

# Blyth Neighbourhood Plan Issues Consultation

Help us shape the future of our town

June 2022



## 1. Background to neighbourhood planning

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by town and parish councils, rather than the county council. The policies within them are used to manage new development. Once they have passed examination and have been agreed by the local community, they have the same status as the [Northumberland Local Plan](#).

The preparation of a neighbourhood plan allows the community to play a much stronger role in shaping their area. A plan should include planning policies that are relevant to the local area, but importantly do not need to repeat policies that are already defined within the local plan. Neighbourhood plans should also support the delivery of strategic policies set out within the local plan. Planning policies can only relate to matters that require planning permission.

Neighbourhood plans can also include wider community aspirations that do not need planning permission such as public transport provision, parking management and tackling incidents of antisocial behaviour.

The first stage of preparing a neighbourhood plan is to define its scope. We need your input to help up decide on what the plan will cover. The starting point for defining the scope of our plan is to consider the key issues facing our town, the opportunities, relationships with other on-going work and the policies contained within the local plan.

## 2. Issues and opportunities

Over recent years there have been a lot of different projects and initiatives looking at opportunities to grow and enhance our town. Work has identified several issues facing our town, including: high unemployment, low skill and low wage economy, a declining town centre, economic exclusion and deprivation, poor connectivity (transport and digital), crime and antisocial behaviour, as well as low life expectancy. However, there are significant opportunities for our town, because of our vibrant community, substantial heritage, our rich natural and built environment, growth in renewable energy and low carbon economy, the Northumberland Rail Line, our relationship with Tyneside and our young population. We want our town to grow, to be vibrant, connected and inclusive.

## 3. Vision and objectives

The vision for a neighbourhood plan should describe how the plan area will look if the policies and actions within it are successful. It should be shaped by community feedback and inform the plan objectives, planning policies and community actions.

A vision and objectives have been defined as part of the [Energising Blyth](#) work following consultation with the local community and key stakeholders in 2020. We believe the vision and objectives as also relevant to the neighbourhood plan and consider that they should be used as the starting point to our plan.

Vision
<i>By 2030 Blyth will be a thriving UK and international centre of renewable energy and advanced manufacturing growth and innovation, providing new jobs, better skills, more homes, and a clean environment for people in the town and the wider North East region. It will be a vibrant and welcoming community, offering a great quality of life on the doorstep of the beautiful Northumbrian coastline and countryside.</i>

**Objective 1 Growing Town**

To grow our economy and productivity by capitalising on our unique strengths in the clean energy sector, investing in business growth, high-quality job creation, and education and skills, for the benefit of our people, communities and businesses.

**Objective 2 Vibrant Town**

To increase vibrancy and activity in Blyth town centre, creating a thriving community of residents, businesses, learners and workers using the centre for leisure and culture, education, employment, and housing, and a destination where everyone feels welcome and safe.

**Objective 3 Connected Town**

To make Blyth an accessible and well-connected town, supporting growth and improving quality of life by making it easier for residents, workers, learners, visitors and businesses to arrive at and move around the town.

**Objective 4 Inclusive Town**

To enable Blyth’s people, communities and businesses to share in the benefits of economic growth, and to be resilient to social challenges including unemployment and economic exclusion, digital exclusion, crime, health and wellbeing, and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Crosscutting - Clean Growth Town**

To establish Blyth as a UK exemplar in clean growth, placing environmental sustainability at the heart of all investments and delivering on Northumberland’s commitment to be a net zero carbon county by 2030

**Q1: Do you agree that we should use the Energising Blyth vision and objectives as the starting point for our neighbourhood plan?**

**4. Northumberland Local Plan**

Once adopted, our neighbourhood plan will form part of the development plan for Blyth. We therefore do not need to repeat the policies that are included within the Northumberland Local Plan. However, we should consider where we can add locally important detail. This section provides an overview of how the local plan policies will help support the delivery of the vision and objectives and suggests areas where it may be beneficial to add local detail within our neighbourhood plan.

Economic growth

The local plan includes several policies to support the growth of the economy. Blyth is highlighted as having significant importance to the local and regional economy. The local plan includes several employment land allocations, including a strategic employment area at Blyth Estuary. It also has several policies to support employment development, homeworking and tourism development. As a result of the level of detail contained within the local plan, we do not consider that it is necessary to include specific policies for the economy in our neighbourhood plan.

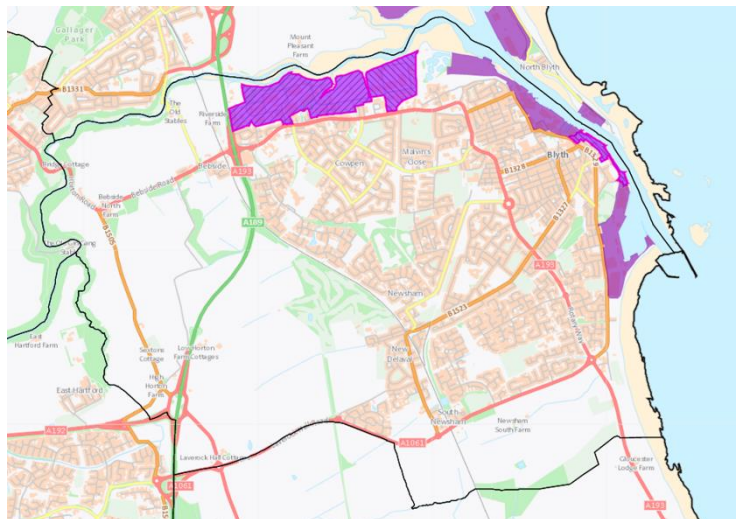


Figure 1: Local plan employment land allocations

**Q2: Do you agree that we should rely on the policies in the Northumberland Local Plan which support economic growth?**

Town centre and retail

The local plan identifies boundaries for the town centre, seeks to protect and enhance the primary shopping area and key shopping frontages. Policies support development that would maintain or enhance the role of the town centre and resist development that would undermine it. The local plan highlights that Blyth would benefit from additional retail capacity and requires a robust approach to bringing forward new town centre development.

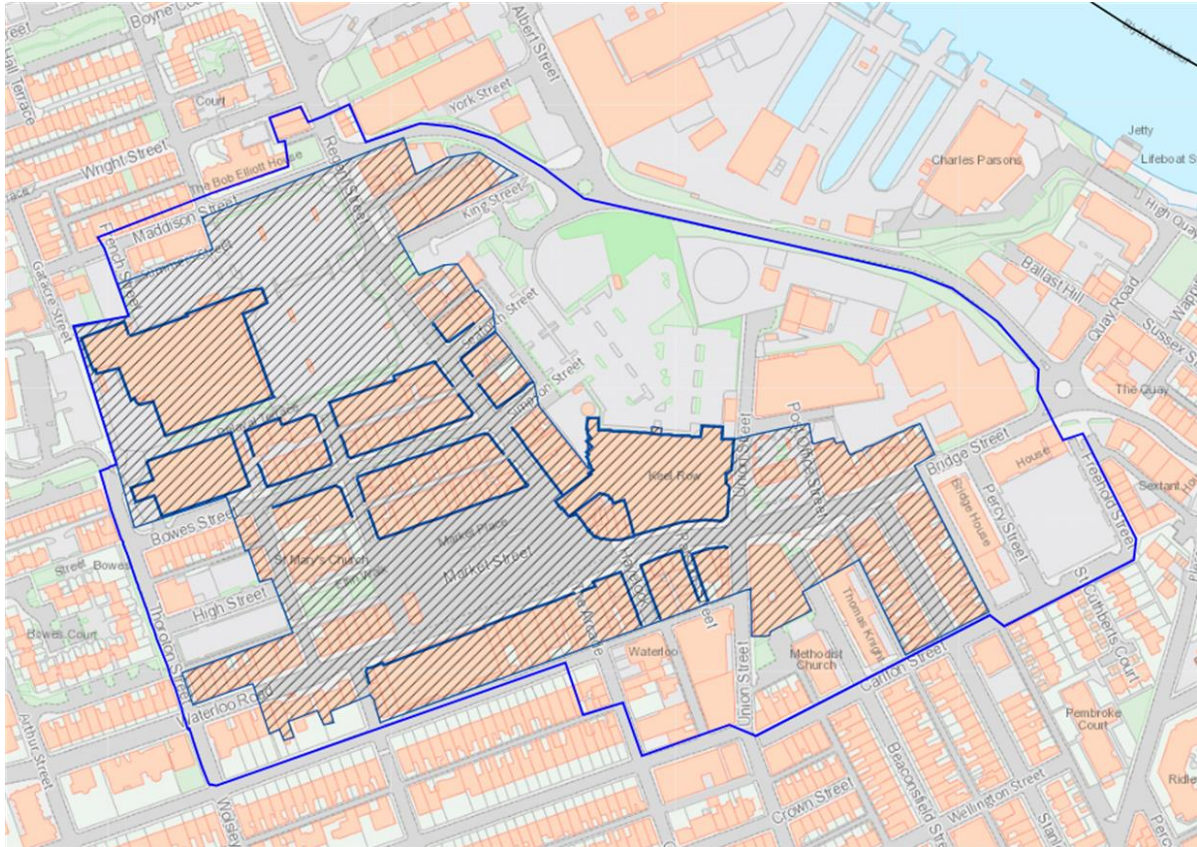


Figure 2: Town centre boundary (local plan)

Within Blyth there are a number of other smaller centres, including retail parks and parades of shops which provide important services and facilities for the local community. We consider that whilst the local plan provides a robust approach to the protection and enhancement of the town centre our plan could include a policy or policies to maintain and enhance the role of the other smaller centres.



**Q3: Should the neighbourhood plan define the smaller retail centres in Blyth and include a policy approach to ensure the role of these centres is maintained and enhanced?**

### Housing

The local plan identifies a housing requirement for Blyth for the delivery of 1,800 homes between 2016 and 2036. Of this requirement, between 2016 and 2020 986 homes had been built, planning permission granted for 801 and a further 93 units allocated in the local plan. Policies are included to focus any new housing development within the identified settlement boundary, require the provision of affordable housing as part of housing developments and to support the delivery of self-build, custom build, community led housing, as well as the provision of homes for older and vulnerable people.

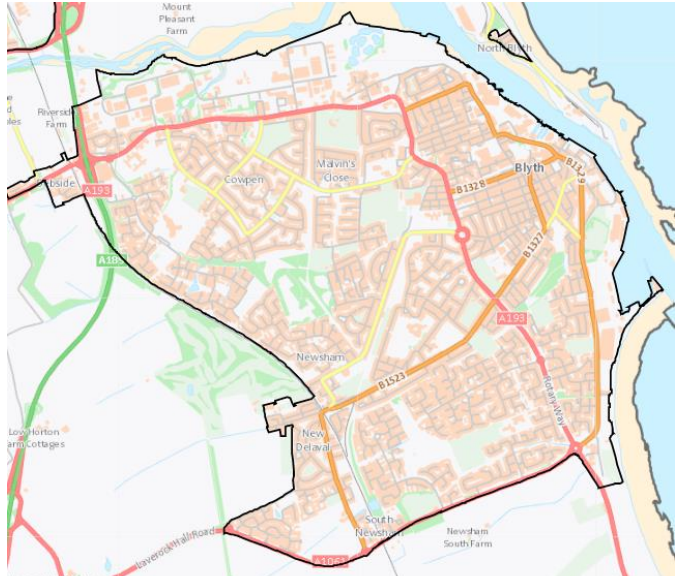


Figure 3: Blyth settlement boundary (local plan)

As a result of the level of detail contained within the local plan, we do not consider that it is necessary to include specific policies for housing in our neighbourhood plan.

**Q4: Do you agree that we should rely on the policies within the local plan to manage the location of new housing?**

### Design

The local plan includes design policies which define design principles for the county, highlight amenity considerations, establish public realm design principles, require the provision of landscaping and protection of trees, as well as on sustainable design and. Despite the local plan containing several policies, design is an area where many neighbourhood plans add local detail through the inclusion of design codes and/ or detailed design policies. We therefore consider it would be beneficial for our plan to include a policy or policies on the design of new development.

**Q5: Do you agree that our plan should include a policy or policies that would be used to manage the design of new development?**

### Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

Blyth has a rich natural environment which includes international and nationally designated sites as well as local wildlife sites and networks. The local plan includes many policies which will ensure these sites are protected and enhanced.

The local plan also allocates areas of protected open space; however, it does not identify areas of local green space, which has a much greater level of protection. The identification of local green space is an important role for neighbourhood plans. We believe our plan should identify areas of local green space which are of importance to the local community.

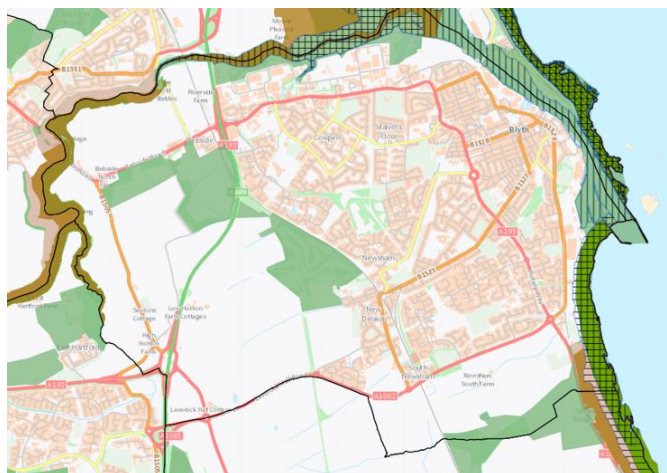


Figure 4: Overview of natural environment designations (local plan)

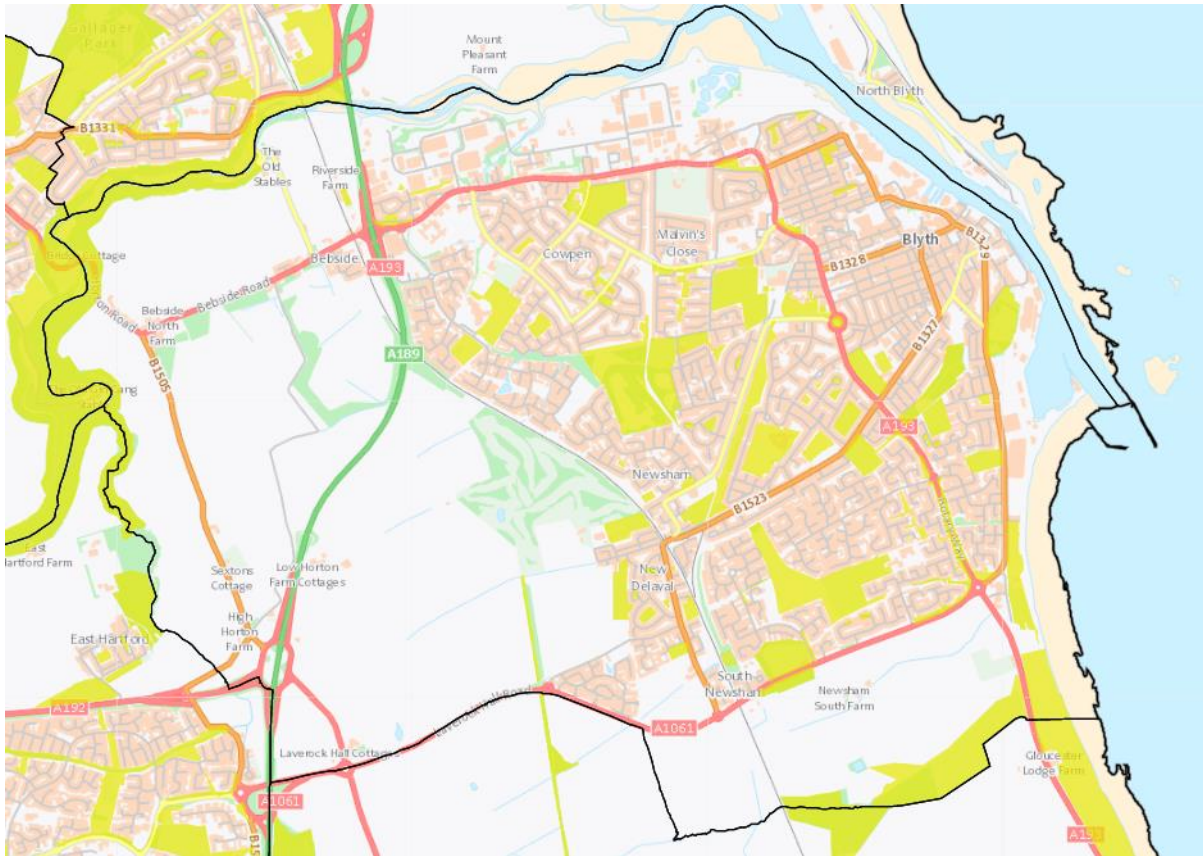


Figure 5: Protected open space (local plan)

**Q6: Do you agree that we should identify areas of local green space that are important to the local community? If so, are there any sites which you would like to propose for inclusion?**

Conserving and enhancing the built environment

Blyth has many heritage assets that are nationally designated as listed buildings. There are also three conservation areas and many other important assets that are not designated. The local plan includes policies to ensure that heritage assets are conserved and enhanced in accordance with their significance. There is the opportunity through a neighbourhood plan to identify heritage assets that are important to the local community (non-designated heritage assets) and include policies to manage any new development within conservation areas.

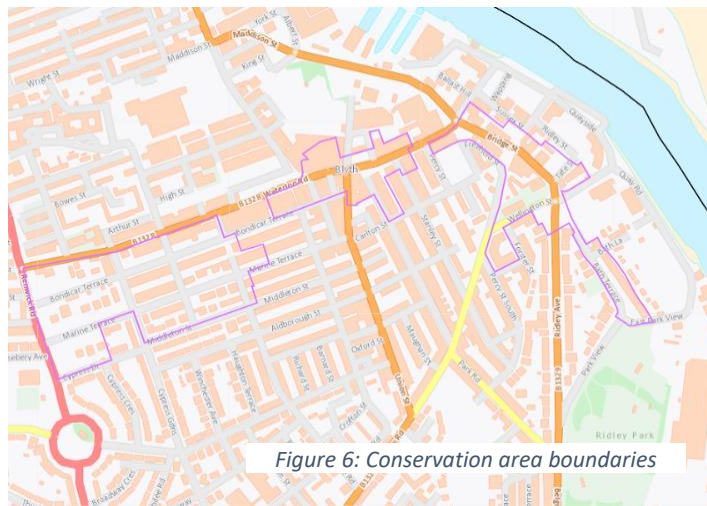


Figure 6: Conservation area boundaries

**Q7: Do you agree that we should identify heritage assets that are important to the local community? If so, are there any buildings or structures that you would like to be included?**

**Q8: Do you agree that we should include policies that would apply to new development within the conservation areas?**

### Sustainable transport

The local plan includes policies to:

- Promote sustainable connections including sustainable transport choices and addressing the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility, ensure delivery of cycle parking, protect enhance and support public rights of way, supporting provision of EV charging points;
- Manage the effects of development on the transport network;
- Improve the core road network;
- Identify car parking standards;
- Support rail transport facilities;
- Support improvements to port facilities.



**Q9: Do you agree that we should rely on the transport policies within the local plan?**

## **5. Possible planning policy areas and themes for community actions**

Informed by the issues and opportunities, as well as the detail contained within the local plan, we consider possible planning policy areas for our neighbourhood plan could include:

- Identification of the smaller retail centres in Blyth;
- Design of new development;
- Designation of local green space and protected open space;
- Identification of non-designated heritage assets; and
- Conservation area policies.

**Q10: Do you agree with the possible planning policy areas?**

Our community actions must ensure clear linkages with ongoing protects and initiatives such as [Energising Blyth](#) to:

- Grow a sustainable business base, delivering more skilled and better paid jobs, including in the low carbon and renewable energy sector;
- Increase town centre footfall and spending;
- Reduce crime and fear of crime – including antisocial behaviour;
- Attract visitors;
- Improve rail and road connectivity, increasing the use of sustainable and active travel modes.

**Q11: Do you agree with the themes for community actions?**

## **6. How to get involved**

We would welcome your feedback to help inform the scope of our neighbourhood plan. We will be holding a drop-in session on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2022 between 10am and 2pm in the Blyth Community Hub, in the Keel Row Shopping Centre.

You can also provide comments in the following ways:

- online (<https://www.blyhtowncouncil.org.uk/neighbourhoodplan.php>);
- by email to [info@blyhtowncouncil.org.uk](mailto:info@blyhtowncouncil.org.uk); or
- in writing to Blyth Town Council, Arms Everytne House, Quay Road, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 2AS.

**We need your comments by the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2022.**

## 7. Next steps

Once we have considered the feedback, we will establish a small steering group to guide the preparation of the plan. The town council will determine the membership of the steering group once the scope of the plan has been agreed.

Further work will then be undertaken to develop the evidence to support policies and allocations in our plan. Depending on the issues that we are looking to address we may need to undertake further early engagement before we publish a draft neighbourhood plan for comment.

When we have received feedback on the draft plan, we will revise it where required and submit it to Northumberland County Council. The plan will then be examined by an independent person and when it passes examination the local community will be asked to vote in a referendum on whether they support the plan.

We will keep the [neighbourhood plan section](#) of our website up to date with information on the progress of the plan. If you would like to be notified of opportunities to get involved in the preparation of the plan, please [contact us](#). Any personal data supplied will only be used in relation to the Blyth Neighbourhood Plan in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations you can view a copy of our [Privacy Statement](#) and [Data Protection Policy](#) on our website.