



Northumberland
County Council

Belford

Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental
Assessment (SEA)

Environmental Report

Prepared by the Neighbourhood Planning Team,
Northumberland County Council for Belford Parish Council

November 2022

Quality Control

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Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

- i. Belford Parish Council has prepared a neighbourhood plan for Belford civil parish area. Once in force, the Belford Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) will form part of the statutory development plan for Northumberland and its policies must then be used when making decisions on planning applications.

What is the purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment?

- ii. This document is the Environmental Report of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Belford Neighbourhood Plan. This report has been prepared in order to meet the obligations set out in The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) which implements European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive) into UK law.
- iii. The aim of undertaking a SEA is to identify and assess the potentially significant environmental effects of a plan; and to suggest measures to avoid, reduce or manage damaging environmental impacts, and enhance positive effects. The SEA process enables engagement with stakeholders and certain specified consultees to allow them to comment on and shape the approach taken to assessment and on the outcomes.
- iv. The need for SEA was triggered by the need for 'appropriate assessment' of the Plan under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (HRA). The HRA screening process, undertaken by the County Council, determined that appropriate assessment was necessary because the Plan would be likely to have significant effects on European sites. This conclusion automatically triggered the need for SEA. An environmental assessment must therefore be undertaken, and an environmental report prepared for submission with the Neighbourhood Plan to meet the requirements of Regulation 15(1)(e) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- v. This Environmental Report describes the assessed impact on the environment of the Submission version of the Belford Neighbourhood Plan (November 2022).

What has the Strategic Environmental Assessment involved so far?

- vi. The first step is to decide whether or not an SEA is required. This is referred to as 'screening'. The need for a SEA for the Belford Neighbourhood Plan was triggered by a separate assessment (the HRA). Accordingly, no further consideration was required about whether the Plan should be subject to SEA. Once 'screened in' there are five stages in undertaking an SEA:

Stage A: Scoping

The scoping stage of the SEA process seeks to ensure that the 'scope' of the assessment covers the likely significant environmental effects of the Plan. It describes the approach proposed for undertaking an environmental assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan and for preparing the environmental report. A scoping report was produced and consultation took place with the 'consultation bodies' in accordance with the SEA Regulations, specifically: Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.

Stage B: Testing

This stage is about assessing the Neighbourhood Plan. This involves:

- Testing the Neighbourhood Plan objectives and policies;
- Examining and assessing any reasonable alternatives;
- Predicting the effects;
- Evaluating and scoring the effects;
- Identifying measures to mitigate adverse effects and maximise positive impacts; and
- Proposing measures for monitoring the environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Stage C: Reporting

This Environmental Report presents the outcome of the assessment of the likely environmental effects arising from the Pre-Submission Draft Plan. The assessment may be reviewed and modified in future should significant changes be made to the Plan prior to it being brought into force.

Stage D: Consulting

This Report will be subject to consultation with prescribed consultation bodies and others who have an interest in the Plan and in the area. Consultation on the Environmental Report will take place alongside the statutory stage of consultation on the Pre-Submission Draft Plan.

Stage E: Monitoring

This stage will not take place until the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' (brought into force) and the effects of implementing the Plan can be monitored.

SEA Scope and Limitations

- vii. Taking a proportionate approach is a key principle in undertaking SEA. The process should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of a plan. The scope of the SEA of the Belford Neighbourhood Plan has been influenced by the relatively small geographic area covered by the Plan and the overall strategy, vision

and objectives. It has also been informed by a higher level 'Sustainability Appraisal' of the now adopted Northumberland Local Plan. That process includes an assessment of the environmental impacts of introducing the Local Plan.

- viii. SEA is not an exact science and there are certain difficulties commonly encountered in undertaking any SEA. For example, the baseline analysis which describes the current situation of various factors is dependent upon the availability of information. Projecting what might happen with or without the Plan or considering the relative effects of implementing alternatives is also inherently difficult and requires a degree of judgement.

What does the Strategic Environmental Assessment tell us?

- ix. The area covered by the Belford Neighbourhood Plan is environmentally sensitive, hosting several important nature conservation sites. Some of the key environmental issues based on the current state of the environment and how it is likely to evolve without the Neighbourhood Plan include:
- The area is rich in biodiversity. There may be opportunities for enhancement but there are also potential pressures which could lead to disturbance or depletion of habitats and species. It will be important to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to prevent any deterioration, or ensure improvement in the status of the current condition of Lindisfarne SSSI, Spindlestone Heugh SSSI and Holburn Lake and Moss SSSI, along with any other relevant geological sites, including through appropriate improvements in land management measures.
 - Some areas of the Neighbourhood Area are at a greater risk of flooding from fluvial flooding as well as surface water flooding. While the areas at greater risk of flooding from these sources avoid the built form of Belford more severe weather could result in properties in the Neighbourhood Area becoming more at risk of flooding from these sources.
 - Reliance upon private vehicles is high reflecting the rural nature of the area. This is the main cause of rising carbon emissions in the County. There are significant barriers to reducing carbon emissions. The changing climate variables (temperature / rainfall) have the potential to affect the area.
 - The health and well-being of those in the Neighbourhood Area is generally good. However, this could change relatively over time as a result of there being an increasingly ageing population. The quality and availability of existing community facilities is limited which could affect health and wellbeing.

- There are currently 2 designated heritage assets in the Neighbourhood Area which appear in Historic England's 'Heritage At Risk Register'. The Neighbourhood Area does include a number of Grade II listed buildings. Since Grade II listed buildings outside London (other than places of worship) are excluded from the Register, it is therefore possible that the Neighbourhood Area may also contain heritage assets at risk but which fall outside the remit of the 'Heritage At Risk Register'. There is a designated Conservation Area in Belford, but no Conservation Area Character Appraisal. This may create difficulties in determining the effect development may have on the Conservation Area, other heritage assets within the Conservation Area and their settings.
- The landscape within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Area contains a number of receptors which are sensitive to changes in the landscape. The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010) identifies Landscape Character Areas across Northumberland and assesses their qualities and sensitivities to change and development. There are 4 key landscape character types within the Belford neighbourhood area: Haggerston; Lucker; Farne Islands Coast; and Belford Hills. Each area has its own particular sensitivities outlined in the Scoping Report and these sensitivities need to be managed and not intensified through future development.

Environmental Report (November 2021)

- x. An assessment was carried out on the November 2021 version of the Plan. The assessment demonstrated that the Neighbourhood Plan objectives are in accordance with the SEA environmental objectives, having a largely neutral or slightly positive effect.
- xi. The assessment demonstrated that individually and collectively the policies of the Belford Neighbourhood Plan serve to support development that has limited environmental impact and the Plan provides appropriate tools to ensure mitigation of any potential negative environmental effects. The Plan encourages the protection and enhancement of the environment as a whole, and provides an appropriate framework, working alongside other plans and programmes, to protect and enhance the environment. The assessment concluded that, subject to two modifications, implementation of the Plan would lead to no significant adverse environmental impacts and would provide some positive environmental effects. The modifications were:
 - A new policy should be included to address impacts from development on water quality.
 - Policy 6 should be modified to reflect advice provided by the Environment Agency to seek protection of existing flood defences, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change.

- xii. In addition, Belford Parish Council made minor modifications to two other policies concerning overnight holiday accommodation (Policy 11), and development in the Belford Conservation Area (Policy 13). These modifications were incorporated into the pre-submission version of the Plan (April 2022).

Environmental Report Addendum (April 2022)

- xiii. These modifications required further consideration through the SEA process. The Addendum Report (April 2022), which should be read alongside this Environmental Report, concluded that overall, the Belford Neighbourhood Plan is likely to continue to lead to minor positive or neutral environmental effects. The Addendum Report concluded that no further modification was required to any of the policies assessed to address any likely significant positive or negative environmental effects of their implementation.

Environmental Report – November 2022

- xiv. In summer 2022, the Parish Council consulted on the SEA Environmental Report (in line with Regulation 13 of the 2004 SEA Regulations) alongside the Regulation 14 publicity and consultation on their pre-submission draft plan.
- xv. No representations were made by the consultation bodies or any other party on the SEA Environmental Report and Addendum Report. However, the assessment and the Environmental Report has been reviewed and, where necessary, revised to take account of the subsequent changes made to the Plan by the Parish Council. These comprise very minor changes, for improved clarity, to the following policies:
- Policy 1: New Housing Development
 - Policy 2: Community Led Housing
 - Policy 3: Accessible and Adaptable Housing
 - Policy 7: Belford Village Centre
 - Policy 8: Broadband Infrastructure and Telecommunications
 - Policy 9: Rural Business Development and Tourism
 - Policy 11: Overnight Tourist Accommodation
 - Policy 12: Provision and Improvement of Pedestrian and Cycle Routes
 - Policy 13: Belford Conservation Area
 - Policy 14: Design in New Development
 - Policy 15: Protected Habitats and Species
 - Policy 17: Valued Landscapes
- xvi. This report is the latest version and is based on the submission draft of the Belford Neighbourhood Plan (November 2022).

Next Steps

- xvii. The final draft Neighbourhood Plan will now be submitted by the Parish Council to Northumberland County Council, along with the Environmental Report and other supporting documents required by legislation. The County Council will then consider whether the Plan and the various submission documents meet certain legal requirements. Provided these requirements are met the Plan will then progress to Independent Examination.

1. Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 Belford Parish Council has prepared a neighbourhood development plan, often referred to simply as a 'neighbourhood plan', for the civil parish of Belford.
- 1.2 The Localism Act 2011 introduced neighbourhood planning powers. These various powers are contained in modifications to the Planning Acts and allow parish councils and, where parishes don't exist, groups of people from the community, called neighbourhood forums, to formulate neighbourhood development plans and neighbourhood development orders. These documents are intended to guide and shape development in a particular 'neighbourhood area'. Neighbourhood planning powers are discretionary and there is no particular obligation on parish councils or local communities to prepare plans. However, where neighbourhood plans are prepared they must have regard to national policies and must be in general conformity with local strategic planning policies.
- 1.3 To be brought into legal force, which is known as being 'made', a neighbourhood development plan must pass an independent examination and meet certain tests known as the 'basic conditions' which are defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These include that the making of the plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations.
- 1.4 One of these EU obligations is European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. This is often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (the SEA Directive). The need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) must be determined and, where necessary, an assessment of the effects a plan may have on the environment must be completed prior to a plan being brought into legal force.
- 1.5 The SEA Directive '*seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing plans and programmes*'. The SEA Directive is transposed into UK legislation through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). It is these regulations with which a neighbourhood plan must comply.
- 1.6 It is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to decide whether a neighbourhood plan complies with relevant legislative obligations. The Local Planning Authority for Belford Parish is Northumberland County Council. The County Council has confirmed that SEA is required for the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan. This requirement was triggered by an assessment under the Habitats Regulations which concluded that the introduction of certain policies in the Plan would be likely to have

significant effects on sites protected for their ecological importance at a European level. This automatically means that a SEA must be completed before a plan can be brought into force.

- 1.7 Beyond its duty to advise and assist Belford Parish Council with neighbourhood planning¹, Northumberland County Council offered additional assistance by undertaking the SEA process and preparing this report. This additional support is akin to the role of an independent consultancy and was offered to assist in light of the limited resources available to the Parish Council and the lack of support available from any other sources, including the government's national support programme for neighbourhood planning.
- 1.8 The outcome of the SEA process is the preparation of an 'Environmental Report'. This Environmental Report has been prepared in line with the procedures prescribed in the SEA Regulations.

Structure of the Report

- 1.9 Regulation 12 of the SEA Regulations specifically sets out the requirements of an Environmental Report. It must identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan, and of the reasonable alternatives, taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan. The Environmental Report must clearly show how these requirements have been met.
- 1.10 In order to meet requirements described in the SEA Regulations, and to produce a user friendly document, the remainder of this report has been structured to include the following chapters:

Chapter 2: The Strategic Environmental Assessment Approach

Chapter 3: Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan and policy context

Chapter 4: Environmental baseline position

Chapter 5: The Strategic Environmental Assessment Framework used to appraise the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Chapter 6: Appraisal of the effects of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan, and reasonable alternatives, on the environment

Chapter 7: Monitoring and Next steps

¹ as required by paragraph 3 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Scope and Limitations

- 1.11 In accordance with national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)², Strategic Environmental Assessment should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of a neighbourhood plan. It should focus on the environmental impacts which are likely to be significant. To this end, the SEA does not need to be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is considered to be appropriate for the content and level of detail in the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.12 Furthermore, in undertaking the assessment, it is necessary to be mindful of the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the plan making process in order to avoid duplication of assessment. Accordingly, the SEA process has been informed by the Sustainability Appraisal of the adopted Northumberland Local Plan, which includes an SEA of that Plan.
- 1.13 It should be noted that in undertaking any SEA, there are certain limitations which are referred to throughout this Environmental Report. For example, the assessment is based on the information found to be available at the time of undertaking the SEA. There may be additional information, which has not been identified or in some instances the available information may be dated, such as data derived from the census. In addition, projecting or forecasting the future situation, with or without the plan is not a precise science. It involves a level of judgement to be applied, including considering the wide range of external factors which could have an indirect influence on the environment over time.

² Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 11-030-20150209

2. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Approach

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

- 2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects on the environment of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternative approaches to achieve the objectives of that plan. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising positive effects. Through this approach, the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the emerging Plan's contribution to achieving sustainable development.
- 2.2 In some circumstances a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be undertaken as a part of a 'Sustainability Appraisal'. The Sustainability Appraisal process has a broader remit than SEA. In addition to assessing the likely effects of a plan or programme on the environment, a Sustainability Appraisal involves examining the likely effects of a plan in social and economic terms.
- 2.3 Neighbourhood development plans are 'development plan documents' for the purposes of the Planning Acts. Accordingly, 'Sustainability Appraisal' is not required. The SEA of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan therefore addresses only the requirements of the SEA Directive and the SEA Regulations. Whilst it does not constitute a Sustainability Appraisal, it has informed wider considerations by the Parish Council in respect of ensuring the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development which is one of the 'basic conditions' required of neighbourhood plans.

Determining the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.4 Not every neighbourhood plan requires SEA. The need for SEA is influenced by the objectives and policies proposed in the plan and the nature of the area to which the plan applies and any likely significant environmental effects. In order to determine if a neighbourhood plan requires SEA, a screening process is necessary. Screening the need for SEA includes consideration of requirements set out in The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'). Where a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) concludes that significant environmental effects are likely as a result of the objectives or policies contained in a plan the SEA Regulations indicate that this automatically triggers the need for SEA.
- 2.5 The Habitats Regulations require that competent authorities assess the potential impacts of land use plans on the Natura 2000 network of European protected sites. For the purposes of the Regulations, Northumberland County Council is the

competent authority. The purpose of assessment is to determine whether there will be any 'likely significant effects' on any European site as a result of the plan's implementation, either alone or 'in combination' with other plans or projects; and, if so, whether these effects will result in any adverse effects on that site's integrity with reference to the site's conservation objectives. The process by which the effects of a plan or programme on European sites are assessed is known as 'Habitats Regulations Assessment' (HRA).

- 2.6 In accordance with the Habitats Regulations, an HRA screening exercise was undertaken to identify the likely impacts of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan upon European sites, either alone or 'in combination' with other projects or plans, and to consider whether these effects are likely to be significant.
- 2.7 The screening exercise found that the possibility of significant effects could not be excluded, therefore it was deemed necessary to undertake a more detailed assessment, known as 'Appropriate Assessment (AA)'. This conclusion automatically triggered the need for SEA. The AA is reported separately from the SEA of the Plan, but importantly has helped to inform the appraisal process, particularly in respect of the potential impact the introduction of some policies may have on biodiversity and habitats.

SEA of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.8 The point in the plan-making process when it was determined that SEA should be undertaken, and the time at which this assessment was completed, has had some impact on the evaluation of reasonable alternatives through the SEA process. The extent to which genuine reasonable alternatives were available to assess through the SEA process at the time this assessment was undertaken is, to some extent, a reflection of progress at the strategic planning level made by the County Council in the preparation of the Northumberland Local Plan. More particularly, the need for indicative local housing requirements for neighbourhood areas was introduced through paragraphs 66 and 67 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Those requirements, including for Belford Parish, have now been included in the draft Northumberland Local Plan which is at an advanced stage in the plan-making process.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Stages

- 2.9 The SEA Regulations prescribe a process for undertaking SEA and specific guidance on what must be addressed at each stage. The stages for the SEA of the Neighbourhood Plan are included in Planning Practice Guidance³ and are described in Figure 1.

³ Paragraph: 033 Reference ID: 11-033-20150209

Figure 1: Stages in the SEA Process

Stage	Tasks
Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives. 2. Collect baseline information. 3. Identify environmental problems. 4. Develop SEA objectives. 5. Consult on the scope of SEA.
Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Test the Plan objectives against the SEA objectives. 2. Develop the Plan options including reasonable alternatives. 3. Predict the likely effects of the Plan, including alternatives. 4. Evaluate the likely effects of the Plan, including alternatives. 5. Consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects. 6. Propose measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Plan.
Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present the predicted environmental effects of the Plan, including alternatives, in an Environmental Report.
Stage D: Consultation and decision-making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult the public and Consultation Bodies on the draft Plan and the Environmental Report. 2. Assess significant changes to the Plan to ensure that the environmental implications are assessed and taken into account. 3. Make decisions on how the Environmental Report and consultees' opinions have been taken into account in deciding the final form of the Plan.
Stage E: Monitoring implementation of the plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop methods for monitoring implementation of the Plan and publish these in a 'post adoption statement'. 2. Monitor significant effects of implementing the Plan. 3. Respond to adverse effects.

Stage A

- 2.10 The SEA Regulations require that *“When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”*. In England, these consultation bodies are Natural

England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The consultation bodies were consulted on the scope of the SEA for the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan in April 2019.

2.11 The Scoping Report included:

- A review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of European, national, regional and local plans, policies and programmes relevant to the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan – this work has been kept under review, but has not required updating since the scoping stage and is presented in Appendix A.
- A baseline against which the Neighbourhood Plan could be assessed – based on the anticipated scope of the neighbourhood plan’s effects, the baseline position was presented in respect of the following environmental topics:
 - a. Air
 - b. Biodiversity, flora and fauna
 - c. Climatic factors
 - d. Population and human health
 - e. Soil
 - f. Water
 - g. Historic environment
 - h. Landscape
- Key environmental issues or problems for the Neighbourhood Area – based on the above topics, the key issues and problems were identified. Where the issues were of little or no relevance to the Plan they would not be addressed or afforded more limited weight.
- An SEA Framework – the SEA framework is a set of objectives and guiding questions used to determine and assess the likely significant effects on the environment of the objectives and policies in the Plan. It is a recognised method by which the likely effects of the plan and alternative options can be described, analysed and compared. The SEA framework is set out in Section 5.

2.15 Consultation responses to the SEA Scoping document are provided in Appendix B to this Report and were taken into account and informed the subsequent stages of assessment. Scoping reports were carried out on earlier versions of the draft neighbourhood plan, including that which covered the previous neighbourhood area. Following change to parish boundaries which significantly increased the size of Belford civil parish a further scoping report was prepared. The consultation responses are as follows:

Historic England: confirmed that heritage could be scoped out of the SEA process.

Environment Agency: *agreed with the Scope of the SEA but suggested a further objective regarding the protection and enhancement of the environment. They also recommended we take account of relevant policies, plans and strategies including our local Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, flood risk strategies, and the Northumbria River Basin Management Plan.*

Natural England: *agreed with the Scope of the SEA.*

Stage B

2.16 Following consultation on the SEA Scoping Report, testing of the objectives and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan was progressed. This involved each of the five actions identified in the defined SEA stages, that is:

- Testing the Plan objectives and policies against the strategic environmental assessment framework;
- Developing the Plan options including reasonable alternatives;
- Evaluating the likely effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and alternatives;
- Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects; and
- Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Neighbourhood Plan

Stage C

2.17 The Environmental Report is prepared. It seeks to present information on the draft Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan and the alternative options considered. The Environmental Report explains the process that was undertaken and provides an assessment setting out how the policies chosen in the draft Plan, and any reasonable alternatives, perform against a range of environmental objectives.

2.18 In accordance with **Stage D**, this report will be subject to consultation. **Stage E** will not take place until the Neighbourhood Plan is made and the effects of implementing the Plan can be monitored.

3. Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan and policy context

Neighbourhood Plans

- 3.1 Communities have a right to use discretionary powers introduced into the Planning Acts in 2011 to produce a neighbourhood development plan, often just known as a 'neighbourhood plan'. Communities are not required by legislation to produce such a plan but they may choose to do so in order to shape development in their area. Local Planning Authorities have a duty to support those groups which choose to pursue a neighbourhood plan and are required to bring plans into force provided they meet all statutory obligations. Once neighbourhood plans are 'made' (brought into legal force) they become part of the statutory development plan and must be used in making decisions on planning applications in the area to which they apply.
- 3.2 There are various regulations governing neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood plans may only be prepared by a 'qualifying body' defined under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Where parish councils exist these are, by default, the 'qualifying body' for the purposes of neighbourhood planning. The preparation of plans is subject to The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent amendments); and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017. Neighbourhood plans may only be prepared for areas specifically defined as 'neighbourhood areas'. For areas where parishes exist it is normally the whole of a parish that is defined as a neighbourhood area.
- 3.3 Neighbourhood plans must meet several statutory requirements to ensure they are legally compliant. This includes meeting what are known as the 'basic conditions'. It must be demonstrated that the basic conditions have been met before a neighbourhood plan can proceed to a referendum and then be formally 'made' by the Local Planning Authority. These are set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Planning Practice Guidance⁴. Independent examination of neighbourhood plans comprises an assessment of the extent to which a plan meets the basic conditions and other legal obligations. The basic conditions applying to neighbourhood plans are that:
- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
 - the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - the making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);

⁴ Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 41-065-20140306

- the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations;
- all prescribed conditions are met in relation to the plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan; and
- the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Belford Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.4 The Belford Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Belford Parish Council, as the qualifying body. If the Plan passes independent examination and is supported in a local referendum it will be 'made' by Northumberland County Council as the Local Planning Authority. The Neighbourhood Plan will cover the Belford Neighbourhood Area which, following a Parish boundary review in April 2021 now comprises a modified neighbourhood area and the whole of the administrative area of Belford Civil Parish (figure 2).
- 3.5 Belford Parish is a rural Parish located 4 miles east of Bamburgh. Holy Island lies approx. 3 miles north, forming part of Northumberland's popular coastline. The market town of Alnwick is 15 miles to the south and Berwick-upon-Tweed a similar distance to the north. Both these towns and Belford are linked by the A1 to the east. The introduction of the A1 created a bypass to Belford and reduced its once historic position as a developing coaching and post town. Initial work on a Neighbourhood Plan for Belford began in 2015. The Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was created to help guide the preparation of a plan and comprises volunteers from the community and Parish Councillors. Throughout the process, the Steering Group has engaged with the local community, through consultation events, and newsletters, and have consulted and engaged with local residents, local businesses, landowners and other local groups and organisations.
- 3.6 A final drop-in event was held in June 2018 to coincide with the Northumberland Local Plan consultation events at the Bell View centre. Following responses to that, the plan was drafted.

Figure 2: Modified Belford Neighbourhood Area (April 2021)



3.7 The Submission Draft Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address the key issues of:

- improving and re-vitalising the town centre;
- improve and re-vitalise the village centre;
- preserve and enhance the special qualities of the Belford Conservation Area;
- support high quality and sustainable design in the Neighbourhood Area;

- have enough of the right type of housing for young families to live in the area and for older people to remain in the area;
- retain and improve local community facilities and valued green spaces in Belford;
- boost the local economy, whilst ensuring that this does not impact negatively on surrounding residential properties;
- support local business and promote tourism

The Submission Draft Belford Neighbourhood Plan sets out the following vision:

“By 2036 Belford will be a thriving, economically diverse and attractive rural hub serving the needs of local residents, businesses and visitors, growing its role as a springboard to the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Northumberland National Park as well as wider rural destinations.”

3.8 In order to deliver this Vision the Parish Council has identified five Objectives which are set out below:

Objective 1: Housing

To support the development of well-located, well-designed new housing in Belford to sustain a balanced and diverse population, and to ensure that we retain and enhance community facilities to support that population.

Objective 2: Community Life

To support our existing community facilities and to support the growth of more services and facilities in Belford. We will protect our special green spaces and recreational areas that are valued by the local community.

Objective 3: The Local Economy

To support the retention of a vibrant, attractive and enterprising retail centre in Belford, and support the wider local economy by supporting existing businesses to grow, and providing a positive environment for the creation of new businesses.

Objective 4: Transport and Travel

To promote and encourage investment and improvement in active travel routes which enable walking and cycling within the village with links to the coast and hills; and to support investment in and improvement of important public transport connections which enable sustainable travel to other areas.

Objective 5: The Built and Natural Environment

To support the protection and sensitive management of the Belford Conservation Area to maintain its special interest; and to protect our most valued places through encouraging high quality design in new development, and protecting and enhancing the intrinsic character and beauty of our valued landscapes and green spaces.

3.9 To deliver the vision and objectives, the draft Plan includes the following policies:

- Policy 1: New Housing Development
- Policy 2: Community Led Housing
- Policy 3: Accessible and Adaptable Housing
- Policy 4: Community Facilities
- Policy 5: Recreational Open Space
- Policy 6: Local Green Space
- Policy 7: Belford Village Centre
- Policy 8: Broadband Infrastructure and Telecommunications
- Policy 9: Rural Business Development and Tourism
- Policy 10: Belford Industrial Estate
- Policy 11: Overnight Tourism Accommodation
- Policy 12: Provision and Improvements of Pedestrian and Cycling Routes
- Policy 13: Belford Conservation Area
- Policy 14: Design in New Development
- Policy 15: Protected Habitats and Species
- Policy 16: Development and Water Quality
- Policy 17: Valued Landscapes

The policies in full are set out in Appendix C of this report.

The Strategic Planning Policy Context

- 3.10 Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan. In Northumberland, the development plan consists of the Northumberland Local Plan, which was adopted in March 2022.
- 3.11 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared having regard to the need to meet the ‘basic condition’ requiring policies and the Plan as a whole to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.
- 3.12 The SEA has been undertaken to support the Neighbourhood Plan in meeting the basic conditions, and particularly the need to ensure that the Plan is compatible with, and does not otherwise breach EU obligations. The Environmental Report provides an assessment of the impact policies presented in the Draft Pre-Submission (April 2022) version of the Plan may have on the environment.

4. Environmental baseline position

Plans, programmes, policies and strategies

- 4.1 In order to establish a clear scope, and in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations, it was necessary to review and develop an understanding of a wide range of relevant plans, programmes, policies and strategies. The Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan first needed to be framed in the context of international, European, national, regional and local objectives and take account of strategic planning and environmental policies. The purpose of this review was to highlight the key elements of these plans and strategies that will influence the preparation of the SEA to ensure that their requirements are taken into account.
- 4.2 Recognising national Planning Practice Guidance in respect of taking a proportionate approach to SEA of Neighbourhood Plans and avoiding duplication of work, the review of such plans and programmes, policies and strategies was derived from the Sustainability Appraisal of the Northumberland Local Plan (produced by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Ltd). It was considered that the same plans, programmes, policies and strategies would be relevant to the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan but additional consideration would be given to any more locally specific context. Appendix A provides the full schedule and outlines brief details of their potential relevance to the Belford Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.3 The plans and programmes identified do not act in isolation and links between their scale and objectives can be made. International and national plans and strategies often provide high level guidance, with their objectives being reflected in plans at a regional, sub-regional or local level. The schedule of plans and programmes identifies the diversity of documents that are considered to have a bearing on the preparation of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

The Baseline – Environmental issues

- 4.4 The selected environmental themes for the assessment, set out below, incorporated the ‘SEA topics’ suggested by Annex I(f) of the SEA Directive⁵. These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of Neighbourhood Plan effects. The assessment has taken into account the interrelationships between topics. These topics are:
- a. Air
 - b. Biodiversity, flora and fauna

⁵ The SEA Directive 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”.

- c. Climatic factors
- d. Population and human health
- e. Soil
- f. Water
- g. Historic environment
- h. Landscape

4.5 The following provides a brief overview of the baseline environmental characteristics in the Belford Parish area and the likely evolution thereof without the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan as required in Planning Practice Guidance⁶. Full details of the baseline assessment are provided in the SEA Scoping Report (20 May 2021). As described, some of the issues are of little or no relevance i.e. do not represent environmental problems or opportunities and therefore have not been addressed in the SEA or have been afforded a more limited focus. The baseline provides the broad basis against which to assess the likely effects of the draft plan and any reasonable alternatives.

Air

4.7 Due to the absence of significant and tangible air quality issues in the Belford Neighbourhood Area, air has been scoped **OUT** of the SEA process.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

Nature conservation designations

4.8 Within the Belford Neighbourhood Area there are a range of sites designated for their contribution to biodiversity and the provision of important habitats. The Northumberland Coast AONB runs through the north eastern section of the parish. Along the coastline there is the Lindisfarne Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); the Lindisfarne Ramsar site; the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Special Protection Area (SPA); the Berwickshire and Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC); and the North Northumberland Dunes (SAC). Further inland in the south east of the parish there is Spindleston Heugh SSSI and Bradford Kames SSSI sites. Holburn lake and Moss SSSI and RAMSAR site also sits on the border of the western edge of the parish.

Other Habitats

4.9 In addition to the designated sites described above there are three areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland: Dinning's Wood located to the south of Belford; and another area of woodland to the west of Belford that adjoins an area of ancient

⁶ Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 11-036-20140306

replanted woodland and an area of ancient woodland south of Warren Mill on the border of the Parish.

Species

- 4.10 The Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast SAC has the largest intertidal beds of narrow-leaved eelgrass (*Zostera angustifolia*) and dwarf eelgrass (*Z. noltei*) on the east coast of England, located along the clean sandflats in Lindisfarne and Budle Bay and on the adjacent open coast flats of Holy Island. The area also makes an important contribution to the grey seal population, supporting approximately 3% of the British annual pup production.
- 4.11 Lindisfarne SSI comprises a wide range of coastal habitats for internationally important wintering populations of wading and wildfowl birds as well as a number of rare plants and species

Water Courses

- 4.12 The four river courses within the Neighbourhood Area (Holy Island and Budle Bay, Ross Low from source to Elwick Burn, Elwick Burn from source to Ross Low and Belford Burn from source to Ross Low) are all recorded as being in 'moderate' condition in 2019. All four water bodies have reduced from Good to a Fail under the chemical classification of the water quality. The previous grading suggests that there has been a marginal, slow decline in the condition of the waterways from a chemical classification.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.13 There are three issues relating to biodiversity, flora and fauna:
- The unfavourable and declining state of the Lindisfarne SSSI could be an environmental issue in the future along with the impact of increased tourism on biodiversity, flora and fauna. 65% of Spindlestone Heugh SSSI site is in an unfavourable condition but is recovering and there are 2 unnamed units, with a medium threat risk. Nearly 70% of the Holburn lake and Moss SSSI and RAMSAR site is also in an unfavourable condition but is recovering. Northern Holburn Moss has a medium threat risk attached to it.
 - The two areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland could be home to more threatened species than any other, providing the perfect environment for communities of fungi and invertebrates and other specialist species of insects, birds and mammals.
- There has been a marginal, slow decline in the condition of the four waterways under the chemical classification of water quality.

Climatic factors

Greenhouse gas emissions by source

- 4.14 No emissions data is available for the Neighbourhood Area. At the local authority level, detailed information is available for Carbon Dioxide (CO²). Total emissions in Northumberland decreased by 40% between 2005 and 2017 mainly because of reductions from industrial and commercial sources. The main source of CO² emissions in Northumberland is now transport, which has shown only a very marginal reduction since 2005, not surprisingly in a large and largely rural county where more people rely on private transport.

Greenhouse gas emissions trends

- 4.15 Per capita emissions of CO² in Northumberland are higher than both the regional and national averages; however, levels in the County decreased more quickly than in the Country as a whole between 2005 and 2017.

Effects of climate change

- 4.16 In Northumberland, compared to the period 1981-2000, winters are projected to be slightly wetter, but summers may be slightly drier. Average year-round temperature is expected to be higher with a slightly greater increase in the daily maximum temperature in the summer. Changes in rainfall patterns, including more frequent and more intense storm events, are predicted.
- 4.17 It is anticipated that climate change will create a number of issues in the area, including: changes in arable cultivation that could have a negative effects on soils and water and cause the loss of landscape features; increased soil erosion; more flooding. Northumbrian Water expect water supply to remain in surplus over the Plan period because water demand is expected to fall in response to water efficiency and leakage strategies.

Flood risk

- 4.18 The risk of fluvial, pluvial and coastal flooding within the Neighbourhood Area is likely to increase as a result of future development, land use change and climate change. The area has experienced flooding from the Belford Burn within the last century. However, flooding has largely been curbed with the installation of flood defences as part of the Belford Catchment Solutions project. At current it is unknown whether existing flood defences will be able to cope with potential future conditions.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.19 There are two issues relating to climatic factors:

- The rising carbon emissions from transport in the County;
- The changing climate variables (temperature / rainfall) and their potential impact on the area.

Population and human health

Population characteristics

- 4.20 Census data shows that Belford Parish has seen a population increase between 2001 and 2011. The regional and national trends have both seen a population increase, but the regional growth has been at a much smaller rate compared to the national growth. Belford's growth has been significant (+12.2%)
- 4.21 The Census data indicates Belford Parish has an ageing population. The parish seen an increase in the percentage of people who were between 16-64 years old and those who are over 65 whilst also seeing a reduction of people aged between 0 and 15 years.

Education and skills

- 4.22 Belford has a higher percentage of people with no qualifications (25.6%) in comparison to local, regional and national figures. Belford also has a proportion above national and regional percentage (22.5%) of people with the highest qualifications.

Health indicators and deprivation

- 4.23 Data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) show that Belford settlement is in the 60% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country and parts of the Plan area in the tier below at 40 to 50% least deprived. Figures for health and disability and crime are particularly positive. Belford has high levels of very good health. In terms of barriers to housing and services, the Parish scores poorly, a reflection of limited geographical accessibility to local services and not he having the right housing mix. The figure for living environment is middling reflecting average quality of the indoor and outdoor local environment.
- 4.24 Belford has an ageing population structure having a low proportion of their populations being under 16 years old and a higher than average proportion of people in the 65 years old or older bracket. In part these changes will be associated with the existing population getting older, but it may also be associated with in-migration of older people reaching retirement age.
- 4.25 An ageing population and older people being able to remain at home in the Parish for longer due to changes in healthcare structure reduces movement to locations closer to the core health and social care facilities that are in the main towns. This has the potential to increase pressures on community social care and

healthcare services which in turn could influence the future health and well-being of residents,

Key environmental problems or issues

4.26 There are several issues relating to population and human health:

- Barriers to housing and services and the quality of the living environment (indoors and outdoors);
- The population is ageing which puts extra pressure on healthcare and other services;
- The quality and availability of existing community facilities is limited which could affect health and wellbeing.
- Difficulties in delivering new services to meet the needs of an older and ageing population may subsequently impact the health and well-being of residents.

Soil

Soil resource

4.27 A significant portion of the Belford Neighbourhood Plan area is defined as grade 3 Agricultural land, i.e. good to moderate quality agricultural land. Land towards the west and south west of the Parish is of poor and very poor quality. The coastal edge of the Parish is predominately land that is in non-agricultural use.

Soil quality

4.28 There are areas in the Parish that have very acidic peaty soils over rock. Along the coastline there are sand dune soils as well as loamy and clayey floodplain soils with naturally high groundwater

Key environmental problems or issues

4.29 The risk of water erosion to soils is at its highest along Middleton Burn and around Upper Hall Lake. The Neighbourhood Area boundary runs across Budle Bay which has areas of very high and high risk of water erosion to soils. Climate change with the likelihood of higher summer temperatures and more intense storms may increase the threat of soil erosion and loss of soil fertility, along with inappropriate agricultural practices.

Water

Water availability

4.30 Water supply in the area is provided by Northumbrian Water Ltd. 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.

Water quality

- 4.31 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) show the risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area. The Neighbourhood Area contains no SPZs.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.32 Classification of all four of the water sources in the Plan area have decreased from good to moderate between 2016 and 2019 under the chemical classification due to industrial processes and changes in agricultural and land management in the locality of Ross Low. The neighbourhood area is also within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ)

Historic environment

- 4.33 Due to the absence of significant and tangible heritage issues in the Belford Neighbourhood Area, historic environment has been scoped **OUT** of the SEA process.

Landscape

Landscape character and quality

- 4.34 Belford Neighbourhood Area is within the boundaries of two national Character Areas which are the North Northumberland Coastal Plain (NCA1) and Northumberland Sandstone Hills (NCA2). The eastern area of the area is within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 4.35 The North Northumberland Coastal Plain is a narrow, windswept strip that runs from the Anglo-Scottish border south to the mouth of the River Coquet, bounded by the sea to the east and the Northumberland Sandstone Hills to the west. The gently undulating inland plain is dominated by arable farming, with large, regular fields bounded by gappy hedgerows and in some places grey sandstone walls, with some pasture for beef cattle and sheep. Woodland cover is sparse and predominantly confined to the river valleys that meander across the coastal plain and the estate woodlands around Howick.
- 4.36 The Northumberland Sandstone Hills form a series of distinctive flat-topped ridges which provide panoramic views of the Cheviots and the coast. The ridgetops and upper slopes are covered with heather and grass moorland broken by large geometric blocks of conifer. Below this is pasture with some arable cultivation on the lower and

dip slopes, broadleaved woodland on scarp slopes and along watercourses and a few notable parklands. A number of major rivers flow east to the coast: the Wansbeck and Font arise in the Sandstone Hills while the Aln and Coquet break through from the Cheviot Fringe. The Till meanders through the lowlands of the northwest corner of this National Character Area.

- 4.37 The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010) identifies further Landscape Character Types (LCT) within each NCA and further Landscape Character Areas (LCA) within a particular LCT. The table below summarises the different landscape classifications relevant to Belford.

Table 7: Landscape Character Types in the Neighbourhood Area

Landscape Description
<p>Landscape Character Types within the North Northumberland Coastal Plain (NCA1)</p> <p>Farmed Coastal Plain (LCT 3) Generally low-lying landscape of gently rolling land, with some broad, flat areas. There are areas of higher ground, such as the small plateau-like hill at Billylaw, south of Berwick, and around Longhoughton. Small, rounded hills are common features. The area is drained by small burns, which run down from the hills to the west, and cut narrow, shallow gullies through the sandy soil. Rocky outcrops are rare, but occur at Belford Station, for example</p> <p>Rocky Coastline (LCT 4) Comprising rocky headlands divided by small bays, while the larger bays area classified as Sandy Coastline (LCT 5). Bays and coves within this LCT are generally rocky, with limited sand beaches, though dune systems are prominent around Bamburgh. Stone reefs, offshore rocks, and wave-cut platforms, often called 'carrs' or 'steels', extend out from the foreshore. Prominent landforms occur, such as the Whin Sill outcrop on which Bamburgh Castle is built.</p> <p>Haggerston (LCT 3a) This narrow strip of coastal plain is low-lying, and is backed by the Kyloe Hills to the south. In the north it merges westward into the Open Rolling Farmland (LCT 16), and rises up to Billylaw, overlooking Berwick. Small rounded drumlin hills are often topped by farmsteads, and enable broad views across Holy Island Sands to Lindisfarne, and inland to the Cheviot Hills. Haggerston Castle itself is a prominent landmark. Traditional farmsteads are of brick and stone, and several located to the north have substantial brick farm chimneys.</p> <p>Lucker (LCT 3b) South of Belford, the coastal plain broadens into an area of flat or gently rolling farmland, rising to a plateau near the coast which obscures most seaward views. Large arable fields are dominant, with little settlement, but prominent features such as mobile phone masts, large agricultural buildings and silos. Post and wire fences are predominant, although stone walls occur near the quarry at Belford Station</p> <p>4b. Farne Islands Coast The western section of this area presents a transition from the Sandy Coastline (LCT5) around Holy Island, but is punctuated by the eminence of Bamburgh Castle on its basalt outcrop. This feature dominates the low lying landscape, and the dune systems which stretch to Seahouses.</p>

Landscape Description
Further south, the coast is more rocky, though still with some dunes. Seahouses and Beadnell are important local tourist centres.
<p>Relevant Landscape Character Types within the Northumberland Sandstone Hills (NCA 2)</p> <p>Sandstone Fringe Farmland (LCT 11) This landscape comprises sandstone, shale, limestone and mudstone which are overlain with glacial drift, giving rise to a subtly undulating topography. Sandstone and whinstone outcrops occur and are quarried for building stone. The landscape shelves down from the higher sandstone hills, to the coastal plain, or to the mid-Northumberland farmland. Generally, this landscape has relatively limited topographical variation, although it is associated with the more distinct landforms of the Outcrop Hills and Escarpments (LCT 8), such as the Kyloe Hills above Hetton.</p> <p>Belford Hills (LCT 11a) This area lies on the east dip slope of the Kyloe Hills section of the Outcrop Hills and Escarpments (LCT 8), and flanks the Farmed Coastal Plain (LCT 3) to the east. Belford lies at the eastern edge, and arable farmland with hedgerows occurs along this lower edge. Estate influences around Belford include folly buildings. Further up the slope, post and wire fencing predominates, defining large semi-improved pastures. At the highest points are areas of grazed moorland and gorse scrub, merging with the Smooth Moorland (LCT 10) to the south. Bamburgh Castle and the Farne Islands are prominent in views to the east.</p>

- 4.38 Development, albeit low, outside the settlement boundary and changes in farming practices, and countryside management have the potential to harm the character of the landscape; even impacts of farming on soil quality could result in changes to the landscape over time. Small scale development or changes in practices in some sensitive areas can result in significant harm having regard to the impact it may have on the nationally recognised important landscapes and the sensitivities of the AONB.
- 4.39 Development within the Neighbourhood Area is unlikely to be on a major scale and development that will occur is likely to be delivered at a slow, incremental pace. As a result, the impact on the local landscape is not likely to be significant provided regard is had to national policy and guidance. The appetite for further new housing development in Belford Parish may increase as a result of recently introduced restrictions on new housing development in Beadnell, Bamburgh and North Sunderland Parishes.

Key environmental problems or issues

4.40 There are two issues relating to landscape:

- The landscape within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Area contains a number of receptors which are sensitive to changes in the landscape and which have the potential to be harmed by inappropriate or insensitive development.
- There are a number of forces for change which could impact on landscape character in the Neighbourhood Area and there is a need to manage the landscape in order to ensure that its character and quality are not harmed. The principal aims of landscape planning policies and initiatives within Haggerston (LCT 3a) and Lucker (LCT 3b) should be to encourage improved custodianship of a landscape that has declined in quality as a result of agricultural intensification. Belford Hills (LCT 11a) has a strong identity and many valuable landscape features which remain in good condition. Although there has been some change such as the planting of coniferous plantation and the decline in pastures, the landscape retains a consistent character. The overall approach for this area is to sensitively manage the landscape of the area. The overall approach for Farne Islands Coast (LCT 4b) should be to arrest the erosion of character and loss of condition of landscape elements where this has occurred, and in so doing raise the general quality of the landscape. The coastal landscape and adjacent seascape is a key element of Northumberland's tourist economy, and requires a degree of protection.

5. The SEA Framework used to appraise the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.1 An SEA Framework is a recognised method by which the likely effects of a Plan and any reasonable alternative options can be described, analysed and compared. It comprises objectives, which are statements of what is intended should be achieved through the implementation of the Plan, specifying a desired direction of environmental change, and these are evaluated having regard to various guiding questions. It is not the intention of the assessment to answer all of the guiding questions. The questions will act as prompts to help focus the assessment as an informed evaluation of likely significant environmental effects arising from the implementation of the Plan or any reasonable alternative options.
- 5.2 The SEA Framework for the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan (figure 3) was informed by the review of relevant plans and programmes and the analysis of the baseline position to identify environmental issues. The framework was subject to consultation with the consultation bodies as part of the SEA Scoping stage.

Figure 3: SEA Framework for the Belford Neighbourhood Plan

SEA Objective	Guiding questions
Biodiversity, flora and fauna 1. Protect and enhance biodiversity features.	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support continued improvements to the status of the European designated sites of significance within the neighbourhood area? • Support the status of SSSIs located wholly or partly within the neighbourhood area? • Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats? • Protect and enhance priority habitats, and the habitat of priority species? • Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? • Support enhancements to multifunctional green infrastructure networks? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?
Climatic factors 2. Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Area	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel? • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? • Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable sources?

SEA Objective	Guiding questions
Climatic factors 3. Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing surface water runoff (either within the neighbourhood area or downstream)? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development in the neighbourhood area? • Increase the resilience of biodiversity to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
Population and Human Health 4. Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality housing which people can afford, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.	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? • Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction? • Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?
Population and Human Health 5. Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and enhance the viability of small local businesses? • Support the diversity of local businesses and the economy? • Support employment opportunities which enable residents to work from home?
Population and Human Health 6. Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups? • Promote the use of healthier modes of travel? • Improve access to the countryside for recreational use?
Population and Human Health 7. Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the need to travel through sustainable patterns of land use and development? • Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel? • Enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements? • Facilitate working from home and remote working? • Improve road safety? • Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?

SEA Objective	Guiding questions
Population and Human Health 8. 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"> Promote the development of a range of high-quality, accessible community facilities? Encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities? Minimise fuel poverty? Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing local residents? Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people? Support the provision of land for allotments and cemeteries?
Soil 9. Manage soil and land resources in a sustainable manner.	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the use of previously developed land? Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land?
Water 10. Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support improvements to water quality? Minimise water consumption?
Landscape 11. Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the integrity of the landscape in the neighbourhood area? Conserve and enhance landscape features?

Methodology

- 5.3 Based on the contents of the current Pre-Submission Draft Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan (May 2021), the SEA Framework has been used to appraise:
- The Neighbourhood Plan objectives;
 - Reasonable alternatives where they exist;
 - The proposed Plan policies.
- 5.4 Along with identifying effects, consideration was given to the likely level of significance of the effects. This includes an assessment of whether the effects are positive or negative and whether the degree of significance is major or minor. The SEA Regulations specify the criteria which should be taken into account. These criteria essentially relate to the nature of the effects arising from the Plan and the value and vulnerability of the receptors as follows:
- How valuable and vulnerable is the receptor that is being affected?
 - How probable, frequent, long lasting and reversible are the effects?
 - What is the magnitude and spatial scale of the effect?
 - Are the effects positive or negative?
- 5.5 The assessment involved judgement in respect of the likely effects of the Neighbourhood Plan, the significance of any effects and the nature of those effects.
- 5.6 Evaluating effects is inherently challenging. There are inevitably many limitations. There is uncertainty about predicting the implications of implementing planning policies. The ability to evaluate effects is also limited by the understanding of the baseline. Accordingly, the SEA can only be assumed to identify the broad implications for the SEA topics. In this regard the assessment takes a proportionate approach, as required by the guidance.
- 5.7 Figure 4 illustrates the scoring system applied to assist in the assessment. Given the assessment must be informed by judgement, a small group of suitably qualified and experienced officers was set up to apply the scoring. This collective approach helped to ensure a degree of objectivity beyond those familiar with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Figure 4: Matrix for the SEA of the Belford Neighbourhood Plan

Assessment	Description	Key
Major positive effect	The objective/policy/alternative addresses all the elements that are required to protect the environment and address the relevant sustainability issues in the neighbourhood area and would help achieve the applicable SEA objective. The objective/policy/alternative also sets out how, where and when the policy will be implemented. It will have a positive impact in relation to characteristics of the effect and the sensitivity of the receptors.	✓✓
Minor positive effect	The objective/policy/alternative addresses all the elements that are required to protect the environment and address the sustainability issues in the neighbourhood area and would help achieve the applicable SEA objective.	✓
Minor negative effect	The objective/policy/alternative conflicts with the SEA objective.	X
Major negative effect	The objective/policy/alternative conflicts with the SEA objective. It also sets out how, where and when the policy will be implemented and this will have a negative effect in relation to characteristics of the effect and the sensitivity of the receptors.	XX
Neutral effect	The objective/policy/alternative does not have an effect or has a neutral effect on the achievement of the SEA objective.	0
Not Applicable	The objective/policy/alternative does not apply to the SEA objective	NA

6. Appraisal of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan and reasonable alternatives on the environment

- 6.1 The key purpose of this Environmental Report is to present an assessment of the effects the implementation of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan, and any reasonable alternative options considered, may have on the environment. This chapter presents the findings of the assessment in relation to the Draft Pre-submission version (May 2021) of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

Appraising the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

- 6.2 It is important that the objectives of the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan are aligned and compatible with the SEA objectives. The Plan objectives have therefore been assessed using the SEA Framework, and are presented in figure 5. The assessment confirms that the Neighbourhood Plan objectives are in accordance with the environmental objectives having a largely neutral or slightly positive effect. No changes are required to any of the Plan objectives to meet the SEA objectives.

Appraising the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan Reasonable Alternatives

- 6.3 The SEA needs to consider and compare any reasonable alternatives that could deliver the Plan's objectives as the Plan evolves, including the preferred approach, and assess these against the baseline environmental characteristics of the area.
- 6.4 Reasonable alternatives are defined in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as '*the different realistic options considered in developing the policies in the plan*'. They need to be sufficiently distinct so that meaningful comparisons can be made. However, PPG acknowledges that there may be limited alternatives that can realistically be considered in the context of the strategic policies for the neighbourhood area.⁷ In some instances the only reasonable alternative would be a 'no policy' alternative, which is appraised in the baseline analysis. This is provided in Chapter 4 of this Report.

⁷ Paragraph: 038 Reference ID: 11-038-20190722

Figure 5: Assessment of the Belford Neighbourhood Plan Objectives against the SEA Objectives

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN OBJECTIVES	Objective 1: Housing	Objective 2: Community Life	Objective 3: The Local Economy	Objective 4: Transport and Travel	Objective 5: The Built and Natural Environment
SEA OBJECTIVES					
<i>Protect and enhance biodiversity features</i>	0	✓	0	0	✓
<i>Reduce the contribution to climate change</i>	0	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Support resilience to the potential effects of climate change</i>	✓	✓	0	0	✓
<i>Provide an appropriate mix of good quality affordable housing</i>	✓	NA	NA	NA	✓
<i>Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents to work locally</i>	✓	✓	✓	0	0
<i>Improve the health and wellbeing of residents</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
<i>Cater for residents' needs, and improve access to local, high-quality community facilities</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	0
<i>Manage soil and land resources in a sustainable manner</i>	✓	0	0	0	0
<i>Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner</i>	0	0	NA	NA	0
<i>Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes</i>	✓	0	NA	0	✓

Settlement Boundaries

- 6.5 The Plan defines a settlement boundary for Belford. This is an appropriate approach to the management of development provided it recognises the need to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which is the main purpose of the planning system in England. The definition of settlement boundaries must be associated with meeting at least the recognised needs for new housing, and other development, in an area.
- 6.6 The alternative approach to defining settlement boundaries (allied with planning to accommodate sufficient development) is the use of criteria based policies. These set out in general terms the criteria to be applied in considering whether development can be considered sustainable and appropriate. This is often regarded as a less prescriptive approach to managing development, but creates greater uncertainty since the application of such policies relies largely on planning judgement rather than reference to described and discernible features defined on policy maps.

Option 1: No settlement boundary

- 6.7 Belford did not have a settlement boundary identified in the Berwick-upon-Tweed Local Plan (April 1999). The adopted Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022), under Policy STP1, defines settlement boundaries for all Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages (except in the Green Belt where inset boundaries are defined) unless local communities, through the neighbourhood planning process are defining boundaries. The Parish Council confirmed their intention to create a settlement boundary through a neighbourhood plan. Accordingly, the County Council have not included a settlement boundary for Belford in the Northumberland Local Plan. It is therefore appropriate that the Neighbourhood Plan addresses this matter in order that it complies with strategic policy.
- 6.8 The Objectives proposed for the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly Objective 5, envisage the Plan providing some general protection of the countryside and valued landscapes within the Parish. The alternative of preparing criteria based policies would fail to accord with the stated intentions of the Objectives for the Plan. Not having settlement boundaries is therefore not a reasonable alternative within the context of the Plan's Objectives.

Option 2: Settlement boundary

- 6.9 The way in which the settlement boundary is defined must have regard to the strategic policies in the Development Plan, and to the aspirations of the local community in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, given that the final outcome on support for the Plan is determined through a local referendum. The Parish Council's justification for the use of settlement boundaries and their methodology for the

definition of the boundaries are discussed and described in detail in the 'Settlement Boundary Methodology and Background Report'.

- 6.10 Evidence presented in that paper demonstrates that there is no expectation that further new housing need be accommodated in the Parish, having regard to current commitments. Community engagement undertaken by the Parish Council would suggest there is no particular appetite from the local community to plan for additional housing growth other than that which meets specific local needs. This is, quite properly, a matter for the local community to decide and for the Parish Council to give expression to through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.11 The Parish Council decided that a settlement boundary was appropriate in order to ensure development is directed to within the settlement boundary, whilst protecting the special character of the surrounding countryside, and that it must be defined within the context of a requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan to support the delivery of sufficient sustainable development in the Neighbourhood Area.
- 6.12 As a result of these requirements, it was therefore determined to define a settlement boundary to give clarity and context to policies proposed. Specifically, the Parish Council consider the benefits of establishing a settlement boundary to be to:
- They create certainty for the local community and for landowners and potential developers by defining clear lines on a policy map where it is easy to distinguish the 'settlement' from the 'countryside', thereby allowing consistent interpretation and use of relevant planning policies.
 - Locally, settlement boundaries are an understood and accepted planning tool for guiding and managing developments.
 - They offer a more plan-led development management approach to future housing growth by supporting growth within settlements and generally only by exception in the countryside beyond.
 - They serve to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside whilst allowing for development to meet established identified needs.
- 6.13 In considering where to draw the settlement boundaries for Belford, the Parish Council took into account:
- the Northumberland Local Plan housing requirement for the Parish;
 - recent planning permissions, and whether these have been implemented; and
 - local features on the ground that provide recognisable boundaries.
- 6.14 The Parish Council determined it would not be necessary to draw a more extensive settlement boundary or to allocate any sites for housing development through the Neighbourhood Plan because no such requirement had been provided by the Local Planning Authority. The result is a settlement boundary for Belford that is relatively

tightly drawn around existing built development, while allowing for infill development, or redevelopment where appropriate, within that settlement.

- 6.15 Having regard to there being no strategic need to plan to accommodate additional housing development in the Parish during the plan period beyond that already committed, the intentions of the objectives established in the Neighbourhood Plan, and the availability of land through windfall sites within Belford, it is evident that there are **no genuine reasonable alternatives** in relation to establishing a settlement boundary other than that defined in the Neighbourhood Plan. Accordingly, no further detailed assessment is required on this matter.

Locally Important Green Spaces

- 6.16 In developing the Neighbourhood Plan there were a number of important green spaces that were identified through community engagement. Qualities like their recreational use, environmental use or significance to the community were discussed through the community engagement process. By using criteria defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the Steering Group assessed the suitability of the locally important sites and decided to designate five Local Green Spaces, which met the criteria defined in national policy. No other sites were considered to be of sufficient value to merit this level of protection. Further information is in the 'Protecting open spaces – Methodology and Background Report'.
- 6.17 6.17 The approach employed by the Parish Council has resulted in protection being afforded through proposed planning policies to the most relevant areas identified by the community as having value and importance to them. Accordingly, there are no **reasonable alternatives** to assess through the SEA process.

Appraising the Belford Parish Neighbourhood Plan Policies

- 6.18 The appraisal has been structured using the SEA Framework. For each SEA Objective, the likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan have been predicted and evaluated where possible. Account has been taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, including the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects, as far as this is possible.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

SEA Objective 1: Protect and enhance biodiversity features

- 6.20 The Belford Neighbourhood Plan sets out a number of provisions to limit the impact of development on features and areas of biodiversity interest, and to support enhancements to ecological networks within the Neighbourhood Area.
- 6.21 Key designations in the Neighbourhood Area and their attributes are described in section 4 of this Report which outlines the environmental baseline characteristics. Designations which demonstrate the value and potential vulnerability of the area to environmental effects include Lindisfarne Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); the Lindisfarne Ramsar site; the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Special Protection Area (SPA); the Berwickshire and Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC); and the North Northumberland Dunes (SAC). Further inland in the south east of the parish there is Spindleston Heugh SSSI and Bradford Kames SSSI sites. Holburn lake and Moss SSSI and RAMSAR site also sits on the border of the western edge of the Parish.
- 6.22 The Habitats Regulations Assessment ('HRA') states that the Lindisfarne SSSI is currently assessed by Natural England as being in unfavourable condition. The condition assessment for this unit states that:
Poor water quality flowing into Budle Bay has resulted in the growth of the macroalgae Enteromorpha, which has a direct impact on the SAC mudflat and feeding habitat of SPA birds. Natural England are working with the Environment Agency to investigate sources of pollution and prevention measures. A Diffuse Water Plan is required to investigate pollution sources/pathways and to help achieve Favourable Condition of the site.
- 6.23 The HRA goes on to say that further input of nitrogen resulting from development could potentially result in contributing to further harm of the interest features of those sites. As such, where any development without mains sewerage is supported within the plan area it should be noted that detailed and exceptional package treatment should be proposed to prevent any further impacts on water quality at those sites, including additional measures such as reedbeds. To ensure that water quality in the Lindisfarne SPA is not adversely affected by further development, it is recommended that a suitably worded policy is included in the Plan.
- 6.24 Policy 1 defines a settlement boundary for Belford. This helps to ensure development is directed to the most suitable locations in the village, and protects the special character of the village and the surrounding landscape. Land outside the settlement boundary will be treated as countryside whose intrinsic character and beauty must be recognised in all decision making on development proposals. Policy 1 provides some protection of the qualities of the countryside where many of the key

environmental designations lie. It achieves a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

- 6.25 Policy 6 designates 5 areas of Local Green Space. Where biodiversity features are present in a local green space the protective nature of the policy will help enhance or protect these features. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.26 Policy 10 supports development proposals for employment generating uses located on land adjoining the Industrial Estate. Any such proposals must include sufficient appropriate and effective structural landscaping using native species. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.27 Policy 11 supports proposals for small scale tourist accommodation where they are of a scale that can be sensitively accommodated into the landscape. The policy does not support the expansion, or creation of new large-scale holiday parks. These controls would be a positive factor in protecting biodiversity by limiting land-take and limiting further significant tourist activities on sensitive sites.
- 6.28 Policy 14 relates to design in new development. Criterion c) of the policy requires appropriate landscaping to be incorporated into any scheme including the retention of trees and hedgerows, where possible.
- 6.29 Policy 15 sets out the requirement for new residential and tourist accommodation within 10km of the coast to contribute to the Coastal Mitigation Service (CMS), or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness. The CMS is a developer-funded warden service which seeks to ensure that effective mitigation can be provided to address the impacts of new residential development and recreational activity within coastal European sites. This measure is likely to protect priority habitats, and the habitat of priority species and would have a major positive effect on the SEA objective. The policy also requires new development to secure a measurable 'net gain' for biodiversity through mitigation, restoration and/or compensatory measures as necessary.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.30 Where relevant, the policies as drafted, are likely to result in a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 1. However, it is recommended that an additional policy is included to address the issue of pollution and its effects on the Lindisfarne SSSI, raised though the HRA.

Recommendation 1

To ensure that water quality in the Lindisfarne SPA is not adversely affected by further development, it is recommended that a suitably worded policy is included in the Plan, which says that any development in the plan area which is not connected to the mains sewerage network will be required to include the best available foul water package treatment and tertiary/quaternary treatment. The details of this will be provided as part of the planning application process.

Climatic Factors

SEA Objective 2: Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Area

SEA Objective 3: Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding

- 6.32 Policy 1 supports development within the settlement boundary of the main settlement, Belford. This permissive approach within the settlement boundary would help to reduce the number of journeys made and also reduce the need to travel to access any new business. Overall, this approach would support SEA Objective 2. In addition, this settlement lies in an area at very low risk of flooding from river or surface water, associated with climate change. Development is supported only by exception outside the settlement boundaries, in accordance with national planning policies. The scale of development supported through the Plan would be such that major negative impacts on flood risk should not occur. In this way, this Policy would support SEA Objective 3.
- 6.33 Policy 2 supports community led housing within Belford village and on small sites on the edge of the village outside the settlement boundary. By supporting development within or just beyond the settlement, this policy may help to reduce the number of journeys made using private transport. In addition, this area lies in a zone, which is at very low risk of flooding from river or surface water, associated with climate change. In these ways, this Policy would support the SEA Objectives.
- 6.34 Policy 4 supports the retention or redevelopment of community facilities within Belford Village. By having these facilities available within walking distance of the main population, it may reduce the need to travel and so reduce the overall number of journeys made. The Policy requests that proposals for new or expanded community facilities beyond the settlement boundary demonstrate how all opportunities have been taken to make the location of the development more sustainable including through improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport. In these ways, the policy would support SEA Objective 2.
- 6.35 Policy 5 protects two spaces in Belford Village for their recreational value. The LGS Evidence Paper describes how each area is used by the community for social and

recreational activities. This would reduce the need to travel as each space is easily accessible by walking and cycling and the policy would help to secure their retention in the long term. As such, this Policy would support SEA Objective 2.

- 6.36 Policy 6, Local Green Space, helps increase the resilience of any biodiversity features present on these spaces to the effects of climate change by supporting their retention and supporting any development on these spaces only in very special circumstances. In response to consultation on the SEA Scoping Report the Environment Agency recommend making modifications to Policy 6 to recognise and secure the working of flood defences in Local Green Spaces LGS2 and LGS3 taking into account the likely future effects of climate change. It is therefore recommended that the advice provided in the Agency's letter dated 11 June 2021 is incorporated into the Plan in order to satisfy the requirements of SEA Objective 3.
- 6.37 Policy 7 supports the retention of shops, services and other facilities within Belford Village Centre. By having these facilities available within walking distance of the main population, it may reduce the need to travel and so reduce the overall number of journeys made. However, the Policy supports proposals to improve cycle *and* car parking within the centre, which somewhat undermines efforts to promote sustainable forms of transport. Overall, the Policy is supportive of SEA Objective 2.
- 6.38 Policy 8 supports proposals which secure the expansion of broadband infrastructure and telecommunications, which may allow more people to work from home, which could reduce the need to travel for work purposes. In this way, the policy would support SEA Objective 2.
- 6.39 Policy 9, Rural Business Development and Tourism, requires any development proposed in the countryside to meet local business needs, including those associated with sustainable rural tourism and leisure activities, must demonstrate how all opportunities have been taken to make the location of the development more sustainable including through improving the scope for access to the development on foot, by cycling or by public transport. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.40 Policy 10 supports proposals to expand existing businesses, and to create new employment generating businesses within the Industrial Estate. This is likely to increase the number of journeys made by road transport. In this way, the policy is likely to have a less than significant negative effect on SEA Objective 2. The site lies in an area at very low or low risk of flooding from river or surface water, associated with climate change. The scale of development supported through the Plan would be such that major negative impacts on flood risk should not occur. In this way, this Policy would support SEA Objective 3.

- 6.41 Policy 11 supports proposals for small scale tourist accommodation that can be accommodated within the capacity of existing drainage and water supply infrastructure and which is of a scale that can be sensitively accommodated into the landscape. The policy does not support the expansion, or creation of new large-scale holiday parks. These controls would be a positive factor in limiting the impact of development on climate change and flooding. This policy is therefore likely to have a neutral effect on the SEA Objectives.
- 6.42 Policy 12 promotes the use of sustainable modes of transport, which would support the achievement of SEA Objective 2.
- 6.43 Policy 14 requires new development, including extensions and conversions to incorporate, where possible, measures to reduce the carbon footprint and energy efficiency of the building. Criterion d) which requires new development, where relevant, to incorporate sustainable drainage, helps to manage water run-off in a sustainable way to mitigate the increased flood risk associated with climate change. Another criterion supports the resilience of biodiversity to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks through landscaping, including the retention of trees and hedgerows wherever possible. These approaches would support SEA Objectives 2 and 3.
- 6.44 Policy 15 supports SEA Objective 3 because it seeks to ensure that the impacts arising from increasing levels of recreational disturbance on coastal Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European Sites can be addressed. In this way, it would help to increase the resilience of biodiversity to the effects of climate change.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.45 Where relevant, policies are likely to have a minor positive effect on the achievement of SEA Objectives 2 and 3. However, it is recommended that policy 6 is modified in line with the advice from the Environment Agency to protect existing flood defences, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change.

Recommendation 2

Policy 6 and the supporting text should be modified to reflect advice provided by the Environment Agency in their response to consultation on the SEA Scoping Report as set out in their letter dated 11 June 2021 in order to secure alignment of the Plan with SEA Objective 3 by seeking to protect existing flood defences, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 4: Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality housing which people can afford, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.

- 6.47 Policy 1 supports new residential development within the settlement boundary of Belford, and in the countryside beyond by exceptions which reflects national planning policy. In this way, it supports the provision of housing in sustainable locations, including affordable housing to meet local needs that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities. The Policy supports the achievement of SEA Objective 4 in that it supports housing to meet the needs of different people in the community.
- 6.48 Policy 2, Community Led Housing, supports smaller, affordable housing schemes to meet local needs. The Policy supports the achievement of the SEA Objective because it would provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs.
- 6.49 Policy 3, Accessible and Adaptable Housing, supports the provision of housing specifically designed for occupation by older people. New housing within the Belford Neighbourhood Area should be designed to meet accessibility and adaptability standards as set out in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations 2010 (as amended) or any equivalent successor building standards. By supporting the provision of a range of house types and sizes to meet the needs of the elderly within the community, the policy would have a major positive effect on the SEA objective
- 6.50 Policy 8 requires new development to provide suitable ducting to enable more than one service provider to provide a fibre connection to individual properties from connection cabinets located on the public highway, or some alternative point available to different service providers. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.51 Policy 14 requires new development, where relevant to demonstrate how: local context and character are reflected in scale, density, height, massing, layout, use of materials, hard and soft landscaping and means of enclosure; and features including windows, doors, roof lights, chimneys, flues, roofs, and boundary treatments have regard to surrounding character and materials used locally. In this way, the policy may support provision of high quality homes and enhancements to the current housing stock. However, the emphasis on reflecting local character and materials could come at the expense of adopting more sustainable building techniques including the use of sustainable building materials in construction. This may conflict with criterion g) which requires proposals to demonstrate the incorporation of measures to reduce the carbon footprint and promote energy efficiency in new building. This criterion supports the use of sustainable building techniques. Overall, this policy is neutral in terms of its contribution towards achieving SEA Objective 4.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.52 Overall, the relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies support the provision of good quality and affordable homes and are assessed as having a minor positive effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 4. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 4.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 5: Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally

- 6.53 Policy 4 supports the retention of important local facilities in the village. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective
- 6.54 Policy 7 supports the retention or redevelopment of shops, services and other facilities in Belford Village Centre. Change will only be supported in a number of circumstances relating to the benefits any new development brings to residents, how new development supports existing services and how new development generates local employment. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.55 Policy 8 supports the expansion of specific broadband and telecommunication equipment in the neighbourhood area. The policy requires new development to ensure suitable connections opportunities to broadband are available, where possible allowing residents to better work from home. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.56 Policy 9 supports proposals for new and/or expansions to existing businesses where they accord with policies elsewhere in the development plan. This supports and enhance the viability of small local businesses and would have a positive effect on the SEA Objective.
- 6.57 Policy 10 supports and enhances the viability and diversity of local businesses and the economy. In this way, it supports the achievement of SEA Objective 5.
- 6.58 Policy 11, Overnight Tourist Accommodation, supports proposals for small scale development. This Policy supports and enhances the viability and diversity of local businesses and the economy. In this way, it supports the achievement of SEA Objective 5.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.59 Where relevant, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are assessed as having a minor positive effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 5. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 5.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 6: Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area

- 6.60 Policy 1 directs new housing development to locations within Belford thereby encouraging walking and cycling to nearby facilities and services, which could improve the wellbeing of residents.
- 6.61 Policy 4 supports the retention of important local facilities in the village. The facilities range from the post office, local shops, churches, pubs, community gym and even a museum. As such, the Policy promotes accessibility to a range of community facilities and would likely have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.62 Policy 5 designates two areas of Recreational Open Space, the former school fields and a community skate park. Each site has recreational value, which may indirectly improve the wellbeing of residents.
- 6.63 Policy 6, Local Green Space, designates 5 open spaces that are demonstrably special to the community and protects them in a manner similar to that of Green Belt land. Each site has recreational value, which may indirectly improve the wellbeing of residents.
- 6.64 Policy 7, Belford Village Centre, does not support the loss of shops and services in Belford centre and encourages services that will benefit residents and/or visitors to the area; or services providing a use that will support existing businesses in the area; and services that provide a use that will generate employment locally. The Policy supports improvements to the public realm for pedestrians and other users. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.65 Policy 11 supports the limited development of tourism accommodation in the Parish, including bunkhouses and campsites, which could help to promote access to the countryside and leisure activities, though this effect is likely to be negligible given its limited applicability to local residents.
- 6.66 Policy 12 actively promotes the use of healthier modes of travel, walking and cycling. In supporting the creation and improvement of footpaths and cycle ways, the policy supports greater access to the countryside for recreational use. In these ways, the policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

- 6.67 Policy 14 seeks to secure high quality and sustainable design. Good design can improve the character and quality of the area, indirectly improving people's wellbeing and enjoyment of the area in which they live or visit.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.68 Where relevant, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are assessed as having a minor positive on the achievement of SEA Objective 6. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 6.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 7: Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel

- 6.69 The approach adopted in the Neighbourhood Plan is to support housing development within Belford's settlement boundary, and beyond this boundary only by exception in accordance with national planning policy. Business development and other community facilities are supported within the settlement and beyond, in accordance with national planning policy. This approach reinforces the role of this settlement in providing the focus for new homes and other development being close to local services. This supports SEA Objective 7 in that it can reduce the need to travel. However, it must be recognised that the area is rural in nature and there will be continued reliance on services, facilities and employment outside the Neighbourhood Area and many of the journeys taken to access those will be by private car. There is scope for limited modal shift to sustainable transport due to the presence of a local bus service to Alnwick and Berwick in the north and Morpeth and Newcastle upon Tyne in the south.
- 6.70 Policy 1 directs new housing development to locations within the settlements and close to services thereby reducing the need to travel through sustainable patterns of land use and development. The Policy also supports housing for rural workers near their place of work which could reduce their need to commute longer distances. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.71 Policy 2 supports community-led housing schemes that include suitable and safe highways access. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.72 Policy 3 supports the provision of housing specifically designed for occupation by older people provided no significant adverse impact arises to highway safety. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.73 Policy 4 supports the retention of important local facilities in the village helping reduce the need to travel through more sustainable patterns of land use and development. Proposals for new or expanded community facilities in the

countryside beyond the settlement boundary must not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and must demonstrate how all opportunities have been taken to make the location of the development more sustainable including through improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport. The policy would help to improve road safety and enable sustainable transport infrastructure and is likely to have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

- 6.74 Policy 7 supports the retention or redevelopment of local shops, services and other facilities in Belford Village Centre helping reduce the need to travel through more sustainable patterns of land use and development. Proposals within Belford Village Centre to improve car and cycle parking, combined with improvements to the public realm for pedestrians and other users will be supported provided that these do not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on highway safety. The policy would help to improve road safety and enable sustainable transport infrastructure and is likely to have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.75 Policy 8 supports the expansion of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure, which would facilitate working from home and remote working. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.76 Under Policy 9 proposals for new and/or expansions to existing businesses would be assessed against criteria including whether access can be accommodated without significant impacts on highway safety. The policy also requires that proposals demonstrate how all opportunities have been taken to make the location of the development more sustainable, though improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport. In these ways, the policy would contribute towards the achievement of SEA Objective 7.
- 6.77 Policy 10 supports proposals to expand existing businesses, and to create new employment generating businesses within the Industrial Estate, provided those proposals do not lead to an unacceptable impact on highway safety. In this way, the policy would have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective. At the same time, the policy is likely to increase the number of journeys made by road transport however, the scale of development likely to arise is not such that would have a significant negative effective on the SEA Objective.
- 6.78 Policy 11 supports proposals for small scale overnight tourist accommodation where it can be demonstrated that no significant adverse impact on highway safety would arise from the development. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.79 Policy 12 supports the creation and improvement of footpaths and cycle ways in the neighbourhood area and specifically supports the creation of a new route to improve

connectivity between Belford and the Northumberland Coast by means of an underpass under the A1. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

- 6.80 Policy 14 requires all new development to show how appropriate, safe vehicular and pedestrian access can be achieved. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.81 Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan is assessed as having a minor positive effect on the objective of reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable transport. The likely scale of development would be small and therefore any effects are unlikely to be significant. The rural nature of the area, however, means reliance will continue to be placed on the use of private cars.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 8: 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

- 6.82 Policy 2 supports community-led housing schemes that deliver affordable housing to meet an identified local need. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.83 Policy 3 supports the provision of housing specifically designed for occupation by older people. The policy could enhance the quality of life of older local residents. In this way, it would have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.84 Policy 4 supports proposals that would retain or expand valued local facilities in the Parish or the creation of new ones. This would help to promote the development of a range of high-quality, accessible community facilities that could enhance the life of existing local residents.
- 6.85 Policy 5 designates sites for protection as a valued recreational open space. This would encourage active involvement of local people in community activities.
- 6.86 Policy 6 designates 5 locally important green spaces in the neighbourhood area and protects them from inappropriate development so they can continue to be enjoyed for their beauty, historic significance, tranquillity or biodiverse qualities. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.87 Policy 7, Belford Village Centre, only supports change of use or redevelopment to existing services in a number of circumstances relating to the benefits any new

development brings to residents, how new development supports existing services and how new development generates local employment. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

- 6.88 Policy 9 supports proposals for new business or expansion to existing businesses and the creation of accessible services and facilities. These would help in meeting the community's needs for accessible employment opportunities and for services and facilities.
- 6.89 Policy 12, Provision and Improvement of Walking and Cycling Routes, supports the creation and improvement of footpaths and cycle ways in the neighbourhood area. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.90 Fuel poverty is not expressly addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, Policy 14 requires new development to demonstrate that opportunities have been taken where possible, to incorporate measures to reduce the carbon footprint and minimise energy consumption of the building. This criterion could indirectly have positive impacts addressing fuel poverty in the longer term.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.91 In general, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are assessed as having a minor positive effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 8. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 8.

Soil

SEA Objective 9: Manage soil and land resources in a sustainable manner

- 6.92 A significant portion of the Plan Area is defined as grade 3 Agricultural land, i.e. good to moderate quality agricultural land.
- 6.93 Policy 1 directs residential development to an existing settlement, Belford, and gives support to residential development outside the settlement in accordance with exceptions established in national planning policy. In this way, the Policy may indirectly promote the use of previously developed land, and it limits the types and scale of development in the countryside.
- 6.94 Policy 1 defines a settlement boundary for Belford. This boundary has been drawn tightly in recognition of the scale of proposed housing required to meet needs in the Parish as set out in the Northumberland Local Plan and the need to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The settlement boundary should have a positive effect on the efficient use of land by avoiding sprawl into the countryside. It should also contribute positively to the avoidance of the development

of the best and most versatile agricultural land in the Neighbourhood Area which is a specific requirement of national planning policy. This is assessed as having an overall positive environmental effect since it encourages the management of land resources in a sustainable manner.

- 6.95 Policies 2 and 3 support community-led housing, and accessible and adaptable housing within Belford Village and on small sites outside the settlement boundary in accordance with exceptions established in national planning policy. In this way, the Policy may indirectly promote the use of previously developed land, and it limits the types and scale of development in the countryside.
- 6.96 Policy 4 supports proposals for new or redeveloped community facilities in Belford Village, and gives support to such development outside the settlement in accordance with exceptions established in national planning policy. In this way, the Policy may indirectly promote the use of previously developed land, and it limits the types and scale of development in the countryside. This is assessed as having a less than significant positive environmental effect since it encourages the management of land resources in a sustainable manner.
- 6.97 Policy 7 supports the retention and redevelopment of shops and services within the Belford Village Centre to benefit the community and provide a focal point for any new development in the neighbourhood area. In this way, the policy indirectly promotes the use of previously developed land and is likely to have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.98 Policy 9 supports business and tourism development within Belford Village and outside the settlement boundary in accordance with exceptions established in national planning policy. Whilst this may have minor negative impacts, the scale of such development is likely to be limited and consistent with the recognised national approach to the management of sustainable development. Overall, the impact of implementing Policy 9 on this SEA Objective is assessed as being neutral.
- 6.99 Policy 10 supports proposals to expand existing businesses, and to create new employment generating businesses within the Industrial Estate. By promoting the use of previously developed land, the policy is likely to have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.100 Policy 11 seeks to promote the development of overnight tourism accommodation, where they are of a scale that can be sensitively accommodated into the landscape. Given the suggested 'small-scale' nature of such development, and the intention not to support large-scale holiday parks, this should help in limiting the amount of holiday accommodation in the Parish and therefore any effect is likely to be negligible.

- 6.101 Policy 14 relates to design in new development. As the Plan largely directs development to an existing settlement, the effect on this SEA objective is likely to be negligible.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.102 The Neighbourhood Plan policies are assessed as having a minor positive effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 9. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 9.

Water

SEA Objective 10: Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.

- 6.103 Water quality is not addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan. 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 also be affected by pollution incidents in the area, the presence of non-native species and physical modifications to water bodies. It is not expected that climate change would affect the ability to supply water in the Kielder Water Resource zone.
- 6.104 Policy 14, Design in New Development requires new development to demonstrate how a Sustainable Drainage system is incorporated or there must be an explanation as to why such a system would not be practicable. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.105 Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are not considered to have a significant effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 10 and no changes are required.

Landscape

SEA Objective 11: Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes

- 6.106 Policy 1 defines a settlement boundary for Belford. Paragraph 5.5 of the Plan explains that the settlement boundary has been created to ensure that development in the Parish is managed in a way that recognises the valued landscapes around Belford Village. Outside of the settlement boundary, proposals would be supported that re-use a redundant or disused building and enhance its immediate setting; or the design is of exceptional quality, in that it significantly enhances its immediate setting, and is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area. In this way, the Policy would help to protect or enhance landscape features and would have a minor positive impact on the SEA objective.

- 6.107 Policy 2 supports housing schemes that deliver affordable housing to meet an identified local need within Belford village and on small sites on the edge of Belford village outside the settlement boundary as long as they do not impact unacceptably on the setting of the settlement and the landscape beyond. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.108 Policy 4 supports proposals for new community facilities and the expansion of existing facilities in the countryside beyond the settlement boundary as long as they are sensitive to their surroundings. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.109 Policy 5 protects two open spaces: the School Fields east of Raynham Close; and the Skate Park at the rear of Belford Fire Station. Development of ancillary facilities on the sites will be supported where that would, in criteria g) contribute positively to the setting and quality of the open space. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.110 Policy 6 protects 5 important local green spaces in a manner consistent with national policy on Green Belt land. Development would only take place in very special circumstances. By supporting the integrity of the landscape in the neighbourhood area the policy would have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.111 Policy 8 supports proposals which secure the expansion of electronic communication networks and high speed broadband along with improvements to connectivity, where it has been demonstrated that the development has been sited and designed to minimize the impacts on the character and appearance of the AONB, other valued and designated landscapes and the Belford Conservation Area. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.112 Policy 9 supports proposals for new business premises and the expansion of existing businesses within the settlement boundary of Belford village subject to compliance with relevant policies elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan and in the development plan. Any development proposed in the countryside to meet local business needs must be sensitive to its surroundings. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.113 Policy 10, Belford Industrial Estate, supports proposals for development on land adjoining the designated employment land. Any such proposals must include sufficient appropriate and effective structural landscaping using native species in order to mitigate the visual impact of built development on views into the site from the surrounding area. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.114 Policy 11 supports proposals for small scale development where it can be demonstrated that the development can be accommodated sensitively in the

landscape with great weight being given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty where development is proposed in the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. All proposals must be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced person to clearly demonstrate the landscape and visual impact anticipated to arise from the development. This approach would help to support the integrity of the landscape in the Neighbourhood Area. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

- 6.115 Policy 13, Belford Conservation Area, supports proposals within or affecting the setting of the Belford Conservation Area which preserve or enhance the character or appearance and quality of the Conservation Area and make a positive contribution to local character, distinctiveness and significance through the careful use of materials and design. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.116 Policy 14, Design In New Development, requires all new development to demonstrate, where appropriate, how in criteria a) local context and character is respected in terms of scale, density, height, massing, layout, materials, hard and soft landscaping, and means of enclosure and in criteria c) appropriate landscaping and planting has been incorporated into the scheme including the retention of trees and hedgerows where possible, and that an appropriate period for landscaping and planting establishment, maintenance and replacement where necessary is secured. Development of poor design that fails to take opportunities to improve the character and quality of the area will be refused. For areas within the Northumberland Coast AONB, development proposals will be required to incorporate the principles contained in the most recent version of the Northumberland Coast AONB Design Guide. This would help to achieve SEA Objective 11 because it supports the integrity of the landscape in the neighbourhood area and helps to conserve and enhance landscape features.
- 6.117 Policy 15 ensures all new development within 7km and major development 7 to 10km inland contributes to the Coastal Mitigation Fund, to allow users of the coast to be educated on the sensitivities of specific habitats and their vulnerable species and to help support the integrity of this important landscape in the future. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.118 Policy 16 (now 17) requires particular care to be taken in decision making to ensure development impacts on the important nationally designated and defined landscapes, and those designated through the Neighbourhood Plan, are fully understood and properly considered prior to development in those areas being supported. The policy designated an area of valued landscape on the policies map and includes other important designated landscapes in the policy. With the exception of minor extensions to existing dwellings, any proposal for development within the designated areas defined or described in the policy must be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by a suitably qualified and

experienced person to clearly demonstrate the landscape and visual impact anticipated to arise from the development. The policy has a major positive effect on the SEA Objective.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.119 Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are assessed as having a minor positive effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 11. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 11.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Conclusions

- 6.120 The summary of the assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies against SEA Objectives is set out in figure 6. The assessment concludes that overall, the Belford Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to lead to slightly positive or neutral environmental effects. Whilst the area hosts a number of environmental designations reflecting its environmental value and sensitivity, the Neighbourhood Plan's vision, objectives and policies should, on the whole help to avoid significant environmental impacts arising from development in the future, and the policies will, to a limited degree, serve to mitigate some of the potential adverse effects.

Figure 6: Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies against the SEA Objectives

POLICIES	Policy 1. New Housing Development	Policy 2. Community Led Housing	Policy 3. Accessible and Adaptable Housing	Policy 4. Community Facilities	Policy 5. Recreational open Space	Policy 6. Local Green Space	Policy 7. Belford Village Centre	Policy 8. Broadband and Telecommunications	Policy 9. Rural Business Development and Tourism	Policy 10. Belford Industrial Estate	Policy 11. Overnight Tourist Accommodation	Policy 12. Walking and Cycling Routes	Policy 13. Belford Conservation Area	Policy 14. Design in new Development	Policy 15. Protected Habitats and Species	Policy 16(17). Valued Landscapes
	SEA OBJECTIVES															
1. Protect and enhance biodiversity features	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA	NA	✓	✓	NA	NA	✓	✓✓	NA
2. Reduce the contribution to climate change	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	0	✓	NA	✓	NA	NA
3. Support resilience to the potential effects of climate change	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	X	NA	NA	✓	✓	0	NA	NA	✓	✓	NA
4. Provide an appropriate mix of good quality affordable housing	✓✓	✓	✓✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	NA	NA
5. Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents to work locally	NA	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
6. Improve the health and wellbeing of residents	✓	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	0	✓	NA	✓	NA	NA
7. Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓	0	✓	✓	NA	✓	NA	NA
8. Cater for residents' needs, and improve access to local, high-quality community facilities	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	✓	NA	NA	✓	NA	✓	NA	NA
9. Manage soil and land resources in a sustainable manner	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	NA	✓	NA	0	✓✓	0	NA	NA	0	NA	NA
10. Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA
11. Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓✓

7. Monitoring and Next Steps

Monitoring

- 7.1 Monitoring the significant effects of the implementation of a neighbourhood plan that was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment will enable unforeseen adverse effects to be identified and enable appropriate remedial actions to be taken. For identified significant effects consideration should be given to identifying:
- the criteria or thresholds for remedial action;
 - the type of remedial actions that could be taken, for example reviewing the relevant policy or implementing additional mitigation measures; and
 - the responsibility for taking the action.
- 7.2 Monitoring will be led by the Parish Council but will be informed by monitoring data captured by Northumberland County Council in respect of the Northumberland Local Plan.

Next Steps

- 7.3 This Environmental Report will be subject to consultation. Subject to any necessary amendments the report will be finalised.
- 7.4 There are a number of subsequent stages before the Belford Neighbourhood Plan can come into force, as described in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. In summary, the Neighbourhood Plan will be finalised and submitted to Northumberland County Council, alongside the SEA Environmental Report. The County Council will consider whether the Plan is suitable to progress to Independent Examination in terms of meeting legal requirements.
- 7.5 If the Plan is successful at Independent Examination, the Plan will progress to Referendum. If more than 50% of voters vote in favour of the Plan, it will then be for Northumberland County Council to seek to 'make' the Plan, subject to meeting EU obligations. Once made, the Plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the Parish of Belford and will be used to make decisions on planning applications in that area.

Appendix A: Review of Plans and Programmes

The following provides a review of plans and programmes, which is derived from the Sustainability Appraisal of the Northumberland Local Plan. It should be noted that in a number of instances the relevance of the plan or programme relates to the Local Plan and therefore is only indirectly related to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
National Plans and Programmes		
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021)		
<p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012 and most recently updated in July 2021.</p> <p>The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Local Planning Authorities should plan positively to seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.</p>	No targets or indicators.	The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the neighbourhood plan. The SEA framework should reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with clear policies that will guide development locally.
National Planning Practice Guidance		
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is designed to support the NPPF. It reflects the objectives of the NPPF which are not repeated here.	No targets or indicators.	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan and SEA framework should reflect the principles of the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance.</p> <p>Planning Practice Guidance contains specific guidance on both Neighbourhood Planning and the Strategic Environmental Assessment of Neighbourhood Plans. Therefore, it is essential that both the SEA and the Plan itself are prepared within the context of PPG.</p>
Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Historic England Advice Note 8)		
The purpose of this advice note is to support those involved in assessing the	Identifying unforeseen adverse effects of	The SEA framework should include objectives relating to conservation

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
effects of certain plans on the historic environment. It offers advice on heritage considerations during the SEA process.	implementing the plan and enabling appropriate remedial action to be taken. Testing the accuracy of predictions made in the appraisal and improving future practice. Determining if the plan is contributing to the achievement of the desired objectives and targets for the historic environment. Checking the delivery and performance of mitigation measures.	and enhancement of the historic environment.
Regional Plans and Programmes		
Northumbria river basin district, River basin management plan, 2015		
<p>The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment.</p> <p>The environmental objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to prevent deterioration of the status of surface waters and groundwater • to achieve objectives and standards for protected areas • to aim to achieve good status for all water bodies or, for heavily modified water bodies • and artificial water bodies, good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status • to reverse any significant and sustained upward trends in pollutant concentrations in groundwater • the cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of priority hazardous substances into surface waters • progressively reduce the pollution of groundwater and prevent or limit the entry of pollutants 	Maintain and enhance water quality in the neighbourhood area.	The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to water quality. The SEA baseline should include information on water quality and how it should be managed in order to ascertain the likely effects on this.
Local Plans and Programmes		
Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022)		

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
<p>The Northumberland Local Plan has recently been adopted. The Plan covers the whole of Northumberland and replaces all of the previous District and County Council Local Plan and Core Strategy documents. The Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets the strategic planning policies of the Council, taking account of key factors like population trends, economic growth, climate change, resources and environmental character; • Sets the general scale and distribution of new development which is required to meet Northumberland's needs to 2036; • Provides the planning principles, including detailed 'development management' policies to guide decisions on planning applications; • Shows in detail where new homes, workplaces and facilities will be located through allocations of land; and • Shows key environmental designations and include site specific proposals for the conservation and enhancement of historic and natural assets. 	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.</p>	<p>Planning law states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, the policies within the Northumberland Local Plan, together with those in neighbourhood plans, will be the starting point for the assessment of all planning applications. The Local Plan is a relevant consideration and its evidence base should be used to help inform the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.</p>
Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service Strategy Document (Northumberland County Council, 2018)		
<p>This strategy document aims to mitigate the effects of development, and pressure resulting from development, on the Northumberland Coast. It requires mitigation measures to be implemented within designated sites as well as covering monitoring, reporting and governance arrangements.</p>	<p>Relevant policies should require mitigation measures, including CMS.</p>	<p>The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to the protection of important coastal ecological areas and habitats.</p>
NCC Climate Commitment Action Plan 2021-23		
<p>The Action Plan sets out targets for reducing carbon emissions to achieve net zero for the County by 2030; the Council's own operational emissions will be halved by 2025 to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.</p> <p>Progress will be measured against 35 measures within the fields of agriculture and land use, energy, industry and commercial, transport, domestic and waste with 4 levels of ambition for each measure.</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan should incorporate policies to support sustainable development and the reduction in carbon omissions in the County.</p>	<p>The SEA framework should include objectives / guiding questions that relate to a reduction in carbon emissions.</p>

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
The measures will encompass Scope 1 (all direct emissions owned or controlled by the Council), Scope 2 (all indirect emissions), and Scope 3 (other indirect omissions from business travel).		
Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (Northumberland County Council, 2008)		
<p>The Biodiversity Action Plan outlines several challenges facing the natural environment of Northumberland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational pressure; • Development; • Habitat fragmentation; • Nutrient enrichment; • Unsuitable management; • Sterilisation of the 'wild' through over tidiness; • Invasive species; • Climate change; • Vandalism. <p>The Biodiversity Action Plan also enforces the need to protect Northumberland's important designated natural assets.</p>	Maintain or enhance the County's natural assets to ensure they can be enjoyed by residents and tourists.	The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to biodiversity. The SEA baseline should include information on biodiversity characteristics and how biodiversity in each neighbourhood area should be managed in order to ascertain the likely effects on this.
Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (Northumberland County Council, 2010)		
<p>The Landscape Character Assessment looks at the character of the landscape, how nature has influenced it, what it has looked like historically and what things make it distinctive. The study is divided into two parts.</p> <p>Part A - Landscape Classification Part A provides an understanding of the 44 different character types and the 108 landscape character areas. The map and associated descriptions provide a background to understanding landscape and its local distinctiveness, and provide a baseline against which change can be assessed.</p> <p>Part B - The Changing Landscape Part B sets out principles for each landscape character type. The principles seek to maintain and enhance the properties most valued in the landscape.</p>	Maintain and enhance the properties most valued in the landscape.	The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to landscape and local distinctiveness. The SEA baseline should include information on landscape character and how landscapes in each neighbourhood area should be managed in order to ascertain the likely effects on these.
NCC Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2010		
The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment provides	Maintain and enhance the properties most	The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
<p>essential information on flood risk, taking climate change into account, which allows the local planning authority to understand the risk across its area so that the Sequential Test can be properly applied.</p> <p>The assessment includes the catchments of the Rivers North, South and Main Tyne, and the Coquet, Wansbeck, Blyth, Rede, Tweed and Till plus coastal frontage settlements that fall within the flood zone of the North Sea.</p> <p>6 main sources of flood risk are identified: fluvial, tidal, sewer, surface water, groundwater and flooding from artificial sources.</p>	<p>valued in the landscape.</p>	<p>relate to flood risk. The SEA baseline should include information on existing flood risk and how it should be managed in order to ascertain the likely effects on this.</p>

Appendix B – Statutory Consultees and their responses to the SEA Scoping Report

RE: Consultation: Belford Neighbourhood Plan SEA Scoping Report

Mo, Lucy <[REDACTED]>

Thu 25/03/2021 11:15 AM

To:

Rob Naples <[REDACTED]>

Hi Rob,

Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to this consultation, this is due to limited Environment Agency resources.

Thank you for consulting us on your Neighbourhood Plan. The Environment Agency is a statutory consultee in the planning process providing advice to Local Authorities and developers on pre-application enquiries, planning applications, appeals and strategic plans. We recommend an objective is included to protect and enhance the environment. Indicators should relate to the environmental constraints in your local area. This may include flood risk, water quality, biodiversity. We also recommend your SEA takes account of relevant policies, plans and strategies including your local Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, flood risk strategies(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collect/cons/flood-risk-management-current-schemes-and-strategies>), and the Northumbria River Basin Management Plan.

Together with Natural England, English Heritage and Forestry Commission we have published joint advice on neighbourhood planning which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans. This is available at:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://cdn.environment-agency.gov.uk/LIT_6524_7da381.pdf.

Kind regards

Lucy

Lucy Mo

Chris Anderson
Northumberland County Council
Planning Strategy
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Our ref: NA/2009/103757/SE-
29/SP1-L01
Your ref:

Date: 11 June 2021

Dear Chris

**Belford Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
Scoping Report (May- June 2021)**

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the revised Scoping Report. We are a statutory consultee for SEA's and provide advice to Local Planning Authorities on the scope and findings of the SEA. Having reviewed the SEA scoping report, we are satisfied with the contents and the approach set out in the SEA scoping report.

It is noted that Belford flood defences are located within local green spaces LGS2 and LGS3. The Neighbourhood Plan and the SEA should seek to ensure that any development within these sites do not impact the function of the flood defence. Therefore, we would welcome the inclusion of wording within the Neighbourhood Plan protecting the flood defence.

It should also be noted that an Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency would be required for any works 1) on or within 8 metres of a main river and 2) on or within 8 metres of a flood defence structure or culverted main river.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Lucy Mo
Planning Technical Specialist - Sustainable Places

Direct dial [REDACTED]

Direct e-mail [REDACTED]



Historic England

Mr Chris Anderson
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: PL00709062

21 May 2021

Dear Mr Anderson

**Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004: Regulation 9
Belford Neighbourhood Plan: SEA Scoping Report - Revision, May 2021**

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the revised version of the above Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report. 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 revised Scoping Report, dated May 2021, we agree that historic environment matters should not form part of the SEA when it is completed alongside the emerging neighbourhood plan. The revised report describes the amended geographical coverage of the plan and its policies, but these amendments do not change our previous conclusion that significant effects on the historic environment are unlikely. Consequently, historic environment matters can remain scoped out of the SEA.

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

Jules Brown
Historic Places Adviser

[REDACTED]

Date: 01 June 2021
Our ref: 353995
Your ref: Belford Neighbourhood Plan - SEA Scoping Consultation



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Planning Services
Northumberland County Council
County Hall Morpeth
Northumberland
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T 0300 060 3900

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Anderson

Planning consultation: Consultation on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report, Belford Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 20 May 2021.

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.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made.

Natural England agrees with the proposed scope and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report.

Natural England has no further specific comments to make on this neighbourhood plan SEA scoping report.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

However, we refer you to the advice in the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Cameron Chandler
Northumbria Area Team

Appendix C – Policies in the Submission Draft Belford Neighbourhood Plan, November 2022

POLICY 1: NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

1. A settlement boundary for Belford village is defined on the Policies Map. New housing development within the settlement boundary will be supported provided no significant adverse impact arises to residential amenity and highway safety, and subject to compliance with relevant policies elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan and other relevant policies in the development plan.
2. Land outside the defined settlement boundary will be treated as countryside whose intrinsic character and beauty must be recognised in all decision making on development proposals in those areas. New housing development in the countryside will not be supported other than in the circumstances described in this Policy.
3. Affordable housing to meet identified local needs, including through community-led schemes, delivered as 'rural exception sites' or as first homes exception sites' in accordance with the definitions and limitations set out in national planning policy and guidance, will be supported outside the defined settlement boundary subject to compliance with any requirements or limitations created by relevant policies elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan and other relevant policies in the development plan. Isolated residential development in the countryside will only be supported where in accordance with policies in the development plan and NPPF.
4. Proposals for the construction of single self-build or custom-build dwellings located within or immediately adjacent to the hamlets of Ross, Elwick, Middleton, Detchant, Easington, Waren Mill, Spindlestone, Warenton and Mousen will be supported subject to compliance with relevant policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and elsewhere in the development plan including those regarding design, highway safety, biodiversity impact, amenity impact and the need to give great weight to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty in the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Any such dwellings will only be supported where they are within an existing building curtilage or are well related and adjacent to or adjoining existing built development. Proposals must be designed at an appropriate scale and be sited in a location that minimises adverse impacts on landscape character; and respects and maintains the character of the named settlement within which they are to be built.

POLICY 2: AFFORDABLE AND COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING

Affordable housing including Community-led housing schemes that meet an identified local need will be supported within Belford village and on small sites on the edge of Belford village outside the settlement boundary as defined on the Policies Map. Schemes must be well related to existing development, have suitable and safe highways access, incorporate high quality landscaping and not impact unacceptably on heritage assets or the setting of the settlement, the landscape beyond or the amenity of local residents.

POLICY 3: ACCESSIBLE AND ADAPTABLE HOUSING

1. The provision of housing specifically designed for occupation by older people through the construction of bungalows, sheltered accommodation, assisted living schemes and extra care housing, including schemes delivered as affordable housing on 'rural exception sites', will be supported provided no significant adverse impact arises to residential amenity and highway safety; and subject to compliance with relevant policies elsewhere in the development plan.
2. New housing within the Belford Neighbourhood Area which is designed to meet accessibility and adaptability standards as set out in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations 2010 (as amended) or any equivalent successor building standards will be supported.

POLICY 4: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

1. The following facilities within Belford village, which are identified on the Policies Map, are recognised and protected for their importance in providing valuable services to the local community, residents and businesses located within and beyond Belford Neighbourhood Area and visitors to the area:

CF1: Bell View Resource Centre, 33 West Street
CF2: Belford Co-op and Post Office, West Street
CF3: The Belford Pharmacy, 22 West Street
CF4: Belford Newsagents, 22 High Street
CF5: The Blue Bell Hotel, Market Place
CF6: The John Dory Fish & Chip Shop, 8 West Street
CF6: Belford Community Gym, High Street
CF7: Belford Museum, 11 Church Street
CF8: The Parish Church of St. Mary and Churchyard
CF9: Belford Community Shop, 13 High Street
CF10: Sunnyside Farm Shop, South Road
CF11: Black Swan Hotel, 1 Market Place
CF12: The Salmon Public House, 31 High Street
CF13: Well House Coffee Shop, 33 High Street

2. Proposals for the redevelopment of these buildings, or a change of use that requires planning permission and would result in loss of these community facilities (or any other facilities registered as Assets of Community Value), will not be supported unless they will be replaced by an equivalent facility in no less convenient location for users; or robust evidence is provided to demonstrate there is no longer a need for the facility or the facility is no longer viable. In order to demonstrate that the facility is no longer viable the building must be actively marketed as being available for rent or acquisition at a price that reflects its current use for a period of not less than six months, and evidence must be provided to demonstrate that no reasonable offers were made within that period.

3. Proposals for new community facilities and the expansion of existing facilities within the Belford settlement boundary defined on the Policies Map will be supported provided no significant adverse impact arises to residential amenity and highway safety, and subject to compliance with relevant policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and in the development plan.
4. Proposals for new community facilities and the expansion of existing facilities in the countryside beyond the settlement boundary must be sensitive to their surroundings, must not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and must demonstrate how all opportunities have been taken to make the location of the development more sustainable including through improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport.

POLICY 5: RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE

1. The outdoor recreational space at the following locations, which are defined on the Policies Map, are designated for protection as a valued recreational open space:

ROS 1: School Fields east of Raynham Close; and
 ROS 2: Skate Park rear of Belford Fire Station

2. These recreational open spaces shall not be built on unless:
 - a. an independent assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space to be surplus to requirements; or
 - b. the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - c. the development is for alternative sports or recreational provision, the benefits of which are clearly demonstrated to outweigh the loss of the current use.
3. Development of ancillary facilities on the sites will be supported where that would:
 - a. be appropriate in scale and would not detract from the character of the site or surroundings;
 - b. not have a significant and unacceptable adverse impact upon residential amenity;
 - c. not be detrimental to the function that the open space performs;
 - d. contribute positively to the setting and quality of the open space; and
 - e. be necessary to, or would facilitate, the functioning of the open space.

POLICY 6: LOCAL GREEN SPACE

- i. 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: Belford Central Park Playground, off William's Way

LGS2: Belford Community Woodland, Croftfield

LGS3: Belford Jubilee Woodland Park

LGS4: Croftfield Playgound

LGS5: Belford Football Ground (The Meadows), Croftfield

1. Management of any development within these Local Green Spaces must be consistent with national policy on Green Belts. Inappropriate development will not be permitted other than where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Local Green Space by reason of inappropriateness, and other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
2. Any development within LGS2 and LGS3 must not impact the function of flood defences located in these areas.

POLICY 7: BELFORD VILLAGE CENTRE

1. Within Belford Village Centre as defined on the Policies Map, the loss of shops, services and other facilities, including those within Class E of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order, as a result of change of use or redevelopment will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the proposed use will not have a significant adverse impact on highway safety or residential amenity and will make a positive contribution to Belford Village Centre by maintaining or improving the economic vitality, viability and sustainability of Belford by:
 - a. providing a service that will benefit residents and/or visitors to the area; or
 - b. providing a use that will support existing businesses in the area; and
 - c. providing a use that will generate employment locally.
2. The change of use of ground floor premises within Belford Village Centre currently in Class E, Class F1 or Class F2 uses to residential use, including as overnight or short-stay tourist accommodation will not be supported.
3. The change of use of ground floor premises within Belford Village Centre currently in Class E, Class F1, or Class F2 uses to residential use, including as overnight or short-stay tourist accommodation will only be supported if relevant tests within this policy and/or Policy 4 have been satisfied.
4. Proposals to improve the external appearance of buildings within Belford Village Centre and the contribution they make to the street-scene and the public realm will be supported.
5. Proposals within Belford Village Centre to improve car and cycle parking, combined with improvements to the public realm for pedestrians and other users will be supported provided that these do not result in an unacceptable adverse impact on

highway safety or residential amenity and they preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Belford Conservation Area.

POLICY 8: BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

1. Proposals which secure the expansion of electronic communication networks and high-speed broadband along with improvements to connectivity will be supported where the applicant demonstrates that opportunities to erect apparatus on existing buildings, masts or other structures and where the number of radio and telecommunication masts are kept to a minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network has been fully explored; and where it has been demonstrated that the development has been sited and designed, where relevant to minimize any adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the AONB, other valued and designated key qualities of the landscape and/or the Belford Conservation Area.
2. Applications for new development should ensure provision is made for suitable ducting to enable more than one service provider to provide a fibre connection to individual properties from connection cabinets located on the public highway, or some alternative point available to different service providers.

POLICY 9: RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

1. Proposals for new business premises and the expansion of existing businesses within the settlement boundary of Belford village as defined on the Policies Map will be supported provided no significant adverse impact arises to residential amenity and highway safety, and subject to compliance with relevant policies in the development plan.
2. The following forms of development that meet local business needs will be supported outside the settlement boundary subject to compliance with other limitations and requirements created by relevant policies in the development plan:
 - a. the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business both through conversion of existing buildings and where this is not possible, through appropriately scaled, well-designed new buildings;
 - b. the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural business;
 - c. sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
 - d. development that supports the creation or expansion of accessible services and facilities to meet the needs of the local community and visitors to the area.
3. Any development proposed in the countryside to meet local business needs, including those associated with sustainable rural tourism and leisure activities, must be sensitive to its surroundings, must not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and must demonstrate how all opportunities have been taken to make the location of

the development more sustainable including through improving the scope for access to the development on foot, by cycling or by public transport.

POLICY 10: BELFORD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

1. Development proposals to expand existing businesses, and proposals to create new employment generating businesses within Belford Industrial Estate, will be supported provided those proposals do not lead to an unacceptable impact on the amenity of nearby residents or on highway safety.
2. Development proposals for employment generating uses located on land adjoining the Industrial Estate will be supported where they accord with Policy 9 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Any such proposals must include sufficient appropriate and effective structural landscaping using native species in order to mitigate the visual impact of built development on views into the site from the surrounding area.
3. The change of use of any existing buildings from employment generating uses to residential use, or the construction of new dwellings through demolition and redevelopment of existing buildings within the Industrial Estate will not be supported.

POLICY 11: OVERNIGHT TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

1. Proposals for overnight tourist accommodation will be encouraged, including support in the open countryside for small scale development, comprising building conversions such as for bunkhouses, and new temporary accommodation such as chalets, holiday lodges, glamping pods, or yurts. Small scale touring caravan sites and camping sites, and the small-scale expansion of existing static caravan and holiday home parks will also be supported. The occupation of any caravans, buildings or other structures will be limited by condition or planning obligation to prevent their use other than as holiday accommodation. It should be demonstrated that:
 - a. the development can be accommodated within the capacity of existing drainage and water supply infrastructure, or appropriate infrastructure can be provided;
 - b. no significant adverse impact on highway safety would arise from the development;
 - c. no significant adverse impact on residential amenity would arise from the development;
 - d. the development can be accommodated sensitively in the landscape with great weight being given to conserving and enhancing the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where these would be affected;
 - e. where proposals would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the optimum use that is viable and justifiable; and

- f. where development proposals affect a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement is made, taking into account the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
2. Where the development is considered likely to have a significant impact on the surrounding landscape, townscape, or seascape character of the site and/or visual amenity and/or the special qualities of the AONB, proposals must be supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced person to clearly demonstrate the landscape and visual impact anticipated to arise from the development.

POLICY 12: PROVISION AND IMPROVEMENT OF WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES

The creation and improvement of footpaths and cycle ways will be supported. The creation of a new route to improve connectivity between Belford and the Northumberland Coast by means of a safe crossing over or under the A1 will be supported. The A1 in Northumberland forms part of the Strategic Road Network and extensive liaison and agreement would be required with National Highways to deliver these proposals.

POLICY 13: BELFORD CONSERVATION AREA

1. Development proposals that contribute positively to the conservation area, better revealing its significance will be supported. Development within or affecting the setting of the Belford Conservation Area will be expected to preserve or enhance the character or appearance and quality of the Conservation Area and also make a positive contribution to local character, and distinctiveness, through the careful use of materials and design.
2. Development proposals that lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of the Belford Conservation Area will be refused. Development of poor design that fails to preserve or enhance the character or appearance and distinctiveness of the Conservation Area will be refused.
3. Any proposed alterations to shop fronts, or the creation of new shop fronts, must reflect the design features dominant in the traditional shop fronts in the village centre and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Belford Conservation Area.

POLICY 14: DESIGN IN NEW DEVELOPMENT

1. All new development, including extensions and conversions, must incorporate high quality design and demonstrate, where appropriate, how:

- a. local context and character are respected in terms of scale, density, height, massing, layout, materials, hard and soft landscaping, and means of enclosure; and
 - b. features including windows, doors, roof lights, chimneys, flues, roofs, and boundary treatments have regard to surrounding character and materials used locally; and
 - c. appropriate landscaping and planting have been incorporated into the scheme including the retention of trees and hedgerows where possible, and that an appropriate period for landscaping and planting establishment, maintenance and replacement where necessary is secured; and
 - d. a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) has been incorporated or it can be demonstrated why such a system would not be practicable; and
 - e. measures have been incorporated to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation; and
 - f. the massing, height, scale and proximity of the proposed development to any neighbouring property does not result in unacceptable adverse amenity impacts arising on the living conditions of existing or future residents through loss of light, overshadowing or over-dominance; and
 - g. opportunities have been taken where possible to incorporate embedded renewables, such as solar panels, heat pumps and other measures to reduce the carbon footprint of the building; and
 - h. opportunities have been taken in the layout and building orientation to minimise energy consumption and maximise passive solar gain; and
 - i. appropriate safe vehicular and pedestrian access can be achieved.
2. Development that is not well designed will be refused especially where it fails to reflect the criteria in this policy and other relevant policies in the development plan.
 3. For areas within the Northumberland Coast AONB, development proposals will be required to incorporate the principles contained in the most recent version of the Northumberland Coast AONB Design Guide.

POLICY 15: PROTECTED HABITATS AND SPECIES

1. To ensure that the impacts arising from increasing levels of recreational disturbance on coastal Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European Sites can be addressed, all development that will result in a net increase in the number of residential units or tourist accommodation will be required to contribute to the Coastal Mitigation Service or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness.
2. All financial contributions required in accordance with this policy will be secured by way of a planning obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or any subsequent amending legislation.

3. Wherever biodiversity is impacted by development the proposal must secure a measurable 'net gain' for biodiversity through mitigation, restoration, and/or, as a last resort compensatory measures as necessary.

POLICY 16: DEVELOPMENT AND WATER QUALITY

Any new residential development, tourism accommodation or any other type of development that will increase foul water discharges must be accompanied by a nutrient budget and a plan to offset any increases in nitrogen levels entering the Lindisfarne SPA and Ramsar Site. Planning permission will only be granted where this nutrient budget shows that there will be no net increase in nitrogen entering the Lindisfarne SPA.

POLICY 17: VALUED LANDSCAPES

1. An Area of Valued Landscape is defined on the Policies Map. Any development that has a significant adverse impact on important characteristics or qualities of the landscape in this area, as described in the Belford Valued Landscapes Background Report (November 2021) or other relevant evidence documents will not be supported.
2. Key views to and from Belford Hall Estate, Chapel Hill and Chapel Crag are recognised, in the Belford Valued Landscapes Background Report (November 2021), as features characteristic to the settlement that are sensitive to change within the surrounding landscape. Proposals for development on the settlement edges of Belford that affect these areas of higher landscape sensitivity will not be supported unless it is demonstrated that the development can be sensitively accommodated in the landscape without significant adverse effect on important views into and out of the settlement.
3. Development proposals in the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be assessed having regard to the need to give great weight to the conservation and enhancement of landscape and scenic beauty in the AONB. Where appropriate, the assessment of development impacts will take account of the findings set out in the Belford Valued Landscapes Background Report (November 2021) This will include the need to have regard to the impact development proposals within and beyond the AONB boundaries would be likely to have on the iconic features and important viewpoints included in that report, including Bamburgh Castle and Greenshean Hill. Proposals for major development in the Northumberland Coast AONB will not be supported other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest in accordance with national planning policies and relevant development plan policies.
4. Any proposal for development considered likely to have a significant impact on the surrounding landscape, townscape or seascape character of the site and/or visual amenity and/or the special qualities of AONB and/or important characteristics or qualities within the Area of Valued Landscape, must be accompanied by a Landscape

and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced person to clearly demonstrate the landscape and visual impact anticipated to arise from the development.