

How to CONTACT US

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

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NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING: Keeping it simple

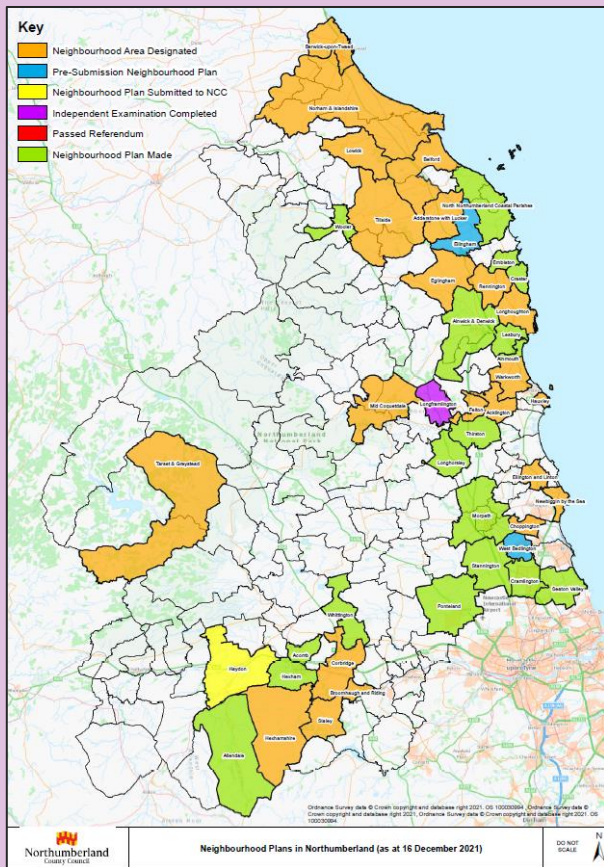
A neighbourhood plan can be kept very simple. Do not think you need to prepare a long and complex document. It is the community's plan and needs only to deal with the planning issues that matter to you.

To avoid being overwhelmed, here are ten top tips to '[keep it simple](#)'.

1. *Keep your eye on the prize – a timely neighbourhood plan which addresses the planning issues that matter in your area*
2. *Manage your time – use a work programme and timetable*
3. *Avoid duplication – don't worry about including issues that are already adequately addressed in the Local Plan*
4. *Make a difference - good ideas count for nothing if they never get implemented so don't get distracted*
5. *Be practical - every new idea requires new information and evidence to back it up*
6. *Compromise - be honest about how much time, energy resources and skills you can all bring*
7. *You can't please all the people all of the time – don't try*
8. *Keep things moving - don't delay everything while you wait for information on a single issue that may never emerge*
9. *Have clear priorities - you won't be able to address every issue raised in public consultation or by the enthusiasts in your group*
10. *Enough is enough – the perfect plan doesn't exist so draw a line and win that referendum*



What's happening around the County?



Residents of Wooler now have more of a say over future development in their parishes following the adoption of their Neighbourhood Plan.

The Wooler Neighbourhood Plan now forms part of the Statutory Development Plan for Northumberland, meaning that future planning decisions in the area will be made in accordance with policies in the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Plan was 'made' at a meeting of the County Council's Cabinet on 7 December. The Plan contains 30 planning policies covering: sustainable development; development allocations; housing; local economy; landscape, natural environment, townscape and heritage, community life and accessibility.

There are now eighteen made neighbourhood plans in Northumberland.

The **Longframlington Neighbourhood Plan** passed independent examination in October and will proceed to a Referendum on Thursday 20 January 2022.

The Plan contains seven policies which support their vision, which is to ensure that Longframlington remains a vibrant, sustainable and attractive place to live.



The Plan supports housing development within a defined settlement boundary for the village, high quality and sustainable design, the provision of new and expanded community facilities, sustainable business growth, protection for valued green spaces and recreation areas, and a net gain for biodiversity.

The Plan currently has significant weight in decision-making.

Haydon Parish Council submitted their plan to the County Council in November. In accordance with legislation, the County Council are now publicising the Submission Draft **Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan** until Wednesday 12 January 2022.



The Plan contains 20 policies covering a range of issues around sustainability and climate change, the built and historic environment, the natural environment, housing mix and tenure, community facilities, and accessibility and transport.

All comments received during the publicity period will be sent to the examiner carrying out the Independent Examination of the Plan.

Twenty-four other parishes are at an earlier stage of plan-making. More information is on our [website](#), where you can also view a larger version of the neighbourhood plan county map.

FOCUS on: Acomb Parish



We are pleased to introduce Norman Robson, Parish Councillor at Acomb. Norman was a member of the steering group, which put together Acomb's Neighbourhood Plan. He shares his experiences and insights.

What has the Parish Council been doing since the Neighbourhood Plan was adopted?

The makeup of the Parish Council (PC) has changed quite a bit. Four of the seven Parish Councillors involved in the neighbourhood plan have left and been replaced with four new ones. Since early 2019, when the Neighbourhood Plan was made, the nature and direction of the PC has also changed, and we have taken on new work streams.

The PC has formally recognised that it is a trustee for the Village Hall, the Pavilion and other community spaces in Acomb. We now have separate Parish Council and Trustees meetings and have a range of initiatives on the go including the refurbishment of the Village Hall and the refurbishment of our Pavilion.

We have also seen a new climate change sub-committee, born out of an earlier environmental subgroup and we have several initiatives in the Parish on climate change.

We are a '[climate champion](#)' parish, and we have secured trees and shrubs from the Woodland Trust to support the preservation of an ancient hedgerow in the Parish which was damaged by the construction of a new development site.

Working with Karbon Homes, we are looking to plant a small community orchard, on one of the Local Green Spaces identified in the neighbourhood plan.

Acomb is historically a mining area, so we are also exploring a district heat network for the Parish utilising deep mine water reserves. We have also looked at establishing 'NO MOW' areas on our local playing field which would encourage the planting and growing of wildflower meadow areas.

Are you still referring to the Acomb Neighbourhood plan in any comments on planning applications?

Yes, very much so. A recent planning application for housing development in the parish mentioned everything but our neighbourhood plan in the application.

One of our newer parish councillors prepared a thorough set of comments and referred to the relevant parts of the neighbourhood plan in our response. We certainly don't want the neighbourhood plan to become a shelved and dusty document.

Has the Parish Council considered a review of the Neighbourhood Plan?

A neighbourhood planning review has been on our Parish Council agenda, yes. We have discussed whether the forthcoming Local Plan for Northumberland and the National Planning Policy Framework will already address some of the newer issues we have in Acomb. We have discussed the issue of a further independent examination and referendum which would be required if we carry out a review of the neighbourhood plan. However, we also recognise that there are personal capacity issues amongst the Parish Councillors which may make it difficult to take on more work through a neighbourhood plan review.

A new Green Infrastructure Framework for England

Natural England has launched a Green Infrastructure Framework for England. The Framework will help neighbourhood planning groups to think more about Green Infrastructure and plan for its creation or improvement.

What is Green Infrastructure?

Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

Examples of GI are urban parks, village greens, rivers and canals, field margins, SuDs, woodland and scrub, road and rail corridors, and green roofs and blue roofs.

How will the Framework help to plan for GI?

Many neighbourhood planners are keen to improve GI in their local area. The following tools are now available:

- [Green Infrastructure Principles](#) set out the Why, What and How to do good GI
- Green Infrastructure Mapping Database - A baseline of GI across England with multiple data sets that assist in planning GI strategically at different scales.

The remaining elements of the Framework are under development and will be published in 2022.

More information is available [here](#).



Environment Bill becomes Law

The Environment Bill has now completed its passage through Parliament and has been enacted as The Environment Act 2021.

The Act introduces a requirement for all development, other than house extensions, to provide a ten per cent net gain in biodiversity. This requirement will be introduced through transitional arrangements by 2023.

Sites where biodiversity net gains are secured must be managed for at least 30 years. Site management will be monitored through a 'biodiversity gain site register' which must be publicly available and maintained for at least 30 years after a scheme is completed.

The Act also introduces Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) - a new system of spatial strategies for nature, which will eventually cover the whole of England. LNRS will help to embed greater strategic thinking about, and management of, biodiversity impacts.

Overall, the Act should help in raising biodiversity issues and securing the avoidance of harm or management and mitigation of impacts at as early a stage as possible in plan-making and decision-taking.

There is a lot of detail yet to come from the Act, but it is, at least, a step further in protecting our environment when planning policies are being drafted and when planning decisions are taken.

The County Council is developing a position statement concerning its approach to biodiversity net gain during the transition period. For further queries about the Environment Act and the council's position statement please contact david.feige@northumberland.gov.uk

The images above from left to right show whin grassland, large heath butterfly, Priestclose Wood, and a water vole.

