

Alnmouth Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2036

(Referendum Version)



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Prepared by Alnmouth Parish Council

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Foreword

Alnmouth is a wonderful village in a magnificent county. The people who live in Alnmouth know this and over the last twenty years or so more and more visitors are also coming to appreciate its attractions. However, the village is much more than its physical appearance. It is also a vibrant community with many well supported clubs and activities catering for a wide variety of activities for all ages.

The Parish Council is keen to ensure that the community is sustainable. Visitors are welcome and bring advantages and valuable support to local businesses, but to survive and prosper the community needs to promote a mutually beneficial balance between the interests of all parties.

With this in mind, the Parish Council is working to achieve just that. This Plan, whilst simple in scope, is a modest attempt to protect what we have and arrest the inexorable drift towards a community overly dependent upon the holiday interests to an extent that threatens its sustainability.

Shaun Whyte
Chair, Alnmouth Parish Council

1. Introduction

Background and Context for Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.1 The Parish of Alnmouth is geographically relatively small in relation to its neighbours. In terms of population it is dominated by the village of Alnmouth, but also includes the small settlement of High Buston.
- 1.2 The Parish, according to the 2011 census, has a population of 445 the vast majority of whom live in Alnmouth village. The village is a vibrant community with three pubs, a hotel, Post Office, Ex-Servicemen's Club as well as a number of eateries and shops. The Hindmarsh Hall acts as the Village Hall and enjoys an ever-growing usage under the management of a professional body of Trustees. Alnmouth has two churches: St John the Baptist and the Methodist Chapel, as well as the Alnmouth Village Golf Club which is the oldest 9-hole links course in the country.
- 1.3 The village enjoys a remarkably large variety of community activities for its size. These include a well subscribed Women's Institute, Camera Club, Autumn Club (History), a Skiff Association, a Sailing Club as well as a Football club and the Alnmouth & Lesbury Cricket Club. Appendix A provides a more detailed snapshot of the Parish.
- 1.4 Development in the 19th and 20th centuries within Alnmouth village has resulted in a densely packed townscape. In addition, the constraints of river and sea mean there is limited scope for significant new development within the village. Nevertheless, there is some scope for further development and the Parish Council is keen to ensure that the village community is protected by attaching a permanent residency condition upon all new dwellings created.

What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

- 1.5 Communities were given new powers by The Localism Act 2011 to shape development in their local areas by establishing a neighbourhood development plan ('Neighbourhood Plan'). This Neighbourhood Plan, when completed, will be used to decide planning applications within Alnmouth Parish.

The aim of the Alnmouth Parish Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.6 The Alnmouth Parish Neighbourhood Plan is a single-issue plan and is designed to ensure that a permanent residency condition is attached to the creation of any new dwelling in the Parish.
- 1.7 Alnmouth village is a lively community and, given its physical proximity to the attractive river estuary of the River Aln, its clean wide beaches and the many coastal walking opportunities, it inevitably attracts many visitors. Many come for the day but in recent years there has been a significant rise in those choosing to enjoy what the village has to offer by way of staying in Holiday Lets or acquiring Second Homes. This trend brings advantages as the village may otherwise not enjoy the number of food and drink outlets it currently does, but conversely there is the risk that if the trend continues it will threaten the community spirit as fewer and fewer residents live in the village permanently.
- 1.8 Therefore, the purpose of the plan is to ensure that any new dwelling is to be restricted to permanent residency status. This will include new builds, but also where large houses are subdivided to create multiple dwellings.

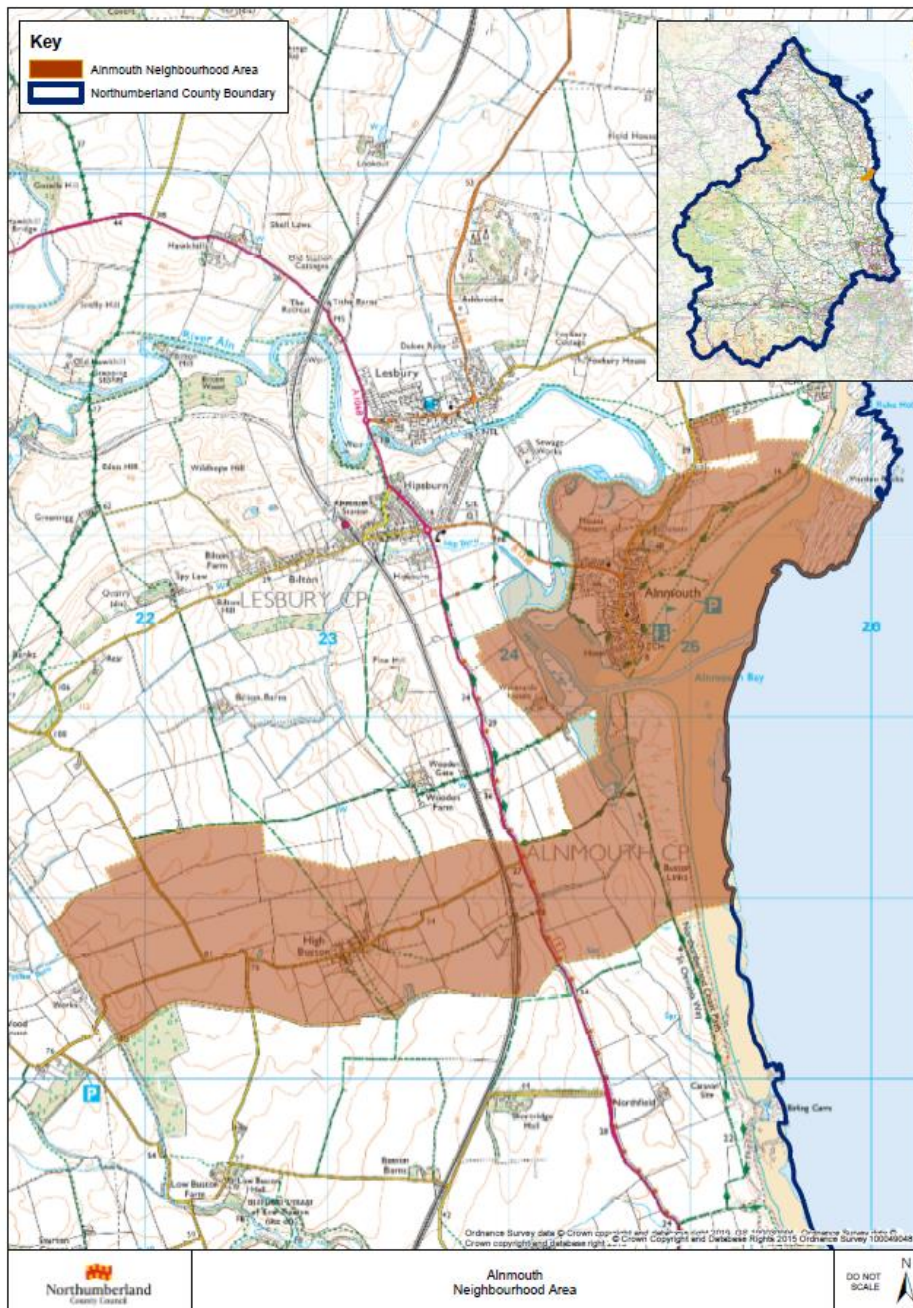
National and Local Planning Policy Context

- 1.9 The National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF', February 2019) and National Planning Practice Guidance provide the most up to date planning policy and advice from Central Government. The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national planning policy and guidance and be in general conformity with strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area. The development plan consists of policies in the Alnwick District LDF Core Strategy Development Plan Document (October 2007), and 'saved' policies in the Alnwick District Wide Local Plan (April 1997). A Local Plan for Northumberland has been prepared and is currently undergoing examination.
- 1.10 The Basic Conditions Statement which will be submitted with the Plan will provide an assessment of the extent to which the Neighbourhood Plan has regard to, or is in general conformity with, these policies.

Alnmouth Parish Neighbourhood Area

- 1.11 The Alnmouth Parish Neighbourhood Area consists of the Parish of Alnmouth and includes the village of Alnmouth and the settlement of High Buston.
- 1.12 Northumberland County Council formally designated the Parish as a Neighbourhood Area on 15th October 2019. The Neighbourhood Plan relates only to the Parish of Alnmouth.

Map 1: Alnmouth Parish Neighbourhood Area



What consultation has taken place?

1.13 The Parish Council has carried out two rounds of pre-submission consultation with the local community and other stakeholders. The first round of consultation in March - April 2020 was suspended because of social distancing restrictions in force due to coronavirus. A second pre-submission consultation ran from July – September 2020. The results of these consultations, and information about how the Plan has been amended to incorporate comments is contained in the Consultation Statement which is submitted with the Alnmouth Neighbourhood Plan.

What happens next?

1.14 The Plan was subject to independent examination in December 2020. That examination concluded that the Plan met all necessary legal tests and the Plan will now be the subject of a local referendum in which people eligible to vote in Alnmouth Parish will be given the opportunity to decide whether the Plan should be brought into force legally and subsequently be used in making decisions on planning applications in the area.

1.15 Unfortunately, the referendum cannot be held until current restrictions on social distancing are removed. The Government has published regulations that prevent referendums being held before 5 May 2021. However, the Government has committed to keep these regulations under review. A referendum will be arranged as soon as reasonably practicable.

1.16 The Plan and background supporting documents are available on the County Council's website:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Neighbourhood.aspx>

2. Alnmouth Neighbourhood Plan Policy

Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 The 2001 census showed that 20.1% of the household spaces within Alnmouth Parish had no residents. In 2011 this figure had risen to 35.1%. Of the 27 Parishes in the North Northumberland Coastal Area this 15% increase was the second largest. “No Residents” is taken as a proxy for either Holiday Homes or Second Homes. Further detail is in the Alnmouth Parish Principal Residence Background Paper (March, 2020), which may be viewed on the Parish Council website: www.alnmouthparishcouncil.org.uk. A list of sources used to support this policy is in Appendix B to this Plan.
- 2.2 The policy is proposed in response to the number and increase in the number of second and holiday homes in Alnmouth Parish. While second and holiday homes can bring financial benefits to the area by the way of local spending by holiday makers, the lack of year-round or permanent occupancy raises concerns in terms of a loss of a sense of community, and increased pressure on services especially during the summer months.
- 2.3 The proposed policy would result in controls being introduced on any planning permission granted for new housing in the Parish. This would mean that all new housing could only be occupied as a sole or main home of the occupants and it could not be rented out on a short-term or holiday-let basis or used as a second home. Planning permission would not be granted for new homes unless these policy restrictions were applied.

Planning Policy 1

Principal Residence Housing

Proposals for all new housing, including that created by change of use and by subdivision of existing dwellings, but excluding replacement dwellings, will only be supported where occupation is restricted in perpetuity to ensure that each new dwelling is occupied only as a Principal Residence. New second homes will not be supported.

Principal Residence housing is that which is occupied as the sole or main home of the occupants and where the occupants spend the majority of their time when not working away from home.

This restriction will be secured through a planning condition or, if necessary, through a planning obligation secured under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or any subsequent legislation.

The occupier will be required to provide evidence that they are meeting the terms of the occupation restriction whenever requested to do so by Northumberland County Council.

3. Enforcement, Delivery, Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 For any policy to be effective it must be shown that it is enforceable. Otherwise credibility is lost and it becomes redundant. The planning obligations or conditions placed on any relevant planning permission in accordance with the policy in the Plan will require occupiers to maintain and provide documentary evidence that the dwelling is being occupied only as a Principal Residence when requested to do so by Northumberland County Council.
- 3.2 Documents requested to determine whether occupant(s) are complying with the occupancy controls could include those that demonstrate occupant(s) are, at that time:
- a. registered on the local electoral register
 - b. registered with a local GP or other medical practitioner.
 - c. the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a child or children registered to attend local school.

Details of other property ownership and occupation elsewhere may also be requested. This is not a definitive list and other evidence may be required for additional clarification.

- 3.3 Effective monitoring is essential to ensure the Plan is achieving sustainable development in the Neighbourhood Area. It also provides information to establish whether the policy is effective and whether there are changes needed in the longer term.
- 3.4 Decision-making on planning applications still rests with Northumberland County Council which has its own monitoring procedures in place. Alnmouth Parish Council will, however, undertake its own monitoring from time to time to evaluate the level of progress being made towards delivering the objective of the Plan.
- 3.5 The Alnmouth Parish Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be formally 'made' before the new Local Plan for Northumberland County has been adopted. It may therefore be necessary to review the Neighbourhood Plan in the light of any significant policy shifts. However, the Plan has been developed in close partnership with Northumberland County Council, giving careful attention to the emerging new Local Plan. As a result, that emerging Local Plan is likely to be well-aligned with the Alnmouth Plan.

Appendix A. A ‘Snapshot’ of Alnmouth Parish

Indicator	Data
Population	<p>The 2011 Census shows that the population of Alnmouth Parish at this time was 445, down from 562 in the 2001 Census.</p> <p>0-24 year-olds accounted for 15.2% of the population. 38.9% of the population was over the age of 65 and 45.8% fell into the 25-64 age group. 95 residents rated their health as only fair to very bad</p>
Households	<p>In 2011, there were 339 Household spaces of which 244 were whole houses or bungalows with the balance of 95 represented by flats or maisonettes (Census, 2011)</p> <p>The 2001 census showed that 20% of household spaces within Alnmouth Parish had no residents. In the 2011 Census this figure had risen to 35%. Of the 27 Parishes in the North Northumberland Coastal Area this 15% increase was the second largest. “No Residents” is taken as a proxy for either Holiday Lets or Second Homes.</p>
Amenities	<p>Alnmouth has an art gallery, two hotels, six shops/cafes, five B&Bs, three Pubs, a Friary, Post Office, The Hindmarsh Hall (Village Hall) and an Ex Servicemen’s Club. It also has a nine-hole Golf Course and Clubhouse (NCC Business Rate data).</p> <p>There is a Methodist Chapel and the actively supported Anglican Church of St John the Baptist.</p> <p>A few yards from the boundary lie the Alnmouth & Lesbury Cricket Club, Alnmouth FC and Hipsburn Primary School which caters for 3-11 year olds.</p>
Transport	<p>Irregular bus services operate, but Arriva’s Newcastle to Berwick service no longer travels round the village and only touches the edge. Travelsure provide an infrequent service from Alnwick to Belford which does travel round the village loop.</p> <p>Alnmouth Railway station handles London to Edinburgh LNER trains as well as local and cross-country services. The station is a mile from the Village boundary.</p>

Appendix B. Evidence Documents

- NOMIS 2001 Census Key Statistics Report
Available at:
https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2001_ks/report?compare=
- Northumberland County Council, National Non-Domestic Rates Full Listing 01-NOV-2016
Available at: <https://opendata.northumberland.gov.uk/>
- Northumberland County Council, National Non-Domestic Rates Full Listing 01-NOV-2019
Available at: <https://opendata.northumberland.gov.uk/>
- Northumberland County Council (July, 2018) Northumberland Local Plan Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation Second and Holiday Homes Technical Paper.
Available at:
<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Studies%20and%20Evidence%20Reports/Housing%20Studies/Technical%20Papers%20for%20Housing/NCC-Second-and-Holiday-Homes-Technical-Paper.pdf>
- Northumberland County Council (February, 2020) Alnmouth Parish Principal Residence Background Paper.
Available at: <https://www.alnmouthparishcouncil.org.uk/>
- Northumberland Knowledge 2011 Census Fact Sheet (Alnmouth Parish)
Available at:
<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Northumberland-Knowledge/NK%20place/Parishes%20and%20towns/Parish%20fact%20sheets/FactSheetParishAlnmouth.pdf>