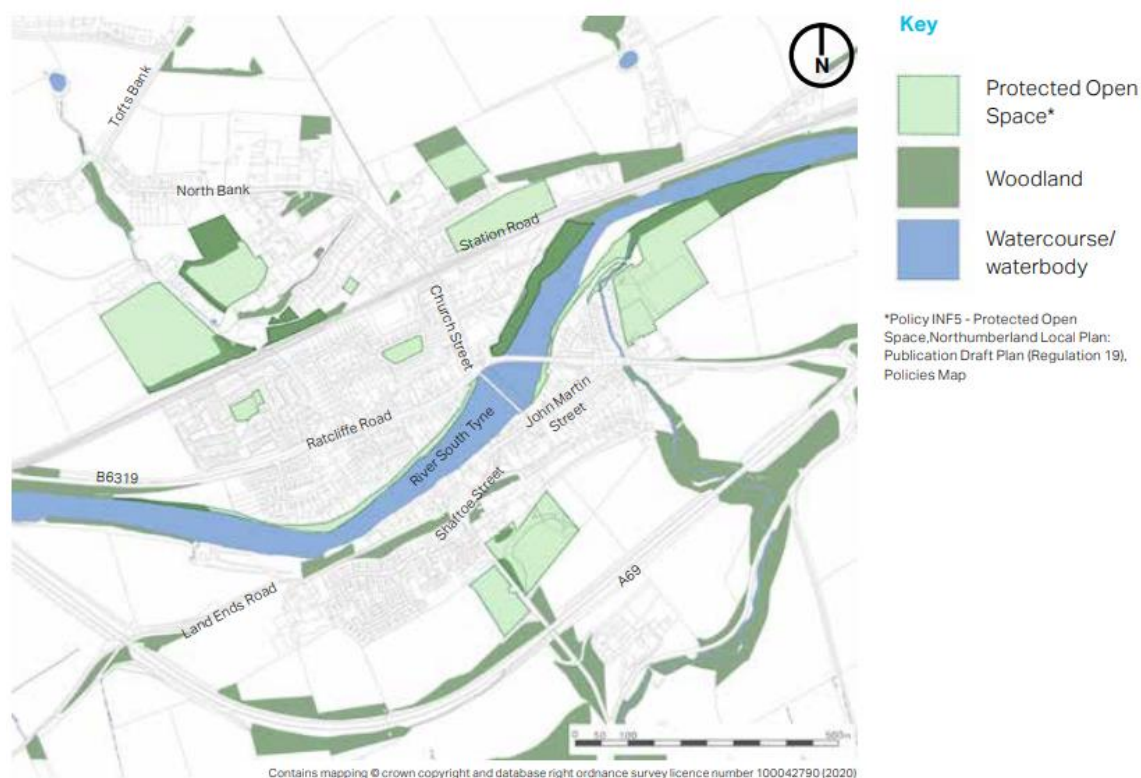


Figure 8: Extract from the Environment Agency Flood Map

Green infrastructure

- 4.8 Green infrastructure encompasses wildlife networks and corridors, open spaces and landscape corridors and linkages to the wider countryside. It can include parks, open spaces, playing fields, wildlife corridors, streams and other water bodies, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens. As part of the work on the design code, the green infrastructure network in Haydon Bridge was mapped (see figure 9). The green infrastructure network within the parish also includes: sites of special scientific interest, local wildlife and geological sites, national nature reserves, ancient woodland, local green space and protected open space.

Figure 9: Existing green infrastructure in Haydon Bridge



5. Feedback

Early engagement – local community

- 5.1 As a means of starting the process of collecting information and opinions to influence the content of the neighbourhood plan, a number of early engagement activities took place between April 2019 and January 2021.
- 5.2 The engagement confirmed that the Neighbourhood Plan area's natural environment is enormously valued by the local community. Lovely countryside and wildlife and green spaces and walks close to the village were amongst the top five reasons that residents valued about living in the parish. The engagement also highlighted the importance of the landscape of the Plan area, particularly the importance of riverside area but also Haresby Lonnen; Tony's Patch and Springwood/Threepwood – all of which provide opportunities to view and enjoy the landscape and the wildlife that it supports.
- 5.3 There was also strong support for other environmental initiatives, including: community tree planting scheme (including help with planting, and gifting/loaning land) and community orchard; small-holdings and habitat creation projects (e.g. wildlife ponds); and enhancing wildlife corridors

6. Planning policy options and preferred policy approach

Background

- 6.1 The strategic policy and evidence review, as well as feedback from early engagement has identified a number of potential planning issues for the neighbourhood plan to seek to address:
- New development and flooding;
 - Protection/ enhancement of the important landscape character of the plan area;
 - Ensuring that new development fully considers biodiversity; and
 - Creation, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure; and
 - Identification of areas of local green space and protected open space (see local green space and protected open space background paper).
- 6.2 This section sets out the potential planning policy options to address the issues identified above and explains the preferred policy approach, which is set out within the pre-submission draft neighbourhood plan.

Potential policy options

Issue 1: New development and flooding

- 6.3 Possible options:
- 1a: Rely on detailed national and local planning policies on flood risk;
 - 1b: Include a policy on flood prevention and alleviation
- 6.4 Both the NPPF and NPPG contain detailed guidance for the consideration of flooding as part of new development proposals. In addition, the draft local plan contains a number of policies on flood risk and water management. Whilst the assessment of flood risk is a detailed technical matter, as a result of the significant flooding events experienced in the parish in 2005 and 2015 and the importance to the local community, the preferred approach is for the plan to include a policy supporting flood prevention and alleviation schemes. The policy should not repeat national and local policy guidance.

Issue 2: Landscape character

- 6.5 Possible options:
- 2a. Utilise county level landscape character information, as well as landscape work undertaken by the national park authority and AONB partnership, to inform a criteria-based policy to ensure that new development conserves and enhances the special landscape characteristics of the plan area;
 - 2b. Commission a local landscape character appraisal to inform a more detailed policy approach to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the plan area;
 - 2c. Identification of particular landscape areas for special consideration for policy development.
- 6.6 As both the county council and the national park authority have detailed studies on landscape character, the preferred policy approach is to use this information, alongside the design code, to inform a locally specific policy on landscape character.

Issue 3: Biodiversity

- 6.7 Possible options:
- 3a. Utilise information available at a national/ county level to inform the preparation of a high-level policy to ensure that new development conserves and enhances the biodiversity value of the plan area;
 - 3b. Option 3a plus specifically highlighting the important biodiversity of the plan area, as well as opportunities and threats;
 - 3c. Option 3b plus identification of local level designations, such as wildlife corridors.
- 6.8 The preferred approach is 3b which builds on the information available at the national and county level, defining the important biodiversity of the plan area within the supporting text and then including a policy to ensure that new development delivers biodiversity net gains.

Issue 4: Green infrastructure

- 6.9 Possible options:
- 3a. High level policy support for the creation, protection and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure;
 - 3b. Option 1b plus identification of green infrastructure.
- 6.10 The preferred approach is option 3b, for the plan to identify the green infrastructure network and seek to ensure that where relevant, new development protects and where practical improves and extends the network. The policy would identify the key criteria to be considered when assessing the impact of development proposals on the green infrastructure network. Given the nature of the plan area, the green infrastructure within Haydon Bridge will be identified on the policies map.

7. Potential community actions

7.1 The work on this background paper has informed the identification of the following community actions:

- Set up community tree planting initiative and community orchard;
- Set up group to undertake regular village enhancement work e.g. planting, weeding, clean up and other improvements;
- Explore the interest and potential for smallholding development to sell produce locally;
- Develop community spaces and habitat creation projects e.g. wildlife ponds and enhancing wildlife corridors; and
- Work with farmers to promote regenerative farming and selling direct to consumers.