

# Neighbourhood Planning Update



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## UK Mini Budget 2022

**On 23 September 2022, the government published the Growth Plan, generally known as the ‘Mini Budget’.** This outlined measures to tackle the cost of living and energy crises and put forward policies and tax cuts aimed at stimulating economic growth.

### **The Mini-budget and the planning system**

The Government described the planning system for major infrastructure as “too slow and fragmented” and is therefore bringing forward the new planning and infrastructure bill to streamline planning and the environmental and regulatory rules that sit alongside.

More specifically, the bill includes the reform of habitats and species regulations and aims to reduce the burden of environmental assets by cutting barriers and restrictions to essentially speed up the planning process.

### **Investment Zones**

Another measure announced includes new investment zones. Investment zones are the governments new proposal to set up dedicated geographic areas with specific tax and regulatory rules intended to drive economic growth, unlock housing and wider support for the local economy.

The mini budget includes examples of sites that the government see as having potential to be investment zones. The Government is currently undergoing discussions with 38 local authorities to establish investment zones in their areas.

The North of Tyne Combined Authority confirmed bids for two investment zones, with one running along the new Northumberland Line and the other incorporating land at Newcastle International Airport, Blyth Energy Central and Lynefield Park in Lynemouth. More information can be found on the North of Tyne Combined Authority website [here](#).





## *What's happening around the County?*

**Residents of Haydon Parish now have more of a say over future development in their local area following the adoption of their Neighbourhood Plan.**

The **Haydon Parish Neighbourhood Plan** now forms part of the Statutory Development Plan for Northumberland, meaning that future planning decisions in the area will be made in accordance with policies in the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Plan was 'made' at a meeting of the County Council's Cabinet on 21 September.

The Plan contains 20 planning policies covering sustainability and climate change, built and historic environment, the natural environment, housing, vibrant and thriving communities, the local economy and accessibility and transport.

There are now 20 made neighbourhood plans in Northumberland. Consultation on the Submission Draft **Lowick Neighbourhood Plan** began on 9 November and runs until 22 December. The Plan contains 15 policies which help to support and deliver their vision for Lowick Parish. The Plan's policies seek to give protection to important local green spaces and community facilities, ensure that development occurs in sustainable locations, seeks to ensure good design and protection of the natural and historic environment and support the local economy.

All comments received during the Regulation 16 publicity period will be sent to the examiner carrying out the Independent Examination of the Plan. The Plan now has increasing weight in decision making and once the Plan has passed independent examination the County Council will have a duty to have regard to the post-examination Plan in decision-making. The Submission Draft Plan and supporting documents can be viewed on the County Council's website [here](#).

**Broomhaugh & Riding Parish Council** began consultation on their Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan on 01 November, and the consultation runs until 13 December 2022.

The Plan contains eight policies relating to energy efficiency and renewable energy, design, local green space, land for housing development and accessibility and sustainable transport. The Plan can be accessed on the [Parish Council's website](#).

**Warkworth Parish Council** are consulting on their Pre-Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan from 21 November 2022 until 09 January 2023. The Plan contains six policies relating to the natural, built and historic environment, community facilities, the local economy and sustainable transport. The Plan can be accessed on the [Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan website](#).

Twenty-seven other parishes are at an earlier stage of plan-making. More information is on our [website](#).



## ***What does ‘Levelling Up’ mean for Neighbourhood Planning?***

**In May, the government published the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which proposed a number of changes to neighbourhood planning.**

The bill proposes introducing a simplified version of the neighbourhood planning process, aims to clarify what can be included in a neighbourhood development plan and increases the weight of neighbourhood plans in the decision making process. Arguably, this demonstrates the government’s continuing support for neighbourhood planning.

### *Neighbourhood Priorities Statements*

The bill introduces neighbourhood priorities statements, which will allow communities to identify their key priorities for their local area, including their development preferences. These statements are designed to *“provide a simpler and more accessible way for them [communities] to participate in neighbourhood planning”*. Local authorities will be required to take these into account when preparing their local plan. It remains to be seen what is meant in practice by ‘take into account’.

### *Basic conditions*

The most significant change is an amendment which would replace the existing requirement for neighbourhood plans to be in “general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan”.

The new condition requires that neighbourhood plans must not result in the development plan for the area proposing less housing development than would have been the case if the plan were not to be made.

This is to address the issue of a neighbourhood plan being prevented from bringing more housing forward than proposed in a local plan.

### *Other changes*

The bill clarifies what can be included in a neighbourhood plan. Its contents may include policies relating to the amount, type and location of development in the local area, details of infrastructure or affordable housing requirements and requirements relating to design.

It requires neighbourhood plans to ensure that the use of land in the neighbourhood area contributes to the “mitigation of, and adaption to, climate change”.

The bill introduces a requirement to comply with the new environmental outcomes reports, which will replace strategic environmental assessments.

The Bill also includes new ‘street vote’ powers, allowing residents on a street to bring forward proposals to extend or redevelop their properties in line with their design preferences and hold a vote on whether it should be given planning permission.



The Bill was introduced to the House of Commons on 11 May 2022 and is currently at committee stage in the House of Commons. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill can be found [here](#).



## First Homes

## Design Codes

**The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), defines a design code as: “A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area.”**

In Northumberland, many neighbourhood plans sought to ensure that certain planning issues were covered by up-to-date policies prior to the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan. Following the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan in March 2022, there is now greater scope for neighbourhood plans in the county to include much more locally-specific policies.

Some neighbourhood plans in the county have begun to look at issues such as design; this can be in the form of a ‘Design Code’ which can include guidance on how development in your area should respond to the characteristics of your areas, whether this is in relation to the historic environment, landscape, renewable energy, as well as taking account of local distinctiveness regarding building materials.

The Haydon Neighbourhood Plan is the first ‘made’ neighbourhood plan in Northumberland to include a design code and aims to ensure that design is an important consideration in new development and how it responds to its surroundings. The Plan and Design Code can be viewed on the County Council’s [Neighbourhood Planning webpage](#).

Parish Councils in Northumberland wishing to prepare a Design Code as part of their neighbourhood plan can access additional grant funding plus technical support from Locality. Further information is available on the [Locality website](#).