



Northumberland
County Council

Acklington Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Screening Opinion

FINAL

Prepared by the Neighbourhood Planning Team, Northumberland County Council

April 2024

Revision history

Version	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
V.1.0	June 2023	Screening Opinion based on the draft Acklington Neighbourhood Plan	Rob Naples	Planning Officer
v.2.0	July 2023	Final Screening Opinion taking account of Consultation Body responses.	Rob Naples	Planning Officer
v3.0	April 2024	Final Screening Opinion based on Submission Draft Plan	Rob Naples	Planning Officer

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Summary of Screening Opinion

1. Acklington Parish Council, as the qualifying body, has prepared a Neighbourhood Plan for the Acklington Neighbourhood Area, which comprises the whole civil parish of Acklington. The Plan seeks to address a number of local issues around sustainability, design, the natural and built environment, community facilities and local green space. It will be 'made' by Northumberland County Council as local planning authority, and will form part of the statutory development plan for the area.
2. Based on the characteristics of the draft Acklington Neighbourhood Plan and the area characteristics, the conclusion of the SEA Screening, in the opinion of Northumberland County Council, is the plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and SEA is therefore not required.
3. This report is supported by the consultation bodies: the Environment Agency; Historic England; and Natural England. Their representations can be found in Appendix B.

1. Introduction

Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.1 Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by a qualifying body under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The Acklington Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Acklington Parish Council (as the 'qualifying body') and will be 'made' by Northumberland County Council as local planning authority.
- 1.2 The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent amendments) and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.
- 1.3 Communities have a right to be able to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. However, communities are not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative purposes to produce such a plan.
- 1.4 Acklington Parish Council has prepared a Neighbourhood Plan for the Acklington Neighbourhood Area, which comprises the whole civil parish of Acklington. Once 'made' it will form part of the statutory development plan for the area.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.5 To be 'made', a neighbourhood plan must meet certain Basic Conditions¹ including compliance with EU obligations. One such obligation is the assessment of the effects of the plan on the environment. The procedures to be followed in determining whether a plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment are set out in European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (the 'SEA Directive'), which is transposed into UK legislation through The Environmental Assessment of Plans and programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations').
- 1.6 The purpose of the SEA Directive is to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to integrate considerations of the environment into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

¹ These are set out in Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and in the Neighbourhood Planning General Regulations (2012) (as amended).

- 1.7 The SEA Directive sets out criteria for assessing the significance of the impact of a plan or programme on the environment. Any assessment must consider both positive and negative effects.
- 1.8 In the first instance, it is necessary to ascertain if SEA is required. This process is referred to as 'screening'.
- 1.9 This report presents the findings of an SEA screening opinion on the Submission Draft Acklington Neighbourhood Plan, provided by Northumberland County Council as local planning authority. It adopts a proportionate approach in applying a series of criteria, as set out in Schedule 1 the SEA Directive, to determine whether any significant effects are likely.
- 1.10 This report is supported by the consultation bodies: the Environment Agency; Historic England; and Natural England. Their representations can be found in Appendix B.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

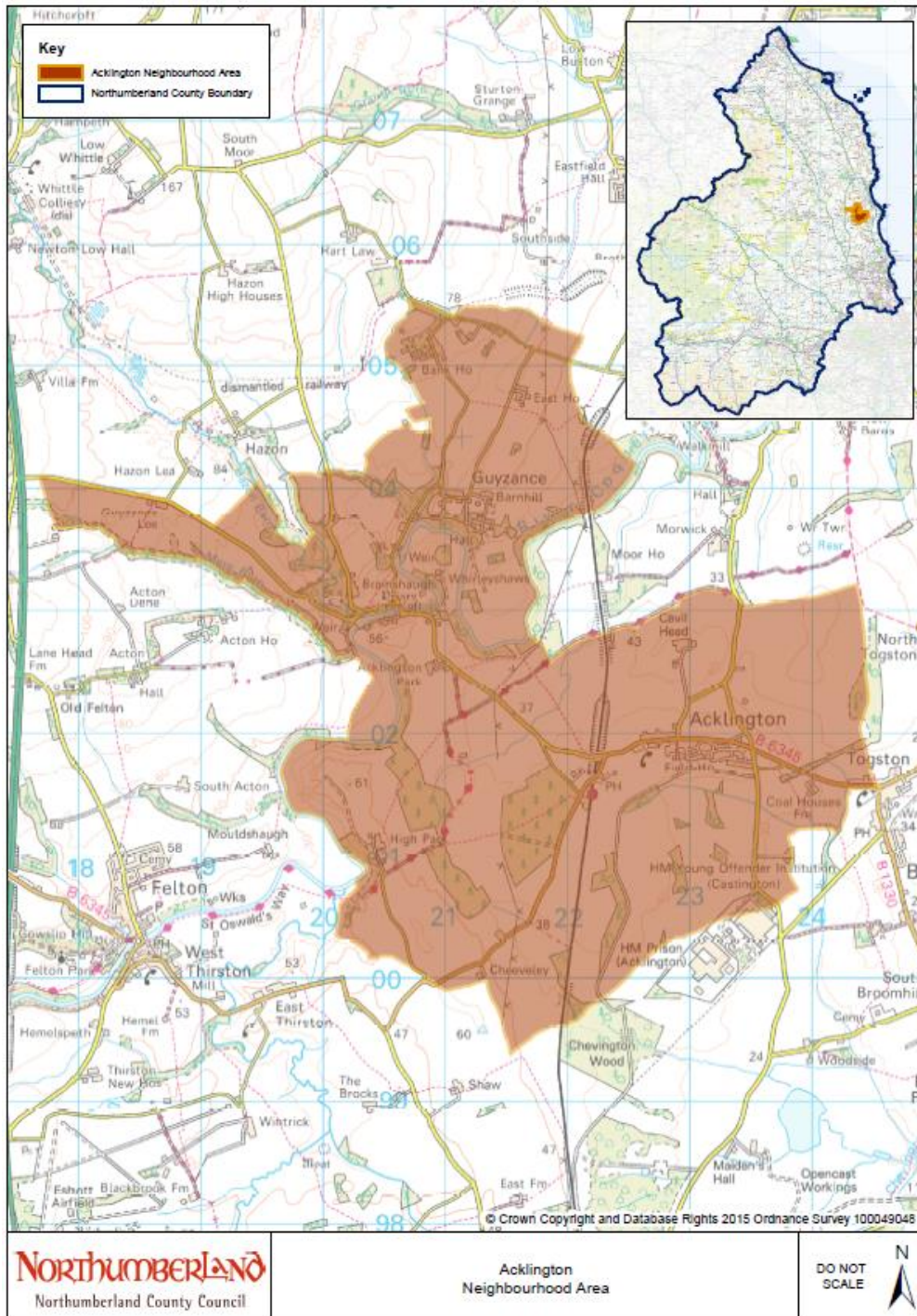
- 1.11 A Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have impacts on sites covered by the Habitats Regulations. The Acklington Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to a separate HRA screening assessment to ascertain whether an Appropriate Assessment is required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, which relate to Articles 6(3) and (4) of the European Union Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna (the 'Habitats Directive'). It was determined that significant effects are unlikely and that Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required.

2. Acklington Draft Neighbourhood Plan

The Acklington Neighbourhood Area

- 2.1 Acklington Parish is a rural parish in the east of the County. The Neighbourhood Area covers the entire civil parish of Acklington (figure 1).

Figure 1. The Acklington Neighbourhood Area



The Draft Acklington Neighbourhood Plan

Vision and Objectives

- 2.2 The vision sets out what the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2036. It informs all of the plan objectives and draft planning policies.

That the parish of Acklington remains an attractive and sustainable place to live and work and that future development respects the quiet rural environment, the dark skies, and is in keeping with the historic character of the diverse settlements in the parish.

- 2.3 To deliver the vision, six objectives have been developed:

Objective 1

To ensure that new development is sustainable, meets local needs and is in keeping with the scale and design of existing buildings and places and preserves the beauty of the open countryside, valued local landscapes and dark skies.

Objective 2

To support the local community by the protection of existing, and the encouragement of new community facilities and by the maintenance of green spaces, outdoor recreation areas and the network of local footpaths and bridleways.

Objective 3

To support and encourage new local services and businesses, while protecting the tranquil rural character of the area and the amenity of residents.

Objective 4

To enhance the natural environment by ensuring that new development delivers a net gain for biodiversity and that areas of value to wildlife are protected.

Objective 5

To ensure that new development preserves and enhances the character and integrity of the historic environment in the parish.

Draft planning policies

- 2.4 There are seven draft planning policies to deliver the objectives. These are stated in full in Appendix A but are summarised here:

Policy ANP1: Development in Acklington Village

This policy relates to proposals for development in Acklington Village, identifying the character areas within the village, and how new development can reflect that special character.

Policy ANP2: Principal Occupancy Dwellings

This policy restricts all new residential development to principal occupancy where the percentage of second/holiday homes and holiday lets is over 20% of the total number of dwellings.

Policy ANP 3: Community Facilities

This policy identifies community facilities that will be protected and supported.

Policy ANP4: Woodlands, Trees, Hedgerows and Wildlife Corridors

This policy sets out the protection of the natural environment proposed in the Plan in relation to trees, hedgerows, and ancient woodland. It also seeks to enhance provision for biodiversity.

Policy ANP5: Local Green Spaces

This policy lists the Local Green Spaces which are proposed for protection in the Parish. These have been identified by the local community and supported by evidence.

Policy ANP6: Guyzance Conservation Area and Guyzance Village

This policy relates to the Guyzance Conservation Area; the supporting text identifies key parts of the historic landscape which are important to the conservation area and its setting.

Policy ANP7: Non-Designated Heritage Assets

This policy relates to development affecting non-designated heritage assets, including the historic core of Acklington.

3. Baseline Information

Context

- 3.1 Acklington is a rural parish situated approximately 10 miles north of Morpeth, Northumberland. The main settlement in the parish is Acklington, but there are also the smaller settlements of Guyzance, Brainshaugh and Acklington Park. Most of the population lives in the main settlement, Acklington Village. Acklington has limited services and facilities but has a railway station on the East Coast Main Line.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

- 3.2 There are no statutory protected sites in the Parish.
- 3.4 The Parish contains a number of priority habitats. Ancient and semi-natural woodland and ancient replanted woodland are situated along the River Coquet, and deciduous woodland is scattered through the Parish particularly to the north-west and south of Acklington Village.

Issue: N/A

Population and human health

- 3.5 The 2011 census recorded a parish population of 544. This represents an increase of 16.5% on the 467 recorded in 2001. The age structure in the resident population has changed: the proportion of young dependents has fallen whilst the proportion of residents aged 65 and over has increased significantly, from 11.8% in 2001 to 20.8% in 2011. The age profile of residents is that of an ageing population, with significantly fewer youths and adults of working age living in the Parish compared to Northumberland as a whole.
- 3.6 Unemployment rates in Acklington are very low, at 2.1% (2011). This is lower than the County average (4.4%). The proportion of residents with a level 4 qualification or above is significantly greater than for Northumberland as a whole (31.5% compared to 25.6%).

Issues: Ageing population.

Climatic Factors

- 3.8 No emissions data is available for the Neighbourhood Area. At the local authority level, detailed information is available for Carbon Dioxide (CO²). The main source of CO² emissions in Northumberland is now transport, which has shown only a very marginal reduction since 2005. By contrast, emissions from industrial and commercial sources have more than halved in the same time. Domestic emissions have also decreased albeit from a lower starting point. As a result, total emissions in Northumberland decreased by 40% between 2005 and 2017. The trend overall, therefore, is downwards though transport emissions remain problematic.
- 3.9 Car ownerships levels in the Parish have remained largely the same in recent years. At 96.9% the proportion of households having one or more cars is high, and is significantly greater than the County average (70%). This likely reflects higher incomes locally, the location of the Parish relative to major employment hubs and the largely rural nature of the area.

Issue: CO² emissions from transport.

Soil

- 3.10 The majority of agricultural land in the Parish is grade 3, i.e. good to moderate quality agricultural land

Issue: N/A.

Water

- 3.11 The Kielder Water Resource Zone (WRZ) serves the Neighbourhood Area. There is a large surplus of supply over demand in the Kielder WRZ and the area is not classed as seriously water stressed.
- 3.12 There are no Groundwater Source Protection Zones in the area indicating that there is little risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area.

Issues: N/A

Air

- 3.16 As of June 2018, the Acklington Neighbourhood Area has no recorded Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), and air quality is not automatically

monitored anywhere within the Neighbourhood Area as part of the annual screening process carried out by Northumberland County Council. There are no significant and tangible air quality issues in the Neighbourhood Area.

Issue: N/A.

Material Assets

3.17 Acklington Village has very little in the way of community services and facilities and looks elsewhere for access to such services. There is a well-used village hall and a railway station situated on the East Coast Main Line which provides connections both locally, regionally and nationally. The village has extensive green space provision. The village is served by public transport but there remains a significant reliance on the private car, evidenced by high levels of car ownership in the parish.

Issue: Transport dominated by car use.

Heritage Assets

3.18 The Parish is rich in heritage. The western portion of Acklington Village retains the historic layout of development and burgage plots are still in existence. Guyzance has a designated Conservation Area.

3.19 Of the 43 listed buildings in the Neighbourhood Area, 40 are grade II listed, 2 are grade II*, and there is one scheduled ancient monument.

Issue: N/A

Landscape

3.22 The Parish overlaps three National Character Areas; the South East Northumberland Coastal Plain NCA; North Northumberland Coastal Plain NCA; and Mid Northumberland NCA.

3.23 The North Northumberland Coastal Plain National Character Area occupies a broad band along the North Sea coast, stretching from the Anglo-Scottish border in the north, to the mouth of the River Coquet in the south. It takes in the Northumberland Coast AONB, which includes Holy Island and the Farne Islands, and also forms part of the Northumberland Heritage Coast. Large parts of the area are designated for nature conservation interests.

- 3.24 The South East Northumberland Coastal Plain National Character Area covers a broad strip of the North Sea coast and occupies the easternmost part of the county. It stretches from Amble in the north to the southern edge of the county where it extends into Newcastle and North Tyneside. The coastal plain widens towards the south, taking in the developed areas around Ashington, Blyth and Cramlington. Morpeth and Ponteland are located on its western boundary.
- 3.25 The Mid Northumberland NCA lies inland of the Northumberland coast between Ponteland and Alnwick. It is a transitional landscape between the coastal plain to the east and the hills, moors and forests to the west. It comprises rolling farmland, shallow valleys and low ridges.

Issue: Pressure for further development

4. SEA Screening

- 4.1 Criteria for determining the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from plans and programmes are set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Directive. The criteria are split into two categories: those relating to the characteristics of the plan and those relating to the characteristics of the effects and areas likely to be affected.² An assessment of the draft Acklington Neighbourhood Plan against these criteria is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Assessment of the likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/No	Comment
The characteristics of the plan, having regard to:		
(a) the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	No	The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for residential or other forms development. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for the civil parish of Acklington and will be used in conjunction with the Northumberland Local Plan to determine planning applications in the area.
(b) the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	No	Due to the locally-specific nature of the policies, the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on other plans and programmes within the wider development plan will be slight. Its policies are in general conformity with strategic policies in the existing development plan (Northumberland Local Plan, 2022). The Plan has been prepared having regard to national planning policies and guidance.
(c) the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in	No	One of the Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.

² Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. Annex II Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

Criteria (Schedule 1)		Significant Environmental Effect likely?
	Yes/No	Comment
particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.		Policy ANP1 sets out a clear intention to consider sustainable development in the determination of planning applications.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	The draft Plan seeks to address the following environmental problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that future housing development is for principal residents; • Protecting leisure, recreation and other green space areas; • Protecting the historic character of the parish; • Enhancing the landscape and biodiversity in the Parish for future generations; • Protection and enhancement of community facilities and services – in particular for older people and young people.
(e) the relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	No	Neighbourhood plans cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of waste management since this is 'excluded development' by virtue of the Planning Acts. The Neighbourhood Plan has no particular relevance for the implementation of other Community legislation, apart from its limited association with legislation designed to ensure continued protection of European designated sites.
The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard to:		
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	No	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period 2023-2036. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development. Instead, it sets out policies supporting the delivery of residential and other forms of development subject to their accordance with other policy requirements. Effects of the Plan are expected to be indirect (due to not allocating sites) but long-term and permanent. Biodiversity, flora and fauna Policy ANP1 seeks to ensure that development protects and enhances biodiversity and the natural

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/No	Comment
		<p>environment, particularly through the retention of trees, hedgerows and other open spaces. Policy ANP4 relates specifically to woodlands, trees hedgerows and wildlife corridors.</p> <p>Population and human health</p> <p>Policy ANP2 seeks to ensure that new housing development is restricted to principal occupancy, helping to support community services and facilities; similarly, Policy ANP3 identifies important community facilities and affords them additional protection.</p> <p>Policy ANP5 identifies and designates areas of Local Green Space.</p> <p>Climatic Factors</p> <p>Policies ANP1 and ANP4 provide protection to trees, hedgerows and wildlife corridors. Similarly, Policy ANP5 identifies and designates areas of Local Green Space.</p> <p>Soil</p> <p>The Plan is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect on soil quality.</p> <p>Water</p> <p>The Plan is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect on water quality of the River Coquet.</p> <p>Air</p> <p>The Plan is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect on air quality.</p> <p>Material Assets</p>

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/No	Comment
		<p>The Plan is likely to have a less than significant positive effect on access to local services and facilities as, subject to conditions, they support the provision and retention of such services.</p> <p>Heritage Assets</p> <p>The Plan identifies and designates areas of Local Green Space; some of these have been designated due to their contribution towards historic character. This would help to support the integrity of the historic environment.</p> <p>Landscape</p> <p>The Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on landscape; the identification and designation of Local Green Space is likely to ensure a neutral effect.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects		<p>It is unlikely that any significant environmental effects would be observed as a result of the policies contained within the draft Acklington Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan does not seek to facilitate a level of development above that of higher-level documents within the Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan supports sustainable development, which would protect and enhance the built and natural environment. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan would result in significant effects, whether in isolation or cumulatively.</p>
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects		N/A
(d) the risks to human health or the environment.	No	<p>There are no anticipated risks to human health or the environment from the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the		<p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development, and whilst it will help to shape future development, the overall extent of future development is likely to be in line with the growth that would occur in the Parish without the Plan.</p>

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/No	Comment
population likely to be affected).		There are no significant effects as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan.
<p>(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; • intensive land-use; 	No	<p>The baseline information for the Parish has been described in Section 3.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Area is close to a number of internationally and nationally important environmental assets. However, the need for Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations has been screened out. The risk to their status and condition from implementation of the Plan is judged to be low.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status	No	Given the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and its focus on sustainable development, which is sympathetic to the qualities of the area, significant effects resulting from the Plan are unlikely.

5. SEA Screening Conclusion

- 5.1 On the basis of the assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment of implementing the Plan as set out in Table 1 of this Screening Opinion, the conclusion is:
- 5.2 **In the opinion of Northumberland County Council, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan *is unlikely to have any significant positive or negative effects on the environment*. Therefore, Strategic Environmental Assessment is NOT required.**
- 5.3 **This conclusion is supported by the consultation bodies: Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.**

Appendix A

Acklington Neighbourhood Plan

Draft Planning Policies

Policy ANP1 – Development in Acklington Village

Proposals for development in Acklington village must, where applicable, have special regard to the following elements:

- a) Proposals for development within the historic core of the village as defined on the policies map, must be carefully designed to reflect the historic character of the area. Special regard will be had to materials, design and layout of development proposals in this area. Trees, hedgerows and the remaining traditional burgage plot layouts along the northern part of the village must be incorporated into any design for new development.
- b) In other areas of the village which have been more recently developed in the 20th and 21st century, new development must respect the existing density and layout of development and seek to reflect the materials and character of the area in which it is situated. Opportunities should be taken wherever possible to improve landscaping along the boundaries of development sites, particularly where this is adjacent to the open countryside.
- c) Existing trees, hedgerows and other open spaces must be retained within the village and any proposals for development in Acklington village must incorporate significant new planting and landscaping to improve biodiversity and habitats within the village, particularly where the development site shares a boundary with a Local Green Space, green verges and/or hedgerows.
- d) The construction of new footpath links to improve links between existing housing development and improve connectivity within the village will be supported.

Policy ANP2 - Principal Residency Dwellings

All new dwellings proposed in the neighbourhood area will be for principal occupancy only where the non-principal dwelling occupancy rates exceeds 20% in each of the defined areas: within the settlement boundary for Acklington village, within the Guyzance Conservation Area, and the rest of the neighbourhood area shown on the Policies Map.

Policy ANP3 – Community Facilities

The following community facilities are identified on the Policies Map.

CF1: Acklington Village Hall

CF2: St John the Divine Church and Graveyard (Acklington)

CF3: Railway Inn (Acklington)

Development proposals resulting in the loss of any of these community facilities will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the facility is either no longer required by the community, or no longer economically viable. In order to demonstrate that a facility is no longer economically viable, the facility must be marketed for freehold or leasehold purposes for the existing use at a reasonable commercial price for at least six months without an appropriate offer being received.

Policy ANP4 – Woodlands, Trees, Hedgerows and Wildlife Corridors

Planning permission will not be given for development which involves the loss of any areas designated as ancient woodland, ancient re-planted woodland and areas that comprise the Woodland Priority Habitat Network as shown on the Policies Map.

Within a 15m buffer of ancient woodland and ancient and semi-natural woodland, proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they provide additional habitat or contribute to connectivity of existing woodland areas.

The loss of mature hedgerows will be avoided. Proposals for new development should, where possible, include new planting by way of tree and hedgerow planting to link existing hedgerows and woodlands and improve wildlife connectivity throughout all parts of the neighbourhood area.

Proposals for development which involve the loss of ancient and/or veteran trees will not be supported. Proposals for development which involve the loss of other mature trees will only be supported in exceptional circumstances and where an adequate compensation scheme has been agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

A Wildlife Corridor and the Network Enhancement Zone are shown on the Policies Map. Proposals for development in these areas must demonstrate how they contribute to the improvement of biodiversity in these areas.

Development within the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI identified on the Policies Map, or areas likely to have an impact on it will not be supported unless the benefits of the development in the location clearly outweigh both the likely impact on the features of the SSSI and the impacts on the national network of SSSIs.

All new development (except those identified as exceptions in the Environment Act) will be expected to deliver at least 10% measurable biodiversity net gain.

Policy ANP5: Local Green Spaces

The sites listed below and shown on the Policies Map are designated as areas of Local Green Space which will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt:

LGS1: Land north and east of St. Omer Road (Acklington)

LGS2: Land and play area to the north of Churchill Way (Acklington)

LGS3: Land to the southwest of Churchill Way (Acklington)

LGS4: Rigg and Furrow fields on the north side of B6345 (Acklington)

LGS5: Open space in Guyzance Village

Policy ANP6: Guyzance Conservation Area and Guyzance Village

Proposals for development within the Guyzance Conservation Area must preserve or enhance the special interest of the conservation area in terms of its historic, architectural, industrial, agricultural and landscape value as defined in the Guyzance Conservation Area Appraisal and respect the prevailing density and form of the conservation area.

Any proposals which would result in harm to the special interest of the conservation area must provide clear and convincing justification. Where less than substantial harm arises, a clear public benefit must be demonstrated.

Due to the importance of open spaces within Guyzance Conservation Area, all proposals within the main built form of the settlement of Guyzance will be limited to proposals comprising the sympathetic conversion, extension or redevelopment of existing buildings.

All proposals for involving the creation of new residential units, including conversions, within the Guyzance Conservation Area must comply with Policy ANP2 which secures principal residency.

ANP7: Non-designated Heritage Assets

Non-designated heritage assets in the neighbourhood area are identified on the Policies Map and identified in Appendix A. Development proposals affecting any non-designated heritage asset or its setting, must be sensitively designed having regard to the historic significance of the heritage asset and its setting.

Appendix B



Mr Rob Naples
Northumberland County Council
Communities & Infrastructure
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Direct Dial:
Our ref: PL00793398

27 June 2023

Dear Mr Naples

**Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004: Regulation 9
Acklington Neighbourhood Plan: SEA Screening Opinion, June 2023**

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion. As the public body that advises on England's historic environment, we are pleased to offer our comments.

Based on the analysis set out in the Screening Opinion, and within the areas of interest to Historic England, we agree that the emerging plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and, therefore, it does not need SEA. In coming to this view we have taken the following factors into consideration:

- The plan area contains a number of heritage assets including several listed buildings, a scheduled monument, and the potential for non-designated assets.
- Heritage assets are fragile and irreplaceable and can be damaged by change through development both directly and indirectly by development in their setting.
- The plan is not expected to allocate sites for development.

As such, from the perspective of our area of interest, the need for SEA of the draft plan can be screened out as it is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects. However, the views of the other two statutory consultees should be taken into account before you conclude on whether SEA is needed. According to Regulation 11 of the above Regulations, I look forward to receiving a copy of your determination in this case.

We reserve the right to review our opinion should the plan change materially in its content and direction. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries relating to our comments or would like any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Jules Brown



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HistoricEngland.org.uk



Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.

Date: 14 July 2023
Our ref: 439469
Your ref: Acklington Neighbourhood Plan



Mr Rob Naples
Neighbourhood Planning
Northumberland County Council

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Dear Mr Naples

Acklington Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Screening Opinion Consultation

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 23 June 2023

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Screening Request: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes are unlikely.

The proposed neighbourhood plan is unlikely to significantly affect any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection area (SPA), Ramsar wetland or sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs') or a Ramsar wetland. The plan area is unlikely to have a significant effect on a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Heritage Coast, and is unlikely to impact upon the purposes for which these areas are designated or defined.

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 is contained within the [Planning Practice Guidance](#). This identifies three triggers that may require the production of an SEA:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this plan is likely to affect protected species to such an extent as to require an SEA. Further information is included in Natural England's [standing advice](#) on protected species.

Furthermore, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all environmental assets. The plan may have environmental impacts on priority species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites, soils and best and most versatile agricultural land, or on local landscape character that may be

sufficient to warrant an SEA. Information on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees is set out in Natural England/Forestry Commission [standing advice](#).

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your ecological, landscape and soils advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local soils, best and most versatile agricultural land, landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by the plan before determining whether a SEA is necessary.

Natural England reserves the right to provide further advice on the environmental assessment of the plan. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make. If a SEA is required, Natural England must be consulted at the scoping and environmental report stages.

Please send any new consultations, or further information on this consultation to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Sally Wintle
Consultations Team



Mo, Lucy [REDACTED]
To: Rob Naples



Wed 26/07/2023 2:00 PM

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Hi Rob,

Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to this consultation.

Having reviewed the relevant documents, we are satisfied that the Acklington Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and therefore an SEA is not required.

Regards

Lucy

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