

# **Longhoughton, Boulmer and Howick Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Natural Environment Background Paper**

**February 2023**

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 This document is one in a series of background papers prepared by the Longhoughton, Boulmer and Howick Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It sets out the relevant national and local policy and guidance that is informing the Longhoughton, Boulmer and Howick Neighbourhood Plan ('the plan'). The background paper also identifies and explains the relevant evidence base and feedback from early engagement, it then explains how the preferred policy approach has been identified.
- 1.2 The vision and objectives for the plan define what it aims to achieve. The vision for the parish in 2036 is:

| <b>A vision for Longhoughton Parish in 2036</b>  |
|--|
| <p><i>In 2036 the Parish of Longhoughton, which includes the unique and distinctive villages of Boulmer, Howick and Longhoughton, will be an attractive place to live and grow with a community that is sustainable, cohesive and thriving.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>Residents will have good access to facilities and be well connected.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>All people who live in the parish will have the opportunity to participate in shaping their surroundings and feel proud of where they live.</i></p> |

- 1.3 To deliver the vision, seven objectives have been developed. Objective four is most relevant to the natural environment:

*'Protecting and improving the natural environment of the parish by: conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Northumberland Coast of Outstanding Natural Beauty; protecting the integrity of the internationally designated coastal sites; and supporting the creation, protection and enhancement of biodiversity and green infrastructure networks.'*

- 1.4 The main areas covered by this background paper are:

- The national and local policy context for the natural environment;
- An overview of other relevant documents and evidence;
- Environmental designations that cover the plan area;
- Consideration of feedback received as part of the early engagement on the plan; and
- Explanation of the evolution of the preferred policy approach.

- 1.5 Alongside consultation on the pre-submission draft neighbourhood plan we are inviting comments on this background paper. Comments can be submitted in the following ways:
- Completing an online form at <http://www.longhoughtonndp.co.uk/>;
  - Email to: [adrian.hinchclife@btopenworld.com](mailto:adrian.hinchclife@btopenworld.com); or
  - Write to: Longhoughton PC, The Croft, Boulmer, Alnwick. NE66 3BW.
- 1.6 Comments must be received by **13 November 2023**.

## 2. Strategic Planning Context

### Background

- 2.1 As neighbourhood plans are part of the development plan, they have to meet defined legal requirements. The way in which neighbourhood plans are prepared and the policies they contain are tested by an independent examiner. In order to pass an examination and proceed to referendum, neighbourhood plans must meet a number of 'basic conditions'. To ensure they are legally compliant they must:
- Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
  - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan;
  - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
  - Be compatible with European obligations.

### National planning policy and guidance

- 2.2 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The NPPF is clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.
- 2.3 The NPPF makes a clear commitment to conserving the natural environment through the planning system. The natural environment is regarded as having a key role in achieving sustainable development (paragraph 8).
- 2.4 Section 8 of the NPPF deals with healthy communities. It stresses the importance of accessibility to high quality open spaces and the need for plan policies to be informed by up-to-date assessments. It also introduces the concept of local green spaces. These are areas of open space, which are important to local communities and can be recognised and protected through local green space designation. The protection is as strong as it is for land in the Green Belt. The spaces must meet three prescribed criteria to be successfully designated (paragraph 102).
- 2.5 Section 12 stresses the importance of good design, requiring planning policies to: create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses including the incorporation of green and other public space; address the connections between people and places; and integrate new development into the natural environment.
- 2.6 Section 14 sets out how the planning system should be meeting the challenge of climate change. Paragraph 153 requires plans to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, as well as the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. It highlights that policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts. Paragraph 155 identifies that plans should help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat.

- 2.7 Paragraph 159 identifies that development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. Also, that all plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development.
- 2.8 Section 15 deals with the natural environment and states that local plans should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, by:
- - Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
  - Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
  - Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
  - Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures ;
  - Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
  - Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land where appropriate.
- 2.9 Paragraph 176 requires that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs. That the scale of development with these areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts.
- 2.10 The NPPG also contains guidance on the natural environment and is subdivided into sections on landscape, biodiversity, green infrastructure, soils and agricultural land.

### **Northumberland Local Plan**

- 2.11 The Northumberland Local Plan (NLP) was adopted by Northumberland County Council (NCC) in March 2022. Those policies of relevance to the natural environment elements of the neighbourhood plan are:
- Policy STP2: Presumption in favour of sustainable development (strategic policy) requires a positive approach to the determination of applications in accordance with the presumption contained within the NPPF;
  - Policy STP3: Principles of sustainable development (strategic policy) gives guidance on the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and defines the key economic, social and environmental factors to consider;
  - Policy STP4: Climate change mitigation and adaptation (strategic policy) requires new development to both mitigate and adapt to climate change;
  - Policy STP6: Green infrastructure (strategic policy) seeks to protect, improve and extend the green infrastructure network across the county;
  - Policy ENV1: Approaches to assessing the impact of development on natural, historic and built environment (strategic policy) includes criteria to ensure that the character and significance of the county's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environments are conserved, protected and enhanced;

- Policy ENV2: Biodiversity and geodiversity (non-strategic policy) requires development proposals that affect biodiversity and geodiversity to minimise their impact and to secure net gains for biodiversity. It also refers to the hierarchy of designated sites and the ecosystem approach;
- Policy ENV3: Landscape (non-strategic policy) identifies the importance of the contribution of the landscape to the county's environment, economy and communities. The policy refers to the Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment and states that great weight should be given to the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities and statutory purposes of the AONBs;
- Policy ENV4: Tranquillity, dark skies and a sense of rurality (non-strategic policy) seeks to limit the urbanising effects of development on open countryside landscapes, natural habitats and the settings of historic/ cultural assets and to conserve or enhance tranquillity;
- Policy ENV5: Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (non-strategic policy) requires the special qualities of the AONB to be conserved and enhanced. The policy highlights the importance of: the sensitivity of the local landscape and its capacity to accommodate new development, including temporary structures; intervisibility between the AONB and other important landscapes; interdependency between the special qualities of the landscape and the marine and coastal environment, including the internationally and nationally important nature conservation sites; and sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, sense of remoteness and distinction between settlements and open countryside. The policy requires, that as far as possible the AONB should be recognised as a living, working area by allowing small scale developments that do not impact on the special qualities of the area;
- Policy WAT5: Coastal erosion and coastal change management (non-strategic policy) identifies that areas vulnerable to coastal change will be managed in accordance with the principles and approach set out within the shoreline management plan whilst giving full weight to the level of importance of the coast's ecological and heritage value. The policy includes criteria for the assessment of planning applications;
- Policy POL1: Unstable and contaminated land (non-strategic policy) requires assessments to demonstrate that development can be delivered on sites where there is a risk of contamination and land instability;
- Policy POL2: Pollution and air, soil and water quality (non-strategic policy) identifies a number of criteria for the assessment of planning applications which may result in pollution;
- Policy POL3: Agricultural land quality (non-strategic policy) resists the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land unless it can be demonstrated that: there are no suitable alternative sites on lower quality land; the need for the development outweighs the need to protect such land in the long term; or the land would be reinstated to its pre-working quality;
- Policy REN1: Renewable and low carbon energy and associated energy storage (non-strategic policy) supports proposals where specific criteria are met, including consideration of the impact on: landscape; biodiversity; heritage assets; air and water quality; highways network; amenity; and aviation operations;
- Policy REN2: Onshore wind development (non-strategic policy) identifies areas of land that could be suitable for wind energy development and provides additional criteria on the assessment of applications.

2.12 Figure 1 provides an extract from the policies map:

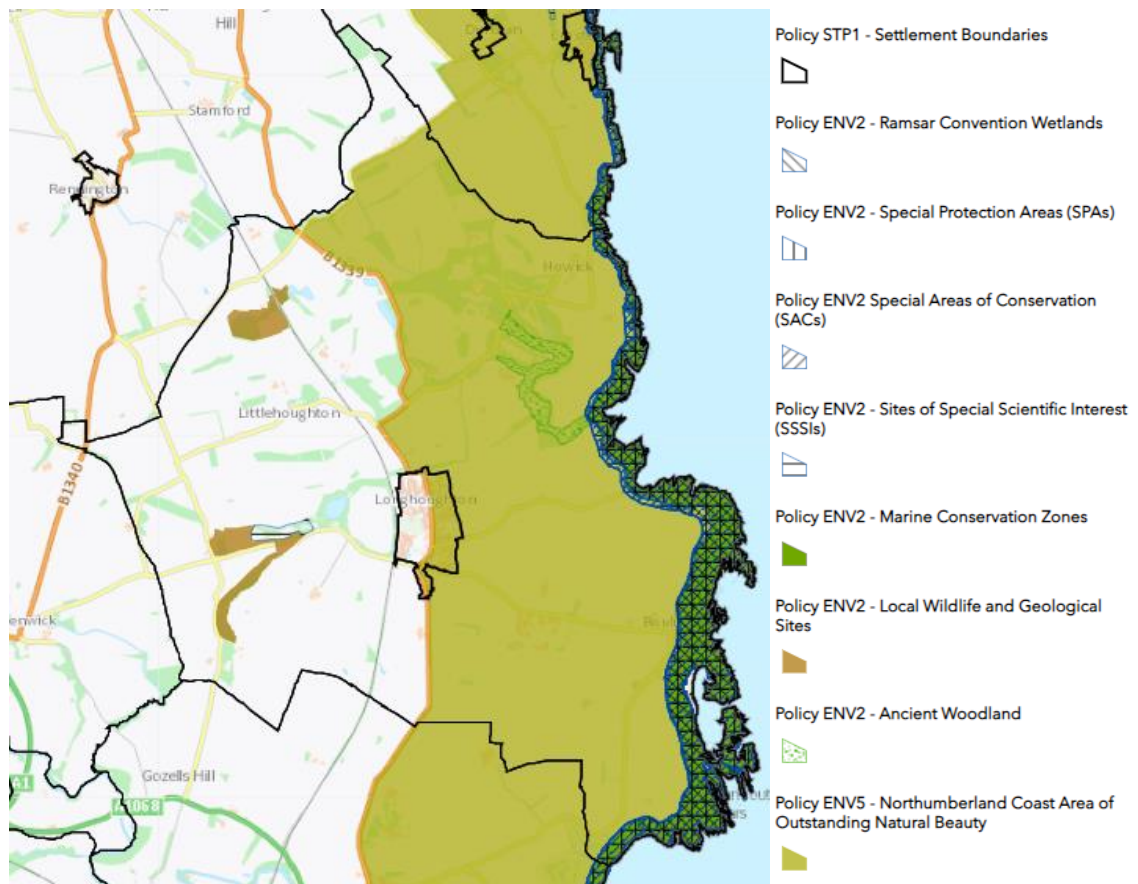


Figure 1: Extract from the NLP policies map

## Summary

2.13 The NPPF emphasises that the planning system should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. In addition, that allocations of land for development should prefer that which is of lesser environmental value. This approach is reflected within both the current development plan policies.



### 3. Other strategies and plans

- 3.1 In addition to the strategic planning framework, there are a number of other documents and evidence available to inform the preparation of the natural environment elements of the neighbourhood plan.

#### **National level**

##### Environment Act (2021)

- 3.2 The Environment Act requires new development to demonstrate a net gain of 10% for biodiversity, it also placed a duty on local authorities to prepare five-yearly biodiversity reports setting out what action the authority has taken over the period to promote the biodiversity objective. The Act also introduced local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies and protected site strategies. Local planning authorities are required to have regard to these strategies when exercising their planning functions.

#### **Regional level**

##### North East Local Nature Partnership

- 3.3 Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) are partnerships of a broad range of influential organisations, businesses and people, and from a range of sectors, charged by government with the task of bringing about improvements in their local natural environment.
- 3.4 The overall purpose of an LNP is to:
- Drive positive change in the local natural environment, taking a strategic view of the challenges and opportunities involved and identifying ways to manage it as a system for the benefit of nature, people and the economy;
  - Contribute to achieving the Government's national environmental objectives locally, including the identification of local ecological networks, alongside addressing local priorities; and
  - Become local champions, influencing decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes, in particular, by working closely with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Health and Wellbeing Boards.
- 3.5 The North East Local Nature Partnership (NELNP) was created from the merger of two existing partnerships; 3Rivers and Northumberland Lowlands and Coast. The NELNP seeks to facilitate coordinated decision making for the benefit of natural heritage, delivering integrated outcomes that provide a wide range of ecosystem services including improvements in health and wellbeing and a vibrant economy.
- 3.6 The remit of the NELNP is to embed the value of natural heritage into local decision making and work to improve ecological networks at a landscape-scale. It works with a diversity of organisations to plan and deliver strategic action, enabling the recognition of the value of the natural environment in social and economic as well as environmental terms. It identifies opportunities to deliver improvements to natural heritage that are integrated with the enhancement of local communities and support economic success.

## Northumberland level

### Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (2008)

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

### Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (2010)

- 3.8 The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the essential landscape characteristics of the county. The plan area lies within the North Northumberland Coastal Plain national character area and falls within two local landscape character areas: 3c Farmed Coastal Plain (Rock) and 4c Rocky Coastline (Craster Coast).
- 3.9 Landscape character type 3 (farmed coastal plain) is described as a gently rolling landscape of mainly arable farmland. The character type is represented by three character areas, the third 'Rock' forms part of the plan area. The LCA describes the relationship between 'Rock' and the adjacent area of 'Lucker'. It explains that the transition is gradual, but the area is characterised by coniferous shelterbelts and deciduous woodland strips. It also explains that estate influences occur at Rock House and Howick Hall, resulting in a more intermate landscape experience.
- 3.10 Landscape character type 4 (rocky coastline) comprises rocky sections of the coastal strip, falling largely within the Northumberland Coast AONB. The character type is also represented by three character areas and the third, 'Craster Coast' forms part of the plan area. The area is described as a straight section of coast, with few bays and little sand, with the exception being the natural harbour of Boulmer Haven. The coast is low-lying, with locally prominent ridges, known as 'heughs' around Craster. At the northern end of the area, Dunstanburgh Castle is the dominant feature, while to the south, the radar apparatus at RAF Boulmer is widely visible.

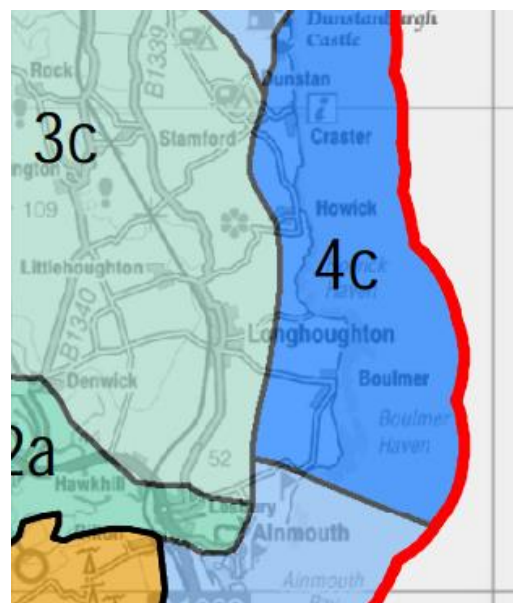


Figure 2: landscape character

The assessment explains that few roads follow this section of coast, although there is an extensive footpath network.

- 3.11 The LCA provides examples of forces for change, key qualities, guiding principles, land management guidelines and development guidelines for each landscape character type. These are summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1: Guidelines from LCA

|                          | <b>3. Farmed Coastal Plain</b>  | <b>4. Rocky Coastline</b>  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Forces for change</b> | <p>Potential loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, arising from climate change or further intensification of arable farming, may cause a loss of enclosure pattern.</p> <p>Lack of management of semi-natural woodland, parkland trees and roadside trees or avenues.</p> <p>Changes to traditional farmsteads, including development of large, utilitarian farm buildings which do not reflect local vernacular, and conversion of older farm buildings to residential or tourist uses.</p> <p>Increasing incentives for restoration and de-intensification and farm diversification through agri-environment schemes.</p> | <p>Coastal erosion, exacerbated by future sea-level rise, which may lead to loss of property and/or habitats. Responses may include introduction of erosion control and/or managed realignment measures.</p> <p>Human-influenced erosion of dune systems.</p> <p>Erosion of significant historic buildings such as Dunstanburgh Castle.</p> <p>Increasing tourist activity in traditional coastal villages, following the decline in local fishing activities.</p> <p>Increasing tourist infrastructure such as caravan parks, car parking, golf courses.</p> <p>Development within or around villages potentially altering their character.</p> <p>Lack of management of remnant semi-natural coastal woodlands.</p> <p>Requirement to allow greater coastal access following implementation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.</p> |
| <b>Key qualities</b>     | <p>Farmsteads of traditional vernacular architecture, with brick industrial farm chimneys.</p> <p>Shelterbelts of mature beech and pine.</p> <p>Estate landscapes and associated semi-natural and plantation woodland.</p> <p>Coastal character, with views to the</p>  | <p>Dynamic seascape environment.</p> <p>Exposed coastal location, with dramatic views along the coast and out to sea.</p> <p>Prominent natural and cultural coastal features including castles and the Farne Islands.</p> <p>Traditional cores of former fishing villages, often with distinctive</p>  |

|                                   | <b>3. Farmed Coastal Plain</b>  | <b>4. Rocky Coastline</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
|                                   | sea and coastal features and landmarks.   | pantiled roofs.<br><br>Extensively accessible landscape with much tourist-oriented development.   |
| <b>Guiding principle</b>          | The principal aims of landscape planning policies and initiatives should be to encourage improved custodianship of a landscape that has declined in quality as a result of agricultural intensification. The areas of this LCT are located between the A1 and the popular coastal strip and have scope to accommodate on-farm tourism.  | The principal aims of landscape planning policies and initiatives should be to arrest the erosion of character and loss of condition of landscape elements where this has occurred, and in so doing raise the general quality of the landscape. The coastal landscape and adjacent seascape are a key element of Northumberland's tourist economy and requires a degree of protection.  |
| <b>Land management guidelines</b> | <p>Encourage restoration and improved management of traditional boundary features, particularly hedgerows and walls. Encourage widening of field margins and incorporation of buffer strips managed primarily for nature conservation along watercourses.</p> <p>Promote improved management of other woodlands and habitats, including through uptake of appropriate agri-environment schemes.</p> <p>The distinctive mature beech and pine shelterbelts found in this area generally consist of single age stock which will have a finite lifespan. Give consideration to promotion of re-planting so that a succession can be achieved.</p> <p>Intensive farming methods have reduced the opportunities for wildlife to co-exist with agriculture. Encourage land managers to increase widths of field margins and to incorporate buffer strips managed primarily for nature conservation along watercourses.</p> <p>Promote the maintenance and enhancement of the key qualities of the landscape and seascape, to ensure that landscape character is</p> | <p>Promote improved management of woodlands and coastal habitats, including through uptake of appropriate agri-environment schemes. Encourage environmental management of marginal agricultural land, for instance on the seaward side of the Howick estate, to extend the influence of maritime habitats and attractiveness of the area for tourism.</p> <p>Seek improvement of recreational access along the coast, including where this can be combined with management to prevent increased erosion and effects on biodiversity. Respond to the requirements of the Marine and Coastal Access Act.</p> <p>Manage coastal defences and potential realignment processes in line with the aims of the Northumberland Shoreline Management Plan, ensuring that these do not conflict extensively with landscape objectives. Erosion control measures should be carried out in a sympathetic manner to avoid damage to the integrity of the coastal landforms.</p> <p>Encourage a strategic approach to the co-ordination of recreational infrastructure would benefit the</p> |

|                               | <b>3. Farmed Coastal Plain</b>  | <b>4. Rocky Coastline</b>   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
|                               | retained or strengthened.   | <p>landscape, encouraging the appropriate siting of car parks and other facilities.</p> <p>Seek to protect visible historic features where these contribute to the landscape.</p> <p>Promote the maintenance and enhancement of the key qualities of the landscape and seascape, to ensure that landscape character is retained or strengthened.</p>  |
| <b>Development guidelines</b> | <p>Encourage appropriate expansion of tourist infrastructure, including accommodation, including conversions or well-designed new build developments which respect local character which respect local character.</p> <p>Carefully consider the landscape and key coastal views when looking into siting and design of campsites, car parks and caravan parks.</p> <p>Seek to encourage the sensitive siting of new farm buildings, particularly with regard to historic buildings and features</p> | <p>Seek to protect key views along the coast and to seaward, avoiding inappropriate development along the coast which would affect the visual characteristics of this landscape, and which could affect the potential of the area for tourism.</p> <p>Seek to minimise effects upon the landscape, and consider key views, in siting and design of new or expanded tourist infrastructure, such as roads, car parking, caravan parks or signage.</p> <p>Ensure that development within or beside coastal villages respects local vernacular forms and materials, particularly the distinctive roofscape.</p> <p>Seek to influence future development beyond areas of this LCT, such as to reduce potential effects on the setting of the landscape and seascape, including consideration of views and skylines.</p> |

Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – Level 1 (2010) and Level 2 (2015)

- 3.12 The Northumberland Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) provides a detailed picture of areas susceptible to different types of flooding and identifies risks across the County. It suggests dividing the sequential test into a series of detailed stages, which will be applied when considering future land allocations and for individual proposals.

### Northumberland Outline and Detailed Water Cycle Studies (2012 and 2015)

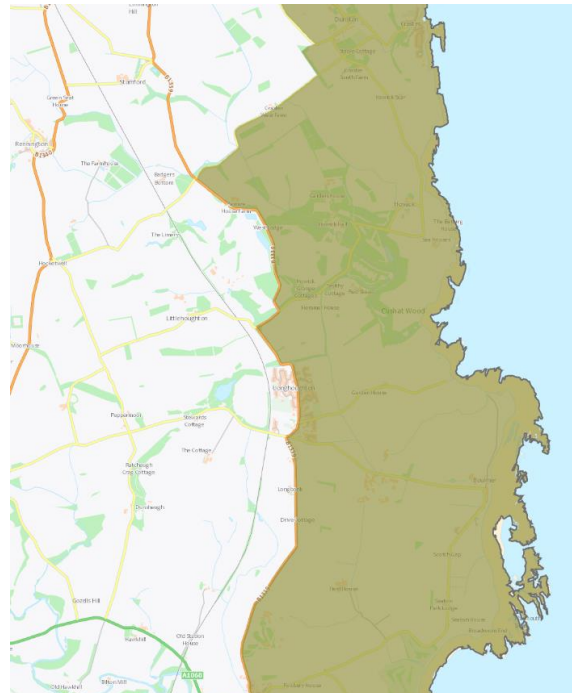
- 3.13 The Northumberland Water Cycle Study examined the capacity for existing water supply and sewerage infrastructure to cope with new development across the county. No specific issues are identified for the plan area.

### **Local level**

### Northumberland Coast AONB Management Plan (2020-24)

- 3.14 As part of the plan area lies within the Northumberland Coast AONB, its management plan is a relevant consideration. The current management plan describes the special qualities of the area, which include:

- Dramatic natural coastline of rocky headlands and cliffs, contrasting with extensive, sweeping sandy beaches and dynamic sand dune systems;
- Coastal and riverside setting of iconic historic and cultural landmark features which provide localised vertical emphasis within a predominantly horizontal landscape and seascape;
- Rocky Farne Islands archipelago, which features in many coastal views;
- Traditional coastal fishing villages clustered around small harbours;
- Views inland to the rounded sandstone hills and Cheviot Hills provide a dramatic and dynamic backdrop to the coast;
- Feeling of exposure and tranquillity on the flat, low lying open coastal plain and windswept coast, with sparse tree cover, huge skies and seascape views;
- Dark skies.



*Figure 2: AONB boundary in relation to the plan area*

- 3.15 The management plan refers to the importance of the coastline at Boulmer, where the Whin Sill can be seen as a series of volcanic rock intrusions into the surrounding sedimentary rocks. Boulmer is also referred to as an example of a distinctive traditional coastal fishing village, where fishing still takes place, clustered around a small harbour. Reference is made to the partly submerged sea caves which can be found in the limestone at Howick. In addition, that there is evidence of Mesolithic people hunting and fishing within the Northumberland coastal plain, with a campsite discovered at Howick. Howick Hall is sited as a prominent example of the increased wealth amongst major landowners in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## 4. Natural environment designations

4.1 This section of the background paper summarises the natural environment designations and other relevant information across the plan area. Mapping has been obtained from the Defra Magic Map<sup>1</sup>.

### Statutory land-based designations

4.2 Figure 3 highlights the statutory land based designated which lie within the plan area. This includes the: Northumberland Coast AONB; Northumbria Coast Ramsar Site; Northumberland Shore Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Howick to Seaton Point SSSI; Longhoughton Quarry (SSSI); Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation; and Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA).

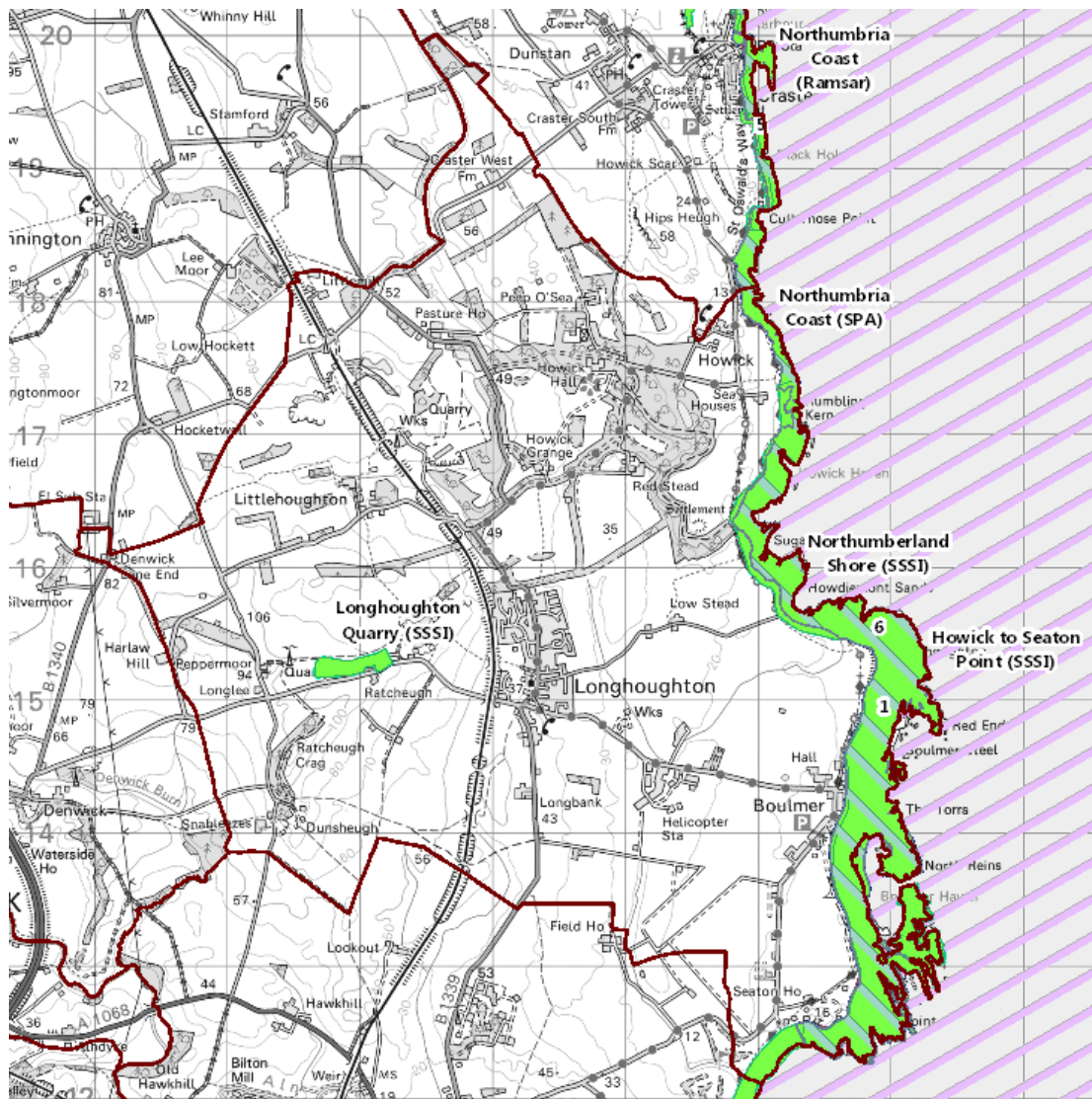


Figure 3: Statutory land based designations

<sup>1</sup> <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>



### Statutory marine designations

- 4.3 There are a number of statutory marine designations within the plan area, as illustrated in figure 4. These include the: Berwick to St Mary’s Marine Conservation Zone; Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation (marine components); Northumbria Coast SPA (marine components); and Northumberland Marine SPA.

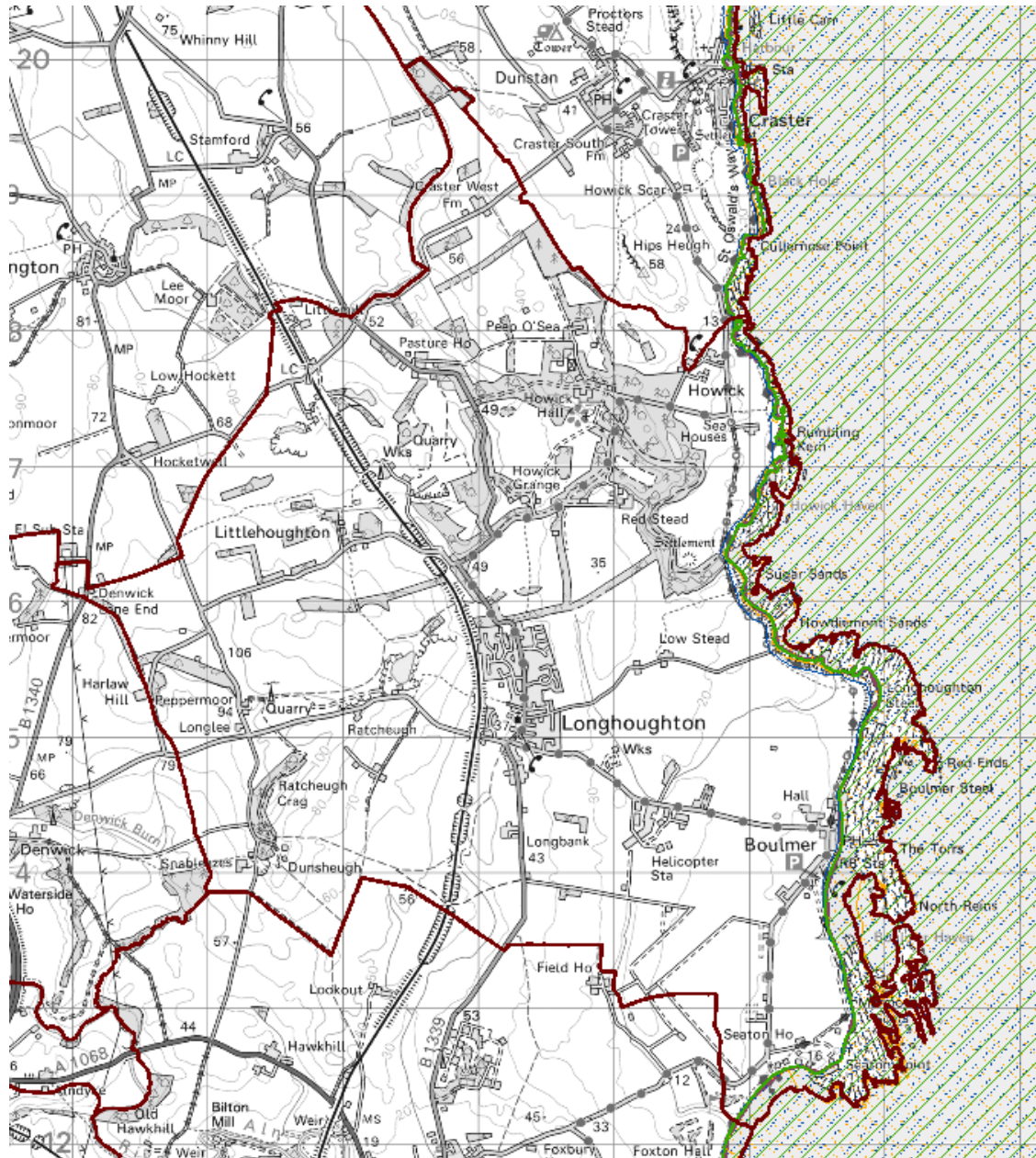


Figure 4: Statutory marine designations

### Habitats

- 4.4 The plan area contains a number of important coastal habitats, including: the priority habitats of coastal sand dunes; maritime cliffs and slopes; and limestone pavements (see figure 5). Figure 6 illustrates the locations of the good quality and semi-improved grassland areas.



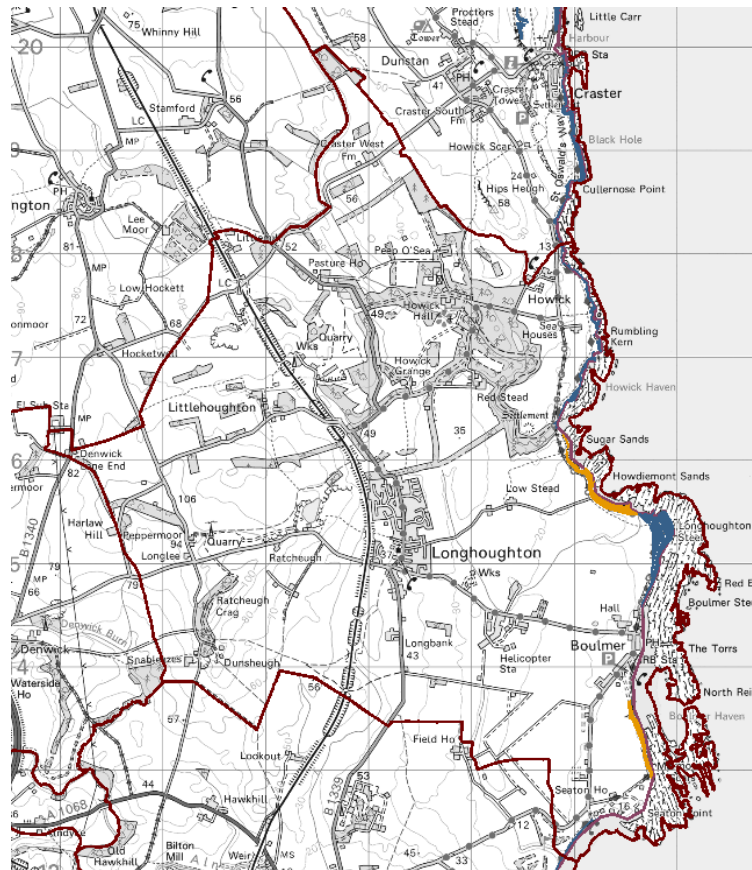


Figure 5: Designated coastal habitats

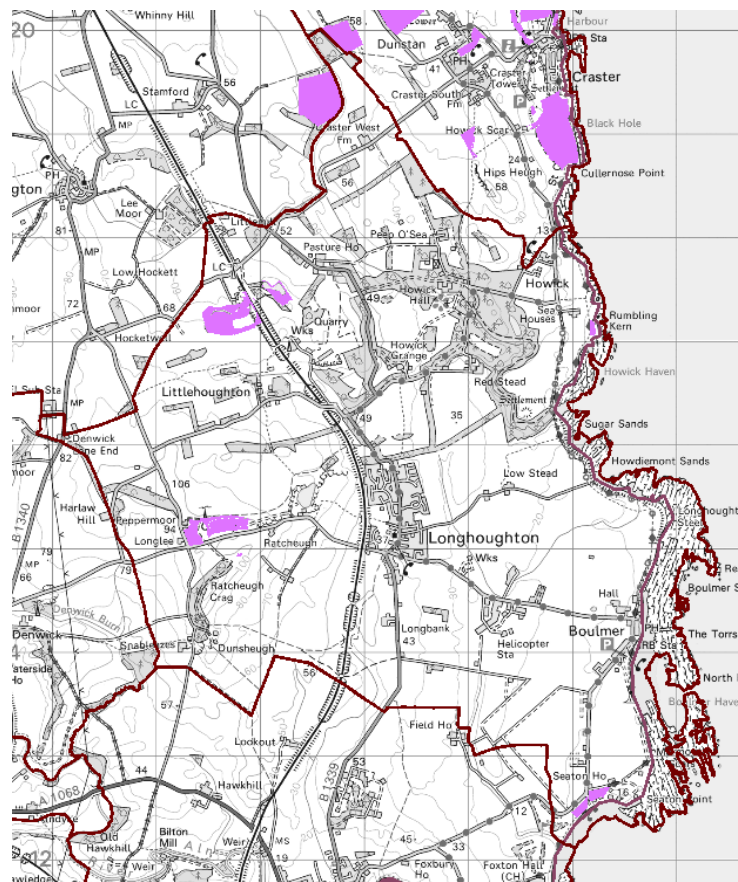


Figure 6: Grassland habitats

## Woodland

- 4.5 The plan area contains both ancient and semi natural woodland and ancient replanted woodland (figure 7), as well as woodland on the priority habitat inventory (figure 8). There is also other woodland which is included on the national forest inventory (figure 9).

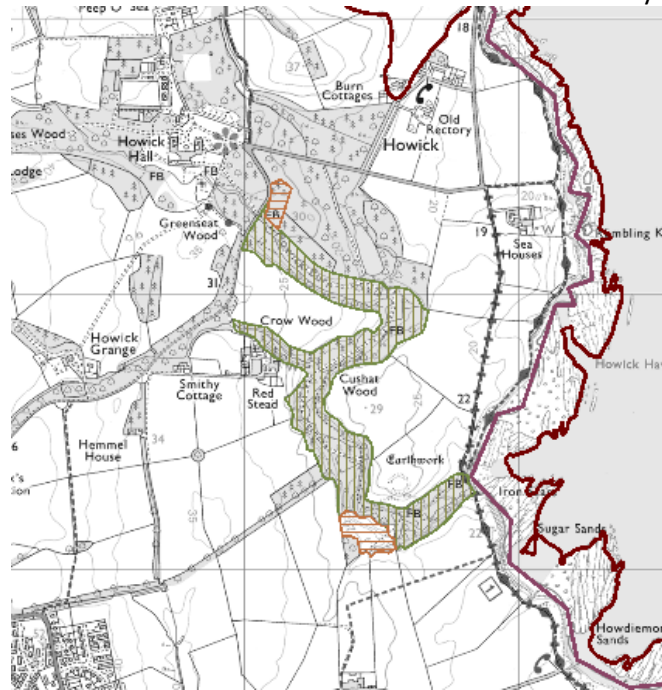


Figure 7: Ancient woodland

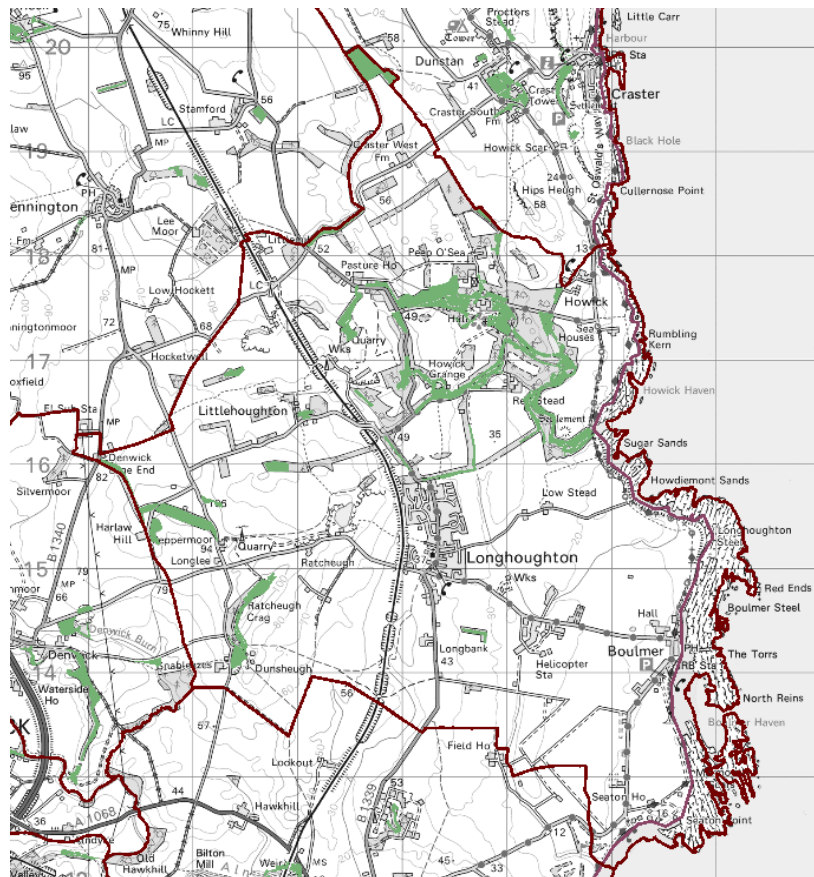


Figure 8: Priority habitat - deciduous woodland



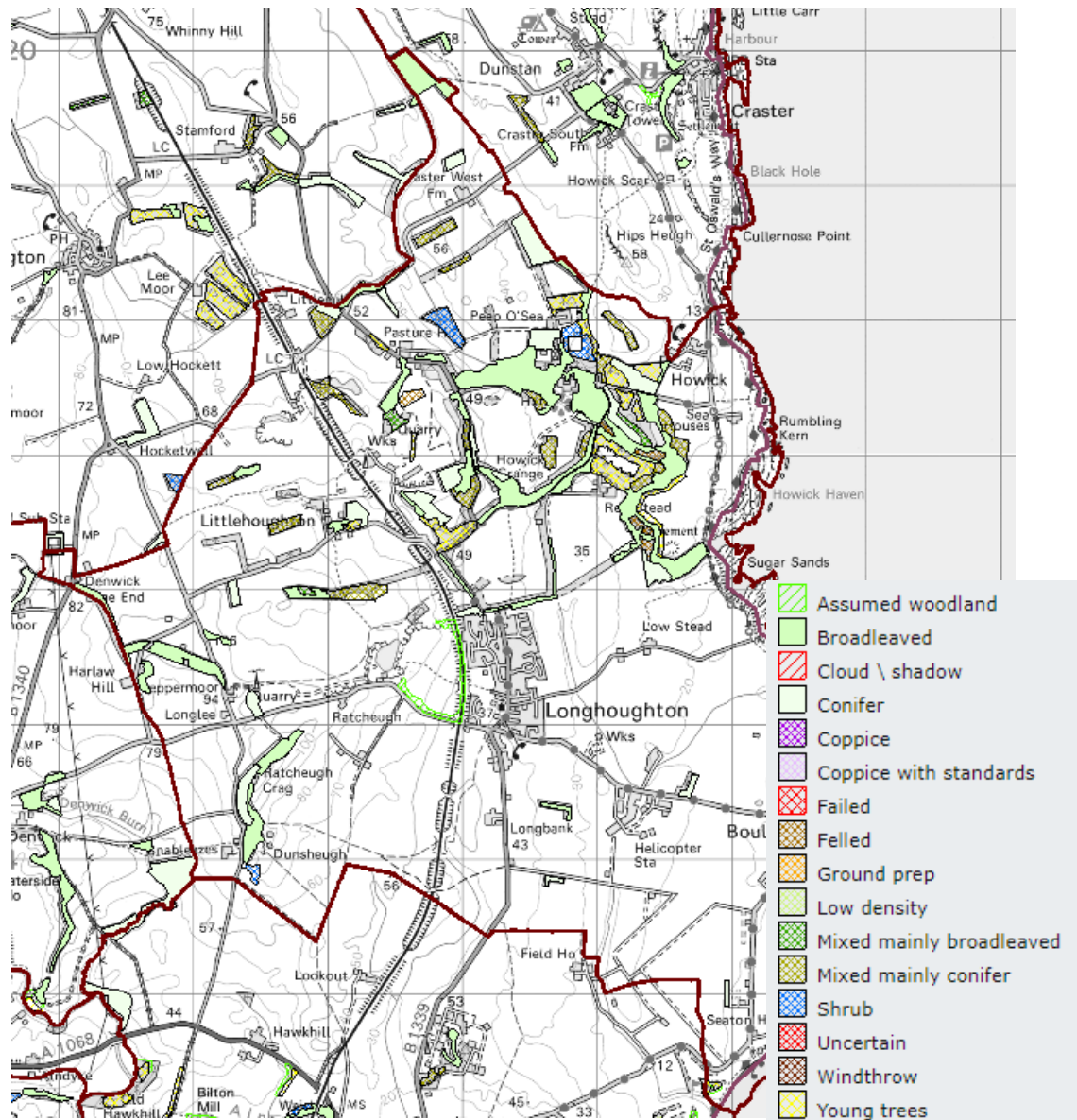


Figure 9: National forest inventory

### Species

4.6 The plan area includes a number of important species, including farmland birds, curlew, grey partridge, lapwing, redshank, snipe, tree sparrow, turtle dove, yellow wagtail, waders and wildfowl.

### Groundwater

4.7 A number of parts of the plan area are identified as having a high and medium risks from groundwater vulnerability (figure 10).

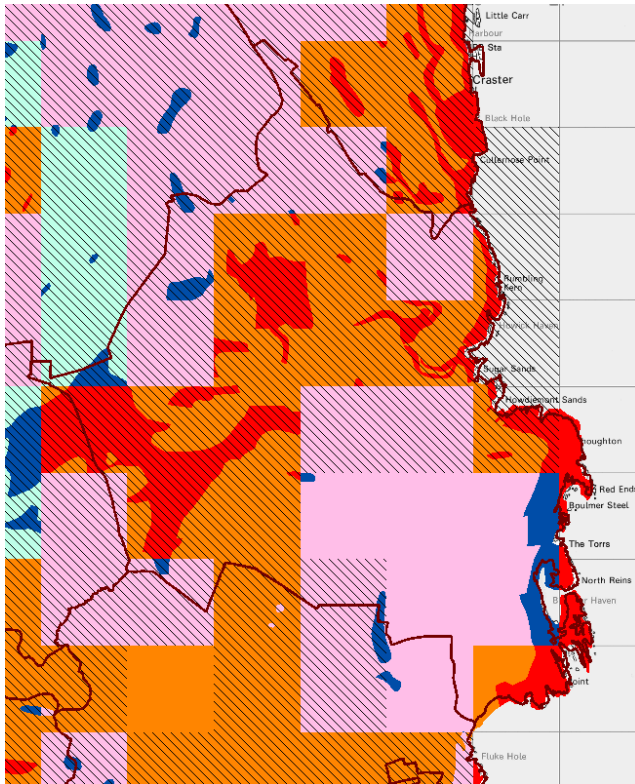
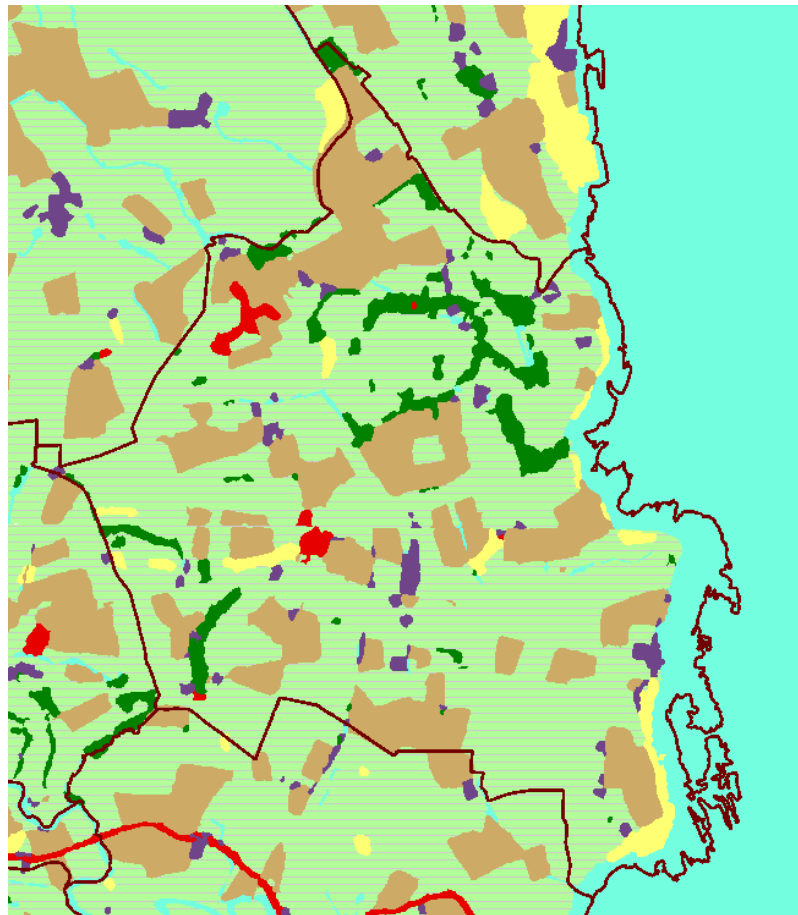


Figure 10: Groundwater vulnerability map

**Land use inventory**

4.8 Figure 11 illustrates land use across the plan area.

- 1 - Rough grazing
- 2 - Urban
- 3 - Water
- 4 - Arable
- 5 - Suburban
- 6 - Grassland
- 7 - Woodland
- 8 - Orchard



## 5. Feedback

### Early engagement – local community

- 5.1 As a means of starting the process of collecting information and opinions to influence the content of the neighbourhood plan, a number of early engagement events were held during January and February 2020. The purpose of the events was to raise awareness of the opportunities presented by neighbourhood planning and to engage as broad a range of people from the local community as possible from the start of the plan making process. Engagement sought to help the steering group to define those issues of greatest importance.
- 5.2 The early engagement sought feedback on the draft vision and objectives for the plan. The vision and objectives were supported by 34 of the 35 respondents.
- 5.3 Comments relevant to the natural environment in terms of planning policy development included:
- Protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the importance of tree planting;
  - Important habitats include the wetland area at Boulmer and the coastal dunes;
  - Should incorporate mitigation measures into new development, where appropriate;
  - Green infrastructure networks should include public footpaths;
  - Protection of the links at Boulmer, incorporating the village green and meadow;
  - Need for green spaces to be embedded in new developments;
  - Protection of important spaces in Longhoughton village e.g. the green next to the vicarage, the green spaces as you enter the village and the green between the cemetery and Chancel Place;
  - Protect the dunes to Seaton Pont and the Steele from further car parking and other development; and
  - Protect the woodland to the north of the village.
- 5.4 Comments relevant to the natural environment that are applicable to the development of community actions include:
- Publicise the history and biodiversity value of Longhoughton Quarry when it is returned to public use;
  - The old football field at the end of Crowlea Road should be designated as a dog walking area;
  - Need for outdoor display boards to raise awareness of what is in the area, wildlife, flora and fauna. A look out building as on Holy Island to point out places of interest. Plant trees for coastal area. Pots of flowers. Some bird hides for perfect photography or a glimpse of rare species.

## 6. Planning policy options and preferred policy approach

### Background

6.1 The strategic policy and evidence review, as well as feedback from early engagement has identified a number of potential planning issues for the neighbourhood plan to seek to address:

- Identification of areas of local green space and protected open space (see Local Green Space and Protected Open Space Background Paper);
- Creation, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure;
- Protection/ enhancement of the important landscape character of the plan area; and
- Ensure new development conserves biodiversity.

6.2 This section sets out the potential planning policy options to address the issues identified above and explains the preferred policy approach, which is set out within the pre-submission draft neighbourhood plan.

### Potential policy options

#### Issue 1: Green infrastructure

6.3 Possible options:

- 1a: Rely on the detailed guidance contained within the NLP
- 1b: Develop a locally specific policy informed by a mapping exercise to identify areas of green infrastructure to be identified within the plan.

6.4 The NLP includes detailed policies for the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure. It was considered that these policies will ensure green infrastructure is protected and enhanced through the planning process.

#### Issue 2: Landscape

6.5 Possible options:

- 2a: Utilise county level landscape character information and the AONB landscape capacity work to inform a criteria based policy to ensure that new development conserves and enhances the special landscape characteristics of the plan area;
- 2b: Commission and local landscape character appraisal to inform a more detailed policy approach to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the plan area;
- 2c: Identification of particular landscape areas for special consideration for policy development.

6.6 As both the county council and the AONB have detailed studies on the landscape, the preferred policy approach is to use this information to inform the development of a locally specific policy (option 2a).

#### Issue 3: Biodiversity

6.7 Possible options:

- 3a. Rely on the policies contained within the NLP
- 3b. Utilise information available at a national/ borough level to inform the preparation of a high-level policy to ensure that new development conserves the biodiversity value

of the plan area including specifically highlighting the important biodiversity of the plan area and threats to it and the identification of local level designations such as wildlife corridors.

- 6.8 It is considered that as a result of the detail contained within the NLP regarding the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, the neighbourhood plan could not add further detail and it is not necessary for these policies to be repeated.

## **7. Potential community actions**

7.1 The work on this background paper has informed the possible identification of the following community actions to be led by the parish council:

- Quarry restoration – to ensure full and effective engagement in the process;
- Establishment of a climate change group with remit to promote a programme of events and projects to mitigate against climate change. It is proposed that this would include the impact of climate change on biodiversity and habitats;
- Encourage the grouping of residents known as the Planting Group to continue to continue to plant more native trees and other plants to improve and enhance the natural environment;
- Work closely with the Northumberland Coast Area of Natural Beauty and the organisation ‘Space for Sea Birds’ to protect and enhance the natural environment of the parish including the designated conservation areas on the coast; and
- Create a litter picking group to clean the beaches of sea-bourne litter and rubbish.