



Northumberland
County Council

**Seaton Valley Draft Neighbourhood Plan
(January 2021)**

**Strategic Environmental
Assessment (SEA)**

**Screening Opinion
FINAL**

Prepared by the Neighbourhood Planning Team, Northumberland County Council

1 February 2021

Quality Control

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Summary of Screening Opinion

1. Seaton Valley Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan to give protection to areas of open and green space that are of demonstrable importance to the local community. The Neighbourhood Plan contains only two policies: one designates areas of local green space; and one designates areas of protected open space.
2. A Habitats Regulations Assessment screening opinion concludes that no significant effect on European sites would arise from the introduction of the proposed planning policy.
3. In the opinion of Northumberland County Council, Strategic Environment Assessment of the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan is **NOT** required for the following reason:
 - The Plan does not allocate sites for development or expressly support further development in the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area. Accordingly, significant positive or negative effects on the environment are considered unlikely to arise as a result of the introduction and implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan.
4. This opinion is supported by the statutory consultation bodies, that is: The Environment Agency; Historic England; and Natural England. Their representations can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

1. Legislative Background

Neighbourhood Planning and Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.1 The legislative framework for neighbourhood planning was created through the Localism Act in 2011. This introduced various changes to the Planning Acts¹ which established discretionary powers that allow parish councils to prepare 'neighbourhood development plans', often just called neighbourhood plans. These are planning policy documents. Once brought into legal force (known as being 'made'), they form part of the statutory development plan. This means that policies in made neighbourhood plans must be used by the local planning authority in the determination of planning applications; and where plans contain policies relevant to the proposed development, a decision must be made in accordance with the policy unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Neighbourhood plans therefore have an important role in decision making on planning applications.
- 1.2 Preparing a neighbourhood plan provides an opportunity for local communities to create locally specific planning policies that can shape and influence the type, scale and design of new development in their local area. They also allow certain protections to be created in policies that prevent development on locally cherished green spaces and policies that support the retention of community facilities.
- 1.3 However, being part of the statutory development plan means that various legal obligations have been created to govern the proper preparation of neighbourhood plans. This includes the requirement for formal consultation and engagement during plan preparation; and the requirement for a neighbourhood plan to be examined by an independent person who must provide the local planning authority with a considered opinion on whether a draft neighbourhood plan meets a range of legal tests. These tests are known collectively as the 'basic conditions' and are set out in Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and in the Neighbourhood Planning General Regulations (2012) (as amended).

¹ The Localism Act introduced changes to the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) and the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) which, along with various statutory Regulations provide the legal framework allowing neighbourhood plans and orders to be prepared by parish councils.

1.4 In the context of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), the basic conditions require, amongst other things, that:

- the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations;

and that:

- 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.

1.5. Collectively, it is these two basic conditions that require further detailed consideration to be given to the impact a neighbourhood plan may have on the environment and on protected species and habitats before it can be brought into force. The procedures to be followed in determining whether a plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment are set out in European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (the SEA Directive), which is transposed into UK legislation through The Environmental Assessment of Plans and programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations).

1.6. Where a plan is judged likely to have significant environmental effects it is necessary to undertake an assessment of those effects in accordance with the processes set out in the SEA Directive and the SEA Regulations. In reaching that judgement on whether significant environmental effects are likely to arise from the introduction and implementation of a neighbourhood plan a process known as 'screening' is required. This establishes whether, in the opinion of a responsible authority, the plan will require further assessment or not. Where a plan requires further assessment, this will result in the need to prepare an environmental report which becomes one of the documents that must be submitted for independent examination alongside the plan.

1.7. When considering whether a plan would be likely to have significant environmental effects there are two routes that may lead to a positive conclusion on that question:

- Firstly, in accordance with Regulation 5(3) of the SEA Regulations, if it has been determined that a plan requires ‘appropriate assessment’ under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations) as a result of its likely impacts on European designated sites, this automatically triggers the need for SEA and the preparation of an environmental report. In such circumstances there is no further requirement to provide a separate screening opinion under the SEA Regulations;
- Secondly, in accordance with Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations, the responsible authority must determine whether or not a neighbourhood plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment. This is generally known as a ‘screening opinion’. If a screening opinion prepared by a responsible authority concludes that there are likely to be significant environmental effects arising from the implementation of the plan then SEA will be required, including the need to prepare an environmental report.

1.8 The County Ecologist has considered whether appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations is required for the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan. An initial screening opinion has been provided confirming that appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations is not required.

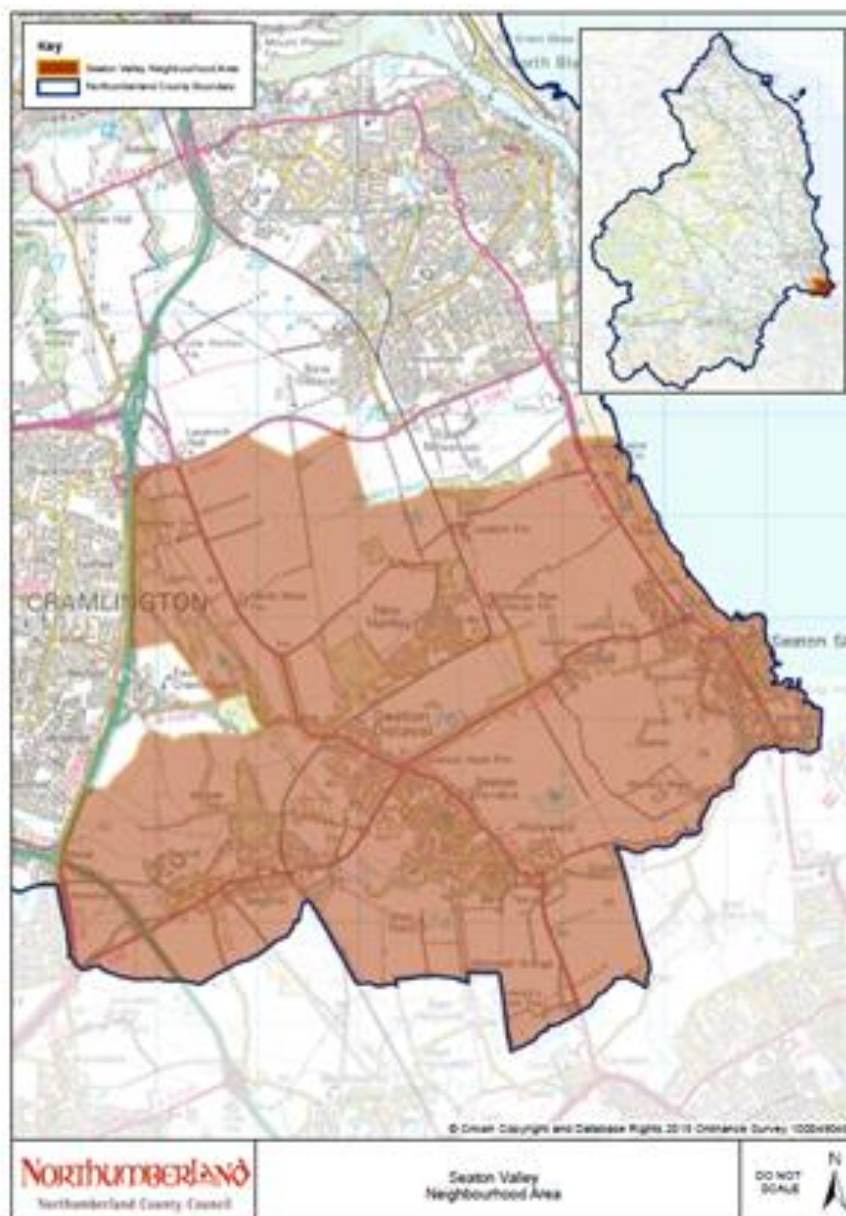
1.9 This report provides a separate screening opinion regarding the environmental effects anticipated to arise from the introduction of the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan and whether, in the opinion of Northumberland County Council as the responsible authority for the purposes of the SEA Regulations, the Plan would have significant environmental effects such that SEA is required.

2. Seaton Valley Draft Neighbourhood Plan

The Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area

- 2.1 Seaton Valley is a small coastal parish in south east Northumberland. The Neighbourhood Area covers the entire civil parish of Seaton Valley (figure 1).

Figure 1. The Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area



The Draft Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan Policies

- 2.2 The Plan contains two policies: one designates areas of local green space; and one designates areas of protected open space. These policies, shown in full below, are designed to give protection to areas of open and green space that are of demonstrable importance to the local community.

Policy SV1: Local Green Space

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

Seaton Delaval

LGS1 Memorial Park, Double Row (Poppy Park);
LGS2 Astley Park;

Seaton Sluice

LGS3 The Dunes Play Park and land between Links Road and the dunes;
LGS4 Sunken garden, The Links;
LGS5 Land between The Melton Constable and Seaburn Grove;
LGS6 Land at the harbour and adjacent to the Seaton Burn;
LGS7 Rocky Island;
LGS8 Ballast/Sandy Island;
LGS9 Headland behind The Kings Arms;
LGS10 Memorial Park, Collywell Bay Road;
LGS11 Seaton Sluice Memorial Park;
LGS12 Land to the east of Collywell Bay Road to Crag Point and along headland to Old Hartley;
LGS13 Land to the south of East End, adjacent to Old Hartley Car Park;
LGS14 Land at Southward Close;
LGS15 Land at west side of Simonside;
LGS16 Paddock to the south of Collywell Bay Road;

Holywell

LGS17 Holywell Pond;
LGS18 Land east of East Grange (old orchard site);
LGS19 Land east of Elsdon Avenue and Seaton Terrace Doctor's Surgery;
LGS20 Bates Welfare Sports Ground;

New Hartley

LGS21 New Hartley Memorial Recreation Field;
LGS22 Hester Pit Memorial;
LGS23 New Hartley Nature Reserve;

Seghill

LGS24 Welfare Recreation Ground.

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

Policy SV2: Protected Open Space

The following areas of open space, as defined on the policies map, shall be protected:

Seaton Delaval

POS1 Lambley Crescent Play Park (Wheatridge Estate);
POS2 Mitford Avenue Play Park and Football Arena;
POS3 Cat Park, Avenue Head;
POS4 Hallington Drive Play Park;
POS5 Ancroft Road allotments;
POS6 Seghill Road allotments;
POS7 Baxter Terrace allotments;
POS8 Dartford Close allotments;
POS9 Seaton Terrace allotments;
POS10 Victoria Close allotments;
POS11 Land between the rear of Avenue Road and Glanton Avenue;
POS12 Land on Western Avenue;
POS13 Land between Western Avenue and St Stephen's Close;
POS14 Land at St Stephen's Close;
POS15 Land behind Melrose Avenue;
POS16 Land behind Newburgh Avenue;
POS17 Land behind Thornhill Close;
POS18 Land at Ambridge Way and Jackson Close;
POS19 Land at Denham Drive;
POS20 Football ground, Wheatridge Park;
POS21 Wheatridge allotments;
POS22 Rear of Acomb Avenue;

Seaton Sluice

POS23 Play Park at Beresford welfare and grassed areas;
POS24 Crag Park Sports Ground;
POS25 Hartley Square Play Park;
POS26 Beresford Road allotments;
POS27 West Terrace allotments;
POS28 Dene Top allotments;
POS29 Land at east end of Derwent Road;
POS30 Land between Westlands and Easedale;
POS31 Land at East Farm Cottages, Eastcroft to Old Hartley Car Park;
POS32 Old Hartley Caravan and Motorhome site;
POS33 Land between Beresford Road and The Crest, Dereham Road and Granville Avenue;
POS34 Land west of Millfield;
POS35 Land between the rear of Southward Close and Millfield;
POS36 Land on Melton Crescent;
POS37 Land south of Rosewood Crescent;
POS38 Land at the rear of the Harbour View;
POS39 Land to the east of Clarence Street;

Holywell

POS40 Play Park and land at Seaton Terrace;
POS41 Coppergate allotments;
POS42 Halls Farm allotments and Hollywell Veteran's Hut;
POS43 Land between the rear of Chatham Close and Sandown Close;
POS44 Land between the rear of Stamford Avenue and Brentwood Close;
POS45 Land between the rear of Denham Drive and Staward Avenue;
POS46 Land between the rear of Tillmouth Avenue and Denham Drive;
POS47 Land on Cheswick Road;
POS48 Land at west end of Northside Place;
POS49 Land between the rear of Acomb Avenue and Swarland Road;
POS50 Land adjacent to the Milbourne Arms;

New Hartley

POS51 Hastings Gardens Play Park;
POS52 Gloria Avenue allotments;
POS53 Memorial field allotments;
POS54 Land on Bristol Street between Dorchester Court and Chipchase Court;

Seghill

POS55 Deneside Play Park;
POS56 The Crescent Play Park;
POS57 Land between the rear of The Crescent and shops on Main Street South;
POS58 Land between Front Street and Northcott Gardens;
POS59 Land at the west end of Reid's lane next to Annitsford Road;
POS60 Land at the rear of houses on Laycock Gardens and Barrass Avenue;
POS61 Land at the rear of Burnlea Gardens;
POS62 Land between Station Road and Barrowburn Place;

POS63 Land in the middle of Barrowburn Place;
POS64 Land between Station Road and Blaketown;
POS65 Esmeralda Gardens;
POS66 Brickwork reclamation site;
POS67 Mill Lane Allotments;
POS68 Land at the junction of Backworth Lane and Annitsford Road.

Development that will result in the loss of protected open space will only be supported where the applicant has robustly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the local planning authority, that the:

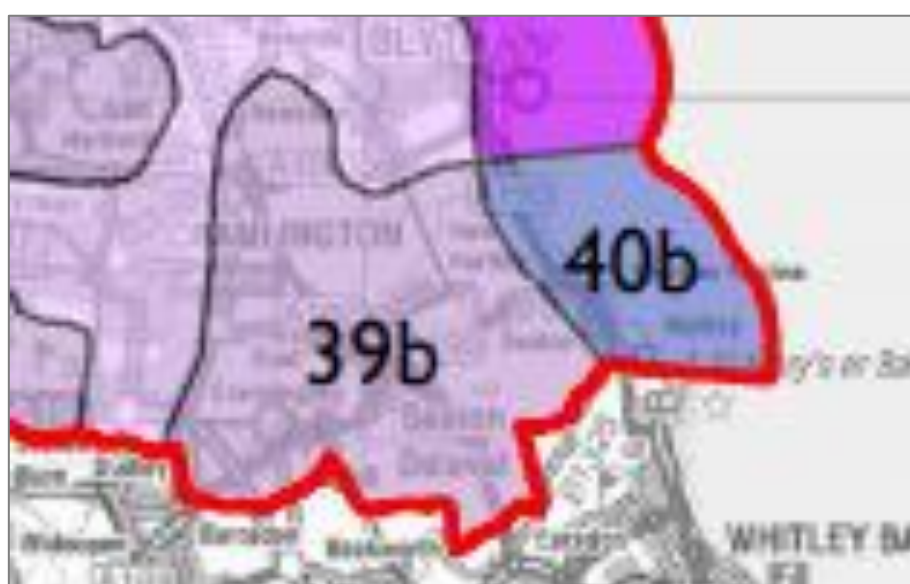
- a. Open space is surplus to requirements; or
- b. Loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by at least equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality, including amenity value, in a suitable location; or
- c. Development is for alternative open space provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

3. Seaton Valley Environmental Context

Landscape quality

- 3.1 The Parish lies in the South East Northumberland Coastal Plain National Character Area (NCA). The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010) identified two distinct Landscape Character Types (LCT) in the Neighbourhood Area: Coalfield Farmland; and Broad Bays and Dunes (figure 2).²

Figure 2. Landscape Character Types in Seaton Valley Parish



- 3.2 39b is Seaton Delaval, an area which slopes gently east from Cramlington to the coastal strip at Seaton Sluice. The large arable and pastoral fields with outgrown hedges are typical of the LCT, although there are more shelterbelts here, and the estate woodlands of Seaton Delaval Hall provide landscape features, including a long avenue on the A190. The surrounding settlement edges and main roads are key influences. Brick predominates within settlements such as Seaton Delaval, although sandstone farmsteads remain elsewhere. Historic and ongoing mineral extraction has affected large parts of the landscape, while urban fringe is also a key influence. This is a heavily modified

² Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment
<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Studies%20and%20Evidence%20Reports/Landscape%20Green%20Spaces%20Studies/1.%20Landscape%20Character/Landscape-Character-Part-A.pdf>

landscape which has lost much of its natural landscape structure and which is dominated by human-made elements.³

- 3.3 40b is Seaton Dunes, is a short strip of coastline comprising the sandy bay between Blyth and Seaton Sluice. The bay is backed by high dune systems, while the coastal edge of the town is formed by a rocky headland. The dunes have car parks for access, and a well-used coastal footpath. Although the dune systems are generally intact, infrastructure such as car parking is in poorer condition. Combined with the industrial features of Blyth Harbour, which are always visible, this extends an urban fringe feel to the landscape. Although largely undeveloped, and with significant nature conservation interest, the coastline has been extensively modified by past mineral extraction.⁴

Biodiversity and geodiversity

- 3.4 There are three local nature reserves in the Parish: East Cramlington; Holywell Dene; and Blyth to Seaton Sluice Dunes (figure 3).
- 3.5 East Cramlington LNR is of value to a range of declining lowland farm birds including skylark, song thrush, linnet, grey partridge and yellow hammer. The grassland is dominated by a range of species including common bent, soft brome, red fescue, Yorkshire fog and sweet vernal grass. A pond supports a wide range of invertebrates and amphibians. The site also supports a wide range of butterflies including small copper, orange tip, green-veined white, wall, large skipper and large white.⁵
- 3.6 Holywell Dene is an area of ancient semi-natural woodland with associated ground flora. The area also has estuarine grassland (salt marsh) and the Seaton Burn watercourse flows through the site. Species include otters, Goldilocks buttercup, kingfisher and bats.⁶
- 3.7 The Dunes LNR overlaps with the Northumberland Shore SSSI (figure 4). The site is home to coastal dart, lyme grass moth (a local and scarce species) and banded land snails.⁷

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

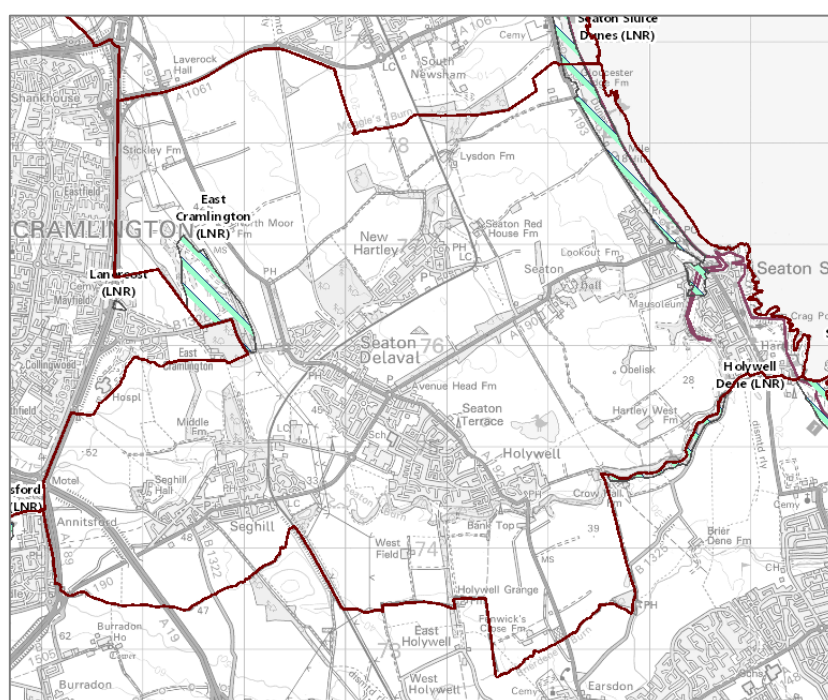
⁵ East Cramlington LNR <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1009610>

⁶ Holywell Dene LNR <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1009794>

⁷ Blyth to Seaton Sluice Dunes LNR

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1082943>

Figure 3. Seaton Valley Local Nature Reserves⁸



3.8 The Northumberland Shore SSSI includes most of the coastline between the Scottish border and the Tyne Estuary and consists largely of sandy bays separated by rocky headlands with wave-cut platforms, backed by dunes or soft and hard cliffs. Discrete areas of estuarine intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh are also included. The site is of international or national significance for six bird species: purple sandpiper, turnstone, sanderling, golden plover, ringed plover and redshank. In the Neighbourhood Area, the condition of this site is described as ‘favourable’.⁹

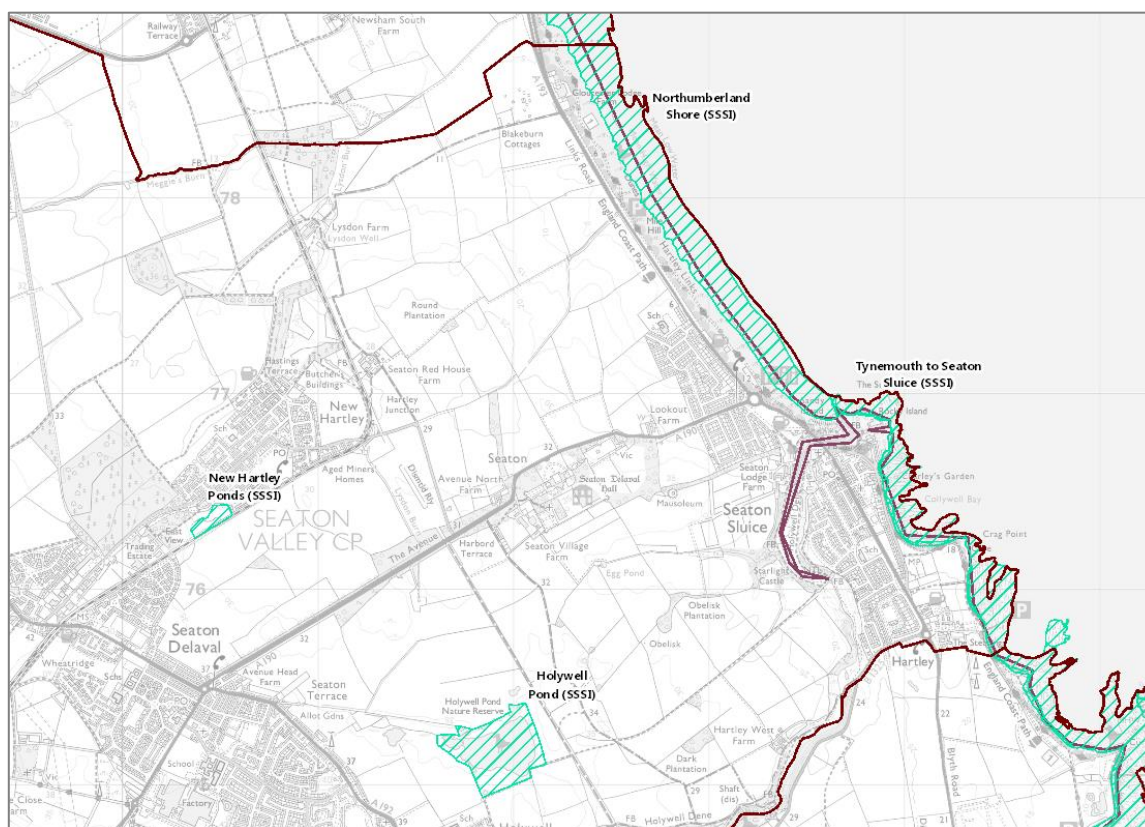
3.9 Tynemouth to Seaton Sluice SSSI supports a significant proportion of the internationally important winter populations of purple sandpiper (over 10%), sanderling (over 10%) and turnstone (over 5%) which occur on the Northumberland coast. In addition there are locally important numbers of knot, ringed plover and golden plover. The site was most recently assessed in 2011 when its condition was described as ‘favourable’ with no identified threats.¹⁰

⁸ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

⁹ Natural England Designated Sites View
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s2000134>

¹⁰ Natural England Designated Sites
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1001176>

Figure 4. Seaton Valley SSSIs¹¹



3.10 Holywell Pond SSSI is a subsidence pond overlying old coal workings. It is attractive to wintering and migratory waterfowl, including teal, wigeon, pochard, goldeneye and tufted duck. Of particular note is a large roosting herd of whooper swans, comprising more than 1% of the British wintering population of this species. Breeding species include little grebe, great-crested grebe, tufted duck and yellow wagtail. The pond is also a Local Wildlife Site designated as such for its substantive nature conservation value. The site was most recently assessed in 2010 when its condition was described as 'unfavourable – no change'. Previous surveys in 2004 and 2001 recorded the same condition. The main reason being pollution caused by excess geese populations and this need to be managed. No assessment of condition threat has been undertaken.¹²

3.11 New Hartley Ponds SSSI are seasonal ponds with a vegetation cover of amphibious bistort, common spike-rush, water horsetail and water crowfoot. They are frequented by five species of breeding amphibian. Of

¹¹ DEFRA Magic Maps <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

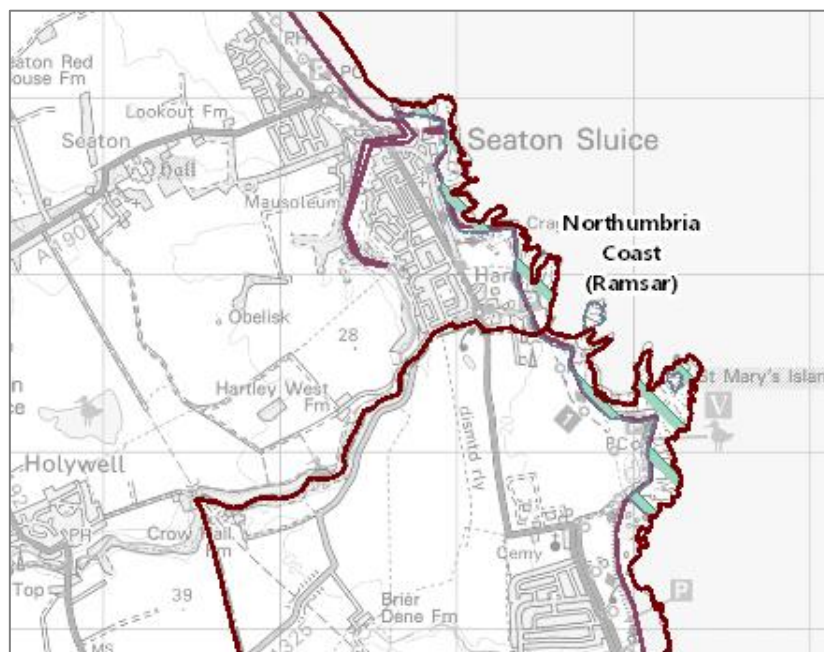
¹² Natural England Designated Sites

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1000949>

particular note is the great crested newt with a population in some years in excess of 500 individuals. The site was most recently assessed in 2010 when its condition was described as 'favourable' (the report actually states 'outstanding') with no identified threats. Following s106 works the site now has six ponds, and terrestrial habitat is present. Amphibian numbers are very good.¹³

- 3.12 The southern portion of the coast in the Neighbourhood Area is part of the Northumbria Coast RAMSAR site which comprises several discrete sections of rocky foreshore that support internationally important numbers of purple sandpiper, turnstone and little tern (figure 5). Most of the site is composed of cliffs, crags/ledges, intertidal rock, open coast and pools and assists in shoreline stabilization, dissipation of erosive forces, and sediment trapping. There is no data available on its condition; however, its bird population – particularly little tern - is vulnerable to disturbance by year-round visitors to the coast.¹⁴

Figure 5. Northumbria Coast RAMSAR¹⁵



¹³ Natural England Designated Sites

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=s1000365>

¹⁴ Ramsar Sites Information Service <https://rsis.ramsar.org/ris/1019>

¹⁵ DEFRA Magic Maps <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

3.13 In order to ensure appropriate management of threats arising from increased recreational pressure to the European designated habitats and protected species along the Northumberland coast Northumberland County Council has introduced a programme of planned mitigation. The Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service (CMS) has been created to ensure the impact of new residential development and tourist accommodation is adequately mitigated. The CMS comprises 2 separate zones where different development tariffs apply. These are shown in figure 6. Seaton Valley lies wholly within the 0km to 7km zone.

Figure 6. Coastal Mitigation Service Zones



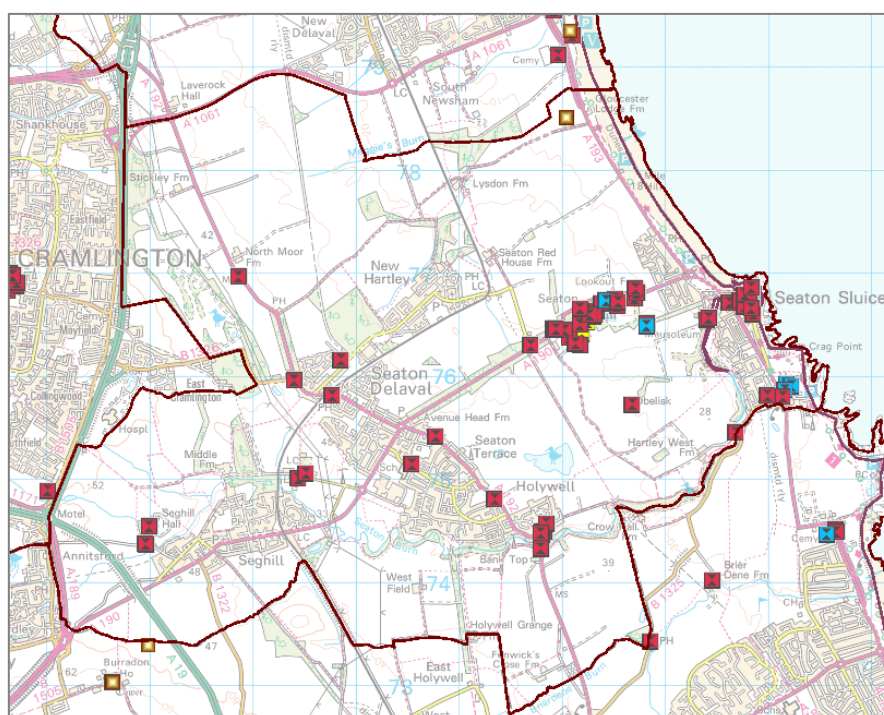
3.14 The aim of the CMS is to prevent a net increase in disturbance to bird species within the European designated sites as a result of increased recreational pressure on those protected areas caused by new development. Financial contributions of £600 per dwelling are required from new development within Seaton Valley. The funds created through the CMS will pay for mitigation measures including awareness raising and promoting behavioural change among visitors to the coast and implementing projects to manage visitor access and to improve bird habitats.¹⁶

¹⁶ Northumberland County Council. The Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service Strategy Document <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Local%20Plan/Northumberland-Coastal-Mitigation-Service-Strategy-Document-December-2018.pdf>

Heritage Assets

3.15 There are 67 designated heritage assets in the Parish (figure 7). Two are grade I (Seaton Delaval Hall and the Church of Our Lady), six are Grade II* listed, and fifty nine are Grade II listed structures. In addition, there is a Scheduled Monument: Gloucester Lodge Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, the remains of a multi-phase Second World War heavy anti-aircraft gun battery and radar site.¹⁷

Figure 7. Designated Heritage Assets in Seaton Valley

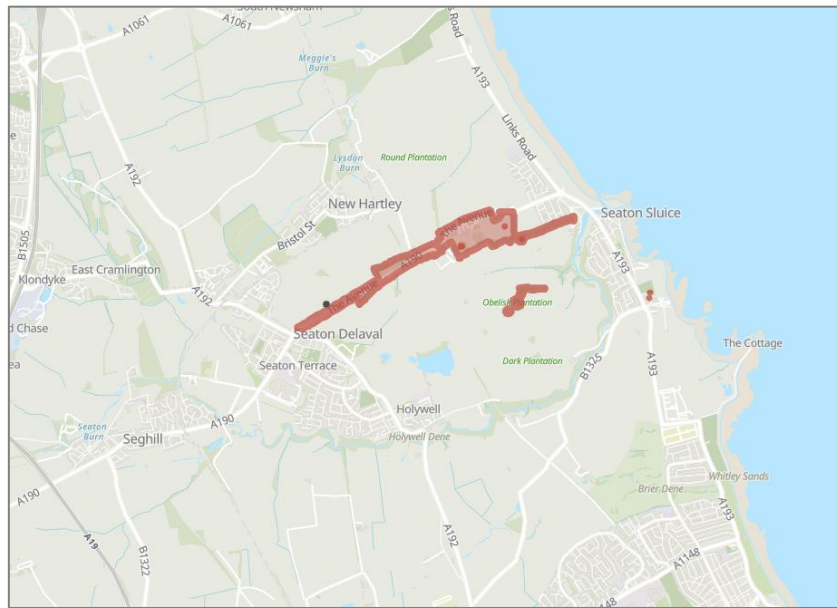


3.16 There are 3 heritage at risk sites in the Parish (figure 8). Seaton Delaval is a registered park and garden (grade II*) and comprises remains of an early 18th century park and garden, partially restored in the 1950s-60s. The approach avenue is deteriorating and woodland regeneration is concealing key landscape features, including earthworks and the mausoleum. Ha-ha walls and corner bastions are being damaged by scrub and tree growth, with areas of partial collapse. The site is in a 'generally satisfactory' condition but with significant localised problems. Its vulnerability is described as 'medium' but the trend is improving. Major conservation and repair works are now in progress.¹⁸

¹⁷ National Heritage List for England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

¹⁸ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/24712>

Figure 8. Heritage at Risk (2019) in Seaton Valley¹⁹



- 3.17 North west pillbox, Fort House, Hartley is a Pillbox or defensible latrine (grade II* listed), circa 1917 and is a rare survival of part of a World War I fort. It is suffering from structural problems and lack of maintenance. The site is in a 'poor' condition and exhibiting 'slow decay'. A repair scheme has been drawn up with funding from Historic England.²⁰
- 3.18 Water tank, Fort House, Hartley is a water tank incorporating former ablutions building (grade II* listed), built circa 1917 and is a rare survival of part of a World War I fort. It is suffering from structural problems and lack of maintenance. The site is in a 'poor' condition and exhibiting 'slow decay'. A repair scheme has been drawn up with funding from Historic England.²¹

Water

Flood Risk

- 3.19 The full extent of the coastline in this Neighbourhood Plan area is at high risk of flooding (this means that each year the chance of flooding of greater than 3.3%). In addition, there is a high flood risk along Seaton Burn that flows through Seaton Delaval eastwards to the sea (figure 9).

¹⁹ <https://englishheritage.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e7b85d3427e14588a9760eaa4f8a88d0>

²⁰ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/48149>

²¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/list-entry/48150>

Figure 9. Flood risk in Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area²²



Water availability

3.20 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.²³

Water quality

3.21 Seaton Burn flows eastwards through the Neighbourhood Area to the North Sea (figure 10). Water quality was classed as ‘moderate’ for each year 2013-2016, which is the latest data available. The River has been heavily modified by human activity and this, in addition to pollution from towns, cities and transport, are the reasons why the River is not achieving ‘good’ status.²⁴

²² Environment Agency Flood Risk

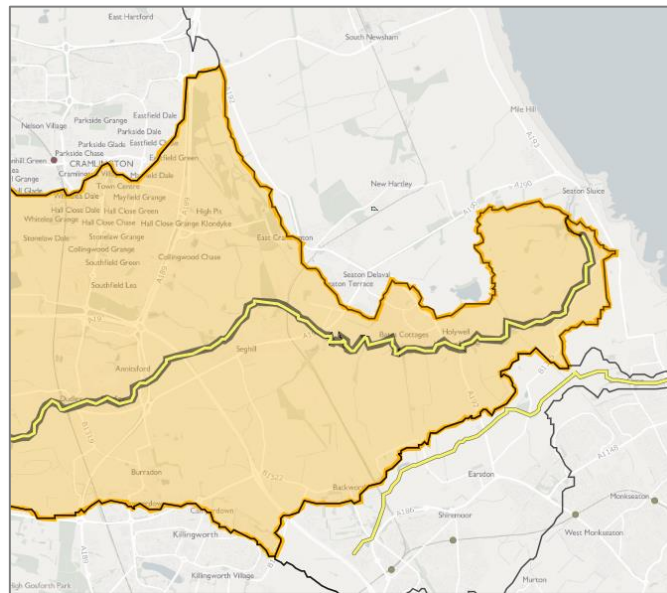
<https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk/map>

²³ Northumbrian Water <https://www.nwg.co.uk/responsibility/environment/wrmp/current-wrmp-2015-2020/>

²⁴ Seaton Burn from Source to Tidal Limit water course, Environment Agency

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB103022076190>

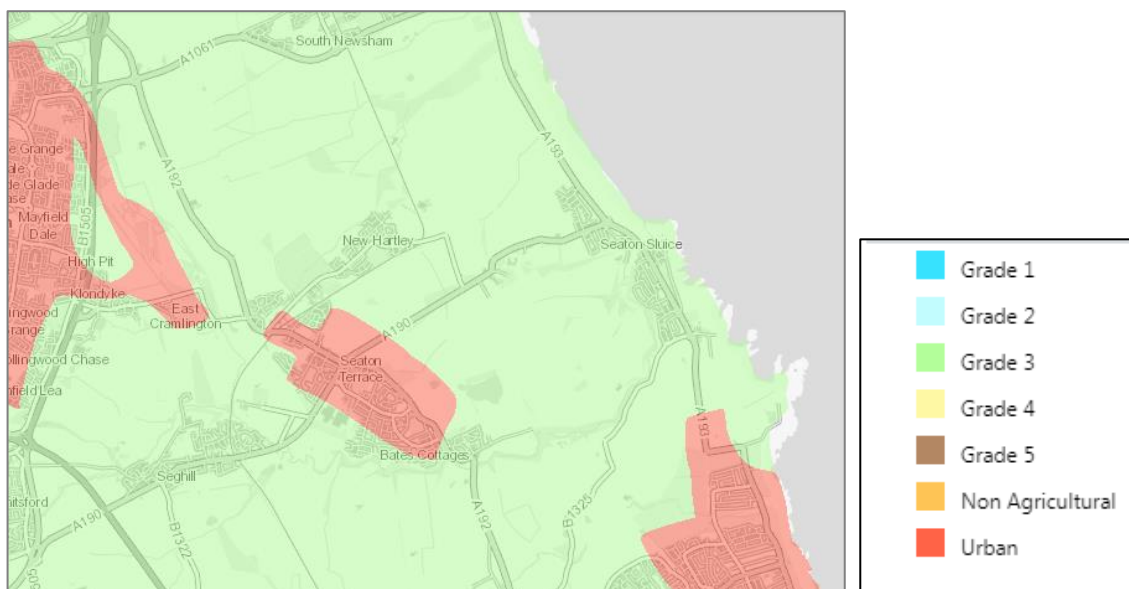
Figure 10. Seaton Burn



Agricultural land

3.22 The Agricultural Land Classification classifies land into five grades. Grade one is best quality and grade five is poorest quality. The agricultural land in the Neighbourhood Area is grade 3, i.e. good to moderate quality agricultural land (figure 11).²⁵

Figure 11. Agricultural Land Classification in Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area



²⁵ DEFRA Data Services
<https://environment.data.gov.uk/DefraDataDownload/?mapService=NE/AgriculturalLandClassificationProvisionalEngland&Mode=spatial>

Pollution

Air pollution

3.23 Within the County, since 2007, there has been a trend of decreasing nitrogen dioxide and particulate levels at monitoring stations. As of November 2019, the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area has no recorded Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), and air quality is not automatically monitored anywhere within the Neighbourhood Area as part of the annual screening process carried out by Northumberland County Council.²⁶ There are no significant and tangible air quality issues in the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Water pollution

3.24 There are no Groundwater Source Protection Zones in the area indicating that there is little risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area.

²⁶ 2019 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), Northumberland County Council
<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Public-Protection/Pollution/2019-LAQM-Annual-Status-Report.pdf>

4. Assessment

4.1 Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment arising from plans and programmes are set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive. These have been used in this screening opinion to determine whether the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan (January 2021) is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The criteria are split into two categories: those relating to the characteristics of the Plan and those relating to the characteristics of the effects and areas likely to be affected.²⁷ An assessment of the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan against these criteria is set out in Table 1 below.

4.2 The likely significance of effects on the environment arising from introducing the proposed policies in the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan has been determined using the criteria within the SEA Directive.

Table 1: Assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment

Criteria	Assessment
The characteristics of the plan, having regard to:	
(a) the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development and does not set a framework to expressly support additional development. It therefore does not set a framework for the location, nature, size or operating conditions for projects or other activities and does not allocate resources.

²⁷ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. Annex II Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

Criteria	Assessment
The characteristics of the plan, having regard to:	
(b) the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	The Neighbourhood Plan is in accordance with the strategic policies in the existing development plan, and with policies proposed in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan. It is a discreet document that does not influence other plans and programmes.
(c) the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development. Its relevance for the integration of environmental considerations is therefore limited.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	The environmental context for the area described elsewhere in this Screening Opinion reveals no particular environmental problems of any relevance to the Plan.
(e) the relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	Neighbourhood plans cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of waste management since this is 'excluded development' by virtue of the Planning Acts. The Plan has no particular relevance for the implementation of other Community legislation, apart from its limited association with legislation designed to ensure continued protection of European designated sites. A programme of mitigation, the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service, has already been put in place to address the issues arising from any potential additional recreational disturbance in those European designated sites along the Northumberland coast.

Criteria	Assessment
The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard to:	
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development and does not expressly support additional development. It is therefore not anticipated that any significant positive or negative effects are likely to arise from the implementation of the Plan.
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects	The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development and does not expressly support additional development. It is therefore not anticipated that any significant positive or negative effects are likely to arise from the implementation of the Plan, and no cumulative impact is predicted.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects	The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development and does not expressly support additional development. It is therefore not anticipated that any significant positive or negative effects are likely to arise from the implementation of the Plan and no transboundary effects are predicted.
(d) the risks to human health or the environment.	The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development and does not expressly support additional development. It is therefore not anticipated that any significant positive or negative effects are likely to arise from the implementation of the Plan, and no significant risks to human health or the environment are predicted.

Criteria	Assessment
The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard to:	
<p>(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).</p>	<p>The two policies in the Plan apply solely to sites in the Neighbourhood Area. These are numerous but the geographical area likely to be affected is relatively small. The number of people likely to be affected, however, is significant given the proximity of sites to residential areas.</p>
<p>(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; • intensive land-use; • the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status 	<p>The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development and does not expressly support additional development. It is therefore not anticipated that any significant positive or negative effects are likely to arise from the implementation of the Plan.</p> <p>The Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area contains a number of international and national ecological and heritage designations. This makes the area highly valued but also sensitive and potentially vulnerable to disturbance and to change. However, as described in the Screening Opinion, the general condition of these designated areas and assets is favourable or improving and the risk to their status from implementation of the Plan is judged to be low.</p> <p>The two policies in the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan seek to protect areas of open and green space <i>because</i> they have demonstrable importance to the local community. These areas comprise many different forms of 'green space' which contribute to the character and appearance of the built and natural environment, support wildlife, and help to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Many of these areas are already used by residents and visitors for leisure or recreational purposes. Designation is unlikely to intensify the use of these areas.</p>

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The potential positive or negative effects of the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan on the environment have been found not to be significant.
- 5.2 The Plan covers a small area along the south east Northumberland coast. The policies set out in the Plan seek to protect areas of open and green space that are of demonstrable importance to the local community.
- 5.3 Significant environmental effects are considered unlikely to arise through the implementation of the Plan, which does not allocate land for development or expressly support new development.
- 5.4 On the basis of the assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment of implementing the Plan as set out in Table 1 of this Screening Opinion, the conclusion is:

In the opinion of Northumberland County Council, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan *is unlikely to have any significant positive or negative effects on the environment.* Therefore, Strategic Environmental Assessment is NOT required for the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan for the following reason:

- **The Plan covers a relatively small area and does not allocate sites for development or expressly support further development in the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area. Accordingly, significant positive or negative effects on the environment are considered unlikely to arise as a result of the introduction and implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan.**
- 5.5 This conclusion is supported by the statutory consultation bodies.

Appendix 1: Responses received from Consultation Bodies



Sarah Brannigan <sarah.brannigan@northumberland.gov.uk>

RE: Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan - EA Consultation on SEA Screening Opinion

Mo, Lucy <lucy.mo@environment-agency.gov.uk>

11 September 2020 at 08:05

To: "sarah.brannigan@northumberland.gov.uk" <sarah.brannigan@northumberland.gov.uk>

Hi Sarah,

Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to the consultation.

Based on matters within our remit, it is considered that the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment when considered against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. Therefore, a SEA will not be required.

In order to assist with workload planning, are you aware of any other neighbourhood plan (other than the Seaton Valley submission) consultations due for consultation this financial year?

Many thanks



Ms Sarah Brannigan
Northumberland County Council
Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure
Planning Services
County Hall, Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]
Our ref: PL00710962

1 September 2020

Dear Ms Brannigan

**Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004: Regulation 9
Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan: SEA Screening Opinion, August 2020**

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

Based on the analysis set out in the Screening Opinion, and within the areas of interest to Historic England, we agree that the emerging plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and, therefore, it does not need SEA. In coming to this view we have taken the following factors into consideration:

- The plan area contains many heritage assets including a conservation area (CA), listed buildings, a scheduled monument (SM), a registered park and garden (RPG), and the potential for many non-designated assets (NDHAs). Note, the report fails to refer to the CA or the potential for NDHAs, and it does not seem to count the SM, RPG or CA in the total number of designated heritage assets given; these errors do not change our opinion.
- Heritage assets are fragile and irreplaceable and can be damaged by change through development both directly and indirectly by development in their setting.
- The plan is not expected to allocate sites for development.

As such, from the perspective of our area of interest, the need for SEA of the draft plan can be screened out as it is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects (positive or negative). However, the views of the other two statutory consultees should be taken into account before you conclude on whether SEA is needed. According to Regulation 11 of the above Regulations, I look forward to receiving a copy of your determination in this case.

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.



BESSIE SURTEES HOUSE 41-44 SANDHILL NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE NE1 3JF
Telephone 0191 269 1255
HistoricEngland.org.uk



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.

Date: 4 September 2020
Our ref: 325233



Northumberland County Council

BY EMAIL ONLY

Hornbeam House
Crewe Business Park
Electra Way
Crewe
Cheshire
CW1 6GJ

T 0300 060 3900

Dear Sir/Madam

Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated and received by Natural England on 14 August 2020.

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.

Screening Request: Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan – Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion

It is our advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that, in so far as our strategic environmental interests (including but not limited to statutory designated sites, landscapes and protected species, geology and soils) are concerned, that there are unlikely to be significant environmental effects from the proposed plan.

Neighbourhood Plan

Guidance on the assessment of Neighbourhood Plans, in light of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (as amended), is contained within the [National Planning Practice Guidance](#). The guidance highlights three triggers that may require the production of an SEA, for instance where:

- a neighbourhood plan allocates sites for development
- the neighbourhood area contains sensitive natural or heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals in the plan
- the neighbourhood plan may have significant environmental effects that have not already been considered and dealt with through a sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan.

We have checked our records and based on the information provided, we can confirm that in our view the proposals contained within the plan will not have significant effects on sensitive sites that Natural England has a statutory duty to protect.

We are not aware of significant populations of protected species which are likely to be affected by the policies / proposals within the plan. It remains the case, however, that the responsible authority should provide information supporting this screening decision, sufficient to assess whether protected species are likely to be affected.