



Northumberland
County Council

Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Screening Opinion

Prepared by the Neighbourhood Planning Team, Northumberland County Council

August 2023

Revision history

Version	Revision date	Details	Name	Position
V.1.0	July 2023	Screening Opinion based on the draft Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan	Rob Naples	Planning Officer
V.2.0	August 2023	Revised Screening Opinion taking account of Consultation Body representations	Rob Naples	Planning Officer

Contents

Summary of Screening Opinion	3
1. Introduction	4
Neighbourhood Planning	4
Strategic Environmental Assessment	4
Habitats Regulations Assessment	5
2. Cresswell Draft Neighbourhood Plan	6
The Cresswell Neighbourhood Area	6
Vision and Objectives	7
Planning policies	8
3. Baseline Information	12
Biodiversity, flora and fauna	12
Population and human health	12
Climatic Factors	13
Soil	13
Water	14
Air	14
Material Assets	15
Heritage Assets	15
Landscape	15
4. SEA Screening	17
5. SEA Screening Conclusion	24

Summary of Screening Opinion

1. Cresswell Parish Council, as the qualifying body, is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Cresswell Neighbourhood Area, which comprises the whole civil parish of Cresswell. The Plan seeks to address local issues around Local Green Space and tourism. It will be 'made' by Northumberland County Council as local planning authority, and will form part of the statutory development plan for the area.
2. Based on the characteristics of the draft Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan and the area characteristics, the conclusion of the SEA Screening, in the opinion of Northumberland County Council, is the plan is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment and SEA is therefore not required.
3. This report is supported by the consultation bodies: the Environment Agency; and Historic England. A response was not received from Natural England within the consultation period. Their representations can be found in Appendix B.

1. Introduction

Neighbourhood Planning

- 1.1 Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by a qualifying body under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared by Cresswell Parish Council (as the 'qualifying body') and will be 'made' by Northumberland County Council as local planning authority.
- 1.2 The preparation of Neighbourhood Plans is subject to The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (and subsequent amendments) and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017.
- 1.3 Communities have a right to be able to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. However, communities are not required by legislative, regulatory or administrative purposes to produce such a plan.
- 1.4 Cresswell Parish Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the Cresswell Neighbourhood Area, which comprises the whole civil parish of Cresswell. Once 'made' it will form part of the statutory development plan for the area.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.5 To be 'made', a neighbourhood plan must meet certain Basic Conditions¹ including compliance with EU obligations. One such obligation is the assessment of the effects of the plan on the environment. The procedures to be followed in determining whether a plan would be likely to have significant effects on the environment are set out in European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (the 'SEA Directive'), which is transposed into UK legislation through The Environmental Assessment of Plans and programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations').
- 1.6 The purpose of the SEA Directive is to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to integrate considerations of the environment into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

¹ These are set out in Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and in the Neighbourhood Planning General Regulations (2012) (as amended).

- 1.7 The SEA Directive sets out criteria for assessing the significance of the impact of a plan or programme on the environment. Any assessment must consider both positive and negative effects.
- 1.8 In the first instance, it is necessary to ascertain if SEA is required. This process is referred to as 'screening'.
- 1.9 This report presents the findings of an SEA screening opinion on the draft Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan, provided by Northumberland County Council as local planning authority. It adopts a proportionate approach in applying a series of criteria, as set out in Schedule 1 the SEA Directive, to determine whether any significant effects are likely.
- 1.10 This report is supported by the consultation bodies: the Environment Agency; and Historic England. No response has been received from Natural England within the consultation period. Their representations can be found in Appendix B.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 1.11 A Neighbourhood Plan could potentially have impacts on sites covered by the Habitats Regulations. The Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan has been subject to a separate HRA screening assessment to ascertain whether an Appropriate Assessment is required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, which relate to Articles 6(3) and (4) of the European Union Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna (the 'Habitats Directive'). It was determined that significant effects are unlikely and that Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required.

2. Cresswell Draft Neighbourhood Plan

The Cresswell Neighbourhood Area

- 2.1 Cresswell Parish is a rural parish on the Northumberland coast. The Neighbourhood Area covers the entire civil parish of Cresswell (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Cresswell Neighbourhood Area



Published July 2017. Scale: 1:17,400
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The Draft Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan

Vision and Objectives

- 2.2 The vision sets out what the Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2036. It informs all of the plan objectives and draft planning policies.

In 2036 Cresswell Parish will remain a tranquil and attractive place to live, while still being able to cater for visitors to our beautiful Northumberland Coastline.

New developments will meet identified local need as well as respecting and valuing the historic, rural and seaside character of the village and the Parish as a whole.

- 2.3 To deliver the vision, three objectives have been developed:

Objective 1: Rich natural environment

Conserving and enhancing the tranquil and valued seaside character of the parish.

Objective 2: Distinctive built and historic environment

Ensuring that new development maintains and enhances local distinctiveness and contributes positively to the built and historic character of the parish.

Objective 3: Sustainable community

Ensuring the location, quantity and type of new development meets locally identified needs.

Draft planning policies

- 2.4 There are two draft planning policies to deliver the objectives. These are stated in full in Appendix A but are summarised here:

Policy 1: Local Green Space

This policy identifies and designates areas of Local Green Space in the Parish and seeks to protect them.

Policy 2: Tourism

This policy seeks to ensure that proposals for tourism-related development are considered in the context of the area's historic coastal and rural heritage.

3. Baseline Information

Context

- 3.1 Cresswell is a rural coastal parish in Northumberland, immediately north of Lynemouth and east of Ellington. Most of the parish's population lives in the main settlement, Cresswell village. Cresswell has limited services, although it is home to two large holiday parks.

Biodiversity, flora and fauna

- 3.2 There are two statutory protected sites in the Parish; the Northumbria Coast Ramsar site, and Northumbria Coast SPA.
- 3.3 Other ecological considerations in the Parish include: Cresswell and Newbiggin Shores SSSI; Northumberland Shore SSSI; Cresswell Ponds SSSI; Cresswell Dunes LNR; Warkworth Lane Pond; Lyne Dene & Chugdon Woods Local Wildlife Site; Ancient Woodland.
- 3.4 Priority Habitats in the Parish include deciduous woodland, coastal sand dunes, reedbeds and fens, and saline lagoons.

Issue: N/A

Population and human health

- 3.5 The 2011 census recorded a parish population of 206. This represents a decrease of 13% on the 237 recorded in 2001. The age structure in the resident population has changed: the proportion of young dependents has fallen whilst the proportion of residents aged 65 and over has increased significantly, from 15.6% in 2001 to 25.7% in 2011. The age profile of residents is that of an ageing population, with significantly fewer youths and adults of working age living in the Parish compared to Northumberland as a whole.
- 3.6 Unemployment rates in Cresswell are high, at 7.5% (2011). This is significantly higher than the County average (4.4%). However, the proportion of residents with a level 4 qualification or above is significantly greater than for Northumberland as a whole (31.2% compared to 25.6%).

Issues: Ageing population.

Climatic Factors

- 3.8 No emissions data is available for the Neighbourhood Area. At the local authority level, detailed information is available for Carbon Dioxide (CO²). The main source of CO² emissions in Northumberland is now transport, which has shown only a very marginal reduction since 2005. By contrast, emissions from industrial and commercial sources have more than halved in the same time. Domestic emissions have also decreased albeit from a lower starting point. As a result, total emissions in Northumberland decreased by 40% between 2005 and 2017. The trend overall, therefore, is downwards though transport emissions remain problematic.
- 3.9 Car ownerships levels in the Parish have remained largely the same in recent years. At 90% the proportion of households having one or more cars is high, and is significantly greater than the County average (70%). This likely reflects higher incomes locally, the location of the Parish relative to major employment hubs and the largely rural nature of the area.

Issue: CO² emissions from transport.

Soil

- 3.10 The majority of agricultural land in the Parish is grade 3, i.e. good to moderate quality agricultural land

Issue: N/A.

Water

- 3.11 The Kielder Water Resource Zone (WRZ) serves the Neighbourhood Area. There is a large surplus of supply over demand in the Kielder WRZ and the area is not classed as seriously water stressed.
- 3.12 There are no Groundwater Source Protection Zones in the area indicating that there is little risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area.

Issues: N/A

Air

- 3.16 As of June 2018, the Cresswell Neighbourhood Area has no recorded Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), and air quality is not automatically monitored anywhere within the Neighbourhood Area as part of the annual screening process carried out by Northumberland County Council. There are no significant and tangible air quality issues in the Neighbourhood Area.

Issue: N/A.

Material Assets

- 3.17 Cresswell has very little in the way of community services and facilities and looks elsewhere for access to such services. There are two large holiday parks within the Parish. The village has extensive green space provision. The village is served by public transport but there remains a significant reliance on the private car, evidenced by high levels of car ownership in the parish.

Issue: Transport dominated by car use.

Heritage Assets

- 3.18 Of the 15 listed buildings in the Neighbourhood Area, 12 are grade II listed, 1 is grade II* and there are two scheduled ancient monuments.

Issue: N/A

Landscape

- 3.19 The Parish lies within the South East Northumberland Coastal Plain National Character Area.

- 3.20 The South East Northumberland Coastal Plain National Character Area covers a broad strip of the North Sea coast and occupies the easternmost part of the county. It stretches from Amble in the north to the southern edge of the county where it extends into Newcastle and North Tyneside. The coastal plain widens towards the south, taking in the developed areas around Ashington, Blyth and Cramlington. Morpeth and Ponteland are located on its western boundary.

Issue: Potential pressure for further tourism development

4. SEA Screening

- 4.1 Criteria for determining the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from plans and programmes are set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Directive. The criteria are split into two categories: those relating to the characteristics of the plan and those relating to the characteristics of the effects and areas likely to be affected.² An assessment of the draft Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan against these criteria is set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Assessment of the likelihood of significant effects on the environment

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/No	Comment
The characteristics of the plan, having regard to:		
(a) the degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	No	The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for residential or other forms development. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for the civil parish of Cresswell and will be used in conjunction with the Northumberland Local Plan to determine planning applications in the area.
(b) the degree to which the plan influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	No	Due to the locally-specific nature of the policies, the effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on other plans and programmes within the wider development plan will be slight. Its policies are in general conformity with strategic policies in the existing development plan (Northumberland Local Plan, 2022). The Plan has been prepared having regard to national planning policies and guidance.
(c) the relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to	No	One of the Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Plan must meet is to contribute to sustainable development.

² Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. Annex II Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects referred to in Article 3(5) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN>

Criteria (Schedule 1)		Significant Environmental Effect likely?
	Yes/No	Comment
promoting sustainable development.		Policy 2 sets out a clear intention to consider sustainable development in the determination of development proposals for tourism related development.
(d) environmental problems relevant to the plan	No	The draft Plan seeks to address the following environmental problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting leisure, recreation and other green space areas; • Ensuring the sustainable development of tourism accommodation.
(e) the relevance of the plan for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	No	Neighbourhood plans cannot contain policies or proposals in respect of waste management since this is 'excluded development' by virtue of the Planning Acts. The Neighbourhood Plan has no particular relevance for the implementation of other Community legislation, apart from its limited association with legislation designed to ensure continued protection of European designated sites.
The characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard to:		
(a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.	No	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period 2023-2036. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for development. Instead, it sets out policies supporting the delivery of residential and other forms of development subject to their accordance with other policy requirements. Effects of the Plan are expected to be indirect (due to not allocating sites) but long-term and permanent. <p>Biodiversity, flora and fauna Policy 1 identifies and designates areas of Local Green Space.</p> <p>Population and human health Policy 1 identifies and designates areas of Local Green Space.</p> <p>Climatic Factors Policy 1 identifies and designates areas of Local Green Space.</p> <p>Soil The Plan is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect on soil quality.</p>

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/No	Comment
		<p>Water The Plan is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect on water quality.</p> <p>Air The Plan is unlikely to have a significant positive or negative effect on air quality.</p> <p>Material Assets The Plan is unlikely to have significant positive or negative effect on material assets.</p> <p>Heritage Assets The Plan identifies and designates areas of Local Green Space; some of these have been designated due to their contribution towards historic character. This would help to support the integrity of the historic environment.</p> <p>Landscape The Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on landscape; the identification and designation of Local Green Space is likely to ensure a neutral effect.</p>
(b) the cumulative nature of the effects		It is unlikely that any significant environmental effects would be observed as a result of the policies contained within the draft Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan does not seek to facilitate a level of development above that of higher-level documents within the Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan supports sustainable development, which would protect and enhance the built and natural environment. Therefore, it is not anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan would result in significant effects, whether in isolation or cumulatively.
(c) the transboundary nature of the effects		N/A
(d) the risks to human health or the environment.	No	There are no anticipated risks to human health or the environment from the Neighbourhood Plan.
(e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the		The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development, and whilst it will help to shape future development, the overall extent of future development is likely to be in line with the growth

Criteria (Schedule 1)	Significant Environmental Effect likely?	
	Yes/No	Comment
population likely to be affected).		that would occur in the Parish without the Plan. There are no significant effects as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan.
<p>(f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; • exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; • intensive land-use; 	No	<p>The baseline information for the Parish has been described in Section 3.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Area is close to a number of internationally and nationally important environmental assets. However, the need for Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations has been screened out. The risk to their status and condition from implementation of the Plan is judged to be low.</p>
(g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status	No	Given the content of the Neighbourhood Plan and its focus on sustainable development, which is sympathetic to the qualities of the area, significant effects resulting from the Plan are unlikely.

5. SEA Screening Conclusion

- 5.1 On the basis of the assessment of the likely significance of effects on the environment of implementing the Plan as set out in Table 1 of this Screening Opinion, the conclusion is:

In the opinion of Northumberland County Council, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, the Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan *is unlikely to have any significant positive or negative effects on the environment*. Therefore, Strategic Environmental Assessment is NOT required.

This conclusion is supported by the consultation bodies: Historic England and the Environment Agency. No response has been received from Natural England within the consultation period.

Appendix A

Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan

Draft Planning Policies

Policy 1: Local Green Space

The Village Green, Dunes, woodlands and identified field areas following areas, as defined in figure 4 on the policies map, are designated as local green space. They which will be protected from development in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt.:

Management of any development within these local green spaces should be consistent with national policy on Green Belts. Inappropriate development will not be permitted other than where very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the harm to the local green space by reason of inappropriateness and other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Policy 2: Tourism

Cresswell Village has two large static caravan parks within its boundary and a touring caravan site has been recently approved (2022).

Any future development should be consistent with national and local policy and will be assessed on the potential economic gain weighed against any possible harmful impacts on our unique historic coastal and rural heritage, and other plan policies. Inappropriate development will not be permitted other than where very special circumstances can be demonstrated.



Mr Rob Naples
Northumberland County Council
Communities & Infrastructure
County Hall
Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

Direct Dial: [REDACTED]

Our ref: PL00793603

21 July 2023

Dear Mr Naples

**Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004: Regulation 9
Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan: SEA Screening Opinion, July 2023**

Thank you for consulting Historic England on the above Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion. As the public body that advises on England's historic environment, we are pleased to offer our comments.

Based on the analysis set out in the Screening Opinion, and within the areas of interest to Historic England, we agree that the emerging plan is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects and, therefore, it does not need SEA. In coming to this view we have taken the following factors into consideration:

- The plan area contains a number of heritage assets including listed buildings and scheduled monuments, and the potential for non-designated assets.
- Heritage assets are fragile and irreplaceable and can be damaged by change through development both directly and indirectly by development in their setting.
- The plan is not expected to allocate sites for development.

As such, from the perspective of our area of interest, the need for SEA of the draft plan can be screened out as it is unlikely to result in significant environmental effects. However, the views of the other two statutory consultees should be taken into account before you conclude on whether SEA is needed. According to Regulation 11 of the above Regulations, I look forward to receiving a copy of your determination in this case.

We reserve the right to review our opinion should the plan change materially in its content and direction. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries relating to our comments or would like any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Jules Brown



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Mo, Lucy <lucy.mo@environment-agency.gov.uk>
To: Rob Naples

    
Wed 26/07/2023 2:24 PM

Hi Rob,

The Environment Agency is satisfied that the Cresswell Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have any significant effects on the environment. Therefore, a SEA is not required.

Regards

Lucy

Lucy Mo

Planning Technical Specialist, Sustainable Places, North East

Environment Agency | Tyneside House, Skinnerburn Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7AR.