



Northumberland  
County Council

## **Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan**

### **The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004**

#### **Regulation 16 Adoption Statement**

**Published 2 April 2020**

#### ***1. Introduction***

1.1. The Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) was made (brought into force) at Cabinet on 10 March 2020. It now forms part of the development plan for Northumberland and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in Cramlington Parish. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the policies in the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.2. Preparation of the Plan included consultation with the statutory consultation bodies, stakeholders and the local community. In parallel with the preparation of the Plan, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was undertaken. SEA is a process by which the Plan and its policies, and any reasonable alternative approaches to achieve the objectives of the Plan, were appraised against a set of environmental objectives. The purpose of SEA is to help ensure that potential significant adverse environmental effects are identified and then avoided or mitigated; and to consider opportunities for improving expected outcomes from implementing the Plan.

1.3. SEA is undertaken as a series of stages in line with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). Once a plan that has been subject to SEA is brought into force Regulation 16 of the SEA Regulations require the local authority that brings the plan into force to publish an 'adoption statement'.

**This document is the Regulation 16 Adoption Statement for the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan for the purposes of the SEA Regulations.**

1.4. In accordance with the SEA Regulations this adoption statement includes the following prescribed information:

- an overview of the process that has been undertaken;
- how environmental considerations have informed the development of the Plan, including consideration of reasonable alternatives;
- how the results of any consultations have been taken into account; and
- the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan.

1.5 The Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan, the SEA Environmental Report, and this statement are available on the County Council's website through the following link: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Neighbourhood.aspx>

A hard copy of these documents can be inspected by prior appointment by contacting the Neighbourhood Planning Team at:

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## 2. Overview of the Process

2.1 SEA was completed over a series of stages in parallel with the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The key stages are summarised in Table 1.

*Table 1 – Key Stages in the SEA Process for Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan*

Date	Description
February 2016	<p>Northumberland County Council (NCC) published a SEA Screening Opinion Report, prepared in consultation with the statutory consultation bodies. The report concludes that SEA of the Plan is required for these reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the identification of the South West Sector as a large scale urban extension to Cramlington;</li> <li>• the presence of designations within the Neighbourhood Area including SSSIs, SNCIs, ancient woodland, local nature reserves and designated and non-designated heritage assets; and</li> <li>• the likelihood of indirect environmental effects with potential for cumulative effects across the Neighbourhood Area.</li> </ul>
February 2017	<p>A SEA Scoping Report (produced by AECOM Consultancy) is published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies. Their comments help inform the final scope of the SEA for the Plan.</p>
November 2017	<p>A draft SEA Environmental Report is published.</p>
August 2018	<p>A final draft SEA Environmental Report is published.</p>
September – October 2018	<p>Cramlington Town Council carry out consultation for 6 weeks in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) on the draft pre-submission Plan and, in accordance with the SEA Regulations, on the draft SEA Environmental Report.</p>
March 2019	<p>Further changes are made to the Environmental Report to reflect Plan amendments. The final version is submitted to NCC along with the final draft version of the Plan. These documents are subsequently publicised by NCC for 6 weeks in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).</p>

2.2. The SEA Scoping Report helped to inform the creation of an SEA Framework, which comprised a list of objectives under seven environmental themes, against which the Plan and its policies were assessed throughout its preparation. This SEA Framework is shown in Table 2.

*Table 2 – Environmental Themes and Objectives for the Plan*

<b>SEA Themes</b>	<b>SEA Objectives</b>
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To protect and enhance Cramlington’s biodiversity and geodiversity.</li> </ul>
Climate change (including risk of flooding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Cramlington.</li> <li>• To ensure Cramlington’s resilience to the effects of climate change through effective adaptation.</li> <li>• To avoid or reduce flood risk to people and property in Cramlington.</li> </ul>
Historic environment and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To protect and, enhance the quality, distinctiveness and diversity of Cramlington’s rural and urban landscapes.</li> <li>• To protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.</li> </ul>
Land, soil, air and water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure prudent use and supply of natural resources.</li> <li>• To ensure good air quality.</li> <li>• To protect and enhance the quality of Northumberland’s ground, river and sea waters.</li> </ul>
Housing, population and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve the quality, range and accessibility of community services and facilities.</li> <li>• To ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home.</li> </ul>
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.</li> </ul>
Transportation and accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce the need for travel and improve transport integration.</li> </ul>

2.3 A full draft SEA Environmental Report (August 2018) was prepared and published alongside a pre-submission consultation version of the CNP. This provided a comprehensive assessment of the draft Plan including consideration of reasonable alternatives to the policies proposed in the Plan. The findings helped to inform a review and further revisions to the Plan. The SEA Environmental Report (March 2019) is an amended iteration that takes account of changes to the draft Plan following consultation. This aligns with the purpose of SEA which must be seen as a continuous process applied throughout the period of plan preparation.

### **3. How SEA has informed the Development of the Plan**

3.1 SEA has been undertaken as an iterative process to ensure that environmental considerations have guided the neighbourhood plan-making process. Policies have been developed having regard to objectives established in the SEA Framework and the need to deliver, through planning policies, Plan's Objectives which are set out in Chapter 4 of the Plan. Together these seek to place environmental considerations at the heart of decision-making.

3.2 The process for preparing a neighbourhood plan requires an independent examination of the draft plan. This requires an independent person to consider and make recommendations on whether the plan meets a range of legal and policy requirements. That examination concludes with the publication of a report by the independent person appointed to examine the plan. The Examiner's Report for the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan was published in September 2019. Paragraph 2.14 of that Report confirms the examiner's conclusions that the relevant statutory requirements in respect of SEA were satisfied through the plan-making process.

#### **Reasonable Alternatives**

3.3 Where the Plan is heavily influenced by policies in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan, it was not considered necessary to consider alternatives. However, there were two areas where reasonable alternatives were considered: approaches to the settlement boundary for Cramlington; and an appraisal of a number of potential sites for housing development in Cramlington.

3.4 The Plan proposed to make amendments to the settlement boundary for Cramlington. Two options were appraised: make changes to the settlement boundary; do not make amendments to the settlement boundary. A detailed appraisal of each option, and the reason for the decision taken, are provided in Appendix C of the Environmental Report.

3.5 During the development of the Plan a number of sites were considered as potential housing sites for allocation within the Neighbourhood Area. From an initial list of 28 sites, 19 sites were shortlisted and appraised against the 7 environmental themes established in the assessment Framework. A detailed SEA Site Assessment for each of the shortlisted sites plus the reasons for the choice of the 2 housing allocations sites can be found in Appendix B of the Environmental Report.

#### **Policy Appraisals**

3.6 The Plan policies were appraised against the SEA Framework at various stages to help inform the final policies in the made version of the Plan. The appraisal commentary for each sustainability theme does not necessarily discuss every single Plan policy, only those where notable effects are predicted. The results of the policy appraisal are summarised in Table 3 below. Notably, there were no policies which were expected to result in significant negative impacts. SEA findings helped give

assurance that the Plan would contribute positively toward meeting environmental objectives.

*Table 3 – Summary of Policy Appraisal by Environmental Objective*

<b>SEA Theme</b>	<b>SEA Objectives</b>	<b>Summary of Effects</b>
Biodiversity and geodiversity	To protect and enhance Cramlington's biodiversity and geodiversity.	A significant positive effect is predicted on biodiversity in the long term. This is due to multiple plan policies seeking to achieve enhancement and a gain in biodiversity.
Climate change (including risk of flooding)	To mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Cramlington.	No significant effects are predicted.
	To ensure Cramlington's resilience to the effects of climate change through effective adaptation.	No significant effects are predicted.
	To avoid or reduce flood risk to people and property in Cramlington.	No significant effects are predicted.
Historic environment and landscape	To protect and, enhance the quality, distinctiveness and diversity of Cramlington's rural and urban landscapes.	The Plan is predicted to have a significant positive effect on landscape and heritage in the longer term through influencing the quality and location of new developments.
	To protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.	
Land, soil, air and water resources	To ensure prudent use and supply of natural resources.	No significant effects are predicted for land, soil, air and water resources.
	To ensure good air quality.	
	To protect and enhance the quality of Northumberland's ground, river and sea waters.	
Housing, population and community	To improve the quality, range and accessibility of community services and facilities.	No significant effects are predicted.
	To ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home.	A significant positive effect is predicted as the Plan ought to help address affordable housing issues and also support the delivery of attractive homes
Health and wellbeing	To improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.	Significant positive effects are predicted due to the protection and enhancement of open space, recreation, walking and cycling routes and community facilities.
Transportation and accessibility	To reduce the need for travel and improve transport integration.	Significant positive effects are predicted in the longer term by encouraging walking, cycling and public transport use, well-located housing development, and supporting infrastructure improvements.

#### **4. How the Results of Consultations have been taken into Account**

4.1 As illustrated in Table 2, the Plan and corresponding SEA have been subject to several rounds of public consultation with responses informing the preparation of both documents.

4.2 An SEA Scoping Report was published for consultation in 2017 with the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England). Comments were received from Historic England: table 3.1 in the Environmental Report (March 2019) sets out how the response to these comments was reflected in the SEA scope.

4.3 A draft SEA Environmental Report (August 2018) was published for consultation alongside the Town Council's consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Comments were received on the Environmental Report from Historic England, the Environment Agency, Natural England and Dysart Developments. Appendix 15 of the Consultation Statement, a document that must be prepared to describe the outcome of consultation undertaken by the Town Council on the Neighbourhood Plan, provides a summary of the written representations received and the Town Council's response to those representations, including any consequent modification they made to the Plan as a result of those representations.

4.4 The final SEA Environmental Report was submitted to Northumberland County Council along with the final draft version of the Plan in April 2019. These documents were subsequently publicised by the County Council for a period of 6 weeks in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). All representations made in response to that publicity were considered by the Examiner during the independent examination of the Plan.

4.5 In addition to the statutory consultation stages, the Town Council also engaged with the local community and stakeholders at a number of informal consultation events throughout the preparation of the Plan. This community engagement provided a further opportunity for the Town Council to consider local environmental considerations. Further information is available in the Consultation Statement.

#### **5. Monitoring Measures**

5.1 The SEA Regulations require that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Plan should be monitored.

5.2 The final SEA Environmental Report (March 2019) highlighted the range of significant positive effects that had the potential to arise as a result of the implementation of the Plan, with no identified significant negative effects. However, the Environmental Report concludes that:

‘It is important to establish measures to monitor the extent to which such effects are generated ‘in reality’ once the Plan has been made. This helps to identify where interventions might need to be taken to ensure that the Plan is implemented more effectively.’

In addition, it states that whilst no significant negative effects have been predicted:

‘...it is useful to monitor the minor negative effects that have been identified to ensure that they are not likely to become significant in practice.’

5.3 Whilst the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan does not set out a framework to monitor the effects of implementation of the policies in the Plan, the County Council will provide, periodically, relevant information and updates through the annual Authority Monitoring Report process.

## **6. Sources**

6.1 The following documents have informed this Adoption Statement:

- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/part/4/made>
- The Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan, Referendum Plan, November 2019. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Cramlington-NP-Referendum-Plan-Draft-FINAL-2.pdf>
- The Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement, May 2019. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Cramlington-NP-Reg-16-Consultation-Statement-May-2019.pdf>
- The Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan Environmental Report, March 2019. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Cramlington-NP-Reg-16-SEA-Environmental-Report-incl-Appendices.pdf>
- Report to the Northumberland County Council on the Independent Examination of the submission draft Cramlington Neighbourhood Plan, September 2019. Available at: [https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Cramlington-NP-Examiner-s-Report\\_1.pdf](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Cramlington-NP-Examiner-s-Report_1.pdf)