

# **Berwick Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Natural Environment Background Paper**

Natural Environment Working Group  
July~~Draft April~~ 2017

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 This document is one in a series of background papers prepared by the Berwick Neighbourhood Plan Working Groups. It sets out the relevant national and local policy and guidance that is informing the Berwick Neighbourhood Plan. The background paper also identifies and explains the relevant evidence base, feedback from early engagement and identifies a series of options for planning policies and community actions to address the issues that have been identified.
- 1.2 The Natural Environment Working Group aims to support the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan vision for Berwick by proposing policies and community actions which aim to conserve and enhance the important natural environment of the Plan area.
- 1.3 The draft Neighbourhood Plan vision statement (December 2016), defines how the Neighbourhood Plan area will look in 2032 and identifies a number of areas of relevance to the natural environment topic:
- 'A border town bridging England and Scotland benefiting from a plethora of historic attractions, river/waterfront activities and the surrounding natural environment which provide a playground for outdoor adventure, history buffs, walkers, cyclists and naturalists';
  - 'A wonderful and unique place; a historic walled town, riverside and coastal neighbourhood all in one. It is a place thronged with people accessing the museums, theatre, festivals, cliff top paths, seaside parades and beautiful countryside with something happening almost every night of the week'.
- 1.4 The main areas covered by this background paper are:
- The national and local policy context for the natural environment;
  - An overview of other relevant documents and evidence;
  - Environmental designations that cover the Plan area;
  - Consideration of feedback received as part of the early engagement on the Plan;
  - Draft vision and objectives for the natural environment elements of the Plan;
  - Planning policy options; and
  - Options for community actions.
- 1.5 As part of the consultation which will take place during 2017 we are inviting comments on the issues identified within this background paper. Comments can be made in the following ways:
- By completing the online questionnaire via the link at [Berwick-TC-GOV.UK](http://Berwick-TC-GOV.UK)
  - By submitting a comment via <http://www.berwickplan.co.uk/>
  - By email to: [consult@berwick-tc.gov.uk](mailto:consult@berwick-tc.gov.uk)
  - By letter to: Berwick Town Council, The Arch Workspace, Boarding School Yard, 90 Marygate, Berwick-upon-Tweed TD15 1BN
  -
- 1.6 Comments must be submitted by the published date.

## 2. Strategic Planning Context

### Background

- 2.1 As they are part of the Development Plan, Neighbourhood Plans have to be prepared in line with legal requirements. The way in which Neighbourhood Plans are prepared and the policies they contain will be tested by an Independent Examiner. In order to pass an examination and proceed to referendum, Neighbourhood Plans must meet a number of 'basic conditions', to ensure they are legally compliant they must:
- Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
  - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan;
  - Contribute to sustainable development; and
  - Be compatible with European obligations.

### National planning policy and guidance

- 2.2 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) respectively. The NPPF is clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.
- 2.3 One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is that the planning system should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution, in addition, that allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value.
- 2.4 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states:  
*'The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*
- *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;*
  - *recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;*
  - *minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
  - *preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and*
  - *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.'*
- 2.5 Paragraph 110 highlights that when preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment and that plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value. With paragraph 111 identifying that plans and decisions on applications should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed, provided it is not of a high environmental value.
- 2.6 Paragraph 113 requires local planning authorities to set criteria based policies against which development proposals on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape

areas will be assessed against. In addition, that distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.

2.7 Paragraph 114 requires local planning authorities to:

- *'set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure; and*
- *maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as Heritage Coast, and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast.'*

2.8 With regard to ensuring that development minimises impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, paragraph 117 requires planning policies to:

- *'plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries;*
- *identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation;*
- *promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan;*
- *aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests; and*
- *where Nature Improvement Areas are identified in Local Plans, consider specifying the types of development that may be appropriate in these areas.'*

2.9 Paragraph 118 requires local planning authorities, when determining planning applications to aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- *'if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- *proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted. Where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest features is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
- *development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted;*
- *opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged;*
- *planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss; and*
- *the following wildlife sites should be given the same protection as European sites:*
  - *potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;*

- *listed or proposed Ramsar sites;26 and*
  - *sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.'*
- 2.10 Section 10 of the NPPF sets out the role of the planning system to meet the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. Paragraph 93 identifies that planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- 2.11 Paragraph 99 requires Local Plans to take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape, requiring that:  
*'New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.'*
- 2.12 With regard to flood risk, paragraph 100 highlights that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Plans are required to apply a sequential, risk based approach to the location of development to avoid where possible, flood risk to people and property and manage any residual risk, taking account of the impacts of climate change.
- 2.13 In coastal areas, paragraph 105 requires local planning authorities to take account of the UK Marine Policy Statement and marine plans and apply Integrated Coastal Zone Management across local authority and land/ see boundaries, ensuring integration of the terrestrial and marine planning regimes. Paragraph 106 requires local planning authorities to reduce risk from coastal change by avoiding inappropriate development in vulnerable areas or adding to the impacts of physical changes to the coast.

## **Local Plan**

### Berwick upon Tweed Local Plan

- 2.14 Currently the Local Plan for Northumberland consists of the saved<sup>1</sup> policies of the former Local Planning Authorities that made up Northumberland before Local Government Reorganisation in 2009. For the Berwick Neighbourhood Plan Area, these are the saved policies of the Berwick upon Tweed Local Plan (1999). Given the time that has elapsed since the preparation of the Berwick upon Tweed Local Plan and as it was prepared to cover the period up to 2006, some elements of it are out of date, therefore it does not provide a wholly appropriate strategic context for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.15 Given the time that has elapsed since the preparation of the Berwick Local Plan, a number of elements of it are out of date, therefore they do not provide a wholly appropriate strategic context for the Neighbourhood Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/WAMDocuments/C7737F00-2738-43F3-9D25-681033B85351\\_1\\_0.pdf?nccredirect=1](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/WAMDocuments/C7737F00-2738-43F3-9D25-681033B85351_1_0.pdf?nccredirect=1)

- 2.16 The Local Plan clearly acknowledges the importance of the landscape and seascape of the borough, which support diverse habitats, wildlife, plants and trees. Also that the outstanding natural heritage of the borough is recognised by the number of international, national and local designations.
- 2.17 The main policies relevant to the natural environment topic are:
- Policy F1 – Environmental Wealth: Identifies that primary importance will be given to sustaining and enhancing environmental wealth, including its landscape, coast and biodiversity;
  - Policy F2 – Coastal Zone: Requires that within the defined Coastal Zone, primary importance will be attached to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and coast;
  - Policy F3 – Tweed Valley: Defines areas of high landscape value within which special policies to protect the countryside apply. Development will be permitted where it is compatible with the principal objective of conserving or enhancing the natural beauty of these areas;
  - Policy F6 – Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar Sites: Requires that development will only be permitted when: it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site for its nature conservation interest; it would not affect the integrity of the site; the developer can demonstrate that there are reasons of overriding public interest for the development and no alternatives are available;
  - Policy F7 – National Nature Reserves and Sites of Scientific Interest: Requires that development will only be permitted when: it is directly concerned with or necessary to the management of the site for its nature conservation interest; it would not adversely affect the nature conservation interest for which the site has been designated; or no alternative site is reasonably available and the benefits of the proposed development would clearly outweighs the benefits of safeguarding the site;
  - Policy F8 – Nature Conservation: Requires that development will only be permitted when: it would not significantly adversely affect the nature conservation interest for which the site has been designated; or no alternative site is reasonable available and the benefits of the proposed development would clearly outweigh the benefits of safeguarding the intrinsic nature conservation value of the site;
  - Policy F9 – Wildlife: Seeks to preserve wildlife diversity across the borough;
  - Policy F10 – Protected Species: Seeks to ensure that development would not significantly adversely affect protected species;
  - Policy F11 – Tree Preservation Orders: Seeks to protect trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders;
  - Policy F12 – Trees and Woodlands: Seeks to protect trees impacted by new development; and
  - Policy F13 – Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands: Give encouragement to new tree, hedgerow and woodland planting.

### Emerging Northumberland Core Strategy

- 2.18 Northumberland County Council (NCC) is currently preparing a new Local Plan which will replace the existing saved planning policies. The Core Strategy is the first Local Plan document and it will set out the strategic policies, with the subsequent Northumberland Delivery Document adding detail to the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is expected to be adopted in December 2017. Whilst the emerging Core Strategy is not an adopted planning

document the strategic policies and associated evidence base are helping to inform the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 2.19 Policy 1 sets out the approach to sustainable development, highlighting the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It also highlights that consideration will be given to the impact of plans and/ or proposals on:
- Their contribution to the conservation and enhancement of Northumberland’s natural environment;
  - The impact on ecosystems and how it can contribute to net gains for biodiversity and establishing a coherent and resilient ecological network;
  - How it prevents or minimises waste and makes prudent and effective use of Northumberland’s available finite and renewable resources;
  - Demonstrates high quality sustainable design; and
  - Ensuring development is located in areas which are least vulnerable to climatic impacts such as flooding.
- 2.20 Policy 2 requires high quality sustainable and inclusive design, including: the creation of a distinctive environment and incorporates measures to improve the energy efficiency of the building.
- 2.21 Policy 28 sets out the strategic principles for the environment in both plan making and decision taking. It identifies that the natural environment will be conserved, protected and enhanced by:
- Giving appropriate weight to the statutory purposes and special qualities of the hierarchy of international, national and local designated and non-designated nature and historic conservation sites and their settings. Greatest weight will be given to international and national designations, followed by sites of regional and local importance;
  - Recognising that assets with a lower designation or non-designated, can still be irreplaceable, may be nationally important and/or have qualitative attributes that warrant giving these the appropriate protection in-situ;
  - Applying an ecosystem approach that demonstrates an understanding of the significance and sensitivity of the natural resource. Such an approach should result in a neutral impact on, or net benefit for those ecosystems;
  - Seeking, as far as possible, to coordinate environmental measures in a way that, cumulatively, could help pro-actively to minimise the causes of climate change, while also adapting to it and mitigating its causes;
  - Minimising adverse impacts on biodiversity, securing net biodiversity gains wherever possible;
  - Promoting a shared understanding of the significance of natural and historic assets and their settings, seeking to avoid adverse impacts of proposals, and identifying opportunities to mitigate harm or enhance them;
  - Ensuring that new development respects the character and local distinctiveness of its landscape or townscape setting;
  - Avoiding unacceptable pollution impacts relating to the ground, soil, water, air, light or noise; and
  - Recognising that soil is a vulnerable natural resource and protecting it through sustainable use, the encouragement of appropriate new landscape features to protect it from erosion, and, where agricultural land is required for development, prioritising poorer over the best and most versatile agricultural land.



- 2.22 Policy 29 seeks to ensure that in plan making and assessing development proposals that adverse impacts of development will be minimised by:
- Avoiding unacceptable harm through site selection and/ or design;
  - Securing net biodiversity gains and/or wider ecological enhancements through new development;
  - Applying the ecosystem approach; and
  - Securing the continued management of ecological features created, restored or enhanced as a result of development.
- 2.23 Policy 30 identifies the landscape considerations that apply to plan making and decision taking:
- Plans and proposals should maintain and where appropriate enhance important elements of landscape character, as defined in the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment and other relevant studies, guidance or management plans;
  - There should be no net adverse impact on the level of dark skies and where appropriate improvements sought;
  - In assessing development proposals in relation to landscape character, consideration will be given to:
    - The guiding principles and other relevant guidelines set out in the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment;
    - The possibility of wider impacts on the landscape, townscape or seascape or of other significant impacts on the environmental resource, through the proportionate use of landscape and visual impact assessment;
    - The setting and surroundings of the County's historic towns and villages, ensuring that new development on the edge of settlements does not harm the landscape character of the settlement edge and, where possible that it has a net positive impact;
    - The Historic Landscape Characterisation;
    - The potential impact that small scale development can have on the landscape in sensitive rural settings; and
    - Any net negative cumulative impacts of development on landscape character, taking into account other existing or approved developments that have already been assessed as having a negative impact;
  - Where it is considered that landscape character may be adversely affected, or aspects of this character that warrant protection would be degraded as a result of a proposed development, then the development will only be permitted if:
    - It can be clearly demonstrated how the harmful effects will be satisfactorily mitigated or, as a last resort, satisfactorily compensated; and
    - Where it can be clearly demonstrated that there are significant national or, outside designated landscapes, regional or local planning reasons for allowing the development, these considerations outweigh the landscape considerations.
- 2.24 Policy 35 seeks to ensure that all water bodies in Northumberland achieve 'good status' by 2021. This requires:
- Favourable consideration to any development and/or landscape measures that maintain, or may result in enhanced water quality, including bathing water;
  - That any development where impact on a water environment is a possibility, will bring about an improvement to that environment;
  - Avoiding development if it would have an adverse impact on water quality in surface water bodies or it could affect the chemical balance of groundwater including any wider impacts;

- Avoiding any reduction in the ‘high status’ of certain surface water bodies in the County, giving very close scrutiny to any development that may affect them; and
  - Assessing the effects of development on designated Bathing Waters.
- 2.25 Policy 37 requires that in plan making and decision taking that the potential for both on and off-site flood risk from all potential sources will be measured.
- 2.26 Policy 38 relates to sustainable drainage systems, requiring that in plan making and decision taking that sustainable drainage systems should be incorporated into development in order to separate, minimise and control surface water run off.
- 2.27 Policy 39 requires that in areas vulnerable to coastal change, plans and proposals will be managed in accordance with the principles and approach set out in the Shoreline Management Plan.

### **Summary**

- 2.28 The NPPF emphasises that planning system should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution, in addition, that allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value. This approach is reflected within both the saved Berwick upon Tweed Local Plan and emerging Northumberland Core Strategy policies.

### 3. Other strategies and plans

- 3.1 In addition to the strategic planning framework, there are a number of other documents and evidence available to inform the preparation of the transport elements of the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### National level

##### Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature' (2011)

- 3.2 The Natural Environment White Paper, highlights the important role that a healthy, properly functioning natural environment plays in society. In addition, the need to properly understand its economic and social value, while recognising the intrinsic value of the natural environment.

##### Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services

- 3.3 This strategy was prepared following the White Paper, with the overarching objective to halt biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

- 3.4 It identified four areas where action is particularly needed:

- A more integrated large-scale approach to conservation on land and at sea;
- Putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy;
- Reducing environmental pressures; and
- Improving our knowledge.

#### Regional level

##### North East Local Nature Partnership

- 3.5 Following the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper a number of 'Local Nature Partnerships' (LNP) were established across the country. LNPs are partnerships of a broad range of influential organisations, businesses and people, and from a range of sectors, charged by government with the task of bring about improvements in their local natural environment in England.

- 3.6 The overall purpose of an LNP is to:

- Drive positive change in the local natural environment, taking a strategic view of the challenges and opportunities involved and identifying ways to manage it as a system for the benefit of nature, people and the economy;
- Contribute to achieving the Government's national environmental objectives locally, including the identification of local ecological networks, alongside addressing local priorities; and
- Become local champions influencing decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes, in particular, through working closely with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Health and Wellbeing Boards.

- 3.7 The North East Local Nature Partnership (NELNP) was been created from the merger of two existing partnerships; 3Rivers and Northumberland Lowlands and Coast. The NELNP believes that it has the opportunity to establish a new local nature partnership for the North East Lowlands that facilitates coordinated decision making for the benefit of natural heritage, delivering integrated outcomes that provide a wide range of ecosystem services including improvements in health and wellbeing and a vibrant economy.
- 3.8 The remit of the NELNP is to embed the value of natural heritage into local decision making and work to improve ecological networks at a landscape-scale. It works with a diversity of organisations to plan and deliver strategic action enabling the recognition of the value of the natural environment in social and economic as well as environmental terms. It identifies opportunities to deliver improvements to natural heritage that are integrated with the enhancement of local communities and support economic success.

## **County level**

### Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (2008)

- 3.9 The Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (NBAP) was prepared to enable partners to focus resources and develop local projects in order to conserve and enhance the threatened habitats and species across Northumberland. A list of specific action plans comprises the NBAP and cover the following habitats and species:
- Habitats: blanket bog; brownfield land; built environment; calaminarian grassland; coastal heathland; fen, marsh and swamp; gardens and allotments; heather moorland; lowland heathland; lowland meadows and pastures; maritime cliffs and slopes; native woodland; ponds, lakes and reservoirs; recreational and amenity spaces; reedbeds; rivers and streams; rocky shire, reefs and islands; saline lagoons; saltmarsh and mudflat; sand dunes; transport corridors; trees and hedges; upland hay meadows; and whin grassland;
  - Species: barn owl; bats; black grouse; coastal birds; common seal; dingy skipper; dormouse; farmland birds; freshwater fish; freshwater pearl mussel; garden birds; great crested newt; grey seal; hedgehog; otter; red quirrel; river jelly lichen; upland waters; violet crystalwort; water rock bristle; water vole; and white clawed crayfish.

### Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010) and Key Land Use Impact Study (2010)

- 3.10 The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the essential landscape characteristics of the various parts of the County and the Northumberland Key Land Use Impact Study looks at the sensitivity of Northumberland's landscape character areas to a number of key land uses and major changes that may threaten their character. It also sets out recommendations to ensure that development respects the sensitivities of certain elements of the landscape in Berwick.
- 3.11 The studies identify that Berwick is situated within the Tweed River Mouth (character area 1a, Broad River Mouth), Rocky Coastline (character area 4a, the North Tweed Coast) and Open Rolling Farmland (character area 16a- Halidon) and occupies rising ground on the banks of the River Tweed as it meets the North Sea. The coastal edge east of Berwick is characterised

by cliffs, rock outcrops and sandbanks. Away from the coast, the landscape rises up to a plateau of open agricultural fields bisected by the river Tweed. Both sides of the plateau slope down to the river banks. The surrounding landscape is characterised by undulating farmland.

- 3.12 With regard to the existing character, the studies identify that Berwick is greatly influenced by its tumultuous history. Its ancient defences and city walls form a distinct feature in the setting of the town and contain much of its historic core. This core is characterised by a grid pattern of streets, based on the surviving medieval layout, lined by 18th- and 19th-century buildings, interspersed with more recent interventions. The riverside edge comprises wooded river banks and reclaimed land historically used as quaysides. A frontage of traditional buildings overlooks the river and its three landmark bridges. A large Conservation Area covers the core of Berwick on both sides of the river, with a smaller Conservation Area at Spittal.
- 3.13 The studies identify that the narrow coastal fringe and open grassland of the Magdalene Fields stretch along the north-eastern edge of the settlement, allowing views of extensive earth and defence works around the settlement, along the coastline and out to sea. The sides of the river valley are locally occupied by pockets of woodland, and gradually give way to open farmland, providing a varied setting to the settlements as they extend away from the river.
- 3.14 With regard to approaches and views, the studies identify Berwick is approached from the north via the A1, which leads along an industrial estate to a roundabout on the outskirts of the town. From here, a main road (North Road) leads down to the historic town centre and across the river to Tweedmouth and Spittal. Approaching from the south (A1) the settlement is largely obscured from view by topography. With increasing proximity, more of the settlement becomes visible and stretches out in views across the valley.
- 3.15 The elevated position of the settlement allows expansive coastal views from the north of Berwick with historic ramparts and military earthworks in the foreground. Across the river to the south, panoramic views are available of the valley and landmark bridges to the settlements of Tweedmouth and Spittal, interspersed with areas of open farmland as the landscape gradually rises away from the river.
- 3.16 The studies also identify strong visual links between Berwick and the settlements of Tweedmouth and Spittal, directly south of the river. Three bridges punctuate the view of the river crossing and provide a focus in views from the river edge. Beyond the defensive earthworks, the Magdalene Fields provide an extensive area of visual open space along the north and east of the settlement. Extensive views can be obtained here of the rocky coastline and towards the sea. The Tweed estuary and Tweed valley also provide considerable areas of open space which may be experienced from the riverside.
- 3.17 With regard to landscape sensitivity, the Key Land Use Impact Study identifies the North-eastern parts of Berwick have a clearly defined urban edge, bounded to the east by the coast and/or the railway line. The A1 curves around the west of the settlement. Lined by mixed shelterbelts, the road forms a strong boundary to the existing settlement edge. A dense woodland belt lines the A698 and locally obscures views of the Tweedmouth from the A1. South of the river the settlement edge is more serrated, with distinct blocks of residential development extending into farmland on the south and south-west fringes.
- 3.18 In terms of sensitivity of the landscape to change, the study identifies that the rocky coastline and Tweed estuary are of considerable wildlife and recreational interest. They are also of importance to the setting of Berwick and are the focus of key views from the settlement, and

are therefore considered to be of higher landscape sensitivity. The banks of the River Tweed are largely undeveloped and managed for agriculture, interspersed with woodlands and shelterbelts. The area provides a buffer between the developed settlement edge and the river and is characteristic in views from the settlement.

- 3.19 The agricultural landscape south of Berwick consists of elevated areas of open farmland which are visible on the horizon in views from the settlement, and characteristic to the setting of the town. The highly visible location of these areas makes them particularly sensitive to change. Urban growth in southern parts of the settlement should therefore focus on less sensitive lower-lying areas, and areas between existing developments. The potential exists to enhance this settlement edge through carefully sited development.
- 3.20 Areas along the A1 and A698 are locally influenced by uniform infrastructure corridors and industrial developments, and are considered to be of lower landscape sensitivity. The proximity of these areas to existing infrastructure and areas of open farmland requires careful consideration of boundary treatment and potential effects on the key characteristics of adjacent landscapes. Carefully sited development along the A1 may enhance the north-western settlement edge. There are pockets of land in the area of employment land uses along the A698 which may be suitable for development.
- 3.21 The Key Land Use Impact Study includes a number of guidelines for new development:
1. Seek to protect sensitive skylines, maintaining characteristic areas of open farmland in views from the settlement.
  2. Areas of lower landscape sensitivity to north-west and south may provide potential for enhancement of settlement edges.
  3. Seek to retain areas of visual open space within the Tweed Valley along the A698.
  4. Seek to enhance boundary of industrial developments along the A1 north of Berwick.
  5. Seek to retain character of agricultural fields on rising ground along the river and beyond the A1.
- 3.22 In addition, the study includes a number of recommendations, which indicate mitigation measures which would reduce the impact of new development in the locations indicated above:
- Strengthen boundaries of settlement with hedgerows and woodland belts. Retain existing mature trees and field boundaries, follow grain of settlement through new development.
  - Review existing massing patterns (terracing, detached, positions of houses within plots and in relation to topography).
  - Review architectural styles extant in the town, and refer to available design guides such as that for Northumberland Coast AONB.
  - Review and maximise use of traditional building materials.
  - Retain key views to and from the settlement and consider potential effects on key landscape characteristics as a result of new development.

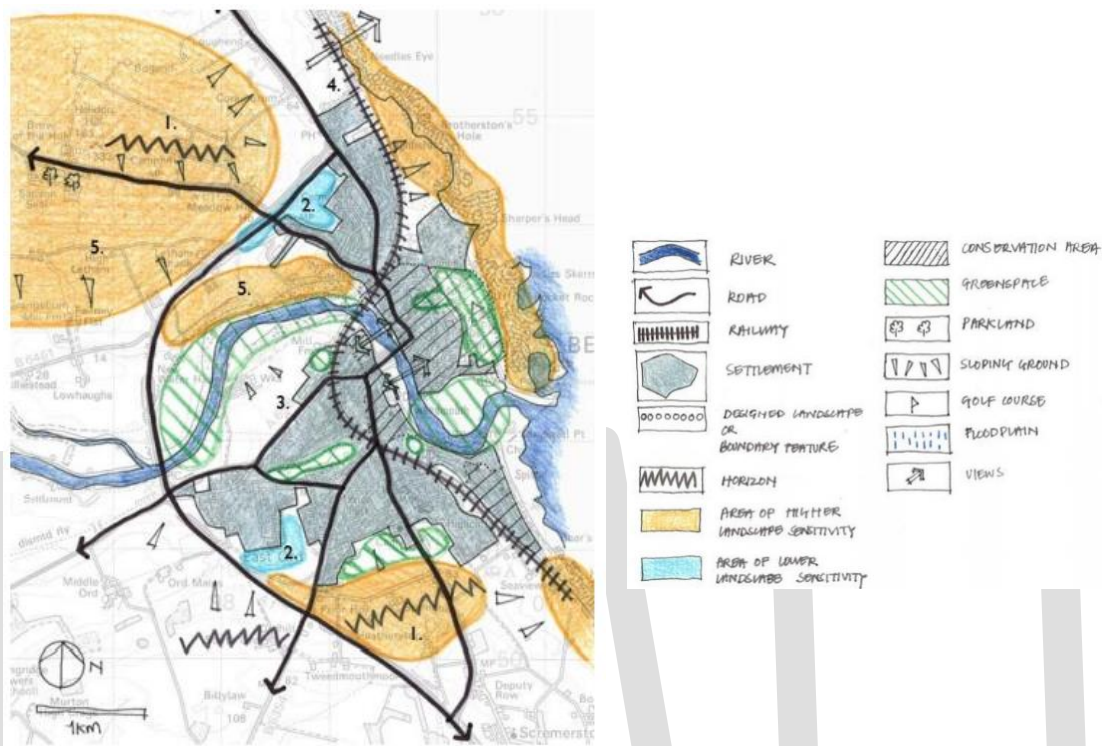


Figure 1: Guidelines for new development

- Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – Level 1 (2010) and Level 2 (2015)**
- 3.23 The Northumberland Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) provides a detailed picture of areas susceptible to different types of flooding and identifies risks across the County. It suggests dividing the sequential test into a series of detailed stages, which will be applied when considering future land allocations and for individual proposals.
- Northumberland Outline and Detailed Water Cycle Studies (2012 and 2015)**
- 3.24 The Northumberland Water Cycle Study examined the capacity for existing water supply and sewerage infrastructure to cope with new development across the County.
- 3.25 The detailed WCS identifies that there are possible constraints to water supply from Berwick and Fowbery Water Resource Zone, which is extracted from ground water sources. There are no capacity constraints associated with Berwick-upon-Tweed Waste Water Treatment Works.
- 3.26 While it identifies no historic record of sewer flooding, potential capacity issues within the public sewerage system have been identified northwest of Berwick, south of East Ord, south of Tweedmouth and northwest of Spittal. Further investigation and possible infrastructure upgrades may be required in this location

### Local level

**Xxxx – anything to add?**

3.27

3.28

**Summary**

3.29 **Too add once section is complete.**

DRAFT



## 4. Natural environment designations

- 4.1 This section of the background paper summarises the natural environment designations across the Plan area.

### Flood Risk

- 4.2 Data from the Environment Agency illustrates that a wide area aligned with the River Tweed, and Whiteadder Water, extending from the west of Berwick to the coast, is at risk of fluvial flooding and is identified as being located in Flood Zone 3. To the east of Berwick, the coastline is identified as being at risk of coastal flooding, in Flood Zone 3.



Figure 2: Flood Risk information from the Environment Agency

### Biodiversity

- 4.4 Both the River Tweed and the coastline to the east of Berwick support diverse marine habitats and ecosystems, meaning a significant amount of local, national and international natural environment designations are located in the area. Both the River Tweed and the coastline are designated SSSI's and Special Areas of Conservation. South from Bear's Head extends a Ramsar site, a Special Protection Area and the Northumberland Coast AONB; in addition, the coastline is a Heritage Coast. The plan area lies within the Tweed and Till Higher Level Stewardship Target Area.
- 4.5 Inland, a LWGS is aligned with the River Tweed and Whiteadder Water, extending from the west to Whiteadder Point, and ancient semi-natural woodland is located on the north bank of the River Tweed

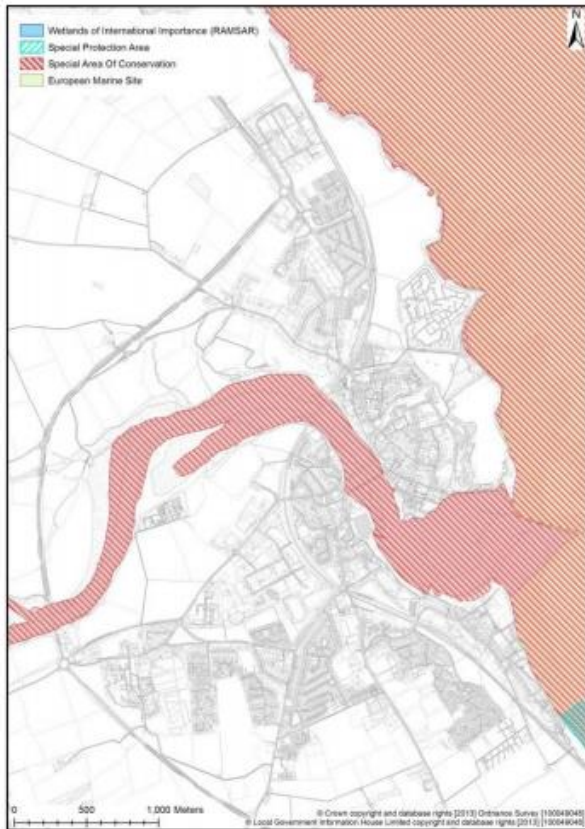


Figure 3: International natural environment designations

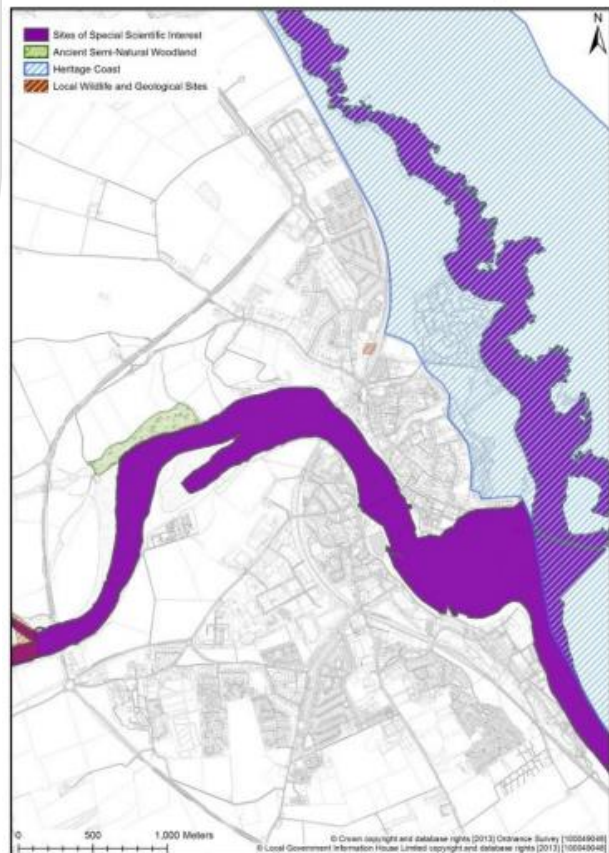


Figure 4: National and Local natural environment designations

### Open space

- 4.6 Berwick contains a significant amount of open space, with much of this identified as outdoor sports facilities. Shielfield Park, Billendean Park and Swan Centre for Leisure are located to the south of Berwick, as are outdoor sports facilities associated with the high school. To the north of Berwick, playing fields and outdoor sports facilities associated with the community centre and middle school, are identified. Recreation grounds on the north bank of the River Tweed estuary are identified as parks and gardens, while areas of natural and seminatural green space are located on the north and south banks of the River Tweed. There is also a large provision of amenity green space.

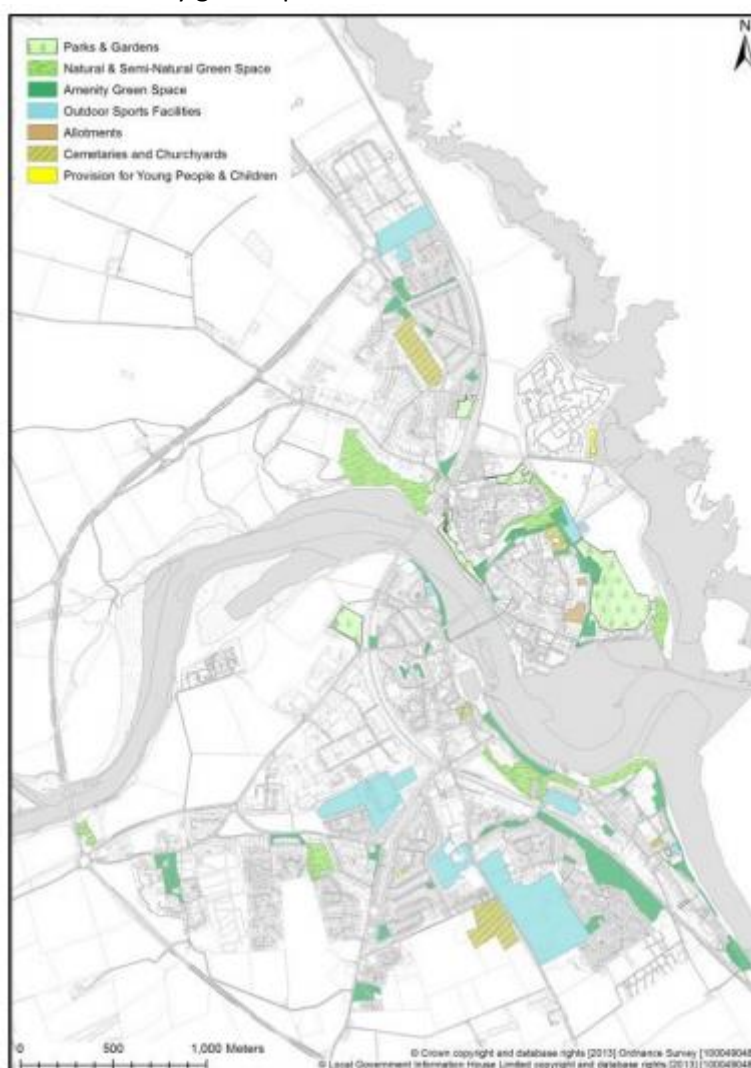


Figure 5: Green Infrastructure and open space

### Agricultural land classification

- 4.7 Agricultural land to the north and south of Berwick is identified as being Grade 3, while an additional area north of the River Tweed at Castlehills Farm is also Grade 3. Much of the land to the south of the River Tweed is Grade 2, as is an area which extends from the A1 up to the A6105, north of the River Tweed.
- 4.8 More detailed analysis has been undertaken across some of the land surrounding Berwick, which identifies in some detail different grades of land. An area of land located southwest of Tweedmouth along the A698, identified as Grade 2 above, is in the more detailed assessment

as Grade 3a or Grade 3b; as is land at Highfield to the north of the River Tweed. Located to the south of Berwick, a parcel of land at Tweedmouth Grove is Grade 3a.

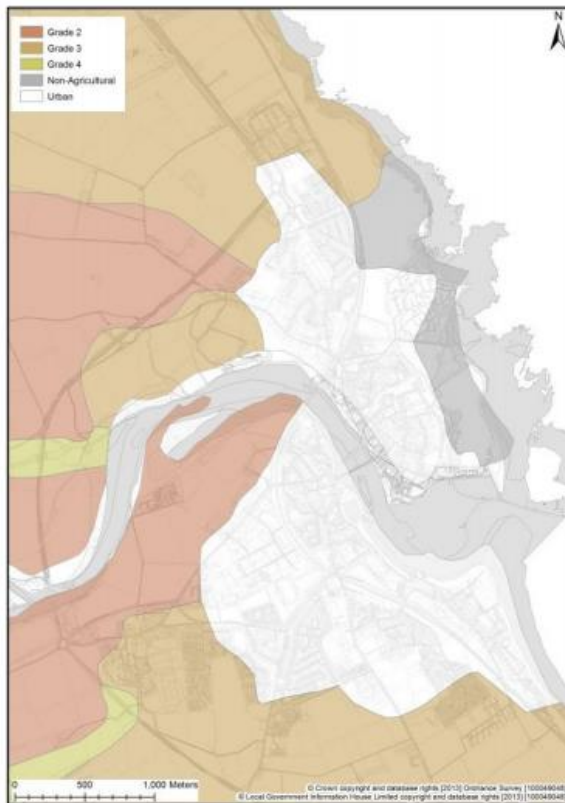


Figure 6: Agricultural land classification

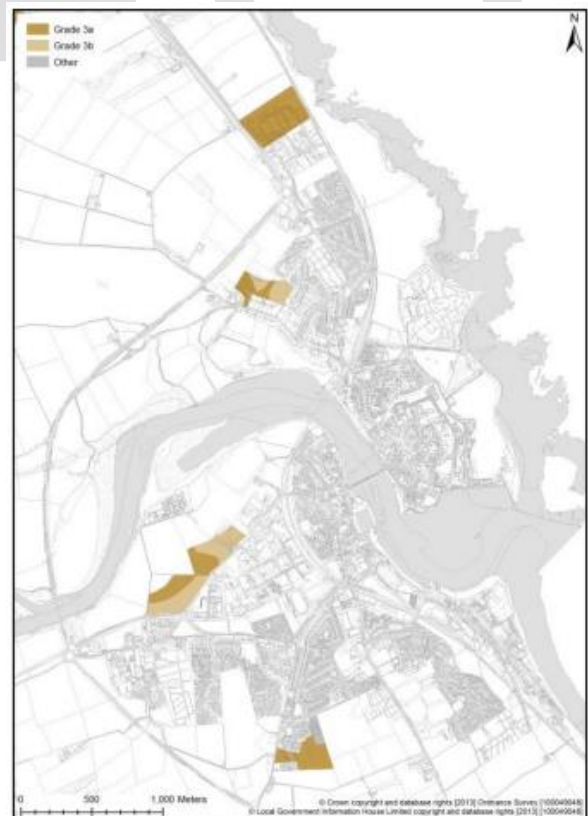


Figure 7: Detailed agricultural land classification

**Other important green infrastructure**

4.9 There are a number of other important features which form part of the green infrastructure of the plan area, such as: footpaths and bridleways; domestic gardens; beaches and cliffs; areas of woodland.

Need maps from NCC

4.10

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## 5. Feedback

### Early engagement – local community

- 5.1 As a means of starting the process of collecting information and opinions that would influence the content of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Town Council held five community engagement drop-in sessions across the Plan area which took place during February 2016. The purpose of the events was to raise awareness of the opportunities presented by Neighbourhood Planning and to engage as broad a range of people from the local community as possible from the start of the plan making process. Engagement sought to help the Steering Group to define those issues of greatest importance to the local community
- 5.2 Each drop-in session sought views from the community using a variety of techniques, each of which looked to determine local opinions about life in Berwick. These techniques included:
- Feedback display boards seeking opinions about the topic areas that should be covered in a Neighbourhood Plan;
  - Feedback display boards which allowed people to identify, by using ‘Post-it’ notes what is good and not so good about life in Berwick;
  - Feedback postcards inviting people to identify the three things they would change about Berwick; and
  - A mapping exercise which allowed people to highlight specific locations of concern and where opportunities exist for improvements.
- 5.3 A full report on the engagement activities is available on the Neighbourhood Plan website<sup>2</sup>.

#### Natural Environment issues identified through early engagement

##### *Key themes the Plan should cover:*

Issue identified	Potential Planning response	Potential community action
Using the potential of the quayside as a space for activities and as a valuable visitor asset.	Consider allocating specific areas/ sites	
Protection of the few green spaces – The Town Green, increasingly threatened by council and developers who CANNOT SEE that an Act of Parliament protects it.	Consider allocation/ protection of local green space and/ or protected open space	
Tackling litter issues	Ensure appropriate waste disposal requirements are included in new development proposals.	
Walking routes – wildlife notices	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	

##### *Good issues:*

<sup>2</sup> xxx

Issue identified	Potential Planning response	Potential community action
Lovely parks and areas for walking	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	
The Estuary	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	
The Sea	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	
Access to river/coast/countryside	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	
We are fortunate to have an open green area and woodland like the Goody Patchy. It needs to be protected and improved as a family restoration area	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	
The air is good and lots of beautiful Buildings and Birds and Swans	Consider identification of sites/ areas. Policy to protect/ enhance biodiversity.	
Excellent environment AONB very important market town feel.	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	
Swans & wildlife	Policy to protect/ enhance biodiversity.	
The fresh air and nature trails and beautiful heritage buildings.	Consider identification of sites/ areas. Policy to protect/ enhance biodiversity.	

*Not so good issues:*

Issue identified	Potential Planning response	Potential community action
Better policing in public parks.	N/A not a planning issue	
Beautiful walks spoilt by needles and bottles.	N/A not a planning issue	
The Goody Patch, neglected filthy paths, litter etc, yet has potential to be a safe and enjoyable area for families.	N/A not a planning issue	
Seafield Park – poor state of maintenance	N/A not a planning issue	

*Feedback postcard – three changes:*

Issue identified	Potential Planning response	Potential community action
Very important to protect our natural environment along the river bank etc.	Consider identification of sites/ areas. Policy to protect/ enhance biodiversity.	
Rose garden, soil is poor, not properly maintained, requires proper maintenance, needs soil moving, pavements need	N/A not a planning issue	

Issue identified	Potential Planning response	Potential community action
improvements.		

*Areas of opportunity:*

Issue identified	Potential Planning response	Potential community action
Quayside and riverside: Supporting property development for leisure uses	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	
New play park – for local kids	Consider identification of sites/ areas.	
Riverside path in poor condition, need tidying up.	N/A not a planning issue	
Outdoor seating – public open space	N/A not a planning issue	

**Early engagement – key stakeholders**

5.4 Following the early engagement with the local community, initial discussions were held with a number of key stakeholders around a number of issues identified through the early engagement, particularly..... to add

**Summary**

5.5 Too add once section is complete.



## 6. Natural environment vision and objectives

### Background

- 6.1 The early engagement with both the local community and key stakeholder has informed the preparation of a vision and objectives for the natural environment elements of the Neighbourhood Plan.

### Vision

- 6.2 The vision for the natural environment of Berwick is that by 2032:

*'The vision for the natural environment of Berwick upon Tweed is that by 2032, there is recognition that our natural surroundings are something to be cherished, nurtured and protected, and that we are wholly dependent on them for our health and prosperity.*

*Visitors are drawn by the water quality, the air quality, the wildlife around us and in our waters, and the tranquillity, as well as by the stunning landscapes, the history and the culture.*

*Incremental loss, damage, or degradation is no longer tolerated: instead the natural environment is reinforced and the range of biodiversity is expanded wherever possible.*

*Businesses, visitors, and residents all benefit from the three-way interdependence between the built environment, the community, and the natural environment.*

*There is also a recognition that the natural environment does not stop at the neighbourhood boundaries – all of our actions within the plan area affect the wider environment far beyond our own back yard, and there will be policies in place to help ensure that a better local environment is not brought about simply by exporting our problems to somewhere else.'*

### Objectives

- 6.3 To deliver the vision the following objectives have been identified:

- **XXXXX**

## 7. Planning Policy Options

### Background

7.1 The evidence review and feedback from early engagement has identified a number of potential planning issues for the Neighbourhood Plan to seek to address:

- Plan positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure;
- Ensure new development enhances the landscape of the Plan area;
- Ensure new development conserves biodiversity;
- Consider the allocation of Local Green Space/ Protected Open Space.

7.2 This section identifies potential planning policy options to address the issues identified above.

### Issue 1: Natural Environment

7.3

- 1a: High level policy support for the creation, protection and enhancement of our natural environment.
- 1b: Option 1a plus undertake mapping exercise to identify area of our natural environment. to be identified within the Plan.

### Issue 2: Landscape

7.4

- 2a: Utilise Northumberland level landscape character information to inform a high-level policy to ensure that new development conserves and enhances the special landscape characteristics of the Plan area;
- 2b: Identification of particular landscape areas for special consideration for policy development.

### Issue 3: Biodiversity

7.5

- 3a. Utilise information available at a national/ county level to inform the preparation of a high-level policy to ensure that new development conserves the biodiversity value of the Plan area;
- 3b. Option 3a plus undertake more detailed local level studies to ensure the important biodiversity of the Plan area is appropriately recorded – consider local level designations such as wildlife corridors.

### Issue 4: Local Green Space/ Protected Open Space

7.6

- 4a. High level policy approach to ensure that new development provides an appropriate level of open space within it;
- 4b. Undertake an assessment of areas that could be considered for designation as local green space or protected open space.

## 8. Potential community actions

Too consider/ discuss

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