BLYTH

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2026-2036



MADE VERSION

November 2026

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Foreword

This Made Version Blyth Neighbourhood Plan is a guiding document that will help shape the future of our town over the coming years. Developed with input from the community, this Plan reflects the aspirations and priorities of the people of Blyth, offering a framework to guide sustainable growth while preserving the character of our town.

The Neighbourhood Plan gives us a clear voice in local planning decisions, ensuring that new development aligns with Blyth's unique identity and long-term needs. With policies focused on the town centre, retail, heritage and open spaces, the Plan balances the need for growth with respect for Blyth's natural beauty and heritage.

The Town Council would like to thank everyone who contributed to the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly the residents of Blyth, whose insights and feedback were invaluable, this Plan is truly a product of our community. Through local events, consultations, and ongoing engagement, Blyth's residents have played an essential role in shaping this vision.

1. Introduction

Background to neighbourhood planning

1.1 Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood plans are community-led, prepared by town and parish councils and in areas without parish councils they are prepared by neighbourhood forums. Neighbourhood plans set out guidance on how new development will be managed. They do this by creating land use 'planning policies'. Plans can deal with a wide range of issues like housing, employment, heritage and transport. In some cases, they may only focus on one or two issues that are of particular importance in a local area. Policies within neighbourhood plans cannot block development or support less than already committed in the statutory development plan. What they can do is help shape where that development will go and what it will look like.

1.2 Neighbourhood plans can also cover issues which are not related to the use and development of land. They can provide a useful document in which a town council can establish priorities for action to improve their area. These are often referred to as 'community actions'. The main purpose of a neighbourhood plan, however, is to set policies for the use and development of land.

1.3 Once a neighbourhood plan has been examined by an independent examiner, agreed at the referendum stage by the local community and 'made' (brought into legal force) by the local planning authority, it becomes part of the statutory development plan. Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning context

1.4 As they are part of the development plan, neighbourhood plans must be prepared in accordance with legal requirements. The way in which neighbourhood plans are prepared and the policies they contain are tested by an independent examiner who assesses whether the plan meets the 'basic conditions' to ensure they are legally compliant. Neighbourhood plans must:

- Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
- Be compatible with legal obligations.

<u>National planning policy and guidance</u>

1.5 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) respectively.

<u>Development plan</u>

1.6 The development plan for the Blyth Town Council area comprises the policies contained within the Northumberland Local Plan (NLP) which was adopted by the Northumberland County Council (NCC) in March 2022. The Blyth Neighbourhood Plan ('the plan') has been informed by the planning policies contained within the NLP and its associated evidence base.

<u>Sustainable development</u>

1.7 The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development as defined by the NPPF. This specifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be the basis for every plan and every planning decision. The most recognised definition of

'sustainable development' is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The basic conditions statement, which accompanied the submission plan, explained how the implementation of the plan will contribute to sustainable development.

Legal obligations

1.8 Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with legal obligations, specifically strategic environmental assessment regulations, and habitats regulations. A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of policies are taken into account before plans are brought into force. The habitats regulations assessment (HRA) process aims to ensure that the plan will not result in significant damage to internationally important nature conservation sites. Where the potential for likely significant effects cannot be excluded an appropriate assessment (AA) must be undertaken.

1.9 NCC provided a screening opinion on whether a SEA and/or AA was required for the plan. The conclusion of the screening opinion for the SEA was that based on the characteristics of the draft plan and the area characteristics, in the opinion of NCC, the plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and SEA is therefore not required. The HRA screening opinion was that the plan would not have a likely significant effect on European Sites within 10km of the Plan boundary, either alone or in combination.

Background to the Blyth Neighbourhood Plan

1.10 Blyth Parish (figure 1) was designated as a neighbourhood area, for the purposes of neighbourhood planning, by NCC on 7 April 2022. Blyth Town Council established a steering group which includes all town councillors.

1.11 To inform the preparation of the neighbourhood plan the following engagement activities have taken place:

- Annual town meeting on the 26 May 2022 began the process of identifying and capturing local aspirations and priorities for the plan;
- Issues consultation (June – July 2022): proposed a draft vision and objectives for the plan and suggested areas for planning policy themes and community actions – this included a drop in session;
- Update (December 2022): an update on the preparation of the plan was included within the Blyth Town Council newsletter, the local community were encouraged to provide further feedback on issues to be included within the plan; and
- Green spaces and heritage assets consultation (December 2023 – January 2024) – feedback was invited on draft local green spaces, protected open spaces and non-designated heritage assets.

1.12 The early engagement and evidence work informed the preparation of a pre-submission draft plan, which was subject to consultation from 13 November 2024 until 6 January 2025. The submission draft plan was the result of engagement and evidence work. It identified:

- The context in which the plan has been prepared – an overview of the town, the **opportunities and challenges** for the plan to address;
- A **positive vision** for the future of the town;
- How the vision of the Plan will be **delivered through planning policies** i.e. the policies that **will be used to determine planning applications** within the plan area – providing a framework for sustainable development; and
- How the vision of the plan will be **delivered through community actions** i.e. measures which are **intended to encourage action and influence decisions** taken by relevant bodies.

The plan covers the period to 2036, which aligns with the NLP. During this period, the neighbourhood plan will be reviewed and updated where required.

The 'Made' Plan

1.13 The Plan was successful at a Referendum which was held on 10th September 2026. It is now part of the statutory development plan for the area and will be used to determine planning applications in the Blyth Neighbourhood Area.

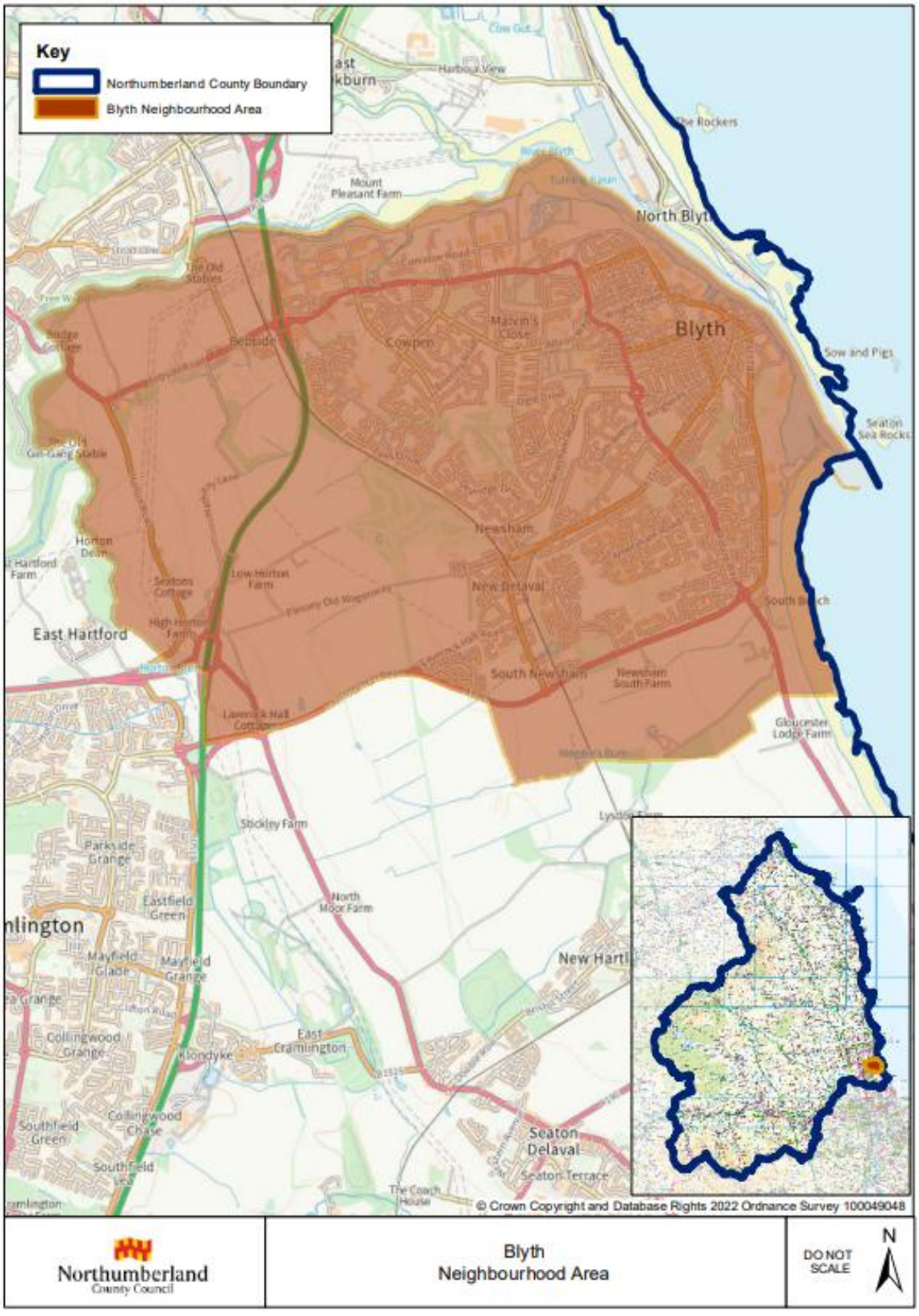


Figure 1 - Blyth Neighbourhood Area

2. Background to Blyth

A brief history of Blyth Town[1]

2.1 Blyth has a rich and varied history, from the beginnings of the port, which were first chronicled in the 12th century. The modern town of Blyth did not start to develop until the 18th century when the quay was constructed for the shipment of coal. At this time there were also 14 saltpans, producing more than one thousand tonnes of salt each year. The Cowpen Quay area was developed in 1810 and in 1815, Waterloo Road area. The making of salt in the 18th century was dogged by taxation, which was finally abolished in 1825, however by this time the salt industry was in marked decline. The last saltpan was destroyed in 1876 and the industry ceased.

2.2 By 1847 a railway between the Blyth and Seghill collieries had been constructed, with the original Blyth Railway Station opened - the station had to be rebuilt in 1896 as a result of an increase in passenger and goods traffic. The port continued to prosper and in 1853 the Blyth Harbour and Dock Company was formed. The subsequent Harbour Act of 1858 permitted dredging of the harbour to commence. This dredging allowed larger ships to enter the port and as a result, dramatically increased the amount of coal shipped out. In 1882 the Blyth Harbour Commission was formed. In 1855, 250,000 tonnes of coal were exported and by 1900 this had increased to 3 million tonnes.

2.3 The first report of shipbuilding appears in 1748 but it was not until the early part of the 20th century that shipbuilding rose to a significant level. The Blyth Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company had five dry docks and four building slipways and was one of the largest shipbuilding yards on the North East coast. During the First and Second World Wars, the Blyth shipyards built numerous ships for the Admiralty including the first aircraft carrier, HMS Ark Royal in 1914. Shipbuilding continued in Blyth after the Second World War until 1967 when the shipyard was closed. In addition to coal exports and shipbuilding, the fishing industry played a great part in Blyth's growth and development. The allied trades also developed rapidly to support the fishing fleet. In addition, many people were engaged in the salmon and herring industries during August and September.

2.4 The population of Blyth increased rapidly from the early 19th century as a result of the development of these industries. In 1831 there were 246 inhabited houses combined with a total population of 1,769. During the 1920s and 1930s new housing estates were developed on the outskirts of Blyth. By 1931 there were 7,218 inhabited houses and the total population had risen to 31,680.

2.5 It is often quoted that in 1961 Blyth was the busiest port in England, shipping over six million tonnes of coal. During the early 20th century, it was a large centre for the shipbuilding industry and home to six collieries within its 19.1 square kilometre boundaries. Fishing, the Bedlington Iron Works and the industries which supplied the coal and shipping trade, such as rope making, played a smaller but important role in the town of Blyth.

2.6 Railways into Blyth closed in 1965 following the 'Beeching Report' in 1963, which resulted in the decline in coal shipping at the port. The late 1960s then witnessed a rapid decline in the coalmining and shipbuilding industries. Blyth Shipyard closed in 1967 and Bates Colliery subsequently closed in 1986.

[1] Ref taken from: https://communities.northumberland.gov.uk/Blyth.htm
https://www.blythtowncouncil.org.uk/history
https://www.blythtown.net/the-history-of-blyth-town

2.7 Trading estates, such as the site at Kitty Brewster, were developed to fill the void and the port diversified to ship wood-based products and materials for the aluminium manufacturing process at Lynemouth, with new facilities located at the north side of the River Blyth.

2.8 The port of Blyth still remains a major industry in the area. The shipment of paper and pulp from Scandinavia flows through the port supplying the newspaper industries of England and Scotland. There has also been redevelopment on the Quayside area which includes a world-leading research and development centre Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult (originally the National Renewable Energy Centre), which was established in 2002. The port is now an important focus for the energy sector.

2.9 The town centre saw considerable investment with the enlargement of the Market Square as a public space. Retailing was also expanded and developed, with The Keel Row Shopping Centre opening in 1991 – this brought many large high street retailers into the town for the first time. Easier transport links resulted in increasing numbers of day trippers visiting the town, to take advantage of the fine beach and parks, such as Ridley Park (created in 1904).

2.10 Despite the continued growth in the population of the town, the town centre has never been a high rental area which attracts investors without the need for public investment. For example, when both the Keel Row and Morrisons store were developed they required significant public investment. This still applies now. Meanwhile private sector investment has been concentrated in places that are more accessible by car, including the Cowpen Road corridor and Cramlington town centre. As a result, Blyth town centre has been hit particularly hard by national set-backs, such as the financial crisis of 2008 and the Covid Pandemic, with rapidly increasing vacancy rates and the withdrawal of several retailers from the town altogether.

2.11 Fortunately, investment initiatives have provided new opportunities to revive the central area of the town. This began with improvements to the quayside area, showcased by the tall ships visit to the town in 2016. More recently the Energising Blyth regeneration programme[2] has resulted in several high profile projects. As the market place has become under-used, part of it is being developed with a new, state of the art cultural hub, which it is hoped will bring much needed new footfall into the centre. Streetscape improvements are also in progress to better link market place to the quayside.

2.12 In 2023 Northumberland County Council purchased the Keel Row shopping centre from Northumberland Estates. At that time, it was announced that only 8 of the 20 units in the centre were let to commercial tenants with only 25% of the lettable floorspace producing a commercial rent. The centre closed at the end of February 2024 and Northumberland County Council announced that the site will be redeveloped bringing new education facilities into the town centre. The new higher level skills and innovation facility, Energy Central, will develop energy sector expertise at degree and PhD levels.

Population, households and housing

2.13 There has been significant housing development in the town in recent years, 2,286 net additional homes were built between 2011/12 and 2021/22. Census figures illustrate that between 2011 and 2021, the population of the town grew from 37,339 to 39,724 residents, a 6.4% increase, compared to only 1.4% in Northumberland as a whole.

2.14 Table 1 illustrates that the greatest proportion of the population is aged between 45-64, followed by those aged 25-44. Although the proportion of households in both of these

[2] http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/energisingblyth

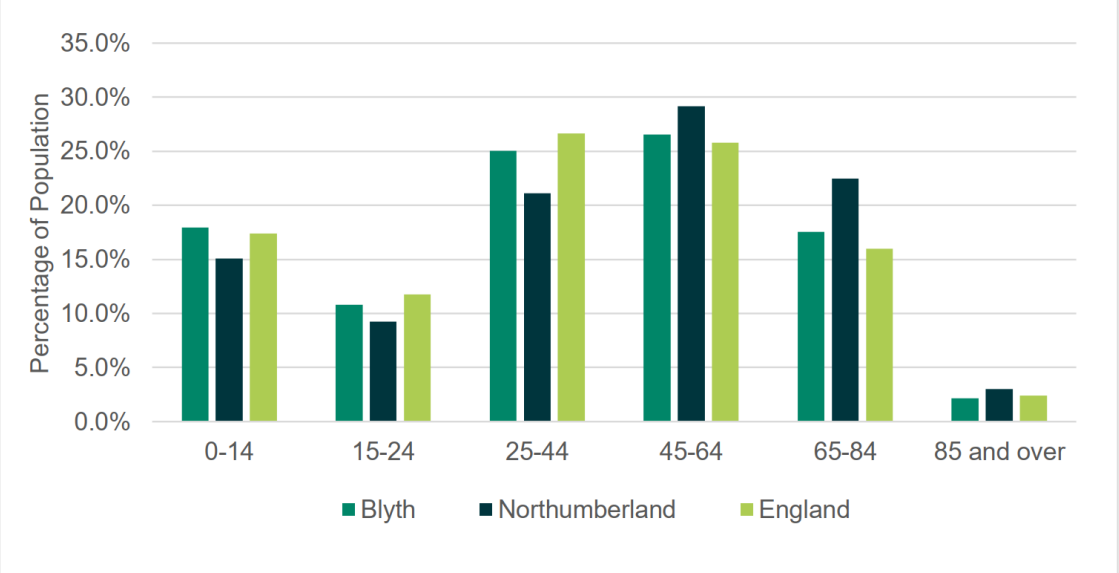
categories decreased over the decade, the number of people falling into these age brackets increased slightly. There was a significant increase in the number of people aged 65+ in the town between 2011 and 2021. This, alongside the increase in population aged 85 and over is indicative of an aging population. The only population decrease was in the number of people aged 15-24, which is likely to be attributed to those moving out of the area for higher education and employment.

Table 1 - age structure of the Parish (2011 and 2021)

Age group	2011 (Census)		2021 (Census)		Change
0-14	6,742	18.1%	7,126	17.9%	+5.7%
15-24	4,754	12.7%	4,290	10.8%	-9.8%
25-44	9,406	25.2%	9,947	25.0%	+5.8%
45-64	10,363	27.8%	10,536	26.5%	+1.7%
65-84	5,371	14.4%	6,970	17.5%	+29.8%
85 and over	703	1.9%	855	2.2%	+21.6%
Total	37,339	-	39,724	-	+6.4%

Source: ONS 2011, ONS 2021, AECOM Calculations

2.15 Figure 2 demonstrates that the town has a greater proportion of children (aged 0-14) than Northumberland and England, as well as a greater proportion of the population aged 15-44 than Northumberland. Whilst the town has a greater proportion of the population aged 45-84 than nationally, this is below the level in Northumberland. Overall, it is clear that the town has a younger population than Northumberland as a whole.



Source: ONS 2021, AECOM Calculations

Figure 2 - age structure compared to Northumberland and England

2.16 The town has a greater proportion of single person households than Northumberland and England – this may be due in part to the greater proportion of smaller dwellings and flats available in the town.

Table 2 - Household composition (2021)

Household composition		Blyth	Northumberland	England
One person household	**Total**	**34.4%**	**32.8%**	**30.1%**
	Aged 66 and over	13.6%	15.6%	12.8%
	Other	20.9%	17.2%	17.3%
One family only	**Total**	**62.6%**	**64.5%**	**63.1%**
	All aged 66 and over	13.6%	12.7%	9.2%
	With no children	17.2%	19.0%	16.8%
	With dependent children	25.5%	22.2%	25.8%
	With non-dependent children[8]	10.4%	10.1%	10.5%
Other household types	**Total**	**3.0%**	**2.7%**	**6.9%**

Source: ONS 2021, AECOM Calculations

2.17 Table 3 illustrates that both in 2011 and 2021 the greatest proportion of households lived in semi-detached dwellings, with the proportion slightly increasing over the decade.

Table 3 - Accommodation type

Type	2011	%	2021	%
Detached	2,235	13.2%	2,955	16.4%
Semi-detached	7,335	43.2%	7,851	43.7%
Terrace	4,772	28.1%	4,577	25.5%
Flat	2,619	15.4%	2,590	14.4%
Total	16,960	-	17,977	-

Source: ONS 2021 and 2011, VOA 2021, AECOM Calculations

2.18 With regard to the size of properties, table 4 illustrates that the greatest proportion of households in both 2011 and 2021 lived in mid-sized, 3-bedroom dwellings. This was followed by households living in smaller 2-bedroom dwellings. Over the decade, the proportion of households living in larger (4+ bedroom) dwellings increased from 11.8% to 15.2%, illustrating the focus of new development on larger dwellings.

Table 4 - Dwelling sizes (bedrooms) 2011-2021

Number of bedrooms	2011	%	2021	%
1	1,607	9.8%	1,596	8.9%
2	5,040	30.8%	5,234	29.1%
3	7,803	47.6%	8,408	46.8%
4+	1,931	11.8%	2,738	15.2%
Total	16,381	-	17,976	-

Source: ONS 2021 and 2011, AECOM Calculations

2.19 Table 5 illustrates that in 2021, a smaller proportion of households in the town owned their own home, compared to Northumberland and England. The proportion of households living in social rented dwellings was well above the Northumberland and England levels. When considering how the tenure mix has changed between 2011 and 2021, table 6 illustrates that the number of shared ownership dwellings in the town has more than doubled. There have also been significant increases in the number of households private renting, with smaller increases in the number of owner occupiers.

Table 5 - Tenure of households compared to Northumberland and England

Tenure	Blyth	Northumberland	England
Owned	58.5%	65.2%	61.3%
Shared ownership	0.4%	0.5%	1.0%
Social rented	25.1%	17.8%	17.1%
Private rented	16.0%	16.5%	20.6%

Sources: Census 2021, AECOM Calculations

Table 6 - Tenure change between 2011-2021

Tenure	2011	2021	% change
Owned	9,727	10,509	+8.0%
Shared ownership	38	79	+107.9%
Social rented	4,396	4,512	+2.6%
Private rented	2,011	2,879	+43.2%

Sources: Census 2021 and 2011, AECOM Calculations

Access to employment, services and facilities

2.20 The 2021 census illustrated that 57.6% of the town were economically active a decrease from 66.6% in 2011. Of those economically active people 93% were in employment. The most dominant occupation was in professional occupations (14.4%), followed by caring, leisure and other service occupations (12.6%), then associate professional and technical occupations (12.2%), then skilled trades occupations (11.9%), then elementary occupations (10.9%), then administrative and secretarial occupations (10.6%), then sales and customer service occupations (10.6%), then managers, directors and senior officials (8.8%) and finally process, plant and machine operatives (8%).

2.21 The town has a strategically important employment role, particularly as a result of the Port, and Offshore Renewables Catapult. The plan area includes part of the Blyth Strategic Employment Area, which has enterprise zone status and there are other important employment areas along Blyth Riverside.

2.22 The aforementioned Energising Blyth programme will see significant investment, not just in the town centre but in the town as a whole. From 2021 to 2027 several major capital projects are being explored to:

- Renew the town centre with new cultural, education, leisure and residential projects around a revitalised market place;
- Create 7,500 jobs, 5,000 learning opportunities, and attract over 100,000 extra visitors to Blyth each year;
- Provide skills, culture and leisure activities to local people, communities and businesses;
- Improve walking and cycling routes and connections to public transport networks, making it easier to travel to and from Blyth;
- Boost the growth of Blyth's major renewable energy industry at the Quayside, Port of Blyth, and industrial sites;
- Repurpose run-down and empty homes into high-quality affordable housing to rent and convert under-occupied offices into new apartments. Improving energy efficiency in social housing and supporting the establishment of an Empty Homes Team;
- Provide new high-tech training equipment at the town's new Energy Central Campus, providing local young people with a route to high-quality jobs on their doorstep;
- Help to reduce crime in Blyth by extending CCTV provision in the town centre and establishing a new partnership between local businesses and the police. These interventions will target anti-social behaviour, substance misuse and theft in particular.



Figure 3 - Energising Blyth Project Map

Natural, historic and built environment

2.23 Blyth has a rich natural environment with a number of designations (see figure 4) including: part of the Northumberland Marine Special Protection Area, part of the Northumberland Shore Site of Special Scientific Interest, part of the Coquet to St Mary's Marine Conservation Zone, part of three local wildlife sites (Plessey Woods, Blyth Estuary and Seaton Sluice Dunes), Ha'penny Woods Local Nature Reserve and part of the Blyth to Seaton Sluice Dunes Local Nature Reserve, Newsham Pond Non-Statutory Nature Reserve and areas of ancient woodland (to the west of the plan area). The plan area also includes a large part of the South East Northumberland Wildlife Network (figure 5)

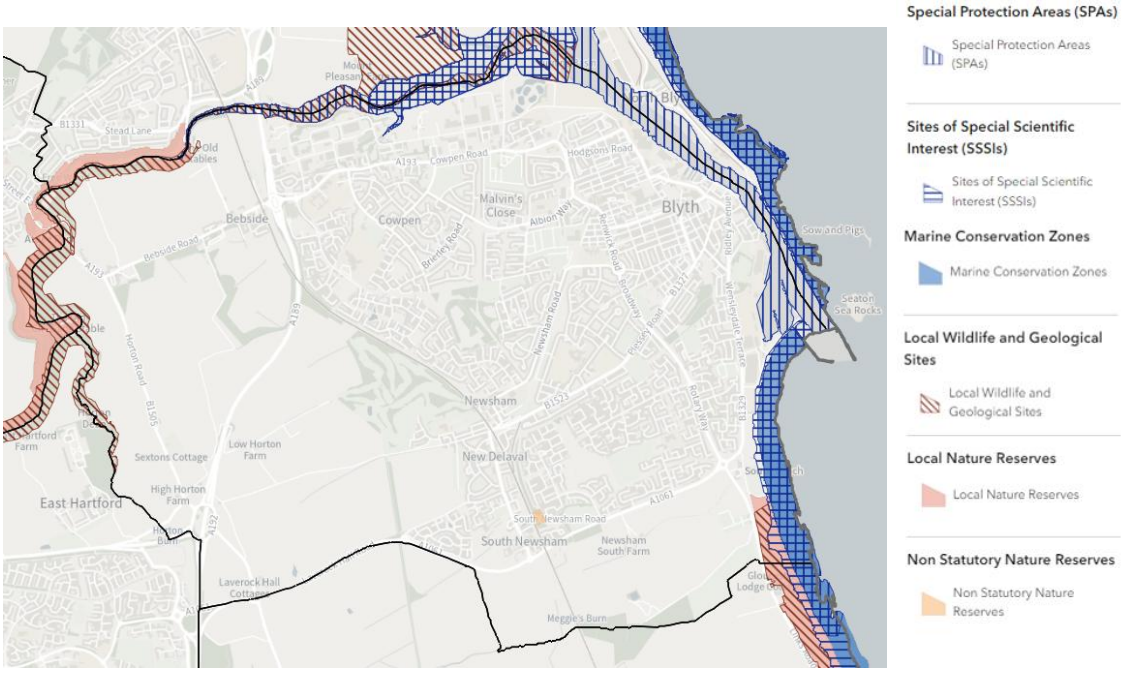


Figure 4 - Natural environment designations

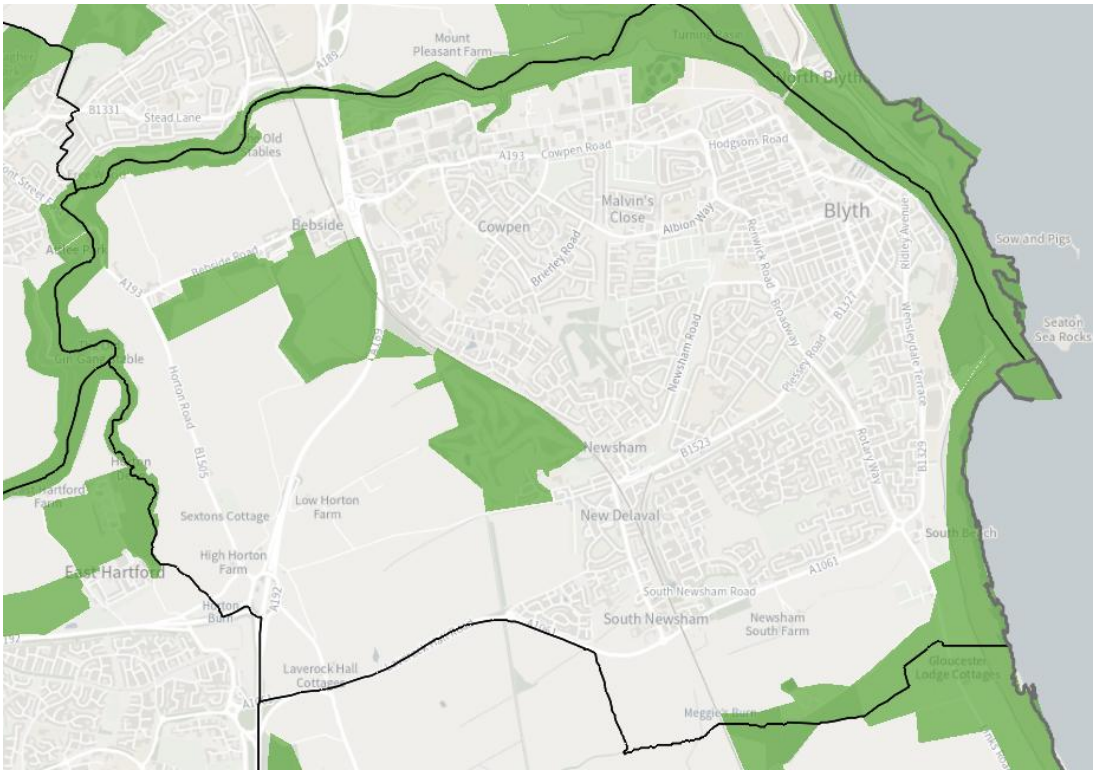


Figure 5 - South East Northumberland Wildlife Network

2.24 The historic assets of the town are a vital part of its identity. There are 37 nationally protected buildings, structures and sites on the National Heritage List for England in the neighbourhood plan area. This includes 36 listed buildings/ structures, one of which is grade II* (Church of St Cuthbert) and one scheduled monument (Coastal Artillery Battery on Blyth Links). There are also three conservation areas: Blyth Bondicar Terrace, Blyth Central and Blyth Heritage (see figure 6).

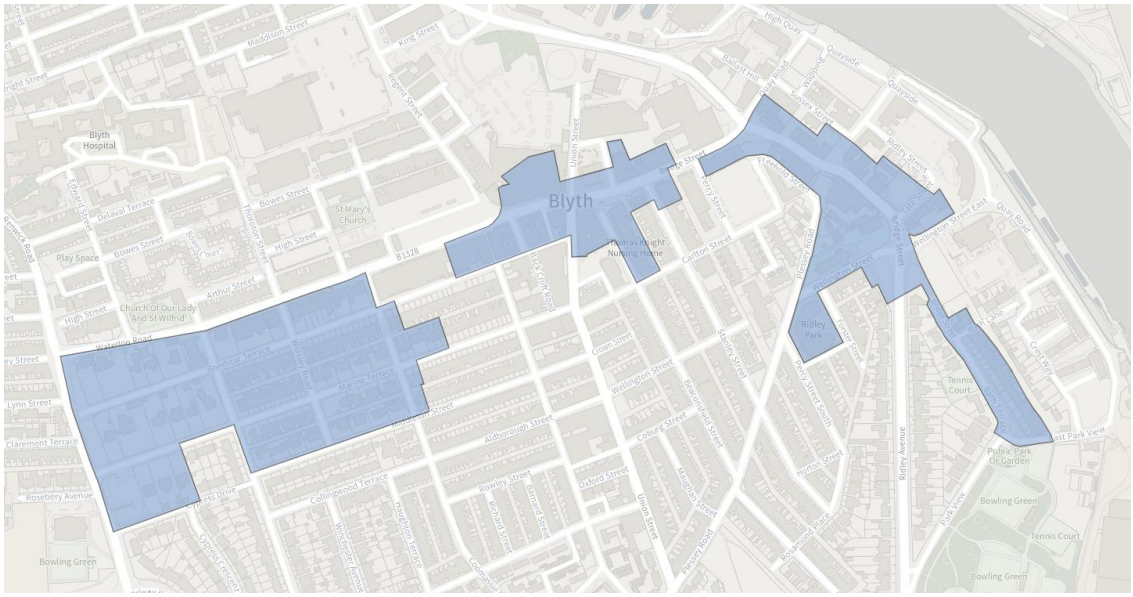


Figure 6 - Conservation Areas

2.25 In addition to the designated heritage assets, there are currently almost 400 entries on the Northumberland Historic Environment Record listed for Blyth, which are not designated. The entries include a mix of assets including anti-tank obstacles, blacksmiths workshops, collieries, farmsteads, houses, inns, mileposts, pillboxes, railway signals, ridge and furrow, wagonways

and wrecks. As part of the preparation of the now superseded Blyth Valley Local Plan, the former Blyth Valley Borough Council developed and adopted a local list of heritage assets, of which 44 are located within the town.

Key issues for our Plan

2.26 The early engagement, described in section 1.11 and evidence work, including the summary presented above has identified the following key issues for the plan, which are not in priority order:

- Supporting the growth of the economy and jobs;
- Importance of retail and community facilities – need to increase town centre footfall and improve connectivity and provide opportunities to increase tourism;
- Protection and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, particularly green spaces, the sustainable design of new development and the important heritage of the town;
- Housing:
    - Access to the right kind of affordable housing;
    - Meeting the housing needs of the aging population;
    - Impact of increasing numbers of homes in multiple occupation and the need to manage this;
    - The need for appropriate management of social housing;
- Need for investment in infrastructure including enhancing opportunities for sustainable transport and opportunities to link the town with the two proposed Northumberland Line stations on the edge of the parish.

2.27 These issues have informed the vision and objectives for the Plan.

3. Vision and objectives

Vision

3.1 The vision sets out what the Blyth Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2036. It informs all the objectives, planning policies and community actions. Given the significant investment in the town coming through the Energising Blyth Programme, there is a clear overlap between the vision and objectives of the programme and the neighbourhood plan.

A vision for Blyth in 2036
By 2036 Blyth will be thriving, vibrant and welcoming. *Our communities will have access to a home that is suitable for their needs and that they can afford, as well as having access to health, education, employment opportunities and key services and facilities.* *Blyth will be recognised as an international centre of renewable energy and advanced manufacturing growth and innovation, providing new jobs and better skills. The role of the town as a visitor destination will have been increased and strengthened.* *The distinct identity of the town will have been respected, celebrated and safeguarded. The biodiversity, green spaces and wildlife corridors will have been protected and enhanced.*

Objectives

3.2 The vision is supported by five objectives. These clearly relate to the issues identified through early engagement with the local community and other stakeholders, as well as the evidence base supporting the plan. The planning policies and community actions contained within the plan, should deliver the objectives.

Objectives
Objective 1 – Growing town: To grow our economy and productivity by capitalising on our unique strengths in the clean energy sector and increasing its role as a visitor destination. Support investment in business growth, high-quality job creation, tourism and education and skills, for the benefit of our people, communities and businesses. Ensure new development incorporates high standards of design, energy efficiency and sustainability. **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, tourism, education, employment, and housing, and a destination where everyone feels welcome and safe. To enhance access to important services and facilities by protecting our smaller retail centres. **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, particularly building on the new Northumberland Line stations.

Objective 4 - Resilient communities:
To ensure that residents and local businesses benefit from economic growth, and are supported to address challenges such as unemployment, digital access, crime and health.

Objective 5 – Clean growth town:
To support practical and proportionate measures that improve environmental sustainability in Blyth in accordance with Northumberland's climate and renewable energy policies.

4. A growing and vibrant town

Introduction

4.1 The NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development[3]. It highlights three overarching objectives, economic, social and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways[4]. The NPPF therefore includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development[5]. This presumption is repeated within the Northumberland Local Plan (NLP - policy STP 2). The NLP also defines sustainable development principles to which development proposals are expected to adhere to (policy STP 3).

Sustainable location of new development

4.2 The NPPF requires planning policies to promote a sustainable pattern of development. In order to do this, the NLP defines a spatial strategy (policy STP 1) which focuses the majority of new development in the key settlements within the county and defines settlement boundaries to seek to protect the countryside, prevent the merging of settlements, maintain the character and form of settlements and protect the settings of historic and ecological assets.

4.3 Blyth is classified in the NLP as a main town, therefore it, alongside other main towns is the focus for employment, housing, retail and service development. The NLP defines a settlement boundary for Blyth, supporting sustainable development within the settlement boundary (figure 7). Land to the south of the town also lies within the Green Belt.



Figure 7 - Blyth Settlement Boundary, identified in the NLP

[3] Paragraph 7
[4] Paragraph 8
[5] Paragraph 11

4.4 The neighbourhood plan could propose an amended settlement boundary for Blyth. The main drivers for reviewing settlement boundaries are the need to provide additional land for new housing and employment development. The NLP identifies that approximately 1,800 new dwellings should be accommodated within the town between 2016 and 2036 and allocates three sites for residential development. As a result of the level of development that has taken place within the town since 2016, current planning permissions for housing, alongside allocated housing sites, the Blyth Housing Needs Assessment (2023)[6] concluded that the overall housing requirement would be met on land within the settlement boundary. The NLP includes policies that would support affordable housing outside the settlement boundary where specific criteria are met. When considering future employment needs, the NLP allocates three sites for employment development and contains flexible policies to support future employment development. As a result, it was concluded that there was a not a need to amend the settlement boundary through the neighbourhood plan as it could support the level of development proposed within the NLP. The Town Council is however aware of discussions regarding a potential large scale development proposal including significant housing and employment, to the west of the town. Given the strategic nature of the proposals, it is not considered appropriate to include provisions for this within the neighbourhood plan.

Climate change

4.5 The requirement for the planning system to meet the challenges of climate change is also clearly explained within the NPPF[7]. It stresses the need to shape places in ways which contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources; and support renewable and low carbon energy. Planning policies are therefore required to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, including considering the long-term implications of flood risk.

4.6 NLP policy STP 4 requires new development to mitigate climate change and contribute to meeting nationally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It includes several criteria that must be considered as part of the assessment of planning applications, such as:

- Through the location, layout, and pattern of development, reducing the need to travel for both people and goods and encouraging sustainable modes of transport;
- Ensuring that development is designed to reduce energy consumption;
- The incorporation of decentralised, renewable, and low carbon energy;
- The re-use of existing buildings and materials;
- The incorporation of multi-functional green infrastructure which can provide carbon storage and environments that encourage walking and cycling;
- Protecting and enhancing habitats that provide important carbon sinks; and
- The incorporation of electric vehicle charging facilities.

4.7 Furthermore, NLP policy STP 4 requires new development to support adaptation to climate change, be resilient to it and not make neighbouring areas more susceptible to its negative impacts. The policy includes the following requirements for new developments:

- Incorporation of design features to provide resilience to climate change;
- Designed to reduce demand on water resources;
- Take into account the risk of flooding and coastal change;
- Incorporation of sustainable drainage systems, to minimise and control surface water run-off;
- Incorporation of multi-functional green infrastructure, where feasible.

[6] https://www.blythtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplan
[7] Section 14

4.8 It is not necessary for the neighbourhood plan to repeat policies contained within the local plan. It is considered that particularly NLP policies STP 3 and STP 4 provide an appropriate framework against which planning applications can be assessed.

Housing

4.9 The NPPF highlights the government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes[8]. Neighbourhood plans have an important role in supporting the delivery of the number, type and mix of homes that are required in the area. They must support the strategic development needs that are set out in local plans and not promote less development. The NPPF also highlights that neighbourhood planning groups should consider opportunities for allocating sites for housing in their area[9]. Housing needs assessments and housing needs surveys are tools to help understand the types of homes that are needed in an area.

4.10 Through early engagement with the local community concern was expressed about the level of new housing development the town has seen in recent years. In order to assist with the process of planning for housing, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to provide neighbourhood planning groups with a definitive or indicative number for houses to plan for over the neighbourhood plan period. The NLP identifies an indicative figure of 1,800 dwellings to be accommodated within the town between 2016 and 2036. Monitoring information provided by Northumberland County Council illustrates that between April 2016 to March 2024 1,717 net additional dwellings were delivered, there were also outstanding planning permissions for a further 292 dwellings. In addition to this, there are outstanding NLP allocations for around 80 additional dwellings. The indicative allocation for the town has therefore been exceeded.

4.11 To inform the decision on whether the neighbourhood plan should look to allocate sites for housing and/ or include housing policies, a housing needs assessment (HNA) was commissioned. This was prepared by AECOM, through the government's technical support programme for neighbourhood planning. The assessment considered the needs for different housing sizes and tenures, affordability issues, whether there was a need for the provision of specialist housing for older people and also issues regarding HMOs. The full housing needs assessment is available on the Town Council website[10]; key issues identified are summarised below:

- Households with a household reference person aged 65 and over are projected to increase by 61% between 2011 and 2036, accounting for 37.5% of households;
- Between 2011 and 2021 the proportion of households living in dwellings with 4+ bedrooms increased from 11.8% to 15.2%. Indicating a significant increase of larger dwellings combined with the extension of smaller or mid-sized dwellings. The delivery of smaller, 2 or 3 bedroom dwellings in the town may encourage older, under-occupying households to downsize which would free up larger dwellings for growing families, reducing the requirement for the delivery of 4+ bedroom dwellings;
- Between 2013 and 2022 house prices in the town remained relatively stable. The median house price increase by 15.2%. In 2022 the median house price in Blyth was £121,000 compared to £170,000 in Northumberland as a whole;
- Households on average incomes are able to access both median and entry level market homes with deposits rather than income being the likely main barrier to home ownership. Private renting is generally only affordable to average earners;
- The HNA recommends that first homes are delivered at a 30% discount in the town and that any further discounts may create viability challenges. It highlights that shared ownership appears to be slightly more affordable than First Homes and that rent to buy

[8] Paragraph 61
[9] Paragraph 74
[10] https://www.blythtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplan

may offer a useful product to meet the needs of households without the savings for a deposit;

- Given the current stock of affordable rented properties, the HNA concludes that this is able to satisfy the projected newly arising need as well as some of the backlog. However, the role that the town plays in meeting wider needs, is an important consideration meaning that new affordable rented housing may still be required to provide homes for households in acute need living elsewhere in the wider area – there is also a demand for social/ affordable rented properties;
- The HNA estimates potential demand for 105.4 affordable home ownership dwellings per annum in Blyth, equating to a total of 1,369.9 over the neighbourhood plan period. It suggests an indicative mix of affordable housing of 33% rented to 67% ownership;
- When looking at affordable home ownership tenures, the HNA recommends that 25% of affordable housing is delivered as First Homes, at a 30% discount. In the interests of diversity and maximising choice, a further 30% is allocated to shared ownership, with 12% allocated as rent to buy in order to provide options for households with little or no savings for a deposit;
- The town has 389 units of specialist accommodation for older people, all of which are available for social rent, in addition there are 429 care home beds. The HNA highlights that there may be a gap in the market for specialist housing for older people who would be ineligible for social rented provision;
- Given the existing position and the ageing population, the HNA concludes that there could be a need for between 463 and 789 specialist accommodation units to 2036, of this, the majority of the need, 69.1% is identified for specialist market housing, 50.7% for extra care housing and 49.3% for sheltered housing. The greatest sub-category of need was for market sheltered housing, at 37%;
- The HNA estimated that by 2036 there would be a need for 120 additional care home beds compared to 2021.

4.12 The NLP contains detailed policies on delivering affordable and market housing. Policy HOU 5 requires a range of types and tenures of homes to be provided and states that proposals will be assessed according to how well they contribute to meeting local needs, informed by local housing needs assessment and other evidence. Policy HOU 6 specifies how new affordable homes for sale or rent, to meet identified needs will be provided.

4.13 Evidence at both county and parish levels identifies the need to support the provision of smaller homes to support young families and meet the needs of an ageing population, in particular older households looking to downsize. As NLP policy HOU 5 includes a requirement for new market homes to meet identified local need, informed by local housing needs information, including supporting community led housing, self and custom build homes. With regard to the provision of homes for older and vulnerable people, NLP policy HOU 11 supports the provision of appropriate accommodation in accessible and sustainable locations that are well-served by local health, leisure, education and transport facilities. Integrated sheltered residential retirement and extra care accommodation with support for older people and vulnerable adults is focussed on main towns and service centres.

4.14 As previously explained, it is not necessary for neighbourhood plans to repeat policies contained within the local plan. It is considered that local plan policies HOU 5, HOU 6, HOU 7 and HOU 11 will, informed by the HNA, provide an appropriate framework to ensure that local housing needs are addressed through the planning application process.

4.15 The Town Council has concerns regarding the growing numbers of HMOs within the town. Whilst the HNA did consider HMOs, this only highlighted that HMOs within the town provide

for a specific housing need. The neighbourhood plan can only include planning policies to be applied to development that requires planning permission - permission is not required for the change of use of a dwelling into a small HMO. A small HMO is a dwelling where three to six unrelated people, forming more than one household, live together. Large HMOs, which are those where more than six unrelated people from more than one household live in a dwelling, fall within the 'sui generis use class', therefore planning permission is required for the conversion of a property to a large HMO.

4.16 Local planning authorities, have the ability to remove permitted development rights and require planning applications for specific applications e.g. for the use of a dwelling as a small HMO. The NPPF is clear that the removal of permitted development rights should be limited to situations where it is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area. It is not possible for the neighbourhood plan to remove permitted development rights, these can only be removed by the local planning authority. There are also other options available to NCC including mandatory and additional licensing for HMOs.

4.17 As a result of the growing concerns regarding HMOs, the loss of family homes and housing management, the neighbourhood plan includes community actions to work with NCC to ensure opportunities to place additional controls on HMOs, including through licensing and the removal of permitted development rights, are fully investigated. The Town Council is committed to providing evidence to NCC to demonstrate a need for the additional measures.

Economy

4.18 The NLP includes several policies which recognise the need to deliver economic growth whilst safeguarding the environment and community wellbeing (policy ECN 1), providing support for large scale employment development, where specific criteria are met (policy ECN 5), protecting employment land (policy ECN 10), support for home working and for employment uses within built-up areas (policy ECN 11). A critical requirement for those residents working from home is the information technology infrastructure. The NLP promotes the importance of access to high quality communications including full fibre broadband (policies ICT 1 and ICT 2).

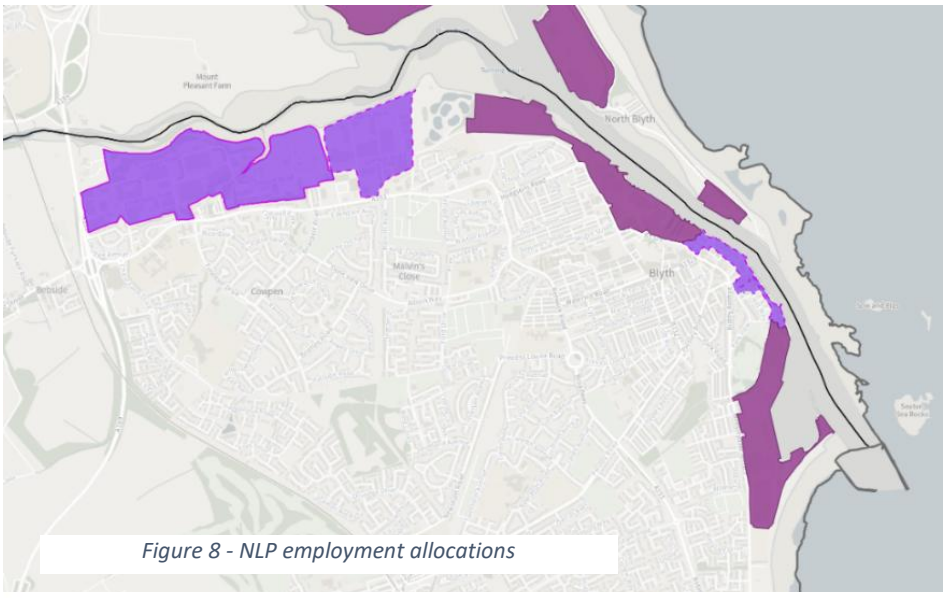


Figure 8 - NLP employment allocations

4.19 The NLP includes four employment land allocations within Blyth (figure 8). Strategic policy ECN 2 allocates Blyth Estuary Strategic Employment Area (the allocation extends into East Bedlington Parish). It supports development within the low carbon, offshore and sub-sea engineering, energy generation and renewables sectors, as well as development which would strengthen the economic role of the port. The policy also highlights the important ecology of the area. Policy ECN 6 allocates three additional sites: Blyth Riverside Business Park (Coniston Road), Blyth Riverside Business Park (Cowley Road) and Blyth Harbour South (Quayside Area). Policies ECN 7 and ECN 8 then provide more detail regarding employment activities on allocated sites, with ECN 9 outlining when flexibility may be appropriate on employment sites e.g. where premises have been vacant for a long period or where there is a need to pump prime development of employment uses.

4.20 As a result, it is considered that the neighbourhood plan could not add any further detail to that contained within the NLP.

Town centre, retail and facilities

4.21 National planning policy requires planning policies and decision to support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. This is reflected within the NLP. Policy TCS 1 defines a hierarchy of centres, supporting development proposals which help maintain and reinforce the role of the centre and resisting proposals that would undermine it. Blyth is defined as a main town – larger centre. The NLP defines main town-larger centres as those with a good level of retail provision along with wide ranging town centre community facilities.

4.22 Policy TCS 2 defines a town centre and primary shopping centre boundary which should be the focus for main town centre uses (large shops, leisure centres and hotels). The policy highlights that boundaries may be reviewed within neighbourhood plans. Policy TCS 3 seeks to ensure the role of town and village centres are supported and promoted. In main towns, policy TCS 3 highlights that opportunities should be identified, and proposals supported which add choice to existing shopping and related service offer. Reference is made specifically to Blyth Town Centre and the need to: consider opportunities to the north and east of Keel Row, including a replacement bus station (should the existing bus station be displaced) and encourage and support schemes for the renewal of blocks and frontages in areas around Market Place, Regent Street and Bowes Street.

4.23 Policy TCS 4 provides the criteria against which proposals for main town centre uses which would be located outside centres, would be assessed against. Policy TCS 5 identifies the Key Shopping Frontages where Blyth Town Centre is the most vibrant. The policy seeks to ensure that these frontages are maintained as shops, restaurants and cafes.

4.24 Whilst the NLP policies are detailed, feedback from early engagement suggested that there was a need to consider whether the existing town centre and primary shopping area boundaries and key shopping frontages remained up to date. A review, detailed within the town centre background paper, concluded that whilst the primary shopping area boundary was considered appropriate there was a need to extend the town centre boundary to the south west at Bridge Street and for a small amendment on the northern side of Maddison Street. Furthermore, as a result of the closure of the Keel Row Shopping Centre and the future redevelopment of the site for different uses, the key shopping frontage allocations should be removed in this location.

4.25 Blyth includes several retail parks and smaller retail centres/ parades of shops which provide important services and facilities. These include:

- Albion Retail Park – comprises three retail units with associated parking, which were constructed in the mid-1990s;
- Blyth Valley Retail Park - granted planning permission in 2006, it originally comprised one large retail unit and five smaller units, the smaller units have subsequently been reconfigured and a drive through added. There is also a supermarket adjacent to the original retail park, which is included within the proposed allocation;
- Broadway Circle – comprises a parade of eight retail units, with uses including a launderette, hot food takeaways, small supermarket, florist and car part shop;
- Cowpen Road (north) – comprises two supermarkets;
- Cowpen Road (south) – comprises a large superstore;
- Newsham Farm – parade of retail units including supermarket, restaurant, hairdressers and takeaways;
- Plessey Road, Newsham – a cluster of units including two supermarkets , chemist, fruit shop, sandwich shop, tanning shop and two public houses;
- South Beach – including a supermarket , public house, community centre and library;
- The Links – retail units including a supermarket, hairdressers, clothing store and restaurant/ takeaway, and café;
- Wordsworth Avenue – cluster of retail units including two convenience stores.

4.26 Feedback from early engagement highlighted support for the neighbourhood plan to identify and protect these areas as important community facilities. Therefore, in addition to protecting the vitality and viability of the town centre, policy 1 also supports appropriate new development within smaller retail centres. It also seeks to resist the loss of important local services and convenience retail within these areas.

Policy 1: Retail development

Town Centre

1. Main town centre uses should be located within the Blyth Town Centre boundary, as defined on the policies map. Within the Key Shopping Frontages, as defined on the policies map, proposals will be supported which maximise the active frontage, in accordance with Northumberland Local Plan policy TCS5.

Retail Parks

2. The following identified retail parks are defined on the policies map:
    - R1. Albion Retail Park
    - R2. Blyth Valley Retail Park
    - R3. Cowpen Road (North)
    - R4. Cowpen Road (South)

3. In order to protect the vitality and viability of Blyth Town Centre, proportionate additional floorspace for main town centre uses (including retail) in these retail parks, including extensions to existing units, will be subject to a sequential assessment and where applicable, impact testing in accordance with Northumberland Local Plan Policy TCS4.

Smaller Retail Centres

4. The following smaller retail parades and clusters, as defined on the policies map, are classified as Smaller Retail Centres:
    - SR1. Broadway Circle
    - SR2. Plessey Road, Newsham
    - SR3. South Beach
    - SR4. The Links
    - SR5. Wordsworth Avenue.

5. Development within the smaller retail centres will be supported where it strengthens the vitality and viability of these areas, while protecting the vitality and viability of Blyth Town Centre. Applicants should demonstrate how the proposal would add to the attractiveness of these smaller centres and how it would not have an adverse impact on the amenity and operation of neighbouring properties and businesses.

5. A distinctive town

Introduction

5.1 The natural, built and historic environment of the town is highly valued by the local community and the many visitors to the town.

Design

5.2 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It creates better places in which people live and work. It is fundamental to what the planning and development process should deliver and ensures that new development contributes positively to the local environment and therefore, enhances the quality of life for residents.

5.3 The NPPF highlights[11] the importance the government attaches to good design and the national design guide[12], which forms part of national planning practice guidance, sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. The national model design code provides further detailed guidance to promote successful design. There are several good practice guidance documents that can help inform the design of development, such as Building for a Healthy Life[13], which is a government endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. Local communities, local authorities and developers are encouraged to use it to guide discussions about creating good places to live.

5.4 The NLP contains several policies to inform the design considerations of new development, particularly:

- Policy QOP 1 (design principles) which, amongst other things, requires development to: make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; contribute to a strong sense of place; integrate the built form of the development with the local area; incorporate high quality design; respect the natural, developed and historic environment; and not cause unacceptable harm to amenity;
- Policy QOP 2 (good design and amenity) requires development to provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users of development;
- Policy QOP 3 (public realm design principles) sets out the requirements for new development that incorporates public buildings and spaces;
- Policy QOP 4 (landscaping and trees) requires new development to incorporate well-designed landscaping and retain trees;
- Policy QOP 5 (sustainable design and construction) seeks to ensure that new development embeds sustainable design and construction measures;
- Policy QOP 6 (delivering well-designed places) requires robust analysis of the character of an area to inform the proposed design of a development.

5.5 As a result of the level of detail contained within the NLP it was concluded that the neighbourhood plan could not add any further detail to the NLP design policies.

[11] Section 12

[12] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide

[13] https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/Building-for-a-Healthy-Life-July-2020.pdf

Heritage

5.6 As indicated in section 2, the town has a rich history, with many designated and non-designated heritage assets. Many of the plan objectives can be achieved by maximising the social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits flowing from heritage. The conservation and enhancement of heritage assets can bring wider benefits, particularly improving the desirability of the town as a place to live, work and visit.

5.7 Designated heritage assets have statutory status and include listed buildings and conservation areas. Under the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, any works for the demolition of a listed building, or for its alteration or extension requires listed building consent. It is a criminal offence to carry out work which needs listed building consent without obtaining it beforehand. The Act also includes provisions to require conservation area consent for some works of demolition within a conservation area. Where planning permission is required for works within a conservation area, the Act requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area. A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which does not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

5.8 Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and the NPPF requires them to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Also, that planning decisions affecting a heritage asset are required to be based on a sound understanding of the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposal on that significance[14]. NLP policies ENV 7, ENV 8 and ENV 9 provide protection to designated and non-designated assets across Northumberland, the significance of which could be affected by new development.

5.9 The town has 37 nationally protected buildings, structures and sites on the National Heritage List for England in the neighbourhood plan area. This includes 36 listed buildings/ structures, one of which is grade II* (Church of St Cuthbert) and one scheduled monument (Coastal Artillery Battery on Blyth Links).

5.10 There are also three conservation areas in the town: Blyth Bondicar Terrace, Blyth Central and Blyth Heritage. The Blyth Central Conservation Area is included on the national heritage at risk register and the Bondicar Terrace and Blyth Heritage Conservation Areas have been identified as vulnerable. There is an opportunity through the neighbourhood plan to include policies to guide new development within conservation areas and also community actions regarding heritage assets at risk. Two of the conservation areas within the town, Blyth Central and Blyth Heritage(Harbour) have conservation area character appraisals. The conservation areas include many non-designated heritage assets that are important to their character. Many of these are included on the Northumberland Historic Environment Record and were identified in the Blyth Valley Local List.

5.11 As part of the early engagement on the neighbourhood plan, feedback identified the importance of the heritage of the area, including those assets that are not designated. As a result, it was concluded that the neighbourhood plan would identify non-designated heritage assets. The methodology and assessment process is outlined within the non-designated heritage assets background paper[15].

5.12 The Bondicar Terrace Conservation Area was designated in 1979. The boundary of the

[14] Section 16

[15] https://www.blythtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplan

conservation area is shown in figure 9. A conservation area character appraisal was prepared for the area in 2008 by the North of England Civic Trust for the former Blyth Valley Borough Council, however this was not adopted.

5.13 The conservation area is characterised by late 19th and early 20th century housing which was built in response to the town's growing commercial strength and its rising population which had increasingly large disposable incomes. The housing developed west from the business and retail core that was expanding along Bridge Street towards Waterloo Road. The layout of this component of the town conforms to the grid iron pattern that was used throughout Blyth in the mid to late 19th century. An important element of the character of the conservation areas is the type and style of houses which range from modest terraces to substantial and elaborately designed groups of properties constructed for and occupied by the rising middle classes. These are often accompanied by ancillary buildings within generous gardens and are subordinate in form, design and use. Furthermore, gardens and garden walls are integral elements of the large period properties and Victorian terraces which contribute to the character of the conservation area.

5.14 The eastern edge of the conservation area predominantly features rows of terraces set to the south of Waterloo Road, the principal route into the town centre from the west, within which are a small number of large detached properties of varying architectural styles. These terraces possess numerous features of architectural interest, the most common of which are attractive bay windows and decorative door surrounds to the southern elevations with the rears featuring a range of offshoots, outbuildings and enclosures and many of which front onto back lanes. Detailing with these terraces sets them apart from those elsewhere in the town and contribute towards the overall character of this part of the conservation area. By contrast, the western edge of the conservation area is less densely developed and suburban in character as it moves towards Renwick Road with a notable change from rows of terraced properties to large detached 'villas' on the western side of Cypress Gardens. The Church of Our Lady and St Wilfred and the Blyth United Reform Church, together with their vicarages are two major landmark buildings within the conservation area. They provide an attractive architectural focus and dominate views along Waterloo Road.



Figure 9 - Bondicar Terrace Conservation Area

5.15 Policy 2 seeks to ensure that development in or affecting the Bondicar Terrace Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and setting.

Policy 2: Bondicar Terrace Conservation Area

1. Development within, or affecting the setting of the Bondicar Terrace Conservation Area must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and its setting. The following are key considerations when assessing the impact of the development on the character or appearance of the conservation area and its setting:
   a. Maintaining the grid iron pattern of development and the setting and views of the Church of Our Lady and St Wilfred and Blyth United Reform Church;
   b. Reflecting or complimenting distinctive Victorian architectural characteristics, including the features of attractive bay windows and decorative door surrounds on terraced properties and the elaborate detailing included on the detached properties;
   c. Retention of the positive aspects of the conservation area, particularly the settings and views of the Church of Our Lady and St Wilfred and the Blyth United Reform Church, along with gardens and garden walls;
   d. Requiring the use of traditional materials wherever possible;
   e. Encouraging the reinstatement of missing architectural features and the replacement of unsuitable materials and details with historically appropriate alternatives (including windows, doors and chimneys);
   f. Encouraging the reinstatement of front boundary walls and railings to reflect the original appearance of the area;
   g. Where planning permission is required, resisting the loss of front gardens to provide off-street parking;
   h. Preventing the inappropriate painting and rendering of stone and brickwork;
   i. Resisting the subdivision of large garden plots to provide infill development sites in order to retain the historic design relationships between buildings and spaces.

2. When considering development proposals, special attention should be paid to the impact of the non-designated heritage assets, listed in table 7 and identified on the policies map, and their role in contributing to the significance of the conservation area.

5.16 Blyth Central Conservation Area was designated in 1979. The boundary of the conservation area is shown in figure 10. A conservation area character appraisal was prepared by the North East Civic Trust for the former Blyth Valley Borough Council in 2008. This describes the factors that make the conservation area special and highlights features and problems which detract from its special quality.

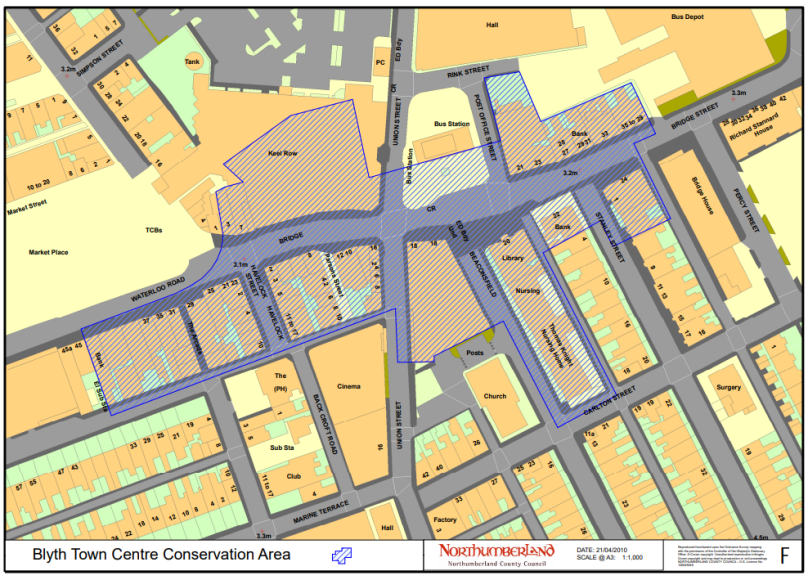


Figure 10 - Blyth Central Conservation Area

5.17 The character appraisal explains that the area substantially comprises the extension of the 19th century commercial core that originally clustered around the Quays with some terraced housing. Within the conservation area, the banking/financial sector has declined and housing has been substantially cleared or converted to make way for new non-residential uses. Retail uses were reinforced with the development of the Keel Row Shopping Centre. The visual character of the area is embedded in the late 19th and early 20th century. The appraisal explains that groups of buildings create a robust and pleasant layout within which new developments have been slotted, some more successfully than others. The area developed over a short period, with most building taking place between 1880 and 1914, as well as the latter quarter of the 20th century. Most of the pre-1880 buildings were demolished to make way for the late 19th century expansion of the town centre and the development of the new cultural hub will again reduce the overall size and extent of the market square. The survivors from the earlier period are concentrated in Havelock Street.

5.18 The historic buildings are constructed from either local carboniferous sandstone, using coursed, squared, tooled blocks, or from red bricks. Contrasting stone details and decorative terracotta tiles are used to adorn front elevations. Roofs are mainly Welsh slate brought into the port as trading ballast. Original windows, doors and shop fronts display typical joinery features, with some surviving. There are few historic spaces that have survived from the first wave of development which still dominates the character of the area. The market place was doubled in size in post-war years, this dramatically changed the established pattern of built development, which was based on a traditional grid-iron layout with views being channelled along streets. The historic containment and division of space has changed at the heart of the town centre.

5.19 The appraisal highlights that the conservation area boundary includes more modern development that does not complement the historic significance of the area, as the original buildings were demolished to make way for the new development. Also, that key views have been impacted as a result of the demolition of important buildings.

5.20 Policy 3 seeks to ensure that development in or affecting the Blyth Central Conservation Area preserves or enhances its character, appearance and setting.

Policy 3: Blyth Central Conservation Area

1. Development within, or affecting the setting of the Blyth Central Conservation Area must preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area and its setting. The following are key considerations when assessing the impact of the development on the character or appearance of the conservation area and its setting:
   a. Reflecting or complimenting the positive architectural characteristics, in particular the form, height and scale of predominately three storey terraced properties with pitched roofs, reducing to two storeys at the southern edge of the area;
   b. Harmonising and complementing the historic grain in scale, style and use of materials;
   c. Encouraging the reinstatement of missing architectural features and replacement of inappropriate materials and details such as chimney stacks, chimney pots and traditional shopfronts.
   d. Improving the quality of public spaces, footpaths and roads through the introduction of traditional materials and following historic patterns wherever possible;
   e. Encouraging the rediscovery of hidden historic shopfronts and features wherever possible.
2. When considering development proposals, special attention should be paid to the impact of the non-designated heritage assets listed in table 7 and identified on the policies map, and their role in contributing to the significance of the conservation area.

5.21 Blyth Heritage Conservation Area was designated in 1979. The boundary of the conservation area is shown in figure 11. A conservation area character appraisal was prepared by the North East Civic Trust for the former Blyth Valley Borough Council in 2008. It explains that the conservation area comprises the surviving heart of the port of Blyth and the late 19th / early 20th century commercial centre that grew around the maritime related activities. The development within the area comprises a mix of grand and more modest buildings which combine to illustrate an historic development pattern displaying the rich blend of building types and functions which evolved to create the unique character of the area. Many of the original architectural details and materials remain.

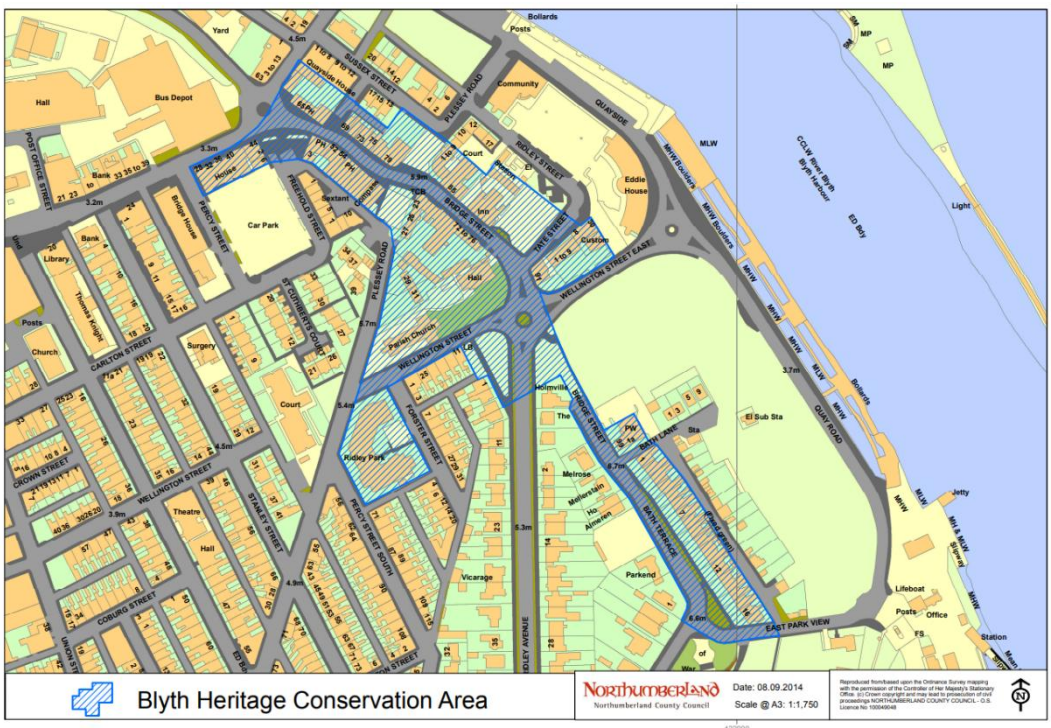


Figure 11 - Blyth Heritage Conservation Area

Policy 4: Blyth Heritage Conservation Area

1. Development within, or affecting the setting of the Blyth Heritage Conservation Area will only be supported where it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area and its setting. The following are key considerations when assessing the impact of the development on the character or appearance of the conservation area and its setting:
   a. Reflecting or complimenting the positive architectural characteristics, in particular the grain and density of the area;
   b. Ensuring the development preserves or enhances the streetscapes that are important to the character and appearance of the area, including: along Bridge Street towards its junction with Plessey Road, to the south along Bath Terrace and Ridley Avenue, views of Blyth Lighthouse and those across the estuary along Plessey Road and Quay Road, as well as along Plessey Road to the south;
   c. Encouraging the reinstatement of the missing elements of historic shopfronts and the replacement of inappropriate modern shopfronts ;
   d. Improving the quality of public spaces, footpaths and roads through the introduction of traditional materials and following historic patterns wherever possible;
   e. Encouraging the reinstatement of missing architectural features and the reversal of inappropriate changes to residential properties, including the reinstatement of boundary walls and railings.

2. When considering development proposals, special attention should be paid to the impact of the non-designated heritage assets listed in table 7 and identified on the policies map, and their role in contributing to the significance of the conservation area.

Non-designated heritage assets

5.22 A non-designated asset is a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which does not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets.

5.23 In addition to the designated heritage assets, there are currently almost 400 entries on the Northumberland Historic Environment Record listed for Blyth, which are not designated. The entries include a mix of assets including anti-tank obstacles, blacksmiths workshops, collieries, farmsteads, houses, inns, mileposts, pillboxes, railway signals, ridge and furrow, wagonways and wrecks. Whilst some of the non-designated heritage assets lie within the conservation areas, several do not. Given the importance of the heritage of the town to the local community, policy 5 seeks to ensure that the significance of non-designated heritage assets, particularly those identified in table 7, is preserved and enhanced. The process for identification is explained within the non-designated heritage assets background paper, this also describes the significance of the proposed assets[16].

Table 7 – Non-designated heritage assets

Reference	Asset
NDHA 01	22 Bridge Street
NDHA 02	Beach Bandstand
NDHA 03	Bedlington Viaduct
NDHA 04	Beulah House, 123 Bondicar Terrace
NDHA 05	Blyth Civic Centre
NDHA 06	Blyth and Tyne, 38 Regent Street
NDHA 07	Blyth Harbour Defence Post
NDHA 08	Boer War Memorial, Ridley Park
NDHA 09	Buffalo Community Centre
NDHA 10	Building north of Harbour Offices, Quay Road
NDHA 11	Chapel of Ease, Links Road
NDHA 12	Coquetdale House, Marine Terrace
NDHA 13	Old Cooperative, 47 Croft Road
NDHA 14	Customs House and Old Chandlery, 32 Ridley Street
NDHA 15	Dinsdale House, Marine Terrace
NDHA 16	Fairholme, 46 Marine Terrace
NDHA 17	23-31 Bridge Street
NDHA 18	Herron's Jewellers, 66 Regent Steet
NDHA 19	Keelman's House
NDHA 20	Library, 20 Bridge Street
NDHA 21	Lifeboat Station, Quay Road
NDHA 22	Marlow Lodge/ Former Thoroton Hotel, 2 Marlow Street
NDHA 23	Newsham Station Masters House
NDHA 24	10 Park View
NDHA 25	18 Bridge Street
NDHA 26	24 Bridge Street
NDHA 27	4 Bridge Street
NDHA 28	41 Waterloo Road
NDHA 29	43 Waterloo Road
NDHA 30	62 Regent Street
NDHA 31	Tweed House, 72 Middleton Street
NDHA 32	Osbourne Villa, 76 Middleton Street
NDHA 33	78 Middleton Steet
NDHA 34	79 Waterloo Road
NDHA 35	1-4 Bath Terrace

[16] https://www.blythtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplan

Reference	Asset
NDHA 36	1-8 Quayside House, Sussex Street
NDHA 37	14-17 Bath Terrace
NDHA 38	2-12 Union Street
NDHA 39	2-6 Sussex Street
NDHA 40	21-25 Waterloo Road
NDHA 41	27-29 Waterloo Road
NDHA 42	31-35 Waterloo Road
NDHA 43	35-39 Bridge Street
NDHA 44	37-39 Waterloo Road
NDHA 45	62-64 Bridge Street
NDHA 46	Oddfellows Arms, 91 Bridge Street
NDHA 47	Post Office, 21 Bridge Street
NDHA 48	Presbytery to the Church of Our Lady and Saint Wilfrid
NDHA 49	Prince of Wales, Waterloo Road
NDHA 50	Former Saint Wilfrid's Infant School, Arthur Street
NDHA 51	St Cuthbert's Church Hall, Bridge Street
NDHA 52	Station Master's House, Delaval Terrace
NDHA 53	Steamboat Inn, 87 Bridge Street
NDHA 54	The Bebside Inn
NDHA 55	The Pullman/ Railway Tavern, 42 Regent Street
NDHA 56	The Top House Public House, Marlow Street
NDHA 57	The Waterloo Public House, 17 Bondicar Terrace
NDHA 58	The Windmill Public House, Cowpen Road
NDHA 59	Former warehouse, 30 Ridley Street/ 8 Tate Street
NDHA 60	Fort House, Links Road
NDHA 61	101 Waterloo Road

Policy 5: Non-designated heritage assets

1. The preservation and enhancement of the significance of non-designated heritage assets listed in table 7 and identified on the policies map will be supported.

2. Development proposals affecting any non-designated heritage asset or its setting will be considered in accordance with the Local Plan and national planning policy.
3. The impact of development on the significance of non-designated heritage assets (described within the non-designated heritage assets background paper)should be fully assessed when considering planning applications.

4. It is recognised that not all buildings or structures of significance are identified in the neighbourhood plan. Where the significance of these buildings or structures can be demonstrated, the above policy consideration should be applied.

Natural Environment

5.24 As outlined in section 2, the Blyth has a rich natural environment with international, national and local designations. The NLP includes detailed policies to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural environment as well as wider green infrastructure networks and

assets, particularly policies ENV 1 and ENV 2. Policy ENV 1 requires the character and significance of the distinctive and valued natural environment to be conserved, protected and enhanced. Policy ENV 2 defines criteria against which planning applications will be considered to ensure they minimise their impact and secure a net gain for biodiversity. It also requires developer contributions to the coastal mitigation service relating to potential impacts on internationally designated site from new housing and tourism development. As a result of the level of protection provided by local plan policies, it is not considered necessary to include further policies within the neighbourhood plan.

Local green space

5.25 Green spaces are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy community and are of great importance to the character and identity of a place. They are valued for a wide range of reasons including visual amenity; historic significance; recreational value; tranquillity; and richness of wildlife. Uncontrolled changes to green spaces can irrevocably alter their special character or intrinsic value.

5.26 The NPPF enables neighbourhood plans to designate areas of local green space for special protection, thereby preventing development on these sites other than in very special circumstances[17]. These spaces do not need to be publicly accessible but must be in reasonably close proximity to the community they serve as well as being demonstrably special to them, holding a particular local significance. The designation cannot be applied to an extensive tract of land.

5.27 The sites listed in policy 6 and shown on the policies map are proposed to be designated as local green spaces as they meet the criteria set out within national policy and guidance. A local green space and protected open space background paper[18] has been prepared to outline the reasons why the sites are of particular importance to the local community and to explain the process that led to their proposed designation. As part of the assessment process, 102 sites across the town were considered – including sites allocated as protected open space within the NLP, those within the updated Northumberland Open Space Study and sites proposed through engagement with the local community.

[17] Paragraphs 106-108

[18] Available at https://www.blythtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplan

Policy 6: Local green space

The following areas, as defined on the policies map, are designated as local green space which will be protected in accordance with national planning policy:

LGS01 Bolam Avenue Allotments
LGS02 Delaval Crescent Allotments
LGS03 Beatrice Avenue Allotments
LGS04 Laverock Place Allotments
LGS05 Bebside Allotments
LGS06 Newsham Side Club Allotments
LGS07 South View Allotments
LGS08 Tenth Avenue Allotments
LGS09 Wensleydale Terrace Allotments
LGS10 20th Avenue Allotments
LGS11 Cottingwood Green
LGS12 Rear of Newsham Road
LGS13 Briardale Road
LGS14 Newsham Pond
LGS15 Isabella Heap
LGS16 Isabella Field
LGS17 Crofton Mill Heap
LGS18 Meggies Burn
LGS19 Halfpenny Woods
LGS20 South of Plessey Old Wagon Way
LGS21 Croft Park
LGS22 Broadway Field
LGS23 New Delaval Park
LGS24 Cowpen and Crofton Welfare Bowling Green
LGS25 South Newsham Pavilion
LGS26 Cowpen Recreation Ground
LGS27 South Beach
LGS28 Blyth Links and Beach Gardens
LGS29 Ridley Park
LGS30 South of the River Blyth, east of Halfpenny Woods

Protected open space

5.28 In addition to local green space designation, neighbourhood plans can also protect other areas which are valued for their local amenity value, such as natural and semi-natural greenspace and/ or for formal and informal recreational purposes, but which do not meet the detailed allocation criteria for designation as local green space. The sites listed in policy 7 and shown on the policies map are proposed to be designated as protected open space, with the intention that they should be safeguarded, and development only permitted where specific criteria are met. The local green space and protected open space background paper outlines the reasons why the sites are important and explains the process that has led to their proposed designation.

Policy 7: Protected open space

The following areas of open space, as defined on the policies map, have been identified as contributing to local amenity and character and will be protected from development in accordance with Local Plan Policy INF 5:

POS01 Play area on Crawford Street/ Millfield Gardens
POS02 Chestnut Avenue
POS03 Bede Academy (north) Playing Fields
POS04 Bede Academy (south) Playing Fields
POS05 Dene View Drive
POS06 Blyth Sports Centre
POS07 Blyth Golf Course
POS08 North of South Newsham Road

6. A connected town

Introduction

6.1 The NPPF encourages a reduction in congestion and greenhouse gas emissions through the introduction of measures which promote a decrease in the number of journeys made by car. The NLP seeks to create a sustainable pattern of development to reduce the need to travel.

Sustainable transport

6.2 Early engagement on the scope for the neighbourhood plan highlighted that there was a need for sustainable transport infrastructure to be put in place and concern that individual projects such as the Northumberland Line, improvements to bus services and cycle networks did not appear to be joined up. There was also concerns expressed regarding changes to road layouts and the need for specific maintenance work as well as creating/ improving linkages across the town.

6.3 The Energising Blyth programme includes several on-going projects to improve walking and cycling routes, as well as connections to public transport networks, with the intention of making it easier to travel to and from the town. Which includes improvements to key gateways to the north of the town. There are other projects related to the Northumberland Line (Bebside Station), the relief road, junction improvements, the bus station, parking improvements and the creation of cycling and walking priority corridors.

6.4 The NLP contains detailed policies to support the delivery of sustainable transport, including:

- Policy TRA 1 (promoting sustainable connections) which requires the transport implications of development to be addressed as part of any planning application. It seeks to create accessible development, maximising sustainable modes of transport;
- Policy TRA 2 (the effects of development on the transport network) requires development proposals to provide effective and safe access and egress to the existing transport network. In addition, proposals are required to include measures to avoid, mitigate and manage impacts on highway capacity, congestion or on highway safety, as well as providing sufficient parking;
- Policy TRA 3 (improving Northumberland's core road network) – the core network within the town is identified as the A193, A189 and B1329. The policy also seeks to ensure that development would not prejudice the progression of the Blyth Relief Road;
- Policy TRA 4 (parking provision in new development) requires an appropriate amount of off-street vehicle parking sufficient to serve new development to be made available. The policy identifies parking standards;
- Policy TRA 5 (rail transport and facilities) resists development that would prejudice the retention of rail transport facilities and that which would prevent the reintroduction of passenger rail services on the Northumberland Line as well as potential stations; and
- Policy TRA 8 (ports, harbours and beach launch facilities) supports proposals which would allow for the growth in sustainable sea based freight movement.

6.5 It is considered that the existing policies contained within the NLP will provide an appropriate framework for the consideration of the transport elements of new development. As previously highlighted, it is not necessary for these policy provisions to be repeated within the neighbourhood plan. Furthermore, not all transport issues can be addressed though planning polices, therefore the plan includes community actions (annex 1).

Annex 1 Community actions

Introduction

As part of the process of developing the neighbourhood Plan, the Town Council identified aspirations and issues that cannot be addressed through the planning system. These have been listed as 'community actions' all of which relate to the policy areas of the neighbourhood plan and are supported by Blyth Town Council. Whilst it may be possible for the Town Council to take forward some of these on its own initiative, others will require collaboration with other bodies and, in some cases, funding will be required.

Growing and vibrant town

Community action 1: Growing the economy
Play an active role in the Blyth Town Deal Board and other relevant partnerships to help shape and support projects which deliver urban regeneration through investment, the strengthening of cultural assets, as well as supporting skills and business development for local people and businesses.
Community action 2: Increasing town centre footfall and spending
Input to key projects including the cultural hub development at the Market Place, Energy Central Institute on the site of the now closed Keel Row shopping centre and cycle and walking route enhancements (to bring more people into the town centre)
Community action 3: Reducing crime and the fear of crime
Support the work on the Welcoming and Safe Blyth project and the Blyth Better Together Partnership to reduce crime in the town. This includes infrastructure measures to design out crime and tackling motorcycle crime.
Community action 4: HMOs – Article 4 Direction(s)
Prepare and present evidence to NCC to demonstrate a need for Article 4 Directions within the town to remove permitted rights, requiring planning permission for new small HMOs.
Community action 5: Housing management
Prepare and present evidence to NCC to extend the selective licensing scheme to other parts of the town. Input to the update to the Northumberland Common Allocation Policy to ensure the provision of an open, fair and transparent housing allocations policy.
Community action 6: Community hub/ facilities
Inputting to the development and delivery of a community hub in the town centre and supporting other initiatives across the town, including a new 3G pitch at Bede Academy.

Community action 7: Increasing tourism
Continuing to support events such as the Blyth Live Music Festival, Blyth Goes to War, Rotary and Life Boat events.

Connected and resilient

Community action 8: Public transport
Input to projects to improve the attractiveness and reliability of public transport, including key linkages (such as the Bebside to town centre walking and cycling corridor), bus lanes/ corridors, improved passenger information and improved accessibility.
Community action 9: Rights of way network
Input to projects to upgrade the existing rights of way network.

Clean growth town

Community action 10: Biodiversity and the natural environment
Supporting and celebrating community natural environment projects, such as those at the Isabella Heap and Crofton Field. Investigate the opportunity to obtain blue flag status for the beach. Consider opportunities to reduce grass cutting across the town to support and increase biodiversity.
Community action 11: Conservation Areas
Work with the Conservation Team within Northumberland County Council to ensure that an up to date character appraisal and management plan is prepared for the Bondicar Conservation Area and updates to the Blyth Central and Blyth Heritage Conservation Areas. This should include engagement with the local community and other stakeholders and should consider the need for a review of the conservation area boundaries, as well as the identification of a positive strategy to tackle heritage at risk and consideration of opportunities to improve the quality of footpaths, roads and street furniture within the conservation areas.
Community action 12: Civic maintenance
Work with NCC to seek to develop projects to improve the local areas, including opportunities for the creation of 'friends of' groups, one-off or regular community clean-up events, projects to re-use derelict buildings and/or establishment of a small grants scheme for resident led maintenance projects.
Community action 13: Electric charging points
Explore options to deliver electric vehicle (bike and car) charging points at appropriate locations across the town.