

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report Addendum

February 2025

Quality information

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Revision History

Revision	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
V1	February 2025	Internal Review	Ian McCluskey	Associate Director
V2	February 2025	QB Review	Jo-Anne Garrick	QB Planning Consultant
V3	February 2025	Final Report	Ian McCluskey	Associate Director
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1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. SEA of the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan is a legal requirement.¹
- 1.3 The Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. It is being prepared in the context of the Northumberland Local Plan 2016-2036, adopted in March 2022.² The Local Plan recognises Longhoughton as a 'service village', which are suitable to accommodate a proportionate amount of housing and be a focus for investment in the wider rural area. Boulmer and Howick are identified as small villages, suitable to support a proportionate level of development.
- 1.4 SEA has been undertaken alongside the development of the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan. SEA scoping was undertaken in 2021, with a Scoping Report consulted upon with the statutory consultees for a 5-week period in April and May 2021.
- 1.5 An SEA Environmental Report, the main output of the SEA process, was subsequently produced. This presented an appraisal of the draft plan and reasonable alternatives and was prepared to meet the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). The Environmental Report (July 2023) was presented to the public alongside the draft Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan during the Regulation 14 consultation. The Regulation 14 consultation took place between 29th September and 13th November 2023.
- 1.6 Following Regulation 14 consultation, the draft Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan has been updated to address consultation responses. The updates to the Regulation 14 draft neighbourhood plan include changes to policy wording, a new standalone policy to address coastal mitigation (recommended through the HRA Appropriate Assessment) and the removal of the site allocation at 'Land to the north east of Portal Place'.

¹ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulation (2012, as amended) requires that each Neighbourhood Plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: a) an environmental report; or b) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process completed in accordance with Regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations ('the SEA Regulations'). The Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan was subject to screening in 2020-21, which, following consultation, determined that SEA is required.

² Northumberland Local Plan: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning-policy/Local-Plan/Northumberland-Local-Plan-Adopted-March-2022.pdf>

The SEA Framework

- 1.7 The scoping stage of the SEA identified the key issues pertaining to the state of the environment in the neighbourhood area and determined what topics should be the focus of the SEA. This led to the identification (or scoping-in) of five SEA topics which formed the SEA Framework; the basis for appraising the Plan (and reasonable alternatives).
- 1.8 Table 1.1 presents a summary of topics and objectives that together form the backbone of the SEA scope. The full SEA framework is set out in the SEA Scoping Report.

Table 1.1 Summary of the SEA Framework

SEA Topic	SEA Objective
Biodiversity	Protect, maintain, restore and enhance biodiversity habitats and species; achieving a net environmental gain and stronger ecological networks.
Climatic Factors (adaptation)	Avoid and manage flood risk and support the resilience of the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan area to the potential effects of climate change.
Historic environment	Protect, enhance and manage the integrity, distinctive character and setting of heritage assets and the wider built environment.
Landscape	Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and appearance of landscapes.
Population and housing	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing which meets the needs of occupiers throughout their lives.

This SEA Addendum Report

- 1.9 This Environmental Report Addendum considers the implications of the updates to the Neighbourhood Plan for the SEA findings previously presented. As such, the addendum should be read alongside the SEA Environmental Report published in July 2023, which accompanied the Regulation 14 consultation.

2. Appraising the updates to the Neighbourhood Plan

Methodology

- 2.1 The updates to the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan have been screened for likely significant effects. The purpose of this screening exercise is to establish whether the proposed updates are likely to lead to significant effects in relation to the SEA framework and alter the findings previously presented in the Environmental Report. This will help establish if an update should be appraised in more detail.
- 2.2 The focus of the screening is on the proposed updates to the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan; however, explicit consideration is also given to the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan as updated (i.e. the cumulative effects of the updates and the rest of the Regulation 14 Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan).

Screening Exercise Outcome

- 2.3 Table 2.1 presents the findings of the screening of the updates to the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan.

Table 2.1 SEA Screening of the updates to the Neighbourhood Plan

Relevant Plan Section	SEA Screening	Screened in?
Introduction and Background	The updates reflect structural and wording amendments including amendments to data and information which provide contextual analysis of the neighbourhood area. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.	No
Vision and Objectives	The vision of the plan has not been amended. Objective 4 has been amended to support 'increasing levels of tranquillity, dark skies and sense of rurality'. Other amendments to the objectives are minor wording updates. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.	No
Policy LBH1: Embedding energy efficiency and renewable energy	Minor wording amendments to improve clarity and remove ambiguity. The amendments do not deviate from the overall policy intent. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.	No
Policy LBH2: Location of new development	Minor wording amendments to improve clarity and remove ambiguity. The amendments do not deviate from the overall policy intent. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.	No

Relevant Plan Section	SEA Screening	Screened in?
Policy LBH3: New residential and tourist accommodation (new policy)	New policy to require residential development and tourist accommodation to 'contribute to the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness'. The policy also requires financial contributions to be secured through a s106 agreement. Whilst this is positive in principle, this is not predicted to derive significant effects or alter the overall findings, as the requirement for developer contributions towards the coastal mitigation service is an existing requirement under Policy ENV2 of the Northumberland Local Plan.	No
Policy LBH3: Design	The updates comprise revision to policy numbering and removal of some design detail relating to the architectural styles of development, retention of trees, retention of views and habitat and wildlife corridors. The amendments do not deviate significantly from the policy intent and do not constitute a change in the overall aim and focus of the Neighbourhood Plan policies and strategy including measures in other policies that address these issues. The amendments are not considered likely to affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.	No
Policy LBH4: Land to the north east of Portal Place	Policy and site allocation has been removed. Some of the policy wording has been incorporated in the new Policy LBH5. The removal of the site allocation is a substantive change to the Neighbourhood Plan and should be considered further through the SEA.	Yes
Housing Allocation Policies Policies LBH5, LBH6 and LBH7 removed and new Policy LBH5 added.	<p>Policies LBH5, LBH6 and LBH7 have been removed and a new policy has been added to cover all housing site allocations (Policy LBH5: Housing).</p> <p><u>Former Johnnie Johnson sheltered housing, Longhoughton</u></p> <p>The site allocation has been reduced from 6 to 4 affordable homes with open space. This should help secure the 'community park' provision as this is no longer proposed as an element subject to viability. Other important policy detail has been added to Policy LBH5.</p> <p><u>Old Recreation Field, Longhoughton</u></p> <p>The homes allocation for the site and the proportion of affordable housing has been increased from approximately 14 homes with 15% affordable to approximately 15 homes with at least 30% affordable housing. The housing type is no longer required to be bungalow. This accords with the latest Housing Needs Assessment (2024) which does not specify a need for bungalow type housing.</p>	No

Relevant Plan Section	SEA Screening	Screened in?
	<p><u>Boulmer South</u></p> <p>The homes allocation for the site has been amended from approximately 17 homes with 15% affordable housing to 15 homes with at least 30% affordable housing. The housing type is no longer required to be bungalow. This accords with the latest Housing Needs Assessment (2024) which does not specify a need for bungalow type housing.</p> <p>The increase in the proportion of affordable housing requirement from 15% to 30% at Old Recreation Field and Boulmer South will to an extent offset the reduction in affordable housing delivery at the Former Johnnie Johnson sheltered housing site. The outstanding increase in affordable housing delivery is minor and not predicted to result in significant effects.</p>	
Policy LBH8: New housing development within Boulmer	<p>Change in policy numbering and amended to include change of use and sub-division of existing dwelling within the scope of principal residence occupational restrictions for new housing. Policy amendments also include some flexibility, with principal residency restriction to not apply to new housing when the percentage of second homes and holiday accommodation falls below 20% in Boulmer.</p> <p>Whilst the amendments are likely to have some effects on the population and housing objective, the cumulative effects are not predicted to derive significant effects or alter the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.</p>	No
Policy LBH9: Small scale rural exception sites	<p>Change in policy numbering and wording amendments to improve clarity and remove ambiguity. The amendments do not deviate from the overall policy intent. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.</p>	No
Policy LBH10: Landscape	<p>The updates comprise revision to policy numbering and minor wording updates to improve clarity. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.</p>	No
Policy LBH11: Community services and facilities	<p>The updates comprise revision to policy numbering and minor wording updates to improve clarity. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.</p>	No
Policy LBH12: Local green space	<p>No updates other than revision to policy numbering. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.</p>	No

Relevant Plan Section	SEA Screening	Screened in?
Policy LBH13: Protected open space	The updates comprise revision to policy numbering and a requirement for replaced open space to be 'as close as possible to the open space to be lost'. Whilst this should support the long-term accessibility of local people to open space, this requirement does not deviate significantly from the existing requirement in the policy and within Policy INF5 of the Northumberland Local Plan for replacement provision to be 'in a suitable location'. Therefore, this amendment is not predicted to derive significant effects and does not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.	No
Policy LBH14: Walking and cycling network	The updates comprise revision to policy numbering and minor wording updates to improve clarity. The changes do not affect the overall findings presented within the Environmental Report at Regulation 14 stage.	No

3. Revisiting the findings of the Regulation 14 Environmental Report

- 3.1 The removal of the site allocation at Land to the north east of Portal Place has been identified through a screening exercise to have potential to lead to significant effects in relation to the SEA framework and alter the findings previously presented in the Environmental Report. This update is therefore subject to further appraisal through the SEA.

Revisiting Alternatives

- 3.2 A key element of the SEA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan. 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'.
- 3.3 The following reasonable alternatives were identified and appraised at the Regulation 14 stage of the SEA:
- Option 1 - The Plan approach which allocates the Former Johnnie Johnson site (L6), Old recreation ground site (L8) and the Boulmer South site (B3) equating to a total growth of 37 dwellings. Land to the north east of Portal Place was identified as being potentially suitable for the provision of 12 units to serve armed forces housing.
 - Option 2 - The higher growth scenario which involves allocating all of the potentially suitable sites maximising growth to further improve affordable housing provision. This option would produce 113 units.
- 3.4 Land to the north east of Portal Place has been removed from the Plan following the Regulation 14 stage. This constitutes a third option, which is the focus of consideration in this addendum report.
- 3.5 No further reasonable alternative options have been identified for assessment at this stage following updates to the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan and the removal of the Portal Place site.

Plan Appraisal

Methodology

- 3.6 The appraisal is structured under the five SEA themes taken forward for the purposes of the SEA and that are linked to the SEA objectives (see Table 1.1).
- 3.7 For each theme 'significant effects' of the proposed removal of the site allocation on the baseline are predicted and evaluated taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency, and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e., the potential for the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes, and projects.

- 3.8 The appraisal is structured to also set out the effects of the site allocation and the Plan as a whole identified under the Regulation 14 SEA, to support the interpretation of how the update to the Neighbourhood Plan alters the outcomes of the Regulation 14 SEA.

Biodiversity

- 3.9 The removal of the site allocation should reduce pressures on coastal RAMSAR and SSSI sites from increase in population and associated increase in disturbances through recreation. However, the reduction in the scale of growth by up to 12 homes is not predicted to be sufficiently substantive to have significant effects or alter the minor positive effects predicted in the Regulation 14 SEA.

Climate Change Adaptation

- 3.10 The removed site allocation does not fall within an area at significant risk of flooding and therefore this does not alter the neutral effects identified in the Regulation 14 SEA for site allocations. The removal of the site allocation is also not predicted to have significant effects on climate change resilience. The removal of the site allocation is therefore not predicted to alter the minor positive effects identified in the Regulation 14 SEA.

Historic Environment

- 3.11 There are no designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the removed site allocation and the Regulation 14 SEA does not consider the site to affect important views and the settings associated with the historic environment. The removal of the site allocation therefore does not alter the neutral effects identified in the Regulation 14 SEA for site allocations, and the moderate positive effects identified overall.

Landscape

- 3.12 The Land to the north east of Portal Place site is adjacent to built development to the east, south and west and thus would form a natural extension to the adjacent residential areas. The site also benefits from strong landscape features along its boundary which define and provide enclosure to the site. The removal of the site allocation is not predicted to alter the predicted neutral effects the site would derive on the landscape objective or alter the overall minor positive effects predicted.

Population and Housing

- 3.13 The removed site allocation proposed to deliver a specified need of homes for military personnel families, and it is envisaged that if the housing need arises then development would likely be delivered speculatively. Whilst there is potential for an incremental increase in needs for military personnel families housing to arise and for this to add to pressures on the local housing market in the absence of the site allocation, this is unlikely. The removal of the site allocation will also safeguard a designated open green space for continued community use which will derive some positive effects for this objective compared to the Regulation 14 SEA. However, the cumulative effects are not predicted to alter the overall moderate positive effects predicted under the Regulation 14 SEA.

Summary of Assessment Findings

- 3.14 Overall, the removal of the site allocation at Land to the north east of Portal Place is not predicted to derive any significant effects or significantly alter the findings previously presented in the Regulation 14 Environmental Report.

Mitigation

- 3.15 Mitigation involves the identification of potential negative effects and proposing measures to minimise or avoid those effects from occurring. The SEA appraisal of the updates to the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan has not identified any significant effects. The updates to the Neighbourhood Plan are in response to recommendations and comments through the Regulation 14 consultation. No mitigation measures have been identified at this stage.

Monitoring

- 3.16 The SEA Regulations require “measures envisaged concerning monitoring” to be outlined in the Environmental Report. This refers to the monitoring of likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan to identify any unforeseen effects early and take remedial action as appropriate.
- 3.17 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan will be undertaken by Northumberland County Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report.
- 3.18 The Regulation 14 Environmental Report suggests the following monitoring measures:
- Annual net housing completions.
 - Affordable housing delivery.
 - Changes in number of buildings and features of historic/ heritage importance (e.g. listed buildings, structures on the Northumberland Historic Environment record (HER)).
- 3.19 No additional monitoring measures have been identified at this stage.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The SEA Regulations require the SEA process to identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Longhoughton Neighbourhood Plan and alternatives.
- 4.2 The screening of the updates identified the removal of the site allocation at Land to the north east of Portal Place to have potential to derive significant effects or alter the findings of the Regulation 14 SEA. This update has been subject to further appraisal through the SEA. The appraisal has concluded that the removal of the site allocation is not predicted to derive any significant effects or significantly alter the findings previously presented in the Regulation 14 Environmental Report.
- 4.3 Other changes to the Plan are less substantive and thus were screened out as they are not considered to have potential to derive significant effects or alter the overall findings of the previous SEA.

