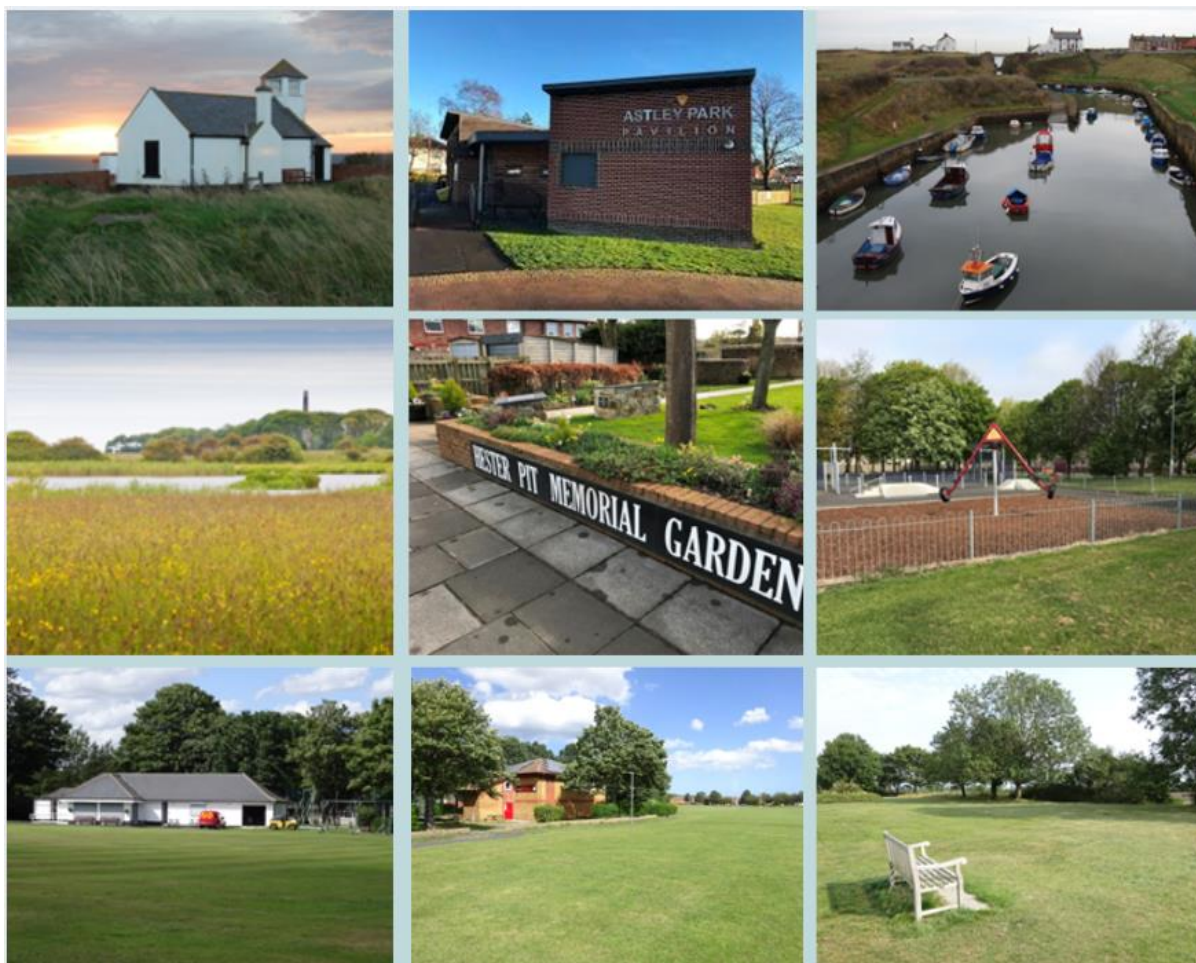


Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan

Referendum Version



May 2021



Seaton Valley Council
A Community Council

Foreword

On behalf of Seaton Valley Community Council, welcome to the referendum version neighbourhood plan for our area. When we commenced work on the plan in 2015 our focus was on the protection of our Green Belt, affordable housing, economy, transport, infrastructure and our environment. The initial work on the plan focused on the concerns of the community in New Hartley around the proposed housing development in the village. Following the granting of planning permission for the development in New Hartley at appeal in September 2017, our work lost some of its momentum.

In July 2017 Northumberland County Council took the decision to end work on the Northumberland Core Strategy and to prepare a local plan for the county. The Northumberland Local Plan is currently at examination.

In early 2020, the council decided to recommence the work on the plan and that the focus of the plan should be the protection of the important open spaces in our villages. The council believes that the Northumberland Local Plan addresses many of the issues in the area around the protection of the Green Belt, future housing and employment sites, transport issues and the protection of the environment and communities. However, we wanted to ensure that the open and green spaces in our villages are also protected.

We commenced consultation in February 2020 and invited residents for their views on which open spaces we should protect through the plan and why. We received a positive response and from that we created a background paper to explain the process that has led to the proposed local green spaces and protected open spaces that we have included. We consulted on our draft plan between September and November 2020 and again received a positive response. Where appropriate, we have amended the Plan to respond to comments received.

I would like to thank all the local residents who responded to all of our engagement activities and gave us their input. The Plan has now passed examination and will proceed to a local referendum where all residents of Seaton Valley will be able to vote on whether the Plan should form part of the development plan for our area.

Cllr. Susan Dungworth
Chair of the Council

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1. Introduction

Background to neighbourhood planning

- 1.1 Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities that was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Neighbourhood plans are community-led, they are prepared by town and parish councils and set out guidance on how new development will be managed in the local area. They do this by creating land use ‘planning policies’. Plans can deal with a wide range of issues like housing, employment, heritage and transport. In some cases, they may only focus on one or two issues that are of particular importance in a local area. Policies within neighbourhood plans cannot block development or support less than that already committed in the statutory development plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.
- 1.2 Neighbourhood plans can also cover issues which are not related to the use and development of land. They can provide a useful document in which a town or parish council can establish priorities for action to improve their area. These are often referred to as ‘community actions’. However, the main purpose of a neighbourhood plan is to set policies for the use and development of land.
- 1.3 Once a neighbourhood plan has been examined by an independent examiner; agreed at the referendum stage by the local community; and ‘made’ (brought into legal force) by the local planning authority, it becomes part of the statutory development plan. Planning law requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.

Planning context

- 1.4 As they are part of the development plan, neighbourhood plans have to be developed in line with legal requirements. The way in which neighbourhood plans are prepared and the policies they contain, are tested by an independent examiner who assesses whether the plan meets the ‘basic conditions’ to ensure they are legally compliant. Neighbourhood plans must:
 - Have regard to national planning policy and guidance;
 - Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan;
 - Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
 - Be compatible with European obligations.

National planning policy and guidance

- 1.5 National planning policy and guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

Development plan

- 1.6 Currently, the development plan for Northumberland consists of the saved policies of the former local planning authorities that made-up Northumberland before Local Government Reorganisation in 2009. For the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area, these are: the Blyth Valley Core Strategy (2007), Blyth Valley Development Control Policies (2007) and the saved policies of the Blyth Valley District Local Plan (1999).
- 1.7 Northumberland County Council (NCC) has prepared a new local plan which will replace the existing saved planning policies. This was submitted for examination in May 2019 and is currently subject to public examination.
- 1.8 The Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan ('the plan') has been informed by the adopted Blyth Valley planning policies and the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Sustainable development

- 1.9 The purpose of the planning system is to help achieve sustainable development as defined by the NPPF. This specifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be the basis for every plan and every planning decision. In brief, 'sustainable development' is about growth which delivers economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. The basic conditions statement, that accompanies this referendum plan, explains how the implementation of the plan is expected to contribute to sustainable development.

European obligations

- 1.10 Neighbourhood plans must be compatible with EU obligations, specifically strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and habitats regulations, through an appropriate assessment (AA). The SEA is a way of ensuring that the environmental implications of policies are taken into account before plans are brought into force. The AA process aims to ensure that the plan will not result in significant damage to internationally important nature conservation sites. NCC provided a screening opinion on the need for both SEA and AA. The conclusion was that neither a SEA nor AA were required. The screening opinion is available on the county council website¹.

Background to the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.11 On 15 October 2015 the Parish of Seaton Valley was designated as a neighbourhood area for the purposes of neighbourhood planning. Following a formal boundary review which was approved by Northumberland County Council and came into force on 28 January 2020 the parish boundary of Seaton Valley was modified. The Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area was re-designated on 8 June 2021. This new neighbourhood area replaces the area previously approved on 15 October 2015.

¹ <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Neighbourhood.aspx>

1.12 The proposed neighbourhood area comprises the whole of the new administrative area of Seaton Valley Civil Parish. This area is shown on Figure 1. The Parish Council consider it appropriate that this area be designated as a neighbourhood area since it comprises the whole of a new single civil parish.

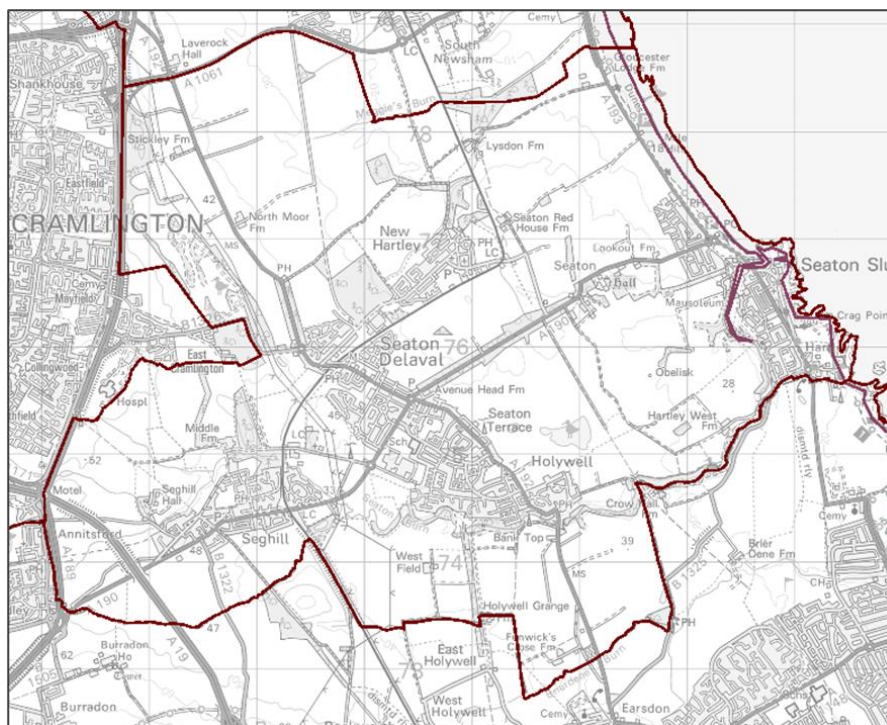


Figure 1: Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area

1.13 In the summer of 2016 Seaton Valley Council (SVC) agreed the key themes for the plan. However, following the granting of planning permission for a controversial residential development at appeal in September 2017, work on the plan lost momentum.

1.14 In January 2020 SVC considered a revised scope for the plan, with the focus to be the protection of important open spaces within the villages. Early engagement with the local community took place during February and March 2020 on sites that could be protected.

1.15 Early engagement informed the preparation of a pre-submission draft plan which was subject to consultation during September and November 2020. The draft plan identified:

- The context in which the plan has been prepared – an overview of Seaton Valley, the **opportunities and challenges** for the plan to address;
- A **positive vision** for the future of the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Area; and
- How the vision of the plan will be **delivered through planning policies** i.e. the policies that **will be used to determine planning applications** within the plan area - providing a framework for sustainable development.

1.16 The period covered by the plan is to 2036, this aligns with the emerging Northumberland Local Plan. During this period, the neighbourhood plan will be reviewed and updated where required.

Next steps

- 1.17 The Plan was subject to independent examination in May 2021. That examination concluded that the Plan met all necessary legal tests, subject to some minor modifications being made. Those changes are incorporated in this version of the Plan which will now be the subject of a local referendum in which people eligible to vote in Seaton Valley Parish will be given the opportunity to decide whether the Plan should be brought into force legally, and then used in making decisions on planning applications in the future.
- 1.18 The Plan and supporting documents are available on the County Council's website: <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Neighbourhood.aspx>

2. The key issues for the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan

Background to Seaton Valley

- 2.1 Seaton Valley lies in the south east of Northumberland, with a population of 15,422². It includes the villages of Seaton Delaval, Seaton Sluice, Holywell, New Hartley and Seghill.
- 2.2 Seaton Delaval is the main service centre and lies at the centre of the plan area. It is a historic village associated with Seaton Delaval Hall and the Delaval family but was also a mining area. It contains a mix of social and private housing. Facilities include the area's high school, Astley Community High School, Whytrig Community Middle School and Seaton Delaval First School, a community centre, Seaton Delaval Arts Centre, a post office, two Co-operative supermarkets and numerous other shops, pubs, cafes and take-aways, social clubs and Elsdon Avenue Church. It also contains Astley Park, the main public park for the Valley area.
- 2.3 Seaton Sluice is a large village on the coast. It includes the village of Old Hartley, still recognised by some local people as a separate village. The village has an attractive setting at the mouth of Seaton Burn, with a historic harbour, a fine sandy beach and dunes, and the open space of Holywell Dene nearby. It is also the closest village to Seaton Delaval Hall, a National Trust property. As a result, Seaton Sluice is both an attractive residential area, and a popular visitor destination. Village facilities include two schools, Seaton Sluice First School and Seaton Sluice Middle School, a community centre and library, post office, several shops, cafes, pubs and social clubs, and St Paul's Church, Church of our Lady and the Methodist Church. The village has significant industrial heritage, linked to the Delaval family, as highlighted by the local history society.
- 2.4 Holywell is a small village that lies just to the south east of Seaton Delaval, without a clear physical separation between the two villages. The village has its own character and identity, and benefits from being close to Holywell Dene, offering attractive walking routes. The heart of the village is a conservation area due to its historic character. Village facilities include Holywell Village First School, a small community centre, a shop, cafe, two pubs and St Mary's Church.
- 2.5 New Hartley is a small village to the north of Seaton Delaval. It is a former mining village, with a strong identity, partly associated with the New Hartley Colliery disaster of 1862. Village facilities include New Hartley First School, a community centre, post office, a shop, a pub, the Victory Club, St. Michael and All Angels Church and Our Lady and St. Joseph Church.

² 2011 census

- 2.6 Seghill lies on the western edge of Seaton Valley, close to the A189 and A19 trunk roads and within easy reach of the northern edge of Tyneside. It is a former mining village, with a relatively large proportion of ex mining and other social housing. However, it also contains some newer developments of private housing, and a few older properties. Village facilities include Seghill First School and Atkinson House School, a community centre, post office, several shops and take-aways, a pub, rugby club and other social clubs, Holy Trinity Church and the Methodist Chapel.

Background to the preparation of the plan

- 2.7 When work commenced on the preparation of the plan in October 2015, one of the key concerns of the local community was a housing development proposed in New Hartley. Other matters included the protection of the Green Belt, affordable housing, local economy, transport, infrastructure, natural and built environment, as well as access to services and facilities. Following the granting of planning permission for the development in New Hartley at appeal in September 2017, work on the plan lost momentum.
- 2.8 In July 2017 Northumberland County Council took the decision to end work on the Northumberland Core Strategy and to prepare a more detailed local plan for the county. The Northumberland Local Plan (NLP) is now at examination.
- 2.9 Early in 2020, SVC considered the scope of the emerging NLP and whether there was any local detail that was required to be included within the neighbourhood plan to address the key themes identified by the local community. It was concluded that the planning policies included within the NLP addressed many of the issues, for example:
- The Green Belt boundary is drawn tightly around the villages Holywell, New Hartley, Seaton Delaval, Seaton Sluice and Seghill. National planning policy is clear that inappropriate development is not supported within the Green Belt, unless there are very special circumstances;
 - The NLP includes two small infill housing allocations within the Seaton Valley area and four employment sites;
 - Transport issues are addressed in a number of policies and proposals within the new NLP; and
 - The NLP includes detailed policies on design, the environment and the protection of community facilities.
- 2.10 However, the review identified that no areas of local green space were included within the emerging NLP. SVC therefore concluded that the focus of the plan should be the protection of important local green spaces and other open spaces within the villages.

3. Vision

Vision

- 3.1 The vision sets out what the Seaton Valley Neighbourhood Plan intends to achieve over the plan period to 2036, it informs the policies contained within this referendum version of the Plan.

A Vision for Seaton Valley

By 2036 green and other open spaces which are important to the character of the area and the local community will be protected for the benefit of current and future generations.

4. Protecting our open spaces

Background

- 4.1 The many open spaces within the plan area are important to the character of the area and the local community highly value their ability to access these areas for recreation. Local residents want to ensure that these important open spaces are protected for the benefit of future generations.

Local green space

- 4.2 Green spaces are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy community and are of great importance to the character and identity of a place. They are valued for a wide range of reasons including: visual amenity; historic significance; recreational value; tranquillity; and richness of wildlife. Uncontrolled changes to green spaces can irrevocably alter their special character or intrinsic value.
- 4.3 The NPPF enables neighbourhood plans to designate areas of local green space for special protection, thereby preventing development on these sites other than in very special circumstances. These spaces do not need to be publicly accessible but must be in reasonably close proximity to the community they serve as well as being demonstrably special to them, holding a particular local significance. The designation cannot be applied to an extensive track of land, so should be local in character.
- 4.4 The sites listed in policy SV1 and shown on the policies map are proposed to be designated as local green space as they meet the criteria set out within national policy and guidance. A background paper has been prepared to outline the reasons why the sites are of particular importance to the local community and to explain the process that led to their proposed designation.

Policy SV1: Local green space

The following areas, as defined on the policies map, are designated as local green space which will be protected in a manner consistent with the protection of land within the Green Belt:

Seaton Delaval:

- LGS1 Memorial Park, Double Row (Poppy Park);
- LGS2 Astley Park;

Seaton Sluice:

- LGS3 The Dunes Play Park and land between Links Road and the dunes;
- LGS4 Sunken garden, The Links;
- LSG5 Land between The Melton Constable and Seaburn Grove;
- LGS6 Land at the harbour and adjacent to the Seaton Burn;
- LGS7 Rocky Island;
- LGS8 Ballast/Sandy Island;
- LGS9 Headland behind The Kings Arms;
- LSG10 Memorial Park, Collywell Bay Road;
- LGS11 Seaton Sluice Memorial Park;
- LGS12 Land to the east of Collywell Bay Road to Crag Point and along headland to Old Hartley;
- LGS13 Land to the south of East End, adjacent to Old Hartley Car Park;
- LGS14 Land at Southward Close;
- LGS15 Land at west side of Simonside;
- LGS16 Paddock to the south of Collywell Bay Road;

Holywell:

- LGS17 Holywell Pond;
- LGS18 Land east of East Grange (old orchard site);
- LGS19 Land east of Elsdon Avenue and Seaton Terrace Doctor's Surgery;
- LGS20 Bates Welfare Sports Ground;

New Hartley

- LGS21 New Hartley Memorial Recreation Field;
- LGS22 Hester Pit Memorial;
- LGS23 New Hartley Nature Reserve;

Seghill

- LGS24 Welfare Recreation Ground.

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

Protected open space

- 4.5 There are many areas of open space which are valued for their local amenity value and for formal and informal recreational purposes, as well as their importance as part of the green infrastructure of the area, but which do not meet the detailed allocation criteria for designation as local green space.
- 4.6 The sites listed in policy SV2 and shown on the policies map are proposed to be designated as protected as they are important to the local community. A background paper has been prepared to outline the reasons why the sites are important and to explain the process that led to their proposed designation. Subject to exceptions, policy SV2 requires that any loss of protected open space resulting from new development should be replaced by at least equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality, including amenity value. Importantly, the new provision should be in a suitable location. It is expected that when considering whether a location for new open space provision is 'suitable', that a key consideration is whether the new space is easily accessible by the local community, it should therefore be in the near vicinity of the protected open space.

Policy SV2: Protected open space

The following areas of open space, as defined on the policies map, shall be protected:

Seaton Delaval:

- POS1 Lambley Crescent Play Park (Wheatridge Estate);
- POS2 Mitford Avenue Play Park and Football Arena;
- POS3 Cat Park, Avenue Head;
- POS4 Hallington Drive Play Park;
- POS5 Ancroft Road allotments;
- POS6 Seghill Road allotments;
- POS7 Baxter Terrace allotments;
- POS8 Dartford Close allotments;
- POS9 Seaton Terrace allotments;
- POS10 Victoria Close allotments;
- POS11 Land between the rear of Avenue Road and Glanton Avenue;
- POS12 Land on Western Avenue;
- POS13 Land between Western Avenue and St Stephen's Close;
- POS14 Land at St Stephen's Close;
- POS15 Land behind Melrose Avenue;
- POS16 Land behind Newburgh Avenue;
- POS17 Land behind Thornhill Close;
- POS18 Land at Ambridge Way and Jackson Close;
- POS19 Land at Denham Drive;
- POS20 Football ground, Wheatridge Park;
- POS21 Wheatridge allotments;
- POS22 Rear of Acomb Avenue;

...Continues overleaf

Seaton Sluice:

- POS23 Play Park at Beresford welfare and grassed areas;
- POS24 Crag Park Sports Ground;
- POS25 Hartley Square Play Park;
- POS26 Beresford Road allotments;
- POS27 West Terrace allotments;
- POS28 Dene Top allotments;
- POS29 Land at east end of Derwent Road;
- POS30 Land between Westlands and Easedale;
- POS31 Land at East Farm Cottages, Eastcroft to Old Hartley Car Park;
- POS32 Old Hartley Caravan and Motorhome site;
- POS33 Land between Beresford Road and The Crest, Dereham Road and Granville Avenue;
- POS34 Land west of Millfield;
- POS35 Land between the rear of Southward Close and Millfield;
- POS36 Land on Melton Crescent;
- POS37 Land south of Rosewood Crescent;
- POS38 Land at the rear of the Harbour View;
- POS39 Land to the east of Clarence Street;

Holywell:

- POS40 Play Park and land at Seaton Terrace;
- POS41 Coppergate allotments;
- POS42 Halls Farm allotments and Hollywell Veteran's Hut;
- POS43 Land between the rear of Chatham Close and Sandown Close;
- POS44 Land between the rear of Stamford Avenue and Brentwood Close;
- POS45 Land between the rear of Denham Drive and Staward Avenue;
- POS46 Land between the rear of Tillmouth Avenue and Denham Drive;
- POS47 Land on Cheswick Road;
- POS48 Land at west end of Northside Place;
- POS49 Land between the rear of Acomb Avenue and Swarland Road;
- POS50 Land adjacent to the Milbourne Arms;

New Hartley:

- POS51 Hastings Gardens Play Park;
- POS52 Gloria Avenue allotments;
- POS53 Memorial field allotments;
- POS54 Land on Bristol Street between Dorchester Court and Chipchase Court;

...Continues overleaf

Seghill:

- POS55 Deneside Play Park;
- POS56 The Crescent Play Park;
- POS57 Land between the rear of The Crescent and shops on Main Street South;
- POS58 Land between Front Street and Northcott Gardens;
- POS59 Land at the west end of Reid's lane next to Annitsford Road;
- POS60 Land at the rear of houses on Laycock Gardens and Barrass Avenue;
- POS61 Land at the rear of Burnlea Gardens;
- POS62 Land between Station Road and Barrowburn Place;
- POS63 Land in the middle of Barrowburn Place;
- POS64 Land between Station Road and Blaketown;
- POS65 Esmeralda Gardens;
- POS66 Brickwork reclamation site;
- POS67 Mill Lane Allotments;
- POS68 Land at the junction of Backworth Lane and Annitsford Road.

Development that will result in the loss of protected open space will only be supported where the applicant has robustly demonstrated to the satisfaction of the local planning authority, that the:

- a. Open space is surplus to requirements; or
- b. Loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by at least equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality, including amenity value, in a suitable location; or
- c. Development is for alternative open space provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss; or
- d. The land is needed for sea defences or related works.