

Hexham
Neighbourhood Plan:
Strategic Environmental
Assessment

Scoping Report
Draft for Comment
October 2017

Quality information

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Revision history

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Acronyms

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
DPD	Development Plan Document
EU	European Union
GhG	Greenhouse gas emissions
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
NERC	Natural Environment Research Council
NEWP	Natural Environment White Paper
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
NVZ	Nitrate Vulnerable Zone
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SPZ	Groundwater Source Protection Zone
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable drainage systems
UKCP	UK Climate Projections
WFD	Water Framework Directive

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Hexham Neighbourhood Plan ('The Plan') is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act (2012). It is anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan will be submitted to Northumberland Council in late 2017.

This Neighbourhood Plan, once 'made', will be the Development Plan for Hexham, and will be used to decide whether to approve or refuse planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area. The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to National Planning Policy (contained in the National Planning Policy Framework). It should also be in line with strategic policy in the Northumberland Local Plan. The higher level policy is complex with regards to Northumberland due to a number of factors. In April 2009, following Local Government Reorganisation, the County Authority was established as a Unitary Authority. It replaced the former County Council and six District / Borough Councils of Alnwick, Berwick, Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth, Tynedale and Wansbeck.

Various policies that applied as part of the now disbanded District / Borough Council local plans have been 'saved' under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and remain in force until replaced by subsequent Development Plan Documents adopted by Northumberland Council. These documents, together with any 'made' Neighbourhood Plans, have been brought together to form the 'Northumberland Consolidated Planning Policy Framework', which sets out the relevant planning policy documents for Northumberland.

The policies in this Hexham Neighbourhood Plan will be used by planning officers at the County Council to determine planning applications. It will also be used by planning inspectors, when deciding planning appeals. It will be a part of the statutory development plan for the area, and policies in it will supercede policies in the old Tynedale plans. Where there are matters that are not covered in the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan, these matters will still be determined in line with the existing 'Northumberland Consolidated Planning Policy Framework', and subsequently in the new Northumberland Local Plan, once this is adopted.

The Hexham Neighbourhood Area, designated for the purposes of 61G(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, comprises the Parish of Hexham. The Neighbourhood Plan relates only to this Parish, and to no other Neighbourhood Areas and is the only Neighbourhood Development Plan in the designated area.

The Lead Authority Northumberland Council has determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) needs to be undertaken for the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan. As a result, the Plan steering group has sought technical support, which is available through Locality (in collaboration with AECOM) to help qualifying Neighbourhood Groups to prepare a sound Neighbourhood Plan. Undertaking SEA is one of the support packages offered by Locality and delivered by AECOM.

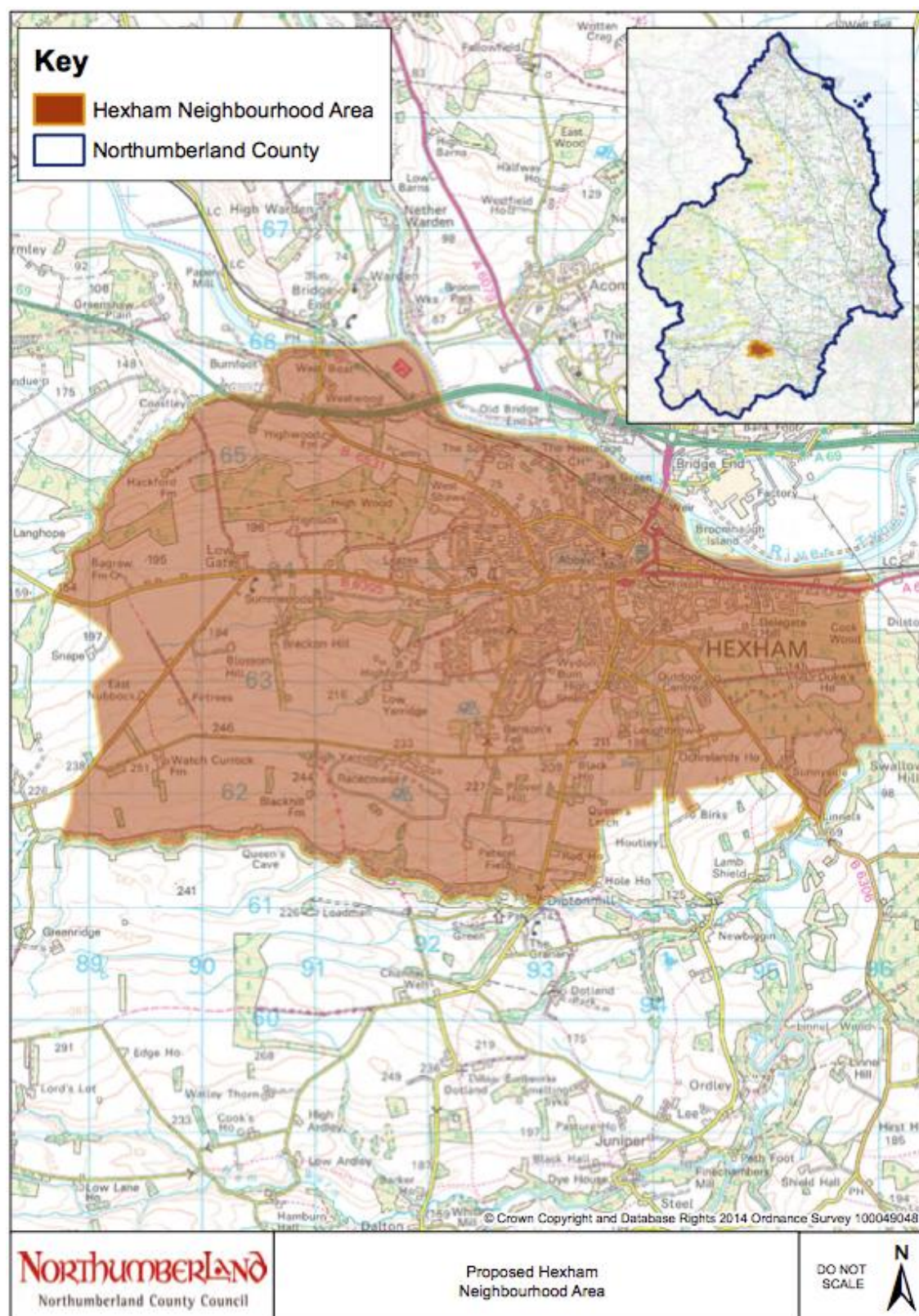
This document is a scoping report, which represents outputs from the early stages of SEA that have been undertaken alongside the emerging Plan. Key information relating to the Neighbourhood Plan is presented in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Key facts relating to the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan

Name of Responsible Authority	Northumberland Council
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Title of Plan	Hexham Neighbourhood Plan
Purpose	The Hexham Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The plan will be in conformity with the Northumberland Local Plan.
Timescale	To 20xx
Area covered by the plan	The Parish of Hexham. (As shown in Figure 1.1)
Summary of content	The Hexham Neighbourhood Plan will set out a vision, strategy and range of policies for the plan area.
Plan contact point	David Clegg Email address: davidclegg615@btinternet.com

Figure 1.1: The Hexham Neighbourhood Plan Area



1.2 Relationship of the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan with the Northumberland Local Plan

Due to the Neighbourhood Area's location within Northumberland, this Plan is being prepared in the context of Northumberland.

The Northumberland Core Strategy was submitted in April 2017, but was subsequently withdrawn. The withdrawal of the Core Strategy should not put a stop to progress on neighbourhood plans. Recent case law makes it clear that a neighbourhood plan can be brought into force ahead of a local plan. Neighbourhood

plans will form part of the development plan for Northumberland, alongside, but not as a replacement for the new Local Plan.

Neighbourhood plans are required to be in conformity with the Local Plan and can develop policies and proposals to address local place-based issues. In this way it is intended for the Local Plan to provide a clear overall strategic direction for development in Northumberland, whilst enabling finer detail to be determined through the neighbourhood planning process where appropriate.

1.3 SEA Explained

The Plan has been screened in by Northumberland County Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group as requiring a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the effects of an emerging plan, and potential alternatives in terms of key environmental issues. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and recommending enhancements.

SEA is undertaken to address the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) which transpose into national law the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive¹. The Plan has been determined to require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. To meet this requirement, the Plan is undergoing an SEA process which incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive.

Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Directive are that:

- 1) A report (the 'Environmental Report') is published for consultation alongside the Draft Plan that presents an appraisal of the Draft Plan (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives; and
- 2) When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the Environmental Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues.

This 'Scoping Report' is concerned with (2) above. It presents a suggested scope for the SEA so that the nationally designated authorities (which, in England, are Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency) can provide timely comment.

1.4 SEA 'scoping' explained

Establishing the scope of the SEA presented in this report has involved the following steps:

- 1) Exploring the environmental context for the SEA, i.e. reviewing high level messages (e.g. from government departments and agencies in particular) with a view to gaining an understanding of broadly what the SEA needs to focus on.
- 2) Establishing the baseline for the SEA, i.e. the current and projected baseline in the area in the absence of the Plan, in order to help identify the plan's likely significant effects.
- 3) Identifying particular problems or opportunities ('issues') that should be a particular focus of the SEA (and those which should not)
- 4) Developing a SEA Framework comprising objectives and appraisal questions on the basis of these issues which can then be used to appraise the draft plan.

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC

1.5 Structure of this report

The outcomes of the scoping exercise (introduced through steps 1–4 above) have been presented under a series of broad environmental themes, as follows:

- Air quality
- Biodiversity
- Climatic factors (including flood risk)
- Historic environment and landscape
- Land, soil and water resources
- Population and community
- Health and wellbeing
- Transportation

The selected environmental themes incorporate the ‘SEA topics’ suggested by Annex I(f) of the SEA Directive². These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of plan effects (drawing from the screening opinion and local knowledge).

It is intended that presentation of the scoping information under these SEA topics will enable the reader to easily locate the information of greatest interest to them.

Each SEA topic is given a chapter in this report (Chapters 2 to 9) setting out the following:

- The policy context
- Baseline summary
- Key headline issues
- Scoping outcome

To demonstrate a clear trail of how the SEA objectives have been identified each SEA topic Chapter (which is scoped into the SEA) concludes with suggested objectives and supporting criteria for inclusion in the SA Framework.

Chapter 10 then sets out the proposed SEA Appraisal Framework, which draws upon the key issues identified within Chapters 2-9.

² The SEA Directive is 'of a procedural nature' (para 9 of the Directive preamble) and does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on 'the environment, **including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors**' [our emphasis]

2 Air Quality

Focus of theme:

- Sources of air pollution
- Air quality hotspots

2.1 Policy context

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- 'Planning policies should sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas is consistent with the local air quality action plan'.
- New and existing developments should be prevented from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution.

In terms of the local context, Northumberland County Council is required to monitor air quality across the County, report regularly to Defra and take action where nationally set levels are likely to be exceeded. Monitoring is undertaken to assess levels of nitrogen dioxide, Sulphur dioxide, ozone, benzene and particulates. Where exceedances exist, areas are declared as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and local authorities are required to produce an Action Plan to improve air quality in the area.

2.2 Baseline summary

Summary of current baseline

Air quality is generally good, with no significant issues identified. No locations in the Neighbourhood Area are at risk of exceedances of air pollutant levels, and the most recent Local Air Quality Management Report (2014 data) stated that the national air quality objectives have been met for annual means and hourly exceedance for particulates (PM₁₀) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).

Summary of future baseline

Whilst no significant air quality issues currently exist in the Neighbourhood Area, continued new housing and employment provision in the Neighbourhood Area has the potential to create adverse effects on air quality through increasing traffic flows and associated levels of pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide. Any increases may however be offset in part by factors such as measures implemented through the Local Transport Plan to encourage modal shift from the private car and the improved fuel economy and efficiency of vehicles.

2.3 Key headline issues

- There are no Air Quality Management Areas or Air Quality Action Plans within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- There is likely to be continued reliance on the car to access services, jobs and facilities.

2.4 Scoping outcome

The Neighbourhood Plan is intending to allocate housing sites, and these are likely to generate more trips by car than would be the case in the absence of the Plan, and associated levels of pollutants such as NO₂. The most sensitive area is likely to be the town centre which may experience congestion. However, there are no AQMAs in either the NPA or in the wider county at present, and the scale of development is such that any effects are not likely to be significant. No employment sites are being promoted through the Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, the potential to generate increased particulates and nitrogen dioxide from car travel is limited.

Combined with the absence of general or point specific air quality issues in the Plan area or adjoining parishes, air quality has been **SCOPED OUT** of this SEA. This means that the plan will not be assessed for its performance against air quality objectives (given that no issues or opportunities are expected to arise through the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan).

3 Biodiversity

Focus of theme:

- Nature conservation designations
- Habitats and species
- Geodiversity

3.1 Policy context

At the European level, the EU Biodiversity Strategy³ was adopted in May 2011 in order to deliver an established new Europe-wide target to *'halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020'*.

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity by minimising impacts and achieving net gains in biodiversity wherever possible.
- Promote the 'preservation, restoration and recreation of priority habitats, ecological networks' and the 'protection and recovery of priority species'. Plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries.
- Set criteria based policies for the protection of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites, giving weight to their importance not just individually but as a part of a wider ecological network.
- Take account of the effects of climate change in the long term. Adopt proactive strategies to adaptation and manage risks through adaptation measures including green infrastructure (i.e. 'a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities').
- Plan positively planning for 'green infrastructure' as part of planning for 'ecological networks'.
- High quality open spaces should be protected or their loss mitigated, unless a lack of need is established.

The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)⁴ sets out the importance of a healthy, functioning natural environment to sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal well-being. It was in part a response to the UK's failure to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity by 2010 and it signaled a move away from the traditional approach of protecting biodiversity in nature reserves to adopting a landscape approach to protecting and enhancing biodiversity. The NEWP also aims to create a green economy in which economic growth and the health of our natural resources sustain each other and markets, business and Government better reflect the value of nature. It includes commitments to:

- Halt biodiversity loss, support functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks by 2020;
- Establish a new voluntary approach to biodiversity offsetting to be tested in pilot areas;
- Enable partnerships of local authorities, local communities and landowners, the private sector and conservation organisations to establish new Nature Improvement Areas; and

³ European Commission (2011) Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 [online] available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/2020/1_EN_ACT_part1_v7%5b1%5d.pdf

⁴ Defra (2012) The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (Natural Environment White Paper) [online] available at: <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf>

- Address barriers to using green infrastructure to promote sustainable growth.

The Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (2008) identified some specific issues and measures relevant for Hexham:

- Improve access for fish migration at obstructions, specifically at Hexham weir.

3.2 Baseline summary

Hexham

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

The north of the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan Area includes part of the Tyne Watersmeet SSSI. Watersmeet is where the rivers North and South Tyne meet. This area is home to a number of diverse habitats of particular interest for invertebrate fauna and varied flora. At the time of the last survey in 2010, the SSSI was classed as being in 'favourable' condition.

There is also another SSSI less than 2km away from the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan Area named Hexhamshire Moors. This site is located within the North Pennines Area of Natural Beauty. The importance of the bird assemblage of Hexhamshire Moors is recognized by the EU Council Directive on the conservation of wild birds.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Neighbourhood Plan Area borders the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The North Pennines is an unspoilt landscape with a rich history and vibrant natural beauty. The North Pennines is the second largest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England at 1983km² it is situated between the Yorkshire Dales and Northumberland National Parks. The North Pennines are home to waterfalls, moorland views, dales, stonewalls and stone built villages.

Special Areas of Conservation

The Hexham Neighbourhood Plan Area is within 2km of North Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The site is made up of Bogs, Marshes, Water fringed vegetation, Fens (41%), Heath, Scrub, Maquis and Garrigue, Phygrana (32%), Dry Grassland, Steppes (26.5%) and Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (0.5%). In addition the plan area is in close proximity to the Tyne and Allen River Gravels SAC. This is classified primarily because of the presence of structurally varied and species rich riverine Calaminarian grasslands.

Special Protected Areas

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is within 2km of the North Pennine Moors Special Protected Area.

Priority Habitats

The Neighbourhood Plan area contains Priority Habitat areas of Deciduous woodland, Ancient Woodland, Woodpasture and Parkland, and Calaminarian Grassland.

Protected Species

There are likely to be numerous protected species present in the Neighbourhood Area, including those that have European protection, species on the NERC Act (2006) Section 41, and those listed through the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

These include species such as the Black Grouse, Curlew, Lapwing, Grey Partridge, and the Yellow Wagtail.

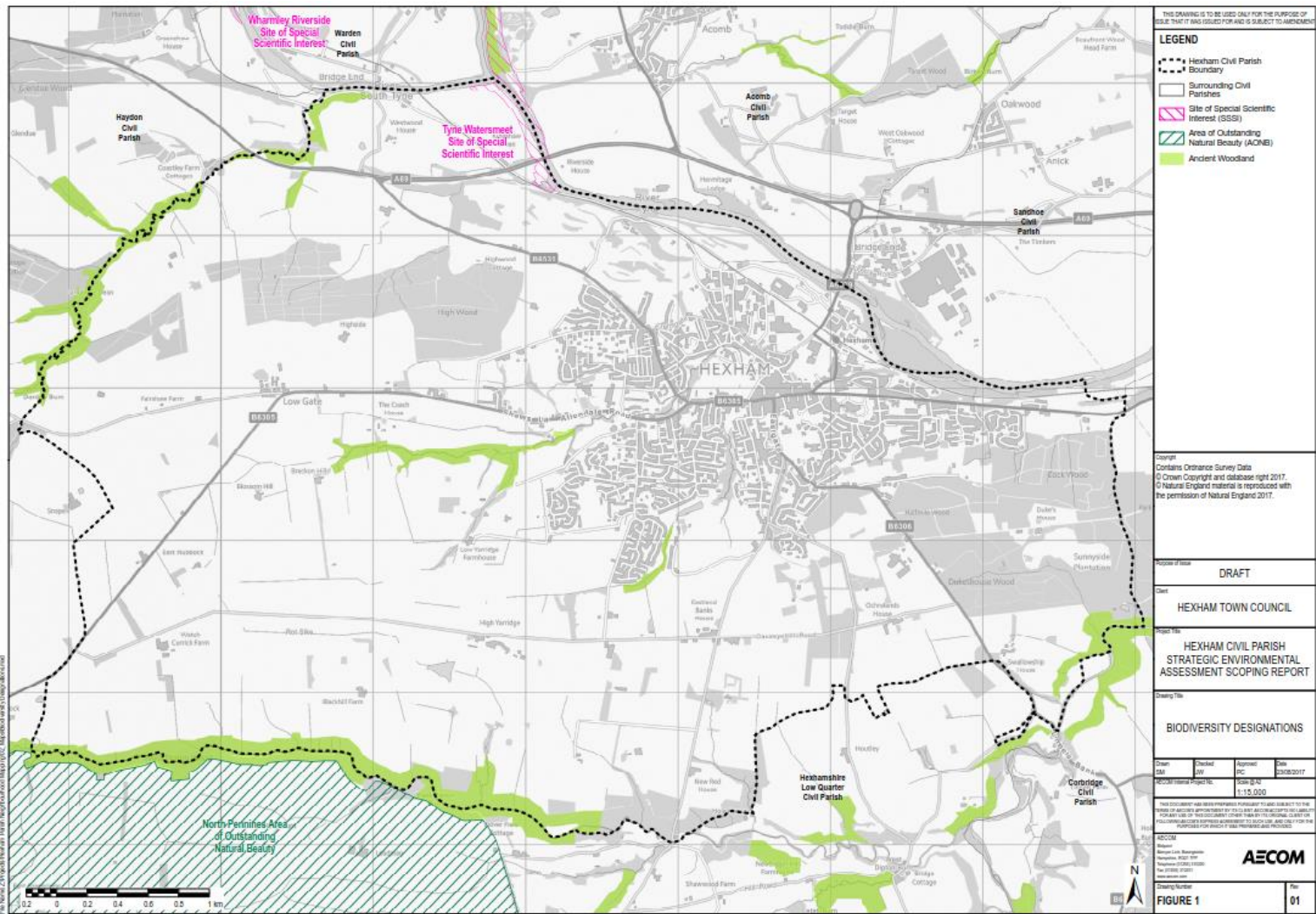
Summary of future baseline

Habitats and species have the potential to come under increasing pressures from housing and employment land development in the Neighbourhood Area.

Climate change also has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition and character of habitats.

Benefits for biodiversity have the potential to arise from the increasing integration of biodiversity considerations within forward planning and efforts to improve green infrastructure networks locally and sub-regionally.

Figure 3.1: Map of Hexham Biodiversity Designations



3.3 Key headline issues

- Nationally designated nature conservation sites are present in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- Watersmeet SSSI is within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.
- The Neighbourhood Plan Area borders the North Pennines AONB
- The Hexham Neighbourhood Plan Area is in close proximity to the internationally designated Tyne and Allen River Gravels Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and within 2km North Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is also classed as a Special Protection Area (SPA).
- The Neighbourhood Plan area contains Priority Habitat areas of Deciduous woodland, Ancient Woodland, Woodpasture and Parkland, and Calaminarian Grassland.
- There are a number of priority species identified within the River Tyne

3.4 Scoping outcome

The SEA topic 'Biodiversity has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA. Although significant effects are not anticipated due to the proposed level of housing, there is potential for localised effects at sites that could be identified for development. It will be important to ensure that species do not rely upon or make use of habitats outside of designated habitat areas. There may also be opportunities to enhance ecological networks.

3.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Biodiversity SEA theme?

The SEA topic 'biodiversity' has been scoped in to the SEA. Table 3.1 presents the SEA objective and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the Neighbourhood Plan in relation to this theme.

Table 3.1: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Biodiversity

Protect and enhance the function and connectivity of biodiversity habitats and species.	Will the option/proposal help to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support connections between habitats in the Plan area? • Support continued improvements to the designated sites in the Plan area? • Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?

4 Climatic Factors

Focus of theme:

- Greenhouse gas emissions by source
- Greenhouse gas emissions trends
- Effects of climate change
- Climate change adaptation
- Flood risk

4.1 Policy context

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published on a 5-yearly cycle in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. It required the Government to compile an assessment of the risks for the UK arising from climate change, and then to develop an adaptation programme to address those risks and deliver resilience to climate change on the ground. For both the 2012 and the 2017 UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Adaptation Sub-Committee commissioned an evidence report to achieve the following:

‘Based on the latest understanding of current, and future, climate risks and opportunities, vulnerability and adaptation, what should the priorities be for the next UK National Adaptation Programme?’⁵

The evidence report contains six priority risk areas requiring additional action in the next five years, as follows:

1. Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses and infrastructure;
2. Risks to health, well-being and productivity from high temperatures;
3. Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry;
4. Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils and biodiversity;
5. Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
6. New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants and animals

The UK Climate Change Act⁶ was passed in 2008 and established a framework to develop an economically credible emissions reduction path. It also highlighted the role it would take in contributing to collective action to tackle climate change under the Kyoto Protocol, and more recently as part of the UN-led Paris Agreement.

The Climate Change Act includes the following:

- **2050 Target.** The Act commits the UK to reducing emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels.
- **Carbon Budgets.** The Act requires the Government to set legally binding ‘carbon budgets’. A carbon budget is a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period. The carbon budgets are designed to reflect the cost-effective path to achieving the UK’s long-term objectives. The first five carbon budgets have been put into legislation and run up to 2032.
- **The Committee on Climate Change** was set up to advise the Government on emissions targets, and report to Parliament on progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

⁵ GOV UK ‘UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report January 2017 (Online) available to download from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017> last accessed 24/07/17.

⁶ GOV UK (2008) Climate Change Act 2008, online, accessible via <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents> last accessed 24/07/17

- The National Adaptation Programme requires the Government to assess the risks to the UK from climate change, prepare a strategy to address them, and encourage key organisations to do the same. For more detail, visit the UK adaptation policy page.⁷

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework include the following:

- Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate as a 'core planning principle'.
- There is a key role for planning in securing radical reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, including in terms of meeting the targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008⁸. Specifically, planning policy should support the move to a low carbon future through:
 - Planning for new development in locations and ways which reduce GHG emissions;
 - Actively supporting energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings;
 - Setting local requirements for building's sustainability in a way that is consistent with the Government's zero carbon buildings policy;
 - Positively promoting renewable energy technologies and considering identifying suitable areas for their construction; and
 - Encouraging those transport solutions that support reductions in GHG emissions and reduce congestion.
- Direct development away from areas highest at risk of flooding, with development 'not to be allocated if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding'. Where development is necessary, it should be made safe without increasing levels of flood risk elsewhere.
- Take account of the effects of climate change in the long term, taking into account a range of factors including flooding. Adopt proactive strategies to adaptation and manage risks through adaptation measures including well planned green infrastructure.

The Flood and Water Management Act ⁹ highlights that alternatives to traditional engineering approaches to flood risk management include:

- Incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings, and retro-fitting properties at risk (including historic buildings);
- Utilising the environment in order to reduce flooding, for example through the management of land to reduce runoff and through harnessing the ability of wetlands to store water;
- Identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage to reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere;
- Planning to roll back development in coastal areas to avoid damage from flooding or coastal erosion; and
- Creating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)¹⁰

Further guidance is provided in the document 'Planning for SuDS'¹¹. This report calls for greater recognition of the multiple benefits that water management can present. It suggests that successful SuDS are capable of 'contributing to local quality of life and green infrastructure'.

The most recent Climate Change Action Plan for Northumberland was published in 2008. This included two specific actions for Spatial Planning;

- provide an appropriate input from a climate change perspective on all relevant plans, strategies and policies;

⁷ Committee on Climate Change (2017) UK Adaptation Policy (online) accessible via <https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-adaptation-policy/> last accessed 24/07/17

⁸ The Climate Change Act 2008 sets targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions through action in the UK of at least 80% by 2050, and reductions in CO2 emissions of at least 26% by 2020, against a 1990 baseline.

⁹ Flood and Water Management Act (2010) [online] available at: <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents>> last accessed [24/07/17]

¹⁰ N.B. The provision of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 came into force on the 1st of October 2012 and makes it mandatory for any development in England or Wales to incorporate SuDS.

¹¹ CIRIA (2010) 'Planning for SuDS – making it happen' [online] available to access via <http://www.ciria.org/Resources/Free_publications/Planning_for_SuDS_ma.aspx> last accessed [04/02/17]

- maximise opportunities through the planning system to strengthen ecological networks , to promote the conservation and restoration of habitats which are carbon stores or sinks and to facilitate natural processes.

4.2 Baseline summary

Summary of current baseline

In relation to Greenhouse Gas emissions, source data from the Department of Energy and Climate Change suggests that Northumberland has had consistently lower per capita emissions total than that of the North East of England since 2005; although until 2012 the area had been consistently higher than England as a whole. Additionally, Northumberland has observed a greater percentage decrease in emissions per capita between 2005 and 2012 (37%) compared to the North East (22%) and England (18.7%). See Table 4.1 for more details.

Table 4.1 Carbon dioxide emissions and sources, plus emissions per capita 2005-2012

	Industrial and Commercial (t CO ₂)	Domestic (t CO ₂)	Transport (tCO ₂)	(t CO ₂)
Northumberland				
2005	13.7	2.9	2.2	18.8
2006	13.7	2.9	2.1	18.7
2007	13.4	2.8	2.2	18.3
2008	13.5	2.7	2.0	18.2
2009	11.8	2.5	1.9	16.2
2010	12.5	2.7	1.9	17.1
2011	12.5	2.3	1.9	16.8
2012	9.5	2.6	1.9	13.9
North East				
2005	9.0	2.6	1.9	13.5
2006	8.7	2.6	1.9	13.2
2007	8.7	2.5	1.9	13.1
2008	8.3	2.4	1.8	12.6
2009	6.9	2.2	1.7	10.9
2010	5.8	2.4	1.7	9.9
2011	5.2	2.0	1.7	8.9
2012	6.7	2.3	1.7	10.6
England				
2005	3.0	2.5	1.7	7.2
2006	3.0	2.5	1.7	7.2
2007	2.8	2.4	1.7	6.9
2008	2.7	2.4	1.6	6.7
2009	2.4	2.2	1.5	6.1

	Industrial and Commercial (t CO ₂)	Domestic (t CO ₂)	Transport (tCO ₂)	(t CO ₂)
2010	2.5	2.3	1.5	6.3
2011	2.3	2.0	1.5	5.7
2012	2.4	2.2	1.4	6.0

Potential effects of climate change

The outcome of research on the probable effects of climate change in the UK was released in 2009 by the UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) team¹². UKCP09 gives climate information for the UK up to the end of this century and projections of future changes to the climate are provided, based on simulations from climate models. Projections are broken down to a regional level across the UK and are shown in probabilistic form, which illustrate the potential range of changes and the level of confidence in each prediction.

As highlighted by the research, the effects of climate change for the North East of England by 2050 for a medium emissions scenario¹³ are likely to be as follows:

- The central estimate of increase in winter mean temperature is 2°C and an increase in summer mean temperature of 2.5°C; and
- The central estimate of change in winter mean precipitation is 11% and summer mean precipitation is –15%.

Resulting from these changes, a range of risks may exist for the Neighbourhood Plan area. These include:

- Effects on water resources from climate change;
- Reduction in availability of groundwater for abstraction;
- Adverse effect on water quality from low stream levels and turbulent stream flow after heavy rain;
- Increased risk of flooding, including increased vulnerability to 1:100 year floods;
- A need to increase the capacity of wastewater treatment plants and sewers;
- A need to upgrade flood defences;
- Soil erosion due to flash flooding;
- Loss of species that are at the edge of their southerly distribution;
- Spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution;
- Increased demand for air-conditioning;
- Increased drought and flood related problems such as soil shrinkages and subsidence;
- Risk of road surfaces melting more frequently due to increased temperature; and
- Flooding of roads.

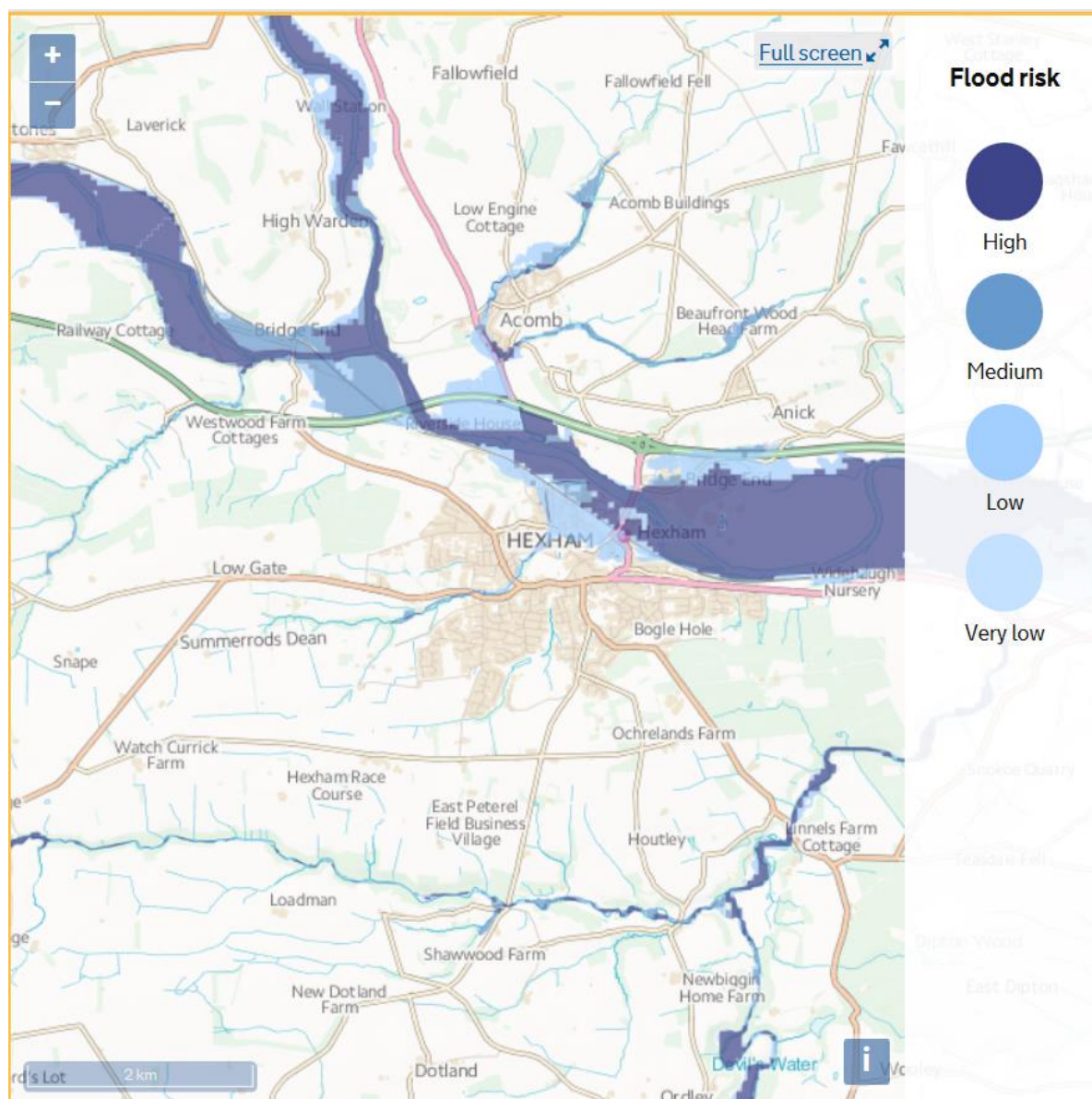
Flood risk

Figure 4.1: Fluvial flood risk in Hexham ¹⁴

¹² The data was released on 18th June 2009: See: <http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk/> last accessed [04/02/17]

¹³ UK Climate Projections (2009) North West 2050s Medium Emissions Scenario [online] available at: <http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk/23847?emission=medium> > last accessed [24/07/17]

¹⁴ GOV UK (2017): 'Long term flood risk assessment for locations in England', [online] available to access from <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk/map> last accessed 24/07/17



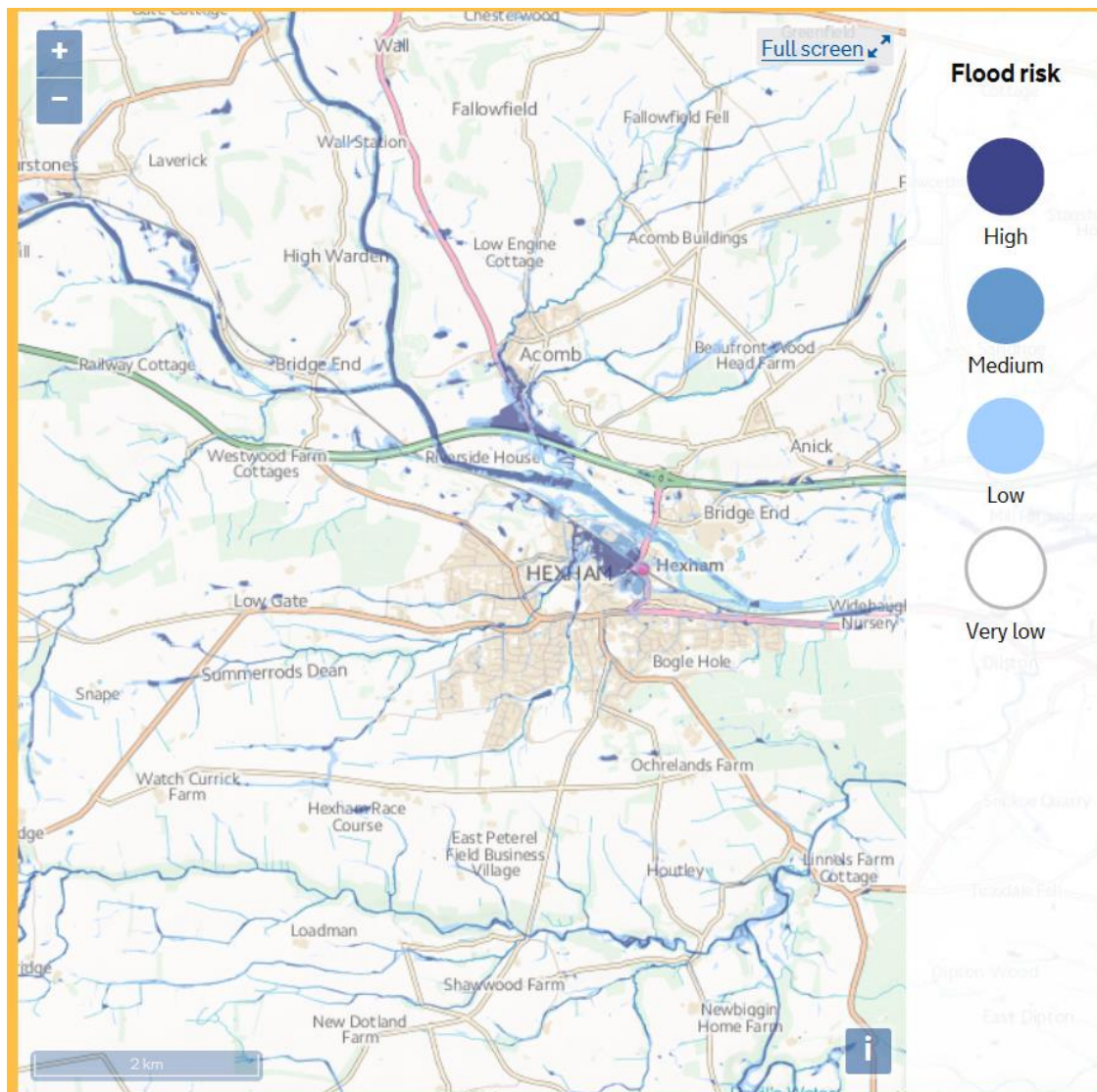
The main areas of concern in the plan area are to the north and east; as parts of these areas are located in Flood Zone 3₁₅ (high risk of fluvial flooding), meaning that the land is classified as having a 1% or greater (1 in 100 chance) of being affected by fluvial flooding in any given year.

Additionally, surface water drainage and sewer flooding is also a risk for some parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area, as highlighted in Figure 4.2. A significant area of land to the north west of the railway station is considered to be at high risk of surface water flooding, with smaller pockets of high risk areas occurring elsewhere in the plan area.

Critical Drainage Areas (CDAs) are defined as areas within Flood Zone 1 which have critical drainage problems, and which have been notified to the Local Authority by the Environment Agency. Northumberland County Council is currently reviewing their flood risk evidence base for the Local Plan, and therefore there are no CDAs designated within the Neighbourhood Plan area, although this could change as a result of new information through the updated evidence base.

Figure 4.2 – Surface Water flood risk in Hexham

¹⁵ GOV.UK (2017): 'Flood Map for Planning', [online] available to access via: <<https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>> last accessed [24/07/17]



Summary of future baseline

Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the Hexham Neighbourhood Area, with increases in mean summer and winter temperatures, increases in mean precipitation in winter and decreases in mean precipitation in summer. This is likely to increase the risks associated with climate change (including fluvial flooding) with an increased need for resilience and adaptation. An anti-flood measure is planned and about to be constructed at Tyne Green.

In terms of climate change mitigation, per capita emissions are assumed likely to continue to decrease as energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies become more widely adopted. However increases in the built footprint of the Neighbourhood Area may lead to increases in overall emissions.

4.3 Key headline issues

- Mitigation of and adaptation to climate change are national and local priorities that the Plan should seek to contribute towards.
- There are areas within the Plan area at risk of fluvial flooding and surface water flooding.

4.4 Scoping outcome

The SEA Topic 'Climatic Factors' has been **SCOPED-IN** to the SEA as climate change is an important national and local priority. Although the influence of the Plan may be limited, there is the potential to explore how resilience to climate change can be enhanced as well as contributing towards climate change mitigation.

4.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Climatic Factors SEA theme?

The SEA topic 'climatic factors' has been 'scoped-in' to this SEA and will therefore be a focus of the appraisal framework. **Table 4.2** presents the SEA objectives and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan in relation to this theme. The questions are focused on those issues that the Plan has the potential to influence. Certain issues will be dealt with by the Local Plan and / or is out of the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore not appropriate to include appraisal criteria that cover these elements.

Table 4.2 SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Climatic Factors

Contribute to climate change mitigation	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote high quality design? Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? Reduce the need to travel?
Support the resilience of Hexham to the potential effects of climate change	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? Sustainably manage surface water run-off, ensuring that the risk of flooding is not increased (either within the plan area or downstream) and where possible reduce flood risk? Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the plan area? Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the plan area to the effects of climate change?

5 Landscape and Historic Environment

Focus of theme:

- Landscape and townscape character and quality
- Designated and non-designated sites, areas and features
- The setting of cultural heritage assets
- Archaeological assets

5.1 Policy context

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Protect and enhance valued landscapes, giving particular weight to those identified as being of national importance.
- Heritage assets should be recognised as an ‘irreplaceable resource’ that should be conserved in a ‘manner appropriate to their significance’, taking account of ‘the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits’ of conservation, whilst also recognising the positive contribution new development can make to local character and distinctiveness.
- Set out a ‘positive strategy’ for the ‘conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment’, including those heritage assets that are most at risk.
- Develop ‘robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics’.
- Consider the effects of climate change in the long term, including in terms of landscape. Adopt ‘proactive strategies’ to adaptation and manage risks through adaptation measures including well planned green infrastructure.

The Government’s Statement on the Historic Environment for England¹⁶ sets out its vision for the historic environment. It calls for those who have the power to shape the historic environment to recognise its value and to manage it in an intelligent manner in light of the contribution that it can make to social, economic and cultural life.

The Hexham Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009) states that Hexham’s elevated position on a glacial terrace overlooking the Tyne valley is of immense visual importance, and the town itself is of great historic and architectural importance. The Abbey and Sele introduce expansive and contrasting open spaces into the town centre.

The Northumberland Historic Environment Record provides information on the local historic environment including non-designated assets.

¹⁶ HM Government (2010) The Government’s Statement on the Historic Environment for England [online] available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6763.aspx

5.2 Baseline summary

Summary of current baseline

Landscape

National Character Areas (NCAs) are landscape areas which share similar characteristics, following natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries. Developed by Natural England, NCA profiles describe the natural and cultural features that shape each of these landscapes, providing a broad context to its character. The Neighbourhood Plan area straddles two NCAs. The majority of the NP area is located within NCA 11 'Tyne Gap and Hadrian's Wall, which is described as a narrow, distinctive corridor centred on the River Tyne which separates the uplands of the North Pennines from the Border Moors and Forests NCA¹⁷. In the south of the NP area, the land is within NCA 10 the 'North Pennines', which is described as having a distinct identity, with its remote upland moorlands divided by quiet dales, and is characterized by a sense of remoteness with few settlements, slow change and cultural community.¹⁸

Within the Tyne Gap and Hadrian Wall NCA, the following characteristics are particularly relevant:

- The NCA is a narrow distinctive corridor running east-west, graduating from lowland to upland through a low lying gap;
- The River Tyne flows through a valley of managed flood plains and mixed farmland;
- Well wooded mosaic of deciduous, mixed and coniferous woodland, broadleaved woodland on steeper slopes lining the rivers and little tree cover in upland areas.
- Fertile lowland corridor of the river flood plain with flat arable fields contrasting with larger scale upper slopes of the valleys.
- Higher elevations to the north with rough grazing on moorland, loughs, raised mire and rushy pastures confined within the Whin Sill outcrops and its associated grasslands and specialised flora.
- Natural waterbodies (loughs) on the ridged plateau provide breeding and wintering areas for wildfowl (whooper swan, goldeneye and widgeon).
- Country estates – Chesters, Haughton Castle, Nunwick Hall, Blenkinsopp Castle and Chipchase Castle – set within parklands of mature trees in the lower valley.
- Extensive archaeology from Roman times: Hadrian's Wall, forts, camps, and roads; other historic features include fortified castles, bastles and pele towers; lime kilns; and evidence of ridge and furrow.
- Villages and towns strategically located along the River Tyne with sandstone buildings and original village centres, dispersed settlements in valley bottoms, with small, nucleated villages and buildings of Millstone Grit. Hamlets or isolated farmsteads on valley flanks.
- Significant transport route with road and rail linking east and west across the Pennines along with the Hadrian's Wall Path and Pennine Way National Trails and the National Cycle Routes, Hadrian's Cycleway and the Pennine Cycleway

Within the North Pennines NCA, the following are considered as key characteristics:

¹⁷ Natural England, National Character Areas, NCA 11 North Pennines (2014) online available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6734181715410944?category=587130> last accessed 24/07/17

¹⁸ Natural England, National Character Areas, NCA 10 North Pennines (2013) online available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5682293?category=587130> last accessed 24/07/17

- Distinctive upland landscape, divided by broad pastoral dales
- Strong landform of summits
- Much of the area is designated as a UNESCO European and Global Geopark;
- Remote and extensive moorlands support internationally important habitats;
- Significant grassland habitat;
- Area of high rainfall, with many fast flowing streams and several major rivers flowing outwards from the hills through the wide dales, creating a range of freshwater habitats;
- A very tranquil landscape with a sense of remoteness;
- Strong vernacular character as a result of the use of local stone, sandstone and gritstone;
- Tree cover is limited to river gorges, gills and side streams, with copses around dispersed farmsteads;
- Rich cultural history, with evidence of early lead mining and extraction of other minerals.

Historic environment

The NP area has a rich historical environment, containing numerous features, with many recognised through designations, including the statutory listed buildings which are nationally designated, and one conservation area designated at the local level. Alongside the 11th century Hexham Abbey, the Neighbourhood Plan area contains a wealth of Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings, a Registered Historic Park, and Garden, Scheduled Monuments and numerous non-designated Heritage Assets.

The Conservation Area was designated in 1973 in response to the clear historic and architectural significance of the town that can be traced back to Saxon times with the construction of St Wilfreds church. The conservation area was extended in 1992 in order to protect the setting and character of the central area in the face of new housing and industrial developments, although this extended area was subsequently reduced in 2009.

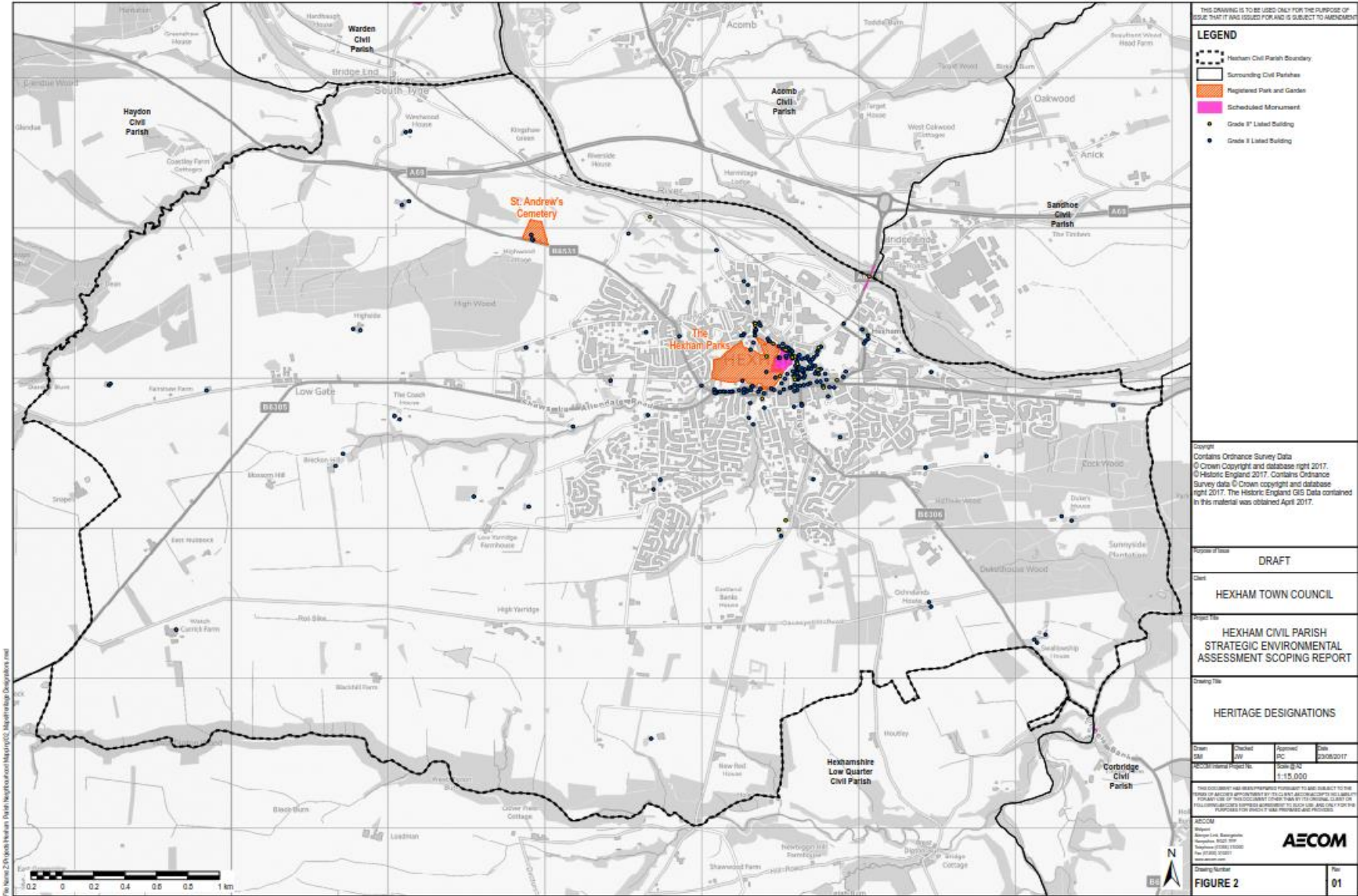
Historic England is the statutory consultee for certain categories of listed building consent and all applications for scheduled monument consent. The historic environment is protected through the planning system, via conditions imposed on developers and other mechanisms.

Since 2008, Historic England has released an annual Heritage at Risk Register. The Heritage at Risk Register highlights some of the Grade I, Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings, scheduled monuments, conservation areas, wreck sites and registered parks and gardens in England deemed to be 'at risk'. There are no heritage assets identified in the Heritage at Risk Register within the Neighbourhood Plan area. However, as the Register does not cover all Grade II listed buildings, building in conservation areas and non-designated heritage assets, it is likely that some locally significant heritage may be at risk.

Figure 5.1 (overleaf) shows the designated landscapes and historical sites located within the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Just a few miles from Hexham there are a number of points of access to Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site including Roman forts and museums.

Figure 5.1: Map of Heritage Assets within and around the Neighbourhood Plan Area



Summary of future baseline

New development in Hexham has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of cultural heritage assets and upon the character of the townscape and landscape. This may be negative effects, such as through unsympathetic design, or positive effects such as through targeted redevelopment of derelict / underused land and buildings. It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations and higher level local and national policies will offer a degree of protection to cultural heritage assets and their settings.

5.3 Key headline issues

- The distinctive surrounding landscape plays a significant role in the setting of Hexham;
- A number of areas within the town are characterised by the presence of a significant number of mature trees and hedgerows;
- Hexham Parish contains a significant level of listed and non-listed heritage assets, which could be affected by policies and proposals within the Plan (either positively or negatively);
- An insensitive approach that does not seek to conserve and enhance heritage assets could result in the erosion of the townscape or landscape quality;
- The high quality of local Heritage Assets provides opportunities for tourism, education and community involvement in their preservation.

5.4 Scoping Outcome

Landscape and historic environment has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA as there is potential for significant effects upon the setting of heritage assets and the character of the built and natural environment.

5.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Landscape and Historic Environment SEA theme?

The SEA topic 'landscape and historic environment' has been 'scoped in' to the SEA and will therefore form part of the appraisal framework. **Table 5.1** presents the SEA objectives and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the Plan in relation to this theme.

Table 5.1: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Historic Environment and Landscape

<p>Protect, enhance and manage the fabric and setting of cultural and natural heritage assets</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve, better reveal the significance and enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment? • Contribute to better management of heritage assets or tackle heritage at risk? • Identify and protect / enhance features of local importance? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment? • Improve linkages between the town centre, residential areas and open space.
<p>Protect, and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance landscape and townscape features • Support the integrity of the surrounding landscape • Support the integrity of the Conservation Area

6 Land, Soil and Water Resources

Focus of theme:

- Soils resource
- Soil quality
- Waste management
- Watercourses
- Water availability
- Water quality

6.1 Policy context

The EU's Soil Thematic Strategy¹⁹ presents a strategy for protecting soils resources in Europe. The main aim of the strategy is to minimise soil degradation and limit associated detrimental effects linked to water quality and quantity, human health, climate change, biodiversity, and food safety.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) drives a catchment-based approach to water management. In England and Wales there are 100 water catchments and it is Defra's intention is to establish a 'framework for integrated catchment management' across England. The Environment Agency is currently seeking to establish 'Significant Water Management Issues' within catchments with a view to presenting second River Basin Management Plans to ministers in 2015. The plans will seek to deliver the objectives of the WFD namely:

- Enhance the status and prevent the further deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and associated wetlands which depend on aquatic ecosystems;
- Promote the sustainable use of water;
- Reduce the pollution of water, especially by 'priority' and 'priority hazardous' substances; and
- Ensure the progressive reduction of groundwater pollution.

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Protect and enhance soils. The value of best and most versatile agricultural land should also be taken into account.
- Prevent new or existing development from being 'adversely affected' by the presence of 'unacceptable levels' of soil pollution or land instability and be willing to remediate and mitigate 'despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate'.
- Encourage the effective use of land' through the reuse of land which has been previously developed, 'provided that this is not of high environmental value'. Whilst there is no longer a national requirement to build at a minimum density, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to 'set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances'.
- Produce strategic policies to deliver the provision of a variety of infrastructure, including that necessary for water supply.
- With regards to waste, the NPPF does not contain any specific waste policies as waste planning policy will be published as part of the National Waste Management Plan.

¹⁹ European Commission (2006) Soil Thematic Policy [online] available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/soil/index_en.htm

Other key documents at the national level include Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England²⁰, which sets out a vision for soil use in England, and the Water White Paper²¹, which sets out the Government's vision for a more resilient water sector. It states the measures that will be taken to tackle issues such as poorly performing ecosystems, and the combined impacts of climate change and population growth on stressed water resources. In terms of waste management, the Government Review of Waste Policy in England²² recognises that environmental benefits and economic growth can be the result of a more sustainable approach to the use of materials.

With regards to water, the Northumbria River Basin management Plan (2015) provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment. To achieve this, and because water and land resources are closely linked, it also informs decisions on land-use planning. One of the main purposes of the plan is to prevent water bodies deteriorating with statutory objectives for water bodies and for protected areas. In addition, the plan includes a programme of measures to achieve statutory objectives.

Summary of current baseline

Quality of agricultural land

The Agricultural Land Classification classifies land into six grades (plus 'non-agricultural' and 'urban'), where Grades 1 to 3a are the 'best and most versatile' land and Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality.

In terms of the location of the best and most versatile agricultural land, Figure 6.1 outlines where it is located in the Neighbourhood Plan Area. This shows that the majority of land assessed is classed as 3b, with two areas classed as 3a.

Recycling centres

There is a household waste recycling site at the industrial estate at the junction of the A69 / Rotary Way, alongside two 'bring sites' at the Marks and Spencer store and the Wentworth Car Park site.

Watercourses

The Neighbourhood Plan Area is bounded to the north by the River Tyne. Within the NP area itself, there are a number of watercourses or 'burns' which all feed into the Tyne, including Cockshaw Burn, Halgut Burn, Skinners Burn, Wydon Water (leading to Wydon Reservoir), Dipton Mill Burn and the watercourse at Bogle Hole.

Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) have been designated by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes and springs that are used for public drinking water supply. The zones show the risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area. There are no such zones designated by the Environment Agency in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

The Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) requires Member States to identify areas where groundwaters have nitrate concentrations of more than 50 mg/l nitrate or are thought to be at risk of nitrate contamination. Areas associated with such groundwaters are designated as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) within which, Member States are required to establish Action Programmes in order to reduce and prevent further nitrate contamination. None of the Plan area includes surface water NVZ.

Pollution

According to the Environment Agency²³, there are three recorded significant pollution incidents reported within the Neighbourhood Plan area related to industrial sites regulated under the EC Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control Directive (IPCC), as follows

²⁰ Defra (2009) Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England [online] available at:

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/land/soil/documents/soil-strategy.pdf>

²¹ Defra (2011) Water for life (The Water White Paper) [online] available at <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm82/8230/8230.pdf>

²² Defra (2011) Government Review of Waste Policy in England [online] available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13540-waste-policy-review110614.pdf>

²³ What's in Your Backyard, Environment Agency, <http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/37827.aspx> last accessed 24/07/17

- Date of incident: 31st January 2011; Pollutant – Not Identified, Significant impact to water
- Date of incident 31st December 2013; Agricultural Materials and Wastes; Significant impact to water
- Date of incident: 10th February 2009; Agricultural Materials and Wastes; Significant impact to water

Summary of future baseline

Due to cost savings, and increasing legislative and regulatory requirements, there are drivers to improve recycling and composting rates. It is likely that recycling rates will continue, although the rates may slow down after 'quick wins' have been achieved.

In terms of water quality, the requirements of the Water Framework Directive are likely to lead to continued improvements to water quality in watercourses in the wider area. Water quality could be affected by pollution incidents in the area, the presence of non-native species and physical modifications to water bodies. There are plan policies within the Core Strategy (namely CP16 - Climate Change and Sustainable Resource Use) that ought to control these potential risks from new development.

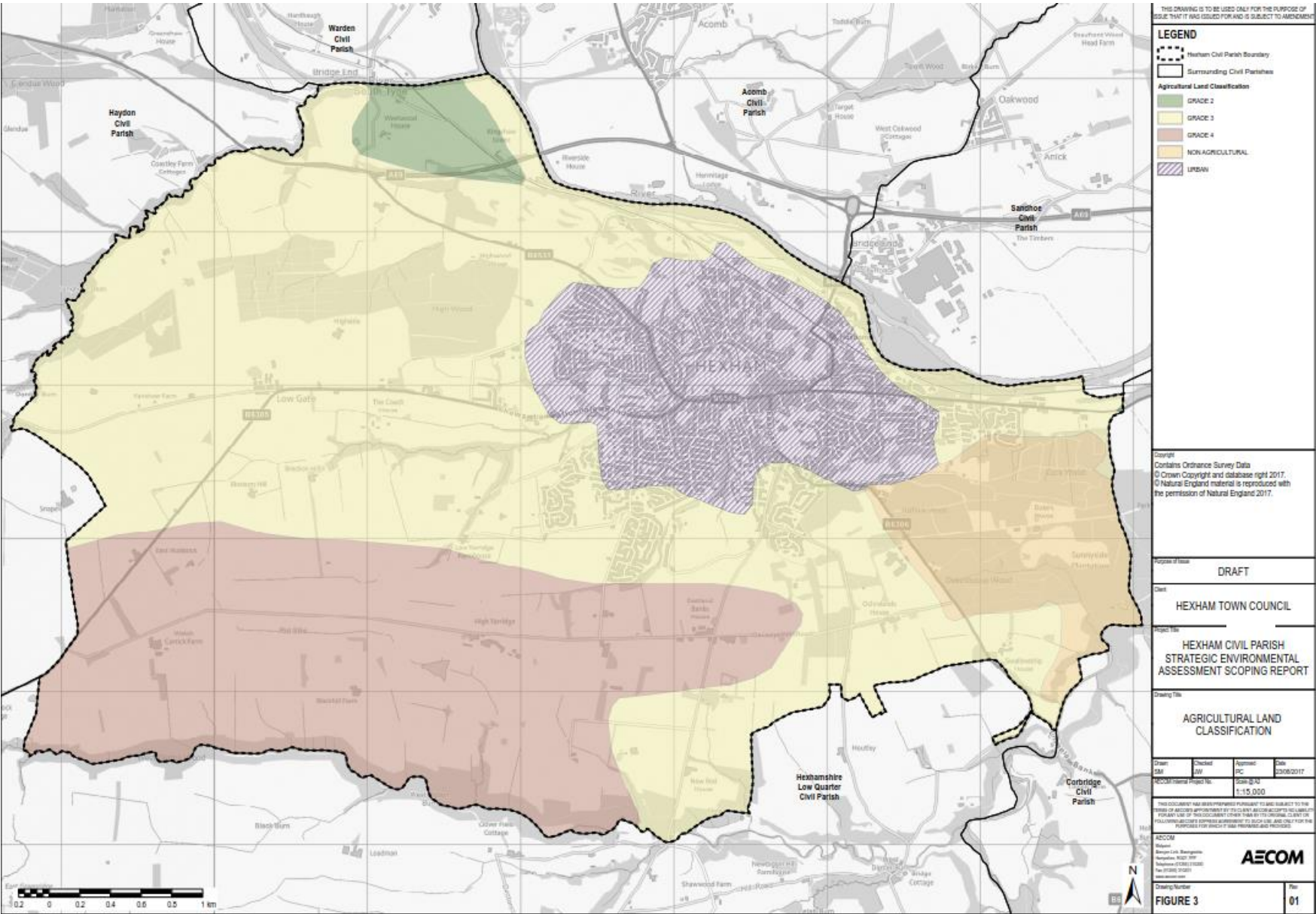
Any changes of use from agricultural (arable) to housing/mixed use at any of the sites identified as Grade 3a or 3b will reduce the quantity of good quality agricultural land in the plan area.

Water availability in the wider area may be affected by regional increases in population and an increased occurrence of drought exacerbated by the effects of climate change.

6.2 Key headline issues

- The only agricultural land in the Plan area is within areas already permitted or allocated for development. No further agricultural land is likely to be affected by the Plan.
- There are no groundwater source protection zones or nitrate vulnerable zones in the Plan area.

Figure 6.1: Agricultural Land Classification



6.3 Scoping outcome

The topic of 'soil' has been **SCOPED OUT** of the SEA as the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on soil / agricultural land.

The topic of 'waste' has been **'SCOPED OUT'** of the SEA as the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on levels of recycling and reuse. Residents already receive kerbside collection services for paper, card, tins, glass bottles and jars and plastic. There are also a number of bring sites that the public can take additional recyclable materials and a household waste recycling centre is accessible by car.

The topic of water quality has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA. Although there are no areas within the Parish that fall within a Groundwater Protection Zone, it is possible that development could affect water quality in such areas, and the plan area includes the River Tyne SSSI.

6.4 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Land, Soil and Water Resources theme?

For the SEA Topic 'land, soil and water resources' only water quality has been scoped into the SEA. **Table 6.1** presents the SEA objective and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the Plan in relation to this theme.

Table 6.1: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Land, Soil and Water Resources

Will the option/proposal help to:	
Protect ground and surface water quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise water consumption? Reduce surface water pollution and encourage the use of SUDS to manage water quality?

7 Population and Community

Focus of theme:

- Population size
- Age structure
- Deprivation
- House prices and affordability
- Education and skills

7.1 Policy context

Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- To 'boost significantly the supply of housing', local planning authorities should meet the 'full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing' in their area. They should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period.
- With a view to creating 'sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities' authorities should ensure provision of affordable housing onsite or externally where robustly justified.
- In rural areas, when exercising the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities, local planning authorities should be responsive to local circumstances and plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate. Authorities should consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs.
- The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It explains how good design is a key aspect in sustainable development, and how development should improve the quality of the area over its lifetime, not just in the short term. Good architecture and landscaping are important, with the use of design codes contributing to the delivery of high quality outcomes. Design should reinforce local distinctiveness, raise standards and address the connections between people and places.
- The social role of the planning system involves 'supporting vibrant and healthy communities'.
- The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities
- Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.
- Ensure that developments create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Places should contain clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public spaces, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.
- Ensuring that there is a 'sufficient choice of school places' is of 'great importance' and there is a need to take a 'proactive, positive and collaborative approach' to bringing forward 'development that will widen choice in education'.

7.2 Baseline summary

Summary of current baseline

Population

According to the most recent mid-year estimates available, in 2015 the total population of Hexham (including Acomb) was 12,888, which was an increase of 2.29 % between 2001 and 2015, which is less than the increase for Northumberland as a whole, but double that of the North East region.

Table 7.1: Population growth 2001 – 2015²⁴

Date	Hexham	Northumberland	North East	England
2001	12,600	307,400	2,596,900	49,138,831
2015	12,888	315,263	2,624,621	54,786,300
Population Change 2001-2015	+2.29 %	+2.56 %	+1.07 %	+ 11.49%

Age structure

The age structure of the area is compared to the county, region and rest of the country in the table below. Hexham has a lower proportion of residents within the 0-17 and 18-24 age groups than the regional and national averages. The proportion of residents within the 65+ and 84+ groups is also higher. However, the Hexham area has a lower proportion of those in the 25-44 age bracket when compared to the county, region and national figures.

Table 7.2: Age Structure (2011)²⁵

	Hexham	Northumberland	North East	England
0-17	19.2%	19.5%	20.3%	21.4%
18-24	7.7%	7.3%	10%	9.4%
25-44	20.3%	22.9%	25.3%	27.5%
45-64	29.9%	30.3%	27.2%	25.4%
65-84	19%	17.5%	15.2%	14.1%
85+	4%	2.5%	2.1%	2.2%
Total population	13,097	316,028	2,596,886	53,012,456

Household Deprivation

Census statistics measure deprivation across four 'dimensions' of deprivation, summarized below:

- **Employment:** Any person in the household (not a full-time student) that is either unemployed or long-term sick.
- **Education:** No person in the household has at least a level 2 qualification and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student.
- **Health and Disability:** Any person in the household that has generally 'bad' or 'very bad' health, or has a long term health problem.
- **Housing:** The household accommodation is either overcrowded (with an occupancy rating of -1 or less), in a shared dwelling or has no central heating.

Table 7.3 Relative Household Deprivation Dimensions²⁶

²⁴ 2001 data from 2001 Census. 2015 data sourced from ONS Data 2015 Mid-Year Estimates accessed online at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

²⁵ ONS (2011) Census 2011, Age structure accessed via <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks102ew>, last accessed 25/07/17

	Hexham	Northumberland	North East	England
Household not deprived	49.4%	43.6%	39.7%	42.5%
Deprived in 1 dimension	31.6%	32.4%	31.6%	32.7%
Deprived in 2 dimension	15.2%	19.3%	22%	19.1%
Deprived in 3 dimensions	3.4%	4.4%	6.3%	5.1%
Deprived in 4 dimensions	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.5%

As evident in Table 7.3, Hexham has a higher percentage of households which are not deprived in comparison to Northumberland, the North East and England averages. In terms of the 50.5% of households which are deprived in Hexham, the majority are deprived in either one or two dimensions, with those deprived in one dimension broadly aligning to the regional and national counterparts. 3.7% of households in Hexham are deprived in either three or four dimensions, fewer than the percentage for Northumberland (4.7%), the North East (6.7%) and England (5.6%).

Index of Multiple Deprivation

Overall deprivation figures mask pockets of deprivation within the parishes. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD) is an overall relative measure of deprivation constructed by combining seven domains of deprivation according to their respective weights, as described below. The seven deprivation domains are as follows:

- **Income:** The proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income, including those individuals that are out-of-work and those that are in work but who have low earnings (satisfying the respective means tests).
- **Employment:** The proportion of the working-age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market, including those individuals who would like to work but are unable to do so due to unemployment, sickness or disability, or caring responsibilities.
- **Education, Skills and Training:** The lack of attainment and skills in the local population.
- **Health Deprivation and Disability:** The risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health. Morbidity, disability and premature mortality are also considered, excluding the aspects of behaviour or environment that may be predictive of future health deprivation.
- **Crime:** The risk of personal and material victimisation at local level.
- **Barriers to Housing and Services:** The physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services, with indicators categorised in two sub-domains.
 - 1) 'Geographical Barriers': relating to the physical proximity of local services
 - 2) 'Wider Barriers': relating to access to housing such as affordability.
- **Living Environment:** The quality of the local environment, with indicators falling categorised in two sub-domains.
 - 1) 'Indoors Living Environment' measures the quality of housing.

²⁶ ONS Census 2011 Households by Deprivation Dimensions 2011 (Table QS119EW) accessed online at <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/components/stdListComponent.asp?menuopt=12&subcomp=100> last accessed 25/07/17

2) 'Outdoors Living Environment' measures air quality and road traffic accidents.

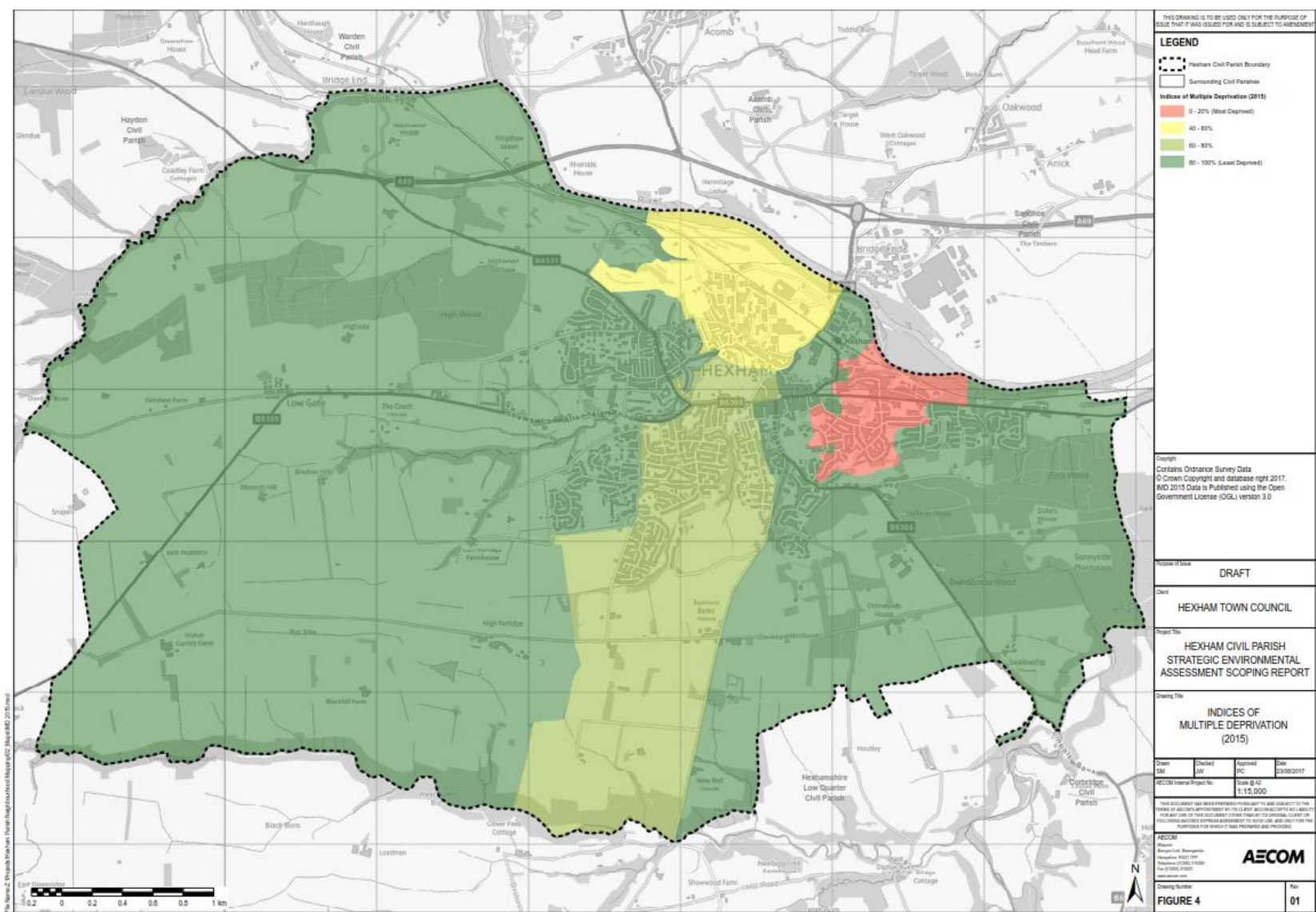
Two supplementary indices (subsets of the Income deprivation domains), are also included:

- **Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index:** The proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families.
- **Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index:** The proportion of all those aged 60 or over who experience income deprivation.

Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardized geographies designed to be as consistent in population as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. In relation to the IMD 2015, LSOAs are ranked out of the 32,844 in England and Wales, with 1 being the most deprived. Ranks are normalized into deciles, with a value of 1 reflecting the top 10% most deprived LSOAs in England and Wales. Figure 7.1 shows the map of IMD 2015 for Hexham.

In terms of the levels of deprivation in the Neighbourhood Plan area, the main pocket of deprivation is to the east of Railway Station in the Dene Park / Peth Head area, with relatively affluent areas to the west and east of the Parish, with a slightly more deprived central area. The level of deprivation in the Dene Park / Peth Head area is in the top 20% of the country.

Figure 7.1: Map of Hexham Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015



Housing tenure

Hexham and the Northumberland local authority area had a slightly higher number of owned households than the regional or English averages in 2011. The Hexham area had a higher number of shared ownership properties than the other areas, although overall this proportion was small. The figures for private renting were similar to Northumberland as a whole, although slightly less than the overall figure for England.

Table 7.3: Housing Tenure (2011) ²⁷

	Hexham		Northumberland	North East	England
	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
All Categories					
Owned (Total)	3,441	66.8%	65.9%	61.8%	63.3
Shared Ownership	48	0.9%	0.4%	0.4%	0.8
Socially Rented	877	17%	18.7%	22.9%	17.7
Private Rented (including those living Rent Free)	784	15.2%	15.1%	14.9%	16.8

Education

Taken from the 2011 Census, the Hexham area had a lower percentage of people with no qualifications than the county, region, and the English figures. Although the area had a lower percentage of people with Level 1, 2, and 3 qualifications than elsewhere, and the area recorded a higher percentage of those with Level 4 qualifications.

Table 7.4: Qualifications (2011) ²⁸

	Hexham		Northumberland	North East	England
	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
All Categories	9,846				
No Qualifications	1,930	19.6%	23.9%	26.5%	22.5%
Level 1 Qualification	1,071	10.9%	13.7%	13.7%	13.3%
Level 2 Qualification	1,460	14.8%	16.5%	16.5%	15.2%
Level 3 Qualification	1,096	11.1%	12.1%	12.1%	12.4%
Level 4 Qualification and above	3,643	37%	25.6%	22.2%	27.4%
Apprenticeship	336	3.4%	4.5%	4.1%	3.6%
Other Qualifications	310	3.1%	3.8%	4.7%	5.7%

Employment

²⁷ ONS (2011) Census 2011 Housing Tenure

²⁸ ONS (2011) Census 2011 Qualifications

The table below shows that the area has a lower percentage of people in full time employment when compared to England as a whole. In terms of part time employment the area has a higher percentage than either Northumberland or the North East, but is lower than the England figure. With regards to self-employment, Hexham has a higher percentage than either Northumberland and a considerably higher figure than the region, but again is lower than the English figure. According to the 2011 Census, the Hexham area has a lower percentage of unemployment than Northumberland, and significantly lower than either the North East or England.

*Table 7.5: Employment (2011)*²⁹

	Hexham		Northum.	North East	England
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
All Categories					
Economically Active Total	5,817	69%	67.8%	66.2%	69.9
<i>Part Time</i>	1,346	16%	14.7%	14.2%	19.6
<i>Full Time</i>	3,108	36.9%	37%	36.8%	55.2
<i>Self Employed</i>	875	10.4%	9.5%	6.5%	13.8
<i>Unemployed</i>	289	3.4%	4.4%	5.4%	6.3
<i>Full Time Student</i>	199	2.4%	2.2%	3.3%	4.9
Economically Inactive Total	2,611	31%	32.1%	33.9%	30.1
<i>Retired</i>	1568	18.6%	18.8	16%	45.5
<i>Student</i>	378	4.5%	3.5	5.9%	19.3
<i>Looking after Home or Family</i>	303	3.6%	3.6	4%	14.5
<i>Long Term Sick or Disabled</i>	263	3.1%	4.4	5.8%	13.5
<i>Other</i>	99	1.2%	1.8	2.2%	7.3

Summary of future baseline

Population estimates predict that in Northumberland the population will reach 321,000 by 2031³⁰. A substantial aspect in this growth is the expansion of residents aged over 65 which is projected to increase by 42%³¹ (71,000 persons to 101,000 persons).

Hexham has a lower proportion of residents within the 0-17 and 18-24 age groups than the regional and national averages. The proportion of residents within the 65+ and 84+ groups is also higher. However, the Hexham area has a lower proportion of those in the 25-44 age bracket when compared to the county, region and national figures.

7.3 Key headline issues

- The population of Hexham marginally increased between 2001 and 2015 (2.29%).
- Hexham has a lower proportion of residents within the 0-17 and 18-24 age groups than the regional and national averages. Conversely the proportion of residents within the 65+ and 84+ groups is

²⁹ ONS (2011) Census 2011 Employment

³⁰ ONS Sub national population projections 2014 based

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/localauthoritiesinenglandtable2> last accessed 26/07/17

higher. However, the Hexham area has a lower proportion of those in the 25-44 age bracket when compared to the county, region and national figures.

- With the number of elderly residents projected to increase, this may require provision of specialist housing.
- The main pocket of deprivation is to the east of Railway Station in the Dene Park / Peth Head area, with relatively affluent areas to the west and east of the Parish.

7.4 Scoping Outcome

The Neighbourhood Plan will have a role to play in allocating and promoting smaller scale housing development in parts of the Parish. Consequently, the topic 'population' has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA. With significant demographic changes taking place during the lifetime of the plan the policy and allocations will have the potential to have a significant effect on the topic.

7.5 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Population and Community theme?

The topic 'population and community' has been 'scoped-in' to the SEA. **Table 7.** presents the SEA objectives and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the Plan in relation to this theme.

Table 7.6: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Population and Community

Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.	Will the option/proposal help to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? • Support enhancements to the current housing stock? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs? • Improve the availability and accessibility of community facilities

8 Health and Wellbeing

Focus of theme:

- Health indicators and deprivation
- Influences on health and well being

8.1 Sustainability context

Key messages from the **NPPF** include:

- The social role of the planning system involves ‘supporting vibrant and healthy communities’.
- A core planning principle is to ‘take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all’.
- The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities’
- Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.
- Set out the strategic policies to deliver the provision of health facilities.
- Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

In relation to other key national messages in relation to health, Fair Society, Healthy Lives³², the ‘Marmot Review’ investigated health inequalities in England and the actions needed in order to tackle them. Subsequently, a supplementary report was prepared providing additional evidence relating to spatial planning and health on the basis that there is: *“overwhelming evidence that health and environmental inequalities are inexorably linked and that poor environments contribute significantly to poor health and health inequalities”*.

The increasing role that local level authorities are expected to play in providing health outcomes is demonstrated by government legislation. The Health and Social Care Act (2012) transferred responsibility for public health from the NHS to local government, giving local authorities a duty to improve the health of the people who live in their areas. This will require a more holistic approach to health across all local government functions.

8.2 Baseline summary

Summary of current baseline

Health indicators and deprivation

With regards to health indicators, the 2011 census provides data at a Parish level. The data for Hexham shows that 46.3% of residents considered themselves to be in very good health, 34.5% were in good health, 14.4% were in fair health, whilst 4% were in bad health and 0.9% were in very bad health.

³² The Marmot Review (2011) The Marmot Review: Implications for Spatial Planning [online] available at: <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/12111/53895/53895.pdf>

Public Health England³³ recorded 7.3%³⁴ of reception age children as being obese, compared to the England figure of 9.3%. For obesity rates in year 6, Hexham is also lower than Northumberland (19.6%), the North East (22.4%) and England (19.8%).

The percentage of adults considered obese was recorded as 23.4%, slightly less than England as a whole (24.1%)

The data for those with a limiting lifelong illness or disability shows that although the percentage in Hexham (19.5%) is slightly lower than either Northumberland (20.7%) or the North East (21.6%), the percentage is higher than the England figure of 17.6%.

The Neighbourhood Area generally performed better than the England average with regards to all-age, all-cause mortality rates, under 75 mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases, and long-term adult social care rates.

The average life expectancy for males is 79.9 years which is higher than Northumberland (79.2) the North East (77.9) and England (79.5). The average life expectancy for females is higher than both the county (82.6) and the region (81.6) but slightly lower than the England average (83.1)

The Neighbourhood Plan area is home to Hexham General Hospital, and there are a number of medical practices located within the Plan area.

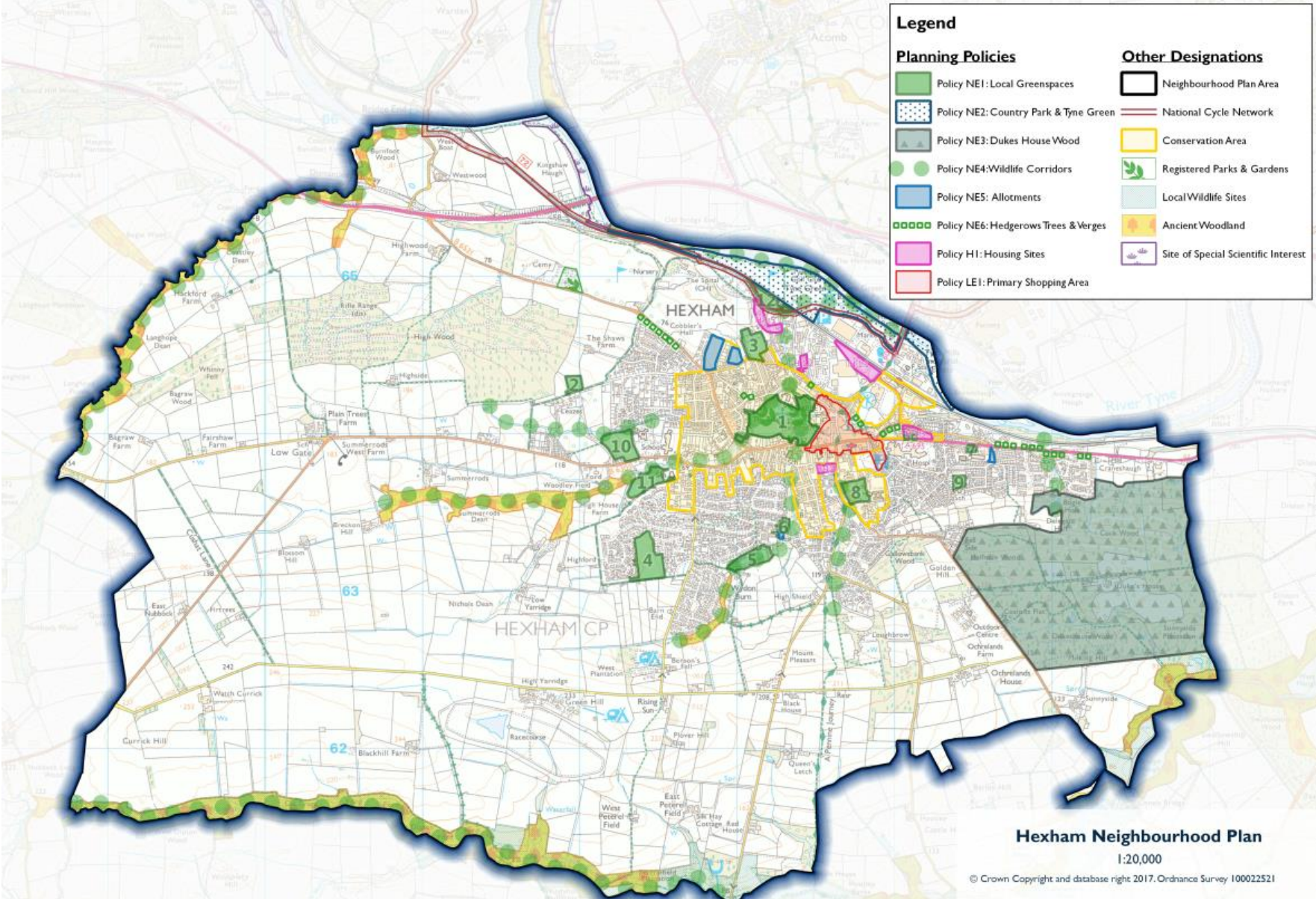
Influences on health and wellbeing

Access to open space and green infrastructure is widely recognised to have a positive effect on the health of communities by facilitating increased outdoor activity levels. Within Hexham there are various open spaces which can be utilised in this way.

³³ <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/8000073/pat/6/par/E12000001/ati/102/are/E06000057>

³⁴ http://www.localhealth.org.uk/#v=map11;i=t2.obese_child_year_r;l=en;z=292286,587730,189950,68981

Figure 8.1 – Map of Green Spaces



Summary of future baseline

It is likely that with increased population growth there will be a higher demand for health, fitness and leisure facilities within the Parish. However, new development could present opportunities to enhance facilities and open space through development contributions.

Key headline issues

- Hexham has lower childhood obesity rates than Northumberland, the North East and England;
- The percentage of those with a limiting lifelong illness or disability is higher than the English average figure;
- The average life expectancy for males is slightly higher than the English average, whilst the average life expectancy for females is slightly lower than the national average; both male and female life expectancy is however higher than the county, and the region.
- There are a considerable number of parks, leisure and fitness facilities within the Neighbourhood Area.

8.3 Scoping Outcome

The SEA topic 'health' has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA as the Plan has the potential to help tackle access to quality green space, as well as encouraging active travel, and better links between urban areas and green infrastructure.

8.4 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Health and Wellbeing theme?

The topic 'health' has been 'scoped-in' to the SEA. **Table 8.3** presents the SEA objectives and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the Plan in relation to this theme.

Table 8.3: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: Health and Wellbeing

Will the option/proposal help to:	
Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of residents by enhancing access to health facilities, open space and facilities for recreation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups? • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards? • Improve access to the countryside for recreation? • Ensure good access to health facilities.

9 Transportation and travel

Focus of theme:

- Transportation infrastructure
- Traffic flows and congestion
- Accessibility
- Car ownership
- Travel to work
- Parking

9.1 Sustainability context

European and UK transport policies and plans place emphasis on the modernisation and sustainability of the transport network. Specific objectives include reducing pollution and road congestion through improvements to public transport, walking and cycling networks and reducing the need to travel. National policy also focuses on the need for the transport network to support sustainable economic growth. It states that developments should be located and designed where practical to:

- Accommodate the efficient delivery of goods and supplies;
- Give priority to pedestrians and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities;
- Create safe and secure layouts which minimize conflict between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians, avoiding street clutter and where appropriate establishing home zones;
- Incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles; and
- Consider the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport.

9.2 Baseline summary

Summary of current baseline

Road network and congestion

Hexham is well served by the national highway network comprising the A69 to the north of the town which links Newcastle and Carlisle, and the M6, whilst the A68 to the east of the town which links to the A1 South and the Borders region to the north. With regards to congestion, a key issue for people in Hexham with regard to transport was the lack of parking in the town, management of parking, and traffic congestion at certain times of day. People were particularly concerned about the impacts of increasing amounts of traffic in the town centre, and on safety for children walking to school in the town.

Rail network

A railway line intersects the Plan area, with Hexham Rail Station located centrally. Services go east and west, with two trains per hour to Newcastle with a maximum journey time of 45 minutes, and an hourly service to Carlisle with a maximum journey time of 1 hour and 2 minutes. There are ambitious plans to increase connectivity between the Metro services in the urban areas of Newcastle and Sunderland and the cross country rail services that run through Hexham.

Bus network

Hexham is served by the 685 and X85 bus services, which are the cross Pennine service from Carlisle to Newcastle, via Hexham, Haltwhistle and Brampton operated by Arriva, with other services providing travel to and from neighbouring towns and villages.

Availability of cars and vans

Both the Plan area and the local authority area exhibit car ownership display similar percentages of car or van ownership – although the plan area shows higher than the region in terms of households with no cars or vans, and the plan area is higher than either the region or the national percentages for those households with one car or van. The overall picture is similar to the national figure, which in reality a higher dependency on the private vehicle which, if matched with usage, coincides with a higher demand for parking facilities and vehicle spaces.

Table 9.1: Car and Van Ownership, 2011

	Hexham		Northumberland		England and Wales
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	
No cars or vans in household	1235	24%	30,543	22%	25.6%
1 car or van in household	2329	45.2%	60875	43.9%	42.2%
2 cars or vans in household	1263	24.5%	36916	26.6%	24.7%
3 cars or vans in household	256	5%	7,671	5.5%	5.5%
4 or more cars or vans in household	67	1.3%	2529	1.8%	1.9%

Cycle network

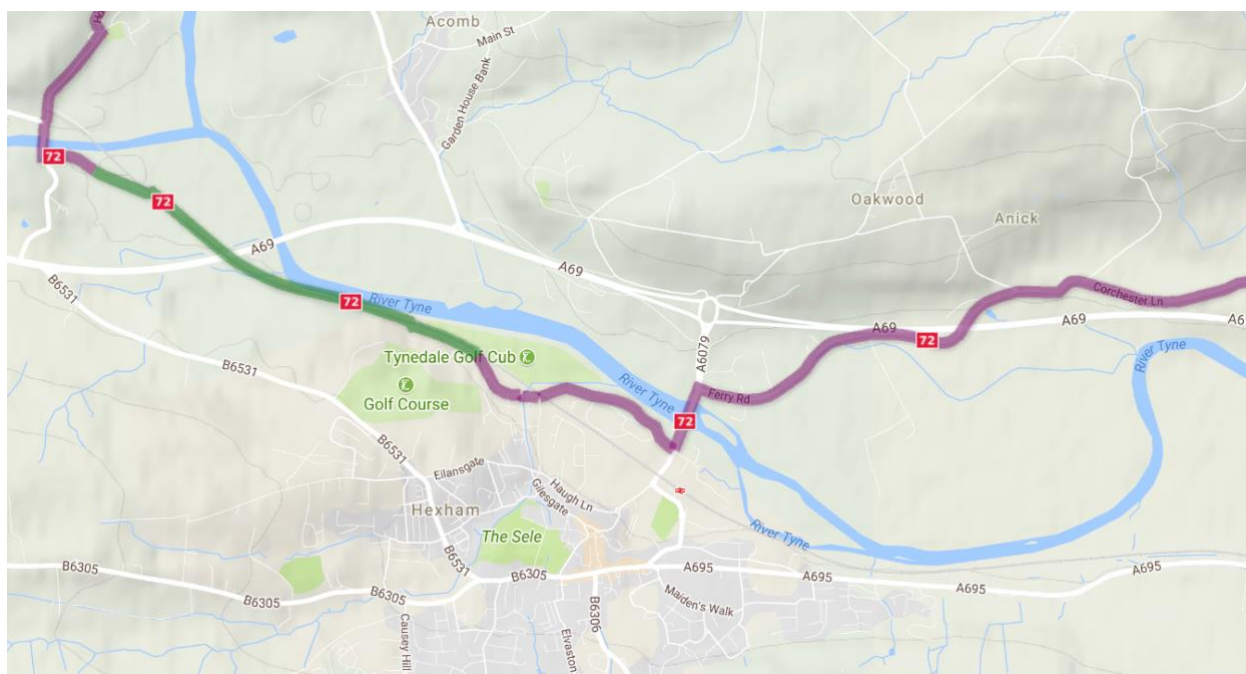
National Cycle route 72 'Hadrians Cycleway' runs through the northern part of the NP area, which when complete will run between Kendal and South Shields. The Sandstone Way is a relatively new Mountain biking route, which runs 120 miles through Northumberland, from Berwick Upon Tweed and Hexham.³⁵ Another route of note is the National Byway, which runs through Hexham and provides a 23 mile loop.³⁶

Figure 9.1: Cycle routes within Hexham³⁷

³⁵ Visit Hexham, <http://www.visithexham.net/cycling.htm>, last accessed 27/07/17

³⁶ Visit Hexham, <http://www.visithexham.net/cycling.htm>, last accessed 27/07/17

³⁷ Sustrans Interactive Map, Available: <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map>, Accessed: 27/07/17



Source :Sustrans

Travel to work

Corresponding with the relatively high rates of car and van ownership highlighted in Table 9.1, more individuals in employment use private transport to travel to work. As shown in table 9.2 almost 61% of journeys to work are made by private vehicle, significantly lower than when compared to the England and Wales average of 76%. This is also demonstrated at the local authority level although the difference is less prominent (69.9%). This indicates that people may have to travel shorter distances to work. In terms of commuting via Public transport, again the Hexham figure is significantly lower (5.2%) than either the county (13.1%) or the England and Wales figure (10.5%).

Table 9.2: Method of Travel to Work (aged 16-74 in employment), Census 2011³⁸

	Hexham		Northumberland		England and Wales (%)
	Number	%	Number	%	
Car/ van/ taxi/ motorcycle	3347	60.9%	805,873	69.9%	76.4%
Public transport	287	5.2%	150,988	13.1%	10.5%
On foot	1387	25.2%	122,533	10.6%	6.9%
Bicycle	59	1.1%	20,361	1.8%	1.9%
Work from home	366	6.7%	42,528	3.7%	3.5%
Other	54	1%	10,687	0.9%	0.4%

9.3 Summary of future baseline

The data suggests that similar to elsewhere in the County, there is reliance on the private car compared to other forms of transport. These trends are likely to continue, though measures to promote sustainable travel and transport could help to reduce car reliance somewhat.

³⁸ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/submit.asp?menuopt=201&subcomp=>

There is potential for the number of people working from home in Hexham (13% as at the last Census 2011) to increase due to modern working patterns and through the provision of high-speed broadband. Whilst negative effects of new development on the transport network are likely to be mitigated in part by measures outlined in the Northumberland Local Transport Plan. There will be a continuing need for development to be situated in accessible locations which limit the need to travel by private car.

Improving connectivity through ambitious plans that could see new Metro or rail links to south east Northumberland, could secure benefits for the Neighbourhood Plan area.

9.4 Key headline issues

- The plan area has lower private vehicle commuting to work figures than either the County or England and Wales;
- The plan area has a higher percentage of people who walk to work;
- National Cycle routes pass through the area;
- A key issue for people in Hexham with regard to transport is the lack of parking in the town, and the management of parking;
- There is traffic congestion at certain times of day, with particular concerns about the impacts of increasing amounts of traffic in the town centre, and on safety for children walking to school in the town.

9.5 Scoping Output

The SEA topic 'transportation' has been **SCOPED IN** to the SEA, as the Plan has the potential to increase the number of car trips. Conversely, development could improve linkages between key assets in the town centre, residential areas and open space. The plan may also have the potential to address parking concerns.

9.6 What are the SEA objectives and appraisal questions for the Accessibility theme?

The topic 'transportation and travel' has been 'scoped-in' to the SEA. Table 9.3 presents the SEA objectives and appraisal questions that will be used to assess the Plan in relation to this theme.

Table 9.3: SEA Framework of objectives and assessment questions: transportation

Reduce the need to travel and support modal shift to active and sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport.	Will the option/proposal help to:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to the town centre? • Improve linkages between the town centre and other community facilities? • Improve parking provision for commuters and residents? • Reduce the need to travel to access jobs, services and facilities?

10 SEA Framework and Methodologies

10.1 The SEA Framework

The SEA framework has been established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise. This draws upon the baseline position and policy context that has been prepared for a range of SEA topics (as set out in Chapters 3-11).

The framework consists of a set of headline objectives and ancillary questions, which will be used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft Plan (and any reasonable alternatives).

Table 10.1 below outlines the full SEA Framework, which brings together the objectives and questions that have been set out at the end of each SEA topic chapter. The framework focuses on those issues that have been identified as the most important to consider in the preparation of the Plan; but acknowledging the limited influence that the Plan can have in some areas.

Table 10.1: The SEA Framework

SEA Objective	Supporting questions (<i>Will the option/proposal help to...</i>)
1. Protect and enhance the function and connectivity of biodiversity habitats and species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support connections between habitats in the Plan area? • Support continued improvements to the designated sites in the Plan area? • Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?
2. Contribute to climate change mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote high quality design? • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? • Reduce the need to travel?
3. Support the resilience of Hexham to the potential effects of climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Sustainably manage surface water run-off, ensuring that the risk of flooding is not increased (either within the plan area or downstream) and where possible reduce flood risk? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the plan area? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the plan area to the effects of climate change?

SEA Objective	Supporting questions (Will the option/proposal help to...)
4. Protect, enhance and manage the fabric and setting of cultural and natural heritage assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and better reveal the significance of buildings and features of architectural or historic value; including those of local interest? • Conserve and enhance the character of the town centre? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment? • Improve linkages between the town centre, residential areas and open space?
5. Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance landscape and townscape features? • Support the integrity of the surrounding landscape? • Support the integrity of the Conservation Area?
6. Protect ground and surface water quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise water consumption? • Reduce surface water pollution and encourage the use of SUDS to manage water quality?
7. Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of a range of house types and sizes? • Support enhancements to the current housing stock? • Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? • Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs? • Improve the availability and accessibility of community facilities
8. Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of residents by enhancing access to health facilities, open space and facilities for recreation.	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups? • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards? • Improve access to the countryside for recreation? • Ensure good access to health facilities.
9. Reduce the need to travel and support modal shift to active and sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to the town centre? • Improve linkages between the town centre and other community facilities? • Improve parking provision for commuters and residents? • Reduce the need to travel to access services and facilities?

10.2 Site appraisal

A small number of site options (for potential allocation in the Plan) will be considered through the Plan preparation process. In order to provide a consistent and objective assessment of each site, the following site appraisal framework will be used.

The selected criteria have been established in the context of the SEA Framework, and therefore seek to test how site options perform with regards to the key environmental issues identified in the SEA. The suggested thresholds are, in some instances, a continuation of those applied as part of an earlier site assessment exercise carried out by Aecom on behalf of Hexham Neighbourhood Planning group in February 2017³⁹.

Table 10.2: Criteria for appraising site options (for town centre uses / housing / mixed use)

SEA Objective	Suggested Criteria	Suggested Thresholds
1. Protect and enhance the function and connectivity of biodiversity habitats and species.	Potential for effects on the Tyne Watersmeet SSSI.	<p>SSSI impact assessment zone suggests effects could be significant</p> <p>SSSI Impact assessment zone suggests effects may be likely</p> <p>SSSI impact assessment zone suggests effects unlikely</p>
	Proximity to a local nature reserve, a local wildlife sites, or area of biodiversity action plan priority habitat.	<p>Adjacent to a designated area (within 50m)</p> <p><400 m of a designated area</p> <p>>400 m of a designated area</p>
	Effects on protected trees.	<p>Site includes trees protected by a Preservation Order that are likely to be affected by development</p> <p>Site includes trees protected by a Preservation Order that are less likely to be affected by development</p> <p>Site does not include trees protected by a Preservation Order</p>
2. Contribute to climate change mitigation	There are no site specific criteria to measure potential greenhouse gas reductions from development, those that relate to reduced emissions from transport are addressed in objective 8.	

³⁹ Site Options and Assessment – Hexham Neighbourhood Plan, February 2017, Final Report

SEA Objective	Suggested Criteria	Suggested Thresholds
3. Support the resilience of Hexham to the potential effects of climate change	Within a Flood risk Zone (Fluvial)	<p>Is the site outside Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3?</p> <p>Is the site within flood risk zone 2?</p> <p>Is the site within flood risk zone 3?</p>
	Areas at risk of surface water (based on EA surface flood risk classification).	<p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Low</p>
4. Protect, enhance and manage the fabric and setting of cultural and natural heritage assets	<p><u>Heritage</u></p> <p>Professional judgement will be used to assess the impact of site options upon identified heritage assets and their setting in a proportionate manner, using available evidence such as conservation area appraisals and information on the HER.</p>	<p>Development could protect and enhance heritage assets and/or have a positive effect on the historic environment including tackling heritage at risk or provides an opportunity to better reveal the significance of heritage assets.</p> <p>Neutral: no heritage assets or their settings are likely to be affected by the site allocation.</p> <p>Development could result in harm to the significance of heritage assets and/or their setting. It is likely that impacts can be avoided/mitigated.</p> <p>Development could result in harm to the significance of heritage assets and/or their setting. It is unlikely that impacts can be avoided/mitigated</p>
	<p><u>Landscape</u></p> <p>Impact on built townscape</p> <p>Impact on open space within the urban area</p>	<p>Site allows for redevelopment of brownfield / derelict land</p> <p>Site is Greenfield</p>
	<p><u>Landscape</u></p> <p>Impact on natural landscape</p>	<p>Site is within the existing urban area of Hexham</p> <p>Site is within the countryside on greenfield land</p> <p>Site is adjacent to the North Pennines AONB</p> <p>Site is in an elevated, visible location</p>
5. Protect ground and surface water quality.	Introduction of SUDS and Green Infrastructure	<p>Site is within an area identified as at a high risk of surface water flooding</p> <p>Site is adjacent to the River Tyne</p> <p>Site is within an area identified as being outside surface water flooding areas</p>

SEA Objective	Suggested Criteria	Suggested Thresholds
6. Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures within their communities.	It is not considered possible to spatially assess against this objective i.e. it cannot be shown how the physical attributes of a site area can meaningful illustrate the effects on this objective.
	Distance to town or local centre	>800 m 400m – 800 m <400 m
	Distance to primary school	>800 m 400m – 800 m <400 m
	Distance to secondary school	>1200 m 400m – 1200 m <400 m
7. Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of residents by enhancing the quality and accessibility of open space, facilities for recreation and health care	<u>Access to natural greenspace</u> Standard 1. Natural greenspace of 2ha within 400m from home Standard 2. 20ha greenspace within 2km from home	Criteria met for both standards Criteria met for one standard Criteria not met for either standard
	Access to a GP surgery / medical-center	>1200 m 400m – 1200 m <400 m
	Distance to recreation facilities	>800 m 400m – 800 m <400 m
8. Reduce the need to travel and support modal shift to active and sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling and public transport.	Proximity to local convenience store / supermarket	>800 m 400m – 800 m <400 m
	Proximity to a cycle route	>800 m 400m – 800 m <400 m
	Proximity to bus stop (with at least a half hourly service during the day) or train station	>800 m 400m – 800 m <400 m

Using the site criteria and thresholds identified in table 10.2, a proforma will be prepared for each site option in the Plan that is identified as a reasonable alternative (for housing or mixed use development). The scores will be determined through a combination of quantitative and qualitative information. To establish objective scores for each site, qualitative measurements will be calculated using GIS software. This will be complemented with qualitative information gathered from site visits, local knowledge and professional judgement.

11 Next Steps

11.1 Subsequent stages for the SEA process

Scoping (the current stage) is the second stage in a six-stage SEA process:

- Screening (NPPG Stage A)
- Scoping (NPPG Stage B)
- Assess reasonable alternatives, with a view to informing preparation of the draft plan (NPPG Stage C)
- Assess the draft plan and prepare the Environmental Report with a view to informing consultation and plan finalization (NPPG Stage D/E)
- Publish a 'statement' at the time of plan adoption in order to 'tell the story' of plan-making/SEA (and present 'measures decided concerning monitoring') (NPPG Stage F)

The next stage will involve appraising reasonable alternatives for the Plan. This will consider alternative policy approaches for the Plan. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will be fed back to the Neighbourhood Group so that they might be taken into account when preparing the draft plan.

Once the draft ('pre-submission version') plan has been prepared by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, it will be subjected to SEA and the Environmental Report prepared for consultation alongside it.

Following consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan / Environmental Report, the plan will be finalised and submitted to Northumberland County Council for subsequent Independent Examination.

11.2 Consultation on the Scoping Report

Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the SEA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public.

The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The Scoping Report has been released to these three statutory consultees.

Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this Scoping Report, in particular the evidence base for the SEA, the identified key issues and the proposed SEA Framework.

11.3 Download and viewing details

The Scoping Report can be downloaded at

Comments on the Scoping Report should be sent to:

Ian McCluskey, *Principal Sustainability Consultant, AECOM Ltd, 4th Floor, Bridgewater House, Manchester, M1 6LT*

Email address: ian.mccluskey@aecom.com

All comments received on the Scoping Report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SEA where appropriate.

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