

Newbiggin by the Sea Neighbourhood Plan 2023 - 2036

Referendum Version

November 2023



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Policies map - illustrates the proposed land allocations and area-based designations.

Foreword

The Newbiggin Neighbourhood Plan (NNP) will shape development in our area over the next 20 years. Neighbourhood plans are part of the Government's reforms to devolve greater power to local communities to manage development in their area. They form part of the statutory development plan, which must be taken into account in reaching planning decisions. The NNP provides a proactive approach to managing change on the basis of the local community's priorities, rather than relying on a reactive approach, often in the form of resisting change, in response to developer pressure.

This Newbiggin Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity for us all to put localism into action, bringing forward a positive vision for our Town which can be realised through our direct involvement in the decision-making process. Over the last few years Newbiggin has seen a number of significant changes and more are planned in the near future. It is vital that we are able to influence outcomes at a local level, where their impacts are felt.

Our gratitude must go to Town Councillors and Officers, our independent consultant and the team within Northumberland County Council planning department for their tireless work in bringing this plan forward. The Town Council has led the way throughout the process, but it is people from the local area who have determined what has gone into making this Neighbourhood Plan, through a number of consultations and local events.

The Neighbourhood Plan aims to make sure that developments already planned for and those yet to come are truly sustainable and that the unique characteristics of the Town are protected from any unwarranted harm. However, we have been diligent in ensuring that we have remained true to the wishes of our parishioners, consulting them at every stage of the project. We now have a set of policies which should allow homes and businesses to be built and expand in accordance with local needs and aspirations but respecting everything that is special about our beautiful and unique, coastal environment.

Cllr Louise Spratt
Chairman of Newbiggin By The Sea Town Council

1. Introduction

Background to neighbourhood planning

- 1.1 Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood plans are community-led, prepared by parish councils and in areas without parish councils they are prepared by neighbourhood forums. Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council is preparing this neighbourhood plan. Plans set out guidance on how new development will be managed. They do this by creating land use 'planning policies'. Plans can deal with a wide range of issues like housing, employment, heritage and transport. In some cases, they may only focus on one or two issues that are of particular importance in a local area. Policies within neighbourhood plans cannot block development or support less than already committed in the local plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.
- 1.2 Neighbourhood plans can also cover issues which are not related to the use and development of land. They can provide a useful document in which a parish council can establish priorities for action to improve their area. These are often referred to as 'community actions'. Annex 1 of this plan includes the community actions which apply to Newbiggin by the Sea. However, the main purpose of a neighbourhood plan is to set policies for the use and development of land.
- 1.3 Once a neighbourhood plan has been examined by an independent examiner, agreed at the referendum stage by the local community and adopted by the local planning authority, it becomes part of the development plan for that area. Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning context

- 1.4 As they are part of the development plan, neighbourhood plans must be prepared in accordance with legal requirements. The way in which neighbourhood plans are prepared and the policies they contain are tested by an independent examiner who assesses whether the plan meets the 'basic conditions'. To ensure they are legally compliant, neighbourhood plans must:
 - Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan;
 - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
 - Be compatible with legal obligations.

National planning policy and guidance

- 1.5 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) respectively.

Development plan

- 1.6 The development plan consists of the Northumberland Local Plan which was adopted in March 2022. The Newbiggin by the Sea Neighbourhood Plan ('the plan') has been informed by the local plan and its evidence base.

Sustainable development

- 1.7 The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development as defined by the NPPF. This specifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be the basis for every plan and every planning decision. In brief, ‘sustainable development’ is about growth which delivers economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. The basic conditions statement, that accompanies this submission plan, explains how the implementation of the plan is expected to contribute to sustainable development.

Legal obligations

- 1.8 Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with legal obligations, specifically strategic environmental assessment (SEA) regulations and habitats regulations, through an appropriate assessment (AA). The SEA is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of policies are considered before plans are brought into force. The AA process aims to ensure that the plan will not result in significant damage to internationally important nature conservation sites. The SEA and AA processes have informed the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. A SEA and AA have been undertaken and have been submitted with the plan.

Background to the Newbiggin by the Sea Parish Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.9 Newbiggin by the Sea Parish (figure 1) was designated as a neighbourhood area for the purposes of neighbourhood planning by NCC in February 2018. Several early engagement activities have taken place since work started on the plan:
- March to April 2019: feedback on ‘the big issues’ for the plan;
 - September to October 2020: feedback on vision, objectives, draft policy areas and themes for community actions; and
 - December 2020 to January 2021: feedback on how housing matters should be addressed in the plan.
- 1.10 The early engagement and evidence work informed the preparation of a pre-submission draft neighbourhood plan, which was subject to consultation for eight weeks during June and August 2022. The Plan was further amended to take account of the engagement and evidence work and it identified:
- The context in which the plan has been prepared – an overview of Newbiggin by the Sea Parish, the **opportunities and challenges** for the plan to address;
 - A **positive vision** for the future of the parish;
 - How the vision of the plan will be **delivered through planning policies** i.e. the policies that **will be used to determine planning applications** within the plan area - providing a framework for sustainable development; and
 - How the vision of the plan will be **delivered through community actions** i.e. measures which are **intended to encourage action and influence decisions** taken by relevant bodies.
- 1.11 The period covered by the plan is to 2036 to align with the Northumberland Local Plan. During this period, the neighbourhood plan will be reviewed and updated where required.
- 1.12 The consultation statement setting out how engagement informed the preparation of the plan, together with background information and evidence documents that supported plan preparation, are available online at:
<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Neighbourhood-Planning/Neighbourhood-Plans.aspx>



Figure 1: Neighbourhood plan area

Next Steps

- 1.13 The Plan was submitted to Northumberland County Council in February 2023, who publicised the Plan for a period of 6 weeks. Following this, an examiner was appointed, and the Plan underwent an independent examination. Following recommendations from the examiner, the Plan has been further modified, subject to further consultation and will now proceed to referendum.

2. Background to Newbiggin by the Sea Parish

A brief history of Newbiggin by the Sea Parish

- 2.1 Although Newbiggin by the Sea is the main settlement within the parish, it is Woodhorn that has a longer history, probably because it was more sheltered inland from coastal weather and raiders. It is thought that Woodhorn may be 'Wucestre' given to the community of St Cuthbert by the Northumbrian King Ceolwulf in Anglo-Saxon times when the king retired to become a monk on Lindisfarne. In the 1110s, Woodhorn was part of the Bariny of Bywell, belonging to the powerful Balliol family.
- 2.2 The church of St Mary at Woodhorn, a grade I listed building, is one of the oldest in Northumberland. The church is partly Saxon and early Norman, with thirteenth and fourteenth century additions.
- 2.3 The earliest recorded spelling of the name Newbiggin is dated 1187 and is 'Niwebingga' which means new building. It is understood that there must have been a fishing settlement around this time. The burgage plot pattern that still survives is thought to be from a medieval borough of Newbiggin, established by 1307 as an earlier planted settlement carved out of the older township of Woodhorn.
- 2.4 Much more is known about medieval Newbiggin. The Church of St Bartholomew, stands on headland and has its origins in early medieval times when Newbiggin had its own market charter and was thriving, acting as a major port between Newcastle and Berwick. Newbiggin was a major port for the shipping of grain and grindstones. However, in the early nineteenth century these activities were overtaken by fishing which resulted in a large expansion of Newbiggin. There was a new school, railway station and golf courses were developed later in the nineteenth century.
- 2.5 In the late 1800s Newbiggin witnessed a large increase in both residents and visitors. It was a popular beach resort for the industrial workers and growing middle classes of Tyneside and south east Northumberland, with several wealthy families having their summer residences in Newbiggin.
- 2.6 Newbiggin Colliery opened in 1910 and alongside the colliery new housing was developed. In the 1940s the colliery employed 1400 men. The demand for coal during and after the two World Wars intensified and some of the coal was taken from seams stretching as far as six and a half miles out to sea, beneath the seabed. By the time the colliery closed in 1967 the area was suffering from subsidence of the seabed which created deeper offshore water and bigger waves, resulting in severe coastal erosion. The beach in the bay almost disappeared, leaving the houses on the sea front as well as the low-lying properties in the town centre unprotected. At the same time, untreated sewage from nearby settlements was being discharged into the bay and coal spoil was being washed up in the bay making it virtually unusable. In 1979, a storm damaged the seafront and flooded the town centre.
- 2.7 In 1982, boulders were put in place to protect the town. However, these alongside the contaminated sea water, prevented the use of the bay. In 1992 sewage was diverted from the bay and in 2007 the beach was recreated with tens of thousands of cubic metres of sand, alongside the building of a breakwater.

- 2.8 Since 2007, with clean water in the bay and a well-established beach, private investment in Newbiggin by the Sea has increased with new facilities being built including a Maritime Centre operated by a charitable organisation, new housing being built by the development arm of Northumberland County Council and a long vacant and derelict town centre pub also being demolished and being replaced with shop units and new apartments.
- 2.9 In 2012 the Town was successful in attracting national funding through the Portas scheme administered by the Department of Communities and Local Government which was used to revitalise shops along the main street and to promote projects in the local area. Newbiggin by the Sea is part of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, which was formally signed in March 2021. The deal represents up to £452m of fresh investment in the borderlands area which includes Carlisle, Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway, Northumberland and the Scottish Borders. Newbiggin by the Sea is one of the seven towns identified as priority towns in Northumberland. The Place Programme Board¹ has been established to oversee the development of the Borderlands Place Plan and Borderlands Town Investment Plan for the town. There are important linkages between this work and the neighbourhood plan.
- 2.10 This section of the plan provides only a snapshot of the history and development of the town. For anyone wanting to learn more, the Newbiggin by the Sea Genealogy Project and Family History Centre have created the world's biggest community family tree. This is a fantastic resource².

Population and housing

- 2.11 In a town with over 6,300³ residents there has been very limited housing development in recent years, despite it taking place in nearby areas such as Ashington and Bedlington. The result of this is that as residents try to find their first home or move to a larger home, there are no suitable properties available. The availability of new housing development in adjacent areas has resulted in younger people and families moving out of the area. This is confirmed by the 2011 census data, which illustrates that since 2001 Newbiggin by the Sea has experienced a significant fall in the proportion of young working age adults aged 25 to 44. However, there are signs that the town is becoming an increasingly popular with residential properties being sold within days of being added to the market.
- 2.12 Newbiggin by the Sea has a lower proportion of home ownership (57%) and a notably higher proportion of social rented households (26%) than is typical either locally across Northumberland (65.8% owned, 18.7% social rented) or nationally (63.3% owned, 17.7% social rented). There are low levels of detached homes (4.6%) and high levels of terraced homes (55%) compared to Northumberland (25.2% detached, 28.1% terraced) and England (22.4% detached, 24.5% terraced). Homes have a smaller number of rooms than those in the rest of Northumberland and there is a lack of four and five bedroom homes, in Newbiggin by the Sea only 9.7% of properties have four or more bedrooms, compared to 19.4% in Northumberland and 19% in England⁴.

¹ <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Economy-Regeneration/Programmes/Borderlands-Place-Programme/Borderlands-Place-Programme.aspx>

² <https://www.myheritage.com/site-224055511/newbiggin-by-the-sea-genealogy-project-community-tree>

³ 2011 census

⁴ Information from the Newbiggin by the Sea Housing Needs Assessment

Employment

- 2.13 The 2011 census reveals that economic activity rates in Newbiggin by the Sea are very low (61.3%) when compared to Northumberland (74%) and the UK as whole (78.5%). Of those in employment, over a third of the workforce is engaged in part time employment, a level higher than both county (30%) and national (29.3%) levels. The qualifications of residents are key to increasing economic activity, however 35.3% of residents have no qualifications, compared to only 6.8% and 7.7% at the county and national level.
- 2.14 Over a quarter (25.9%) of those in employment in 2011 were in elementary or process/machine-based operations, this is a lot higher than the county (18.8%) and national (18.4%) levels. The parish includes Lynefield Park, which is one of the largest industrial sites in Northumberland, in addition it is close to the Britishvolts battery plant in Cambois. Both of which are a major opportunity for the town.

Deprivation

- 2.15 The English Indices of Deprivation (2019) is the government's official measure of deprivation in England, this is measured at a small area level (Lower Layer Super Output Areas - LSOAs). There are 32,844 LSOAs in England, the area ranked 1 is the most deprived. To calculate the position, seven issues are considered: income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services, and living environment. The Newbiggin Central and East ward lies within the 10% most deprived areas in the country, with a rank of 1,124th. This rank is worse than that in 2015 which was 1,643rd.
- 2.16 The town has greatly suffered from the decline in industry, particularly mining, fishing and tourism. Youth unemployment, mental health and antisocial behaviour are significant issues. However, in recent years the town has begun a renaissance led by local people, with the focus on our heritage past and creative future.

Services, facilities and accessibility

- 2.17 Newbiggin by the Sea has a range of services and facilities. The town includes many independent retailers, offices, restaurants and cafes, community history centre, community art studio, sports and community centre. All of which are within easy access to the promenade and bay.
- 2.18 Local community groups provide a variety of activities and events including: Newbiggin Genealogy Group (exhibitions), Newbiggin Traders Association (events), Newbiggin Maritime Centre (art exhibitions, kite festival), active church community, Newbiggin by the Sea Park Run, RNLI (lifeboat, boxing day dip). These make a significant contribution to the vitality and viability of the parish enhancing quality of life and often providing an important focal point for social interaction.
- 2.19 There is one school within the parish – The Northumberland Church of England Academy Grace Darling Campus.
- 2.20 Newbiggin by the Sea has good road connections to surrounding areas via the A197 and B1334 which connect to the A189 and on to the A19/ A1 to the south and the A1068 to the north. The nearest railway station is Morpeth, which provides services to Newcastle upon Tyne, Edinburgh and London. Work is underway to restore passenger services between Ashington and Newcastle, with the potential to extend the line to Newbiggin and Woodhorn. There are regular

bus services to Ashington and Morpeth and express services to Newcastle upon Tyne. The parish is also well connected on the cycle network e.g. National Cycle Route 155 between Morpeth and Newbiggin by the Sea and on National Cycle Route 1, Coast and Castles Route. It is also part of the England Coastal Path.

Natural, built and historic environment

- 2.21 Newbiggin by the Sea has a significant level of natural environment designations, including internationally and nationally important sites along the coast as well as local designations including local nature reserves and part of the South East Northumberland Wildlife Network. The importance of wildlife corridors within the area was one of the ‘big issues’ identified by the local community. These corridors and other open spaces are a valuable part of the character of the area and play a key role sustaining the natural environment.
- 2.22 The built and historic environment of Newbiggin by the Sea is part of what makes it distinctive. It includes a conservation area and 17 listed buildings. There are also 74 entries on the Northumberland Historic Environment Record which demonstrates the historical importance of the area. Newbiggin Lifeboat Station is the oldest operational boathouse in the British Isles and Ireland and St Mary’s Church (Woodhorn) is one of the oldest in Northumberland, incorporating Saxon, Norman and Gothic Architecture.

Key issues for the Newbiggin by the Sea Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.23 The main challenges highlighted by the community through early engagement and the town council through a review of both existing and new evidence documents are:
1. A clear separation of settlements to enhance the character and distinctiveness of Newbiggin;
 2. New ‘wildlife corridors’ to protect natural habitats, incorporating sustainable drainage for the Ashington developments and former Alcan ash lagoons;
 3. Regeneration of the town through endorsing employment and providing appropriate infrastructure and start up units;
 4. Improved visitor attractions are needed to sustain visitor growth and contribute to commercial sustainability;
 5. Improved pedestrian and cycle routes to public transport and a new link road to the strategic network from Woodhorn Roundabout; and
 6. Housing and economic growth, with an improved choice of homes to retain and attract young people and families.
- 2.24 The town council assessed these issues, considering how they could be addressed through a neighbourhood plan and then developed a vision and a set of policy themes and objectives for the plan, covering:
- Housing;
 - Green spaces and the natural environment;
 - Design and heritage;
 - Community facilities and services;
 - Employment and tourism; and
 - Accessibility.
- 2.25 These were then refined into the plans vision and objectives.

3. Vision and objectives

Vision

- 3.1 The vision sets out what the Newbiggin by the Sea Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2036. It informs all the plan objectives and draft planning policies.

A vision for Newbiggin by the Sea in 2036
<p>By 2036 Newbiggin by the Sea will be successful, thriving and sustainable. A place where people want to live and work because of the rich and distinctive environment, range of services and facilities, leisure opportunities, as well as access to high quality housing, employment and protected open spaces with linked wildlife corridors.</p> <p>New employment opportunities will have reduced the number of residents commuting out of the town for employment and they will have access to sustainable modes of transport.</p> <p>The town centre will be vibrant, with a range of shops, social and leisure facilities. These services, facilities and leisure opportunities will be fully accessible, contributing to health and well-being and will result in a growth in visitor numbers who will support the success of the local economy.</p> <p>New development will ensure the protection and enhancement of the area and safeguard the amenity of the local community.</p>

Objectives

- 3.2 To deliver the vision, three objectives have been developed. These clearly relate to the issues identified through early engagement with the local community and other stakeholders, as well as the evidence base supporting the plan. The draft planning policies and community actions contained within the plan, should deliver the objectives.

Objectives
<p>Objective 1 - Distinctive place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Achieving a balance between development and maintaining the clear separation of settlements, conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment, as well as protecting important open spaces. <p>Objective 2 – Sustainable, thriving and healthy community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Supporting new development which meets the needs of existing and future residents. This includes providing the right types of housing, supporting investment in employment space and the visitor economy, strengthening the role of the town centre and improving infrastructure to support health needs. <p>Objective 3 - Well connected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Promoting access to sustainable modes of transport which connect people to a wide range of services, facilities and employment opportunities. As well as enhancing opportunities for safe and active travel and ensuring access for all.

4. Distinctive place

Introduction

- 4.1 The natural, built and historic environment of the plan area are vital to its character and the quality of life of residents and provide a huge opportunity to encourage new housing and economic development to take place. Therefore, the first plan objective seeks to achieve a balance between new development and conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment of the parish. Early engagement on the neighbourhood plan highlighted the importance the local community give to the rich environment of the area. This has been reiterated through the early engagement on the Borderlands Place Programme.

Location of new development

- 4.2 National planning policy explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It highlights three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. It explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of these objectives. The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.3 The Northumberland Local Plan (the 'local plan') seeks to focus new development within sustainable locations. It includes a settlement hierarchy, which seeks to focus most new development within main towns and services centres across the county. The local plan explains that the role of settlements within the hierarchy varies across the county. Newbiggin by the Sea is identified as a service centre in which the development of new housing, employment and services will be supported where it maintains and strengthens its role. Newbiggin by the Sea is highlighted as providing important services for both residents and communities within neighbouring areas.
- 4.4 Woodhorn is identified as a small village within the settlement hierarchy. The local plan does not actively direct development to small villages; however, it recognises that a level of development is required to support their vitality. Therefore, small villages can support a level of development that is proportionate to their size. The local plan does not define settlement boundaries for Newbiggin by the Sea or Woodhorn as the town council did not consider it was appropriate because other policies within the development plan could effectively manage development.
- 4.5 It is not necessary for the neighbourhood plan to repeat policies contained within the local plan. As the settlement hierarchy defined within the local plan (policy STP1) will allow for development that maintains and strengthens the role of the town, it is not necessary to restate this within the neighbourhood plan. The local plan also provides protection for development in the open countryside, away from the built-up parts of the parish.

Design

- 4.6 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, it creates better places in which people live and work. It is fundamental to what the planning and development process should deliver and will ensure that new development contributes positively to the local environment and therefore enhances the quality of life of residents. Section 12 of the NPPF highlights the importance the government attaches to good design. Paragraph 127 recognises the significant

role that neighbourhood plans can play in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in new development.

- 4.7 In addition, the national design guide sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. It forms part of national planning practice guidance. The national model design code provides further detailed guidance to promote successful design. There are several good practice guidance documents that can help inform the design of development, such as Building for a Healthy Life, which is a government endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. Local communities, local authorities and developers are encouraged to use it to guide discussions about creating good places to live.
- 4.8 Policy N1 encourages high quality and sustainable design and sets out the key principles that should be addressed as part of proposals for new development, whilst seeking to ensure the plan area does not place unnecessary restrictions on new development. The key principles were supported by the local community through engagement on the draft plan and have therefore been included within policy N1.

Policy N1: Design

All development must be of a high quality design which respects and responds to the distinctive character of the area. Development should:

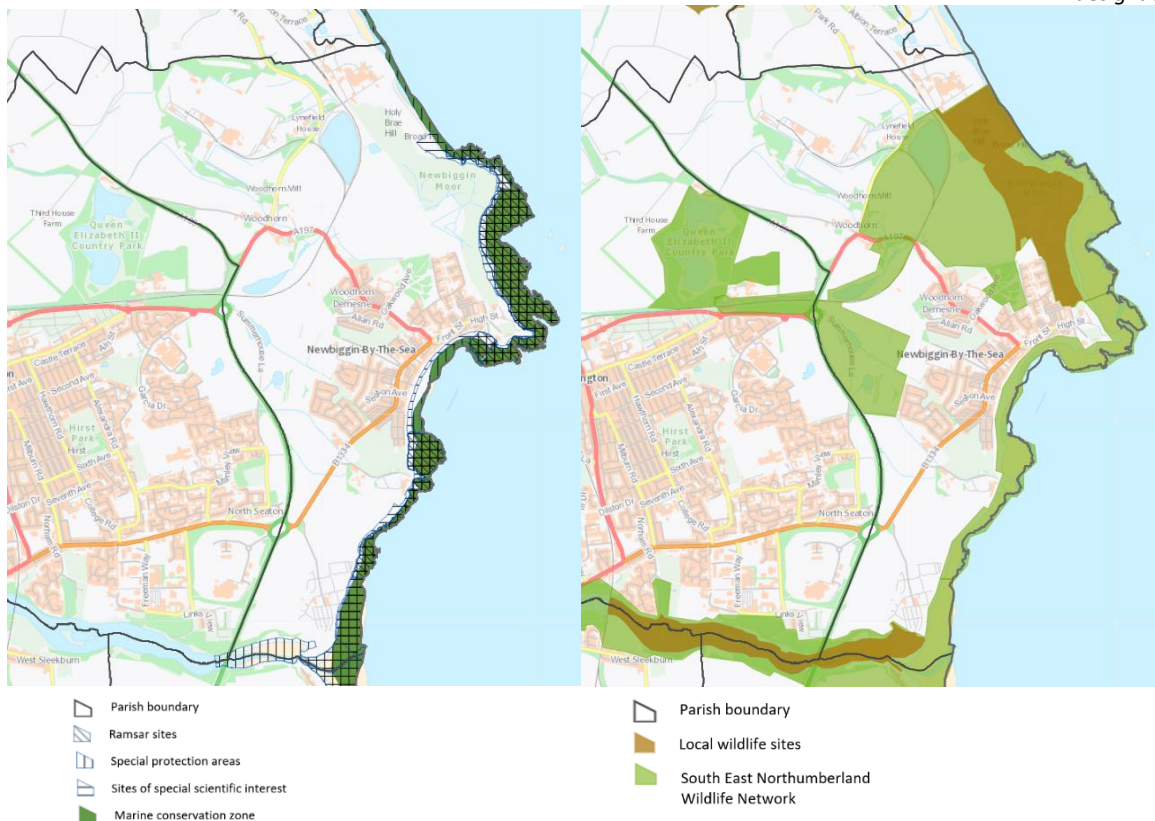
- a. pay particular attention to the appearance, size, scale and density of the proposal
- b. use materials that complement local character;
- c. conserve or enhance heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to their significance;
- d. respect local topography and natural site features;
- e. respect existing building lines and ensure that boundary treatments and roof lines respect their surroundings;
- f. incorporate refuse and recycling storage into schemes in a manner that minimises visual impact;
- g. ensure that development respects residential amenity, with regards to sunlight, daylight, outlook, privacy, noise and disturbance;
- h. seek to incorporate sustainable drainage.

Green infrastructure and the natural environment

- 4.9 Newbiggin by the Sea benefits from many natural environment designations, including those of international and national importance along the coast (figure 2). There are also several local designations, including local nature reserves. In addition, part of the south east Northumberland wildlife network lies within the parish (figure 3).
- 4.10 Early engagement highlighted that the local community are strongly of the view that the natural environment and green infrastructure should be protected and enhanced.
- 4.11 Green infrastructure encompasses wildlife networks and corridors, open spaces and landscape corridors and linkages to the wider countryside. The NPPF defines green infrastructure as: “A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity”. A network, green infrastructure can include: parks, open spaces, playing fields, wildlife corridors, streams and other water bodies, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens.
- 4.12 As green infrastructure is close to where people live, it can play a key role in supporting the health of the local community. It also supports wildlife, climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as helping to improve air quality. It provides important linkages from the built-up area to the wider countryside.

Figure 2: Internationally and nationally designated sites.

Figure 3: SE Northumberland Wildlife Network and local designations



- 4.13 The local plan includes policies to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural environment as well as the green infrastructure networks and assets, particularly policies ENV1 and ENV2.
- 4.14 As part of the appropriate assessment process, it was recommended that the plan should include a policy to ensure that impacts arising from increasing levels of recreational disturbance on environmental assets as a result of any new residential or tourist accommodation could be mitigated against. These adverse effects could be avoided where developers agree to contribute to the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service. This requires financial contributions from all relevant development in the parish as it all lies within 7km of the coast. This requirement is set out in policy N2.

Policy N2: 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 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.

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.

Local green space

- 4.15 The neighbourhood plan has an important role in identifying and protecting spaces which are of importance to the local community and providing other important local detail. Green spaces are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy community and are of great importance to the character and identity of a place. They are valued for a wide range of reasons including: visual amenity; historic significance; recreational value; tranquillity; and richness of wildlife. Uncontrolled changes to green spaces can irrevocably alter their special character or intrinsic value.
- 4.16 The NPPF enables neighbourhood plans to designate areas of local green space for special protection, thereby preventing inappropriate new development on these sites other than in very special circumstances. These spaces do not need to be publicly accessible, although the designation must not be applied to an extensive tract of land and the site must be in close proximity to the community it serves. The land must be demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular local significance. The designation cannot be applied to an extensive track of land.
- 4.17 The sites listed in policy N3 and shown on the policies map are designated as local green spaces. A local green space background paper has been prepared to outline the reasons why the sites are of particular importance to the local community and to explain the process that led to their proposed designation. The assessment takes account of the areas that are identified for inclusion within the local plan as protected open space (see figure 4) and does not repeat this designation.

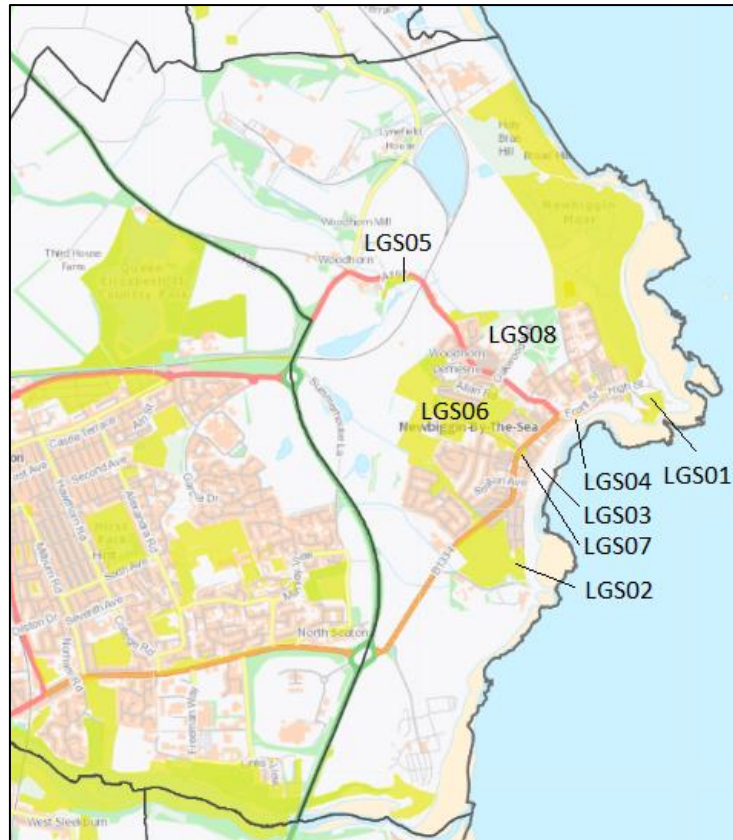


Figure 4: Protected open space identified in the local plan

Policy N3: Local green space

The following areas, as identified on the policies map, are designated as local green space which will be protected from development in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt:

- LGS01 Church Point;
- LGS02 Milburn Park;
- LGS03 Promenade and Quay Wall;
- LGS04 Newbiggin Piazza;
- LGS05 Woodhorn Picnic Area;
- LGS06 Newbiggin Central Park;
- LGS07 Newbiggin Memorial Park;
- LGS08 Newbiggin Colliery Memorial and former colliery site;

Management of any development within these local green spaces should be consistent with national policy on Green Belts. Inappropriate development will not be permitted other than where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the local green space by reason of inappropriateness and other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Historic environment

- 4.18 As explained in section 2, Newbiggin by the Sea has a rich history. Planning policies have an important role in protecting heritage assets, which can be designated or non-designated. Designated assets have statutory status and include listed buildings and conservation areas. A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.
- 4.19 National planning policy defines a heritage asset as: *“A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)”*.
- 4.20 Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and national planning policy requires them to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Also, that planning decisions affecting a heritage asset are required to be based on a sound understanding of the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposal on that significance.
- 4.21 Newbiggin by the Sea has many designated and undesignated, these assets reveal and record the rich history and development of the area. Designated assets comprise 17 listed buildings (two of which are grade I, and the remaining are grade II) and one conservation area. In addition to the designated heritage assets, there are currently 74 entries on the Northumberland Historic Environment Record which contains details of local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes.
- 4.22 Local plan policy ENV7 provides protection to the designated and non-designated assets across Northumberland, the significance of which could be affected by new development. It is not necessary to repeat this protection within the neighbourhood plan. However, it is appropriate for a neighbourhood plan to provide additional detail to add to that contained within the local plan. There is the opportunity to provide this detail to guide future development within Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area, informed by the conservation area character⁵ appraisal and management strategy⁶.
- 4.23 The Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area Character Appraisal summaries the special character and significance on the conservation area. It highlights that boundary is drawn tightly around the core historic town and its architecturally higher quality linear suburb to the south. Also, that the bay and sea are crucial to the conservation area, defining the historic fishing village and modern seaside elements to its character. Furthermore, that most of the conservation area is characterised by rows of long, narrow plots which are perpendicular to the street, stretching back from it.
- 4.24 Three distinct areas are identified within the character appraisal (see figure 5), which despite having distinct differences are all firmly linked through the development of the town:
- Historic core – towards the top of the bay with a Front/ High Street spine. Inward looking fishing villages, defined by the shape of the bay. This area has always

⁵ <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/Conservation/NewbigginCACA.pdf>

⁶ [https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Consolidated%20Planning%20Policy%20Framework/Section%20B/Part%201%20-%20Adopted%20LDDs%20\(Not%20Statutory\)/Newbiggin%20SPD/Newbiggin-Conservation-Area-SPD.pdf](https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Consolidated%20Planning%20Policy%20Framework/Section%20B/Part%201%20-%20Adopted%20LDDs%20(Not%20Statutory)/Newbiggin%20SPD/Newbiggin-Conservation-Area-SPD.pdf)

accommodated the main town centre. The fishing industry created the tightly packed small-scale groups of buildings and spaces, which is key to the special interest of the conservation area. The original residential use of many of the properties has determined the domestic scale of much of the town centre;

- Suburban extension – the later growth of the town with Front Street and Gibson Street as its spine, in the middle of the bay and raised up from it. This area is almost entirely residential; and
- Church Point – at the norther tip of the bay and distinctly separate from the linear development of the historic core and suburban extension.

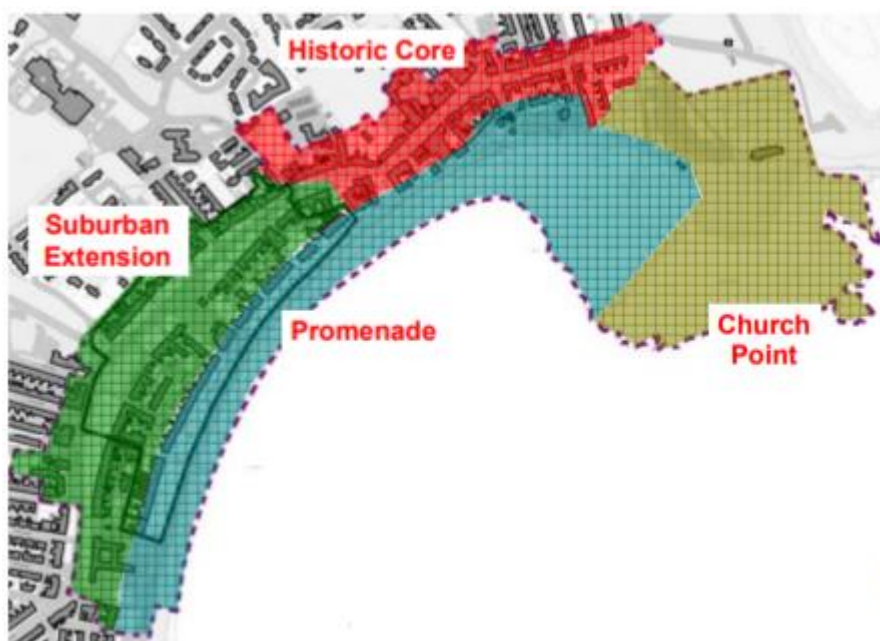


Figure 5: Character Areas

4.25 Several individual buildings are identified within the character appraisal as being of importance to its significance:

- **Church of St Bartholomew** – grade I listed, from at least the thirteenth century;
- **Lifeboat House** (1851) and **Rocket House**⁷ (1866) near Robinson Square is the oldest working lifeboat house in the country, having been in continuous operation since it first opened. The Rocket House, built onto the rear of the lifeboat house, is an early example of a building specifically built to house lifesaving apparatus used when conditions prevented the lifeboat from deploying;
- **Wesleyan Methodist Chapel** at Robinson Square (1844), grade I listed and identified as being one of the most characterful buildings in the south-east side of the historic core;
- **Queen Victoria Public House** (1928) and **New Dolphin Public House** (1908)⁸, with great architectural integrity as well as a good townscape presence on Front and High Streets;
- **116 Front Street** – an attractive and imposing building, which was opened in 1899 as a new Co-operative Society public hall and shops by Lady Watts, a distinguished nurse,

⁷ The Rocket House was not specifically referred to in the CACA however, its significance is now better understood following recent conservation work.

⁸ The New Dolphin Public House fell into disrepair and was replaced by a retail and office development.

balloonist and geographer. John Braine was employed as librarian while he wrote his seminal novel 'Room at the top'⁹;

- **Café Riviera Building**¹⁰ on Bridge Street, which demonstrates how long the seaside resort phase of the town's life lasted;
- **Former Mechanics Institute** (1881, rebuilt 1914) on Bridge Street has an important historical and social associations for the miners and fishermen of Newbiggin, as well as being an interesting building at a significant corner in the Front Street townscape;
- **White House** and **buildings to the rear** at the junction of Woodhorn Road and Front Street, which was a former farm of 1708;
- **St Andrews Church**¹¹, **St Marks Church**¹² and **the library**¹³ on Front Street, which the character appraisal highlights provide 'solid and smart townscape relief' from the residential environment;
- **Bank House** and its small **garden lodge** which are described as 'a fine remnant of the polite, grand residential character of the suburban extension';
- **Brewery House (1,3 and 5 Front Street)** – the oldest property in the suburban extension.

4.26 Feedback on the draft plan highlighted the importance of Moor End House, on Prospect Place. This was home of Sir Philip Watts from 1885 to 1902, when he was chief designer at Armstrong's factory in Elswick. He was the chief designer for the Royal Navy between 1902 and 1912 and was the architect of HMS Dreadnought which was launched in 1908 as well as many other battleships. Also, that the Queens Head is one of the oldest public houses in Newbiggin, predating Queen Victoria, possibly dating back to Elizabeth 1st. Furthermore, the Coble has a claim to be the oldest public house in Newbiggin, the Cresswell Arms was once the location of a brewery, and the Old Ship was Newbiggin's very earliest tourist destination from the days when its guests arrived by horse and carriage. Inquests used to be held in the room above the New Ship.

4.27 The character appraisal explains that there are two main types of view inside the conservation area, the first from inside the town and the second from the bay and Church Point. Views inside the town are strongly linear, within the historic core views are shortened by topography and sharp bends in the roads. In the suburban extension, trees and gardens are identified as being crucial. Because of the nature of the area, views are small glimpses from the main streets, through back lanes, paths and squares to the sea. By contrast, views within the Church Point area are extensive and dramatic, around the bay to St Bartholomew's Church. The views of the rows of historic terraces which line the bay are definitive of Victorian and early twentieth century seaside resorts. The town's roofscape is identified as being crucial to the success of these views, which is defined by a relatively regular array of traditional pitched roofs and chimneys. With views along the bay detailed and interesting, particularly around the lifeboat station and boatyard.

4.28 The Town Council is keen to make sure that key buildings identified through the character appraisal are afforded special attention whenever development may impact on their significance, as well as that of the Conservation Area. These specific buildings are:

⁹ 'Room at the Top' was written in 10 Matfen Terrace, which is located outside the conservation area.

¹⁰ Now Café Bertorelli

¹¹ Now St Andrews and St Marks

¹² Now the community activity centre

¹³ The library, was demolished five years ago

- Church of St Bartholomew
- Lifeboat house and former rocket house, Robinson Square
- Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, Robinson Square
- Queen Victoria Public House
- 116 Front Street
- Café Bertorelli Building, Bridge Street
- Former Mechanics Institute, Bridge Street
- White House and former farm buildings Woodhorn Road
- St Andrews and St Marks Church
- Community Activity Centre
- Bank House and garden lodge
- Brewery House, Front Street

Policy N4: Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area

Development must conserve or enhance the Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area and its setting.

The following should be considered when assessing the impact of development on the Conservation Area and its setting:

- a. Maintaining the three distinct character areas of the historic core, suburban extension and church point;
- b. Reflecting the locally distinctive architectural characteristics, vernacular building forms and materials;
- c. Respecting the prevailing density and grain of the area;
- d. The impact on views that are important to the character and appearance of the area as referenced in the conservation area character appraisal, including:
 - i. In the historic core of strong linear terraces;
 - ii. In the suburban extension of trees and gardens; and
 - iii. Extensive and dramatic views from the Church Point area around the bay and rows of historic terraces.

5. Sustainable, thriving and healthy community

Introduction

- 5.1 The NPPF highlights the government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. Neighbourhood plans have an important role in supporting the delivery of the number, type and mix of homes that are required in the area. Plan objective 2 seeks to ensure that the plan supports new development which meets the needs of existing and future residents. This includes providing the right types of housing, supporting investment in employment space and the visitor economy, strengthening the role of the town centre and improving infrastructure to support health needs.

Housing

- 5.2 The local community support the provision of housing to meet identified local needs, as well as that which is an appropriate scale to maintain and enhance the special character of the parish. Concerns have been raised through both the early engagement on the plan and the Borderlands work that there is need for a balance of housing for the local community, as people are moving away from the area because of a lack of appropriate housing. To inform this element of the plan, the town council commissioned a housing needs assessment (HNA), prepared by AECOM as part of the governments technical support programme.
- 5.3 The HNA, which is available on the town council website, identified an overall housing target figure in the range of 424 to 521 dwellings to 2036. This is an increase in the housing figure identified in the local plan. The identification of the range was informed by the consideration of different options for growth. Between 2009 and 2019 there were only 61 new homes built in Newbiggin by the Sea. If this level of development continued to 2036, this would only result in a 3.29% growth in population. This is significantly lower than the projected growth in other similar areas, such as Amble (14%), Blyth (17%) and Seaton Valley (14%). The HNA concluded that by exceeding the local plan housing figure, this would help to deliver the objectives of the neighbourhood plan and promote the economic resilience and sustainability of Newbiggin by the Sea.
- 5.4 With regard to the type and size of housing that is required in the area, the HNA identified that Newbiggin by the Sea has an overabundance of 3-bedroom homes (53% of the housing stock). That smaller homes are needed to provide suitable homes for younger adults without children and also those looking to downsize. Furthermore, that larger, 4 and 5 -bedroom homes would make the area more attractive to buyers looking for larger homes and families with children who have a greater need for space.
- 5.5 Between April 2016 and March 2022, 46 dwellings have been constructed within the plan area and a further 92 units have planning permission. In addition, there are 86 units that are subject to current applications which are pending consideration and between 55-85¹⁴ units could be provided on allocations within the local plan (which are not subject to a current application). This would result in the delivery of between 279 and 309 dwellings between 2016 to 2036. As this is lower than the housing target figure identified in the HNA, the town council considered the allocation of additional housing sites through a site assessment process, a housing site assessment background paper provides the full details¹⁵. The outcome of this process was that

¹⁴ Includes two local plan allocations

¹⁵ <http://www.newbiggintowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan/>

there was the capacity to deliver an additional 368-442 new dwellings on sites that were considered to be suitable, available and achievable. This would however be significantly in excess of the local plan housing requirement and may therefore be considered to conflict with a strategic policy of the local plan.

- 5.6 Policy N5 therefore proposes to identify three sites to deliver between 144-173 dwellings to 2036. Table 1 summarises how the housing target figure will be delivered.

Table 1: Delivery of housing target figure

	Number of dwellings
Housing delivered (1 April 2016- 31 March 2022)	46
Sites with planning permission (at 31 March 2021)	99
Pending applications (including 2 NLP allocations – Woodhorn Rd adj. to former arts centre and Former Moorside School)	86
Local plan allocation (Spital House Farm)	55-85
Neighbourhood plan allocations – Storey Crescent (5090), land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea – phase 1 (9231a part) and land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea – phase 2 (9231a part)	144-173
	430-482

Policy N5: Housing site allocations

The following sites, as defined on the policies map, are allocated for housing development:

- H1 Storey Crescent, delivery of approximately 40-50 dwellings;
- H2 Land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea (phase 1), delivery of approximately 11-14 dwellings;
- H3 Land to the south of Newbiggin by the Sea (phase 2), delivery of approximately 93-109 dwellings.

The mix of housing types and tenure delivered on housing sites, including the provision of affordable housing should have regard to and be informed by evidence of housing needs, including Newbiggin by the Sea Housing Needs Assessment (2021) and the Northumberland Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2018) and any subsequent updates.

Development proposals should contribute to meeting identified needs, particularly through the provision of two, four and five bedroom homes.

Employment, local services and tourism

- 5.7 Newbiggin by the Sea should be a place where people can live, work and play. The vision and objectives for the plan are clear that the community should have access to employment opportunities and a town centre that is vibrant, as well as a growth in visitor numbers which supports the success of the local economy.

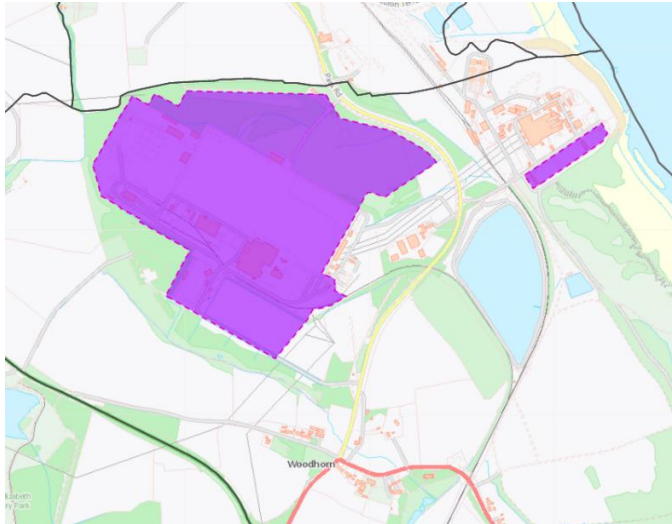


Figure 6: Employment land allocation at Lynefield Park

- 5.8 The local plan includes several policies which will ensure, where planning permission is required, the retention and growth of local businesses, as well as protecting employment land from non-employment generating uses. Policies identify: the need to deliver economic growth whilst safeguarding the environment and community well-being; allocation and protection of sites for employment development (this includes the identification of 49 hectares of employment land at Lynefield Park, the former Lynemouth aluminium smelter – see figure 6); support for home working; and support for other employment uses in the built-up area.
- 5.9 As a result of the detail contained within the local plan, it is considered that the neighbourhood plan could not add anything further to that contained within the local plan. The local plan also includes several policies which will maintain and reinforce the role of Newbiggin by the Sea as a service centre.
- 5.10 There are significant opportunities for tourism in the town. There are many assets including the Maritime Centre, beach and the coastline (located on both the coastal path and coast and castles cycle route), promenade and piazza square, pubs and accommodation (including two established caravan sites and a further site with planning permission). Again, the local plan includes policies which would support the creation of new and expansion of existing tourism facilities and accommodation. Policy ECN15 highlights that Northumberland will be promoted and developed as a destination for tourists and visitors. As a service centre, Newbiggin by the Sea is prioritised for the development of significant new facilities and accommodation.
- 5.11 Community infrastructure supports the health and well-being, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community and is provided through a wide range of venues. Community facilities are identified in the NPPF as: local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. Local plan policy INF2 supports improvements in the quantity, quality, accessibility and range of community services and facilities and it is not necessary to repeat this support within the neighbourhood plan.
- 5.12 There is a range of community services and facilities and services in Newbiggin by the Sea. These are highly valued by local residents and make an important contribution to the vitality and viability of the area. Key services and facilities have been identified through community consultation and by the town council are: the health centre, sports and community centre,

bowling green and the many community halls (Simonside Hall, WI Hall, Elizabethan Hall, Salvation Army Community Hall, St Bartholomew's Church Hall, Newbiggin Maritime Centre, Community Activity Centre).

- 5.13 The NPPF is clear that the planning system should support the development of new community facilities and that valued community facilities should be retained where appropriate. Policy N6 seeks to retain, enhance and protect important community facilities and services.

Policy N6: Community services and facilities

The following facilities are identified as having great importance to the local community and are identified on the policies map:

- CF1 Newbiggin Health Centre;
- CF2 Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre;
- CF3 Milburn Park Pavilion and Bowling Green;
- CF4 Simonside Hall;
- CF5 Women's Institute Hall;
- CF6 Elizabethan hall;
- CF7 Salvation Army Community Hall;
- CF8 St Bartholomew's Church Hall;
- CF9 Newbiggin Maritime Centre; and
- CF10 Newbiggin Community Activity Centre

A development that would result in the loss of any of the identified facilities (CF1 to CF10) would only be supported where the applicant can demonstrate that:

- a. It is no longer needed in its current form; or
- b. A replacement service or facility of sufficient size, layout and quality is to be provided in an alternative suitable location; or
- c. It would not be economically viable or feasible to retain the service or facility and there is no reasonable prospect of securing an alternative community use of the land or building.

6. Rights of Way

- 6.1 Rights of way in the Neighbourhood Area include routes used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. They provide recreation and leisure opportunities and also promote healthy living. The King Charles III England Coast Path is a National Trail that runs through the Neighbourhood Area and is identified on the policies map.
- 6.2 Policy N8 seeks to support proposals to improve or extend the walking and cycling network within the parish, as well as protecting existing routes.

Policy N8: Rights of way

The protection of and improvements to and/or the extension of rights of way will be supported.

Annex 1 Community actions

As part of the process of developing the plan, a number of areas were identified by the local community which cannot be addressed through the planning system. These have been identified as 'community actions' – they do however relate to one or more of the policy areas.

These community actions are supported by the town council. However, many of them will be delivered by, or in conjunction with, other bodies and community groups.

The community actions are grouped under the three plan objectives.

The town council want these projects to be taken forward. This will only happen if there is enough community support, including (but not only) hands on support. It is your chance to get involved and make things happen.

Objective 1 – Distinctive place:

1. Develop environmental enhancement projects particularly regarding improving wildlife corridors, public footpaths and bridleways;
2. Maintenance of open spaces, such as Central Parkway, East Lea Woods and Welfare/ Spital;
3. Work with NCC to update the Newbiggin by the Sea Conservation Area Appraisal;
4. Work with NCC and other stakeholders, including the Newbiggin by the Sea Genealogy Project to consider the identification on non-designated heritage assets;
5. Work with Historic England, NCC and other stakeholders to assist in finding a suitable future for the Grade I listed St Mary's Church which is included on the national heritage at risk register;
6. Support projects to celebrate the diverse heritage of the area.

Objective 2 – Sustainable, thriving and healthy communities:

7. Work with others to seek to establish a business hub to provide office space and shared business support services;
8. Develop initiatives to promote Newbiggin by the Sea as a tourist destination.

Objective 3 – Well connected:

9. Maintenance of public rights of way; and
10. Working with NCC on highway improvement projects.