

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for The Eglington Neighbourhood Plan

Environmental Report

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Quality information

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Table of Contents

Non-technical summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?	3
3. What is the scope of the SEA?	6
Part 1: What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point?	8
4. Introduction (to Part 1)	9
5. Options assessment	12
6. The preferred approach	16
Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?	17
7. Introduction (to Part 2)	18
8. Assessment of the ENP	20
9. Conclusions and recommendations	24
Part 3: What are the next steps?	26
10. Plan finalisation	27
11. Monitoring	27
Appendices	28
Appendix I: Meeting the Regulations	29
Appendix II: The SEA Scoping Report	33

Non-technical summary

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Eglingham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) 2021-2036.

The Eglingham Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) is currently being prepared as a Neighbourhood Development Plan under the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Neighbourhood plan is being prepared in the context of the adopted East Herts District Plan (2018).

SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. Central to the SEA process is publication of an Environmental Report alongside the draft plan that presents certain required information. The aim is to inform the consultation and, in turn, plan finalisation.

Preparing the Environmental Report essentially involves answering three questions:

1) What has plan-making / SEA involved **up to this point?**

- including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.

2) What are the SEA findings **at this stage?**

- i.e. in relation to the draft plan.

3) What happens **next**

This Environmental Report NTS

This is the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the Environmental Report for the ENP, in which the three questions are answered in turn. Firstly, there is a need to set the scene further by answering: *What's the scope of the SEA?*

What is the scope of the SEA?

The scope of the SEA is reflected in a list of topics and objectives, which, taken together indicate the parameters of the SEA and provide a methodological ‘framework’ for assessment. The SEA framework is presented below:

Table A: The SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity	To protect, maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity sites and networks within and surrounding the Plan area.
Climate change	Avoid and manage flood risk and support the resilience of the Eglington Neighbourhood Plan area to the effects of climate change.
Historic environment	Protect, enhance and manage the integrity, distinctive character and setting of the historic environment and the wider built environment.
Landscape	Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and appearance of landscapes.
Population and housing	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing which meets the needs of occupants throughout their lives.

Plan making/SEA up to this point

An important element of the required SEA process involves assessing **reasonable alternatives** in time to inform development of the draft plan, and then publishing assessment findings in the Environmental Report. As the Northumberland Local Plan (NLP) does not allocate housing growth in Eglington (no housing requirement figure HRF) and there is no local housing needs assessment, the ENP Steering Group did not consider allocating housing growth in the ENP. As such, there are no reasonable alternatives to consider in terms of development site allocations.

One reasonable alternative was considered in the SEA process which pertains to ENP policy 4 (Local Green Spaces in the villages of Eglington and South Charlton). The policy designates 22 sites as LGS. The supporting text for the emerging NLP’s policy INF5 (Open space and facilities for sport and recreation) states that ‘whilst the opportunity to create Local Green Space through the Local Plan exists, the County Council considers that, given the need to show that any such designation is demonstrably special to a local community, the most appropriate mechanism for designating Local Green Space is through a neighbourhood plan.’ Engagement on the emerging ENP has identified that the distinctiveness of the plan area is hugely valued by the local community. Therefore, the ENP designates areas of Local Green Space seeking to protect these areas which contribute to the character and the landscape in the Parish.

The SEA considered the reasonable alternative of not designating the 22 LGS sites in the ENP, as these would be offered a degree of protection through ENP and NLP policies seeking to protect the landscape and the natural environment.

In conclusion there are two reasonable alternatives pertaining to the LGS designation.

Option 1 – Given the importance of the sites identified in ENP (policy 4), to the local community, these should be designated as LGS to protect them from future encroachment.

Option 2 – Not to allocate areas of LGS as the majority of these areas would be offered a degree of protection through strategic and ENP policies seeking to protect the landscape and the natural environment.

Table B presents the assessment. Presented subsequently is the Eglington Community Steering Group’s response to the assessment, i.e. reasons for supporting the preferred approach, which is **Option 1**.

Assessment methodology:

Within each row of Table B (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) the columns to the right hand firstly rank the options in order of preference and then, secondly, highlight instances of a predicted significant positive (**dark green**), moderate positive (**medium green**), minor positive (**light green**), minor negative (**amber**), or significant negative (**red**), effect on the baseline. Also, ‘ = ’ is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par (i.e. it not possible to differentiate between them). Where there is uncertainty this is denoted as ‘?’

Table B: Options assessment

Topic	Option 1 ENP approach	Option 2 Reasonable alternative
Biodiversity	1	2
Climate change (including flood risk)	1	2
Historic environment	=	=
Landscape	1	2
Population & housing		1

Summary discussion

The assessment shows a predominantly positive picture, with each options associated with moderate or minor negative effects. Although Option 1 is the best-performing, scoring more positively for all 5 SEA topics, it has one potential minor negative effect associated with the population and housing SEA theme. Whereas Option 2 is generally less positive but it does not have any negative effects. Whilst Option 1 is preferable to Option 2 for with the most positives and no major negatives. Scenarios 1 is mostly preferable to Option 2, the latter is marginally preferable to the former for the population and housing theme. However, it does not automatically follow that Option 1 is best-performing overall, as the topics are not assumed to be of equal importance. It is for the decision-maker (also consultees), not this assessment, to assign weight to the various pros and cons and then arrive at a conclusion on which scenario is best-performing overall.

The plan-makers responded to the growth scenarios assessment is as follows: “The preferred approach is to take forward Option 1 as the basis for the ENP”. This approach is considered to broadly align with the findings of the assessment, which finds Option 1 to perform generally more positively than Option 2 with the exception of a minor negative for the population and housing theme. The latter could be overcome if the recommendations made herein are followed.

Whilst no significant negative effects are predicted for Option 1 it is recognised that the allocations of SHLAA sites 0296 and 0275 as LGS23 and LGS2, respectively, could reduce the flexibility of land use for sites that are suitable for housing. However, it may be possible to address the issue by allocating these two sites as Protected Open Space (POS) instead of LGS which serves to safeguard them until such a time when a local housing need can be established.

With regards to Option 2, the assessment highlights mainly minor positive effects (climate change, landscape, population and housing), with one neutral effects (biodiversity) and one moderately positive effect (historic environment). No negative effects are predicted for Option 2.

The process of defining and assessing options shows Option 1 as the best option overall. This is also the assessment of the ENP Steering Group, who view Option 1 as best representing sustainable development on balance

Assessment findings at this stage

Part 2 of the Environmental Report presents an assessment of the ENP as a whole, as it stands at the current time (pre-submission plan).

Assessment findings are presented as a series of narratives under the SEA framework. The assessment reaches the following overall conclusions:

Overall, the Plan appraisal has served to highlight the potential for mainly positive effects with one potential minor negative effect.

Moderate positive effects are anticipated in relation to the biodiversity SEA theme through the implementation of policies seeking to avoid adverse impacts from development on water quality within the River Tweed SAC and the safeguarding areas of green space.

Moderately positive effects are also forecast in relation to the climate change (adaptation) SEA theme due to the designation of numerous areas as LGS and protection of the Parish's landscapes, gardens and allotments; measures that are likely to increase the NP areas resilience to the effects of climate change.

The potential for moderate positive effects is recognised for the historic environment, namely through policies requiring new development to be in keeping with the character of the CA and policies seeking to protect important landscapes that form an intrinsic part of the historic character and heritage of the Parish.

ENP policies safeguarding areas of high landscape value and valued green spaces that run through the Parish are anticipated to produce moderately positive effects on the landscape SEA theme.

Mixed effects are predicted with respect to the population and housing theme. moderate long-term positive effects are anticipated as a result of policies promoting well-designed development and safeguarding valued landscapes and green space. However, minor negative effects are possible for population as two of the LGS allocations have been identified as being suitable for housing. The NLP's policy INF5 (Open space and facilities for sport and recreation) creates a specific designation of Protected Open Space which seeks to retain existing areas of open space within Northumberland. The supporting text to policy states that 'whilst the opportunity to create Local Green Space through the Local Plan exists, the County Council considers that, given the need to show that any such designation is demonstrably special to a local community, the most appropriate mechanism for designating Local Green Space is through a neighbourhood plan.' Under the policy development likely to result in loss of protected open space (POS) will not be supported unless it meets a set of criteria. These include, inter alia, the provision of a replacement area of space of equivalent or better quality, in a suitable location, or where the development proposed is for alternative sports and recreation, the needs for which, outweigh the loss. Engagement on the emerging NP has identified that the distinctiveness of the plan area is hugely valued by the local community. Therefore, the ENP designates areas of Local Green Space seeking to protect these areas which contribute to the character and the landscape in the Parish. However, given the SHLAA assessed suitability of sites LGS2 and LGS23 for housing development (over 6-10 years from 2019) It is recommended that these two sites are allocated as Protected Open Space instead of LGS which serves to safeguard them until such a time when a demonstrable housing need arises. That said, it is ultimately up to the ENP Steering Group to decide whether or not to implement this recommendation.

Next steps

This Environmental Report is published alongside the pre-submission version of the ENP. Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, when finalising the plan for submission.

The 'submission' version of the plan will then be submitted to NCC (alongside an Environmental Report Update, if necessary). The plan and supporting evidence will be then published for further consultation, and then submitted for examination.

If the outcome of the Independent Examination is favourable, the ENP will then be subject to a referendum, and the plan will be 'made' if more than 50% of those who vote are in support. Once made, the ENP will become part of the Development Plan for Northumberland.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Eglington Neighbourhood Plan ('ENP') 2021–2033.
- 1.2 The ENP is being prepared in the context of the policies of the adopted Northumberland Local Plan (NLP). The ENP sets out a vision and a range of policies for the neighbourhood plan area, including protection and enhancement of the historic and natural environment and support for the economy and thriving communities.
- 1.3 Once 'made', the ENP will form part of the Northumberland Development Plan.
- 1.4 The ENP will be used to guide and shape development within the Plan area.
- 1.5 SEA is a required process for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to minimising negative effects and maximising positive effects.¹

SEA explained

- 1.6 It is a requirement that the SEA process is undertaken in-line with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 1.7 In-line with the Regulations, a report (known as the Environmental Report) must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that "*identifies, describes and evaluates*" the likely significant effects of implementing "*the plan, and reasonable alternatives*".² The report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
- 1.8 More specifically, the Report must answer the following three questions:
 1. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
 - including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
 2. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e. in relation to the draft plan.
 3. What happens next?

¹ Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended) requires that each neighbourhood plan is submitted to the Local Authority alongside either: A) an environmental report; or, B) a statement of reasons why SEA is not required, prepared following a 'screening' process. The ENP was subject to screening, on the basis of which it was determined that there *is* a requirement for SEA (i.e. the plan was 'screened-in').

² Regulation 12(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

This Environmental Report

- 1.9 This report is the Environmental Report for the ENP. It is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Plan, under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2012, as amended).
- 1.10 This report answers questions 1, 2 and 3 in turn, to provide the required information.³ Each question is answered within a discrete 'part' of the report.
- 1.11 However, before answering Q1, two further introductory sections are presented to further set the scene.

³ See **Appendix A** for further explanation of the report structure including its regulatory basis.

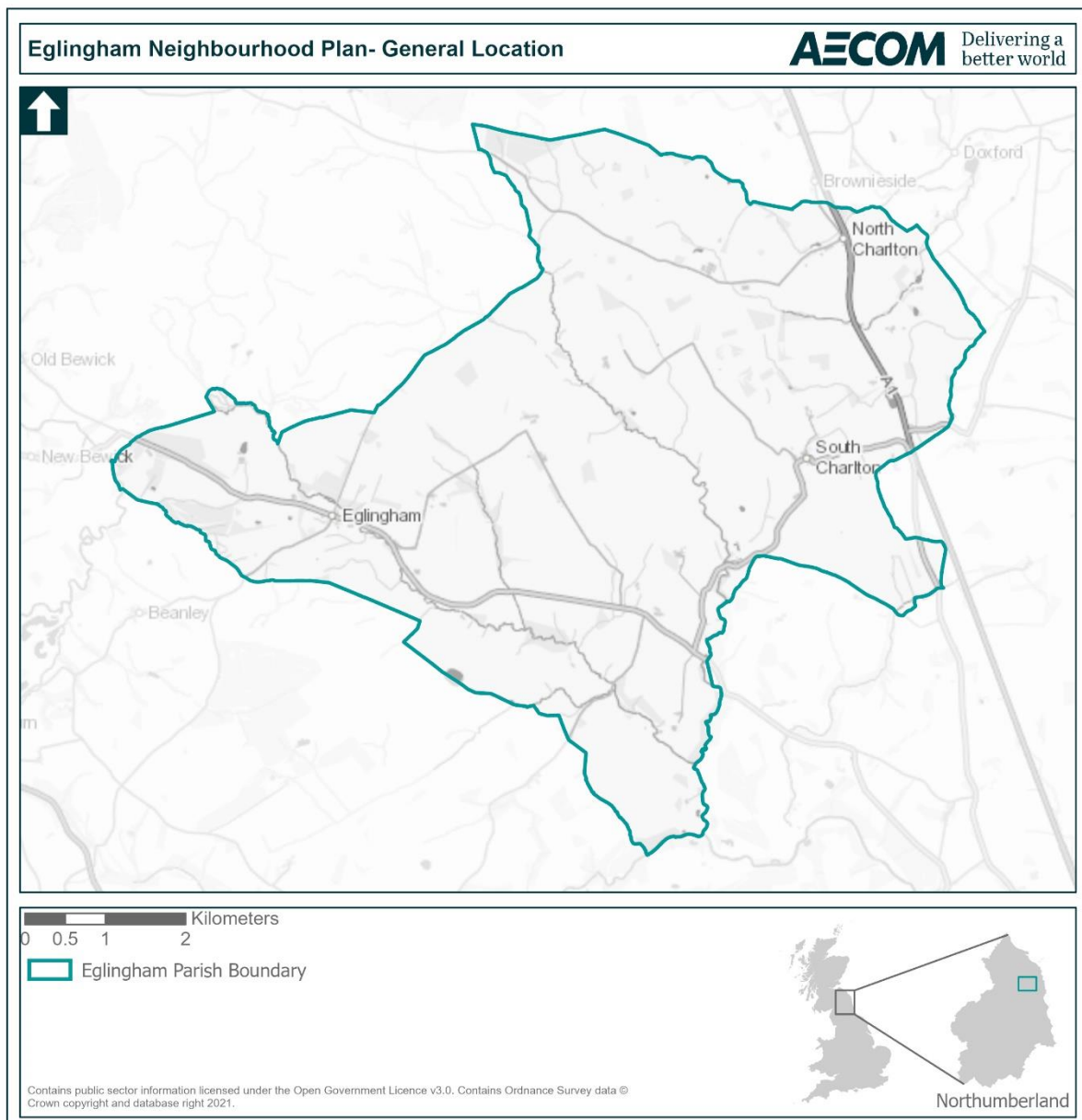
2. What is the plan seeking to achieve?

Introduction

2.1 This section considers the context provided by the applicable Local Plan before setting out the established ENP vision and objectives. The Local Plan comprises the adopted Northumberland Local Plan (adopted March 2022) (NLP).

2.2 Figure 2.1 shows the plan area.

Figure 2.1: The ENP area



The NLP

- 2.3 Eglington falls within the Northern Delivery Area as defined in the NLP. The settlement hierarchy set out in Policy STP1 (Appendix A) identifies Eglington as a Small Village. NLP Policy HOU3 (Housing requirements for neighbourhood areas) sets a zero minimum housing requirement figure (HRF) for Eglington.
- 2.4 The NLP (paragraph 4.38) states that *“Northumberland contains many small villages and hamlets. While the Local Plan does not actively direct development to small villages, it is recognised that a level of development is required in rural areas to support social and economic vitality, and that development in one village can support services and facilities in another nearby. In small villages not identified as Main Towns, Service Centres or Service Villages, small scale development will be supported subject to a number of criteria.”*
- 2.5 Policy STP1 (Spatial strategy) of the NLP states that “in order to support the social and economic vitality of rural areas, and recognising that development in one village can support services and facilities in other nearby small villages, Small Villages will support a proportionate level of development.” The policy adds that sustainable development within, or immediately adjacent to the built up form of Main Towns, Service Centres, Service Villages, and Small Villages without defined Green Belt inset boundaries or settlement boundaries will be supported, subject to Green Belt policy considerations where relevant, if it is:
- Commensurate with the size of the settlement; and
 - Reflects the role and function of the settlement; and
 - Does not adversely impact upon the character and appearance of the settlement; and
 - Does not adversely impact upon the setting of the settlement or the surrounding countryside.

The ENP objectives

2.6 The ENP is being prepared by the Eglington NP Steering Group and will cover the period 2022 to 2036.

2.7 The following vision has been established:

“ By 2036, the Parish’s rural and historic assets will be better conserved and enhanced, especially the breadth, scale and quality of its valued landscapes and biodiversity.

New development will be well designed, in keeping with the area’s existing and historic character, and it will minimise environmental harm and mitigate the effects of climate change.

The qualities of the Parish as a very high-quality place and landscape, valued greatly by communities and visitors, will be maintained.

The Parish’s rural and visitor economy will prosper, without degrading its most valuable resources, notably its landscapes and biodiversity.”

2.8 A series of 3 objectives have also been established to guide plan preparation, with a view to achieving the vision, reproduced in the table below.

Table 2-1 The ENP Objectives

Objective	Description
1 Sense of Place	To ensure the location of development in suitable locations; high quality design in all new development; the maintenance and improvement of the individual character of the Parish, its landscapes and its settlements; the accessibility of public spaces and the protection of Local Green Spaces; the protection of the Parish’s non-designated heritage assets; and pride in the Parish as a place to live and work.
2 Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Change	The Parish’s natural, historic and built environments – especially its landscapes, those surrounding the Parish and their interconnected views and biodiversity – will be protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced, while development will be encouraged to contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions without damaging the Parish’s most important assets.
3 Community Facilities	To protect, maintain and improve community and recreational facilities for the benefit of both residents and visitors.

3. What is the scope of the SEA?

Introduction

3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA, i.e. the sustainability themes and objectives that should be a focus of the SEA. Supplementary information is presented in the SEA Scoping Report (Appendix II).

Consultation

3.2 The SEA Regulations require that “*when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. As such, these authorities were consulted over the period January to February 2022. One response was received from Natural England as detailed in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3-1 SEA scoping consultation responses

Consultee	Consultation response summary	AECOM response
Natural England	The River Tweed Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to be included in Table 3-1 (p.15) of the SEA Scoping Report, due to its proximity to the Plan area. NE also provided standard guidance on ‘Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities.’	The River Tweed SAC added to Table 3-1 of the Scoping Report. Noted

The SEA framework

3.3 The SEA framework has been established through the identification of key issues and environmental objectives as part of the scoping exercise. This draws upon the baseline position and policy context that has been prepared for a range of SEA topics. The framework consists of a set of headline objectives and ancillary questions, which has been used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft Plan (and any reasonable alternatives).

3.4 Table 3.2 presents a list of topics and objectives that together form the back-bone of the SEA scope. Together they comprise a ‘framework’ under which to undertake assessment.

Table 3-2 The SEA framework

SEA topic	SEA objective
Biodiversity	To protect, maintain and enhance the extent and quality of biodiversity and geodiversity sites and networks within and surrounding the Plan area.
Climate change	Avoid and manage flood risk and support the resilience of the Eglington Neighbourhood Plan area to the effects of climate change.
Historic environment	Protect, enhance and manage the integrity, distinctive character and setting of the historic environment and the wider built environment.
Landscape	Protect, enhance and manage the distinctive character and appearance of landscapes.
Population and housing	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing which meets the needs of occupants throughout their lives.

Part 1: What has plan-making/ SEA involved to this point?

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

Overview

- 4.1 In accordance with the SEA Regulations the Environmental Report must include:
- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with; and
 - The likely significant effects on the environment associated with alternatives / an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of alternatives appraised.
- 4.2 Work on the ENP commenced in 2019 when Eglington Parish Council decided to produce a neighbourhood plan. The NP area, which constitutes the civil parish of Eglington, was designated by NCC in May 2019. A Steering Group (ESG) comprising members of the Parish Council and other residents was formed to oversee the production of the ENP.
- 4.3 The Steering Group gathered a range of evidence, and undertook consultation with communities and other key stakeholders to identify the issues and opportunities that need to be addressed in the neighbourhood plan (avoiding duplication of issues covered by the NLP). Informed by the results of that consultation, a focused set of proposals, supported by evidence was developed.
- 4.4 The Steering Group also commissioned a professional evaluation of the Parish's landscapes by Alison Farmer Associates ('AFA') and obtained technical assistance in relation to the production of a Design Code by AECOM.
- 4.5 The first step in the SEA Process was the development of a Scoping Report, which was published for Consultation in January 2022.
- 4.6 A draft Plan has been shared with AECOM, who have undertaken an appraisal of the Plan 'as a whole', taking into account each of the individual policies in combination. As part of this process, it is important to consider 'reasonable alternatives'.

Assessment of reasonable alternatives for the ENP

- 4.7 A key element of the SEA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives'. The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative, stating only that the Environmental Report should present an appraisal of the *'plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan'*.
- 4.8 The following sections therefore describe how the SEA process to date has informed the development strategy for the neighbourhood plan area.

Housing Strategy

- 4.9 Overall County level housing numbers (targets) are primarily the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority; Northumberland County Council.
- 4.10 The neighbourhood plan policies must be in conformity with the adopted NLP.
- 4.11 The spatial strategy of NLP is to focus the majority of new development within 'Main Towns' and 'Service Centres' and smaller growth within 'Service Villages'.

None of the settlements within the parish (Eglingham and South Charlton) fall within any of these categories. Eglingham and South Charlton are identified in the NLP as 'Small Villages' (NLP Appendix A). Small Villages are defined as "a cluster of dwellings and associated buildings which has a recognised name and identity, a definable centre, and a church or other community building". The NLP states that "Northumberland contains many small villages and hamlets. While the Local Plan does not actively direct development to small villages, it is recognised that a level of development is required in rural areas to support social and economic vitality, and that development in one village can support services and facilities in another nearby. In small villages not identified as Main Towns, Service Centres or Service Villages, small scale development will be supported subject to a number of criteria."

- 4.12 Eglingham is part of the NLP's 'North Delivery Area' which is described as a largely rural area interspersed with market towns along the A1 corridor and bordering the Northumberland National Park. The NLP directs around 19% of the overall housing target to this area with around half the growth going to Alnwick and Berwick-upon-Tweed.
- 4.13 The NLP (Table 7.2 distribution of housing requirements and commitments in Northumberland) gives the total housing requirement for the North Delivery Area as 3,390 over the plan period. Completions and commitments (including minded-to-approve applications) total 3,390 dwellings. This leaves a residual (total housing required over plan period minus total completions and commitments and minded to approve over same period) of -450 homes i.e. the North Delivery Area is expected to 'over-delivered' by 450 dwellings by the end of the NLP period. Whilst the overall number of completions and commitments exceeds the minimum housing requirement over the plan period, the NLP allocates net additional dwellings to meet future needs and to help balance the County's housing market.
- 4.14 The NLP does not allocate sites for housing in the NP area, setting a zero housing requirement figure (HRF) for the Parish. In view of this and in the absence of a local housing need assessment the ENP does not allocate sites for housing. Therefore, there are no reasonable alternatives to consider in terms of housing growth or sites for residential development.
- 4.15 One reasonable alternative considered in the SEA process pertains to ENP policy 4 which allocates 22 sites as Local Green Space (LGS) across the two main settlements of South Chorlton and Eglingham. The LGS designation provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. Designating a green area as LGS would give it protection consistent with that in respect of the green belt.
- 4.16 The NLP creates a specific designation of Protected Open Space which seeks to retain existing areas of open space within Northumberland (policy INF5 and NLP policies map). The supporting text to the policy states that 'whilst the opportunity to create Local Green Space through the Local Plan exists, the County Council considers that, given the need to show that any such designation is demonstrably special to a local community, the most appropriate mechanism for designating Local Green Space is through a neighbourhood plan.' Under the policy, development likely to result in loss of protected open space will not be supported unless it meets a set of criteria. These include, inter alia, the provision of a replacement area of space of equivalent or better quality, in a suitable

location, or where the development proposed is for alternative sports and recreation, the needs for which, outweigh the loss. The NLP allocates numerous areas of POS throughout the County including within the ENP area.

4.17 Engagement on the ENP has identified that the distinctiveness of the plan area is hugely valued by the local community. Therefore, the ENP designates areas of Local Green Space seeking to protect these areas which contribute to the character and the landscape in Eglington and are highly valued by the community.

4.18 The SEA considered the option (the *reasonable alternative*) of not designating the 22 sites in the ENP as LGS as these would be offered a degree of protection under the strategic, and ENP policies, seeking to protect the landscape and the natural and historic environment. Furthermore, some of the sites may be suitable for future residential development within the villages of Eglington, South Charlton or North Charlton, should the need for additional housing arise.

4.19 In conclusion two reasonable alternatives have been considered:

- **Option 1** – Given the importance of the sites identified in ENP (policy 4), to the local community, these are to be designated as LGS to protect them from future encroachment.
- **Option 2** – Not to allocate areas of LGS as the majority of these areas would be offered a degree of protection through strategic and ENP policies seeking to protect the landscape and the natural/ historic environment.

4.20 It is pertinent to clarify the following with regards to reasonable alternatives:

- Defining scenarios - is ultimately the responsibility of the plan-maker, although the SEA consultant (AECOM) is well placed to advise.
- Assessing scenarios - is the responsibility of the SEA consultant.
- Selecting a preferred scenario - is the responsibility of the plan-maker.

Structure of this part of the report

4.21 The following sections of the report are structured as follows:

- **Section 5** presents the outcomes of the options assessment
- **Section 6** explains reasons for supporting the preferred approach.
- **Section 7** explains the SEA findings at this stage
- **Section 8** presents the appraisal of the ENP
- **Section 9** presents conclusions and recommendations
- **Section 10** explains next steps and plan finalisation
- **Section 11** identifies monitoring measures

5. Options assessment

Introduction

5.1 The aim of this section is to present assessment findings in relation to the two options introduced above, and set out below:

- Option 1 – Given the importance of the sites identified in ENP (policy 4), to the local community, these should be designated as LGS to protect them from future encroachment.
- Option 2 – Not to allocate areas of LGS as the majority of these areas would be offered a degree of protection through strategic and ENP policies seeking to protect the landscape and the natural/ historic environment.

Assessment findings

5.2 Table 5.1 presents assessment findings in relation to the two options.

5.3 With regards to methodology within each row (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SEA framework) of Table 5.1 the columns to the right hand side seek to both **categorise** the performance of each scenario in terms of ‘significant effects’ on the baseline (using red, amber and light green and dark green)⁴ and also **rank** the alternatives in order of performance. Also, ‘ = ’ is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par (i.e. it not possible to differentiate between them). The appraisal matrix is followed by a discussion, setting out reasons for the appraisal conclusions reached, with reference to available evidence.

5.4 The assessment shows predominantly positive effects, with each of the options associated mainly positive effects. Option 1 scores moderate positives for 4 out of the 5 SEA themes with one potential minor negative associated with the population and housing theme. Option 2 also performs well but less positively for 3 of the themes and neutral effects for two themes but has no negative effects. If the SEA recommendations are followed, Option 1 would score better with respect to the population and housing theme resulting in minor positive effects overall. However, it is for the decision-maker (also consultees), not this assessment, to assign weight to the various pros and cons and then arrive at a conclusion on which scenario is best-performing overall.

⁴ Red indicates a significant negative effect; amber a negative effect that is of limited or uncertain significance; light green a positive effect that is of limited or uncertain significance; and dark green a significant positive effect. No colour is assigned where effects are considered to be neutral or uncertain.

Table 5.1: Options assessment

Topic	Option 1 ENP approach	Option 2 Reasonable alternative
Biodiversity	1	2
Climate change (including flood risk)	1	2
Historic environment	=	=
Landscape	1	2
Population & housing		1

Biodiversity

- 5.5 There are several important biodiversity designations within, and in the vicinity of, the NP area. The ENP does not allocate sites for development but includes several policies which are associated with positive effects on biodiversity. Policy 6 (Habitats and species) seeks to protect the River Tweed SAC by requiring development that is not connected to the sewerage network to provide suitable wastewater treatment (e.g. packaged treatment plants). This includes tertiary treatment to reduce nitrates and phosphates to a satisfactory level, thus avoiding adverse effects on the water quality within the Tweed SAC.
- 5.6 Policy 4 designates 21 green open space areas as formal Local Green Space. The designation offers the same level of protection as that afforded to green belt land. The sites contribute to the green infrastructure networks extending throughout the Parish and wider area, providing habitats that support a wide range of biodiversity and serving as ecological links.
- 5.7 Option 2 would not include the LGS allocations which may result in the loss of some sites to development in future, however this would be counterbalanced by the beneficial effects associated with Policy 6 (which applies to both options). Consequently, Option 2 is predicted to have neutral effects overall.
- 5.8 In conclusion, Option 1 is judged to be preferable. With regards to significant effects, it is not possible to conclude that any of the scenarios would result in significant effects. Therefore, the overall conclusion is that biodiversity concerns are fairly limited in this respect

Climate change

- 5.9 The ENP has limited scope for significant effects on climate change mitigation. Therefore, this section is primarily concerned with climate change adaptation, specifically flood risk. Whilst the majority of the NP area is at low risk of flooding (Flood Zone 1), there are areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 along the River Aln and its tributaries.

- 5.10 The ENP potentially improves the resilience of the Plan area to future flood risk by allocating large areas of LGS and safeguarding swathes of landscape from encroachment. This serves to provide interconnected green infrastructure (GI) which provide multiple ecosystem services including flood retention and attenuation, thus improving the Parish's resilience to future flood risk.
- 5.11 Option 2 does not include the LGS allocations which could result in the loss of some flood retention capacity (and reduced permeability in the built up areas) if these sites are lost to development.
- 5.12 Option 2 would still provide the positive effects associated with Policy 5 (Protection of the Parish's special landscapes). Therefore Option 2 is predicted to produce only minor positive effects as it does not include the LGS allocations provided in Option 1.
- 5.13 In conclusion Option 1 is preferable as it performs best with respect to climate change adaptation, potentially giving rise to moderate positive effects.

Historic environment

- 5.14 The NP area contains numerous heritage assets including listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments and a Registered Park and Gardens. Most of Eglington village and surrounding land is designated as a Conservation Area. Therefore, Policy 3 (Development within Eglington Village Conservation Area) is positive as it seeks to preserve the historic character of the CA, requiring development proposals to preserve / enhance the character of the CA and to follow the guidance of the Design Code. Policy 5 (Protection of the Parish's special landscapes) also makes a positive contribution as it seeks to preserve the Parish's landscapes, many of which are of high heritage significance, forming part of the historic landscape and townscape character associated with the conservation area. The policies are therefore predicted to have favourable effects as they seek to protect these important sites and their significant contribution to the historic environment. Since both options include these policies, they perform on par, producing moderate positive effects.

Landscape

- 5.15 The majority of the Parish comprises areas assessed as being of high landscape value. In this context the ENP's Policy 5 (Protection of the Parish's special landscapes) is positive as it seeks to protect such areas, stating that proposals likely to have adverse effects on such Landscapes will not be permitted. The policy specifies several features which would be taken into consideration such as views into, across and out of the CA and the cumulative impact of tall structures such as wind farm developments.
- 5.16 Other policies assessed as positive include Policy 2 (High quality and sustainable design) supporting high quality design that is in keeping with the local character and the landscape. Policy 3 (Development within Eglington Village Conservation Area) is expected to have positive impacts as it requires new development proposals to preserve / enhance the character of the CA.
- 5.17 Policy 4 (Local Green Spaces in the villages of Eglington and South Charlton) designates 21 green space areas as LGS, since these make a major contribution to the landscape character of the NP area, the policy is expected to have positive effects as it serves to preserve these important parts of the landscape. In

conclusion, whilst both options would produce the beneficial effects associated with Policies 3 and 5, Option 2 performs slightly less positively as it excludes the LGS allocations (and therefore there is greater potential for alternative uses on these sites) leaving minor positive effects overall (compared to potential moderate positive effects for Option 1)

Population and housing

- 5.18 Normally the primary consideration is related to meeting the housing need in the NP area over the Plan period. Given that there is no HRF or a local housing needs assessment, the ENP does not allocate sites for housing development. However, the Plan is likely to have some positive effects through policies promoting well designed development (Policy 2) and supporting affordable housing on rural exception sites (Policy 1). Option 1 allocates numerous areas as LGS in Eglingham and South Charlton which helps to maintain the attractiveness of the villages and engender health and wellbeing benefits. However, this approach potentially limits the flexibility for additional housing in these locations. This only applies to two of the LGS sites (LGS1 and LGS2) which were assessed as potentially suitable for residential development in the NCC SHLAA (2019).
- 5.19 Both Options share the minor positive effects associated with Policies 1 and 2 but only Option 1 includes the LGS designations (Policy 4). Therefore, Option 1 is likely to have mixed effects with moderate positive effects predicted through Policies 1, 2 and 4 (associated with the with beneficial effects discussed above) and potentially minor negative effects associated with the safeguarding of two sites that are potentially suitable for residential development. As Option 2 does not include Policy 4; it does not share the potential negative effects of Option 1 but would also lack the beneficial effects associated with the designation of LGS sites (maintaining the attractiveness of the villages and the health and wellbeing aspects). Therefore Option 2 is likely to produce only minor positive effects. In conclusion whilst option 2 is less positive than option 1, it does not share the minor negative effects associated with Option 1. Therefore, Option 2 is marginally preferable as it does not include the LGS designations and consequently it is more flexible with regards to housing provision in the Parish.

6. The preferred approach

Introduction

6.1 The aim of this section is to present the reasons for supporting the preferred approach, in light of the scenarios assessment presented above. The rationale is provided by the plan-makers.

Reasons for supporting the preferred approach

6.2 The plan-makers responded to the assessment as follows:

“The preferred approach is to take forward Option 1 as the basis for the ENP”. This approach is considered to broadly align with the findings of the assessment, which finds Option 1 to perform generally more positively than Option 2 with the exception of a minor negative for the population and housing theme. The latter could be overcome if the recommendations made herein are applied. Having said that, the NLP shows that there has been an over-delivery of housing in the North Delivery Area (includes Eglington), therefore the ENP is unlikely to affect the achievement of housing needs⁵ within the wider delivery area.

6.3 Whilst no significant negative effects are predicted for Option 1 it is recognised that the allocations of SHLAA sites 0296 and 0275 as LGS23 and LGS2, respectively, could reduce the potential to secure additional housing on sites that are identified as suitable for residential development. However, it may be possible to address the issue by allocating these two sites as Protected Open Space (POS) instead of LGS which serves to safeguard them until such a time when a local housing need can be established.

6.4 With regards to Option 2, the assessment highlights mainly minor positive effects (climate change, landscape, population and housing), with one neutral effect (biodiversity) and one moderately positive effect (historic environment). No negative effects are predicted for Option 2.

6.5 The process of defining and assessing options identifies Option 1 as the best performing option overall. This is also the view of the ENP Steering Group, who view Option 1 as best representing sustainable development on balance.

⁵ NLP Table 7.2 gives the total housing requirement for the North delivery area as 3,390 over plan period. Completions and commitments (including minded-to-approve applications) total 3,654 dwellings, leaving a residual requirement of -264 homes i.e. the North Delivery area has 'over-delivered' by 264 dwellings for the plan period.

Part 2: What are the SEA findings at this stage?

7. Introduction (to Part 2)

- 7.1 The aim of this section is to present an assessment of the current 'pre-submission' version of the ENP.
- 7.2 The ENP puts forward 8 policies to guide development in the Neighbourhood Plan area. These are set out in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7-1 ENP policies

Policy ref.	Title
1	Settlement boundaries for the villages of Eglingham and South Charlton.
2	High quality and sustainable design
3	Eglingham Village Conservation Area
4	Local Green Spaces in the villages of Eglingham and South Charlton
5	Areas of high landscape value
6	Non-designated heritage assets
7	Community facilities.
8	Habitats and species

Methodology

- 7.3 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives identified through scoping (see Table 3.1) as a methodological framework.
- 7.4 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g. in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim of striking a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the draft plan in more general terms.
- 7.5 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e. the potential for the ENP to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes and projects. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the assessment as appropriate.

8. Assessment of the ENP

Introduction

8.1 The assessment is presented below under five topic headings, reflecting the established assessment framework (see Section 3). A final section (Chapter 9) then presents overall conclusions.

Biodiversity

- 8.2 There are several protected biodiversity sites located within, and in proximity to, the neighbourhood plan area. These include the Bewick and Beanley Moors Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the River Tweed Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Till Catchment SSSI. There are several important biodiversity designations along the Northumberland coast, 6-7km, east of the NP area including Special Protection Areas (Northumbria Coast and Northumberland Marine SPA), Ramsar Sites (Northumbria Coast) and SACs (North Northumberland Dunes and Newham Fen). The Parish includes areas of Priority Habitat including; Upland and Lowland Heathland, Ancient Woodland, Deciduous Woodland and Woodpasture and Parkland.
- 8.3 In this context, Policy 8 (Habitats and species) is positive as it echoes the NLP Policy ENV2, in seeking to protect important habitats and species in the NP area and its vicinity. Development resulting in a net increase of residential or tourist accommodation within 7km of the coast would be required to contribute to the Northumberland Coastal Mitigation Service (NCMS) or demonstrate how it would mitigate for the effects of increased disturbance / recreational pressures on the coastal designated biodiversity sites. Similarly, major developments within a 7km-10km zone from the coast must also contribute NMCS. The policy also seeks to protect the River Tweed SAC by requiring development not connected to the sewerage network to provide suitable wastewater treatment (e.g. packaged treatment plants) including tertiary treatment to reduce nitrates and phosphates to a satisfactory level. This is to avoid deterioration in the water quality within the Tweed SAC.
- 8.4 Policy 4 designates 22 green open space areas as Local Green Space. The designation offers the same level of protection as that afforded to green belt land. All of these contribute to the green infrastructure networks extending throughout the Parish and wider area, providing habitats that support a wide range of biodiversity. Therefore, the policy is expected to have positive effects as it serves to reduce habitat loss and fragmentation by maintaining their functional contribution as ecological links.
- 8.5 Overall, **moderate positive effects** are considered likely through implementation of policies seeking to protect water quality within the River Tweed SAC and the safeguarding of areas of green space through the LGS designation helping to reduce habitat fragmentation.

Climate change

- 8.6 In terms of climate change adaptation, the majority of the Plan area is within Flood Zone 1 (low risk), although stretches of Flood Zone 2 and 3 exist along the water courses associated with the River AIn and its tributaries.
- 8.7 Well-planned green infrastructure can help an area adapt to, and manage the risks of climate change (including flood risk). Enabling and providing for green infrastructure within Eglington is therefore a key means to promoting climate change adaptation measures within the ENP. Policy 4 (*Local green spaces in the villages of Eglington and South Charlton*) performs positively in this respect. LGS provides multi-functional benefits including flood retention / attenuation, carbon sequestration and encouraging active travel in the form of walking and cycling through attractive public realm.
- 8.8 Policy 5 (*Area of high landscape value*) is also potentially positive as it seeks to preserve the Parish's landscapes which include wide swathes of open green space (providing the benefits discussed above). The policy also seeks to maintain the interconnectivity between the Parish's special landscapes and beyond including to designated biodiversity sites.
- 8.9 Policy 7 (Community facilities) seeks to preserve community facilities which are highly valued by the community. These include a Public House, 2 Churches, the Village Hall and allotments. Such areas often serve as biodiversity hotspots for native species within urban green infrastructure. Therefore, minor positive effects on biodiversity are likely as a result of this policy.
- 8.10 The measures to increase climate resilience through designating areas of LGS and promoting the protection of the Parish's landscapes, gardens, fields and allotments are considered to have **moderate positive effects** on climate change adaptation.

Historic environment

- 8.11 The NP area contains numerous heritage assets including 56 designated assets such as, listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments and a Registered Park and Garden. These assets have been designated by Historic England as being of special interest by way of their historic and architectural value. Listing marks and celebrates a building's special architectural and historic interest (e.g. the Grade II Eglington Post Office or the Grade II* Church of St. Maurice), and also brings it under the consideration of the planning system, so that it can be protected for future generations. The Eglington Conservation Area covers most of Eglington village and surrounding land.
- 8.12 Policy 2 (High quality and sustainable design) requires new development to incorporate high quality design and demonstrate how it fits in with the local context in terms of character, scale, height, materials, landscaping etc. The policy also requires development to adhere to the guidelines set out in the Eglington Parish Design Code (2020) which seeks to ensure that the local vernacular and design are at the heart of new development proposals. In this context the policy is expected to have positive effects on the historic environment, particularly within the Eglington Conservation Area (CA).
- 8.13 Threats to the Eglington CA include inappropriate new development that is out of scale and character with its surroundings and the use of unsuitable modern

materials e.g. replacement doors / windows. In this respect Policy 3 (Eglingham Village Conservation Area) is expected to have positive impacts as it seeks to preserve the historic character of the CA, requiring development proposals to preserve / enhance the character of the CA and to follow the guidance of the Design Code. This helps ensure that future development takes account of the historic fabric and significance of the heritage assets and their settings. The policy also helps to implement one of the Plan's main objectives, namely that *'the Parish's natural, historic and built environments ...will be protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced'*.

- 8.14 Policy 5 (Area of high landscape value) is also potentially positive as it seeks to preserve the Parish's landscapes, many of which are of high heritage significance, forming part of the historic landscape and townscape character associated with the conservation area. The policies are therefore predicted to have favourable effects as they seek to protect to these important sites and their significant contribution to the historic environment.
- 8.15 Overall, the potential for **moderate positive effects** is recognised, namely through policies requiring new development to be in keeping with the character of the CA and policies seeking to protect important areas of landscape that form an intrinsic part of the historic character and heritage of the Parish.

Landscape

- 8.16 The majority of the NP area falls within the Northumberland Sandstone Hills Character Area (NCA). It also partially overlaps the North Northumberland Coastal Plain (to the north east) and the Cheviot Fringe NCA (to the west). The Northumberland Sandstone Hills NCA provides the context to the character of the Parish.
- 8.17 The Eglingham Parish Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Assessment considers the majority of the Parish to be a valued landscape. In this context the ENP's Policy 5 (Area of high landscape value) is positive as it seeks to protect areas identified as being of *high landscape value*. The policy states that developments likely to have adverse effects on such areas will not be permitted. Additionally, development which undermines the Parish's landscapes will not be regarded as sustainable. The policy specifies several features which would be taken into consideration such as views into, across and out of the CA and the cumulative impact of tall structures such as wind farm developments.
- 8.18 Policy 2 (High quality and sustainable design) is also likely to have favourable effects as it requires development proposals to reflect the quality of the historic townscape (through design, materials, boundary treatment, soft and hard landscaping). Additionally, new development would be required to include appropriate landscaping and to retain trees and hedgerows.
- 8.19 Policy 4 (Local Green Spaces in the villages of Eglingham and South Charlton) designates 22 green open space areas as Local Green Space. These spaces make a major contribution to the landscape of the NP area therefore, the policy is expected to have positive effects as it serves to better preserve important parts of the landscape within the Parish.
- 8.20 Together, the ENP policies ought to safeguard areas of high landscape value and protect the landscape surrounding the built areas, as well as the important

spaces that run through the Parish. Consequently, **moderately positive effects** are predicted overall.

Population and community

- 8.21 The NLP classifies Eglingham and South Charlton as ‘Small Villages’. These are expected to support some small scale development provided it retains the core form of the settlement; and is appropriate to the character / appearance of the settlement and the rural setting.
- 8.22 The Parish falls within the NLP’s North Delivery area which is allocated a minimum housing requirement of 3,390 dwellings over the NLP period (2016-2036). According to the NLP, completions and commitments total 3,840 dwellings (as of March 2020). This leaves a residual need of -450 homes; i.e. the area is expected to ‘over-deliver’ by 450 dwellings by the end of the NLP period. In the absence of demonstrable local housing need, the expected surplus provision in the North Delivery area and the zero HRF set for Parish in the NLP, the ENP does not allocate sites for housing.
- 8.23 One of the main objective of the ENP is to *‘ensure: the location of development in suitable locations; high quality design in all new development; the maintenance and improvement of the individual character of the Parish, its landscapes and its settlements; the accessibility of public spaces and the protection of Local Green Spaces; the protection of the Parish’s non-designated heritage assets; and pride in the Parish as a place to live and work.’* In this context Policy 2 (High quality and sustainable design) is anticipated to have positive effects as it requires new development to follow the guidelines set out in the Eglingham Design Code. This promotes high quality design that is in keeping with the local vernacular and the character of the Eglingham CA.
- 8.24 Policy 1 (*Settlement boundaries for the villages of Eglingham and South Charlton*) sets the settlement boundaries for Eglingham and South Charlton and supports residential development within these boundaries subject to ENP and NLP policies. Land outside the settlement boundaries would be treated as open countryside, where residential development would be limited to affordable housing delivered as ‘rural exception sites’. The policy supports rural exception sites on the edge of settlements where they relate well to existing development. The policy states that isolated dwellings in the countryside would not be supported except in special circumstances e.g. for essential rural worker and for those taking majority control of a farm business to live permanently near their place of work in the countryside. The policy is positive as it potentially serves to improve the supply rural affordable housing and to meet the housing needs of rural workers.
- 8.25 Policies 4 and 5 are likely to engender positive effects as they serve to protect the Parish’s landscapes and valued open green spaces thus enhancing the attractiveness of the NP area. The policies are also likely to create a sense of wellbeing as attractive public realm, landscapes and green space have beneficial effects on health and promote a sense of wellbeing. On the other hand, the designation of the 22 sites of LGS may potentially limit flexibility of housing provision within the Parish as these include two sites which were assessed as being suitable for future residential development in the NCC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (2019). The latter identified a 2.25ha site (SHLAA ref. 0296, Eglingham Glebe, designated as LGS23 in policy 4,) as

suitable for future residential development of up to 20 dwellings (deliverable in 6-10 years). Similarly, the SHLAA identified a 1.2ha site opposite South Charlton Village Hall (SHLAA ref 0275, designated as LGS2 in policy 4) as suitable for residential development for up to 10 dwellings deliverable in (6-10 years).

- 8.26 Overall, mixed effects are predicted **minor positive effects** are anticipated as a result of policies promoting well-designed development and safeguarding valued landscapes and green space. However, **minor negative effects** are possible with regards to housing provision as two of the LGS allocated, are potentially suitable for housing, and this limits flexibility of use in the future.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

- 9.1 Overall, the Plan appraisal has served to highlight the potential for mainly positive effects with one potential minor negative effect.
- 9.2 Moderate positive effects are anticipated in relation to the biodiversity SEA theme through the implementation of policies seeking to avoid adverse impacts from development on water quality within the River Tweed SAC and the safeguarding areas of green space.
- 9.3 Moderately positive effects are also forecast in relation to the climate change (adaptation) SEA theme due to the designation of numerous areas as LGS and protection of the Parish's landscapes, gardens and allotments; measures that are likely to increase the NP areas resilience to the effects of climate change.
- 9.4 The potential for moderate positive effects is recognised for the historic environment, namely through policies requiring new development to be in keeping with the character of the CA and policies seeking to protect important landscapes that form an intrinsic part of the historic character and heritage of the Parish.
- 9.5 ENP policies safeguarding areas of high landscape value and valued green spaces that run through the Parish are anticipated to produce moderately positive effects on the landscape SEA theme.
- 9.6 Mixed effects are predicted with respect to the population and housing theme. moderate long-term positive effects are anticipated as a result of policies promoting well-designed development and safeguarding valued landscapes and green space. However, minor negative effects are possible as two of the LGS allocations are potentially suitable for housing, and their designation as LGS would considerably limit their potential for other uses.
- 9.7 The NLP's policy INF5 (Open space and facilities for sport and recreation) creates a specific designation of Protected Open Space which seeks to retain existing areas of open space within Northumberland. The supporting text to policy states that 'whilst the opportunity to create Local Green Space through the Local Plan exists, the County Council considers that, given the need to show that any such designation is demonstrably special to a local community, the most appropriate mechanism for designating Local Green Space is through a neighbourhood plan.' Under the policy, development likely to result in loss of protected open space (POS) would not be supported unless it meets a set of criteria. These include, inter alia, the provision of a replacement area of space of

equivalent or better quality, in a suitable location, or where the development proposed is for alternative sports and recreation, the needs for which, outweigh the loss. Engagement on the emerging NP has identified that the distinctiveness of the plan area is hugely valued by the local community. Therefore, the ENP designates areas of Local Green Space seeking to protect these areas which contribute to the character and the landscape in the Parish. However, given the SHLAA assessed suitability of sites LGS2 and LGS23 for housing development (over 6-10 years from 2019) It is recommended that these two sites are allocated as Protected Open Space instead of LGS which serves to safeguard them until such a time when a demonstrable housing need might arise.

Part 3: What are the next steps?

10. Plan finalisation

- 10.1 This Environmental Report accompanies the pre-submission version of the ENP for consultation. Following consultation, any representations made will be considered by the neighbourhood plan committee, when finalising the plan for submission.
- 10.2 The 'submission' version of the plan will then be submitted to NCC (alongside an Environmental Report Update, if necessary). The plan and supporting evidence will be then published for further consultation, and then submitted for examination.
- 10.3 If the outcome of the Independent Examination is favourable, the ENP will then be subject to a referendum, and the plan will be 'made' if more than 50% of those who vote are in support. Once made, the ENP will become part of the Development Plan for Northumberland.

11. Monitoring

- 11.1 The SEA regulations require 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' to be outlined in this report.
- 11.2 It is anticipated that monitoring of effects of the Neighbourhood plan will be undertaken by Northumberland County Council as part of the process of preparing its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
- 11.3 The SEA has not identified any potential for significant effects that would require closer monitoring.

Appendices

Appendix I: Meeting the Regulations

As discussed in Chapter 1 above, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations 2004 (the Regulations) explains the information that must be contained in the Environmental Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. Table AI.1 links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst Table AI.2 explains this interpretation. Table AI.3 identifies how and where within this report the requirements have/ will be met.

Table AI.1: Questions answered by this report, in-line with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

Introduction	What's the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes
SEA scope?	What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level ▪ Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
SEA scope?	What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan ▪ The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be affected ▪ Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
SEA scope?	What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment
Part 1	What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach) ▪ The likely significant effects associated with alternatives ▪ Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan
Part 2	What are the SEA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan ▪ The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan
Part 3	What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A description of the monitoring measures envisaged

Schedule 2

Interpretation of Schedule 2

The report must include...

The report must include...

(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes	i.e. answer - <i>What's the plan seeking to achieve?</i>	
(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'context'?</i>	i.e. answer - <i>What's the scope of the SA?</i>
(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level		
(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC;	The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'	i.e. answer - <i>What's the 'baseline'?</i>	
(e) the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected		
(f) the likely significant effects on the environment including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors;	Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance	i.e. answer - <i>What are the key issues & objectives?</i>	
(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;	Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of appraisal		
(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information	An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (i.e. an explanation of the 'reasonableness of the approach')	i.e. answer - <i>What has Plan-making / SA involved up to this point?</i> [Part 1 of the Report]	
(i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	The likely significant effects associated with alternatives, including on issues such as... ... and an outline of the reasons for selecting the preferred approach in light of the alternatives considered / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the draft plan.		
	The likely significant effects associated with the draft plan	i.e. answer - <i>What are the assessment findings at this current stage?</i> [Part 2 of the Report]	
	The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the draft plan		
	A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring	i.e. answer - <i>What happens next?</i> [Part 3 of the Report]	

Table A1.2: Interpretation of the regulations

Table AI.3: ‘Checklist’ of how (throughout the SEA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements are met

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
A) The Environmental Report must present certain information	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 (‘What is the plan seeking to achieve’) presents this information.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	These matters have been considered in detail through scoping work, which has involved dedicated consultation on a Scoping Report.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The ‘SEA framework’ – the outcome of scoping – is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA?’).
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	More detailed messages, established through a context and baseline review are also presented in Appendix II.
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;	The SEA framework is presented within Chapter 3 (‘What is the scope of the SEA’). Also, Appendix II presents key messages from the context review. With regards to explaining “ <i>how...considerations have been taken into account</i> ”, Chapter 7 explains ‘reasons for supporting the preferred approach’, i.e. explains how/ why the preferred approach is justified in light of alternatives assessment.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);	Chapter 6 presents alternatives assessment findings (in relation to housing growth, which is a ‘stand-out’ plan policy area). Chapters 9 presents an assessment of the draft plan. With regards to assessment methodology, Chapter 8 explains the role of the SEA framework/scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions.
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;	The assessment highlights certain tensions between competing objectives, which might potentially be actioned when finalising the plan, and specific recommendations are made in Section 9.

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;	Chapters 4 and 5 deal with 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with', in that there is an explanation of the reasons for focusing on particular issues and options. Also, Chapter 7 sets out reasons for selecting the preferred option (in-light of alternatives assessment).
9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;	Chapter 11 presents measures envisaged concerning monitoring.
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings	The NTS is provided at the beginning of this Environmental Report.
B) The Report must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan	
Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)	At the current time, this Environmental Report is published alongside the 'pre-submission' version of the Neighbourhood plan, with a view to informing Regulation 14 consultation.
C) The report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan	
The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be taken into account during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.	This Environmental Report, and consultation responses received, will be taken into account when finalising the plan.

Appendix II: SEA Scoping Report

