

CABINET

DATE: 29 MARCH 2022

ADOPTION OF THE NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL PLAN (2016 - 2036)

Report of Rob Murfin, Interim Executive Director Planning and Local Services

Cabinet Member: Colin Horncastle, Cabinet Member for Community Services

Purpose of report

To present the Inspectors' Report into the independent examination of the Northumberland Local Plan and to seek Cabinet's approval to recommend that the Council approve the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan (2016-2036), including the Policies Map, as amended by main modifications and additional changes, following its Independent Examination by the Planning Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1. Considers the content of the Inspectors' Report into the Examination of the Northumberland Local Plan (Appendix 3), together with the Schedule of Main Modifications appended to the Inspectors' Report (Appendix 4); and**
- 2. Endorse and make the following recommendations to Council:**

That Council:

- (a) Considers the content of the Inspectors' Report into the Examination of the Northumberland Local Plan (Appendix 3), together with the Schedule of Main Modifications appended to the Inspectors' Report (Appendix 4).**
- (b) Adopts the Northumberland Local Plan (2016 – 2036) (Appendix 1), incorporating the Main Modifications as set out in the Schedule of Main Modifications appended to the Inspectors' Report (Appendix 4) and the additional changes to the Local Plan (Appendix 5).**
- (c) Subject to recommendation (b), approves the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan (2016 – 2036) (Appendix 1) to take effect from 31 March 2022.**
- (d) Subject to recommendation (b), adopts the Northumberland Local Plan (2016 – 2036) Policies Map (Appendix 2), incorporating the changes in the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Northumberland Local Plan Policies Map June 2021 (Appendix 6), the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Northumberland Local Plan Policies Map - Appendices, June 2021 (Appendix 7) and the additional changes to the Local Plan (Appendix 5).**

- (e) Subject to recommendation (b), approves the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan (2016 – 2036) Policies Map (Appendix 2) to take effect from 31 March 2022.
- (f) Subject to recommendation (b), agrees the revocation of the following development plan documents, to take effect from the 12 May 2022 (following the statutory six-week legal challenge period from the adoption date of the Northumberland Local Plan):
- Alnwick Local Development Framework Core Strategy (October 2007)
 - Alnwick District Wide Local Plan (April 1997) – Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Berwick -upon-Tweed Borough Local Plan (April 1999) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Blyth Valley Local Development Framework Core Strategy (July 2007)
 - Blyth Valley Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD (September 2007)
 - Blyth Valley District Local Plan (May 1999) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction, 28 September 2007)
 - Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (February 2003) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Tynedale Local Development Framework Core Strategy (October 2007)
 - Tynedale District Wide Local Plan (April 2000) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction, 22 April 2010)
 - Northumberland Minerals Local Plan (March 2000) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Northumberland Waste Local Plan (December 2002) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan First Alteration (February 2005) - Saved Policy S5 (Green Belt Extension).
- (g) Subject to recommendation (b), agrees the revocation and downgrading of the Supplementary Planning Documents as set out in Appendix 8, to take effect from the 12 May 2022 (following the statutory six-week legal challenge period from the adoption date of the Northumberland Local Plan).
- (h) Subject to recommendation (b), notes the content of the Adoption Statement attached at Appendix 9 prepared in accordance with Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012).
- (i) Subject to recommendation (b), approves the Sustainability Appraisal Post-Adoption Statement (Appendix 10); and
- (j) Subject to recommendation (b), authorises the Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services in consultation with Cabinet Member for Community Services to make any additional necessary minor textual, graphical, presentational or layout amendments to the Northumberland Local Plan (2016-2036) (Appendix 1) and its Policies Map (Appendix 2) to finalise the Plan prior to publication.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following priorities included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021:

- How - We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone
- Living - We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for
- Enjoying - We want you to love where you live
- Connecting - We want you to have access to the things you need
- Thriving - We want to attract more and better jobs

Key issues

1. The Northumberland Local Plan will:
 - Set the strategic planning policies of the Council, taking account of key factors like population trends, economic growth, climate change, resources and environmental character.
 - Set the general scale and distribution of new development which is required to meet Northumberland's needs to 2036.
 - Provide the planning principles¹, including detailed 'development management' policies to guide decisions on planning applications.
 - Show in detail where new homes, workplaces and facilities will be located through allocations of land; and
 - Show key environmental designations and include site specific proposals for the conservation and enhancement of historic and natural assets.
2. The Local Plan has been the subject of extensive public consultation over the course of its preparation, in line with the legislation and regulations for the preparation of Local Plans, as well as the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. In May 2019 the Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. Planning Inspectors Susan Heywood and Stephen Normington were then appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Local Plan. The examination hearings took place between 8-11 and 22-31 October 2019, 5-6 and 26-27 February 2020 and 20 October – 19 November 2020. At the request of the Inspectors consultation on a number of proposed Main Modifications took place between 9 June 2021 and 4 August 2021.
3. After taking into account all of the representations received, including those made during the examination hearing sessions and submitted to the Council in response to the Regulation 19 consultation in 2019 and the Proposed Main Modifications consultation in 2021, the Inspectors issued their report on the examination of the Northumberland Local Plan on 26 January 2022.
4. The Inspectors' Report concludes that with the Main Modifications recommended by the Inspectors', the Northumberland Local Plan satisfies the requirements referred to in Section 20(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ("The Act") and is sound. The Inspectors consider that the Northumberland Local Plan provides an appropriate basis for the planning of the County, subject to the recommended modifications.

¹ Excluding the Northumberland National Park which is a separate Local Planning Authority and has separate planning policies.

5. The receipt of the Inspectors' Report is a key milestone towards the adoption of the Local Plan, and this report recommends that the Council adopts the Northumberland Local Plan, incorporating all of the proposed modifications. The adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan will replace the development plan documents from the former district and county councils, with a robust and up-to-date spatial planning policy framework for Northumberland.
6. Having an up to date adopted Local Plan promotes sustainable development and allows the Council to apply an effective plan-led approach with a plan that is sound, based on up-to-date evidence and is consistent with national policy. The Plan will provide relative certainty to businesses and communities to facilitate appropriate development to support the local economy and meet housing needs as well as resist inappropriate development.
7. While the Plan provides an up-to-date basis for planning decisions across Northumberland, it is recognised that the world does not stand still. The Plan is flexible enough to support the changing needs of the Northumberland Economy and its communities, such as the recent inward investment into the County and the opportunities presented by the North of Tyne Devolution Deal and the Borderlands Growth Deal, as well as aiding the County's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
8. As soon as reasonably practical following adoption of the Plan, the regulations require the Council to make available the Northumberland Local Plan, an Adoption Statement, the Sustainability Report, the Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement and the details of where the Local Plan is available for inspection and the places and times at which the document can be inspected.
9. Following adoption of the Plan, a person aggrieved by the Plan, may under Section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, make an application to the High Court to challenge it. Such an application must be made within six weeks of adoption of the Local Plan.
10. The Inspectors' Report and Main Modifications commits the Council to produce a separate Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan (GTTSLP), and to undertake an early and partial update of the Local Plan in relation to the open space, sport and recreation and sites allocated as Protected Open Space in the Plan and to reflect recent changes in national planning policy, where necessary. The partial update, and the GTTSLP is expected to be submitted within 18 months of the adoption date of the Northumberland Local Plan. The timetable for these commitments will be set out in an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Background

11. All Local Planning Authorities have a statutory requirement to prepare and maintain an up-to-date Local Plan for their area. Local Plans must be prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and meet the Duty to Cooperate and legal and procedural requirements as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004(as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

12. Local Plans must be considered to be sound following an examination in public which means that the Plan has been positively prepared and seeks to meet the objectively assessed needs for development and infrastructure requirements, is justified, is an appropriate strategy, is effective and is consistent with national policy.
13. The Northumberland Local Plan has been the subject of extensive public consultation over the course of its preparation, in line with the legislation and regulations for the preparation of Local Plans, as well as the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. This has comprised:
 - The Spring 2018 Local Plan consultation which took place between 28 March and 2 May 2018.
 - The Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation, which commenced on 4 July and ended on 15 August 2018; and
 - The Publication Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19) consultation, which took place between 30 January 2019 to 13 March 2019.
14. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination on 29 May 2019. Planning Inspector Susan Heywood was then appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Local Plan, with Planning Inspector Stephen Normington appointed as assistant examiner to consider Chapter 13 of the Plan relating to minerals, waste, renewable and low carbon energy. The examination hearings took place between 8-11 and 22-31 October 2019, 5-6 and 26-27 February 2020 and 20 October – 19 November 2020.
15. During the course of the examination, the Inspector requested that the Council undertook a period of consultation of the additional evidence requested by her as a result of the Phase 1 hearing sessions held in October 2019 and February 2020. The consultation took place between 13 July 2020 and 7 September 2020.
16. On 24 February 2021, the Inspector issued her post hearings letter to the Council which stated that following the hearings into the Local Plan she had concluded that whilst she considered the submitted Local Plan not to be sound, it is likely that it could be made sound by modifications. Following this letter, the Council worked with the Inspectors, though the Programme Officer, to finalise the wording of the main modifications and to agree the dates for consultation on the proposed main modifications to the Local Plan.
17. Consultation on the proposed main modifications to the Local Plan took place between 9 June 2021 and 4 August 2021. Comments were also invited on a number of supporting documents, including the proposed modifications to the Local Plan Policies Map and additional evidence base documents produced by the Council through the examination process. At the same time, the Council also proposed additional changes to the Local Plan (See Appendix 5) which do not materially affect the meaning or substance of the Local Plan or its overall soundness. These proposed additional changes relate to points of clarification, factual updates and typographical or grammatical errors and are minor in nature. Responses received to this consultation were sent to the Inspectors on 3 September 2021.
18. After taking into account all of the representations received, including those made during the examination hearing sessions and submitted to the Council in response to the

Regulation 19 consultation in 2019 and the Proposed Main Modifications consultation in 2021, the Inspectors have now issued their final report on the examination of the Local Plan.

The Inspectors' Report and Main Modifications

19. On 26 January 2022, the Council received the Inspectors' report on the Examination of the Northumberland Local Plan (See Appendix 3), together with a Schedule of Main Modifications appended to the Report (See Appendix 4). This marks the conclusion of the examination process.
20. In accordance with Section 20(8) of the Act and Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), the Council is required to publish the Inspectors' Report which sets out their recommendations and the reasons for them. It is also required to notify individuals and organisations on the Local Plan consultation database who requested to be informed of the publication of the report. This was duly undertaken on Wednesday 16 February 2022.
21. The Inspector's Report concludes that the Duty to Cooperate has been met and that with the Main Modifications recommended by the Inspectors', the Northumberland Local Plan satisfies the requirements referred to in Section 20(5)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and is sound.

Legal Compliance

22. In accordance with Section 33 (A) of Act the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), the Duty to Cooperate requires Local Planning Authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in the preparation of Development Plan Documents in relation to strategic matters.
23. The Inspectors considered the Council's evidence of engagement with neighbouring local planning authorities and other organisations and bodies on strategic matters. This included matters relating to housing, economic growth, minerals, green infrastructure, biodiversity, wastewater treatment and Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. The Inspectors concluded that they were satisfied that where necessary the Council had engaged constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in the preparation of the Plan, and that the duty to cooperate had therefore been met.
24. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report was submitted to support the Local Plan, and the proposed Main Modifications. The Inspectors considered the SA's appraisal of the growth options, spatial options for delivering this growth, and employment and housing allocations put forward in the Plan. They concluded that it was reasonable that options that required more housing growth than proposed in the Plan, and which required the release of Green Belt sites for housing were not considered in the SA. They also concluded that the release of Green Belt land for employment purposes was justified in the SA, and that the housing allocation site selection had been conducted in a robust way, and that alternatives had been adequately appraised. Overall, the Inspectors were satisfied that the SA had been carried out satisfactorily and the SA process was proportionate, objective and the judgements reached were reasonable and constituted appropriate evidence to inform the Plan.

25. The Plan has also been subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). This assessed the likely impacts of the Plan on European protected sites. The HRA concludes that whilst some policies in the Plan were likely to have a significant effect on specific European protected sites, the effects can be mitigated through developers of proposals contributing to a Coastal Mitigation Service. With this mitigation, the HRA also concludes that the Plan will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European protected sites. This approach is agreed with Natural England.
26. In respect of the other aspects of the legal compliance requirements, the Inspectors concluded that the Plan complied with all of the relevant legal requirements, including the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Plan had been prepared in accordance with the Local Development Scheme although there had been slippage in the timescales given the need for the preparation of, and consultation on additional evidence and main modifications as well as implications arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Inspectors were also satisfied that the consultation on the Plan was undertaken in a robust manner and in accordance with the regulations and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

Assessment of Soundness

27. The Inspectors' Report considers whether the Local Plan is 'sound'. In accordance with national policy, to be found 'sound', plans should be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.
28. In this regard the Inspectors identified 11 main issues upon which the soundness of the Plan depends. Not all issues are covered in this Report, which focusses largely on the key issues that are fundamental to housing and economic development.

Quantity of development - Employment land and Housing requirement

29. The Council's Housing and Economic Growth Options (HEGO) report identifies a need for only 40 hectares of employment land to deliver the level of job growth (15,000 jobs) envisaged through the plan's 'ambitious growth scenario'. The Plan proposes to provide for significantly more than this; 242 hectares of employment land. However, the Inspectors accepted that there are locally important 'land hungry' employment sectors in the parts of the County (renewable energy sector and port related uses), that there is a need to ensure an adequate supply of land in different parts of the county, and that North of Tyne Devolution Deal and the Borderlands Growth Deal will provide significant investment funding to Northumberland. They conclude that while the amount of land allocated for employment purposes is aspirational, it will provide flexibility, and ensure the projected job growth is deliverable over the plan period.
30. The Plan's housing requirement of 17,700 dwellings over the plan period is derived from the level of job growth in the 'ambitious growth scenario', by applying a number of assumptions. The Inspectors were satisfied that the method used to identify this number was justified. This requirement is significantly more than that required for Northumberland when applying the Government's standard Local Housing Need method. The Inspector found the housing requirement justified and positively prepared.

Spatial Strategy and distribution of housing development

31. The Plan's spatial strategy is based on a proportionate distribution of growth within the constraints of the Green Belt. It sets out a settlement hierarchy and focuses the majority of new development in key settlements whilst allowing smaller scale development elsewhere. Settlement boundaries are defined for settlements in the hierarchy unless through the neighbourhood planning process local communities have defined a boundary, chosen not to define a boundary or retain a boundary defined in an earlier plan. The Inspector considered this approach to be positively prepared and justified.
32. Table 7.1 of the Local Plan sets out the indicative distribution of the overall housing requirement across four Delivery Areas, the parishes that make the county's Main Towns and Service Centres, and the rural areas. The Inspector considered the Council's evidence of housing supply (permitted sites and allocated sites) to meet these requirements, and also considered the supply in relation to smaller housing market areas within the Delivery Areas identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). While she identified supply shortfalls in some areas, most notably the Tyneside Commuter Belt (West) which includes the towns of Hexham and Prudhoe, she was comfortable that there was sufficient potential supply from other non-allocated sites to meet the shortfalls, including the former middle school site in Hexham. Whilst she acknowledged that housing supply is constrained in this area, she did not consider it necessary to allocate additional sites for housing and concluded that the Council's approach of meeting its needs within the constraints of the Green Belt is sound.
33. The Plan's spatial strategy is reflected in Policy STP 1. There was a lengthy discussion about this policy at the Local Plan hearing sessions, and the Inspector has recommended significant changes to the wording of the policy in a Main Modification, particularly in relation to the treatment of small settlements and the forms of development that may be permitted in the open countryside. However, the essence of the policy as submitted remains intact, and subject to the modifications the Inspector considered the Plan's overall spatial strategy and distribution of housing development justified and consistent with national policy.

Green Belt

34. The Inspector identified two areas of Green Belt in Northumberland; that to the south / south east of the County where boundaries are defined in previous development plans (the established Green Belt) and the area around Morpeth, where detailed boundaries for the majority of this area are being defined for the first time (the Morpeth Green Belt). She considered issues in relation to these areas separately.
35. Proposed changes to the established Green Belt in the Plan included the:
- Release land for employment purposes in Hexham, Prudhoe and to the south east of Ponteland
 - Release land to be safeguarded to for future employment uses to the south east of Ponteland
 - Insetting of settlements within the Green Belt which were previously washed over.
36. The Inspector considered whether exceptional circumstances existed for these releases from the Green Belt.

37. Despite the significant supply of employment land at the countywide level identified above, the Inspector accepted that there is an undersupply in Hexham, Prudhoe and Ponteland. While she considered that the development of each of the sites proposed in the plan, would harm the openness of the Green Belt, she concluded that the Green Belt harm would be limited in each instance, and that the allocations would not harm the integrity of the wider Green Belt.
38. The Inspector recommended Main Modifications to Policy ECN 6 to clarify the uses appropriate to each allocation, to ensure they can meet the identified local needs, to require planting where new Green Belt boundaries are not clearly defined on the ground. Subject to these modifications she considered that the Council's judgement that exceptional circumstances exist to the alter the Green Belt boundaries in connection with these sites is sound.
39. However, the Inspector was not satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changing the Green Belt boundary in relation to the proposed safeguarded land to the south east of Ponteland. She considered that there was no current evidence of need for this land beyond the plan period, and that it would be difficult to forecast such a need, as the needs of businesses may change significantly within the next 15 years. The Inspector, therefore recommended a Main Modification (MM) to remove reference to this safeguarded land in Policy ECN 6, and to change the policies map.
40. In the former Tynedale District, a number of settlements were washed over by the Green Belt but included infill boundaries. The Local Plan proposes to remove, or 'inset' these settlements from the Green Belt so Green Belt policy would not apply within the defined boundary.
41. The Inspector considered that the former Tynedale approach in this regard was not consistent with national policy, and that maintaining the previous approach would make it difficult for these villages to accept any proportionate growth in accordance with the spatial strategy. The Inspector, therefore agreed with the Council's conclusion that exceptional circumstances exist for these changes.
42. The Morpeth Green Belt was first defined by the now saved policy S5 of the Northumberland and National Park Joint Structure Plan First Alteration (February 2005) (the JSP). Local Plan proposes to set detailed boundaries in much of this area for the first time; an outer boundary, an inset boundary around Morpeth and boundaries around some villages, to inset them from the Green Belt.
43. Because, in accordance with national policy, the general extent of the Green Belt is already established the Inspector concluded that exceptional circumstances are not required to define the outer boundaries of the Green Belt nor to identify the precise boundaries around settlements.
44. The Inspector was satisfied that the Council's judgements in relation to the chosen outer boundary are sound and justified by the evidence in that it reflects saved Policy S5 and avoid development 'leapfrogging' over the Green Belt to settlements beyond. She also concluded that she was satisfied that the Council's judgements in relation to the inset boundaries is sound. While there were suggestions that additional land should be inset

and excluded from the Green Belt, the Inspector concluded that there is no justification, either in terms of spatial distribution or the need for additional housing sites, to allocate additional greenfield land for housing.

45. The Local Plan does not propose to release or exclude land from the Green Belt to be safeguarded for housing beyond the plan period. The requirement to do or not do this was a matter of much discussion at the hearing sessions.
46. The Inspector concluded that the Plan would provide sufficient land in accordance with the spatial strategy to meet the identified need for housing for the Plan period and beyond, and therefore there is no justification for a further release of Green Belt land in the established Green Belt for housing to meet unknown development needs. In relation to the Morpeth Green Belt, the Inspector was satisfied that, taking into consideration the Council's housing land supply for the Plan period and beyond, and the inclusion of unallocated White Land to the north of Morpeth, that safeguarded land for housing was not required to ensure that the newly defined Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period.

Housing Supply

47. During the Examination, the Inspector asked the Council to update its housing supply evidence to ensure it complied with the requirements as set out in recent update to planning practice guidance, and to demonstrate that Northumberland would be able to demonstrate that it had at least a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites on the adoption of the Plan.
48. The Inspector was satisfied that this updated evidence was proportionate and justifies the housing land supply trajectory in the Plan, and that when set against the housing requirement over the plan period, it indicates there is a good measure of flexibility, and a significant buffer which provides a good deal of certainty that the plan requirement will be met.
49. Much of the Plan's supply is made up of commitments (i.e., sites that already benefit from planning permission or indeed have built out in the early years of the Plan), with relatively few allocations in the plan. The Inspector has recommended a number of MMs to Policy HOU 4, to reflect that a number of proposed allocations are no longer considered developable (no longer available or to reflect heritage impact concerns), and to reflect changes to the areas of some of the allocated sites.
50. The lack of allocations was a matter of significant objection from the development industry during and prior to the examination, with concerns expressed that delivery would dry up towards the end of the plan period. The Inspector however has concluded that there is nothing inherently unsound with this approach and that indeed the commitments give greater certainty that the supply will be deliverable.
51. In the updated evidence provided during the examination, the Council demonstrated that on adoption, it would have a 10.2 year supply of housing land; significantly more than required by national policy. There was some criticism that the calculation took into account over supply in the early years of the Plan, resulting in a reduced residual requirement below 885 dwellings per annum, the average requirement if the 17,700

housing number was to be spread equally throughout the plan period. However, the Inspector considered that ignoring the over supply since the start of the plan period, would in effect require the Plan to exceed the 17,700 dwelling requirement, and act as a perverse disincentive to over delivery in the early years.

52. The Inspector concluded that the Plan identifies sufficient land to ensure that the identified need for housing during the plan period can be met and that a 5 year supply can be maintained as required by national policy.

Housing needs of different groups

53. The SHMA identifies a need for 151 affordable homes per year. This is equivalent to 17% of the average housing requirement of 885 dwellings per year. To meet this need, Policy HOU 6 sets out the varying proportions of affordable homes required on new applications, ranging from 10% to 30% based on value areas. The Inspector was satisfied that the Plan sets out a proportionate approach to affordable housing which is justified by the housing need and viability evidence. The Inspector acknowledges that opportunities for affordable housing in some settlements in the Green Belt are limited, and that a balanced approach must be taken between the need for affordable housing and the need to protect the Green Belt. However, as set out above, she concludes that the Council's approach of meeting its housing needs within the constraints of the Green Belt is sound.
54. The Inspector has recommended a number of MMs to Policy HOU 6, including to take greater account of the Council's viability evidence. This MM removes the requirement for developments of 10 to 29 dwellings, in low or medium value areas to provide a proportion of affordable housing. Another MM adds Appendix D of the Plan, which sets out how financial contributions in lieu of onsite affordable housing provision, will be calculated.
55. While the Regulation 18 consultation draft of the Plan set a requirement for new dwellings to meet or exceed the optional accessibility housing standards as required enhancements of Part M of the Building Regulations, this requirement was dropped from the submitted Regulation 19 version of the Plan on viability grounds.
56. Having regard to national policy which indicates that planning policies for housing should make use of the standards where it would address a need for such properties, and the SHMA which concludes there is a compelling case for the adoption of such dwellings, the Inspector requested that the Council consider this matter again. Taking into account the evidence of need, and further viability testing, a MM to Policy HOU 11 is recommended by the Inspector, which requires 20% of open market homes and 50% of affordable homes to meet or exceed the enhanced accessibility and adaptability housing standards in compliance with Requirement M4 (2) of the Building Regulations. Recognising viability constraints in low value areas, development of less than 30 dwellings in these areas will be exempt from the requirement. The MM is considered necessary to ensure the Plan is consistent with national policy and effective.
57. As communicated at the hearing session relating to this matter, the Inspector has expressed concerns that the Council's Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show-people Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) is not sufficiently up to date, and that there are

some deficiencies in the assessment. She was also concerned that while the Report identifies a need for transit pitches, the Plan does not allocate a site for this. Given the timescale for undertaking the necessary work to rectify this situation, the Inspector has considered it pragmatic to allow the Plan to move towards adoption despite these deficiencies, but a recommended MM which commits the Council to undertake a new GTAA and submit for examination a separate Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan within 18 months of adoption of this Local Plan. This matter is addressed further later in this report.

Strategic Employment sites, economic and town centre development

58. There was significant discussion at the hearing sessions regarding Policy ECN 3 which allocates 32 ha at West Hartford, Cramlington as 'Prestige Employment Area'. The site, which is owned by Homes England, has been the subject of recent planning applications for residential development. However, during the examination, Advance Northumberland entered into discussions about acquiring the site. The Inspector is satisfied that the need for the employment allocation is justified, and that there is a reasonable prospect that it could be delivered over the Plan period.
59. In the Report, the Inspector sets out her considerations in relation to a number of other employment allocations, including a site at Fairmoor, north of Morpeth, land to the south of Coopies Way, Morpeth and at Bassington Industrial Estate, Cramlington.
60. She was content that reasonable judgements had been made in allocating the Fairmoor site, she considered that land to the south of Coopies Way is not required during the plan period (it is proposed to be safeguarded for employment beyond the plan period), and that the need for employment land in Cramlington warranted the retention of the remaining employment allocation on Bassington Industrial Estate, despite interest in developing it for housing by the land owner.
61. During the examination, the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force. This revoked many of the former use classes including A1 (shops) and B1 (offices) and created a new 'commercial, business and service' use class (Class E). As a result of these changes, MMs have been recommended to many of the Economic Development and Town Centres and Central Services policies. A new definition of Main Employment Uses is set out in the Plan while the definitions of Wider employment-generating uses, and Main Town Centre Uses have been amended. These definitions guide what forms of development may be permitted on specific employment sites and in town centres.
62. While the Inspector initially expressed concerns that no town centre sites are allocated for town centre uses, she was content that the Council is working with partners, including Advance Northumberland to support town centre development.
63. Overall, subject to recommended MMs, the Inspector considered that all the policies in these chapters of the Plan are justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Other Main Issues

64. Other main issues identified by the Inspectors covered:
- Policies relating Quality of Place, the Environment, including historic environment, Water Environment and Pollution and Land Quality
 - Policies relating to Connectivity and Movement
 - Policies and allocations for open space and policies relating to infrastructure and delivery
 - The policy requirements in the Plan in relation to viability, and
 - The Plan's approach to Minerals, Waste and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development and Associated Energy Storage.
65. While the Inspector has recommended a series of MMs to these parts of the Plan to increase clarity, ensure consistency with national policy, and provide for flexibility, most of these matters did not involve detailed discussion at the hearing sessions, and are given limited coverage in the Inspectors' Report. Only key points from these policy areas are covered below.
66. Policy INF 5 aims to limit development on areas of Protected Open Space as defined on the policies map. The Inspector considered elements of the policy as submitted were ambiguous and created uncertainty. Significant changes to the policy are proposed through MMs including the introduction of open space standards for new housing development in a new Appendix H1.
67. The Inspector expressed concern about the age of the study which informed the sites designated as protected open space and identified through the examination process that a number of sites which had been allocated as protected open space where no longer justified by the evidence. Through modifications to the policies map, these particular allocations are to be deleted.
68. While the Inspector considered that the evidence does not constitute a robust and up to date assessment of need, she recognised that updating the evidence would be time consuming and has taken the pragmatic view that the Plan should proceed towards adoption, but that there is a commitment to undertake an early partial update to the Plan in relation to open space, sport and recreation and the allocated Protected Open Space sites.
69. Policy INF 6 sets out when planning obligations will be required and the types of infrastructure that may be sought. The Inspector was concerned that the level of contributions expected from development is not set out in the Plan but was to be left to Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). A number of MMs to Policy INF 6 are recommended by the Inspector, while Appendices D and H are added as MMs to provide details about standard contributions in relation to affordable housing, open space, education, health and coastal mitigation.
70. The Inspector considered the evidence relating to aggregate minerals as set out in the Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA), and the approach taken to establish demand based on sales figures over different time periods, taking into account proposed housing growth and infrastructure projects. He concluded that that there was no convincing reason to depart from the supply figures provided in the evidence. He however

recommended for clarity, a significant number of MMs to the supporting text, and tables showing how the supply and demand of for minerals has been calculated.

71. Policies MIN 7 and MIN 8 set out sites allocated for the extraction of sand and gravel, and crushed rock to meet the needs over the plan period, and to ensure rolling 7 year and 10-year land banks of each resource are maintained throughout the plan period.
72. A MM is recommended to Policy MIN 7 to delete the proposed allocation at West Wharmley which has been identified as undeliverable, and to replace this with a Ebchester Quarry extension. These MMs are reflected in modifications to the Policies Map. A modification to the Policies Map also shows a significant reduction in the size of the area allocated at Anick Grange Haugh for sand and gravel extraction.
73. A MM is recommended to Policy MIN 8 to include an additional crushed rock allocation at Shiels Dykes. The Inspector identifies that the inclusion of this site ensures there is a more even geographical split between reserves in the north and the south of the County, and that the allocation is required in order to ensure that productive capacity can meet annual demand. A corresponding change to the policies map is made to identify this new allocation.
74. Policy REN 2 sets out the Council's approach to determining applications for onshore wind energy developments. Part 1a requires development sites (except for the repowering of existing wind turbines) to be in an area identified as potentially suitable for wind energy development. The Inspector considered the evidence base for the identification of such areas on the Policies Map. While he concluded that the identification of potentially suitable areas in the Plan is consistent with national policy, he recommended MMs to provide additional text regarding the identification process, and to make it clear that identified areas should be seen as a starting point for the consideration of individual proposals.
75. Part 1b of Policy REN 2 also requires proposals to demonstrate that the planning impacts identified by affected communities through consultation have been fully addressed and the that the proposal has their backing. While the Inspector was comfortable with this section of the policy as worded, he recommended the addition of a number of paragraphs of supporting text to explain this process. A MM to add a criterion to Part 2 of the policy is also recommended to ensure that the landscape has the capacity to accommodate development without unacceptable negative effects on its character and qualities and how it is valued by communities likely to be affected.
76. The Inspector considered that the above MMs were required to ensure the policy is effective and consistent with national policy.

Council commitments in the Main Modifications

77. As reported above, the Council is committed to produce a separate Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Local Plan (GTTSLP), and to undertake an early and partial update of the Local Plan in so far as it relates to open space, sport and recreation and sites allocated as Protected Open Space in Policy INF 5. In addition, the Council is committed to an early partial update of the plan, to reflect recent changes in national planning policy, where necessary. The partial update, and the GTTSLP is expected to

be submitted within 18 months of the adoption date of the Northumberland Local Plan. The timetable for these commitments will be set out in an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan

78. Section 23 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states that if a planning inspector finds a local plan sound subject to Main Modifications, a local planning authority may adopt that local plan with the Main Modifications which the Inspector concludes are necessary for the plan to be sound and any additional modifications, which do not materially affect the policies that would be set out in the document if it was adopted with the main modifications only. The Council is not permitted to adopt the local plan without the Main Modifications. The alternative is for the local planning authority not to adopt the local plan. Should the Council resolve to not adopt the Northumberland Local Plan, there is a significant risk of intervention by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government. This is particularly significant as the Council was under the threat of such intervention following the withdrawal of the Northumberland Core Strategy in 2017.
79. Following publication of the Inspectors' Report, it is recommended that the Council adopts the Northumberland Local Plan (2016 – 2036) (see Appendix 1), as amended by the Inspectors' Report on the Examination of the Northumberland Local Plan (See Appendix 3), together with the Schedule of Main Modifications appended to the Report (See Appendix 4) and the proposed additional changes to the Local Plan (See Appendix 5). Approval is also being sought for the formal adoption of the Local Plan to take effect from 31 March 2022.
80. Members are also requested to authorise the Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services in consultation with Cabinet Member for Community Services to make any additional necessary minor textual, graphical, presentational or layout amendments to the Northumberland Local Plan (as presented at Appendix 1) to finalise the Plan prior to publication.
81. Upon adoption, the Northumberland Local Plan will supersede the following development plan documents:
 - Alnwick Local Development Framework Core Strategy (October 2007)
 - Alnwick District Wide Local Plan (April 1997) – Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Berwick -upon-Tweed Borough Local Plan (April 1999) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Blyth Valley Local Development Framework Core Strategy (July 2007)
 - Blyth Valley Local Development Framework Development Control Policies DPD (September 2007)
 - Blyth Valley District Local Plan (May 1999) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction, 28 September 2007)
 - Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (February 2003) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction, 31 August 2007)
 - Tynedale Local Development Framework Core Strategy (October 2007)
 - Tynedale District Wide Local Plan (April 2000) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction, 31 August 2007)

- Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction, 22 April 2010)
- Northumberland Minerals Local Plan (March 2000) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction, 31 August 2007)
- Northumberland Waste Local Plan (December 2002) - Saved Local Plan Policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction, 31 August 2007)
- Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan First Alteration (February 2005) - Saved Policy S5 (Green Belt Extension).

82. The Council is recommended to agree the revocation of the above-mentioned development plan documents from the 12 May 2022 (following the statutory six week legal challenge period from the adoption date of the Northumberland Local Plan).
83. A range of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) were previously produced to support the above-mentioned development plan documents. In order to ensure that the Council has up to date guidance that link to policies within the Northumberland Local Plan, it is recommended that a number of SPDs are revoked alongside the above-mentioned development plan documents. These SPDs and the reason for recommending revocation are set out in Appendix 8. There are also SPDs which will need to be downgraded from having SPD status but which are recommended to be retained as non-statutory planning guidance until such time they are reviewed and replaced or become defunct. These SPDs and the reason for their downgrading is also set out in Appendix 8.
84. The Local Plan makes reference to a series of SPDs, which the Council intends to produce, to elaborate on specific policies and matters within the Plan. A project management approach will be adopted to effectively plan and prioritise these SPDs to ensure they are prepared in a timely manner.

Policies Map

85. The Council must maintain an adopted Policies Map which illustrates geographically the application of policies in the adopted Local Plan. The Council was required to provide a submission policies map showing the changes to the adopted policies map that would result from the proposals in the submitted local plan. In this case, this was the Northumberland Local Plan – Publication Draft Plan (Regulation 19) Policies Map Incorporating Erratum May 2019.
86. The Policies Map is not defined in statute as a development plan document and so the Inspectors do not have the power to recommend main modifications to it. However, a number of the published main modifications to the Plan's policies require further corresponding changes to be made to the Policies Map. In addition, there are some instances where the geographic illustration of policies on the submission Policies Map is not justified and changes to the Policies Map are needed to ensure that the relevant policies are effective. These further changes to the Policies Map were published for consultation alongside the Main Modifications in the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Northumberland Local Plan Policies Map, June 2021 (see Appendix 6), the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Northumberland Local Plan Policies Map - Appendices, June 2021 (See Appendix 7) and the proposed additional changes to the Local Plan (See Appendix 5).

87. When the Plan is adopted, in order to comply with the legislation and give effect to the Plan's policies, the Council will need to update the adopted Policies Map to include all the changes proposed in the Northumberland Local Plan – Publication Draft Plan (Regulation 19) Policies Map Incorporating Erratum and the further changes published alongside the Main Modifications in the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Northumberland Local Plan Policies Map June 2021 (see Appendix 6) and the Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the Northumberland Local Plan Policies Map - Appendices, June 2021 (See Appendix 7). The updating of the Policies Map has been undertaken and subject to approval to adopt the Local Plan, approval is also sought to agree the adoption of the updated Policies Map which is set out in Appendix 2.
88. As with the Local Plan documents, Members are also requested to authorise the Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services in consultation with Cabinet Member for Community Services to make any additional necessary minor textual, graphical, presentational or layout amendments to the Policies Map (as presented at Appendix 2) to finalise the Policies Map prior to publication.

Next Steps

89. Subject to the Council adopting the Northumberland Local Plan, Regulation 26 of the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires the Council, as soon as reasonably practical following the adoption of the Plan, to make available:
- (i) the Northumberland Plan.
 - (ii) an Adoption Statement.
 - (iii) the Sustainability Report; and
 - (iv) details of where the Local Plan is available for inspection and the places and times at which the document can be inspected.
90. In accordance with the Regulations 17 and 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended), an Adoption Statement to accompany the Local Plan has been prepared. A copy is attached at Appendix 9. The Council is also required to send the Adoption Statement to anyone who requested to be notified of the adoption of the Local Plan, and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government
91. In accordance with Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the Council is also required to finalise and publish the Sustainability Appraisal report, as soon as practicable following adoption of the Plan. The Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement is the final step in the SA process, which involves preparing a 'statement' at the time of the Plan's adoption. The Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement is available at Appendix 10.
92. Following adoption of the Local Plan, under Section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, a person aggrieved by the Plan may make an application to the High Court to challenge it. Such an application must be made within six weeks of

adoption of the Local Plan. Should the adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan come into effect on 31 March 2022, this six week challenge period would end on 12 May 2022.

Implications

Policy	<p>The Northumberland Local Plan when adopted will form part of the Development Plan for Northumberland, together with made neighbourhood plans and as set out in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.</p> <p>The Local Plan when adopted will form part of the Council's policy framework and will act as vehicle to help realise a range of Council corporate priorities.</p>
Finance and value for money	<p>The adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan forms the final stage that will complete the preparation of the Local Plan for Northumberland. Budget provision has been made for this statutory function through the use of earmarked reserves.</p> <p>Councils are statutorily required to keep development plans up to date with a cycle of plan every five years. As part of the Inspectors' Report, the Council is committed to undertaking a partial update of the Local Plan and the production of a separate Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (GTTSLP) Local Plan. Budgetary provision has been made to undertake the Local Plan partial update and the GTTSLP through the Council's budget setting and Medium-Term Financial Planning process.</p>
Legal	<p>Local Planning Authorities must prepare a Local Plan which sets planning policies in a local authority area. Preparation of the Northumberland Local Plan has been progressed in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).</p> <p>Local Plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in accordance with Section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>The Inspector's Report has concluded that the Duty to Cooperate has been met and that with the Main Modifications recommended by the Inspectors', the Northumberland Local Plan satisfies the requirements referred to in Section 20 of the</p>

	<p>Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and is sound.</p> <p>Upon adoption of the Local Plan, it must be made publicly available as soon as reasonably practicable. In addition, an Adoption Statement must be made available and sent to the Secretary of State and any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption of the Plan. The Adoption Statement must state the date of adoption of the Plan, identify the modifications made and inform the public of the ability to challenge the Plan by an application to the High Court within 6 weeks from the date of adoption under Section 113 of the 2004 Act.</p> <p>It is a function of Cabinet under its terms of reference set out in Part 3 of the Constitution that Cabinet will take all necessary steps to prepare plans and strategies which constitute the Policy Framework prior to final adoption by the Council. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000 states that adoption of the Local Plan itself are not the responsibility of the executive of the authority.</p>
Procurement	External expertise has been procured to assist with the preparation of evidence base studies, where the nature of the work is of a specialist nature. Additional external capacity, in the form of critical friend support was also procured to assist in the preparation of the Local Plan.
Human Resources	Work on the preparation of the Local Plan has involved both Council Officers and Members. The preparation of the final Local Plan document and the accompanying policies map for adoption will require officer time.
Property	The adopted Local Plan will apply to land and buildings owned by the County Council as they would apply to land and buildings owned by others.
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>An Equality Assessment has been undertaken to inform the preparation of the Local Plan and throughout the examination process, the Inspectors had due regard to the equality impacts of the Plan, in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Within the Plan there are specific policies relating to different types of housing need, including people with disabilities, older people and travellers, as well as policies which promote health and wellbeing and ensure accessibility and inclusive design.</p>
Risk Assessment	The preparation and adoption of the Northumberland Local Plan is a key corporate priority and one of the key risks identified on the Council's Corporate Risk Register. There is a significant risk of intervention by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government, should the Council fail to

	<p>adopt the Local Plan. This is particularly significant as the Council was under the threat of such intervention following the withdrawal of the Northumberland Core Strategy in 2017.</p> <p>Not having an up to date adopted Local Plan makes it more difficult to provide the necessary certainty to facilitate appropriate development to support the local economy and meet housing needs and to resist inappropriate development.</p>
Crime & Disorder	<p>Crime and disorder considerations have been taken into account in the preparation of the Local Plan. The Local Plan includes a range of policies which aim to support social interaction and a safe and secure environment, including measures where relevant to reduce the risk and fear of crime.</p>
Customer Consideration	<p>Consultation on the Local Plan has been undertaken in accordance with Local Plan Regulations 2012 and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The views of a wide range of stakeholders and the general public have helped shape the Plan.</p> <p>The Local Plan once adopted will supersede the planning policies from the former County and District Council planning documents into a single Local Plan document, ensuring consistency in planning policies across the County and thereby making it easier for the public to understand.</p>
Carbon reduction	<p>The Local Plan has been prepared within a legal framework and national planning policy that has at its heart the principle of sustainable development and policies to help address climate change through the development and use of land.</p> <p>The Plan includes a policy that requires development proposals to mitigate climate change, while a range of other policies including those relating to the location of development, sustainable construction, sustainable connections and renewable energy aim to ensure the delivery of sustainable development which mitigates climate change and reduce carbon emissions.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>A Health Impact Assessment was undertaken to inform the preparation of the Local Plan. The Plan includes a specific Health and Wellbeing policy, which requires a Healthy Planning Checklist to be completed and submitted for all major development proposals, while many other policies in the Plan including those in relation to housing, green infrastructure and pollution aim to have a positive impact upon health and wellbeing.</p>
Wards	All

Background papers:

Local Plan examination library including submission documents, evidence base, hearing statements and examination document can be found at:

<https://northumberland-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/planning/localplan/lp-exam>

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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