



Northumberland
County Council

Lowick
Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental
Assessment (SEA)

Environmental Report:
ADDENDUM

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

March 2023

Introduction

1. 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.
2. The Lowick Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Northumberland County Council in October 2022. The County Council subsequently publicised the Plan and associated documents in accordance with Regulation 16 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) between 09 November 2022 and 22 December 2022.

Independent Examination

3. Following the Regulation 16 publicity period, the Plan underwent Independent Examination; the Report of the Independent Examiner was received by the County Council on 26 January 2023 and published on the County Council's website.
4. The report of the Independent Examination considers issues raised during the publicity period. It addresses matters raised and presents coherent justification to support each of the conclusions reached by the Examiner. Having regard to the justification given by the Examiner for each of his recommended modifications, and the need to ensure that the Plan meets the 'basic conditions', the County Council must decide whether it agrees with the Examiner.
5. The County Council may reach an alternative view about the recommended modifications, and it may consider further changes to the policies in the Plan. However, such action should only be taken where the County Council has clear and convincing evidence to support an alternative approach to that recommended by the Examiner. Any alternative or additional modifications that the County Council may propose to make to the Plan should only be done to ensure that the Plan meets the 'basic conditions'.
6. All of the proposed modifications are contained in the Examiner's report which has been published and is available on the County Council's website. The County Council accepts and agrees with the reasoned justification provided by the Examiner in recommending modifications to the planning policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, with the exception of the recommended modifications to three policies. This concerns recommendations by the Examiner regarding the approach to non-designated heritage assets taken by the Neighbourhood Plan.

7. The County Council considers that the modifications recommended by the Examiner in relation to the three policies (Policies L13, L14 and L15) are not required in order to meet the basic conditions. The County Council considers that these recommended modifications regarding use of the term “locally-valued heritage assets” instead of “non-designated heritage assets” were recommended as a result of now-superseded published advice from Historic England. More recent guidance from Historic England, supported by National Planning Practice Guidance, clarifies that the approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan is appropriate and correct. The County Council therefore considers that these modifications are not required in order for these policies to meet the basic conditions.

Conclusion

8. The modifications recommended by the Independent Examiner in order for the Plan to meet the basic conditions are not required to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment. The remaining policies where an alternative view has been reached by the County Council include some of the Examiner’s recommendations but otherwise remain unchanged from the original Submission Version of the Plan, which was itself supported by an SEA Environmental Report.
9. As a result, the County Council does not consider that the Post-Examination Version of the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan needs to be subject to further assessment under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.