

Lowick Neighbourhood Development Plan (February 2017)

Report to Steering Group:

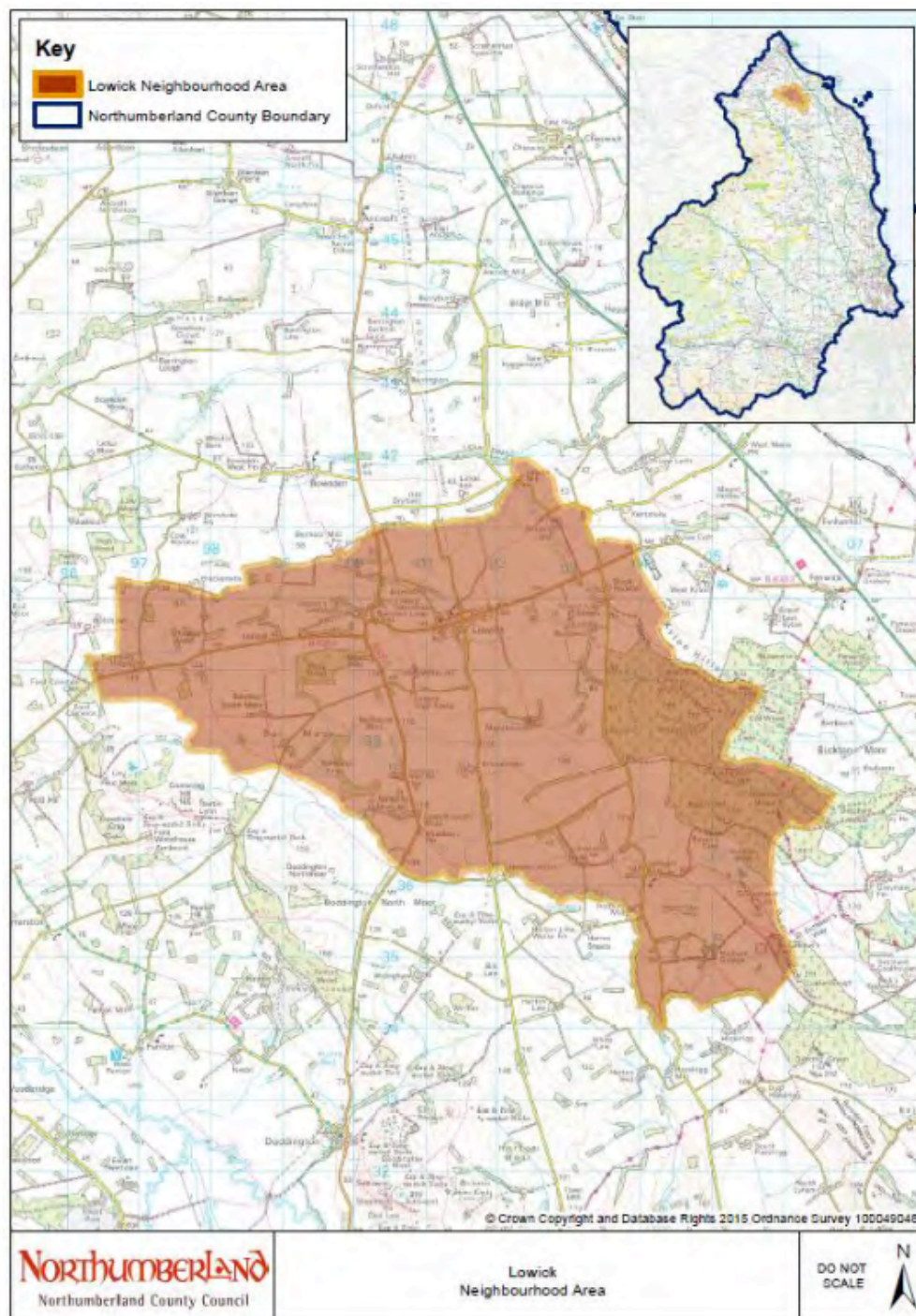
Background information, results of consultation, suggested 'vision', 'objectives' and 'policy areas' and suggestions for further work and next stages of consultation



Introduction

Neighbourhood Planning came about through the introduction of the Localism Act in 2011. It gives local communities an opportunity to influence development in their areas.

The Neighbourhood Area for Lowick was approved by Northumberland County Council on the 19th of June 2015. The next stage is for the Steering Group to establish and consult on, a Vision for the area, a set of clear objectives which they want the Neighbourhood Plan to achieve, and potentially some policy areas that can meet these objectives.



A Steering Group with delegated powers to produce a Neighbourhood Plan was established. This Steering Group is made up of parish councillors as well as other local volunteers and residents.

This report provides a review of the Community Engagement exercises that have been carried out so far, and identifies areas that are 'planning' matters, and areas that are 'non planning' matters, which can be dealt with through a Community Action Plan (or similar).

The report then proposes ideas towards establishing a 'vision' and 'objectives' for the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan, based on an overall assessment of the comments received. From these objectives, some very initial 'Policy Areas' are suggested.

Current Legislative and Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (Consolidated) require that all Neighbourhood Plans must meet the 'basic conditions' outlined in paragraph 8 of Schedule 4B of the 1990 Planning Act. These basic conditions are that:

- The plan must have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State (NPPF and NPPG and other statements)
- The making of the plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- The making of the plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority
- The making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations
- Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the neighbourhood development plan and prescribed matters have been complied within in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood development plan.

First basic condition - National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (published in 2012) and National Planning Practice Guidance provide the framework within which other local development plans must sit (including neighbourhood plans). To meet the basic conditions, the neighbourhood plan will have to comply with the NPPF.

Second basic condition - Sustainable Development

This basic condition is consistent with the planning principle that all plan-making and decision-taking should help to achieve sustainable development. The Parish Council must demonstrate how the Neighbourhood Plan will contribute to improvements in environmental, economic and social conditions or that consideration has been given to how any potential adverse effects arising from the proposals may be prevented, reduced or offset (referred to as mitigation measures).

In order to demonstrate that a draft neighbourhood plan contributes to sustainable development, sufficient and proportionate evidence should be presented on how the draft

neighbourhood plan or Order guides development to sustainable solutions.¹

Third basic condition: To be in conformity with strategic policies in the Development Plan

The Development Plan for Lowick is the Berwick on Tweed Local Plan (1999). When considering whether a policy is in general conformity, the following must be considered:

- whether the neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal supports and upholds the general principle that the strategic policy is concerned with
- the degree, if any, of conflict between the draft neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal and the strategic policy
- whether the draft neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal provides an additional level of detail and/or a distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policy without undermining that policy
- the rationale for the approach taken in the draft neighbourhood plan or Order and the evidence to justify that approach²

Paragraph 184 of the NPPF states:

“The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan... Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.”

It is sensible for the Neighbourhood Plan to be broadly aligned with the emerging Core Strategy for Northumberland, although the policies in those plans are not 'strategic policies' until that Plan is adopted, for the purposes of neighbourhood planning.

The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Development Plan for the area where they are themselves in accordance with the NPPF.

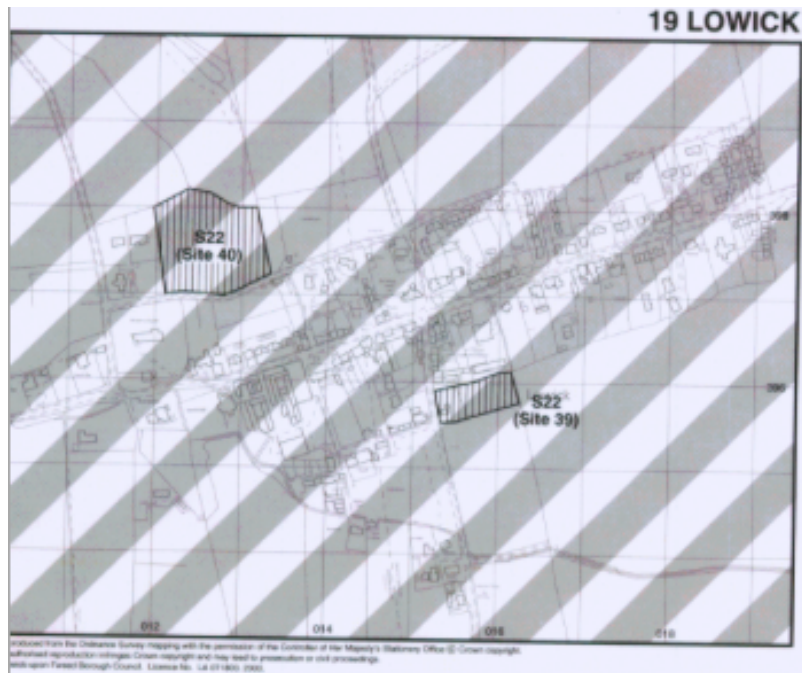
The current policy framework for the Lowick NP area is the Berwick-upon-Tweed Local Plan (adopted April 1999) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

Berwick-upon-Tweed Local Plan (1999) (saved policies)

The Berwick-upon-Tweed Local Plan contains a proposals map for Lowick, as well as the wider Parish. The inset map for Lowick is shown below:

¹ National Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 072 Reference ID: 41-072-20140306

² Paragraph: 074 Reference ID: 41-074-20140306



The stripes covering the map refer to Policy F4 'Intermediate Areas of Landscape Value'. This policy states:

In the Intermediate Areas of Landscape Value as identified on the Proposals Map, development will be permitted provided that:

- i) *it is located within or immediately adjoining an existing settlement;*
- ii) *it accords with its surroundings by virtue of its scale, density, height, massing, layout, materials, hard and soft landscaping including indigenous species, means of enclosure and access;*
- iii) *it will not have a detrimental impact on long range views important to the character and quality of the landscape including the National Park, the Tweed Valley and Kyloe Hills and Glendale Areas of High Landscape Value, the North Sea and Coastal Region of Scotland;*
- iv) *it relates to and accords with Policies S4, W2, W4, W8 or C5 associated with agricultural developments or Policies R7 or R9; and*
- v) *it accords with policies elsewhere in the Plan.*

Criterion i) includes villages, farmsteadings and other groups of buildings. It does not include isolated houses in the countryside.

Both the sites shown on the proposals map have now come forward for development and are at various stages of construction, or have planning permission.

Other policy in the Berwick Local Plan in relation to Lowick:

POLICY S3

The development of new housing will be permitted, subject to Policies elsewhere in the plan, in the service villages of Lowick, Lucker, Scremerston and Warenford. The desirability of defining envelopes around other settlements, will be kept under review.

POLICY R18

Within the Intermediate Areas of Landscape Value in the village of Lowick, the development of land for use as a bowling green and/or a floodlit multi-purpose games area, will be permitted provided that:

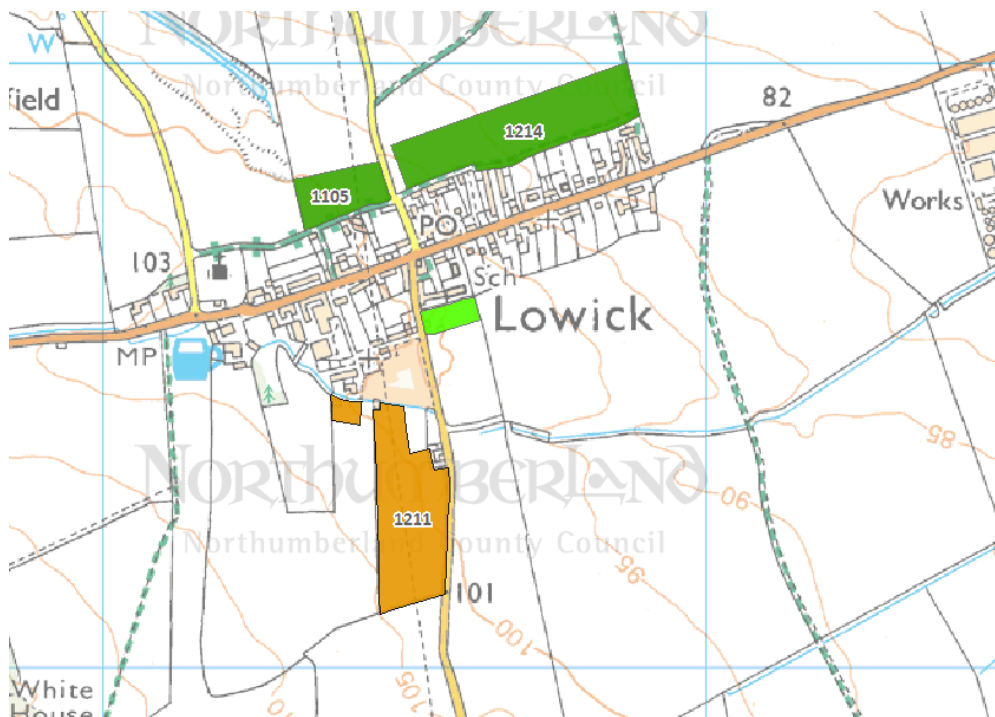
- i) it will not adversely affect the amenity of adjoining uses, land or the environment;*
- ii) satisfactory vehicular access and parking provision can be obtained; and,*
- iii) it accords with Policies elsewhere in the Plan.*

Northumberland Core Strategy (emerging)

A Neighbourhood Plan must be in conformity with the existing Development Plan. Northumberland Core Strategy is not yet part of the Development Plan. However, it is sensible for the Lowick Neighbourhood Plan to ensure it is broadly aligned with the Northumberland Core Strategy as it is the policies in the most recently adopted plan that take precedence in decision-making. This means that, when adopted, the Core Strategy will form part of the Development Plan, and policies in it could take priority over Neighbourhood Plan policies where there is a conflict.

Policies in the emerging Core Strategy support the delivery of housing (including affordable housing) throughout the plan area. Policies that are relevant to the emerging Lowick Neighbourhood Plan, and evidence base that is available should be consulted and have a key role in policy development.

In order to assess the availability of land for housing, Northumberland County Council has conducted a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The latest version of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2016) gives an indication of interest from local landowners in relation to land around Lowick.



The sites highlighted above has been assessed as follows:

Site No	Status	Site area	No. of dwellings	Constraints	Availability
1105	None	1.12	30	Highway capacity constraints. Transport appraisal for adj. site indicates these can be overcome.	Yes
1214	None	3.62	54	Highway capacity constraints. Water main crosses site. Upgrade of sewage works may be required. Plans have been prepared for the development of the site	Yes
1195	None	0.19	6	Narrow access will need upgrading to adoptable standards. May be difficult given space constraints. Cost may impact on delivery - rights of landowner to upgrade access road uncertain. Burn adjoins site to the north - buffer would be required. Close to Devil's Causeway Roman road. Sewer crosses site	Yes
1211	None	3.25	49	Attractive arable field to south which would extend settlement in a linear manner. Highway access from east, significant improvements required. Devil's causeway Roman road runs through centre of site - archaeological assessment/evaluation trenching would be required. Buffer to burn to north. Potential flood risk.	Yes

Fourth basic condition: EU Obligations

A Neighbourhood Plan must comply with EU obligations, and show that the Plan meets these obligations. This will be particularly relevant where there are European Sites within or close to the Plan area, and/or where sites are proposed for development in the Neighbourhood Plan. A Strategic Environmental Assessment and/or Habitats Regulations Assessment may be required. A screening opinion should be sought from Northumberland County Council as soon as the strategic focus of the neighbourhood plan is established (i.e. whether the Plan will be allocating sites for development, defining settlement boundaries, etc.)

Fifth basic condition: Prescribed requirements

This will mean that all the correct documents must be submitted, and the correct procedures followed in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (Consolidated) 2012.

Lowick Plan area - Background information

Population:

The 2011 Census recorded that there were 552 usual residents in the Parish of Lowick. Of this population, the majority live in Lowick itself. The rest of the population live in surrounding hamlets of Barmoor, Bowsdon and Holburn and Laverick-Law farms, and in the countryside.

Housing:

Northumberland County is split, at a County level, into housing 'delivery areas'. Lowick lies in the North Northumberland Delivery Area. Within this area, there are 'small areas' where outline housing numbers are proposed for delivery over the Core Strategy period. Lowick lies in the 'Rest of North Delivery Area'. The housing target for this whole area (which is the whole North Delivery area, but excluding the small areas of Wooler, Berwick, Alnwick, Lowick and the North Northumberland Coast) is 1250 over the Plan period.³ This area comprises a total of 48 Parishes, including Lowick. It is difficult to see how this reflects into housing numbers for Lowick itself, and more work needs to be done on this. The Strategic Land Review (2016) states that the capacity of sites far exceeds the housing requirement for the 'Rest of North' Delivery Area. Due to the number of sites brought forward already, the remaining 'balance' for the 'Rest of North' Delivery Area is 1030 dwellings. This report (Figure 101) shows that Lowick currently has a 'capacity' to deliver approximately 92 new dwellings until 2031. This reflects the sum of the green SHLAA sites shown on the previous pages.

It is interesting to note that the 2011 census shows a total of 50 household spaces with 'no residents'. This amounts to 16.6% of the housing in the Parish. This is likely to be second-homes/holiday homes, which is not surprising given Lowick's proximity to the coast.

Affordability - There are currently 7 'affordable' housing units within Lowick that are managed by Bernicia (previously 4 Housing). There is no evidence of a particular affordable housing need in Lowick so far. Homefinder (information requested) has some information about properties, availability, and bidding activity for Lowick and surrounding Parishes. Evidence to date shows that Registered Providers of affordable housing have little interest in sites in the Lowick area at present.

Alternative options (which do not require a Registered Provider to be party to a scheme) are Discount Market Value properties. These are marketed at 30% less than market value. They are tied into a planning approval through a S106 agreement, which keeps this discount rate in perpetuity. Local people are given first refusal on these houses, and purchasers must provide evidence that they cannot afford a full value property.

Starter Homes are a recent government initiative, and fall within the proposed definition of affordable housing in the Housing Bill 2017.⁴

³ Northumberland County Council draft Core Strategy - p.97

⁴ More in 'Fixing our broken housing market' 2017 - p.100 contains proposed definition of 'affordable housing'

Local Economy:

Lowick's local economy is largely limited to small businesses (many of them linked with tourism) and farming. There is a caravan site at Barmoor Castle, which is a significant local employer, and generates business for local smaller businesses.

Most people of working age commute to work from Lowick. A lack of sufficiently fast broadband means that running a business from home and locating new businesses in the Plan area is difficult. The availability of 4G and good telephone signal is patchy.

Community Facilities and Services:

There are two pubs (the Black Bull and the Swan), and a village shop. There is a well-used village hall, local First School, Community Orchard (just outside the village), play areas, and a local shop.

Historic Environment:

Lowick has a historic centre, with a total of 18 listed buildings and structures within the village (see below). These are all within the western portion of the village.



Lowick is not designated a Conservation Area. There are a number of listed buildings and scheduled monuments elsewhere in the Plan Area.

Natural Environment and Landscapes

Lowick is not within the Northumberland Coast AONB but is in an area of Landscape Value as defined in the Berwick on Tweed Local Plan. There are also a number of nature conservation designations in the Plan area:

- Holburn Lake & Moss (Ramsar Site)
- Holburn Lake & Moss (SSSI)
- Holburn Lake & Moss (SPA)

Ford Moss SAC and SSSI are just outside the Neighbourhood Area boundary.

Lowick sits within Landscape Character Type 16: 'Open Rolling Farmland' (16b) as identified in the Northumberland County Council Landscape Character Assessment (2010).

Consultation: – Awareness raising and Initial Community Engagement

The first stage of consultation sought to raise awareness among the community, both with businesses and residents in the Parish, that a Neighbourhood Development Plan was being prepared. It sought to gather initial views from the community on the relevant issues and the opportunities that a Neighbourhood Development should consider. The First school were contacted and every child in the school fed into a report called 'Lowick I like'.

This took the form of an 'open day' held on 24th September 2016, with an exhibition in the Village Hall in Lowick. A questionnaire was also sent to every household in the Parish, and a number were returned in person, and online, as well as feedback being given at the event itself.

Broad questions were asked, which is appropriate at the early stages of a Neighbourhood Plan. Questions asked were as follows:

1. What do you feel is good about life in Lowick?
2. What do you think makes this neighbourhood a good place to live and work in?
3. What aspects of life in Lowick could be improved, and how?

The consultation findings have been categorised into the following subjects: Natural Environment, Transport (including Roads and Paths), Housing, Employment, Conservation and Green Spaces, and Community.

Many of the matters raised are best dealt with through Community Projects (i.e. not through planning policies in the Neighbourhood Plan). Some matters may be dealt with through both.

Lowick Neighbourhood Development Plan – Report to Steering Group (March 2017)

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
Strong sense of community - good quality of life	Street parking
Countryside and wildlife - wide reaching views	No permanent post office
Community facilities (village hall, Black Bull pub, village green, village shop, local school, church, play area, local garage, Community Orchard, football field)	Wheelchair accessibility poor
Safe place to live	Lack of affordable housing (evidence)
Heritage and historic environment; strong sense of local vernacular	Lack of employment opportunities locally
Peace and tranquillity	Traffic in main street (diversions if A1 closed, HGVs, safety at the school)
Good local services and facilities	State of the roads (highway surfacing)
Good broadband access	
Good 'mix' of people	
Good walking and access to the countryside	
Good access to A1, train station, bus service	
Good access to local healthcare services	
Opportunities:	Threats:
Improvements to play facilities for younger people (tennis courts?) potentially at the school?	Increasing numbers of second homes/holiday homes (impact on affordable housing)
Improve public transport	Inappropriate development and/or unsympathetic development
Safe path from Lowick to the Community Orchard	Traffic through the village
Improve broadband to allow and encourage more home-working	Chapel House deterioration?
Ensure new homes are for first-time buyers, affordable housing, particularly for young families	
Preserve historic buildings in the village	
Continue with, and build on, Lowick in Bloom	
Introduce traffic calming or means to slow traffic down through the village	
New development could enhance the village (i.e. from the east)	
Encourage small-scale residential development on farms around the parish	
Encourage the incorporation of biodiversity into development proposals	
Encourage self-build housing development	
Encourage better use of the Common	
Encourage small business units in the village	
More village events/activities, better advertising of them	
Protect community assets and green spaces in the village	

These issues further assist with a ‘vision’ for the Plan area. Matters which can be dealt with through neighbourhood plan policies have been highlighted in green - matters which are more appropriately dealt with through Community Projects have been highlighted in blue. This SWOT analysis further assists in developing a vision, objectives and policy areas for the NDP. This will be covered in the suggested ‘vision, objectives and policy areas’ section.

Consultation responses:

This section identifies issues and options for addressing threats, taking opportunities, and building on the strengths identified.

Local character/historic environment

The local character and historic environment is highly valued in Lowick. There is a strong desire to ensure that new development respects the local character of the village. Lowick does not have a Conservation Area although it does have a number of listed buildings.

Leisure and Community Facilities

Local community facilities are highly valued, and the village of Lowick has an unusually large number for its size. These are to some extent supported by the surrounding population, as well as by visitors to the nearby caravan park. A focus on the Plan may be to seek to ensure that these facilities are retained, enhanced, and supported, and the provision of more facilities is also supported.

The lack of enough play areas for teenagers was identified, and the opportunity to provide further leisure facilities (ie. tennis courts) was highlighted. The football club is highly valued as is the football field.

Transport/Parking/Accessibility

Comments were largely to do with traffic in the main street in the village, and particularly HGVs. There were suggestions for improving traffic calming, and improving the quality of local roads.

There were a number of people who value the close links with footpaths, bridleways and quiet lanes into the countryside.

Housing Sites/Type and Mix of Housing

There appears to be significant support for more affordable housing, and housing to meet the needs of the local population, particularly young people and young families. Further evidence is needed on the need for affordable housing).

There were concerns about the increase in number of second homes and/or holiday homes in the village.

Tranquillity, Natural Environment (Dark Skies??)

The quality of the natural environment and landscapes in the Plan area were considered to be very important by many respondents. Tranquillity and peacefulness were terms that were often used in responses.

Vision and Objectives for Lowick Neighbourhood Plan

In order to be able to start looking at Policy Areas for the Neighbourhood Plan, it is necessary to condense down the responses that have been received so far, into a 'vision' for the Parish, from which emerge a number of overarching objectives required to achieve that vision.

From these objectives, will emerge Policy Areas which will help to achieve each of these objectives. Some Policy Areas will need further evidence gathering to confirm the true picture prior to policy drafting. This report contains some suggested Policy Areas based on the consultation so far. Some of these matters may be better taken forward as Community Projects rather than Planning Policies.

A vision should be overarching, and seek to summarise what it is that the Plan is hoping to achieve over its lifetime.

Current suggested **vision** for consultation:

By 2031, Lowick will be a Parish with a balanced, sustainable community and a mix of people of all ages. Local facilities and services will be maintained and enhanced. Local character and heritage will be the inspiration for new development which will be well integrated into the village. Lowick and the wider parish will be an even more attractive place to work, live and visit.

This vision gives rise to a number of themes and objectives, particularly in relation to the historic environment and local character, the economic, environmental and social well-being of the local population, the quality of the surrounding landscape and countryside which is highly valued.

Objective 1: Community Facilities

We will protect our most highly valued local community facilities, and encourage new community facilities that will increase the sustainability of Lowick

Potential Planning Policy areas:

- ➔ Protect local community facilities (are any registered as ACVs?)
- ➔ Positively support the provision of further community facilities/recreational facilities, particularly a play area for teenagers? Further consultation to establish more evidence
- ➔ Identify Local Green Spaces in Lowick (e.g. playing fields, Community Orchard, Play Areas, village green? Any other special open spaces within the village? Further consultation to establish more evidence
- 🌀 Register Assets of Community Value
- 🌀 Improve provision of local services, community activities and facilities through better advertising
- 🌀 Lowick in Bloom - tidy-ups in the village as well
- 🌀 Work closely with the school to improve facilities and links with the local community

Objective 2: Natural Environment and Biodiversity

Lowick will grow in such a way that respects the special landscapes around it, incorporates biodiversity into new development and respects the special qualities of the area.

Potential Planning Policy Areas:

- ➔ Policy to define a settlement boundary for Lowick to focus development in the most appropriate locations (further consultation, liaison with local landowners required)
- ➔ Ensure Dark Skies are protected through appropriate external lighting in new development
- ➔ Ensure new development incorporates biodiversity into the scheme
- ➔ Holburn Moss - opportunities here?

Potential Community Projects

- 🌀 Red squirrels project

Objective 3: Accessibility

To make the Plan area more accessible, we will work to improve public transport, and improve cycle ways and enhance public rights of way elsewhere in the Plan area

Potential Planning Policy Areas:

- ➔ Ensure new development includes transport/traffic assessments where relevant and necessary, to reduce the impact of traffic in relation to new development in the village
- ➔ Ensure new development is well integrated with the existing village and services (through pedestrian routes and cycle ways if appropriate) to reduce the need to travel short distances by car (i.e. to the shop/school)
- ➔ Support provision of a safe route between Lowick and the Community Orchard (i.e. through fields)

Potential Community Projects

- 🌀 Work to improve public transport services
- 🌀 Liaise with NCC Highways to reduce speeds through the village
- 🌀 Liaise with NCC to incorporate traffic calming measures where appropriate
- 🌀 Improve route between village and Community Orchard

Objective 4: Housing

To ensure we have a truly sustainable community, we will seek to ensure there is enough housing to meet the needs of all sectors of our community, particularly young families and first time buyers.

Potential Planning Policy Areas:

- ➔ A policy to ensure all new housing incorporates an appropriate amount of affordable housing (evidence - is there an affordable housing need? If so, what type?)
- ➔ Consider site allocations with type and mix proposed based on housing needs in the area (further evidence - housing needs survey?)

Objective 6: The Local Economy

Provide opportunities for, and support a more vibrant and diverse local economy, including tourism in Lowick village and surrounding areas

Potential Planning Policy Areas:

- ➔ Promote more small-scale enterprise in the village
- ➔ Support rural enterprise (farm diversification, rural businesses)
- ➔ Support home working by encouraging better broadband access to the village
- ➔ Lack of mobile coverage - support further telecommunications
- ➔ Support further tourism development at Barmoor Castle??

Objective 7: Local Heritage, Character and Design

Preserve and enhance the character of the village of Lowick and identify local buildings which are of special local interest, ensuring new development re-enforces local character

Potential Planning Policy Areas:

- ➔ Identify buildings that are of local historic interest (using a recognised methodology) and protect through a suitable planning policy (Historic England methodology)
- ➔ Support innovative, sustainable design
- ➔ Establish what features of Lowick are important, and seek to ensure that new development respects and enhances local character (new development and extensions) or creates new character (Carry out a 'place-check'?)

<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/planning/neighbourhood-planning-information-aug14.pdf>

- 🌀 Work with owners at Barmoor Castle to improve the building, and potential for visitors to access the Castle?

7.0 Next steps

Another consultation event to take place in April 2017: This could focus on the vision, objectives and potential policy areas (once agreed by the Steering Group).

Further evidence will be required for some areas:

Existing Evidence:

Northumberland County Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2016)

Northumberland County Council Strategic Housing Market Assessment (updated 2015)

Strategic Land Review - North Northumberland Delivery Area (2016)

Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment (Part A) (August 2010)

Homefinder database (information asked for and awaited)

Need to do:

- Walkabout survey - historic environment (Place check - EH)
- Heritage assets in Lowick - establish a list using methodology by Historic England
- List Community Facilities that are valued - registered assets or just protect community facilities
- Consider conducting a housing survey? Perhaps with adjoining Parishes? (Share the cost!) Find out affordable needs, but also type and mix of housing needed.
- Is a settlement boundary the best tool to encourage the right kind of development in the right places?
- Local Green Space assessment (results of consultation - ask the question - which are the most valued)
- Business survey of local employers/farms/businesses in the area?
- Liaise with local landowners - Barmoor Castle and other land around Lowick put forward through SHLAA
- Liaise with owners of brownfield site in village - proposals there? Business units?