

# Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan

## Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion

### FINAL REPORT

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

20 June 2017

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## 1. Introduction and Summary

### Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.01 Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by a qualifying body under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Longhorsley Parish Council (as the “relevant body”) and will be ‘made’ by Northumberland County Council as the local authority.
- 1.02 The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.
- 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 Longhorsley Parish Council is producing a Neighbourhood Plan for the civil parish of Longhorsley; the ‘Longhorsley Neighbourhood 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 environment<sup>1</sup>. 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’.

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

- 1.09 This report presents the findings of an SEA screening opinion on the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan, provided by Northumberland County Council as the Local Planning Authority. It adopts a proportionate approach in applying a series of criteria, as set out in the SEA Directive<sup>2</sup>, to look at the draft Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan and determine whether a significant effect or effects are likely.
- 1.10 Based on the characteristics of the Draft Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan and the area characteristics, the conclusion of the SEA Screening, in the opinion of Northumberland County Council, is that the plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and SEA is therefore not required.
- 1.11 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion was sent to the consultation bodies<sup>3</sup>: the Environment Agency; Historic England; and Natural England, in order to seek their views on its conclusions<sup>4</sup>.
- 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 Longhorsley 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 Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a separate HRA screening assessment to ascertain whether an Appropriate Assessment is required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, which relate to Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive.

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

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

<sup>4</sup> 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 Longhorsley 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 Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan against these criteria is set out accordingly in Tables 1 and 2 in Section 4 of this report.

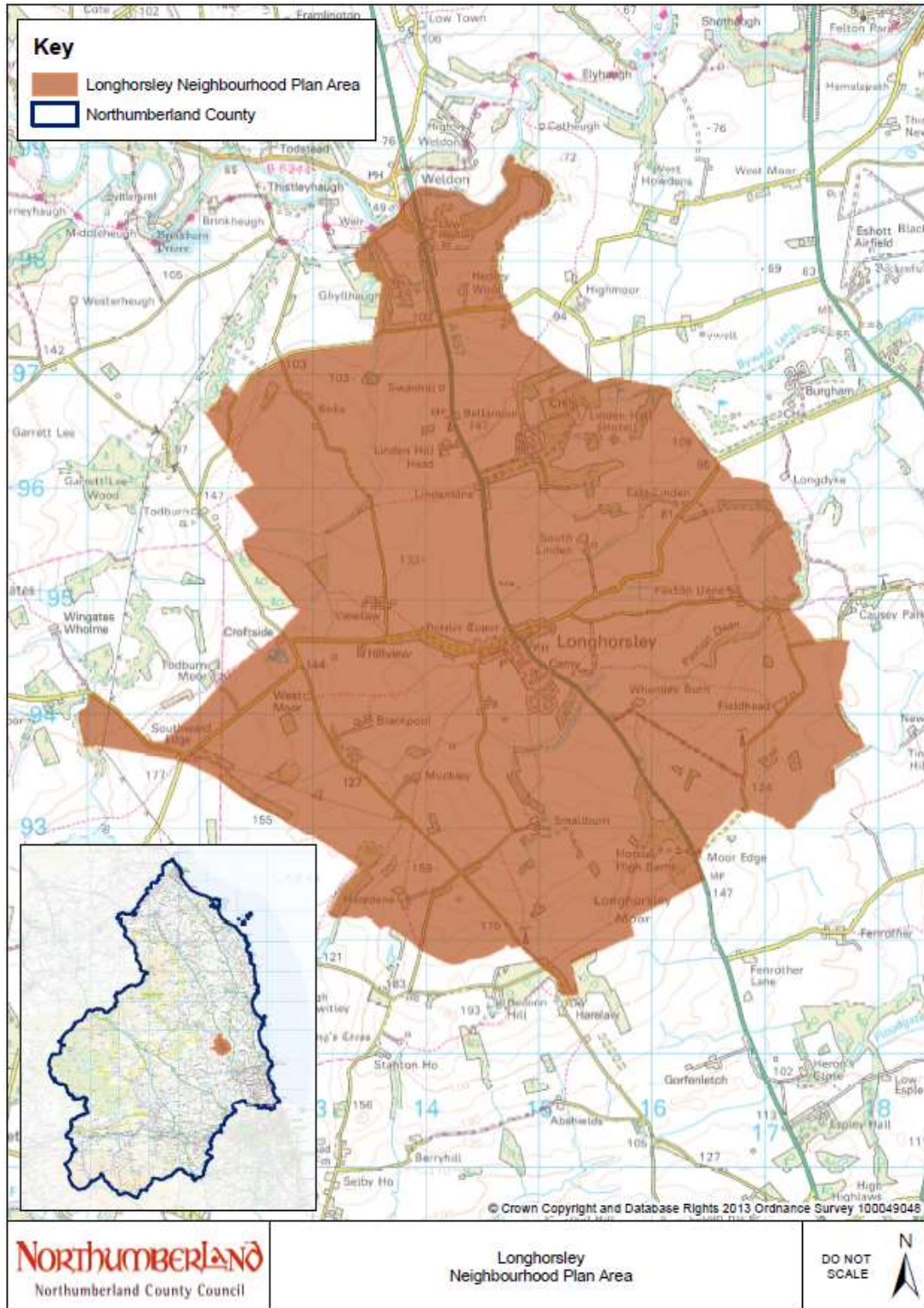
### **Figure 1: Criteria for determining likely significance of effects on the environment**

- 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. Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan

3.01 Longhorsley parish is a rural civil parish in Northumberland with the settlement of Longhorsley at its centre, bisected by the A697. The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Area covers the entire civil parish of Longhorsley. The Neighbourhood Area is shown below:



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

Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan Vision Statement:

*“The vision for Longhorsley Parish is to sustain our thriving and active community, whilst protecting the beauty and heritage of our built and natural landscape.”*

**Objectives:**

**LNP-OBJ-01** To outline levels of housing development across the parish to contribute to local housing needs, whilst protecting the green belt and environmental beauty of our area;

**LNP-OBJ-02** To conserve or enhance the landscape setting, biodiversity and heritage of the parish and village;

**LNP-OBJ-03** To support and encourage local business to thrive;

**LNP-OBJ-04** To support and protect our key community facilities;

**LNP-OBJ-05** To work with Northumberland County Council to provide safer roads and footpaths for better transport for the parish.

- 3.03 The Plan contains a series of policies which seek to deliver the aims and objectives. In summary, the plan seeks to identify a settlement boundary<sup>5</sup>; allocate two sites for housing (both of which have planning permission and amount to 67 dwellings in total); provide a planning framework for development within the settlement boundary and outwith it (in the Countryside and Green Belt); and to support and protect community facilities, green spaces and allotments.
- 3.04 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.

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<sup>5</sup> This follows the approach to Green Belt inset boundaries taken in the now submitted Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy, which was itself subject to SEA and HRA



## 4. SEA Screening Assessment

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

**Table 2: Assessment of the likelihood of significant effects on the environment**

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/no	Justification
<b>The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
<b>(a)</b> 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 Core Strategy level, which is itself subject to SEA as a matter of course. The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan seeks to allocate land for residential development at two locations in Longhorsley. Both sites have planning permission and are considered to be deliverable within the Plan period. These sites would contribute towards meeting the housing need for the delivery area identified in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy.
<b>(b)</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 Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan could inform future supplementary guidance in the area. The present draft document is in accordance with existing higher-level plans and programmes and builds upon them through the inclusion of locally-specific policies which seek to protect and enhance the local built and natural environments. Due to the locally-specific nature of the policies, the effects of the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan on other plans and programmes within the wider development plan will be slight.
<b>(c)</b> the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	No	The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan seeks to promote sustainable development overall and does not seek any relaxations to sustainable development principles set out in higher-level plans. The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan includes a number of specific policies relating to the Longhorsley Conservation Area and protection of the natural environment. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to address any significant environmental problems in the area, nor are there considered to be significant environmental problems that may be exacerbated by the Neighbourhood Plan.

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/no	Justification
<b>The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
<b>(d)</b> environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	No	The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan is not anticipated to result in significant environmental problems.
<b>(e)</b> 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 Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained within other relevant planning documents. The current adopted local plan for the area consists of the saved policies in the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (2003). Policies in this plan 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 submitted the Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy to government in April 2017 for examination.</p> <p>The Longhorsley 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
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:</b>		
<b>(a)</b> the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	No	<p>The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan seeks to allocate land for residential development. The allocation of two areas of land for housing would lead to an increase in the number of dwellings in Longhorsley and would allow for a modest increase in the number of properties in the Neighbourhood Area over the Plan Period. It is important to note that both sites have planning permission and would deliver a total of around 67 dwellings.</p> <p>One site is expected to deliver around 55 dwellings. This was granted outline planning permission in March 2016 under reference 14/03839/OUT and was supported by a Heritage Statement and Flood Risk Assessment. Historic England raised no objections and an objection from the Environment Agency was withdrawn following submission of a Flood Risk Assessment.</p> <p>The second site is expected to deliver around 12 dwellings and was granted outline planning permission in March 2013 under reference 12/03472/OUT. A reserved matters application was approved in July 2016 under reference 16/00626/REM.</p> <p>Both developments subject to planning applications are anticipated to be delivered within the time limits of the planning applications. However, there is a possibility that the applications could lapse. The allocation of the sites through the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan could support future planning applications, which would be anticipated to be delivered in the Plan period.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Plan is supportive of sustainable development within the overall policy context of the development plan in terms of the built and natural environment.</p>
<b>(b)</b> the cumulative nature of the effects	No	<p>The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan proposes a policy which would allocate land for housing. Both sites have planning permission for a total of 67 dwellings. Neither the allocation of the two sites or the inclusion of other</p>

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/no	Justification
		<p>Neighbourhood Plan policies is likely to result in significant effects either in isolation or cumulatively.</p> <p>As mentioned, this is set within the context of a Neighbourhood Plan which supports sustainable development which would protect and enhance the built and natural environment of the Neighbourhood Area.</p>
<b>(c)</b> the transboundary nature of the effects	No	<p>Consideration has been given to any sensitive receptors beyond the Plan's boundary, including on the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI. 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.</p>
<b>(d)</b> the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	No	<p>New development on sites allocated for housing in the plan may result in marginal increases in traffic and resulting risks (e.g. vehicle emissions). However such impacts are considered to be negligible and it is highly unlikely that there would be risks to human health or the environment arising from the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan.</p>
<b>(e)</b> the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	No	<p>The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan covers a relatively small rural area understood to be 243 sq. km, within Northumberland, covering Longhorsley Village and a number of outlying dwellings and farmsteads. The plan identifies only two sites for new development amounting to 67 dwellings in total. Consequently the plan is limited in its magnitude. The population which will be affected by the plan is similarly small. There is understood to be a population of 887 in the Neighbourhood Plan area, which will be affected the plan.</p>
<b>(f)(i)</b> the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to special natural characteristics or cultural heritage.	No	<p>The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Area contains a number of designations, including, but not limited to, designated and non-designated heritage assets.</p> <p>While it is clear that the Neighbourhood Area contains a number of sensitive/potentially vulnerable receptors, it is unlikely that these would be affected by the majority of the Neighbourhood Plan policies, since the policies seek to conserve and enhance the landscape,</p>

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/no	Justification
		<p>biodiversity, natural habitats and cultural heritage of the Neighbourhood Area.</p> <p>The policy which seeks to allocate land adjacent to the conservation area for housing is considered to be unlikely to have an impact on cultural heritage due to the information submitted and considered in relation to the planning applications and responses received from those consulted on them.</p>
<b>(f)(ii)</b> 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.
<b>(f)(iii)</b> 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 as no intensive land uses are proposed.
<b>(g)</b> the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	No	<p>The Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan area is within the National Character Area referred to as 'Mid Northumberland' (Natural England). It is described as an <i>'intermediate plateau on gently undulating farmland which forms a transitional area between Northumberland Sandstone Hills to the west and the low lying coastal plain to the east'</i>. As acknowledged in the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan to the south of the plan area is the Longhorsley Moor SSSI. The Plan seeks to concentrate new development in the Longhorsley Village boundary. Outwith the settlement, i.e. in the countryside and Green Belt there are a range of policy criteria to ensure a focus on sustainable development which is sympathetic to the qualities of the area. Significant effects on the landscape, including the SSSI resulting from the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan are considered to be unlikely. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect the character of the area and should result in a neutral or potentially positive effect through providing locally-specific detail and protection which is not provided at other levels of the development plan.</p>

## 5. SEA Screening Opinion Summary and Conclusion

- 5.01 The potential effects of the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan on the environment have been found not to be significant.
- 5.02 The 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 a settlement boundary and concentrate development within that boundary. It provides a planning framework for development proposals within the settlement and outwith it (i.e. in the countryside and Green Belt) to ensure sustainable development, which is sympathetic to the qualities of the area.
- 5.03 The Plan includes two housing allocations; however, both these sites are the subject of planning approvals and have been subject to relevant consultation with statutory bodies. 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.
- 5.04 On the basis of the reasons set out in the SEA Screening Assessment above (Table 2), the conclusion is that, in the opinion of Northumberland County Council, and having regard to formal representations made by the consultation bodies<sup>6</sup>, the Longhorsley 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. **It is therefore considered that the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan need not be subject to SEA.**

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<sup>6</sup> Consultation Body responses are included in Appendix 1 of this Final Report.

## Appendix 1: Responses received from Consultation Bodies

Date: 07 June 2017  
Our ref: 216297  
Your ref: Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan - Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion



Rob Naples  
Northumberland County Council  
Development Management  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
NE61 2EF

Customer Services  
Hornbeam House  
Crewe Business Park  
Electra Way  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 6GJ

BY EMAIL ONLY

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Rob Naples

**Planning consultation:** Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan - Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion  
**Location:** Longhorsley, Northumberland

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 23 May 2017 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.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment - Screening

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests are concerned (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils), there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

### Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans in light of the SEA Directive is contained within the National Planning Practice Guidance. 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 in our view the proposals/allocations contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.

Notwithstanding this advice, Natural England does not routinely maintain locally specific data on all potential environmental assets. As a result the responsible authority should 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, with its own ecological and/or landscape advisers, local record centre, recording society or wildlife body on the local landscape and biodiversity receptors that may be affected by this plan, before determining whether an SEA is necessary.

Please note that Natural England reserves the right to provide further comments on the environmental assessment of the plan beyond this SEA screening stage, should the responsible authority seek our views on the scoping or environmental report stages. This includes any third party appeal against any screening decision you may make.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Ellen Bekker on 0208 225 7091 or [ellen.bekker@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:ellen.bekker@naturalengland.org.uk). For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

Yours sincerely

Ellen Bekker  
Northumbria Area Team





Historic England

NORTH EAST OFFICE

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

Direct Dial: 0191-2691232

Our ref: PL00099022

8 June 2017

Dear Mr Naples

**Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan  
Consultation on Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion**

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above. I confirm that, within the areas of interest to Historic England, we agree that the plan would be unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and, therefore, need not be subject to an SEA. In coming to this view we have taken the following factors into consideration:

- The plan area contains a focus of heritage assets including the conservation area and several listed buildings, as well as areas with potential for non-designated heritage 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's housing allocation sites already have consent. Although reference is made in the Screening Opinion to the use of information relating to the planning applications to help judge suitability, it is unclear whether this included a heritage impact assessment; clarity over the evidence used would have improved the Screening Opinion's case.

Nonetheless, we accept that the plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects within our area of interest and need not be subject to SEA. We reserve the right to review this opinion 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  
Historic Places Adviser  
jules.brown@historicengland.org.uk



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Historic England is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). All information held by the organisation will be accessible in response to an information request, unless one of the exemptions in the FOIA or EIR applies.

Northumberland County Council  
Planning Strategy  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF

**Our ref:** NA/2009/103757/SE-  
09/SC1-L01

**Your ref:**

**Date:** 19 June 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

**Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan SEA Screening Opinion**

Thank you for referring the above SEA Screening Opinion. I apologise for the delay in replying, and trust that our comments, as set out below, will still be taken into consideration.

The Environment Agency agrees that the impact of the Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan would not result in any significant environmental effects beyond those already assessed as part of the preparation of the Local Plan. On this basis, we consider that Neighbourhood Plan would not require a SEA.

Yours faithfully

**Cameron Sked**  
**Technical Specialist - Sustainable Places Team**

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