



Northumberland
County Council

Lesbury Neighbourhood Plan

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Regulation 16 Adoption Statement

Published July 2021

1. Introduction

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

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 Lesbury Neighbourhood Plan

Date	Description
December 2018-February 2019	Lesbury Parish Council carry out consultation for 6 weeks in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) on the draft pre-submission Plan but not on a draft SEA Environmental Report and before the results of the Habitats Regulations Assessment report.
March 2019	Northumberland County Council (NCC) carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment of the draft Plan. The draft assessment concludes 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 also be completed before a plan can be brought into force.
April 2019	Lesbury Parish Council did not qualify for a Technical Support Package (usually delivered through consultants AECOM) to undertake the SEA work so a SEA Scoping Report is produced by Northumberland County Council and is published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies. Their comments help inform the final scope of the SEA for the Plan.
October – November 2019	A draft SEA Environmental Report is prepared by Northumberland County Council based on a revised version of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, following consultation (June 2019) and the Parish Council carry out a 4 week consultation on the draft SEA report with the statutory consultation bodies. Their comments help inform the final scope of the SEA for the Plan
December 2019 – January 2020	The final version of the Environmental Report is submitted to NCC along with the final draft version of the Plan. These documents are subsequently publicised by NCC for 7 weeks in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
February 2020	Since the commencement of publicity consultation modification is made to the Habitats Regulations Assessment. Having regard to the requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, the Council extends the publicity period until February 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 Lesbury Plan

SEA Themes	SEA Objectives
<p>Biodiversity and Geodiversity Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <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?
<p>Climate Change Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Area</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <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?
<p>Climate Change Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <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?

SEA Themes	SEA Objectives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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?
<p>Landscape and Historic Environment Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the integrity of the landscape in the neighbourhood area? • Conserve and enhance landscape and townscape features?
<p>Land, Soil and Water Resources Ensure the efficient use of land</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land? • Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land?
<p>Land, Soil and Water Resources Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the amount of waste produced? • Support the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste? • Encourage recycling of materials and minimise consumption of resources during construction?
<p>Land, Soil and Water Resources Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support improvements to water quality? • Minimise water consumption?
<p>Population and Community 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</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <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?

SEA Themes	SEA Objectives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the provision of land for allotments and cemeteries?
<p>Human Health Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <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?
<p>Human Health Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <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?
<p>Human Health Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <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?
<p>Transportation Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <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?

2.3 A full draft SEA Environmental Report (October 2019) was prepared but the pre-submission consultation period on the draft Plan had already been carried out. The pre-submission consultation version of the LNP was updated to reflect commentary in the Regulation 14 pre submission stages so the SEA assessment was carried out using the updated draft Plan. The SEA was subject to a further 4 weeks of consultation to satisfy SEA regulations. 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 (October 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 3 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 Lesbury Neighbourhood Plan was published in Jun 2020. In the report he noted that the SEA process had been followed accordingly. Northumberland Estates objected to the SEA on four separate grounds relating to 1) whether regulatory requirements for screening and consultation been correctly followed, 2) Whether a reasonable amount of time allowed for the EAPP Regulation 13 Consultation, 3) Whether the baseline information established in the Report is appropriate, and 4) whether the identification and evaluation of 'reasonable alternatives' satisfy EAPP requirements. The Examiners Report answers each objection in detail (5.36 – 5.71) and 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 A key element of the SEA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the LNP. The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative, stating only that the Environmental Report should present an

appraisal of the ‘plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan’.

3.4 The reasonable alternatives in the Lesbury Plan were:

- alternative settlement boundaries;
- potential site allocations for housing;
- important community spaces; and
- controls over the occupation of new dwellings as principal residences

3.5 The SEA demonstrates the alternatives do not represent more favourable outcomes in respect of environmental impacts; and, for settlement boundaries and housing allocations, the identification of genuine reasonable alternative options other than those preferred policy approaches defined in the draft Plan diminished significantly as a result of progress made on the Northumberland Local Plan and the identification of indicative housing requirements for the Parish over the Plan period to 2036.

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 Themes	SEA Objectives	Summary of Effects
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.	Whilst it is recognised that Lesbury Parish is an environmentally vulnerable area, the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have positive effects on biodiversity and geodiversity through the implementation of preservation and habitat enhancement policies.
Climate Change	Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Area.	The approach set out in the neighbourhood Plan seeks to reduce the need to travel. It supports sustainable transport where it is possible to do so. The Plan also includes policy provisions to ensure climate change is considered and mitigated in new development. The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on Climate Change.

SEA Themes	SEA Objectives	Summary of Effects
Climate Change	Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding	The approach set out in the neighbourhood Plan seeks to reduce the need to travel. It supports sustainable transport where it is possible to do so. The Plan also includes policy provisions to ensure climate change is considered and mitigated in new development. The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on Climate Change
Landscape and Historic Environment	Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.	The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on Landscape and the Historic Environment and therefore support SEA Objective 4.
Land, Soil and Water Resources	Ensure the efficient use of land	The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on land, soil and water resources. The Plan generally supports SEA Objectives 5, 6 and 7
Land, Soil and Water Resources	Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste	The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on land, soil and water resources. The Plan generally supports SEA Objectives 5, 6 and 7
Land, Soil and Water Resources	Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on land, soil and water resources. The Plan generally supports SEA Objectives 5, 6 and 7
Population and Human Health	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.	The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely positive effect on residents' needs.
Population and Human Health	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures	The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on human health and support SEA Objectives 9, 10 and 11.
Population and Human Health	Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally	The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on human health and support SEA Objectives 9, 10 and 11.

SEA Themes	SEA Objectives	Summary of Effects
Population and Human Health	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area	The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to have a largely neutral or positive effect on human health and support SEA Objectives 9, 10 and 11.
Transportation	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to result in a largely positive effect on transportation. However, given the likely small scale of development and the small geography covered, the effects are not likely to be significant.

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 several rounds of public consultation with responses informing the preparation of both documents.

4.2 An SEA Scoping Report was published for consultation in April 2019 with the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England). The Environmental Report sets out how the response to the consultation bodies comments was reflected in the SEA scope.

4.3 A draft SEA Environmental Report (October 2019) was published for consultation by the Parish Council during October and November 2019. Responses were received from a number of consultees. These are set out in Appendix E of the Consultation Statement, a document that must be prepared to describe the outcome of consultation undertaken by the Parish Council on the Neighbourhood Plan. There were no concerns raised by statutory consultees. There was one objection raised by Northumberland Estates. Their full response is set out in Appendix E, along with the responses to those comments by Lesbury Parish Council.

4.4 The final SEA Environmental Report was submitted to Northumberland County Council along with the final draft version of the Plan in December 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). The publicity period was extended until February 2020 due to additional revisions to the Habitats Regulations Assessment. 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 (October 2019) highlighted the range of 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:

‘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. 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.’

5.3 Whilst the Lesbury 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/uksi/2004/1633/part/4/made>
- The Lesbury Neighbourhood Plan, Referendum Plan, July 2020. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Lesbury-NP-Referendum-Version-Final.pdf>
- The Lesbury Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement, November 2019. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Lesbury-04-Consultation-Statement.pdf>

- The Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Lesbury Neighbourhood Plan Environmental Report, October 2019. Available at: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Lesbury-07-SEA-Environmental-Report.pdf>
- Report to the Northumberland County Council on the Independent Examination of the submission draft Lesbury Neighbourhood Plan, June 2020. Available at: https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Neighbourhood%20Planning/Lesbury-NP-Examiners-Report_1.pdf