



Northumberland  
County Council

## **Embleton Neighbourhood Plan**

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

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

**Published July 2021**

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

1.1. The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) was made (brought into force) at Cabinet on 13 July 2021. It now forms part of the development plan for Northumberland and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in Embleton 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 Embleton 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 Embleton 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:

Planning Services

Northumberland County Council

County Hall

Morpeth

NE61 2EF

(office hours: Monday – Thursday, 9am – 5pm, Friday 9am – 4:30pm).

Tel: 0345 600 6400

Email: [Neighbourhoodplanning@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Neighbourhoodplanning@northumberland.gov.uk)

## 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 the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan*

Date	Description
February 2019	Northumberland County Council (NCC) published a SEA Screening Opinion, prepared in consultation with the statutory consultation bodies. The report concludes that SEA of the Plan was not required as the Plan was not considered to result in significant effects on the environment.
April - September 2019	A Screening Opinion carried out under the Habitats Regulations was produced; this concluded that Appropriate Assessment was required due to a number of policies being supportive of development which could result in an increase in recreational pressure on sensitive statutory designations within and outside the Neighbourhood Area.  Since the Plan needed to be subject to Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations, this triggered the need for SEA.
April 2019	A SEA Scoping Report was published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies. Their comments help inform the final scope of the SEA for the Plan.
August 2019	A draft SEA Environmental Report is published.
September 2019	A final draft SEA Environmental Report is published.
November 2019	Northumberland County Council begin period of publicity in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) on the Submission Plan. Due to an amendment to the Habitats Regulations Assessment, the publicity period for the Plan is extended until January 2020.

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 all biodiversity and geological features.</li> </ul>
Climate change (including flood risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Area;</li> <li>• Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding;</li> </ul>
Landscape and historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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>• Ensure the efficient use of land;</li> <li>• Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste;</li> <li>• Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.</li> </ul>
Population and human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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;</li> <li>• Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures;</li> <li>• Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally;</li> <li>• Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area;</li> <li>• Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.</li> </ul>

2.3 A full draft SEA Environmental Report (September 2019) was prepared and published alongside the submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan. 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 of the Plan. 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, the plan's objectives. 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 Embleton Neighbourhood Plan was published in March 2020. Paragraph 44 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 three areas where reasonable alternatives were considered: approaches to the settlement boundaries for Embleton and Christon Bank; potential site allocations for housing; and a no-policy approach to second/holiday homes.

3.4 Early discussions during the preparation of the Plan included options for alternative settlement boundaries for Embleton and Christon Bank. Two options were appraised; a boundary which included additional land, and a boundary which closely followed the pattern of existing development. A detailed appraisal of each option, and the reason for the decision taken, are provided in paragraphs 6.8-6.13 of the Environmental Report.

3.5 In developing the neighbourhood plan, there were also two housing sites considered for allocation (see Appendix F of the Environmental Report). In respect of the site to the north of Creighton Place in Embleton circumstances overtook Plan preparation as a planning application was submitted and approved on the site. It was therefore deemed no longer necessary to allocate it for housing. Development has subsequently commenced on that site. The other site that was considered for allocation related to old quarry buildings in Embleton Quarry. As recognised in the Embleton Conservation Area Management Plan the quarry buildings have been subject to vandalism and may be worth repairing and reusing because of their history and quality. However, in view of the Northumberland Local Plan housing requirement defined for the Parish, it was not considered necessary to allocate the site.

## 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*

SEA Theme	SEA Objectives	Summary of Effects
Biodiversity and geodiversity	To protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.	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 flood risk)	Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Area.	While no significant effects are predicted, the plan's policy relating to sustainable design will allow more efficient buildings.
	Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding;	No significant effects are predicted.
Landscape and historic environment	Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.	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, together with protection of heritage assets.
Land, soil, air and water resources	Ensure the efficient use of land;	No significant effects are predicted for land, soil, air and water resources.
	Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste;	
	Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	
Population and human health	Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the	No significant effects are predicted.

SEA Theme	SEA Objectives	Summary of Effects
	community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.	
	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures;	A significant positive effect is predicted as the Plan ought to help address affordable housing issues and also support the delivery of attractive homes. Principal residence policy should help to ensure that new homes are available to those who wish to be permanent residents.
	Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally;	Positive effects are predicted due to the protection and enhancement of open space, recreation, walking and cycling routes and community facilities.
	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area;	Positive effects are predicted in the longer term by encouraging walking, cycling and public transport use, well-located housing development, and supporting infrastructure improvements.
	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	Positive effects are predicted by seeking to locate development in accessible locations, promotion of home working and protection and enhancement of open space, recreation, walking and cycling routes and community facilities.

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

4.1 As illustrated in Table 1, the Plan and corresponding SEA have been subject to consultation.

4.2 An SEA Scoping Report was published for consultation in 2019 with the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England). Comments were received from all three consultation bodies.

4.3 A draft SEA Environmental Report (August 2019) was published for consultation. Comments were received on the Environmental Report from Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

4.4 The final SEA Environmental Report was submitted to Northumberland County Council along with the final draft version of the Plan in October 2019. These documents were subsequently publicised by the County Council for a period of not less than 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 Parish 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 (September 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.

5.3 Whilst the Embleton 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 Embleton Neighbourhood Plan, Referendum Plan, April 2020. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Embleton-NP-Referendum-Version.pdf>
- The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement, October 2019. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Embleton-NP-Consultation-Statement.pdf>
- The Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan Environmental Report, September 2019. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Pla>



[ning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Embleton-NP-SEA-Environmental-Report.pdf](#)

- Report to the Northumberland County Council on the Independent Examination of the submission draft Embleton Neighbourhood Plan, March 2020. Available at:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Embleton-NP-Examiners-Report-Final.pdf>