

Neighbourhood Planning Update

How to CONTACT us

We are here to support parishes through the neighbourhood planning process.

For further information and advice please contact the neighbourhood planning team:

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When should you review your Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood plans, like all planning policy documents, benefit from being reviewed and revised, to reflect changing context or issues around effectiveness.

When to review?

The decision to review a neighbourhood plan must be taken by the qualifying body based on a consideration of factors such as:

- How the plan policies are being applied to shape decisions on planning applications and appeals;
- Whether plan aims are being achieved;
- Changes to national planning policy, including the September 2020 amendments to the Use Classes Order;
- Changes to the status of local strategic planning policies as the Northumberland Local Plan moves towards adoption; and
- Changing local context including loss of employment, population change or new environmental challenges.

The review process

If you do decide to review your made neighbourhood plan, there are three options available.

A **Minor Review** is for non-material updates, for example, for minor typographical errors or adding information for clarification.

A **Material Modification Review** is for changes which do not alter the overall strategy of the plan but add additional details to the existing policies.

A **Substantial Modification Review** is for significant changes including new site allocations, a new settlement boundary or new policy areas.

Examples of plans that have been reviewed are given in the recent Locality newsletter available through this [link](#).

Please feel free to contact the Neighbourhood Planning team for further advice and support.



The FUTURE of planning?

The government recently consulted on proposed reforms to the Planning System. These proposals are set out in the [White Paper: Planning for the Future](#).

The government proposes to retain Neighbourhood Planning and wishes to make it easier to develop Neighbourhood Plans by supporting communities to make better use of digital tools.

The White Paper provides very little detail about neighbourhood planning. However, the government is considering whether neighbourhood plans should become more focused, to reflect proposals for reforms to Local Plans.

The Neighbourhood Planning Team responded to this consultation; our response can be viewed [here](#).



What's happening around the County?

There are currently ten made neighbourhood plans in Northumberland. These plans form part of the Development Plan for their areas and planning decisions must be made in accordance with their policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Five Neighbourhood Plans are at Referendum stage. **Hexham, Embleton, Lesbury Wooler and Craster** Neighbourhood Plans have successfully passed independent examination and will proceed to referendum when it is safe to do so. These plans will be given significant weight in decision making.

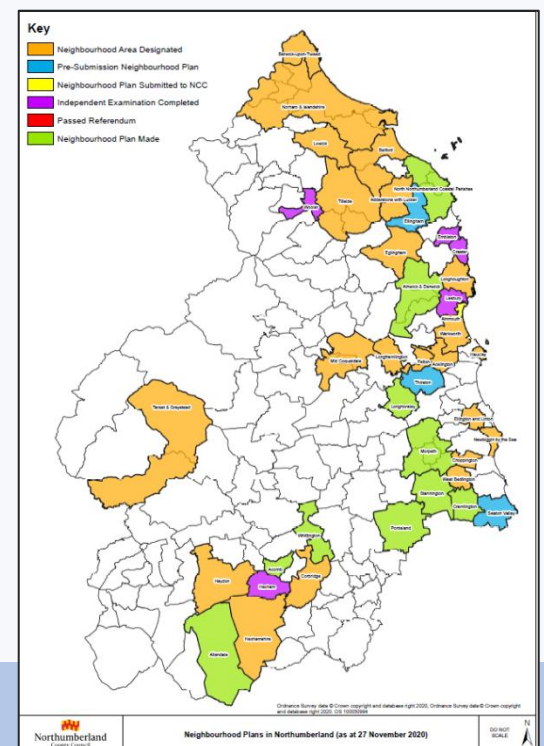
Alnmouth Neighbourhood Plan is at examination stage. The Plan contains a single planning policy relating to a principal residency restriction.

The County Council will consider the outcome of this process in discussion with the Parish Council. The Plan currently carries limited weight in decision making.

Seaton Valley and **Thirston** Parishes have recently consulted on their pre-submission plans.

Seaton Valley Parish is seeking to protect areas of open and green space that are of demonstrable importance to the local community. Their plan contains policies designating Local Green Spaces and Protected Open spaces. Thirston Parish wishes to support business and community services in the context of achieving sustainable development and conserving the special character of the local area. These Plans may now be afforded some weight in the decision-making process.

Twenty-two other parishes are at an earlier stage of plan-making. More information can be found on our [website](#), including a larger version of the map, below.



Environment Bill Progress

The Environment Bill returned to the UK parliament in November. There remain several parliamentary hurdles for it to clear, and therefore significant scope for further amendments to be introduced.

Biodiversity gain

If passed in its current form, the Bill would amend the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act to make provision for biodiversity gain to be a condition of planning permission in England.

Before commencing development, the developer would need to submit a biodiversity net gain plan to the local planning authority for their approval. The local planning authority can only approve the Plan if the 'biodiversity value' attributable to the development is greater than the 'pre-development biodiversity value' of the onsite habitat by at least 10%.

This "biodiversity gain" will be calculated using the government's biodiversity calculator (currently the "Biodiversity Metric 2.0").

There will be exceptions to the biodiversity gain requirement as well as adaptations for smaller sites.

These will be set out in secondary legislation but are likely to include permitted development, householder applications and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

Progress of the Bill can be viewed [here](#).



Impacts of Neighbourhood Planning in England

The government has published the findings of a study into the impact of neighbourhood planning on development outcomes, decision-making and investment, community attitudes and engagement.

The research found that neighbourhood planning's contribution to housing supply can be significant: the 141 plans that had passed referendum and allocated sites for housing between mid-2015 and 2017 allocated a net number of over 18,000 additional dwellings.

Neighbourhood plans have helped improve design policy and refined local priorities, for example, by planning for housing for specific societal groups.

Neighbourhood plans have also improved local engagement with local planning authorities and are important vehicles for place-making beyond land use planning.

Evidence from local planning authorities and appeals indicates neighbourhood plans are influencing decisions, and as a minimum they provide nuance to decisions.

The research found that community attitudes to development may become more positive as a result of the neighbourhood planning experience. Some neighbourhoods reported better relations with local planning authorities, but in other cases poor relations with local authorities and lack of an up-to-date local plan also presented a barrier.

While there has been strong take-up of neighbourhood planning since 2011, take-up rates have slowed considerably. The main reasons for this are time, procedural and technical burdens, relationship with local plan progress, and levels of enthusiasm in some local planning authorities. There is a noticeably low take-up in urban areas, and in northern regions.

Local planning authority support overall is varied, with examples of strong support but also ambivalence in other areas.

The Government is reflecting on these findings and intends to set out next steps in due course.

Click [here](#) to view the whole report.

Neighbourhood Development Orders

Neighbourhood planning groups have the power to create Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs). These grant planning permission for specific types of development within the neighbourhood area.

So far there has been very limited use of NDOs – there are none in Northumberland – but they have real potential especially when carried out in parallel with the preparation of a neighbourhood plan.

For example, if a neighbourhood plan allocated sites for a particular type of development, an NDO could be employed to grant permission for those uses.

Benefits

While a neighbourhood plan can include policies on things like change of use, an NDO can actually allow the development to go ahead without the need to submit a planning application to the County Council. This saves both time and money and additionally, provides certainty to developers.

Uses

Supporting regeneration - Where traditional industries have declined an NDO could support the transition of such areas by allowing a range of specified changes of use, such as commercial uses, and food and drink outlets.

Supporting site allocations – an NDO could be used to grant outline consent for specified uses, together with any limitations. Such permissions could be subject to development design guidelines, to ensure sustainability and good integration with the surrounding area.

Historic areas – an NDO could be used to allow the reinstatement of original features or installation of well-designed shopfronts. An NDO could accompany wider initiatives to improve and regenerate historic areas, such as historic building grant schemes.

We are keen to advance NDOs in Northumberland – if you are interested in finding out more about this, please contact the Neighbourhood Planning Team.

EYE ON NDOs in Practice

In 2018, Broughton in Northamptonshire became only the third NDO to come into force in England.

Policy 4 of the accompanying neighbourhood plan allocates the BT Exchange, a relatively small site in the village of Broughton for development of up to 7 open market housing units consisting of small 'mews' flats and / or terraced houses.

The site is in a key central location and in appearance is starkly out of keeping with its surroundings. The Parish Council sought a sympathetic redevelopment of the site consistent with the heritage street scene.

The NDO grants outline planning permission for the development of this site as outlined in Policy 4 of the Plan.

In order to secure a satisfactory development, the NDO imposes certain conditions on the planning permission including strict adherence to the design principles specified in the order.

Existing BT Exchange.



Indicative design of future development



The Broughton NDO is valid for 6 years. As yet the site has not been redeveloped. For more information, please go to the [Kettering District Council website](#).