

Neighbourhood Planning Update

How to CONTACT us...

We are here to support parishes through the neighbourhood planning process.

For further information and advice please contact the neighbourhood planning team:

Telephone: 0345 600
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Email:

NeighbourhoodPlanning@northumberland.gov.uk

Website:

www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Neighbourhood.aspx

Alternatively, write to:

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Planning Services
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Morpeth
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The future of planning?

The government is currently consulting on proposed reforms to the Planning System. These proposals are set out in the **White Paper: Planning for the Future**.

The government proposes to retain Neighbourhood Planning. They wish to make it easier to develop Neighbourhood Plans by supporting communities to make better use of digital tools. They also wish to encourage their continued use, and to help spread their use further, particularly in towns and cities.

But there may be changes to the content of future neighbourhood plans: the government is considering whether they should become more focused, to reflect proposals for reforms to Local Plans. The government appears to suggest a more focused role for neighbourhood planning in producing design guides to shape the form and appearance of development in their areas.

Specifically, the government is asking two questions:

13(a). Do you agree that Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system?

13(b). How can the neighbourhood planning process be developed to meet our objectives, such as in the use of digital tools and reflecting community preferences about design?

If you want to find out more or indeed respond, the White Paper is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

The consultation closes on 29 October 2020. The Neighbourhood Planning Team will be responding to this consultation; we will share our response with Town and Parish Councils.

If you have any queries, please get in touch with the team.



Northumberland
County Council

COVID-19 Update

There have been some changes to neighbourhood planning in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

All neighbourhood planning referendums scheduled to take place, between 16 March 2020 and 5 May 2021 are postponed until 6 May 2021. Neighbourhood Plans at this stage will be given significant weight in decision-making, so far as the plan is material to the application.

*Town and Parish Councils can undertake **public consultation and publicity** for their neighbourhood plans so long as this is done in a safe and equitable manner. More information is available on our website.*

*Due to the impacts of coronavirus, the **Basic Grant** allowance has increased from £9,000 to £10,000.*



What's happening around the County?

There are currently ten made neighbourhood plans in Northumberland. These plans form part of the Development Plan for their areas and planning decisions must be made in accordance with their policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

A number of Neighbourhood Plans are at Referendum stage. **Hexham**, **Embleton**, **Lesbury** and **Wooler** Neighbourhood Plans have successfully passed independent examination and will proceed to referendum when it is safe to do so. These plans will be given significant weight in decision making.

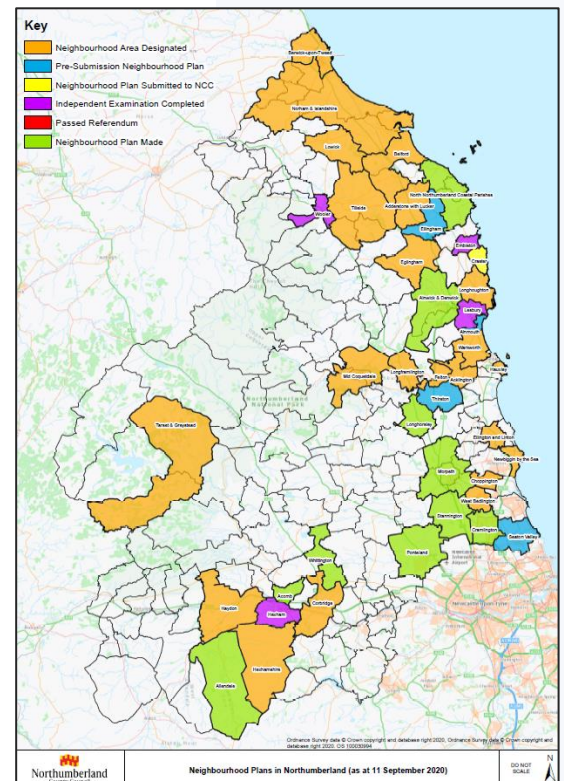
Craster Parish Council has submitted its draft Neighbourhood Plan to the County Council. The Plan contains a single planning policy relating to a principal residency restriction.

The County Council are inviting comments on the submission draft Plan until 2 October 2020. The Plan currently carries limited weight in decision making.

Several neighbourhood plans are at pre-submission stage. **Alnmouth** Parish has recently completed Regulation 14 Consultation on its draft plan; and the **Thirston** and **Seaton Valley** plans are currently out for consultation.

Many other parishes are at an earlier stage of plan-making and are carrying out numerous and varied activities, including community consultation, gathering evidence, preparing draft policies and screening their draft plans for environmental effects.

More information can be found on our website, including a larger version of the map, below.



New Use Class Orders at a Glance

From 01 September 2020, shops, businesses and other services can diversify and change to other uses without needing to apply for planning permission.

Planning law organises different types of housing, businesses, commercial and community facilities into various 'Use Classes'.

The new regulations introduce the following new use classes:

- Class E: Commercial, Business and Service;
- Class F1: Learning and Non-residential institutions, such as schools and libraries;
- Class F2: Local community uses, such as recreation and leisure, and small, local shops.

Existing use classes A, B1, and D will cease to exist. The majority of uses in these use classes will be 'grouped' together into the new 'Class E', which will include: retail; offices; restaurants; financial, professional or other commercial services; publicly accessible indoor sport, recreation or fitness; publicly available medical or health services; crèches, day nurseries and day centres; and industrial uses which do not harm amenity.

Major Changes to Use Classes Order

What are the implications for Neighbourhood Planning?

The new regulations make changes to the use classes system, which the government hopes will:

"...help our high streets and town centres to provide more space for new businesses and help them to adapt quickly to what consumers and businesses need"



More flexible high streets?

Greater flexibility for commercial and business uses?

The most significant change is the creation of a new "Commercial, Business and Service" use called "Class E". This brings together a wide variety of uses, all of which are now considered to be in the same use class.

Planning permission is not required for changes of use within the same use class. This means that many types of business user will be able to change the uses of properties without seeking planning permission. This may limit the opportunities for Neighbourhood Plans to shape the development of businesses and services.

For example, a Neighbourhood Plan may seek to preserve town centre shops for retail use, but the new rules will allow shops to change into another 'Class E' use without needing to submit a planning application.

Similarly, policies to safeguard existing employment areas may lose their intended effect, as business units will be free to transform into other uses such as supermarkets or day nurseries.

These changes may be welcome: some argue it will make it easier for communities to grow and change to meet local demands.

Greater say on pubs and takeaways?

Under the new rules proposals to open or alter such facilities will need to submit a planning application, and therefore must also comply with policies set out in Local and Neighbourhood Plans.

More protection for community facilities and services?

The new 'F2 Local community' use class seeks to protect those facilities which serve the community. For example, it provides some protection for small, local shops, which would not enjoy the same freedoms to change as a shop in Class E.



Technical Support for Neighbourhood Planning

Groups facing complex issues, such as allocating sites for development, can apply to the government for Technical Support. This is free of charge and is usually delivered by AECOM.

There are currently 8 technical support packages available. More detail can be found on the Locality site:

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/technical-support/>

Haydon and Eglington Parish Councils have been working with AECOM to produce Design Codes for their Neighbourhood Areas.

Haydon Parish's Design Code provides detailed guidance for developers to influence the design of future proposed developments so that they are a 'good fit' with the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Newbiggin-by-the-Sea Town Council has commissioned AECOM to produce a Housing Needs Assessment to look at housing demand in the Parish in addition to local requirements for affordable housing, and different tenures and type and size of dwellings.



EYE ON IT

Permitted Development Rights

From 31 August 2020, the following additional permitted development rights are available:

- the demolition and rebuilding of “vacant and redundant” office and light industrial buildings into dwellings, without planning permission.
- the upward extension, by up to two storeys, of existing postwar-built homes. These rights will also be extended to the creation of new homes above terraces, offices and shops, without planning permission.

Both rights will require that **prior approval** is sought from the local authority prior to commencement of the development, in respect of matters including transport and highway issues, flood risk, contamination risks, impact on amenity of the existing building and neighbouring premises, and the impact on any protected views.

More information is available on our website.

Our New Website!

WE have updated the NCC Neighbourhood Planning Website to keep it fresh, informative, and user-friendly.

We have introduced new features such as a newsfeed, where you can find the latest updates on neighbourhood planning and the wider planning world.

We have also begun to upload detailed advice notes on a range of topics to support you through the neighbourhood planning process.

We would really value your feedback on our website. You can send any comments or requests for extra features to the team at:

NeighbourhoodPlanning@northumberland.gov.uk