



Northumberland
County Council

Lowick

Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental
Assessment (SEA)

Environmental Report

Prepared by the Neighbourhood Planning Team,
Northumberland County Council for Lowick Parish Council

August 2022

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Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

- i. Lowick Parish Council has prepared a neighbourhood plan for the Lowick Parish area. Once in force, the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) will form part of the statutory development plan for Northumberland, which is the background against which planning decisions are made.

What is the purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment?

- ii. This document is the Environmental Report for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan. This report has been prepared in order to meet the obligations set out in The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) which transposed European Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive) into UK law.
- iii. The aim of undertaking SEA is to identify and assess the potentially significant environmental effects of a plan; and to suggest measures to avoid, reduce or to manage damaging environmental impacts, and enhance positive effects. The SEA process enables engagement with stakeholders and certain specified consultees to allow them to comment on and shape the approach taken to assessment and to comment on the outcomes.
- iv. The need for SEA was triggered by the need for ‘appropriate assessment’ of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (HRA). The HRA screening process, undertaken by the County Council, determined that appropriate assessment was necessary because the Plan would be likely to have significant effects on European sites. This conclusion automatically triggered the need for SEA. An environmental assessment must therefore be undertaken, and an environmental report prepared for submission with the Neighbourhood Plan to meet the requirements of Regulation 15(1)(e) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- v. This Environmental Report describes the assessed impact on the environment of the Submission version of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan (April 2022).

What has the Strategic Environmental Assessment involved so far?

- vi. The first step is to decide whether or not an SEA is required. This is referred to as ‘screening’. The need for a SEA for the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan was triggered by a separate assessment (the HRA). Accordingly, no further consideration was required

about whether the Plan should be subject to SEA. Once 'screened in' there are five stages in undertaking an SEA:

Stage A: Scoping

The scoping stage of the SEA process seeks to ensure that the 'scope' of the assessment covers the likely significant environmental effects of the Plan. It describes the approach proposed for undertaking an environmental assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan and for preparing the environmental report. A scoping report was produced, and consultation took place with the 'consultation bodies' in accordance with the SEA Regulations, specifically: Natural England, Historic England, and the Environment Agency.

Stage B: Testing

This stage is about assessing the Neighbourhood Plan. This involves:

- Testing the Neighbourhood Plan objectives and policies;
- Examining and assessing any reasonable alternatives;
- Predicting the effects;
- Evaluating and scoring the effects;
- Identifying measures to mitigate adverse effects and maximise positive impacts; and
- Proposing measures for monitoring the environmental effects of the Plan.

Stage C: Reporting

This Environmental Report presents the outcome of the assessment carried out at Stage C of the process at this point in time. This may be modified in future should further significant changes be made to the Plan prior to it being brought into force.

Stage D: Consulting

This report will be subject to consultation with prescribed consultation bodies and others who have an interest in the Plan and in the area.

Stage E: Monitoring

This stage will not take place until the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' (brought into force) and the effects of implementing the Plan can be monitored.

SEA Scope and Limitations

- vii. Taking a proportionate approach is a key principle in undertaking SEA. The process should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of a plan. The scope of the SEA of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan has been influenced by the relatively small geographic area covered by the Plan and the overall strategy, vision and objectives. It has also been informed by a higher level 'Sustainability Appraisal' of

the Northumberland Local Plan. That process includes an assessment of the environmental impacts of introducing the Local Plan.

- viii. SEA is not an exact science and there are certain difficulties commonly encountered in undertaking any SEA. For example, the baseline analysis which describes the current situation of various factors is dependent upon the availability of information. Projecting what might happen with or without the Plan or in light of alternatives is also inherently difficult and requires a degree of judgement.

What does the Strategic Environmental Assessment tell us?

- ix. The area covered by the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan is environmentally sensitive, hosting a number of important nature conservation sites. Some of the key environmental issues based on the current state of the environment and how it is likely to evolve without the Neighbourhood Plan include:
- The area is rich in biodiversity. There may be opportunities for enhancement but there are also potential pressures which could lead to disturbance or depletion of habitats and species. It will be important to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to prevent any deterioration, or ensure improvement in the status of the current condition of the Holburn Lake and Moss SSSI, and the other relevant geological sites, including through appropriate improvements in land management measures.
 - Some parts of the Neighbourhood Area are at a greater risk from fluvial flooding as well as surface water flooding. While the areas at greater risk of flooding from these sources avoid the built form of Lowick, more severe weather could result in properties in the Neighbourhood Area becoming more at risk of flooding from these sources.
 - Reliance upon private vehicles is high, reflecting the rural nature of the area. This is the main cause of rising carbon emissions in the County. There are significant barriers to reducing carbon emissions. The changing climate variables (temperature / rainfall) have the potential to affect the area.
 - The health and well-being of those in the Neighbourhood Area is generally good. However, this could change relatively over time as a result of there being an increasingly ageing population. The quality and availability of existing community facilities is limited which could affect health and wellbeing.
 - There are currently 2 designated heritage assets in the Neighbourhood Area which appear in Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register. The Neighbourhood Area does include a number of Grade II listed buildings. Since Grade II listed buildings outside London (other than places of worship) are excluded from the Register, it is therefore possible that the Neighbourhood Area may also contain heritage assets at risk, but which fall outside the remit of the Heritage At Risk Register.

- The landscape within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Area contains a number of receptors which are sensitive to change. It would be appropriate to protect the historic integrity of estate settlements such as Ford and Etal within Landscape Character Area '16b Duddo and Lowick'. In relation to Landscape Character Area '8b Kyloe and Chillingham Hills' there is a need to ensure the sensitivity of the north and west-facing scarp ridge is recognised since this is particularly sensitive to any skyline structures because of its importance in views.

Environmental Report – Initial findings (November 2021)

- x. An assessment was carried out on the November 2021 version of the Plan. The assessment demonstrated that the Neighbourhood Plan objectives are in accordance with the SEA environmental objectives, having a largely neutral or slightly positive effect.
- xi. With regard to the policies in the Plan, the assessment resulted in recommendations for 4 changes:
 - A new policy should be included to address the potential impact of recreational disturbance on coastal sites.
 - A new policy should be included to address impacts from development on water quality.
 - Policy L10 should be modified to improve alignment of the Plan with SEA Objective 2.
 - Policy L13 should be modified to improve alignment of the Plan with SEA Objective 7.

Environmental Report – February 2022

- xii. These changes were incorporated into a revised version of the Plan (February 2022). This plan was assessed with the conclusion that no further changes were needed.
- xiii. In March 2022, Natural England issued advice on Habitats Sites that are in an unfavourable conservation status and where additional nutrient loads, such as from development, may have an adverse effect. Natural England identified the catchment that feeds into the Lindisfarne Special Protection Area/Ramsar Site as one in which 'nutrient neutrality' is required for all new developments. As a result, the HRA for the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan was updated with the requirement for revised policy wording for Policy L7.

Environmental Report – April 2022

- xiv. This change was incorporated into the pre-submission version of the Plan (April 2022). This plan was assessed with the conclusion that no further changes are needed.

- xv. In summer 2022, the Parish Council consulted on the SEA Environmental Report (in line with Regulation 13 of the 2004 SEA Regulations) alongside the Regulation 14 publicity and consultation on their pre-submission draft plan. Comments received during this consultation have led to changes being made to the draft plan and the Environmental Report. This report is the latest version and is based on the submission draft of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan (August 2022).

Environmental Report – August 2022

- xvi. The assessment demonstrates that individually and collectively the policies of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan serve to support development that has limited environmental impact and the Plan provides appropriate tools to ensure mitigation of any potential negative environmental effects. The Plan encourages the protection and enhancement of the environment as a whole, and provides an appropriate framework, working alongside other plans and programmes, to protect and enhance the environment. Implementation of the Plan overall is assessed as having positive or neutral effects on the environment.
- xvii. The ‘reasonable alternatives’ considered in the plan making process related to:
- Settlement Boundaries;
 - Local Green Spaces
- xviii. The SEA demonstrates the alternatives do not represent more favourable outcomes in respect of environmental impacts. For the settlement boundary, the possibility of identifying genuine reasonable alternative options other than the preferred policy approach defined in the draft Plan diminished significantly as a result of progress made on the Northumberland Local Plan including the identification of indicative housing requirements for the Parish over the Plan period to 2036, and the objectives of the Plan (which does not propose to allocate land for a greater quantum of development than that apportioned to the Parish by the Local Planning Authority strategy for the area), there were no genuine reasonable alternative options other than the preferred policy approach defined in the draft Plan.
- xix. For locally important green spaces, these may only be designated where they serve particular purposes, and they are demonstrably special to the local community. The Plan designates all green spaces identified by the community that achieve the recognised status in terms of their function and the value attributed to them by the community. Accordingly, there are no further spaces that could be considered reasonable alternatives.

Next Steps

- xx. The Environmental Report was subject to consultation in accordance with the SEA Regulations. The assessment and the Environmental Report have been reviewed and,

where necessary, revised to take account of representations made by the consultation bodies and to take account of the subsequent changes made to the Plan by the Parish Council. The final draft Neighbourhood Plan will now be submitted by the Parish Council to Northumberland County Council, along with the Environmental Report and other supporting documents required by legislation. The County Council will then consider whether the Plan and the various submission documents meet certain legal requirements. Provided these requirements are met the Plan will then progress to Independent Examination.

1. Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 Lowick Parish Council has prepared a neighbourhood development plan, often referred to simply as a 'neighbourhood plan', for the Lowick Parish area.
- 1.2 The Localism Act 2011 introduced neighbourhood planning powers. These various powers are contained in modifications to the Planning Acts and allow parish councils and, where parishes don't exist, groups of people from the community, called neighbourhood forums, to formulate neighbourhood development plans and neighbourhood development orders. These documents are intended to guide and shape development in a particular area. Neighbourhood planning powers are discretionary and there is no particular obligation on parish councils or local communities to prepare plans. However, where neighbourhood plans are prepared, they must have regard to national policies and must be in general conformity with local strategic planning policies.
- 1.3 To be brought into legal force, which is known as being 'made', a neighbourhood development plan must pass an independent examination and meet certain 'basic conditions' defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These include that the making of the plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations.
- 1.4 One of these EU obligations is European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. This is often referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (the SEA Directive). The need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) must be determined and, where necessary, an assessment of the effects a plan may have on the environment must be completed prior to a plan being brought into legal force.
- 1.5 The SEA Directive seeks to '*...provide a high level of protection of the environment by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing plans and programmes*'. The SEA Directive is transposed into UK legislation through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). It is these regulations with which a neighbourhood plan must comply.
- 1.6 It is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to decide whether a neighbourhood plan complies with relevant legislative obligations. The Local Planning Authority for Lowick Parish is Northumberland County Council. The County Council has confirmed that SEA is required for the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan. This requirement was triggered by an assessment under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations) which concluded 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 be completed before a plan can be brought into force.

- 1.7 Beyond its duty to advise and assist Lowick Parish Council with neighbourhood planning¹, Northumberland County Council offered additional assistance by undertaking the SEA process. This additional support is akin to the role of an independent consultancy and was offered to assist in light of the limited resources available to the Parish Council and the lack of support available from any other sources, including the government's national support programme for neighbourhood planning.
- 1.8 The outcome of the SEA process is the preparation of an 'Environmental Report'. This Environmental Report has been prepared in line with the procedures prescribed in the SEA Regulations.

Structure of the Report

- 1.9 Regulation 12 of the SEA Regulations specifically sets out the requirements of an Environmental Report. It must identify, describe, and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan, and of the reasonable alternatives, taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan. The Environmental Report must clearly show how these requirements have been met.
- 1.10 In order to meet requirements described in the SEA Regulations, and to produce a user-friendly document, the remainder of this report has been structured to include the following chapters:

Chapter 2: The Strategic Environmental Assessment Approach

Chapter 3: Lowick Neighbourhood Plan and strategic policy context

Chapter 4: Environmental baseline position

Chapter 5: The Strategic Environmental Assessment Framework used to appraise the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan

Chapter 6: Appraisal of the effects of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan, and reasonable alternatives, on the environment

Chapter 7: Monitoring and Next steps

¹ as required by paragraph 3 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Scope and Limitations

- 1.11 In accordance with national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)², Strategic Environmental Assessment should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of a neighbourhood plan. It should focus on the environmental impacts which are likely to be significant. To this end, the SEA does not need to be done in any more detail, or using more resources than is appropriate for the content and level of detail in the Plan.
- 1.12 Furthermore, in undertaking the assessment, it is necessary to be mindful of the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the plan making process in order to avoid duplication of assessment. Accordingly, the SEA process has been informed by the Sustainability Appraisal of the Northumberland Local Plan, which includes an SEA of that Plan.
- 1.13 It should be noted that in undertaking any SEA, there are certain limitations which are referred to throughout this Environmental Report. For example, the assessment is based on the information found to be available at the time of undertaking the SEA. There may be additional information which has not been identified, or in some instances the available information may be dated, such as data derived from the census. In addition, projecting or forecasting the future situation, with or without the plan is not a precise science. It involves a level of judgement being applied, including considering the wide range of external factors which could have direct and indirect influence on the environment over time in both positive and negative ways.

² Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 11-030-20150209

2. The Strategic Environmental Assessment Approach

What is Strategic Environmental Assessment?

- 2.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects on the environment of an emerging plan, and reasonable alternative approaches to achieve the objectives of that plan. The aim of SEA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative environmental effects and maximising positive effects. Through this approach, the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan seeks to maximise the emerging Plan's contribution to achieving sustainable development.
- 2.2 In some circumstances a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be undertaken as a part of a 'Sustainability Appraisal'. The Sustainability Appraisal process has a broader remit than SEA. In addition to assessing the likely effects of a plan or programme on the environment, a Sustainability Appraisal involves examining the likely effects of a plan in social and economic terms.
- 2.3 Neighbourhood development plans are 'development plan documents' for the purposes of the Planning Acts. Accordingly, 'Sustainability Appraisal' is not required. The SEA of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan therefore addresses only the requirements of the SEA Directive and the SEA Regulations. Whilst it does not constitute a Sustainability Appraisal, it has informed wider considerations by the Parish Council in respect of ensuring the Neighbourhood Plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development which is one of the 'basic conditions' required of neighbourhood plans.

Determining the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 2.4 Not every neighbourhood plan requires SEA. The need for SEA is influenced by the objectives and policies proposed in the plan and the nature of the area to which the plan applies and any likely significant environmental effects. In order to determine if a neighbourhood plan requires SEA, a screening process is necessary. Screening the need for SEA includes consideration of requirements set out in The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'). Where a 'Habitats Regulations Assessment' (HRA) concludes that significant environmental effects are likely as a result of the objectives or policies contained in a plan the SEA Regulations indicate that this automatically triggers the need for SEA.
- 2.5 The Habitats Regulations require that competent authorities assess the potential impacts of land use plans on the Natura 2000 network of European protected sites. For the purposes of the Regulations, Northumberland County Council is the

competent authority. The purpose of HRA is to determine whether there will be any 'likely significant effects' on any European site as a result of the plan's implementation, either alone or 'in combination' with other plans or projects; and, if so, whether these will result in any adverse effects on that site's integrity with reference to the site's conservation objectives.

- 2.6 In accordance with the Habitats Regulations, an HRA screening exercise was undertaken to identify the likely impacts of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan upon European sites, either alone or 'in combination' with other projects or plans, and to consider whether these effects are likely to be significant.
- 2.7 The screening exercise found that the possibility of significant effects could not be excluded, therefore it was deemed necessary to undertake a more detailed assessment, known as 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA). The conclusion that Appropriate Assessment was required automatically triggered the need for SEA. The AA is reported separately from the SEA of the Plan, but importantly has helped to inform the appraisal process, particularly in respect of the potential impact the introduction of some policies may have on biodiversity and habitats.

Timing of the SEA of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.8 The point in the plan-making process when it was determined that SEA should be undertaken, and the time at which this assessment was completed, has had some impact on the extent of the assessment, particularly the evaluation of genuine reasonable alternatives through the SEA process. The need for SEA was not established until the objectives and scope of the Plan had largely been established by the Parish Council.
- 2.9 Furthermore, the likelihood of there being genuine reasonable alternatives that could deliver the Plan's objectives reflects progress at the strategic planning level made by the County Council in the preparation of the Northumberland Local Plan, which was adopted in March 2022. In addition, the need for Local Planning Authorities to provide local housing requirements for neighbourhood areas was introduced more recently through paragraphs 65 and 66 of the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019). Those requirements have been fulfilled through advice provided by the County Council to the Parish Council on housing requirements, and these requirements have now been included in policies in the Northumberland Local Plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Stages

- 2.10 The SEA Regulations prescribe a process for undertaking SEA and specific guidance on what must be addressed at each stage. The stages for the SEA of the Neighbourhood

Plan are included in Planning Practice Guidance³ and are described in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Stages in the SEA Process

Stage	Tasks
Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline, and deciding on the scope	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives. 2. Collect baseline information. 3. Identify environmental problems. 4. Develop SEA objectives. 5. Consult on the scope of SEA.
Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Test the Plan objectives against the SEA objectives. 2. Develop the Plan options including reasonable alternatives. 3. Predict the likely effects of the Plan, including alternatives. 4. Evaluate the likely effects of the Plan, including alternatives. 5. Consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects. 6. Propose measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Plan.
Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present the predicted environmental effects of the Plan, including any reasonable alternatives, in an Environmental Report.
Stage D: Consultation and decision-making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult the public and Consultation Bodies on the draft Plan and the Environmental Report. 2. Assess significant changes to the Plan to ensure that the environmental implications are assessed and taken into account. 3. Make decisions on how the Environmental Report and consultees' opinions have been taken into account in deciding the final form of the Plan.
Stage E: Monitoring implementation of the plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop methods for monitoring implementation of the Plan and publish these in a 'post adoption statement'. 2. Monitor significant effects of implementing the Plan. 3. Respond to adverse effects.

³ Paragraph: 033 Reference ID: 11-033-20150209

Stage A

- 2.11 The SEA Regulations require that *“When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”*. In England, these consultation bodies are Natural England, Historic England, and the Environment Agency. The consultation bodies were consulted on the scope of the SEA for the Lowick Parish Neighbourhood Plan in April 2019.
- 2.12 The Scoping Report included:
- A review of the key environmental and sustainability objectives of European, national, regional and local plans, policies and programmes relevant to the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan – this work has been kept under review, but has not required updating since the scoping stage and is presented in Appendix A.
 - A baseline against which the Neighbourhood Plan could be assessed – based on the anticipated scope of the Plan’s effects, the baseline position was presented in respect of the following environmental topics:
 - a. Air
 - b. Biodiversity, flora and fauna
 - c. Climatic factors
 - d. Population and human health
 - e. Soil
 - f. Water
 - g. Historic environment
 - h. Landscape
 - Key environmental issues or problems for the Neighbourhood Area – based on the above topics, the key issues and problems were identified. Where the issues were of little or no relevance to the Plan they would not be addressed in the assessment or afforded more limited weight.
 - An SEA Framework – the SEA framework is a set of objectives and guiding questions used to determine and assess the likely significant effects on the environment of the objectives and policies in the Plan. It is a recognised method by which the likely effects of the plan and alternative options can be described, analysed and compared. The SEA framework is set out in Section 5 of this Report.
- 2.13 Responses from the consultation bodies on the SEA Scoping Report are provided in Appendix B to this Report. These were taken into account and informed the subsequent stage of assessment. Responses are summarised as follows:

Historic England: *Under Context, HE suggests mentioning the principal duties under the legislation governing the types of heritage asset in the plan area. Under Summary, they advise expanding a little further on the significance (including that derived from setting) and sensitivity of the assets identified. This section should also give information on the likely scope of the non-designated heritage assets (for example by reference to the county Historic Environment Record) including a summary of their significance and sensitivity. Under Triggers, a modest discussion of condition and risk to the assets identified would be useful. This section could also identify any likely positive impacts on the historic environment that the plan might need to take the opportunity to plan for. Under SEA Objectives, the report might consider whether any additional questions are needed once the baseline and triggers are addressed. In the questions already set out, HE suggests “significance” is a better word than “integrity”. The report should also consider indicators and monitoring to clearly demonstrate the effects of the plan in operation.*

Natural England: *Responded to say they had no comments at this stage.*

Environment Agency: *There were no comments from the Environment Agency*

- 2.14 The response from Historic England regarding the need for additional information on the significance and sensitivity to change of heritage assets has been questioned. The SEA assessment team were concerned that Historic England’s expectations stray some way beyond the advice on SEA for neighbourhood plans provided in Planning Practice Guidance, particularly in terms of the need for a proportionate approach being taken in the extent of an assessment. PPG requires that:

‘The strategic environmental assessment should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of the neighbourhood plan. It should focus on the environmental impacts which are likely to be significant. It does not need to be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is considered to be appropriate for the content and level of detail in the neighbourhood plan.’⁴

- 2.15 Having regard to the scope and geographic extent of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan, and in particular that the Plan does not seek to specifically allocate land for development, it is considered that a general assessment of the significance and sensitivity of all heritage assets in the parish could not reasonably be deemed appropriate, it would involve a disproportionate use of resources and would present detail that may be interesting, but not necessarily helpful in addressing the environmental effects associated with implementing this specific Plan. Historic England have accepted this view and their response on the matter is provided at Appendix B.

⁴ Paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 11-030-20150209

Stage B

- 2.16 Following consultation on the SEA Scoping Report, testing of the objectives and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan was progressed. This involved each of the five actions identified in the defined SEA stages, that is:
- Testing the Plan objectives and policies against the strategic environmental assessment framework;
 - Developing the Plan options including reasonable alternatives;
 - Evaluating the likely effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and alternatives;
 - Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects; and
 - Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Neighbourhood Plan

Stage C

- 2.17 The Environmental Report is prepared. It seeks to present information on the draft Lowick Neighbourhood Plan and the reasonable alternative options considered. The Environmental Report explains the process that was undertaken and provides an assessment setting out how the policies chosen in the draft Plan, and any reasonable alternatives, perform against a range of environmental objectives.
- 2.18 In accordance with **Stage D**, this Environmental Report will be subject to consultation. **Stage E** will not take place until the Neighbourhood Plan is made and the effects of implementing the Plan can be monitored.

3. Lowick Neighbourhood Plan and the strategic policy context

Neighbourhood Plans

- 3.1 Communities have a right to use discretionary powers introduced into the Planning Acts in 2011 to produce a neighbourhood development plan, often just known as a 'neighbourhood plan'. Communities are not required by legislation to produce such a plan, but they may choose to do so in order to shape development in their area. Local Planning Authorities have a duty to support those groups which choose to pursue a neighbourhood plan and are required to bring plans into force provided they meet all statutory obligations. Once neighbourhood plans are 'made' (brought into legal force) they become part of the statutory development plan and must be used in making decisions on planning applications in the area to which they apply.
- 3.2 There are various regulations governing neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood plans may only be prepared by a 'qualifying body' defined under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Where parish councils exist these are, by default, the 'qualifying body' for the purposes of neighbourhood planning. In addition to meeting requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the preparation of plans is subject to The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012; The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent amendments); and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017. Neighbourhood plans may only be prepared for areas specifically defined as 'neighbourhood areas'. For areas where parishes exist it is normally the whole of a parish that is defined as a neighbourhood area.
- 3.3 Neighbourhood plans must meet several statutory requirements to ensure they are legally compliant. This includes meeting what are known as the 'basic conditions'. It must be demonstrated that the basic conditions have been met before a neighbourhood plan can proceed to a referendum and then be formally 'made' by the Local Planning Authority. These are set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Planning Practice Guidance⁵. Independent examination of neighbourhood plans comprises an assessment of the extent to which a plan meets the basic conditions and other legal obligations. The basic conditions applying to neighbourhood plans are that:
- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
 - the making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - the making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area);

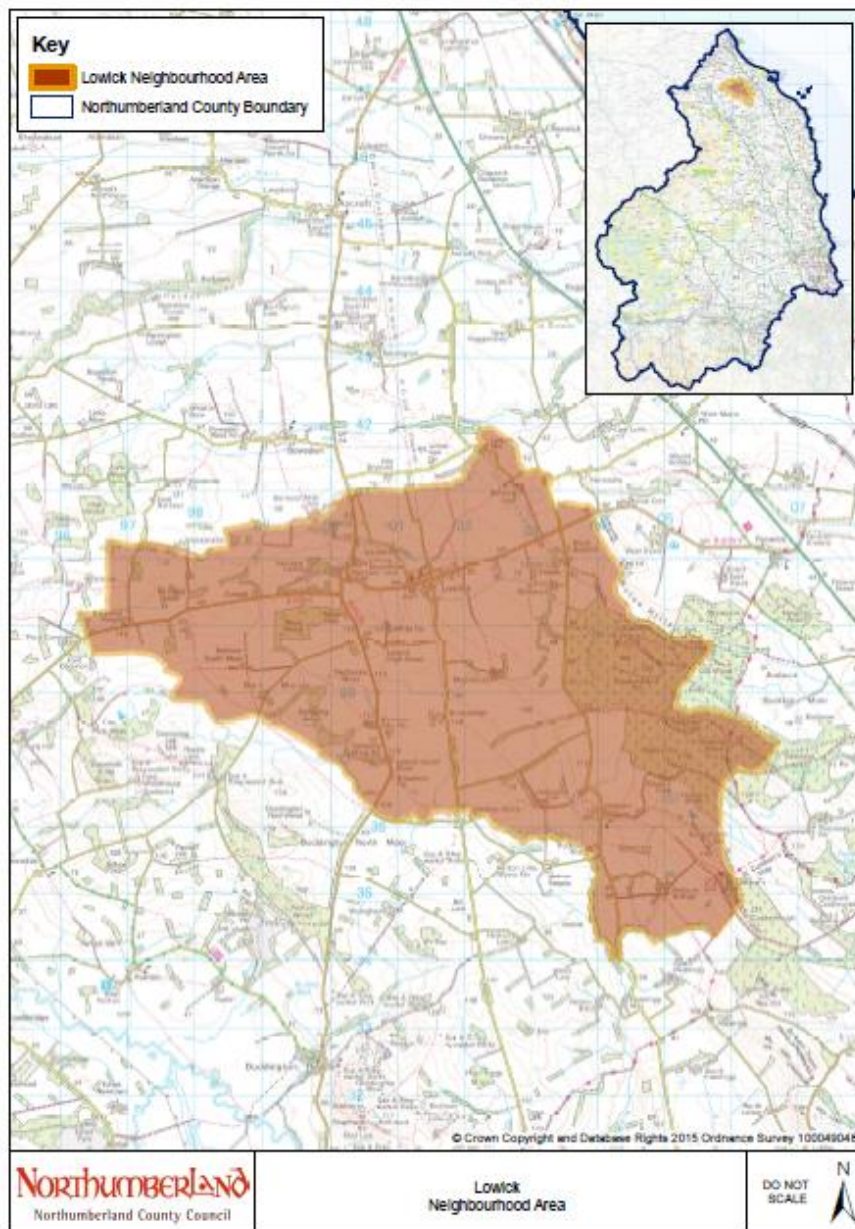
⁵ Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 41-065-20140306

- the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations;
- all prescribed conditions are met in relation to the plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan; and
- the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Lowick Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.4 The Lowick Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by Lowick Parish Council, as the qualifying body. If the Plan passes independent examination and is supported in a local referendum it will be 'made' by Northumberland County Council as the Local Planning Authority. The Neighbourhood Plan will cover the Lowick Neighbourhood Area which comprises the whole of the administrative area of Lowick Civil Parish (figure 2).
- 3.5 Lowick Parish is in a rural area located around 10 miles south west of Berwick-upon-Tweed and close to Northumberland's coastline. Initial work on a neighbourhood plan for Lowick began in 2015. The Lowick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was created to help guide the preparation of a plan. It comprises volunteers from the community and Parish Councillors.
- 3.6 Throughout the plan preparation process the Steering Group has engaged with and consulted the local community, including residents, businesses, landowners and other locally active organisations through consultation events and newsletters. There is also an active website www.lowickplan.com which has given opportunities for comments to be made on the Plan at any time throughout its development.
- 3.7 A questionnaire was circulated to the local community seeking comments on the scope of a plan, and an open day was held in June 2018. Following responses to those exercises a draft Plan was prepared.

Figure 2: Lowick Neighbourhood Area



- 3.8 The Submission Draft Lowick Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address the following issues identified by the Steering Group and supported by the local community:
- preserving and enhancing the special qualities of the Lowick Village Historic Core and the many listed buildings in the Parish;
 - supporting high quality and sustainable design in the neighbourhood area;
 - having enough of the right type of housing for young families to live in the area and for older people to remain in the area;
 - retaining and improving on local community facilities and valued green spaces in Lowick village;
 - supporting the rural economy by supporting local business and promoting tourism.

3.9 The Submission Draft Lowick Neighbourhood Plan sets out the following vision:

“By 2036, Lowick will be a Parish with a balanced, sustainable community and a mix of people of all ages. Local facilities and services will be maintained and enhanced. Local character and heritage will be the inspiration for new development which will be well integrated into the village. Lowick and the wider parish will be an even more attractive place to work, live and visit.

3.10 To deliver the vision, the following objectives are set out in the draft Plan:

Objective 1: Community Facilities

We will protect our most highly valued community facilities and encourage the provision of new community facilities to increase the sustainability of Lowick

Objective 2: Natural Environment, Biodiversity and Landscape

Lowick will grow in such a way that respects the special landscapes around it, incorporates biodiversity into new development and respects the special qualities of the area.

Objective 3: Accessibility

To make the Neighbourhood Area more accessible to all, we will work to improve access to public transport, improve cycle ways and public rights of way and make Lowick a safer place to walk and cycle. We will also seek to improve the provision of better mobile telephone communications and to maintain and improve broadband speeds from all providers.

Objective 4: Housing

To ensure we have a truly sustainable community we will seek to ensure there is enough housing to meet the needs of all sectors of our community, particularly young families and first-time buyers.

Objective 5: The Local Economy

Provide opportunities for and support a more vibrant and diverse local economy including tourism in Lowick village and surrounding areas.

Objective 6: Heritage, Character and Design

Preserve and enhance the character of the village of Lowick and identify local buildings which are of special local interest. Identify a historic core for the village and ensure that new development in that area reinforces local character. Support and encourage new building which promotes good design standards and shows originality if required.

3.11 To deliver the vision and objectives, the draft Plan includes the following policies:

- Policy L1: Community and recreational facilities in Lowick;
- Policy L2: Local Green Spaces;
- Policy L3: Lowick Village settlement boundary;
- Policy L4: Design in new housing development;
- Policy L5: Biodiversity and development;
- Policy L6: Coastal mitigation;
- Policy L7: Water quality and nutrient neutrality;
- Policy L8: Accessibility;
- Policy L9: Creation and improvement of footpaths and cycleways;
- Policy L10: Broadband and telecommunications;
- Policy L11: Local employment and rural enterprise;
- Policy L12: Tourism;
- Policy L13: Non-designated heritage assets;
- Policy L14: Lowick's historic core;
- Policy L15: Conversion of buildings.

The policies in full are set out in Appendix C of this report.

The Strategic Planning Policy Context

3.12 Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan. In Northumberland, the development plan consists of the Northumberland Local Plan, which was adopted in March 2022.

3.13 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared having regard to the need to meet the 'basic condition' requiring policies and the Plan as a whole to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

3.14 The SEA has been undertaken to support the Neighbourhood Plan in meeting the basic conditions, and particularly the need to ensure that the Plan is compatible with, and does not otherwise breach EU obligations. The Environmental Report provides an assessment of the impact policies presented in the Submission (August 2022) version of the Plan may have on the environment.

4. Environmental Baseline Position

Plans, programmes, policies and strategies

- 4.1 In order to establish a clear scope, and in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations, it was necessary to review and develop an understanding of a wide range of relevant plans, programmes, policies and strategies. The Lowick Neighbourhood Plan first needed to be framed in the context of international, European, national, regional and local objectives and take account of strategic planning and environmental policies. The purpose of this review was to highlight the key elements of these plans and strategies that will influence the preparation of the SEA to ensure that their requirements are taken into account.
- 4.2 Recognising national Planning Practice Guidance in respect of taking a proportionate approach to SEA and avoiding duplication of work, the review of such plans and programmes, policies and strategies was derived from the Sustainability Appraisal of the Northumberland Local Plan (produced by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Ltd). It was considered that the same plans, programmes, policies and strategies would be relevant to the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan, but additional consideration would be given to any more locally specific context. Appendix A provides a schedule of relevant plans and programmes and outlines brief details of their potential relevance to the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.3 The plans and programmes identified do not act in isolation and links between their scale and objectives can be made. International and national plans and strategies often provide high level guidance, with their objectives being reflected in plans at a regional, sub-regional or local level. The schedule of plans and programmes identifies the diversity of documents that are considered to have a bearing on the preparation of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan.

The Baseline – Environmental issues

- 4.4 The selected environmental topics for the assessment, set out below, incorporated the ‘SEA topics’ suggested by Annex I(f) of the SEA Directive⁶. These were refined to reflect a broad understanding of the anticipated scope of effects associated with a neighbourhood plan. The assessment has taken into account the interrelationships between topics. The topics are:
- a. Air
 - b. Biodiversity, flora and fauna

⁶ The SEA Directive does not set out to prescribe particular issues that should and should not be a focus, beyond requiring a focus on *“the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors”*.

- c. Climatic factors
- d. Population and human health
- e. Soil
- f. Water
- g. Historic environment
- h. Landscape

- 4.5 The following provides a brief overview and summary of the current baseline environmental characteristics in the Lowick Parish area and the likely evolution thereof without the implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan as required in Planning Practice Guidance⁷. Full details of the baseline assessment are provided in the SEA Scoping Report (June 2020). Some topics present few or no issues and therefore are of little or no relevance to the assessment in that they do not present environmental problems or opportunities. Accordingly, these topics have either not been addressed in the SEA or have been afforded a more limited focus. The baseline provides the broad basis against which to assess the likely effects of the draft plan and any reasonable alternatives.

Air

- 4.6 Due to the absence of significant and tangible air quality issues in the Lowick Neighbourhood Area, air has been scoped **OUT** of the need for further assessment through the SEA process.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

Nature conservation designations

- 4.7 The eastern edge of the Parish boundary is approximately 3 miles from the coastline which includes the Berwickshire and Northumberland Coast European Marine Site, which consists of components of two separate European sites – the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation, and the intertidal habitats of the Lindisfarne Special Protection Area.
- 4.8 The Lindisfarne Special Protection Area (Lindisfarne SPA) was designated in 1992 to protect rare, threatened and vulnerable birds listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, and internationally-important populations of migratory species and waterfowl.
- 4.9 Holburn Lake and Moss runs along the south eastern boundary of the Neighbourhood Area and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Ramsar Convention Wetlands area. Holburn is raised mire which is

⁷ Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 11-036-20140306

at the dry end of the range of variation. A limited number of raised mires are still intact in Britain, making this a rare site. Currently Holburn Lake and Moss SSSI condition assessment summary has identified that 67.30% of the site is in an unfavourable – recovering condition, whilst 32.70% is in favourable condition.

Habitats

- 4.10 The local wildlife and geological sites that have been identified within the Parish are Barmoorhill Quarry, Kyloe Old Wood and Kyloe Hills.

Species

- 4.11 Holborn Lake, and the adjacent area, is of international importance due to it being a major roost for greylag geese. Greylag geese are listed as 'Amber' under the Birds of Conservation Concern: the Red List for Birds (2015). The species is protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.12 There are two issues relating to biodiversity, flora and fauna:
- The importance of ensuring that appropriate measures are taken to prevent any deterioration, or ensure improvement in the status of the current condition of the Holburn Lake and Moss SSSI.
 - Ensuring the continued protection of rare and threatened bird species in the Parish.

Climatic factors

Greenhouse gas emissions by source

- 4.13 No emissions data is available for the Neighbourhood Area. At the local authority level, detailed information is available for Carbon Dioxide (CO²). Total CO² emissions in Northumberland have decreased by 40% between 2005 and 2017 mainly because of reductions from industrial and commercial sources. The main source of CO² emissions in Northumberland is now transport, which has shown only a very marginal reduction since 2005, not surprisingly in a large and largely rural county where more people rely on private transport.

Greenhouse gas emissions trends

- 4.14 Per capita emissions of CO² in Northumberland are higher than both the regional and national averages. However, levels in the County decreased more quickly than in the country as a whole between 2005 and 2017.

Effects of climate change

- 4.15 In Northumberland, compared to the period 1981-2000, winters are projected to be slightly wetter, but summers may be slightly drier in future years. Average year-round temperature is expected to be higher with a slightly greater increase in the daily maximum temperature in the summer. Changes in rainfall patterns, including more frequent and more intense storm events, are predicted.
- 4.16 It is anticipated that climate change will create a number of issues in the area, including: changes in arable cultivation that could have negative effects on soils and water and cause the loss of landscape features; increased soil erosion; and more flooding. Northumbrian Water expect water supply to remain in surplus over the Plan period because water demand is expected to fall in response to water efficiency and leakage strategies.

Flood risk

- 4.17 The Neighbourhood Area is not at a great risk of coastal flooding as a result of climate change. There are some farms located next to fluvial sources, but these are still at low risk from flooding. Unlike fluvial and coastal flooding, it is apparent that certain pockets within the settlement of Lowick are at a risk of pluvial flooding and these locations seem to be more concentrated around the southern and western edges of the settlement and within the developed core of Lowick village.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.18 There are two issues relating to climatic factors:
- The rising carbon emissions from transport in the County;
 - The changing climate variables (temperature / rainfall) and their potential impact on the area.

Population and human health

Population characteristics

- 4.19 The population of the Civil Parish of Lowick was shown in the 2011 Census as 552, equating to a density of 0.1 people per hectare or 10.5 per km². The population of Lowick is ageing and there are a significant number of residents (59.9%) aged 45 and over. Compared to Northumberland, the North East and England as a whole, the Parish has a lower percentage of those aged 0-44 and a higher percentage aged 45 and above.
- 4.20 Between 2001 and 2011 there was a 60% increase in the number of residents aged 65 years or older; at the same time, the number of children fell by 40%. In

2001 the average age of residents was 38.5 years; in 2011 it was 44.8 years. However, the Parish still has a greater percentage of people of working age and a smaller proportion of older residents compared to the County overall.

Education and skills

- 4.21 Lowick has a highly qualified population with only 34.5% having either no qualifications or qualification no higher than level 1 and 61.5% having level 2 or above. Lowick has an above average level of people with level 4 or above qualifications and a below average percentage of people who have no qualifications or a level 1 qualification compared with figures for Northumberland, the North East and England overall.

Health indicators and deprivation

- 4.22 Data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) show that Lowick is in the 30% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Figures for income, employment, education and crime are particularly positive though it is noticeable that, for crime, the risk of personal and material victimisation at a local level has increased. In terms of barriers to housing and services, the Parish scores poorly, a reflection of limited geographical accessibility to local services and the current local housing mix. The figure for living environment is middling reflecting average quality of the indoor and outdoor local environment.
- 4.23 Lowick has high levels of very good health (46.2%), good health (33.5%) and fair health (15.8%). Only 4.5% of the Lowick Parish population is considered to be in bad health or very bad health.
- 4.24 Overall, the baseline for Population and Human Health is very positive for Lowick Parish, with almost all indicators being at or above comparison figures. The trends for the indicators described are, generally, stable or improving. The exception would be that its population is ageing in line with the rest of the County, and at a higher rate than elsewhere. No vulnerable social groups have been identified in the Parish.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.25 The key environmental issues relating to population and human health are:
- Barriers to housing and services and the quality of the living environment (indoors and outdoors);
 - The population is ageing which puts extra pressure on healthcare and other services;
 - The quality and availability of existing community facilities is limited which could affect health and wellbeing.

Soil

Soil resource

- 4.26 A significant portion of the Lowick Neighbourhood Area is defined as grade 3 Agricultural land, i.e., good to moderate quality agricultural land. A proportion of the land in the Parish is land primarily in non-agricultural use. The area which is not primarily in agricultural use is the Holburn Lake and Moss SSSI, Special Protection Area and a Ramsar Convention Wetlands area. In the south east corner of the Parish the land is categorised as being of 'poor' or 'very poor' agricultural quality.

Soil quality

- 4.27 In terms of land quality, there are no 'Special Sites' within the Neighbourhood Area, as defined under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act. The Neighbourhood Area does not have a history of heavy industrial land use which may have resulted in soil and groundwater pollution.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.28 None were identified at the SEA scoping stage.

Water

Water availability

- 4.29 Water supply in the area is provided by Northumbrian Water Ltd. The Kielder Water Resource Zone (WRZ) serves the Neighbourhood Area. There is a large surplus of supply over demand in the Kielder WRZ and the area is not classed as seriously water stressed.

Water quality

- 4.30 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) show the risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area. The Neighbourhood Area contains no SPZs.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.31 None were identified at the SEA scoping stage.

Historic environment

Designated and non-designated heritage assets

- 4.32 The Neighbourhood Area has a rich historic environment. A number of features are recognised through historic environment designations, including the statutory listed buildings and scheduled monuments, which are nationally designated. The parish of Lowick has traditionally been linked with agriculture. Coal pits and stone quarries are in the area. Today there are numerous guesthouses and old farm buildings converted into cottages catering for tourists.
- 4.33 There are 40 listed structures in the Parish and a number of non-designated heritage assets. There are currently 2 designated heritage assets which appear in Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register. The Earthworks 370 yards east of Low Stead and Barmoor Castle.

Key environmental problems or issues

- 4.34 There are two issues relating to the historic environment:
- The Earthworks 370 yards east of Low Stead and Barmoor Castle are registered as being "at risk" by Historic England.
 - There is a lack of information about the condition of listed heritage assets in the Neighbourhood Area.

Landscape

Landscape character and quality

- 4.35 Lowick Neighbourhood Area is largely in the Cheviot Fringe (NE438) National Character Area (NCA). This is a lowland landscape character area that includes the edge of the Cheviot Hills, and its western edge falls within the Northumberland National Park. The glacial process has heavily shaped this area's topography and provided the area with fertile soils. The river valleys provide much of the county's sand and gravel resources and much of the area's broadleaved woodland is found along the watercourses. The south east corner of the Parish falls within the Northumberland Sandstone Hills, a series of distinctive flat-topped ridges that are covered with heather and grass moorland with breaks provided by blocks of conifers. Below this is pasture that is typically used for rearing hardy sheep and cattle. The major rivers that run through the area are the Wansbeck, Font, Aln, Coquet and Till.
- 4.36 The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010) identifies further Landscape Character Types (LCT) within each NCA and further Landscape Character Areas (LCA) within a particular LCT. Figure 3 summarises the different landscape classifications relevant to Lowick.

Figure 3: Landscape Character Types in the Neighbourhood Area

Landscape Description
<p>Landscape Character Types / Areas within the Cheviot Fringe (NCA 3)</p> <p>Open Rolling Farmland (LCT 16) Areas of gently rolling arable farmland, with scattered villages and occasional estates. There is gently undulating farmland lying above the valleys of the River Tweed and River Till. Arable cultivation dominates the farmland with a strong pattern of enclosure and regular, medium sized fields. Scattered farmsteads, hamlets and small villages are dispersed throughout the landscape. Local influences of estates and planned villages such as Ford and Etal are apparent. The landscape has an open character, and the regular landform and medium sized fields contribute a consistency across the area. Influences from a number of periods of history are evident from the route of the A697 along the Roman road, the Battle of Flodden Field, and estate landscapes such as Tillmouth Park.</p> <p>Duddo and Lowick (LCA 16b) A large area that rises steadily from the Tweed towards the sandstone hills. The topography is relatively varied. Around Duddo a more undulating landform predominates, with occasional rock outcrops. To the south, the land drops down to Ford, where the influence of the Ford Estate is clear. Ford Castle and the surrounding village are key historic attractions in the area. Other significant features include the stone circle at Duddo, and Barmoor Castle with its associated caravan park. An extension of the area forms the fringe of the Till valley. Around Lowick, the landform is flatter, with large, arable fields.</p>
<p>Landscape Character Types within the Northumberland Sandstone Hills (NCA 2)</p> <p>Outcrop Hills and Escarpments (LCT 8) A distinctive chain of rocky uplands, running the length of the Northumberland Sandstone Hills, from the Kyloe Hills in the north, to Great Wanney Crag in the south. Their distinctive form, and rich semi-natural vegetation patterns, contrast with the surrounding more intensively-farmed landscape. There are flat-topped elongated ridges and rounded sandstone hills. Distinctive steep scarp faces forming stepped, often dark, skyline silhouettes. Open plateau and gentle dip slopes clothed in heather moorland, acidic grassland mosaic, coniferous forestry and peat bog/mires. Steeper slopes and craggy outcrops with bracken, heather and broadleaved woodland. Wet pastures and semi-improved pastures on lower slopes. Rich muted colours and textures. Little or no habitation but significant archaeological remains. Water bodies including natural loughs and reservoirs.</p> <p>Kyloe and Chillingham Hills (LCA 8b) A long chain of hills has the characteristic outcrop escarpment on its western edge, forming relatively low but prominent hills including the Kyloe Hills (174m), Greensheen Hill (205m) and Ros Castle (315m). The latter is the site of a hill fort, and similar evidence of prehistoric use is scattered across the area. There are also the more modern remains of coal working. There are medium-scale forestry plantations, as well as estate woodland and parkland associated with Chillingham Castle, an important tourist destination. The Kyloe Hills are a popular rock climbing venue.</p>

4.37 Development in the countryside outside settlement boundaries, and changes in farming practices and countryside management have the potential to harm the character of the landscape. The impacts of farming on soil quality could result in changes to the landscape over time. Small scale development or changes in practices in some sensitive areas can result in significant harm. Development within the Neighbourhood Area is unlikely to be on a major scale and development that does occur is likely to be delivered at a slow, incremental pace. As a result, the impact from development on the local landscape is not likely to be significant provided regard is had to relevant national policy and guidance.

Key environmental problems or issues

4.38 There are four key environmental issues relating to landscape:

- The landscape within and surrounding the Neighbourhood Area contains a number of receptors which are sensitive to changes in the landscape, and which have the potential to be harmed by inappropriate or insensitive development. These include important viewpoints to and from the Northumberland Coast AONB including those associated with Greensheen Hill;
- There are a number of forces for change which could impact on landscape character in the Neighbourhood Area and there is a need to manage the landscape in order to ensure that its character and quality are not harmed;
- In relation to Landscape Character Areas '16b Duddo and Lowick', the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (Part B) identifies a need to protect the historic integrity of estate settlements such as Ford and Etal;
- In relation to Landscape Character Area '8b Kyloe and Chillingham Hills' the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (Part B) identifies a need to carefully manage any development impacts on the north and west-facing scarp ridge which is particularly sensitive to any skyline structures because of its importance in views, especially those from Northumberland National Park.

5. The SEA Framework used to appraise the Lowick Parish Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.1 An SEA Framework is a recognised method by which the likely effects of a Plan and alternative options can be described, analysed and compared. It comprises objectives, which are statements of what is intended, specifying a desired direction of environmental change, and guiding questions. It is not the intention of the assessment to answer all of the questions identified below. The questions will act as prompts to help focus the assessment of likely significant environmental effects.
- 5.2 The SEA Framework for the Lowick Parish Neighbourhood Plan was informed by the review of plans and programmes and the analysis of the baseline position to identify environmental issues. The framework (figure 3) was subject to consultation with the consultation bodies as part of the SEA Scoping stage.

Figure 3: SEA Framework for the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan

SEA Objective	Guiding questions
1. Biodiversity, flora and fauna Protect and enhance biodiversity features.	Will the option/proposal help to: <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?
2. Climatic factors Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Area	Will the option/proposal help to: <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?

SEA Objective	Guiding questions
<p>3. Climatic factors</p> <p>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? • 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>4. Population and Human Health</p> <p>Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality housing which people can afford, 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>5. Population and Human Health</p> <p>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>6. Population and Human Health</p> <p>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?

SEA Objective	Guiding questions
7. Population and Human Health Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	Will the option/proposal help to: <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?
8. 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	Will the option/proposal help to: <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? • Support the provision of land for allotments and cemeteries?
9. Soil Manage soil and land resources in a sustainable manner.	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land? • Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land?
10. Water Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support improvements to water quality? • Minimise water consumption? • Ensure the Plan does not cause deterioration in the Water Framework Directive status of the River Coquet
11. Historic Environment Protect and enhance the character and quality of the historic environment	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the significance of the historic environment? • Conserve and/or enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment? • Respect, maintain and strengthen local character and distinctiveness?
12. Landscape Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes	Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the integrity of the landscape in the neighbourhood area? • Conserve and enhance landscape features?

Methodology

- 5.3 Based on the contents of the current Submission Draft Lowick Parish Neighbourhood Plan (April 2022), the SEA Framework has been used to appraise:
- the Neighbourhood Plan objectives;
 - reasonable alternatives where they exist;
 - the proposed policies.
- 5.4 Along with identifying effects, consideration was given to the likely level of significance of the effects. This includes an assessment of whether the effects are positive or negative and whether the degree of significance is major or minor. The SEA Regulations specify the criteria which should be taken into account. These criteria essentially relate to the nature of the effects arising from the Plan and the value and vulnerability of the receptors as follows:
- How valuable and vulnerable is the receptor that is being affected?
 - How probable, frequent, long lasting and reversible are the effects?
 - What is the magnitude and spatial scale of the effect?
 - Are the effects positive or negative?
- 5.5 The assessment involved judgement in respect of the likely effects of the Neighbourhood Plan, the significance of any effects and the nature of those effects.
- 5.6 Evaluating effects is inherently challenging. There are inevitably many limitations. There is uncertainty about predicting the implications of implementing planning policies. The ability to evaluate effects is also limited by the understanding of the baseline. Accordingly, the SEA can only be assumed to identify the broad implications for the SEA topics. In this regard the assessment takes a proportionate approach, as required by the guidance.
- 5.7 Figure 4 illustrates the scoring system applied to assist in the assessment. Given the assessment must be informed by judgement, a small group of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners was engaged to undertake the assessment. This collective approach helped to ensure a degree of consensus and sought to ensure objectivity which may not necessarily come from those familiar with or directly engaged in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Figure 4: Scoring system for the SEA of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan

Score	Description	Key
Major positive effect	The objective/policy/alternative addresses all the elements that are required to protect the environment and address the relevant sustainability issues in the neighbourhood area and would help achieve the applicable SEA objective. The objective/policy/alternative also sets out how, where and when the policy will be implemented. It will have a positive impact in relation to characteristics of the effect and the sensitivity of the receptors.	✓✓
Minor positive effect	The objective/policy/alternative addresses all the elements that are required to protect the environment and address the sustainability issues in the neighbourhood area and would help achieve the applicable SEA objective.	✓
Minor negative effect	The objective/policy/alternative conflicts with the SEA objective.	X
Major negative effect	The objective/policy/alternative conflicts with the SEA objective. It also sets out how, where and when the policy will be implemented, and this will have a negative effect in relation to characteristics of the effect and the sensitivity of the receptors.	XX
Neutral effect	The objective/policy/alternative does not have an effect or has a neutral effect on the achievement of the SEA objective.	0
Not Applicable	The objective/policy/alternative does not apply to the SEA objective	NA

6. Appraisal of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan and reasonable alternatives on the environment

- 6.1 The key purpose of this Environmental Report is to present information and an assessment of the effects the implementation of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan, and any reasonable alternative options considered, may have on the environment. This chapter presents the findings of the assessment in relation to the Draft Submission version (April 2022) of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan.

Appraising the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

- 6.2 It is important that the objectives of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan are compatible with and contribute towards the achievement of the SEA objectives. The Plan objectives, which are set out at paragraph 3.10 above, have therefore been assessed using the SEA Framework. The conclusions of that assessment are set out in figure 5. The assessment concludes that the Neighbourhood Plan objectives are judged as having a largely neutral or minor positive effect when assessed against the SEA objectives. No changes are required to any of the Plan objectives to meet the SEA objectives.

Appraising the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan Reasonable Alternatives

- 6.3 The SEA needs to consider and compare any reasonable alternatives that could deliver the Plan's objectives as the Plan evolves, including the preferred approach, and assess these against the baseline environmental characteristics of the area.
- 6.4 Reasonable alternatives are defined in Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as '*the different realistic options considered in developing the policies in the plan*'. They need to be sufficiently distinct so that meaningful comparisons can be made. However, PPG acknowledges that there may be limited alternatives that can realistically be considered in the context of the strategic policies for the neighbourhood area. In some instances, the only reasonable alternative would be a 'no policy' alternative, which is appraised in the baseline analysis. This is provided in Chapter 4 of this Report.

Figure 5: Assessment of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan Objectives against the SEA Objectives

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN OBJECTIVES	Objective 1: Community Facilities	Objective 2: Natural Environment	Objective 3: Accessibility	Objective 4: Housing	Objective 5: The Local Economy	Objective 6: Heritage, Character & Design
SEA OBJECTIVES						
1. <i>Protect and enhance biodiversity features</i>	0	✓	0	0	0	0
2. <i>Reduce the contribution to climate change</i>	0	0	✓	0	0	0
3. <i>Support resilience to the potential effects of climate change</i>	0	0	✓	0	0	0
4. <i>Provide an appropriate mix of good quality affordable housing</i>	0	0	0	✓	0	✓
5. <i>Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents to work locally</i>	0	0	✓	0	✓	0
6. <i>Improve the health and wellbeing of residents</i>	✓	0	✓	0	✓	0
7. <i>Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.</i>	0	0	✓	✓	0	0
8. <i>Cater for residents' needs, and improve access to local, high-quality community facilities</i>	✓	0	✓	0	✓	0
9. <i>Manage soil and land resources in a sustainable manner</i>	0	✓	0	0	0	0
10. <i>Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0
11. <i>Protect and enhance the character and quality of the historic environment</i>	0	0	0	0	0	✓
12. <i>Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes</i>	0	✓	0	0	0	✓

Settlement Boundaries

- 6.5 The Plan defines a settlement boundary for Lowick Village. This is an appropriate approach to the management of development provided it recognises the need to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which is the main purpose of the planning system in England. The definition of settlement boundaries must be associated with meeting at least the recognised needs for new housing, and other development, in an area.
- 6.6 The alternative approach to defining settlement boundaries (allied with planning to accommodate sufficient development) is the use of criteria based policies. These set out in general terms the criteria to be applied in considering whether development can be considered sustainable and appropriate. This is often regarded as a less prescriptive approach to managing development, but creates greater uncertainty since the application of such policies relies largely on planning judgement rather than reference to described and discernible features defined on policy maps.

Option 1: No settlement boundary

- 6.7 Lowick did not have a settlement boundary identified in the now superseded Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Local Plan (April 1999). The Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022), under Policy STP1, defines settlement boundaries for all Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages (except in the Green Belt where inset boundaries are defined) unless local communities, through the neighbourhood planning process are defining boundaries. Lowick Parish Council confirmed their intention to create a settlement boundary through a neighbourhood plan. Accordingly, the County Council have not included a settlement boundary for Lowick Village in the adopted Northumberland Local Plan. It is therefore appropriate that the Neighbourhood Plan addresses this matter in order that it complies with strategic policy.
- 6.8 The Parish Council consider the delineation of a settlement boundary for Lowick Village to be the best mechanism to achieve some of the main elements of the vision and objectives of the neighbourhood plan, particularly those related to landscape protection and encouraging the provision of housing in the most sustainable locations in the village.
- 6.9 Specifically, the Parish Council consider the benefits of establishing a settlement boundary to be to:
- Ensure development is directed to the most suitable locations in the village, both in terms of accessibility to and support of existing services and transport, and in terms of landscape and the historic environment.
 - Protect the special character of the village and the landscape around it and maintain the character and distinctiveness of Lowick.

- Provide greater certainty to communities, landowners and developers over where certain types of development could be acceptable in principle, and where.
- Support the plan led approach to development, giving a local context to the strategic intention of providing sufficient housing to meet the needs of the Parish.

6.10 The Objectives proposed for the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly Objective 2, envisage the Plan providing some general protection of the countryside and valued landscapes within the Parish. The alternative of preparing criteria based policies would fail to accord with the stated intentions of the Objectives for the Plan. Not having a settlement boundary is therefore not a reasonable alternative within the context of the Plan's Objectives.

Option 2: Settlement boundary

6.11 The way in which the settlement boundary is defined must have regard to the strategic policies in the Development Plan, and to the aspirations of the local community in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, given that the final outcome on support for the Plan is determined through a local referendum. The Parish Council's justification for the use of a settlement boundary and their methodology for the definition of the boundary are discussed and described in detail in the topic papers supporting the neighbourhood plan.

6.12 In considering where to draw the settlement boundaries for Lowick, the Parish Council took into account:

- the Northumberland Local Plan housing requirement for the Parish;
- recent planning permissions, and whether these have been implemented; and
- local features on the ground that provide recognisable boundaries.

6.13 Policy HOU3 of the Northumberland Local Plan identifies a minimum requirement for 25 additional dwellings in Lowick Parish during the Local Plan period (2016-2036). Eight net additional homes have been completed in Lowick Parish since 2016 and there are outstanding commitments for another 41 dwellings (March 2021 – full details in Appendix D). This is significantly more than the minimum number of net additional dwellings required for the area during the plan period. While some permissions may lapse over time, analysis of delivery rates by the County Council indicate that there is a reasonably high degree of confidence that the majority of permitted housing applications will come forward and be delivered. Accordingly, the Northumberland Local Plan does not propose any further allocation of land for housing development in the Lowick Neighbourhood Area.

6.14 Having regard to information provided by the County Council regarding housing land supply in the Neighbourhood Area, the Parish Council determined it would not be

necessary to draw an extensive settlement boundary to accommodate further housing development, or to allocate any sites for housing development through the Neighbourhood Plan. The result is a settlement boundary for Lowick that is relatively tightly drawn around existing built development, including those sites with planning permission for housing development, while allowing for infill development, and for development beyond the settlement boundary by exception in accordance with national policy and guidance.

- 6.15 Having regard to there being no strategic need to plan to accommodate additional housing development in the Parish during the plan period beyond that already committed, the intentions of the objectives established in the Neighbourhood Plan, and the availability of land through windfall sites within Lowick, it is evident that there are **no genuine reasonable alternatives** in relation to establishing a settlement boundary other than that defined in the Neighbourhood Plan. Accordingly, no further detailed assessment is required through the SEA process on this matter.

Locally Important Green Spaces

- 6.16 Objective 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan intends that highly valued community facilities will be protected. This is taken to include areas of Local Green Space. Accordingly, the alternative approach of not seeking to identify and protect important and highly valued community facilities is not a genuine reasonable alternative for assessment through the SEA process.
- 6.17 In developing the Neighbourhood Plan a number of important green spaces were identified through community engagement. By using criteria defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) the Steering Group assessed the suitability of the locally important sites and decided to allocate five Local Green Spaces as the preferred approach in the Plan. Details of the assessment of each site and the extent to which they meet the established criteria for designation is set out in the 'Topic Paper 3: Local Green Spaces – Lowick Neighbourhood Plan'. No other sites were considered to be of sufficient value to merit this level of protection.
- 6.18 The approach employed by the Parish Council has resulted in protection being afforded through proposed planning policies to areas identified by the community as having value and importance to them. Whilst designation of these additional sites as Local Green Space could contribute to meeting several SEA objectives and the Vision and Objectives set for the Neighbourhood Plan, this is a matter for the Parish Council, and they could not be compelled to designate land through the outcome of the SEA process. No further candidate sites were identified by the Steering Group or by the local community. The potential alternative sites were considered by the Steering Group and their conclusion was not to designate those sites. No further assessment of reasonable alternatives is necessary through the SEA process.

Appraising the Lowick Parish Neighbourhood Plan Policies

- 6.19 The appraisal has been structured using the SEA Framework. For each SEA Objective, the likely significant effects of the Neighbourhood Plan have been predicted and evaluated where possible. Account has been taken of the criteria presented within Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, including the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects, as far as this is possible.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

SEA Objective 1: Protect and enhance biodiversity features

- 6.20 The Lowick Neighbourhood Plan sets out a number of provisions to limit the impact of development on features and areas of biodiversity interest, and to support enhancements to ecological networks within the Neighbourhood Area.
- 6.21 However, the Habitats Regulations Assessment has concluded that the Plan is likely to have significant effects on European Sites. In order to mitigate these effects, two recommendations are made, which require additional policies. The first concerns the potential impact of recreational disturbance on coastal sites. The second concerns impacts from development on water quality. These recommendations are described in full at the end of this section.
- 6.22 Policy L5 provides protection to species and habitats and supports the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity in the neighbourhood area. This is an overarching policy which should be read alongside other specifically development-related policies.
- 6.23 Policy L2 designates 5 sites within the neighbourhood area as Local Green Space. The policy would protect any biodiversity features apparent in the green spaces by strictly controlling development in line with national Green Belt policy. Overall, the policy would have a positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.24 Policy L3 identifies a settlement boundary for Lowick. Settlement boundaries help to ensure development is directed to the most suitable and sustainable locations within existing built-up areas. This approach seeks to limit development in the countryside which supports the intention of SEA Objective 1. Overall, the policy would have a positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.25 Policy L4 supports new housing development subject to criteria including where a net gain in biodiversity is achieved. Overall, the policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.26 Policy L6 addresses the potential impact of recreational disturbance on coastal sites by requiring developers of new residential and tourism units to pay a contribution to

the Coastal Mitigation Service or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness. In this way, the policy would have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective by supporting continued improvements to the status of nearby European designated sites of significance.

- 6.27 Policy L7 seeks to address the effects of development on water quality in the Lindisfarne SPA. In this way, the policy supports improvements in the status of a European designated site in the neighbourhood area and would have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.28 Implementation of the Plan is likely to have a largely neutral or minor positive effect on SEA Objective 1. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 1.

Climatic Factors

SEA Objective 2: Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by activities within the Neighbourhood Area

SEA Objective 3: Support the resilience of the Neighbourhood Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding

- 6.29 Policy L1 seeks to protect local facilities such as the pubs, the local shop and the village hall. The policy also supports the provision of new community facilities in the village and wider area and specifically the provision of a new clubhouse on the football field. This approach would help to reduce the need to travel to access facilities and would have a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 2.
- 6.30 Policy L2 designates areas of Local Green Space that could help to reduce surface water run-off. In this way, the policy would have a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 3.
- 6.31 Policy 3 (implicitly) supports development within the settlement boundary of Lowick. This permissive approach within the settlement boundary would help to reduce the number of journeys made and also reduce the need to travel to access any new business. Overall, this approach would support SEA Objective 2. In addition, this settlement is not in an area at higher risk of flooding, fluvial or surface, associated with climate change. Development is supported only by exception outside the settlement boundary, in accordance with national planning policies. The scale of development supported through the Plan would be such that significant negative impacts on flood risk should not occur. In this way, this Policy would support SEA Objective 3.

- 6.32 Policy L4 supports proposals for housing development subject to certain provisions. Criterion e) requires carbon reduction and low carbon building measures to be incorporated in new housing. This approach would support SEA Objective 2. The policy is not considered to have an effect on SEA Objective 3.
- 6.33 Policy L5 supports the preservation and creation of a range of natural features including hedgerows, roadside verges and woodlands. This would contribute to the improvement of green infrastructure networks in the neighbourhood area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change, it would increase the resilience of biodiversity to the effects of climate change, and could help to reduce surface water run-off associated with more intense rainfall episodes. This policy would have a positive effect on SEA objective 3.
- 6.34 Policy L6 addresses the potential impact of recreational disturbance on coastal sites by requiring developers of new residential and tourism units to pay a contribution to the Coastal Mitigation Service or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness. In this way, the policy would have a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 3 by supporting the resilience of biodiversity to the effects of climate change.
- 6.35 Policy L8 requires all new development to incorporate safe pedestrian and cycle access. This would promote the use of sustainable modes of transport and would have a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 2.
- 6.36 Policy L9 supports new and improved cycle ways in the neighbourhood area. It also identifies three specific walking routes that will be supported by the Plan. This would promote the use of sustainable modes of transport and would have a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 2.
- 6.37 Policy L10 supports proposals which secure the expansion of electronic communication networks and high-speed broadband along with improvements to connectivity, which may allow more people to work from home, which could reduce the need to travel for work purposes. In this way, the policy would support SEA Objective 2.
- 6.38 Policy L11 supports proposals for home working in the neighbourhood area and supports the expansion of existing businesses and services within the village. This would help to reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel for work purposes. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 2. The policy also supports the provision of local employment opportunities in the neighbourhood area where they accord with other policies in the plan. The scale of development supported through the Plan would be such that major negative impacts on flood risk should not occur. In this way, this Policy would have a neutral effect on SEA Objective 3.

- 6.39 Policy L12 supports the expansion of rural enterprises and improvements to existing or provision of new tourist facilities and tourist accommodation. The scale of development supported through this policy would be unlikely to result in a significant effect on SEA Objectives 2 or 3. The Parish lies in an area at low risk of flooding from river or surface water, associated with climate change. The scale of development supported through the Plan would be such that major negative impacts on flood risk should not occur. In this way, this Policy would have a neutral effect on SEA Objective 3.
- 6.40 Policy L15 supports the conversion of redundant buildings anywhere in the neighbourhood area, which could increase the number of journeys made including by car, which is likely to have a less than significant negative effect on SEA Objective 2. Overall, the neighbourhood area lies in a low flood risk zone. The scale of development supported through the Plan would be such that major negative impacts on flood risk should not occur. In this way, this Policy would have a neutral effect on SEA Objective 3.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.41 Implementation of the Plan is likely to have a largely neutral or minor positive effect in relation to the intentions of SEA Objectives 2 and 3. No changes are required to meet SEA Objectives 2 and 3.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 4: Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality housing which people can afford, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.

- 6.42 Policy L3 proposes a settlement boundary for Lowick Village. The Policy helps to provide housing in sustainable locations by supporting new housing within the settlement. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 4.
- 6.43 Policy L4 supports new housing development which meet the standards set out in the Building for Life 12. In this way, the policy supports the provision of better housing. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.44 Policy L8 supports the integration of new development with safe pedestrian access, highway access and cycle access. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 4.
- 6.45 Policy L11 supports home working. Being more able to work from home helps provide flexible homes that meet people's needs. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 4.

- 6.46 Policy L14 requires new development to make a positive contribution to the significance of Lowick's historic core and the character of this area and its setting. The policy sets protective and enhancement criteria that must be considered. The policy would support enhancements to the current housing stock within the historic core and does not support development of poor design. The policy has a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.
- 6.47 Policy L15 supports the conversion of redundant buildings of substantial construction in the neighbourhood area. This would presumably include conversion from non-residential to residential use and therefore potentially, would support housing in unsustainable locations. Although the NPPF discourages isolated housing in the countryside it does encourage rural housing development that would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance their immediate setting. The scale of housing supported through this policy would be unlikely to result in a significant effect on the SEA Objective.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.48 Implementation of the Plan is likely to have a largely neutral or minor positive effect in relation to the intentions of SEA Objective 4. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 4.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 5: Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally

- 6.49 Policy L1 seeks to protect facilities that are of value to the local community. This includes the shop, two pubs and the local garage. The policy would contribute to the achievement of the SEA objective.
- 6.50 Policy L10 supports the expansion of electronic communication networks, highspeed broadband and improvements to connectivity. The policy helps to support a vibrant, mixed economy and enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally. The policy has a positive effect on SEA Objective 5.
- 6.51 Policy L11 supports proposals for home working, the expansion of businesses in the village and the creation of local employment opportunities in the area. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 5
- 6.52 Policy L12 supports the creation and enhancement of tourist facilities including access to Barmoor Castle. The policy helps support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents of the neighbourhood area to work locally. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 5

- 6.53 Policy L15 supports the conversion of redundant buildings in the neighbourhood area and allows opportunities for new business, rural diversification and local employment opportunities through a permissive policy supporting such conversions. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 5.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.54 Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are not considered to have a significant effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 5. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 5.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 6: Improve the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area

- 6.55 Policy L1 seeks to protect identified community and recreational facilities which are of value to the neighbourhood. Access to good community facilities helps increase the health and wellbeing of residents within the neighbourhood area. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 6.
- 6.56 Policy L2 promotes access to open areas for play and recreation and, in designating Lowick Common, helps toward improving access to the countryside for recreational use. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 6.
- 6.57 Policy L4 supports new housing development subject to a number of criteria. Criterion a) requires suitable and safe access to be provided for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. This helps toward promoting healthier modes of travel. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 6.
- 6.58 Policy L8 aims to ensure all new development is well integrated into the village by incorporating safe pedestrian access, highway access and cycle access. The policy helps promote the use of healthier modes of travel. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 6.
- 6.59 Policy L9 supports more opportunities for cycling and walking in the neighbourhood area. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 6.
- 6.60 Policy L12 supports farm diversification, new tourist proposals and better access to Barmoor Castle Country Park. This would help towards improving access to the countryside for recreational use. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 6.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.61 Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are not considered to have a significant effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 6. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 6.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 7: Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel

- 6.62 The approach adopted in the Neighbourhood Plan is to support development within the settlement boundary, and beyond this boundary only by exception in accordance with national planning policy (Policy L3). This approach reinforces the role of Lowick Village as the focus for new homes and other development being close to local services. This supports SEA Objective 7 in that it can reduce the need to travel. However, it must be recognised that the area is rural in nature and there will be continued reliance on services, facilities and employment outside the Neighbourhood Area and many of the journeys taken to access those will be by private car. There is scope for limited modal shift to sustainable transport due to the presence of a local bus service to Berwick in the north and Wooler in the south.
- 6.63 Policy L1 supports the retention of important local facilities in the village helping reduce the need to travel through more sustainable patterns of land use and development. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 7.
- 6.64 Policy L4 supports new housing development subject to a number of criteria. Criterion a) requires suitable and safe access to be provided for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. This helps toward promoting more sustainable modes of travel. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 7.
- 6.65 Policy L8 states all new development must be well integrated into the village by incorporating safe pedestrian access, highway access and cycle access. This requirement helps promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 7.
- 6.66 Policy L9 supports the creation of cycle ways and footpaths in the village and specifically supports these kinds of schemes in specific parts of the neighbourhood area. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 7.
- 6.67 Policy L10 supports better connectivity through improvements to and provision of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure. Support for better connectivity could help facilitate more people to work from home and reduce the need to travel. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 7.

- 6.68 Policy L11 supports proposals for home working and proposals to expand existing business and services within the village. In this way, the Policy would reduce the need to travel through sustainable patterns of land use and development. Support for new local employment opportunities anywhere in the neighbourhood area could make it more difficult to access these opportunities using sustainable modes of transport but the effect of this would not be significant enough to require mitigation to the policy.
- 6.69 Policy L12 supports proposals for new tourist facilities. New tourist facilities and tourist accommodation will be supported in the Neighbourhood Area where they are well-related to existing infrastructure and development. The policy has a neutral effect on SEA Objective 7.
- 6.70 Policy L15 supports the conversion of redundant buildings anywhere in the neighbourhood area, which could increase the number of journeys made including by car. However, the likely scale of development would have a less than significant effect on SEA Objective 2.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.71 Implementation of the Plan is likely to have a largely neutral or minor positive effect in relation to the achievement of SEA Objective 7. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 7.

Population and Human Health

SEA Objective 8: 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

- 6.72 Policy L1 seeks to protect community facilities. The policy helps cater for existing and future residents' needs, and helps improve access to local, community services and facilities. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 8.
- 6.73 Policy L2 designates The Common, Holburn Play Park and Holburn Village Green as local green spaces. These spaces can continue to be used by a range of different communities and helps encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities on these spaces. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 8.
- 6.74 Policy L4 supports new housing development subject to a number of criteria. Criterion d) requires there to be no significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents. The policy also requires that new housing development meets the standards set out in the Building for Life 12. Houses that are better designed and

more energy efficient reduces the reliance on fossil fuels and also may help toward reducing fuel poverty. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 8.

- 6.75 Policy L8 seeks to ensure that development is well integrated into the village by incorporating safe pedestrian access, highway access and cycle access. This will help improve social cohesion and maintain an existing quality of life for residents. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 8.
- 6.76 Policy L9 supports the creation of cycling and walking opportunities in the plan area. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 8.
- 6.77 Policy L11 supports home working, the expansion of local business and new employment opportunities in the plan area. The policy helps toward the neighbourhood becoming more locally self-sufficient in terms of services and employment in the future. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 8.
- 6.78 Policy L12 supports rural diversification opportunities, new tourism facilities and improved access to Barmoor Castle with associated camping and caravanning. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 8.
- 6.79 Policy L14 seeks to protect and enhance the qualities of the built environment that are historically special in this area. The policy has a neutral effect on SEA Objective 8

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.80 Implementation of the Plan is likely to have a largely neutral or minor positive effect on SEA Objective 8. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 8.

Soil

SEA Objective 9: Manage soil and land resources in a sustainable manner

- 6.81 The Lowick Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development and therefore does not actively promote new development on previously developed land.
- 6.82 Policy L3 defines a settlement boundary for Lowick. This boundary has been drawn tightly in recognition of the scale of proposed housing required to meet needs in the Parish as set out in the Northumberland Local Plan and the need to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The settlement boundary should have a positive effect on the efficient use of land by avoiding sprawl into the countryside. It should also contribute positively to the avoidance of the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land in the Neighbourhood Area. This is assessed as having an overall positive environmental effect since it encourages the management of land resources in a sustainable manner.

- 6.83 Policy L11 supports proposals which provide local employment opportunities in the neighbourhood area. Whilst this may have minor negative impacts on soil, the scale of such development is likely to be limited and consistent with the recognised national approach to the management of sustainable development. Overall, the impact of implementing Policy L9 on this SEA Objective is assessed as being neutral.
- 6.84 Policy L12 supports tourism development. Whilst this may have minor negative impacts on soil, the scale of such development is likely to be limited and consistent with the recognised national approach to the management of sustainable development. Overall, the impact of implementing Policy L10 on this SEA Objective is assessed as being neutral.
- 6.85 Policy L15 supports the conversion of redundant buildings of substantial construction anywhere in the neighbourhood area. This would help to promote the use of previously developed land though the scale of such development is likely to be limited. Overall, the impact of implementing Policy L15 on this SEA Objective is assessed as being neutral.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.86 Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are not considered to have a significant effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 9. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 9.

Water

SEA Objective 10: Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.

- 6.87 The requirements of the Water Framework Directive are likely to lead to continued improvements to water quality in watercourses in the wider area. Water quality could also be affected by pollution incidents in the area, the presence of non-native species and physical modifications to water bodies. It is not expected that climate change would affect the ability to supply water in the Kielder Water Resource zone.
- 6.88 Policy L7 seeks to address the effects of development on water quality in the Lindisfarne SPA / Ramsar site. In this way, the policy supports improvements to water quality in the neighbourhood area and would have a minor positive effect on the SEA objective.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.89 The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to not have a significant effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 10. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 10.

Historic Environment

SEA Objective 11: Protect and enhance the character and quality of the historic environment

- 6.90 Policy L1 seeks to protect facilities that are of value to the community, including those that are also identified as non-designated heritage assets. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 11.
- 6.91 Policy L2 designates Lowick War Memorial and Lowick Church Yard as local green spaces. Protecting these areas helps toward respecting, maintaining and strengthening local character and distinctiveness and supporting the significance of these areas and for their historic value. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 11.
- 6.92 Policy L4 supports new housing development subject to a number of criteria including that the impact of the scheme on Lowick's Historic Core and on any designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings has been fully assessed and mitigated. This would help to conserve heritage assets and would have a positive effect on the SEA Objective.
- 6.93 Policy L9 supports the creation of new walking routes to and between local heritage sites and routes linking the pilgrimage routes of St. Cuthbert's Way and St. Oswald's Way with footpaths in the Parish. The policy helps toward enhancing heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 11.
- 6.94 Policy L12, Rural Enterprise and Tourism directly supports proposals to improve public access to Barmoor Castle and any proposals which result in the restoration of the Grade II* listed building. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA objective 11.
- 6.95 Policy L13 requires any new development to fully explore the impact of the scheme on any designated and non-designated heritage assets. This helps toward supporting the significance of the historic environment and helps to conserve or enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 11.

- 6.96 Policy L14 requires that development makes a positive contribution to the significance of the historic character of Lowick's historic core. Proposals should have regard to a number of criteria that together would help to conserve and/or enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment. The policy would have a positive effect on SEA Objective 11.
- 6.97 Policy L15 supports the conversion of redundant buildings of substantial construction in the neighbourhood area. The policy requires special regard to be had to the historic significance of any redundant buildings which are non-designated heritage assets. The information on the significance or setting of any non-designated heritage assets may need to be updated after referring to Advice Note 11 from Historic England. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 11.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.98 Implementation of the Plan is likely to have a largely positive or neutral effect on SEA Objective 11. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 11.

Landscape

SEA Objective 12: Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes

- 6.99 Policy L2 designates five local green spaces. The policy helps support the protection and enhancement of the character and quality of the landscape. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 12.
- 6.100 Policy L3 defines a settlement boundary for Lowick. This boundary has been drawn tightly in recognition of the scale of proposed housing required to meet needs in the Parish as set out in the Northumberland Local Plan and the need to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The settlement boundary should have a positive effect on landscape by avoiding sprawl into the countryside. The policy achieves a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 12.
- 6.101 Policy L4 requires high quality landscaping to be incorporated as part of any housing development within the settlement boundary and on rural exception sites. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 12.
- 6.102 Policy L5 requires new development to preserve and enhance a wide range of ecological habitats and features which helps protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape. The policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 12.
- 6.103 Policy L10 supports the expansion of electronic communication networks and high-speed broadband along with improvements to connectivity. It requires any

telecommunications development to be sited and designed to minimise the impacts on the local landscape. The policy has a neutral effect on SEA Objective 12.

- 6.104 Policy L12 supports proposals to improve public access to Barmoor Castle along with improvements to the camping and caravanning facilities providing any landscape and heritage impacts can be adequately mitigated. The policy has a neutral effect on SEA Objective 12.
- 6.105 Policy L14 requires development proposals within or affecting the historic core of Lowick to make a positive contribution to the significance of the historic character of this area and/or its setting. This would include landscaping to complement the character of the Historic Core of Lowick. The policy helps toward supporting the integrity of this landscape in the neighbourhood area and conserving and enhancing any landscape features. Overall, the policy has a minor positive effect on SEA Objective 12.
- 6.106 Policy L15 supports the conversion of redundant buildings of substantial construction anywhere in the neighbourhood area. Whilst this may have minor negative impacts on landscape, the scale of such development is likely to be limited and consistent with the recognised national approach to the management of sustainable development. Overall, the impact of implementing Policy L15 on this SEA Objective is assessed as being neutral.

Assessment Conclusions

- 6.107 The Neighbourhood Plan policies are considered to not have a significant effect on the achievement of SEA Objective 12. No changes are required to meet SEA Objective 12.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Conclusions

- 6.108 The summary of the assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies against SEA Objectives is set out in figure 6. The assessment has demonstrated that overall, the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan is likely to lead to slightly positive or neutral environmental effects. Whilst the area hosts a number of environmental designations reflecting its environmental value and sensitivity, the Neighbourhood Plan's vision, objectives and policies have avoided any significant environmental impacts and the policies will, to a limited degree, serve to mitigate some of the potential adverse effects.

Figure 6: Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies against the SEA Objectives

POLICIES	L1 Community and Recreational Facilities	L2 Local Green Space	L3 Lowick Settlement Boundary	L4 Design in new Housing	L5 Biodiversity and Development	L6 Coastal Mitigation	L7 Water Quality and nutrient neutrality	L8 Accessibility	L9 Cycleways and Footpaths	L10 Broadband and Telecomms	L11 Home Working and Local Employment	L12 Rural Enterprise and Tourism	L13 Non-designated Heritage Assets	L14 Lowick Village Core	L15 Conversion of Buildings
SEA OBJECTIVES															
1. Protect and enhance biodiversity features	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2. Reduce the contribution to climate change	✓	NA	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	0	NA	NA	0
3. Support resilience to climate change	NA	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0	NA	NA	0
4. Provide an appropriate mix of good quality affordable housing	NA	NA	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA	✓	0
5. Support a vibrant, mixed economy which enables residents to work locally	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓	NA	NA	✓
6. Improve the health and wellbeing of residents	✓	✓	NA	✓	NA	NA	NA	✓	✓	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA	NA
7. Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.	✓	NA	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓	0	0	NA	NA	0
8. Cater for residents' needs, and improve access to local community facilities	✓	✓	NA	✓	NA	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	0	NA
9. Manage soil and land resources sustainably	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	0	NA	NA	0
10. Use and manage water resources sustainably	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11. Protect and enhance the historic environment	✓	✓	NA	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	✓	NA	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓
12. Protect and enhance the landscapes	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓	NA	NA	NA	NA	0	NA	✓	NA	✓	0

7. Monitoring and Next Steps

Monitoring

- 7.1 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. For identified significant effects consideration should be given to identifying:
- the criteria or thresholds for remedial action;
 - the type of remedial actions that could be taken, for example reviewing the relevant policy or implementing additional mitigation measures; and
 - the responsibility for taking the action.

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.

Next Steps

- 7.2 This Environmental Report will be subject to consultation. Subject to any necessary amendments the report will be finalised.
- 7.3 There are a number of subsequent stages before the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan can come into force, as described in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. In summary, the Neighbourhood Plan will be finalised and submitted to Northumberland County Council, alongside the SEA Environmental Report. The County Council will consider whether the Plan is suitable to progress to Independent Examination in terms of meeting legal requirements.
- 7.4 If the Plan is successful at Independent Examination, the Plan will progress to Referendum. If more than 50% of voters vote in favour of the Plan, it will then be for Northumberland County Council to seek to 'make' the Plan, subject to meeting EU obligations. Once made, the Plan will become part of the statutory development plan for the Parish of Lowick and will be used to make decisions on planning applications in that area.

Appendix A: Review of plans and programmes

The following provides a review of plans and programmes, which is derived from the Sustainability Appraisal of the Northumberland Local Plan. It should be noted that in a number of instances the relevance of the plan or programme relates to the Local Plan and therefore is only indirectly related to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
National Plans and Programmes		
National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2021)		
<p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012 and most recently updated in July 2021.</p> <p>The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans and is a material consideration in planning decisions. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a 'golden thread' running through both plan making and decision taking. Local Planning Authorities should plan positively to seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.</p>	No targets or indicators	<p>The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the neighbourhood plan. The SEA framework should reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with clear policies that will guide development locally.</p>
National Planning Practice Guidance		
<p>National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is designed to support the NPPF. It reflects the objectives of the NPPF which are not repeated here.</p>	No targets or indicators	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan and SEA framework should reflect the principles of the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).</p> <p>PPG contains specific guidance on both Neighbourhood Planning and the Strategic Environmental Assessment of Neighbourhood Plans. Therefore, it is essential that both the SEA and the Plan itself are prepared within the context of PPG.</p>

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (Historic England Advice Note 8)		
The purpose of this advice note is to support those involved in assessing the effects of certain plans on the historic environment. It offers advice on heritage considerations during the SEA process.	<p>Identifying unforeseen adverse effects of implementing the plan and enabling appropriate remedial action to be taken.</p> <p>Testing the accuracy of predictions made in the appraisal and improving future practice.</p> <p>Determining if the plan is contributing to the achievement of the desired objectives and targets for the historic environment.</p> <p>Checking the delivery and performance of mitigation measures.</p>	The SEA framework should include objectives relating to conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.
Regional Plans and Programmes		
Northumbria river basin district, River basin management plan, 2015		
<p>The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment.</p> <p>The environmental objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to prevent deterioration of the status of surface waters and groundwater • to achieve objectives and standards for protected areas • to aim to achieve good status for all water bodies or, for heavily modified water bodies • and artificial water bodies, good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status • to reverse any significant and sustained upward trends in pollutant concentrations in groundwater • the cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of priority hazardous substances into surface waters • progressively reduce the pollution of groundwater and prevent or limit the entry of pollutants 	Maintain and enhance water quality in the neighbourhood area.	The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to water quality. The SEA baseline should include information on water quality and how it should be managed in order to ascertain the likely effects on this.

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
Local Plans and Programmes		
Northumberland Local Plan (March 2022)		
<p>The Northumberland Local Plan has recently been adopted. The Plan covers the whole of Northumberland and replaces all of the previous District and County Council Local Plan and Core Strategy documents.</p> <p>The Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets the strategic planning policies of the Council, taking account of key factors like population trends, economic growth, climate change, resources and environmental character; • Sets the general scale and distribution of new development which is required to meet Northumberland's needs to 2036; • Provides the planning principles, including detailed 'development management' policies to guide decisions on planning applications; • Shows in detail where new homes, workplaces and facilities will be located through allocations of land; and • Shows key environmental designations and include site specific proposals for the conservation and enhancement of historic and natural assets. 	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.</p>	<p>Planning law states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Therefore, the policies within the Northumberland Local Plan, together with those in neighbourhood plans, will be the starting point for the assessment of all planning applications. The Local Plan is a relevant consideration and its evidence base should be used to help inform the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.</p>
Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service Strategy Document (Northumberland County Council, 2018)		
<p>This strategy document aims to mitigate the effects of development, and pressure resulting from development, on the Northumberland Coast. It requires mitigation measures to be implemented within designated sites as well as covering monitoring, reporting and governance arrangements.</p>	<p>Relevant policies should require mitigation measures, including CMS.</p>	<p>The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to the protection of important coastal ecological areas and habitats.</p>

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
NCC Climate Commitment Action Plan 2021-23		
<p>The Action Plan sets out targets for reducing carbon emissions to achieve net zero for the County by 2030; the Council's own operational emissions will be halved by 2025 to achieve net zero emissions by 2030.</p> <p>Progress will be measured against 35 measures within the fields of agriculture and land use, energy, industry and commercial, transport, domestic and waste with 4 levels of ambition for each measure.</p> <p>The measures will encompass Scope 1 (all direct emissions owned or controlled by the Council), Scope 2 (all indirect emissions), and Scope 3 (other indirect emissions from business travel).</p>	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan should incorporate policies to support sustainable development and the reduction in carbon emissions in the County.</p>	<p>The SEA framework should include objectives / guiding questions that relate to a reduction in carbon emissions.</p>
Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (Northumberland County Council, 2008)		
<p>The Biodiversity Action Plan outlines several challenges facing the natural environment of Northumberland:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational pressure; • Development; • Habitat fragmentation; • Nutrient enrichment; • Unsuitable management; • Sterilisation of the 'wild' through over tidiness; • Invasive species; • Climate change; • Vandalism. <p>The Biodiversity Action Plan also enforces the need to protect Northumberland's important designated natural assets.</p>	<p>Maintain and even enhance the County's natural assets to ensure they can be enjoyed by residents and tourists.</p>	<p>The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to protecting the natural environment and which relate back to the SEA Regulations.</p>

Key Objectives relevant to Neighbourhood Plan	Relevant indicators	How the SEA Framework should incorporate the document's requirements
Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (Northumberland County Council, 2010)		
<p>The Landscape Character Assessment looks at the character of the landscape, how nature has influenced it, what it has looked like historically and what things make it distinctive. The study is divided into two parts.</p> <p>Part A - Landscape Classification</p> <p>Part A provides an understanding of the 44 different character types and the 108 landscape character areas. The map and associated descriptions provide a background to understanding landscape and its local distinctiveness, and provide a baseline against which change can be assessed.</p> <p>Part B - The Changing Landscape</p> <p>Part B sets out principles for each landscape character type. The principles seek to maintain and enhance the properties most valued in the landscape.</p>	Maintain and enhance the properties most valued in the landscape.	The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to landscape and local distinctiveness. The SEA baseline should include information on landscape character and how landscapes in each neighbourhood area should be managed in order to ascertain the likely effects on these.
NCC Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2010		
<p>The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment provides essential information on flood risk, taking climate change into account, which allows the local planning authority to understand the risk across its area so that the Sequential Test can be properly applied.</p> <p>The assessment includes the catchments of the Rivers North, South and Main Tyne, and the Coquet, Wansbeck, Blyth, Rede, Tweed and Till plus coastal frontage settlements that fall within the flood zone of the North Sea.</p> <p>6 main sources of flood risk are identified: fluvial, tidal, sewer, surface water, groundwater and flooding from artificial sources.</p>	Maintain and enhance the properties most valued in the landscape.	The SEA framework should include objectives/guiding questions that relate to flood risk. The SEA baseline should include information on existing flood risk and how it should be managed in order to ascertain the likely effects on this.

Appendix B: Statutory Consultees and their responses to the SEA Scoping Report



Mr Chris Anderson
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: PL00704332

30 June 2020

Dear Mr Anderson

**Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004: Regulation 9
Lowick Neighbourhood Plan: SEA Scoping Report, June 2020**

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) scoping report. As the public body that advises on England's historic environment, we are pleased to offer our comments.

We agree that historic environment issues should be scoped in to the SEA when it is completed alongside the emerging neighbourhood plan.

The scoping report goes a long way to setting out the scope and level of assessment which will follow. I provide some additional advice below with reference to *Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment* (Historic England Advice Note 8, December 2016), <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>.

- Under *Context* (p69), ahead of the NPPF references, it would be worth mentioning the principal duties under the legislation governing the types of heritage asset in the plan area: the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
- Under *Summary of current baseline* (p70), I advise expanding a little further on the significance (including that derived from setting) and sensitivity of the assets identified. This only need be proportionate but our advice note does explain that a simple list of assets is unlikely in itself to be sufficient information on which to judge the likely environmental impacts of the plan's policies. Advice on this is in *Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment* (Historic England Advice Note 11, October 2018), <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/>. For the listed building and scheduled monuments, the report could give a summary of their nature, significance and sensitivity to change, for example by considering their written list entries (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>) although this will not be the only source of information. This section should also give



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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.



Historic England

information on the likely scope of the non-designated heritage assets (for example by reference to the county Historic Environment Record) including a summary of their significance and sensitivity.

- Under *Triggers...* (p71), you are right to identify heritage at risk (at several levels) as a theme. A modest discussion of condition and risk to the assets identified would be useful; a heritage at risk survey is unlikely to be necessary unless a significant trend were identified (eg. under-investment, disuse, etc). This section could also identify any likely positive impacts on the historic environment that the plan might take need to the opportunity to plan for, such as enhancement of historic village character, tourism, climate change or the need for traditional skills development.
- Under *SEA Objectives...* (p72), the report might consider whether any additional questions are needed once the baseline and triggers are addressed as discussed above. Suggestions of additional questions are found in p9 of HEAN 8. In the questions you already set out, I suggest "significance" is a better word than "integrity".
- The report should also consider indicators and monitoring to clearly demonstrate the effects of the plan in operation. Advice is given on p10 of HEAN 8.

We reserve the right to review our 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



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Date: 10 July 2020
Our ref: 318790
Your ref: Lowick NP SEA Scoping



Mr C. Anderson
Planning Officer (Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure)
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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Mr Anderson

Planning consultation: Consultation on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report, Lowick Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 04 June 2020 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.

Natural England agrees with the proposed scope and level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report.

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.

However, we refer you to the advice in the attached annex which covers the issues and opportunities that should be considered when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact me on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

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



Historic England

Mr Chris Anderson
Northumberland County Council
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: PL00704332

30 June 2020

Dear Mr Anderson

**Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004: Regulation 9
Lowick Neighbourhood Plan: SEA Scoping Report, June 2020**

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We agree that historic environment issues should be scoped in to the SEA when it is completed alongside the emerging neighbourhood plan.

The scoping report goes a long way to setting out the scope and level of assessment which will follow. I provide some additional advice below with reference to *Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment* (Historic England Advice Note 8, December 2016), <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>.

- Under *Context* (p69), ahead of the NPPF references, it would be worth mentioning the principal duties under the legislation governing the types of heritage asset in the plan area: the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
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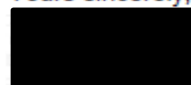
Historic England

information on the likely scope of the non-designated heritage assets (for example by reference to the county Historic Environment Record) including a summary of their significance and sensitivity.

- Under *Triggers...* (p71), you are right to identify heritage at risk (at several levels) as a theme. A modest discussion of condition and risk to the assets identified would be useful; a heritage at risk survey is unlikely to be necessary unless a significant trend were identified (eg. under-investment, disuse, etc). This section could also identify any likely positive impacts on the historic environment that the plan might take need to the opportunity to plan for, such as enhancement of historic village character, tourism, climate change or the need for traditional skills development.
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- The report should also consider indicators and monitoring to clearly demonstrate the effects of the plan in operation. Advice is given on p10 of HEAN 8.

We reserve the right to review our 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



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Appendix C: Policies in the Submission Draft Lowick Neighbourhood Plan, August 2022

POLICY L1: COMMUNITY AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN LOWICK

The following community facilities are of significant value to the local community and are shown on the Policies Map:

CF1: Lowick Village Hall

CF2: Lowick Village Shop

CF3: The Black Bull Public House

CF4: The White Swan Public House

CF5: Lowick Garage

CF6: Lowick First School

CF7: St. John the Baptist Church

Proposals requiring planning permission that involve the loss or change of use of any of these facilities will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the use is no longer required, viable, or if there is the provision of alternative equivalent facilities within or adjacent to Lowick village.

The provision of new community facilities in Lowick will be supported providing there is no unacceptable negative impact on local amenity and on highway safety.

The provision of a new clubhouse at the football field will be supported provided it accords with other policies in the Development Plan.

POLICY L2: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The sites listed below and shown on the Policies Map are designated as areas of Local Green Space which will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt.

LGS1: The Common

LGS2: Lowick War Memorial

LGS3: Lowick Play Park

LGS4: Holburn Village Green

LGS5: Lowick Church Yard (deconsecrated)

POLICY L3: LOWICK VILLAGE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

A settlement boundary is identified for Lowick and is shown on the Policies Map.

Proposals for development within the settlement boundary will be supported where it accords with policies elsewhere in the Development Plan.

Land outside the settlement boundary will be treated as open countryside whose intrinsic character and beauty must be recognised in all decision-making on development proposals.

POLICY L4: DESIGN IN NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Proposals for new housing development, reserved matters applications for existing housing outline permissions, and conversion schemes of redundant buildings to housing will be supported subject to compliance with relevant policies elsewhere in the Development Plan.

All new housing development must ensure that:

- a) suitable and safe access has been provided for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists; and
- b) high quality landscaping is incorporated; and
- c) a net-gain in biodiversity is achieved; and
- d) there is no significant adverse impact on the amenity of nearby residents; and
- e) carbon reduction and low carbon building measures have been incorporated; and
- f) The impact of the scheme on Lowick's Historic Core and on any designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings has been fully assessed and mitigated.

Proposals which meet the standards set out in the Building for Life 12 will be supported.

POLICY L5: BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT

All proposals for development must protect and enhance biodiversity in the Plan area by:

- a) Protecting locally identified sites and species and ancient or species-rich hedgerows, trees, important roadside verges such as Dryburn Road and Church Lane, grasslands, ponds, bogs, such as the Quarry Ponds and Slagheaps;
- b) Preserving ecological networks of woodland and water, and where feasible, enhancing the links between them;
- c) Protecting ancient trees or trees and woodlands of amenity value in Lowick Neighbourhood Area including Lowick Mill Wood and Kyloe Wood;

- d) Promoting, where appropriate, the mitigation, preservation, restoration and re-creation of wildlife habitats, and the protection and recovery of priority species to achieve a net gain in biodiversity over the Plan period.

Proposals for development which involve the loss of hedgerows and/or mature trees will be resisted. Where loss is unavoidable, then as a minimum, the lost features must be replaced elsewhere on the site.

POLICY L6: COASTAL MITIGATION

To ensure that the impacts arising from increasing levels of recreational disturbance on coastal Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European Sites can be addressed, all development within 7km of the coast that will result in a net increase in the number of residential units or tourist accommodation will be required to contribute to the Coastal Mitigation Service, or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness.

Within a zone, as shown on the policies map, extending between 7km and 10km from the coast, only major development will be required to make a contribution to the Coastal Mitigation Service, or provide alternative mitigation of demonstrable effectiveness.

All financial contributions required in accordance with this policy will be secured by way of a planning obligation under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or any subsequent amending legislation.

POLICY L7: WATER QUALITY AND NUTRIENT NEUTRALITY

Any new residential development, tourism accommodation or any other type of development that will increase foul water discharges must be accompanied by a nutrient budget and a plan to offset any increases in nitrogen levels entering the Lindisfarne SPA and Ramsar Site.

Planning permission will only be granted where this nutrient budget shows that there will be no net increase in nitrogen entering the Lindisfarne SPA.

POLICY L8: ACCESSIBILITY

All new development in Lowick village must be well connected to local services and facilities in the village by incorporating safe pedestrian access, highway access and cycle access. New development which will attract visitors must include provision for cycle parking.

POLICY L9: CREATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS

The creation and improvement of footpaths and cycle ways in the Neighbourhood Area will be supported along with the following specific proposals:

- a) A safe walking route from Lowick village to the Community Orchard, should the orchard re-open, as shown on the policies map;
- b) Walking routes to and between local heritage sites and routes linking the pilgrimage routes of St. Cuthbert's Way and St. Oswald's Way with footpaths in the Parish where feasible.
- c) A circular Parish Walk following its boundary is being developed as shown on the policies map.

POLICY L10: BROADBAND AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Proposals which secure the expansion of electronic communication networks and high-speed broadband along with improvements to connectivity will be supported.

In all cases, the applicant should demonstrate that they have explored the opportunities to erect apparatus on existing buildings, masts or other structures. They should also seek to ensure that the number of radio and telecommunication masts are kept to a minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network; and that any telecommunications development has been sited and designed to minimise the impacts on the local landscape.

Applications for new development should ensure provision is made for suitable ducting to enable more than one service provider to provide a fibre connection to individual properties from connection cabinets located on the public highway, or some alternative point available to different service providers.

The use of the St. John the Baptist Church in Lowick to provide a mobile telecommunications mast will be supported.

POLICY L11: LOCAL EMPLOYMENT AND RURAL ENTERPRISE

Proposals for home working will be supported in the Neighbourhood Area where there is not an unacceptable impact on residential amenity or highway safety.

Proposals to expand existing businesses and services within the settlement boundary of Lowick Village identified on the Policies Map will be supported.

Support will be given to proposals which provide local employment opportunities including the expansion of rural enterprises and farm diversification, where there is not an unacceptable impact on the surrounding area in terms of residential amenity, highway safety, the setting of heritage assets, local landscapes and biodiversity.

POLICY L12: TOURISM

Subject to policies elsewhere in this Plan, proposals to improve public access to Barmoor Castle and the extension of the Barmoor Castle Caravan Park including the provision of camping facilities will be supported providing any landscape, heritage and biodiversity impacts can be adequately mitigated.

Proposals which result in the restoration of the Grade II* listed Barmoor Castle, will be supported where they comply with policies elsewhere in the Development Plan.

POLICY L13: NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

The Neighbourhood Plan list of non-designated heritage assets are defined in Appendix A of this Plan. Development, including renovation or alterations affecting any non-designated heritage asset or its setting should be sensitively designed having regard to the scale of any harm or loss to the asset, and the significance of the heritage asset including its archaeological, historic and architectural interest.

POLICY L14: LOWICK'S HISTORIC CORE

Development proposals within or affecting the setting of the historic core of Lowick as defined on the Policies Map must make a positive contribution to the significance of the historic character of this area and/or its setting. All proposals must consider carefully how the scale, height, design, landscaping, boundary treatment and materials complement the character of the Historic Core of Lowick. In the assessment of development proposals, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and impact on the significance of the historic core of Lowick as a non-designated heritage asset. In particular, the assessment of proposals will consider the following:

- a) the incorporation and retention of historic buildings, boundary treatments and traditional layout and use of space in the identified Historic Core of the village;
- b) the need to improve the quality of the public realm in the centre of the village around the Memorial Green;
- c) the setting of historic buildings in the village and the Historic Core that are designated and non-designated heritage assets as shown on the Policies Map;
- d) the use of traditional vernacular materials of buff sandstone, Welsh slate, brick types and careful modern design that complements historic character where relevant;
- e) careful consideration of detailing such as windows, doors, chimneys and water goods and avoiding the use of uPVC;
- f) traditional frontages onto the street

Development of poor design that fails to preserve or enhance the character and quality of the historic core will be refused.

POLICY L15: CONVERSION OF BUILDINGS

Conversion of redundant buildings of substantial construction will be supported in the Neighbourhood Area. Special regard should be had to the historic significance of any redundant buildings which are non-designated heritage assets.

This policy does not apply to steel framed modern farm buildings.

Appendix D: Housing completions and permissions in Lowick Parish

There have been eight net additional homes completed in Lowick Parish since 2016.

Housing completions since 2016

2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	TOTAL
0	2	-1	3	4	8

COMPLETIONS April 2016 – March 2021				
Year	REF	Address	Description	Units
2017-18	12/02648/FUL	Land behind 85/87 Main Street Lowick	Erection of 2no. dwellinghouses (C3 Use)	2
2018-19	17/02378/FUL	1 Laverock Law, Lowick, Berwick-Upon-Tweed	Demolition of existing single storey dwelling with the erection of a new two storey dwelling with single storey utility link, greenhouse and garage.	-1
2019-20	17/02378/FUL	1 Laverock Law, Lowick, Berwick-Upon-Tweed	Demolition of existing single storey dwelling with the erection of a new two storey dwelling with single storey utility link, greenhouse and garage.	1
2019-20	14/01679/FUL	Land At South Road, Lowick	Proposed residential development of 8no. detached dwelling houses	2
2020-21	19/00994/FUL	Lowick South Steads Lowick	Residential development (use class C3) for one dwelling with associated landscaping and access	1
2020-21	14/01679/FUL	Land At South Road, Lowick	Proposed residential development of 8no. detached dwelling houses	2
2020-21	16/04070/FUL	Land North Of Western House 3 Main Street Lowick	Proposed Dwelling House & Garage	1
				8

There are outstanding commitments for another 41 dwellings.

Sites with Planning Permission for housing in Lowick Parish (as at 31 March 2021)

Planning Reference	Address	Number of units
14/01679/FUL	Land At South Road, Lowick	4
17/04394/OUT, 21/01337/NONMAT (21/01418/OUT)	Land East Of Lambton Avenue And Kyloe View Lowick (north and south parcels)	24
09/B/0454 13/00425/VARYCO	East Holburn Farm, Holburn Village, TD152UJ	6
05/B/0032	Church Lane (Plot 10), Lowick, Berwick-upon-Tweed	1
08/B/0564	East Holburn Farm, Holburn Village, Berwick-upon-Tweed	-1
10/B/0318	Former Presbyterian Church 3 Cheviot View Lowick Berwick-upon-Tweed	1
11/01464/FUL	Moss Hall, Wooler	1
11/01464/FUL	Moss Hall, Wooler	1
16/01761/FUL	Land North East Of Lambton Avenue Lowick	1
16/04010/FUL	The Causeway Dryburn Road Lowick	1
19/01710/FUL	Land Adjacent To 73 Main Street, Lowick	1
19/04683/FUL	Land East Of High Steads Lowick	1
		41