

East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan
Natural Environment Background Paper

October 2020

Contents

1.	Background	3
2.	Strategic planning context	5
3.	Other strategies and plans	12
4.	Environmental designations	29
5.	Feedback	31
6.	Planning policy options and preferred approach	34
7.	Potential community actions	36

1. Background

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

A vision for East Boldon in 2036

East Boldon remains a thriving village full of character.

It has a strong sense of community where local schools and voluntary groups, including sport and leisure organisations, play an important part in bringing people together.

It is home to a wide range of successful businesses. These make an important contribution to village life and are actively supported by local people.

It is blessed with wonderful green spaces on all sides, much of which is safeguarded by Green Belt status. This has done much to protect the village from urban sprawl and help maintain its identity and separation from other settlements as well as providing important habitat for wildlife.

Infrastructure has been delivered to support the needs of the local community and business. New development is sensitive to the character of the village, it provides opportunities for the enhanced wellbeing of its residents, and ensures an environment which is rich in landscape for wildlife.

In short, new development should be sustainable in every sense.

The needs of local residents, both young and old, are a major consideration in the type and location of all new development.

The need to keep the local community together by providing the right mix of housing is seen as a priority.

Any new development should be seen as an opportunity to address the issue of parking and not add to it.

- 1.3 Neighbourhood plan objective three addresses the natural environment:
"Plan positively for the creation, protection and enhancement of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure in the neighbourhood plan area including ensuring that there are linkages to wider 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 preferred policy approach

- 1.2 As part of the consultation on the pre-submission draft plan we are inviting comments on the issues identified within this background paper. Comments can be made in the following ways:
- By email to: info.eastboldonforum@gmail.com; or
 - By letter to: East Boldon Forum, c/o Boldon & Cleadon Community Library, Boker Lane, East Boldon, NE36 0RY.
- 1.3 Comments must be submitted by **Monday 7 December 2020**.

2. Strategic Planning Context

Background

- 2.1 As they are part of the development plan, neighbourhood plans have to be prepared in line with legal requirements. The way in which neighbourhood plans are prepared and the policies they contain will be 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 local plan;
 - Contribute to 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) respectively. 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 in 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 highlights the importance of accessibility to high quality open spaces and the need to base plan policies on up to date assessments. It also introduces the concept of local green spaces where areas of open green space, that are important to local communities, can be recognised and protected through this specific designation. The strength of protection is as strong as for Green Belt, it needs to be consistent with sustainable development and spaces must meet three prescribed criteria to be successfully designated (paragraph 100).
- 2.5 Section 12 looks at good design and identifies that planning policies should: create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses including the incorporation of green and other public space and 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, flooding and change. Paragraph 149 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 and 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 151 identifies that plans should help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat.

- 2.7 With regard to flood risk, paragraph 155 identifies that development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk and 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:
- Maintain the objective of sustainable development;
 - Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
 - Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
 - Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible;
 - Plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks;
 - Identify and record all components of the ecological network;
 - Include policies to conserve and enhance the natural environment;
 - Identify areas where development may be inappropriate;
 - Contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural environment;
 - Retain and enhance all publicly accessible open space unless prescribed tests are met.
- 2.9 The NPPG also contains guidance on the natural environment and is subdivided into sections on landscape, biodiversity, green infrastructure, soils and agricultural land.

Local Plan

- 2.10 Currently the development plan policies which cover the East Boldon Neighbourhood Plan Area are contained in the South Tyneside: Core Strategy (2007); Development Policies (2011); and Site Specific Allocations (2012). The South Tyneside Development Policies document contains a set of generic policies against which planning applications for new development are assessed. As the neighbourhood plan is required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan, the policies contained within the South Tyneside Development Policies document are not considered to be strategic policies and therefore are not applicable.
- 2.11 Table 1 provides a summary of the relevant South Tyneside Core Strategy policies:

Table 1: Relevant South Tyneside Core Strategy Policies

Policy	Description
ST1 – Spatial Strategy for South Tyneside	<p>Seeks to focus new development in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regenerate the River Tyne and coastal corridors; • support the role and function of the South Shields, Jarrow and Hebburn; • promote opportunities along the A19 economic growth corridor; • ensure the sustainability of settlements; and • maximise the re-use of land. <p>In addition, the policy seeks to avoid or minimise environmental</p>

Policy	Description
	impacts.
ST2 – Sustainable urban living	<p>Requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high standards of urban design; • energy efficiency and sustainable construction; • on-site renewable energy generation; • use of sustainable urban drainage and water conservation features; • priority to be given to modes of transport other than the private car; • designing out crime; • accessibility; and • incorporation of biodiversity and geological features.
SC6 – Providing for recreational open space, sport and leisure	<p>Seeks to promote the provision of high quality recreational open space, playing fields and outdoor sporting facilities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting schemes which protect and improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and facilities; • remedying deficiencies in open space provision and quality; and • supporting schemes that extend open spaces into the wider countryside.
EA1 – Local character and distinctiveness	<p>Seeks to conserve the best qualities of South Tyneside’s built and natural environment. Including: protecting and enhancing the openness of the Green Belt; and preserving the special and separate characters of the urban fringe villages (including East Boldon).</p>
EA3 – Biodiversity and geodiversity	<p>The policy requires the council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secure and enhance the integrity of designated sites; • maintain, enhance, restore and add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests; • ensure that new development would result in no net loss of biodiversity value of any of the priority habitats; • reduce the fragmentation of, improve or extend exiting priority habitats; • create new priority habitats in identified areas; • protect and strengthen populations of priority and other protected species; • enhance biodiversity and wildlife corridors; and • where appropriate restrict access and usage to conserve and areas biodiversity value.
EA5 – Environmental protection	<p>Development will be controlled to ensure that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • acts to reduce levels of pollution, environmental risk and nuisance; • minimises impacts on groundwater; • focuses the treatment of contaminated and derelict land; • breach noise, hazardous substances or pollution limits.

2.12 The allocations which cover the plan area are included in figure 1 below:

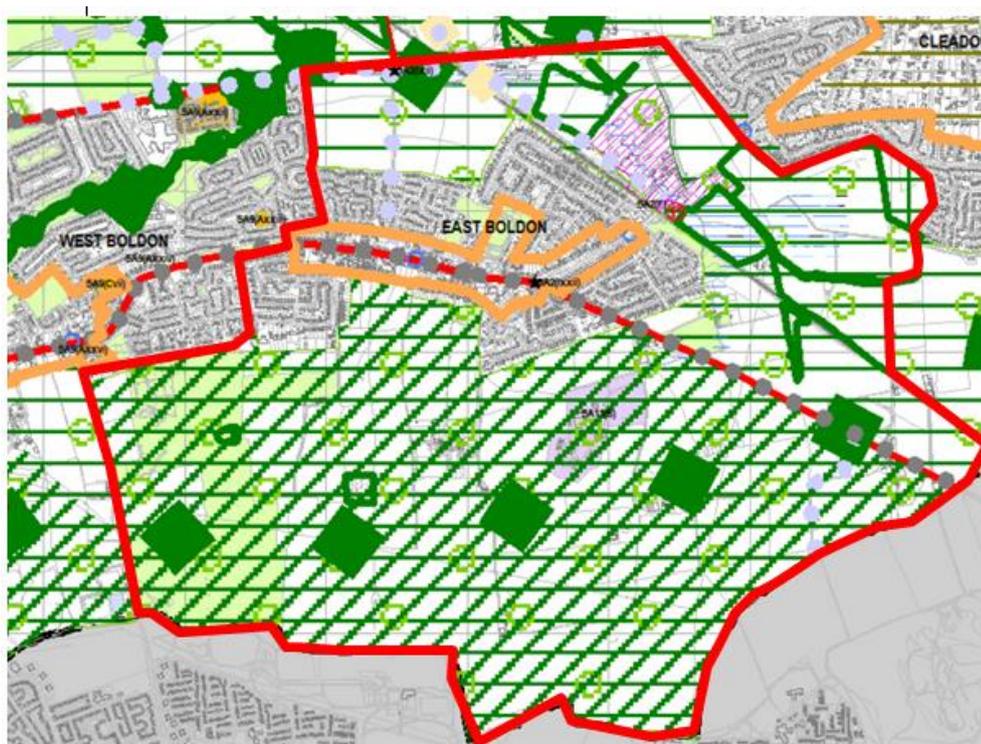


Figure 1: Extract from South Tyneside Site Specific Allocations Document

2.13 Those allocations that are most relevant to the natural environment are: Green Belt; Great North Forest; area of high landscape value; sites of special scientific interest and wildlife corridors.

Emerging South Tyneside Local Plan

2.14 South Tyneside Council (STC) is currently preparing a new South Tyneside Local Plan which will replace the planning policies. STC has undertaken four rounds of engagement on issues and options for the emerging local plan: Local Plan Key Issues & Options (April 2013); Issues Review of Policies and Guidance (2014); Local Plan Growth Options (July 2015); and Local Plan Pre-Publication Draft (August 2019).

2.15 Those policies of relevance to the natural environment elements of the neighbourhood plan are:

- Policy S1 (spatial strategy) – seeks to secure the sustainability of the villages in the borough, including East Boldon and encourages the use of brownfield land. The policy also seeks to protect the openness and permanence of the Green Belt, in order, amongst other matters, to preserve the special and separate characters of the villages of West Boldon, East Boldon, Cleadon and Whitburn. In addition, the policy seeks to protect and enhance the network of environmental assets, including green spaces and sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance;
- Policy S2 (strategic development principles) – in order to maintain and enhance the special and distinct character of the built and natural environment, the policy identifies a number of design and landscape principles for proposals to have regard

- to. These include matters such as: landscaping; protection and enhancement of open space, hedgerows and trees; and protecting the openness of the Green Belt;
- Policy S3 (promoting health and wellbeing in South Tyneside) – looks to promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities, encouraging healthy lifestyle choices and supporting good physical and mental health. The policy identifies a number of criteria to ensure development contributes to providing healthy communities, including: provision of good quality and accessible open spaces and playing fields; enhancing environments to encourage walking and cycling; and enhancing the quality of the natural environment and green infrastructure;
 - Policy S4 (presumption in favour of sustainable development) – identifies that the council will take a positive approach in the determination of development proposals, seeking to ensure that it improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the borough;
 - Policy S5 (re-use of previously developed land) – states that wherever viable, the council will prioritise the re-use of brownfield land provided the proposals are appropriate in scale, size and role of the settlement;
 - Policy S6 (appropriate development within the Green Belt) – requires proposals to protect and enhance the openness of the Green Belt in accordance with national policy;
 - Policy S7 (extensions and alterations to and replacement of buildings in the Green Belt) – provides guidance on extensions and alterations in the Green Belt, requiring development to be appropriate in scale and sympathetic to the size of the plot, as well as to the character and appearance of the original building;
 - Policy S8 (replacement of buildings in the Green Belt) – supports the replacement of buildings where the external volume is no greater than 30% above the size of the original building. The policy includes a number of criteria to be met by the development;
 - Policy H3 (housing allocations and commitments) – identifies sites to deliver housing, reference is also made to environmental considerations;
 - Policy H5 (efficient use of land and housing density) – seeks to deliver land at appropriate densities, stating that where sites are within 400m of town district/ local centres or metro stations dwellings should be built at an average of 55 dwellings per hectare, on sites between 400-8m from identified facilities, the density is reduced to 45 dwellings per hectare and on sites beyond 800m from identified facilities, the density is reduced to 35 dwellings per hectare;
 - Policy ED6 (leisure and tourism) – supports enhancements to the diverse range of leisure and tourism attractions. Reference is made to the need to ensure that development does not adversely impact on the natural assets of the area;
 - Policy D2 (general design principles) – includes a number of criteria to be assessed when considering the design of new development. This includes: reference to sustainable design and construction; inclusion of landscaping; protection of trees; and integration with open spaces;
 - Policy D3 (promoting good design with new residential developments) – provides criteria to be considered when assessing proposals for residential development. This includes the need to respond to natural features and provide gardens and other open space;
 - Policy NE1 (our strategic approach for the natural environment) – identifies how the protection and enhancement of the natural environment will be delivered through the planning process. Reference is made to: conserving and enhancing the natural environment, giving appropriate protection to designated and non-designated

assets; ensuring the protection and enhancement of biodiversity; preserving local, national and international priority species and habitats while promoting their restoration, recreation and recovery; protecting against the loss of trees, woodlands and hedgerows; providing new and maintaining existing high quality and accessible open space and green infrastructure; improving and protecting water and groundwater quality; addressing causes of pollution; and contributing to and mitigating against the likely effects of climate change;

- Policy NE2 (biodiversity, geodiversity and ecological networks) – requires appropriate avoidance, protection and enhancement measures to be incorporated into the design and development of proposals to minimise impacts on and provide measurable net gains for biodiversity. The policy states that detrimental direct and indirect impacts of development on biodiversity should be avoided. Where this is not possible, the policy requires mitigation or lastly compensation to be provided. The policy then defines the hierarchical approach to decision making;
- Policy NE3 (green infrastructure) – aims to deliver a good quality and accessible network of green spaces by protecting and enhancing existing networks, safeguarding assets and ensuring new developments incorporate green infrastructure into their design;
- Policy NE4 (open space and green infrastructure provision) – seeks to protect and enhance designated areas of open space, outdoor sports, playing fields, children’s play facilities and the wider green infrastructure network. The policy identifies criteria to be satisfied to allow the loss of designated sites and defines where open space provision should be provided;
- Policy NE5 (areas of high landscape value) – states that the council will protect the most valued and sensitive parts of the landscape, defining areas of high landscape value. The policy requires that in these areas development proposals should: retain and enhance the open and undeveloped character of the area; retain views from and of key landmarks; encourage accessibility and enhancement of green infrastructure and habitat enhancement; and provide landscape mitigation;
- Policy NE6 (flood risk and water management) – identifies that flood risk will be taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at current or future risk of flooding. The policy identifies what should be taken into account in order to consider flood risk and where a flood risk assessment and sustainable drainage systems will be required;
- Policy NE7 (protecting water quality) – seeks to protect the rivers, the banks and tributaries from damaging development. In addition, the policy also protects the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater bodies. The policy includes a number of criteria against which development proposals will be assessed;
- Policy NE9 (contaminated land and ground stability) – identifies where contaminated and land stability investigations must take place;
- Policy NE10 (air quality) – requires sensitive developments to take place where air quality meets national air quality objectives and highlights when air quality assessments should take place;
- Policy NE11 (pollution) – requires developments that may result in pollution of water, soil, air, noise, vibration, odour, light, fumes, dust to incorporate measures to prevent or reduce pollution levels to an acceptable standard to avoid negative impacts on people or the environment.

2.16 Figure 2 provides an extract from the draft policies map:

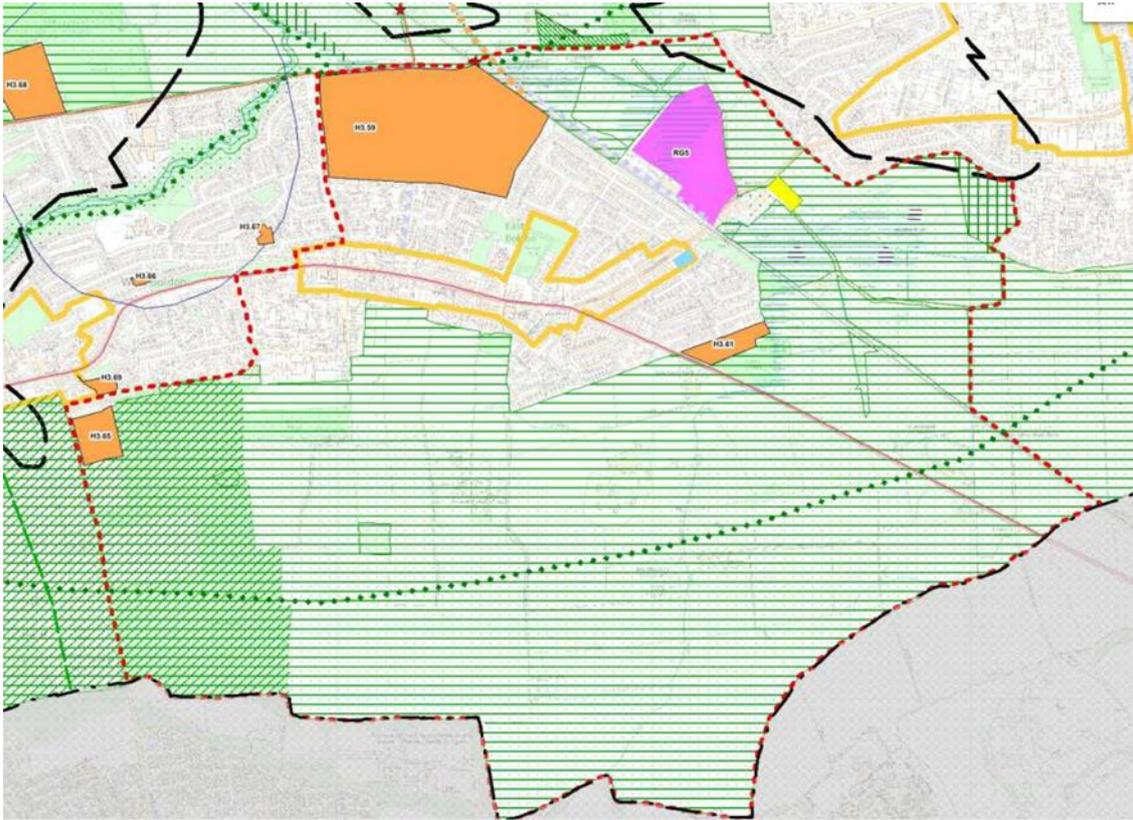


Figure 2: Extract from the emerging local plan policies map

Summary

- 2.17 The NPPF emphasises that planning system should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution, in addition, that allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value. This approach is reflected within both the current and emerging 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 Bill (2020)

- 3.2 The Environment Bill was re-introduced into parliament in January 2020, following the general election. It sets out how the government intends to protect and improve the natural environment. The key change for the planning system would be a new duty for developers to deliver ten percent net biodiversity gain in new schemes, which toughens the current requirements in the NPPF.
- 3.3 The bill also obliges councils to produce local nature recovery strategies. The strategies will support better spatial planning for nature recovery by setting out priorities and opportunities for protecting and investing in nature within a local area. These would be supported by a local habitat map to illustrate existing nature assets and identifying key opportunities for enhancement.
- 3.4 It is proposed that a new public body, the office for environmental protection, would be established to regulate the UKs environment after the European Commission ceases to have jurisdiction.

Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services

- 3.5 This strategy was prepared following the White Paper, with the overarching objective to halt biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.
- 3.6 It identified four areas where action is particularly needed:
- A more integrated large-scale approach to conservation on land and at sea;
 - Putting people at the heart of biodiversity policy;
 - Reducing environmental pressures; and
 - Improving our knowledge.

Regional level

North East Local Nature Partnership

- 3.7 Following the publication of the Natural Environment White Paper a number of 'Local Nature Partnerships' (LNP) were established across the country. 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 bring about improvements in their local natural environment in England.
- 3.8 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, through working closely with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Health and Wellbeing Boards.

3.9 The North East Local Nature Partnership (NELNP) was been created from the merger of two existing partnerships; 3Rivers and Northumberland Lowlands and Coast. The NELNP believes that it has the opportunity to establish a new local nature partnership for the North East Lowlands that facilitates 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.

3.10 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.

South Tyneside level

South Tyneside Landscape Character Study (2012)

3.11 The landscape character study was prepared by Land Use Consultants for South Tyneside Council. It presents a detailed review of the landscape of the borough and identifies the way in which the distinctive characteristics can be maintained and enhanced. In addition, the study considers the implications with regard to the function of the Green Belt and landscape designations. It identifies 35 local character areas to represent the distinct areas of the borough. The plan area lies within three of the character areas:

- Character Area 24 (Urban): The Boldons;
- Character Area 32 (Urban Fringe): Boldon Downhill; and
- Character Area 33 (Urban Fringe): Boldon Flats and Whitburn Moor.

3.12 These areas are described below:

Character Area 24 (Urban) - The Boldons:

3.13 The area comprises the outlying settlements of Boldon Colliery, West Boldon and East Boldon and the associated business park. It is bounded to the west by the A19, while the other boundaries are defined by the settlement edge.

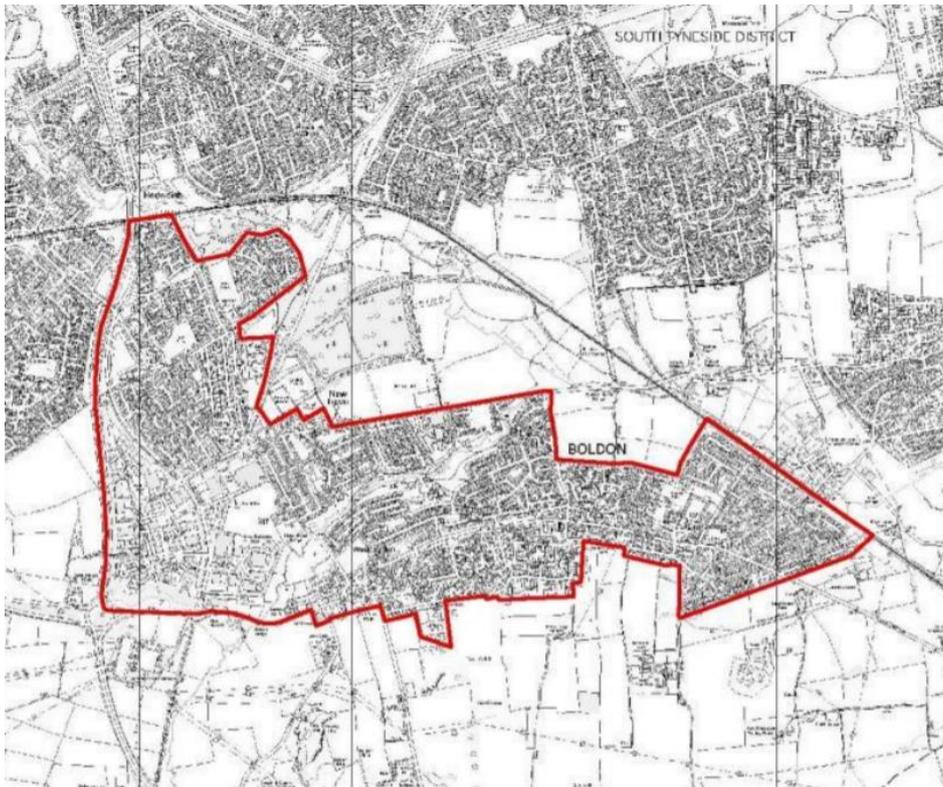


Figure 3: Character area 24

- 3.14 The key characteristics of the area are described as:
- Historic cores of West and East Boldon, and terraces of Boldon Colliery;
 - Hilltop location of West Boldon, overlooking South Tyneside;
 - River Don divides the area and provides open space;
 - Landmark Quadrus office building at Boldon Business Park on the A19.
- 3.15 The following physical influences are identified:
- East and West Boldon are built along a low ridge, which steepens to the west, rising to a high point (60 m) above the Don;
 - The river flows through a shallow valley which divides the settlement, and returns to form the northern edge of the area.
- 3.16 With regard to land use the following are identified:
- The area is primarily residential, centred on the three villages. Suburban-style housing now surrounds the older buildings, though the village centres are still well defined;
 - Boldon Colliery was associated with coal mines which have since closed and been redeveloped;
 - Extensive business and retail development has been established in association with the A19 and A184 junction.
- 3.17 The areas built form is described as:
- The 13th -century St Nicholas Church stands at the high point of West Boldon, and a small, irregular village core of limestone buildings still surrounds it;
 - East Boldon is of more recent origin, with a linear core dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Several distinctive buildings stand on the main street.

- Boldon Colliery developed in the 19th century, with brick terraces constructed to house mine workers;
- In the post-war period, suburban type development around these cores has led to the amalgamation of the Boldons into a large settlement, without clear breaks between the three areas;
- Most recently, business and leisure development at Boldon Business park has expanded the built-up area westwards. The Quadrus building is now a landmark feature on the A19, though other retail development is less distinctive.

3.18 With regard to open space, the study highlights:

- Semi-natural and amenity space follows the River Don as it flows through the Boldons and wraps around its northern edge;
- There is limited other open space within the settlements, but they are well placed to take advantage of surrounding accessible open areas including the former colliery land;
- Amenity space around the business park is attractive, with ponds and wetland of biodiversity value.

3.19 Two important views are identified:

- From the high ground in and between East and West Boldon, there are views north across South Tyneside; and
- St Nicholas Church spire, though not tall, is prominently sited and a local landmark.

3.20 The following key sensitivities are identified:

- The historic cores of East and West Boldon give these villages their sense of place. Recognised as conservation areas, they form focal points for this character area;
- Within Boldon Colliery, the blocks of pre-1919 terraced houses perform a similar function, creating a sense of place and anchoring the settlement in its mining past;
- The River Don flows through an important area of open space at West Boldon. Boldon Colliery is also close to the Don and urban fringe areas;
- At the south-west, the Quadrus building and the surrounding landscape form a gateway into South Tyneside on the A19;
- East and West Boldon lie along a ridge, relatively elevated above the area to the north;
- Buildings along this ridge, particularly St Nicholas Church in West Boldon, are prominent on the skyline in wider views.

3.21 Guidelines for development are identified in table 2 below.

Table 2: Guidelines for development

Guidelines		
Strengths/opportunities/challenges	Do	Don't
Historic village cores	Continue to conserve and enhance in line with conservation area management plans	
Boldon Colliery terraces	Recognise the value of the terraces to the sense of place of the area	Permit fragmentation or piecemeal replacement of the remaining terraces
River Don open space	Promote and enhance the River Don corridor as a recreational amenity for the Boldons, and as a biodiversity resource	
Links to urban fringe	Where the settlement adjoins open space, such as to the north by the River Don and Boldon Colliery Woods, seek to enhance access Where the settlement adjoins farmland, reinforce Green Belt boundaries	Block or reduce access, whether formal or informal, to the urban fringe
Gateway on A19	Continue to maintain a high quality landscape setting for the Quadrus building	Allow large unsightly signs to encroach on the gateway
Prominence of buildings on the ridge line	Protect the setting of St Nicholas Church as viewed from the north	Allow development which appears overbearing in views of the skyline

Character Area 32 (Urban Fringe): Boldon Downhill

3.22 This character area is located at the south edge of South Tyneside, Boldon Downhill is to the south of East and West Boldon. The northern boundary follows the settlement edge. To the west the boundary is formed by Downhill Lane which runs at the foot of the slope, and to the east the A184 Sunderland Road marks the edge. The character area extends a short distance south into Sunderland, up to the settlement boundary (areas beyond the borough boundary are not described in detail).

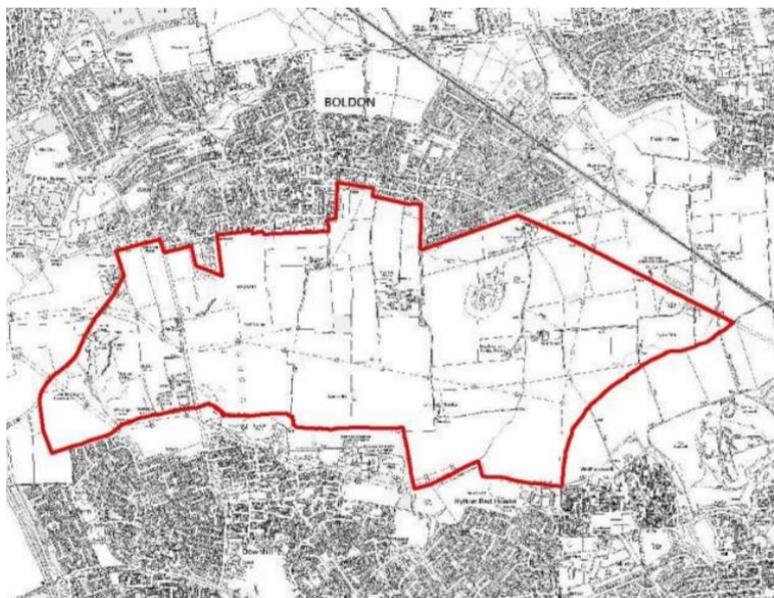


Figure 4: Character area 32

- 3.23 The following key characteristics are identified:
- Highest point in the borough, steeply sloping to the west.
 - Limestone scarp slope with former quarries.
 - Gentle eastern slope with golf courses.
 - Intermittent woodlands.
- 3.24 The following physical influences are identified:
- Boldon Downhill rises gradually up from the east, to a high point of 90 m, before dropping sharply to the west;
 - The hill, and particularly the western scarp, is an important feature of the area's Magnesian limestone geology;
 - To the east, the area merges into the low-lying Whitburn Moor, with small watercourses draining to the north-east. Only the western area forms a distinct hill.
- 3.25 With regard to land use and landcover, the study identifies:
- The area is open arable farmland, with some pasture. Fields are moderate sized, with gappy hedges and wire fences;
 - There are stands of woodland around farms and within golf courses. The scarp of Downhill is densely vegetated with woodland and scrub;
 - A disused MOD depot is located south of East Boldon, an example of brownfield land within the Green Belt.
- 3.26 For human influence, the study identifies:
- The hill is topped by a covered reservoir and associated structures, and overhead power lines pass across the highest part of the hill. A golf course is laid out to the east of the summit;
 - Limestone extraction has been carried on along the Downhill slope in the past, and limestone outcrops remain to be seen in the area, along with associated limekilns;
 - On the lower eastern areas are several farms and allotments, as well as a disused military facility.
- 3.27 With regard to perceptual aspects, the study identifies:
- The occasional woodland provides some enclosure, this is a medium scale landscape. Although quiet, it is strongly human-influenced, with views of infrastructure and settlement edges throughout.
- 3.28 Key views are identified as:
- The upper parts of the hill enable views east to Cleadon Hill and south, looking over Sunderland;
 - Passing over Hylton Lane, the sudden view from of Sunderland the high point of the road is striking;
 - Westward views overlook the A19 and substation in the foreground, but are open to a wider panorama.
- 3.29 The study identifies the following key sensitivities:
- The high ground and westward scarp of Boldon Downhill are a key feature in the South Tyneside landscape, particularly prominent from the A19 and A184. The hill is affected by infrastructure including power lines, reservoir and substation;

- Boldon Downhill, particularly the old quarry, is of high geodiversity value, though relatively inaccessible. There is no formal path to the summit to allow appreciation of the wide views;
- The arable area to the east of the summit is relatively well-wooded compared to the rest of South Tyneside, though there are gappy hedges;
- The former MOD depot presents an opportunity for sustainable development.

3.30 Guidelines for the future development of the area are identified within table 3 below:

Table 3: Guidelines for development

Guidelines		
Strengths/opportunities/challenges	Do	Don't
Boldon Downhill summit	Protect the open aspect of the hilltop, recognising its value as a landscape feature and viewpoint	Permit further proliferation of infrastructure on the summit
Access	Promote enhanced access to the hill summit as part of good access network in this area Promote access and interpretation of the old quarry	
Woodlands and farmland	Retain existing stands of mature woodland, and promote the establishment of new areas of woodland to link these up and form a more coherent landscape structure Support the restoration and reinstatement of hedges	Allow further loss of hedges and trees from the landscape
Former MOD depot	Examine possible opportunities for reclamation and/or appropriate sustainable redevelopment which is compatible with the purposes and functions of the Green Belt	

3.31 Table 4 provides a summary of the Green Belt evaluation:

Table 4: Green Belt evaluation

Evaluation	
Setting	
How important is the landscape in relation to key views from static locations, such as landmarks, hills and recreational areas?	This landscape is of some importance in views from the west, where the scarp slope is prominent, though there are fewer viewpoints in this area. The eastern slope is important in views from East and West Boldon.
How important is the landscape in views from key transport corridors?	The scarp of Downhill is of high importance in views from the A19 and from the eastbound A184. To the east, the A184 Sunderland Road crosses the eastern end.

Does the landscape play an important role in the setting of other areas of landscape importance?	This area has limited relationship with other areas of landscape importance.
Identity	
Does the landscape contribute to appreciation of (historic) settlement form?	The lower ground around the ridge of Boldon Downhill is settled, though not greatly visible from within this landscape.
Does the landscape include distinctive features which are important to a settlement's sense of place?	Boldon Downhill is a local landmark and of importance to the identity of West Boldon and South Boldon.
Does the landscape contribute to settlement identity through providing physical, visual or perceptual distinction between settlements?	This area plays an important role in providing physical distinction between the Boldons and Sunderland. The elevated ground provides a high degree of visual and perceptual separation.

3.32 The study explains that Boldon Downhill is a local landmark, and is important to the setting and identity of West Boldon. Further east the area is of less significance in terms of setting, but the whole area plays a major role in maintaining the identity of the Boldons as a separate entity.

3.33 It concludes that maintaining the open aspect of Boldon Downhill should be a principal aim for this area, allowing it to remain as a key landmark. Promotion of the hilltop as a viewpoint would increase opportunities to appreciate the distinction between the Boldons and surrounding settlements. Further west, increased tree cover would add to the visual separation provided by the Green Belt.

Character Area 33 (Urban Fringe): Boldon Flats and Whitburn Moor:

3.34 The area includes flat to gently sloping agricultural land that lies to the south of Whitburn, Cleadon and East Boldon. The southern boundary is formed by the Council Boundary and the northern boundary follows the settlement edges of Whitburn, Cleadon and Boldon. The A184 forms the boundary to the adjoining LCA 34 to the west. The character area extends a short distance south into Sunderland, though across the boundary the area become more of a settlement fringe (areas beyond the borough boundary are not described in detail).

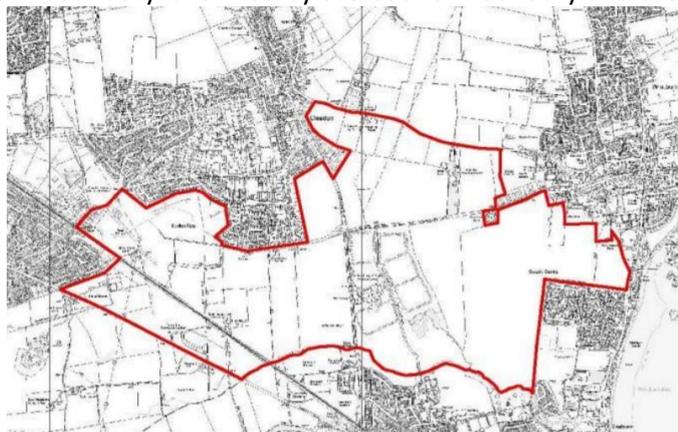


Figure 5: Character area 33

3.35 The key characteristics of the area are described as:

- Open to semi-enclosed area of urban fringe and agricultural land associated with Boldon and Cleadon;
 - A gradual transition in landform and pattern of elements from east to west;
 - Open, gently sloping eastern areas overlooking Sunderland and the coast;
 - Recreational areas and wildlife site on the Boldon Flats.
- 3.36 The following physical influences are identified:
- Flat to the west, more gently sloping towards the coast and to the south;
 - A number of drains cross the Boldon flats.
- 3.37 Land use and landcover is identified as:
- Mixture of urban fringe and agricultural land associated with the settlements of Cleadon and Whitburn;
 - Fields are bound by gappy hedgerows and post and wire fencing;
 - Trees, scrub and damp pasture are associated with the local wildlife site to the south of Boldon, on the Boldon Flats.
- 3.38 The following human influences are identified:
- There are busy roads crossing this area, including the A184 but also narrower lanes such as Moor Lane. The Metro line also passes through.
 - The extensive Academy of Light is largely hidden by earth bunds, though the greyhound stadium is visible across the west of the area.
- 3.39 With regard to perceptual aspects, the following are identified:
- Medium to large scale with eastern areas open to the sea and more enclosed to the west;
 - Busy roads and the railway line have a strong audible and visual influence.
- 3.40 The following key views are identified:
- Views are limited where the terrain is flat, frequently stopping at settlement edges;
 - Long views south towards Sunderland are available from more elevated areas to the east.
- 3.41 The study identifies the following key sensitivities:
- Urban fringe character, particularly around the edges of Cleadon and East Boldon, where the area is affected by Cleadon Lane industrial estate;
 - Low-lying areas of habitat value are an important biodiversity resource, and the winter flooding is characteristic of this area;
 - The B1299 offers broad southward views across the lower-lying Whitburn Moor and Seaburn to Sunderland and the coast;
 - Field boundaries are generally in poor condition, with evidence of loss of hedgerows and fences in poor repair. The open area lacks significant woodland cover and landscape structure;
 - The area is affected by busy roads, particularly where these are narrow.
- 3.42 Guidelines for development are set out in table 5 below:

Table 5: Guidelines for development

Guidelines		
Strengths/opportunities/challenges	Do	Don't
Urban fringe character	Resist the further extension of Cleadon Lane industrial estate Examine ways of enhancing settlement boundaries to form an improved Green Belt edge	Allow further intrusion of commercial land uses into this area Permit unsightly boundaries such as security fencing
Broad views of the coast to the south and east	Retain open aspect of eastern areas, particularly along the B1299	Permit woodland planting that would restrict key views
Landscape structure	Support reinforcement of landscape structure through establishment of new woodland planting and reinstatement of hedges Ensure long-term management of new and existing hedges in the area	
Narrow, busy roads	Examine the potential for calming of traffic on narrow roads such as Moor Lane	Permit new developments without examining the impacts on traffic levels

3.43 Table 6 provides a summary of the Green Belt evaluation:

Table 6: Green Belt evaluation

Evaluation	
Setting	
How important is the landscape in relation to key views from static locations, such as landmarks, hills and recreational areas?	This low lying-landscape does not feature strongly in views. It is visible from the Cleadon Hills to the north
How important is the landscape in views from key transport corridors?	The area is visible from the A184 Sunderland Road which forms its western boundary, and from the parallel Metro line. It is also visible from the B1299 Moor Lane, which links Whitburn and Cleadon.
Does the landscape play an important role in the setting of other areas of landscape importance?	This area plays a limited role in the setting of the Cleadon Hills to the north, and Boldon Downhill to the west, though its low-lying nature means that this role is low-key.
Identity	
Does the landscape contribute to appreciation of (historic) settlement form?	This landscape does not enable clear appreciation of any strong associations of settlement and landform.
Does the landscape include distinctive features which are important to a settlement's sense of place?	This landscape has few distinctive features. The northern part does permit views south across Whitburn Bay which are important to the sense of place of the wider area.
Does the landscape contribute to settlement identity through providing physical, visual or perceptual distinction between settlements?	The farmland plays a key role in providing separation between Cleadon, East Boldon Whitburn and Sunderland to the south. This includes narrow corridors such as between East Boldon and Cleadon, and between Whitburn and South Bents.

3.44 The study explains that the low-lying area is not visually prominent and has only a limited role in the wider landscape setting of settlements. It does, however, play a critical role in settlement identity, by providing physical distinction between the villages of South Tyneside and the fringes of Sunderland to the south.

3.45 It is concluded that increased tree cover will enhance this landscape and increase its role in providing perceptual distinction between settlements. For example, at the narrow corridor between Seaburn and Whitburn, tree cover is already good around Whitburn but the southern edge is more open. Seaward views are a key characteristic of this area, and give it some sense of place. It is therefore important to maintain this open aspect

Green Infrastructure Strategy (2013)

3.46 The GI strategy document provides guidance on the provision of open space and supporting biodiversity. Issues regarding the provision of open space for recreation are covered within the Local Green Space and Protected Open Space Background Paper. The GI strategy provides details of: strategic green infrastructure corridors (figure 6); public rights of way (figure 7); the cycling network (figure 8); biodiversity value of sites (figure 9); and primary habitat networks and wildlife corridors (figure 10). Maps are reproduced below.



Figure 6: Strategic green infrastructure corridors

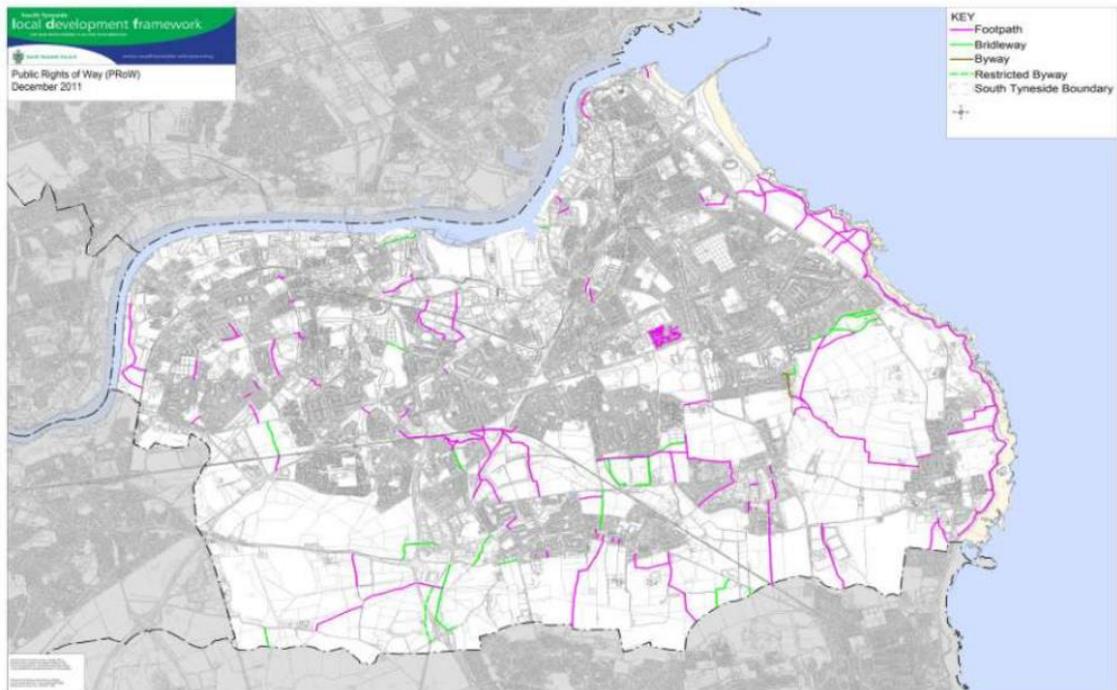


Figure 7: Public rights of way

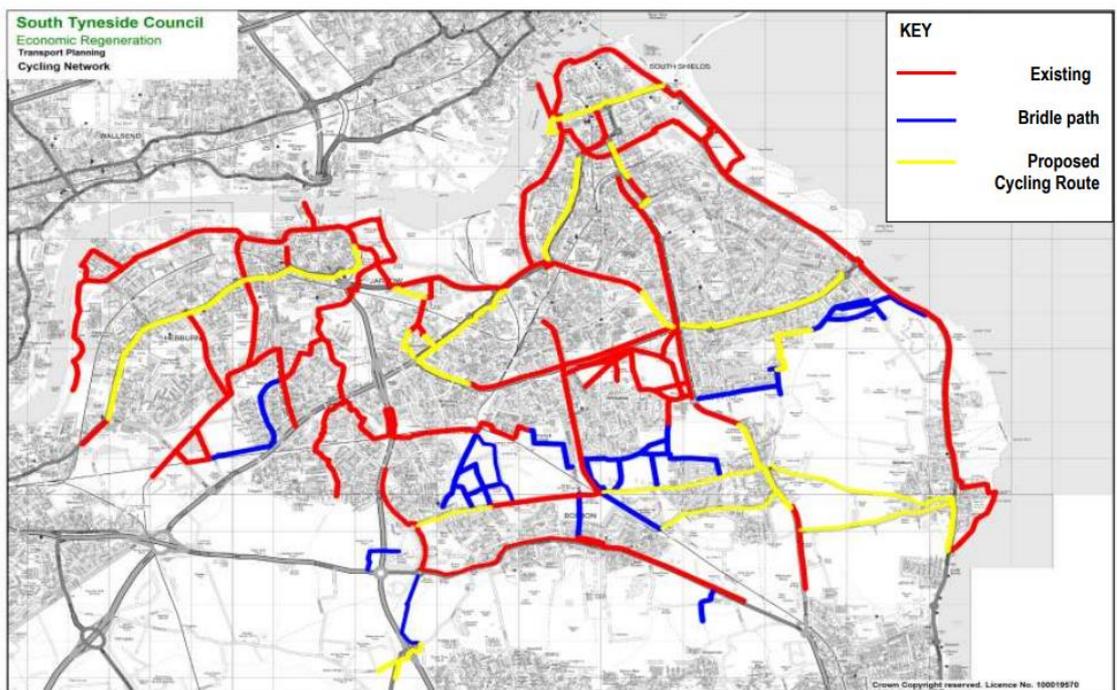


Figure 8: Cycling network

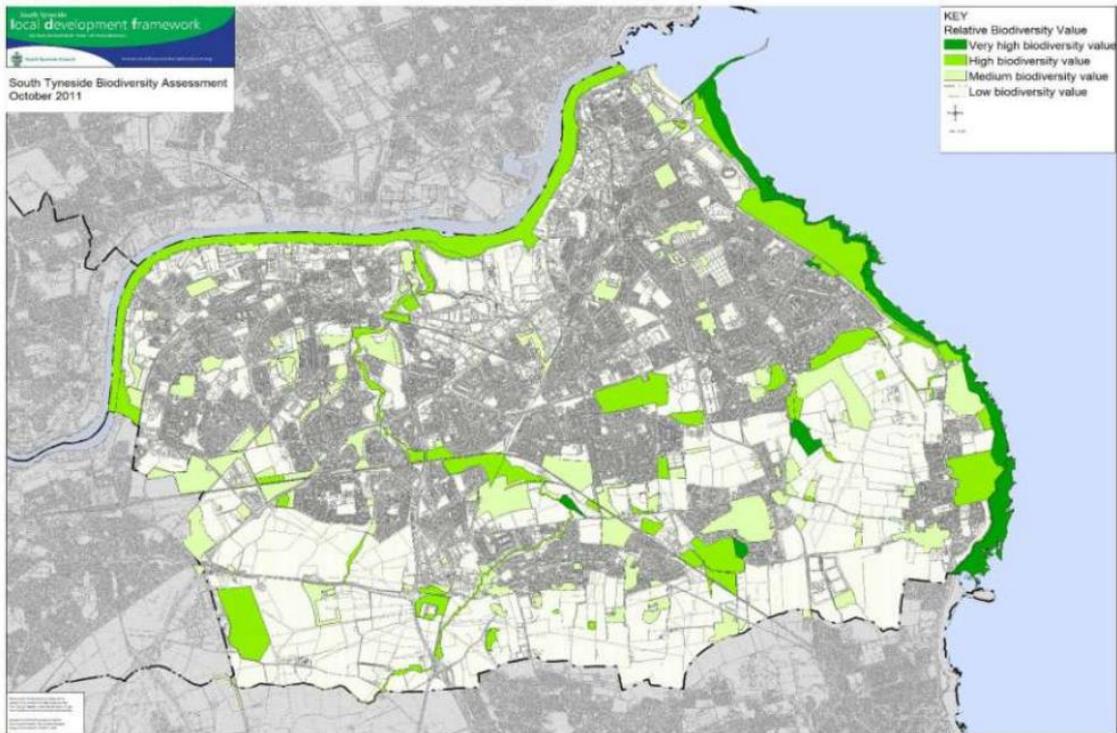


Figure 9: Biodiversity value of sites

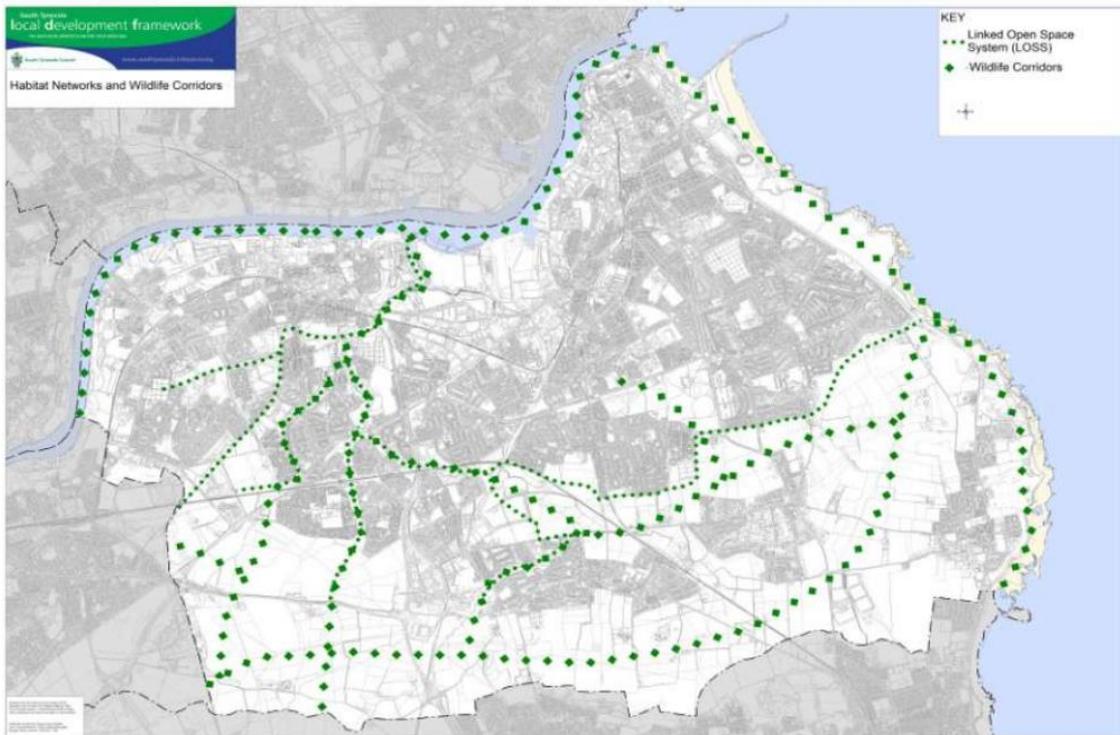


Figure 10: Primary habitats networks and wildlife corridors

South Tyneside Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2018)

3.47 This document was prepared to inform the development of the new local plan. It updates the previous assessment that was undertaken in 2011 and investigates and identifies the extent and severity of flood risk from all sources, both currently and into the future. Figures 11 and 12 provide details of the relationship of the flood zones with the potential development sites being considered by the council.

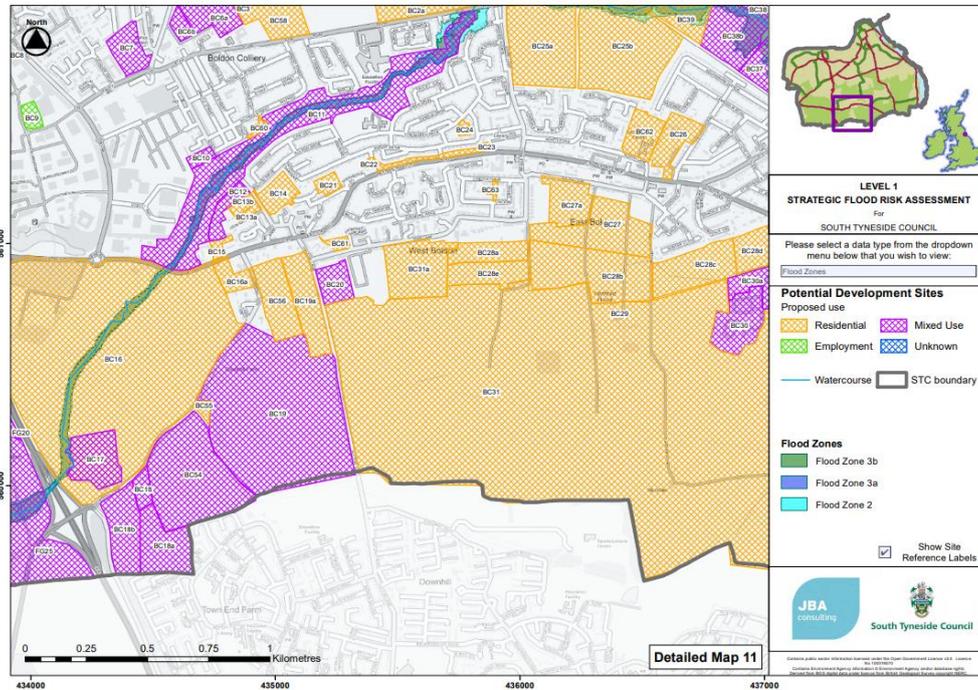


Figure 11: SFRA detailed map 11

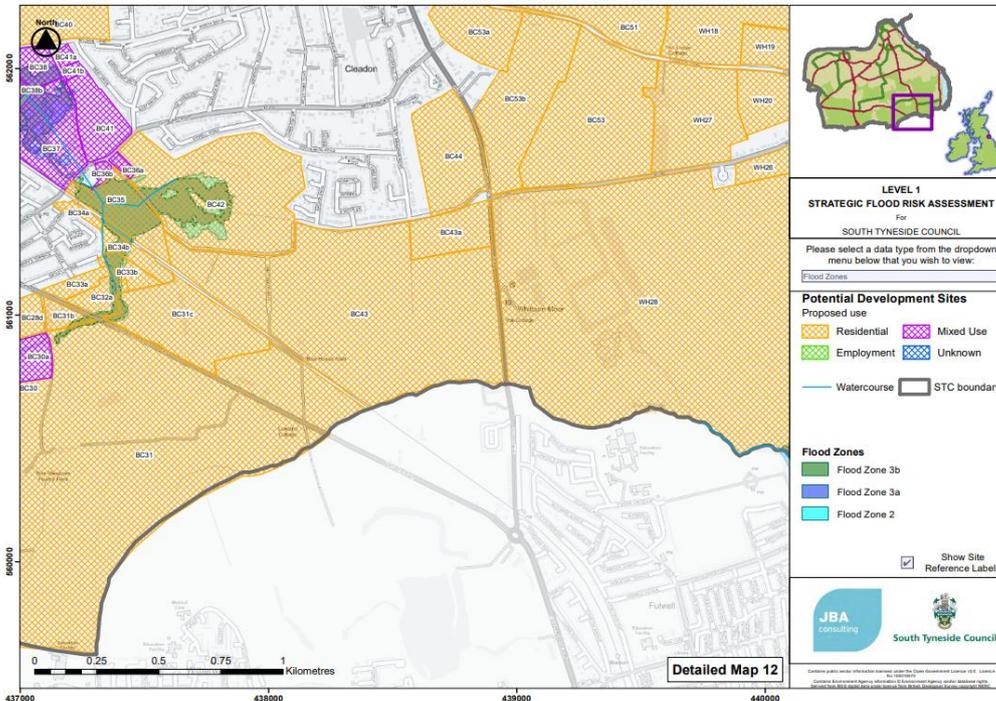


Figure 12: SFRA detailed map 12

Justification for areas of high landscape value (2019)

- 3.48 The current development plan includes the allocation of the Area of High Landscape Value and Area of Landscape Significance south of the village from Hylton Lane to Sunderland Road. This designation had been in place since 1985 when it was identified as part of the West Boldon, East Boldon and Cleadon Local Plan.
- 3.49 Part III of the South Tyneside Landscape Character Study recommended the removal of the Area of Landscape Significance east of Boldon Downhill. The study concluded that there was no justification of retaining this designation and concluded that although an area of pleasant, relatively well wooded farmland, this area does not display the range of aspects and qualities which would potentially merit the maintenance of the designation. The Forum does not agree with this conclusion which has been included in the emerging local plan.
- 3.50 Part of the revised Boldon Downhill Area of High Landscape Value lies within the plan area. The 2019 evidence document explains that the 2012 landscape character study proposed a new boundary for the area of high landscape value. The new boundaries are proposed as:
- The western boundary to follow Downhill Lane and the track at the foot of the scarp;
 - The southern boundary to follow the borough boundary;
 - The eastern boundary to follow the eastern edge of the golf course; and
 - The northern boundary to follow the urban/ Green Belt boundary.

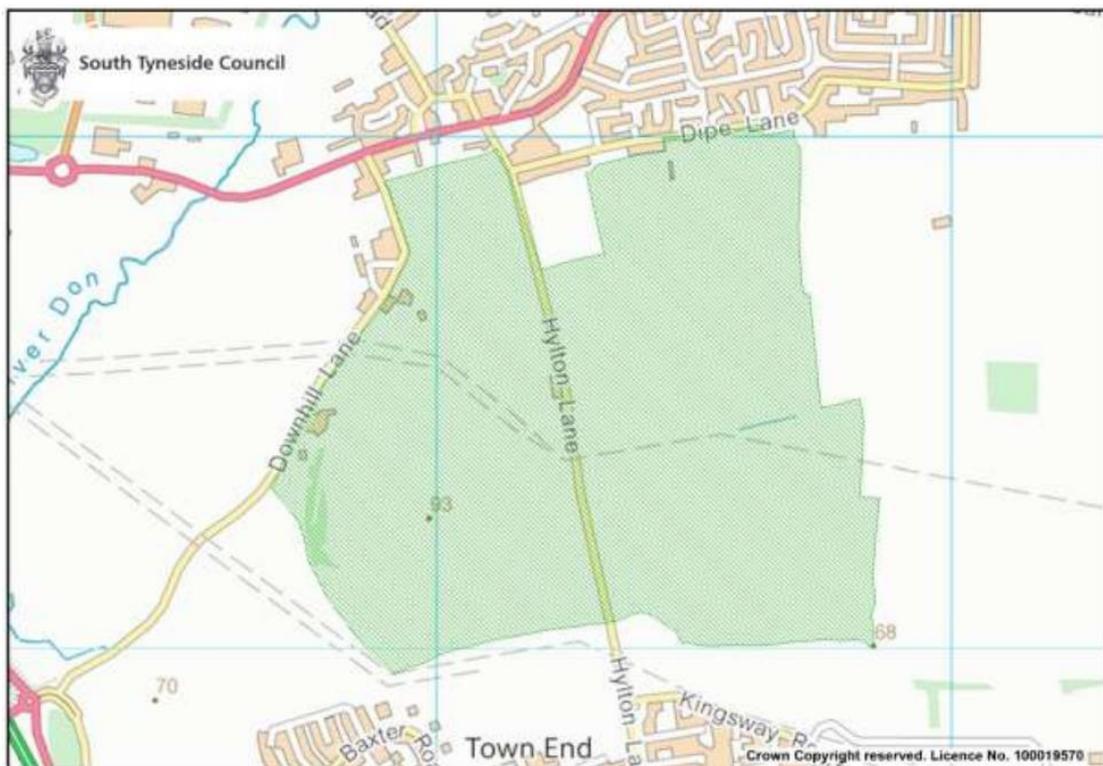


Figure 13: Boldon Bownhill AHLV

South Tyneside Green Belt Review – stages 1 and 2 (2019)

- 3.51 Stage 1 of the Green Belt review concludes that exceptional circumstances exist at the borough level to justify the release of land from the Green Belt and then considers sites for

release. This conclusion has not yet been tested through independent examination and there remain significant unresolved objections to the approach taken by the council. Therefore, at this stage, the conclusions of the review cannot be given weight in the planning process. However, it is included within this paper for completeness.

3.52 Stage 2 of the Green Belt review assessed parcels of land against the purposes of the Green Belt and other designations and constraints. The nationally defined Green Belt purposes are to:

- Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
- Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- Assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict land.

3.53 Figure 14 provides an extract of the findings of the Green Belt land parcel assessments:

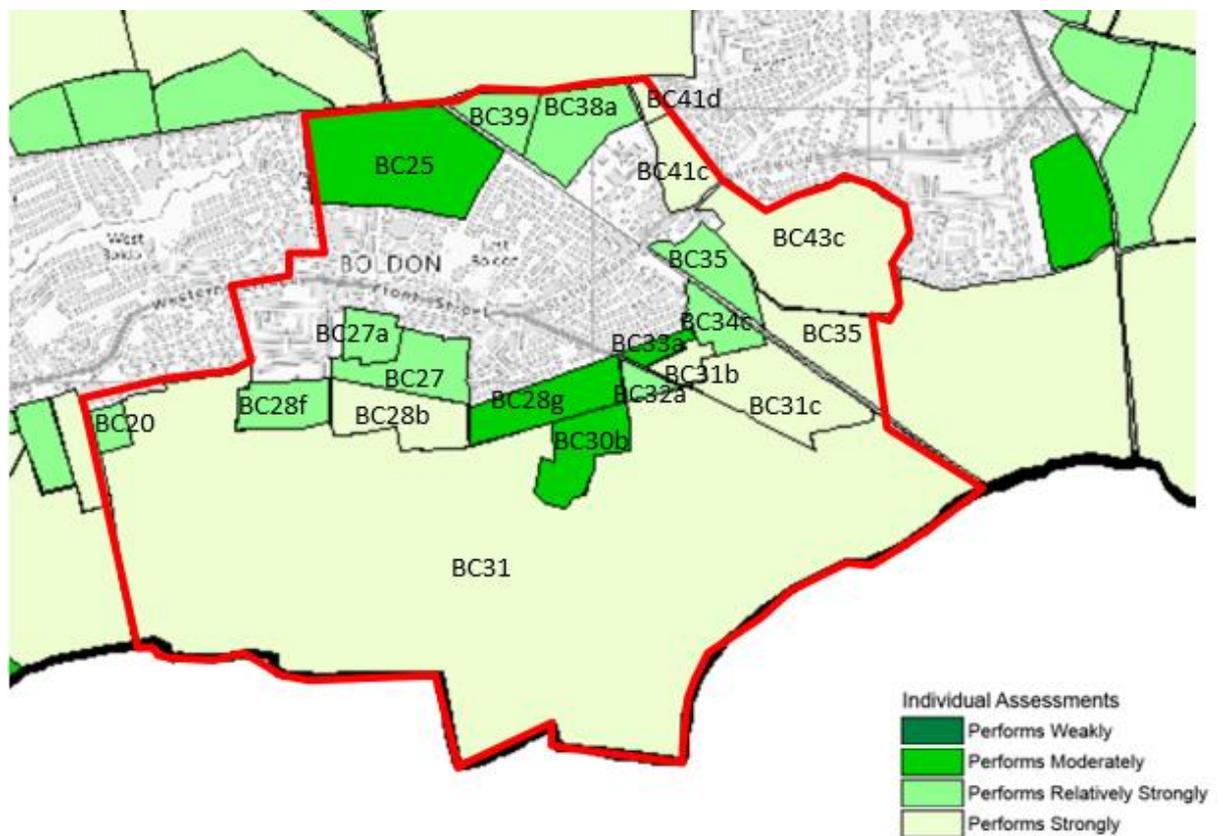


Figure 14: STC Green Belt review - land parcel assessment

3.54 No sites within the plan area have been assessed by the council as performing weakly against the purposes of the Green Belt, however four sites have been identified as performing moderately (BC28g, BC30b, BC33a and BC25). Nine sites have been identified as performing relatively strongly (BC20, BC27, BC27a, BC28f, BC32a, BC34c, BC35, BC38a, and BC39) and eight sites performing strongly (BC28b, BC31, BC31b, BC31c, BC32a, BC35, BC41c, BC41d and BC43c).

Local level

East Boldon Statement on Natural Environment and Flooding

- 3.55 The statement, prepared by the forum, provides a more detailed consideration of the natural environment within the plan area. It explains the topology and geology of the plan area, describes the watercourses that run through it, discusses soil types, as well as biodiversity sites and habitats. The statement is available on the forum website.

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.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

4.2 The Boldon Pastures Site of Special Scientific Interest lies to the east of the plan area. The plan area also lies within the impact risk zones of two SSSIs which lie outside the boundary. Boldon SSSI is also identified on the priority habitat inventory as lowland meadows.

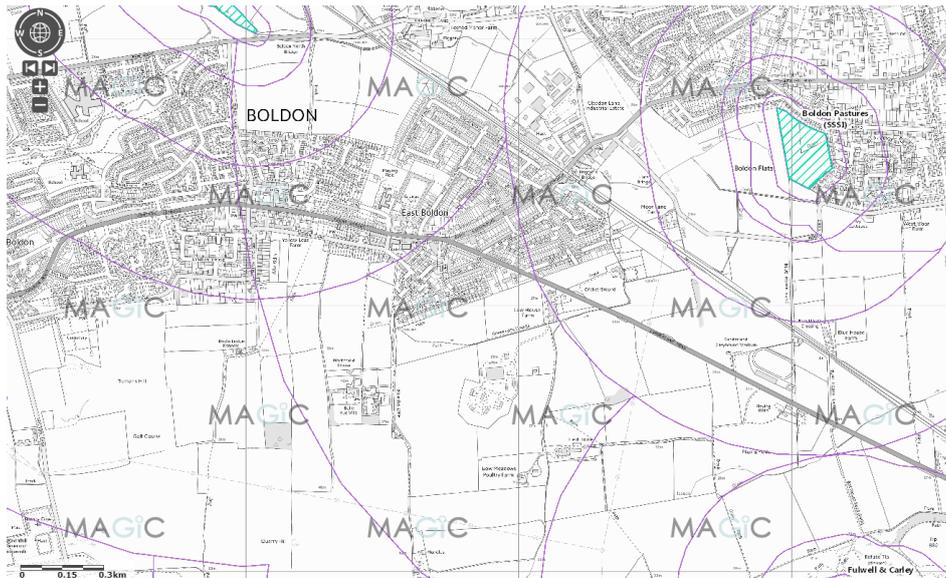


Figure 15: SSSIs

Woodland

4.3 There a number of areas of woodland included on the priority habitat inventory that fall within the plan area, as illustrated on figure 16.



Figure 16: Woodland

Species

4.4 The plan area is identified as important for farmland birds, including corn bunting, grey partridge, lapwing, snipe, tree sparrow and yellow wagtail.

Agricultural land classification

4.5 The plan area includes land which is of agricultural importance, including areas of grade 2, 3a and 3b.

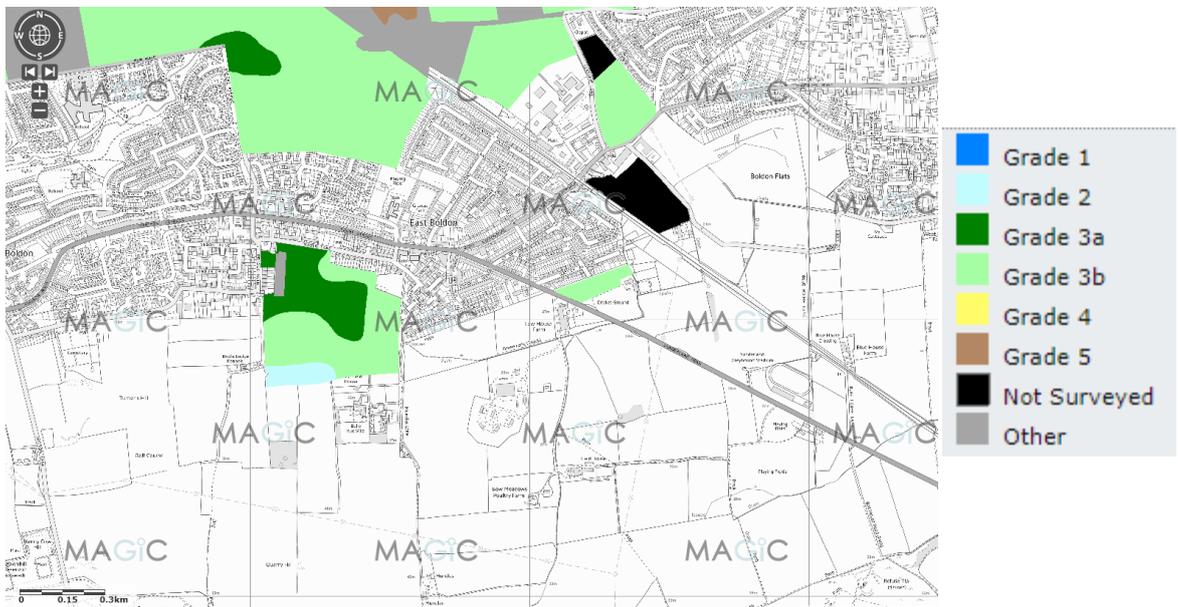
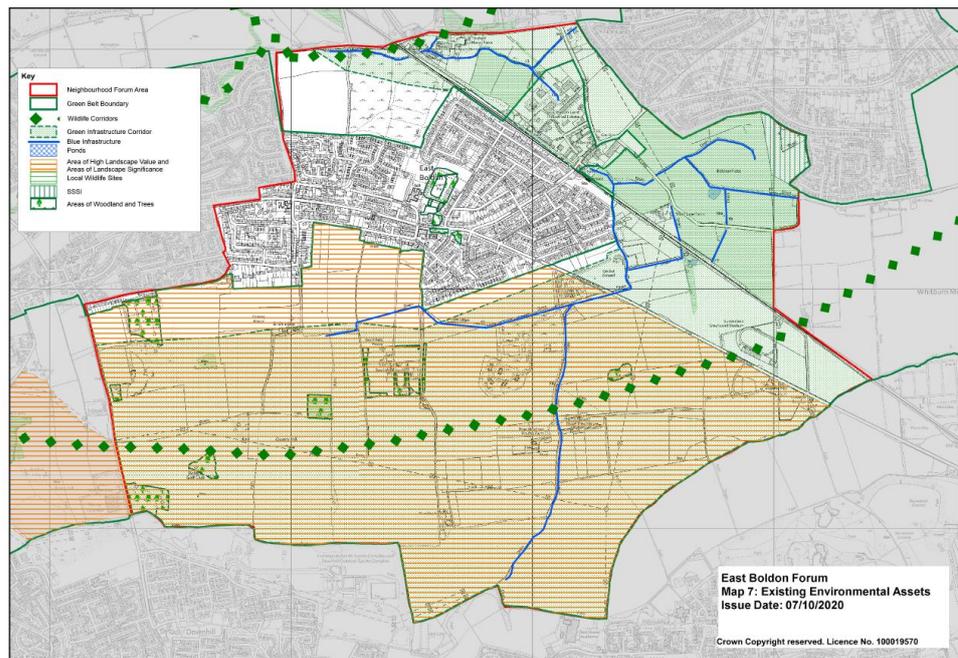


Figure 17: Agricultural land classification

Environmental mapping produced by South Tyneside Council

4.6 Existing environmental assets are identified on figure 18. This includes: areas of high landscape value and landscape significance; green infrastructure; areas of woodland and trees; local wildlife sites; sites of special scientific interest; wildlife corridors; and blue infrastructure.

Figure 18: Existing environmental assets



5. Feedback

Early engagement – local community

- 5.1 As a means of starting the process of collecting information and opinions that would influence the content of the neighbourhood plan, the forum held a community engagement drop-in session in July 2017. 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 to the local community.
- 5.2 As the second early engagement event in June 2018, feedback was sought on eight draft objectives for the neighbourhood plan. In addition, it asked for views on what East Boldon means to the local community and what their vision was for East Boldon.
- 5.3 Draft objective 3 on the natural environment was supported by 53 of the 54 respondents (one respondent left the response blank).

Natural Environment issues identified through early engagement

What does East Boldon mean to you?

Issue identified	Potential planning response	Potential community action
Retention of village feel and community	Policy to ensure new development protects/enhances natural environment, including landscape and green infrastructure.	
Rich rural environment should be protected	Policy to ensure new development protects/enhances natural environment, including landscape and green infrastructure.	
New development should be limited and sensitive to existing character	Policy to ensure new development protects/enhances natural environment, including landscape and green infrastructure.	

What is your vision for East Boldon for the future?

Issue identified	Potential planning response	Potential community action
Maintain current character of village/any new development should be sensitive to this	Policy to ensure new development protects/enhances natural environment, including landscape and green	

Issue identified	Potential planning response	Potential community action
	infrastructure.	
Maintain/improve/increase green and open spaces	Identification of local green space and/ or protected open space.	
Improved parking, particularly near metro/concerns over volume of traffic.	Ensure any parking provision does not impact negatively on the natural environment.	

General comments on natural environment objective

Issue identified	Potential planning response	Potential community action
Concern over impact on wildlife if care not taken	Policy to ensure new development protects/enhances natural environment.	
Explore brownfield sites for any new development	Site assessment process – but conscious that brownfield land can be of biodiversity importance.	
Enhance the natural ways to move around the Village - walk, cycle, horse ride.	Policy to protect/ enhance active travel routes.	
Improve the entrances to the Village from Sunderland & South Shields. Open up the area around the war memorial & Church to give a wonderful village green appearance and as a feature of the village.		Community project?

5.4 Two further events were held in March and June 2019, feedback could be provided at the events or online. The environment was included as a topic for the March event. Those attending were asked specific questions regarding the Green Belt, green infrastructure and green spaces. The questions were:

- Do you think the neighbourhood plan should attempt to protect the Green Belt?
- Should new development in the plan area contain an appropriate provision of landscaping, green corridors and wildlife habitats which link to the existing network? and
- Do you think the neighbourhood plan should designate areas as green space?

5.5 All of the 87 people who completed the questionnaire considered that the plan should attempt to protect the Green Belt and provide appropriate green infrastructure provision. Specific comments included:

- Focus should be development on brownfield sites before Green Belt/ green field;
- Importance of promoting a healthy green environment;
- Green Belt should be preserved as once it is lost it can never be recovered;
- Landscaping and green corridors should be coordinated;
- Should be protecting green spaces and wild areas – green corridors are needed to protect wildlife;

- Bridle path north from North Road should be identified as a wildlife corridor and pathway for walkers;
- Green spaces and leafy environment contribute to the special character of the area;
- Green Belt is important to the character of the village;
- Focus on infill development not the loss of Green Belt;
- Important to maintain the gap between Cleadon and Boldon;
- If new development does happen it needs to include green corridors and wildlife habitats.

5.6 Only one person thought that the plan should not look to designate areas of green space. Specific comments regarding the protection of green space included:

- Should open up area in front of St George's Church;
- Need for hanging baskets;
- Area around war memorial should be improved;
- Need for management of green spaces;
- Protect Mundles Lane, wildlife corridors, golf course and cricket club;
- Need for survey work to identify important species and habitats;
- Green Belt/ wildlife corridor from Dipe Lane to Newcastle Road;
- Junior school field should be protected;
- Protect fields off South Lane, including allotments, Dipe Lane, Boker Lane;
- Land between the metro line and Burnside should be protected and enhanced;
- Site BC25a and BC25b should be protected from development;
- Areas around Boldon Bank should be protected;
- The south of the village should be protected;
- Need for green spaces to combat rising pollution levels;
- Tile Sheds Nature Reserve, Grange Park and playground next to the infants school should be protected;
- Areas along and beside the old railway lines – tranquil and rich in wildlife. Important for mental health and family life;
- Green spaces provide recreation and walking opportunities;
- The village would benefit from having a focal point in the vicinity of St George's Church and the war memorial;
- Bridleways – North Road and adjacent to the metro line;
- Protect Burnside open space.

5.7 Potential planning responses to the issues identified are:

- Seek to priorities the use of brownfield land;
- Policies to protect the Green Belt/ focus development in the existing built up area;
- Identification of green and wildlife corridors;
- Identification of local green space and protected open space;
- Embedding landscaping requirements within new development.

5.8 Potential community actions relevant to the issues identified are:

- Work with the council and other landowners to improve the appearance of important areas of open space;
- Undertaking wildlife surveys;
- To work with South Tyneside Council, the Church Commissioners and the tenant farmer to improve the management, supervision and interpretation of the Boldon Flats Local Wildlife Site.

6. Planning Policy Options and preferred 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 and blue infrastructure;
 - Protection/ enhancement of the important landscape character of the plan area;
 - Ensure new development conserves biodiversity;
 - Protection of trees and woodland;
 - Reducing the causes and risks of flooding;
 - Identifying, protecting and enhancing active travel routes (see transport and movement background paper).
- 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.

Issue 1: Green and blue infrastructure

- 6.3 Possible options:
- 1a: High level policy support for the creation, protection and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure;
 - 1b: Option 1a plus undertake mapping exercise to identify area of GI to be identified within the plan.
- 6.4 The preferred approach is for the plan to identify the green infrastructure network and seek to ensure that new development protects and where practical improves and extends the network. The policy identifies the key criteria to be considered when assessing development proposals on both green and blue infrastructure.

Issue 2: Landscape

- 6.5 Possible options:
- 2a: Utilise South Tyneside level landscape character information to inform a high-level 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;
 - 2d: Identification of particular landscape areas for special consideration for policy development.
- 6.6 The South Tyneside Landscape Character Study provides detailed information regarding the landscape characteristics of the plan area and its key sensitivities. In addition, the work on the design code and design objectives highlight some important landscape considerations. As a result, the preferred approach is to utilise existing evidence documents and identify key landscape considerations against which development proposals will be assessed, with the

overriding presumption being that they should maintain and where appropriate enhance the positive elements of landscape character of the plan area.

Issue 3: Biodiversity

- 6.7 Possible options:
- 3a. 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;
 - 3b. Option 3a plus undertake more detailed local level studies to ensure the important biodiversity of the plan area is appropriately recorded – consider local level designations such as wildlife corridors.
- 6.8 The plan area includes a wide range of species and habitats. It is considered that more detailed local level studies would not add a significant amount to the information currently available. The preferred approach is therefore to ensure that development should protect and enhance biodiversity, seeking to ensure no loss or significant harm. This approach accords with the requirements of national policy.

Issue 4: Trees and woodland

- 6.9 Possible options:
- 4a. Rely on existing legislation and do not include a policy on the protection of trees;
 - 4b. Include a policy to seek to ensure new development protects trees from damage or loss.
- 6.10 Whilst legislation requires that when granting planning permission for any development adequate provision is made for the preservation or planting of trees, as trees are such an important element of the character of the plan area, the preferred approach is to include a specific policy on trees and woodland. In addition, the supporting text to the plan will identify significant mature trees within the plan area.

Issue 5: Flooding

- 6.11 Possible options:
- 5a. Include a policy on flood risk and water management;
 - 5b. Rely on detailed national and local planning policies on flood risk and water management.
- 6.12 Both the NPPF and NPPG contain detailed guidance for the consideration of flooding as part of new development proposals. In addition, the draft local plan contains a policy on flood risk and water management. This policy identifies that flood risk will be taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at current or future risk of flooding. The assessment of flood risk is a detailed technical matter. It is considered that the inclusion of a specific policy on flood risk will not add anything to existing policy. The preferred approach is therefore for the plan to include references to flooding at appropriate points e.g. policy on sustainable development, as well as the policy on green and blue infrastructure.

7. Potential community actions

The work on this background paper has informed the identification of the following community action:

- To work with South Tyneside Council, the Church Commissioners and the tenant farmer to improve the management, supervision and interpretation of the Boldon Flats Local Wildlife Site.