

# LONGHOUGHTON, BOULMER AND HOWICK NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## BUSINESS AND TOURISM SUPPORT PAPER

### 1 Background

We depend upon business for generating wealth and for employment. Where business exists, it usually requires land which is why it has to be part of the Neighbourhood Plan. Within the Parish there are two large employers, the RAF and Howick Estates/Gardens. In addition there are many other smaller businesses and many of them are based on tourism and visitors, plus the farms in the parish are vital business in their own right. There are many micro-businesses that could grow and there are two important quarries.

There is a consensus in the Parish that we should support existing businesses and encourage more businesses provided that they are not obtrusive and add to sustainability. This paper looks at business in the community and puts forward suggestions for the ways in which it could develop in the years to 2036.

**As part of the consultation, we are inviting comments on the issues identified within this support paper. Comments can be submitted in the following ways:**

- Complete an online form on our web site [www.longhoughtonndp.co.uk/consultations](http://www.longhoughtonndp.co.uk/consultations)
- Email: [adrian.hinchclife@btopenworld.com](mailto:adrian.hinchclife@btopenworld.com)
- Write to: Longhoughton PC, The Croft, Boulmer, Alnwick. NE65 3BW

The Consultation closes on 30th June 2021.

### 2 Vision and Objectives

#### Vision for 2036

In 2036 the Parish of Longhoughton, which includes the unique and distinctive villages of Boulmer, Howick and Longhoughton, will be attractive places to live and grow with a community that is sustainable, cohesive and thriving.

The diverse needs and wellbeing of the existing and future residents will be provided for and the community will be sustainable in relation to the facilities and infrastructure available to residents.

Residents will have good access to facilities and be well connected.

The natural, historic and environmental character of the area will be maintained and enhanced for future generations by ensuring that new developments are of an appropriate quality, scale and design and embed important habitats for wildlife.

New development will minimise environmental harm by ensuring the prudent use of natural resources in both construction and occupation. It will be designed to be resilient to the effects of climate change.

All people who live in the parish will have the opportunity to participate in shaping their surroundings and feel proud of where they live.

## **Objective for Business**

Supporting and encouraging appropriate and sustainable levels of business growth and development across the Parish.

## **Sustainability**

Sustainability has to be at the very core of the Neighbourhood Plan. Our proposals must aim to sustain the community of the Parish in terms of their needs and issues over the period of the Plan to 2036.

It means that we have to plan to provide for the needs of the community in all aspects of life in the Parish, irrespective of age, in relation to the use of land:

- Planning to ensure that the education facilities are adequate and well used.
- Planning to provide adequate medical facilities appropriate for all.
- Planning to provide adequate retail facilities.
- Planning to provide adequate services.
- Planning to provide adequate leisure and sporting facilities.
- Planning to protect the natural and built environment
- Planning to provide an adequate infra-structure
- Planning to ensure that people are able to conduct their lives in a healthy and safe manner.
- Planning for a vibrant community where people have a sense of place and a feeling that they are part of a community and are valued and listened to.

In terms of business the Parish is clearly not self-sufficient in that many residents travel to businesses that are based outside the Parish for employment or businesses that they own.

Nevertheless there is support to develop businesses of an appropriate scale within the Parish that will support its sustainability.

## **3 Planning Policy Context**

National planning policy requires that planning policies and decisions on planning applications should help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, adapt. With regard to the rural economy, national planning policy states that planning policies and decisions on planning applications should enable:

- the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;
- the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
- the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Furthermore, there should be recognition that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

The emerging Northumberland Local Plan, which includes planning policies for the whole of Northumberland, contains a number of policies to support economic growth, including supporting the growth of the rural economy. There are specific policies for: farm and rural diversification; tourism and visitor development; and one which covers military establishments. The emerging local plan also proposes to allocate Howick Quarry for employment generating uses.

Neighbourhood plans provide the opportunity to add local detail to national and local planning policies and to address specific planning issues, they do not need to repeat policies that are already in place.

#### **4 Assets of the Parish**

The Northumberland Coast is undoubtedly the primary attraction of the area. In the Parish of Longhoughton the coast from Howick to Seaton Point is beautiful, unspoiled, rugged, has an attraction for the way it has not been commercialised and is full of interest. The coastal strip is full of species and habitats that are protected by World, European and British conservation designations. It is an absolute gem.

The Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) covers approximately half of the Parish from the coast westerly and this has been established to designate the area as a place that should be protected and conserved for its beauty, biodiversity and sense of place.

The fishing village of Boulmer with its traditional fishermen's cottages and the Fishing Boat Inn, along with Howick village are areas of significant history and interest to people. The small fishing fleet at Boulmer is also an attraction. Equally the historic heart of Longhoughton with its Norman Church represents significant asset of interest.

Howick Garden's and Arboretum attracts large numbers of people and is probably the most visited feature in the Parish, undoubtedly a significant asset.

The bird population along the coast attracts many people to the area to observe different species of birds at different times of year and the biodiversity of the Parish supports many species.

Longhoughton village is four miles east of the market town of Alnwick which is a tourism destination. Alnwick Gardens, Alnwick Castle, the ancient market town of Alnwick are all attractive places to visit. Visitors who stay in the Alnwick area are likely to make day visits to Longhoughton, Alnmouth and Craster. Visitors also come to the area to visit the Northumberland National Park and its gateway towns of Rothbury and Wooler.

The walking and cycling routes that pass through the Parish attract significant numbers of tourists and visitors and are significant assets. St Cuthbert's Way and the round Britain coastal path run along the coast and the Sustrans Route 1 also runs through the Parish.

The land in the Parish is used predominantly for agriculture and farming which is a predominant industry. Over the centuries farming has helped shape the landscape as policies have been focused on production. However, policy is now changing and requiring land farmers and land managers to support nature, biodiversity and access and this will present new opportunities for our farmers.

Finally the welcome. The welcome from the local people to tourists and visitors is a definite asset. A friendly welcome and chat is really valued and appreciated along with the local accent and local traditions.

A list of the known business's within the parish is given at Appendix 2.

## **5 Economy and Employment**

The economy of the Parish is characterised by low wages, seasonal employment, high housing costs, the latter due to the lack of affordable accommodation and low skills. Whilst the coast is the largest asset due to its attractiveness to retirees, houses that come up for sale go for prices that are beyond the affordability of many people who work and live locally. This forces these people away from the coast into cheaper housing areas inland. The influx of people into the Parish is primarily people who are retiring or returning to the area. Generally they are older people and their families have left home. This does not help the sustainability of the Longhoughton Primary School.

RAF Boulmer is the largest employer in the Parish either by direct employment or through contractors. Additionally, the RAF houses some of its personnel in the village of Longhoughton where it has 149 houses for this purpose. These personnel make up around twenty five percent of the population of the Parish and as residents they use the whole range of services which enhances the sustainability of all the services including the local Primary School that has almost half of its pupils from RAF families.

Travelling to work in the Tyneside conurbation or the Edinburgh area is becoming more frequent. The East Coast main line railway station at Hipsburn presents the commuting possibility and once the A1 is fully duelled the 40/45 minute drive to Tyneside may seem more attractive. Due to this Longhoughton Parish may well see more people choosing to live in the Parish and commute the 40 miles or more to work.

## **6 Support for the Promotion of Businesses**

The Neighbourhood Plan needs to support existing and new businesses to achieve the vision and objective and sustainability set out in section 2 above. The Parish Council functions do not enable it to use the precept for supporting and encouraging business development but this is clearly part of the vision, so it is quite right that business support and development should be part of the plan.

We should start by ensuring that existing businesses have the facilities, expertise, skills and information to be successful and to develop their businesses, if that is their objective. Equally, we should ensure that the conditions are right to support any emerging new businesses. Emerging microbusinesses are where many new businesses start. People having an idea, a skill and see a potential business opportunity. Initially they may work from home until the business grows and they need to expand. The Parish will have many individuals who may have good ideas to create a micro-business. But, they will need support. Management skills, marketing skills, financial skills and they will need access to a whole range of advice covering such things as banking, legal matters, social media, taxation and producing their own accounts. The Parish Council does not provide this advice but it should have sufficient information guidance to direct small businesses to Business Hubs and appropriate networks where they can obtain help.

The infrastructure for existing and new businesses is something that the Parish Council should be concerned with through the Neighbourhood Plan. The provision of land and suitable buildings for businesses that wish to set up or expand is clearly an issue. The Parish does not have any units built that are suitable for small businesses. These sort of needs have been provided for in the market Town of Alnwick but no encouragement has been given in Longhoughton Parish. This is an issue and considering that most of the land is owned by Northumberland Estates it is an issue that should

involve the Estates and the Neighbourhood Plan. Most property owners have conditions in their leases or deeds that require the permission of Northumberland Estates for the property or site to be developed for business purposes. Restrictions such as these need further investigation and solutions found.

It is a Parish Council responsibility to consider the needs and issues of the community. The provision of high speed broadband and a good mobile phone service is essential for business development. These are not always present and the Parish Council has a responsibility to act as a middle-person in ensuring that there is good provision.

### **Post COVID-19**

The Coronavirus pandemic has seen a step change working from home and the need for local support. Many people have been sent home from their working establishments to carry out their work from home. This has placed much greater emphasis on connectivity and on-line communications. These changes that have been forced on businesses have identified what may be a new way of working that cuts travel and the use of expensive accommodation. We are going to see far more people post-COVID working from home and connecting with their colleagues, partners and customers on-line. This change should also encourage more people in rural areas to set up a business and work from home.

Small businesses need help and access to services. It could be that Longhoughton could provide some sort of business hub to support small businesses in the area and help with marketing and promotion.

## **7 Business Development Opportunities**

In the Parish there are opportunities for business development in the following areas:

Tourism and Visitors  
Climate Change and environmental services  
Personal services  
Household services

**Tourism and visitors** presents an emerging and significant opportunity for the development of new businesses. Northumberland has become a popular place to visit and this is likely to continue for many years. The area is known for its natural beauty, unspoiled beaches and its heritage. Too much pressure from tourism can destroy the 'special qualities', that attract people to the area and this is a balancing act that has to be carefully considered.

Ideally, it is sustainable tourism such as walking, cycling, horse riding and special purpose holidays that should be promoted. There are opportunities to promote these activities. Also, the Parish may be able to offer caravan, campervan and camping facilities to add to the existing sites at Longbank Farm and Boulmer Road. Specialist holidays could also be offered, equestrian, guided walks, heritage walks, mountain bike riding are all possible. These would add to the attraction of the beach that already brings people to stay in the Parish.

Tourism also presents an opportunity for our farmers to diversify and create a new income stream but they will need support for this.

It is important that what is offered represents good quality and brings people back.

Like many coastal based holiday destinations there are not many tourists and visitors about in winter. All the main attractions are closed apart from Alnwick Garden's. It should be an objective to offer holidays in winter that will allow employment (and earnings) to continue during this period and boost the local economy.

The Parish is served well by the East Coast Main Line that runs through the Parish and there is a station at Hipsburn (Alnmouth) which is only three miles from Longhoughton. This is ideal for sustainable holidays and with the proper organisation could be exploited. This also leads to the possible creation of more green routes to get people off the roads and to encourage cycling and walking. A good public transport network is also essential to avoid the use of motor vehicles. This is a facility that needs further investigation and the identification of innovative solutions.

Increased tourism and visitors will help to achieve the object of sustainability. More visitors will require more services and will result in more money being spent in the area. The soon to open Running Fox will add a welcome attraction to Longhoughton

**Climate change** is also going to present business opportunities over the coming decades. The move away from an oil/fossil fuel economy will present many business opportunities. Improving the insulation of properties, changeover of heating systems, the changeover of vehicles from oil based combustion to electricity is going to offer many opportunities. Equally, exploiting the emerging technologies for generating clean electricity and changes to farming methods that protects and propagates species is going to represent many business opportunities.

**Heritage** – There are opportunities to make the villages of Longhoughton, Boulmer and Howick more interesting to visitors by the promotion of the heritage of the Parish. Many people are interested in this sort of thing. The Parish has many heritage assets from the well preserved Lime smelting kiln at Little Mill, to Longhoughton Church and the observatory at Ratcheugh.

**Personal Services** - Where there are people they need personal services. Longhoughton is lacking in these services and that does represent employment opportunities.

**Home Services** – Again, people need their homes maintaining and changing. This offers opportunities for builders, electricians, communication systems specialists, gardening services and lots more. Many of these services tend to come from an Alnwick base or south east Northumberland. so there are opportunities for people with the right skills.

## **8 Evidence**

### **Business Survey**

In March 2020 the Steering Group undertook a survey of all businesses in the Parish except holiday lets. Twenty four businesses were sent the survey that is included at Appendix 1 under cover of the letter shown. The RAF was considered to be a specialist organisation and a discussion took place with the Commander in October 2020.

**Response.** Seven responses were received but two of those were explanations of why the survey had not been completed. Of the five responses (20%) there were two from farmers, one from

Northumberland Estates, one from a concrete product manufacturer and one from a fishing business.

The common responses coming from the survey are shown in the table below:

<b>What do you see as the obstacles to the expansion of your business</b>			
	Please tick the appropriate box		
	Not an Obstacle	Minor obstacle	Major obstacle
Lack of Land for expansion		1	2
Inadequacy of your existing premises			
Finding premises to increase size			1
Raising Finance			
Planning Policies			
Market conditions		1	
Quality of the local road network		1	
Lack of a link to the motorway network			
Lack of public transport			
Inability to use the rail network			
Labour shortage		1	
Lack of appropriately skilled labour		3	
Availability of suitable housing for employees			1
Connectivity - Broadband			
Connectivity – Mobile Phone network		1	
Quality of the utility infrastructure			
Inadequate local support services (eg shops, café, crèche)			
Access to your supply chain			
Business support			
Remoteness to customers			
Lack of appropriate retail outlets			
OTHER Obstacles (please specify)			
Parking restrictions proposed for Boulmer			1
Concern about the introduction of conservation measures			1

### **Comment on the responses**

Although the survey is very limited in numbers there are some common issues that are easily identifiable:

Two businesses need more land – both are farmers.

One wants to expand but cannot find the right premises.

One has a labour shortage but see this as a minor obstacle.

Three lack appropriately skilled labour but see this as a minor obstacle.

One says there is a lack of affordable accommodation for its employees.

One is concerned about poor quality mobile connectivity.

One has concerns about local changes that might affect their business.

One has concerns about conservation measures that might affect their business.

### **Discussion with the Commander of RAF Boulmer**

These discussions took place in October 2020. The RAF did not identify any particular business need apart from an off-road link between the Boulmer Road site and the Lesbury site. It is common for many personnel to move between the two sites and the existing method is to use motor vehicles. If a green route linked the two sites the personnel would be able to walk or cycle between the two sites which would reduce the carbon footprint of the RAF Boulmer and add an exercise period.

## **9 Proposed Planning Policy Approach**

National planning policy requires significant weight to be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity. The RAF is the most significant employer in the parish, but there are several other businesses which operate, including tourist accommodation, Longhoughton and Howick Quarries, agriculture and other small businesses. The economy of the plan area is an essential element of the area and especially important to the local community. Plan objective 3 therefore supports and encourages appropriate and sustainable levels of business growth and development across the parish.

The parish council strongly believes that existing businesses must have the facilities, expertise, skills and information to be successful and develop. Furthermore, the conditions should be right to support new businesses. Many of these support mechanisms lie outside the planning process. However, the neighbourhood plan has an important role to support new economic development, it is essential that this does not have an adverse impact on the built, historic and natural environment or the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties. It is therefore seen as appropriate that the plan seeks to provide a positive policy framework to support the rural economy.

### **Rural economic development**

Development that would result in the creation or protection of jobs and the sustainable economic growth of the neighbourhood plan area will be supported where it is:

- Is well designed and can be achieved without having a negative impact on the built and natural environment, including the special qualities of the AONB, highway safety and residential amenity;
- Is an appropriate scale and the use does not conflict with that of neighbouring occupiers;
- Provides opportunities to be accessed by sustainable transport, where appropriate; and
- Includes appropriate levels of car and cycle parking.

Where the above criteria can be met, particular support will be given to:

- Development which would provide opportunities for home –based business and support homeworking;
- Proposals which would help maintain and increase job opportunities in rural industries, such as agriculture and tourism; and
- The provision of small, flexible, start-up business or incubator uses which support small and micro businesses.

## Appendix 1



## LONGHOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk: Elizabeth Taylor  
Rivendell, Steppy Lane, Lesbury, Alnwick NE66 3PU  
Telephone: 01665 830040 Email: [parishclerk@hotmail.com](mailto:parishclerk@hotmail.com)  
Website: <https://northumberlandparishes.uk/longhoughton/>  
Neighbourhood Development Plan: [www.longhoughtonndp.co.uk](http://www.longhoughtonndp.co.uk)

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020

Boulmer  
Alnwick.  
NE66 3BX

Dear

### **LONGHOUGHTON PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

I am writing to you as a business within the Parish of Longhoughton. The Parish Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, the vision and policies within the plan will cover the period to 2036. The plan will cover all forms of land use. When the Plan is approved all planning applications will be determined in accordance with the policies within it.

Through the neighbourhood plan, the Parish Council wishes to support existing businesses within the Parish and to encourage new businesses to set up and increase employment opportunities. We have set the following business objective within the plan.

**Objective 2 - Business:** Supporting and encouraging appropriate and sustainable levels of business growth and development across the Parish.

As an existing business we would like to understand if there are any issues that are holding back the development or expansion of your business. To this end, would you please complete the enclosed short questionnaire which identifies the potential barriers to business expansion. Please return the questionnaire to me by email on [adrian.hinchcliffe@btopenworld.com](mailto:adrian.hinchcliffe@btopenworld.com) or use the enclosed envelope. I would very much appreciate receiving it no later than Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Hinchcliffe  
Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group  
Vice Chair of Longhoughton Parish Council

The Croft, Boulmer, Longhoughton, Alnwick. NE66 3BW

<b>Company Name</b>	
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The information that you provide below will be merged with all the other responses that we receive and will not be attributable to your company by name.

<b>What do you see as the obstacles to the expansion of your business</b>			
	Please tick the appropriate box		
	Not an Obstacle	Minor obstacle	Major obstacle
Lack of Land for expansion			
Inadequacy of your existing premises			
Finding premises to increase size			
Raising Finance			
Planning Policies			
Market conditions			
Quality of the local road network			
Lack of a link to the motorway network			
Lack of public transport			
Inability to use the rail network			
Labour shortage			
Lack of appropriately skilled labour			
Availability of suitable housing for employees			
Connectivity - Broadband			
Connectivity – Mobile Phone network			
Quality of the utility infrastructure			
Inadequate local support services (eg shops, café, crèche)			
Access to your supply chain			
Business support			
Remoteness to customers			
Lack of appropriate retail outlets			
OTHER Obstacles (please specify)			

## **Appendix 2**

### **Existing Business in the Parish**

The following businesses are known to exist within the Parish. The list will not be comprehensive.

#### **Longhoughton Ward**

Longhoughton Quarry – quarrying for aggregates and recycling.  
Low Steads Farm – Farming and holiday accommodation.  
Ratcheugh Farm  
Harlow Hill Farm  
Coop Retail Store  
Company B – café  
Alnwick Medical Practice  
Greenfingers – Gardening and landscaping services  
Builder – Gary Mallaburn  
Plumb Rabbitts Cake Studio  
Big Laces  
Sugar Sands Holiday Cottage  
Chestnut Tree House B&B  
Chestnut Tree Cottage Holiday Let 16 North End  
Wayside Cottage Holiday let, Station Road  
Coast Cottage Holiday Let  
Other Holiday Lets & Air B&B  
UK Motorhome Hire Co Ltd, Southend.  
Ex Spar Building – to be The Running Fox.  
RAF Beacon – Services for RAF Families including the nursery  
Longbank Farm – Caravan and Camping Site

#### **Boulmer Ward**

RAF Boulmer  
Boulmer Hall Farm – farming  
Fishing  
Fishing Boat Inn – Bar, Restaurant & Accommodation.  
St Andrew's Church Gallery  
Seaton Point Caravan Site – fixed caravans plus caravan storage  
Seaton Point Caravan Association  
Seaton Point Holiday Beach huts (Northumberland Estates)  
Dog walking and Accommodation  
Mysoft – IT Services  
20 Holiday Lets  
Bed and Breakfast & Air B&B.

#### **Howick Ward**

Howick Quarry – Tarmac Ltd  
FP McCann Ltd - Civil Engineers  
Howick Gardens and Arboretum  
Howick Estates (including The Bathing House, School House holiday Cottage, Farming and Estate management)  
Howick Tea Room  
Redsteads Farm – Farming and holiday accommodation

Seahouses Farm – Farming and holiday accommodation  
VM Dundas, Joiners, Little Mill.  
Little Mill Badger Bottom holiday lets  
The Old Rectory B&B