



Northumberland
County Council

Embleton Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion

Prepared by the Neighbourhood Planning & Infrastructure Team,
Northumberland County Council

01 February 2019

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1. Introduction and Summary

Embleton Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.01 Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by a qualifying body under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Embleton Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be ‘made’ by Northumberland County Council as the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.02 The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent amendments) and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.
- 1.03 Communities have a right to be able to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. However, communities are not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative purposes to produce such a plan.
- 1.04 Embleton Parish Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Embleton administrative Parish area. Once ‘made’ it will form part of the statutory development plan for Northumberland.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.05 To be ‘made’, a Neighbourhood Plan must meet certain basic conditions, including compliance with EU Obligations. One such obligation is the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment¹. This is often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.
- 1.06 The purpose of the SEA Directive is to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to integrate considerations of the environment into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.
- 1.07 The SEA Directive sets out criteria for assessing the significance of the impact of a plan or programme on the environment. Any assessment must consider both positive and negative effects.
- 1.08 In the first instance, it is necessary to ascertain if SEA is required. This process is referred to as ‘screening’.
- 1.09 This report presents the findings of an SEA screening opinion on the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan, provided by Northumberland County Council as the Local Planning

¹ [European Directive 2001/42/EC \(SEA Directive\)](#)

Authority. It adopts a proportionate approach in applying a series of criteria, as set out in the SEA Directive², to look at the draft Embleton Neighbourhood Plan and determine whether a significant effect or effects are likely.

1.10 Based on the characteristics of the draft Embleton Neighbourhood Plan and the area characteristics, the conclusion of the SEA Screening, in the opinion of Northumberland County Council, is the plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and SEA is therefore not required.

1.11 This report was sent to statutory consultation bodies³, that is: the Environment Agency; Historic England; and Natural England, in order to seek their views on its conclusions⁴.

1.12 This final report considers the representations made by the consultation bodies on the Screening Opinion. The representations made can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

1.13 The conclusion of this Final Report is that the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and that Strategic Environmental Assessment is therefore not required.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.14 A Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have impacts on sites covered by the Habitats Regulations. The County Council, as competent authority, considers that the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan need not be subject to Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, which relate to Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive and that this can be screened out.

² See footnote above, plus [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 \(SEA Regulations\)](#)

³ As set out in Regulation 4(1) of the SEA Regulations 2004.

⁴ As set out in Regulation 9(2)(b) of the SEA Regulations 2004.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.01 Regulation 15 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires that certain specified information is provided alongside a draft neighbourhood plan when it is submitted to the local planning authority. In summary, this information is:
- (a) A map or statement which identifies the area to which the proposed neighbourhood development plan relates;*
 - (b) A consultation statement;*
 - (c) The proposed neighbourhood development plan;*
 - (d) A 'basic conditions statement'; and*
 - (e) (i) an environmental report, or*
(ii) a screening opinion indicating that an environmental report is not required.
- 2.02 The SEA process is a means of testing the environmental impacts of plans and programmes. It should shape and hone a neighbourhood plan's content to ensure the plan effectively ensures sustainable development.
- 2.03 In order to determine whether the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, there are criteria for assessment set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive. They are split into two categories: those relating to the characteristics of the plan and those to the characteristics of the effects and areas likely to be affected (see Figure 1). An assessment of the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan against these criteria is set out accordingly in Figure 1 and Table 1 of this report.

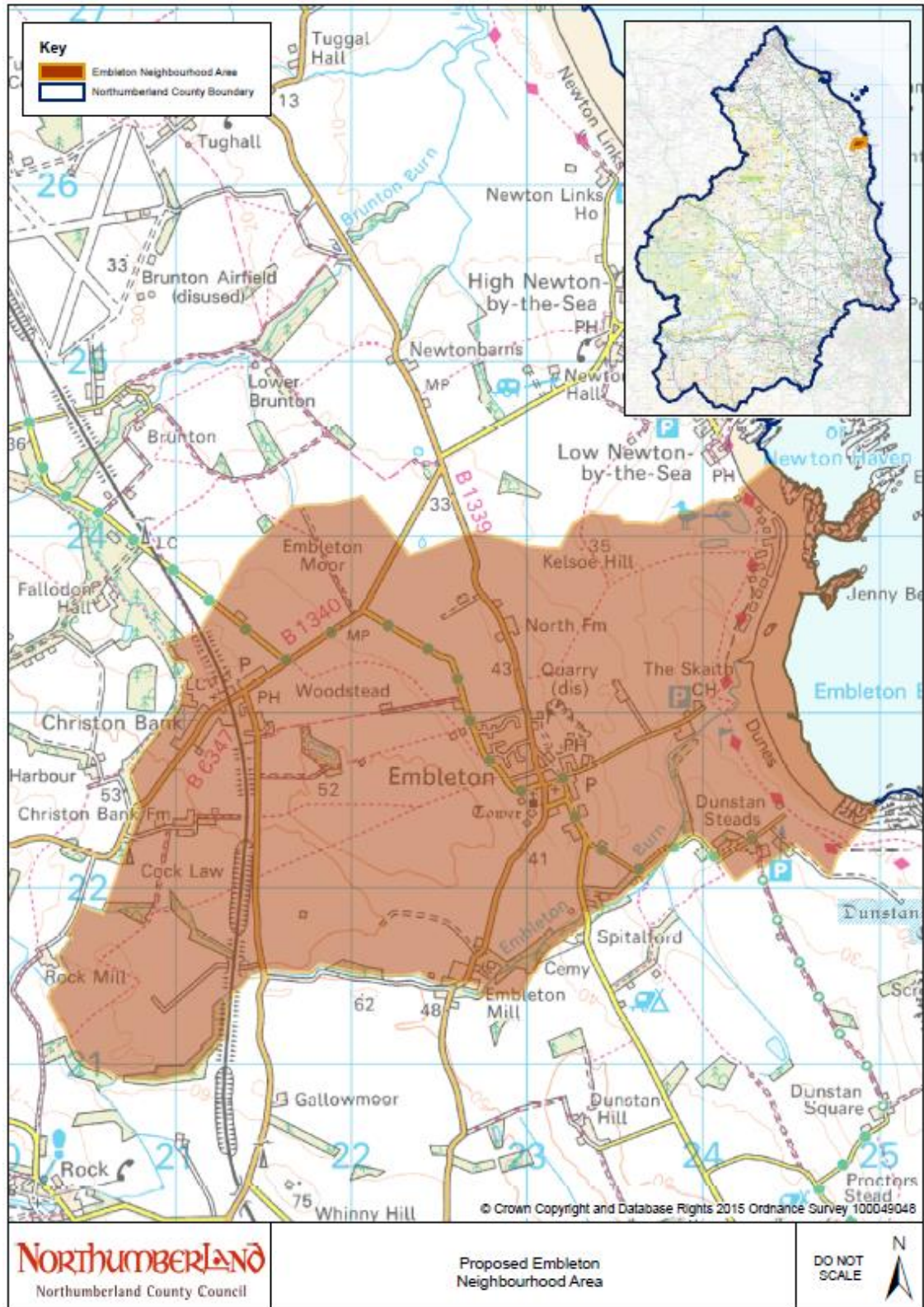
Figure 1: Criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment

- 1. The characteristics of neighbourhood plans, having regard, in particular, to:**
 - (a)** the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;
 - (b)** the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
 - (c)** The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
 - (d)** Environmental problems relevant to the plan;
 - (e)** The relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or waste protection)
- 2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:**
 - (a)** The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;

- (b)** The cumulative nature of the effects;
- (c)** The transboundary nature of the effects;
- (d)** The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);
- (e)** The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- (f)** The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - (i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;
 - (ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;
 - (iii) Intensive land use
- (g)** The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.

3. Embleton Neighbourhood Plan

3.01 Embleton parish is a rural civil parish in Northumberland, situated to the north-east of Alnwick, on the Northumberland coast. The Embleton Neighbourhood Area covers the entire civil parish of Embleton. The Neighbourhood Area is shown below:



3.02 The Vision Statement and Objectives of the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan are set out below:

Embleton Neighbourhood Plan Vision:

“The rural parish of Embleton will continue to be a thriving and a sustainable place to live, learn, work and visit. We will contribute to the long-term sustainability of our communities by supporting appropriate housing which is accessible to all. We will protect, and where possible enhance, the setting and environment of our parish, the Northumberland Coast AONB, the Northumberland Heritage Coast and other special and natural places in our Parish.”

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

Objective 1: Sustainable Development

“To support development that enhances and protects the environment, supports the economy, and helps our communities become more sustainable, whilst ensuring that we protect the assets that make the Embleton Parish special, and ensure there is a positive legacy for future generations.”

Objective 2: Sense of Place

“Our objective in relation to ‘sense of place’ is to: protect heritage assets and enhance local green spaces, landscapes and views that contribute to the distinct look and feel of Embleton Parish.”

Objective 3: Local Economy

“Our objective to achieve economic and community sustainability is to: support, encourage and protect local businesses, the school and other key facilities that contribute positively to the rural charm and characteristics of Embleton so that it can thrive as a sustainable community.”

Objective 4: Housing

“To support enough affordable and Principal Residence housing to meet the objectively assessed needs for the Parish. Any future housing will be of high-quality design and environmentally sensitive and sympathetic to the historic landscape and natural surroundings.”

Objective 5: Community Facilities

“To protect, improve and, as appropriate, develop, year-round community and recreational facilities for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.”

Summary

3.03 The Plan contains a series of policies which seek to deliver the aims and objectives. In summary, the plan includes policies on the following:

- Policy 1: Sustainable development;
- Policy 2: Landscapes and seascapes in the neighbourhood area;
- Policy 3: Habitats and species;
- Policy 4: Design in new development;
- Policy 5: Settlement boundaries for Christon Bank and Embleton;
- Policy 6: Development within Embleton Conservation Area;
- Policy 7: Local Green Spaces;
- Policy 8: Non-designated heritage assets;
- Policy 9: Business and employment;
- Policy 10: Principal residence housing;
- Policy 11: Affordable housing contributions;
- Policy 12: Rural exception sites and community led housing;
- Policy 13: Change of use from holiday use to principal residence housing;
- Policy 14: Assets of community value and community facilities;
- Policy 15: Provision and improvement of pedestrian and cycle routes.

3.04 The Plan does not seek to allocate land for development, but does seek to identify settlement boundaries for Christon Bank and Embleton. The Plan also seeks to identify and protect areas of Local Green Space. Additionally, the Plan is supportive of sustainable development within the overall policy context of the statutory development plan in terms of the built and natural environment.

4. SEA Screening Assessment

4.01 The policies set out in the draft version of the pre-submission Embleton Neighbourhood Plan have been used to undertake the screening assessment based on the criteria within the SEA Directive.

Table 1: Assessment of the likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/no	Justification
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
(a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	No	The main framework will continue to be at the Local Plan/Core Strategy level. The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development, and sets out positive planning policies seeking to encourage development which would be sympathetic to the area, in line with specific protective policies elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan.
(b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	No	It is possible that the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan could inform future supplementary guidance in the area. The neighbourhood plan must be in accordance with existing higher-level plans and programmes, in this case the Alnwick LDF Core Strategy (2007) and the saved policies of the Alnwick District Local Plan (1997).
(c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	No	The Plan contains a series of policies which seek to deliver the aims and objectives. In summary, the plan seeks to allocate land for housing, employment and mixed uses, as well as designating areas of Local Green Space. The Plan identifies important community facilities, seeks to improve links for pedestrians and cyclists, and supports sustainable development in the Neighbourhood Area.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	No	The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan is not anticipated to result in significant environmental problems.

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/no	Justification
The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:		
(e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection)	No	<p>The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan has to be in conformity with the strategic policies contained within other relevant planning documents. The current adopted local plan for the area consists of the Alnwick LDF Core Strategy (2007) and the saved policies of the Alnwick District Local Plan (1997). Policies in these plans are material planning considerations where they comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).</p> <p>New planning policies are emerging in Northumberland. Northumberland County Council is due to commence consultation on its Regulation 19 Publication Draft Local Plan in January 2019.</p> <p>The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan supports the implementation of higher level policies at the Neighbourhood Area level. It is therefore not considered to have significant influence on other plans and programmes or their effects on the environment.</p>

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/no	Justification
Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:		
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	No	While the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan seeks to designate areas of Local Green Space, no allocations relating to development are included within the Plan and no significant effects are predicted as a result. The Neighbourhood Plan is supportive of sustainable development within the overall protective policy context of the development plan in terms of the built environment.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	No	It is unlikely that any significant environmental effects would be observed as a result of the policies contained within the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to facilitate a level of development above that of higher-level documents within the development plan. The Neighbourhood Plan does support sustainable development which would protect and enhance the built and natural environment but it is not anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan would result in significant effects, whether in isolation or cumulatively.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	No	The Civil Parish of Embleton is contained wholly within Northumberland. It is not anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan would result in significant effects, nor result in significant effects beyond the administrative area of Northumberland County Council.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	No	It is considered unlikely that there would be risks to human health or the environment arising from the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	No	The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development. While the Plan is supportive of sustainable development, this is in the wider context of the development plan. Therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan is not anticipated to have significant environmental effects.
(f)(i) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.	No	The Embleton Neighbourhood Area contains a number of designations, including listed buildings and a conservation area. The Neighbourhood Area also contains a number of important environmental designations. The County Council, as competent authority, has confirmed that that Appropriate

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/no	Justification
		Assessment under the Habitats Regulations can be screened out.
(f)(ii) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values.	No	This would be unlikely to result from the proposals.
(f)(iii) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to intensive land use.	No	This would be unlikely to result from the proposals.
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	No	Given the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and its focus on sustainable development which is sympathetic to the qualities of the area, significant effects resulting from the Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely.

5. SEA Screening Opinion Summary and Conclusion

5.01 **On the basis of the SEA Screening Assessment set out in Table 1 above, the conclusion is that, in the opinion of Northumberland County Council, the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan *is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment* when considered against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations and will therefore not need to be subject to SEA. The main reasons for this conclusion are:**

- The Embleton Neighbourhood Plan covers a relatively small rural area within the County of Northumberland. The policies set out within the Plan seek to supplement other statutory development plan policies. Notably the plan seeks to identify and provide protection to areas of Local Green Space and Community Facilities within the Neighbourhood Area. It provides a planning framework for development proposals to ensure sustainable development which is sympathetic to the qualities of the area;
- Significant effects are considered unlikely. The Plan does not propose or allocate sites for potentially environmentally harmful development, nor is such development anticipated in the area;
- The Embleton Neighbourhood Area includes a number of sensitive receptors including listed buildings and a conservation area, as well as a number of important environmental designations. The County Council, as competent authority, considers that the plan need not be subject to Appropriate Assessment and that this can be screened out.

Appendix 1 – Responses received from Consultation Bodies

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Rob Naples
Planning Officer
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Northumberland County Council
Planning Strategy
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Our ref: NA/2009/103757/SE-14/SC1-L01

Your ref:

Date: 27 December 2018

Dear Rob

Embleton Neighbourhood Plan – Consultation on SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for consulting us on this Screening Opinion.

Environment Agency Position

Having reviewed the relevant documents we are satisfied that the Embleton Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and therefore an SEA is not required.

Yours sincerely

Marion Williams
Planning Advisor

Direct dial 02077140989

Direct e-mail marion.williams@environment-agency.gov.uk

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Date: 01 February 2019
Our ref: 271800
Your ref: Embleton NDP – SEA Screening (Reconsultation)



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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Naples

Screening consultation: Embleton (pre-submission draft) Neighbourhood Plan Consultation on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion - Reconsultation (Plan does not seek to allocate land for housing)

Location: Embleton, Northumberland

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 24 January 2019 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

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.

Neighbourhood Plan Strategic Environmental Assessment - Screening

Where Neighbourhood Plans could have significant environmental effects, they may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the Environment Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Further guidance on deciding whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects and the requirements for consulting Natural England on SEA are set out in the National Planning Practice Guidance [here](#).

The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development;
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan;
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that the application site is either located within, adjacent to or in close proximity to the following sites:

- Northumberland Shore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- Berwickshire and North Northumberland Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
- Northumberland Marine Special Protection Area (SPA);
- Northumberland Coast Ramsar site;
- Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as statutory designated sites and protected landscapes are concerned, that there are no potential significant impacts.

Natural England does not hold information on the location of significant populations of protected species, so is unable to advise whether this proposal is likely to affect such populations to an extent sufficient to require an SEA. It remains the case, however, that the developer must provide information supporting this application sufficient for you to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected and, if they are, whether sufficient mitigation, avoidance or compensation measures will be put in place.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result this application may raise environmental issues that we have not identified on local or national biodiversity action plan species and/or habitats, local wildlife sites or local landscape character that may be sufficient to warrant an SEA.

We therefore recommend that advice is sought from your own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this development before determining whether an SEA is necessary.

Should you determine that an SEA is not required in this case, you should still ensure that the application is supported by sufficient biodiversity and landscape information in order for you to assess the weight to give these material considerations when determining the application.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Where a neighbourhood plan could potentially affect a European protected site, it will be necessary to screen the plan in relation to the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017), as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). One of the basic conditions that will be tested at Examination is whether the making of the plan is compatible with European obligations and this includes requirements relating to the Habitats Directive, which is transposed into the Habitats Regulations. In accordance with Schedule 2 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, a neighbourhood plan cannot be made if the likelihood of significant effects on any European Site, either alone (or in combination with other plans and projects) cannot be ruled out. Therefore, measures may need to be incorporated into the neighbourhood plan to ensure that any likely significant effects are avoided in order to secure compliance with the Regulations. A screening exercise should be undertaken if there is any doubt about the possible effects of the plan on European protected sites. This will be particularly important if a neighbourhood plan is to progress before a local plan has been adopted and/or the neighbourhood plan proposes development which has not been assessed and/or included in the Habitats Regulations Assessment for the local plan.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on this proposal beyond this SEA screening opinion, should your authority seek our views on the planning application. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Carolyn Simpson on 020 80265319. For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Carolyn Simpson
Northumbria Area Team



NORTH EAST OFFICE

Mr Rob Naples
Northumberland County Council
Communities & Infrastructure
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Direct Dial: 0191-2691232

Our ref: PL00523482

23 January 2019

Dear Mr Naples

**Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004: Regulation 4
Embleton Neighbourhood Plan: SEA Screening Opinion, 18 December 2018**

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion. 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 Screening Opinion and within the areas of interest to Historic England, we agree that the emerging plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and, therefore, it does not need SEA. In coming to this view we have taken the following factors into consideration:

- The plan area contains a number of heritage assets including a conservation area, several listed buildings, and the potential for non-designated assets.
- Heritage assets are fragile and irreplaceable and can be damaged by change through development both directly and indirectly by development in their setting.
- The plan is not expected to allocate sites for development.

As such, the need for SEA of the draft plan can be screened out as it is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects within our area of interest. We reserve the right to review this 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
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Historic England is subject to both the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Any information held by the organisation can be requested for release under this legislation.