



SLC Property

Planning Statement

**Prepared in support of a planning
application for a new railway
station at Ashington**

60601435-SLC-P-270-A-PS

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Document Control

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1 Introduction to the scheme

1.1 Overview of the scheme

- 1.1.1 The scheme seeks to re-introduce passenger services onto the existing freight line between the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the town of Ashington in Northumberland.
- 1.1.2 The railway line is known as the 'Northumberland Line' and was formerly known as the Ashington Blyth and Tyne Line (ABT). ['the scheme'].
- 1.1.3 The scheme includes the construction of six new railway stations and associated infrastructure. This planning statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for the proposed railway station and associated works at Ashington. ['the application'].

1.2 Ashington Station

- 1.2.1 This Planning Statement supports and accompanies an application for planning permission for the development associated with the construction and operation of a new railway station in Ashington. Further details of the proposed development are provided in Section 5 of this Planning Statement.

1.3 Applicant and Agent

- 1.3.1 SLC Property Ltd has been instructed on behalf of Northumberland County Council to prepare this planning application.

1.4 The Scheme

- 1.4.1 The Northumberland Line proposes to offer a direct passenger service between Newcastle Central to Ashington. It is anticipated that the proposed service will call at the existing Manors railway station and at six proposed new station sites at Northumberland Park, Seaton Delaval, Newsham, Bebside, Bedlington and Ashington. Figure 1.1 illustrates the locations of the six new railway stations.

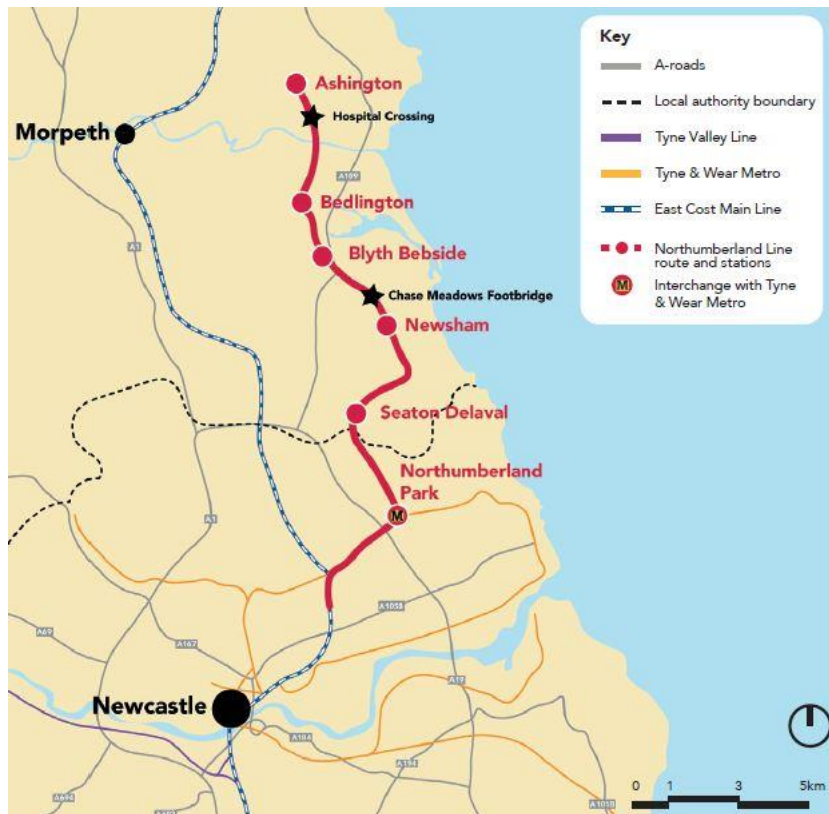


Figure 1.1 Northumberland Line

- 1.4.2 The scheme seeks to encourage a modal shift towards rail travel, assisting in reducing congestion and therefore improving journey times both on the local highway network, and for users of public transport. The scheme anticipates a journey time of approximately 35 minutes between Ashington and Newcastle.
- 1.4.3 The 'Northumberland Line' is located within the administrative areas of three local planning authorities.
- **Northumberland County Council (NCC):** Five of the six proposed railway stations are located within the NCC administrative boundary: Seaton Delaval, Newsham, Bebside, Bedlington and Ashington.
 - **North Tyneside Council (NTC):** The proposed railway station at Northumberland Park is located within the NTC administrative boundary.
 - **Newcastle City Council:** There are no new stations proposed within the Newcastle City Council administrative boundary, however passenger services along the Northumberland Line will operate to and from Newcastle Central station.

1.5 Supporting Information

1.5.1 The application for planning permission is accompanied by the supporting information identified as required by the local planning authority in discussions prior to submission. The nature, extent and scope of the supporting information is in accordance with the advice and recommendations given by officers of the local planning authority. The schedule of submitted information is summarised in Figure 1.2.

Document/Plan reference number	Name of document/Plan
60601435-ACM-XX-ZZ-DRG-LEP-000015	Site Location Plan
60601435-SLC-P-270-A-PS	Planning Statement
60601435-ACM-07-PL-DRG-ECV-000002	Existing General Arrangement
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EHW-070003	Car Park Existing Public Utilities Layout
60601435-ACM-07-PL-DRG-ECV-000003	Proposed General Arrangement
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-ECV-000002	General Arrangement Level Option
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EST-001301	Proposed Wansbeck Sq Lift Access General Arrangement
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EST-001302	Proposed Wansbeck Sq Lift Access Side Elevation
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EST-001303	Proposed Wansbeck Sq Lift Access Front Elevation
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EHW-070001	Highways General Arrangement
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EHW-070002	Highways typical cross sections
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EHW-070004	Traffic sign and road marking layout
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EHW-070006	Highways Drainage Layout
60601435-ACM-07-ZZ-DRG-EHW-070007	Vehicle Tracking
60601435-ACM-07-PL-DRG-ECV-000006	Platform Drainage General Arrangement
60601435-ACM-07-PL-DRG-ECV-000007	Typical Section and Platform Details
60601435-ACM-XX-ZZ-DRG-EPT-000067	E&P Proposed Lighting Layout
60601435-ACM-XX-ZZ-DRG-EEN-000502	Ashington - Landscape Design
60601435-SLC-P-270-A-LTVO	Landscape Statement
60601435-SLC-P-270-A-DAS	Design and Access Statement
60601435-SLC-P-270-A-ECIA	Ecological Impact Assessment (including net gain statement)
60601435-ACM-XX-ZZ-REP-EEN-000032	Arboriculture Assessment
60601435-SLC-P-270-A-SCE	Statement of Community Engagement
Final Issue_TA_Northumberland Line-Ashington	Transport Assessment
Ashington_FRA_final	Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment
Ashington_Heritage_Statement	Heritage assessment (including archaeology assessment)
Ashington Railway Station NIA Report_2	Noise and Vibration Assessment
Ashington Station PSSR	Geo-technical Desk Based Assessment (including coal mining risk assessment)
Ashington Station_Air Quality Assessment Report_final	Air Quality Impact Assessment
60601435-SLC-P-270-A-HW	Health and Wellbeing Statement
60601435-SLC-P-270-A-PS	Economic Assessment (within the Planning Statement)
60601435-SLC-P-270-A-CEMP	Outline CEMP
Ashington_Services and Utilities Statement_final	Services and utilities Statement

Figure 1.2 Schedule of supporting information

1.6 Structure of this statement

- Section 2 sets out the background to the development and highlights the relevant planning history for the site and adjacent land.
- Section 3 summarises the engagement with the NCC, stakeholders and the public which has informed the submitted scheme.
- Section 4 introduces the application site and describes the surrounding areas.
- Section 5 describes the proposed development.
- Section 6 sets out the policies and other determining factors at both a national and local level which are relevant to the determination of the planning application.
- Section 7 addresses the proposed development against the policies identified in Section 6.
- Section 8 describes the material considerations.
- Section 9 provides a summary of the case for planning permission to be granted.

2 Background to the Proposed Development

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The purpose of this section is to provide a background to the ambitions held by key stakeholders for the reintroduction of passenger services on the 'Northumberland Line'.

2.2 Ambitions for a new passenger service

2.2.1 The reintroduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line is a long-held ambition of Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council, Newcastle City Council, North East Combined Authority, Network Rail and other partners and key stakeholders. This section provides a summary of recent support for new railway stations and introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line, with particular reference to the proposed railway station at Ashington.

2.2.2 The scheme seeks to improve connectivity and accessibility in the South East Northumberland Corridor (SEN Corridor). The scheme is a priority of Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council, Newcastle City Council, North East Combined Authority and is supported by a number of key project partners, including the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail, Transport for the North (TfN) Nexus and Northern Rail.

2.2.3 South East Northumberland is the most densely populated area of Northumberland, where the county's three largest towns are located: Cramlington, Blyth and Ashington. Crucially, the most densely populated settlements of Ashington and Blyth are not served by a passenger rail service.

2.2.4 At present, bus journey times are uncompetitive in comparison with car journey times from Newcastle to Ashington. The average journey time by bus between Newcastle and Ashington is more than 60 minutes.

2.2.5 The lack of viable and efficient modal choice has resulted in significant dependence on the private car by residents and visitors within South East Northumberland, increasing highway congestion, delaying journey times and adversely impacting local air quality. The aforementioned issues are exacerbated by the high percentage of residents who commute to nearby Newcastle and North Tyneside for work, leisure and retail opportunities. The 2011 Census identified a new outflow of commuters from Northumberland of over 23,000 people (37% of the population). This is expected to have increased in the last decade. Of those commuters, 65% of trips originating in Northumberland are made by car, which is higher than the national and regional average.

2.2.6 The scheme supports the strategic objectives of Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council and other key stakeholders, as summarised below, to improve sustainable

transport connections, which will facilitate economic growth, assist in reducing local highway congestion and contribute to improvements in local air quality.

- 2.2.7 Improving the links from towns such as Ashington and Blyth is critical to encouraging more sustainable access to the key regional economic centres in Tyne and Wear and South East Northumberland. This includes the regionally significant business parks at Wansbeck and Ashwood, Cobalt, Quorum, Gosforth and Balliol and the renewables energy sector businesses located in the Blyth Estuary. Wansbeck Business Park is located approximately 500 metres to the north east of the site of the proposed railway station at Ashington, which will assist in improving access for staff and visitors.
- 2.2.8 It is anticipated that enhancements to transport links within South East Northumberland will be instrumental in stimulating economic investment within the region. The reintroduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line will improve the accessibility and connectivity of South East Northumberland to the wider North East area, which may help to bring forward the much-needed delivery of housing allocations and other infrastructure.

Northumberland County Council

- 2.2.9 The Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019–2024 considers the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line, as a ‘dormant asset’¹. The re-introduction of the railway line is a top priority for South East Northumberland. The scheme is a key deliverable for the next stage of the Economic Strategy and has been identified as a catalyst for unlocking commercial investment throughout the area.
- 2.2.10 The Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2011–2026 sets out the Council’s visions, aims and objectives for transport over this period. The strategy identifies that levels of deprivation in South East Northumberland are exacerbated by accessibility issues². As such, the current public transport options are considered not to meet the needs of all residents in Northumberland. The Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line is identified as a key area of development within the South East Northumberland Public Transport Corridor³. The strategy identifies the potential socio-economic and environmental benefits the scheme could bring to the area.

¹ The Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019–24 p19

² Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2011–2026 p45

³ Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2011–2026 p118

North Tyneside Council

- 2.2.11 The adopted North Tyneside Local Plan (2017) considers 'Future transport provision should reflect existing demand and also take account of planned economic and housing growth to ensure an integrated approach to sustainable development and travel patterns⁴.
- 2.2.12 North Tyneside Council supports the common objectives of the North East Combined Authority and Northumberland County Council in seeking to deliver a modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport. Notably, the local plan safeguards the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Railway to ensure the transport infrastructure can be delivered with limited constraints.
- 2.2.13 Paragraph 10.25 of the North Tyneside Local Plan states:

"The reinstatement of passenger services over the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Railway is seen as a key driver for delivering growth in South East Northumberland. It is crucial that the potential should be retained for reopening of this route to passenger traffic in the future, an importance reflected through the safeguarding of the alignment in the Local Plan. The proposal would link South East Northumberland to Newcastle with options to serve Ashington, Bedlington and Morpeth including the possibility for an interchange station, between heavy rail, Metro and bus services, at Northumberland Park. Reinstatement of this passenger service is a key aspiration of Northumberland County Council and North Tyneside Council. Significant progress has already been made, including progressing plans through a Network Rail GRIP study and in assembling funding bid packages. Various options are currently being appraised for station sites, service frequency and infrastructure requirements for both development and operation. Although closed to passenger traffic since the mid-1960s, the majority of the route is still in use as an existing freight line, but the North Tyneside Local Plan also includes the protection of land which would enable the option of direct access from Seghill southwards towards Percy Main (as shown on the Policies Map)."

North East Combined Authority

- 2.2.14 The '20-year Transport Manifesto'⁵ produced by the North East Combined Authority' has a vision to provide 'provide affordable, attractive, reliable, safe, healthy transport choices for businesses, residents and visitors whilst enhancing the environment' The strategy identifies local rail and metro as a way to drive economic growth. Although the Northumberland Line scheme is not specifically identified, the strategic identifies the upgrading of freight-only sections to passenger use as an objective.

⁴ North Tyneside Local Plan (2017) p153

⁵ North East Combined Authority (2016) A 20-year Transport Manifesto for the North East Combined Authority

Transport for the North

- 2.2.15 Transport for the North published a 'Strategic Transport Plan in 2019 which outlines the ambitions for the growth of the Northern Powerhouse until 2050.
- 2.2.16 The plan identifies the importance of encouraging a modal shift towards rail in meeting transport objectives for the region⁶. This includes contributing to meeting commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and driving towards the inclusive growth agenda.
- 2.2.17 The strategy considers that 'To realise the benefits of agglomeration and economic mass, the North requires faster, more efficient, reliable and sustainable journeys on the road and rail networks⁷.
- 2.2.18 The aims and objectives of Transport for the North align with the principles of the Northumberland Lines scheme. The Northumberland Line seeks to improve connectivity in South East Northumberland, which contributes to the aim that: *'improvements should ensure that all areas of opportunity are connected, and that communities are not disconnected and further isolated⁸'*.

2.3 Ambitions for a railway station at Ashington

- 2.3.1 The site of the new railway station located within Ashington town centre. It is considered the new railway station will support and enhance ambitions for the future role of Ashington. Furthermore, the proposed station will strengthen the role of the town centre and the strategically important employment sites at Ashwood Business Park, Northumberland College and Wansbeck Hospital. The main shopping street in Ashington is located approximately 100 metres to the north of the site of the proposed station. As such, the proposed railway station will assist in improving access for staff and visitors.
- 2.3.2 There are a number of aspirations for growth and development within Ashington. The 'Ashington Investment Plan (2015)' outlines an *'ambitious ten-year programme that will see up to £74 million invested in regeneration and redevelopment, bringing over 1000 high-quality jobs to the heart of Ashington and transforming the town centre economy⁹'*. The aspirations include the re-development of Wansbeck shopping centre which is located immediately to the north of the site of the proposed station. As such, it is considered the new station will support ambitions to re-develop the shopping centre.

⁶ Transport for the North (2019) Strategic Transport Plan, p87

⁷ Transport for the North (2019) Strategic Transport Plan, p8

⁸ Transport for the North (2019) Strategic Transport Plan, p8

⁹ Ashington Investment Plan (2015) p4

2.3.3 Ashwood Business Park is designated as an enterprise zone¹⁰ for Northumberland’s Advanced Manufacturing sector. There are also aspirations to expand Wansbeck Business Park, which is located approximately 500 metres to the north east of the site of the proposed station. Furthermore, it is anticipated that 49 hectares of land will be available for employment uses following regeneration of the land of the former Lynemouth aluminium smelter.

2.3.4 The proposed development will provide sustainable transport infrastructure, reducing reliance on the private car for residents which will assist in reducing congestion on the local highway network, and improving access to employment and leisure opportunities across the North East. As such, it is considered the proposed development will support aspirations for growth by improving the accessibility of the potential future development.

2.4 Committed Development

2.4.1 The site is located in close proximity to land used for employment, retail and residential purposes.

2.4.2 A review of planning applications on land adjacent to the site (both determined and in the process of being determined) has been undertaken to identify any consented developments which may be material considerations in the determining of a planning application for the proposed railway station.

2.4.1 Figure 2.1 describes those developments which have been granted planning permission [committed development] as listed on Northumberland County Council’s planning public access system on the 23rd of November 2020 within 500 metres of the red line boundary. Figure 2.1 also identifies planning applications which are awaiting determination which have the potential to be ‘material considerations’ in the determination of the planning application.

Reference	Address	Description of proposal	Date of approval
20/01017/FUL	Construction of 1no. retail unit (Class A1) along with access and servicing arrangements, car parking, landscaping and associated works.	Land at East of Ashington Bus Station Lintonville Terrace Ashington Northumberland	30 th September 2020
19/03489/FUL	Full planning permission for the erection of a 2,599 sqm/27,975 sqft (GEA) cinema (Use Class D2), incorporating 544 sqm/5,859 sqft (GIA) of ancillary restaurant provision (Use	Land South of Petrol Station Lintonville Terrace Ashington Northumberland	8 th January 2020

¹⁰ Designated in the North East Strategic Economic Plan (2017); Northumberland Economic Strategy 2019–2024 and Emerging Northumberland Local Plan

Reference	Address	Description of proposal	Date of approval
	Class A3) and 120 associated car parking spaces. Outline planning permission for 1,115 sqm/12,000 sqft (GEA) of retail development (Use Classes A1/A2 and A3) and associated parking (no reserved matters discharged at this stage).		
15/04009/FUL	Infrastructure application: comprising upgrade of existing and creation of new highway, modifications and upgrading of existing junctions, new roundabout, street lighting and furniture and associated hard and soft landscaping. Replacement of existing bus shelters and associated infrastructure.	Lintonville Terrace, Woodhorn Road, Grand Corner Ashington Northumberland	10 th March 2016

Figure 2.1 Schedule of committed developments

- 2.4.1 It is considered the scheme which is the subject of this planning application would not preclude or impact on the delivery of the committed developments set out in the table above. The scheme which is the subject of this application for planning permission does not impact any of the land that pertains to those committed developments. It is anticipated that appropriate measures will be implemented during the construction phase to avoid or mitigate any impacts on the delivery of those adjacent developments.
- 2.4.2 Figure 2.1 indicates that a large site designated for leisure and retail uses has been approved approximately 250 metres to the north east of the site of the proposed station. It is considered the proposed station and car park would complement those developments, improving access to those businesses for residents, staff, customers and visitors.
- 2.4.3 Furthermore, it is considered the station will stimulate future investment and economic growth in the surrounding area, reinforcing the role of Ashington as a main town centre for Northumberland.

3 Pre-application Engagement

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The proposed development has been the subject of extensive and ongoing engagement with officers and Members of Northumberland County Council, and other key stakeholders.
- 3.1.2 This section provides a summary of the formal pre-application discussions and engagement that has been undertaken pertaining to this planning application.

3.2 Pre-application enquiries

- 3.2.1 Informal dialogue with local authority officers and members was undertaken prior to the submission of a formal pre-application to Northumberland County Council as the local planning authority on the 9th of August 2019. A formal response to the pre-application enquiry was received from the local planning authority on 1st October 2019.
- 3.2.2 The response indicated that the principle of development would likely be supported, however an application for planning would need to be supported by assessments to ascertain the extent of any potential impacts:
- 'the principle of development may vary from site to site, but a case could be made that would likely to receive support. The proposals are considered by Northumberland County Council to be in accordance with the development plan'*¹¹.
- 3.2.3 Overall, the local planning authority considered that *'the benefits that could be delivered to the South East of Northumberland, should be able to address any harm that may be created by each application through the wider benefits that would be proposed and deliverable'*.
- 3.2.4 The formal pre-application response did not raise any specific concerns relating to the proposed new railway station at Ashington.
- 3.2.5 Since receipt of the pre-application response, extensive discussions have been held with Northumberland County Council local officers including those from departments for highways, environmental health, ecology, flooding and drainage. During these discussions various surveys, assessments and draft designs and proposals have been shared. Those discussions have also confirmed the scope, extent and nature of the information which is required to be submitted in support of the planning application. The submitted scheme

¹¹ NCC Pre-Application response, Ref: 19/00680/PREAPP (1st October 2019) p14

takes account of the comments and advice received from the local planning authority and other Council services.

- 3.2.6 Further details can be found within the full suite of information which has been submitted in support of this planning application. This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the various submitted plans, surveys and assessment reports.

3.3 Changes to the proposed development since the receipt of pre-application response

- 3.3.1 Subsequent to the submission of the pre-application enquiry and receipt of the formal pre-application response from Northumberland County Council (application ref: 19/00680/PREAPP) on the 1st of October 2019, several changes have been made to the proposed development at Ashington station. Those changes are set out below:

- 1) Transport demand modelling confirmed the need to construct a larger car park.
- 2) The extent of the 'slewing' of the track to provide for the platform and the relationship with the car park has been confirmed to be adjacent to the existing car park.
- 3) Pedestrian connections to John Street and Station Road to be provided via a lift adjacent to the existing Wansbeck Square footbridge.

- 3.3.2 As a consequence of those changes, it has been agreed that the surveys and assessments to be submitted with the planning application would be varied and extended in the following ways:

- 1) The scope of the Transport Assessment has been updated to include impacts on the highway network associated with the additional car parking assessment of car parking demand.
- 2) The scope of the Design and Access Statement has been updated to include the construction of a lift shaft.

3.4 Request for a Screening Opinion (RfSO)

- 3.4.1 A Request for a Screening Opinion (RfSO) was submitted to North Tyneside Council and Northumberland County Council on 28th June 2019 in accordance with the screening procedures laid out in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (hereafter referred to as the EIA Regulations).

- 3.4.2 The Opinion of Northumberland County Council was received on 9th August 2019, confirming that the scheme does not constitute 'EIA development'.

- 3.4.3 As the detailed design of the scheme has evolved, it has become apparent that some components of the scheme have altered from those identified in the previous RfSO, as well as the extent of the land which is required.
- 3.4.4 As a consequence of the changes to the scheme, a further RfSO was submitted on 16th July 2020.
- 3.4.5 On the 19th of November 2020, Northumberland County Council confirmed that the amended scheme *'is not likely to have significant effects on the environment and as such is not considered to be EIA development'*¹².
- 3.4.6 On this basis, an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required to be undertaken and the planning application is not required to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

3.5 Pre-submission stakeholder consultation (2019)

- 3.5.1 The preparation of this planning application, and the scope of the submitted information, has been informed by the responses received to the public consultation undertaken during 2019 and 2020.
- 3.5.2 An initial public consultation was undertaken between the 2nd and 18th September 2019. The objective was to raise awareness of the scheme and ascertain local perceptions of the scheme. The consultation was undertaken through the provision of 'drop in' events, attended by officers of the council and project team representatives. The initial public consultation for the overall Northumberland Line scheme received a total 971 responses. Those responses were considered and used to inform the proposals which were the subject of the public consultation in 2020.

3.6 Pre-submission stakeholder consultation (2020)

- 3.6.1 A second public consultation was undertaken between the 14th of November and 16th December 2020. Discussions were held with officers of the council to confirm the extent, scope, nature, timing and information of this public consultation. The objective was to ascertain local views on the specific proposals for each of the station sites.
- 3.6.2 474 comments were made in connection with the proposals for Ashington station. 82% of the comments were either positive or neutral, 18% were negative. Comments were coded across fifteen themes. Positive responses commonly focussed on the following benefits of the development: economy, interchange and connectivity and the positive impact on the immediate environ and potential for future expansion. Neutral feedback focussed on detail

¹² NCC Screening Opinion, Ref: 20/02242/SCREEN (19th November 2020) p19

of the design, size of car park and connectivity via wayfinding/signage within the local area. Negative feedback focussed on the parking and impact on availability for shoppers, design with concerns raised about the single platform and its inhibiting future service expansion and location.

- 3.6.3 The Statement of Community Engagement submitted in support of this application demonstrates that the project has engaged stakeholders and the local community at the plan-making stage of the proposals when information on the designs was of sufficient level for informed and meaningful engagement. It further demonstrates that the project team has listened and considered the feedback which will feed into the development of the station at Ashington.

3.7 Summary

- 3.7.1 Ongoing consultation with local planning authority officers and other key stakeholders has informed the nature, extent and scope of the information submitted in support of this application. The design submitted in support of this application has been informed by the feedback received during the public consultation and engagement with key stakeholders. Further details can be found in the submitted Statement of Community Engagement.

4 Site Context

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section describes the existing site, adjacent land uses and provides a contextual overview of those considerations which have informed the designs of the submitted scheme. Further details of those considerations and how the submitted scheme has been informed based on an understanding of those considerations and appraisal of alternative development options, are set out in the submitted Design and Access Statement.

4.2 Historical Context

4.2.1 Ashington was once the centre of the coal mining industry in Northumberland. Ashington Station was initially built to convey coal traffic to the River Tyne. The original Ashington Station was open to passenger services as part of the 'Ashington, Blyth and Tyne' line in 1878.

4.2.2 The Blyth and Tyne rail network served the vast number of collieries in the South East Northumberland area into the early twentieth century,

4.2.3 The location of the historic Ashington Station is identified in Figure 4.1.

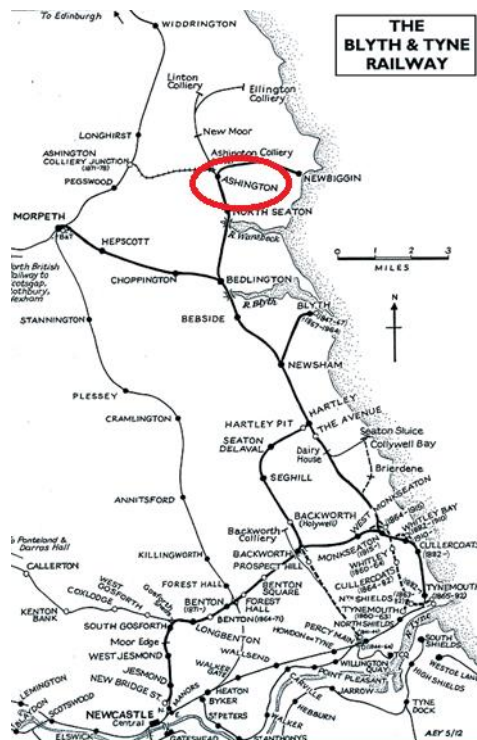


Figure 4.1 Blyth and Tyne Railway Historic Network

4.2.4 The Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line ran its final passenger service in 1964. Several stations were closed as part of the Beeching cuts in the early 60s, including Ashington in 1964. Since

the closure of passenger services, freight trains have continued to operate, primarily serving Lynemouth Power Station.

- 4.2.5 The proposed location for the railway station at Ashington is adjacent to the site of the original station (see Figure 4.2).

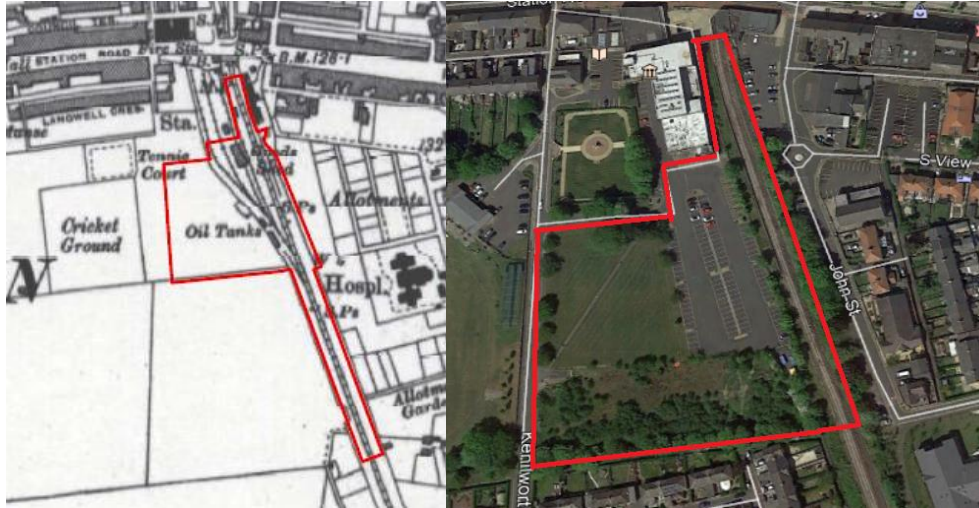


Figure 4.2 Location of Ashington station (Ordnance Map, 1924; Google Earth, 2020)

4.3 Planning History of the Site

- 4.3.1 A desk-based review of the planning applications which have been submitted to and either: consented, refused or withdrawn on the land which comprises the application site has been undertaken.
- 4.3.2 Figure 4.3 describes those relevant applications which have been identified within the red line boundary, based on a review of Northumberland County Council’s planning public access system undertaken on the 23rd of November 2020.

Reference	Address	Description of proposal	Decision	Date
20/02243/SCREEN	Various addresses	Screening request for provision of six new train stations, associated upgrading and refurbishment of existing rail infrastructure and engineering works and the reintroduction of passenger train services.	No EIA required	19 th November 2020
19/02151/SCREEN	Various addresses	Request for a Screening Opinion- Provision of six new train stations, associated upgrading and refurbishment of existing rail infrastructure and engineering works and	No EIA required	9 th August 2019

Reference	Address	Description of proposal	Decision	Date
		the reintroduction of passenger train services.		
07/00537/FUL	Station Yard Car Park North Wansbeck Square Ashington Northumberland NE63 9XH	Maintenance and upgrading of existing car park. To include kerbing and block work around the boundary and a limited number of islands between bays and landscaping. Scheme includes provision of recycling and bicycle bays and full resurface.	Approved	1 st February 2008

Figure 4.3 Planning History

4.3.3 Based on the desk-based review there are not known to be any recent planning or other related applications pertaining to the site, other than the Request for a Screening Opinions submitted to assess the potential requirement for an EIA to support the planning applications for the Northumberland Line scheme.

4.3.4 There are historic permissions relating to car parking construction. The scheme which is the subject of this planning application proposes to construct a new car park to serve the railway station which has capacity to accommodate existing demand.

4.4 Site Selection

4.4.1 To construct a railway station, it must obviously be located adjacent to a railway line. This significantly limits the number of sites available for the proposed development.

4.4.2 The intention for the station at Ashington is to provide easy access to Ashington town centre. As such, the site needs to be located in close proximity to the town centre to provide maximum benefit.

4.4.3 The proposed siting of the station has been determined based on an appraisal of alternative options. Options for a site to accommodate a railway station within Ashington are constrained by existing built development located adjacent to the railway line. A station located to the south of the preferred site would not have provided the same benefits as a site located immediately adjacent to Wansbeck Shopping Centre and the high street.

4.4.4 Furthermore, the site of the proposed station is located to the south of a railway junction. Where the railway line splits, an existing freight line heads north east towards Woodhorn and Lynemouth Power Station. The disused 'Butterwell' railway line heads north towards the site of Linton Colliery. A site located to the north of the preferred station site may have precluded future re-use of the railway lines. As such, the site of the railway station has been chosen to support potential ambitions for future services to the north of Ashington.

4.4.5 The site of the proposed station is adjacent to the site of the historic railway station. The success of the coal mining industry necessitated a rapid expansion of the Blyth and Tyne Railway. As such, the historic railway network embodies the history of the local area. The proposed development supports local heritage by re-introducing a station in close proximity to the site of the historic Ashington Station.

4.4.1 Overall, the site of the proposed station is considered to be the most appropriate and the most beneficial when compared against alternatives.

4.5 Site Description

4.5.1 Ashington is one of the three largest towns within Northumberland. The town is identified within the emerging Northumberland Local Plan as playing a strategic employment role for the county.

4.5.2 Wansbeck Square shopping complex is located immediately to the north of the existing car park at the site. There is an existing ramp which provides access from the car park into the shopping centre and to Station Road (the main shopping street in Ashington). Ashington Memorial Garden is located immediately north of the existing amenity grassland. The railway line is bound to the east by residential and commercial uses on St Johns Street. The site is bound to the south by residential properties on Ashbourne Crescent. The site is bound to the west by Kenilworth Road. Ashington Cricket Ground is located to the west of Kenilworth Road.

4.5.3 The site of the proposed development has an area of 1.89 hectares.

4.5.4 The existing site is comprised of four separate areas:

- 1) Existing Car Park with 105 standard bays and 7 bays for disabled users
- 2) Brownfield site (former care home) to the south
- 3) Amenity grassland on the west
- 4) Existing railway corridor

4.5.5 A permissive path runs south west to north east through the amenity grassland (area 3 as identified above).

4.5.6 The platform is proposed to be constructed within, and to the west of the railway corridor. The car park is proposed to be constructed on the site of the existing car park, brownfield site and amenity grassland. Access to the car park is proposed from Kenilworth Road.

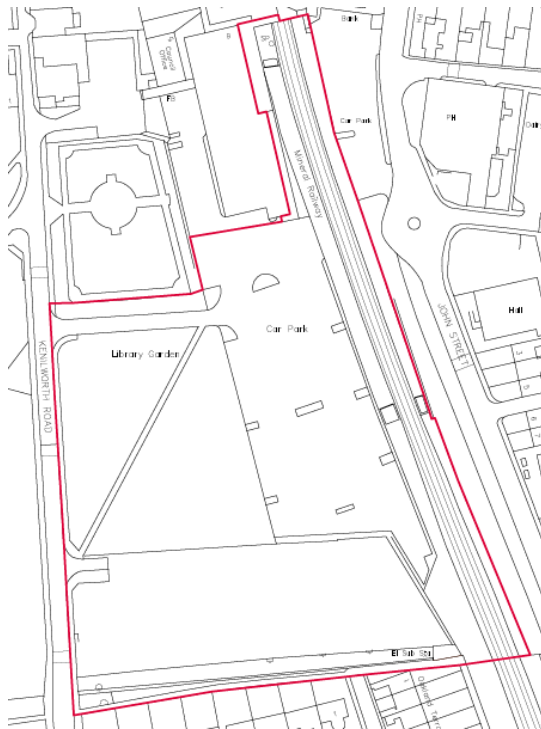


Figure 4.4 Red Line Boundary Plan

4.6 Site-specific environmental and land use constraints

4.6.1 The site-specific policy constraints and land-use designations that pertain to the site are shown on Figure 4.5, extracted from the Emerging Northumberland Local Plan and adopted Wansbeck District Local Plan. This section presents an overview of the constraints, which are assessed in the subsequent chapters of this planning statement. A full extract of the local plan maps and associated legends are available in Appendix B.



Figure 4.5 Extract from Emerging Northumberland Local Plan Reg 19 Draft and Adopted Wansbeck Local Plan.

- 4.6.2 The proposed station site is located within the designated Ashington town centre. As such, developments which maintain and enhance the role of town centres are supported by Adopted Wansbeck Local Plan policy RTC10 and emerging local plan policy TCS3.
- 4.6.3 The railway line is safeguarded for the reintroduction of passenger trains by Policy T1 of the Adopted Wansbeck District Local Plan, and Policy TRA5 of the emerging Local Plan. The proposed station site is located approximately 50 metres to the south of the site designated in the emerging and adopted local plans.
- 4.6.4 Policy INF5 of the emerging local plan designates the amenity grassland located to the west of the site as Protected Open Space.
- 4.6.5 The identified policy constraints and land use designations referenced above are more fully set out in Section 6 and assessed in Section 7 of this Statement.

5 Proposed Development

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section presents the detail of the development proposals which are the subject of this application for planning permission.

5.2 Planning Application

5.2.1 This planning statement has been submitted in support of an application for planning permission for:

Construction of a new single platform railway station including pedestrian lift, new highway access; modifications to existing highways including pedestrian footways; provision of parking for cars, electric vehicles, motorcycles, cycles, and taxis and other associated works including new crossings for pedestrians and cyclists. Construction of facilities ancillary to the station including, lighting, soft and hard landscaping, surface and subsurface drainage, utilities and other services, boundary treatment and other associated works.

5.3 Reasons for the proposed development

5.3.1 The Economic Assessment¹³ produced to support this application for planning permission identifies that the Northumberland Line is forecast to generate approximately £1.45million annual return journeys by 2039¹⁴.

5.3.2 The Economic Assessment submitted in support of this statement identified that 33% of household in Ashington do not have access to a car or a van. At present, Ashington is serviced by a bus network which provides connections to other towns in South East Northumberland, and into Newcastle. However, the average journey time by bus from Newcastle to Ashington is currently 64 minutes at AM Peak. This is not comparable with a car journey time of 35 minutes. As such, journey times on public transport are uncompetitive. The proposed development provides a viable alternative to the existing bus network and private vehicle for residents.

5.3.3 The proposed development will improve accessibility for residents of South East Northumberland and beyond to access employment, education and leisure opportunities outside of local areas. As such, the proposed station is likely to strengthen the role of

¹³ Ashington Economic Assessment (AECOM, 2020) see Appendix A

¹⁴ These forecasts are aligned to a service proposition that has 2 trains per hour operating between Ashington and Newcastle, taking 32 minutes. Rail fares would be set at a similar level to those used on the Tyne & Wear Metro.

Ashington as a town centre and strategic employment site to accommodate future employment, housing and services.

5.4 Elements of proposed development

5.4.1 It is anticipated the Northumberland Line scheme will provide a half hourly service with an anticipated journey time between Newcastle and Ashington of 35 minutes.

5.4.2 Figure 5.1 indicates the proposed site layout for the proposed development.



Figure 5.1 Proposed Site Layout

5.4.3 Figure 5.2 summarises the elements of the proposed development which are the subject of this application for planning permission for the construction and operation of a new railway station.

Figure 5.2 Schedule development proposals

Development Proposals	
Platform	Construction of single platform (approximately 100 metres in length) Platform to include the following facilities: help points, platform lighting, CCTV and waiting shelters. Ticket Vending Machines and Customer Information Screens with real time information to be provided at station entrance. Emergency Access to be constructed to the south of the platform. Retaining wall to be constructed to the south of the site. Noise attenuation fencing to be constructed to the east of the railway corridor.
Car Parking	Construction of car park providing up to 275 spaces, including 17 accessible spaces and 18 Electric Vehicle charging bays. Car park to include taxi drop off. Cycle storage facility to be provided for up to 29 bicycles
Pedestrian and Cycle access	Existing access from Wansbeck Square to be maintained. Pedestrian access from Kenilworth Road to car park. Local pedestrian access to be provided from Oakland Terrace. Lift access to provide step free access (16-man lift) from the existing Wansbeck Square footbridge which links to John Street and the east of the railway line.
Vehicular Access	Existing access and egress from Kenilworth road to be modified. New egress to Kenilworth Road be constructed to the south of the site.
Landscaping	Areas of shrub and specimen tree planting. Hard and soft landscaping.
Biodiversity	It is anticipated that off-site compensatory habitat creation will be undertaken as the existing biodiversity within the site cannot be replaced within the site details are to be agreed with the planning authority.
Drainage	Surface water drainage system to be provided including attenuation tanks, and other measures.
Lighting	Raise/lower lighting columns (typically 6 m in height) to provide platform illumination. Shelter to include in-built lighting. Appropriate lighting to be provided in car park.
Construction	It is anticipated the construction of the station will be undertaken in a period of approximately 4.5 months, however this is subject to safety, access and other considerations.
Services and Utilities	Existing electrical substation to be relocated. Details of existing local services provision provided as part of planning application. Details of works thereto to be provided to discharge a condition.
Signage	Adequate signage will be provided for pedestrians and cyclist movements as well as vehicular traffic. Signage will be provided to amenities within the station such as lifts and stairs. Signage to be provided for pedestrians and cyclists movements as well as vehicular traffic.

5.5 Summary

- 5.5.1 The emerging proposals have attracted support based on pre-application discussions with local planning authority officers and key stakeholders. Section 7 assesses compliance of the proposed development against those local and national planning policies.

6 Planning Policy Context

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 This section outlines the principal planning policies that pertain to the proposed development. It is important to note that the thematic survey reports and assessments submitted in support of this application contain further additional information and further details of other relevant policies (e.g., ecology).
- 6.1.2 In England, there is a hierarchical structure of policy covering national and local planning. At a national level the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. At a local level, development plans set out planning policy for the area.
- 6.1.3 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.1.4 Therefore, the starting point from a planning perspective in the determination of this planning application is the development plan. The development plan in respect of the application site comprises the Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007).
- 6.1.5 The NPPF advises at paragraph 213 that, in respect of development plans adopted prior to publication of the NPPF, local planning authorities should afford due weight to relevant policies according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF; the closer the policies in the Plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given.
- 6.1.6 In accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF, weight may also be given to the policies in emerging plans, depending on the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent to which emerging policy aligns with the NPPF and the extent of unresolved objections to the emerging plan. The latest version of the Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in May 2019 and is currently at examination. Relevant policies in this Plan are a material consideration in determining this application and it is considered that such policies can be afforded some weight at this time.
- 6.1.7 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF provides definitive guidance on how applications should be determined by stating:

“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:

Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies

which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. *The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. *Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework as a whole.”*

6.2 Northumberland Development Plan

6.2.1 Northumberland County Council was established as a unitary authority on 1st April 2009 following Local Government Reorganisation. It replaced the former County Council and six District/ Borough Councils of Alnwick, Berwick, Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth, Tynedale and Wansbeck.

6.2.2 The former Northumberland local planning authorities had produced their own Development Plans to guide development within their administrative boundaries, of relevance to this application are:

- The saved Local Plan policies (under the Secretary of State’s Direction) of the Wansbeck District Local Plan (2007).

6.2.3 Policies contained within those documents that have been ‘saved’ under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 will remain in force and will continue to provide the basis for planning decisions until replaced by subsequent Development Plan Documents.

6.2.4 These documents, together with any made Neighbourhood Plans, have been brought together to form the ‘Northumberland Consolidated Planning Policy Framework’.

6.2.5 Planning law states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. The closer the policies in the Development Plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that can be given to the development plan policies.

6.2.6 Northumberland County Council is focusing on the preparation of a Local Plan for Northumberland. The Northumberland Local Plan will:

- set the strategic planning policies of the Council;
- provide the planning principles, including detailed development management policies to guide future development and planning decisions in Northumberland to 2036;

- set the general scale and distribution of new development which is required to meet Northumberland's needs to 2036;
- include strategic allocations as well as detailed land allocations and designations; and
- include site specific proposals for the development, protection and conservation of land.

6.2.7 Once adopted, the Northumberland Local Plan will supersede those existing development plan documents which collectively comprise the 'Northumberland Consolidated Planning Policy Framework'.

6.2.8 The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 29th May 2019 and is currently undergoing independent examination. Given that the examination of the Plan is currently ongoing, this Planning Statement considers both the extant and emerging local planning policies that are of relevance to the determination of this application for planning permission.

6.2.9 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that:

"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 plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

6.2.10 Therefore, the starting point from a planning perspective in considering the acceptability or otherwise of the proposals is the development plan. The development plan in respect of the application site comprises the Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007).

6.2.11 The NPPF advises at paragraph 213 that, in respect of Development Plans adopted prior to publication of the NPPF, local planning authorities should afford due weight according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the Plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.2.12 In accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF, weight may also be given to the policies in emerging plans depending on the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent to which emerging policy aligns with the NPPF and the extent of unresolved objections to the emerging plan. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to Secretary of State for examination in May 2019 and is currently undergoing examination. It is therefore considered that relevant policies can be given some weight presently and can be given increasing weight as the Plan moves towards adoption.

6.3 Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007)

6.3.1 The relevant policies of the extant Local Plan that pertain to the scheme which is the subject of this planning application are identified as follows:

Policy GP1: Spatial Strategy

6.3.2 Policy GP1 states that provided that proposals are in accordance with other policies of the Plan, development on previously developed sites and buildings with settlement limits will be permitted. Development on greenfield sites within settlement limits will only be permitted if:

- The site is allocated for development; or
- It can be demonstrated that the development will meet an identified and justified need and no suitable alternative previously developed site is available.

Policy GP4: Accessibility

6.3.3 Policy GP4 stipulates that new development should be located to reduce the need to travel and to minimise journey length. It should be accessible to all users by a choice of means of transport including buses, walking and cycling.

Policy GP5: Landscape Character

6.3.4 Policy GP5 states that development must respect the character of the District's landscape. Proposals will be assessed in terms of:

- The siting, scale and design of buildings and materials; and
- The effect on distant views

Policy GP6: Trees and hedgerows

6.3.5 Policy GP6 states that the authority will seek to protect trees, woodlands and hedgerows in the District and will encourage new planting, particularly of native species. Development which would result in the loss of healthy trees which make an important contribution to the quality of the environment will not be permitted unless there are overriding social or economic benefits to the community and compensatory off-site provision of landscape infrastructure is made. Healthy trees lost as a consequence of development shall be replaced with trees of an equivalent standard.

Policy G13: Biodiversity and wildlife networks

6.3.6 Policy G13 states that the value to biodiversity of all sites proposed for development will be considered when planning applications are determined whether or not they are designated sites. Particular importance will be attached to the protection of priority habitats and species in Wansbeck. Where proposals affect a habitat which contributes, or could potentially contribute, to a network of natural habitats the developer will be required to protect and enhance the network.

Policy GP21: Archaeology

- 6.3.7 Policy GP21 states that where evidence suggests that a proposed development could disturb archaeological remains, the developers will be required, before their planning application is determined, to provide information on the character and extent of the remains and any measures they propose to mitigate the impact of development. A field evaluation will be required if judged necessary.

Policy GP22: Flood risk and erosion

- 6.3.8 Policy GP22 states that developers are required to consider the risk to their development from flooding and erosion and to consider any possible effect of their development on flood risk or erosion elsewhere. Development in areas of flood risk will not be permitted unless a flood risk assessment has been carried out and it can be demonstrated that:

- There is no reasonable alternative development option available which would involve no risk or a lower risk of flooding; and
- The development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; and
- Satisfactory protection measures can be carried out at the expense of the developer and maintained for the lifetime of the development

Policy GP23: Pollution and nuisance

- 6.3.9 Policy GP23 states that when determining planning applications, the authority will consider whether a proposed development has the potential to cause pollution or nuisance. Planning permission will not be granted for development liable to cause significant harm to either:

- Human health and safety
- The amenity of local residents and other land users
- The quality and enjoyment of all aspects of the environment

Policy GP25: Noise

- 6.3.10 Policy GP25 states that when determining planning applications, the authority will consider the levels and characteristics of any noise which may be generated as a result of permitting the development. The likely impact will be assessed in terms of the following:

- Any disturbance to people living in the area; and
- Any disturbance to other noise-sensitive uses such as hospitals, schools, colleges, offices and community buildings; and
- Any effect on people's enjoyment of the outdoor environment including gardens, parks, the coast and the countryside; and

- Any disturbance to wildlife or livestock

Policy GP29: Land contamination

- 6.3.11 Policy GP29 states that where there is reason to suspect that land is affected by contamination, applicants for planning permission will be required to submit a report of a desk study of previous uses of the site and their potential for contamination. Unless the study clearly demonstrates that the risk to the proposed uses is acceptable, furthermore detailed investigations will be required before the application is determined to assess the risks and identify and appraise the options for remediation.
- 6.3.12 Development will only be permitted if sustainable and feasible remediation solutions are adopted to secure the removal of unacceptable risk and make the site suitable for its new use.

Policy GP30: Visual Impact

- 6.3.13 Policy GP30 states that all proposed development will be assessed in terms of its visual impact. Developments which in visual terms would cause significant harm to the character or quality of the surrounding environment will be refused.

Policy GP31: Urban Design

- 6.3.14 Policy GP31 states that when considering any proposed development, the authority will require high standards of urban design to:
- Promote character in townscape and landscape and establish local identity; and
 - Clearly define public and private spaces; and
 - Encourage accessibility; and
 - Make places with a clear image that is easy to understand, by providing recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks; and
 - Promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.

Policy GP32: Landscaping and the Public Realm

- 6.3.15 Policy GP32 states that developers are required to incorporate a high standard of landscape treatment in their developments. When submitting planning applications, developers will be required to demonstrate that:
- Any existing landscape features of value including trees, shrubs, hedgerows and ponds, will be retained, protected and used to advantage as part of the development; and

- New landscape features will be introduced which enhance the visual quality of the development, reduce its impact and provide habitat for the district's wildlife; and
- New landscape features to be introduced will be appropriate to the use and character of the development and its location; and
- Opportunities to create new public spaces and improve existing ones have been considered.

Policy GP35: Crime Prevention

6.3.16 Policy GP35 states that development proposals will be expected to have regard to the objectives of 'planning out crime' through the incorporation of measures such as:

- Promotion of schemes that increase the range of activities that maximise the opportunities for surveillance,
- Maximising the amount of defensible space which is controlled, or perceived to be controlled, by occupiers,
- A high standard of street lighting

Policy T1: Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Rail Line

6.3.17 Policy T1 states that the re-introduction of passenger services on the rail line between Newcastle and Ashington will be supported and promoted. Land which may be required for associated facilities such as stations, bus stops and car parks will be safeguarded.

Policy T3: Provision for cyclists

6.3.18 Policy T3 states that improved facilities for cycling in the District will be sought. Cyclists will be provided for as part of highway and traffic management schemes and by developers as part of new developments. Provision will include the development of safe and convenient routes and cycle parking facilities. Developers will be required as a condition of planning permission to provide cycle parking as part of their developments.

Policy T4: Provision for walking

6.3.19 Policy T4 states that measures to assist and encourage walking will be sought including the development of a comprehensive network of footpaths and footways. Developers will be required to provide safe, convenient and pleasant routes for pedestrians.

Policy T5: Access for people with reduced mobility

6.3.20 Policy T5 states that an environment which is accessible to all will be sought. Developers will be required to make appropriate provision for those with reduced mobility as part of their developments.

Policy T6: Traffic implications of new development

6.3.21 Policy T6 states that when planning applications are determined, the volume and character of traffic likely to be generated by and attracted to the proposed development will be considered. Proposals will only be permitted if:

- The existing highway network is adequate to cope with any additional traffic resulting from the development or necessary improvement works will be carried out before the development goes ahead; and
- The proposed arrangements for access and egress will allow the safe and efficient movement of vehicles; and
- Internal circulation arrangements will be able to absorb vehicular traffic entering the site without queues forming on existing roads and will include measures to achieve safe traffic speeds; and
- Adequate provision is made, in terms of safety and operating efficiency, for servicing and deliveries and for other heavy vehicles such as buses and emergency vehicles.

Policy T7: Parking provision in new development

6.3.22 Policy T7 states that developers should make appropriate provision in their developments for the parking of motor vehicles and motorcycles.

Policy REC2: Recreation and Open Space

6.3.23 Policy REC2 states that planning permission for development on open spaces not designated as being of strategic importance will only be granted if there is shown to be a surplus of open space by way of an assessment of open space needs and opportunities in the area that there will be no significant loss to the community in terms of either:

- a) visual amenity; or
- b) provision for play and recreation; or
- c) nature conservation; or
- d) use for community events

Policy REC11: Access to the countryside and coast

6.3.24 Policy REC11 states that improvements to the network of recreational footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways in the District will be sought. When new routes are planned, the impact on existing uses and interests will be taken into account and potential harm minimised. Existing routes will be protected.

6.4 Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Publication Draft (May 2019)

6.4.1 The NPPF advises at paragraph 48 that weight may also be given to the policies in emerging plans depending on the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent to which emerging policy aligns with the NPPF and the extent of unresolved objections to the emerging plan. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to Secretary of State for examination in May 2019 and is currently undergoing examination. It is therefore considered that relevant policies can be given some weight presently and can be given increasing weight as the Plan moves towards adoption.

6.4.2 The relevant policies of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan that pertain to the scheme which is the subject of this planning application are identified as follows:

Policy STPI: Spatial Strategy

6.4.3 Policy STPI states that sustainable development within, or immediately adjacent to, the built-up form of Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages without defined settlement boundaries, will be supported, if it is commensurate with size of the settlement, and it can be demonstrated that it does not adversely impact upon the character of the settlement.

6.4.4 Development in the open countryside will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that it:

- Provides for essential transport, utilities and energy infrastructure in accordance with other policies in the Local Plan.

6.4.5 The policy goes on to state that development in the open countryside should be sensitive to its surroundings, not have an unacceptable impact upon the local road network and use previously developed land where opportunities exist.

Policy STP2: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development

6.4.6 Policy STP2 states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It will always work pro-actively with applicants to seek to find solutions that mean proposals that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area can be approved wherever possible.

Policy STP3: Principles of Sustainable Development

6.4.7 Policy STP3 states that in applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development in Northumberland and to deliver against economic, social and environmental objectives, development proposals will be expected to deliver across the range of the economic, social and environmental factors, and adhere to the following principles where appropriate:

- Contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy across Northumberland, support more and better jobs, protect and enhance the vitality and viability of Northumberland's town centres and other important economic sectors;
- Minimise their impact upon local amenity for new or existing residents and businesses, adjoining premises and land uses;
- Support and provide opportunities to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and provide the infrastructure which is required to enhance the quality of life of individuals and communities;
- Demonstrate high quality sustainable design which is accessible to all, and which respects and enhances the local distinctiveness of the natural, historic and built environment, helps promote a sense of place, reduces the need for energy, and facilitates flexible and adaptable buildings and environments;
- Be accessible by, or be able to be made accessible by public transport, walking or cycling where feasible, thereby reducing the need to travel for both people and goods, and the dependence on travel by private car;
- Make best use of existing facilities and infrastructure, whilst making appropriate provision for new or additional infrastructure as required;

Policy STP4: Climate change mitigation and adaptation

6.4.8 Policy STP4 states that Development proposals should mitigate climate change and contribute to meeting nationally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. When determining planning applications, support will be given to how development proposals that help mitigate climate change and consideration will be given to how proposals:

- Through their location, layout and pattern of development, reduce the need to travel for both people and goods, and encourage sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Policy STP5: Health and wellbeing

6.4.9 Policy STP5 states that development which promotes, supports and enhances the health and wellbeing of communities, residents, workers and visitors will be supported. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they:

- are safe, comfortable, inclusive and attractive and prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement;
- provide access to a range of facilities including public transport, health, education, social care, green spaces, sport, play and leisure facilities

6.4.10 The policy requires that a Health Impact Assessment Screening be submitted for all major development proposals to determine whether the potential impact on health resulting from

the development warrants any further assessment. Where further assessment is warranted, a proportionate Health Impact Assessment will also be required to be submitted as part of the application. A Health Impact Assessment will be required to include proposals to mitigate any adverse health impacts, maximise potential positive impacts, and help reduce health inequalities.

Policy QOP1: Design Principles

6.4.11 Policy QOP1 states that in determining planning applications, design will be assessed against the following design principles, in accordance with the Northumberland Design Guide.

Policy QOP2: Good Design and Amenity

6.4.12 Policy QOP2 states that development will be required to provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users of the development itself and preserve the amenity of those living in, working in or visiting the local area.

6.4.13 Development which would result in unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses, in terms of both individual and cumulative impacts, will not be supported.

Policy QOP4: Landscaping and Trees

6.4.14 Policy QOP4 states that where relevant, new development will be expected to incorporate well-designed landscaping and respond appropriately to any existing landscape features. Development proposals should ensure that:

- Landscaping design is of a high quality, in accordance with the principles set out in Policy QOP 1;
- Existing features which contribute towards the character of the area, or amenity, are retained wherever possible and sympathetically incorporated into the overall design of the scheme;
- Any hard or soft landscaping is appropriate, functional and well-integrated into the design of the development;
- Trees, and other spaces and features that provide green and blue infrastructure, are preserved, enhanced and introduced into the landscaping scheme wherever possible;

Policy QOP6: Delivering well-designed places

6.4.15 Policy QOP6 states that proposals are expected to meet the local design expectations set out in design policies within the Plan, the Northumberland Design Guide, and any other design guidance. Proposals are expected to respond to any character assessments that form part of or support the Plan. Where a Design and Access Statement is required as part of a planning application, there must be a clear and proportionate demonstration of:

- How relevant design policies, the Northumberland Design Guide, character assessments and any other design guidance supporting the Plan, have been integral to the design development process;
- A robust analysis of the context and character of the site and the local area, in addition to the functional requirements of the intended use;
- The design concept and the evolution of the design development through drawings or models, including explanatory text as appropriate; and
- Where relevant, how consultation with communities and other relevant stakeholders has informed the design.

Policy TRA1: Promoting sustainable connections

6.4.16 Policy TRA1 states that the council will support development that:

- Promotes a spatial distribution which creates accessible development, reduces the need to travel by car, and maximises the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- Promotes good design principles in respect of the permeability, connectivity and legibility of buildings and public spaces; and inclusive access;
- Promotes sustainable transport choices, including supporting, providing and connecting to networks for walking, cycling and public transport; and infrastructure that supports the use of low and ultra low emission vehicles;
 - a. Ensures delivery of cycle parking and supporting infrastructure;
 - b. Protects, enhances and supports public rights of way;
 - c. Supports the delivery of reliable, safe and efficient transport networks, in partnership with other organisations, service providers and developers;
 - d. Requires development to be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra low emission vehicles in safe, accessible, convenient locations; and
 - e. Requires development proposals which generate significant amounts of movements to be supported by a Transport Assessment/ Transport Statement, and Travel Plans, and where appropriate, delivery/servicing plans.

Policy TRA2: The effects of development on the transport network

6.4.17 Policy TRA2 states that all developments affecting the transport network will be required to:

- a. Provide effective and safe access and egress to the existing transport network;

- b. Include appropriate measures to mitigate and manage any adverse impacts on the transport network including any contribution to cumulative impacts;
- c. Minimise conflict between different modes of transport, including measures for network, traffic and parking management;
- d. Facilitate the safe use of the network, including suitable crossing points, footways and dedicated provision for cyclists where necessary;
- e. Suitably accommodate the delivery of goods and supplies, access for maintenance and refuse collection; and
- f. Minimise any adverse impact on communities and the environment, including noise and air quality

Policy TRA4: Parking provision in new development

- 6.4.18 Policy TRA4 states that an appropriate amount of off-street vehicle parking sufficient to serve new development shall be made available in safe, accessible and convenient locations prior to the development, as a whole or in part, being brought into use. Vehicle parking shall be provided in accordance with the parking standards set out in Appendix D of the Local Plan, or other such local standards set out in made neighbourhood plans which will be given priority in determining the appropriate amount of parking required.

Policy TRA5: Rail transport and safeguarding facilities

- 6.4.19 Policy TRA5 states that development which would prevent the reintroduction of passenger rail services on the Northumberland Line along with associated stations, facilities and access to them from adjacent highways, and continued rail freight use of the Northumberland Line, its associated branch lines (including the branch line from Bedlington to Morpeth via Choppington, the Butterwell line north of Ashington and the line from Woodhorn to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea) and supporting infrastructure will not be supported.

- 6.4.20 Sites for stations have been identified and land will be safeguarded at the following locations:

- Woodhorn
- Ashington
- Bedlington Station
- Blyth Bebside
- South Newsham
- Seaton Delaval

- Seghill

6.4.21 The policy goes on to state that measures to improve public safety at level crossings will be supported. Improvement, alteration or closure of level crossings, or appropriate contributions towards the implementation of such works, may be secured through the grant of planning permission for development where it can be demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, that those works are directly related to the impact that development may have on the level crossing and they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

Policy ENVI: Approaches to assessing the impact of development on the natural, historic and built environment

6.4.22 Policy ENVI states that the character and significance of Northumberland's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environments, will be conserved, protected and enhanced by:

- Giving appropriate weight to the statutory purposes and special qualities of the hierarchy of international, national and local designated and non-designated nature and historic conservation assets or sites and their settings;
- Protecting Northumberland's most important landscapes and applying a character-based approach to, as appropriate, manage, protect or plan landscape across the whole County.

Policy ENV2: Biodiversity and geodiversity

6.4.23 Policy ENV2 states that development proposals affecting biodiversity and geodiversity will minimise their impact and net gains for biodiversity will be secured by:

- Avoiding significant harm through location and/ or design. Where significant harm cannot be avoided, applicants will be required to demonstrate that adverse impacts will be adequately mitigated or, as a last resort compensated for;
- Securing net biodiversity gains and/or wider ecological enhancements through new development

Policy ENV7: Historic environment and heritage assets

6.4.24 Policy ENV7 supports the NPPF position on historic assets in that decisions affecting a heritage asset will be based on a sound understanding of the significance of that asset and any impact of any proposal upon that significance.

Policy WAT3: Flooding

6.4.25 Policy WAT3 states that development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they will minimise flood risk to people, property and infrastructure from all potential sources by:

- Avoiding inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and directing the development away from areas at highest risk, applying the Sequential Test and if necessary the Exceptions Test, in accordance with national policy and the Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Site Specific Flood Risk Assessments will be required in accordance with national policy and guidance;
- Ensuring that the development will be safe over its lifetime, taking account of climate change, will not increase flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reduce flood risk overall;
- Ensuring that development proposals in areas at risk from flooding are made resistant and resilient, in terms of their layout, mix and/or building design, in accordance with national policy and the findings and recommendations of the Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment;

Policy WAT4: Sustainable Drainage Systems

6.4.26 Policy WAT4 states that SuDS will be a requirement for any development where it is necessary to manage surface water drainage unless it can be clearly demonstrated:

- That SuDS are not technically, operationally or financially deliverable or viable and that any surface water drainage issues resulting from the development can be alternatively mitigated; or
- That the SuDS scheme will itself adversely affect the environment or safety, including where ponds could increase the risk of bird strike close to the airport or where existing minewater problems could be exacerbated.

Policy POL1: Unstable and contaminated land

6.4.27 Policy POL1 states that development proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that unacceptable risks from land instability and contamination will be prevented and that measures can be taken to effectively mitigate the impacts.

Policy POL2: Pollution and air, soil and water quality

6.4.28 Policy POL2 states that development proposals that may cause pollution of water, air or soil, either individually or cumulatively, are required to incorporate measures to prevent or reduce their pollution so as not to cause nuisance or unacceptable impacts on the environment, people or biodiversity. Development proposed where pollution levels are unacceptable, and unable to be mitigated to acceptable levels, will not be supported.

Policy INF5: Open space and facilities for sport and recreation

6.4.29 Policy INF5 states '*Development proposals that would result in the loss of land or buildings used for recreational use or the loss of Protected Open Space (as shown on the Policies Map) will not be supported unless:*

“a. They would be replaced by an area of equivalent or better quantity and quality, in a suitable location; or

b. An excess of provision in quantitative and qualitative terms is clearly demonstrated; or

c. The development proposed is for alternative sports and recreation provision, the need for which clearly outweighs the loss of the existing open space”.

6.5 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)

6.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework¹⁵ (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

6.5.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.

6.5.3 The NPPF states at paragraph 7 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

6.5.4 Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that

¹⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) National Planning Policy Framework (p4)

reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

- an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

6.5.5 At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way.

6.5.6 With reference to paragraph 11 of the NPPF, it is important to note that for decision-taking this means;

- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

6.5.7 Further advice on decision-taking which is of relevance to the current scheme is provided at paragraph 38 of the Framework;

6.5.8 Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

6.5.9 The early engagement evoked by the NPPF has been undertaken in a bid to assist in the efficiency and effectiveness of the determination of this planning application; paragraphs 39 to 46 of the NPPF highlight the importance of pre-application engagement.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

6.5.10 An integral component in delivering sustainable development and achieving wider sustainability and health objectives is the promotion of sustainable transport, as set out in

Section 9 of the Framework. This includes identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use.

- 6.5.11 This section states that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health.
- 6.5.12 Paragraph 109 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 6.5.13 This connotes that a refusal of planning permission on transport grounds will only be justifiable if there are severe impacts arising from the development which cannot be mitigated.

Building a strong, competitive economy

- 6.5.14 The NPPF places great importance on ensuring the planning system does everything it can to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Achieving well-designed places

- 6.5.15 The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 6.5.16 Paragraph 128 states that design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

7 Planning Assessment

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 The application for planning permission is accompanied by the supporting information identified as required by the local planning authority in discussions prior to submission. The scope, extent and nature of the supporting information is in accordance with the advice and recommendations given by officers of the local planning authority.
- 7.1.2 The design of the scheme and scope of the submitted proposals has been conceived with the ambition of satisfying all of the relevant local and national planning, transport and environmental policies.
- 7.1.3 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.1.4 The following sections:
- summarises the evidence that demonstrates how the development proposals accord with the Local Plan (section 7.2–7.4)
 - summarises the evidence that demonstrates how the development proposals accord with national planning policies (section 7.4)
 - confirms that there are no material considerations in the determination of the planning application that should lead to the application being refused (section 8)
 - confirms that the implementation of the scheme would deliver significant public benefits

7.2 Accordance with Northumberland Development Plan

- 7.2.1 The development plan in respect of the application site comprises the saved Local Plan policies (under the Secretary of State's Direction) of the Wansbeck District Local Plan (2007).
- 7.2.2 The NPPF advises at paragraph 213 that, in respect of Development Plans adopted prior to publication of the NPPF, local planning authorities should afford due weight according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the Plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 7.2.3 In accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF, weight may also be given to the policies in emerging plans depending on the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent to which emerging policy aligns with the NPPF and the extent of unresolved objections to the

emerging plan. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to Secretary of State for examination in May 2019 and is currently undergoing examination. It is therefore considered that relevant policies can be given some weight presently and can be given increasing weight as the Plan moves towards adoption.

7.3 Wansbeck District Local Plan (July 2007)

7.3.1 The Wansbeck District Local Plan sets out the overall vision and spatial strategy for development in Wansbeck. It currently forms the basis of Northumberland's Local Development Framework and is used to guide planning decisions throughout Wansbeck.

7.3.2 The District Local Plan was adopted in July 2007. It now forms part of the statutory development plan for Northumberland. As well as providing the basis for decisions on planning applications, the District Local Plan is used to help shape regeneration, investment and growth within the borough.

7.3.3 It is anticipated the Wansbeck District Local Plan will be superseded by the emerging Northumberland Local Plan. Notwithstanding this, the extant District Local Plan currently forms part of the adopted development plan. Those policies of the existing, adopted District Local Plan that are material to the determination of this planning application are set out below.

Policy GPI: Spatial Strategy

7.3.4 Policy GPI states that provided that proposals are in accordance with other policies of the Plan, development on previously developed sites and buildings with settlement limits will be permitted. Development on greenfield sites within settlement limits will only be permitted if:

- The site is allocated for development; or
- It can be demonstrated that the development will meet an identified and justified need and no suitable alternative previously developed site is available.

7.3.5 The proposed development includes the re-use of previously developed land. The site is located within an accessible location in proximity to Ashington town centre and would therefore align with the general spatial strategy. The proposed railway station at Ashington is an integral component, and proposed to be delivered as part of, the Northumberland Line scheme. The re-introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line is a strategic priority for the council as set out in the Plan. The development of the site to facilitate the delivery of a new railway station to serve Ashington is therefore considered to support the council's wider ambitions for the re-introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line.

7.3.6 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GPI of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP4: Accessibility

- 7.3.7 Policy GP4 stipulates that new development should be located to reduce the need to travel and to minimise journey length. It should be accessible to all users by a choice of means of transport including buses, walking and cycling.
- 7.3.8 The proposed railway station at Ashington, given its nature, represents a sustainable development. The scheme will encourage a modal shift toward more sustainable travel, reducing reliance on the private car. The location of the proposed station is adjacent existing housing and other amenities and can therefore be considered to be readily accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. Pedestrian crossing improvements are proposed to be delivered as part of the scheme, to encourage passengers to walk or cycle to and from the railway station. To this end, appropriate cycle parking facilities are to be provided at the site.
- 7.3.9 The submitted Design and Access Statement demonstrates that the scheme has been designed to ensure appropriate access is made for all users. The submitted Transport Assessment demonstrates that safe and convenient access is made for all users, and that the scheme is anticipated to assist in reducing congestion on the local highway network by encouraging increased use of rail travel.
- 7.3.10 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP4 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP5: Landscape Character

- 7.3.11 Policy GP5 states that development must respect the character of the District's landscape. Proposals will be assessed in terms of:
- The siting, scale and design of buildings and materials; and
 - The effect on distant views
- 7.3.12 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the physical constraints of the site, to ensure that it can be considered to appropriately sit within its landscape setting. Further details in this regard can be found within the submitted Landscape Appraisal.
- 7.3.13 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a detailed understanding and appraisal of those features of the local area that contribute to landscape character and distinctiveness, and through identifying and appraising the visual impact on different receptors from various viewpoints. It is anticipated that precise details of materials to be used in the construction of the development will be agreed through the subsequent discharge of planning conditions attached to a planning permission.
- 7.3.14 It should also be noted that the entire site is located within the defined settlement boundary, therefore the impact on the open countryside is negligible.

7.3.15 It is considered that the proposed station would not have a significant adverse impact on the local landscape.

7.3.16 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP5 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP6: Trees and hedgerows

7.3.17 Policy GP6 states that the authority will seek to protect trees, woodlands and hedgerows in the District and will encourage new planting, particularly of native species. Development which would result in the loss of healthy trees which make an important contribution to the quality of the environment will not be permitted unless there are overriding social or economic benefits to the community and compensatory off-site provision of landscape infrastructure is made. Healthy trees lost as a consequence of development shall be replaced with trees of an equivalent standard.

7.3.18 The design of the scheme has been informed by a survey of the trees: within, adjacent to, and nearby to the site, and by the preparation of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. These documents are submitted with the application.

7.3.19 The design of the scheme has been informed by the Landscape Appraisal of the site and surroundings. This document is submitted with the application.

7.3.20 These surveys, assessments and appraisals have been used to guide the proposals and in particular to guide the; removal of trees and shrubs from within the site, and the provision of a soft landscaping scheme. The application is supported by an indicative landscaping scheme which seeks to retain and/or replace existing trees, wherever possible. An indication of the landscape proposals and the justification for tree removals are set out in the submitted landscaping scheme and arboricultural reports. It is anticipated that the overall benefits of the proposed railway station at Ashington outweigh the harm resulting from the loss of the Category A tree at the site. It is anticipated that appropriate compensation for the loss of trees will be discussed and agreed with officers during determination of the application.

7.3.21 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP6 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy G13: Biodiversity and wildlife networks

7.3.22 Policy G13 states that the value to biodiversity of all sites proposed for development will be considered when planning applications are determined whether or not they are designated sites. Particular importance will be attached to the protection of priority habitats and species in Wansbeck. Where proposals affect a habitat which contributes, or could potentially contribute, to a network of natural habitats the developer will be required to protect and enhance the network.

7.3.23 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the ecological and wider environmental sensitivity of the site and adjacent land. The planning application is supported by appropriate ecological and other assessments which demonstrate that the scheme will not adversely impact on biodiversity and wildlife networks; opportunities for habitat and landscaping improvement, including appropriate mitigation, are to be provided. It is anticipated that the scheme will incorporate measures to improve the biodiversity value of the site, including sensitive landscaping proposals and the installation of bat and bird boxes. The project would be content to accept suitably worded conditions for further details regarding such measures.

7.3.24 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy G13 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP21: Archaeology

7.3.25 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a detailed understanding of the existing and historic site conditions. This includes a desk-based assessment of possible archaeological assets and non-listed heritage assets. It is also informed by and advice of all stakeholders including Network Rail, the local planning authority, the local highway authority, residents, businesses and local politicians.

7.3.26 The submitted Design and Access Statement provides further details demonstrating that the submitted scheme is based on a clear understanding of the character and local distinctiveness of the area and confirms that the proposed railway station would make a positive contribution to place-making and environmental improvement. The scheme would not have a detrimental impact on the significance on any heritage and archaeological assets.

7.3.27 The planning application is supported by a Heritage Statement which demonstrates that the scheme would not detract from the significance of recorded historical assets on site.

7.3.28 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP21 of the adopted Wansbeck Local Plan.

Policy GP22: Flood risk and erosion

7.3.29 Policy GP22 states that developers are required to consider the risk to their development from flooding and erosion and to consider any possible effect of their development on flood risk or erosion elsewhere. Development in areas of flood risk will not be permitted unless a flood risk assessment has been carried out and it can be demonstrated that:

- There is no reasonable alternative development option available which would involve no risk or a lower risk of flooding; and
- The development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; and

- Satisfactory protection measures can be carried out at the expense of the developer and maintained for the lifetime of the development

7.3.30 The application site is identified as being located within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding. The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the flood risk pertaining to the site from all sources. The scheme includes appropriate drainage to manage and mitigate the risk of flooding.

7.3.31 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Sustainable Drainage Assessment provides further details to demonstrate that the scheme has been designed to mitigate the risk of flooding to the site, in accordance with the drainage hierarchy.

7.3.32 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP22 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP23: Pollution and nuisance

7.3.33 Policy GP23 states that when determining planning applications, the authority will consider whether a proposed development has the potential to cause pollution or nuisance. Planning permission will not be granted for development liable to cause significant harm to either:

- Human health and safety
- The amenity of local residents and other land users
- The quality and enjoyment of all aspects of the environment

7.3.34 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed to accord with all relevant legislation, policies, standards and guidance. This has included detailed pre-application discussions with statutory consultees and key stakeholders to assure the safety credentials of the submitted scheme.

7.3.35 Due regard has been given to the potential impacts of the development on the amenity of local residents and adjacent land uses, as detailed in the submitted Design and Access Statement.

7.3.36 The submitted noise, air quality, lighting and other environmental assessments demonstrate that the scheme would not result in unacceptable pollution or nuisance impacts.

7.3.37 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP23 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP25: Noise

7.3.38 Policy GP25 states that when determining planning applications, the authority will consider the levels and characteristics of any noise which may be generated as a result of permitting the development. The likely impact will be assessed in terms of the following:

- Any disturbance to people living in the area; and
- Any disturbance to other noise-sensitive uses such as hospitals, schools, colleges, offices and community buildings; and
- Any effect on people's enjoyment of the outdoor environment including gardens, parks, the coast and the countryside; and
- Any disturbance to wildlife or livestock

7.3.39 The proposed development has been designed based on a sound understanding of the site and adjacent land uses. The railway is currently used by freight trains and therefore a level of operational rail noise is already experienced at this location.

7.3.40 It is considered that there will be noise impacts during the construction and operational phases of the development; appropriate mitigation is proposed to be implemented to ensure noise impacts are minimised wherever possible.

7.3.41 The submitted Noise and Vibration Assessment demonstrates that the scheme has been designed based on a sound understanding of the proximity of sensitive receptors. Noise attenuation fencing is proposed to the east of the railway corridor to mitigate the impact on sensitive receptors on John Street. Furthermore, it is proposed that appropriate mitigation during the operational phase will be secured through the provision of details to discharge relevant conditions on a planning permission. It is anticipated the details to mitigate construction noise impacts will be included within the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which is expected to be included as a condition on a planning permission.

7.3.42 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP25 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP29: Land contamination

7.3.43 Policy GP29 states that where there is reason to suspect that land is affected by contamination, applicants for planning permission will be required to submit a report of a desk study of previous uses of the site and their potential for contamination. Unless the study clearly demonstrates that the risk to the proposed uses is acceptable, further more detailed investigations will be required before the application is determined to assess the risks and identify and appraise the options for remediation.

7.3.44 Development will only be permitted if sustainable and feasible remediation solutions are adopted to secure the removal of unacceptable risk and make the site suitable for its new use.

7.3.45 The proposed railway station has been designed based on a sound understanding of the physical and environmental constraints of the site, including pollution and land contamination. The submitted Phase I Geo-environmental Assessment demonstrates that

the proposed development incorporates appropriate mitigation to safeguard the site and adjacent land from significant adverse contamination issues.

7.3.46 In summary, the proposed development is considered to appropriately consider land contamination issues and appropriate mitigation measures are to be incorporated to manage any pollution or contamination issues arising as a result of the scheme.

7.3.47 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP29 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP30: Visual Impact

7.3.48 Policy GP30 states that all proposed development will be assessed in terms of its visual impact. Developments which in visual terms would cause significant harm to the character or quality of the surrounding environment will be refused.

7.3.49 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the physical constraints of the site, to ensure that it can be considered to appropriately sit within its landscape setting and to ensure that the scheme does not adversely impact on the visual amenity of the area.

7.3.50 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a detailed understanding and appraisal of those features of the local area that contribute to landscape character and distinctiveness, and through identifying and appraising the visual impact on different receptors from various viewpoints.

7.3.51 It should also be noted that the entire site is located within the defined settlement boundary, therefore the impact on the open countryside is considered to be negligible.

7.3.52 It is considered that the proposed station would not have a significant adverse impact on the local landscape or the visual amenity of the local area.

7.3.53 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP30 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP31: Urban Design

7.3.54 Policy GP31 states that when considering any proposed development the authority will require high standards of urban design to:

- Promote character in townscape and landscape and establish local identity; and
- Clearly define public and private spaces; and
- Encourage accessibility; and
- Make places with a clear image that is easy to understand, by providing recognisable routes, intersections and landmarks; and

- Promote diversity and choice through a mix of compatible developments and uses that work together to create viable places that respond to local needs.

7.3.55 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a detailed understanding of the existing and historic site conditions. This includes an appraisal of local features that contribute to local character and distinctiveness, and by identifying the needs of all anticipated future users of the railway station. It is also informed by and advice of all stakeholders including Network Rail, the local planning authority, the local highway authority, residents, businesses and local politicians.

7.3.56 The submitted Design and Access Statement provides further details demonstrating that the submitted scheme is based on a clear understanding of the character and local distinctiveness of the area and confirms that the proposed railway station would make a positive contribution to place-making and environmental improvement.

7.3.57 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP31 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP32: Landscaping and the Public Realm

7.3.58 Policy GP32 states that developers are required to incorporate a high standard of landscape treatment in their developments. When submitting planning applications, developers will be required to demonstrate that:

- Any existing landscape features of value including trees, shrubs, hedgerows and ponds, will be retained, protected and used to advantage as part of the development; and
- New landscape features will be introduced which enhance the visual quality of the development, reduce its impact and provide habitat for the district's wildlife; and
- New landscape features to be introduced will be appropriate to the use and character of the development and its location; and
- Opportunities to create new public spaces and improve existing ones have been considered

7.3.59 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the physical constraints of the site, to ensure that it can be considered to appropriately sit within its landscape setting. The application is supported by various landscape and visual impact assessments which confirm that the scheme would not have a significant adverse impact on the wider landscape.

7.3.60 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a detailed understanding and appraisal of those features of the local area that contribute to landscape character and distinctiveness, and through identifying and appraising the visual impact on different receptors from various viewpoints.

- 7.3.61 It is considered that the proposed station would not have a significant adverse impact on the local landscape.
- 7.3.62 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP32 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy GP35: Crime Prevention

- 7.3.63 Policy GP35 states that development proposals will be expected to have regard to the objectives of 'planning out crime' through the incorporation of measures such as:
- Promotion of schemes that increase the range of activities that maximise the opportunities for surveillance
 - Maximising the amount of defensible space which is controlled, or perceived to be controlled, by occupiers
 - A high standard of street lighting
- 7.3.64 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed to seek to 'design out' crime, taking into account the observations, guidance and comments received from Northumbria Police and the British Transport Police.
- 7.3.65 The proposed layout, landscaping, lighting and CCTV camera provision have evolved to take account of discussions with key stakeholders, to ensure that opportunities are taken to maximise the safety of the station for all users.
- 7.3.66 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy GP35 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy T1: Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Rail Line

- 7.3.67 Policy T1 states that the re-introduction of passenger services on the rail line between Newcastle and Ashington will be supported and promoted. Land which may be required for associated facilities such as stations, bus stops and car parks will be safeguarded.
- 7.3.68 The proposed railway station at Ashington is an integral component, and proposed to be delivered as part of, the Northumberland Line scheme. The scheme is therefore specifically supported by Policy T1. The delivery of the new station will support and facilitate the council's ambitions for the re-introduction of passenger services on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line.
- 7.3.69 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy T1 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy T6: Traffic implications of new development

- 7.3.70 Policy T6 states that when planning applications are determined, the volume and character of traffic likely to be generated by and attracted to the proposed development will be considered. Proposals will only be permitted if:
- The existing highway network is adequate to cope with any additional traffic resulting from the development or necessary improvement works will be carried out before the development goes ahead; and
 - The proposed arrangements for access and egress will allow the safe and efficient movement of vehicles; and
 - Internal circulation arrangements will be able to absorb vehicular traffic entering the site without queues forming on existing roads and will include measures to achieve safe traffic speeds; and
 - Adequate provision is made, in terms of safety and operating efficiency, for servicing and deliveries and for other heavy vehicles such as buses and emergency vehicles.
- 7.3.71 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed to ensure safe and convenient access is provided to the site for all modes, including the private car. The scheme, by nature, will assist in reducing reliance on the private car by encouraging a modal shift towards rail travel – which will assist in reducing congestion on the local highway network.
- 7.3.72 The submitted Transport Assessment demonstrates that the scheme will not have an unacceptable impact on the safety or capacity of the local highway network.
- 7.3.73 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy T6 of the Wansbeck District Local Plan.

Policy REC2: Recreation and open space

- 7.3.74 A section of the site of the proposed development is designated as amenity greenspace under Policy RE1 of the adopted Wansbeck Local Plan. Policy REC2 identifies that development on open spaces 'not designated as being of strategic importance' will only be granted if there is shown to be a surplus of open space by way of an assessment of open space needs and opportunities in the area.
- 7.3.75 The development proposes the loss of 'Ashington Library Gardens' which currently provides 0.43Ha of amenity grassland.

- 7.3.76 The Open Space, Sport and Recreational facilities PPG17 Assessment 2011 (as amended in 2018)¹⁶ assessment identifies the following minimum standards should be achieved to provide appropriate provision for amenity grassland in the county:
- 1) **Quantity**- To ensure provision does not fall below the current level of 1.09 ha per 1,000 population,
 - 2) **Quality**- To achieve a minimum standard of 48%,
 - 3) **Accessibility**-To provide amenity greenspace with 600m or 8 minutes travel time of where people live.
- 7.3.77 The aforementioned assessment identifies that South East Northumberland currently provides for 1.4 Ha of amenity greenspace per 1000 population. This is higher than the identified minimum standard of 1.09ha. As such, the assessment identifies that South East Northumberland has a surplus of amenity greenspace. On this basis, is considered the removal of a 0.43 Ha site would not significantly impact on the quantity of provision in the local area.
- 7.3.78 The site has a quality rating of 41.46%. This is lower than the recommended minimum standard of 48%. As such, the development of this open space does not propose a loss of high-quality open space.
- 7.3.79 The assessment identifies that 98% of residents in South East Northumberland are located within 600 metres of open space. This is significantly higher than the north (75%) and the west (58%) of Northumberland.
- 7.3.80 Ashington Memorial Garden is designated as amenity grassland which is located immediately to the north of Ashington Library Gardens. Furthermore, Station Road is also designated as amenity grassland. The site is located approximately 150 metres to the north east of Ashington Library Gardens. Due to the provision of alternative sites in the vicinity of the site, it is not considered the proposed development will reduce the standards for accessibility within the local area.
- 7.3.81 Furthermore, Ashington Cricket Club is a 2.13Ha site of Protected Open Space designated as 'outdoor sports facilities' which is located immediately to the west of the site on Kenilworth Road (2.13 Ha). Ashington Park (otherwise known as People's Park) is an 8.79 Ha site designated as 'parks and gardens' which is located approximately 0.35km from the site of the proposed railway station. Ashington Community woodland is a large 140 Ha site of natural and semi- natural greenspace which is located approximately 0.3km to the north of the site. Whilst these sites of open space are not designated as amenity grassland, the sites

¹⁶ Northumberland County Council (2011) PPG17 open space, sport and recreation assessment (as amended in 2018) p106.

demonstrate that the loss of Ashington Library Gardens will not have a significant impact on access to quality open spaces for local residents.

7.3.82 In conclusion, there is a surplus of open space in close proximity to the site of the proposed station. As such, it is considered that development of the proposed station will not result in a significant loss to the community in provision for play and recreation; nature conservation or use for community events. Furthermore, Landscape, Townscape and Visual Overview submitted in support of this planning application demonstrates that there would not be a significant loss to the community relating to visual amenity.

7.3.83 Notwithstanding the above, the applicant is content to agree in principle to the making of a compensatory provision to offset the loss of the open space required to facilitate the development which is the subject of this application. The applicant is committed to working with the local authority during determination of the application to seek to identify suitable compensatory provision.

7.4 Accordance with Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Publication Draft (May 2019)

7.4.1 The NPPF advises at paragraph 48 that weight may also be given to the policies in emerging plans depending on the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent to which emerging policy aligns with the NPPF and the extent of unresolved objections to the emerging plan. The Northumberland Local Plan was submitted to Secretary of State for examination in May 2019 and is currently undergoing examination. It is therefore considered that relevant policies can be given some weight presently and can be given increasing weight as the Plan moves towards adoption.

7.4.2 The relevant policies of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan that pertain to the scheme which is the subject of this planning application are identified as follows:

Policy STPI: Spatial Strategy

7.4.3 Policy STPI states that sustainable development will be supported within, or immediately adjacent to, the built-up form of Main Towns, Service Centres and Service Villages without defined settlement boundaries, will be supported, if it is commensurate with size of the settlement, and it can be demonstrated that it does not adversely impact upon the character of the settlement.

7.4.4 The proposed railway station at Ashington forms an integral component of the scheme which proposes the re-introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line. The Northumberland Line scheme is a strategic priority of both national and local government and could therefore reasonably be considered to constitute 'essential infrastructure'.

7.4.5 The application site is located in an accessible location, adjacent existing housing and other development and is therefore located in a sustainable location. The scheme is designed to integrate with existing and adjacent public transport infrastructure, including the bus stops

located nearby. The proposed development would involve the use of land for a use which could not reasonably be located elsewhere: to construct a railway station it must obviously be located adjacent to the railway line. The submitted landscaping proposals and visual impact assessment demonstrate that the proposals have been designed in a manner to minimise the impact on the existing landscape.

7.4.6 In summary, the proposed railway station is considered to be appropriate development outwith the defined settlement boundary.

7.4.7 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy STPI of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy STP2: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development

7.4.8 Policy STP2 states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It will always work pro-actively with applicants to seek to find solutions that mean proposals that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area can be approved wherever possible.

7.4.9 The proposed railway station at Ashington, given its nature, is considered to represent a sustainable development. The scheme will promote the use of rail services as an alternative to the private car and will assist in alleviating congestion on the local highway network and improving local air quality. The application site is located within an accessible location and as such will encourage walking and cycling to and from the station, though vehicular access is to be provided to ensure the station is accessible for all users.

7.4.10 The proposed railway station at Ashington would deliver economic, social and environmental benefits and thereby support the planning system in fulfilling its purpose: to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

7.4.11 The economic benefits of the scheme include:

- The development will facilitate increased access for residents and local people to employment and training opportunities throughout Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle City Centre. The provision of passenger rail services at this location, including specialist provision for mobility impaired and disabled users, will also encourage employers to locate in this part of Northumberland;
- The development will provide a convenient multimodal transport interchange which integrates the train services and railway station with buses, cycling, walking, private cars and taxis.
- The proposed railway station will help to alleviate congestion on the local highway network, presenting a potential cost saving in journey times for staff and visitors to local businesses and those travelling further afield, supporting economic growth in Ashington, Northumberland and the North East more widely.

7.4.12 The social benefits of the scheme include:

- The development will improve journey times for residents, local people and those wishing to travel from Ashington to destinations further afield including North Tyneside and Newcastle City Centre;
- The development will increase the ability of residents and local people to gain access to employment and training opportunities;
- The development will contribute to building strong, vibrant and healthy communities by encouraging social inclusion, improving the accessibility of local services and the use of sustainable travel modes.

7.4.13 The environmental benefits of the scheme include:

- The development will improve the physical accessibility and connectivity of transport infrastructure for all users.
- The development will make it physically more simple and convenient to use and access public transport infrastructure in Ashington. The consequential modal shift will assist in improving local air quality.
- The development will decrease dependence on the private car for residents and local people, in so doing it will reduce carbon emissions.

7.4.14 In summary, the proposed railway station is considered to represent a sustainable development. Accordingly, it is considered the local planning authority ought to take a positive approach to the consideration and determination of this planning application.

7.4.15 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy STP2 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy STP3: Principles of Sustainable Development

7.4.16 Policy STP3 states that In applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development in Northumberland and to deliver against economic, social and environmental objectives, development proposals will be expected to deliver across the range of the economic, social and environmental factors, and adhere to the following principles where appropriate:

- Contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy across Northumberland, support more and better jobs, protect and enhance the vitality and viability of Northumberland's town centres and other important economic sectors;
- Minimise their impact upon local amenity for new or existing residents and businesses, adjoining premises and land uses;

- Support and provide opportunities to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and provide the infrastructure which is required to enhance the quality of life of individuals and communities;
- Demonstrate high quality sustainable design which is accessible to all, and which respects and enhances the local distinctiveness of the natural, historic and built environment, helps promote a sense of place, reduces the need for energy, and facilitates flexible and adaptable buildings and environments;
- Be accessible by, or be able to be made accessible by public transport, walking or cycling where feasible, thereby reducing the need to travel for both people and goods, and the dependence on travel by private car;
- Make best use of existing facilities and infrastructure, whilst making appropriate provision for new or additional infrastructure as required;

- 7.4.17 The proposed railway station at Ashington would improve access to and from the local area for residents, staff and customers of local businesses. The proposed station would therefore improve the accessibility and connectivity of Ashington to Northumberland and the North East more widely.
- 7.4.18 The scheme would assist in reducing reliance on the private car, encouraging use of more sustainable modes of travel including walking and cycling. The submitted Transport Assessment and Travel Plan demonstrates that the scheme can be suitably accessed by various modes, and that safe and convenient access is provided for all users.
- 7.4.19 The scheme has been designed based on a sound understanding of the site, adjacent land uses and the requirements of key stakeholders including Network Rail, the local planning authority and the local highway authority. The submitted Design and Access Statements provides a detailed summary of the design evolution and confirms that the scheme constitutes a sustainable design which is accessible to all.
- 7.4.20 The scheme incorporates appropriate and proportionate improvements to the local highway, including improved pedestrian crossing arrangements, to ensure that the opportunities to encourage pedestrian and cyclist access to and from the station have been taken.
- 7.4.21 In summary, the proposed railway station is considered to represent a sustainable development. Accordingly, it is considered the local planning authority ought to take a positive approach to the consideration and determination of this planning application.
- 7.4.22 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy STP3 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy STP4: Climate change mitigation and adaptation

- 7.4.23 Policy STP4 states that development proposals should mitigate climate change and contribute to meeting nationally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. When determining planning applications, support will be given to how development proposals that help mitigate climate change and consideration will be given to how proposals:
- 7.4.24 Through their location, layout and pattern of development, reduce the need to travel for both people and goods, and encourage sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and the use of public transport;
- 7.4.25 The proposed railway station at Ashington, given its nature, will assist in encouraging the use of more sustainable modes of travel, reducing reliance on the private car. Such a modal shift is likely to assist in reducing carbon and greenhouse gas emissions; improving local air quality together with assisting the council in meeting its climate change objectives.
- 7.4.26 The scheme is located within an accessible and sustainable location, adjacent existing housing and other development. The scheme incorporates measures to encourage walking and cycling, as well as rail services. The planning application is supported by appropriate flood risk, drainage and other assessments which demonstrate that the scheme will not increase the risk of flooding either on or off-site.
- 7.4.27 In summary, the proposed railway station is considered to represent a sustainable development. The scheme will assist the council in meeting its wider climate change objectives.
- 7.4.28 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy STP4 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy STP5: Health and wellbeing

- 7.4.29 Policy STP5 states that development which promotes, supports and enhances the health and wellbeing of communities, residents, workers and visitors will be supported. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they:
- are safe, comfortable, inclusive and attractive and prioritise pedestrian and cycle movement;
 - provide access to a range of facilities including public transport, health, education, social care, green spaces, sport, play and leisure facilities
- 7.4.30 The policy requires that a Health Impact Assessment Screening be submitted for all major development proposals to determine whether the potential impact on health resulting from the development warrants any further assessment. Where further assessment is warranted, a proportionate Health Impact Assessment will also be required to be submitted as part of the application. A Health Impact Assessment will be required to include proposals

to mitigate any adverse health impacts, maximise potential positive impacts, and help reduce health inequalities.

- 7.4.31 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movements. The scheme includes improved pedestrian crossing arrangements and cycle parking is provided to encourage travel to and from the station by sustainable modes. It is recognised, however, that not all users are able to walk and/ or cycle to and from the station. The scheme therefore ensures vehicular access is provided to ensure the station can be accessed by elderly and disabled users.
- 7.4.32 The scheme, given its nature, supports the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure which will improve access to health, education and leisure facilities across the North East for local people.
- 7.4.33 The response by the local planning authority to the pre-application indicated that a Health Impact Assessment was not required to be undertaken. Notwithstanding this response the application includes an appraisal of the potential health and wellbeing benefits of the station to the local population. This demonstrates that the potential impacts resulting from the development are generally beneficial. The scheme has been designed to manage and mitigate the risk of potential adverse health impacts, wherever possible.
- 7.4.34 In summary, the proposed railway station is considered to represent a sustainable development, which will deliver many and various health and wellbeing improvements.
- 7.4.35 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy STP5 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy QOPI: Design Principles

- 7.4.36 Policy QOPI states that in determining planning applications, design will be assessed against the following design principles, in accordance with the Northumberland Design Guide. Proposals will be supported where design:
- Makes a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and contributes to a positive relationship between built and natural features, including landform and topography;
 - Facilitates an inclusive, comfortable, user-friendly and legible environment;
 - Supports health and wellbeing and enhances quality of life
- 7.4.37 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a detailed understanding of the existing and historic site conditions. This includes an appraisal of local features that contribute to local character and distinctiveness, and by identifying the needs of all anticipated future users of the railway station. It is also informed by and advice of all stakeholders including Network Rail, the local planning authority, the local highway authority, residents, businesses and local politicians.

7.4.38 The submitted Design and Access Statement provides further details demonstrating that the submitted scheme is based on a clear understanding of the character and local distinctiveness of the area and confirms that the proposed railway station would make a positive contribution to place-making and environmental improvement.

7.4.39 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy QOP1 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy QOP2: Good Design and Amenity

7.4.40 Policy QOP2 states that development will be required to provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users of the development itself and preserve the amenity of those living in, working in or visiting the local area.

7.4.41 Development which would result in unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses, in terms of both individual and cumulative impacts, will not be supported.

7.4.42 The design of the proposed railway station at Ashington has been informed by a detailed assessment of the potential impacts on the amenity of nearby and adjacent properties, and residents. The design has been based on a sound understanding of the site and adjacent land uses, and in ensuring that the scheme takes account of the amenity of neighbouring land uses etc. Careful consideration has been given to the impacts of the scheme on sensitive receptors, and proposals for mitigating adverse impacts form part of the submission.

7.4.43 The thematic surveys and assessments submitted in support of the planning application including the noise and vibration assessment demonstrates that the scheme would not have a significant adverse impact on neighbouring land uses – subject to appropriate mitigation, including noise attenuation fencing. The scheme will seek to incorporate appropriate mitigation, the precise details of which will be agreed through the discharge of relevant conditions on a planning permission.

7.4.44 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy QOP2 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy QOP4: Landscaping and Trees

7.4.45 Policy QOP4 states that where relevant, new development will be expected to incorporate well-designed landscaping and respond appropriately to any existing landscape features. Development proposals should ensure that:

Landscaping design is of a high quality, in accordance with the principles set out in Policy QOP 1;

- Existing features which contribute towards the character of the area, or amenity, are retained wherever possible and sympathetically incorporated into the overall design of the scheme;

- Any hard or soft landscaping is appropriate, functional and well-integrated into the design of the development;
- Trees, and other spaces and features that provide green and blue infrastructure, are preserved, enhanced and introduced into the landscaping scheme wherever possible;

7.4.46 The design of the scheme has been informed by a survey of the trees: within, adjacent to, and nearby to the site, and by the preparation of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. These documents are submitted with the application.

7.4.47 The design of the scheme has been informed by the Landscape Appraisal of the site and surroundings. This document is submitted with the application.

7.4.48 These surveys, assessments and appraisals have been used to guide the proposals and in particular to guide the; removal of trees and shrubs from within the site, and the provision of a soft landscaping scheme. The application is supported by an indicative landscaping scheme which seeks to retain and/or replace existing trees, wherever possible. An indication of the landscape proposals and the justification for tree removals are set out in the submitted landscaping scheme and arboricultural reports.

7.4.49 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy QOP4 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy QOP6: Delivering well-designed places

7.4.50 Policy QOP6 states that proposals are expected to meet the local design expectations set out in design policies within the Plan, the Northumberland Design Guide, and any other design guidance. Proposals are expected to respond to any character assessments that form part of or support the Plan.

7.4.51 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the defining characteristics of the site and the adjacent land uses. The scheme has evolved based on discussions with local authority officers and other key stakeholders to ensure the design of the scheme suitably reflects the wider ambitions of those stakeholders.

7.4.52 The proposed railway station at Ashington is supported by a Design and Access Statement which provides a summary of the design evolution process. The Design and Access Statement should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement and the submitted Statement of Community Engagement to provide a comprehensive overview of how the submitted scheme has evolved to take account of the observations, guidance and comments received from the local planning authority and other key stakeholders.

7.4.53 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy QOP6 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy TRAI: Promoting sustainable connections

- 7.4.54 Policy TRAI states that the council will support development that:
- Promotes a spatial distribution which creates accessible development, reduces the need to travel by car, and maximises the use of sustainable modes of transport;
 - Promotes good design principles in respect of the permeability, connectivity and legibility of buildings and public spaces; and inclusive access;
 - Promotes sustainable transport choices, including supporting, providing and connecting to networks for walking, cycling and public transport; and infrastructure that supports the use of low and ultra low emission vehicles;
 - Ensures delivery of cycle parking and supporting infrastructure;
 - Protects, enhances and supports public rights of way;
 - Supports the delivery of reliable, safe and efficient transport networks, in partnership with other organisations, service providers and developers;
 - Requires development to be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra low emission vehicles in safe, accessible, convenient locations; and
 - Requires development proposals which generate significant amounts of movements to be supported by a Transport Assessment/ Transport Statement, and Travel Plans, and where appropriate, delivery/servicing plans.
- 7.4.55 The proposed railway station at Ashington is an integral part of the proposed re-introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line. The scheme includes the provision of measures to encourage walking and cycling to and from the station. The proposed development would promote greater use of sustainable transport modes, encouraging rail travel for car users for either all or part of their journey to destinations including Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle City Centre; helping to reduce the growth and reliance on car borne journeys. The scheme also provides measures to facilitate vehicular access to the station for elderly and mobility impaired users, to ensure the station is accessible for all.
- 7.4.56 The submitted Transport Assessment provides a detailed review of the predicted impacts of the proposed development on the local highway network, confirming that the proposed development would not result in a detrimental impact on the operation of the highway network and could alleviate pressure on the local highway network through encouraging an increased number of trips by rail.

7.4.57 In summary, the proposed railway station at Ashington is anticipated to encourage a modal shift toward more sustainable modes, benefiting both journey times for users of the road and rail network and improved cycle and walking routes.

7.4.58 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy TRA1 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy TRA2: The effects of development on the transport network

7.4.59 Policy TRA2 states that, amongst other things, all developments affecting the transport network will be required to:

- Provide effective and safe access and egress to the existing transport network
- Facilitate the safe use of the network, including suitable crossing points, footways and dedicated provision for cyclists where necessary.

7.4.60 The proposed railway station at Ashington is an integral part of the proposed re-introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line. Given its nature, a railway station, the proposed development will encourage the use of public transport. The scheme includes the provision of measures to encourage walking and cycling to and from the station. The scheme also provides measures to facilitate vehicular access to the station for elderly and mobility impaired users, to ensure the station is accessible for all.

7.4.61 The proposed railway station would be available to serve both existing and new developments and would promote walking and cycling, through improvements to pedestrian crossing facilities and provision of cycle parking infrastructure at the site. Further, given the nature of the scheme, the proposed development would promote greater use of sustainable transport modes, encouraging rail travel for car users for either all or part of their journey to destinations including Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle City Centre; helping to reduce the growth and reliance on car borne journeys.

7.4.62 The submitted Transport Assessment provides a detailed review of the predicted impacts of the proposed development on the local highway network, confirming that the proposed development would not result in a detrimental impact on the operation of the highway network and could alleviate pressure on the local highway network through encouraging an increased number of trips by rail.

7.4.63 In summary, the proposed railway station at Ashington is anticipated to encourage a modal shift toward more sustainable modes, benefiting both journey times for users of the road and rail network and providing environmental improvements to local air quality, and improved cycle and walking routes.

7.4.64 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy TRA2 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy TRA4: Parking provision in new development

- 7.4.65 Policy TRA4 states that an appropriate amount of off-street vehicle parking sufficient to serve new development shall be made available in safe, accessible and convenient locations prior to the development, as a whole or in part, being brought into use. Vehicle parking shall be provided in accordance with the parking standards set out in Appendix D of the Local Plan, or other such local standards set out in made neighbourhood plans which will be given priority in determining the appropriate amount of parking required.
- 7.4.66 The proposed railway station at Ashington seeks to provide appropriate access for all users, with priority given to encouraging walking and cycling to the station. It is acknowledged that not all users are able to walk and/or cycle to and from the station. For elderly and disabled users, it may be necessary to arrive at or depart from the station by car. The proposed station therefore provides appropriate vehicular access and car parking, the extent of which has been the subject of pre-application discussions with both planning and highway authority officers.
- 7.4.67 The proposed station has been designed to ensure safe and convenient access is available for all modes. The submitted Transport Assessment demonstrates that the scheme, including the proposed amount of car parking, is considered to be acceptable from a highway capacity and safety perspective.
- 7.4.68 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy TRA4 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy TRA5: Rail transport and safeguarding facilities

- 7.4.69 Policy TRA5 states that development which would prevent the reintroduction of passenger rail services on the Northumberland Line along with associated stations, facilities and access to them from adjacent highways, and continued rail freight use of the Northumberland Line, its associated branch lines (including the branch line from Bedlington to Morpeth via Choppington, the Butterwell line north of Ashington and the line from Woodhorn to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea) and supporting infrastructure will not be supported.
- 7.4.70 Sites for stations have been identified and land will be safeguarded at the following locations:
- a. Woodhorn
 - b. Ashington
 - c. Bedlington Station
 - d. Blyth Bebside
 - e. South Newsham
 - f. Seaton Delaval

g. Seghill

7.4.71 The proposed railway station at Ashington is an integral component, and proposed to be delivered as part of, the Northumberland Line scheme. The scheme is therefore specifically supported by Policy TRA5. The delivery of the new station will support and facilitate the council's ambitions for the re-introduction of passenger services on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line.

7.4.72 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy TRA5 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy ENVI: Approaches to assessing the impact of development on the natural, historic and built environment

7.4.73 Policy ENVI states that the character and significance of Northumberland's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environments, will be conserved, protected and enhanced by:

7.4.74 Giving appropriate weight to the statutory purposes and special qualities of the hierarchy of international, national and local designated and non-designated nature and historic conservation assets or sites and their settings;

7.4.75 Protecting Northumberland's most important landscapes and applying a character-based approach to, as appropriate, manage, protect or plan landscape across the whole County.

7.4.76 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the site and its context, including consideration of the impacts on adjacent land uses. The planning application is supported by detailed surveys and assessments which consider the likely effect of the scheme on natural, historic and built environment receptors, confirming that the scheme would not have a significant adverse impact on those receptors. The scheme will improve access to Northumberland's distinctive and values natural, historic and built environments, helping to ensure they can continue to be continued by this and future generations, which will assist in the conservation, protection and enhancement of such assets.

7.4.77 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy ENVI of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy ENV2: Biodiversity and geodiversity

7.4.78 Policy ENV2 states that development proposals should minimize the impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity and net gains should be secured.

7.4.79 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the ecological and wider environmental sensitivity of the site and adjacent land. The planning application is supported by appropriate ecological and other assessments which demonstrate that the scheme will not adversely impact on biodiversity

and wildlife networks; opportunities for habitat and landscaping improvement, including appropriate mitigation, are to be provided. It is anticipated that the scheme will incorporate measures to improve the biodiversity value of the site, including sensitive landscaping proposals and the installation of bat and bird boxes. The project would be content to accept suitably worded conditions for further details regarding such measures.

- 7.4.80 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy ENV2 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy ENV7: Historic environment and heritage assets

- 7.4.81 Policy ENV7 supports the NPPF position on historic assets in that decisions affecting a heritage asset will be based on a sound understanding of the significance of that asset and any impact of any proposal upon that significance.

- 7.4.82 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a detailed understanding of the existing and historic site conditions. This includes an appraisal of local features that contribute to local character and distinctiveness, and by identifying the needs of all anticipated future users of the railway station. It is also informed by and advice of all stakeholders including Network Rail, the local planning authority, the local highway authority, residents, businesses and local politicians.

- 7.4.83 The submitted Design and Access Statement provides further details demonstrating that the submitted scheme is based on a clear understanding of the character and local distinctiveness of the area and confirms that the proposed railway station would make a positive contribution to place-making and environmental improvement. The scheme would not have a detrimental impact on the significance on any heritage assets.

- 7.4.84 The planning application is supported by a Heritage Statement which demonstrates that the scheme would not detract from the significance of any designated or non-designated heritage assets.

- 7.4.85 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy ENV7 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy WAT3: Flooding

- 7.4.86 Policy WAT3 states that development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they will minimise flood risk to people, property and infrastructure from all potential sources.

- 7.4.87 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of the identified risk of flooding to the site from all sources. Appropriate drainage is incorporated within the submitted designs. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy demonstrates that flood risk to people, property and infrastructure from all sources will be suitably mitigated and managed as part of the proposed development.

7.4.88 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy WAT3 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy WAT4: Sustainable Drainage Systems

7.4.89 Policy WAT4 SuDS should be incorporated within all development where it is necessary to manage surface water drainage, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

7.4.90 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed to incorporate appropriate drainage arrangements. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy provides further details on the proposed drainage arrangements.

7.4.91 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy WAT4 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy POL1: Unstable and contaminated land

7.4.92 Policy POL1 states that development proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that unacceptable risks from land instability and contamination will be prevented and that measures can be taken to effectively mitigate the impacts.

7.4.93 The proposed railway station at Ashington is supported by various ground investigations and contaminated land assessments, which are submitted in support of the planning application, to demonstrate that land instability and contamination issues will be appropriately mitigated and managed as part of the proposed development.

7.4.94 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy POL1 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy POL2: Pollution and air, soil and water quality

7.4.95 Policy POL2 states that development proposals that may cause pollution of water, air or soil, either individually or cumulatively, are required to incorporate measures to prevent or reduce their pollution so as not to cause nuisance or unacceptable impacts on the environment, people or biodiversity. Development proposed where pollution levels are unacceptable, and unable to be mitigated to acceptable levels, will not be supported.

7.4.96 The proposed railway station at Ashington is supported by various air quality and contaminated land assessments, which are submitted in support of the planning application, to demonstrate that the development is not at risk from nor would it result in unacceptable impacts on the environment, people or biodiversity.

7.4.97 The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy POL2 of the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

Policy INF5: Open space and facilities for sport and recreation

- 7.4.98 A section of the site of the proposed development is designated as amenity greenspace under Policy INF5 of the Emerging Northumberland Local Plan.
- 7.4.99 Policy INF5 states that development polices would not be supported unless one of identified exceptions apply including '*an excess of provision in quantitative and qualitative terms is clearly demonstrated*'
- 7.4.100 The development proposes the loss of 'Ashington Library Gardens' which currently provides 0.43Ha of amenity grassland.
- 7.4.101 The Open Space, Sport and Recreational facilities PPG17 Assessment 2011 (as amended in 2018)¹⁷ assessment identifies the following minimum standards should be achieved to provide appropriate provision for amenity grassland in the county:
- Quantity**- To ensure provision does not fall below the current level of 1.09 ha per 1,000 population,
- Quality**- To achieve a minimum standard of 48%,
- Accessibility**-To provide amenity greenspace with 600m or 8 minutes travel time of where people live.
- 7.4.102 The aforementioned assessment identifies that South East Northumberland currently provides for 1.4 Ha of amenity greenspace per 1000 population. This is higher than the identified minimum standard of 1.09ha. As such, the assessment identifies that South East Northumberland has a surplus of amenity greenspace. On this basis, is considered the removal of a 0.43 Ha site would not significantly impact on the quantity of provision in the local area.
- 7.4.103 The site has a quality rating of 41.46%. This is lower than the recommended minimum standard of 48%. As such, the development of this open space does not propose a loss of high-quality open space.
- 7.4.104 The assessment identifies that 98% of residents in South East Northumberland are located within 600 metres of open space. This is significantly higher than the north (75%) and the west (58%) of Northumberland.
- 7.4.105 Ashington Memorial Garden is designated as amenity grassland which is located immediately to the north of Ashington Library Gardens. Furthermore, Station Road is also designated as amenity grassland. The site is located approximately 150 metres to the north

¹⁷ Northumberland County Council (2011) PPG17 open space, sport and recreation assessment (as amended in 2018) p106.

east of Ashington Library Gardens. Due to the provision of alternative sites in the vicinity of the site, it is not considered the proposed development will reduce the standards for accessibility within the local area.

7.4.106 Furthermore, Ashington Cricket Club is a 2.13Ha site of Protected Open Space designated as 'outdoor sports facilities' which is located immediately to the west of the site on Kenilworth Road (2.13 Ha). Ashington Park (otherwise known as People's Park) is an 8.79 Ha site designated as 'parks and gardens' which is located approximately 0.35km from the site of the proposed railway station. Ashington Community woodland is a large 140 Ha site of natural and semi-natural greenspace which is located approximately 0.3km to the north of the site. Whilst these sites of open space are not designated as amenity grassland, the sites demonstrate that the loss of Ashington Library Gardens will not have a significant impact on access to quality open spaces for local residents.

7.4.107 In conclusion, it is considered an excess of provision in quantitative and qualitative terms is clearly demonstrated. Therefore, the proposed development is considered to be compliant with Policy INF5.

7.4.108 Notwithstanding the above, the applicant is content to agree in principle to the making of a compensatory provision to offset the loss of the open space required to facilitate the development which is the subject of this application. The applicant is committed to working with the local authority during determination of the application to seek to identify suitable compensatory provision.

7.5 Accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework

7.5.1 The NPPF states at paragraph 7 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. There are three interdependent, overarching objectives that the planning system must perform in order to contribute to sustainable development:

- an economic objective;
- a social objective; and
- an environmental objective

7.5.2 The proposed railway station at Ashington would deliver economic, social and environmental benefits and thereby supports the planning system in fulfilling its fundamental purpose: to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

7.5.3 The economic benefits of the scheme include:

- The development will facilitate increased access for residents and local people to employment and training opportunities throughout the North East. The provision of passenger rail services at this location, including specialist provision

for mobility impaired and disabled users, may also encourage employers to locate in this part of Northumberland, given its improved accessibility and connectivity to the wider North East conurbation.

- The development will provide a convenient multimodal transport interchange which integrates the train services and railway station with buses, cycling, walking, private cars and taxis.
- The development will facilitate movement between Ashington and the wider North East conurbation, improving access to employment opportunities for local people.
- The proposed railway station will help to alleviate congestion on the local highway network, presenting a potential cost saving in journey times for staff and visitors to local businesses and those travelling further afield, supporting economic growth in Ashington, Northumberland and the North East more widely.
- The proposed railway station at Ashington will increase footfall in the local area, which will support local businesses.
- The significant investment into new and upgraded transport infrastructure will attract private sector investment, enhance economic vitality and encourage further economic growth in Northumberland.

7.5.4 The social benefits of the scheme include:

- The development will improve journey times for residents, local people and those wishing to travel from Ashington to destinations further afield including Newcastle City Centre.
- The development will increase the ability of residents and local people to gain access to employment and training opportunities
- The development will provide a safe and secure railway station, with appropriate lighting and CCTV camera provision to encourage all parts of the community to use the transport services and the railway station
- The development will incorporate lift and stepped access to both platforms and signage to the railway station suitable for users with disabilities
- The development would provide infrastructure that would encourage sustainable travel and would accommodate projected future growth in Ashington in terms of population, employment and housing
- The development will conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of Ashington. The station has been designed based on a sound understanding of local character and distinctiveness.

- The development will contribute to building strong, vibrant and healthy communities by encouraging social inclusion, improving the accessibility of local services and the use of sustainable travel modes
- The development will make it physically more simple and easy to use and access public transport infrastructure in Ashington. The consequential modal shift will assist in improving local air quality
- The scheme will deliver environmental and physical improvements to the site, and, in doing so, it will assist in changing perceptions of the area and of Ashington

7.5.5 The environmental benefits of the scheme include:

- The development will improve the physical accessibility and connectivity of transport infrastructure for all users
- The development will provide a modern environment which is attractive and safe for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists
- The development will provide a safe and secure railway station, with appropriate lighting and CCTV camera provision to encourage all parts of the community to use the transport services and the railway station
- The pedestrian spaces within the site have been designed to be accessible for all users, especially those with visual and physical limitations
- The development will conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of Ashington. The station has been designed based on a sound understanding of local character and distinctiveness.
- The development will make it physically more simple and convenient to use and access public transport infrastructure in Ashington. The consequential modal shift will assist in improving local air quality
- The development will be undertaken in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), which will minimise the environmental impacts traditionally associated with urban redevelopment schemes.
- The development will decrease dependence on the private car for residents and local people, in so doing it will reduce carbon emissions
- The development will implement a strategy for providing a structured approach to landscaping at the site; removing invasive non-native species and introducing native shrub and tree planting

7.5.6 The proposed railway station at Ashington is a sustainable transport project which will deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits; supporting the fundamental objectives of the planning system as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The scheme can therefore be considered to represent a sustainable development. The NPPF holds a presumption in favour of sustainable development, for decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

7.5.7 An integral component in delivering sustainable development and achieving wider sustainability and health objectives is the promotion of sustainable development, as set out in Section 9 of the Framework. This section states that applications for development should:

- give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
- address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;
- create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
- allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
- be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations

7.5.8 The proposed development has given due regard to the above criteria; the scheme has been designed to encourage pedestrian and cycle movements both within the site and adjacent to the site. The scheme will provide safe and secure cycle parking on-site; a pedestrian link is to be provided to the station car park from the existing road bridge and the layout of the car park has been designed to ensure safe and convenient pedestrian routes are provided for those entering and exiting the railway station.

7.5.9 Given the nature of the proposed development, a railway station, it is considered the scheme would facilitate access to public transport. The location of the proposed station already benefits from good access to the local highway network and would therefore be possible to integrate with other public transport modes.

7.5.10 The proposed development has been designed following workshops with disabled user forums, which have assisted in identifying and understanding barriers to access for users

with visual, auditory, physical and other impairments. The feedback received has been used by the designers to ensure the proposed railway station is accessible to all users. The proposed platforms will be accessed by lifts, steps and a pedestrian footbridge and a generous amount of disabled car parking is proposed in close proximity to the platforms to ensure the station is designed to promote access for all users.

- 7.5.11 The proposed layout, lighting, CCTV camera provision and landscaping proposals have been designed to seek to 'design out' crime wherever possible. The proposed cycle parking provision and landscaping are based on the detailed responses received from residents, businesses, local authority officers, local politicians and other stakeholders in the period prior to submission of this planning application.
- 7.5.12 Furthermore, Electric Vehicle Charging will be provided in the station car park, thus encouraging sustainable forms of onward travel.
- 7.5.13 The development is therefore considered to accord with the aims of objectives of section 9 of the NPPF, given that the proposed development by its very nature is promoting access to and use of sustainable modes of transport.
- 7.5.14 It should also be noted that paragraph 109 of the Framework states:
- 7.5.15 "Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe."
- 7.5.16 The Transport Assessment submitted in support of this planning application has been based on a scope agreed with the local highway authority. The Transport Assessment demonstrates that the proposed development would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, nor would the residual cumulative impacts on the road network be severe. Consequently, it is considered there are no highway grounds that should be used to seek to prevent or refuse the planning application.
- 7.5.17 In summary, the proposed railway station at Ashington would provide residents and local people with improved access to Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle City Centre. It would provide those without access to the private car with an alternative to the bus, and those with access to the private car with an opportunity to avoid and help reduce congestion on the local road network. The proposed development has been designed to encourage access to the station by all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and disabled users. The proposed development has been the subject of a detailed assessment of the predicted traffic and transport-related impacts resulting from the development. The assessment has confirmed that the proposed development would not impinge upon the safe operation or capacity of the highway network. The proposed development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Building a strong, competitive economy

- 7.5.18 The NPPF states at paragraph 80 that:

- 7.5.19 “Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.”
- 7.5.20 Given the nature of the proposed development, a railway station, there are no other locations that are either available or suitable to provide a railway station in Ashington. The locational constraints on certain types of development is recognised by the NPPF at paragraph 82 which states:
- 7.5.21 “Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.”
- 7.5.22 There is a significant amount of land within Ashington, and within close proximity to the proposed railway station site, that is allocated for or has consent to deliver new housing and industrial development. Those housing and industrial sites would derive significant benefits from being located within close proximity to the proposed railway station.
- 7.5.23 The improved access to and connectivity of the housing and industrial sites could encourage businesses to locate and grow in Ashington. The proposed railway station could also incentivise businesses to locate in Ashington. The increased ease of access and connectivity to Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle City Centre makes Ashington a more attractive location as it is more easily accessible for staff and customers. The fact there is not currently a passenger rail service that serves the area could impede investment in the local area. The proposed railway station at Ashington could act as a catalyst for further inward investment and the continued regeneration of Northumberland more widely.
- 7.5.24 In summary, it is considered that the proposed railway station could assist in stimulating sustainable economic growth in Ashington. The substantial investment to deliver the railway station is anticipated to assist in unlocking the development potential of the sites which are proposed to be allocated for new housing and industrial development, increasing employment opportunities in the local area. The proposed railway stations will create direct employment opportunities during the construction phase and onwards associated with the operation and maintenance of the station and indirect employment opportunities, through improving access to employment opportunities further afield and increasing the attractiveness of Ashington as a destination for businesses looking to relocate.
- 7.5.25 The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with the aims and objectives of Section 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Achieving well-designed places

- 7.5.26 The NPPF states at paragraph 124 that:
- 7.5.27 “The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable

development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

- 7.5.28 The proposed railway station at Ashington has been designed based on a sound understanding of both the historic and existing conditions of the site, the surrounding area and the aspirations of Network Rail, the local planning authority, the local highway authority and other key stakeholders. The scheme has been finessed to take account of comments and observations from residents and local politicians to the preliminary designs which were the subject of an extensive public engagement campaign.
- 7.5.29 The proposed layout, scale, height and extent of the proposed development has been informed based on an understanding of the requirements of a 21st Century railway station, together with an understanding of the context of the site to ensure that the station design reinforces the local character and distinctiveness of the site through integration with existing pedestrian, cycle and vehicular routes and being respectful to adjacent land uses.
- 7.5.30 The Design and Access Statement which is submitted in support of this planning application demonstrates that a detailed appraisal of different design options was undertaken to understand the implications of various layouts and access arrangements, culminating in the submitted scheme which is considered to present the optimum viable layout within the budget and other constraints for the scheme.
- 7.5.31 In summary, the proposed railway station is considered to promote high levels of sustainability through encouraging the use of a more sustainable transport mode and will help raise the standard of design more generally in this area, whilst ensuring coherence with the overall form and layout of the surrounding area, in accordance with paragraph 131. Accordingly, great weight should be given to the designs which promote high levels of sustainability. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the aims and objectives of Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

7.6 The Planning Balance

- 7.6.1 With reference to the above planning assessment, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the relevant policies of the Northumberland Local Plan as summarised in Figure 7.1 below and the Development Plan as a whole. The ecology, noise, air quality, contaminated land, flood risk and other surveys and assessments submitted in support of the planning application identify the various environmental effects associated with the proposed development but conclude that with the adoption of appropriate mitigation measures during both the construction and operational phases, there would be no significant adverse effects as a result of the proposed development.
- 7.6.2 The approval of the planning application would facilitate improved access and connectivity both to and from Ashington for residents, businesses, and other groups. The scheme would

improve access to employment, educational and leisure opportunities across Northumberland, as well as North Tyneside and Newcastle City Centre.

- 7.6.3 The scheme would encourage a modal shift away from, and thereby reduce reliance on, the private car which would alleviate congestion on the local highway network and would assist in improving local air quality.
- 7.6.4 In addition to the proposed development's accordance with the adopted policies of the Development Plan, and the emerging policies of the Northumberland Local Plan, it is further considered that the proposed development accords with the relevant policies of the NPPF which is a material planning consideration.
- 7.6.5 For these reasons it is considered that the positive benefits of the proposed development outweigh any minimal harm and the application accords with the Development Plan, as summarised in Figure 7.1.

Northumberland Development Policy	
Principle of Development Policy GP1, T1 (Wansbeck District Local Plan) Policy STP1, STP8 TRA5 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	The proposed development would provide a viable alternative to the private car, encouraging use of a more sustainable mode of travel and assisting in delivering air quality and other improvements. The re-opening of the Northumberland Line to passenger rail services, of which the new station is an integral component, is specifically supported by the policies within the Northumberland Development Plan.
Design Policy GP4, GP31, GP32, GP35 (Wansbeck District Local Plan) Policy QOP1, QOP2, QOP6, TRA1, TRA2 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	The submitted scheme aims to provide a high-quality, sustainable station that is well integrated within its surroundings and which takes opportunities to encourage walking and cycling both to and from the station. The submitted Design and Access Statement provides further details to demonstrate the evolution of the scheme to ensure the design suitably reflects the ambitions of the local planning authority and other key stakeholders.
Health and wellbeing Policy STP5 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	The scheme is designed to ensure that appropriate access is provided for all users, including elderly and disabled users. The scheme will improve access to employment and leisure opportunities for residents and will assist in improving local air quality and reducing congestion on the local highway network.
Landscape Policy GP5, GP30, GP31, GP32 (Wansbeck District Local Plan) Policy QOP4 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	The proposed development has been designed based on a sound understanding of the site and its context. The scheme will incorporate sensitive landscaping to ensure the scheme makes an appropriate contribution to the local area. The application is supported by a detailed Landscape Assessment.
Transport and Access Policy GP4, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7 (Wansbeck District Local Plan) Policy TRA1, TRA2, TRA4, TRA5 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	The proposed development has been designed to ensure safe and convenient access to the station is provided for all users – pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. The application is supported by a Transport Assessment which provides further details to demonstrate that the scheme is capable of being supported from both a highway safety and capacity perspective.
Ground Conditions	The scheme has been designed based on an understanding of the existing ground conditions. A Phase I Geo-environmental Assessment has

Northumberland Development Policy	
Policy GP23, GP29 (Blyth LDF Core Strategy) Policy STP2, STP3, STP4, POL1 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	been submitted which provides further details on the ground conditions, which have been used to inform the submitted proposals.
Water Quality, Flood Risk and Drainage Policy GP22 (Wansbeck District Local Plan) Policy STP2, STP3, STP4, WAT3, WAT4 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	The scheme has been designed based on an understanding of the flood risk and drainage requirements of the site. Discussions with the LLFA have informed the submitted proposals. The application is supported by a detailed Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment which demonstrates that the site is not at risk of flooding and that appropriate drainage is provided.
Open Space Policy REC2 (Wansbeck District Local Plan) Policy INF5 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	This Planning Statement has demonstrated there is an excess in provision of open space in quality and quantity in the local area. The Landscape, Townscape and Visual Overview submitted in support of this planning application demonstrates that there would not be a significant loss to the community relating to visual amenity. Notwithstanding the above, the applicant is content to agree in principle to the making of a compensatory provision to offset the loss of the open space required to facilitate the development which is the subject of this application. The applicant is committed to working with the local authority during determination of the application to seek to identify suitable compensatory provision.
Heritage Policy GP21 (Wansbeck District Local Plan) Policy ENV7 (Northumberland Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft)	The Heritage Statement submitted in support of this application demonstrates that the scheme has been designed based on a sound understanding of significance of the historic assets which may be impacted. The assessment that there would not be a significant impact on designated and non-designated heritage assets. The assessment identifies that the railway line played a significant role in the growth of Ashington and therefore the reinstatement of passenger travel is an opportunity to promote local heritage.

Figure 7.1 Summary of policy compliance

8 Material Considerations

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 8.1.2 A material consideration is a matter which should be taken into account in deciding a planning application, or on an appeal against a planning decision. There is no legal definition to prescribe those matters which have the potential to constitute 'material planning considerations'. Case law has held that any consideration that relates to the use and development of land is capable of being a material planning consideration. It is for the decision-maker to determine the weight to be apportioned to each of the considerations.
- 8.1.3 The purpose of this section is therefore to identify and summarise those other policy and guidance documents that do not form part of the statutory development plan that are of particular relevance to the determination of this planning application.

8.2 National Design Guide (2019)

- 8.2.1 Published in October 2019, the National Design Guide seeks to provide guidance to assist in the delivery of beautiful, enduring and successful places.
- 8.2.2 The National Design Guide recognises the importance of good design. To this end, the document sets out ten characteristics which ought to be used to assess the design credentials of development. The ten characteristics identified are said to contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the NPPF. The ten characteristics are:
- Context – enhances the surroundings.
 - Identity – attractive and distinctive.
 - Built form – a coherent pattern of development.
 - Movement – accessible and easy to move around.
 - Nature – enhanced and optimised.
 - Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive.
 - Uses – mixed and integrated.
 - Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable.
 - Resources – efficient and resilient.

- Lifespan – made to last.

8.2.3 The submitted Design and Access Statement demonstrates that the scheme has evolved to take account of the observations, guidance and comments received from the local planning authority officers, together with other key stakeholders including Network Rail. It is considered that the principles set out in the National Design Guide reinforce those principles set out in those design-specific policies contained within the development plan, which the submitted scheme is considered to accord with.

8.2.4 It is therefore considered that the National Design Guide can be given moderate weight in the determination of this planning application. The scheme is considered to represent a sustainable design that suitably takes account of the site context. It is considered that further details that pertain to design considerations, including external material finishes, can be the subject of suitably worded conditions on a planning permission for the scheme.

8.3 Northumberland Local Transport Plan (LTP3) (2011)

8.3.1 The Northumberland Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 was adopted on 4th April 2011 as an interim strategy which will be refreshed following the council's adoption of the Northumberland Sustainable Community Strategy and the Northumberland Local Plan.

8.3.2 The LTP3 identifies at paragraph 3.68 that:

“Of particular issue to South East Northumberland is the time it takes to travel into the neighbouring authorities of Tyne & Wear, a key source of employment for residents of Northumberland, and the cost associated with these journeys. For example, public transport journey times from Blyth and Ashington to Newcastle City Centre can take in excess of 40 minutes with a weekly bus pass costing between £15 and £20.”

8.3.3 To address such issues, the Northumberland LTP3 recognises that rail travel will have an increasingly important role in tackling congestion and supporting Northumberland's sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

8.3.4 Paragraph 6.29 of the LTP3 states that:

“The County Council is committed to addressing rail issues in Northumberland through improved partnership working with a wide range of stakeholders. These include rail passengers and representative organisations, the Department for Transport, local authorities and regional partners, Network Rail, rail operators and regulatory bodies.”

8.3.5 Paragraph 6.33 also notes that the lack of available car parking at stations severely restricts passenger growth and demand for rail travel.

8.3.6 Paragraph 6.36 states that re-opening of the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line to passenger services is one of the principal elements of the new rail strategy to be implemented in partnership with Network Rail and local rail operators over the period of the third LTP.

- 8.3.7 The scheme which is the subject of this application for planning permission would directly support the aims of the LTP3, to improve and encourage use of rails services in order to assist in reducing the economic, social and environmental impacts resulting from the highway congestion and journey time delays across South East Northumberland.
- 8.3.8 It is therefore considered that the Northumberland Local Transport Plan (LTP3) can be given substantial weight in the determination of this planning application. The scheme is considered to directly support the delivery of a scheme which is identified as a strategic transport priority for the council.

8.4 North East Combined Authority Transport Manifesto (2016)

- 8.4.1 The North East Combined Authority was established in April 2014 and brought together the seven councils which serve County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland. The ambition of NECA is to create the best possible conditions for growth in jobs, investment and living standards, making the North East an excellent place to live and work.
- 8.4.2 NECA recognises that effective transport networks are key to economic growth and opportunity for all. This includes links with the North East and connectivity with the rest of the UK, Europe and the rest of the world. The North East Combined Authority's ambition, as set out in its Transport Manifesto, is to provide affordable, attractive, reliable, safe, healthy transport choices for businesses, residents and visitors while enhancing the environment.
- 8.4.3 The NECA's Transport Manifesto supports the opening of new stations on existing rail lines, including the upgrading of freight-only sections for passenger use.
- 8.4.4 The scheme which is the subject of this application for planning permission would directly support the aims of the NECA's Transport Manifesto, to re-introduce passenger services on an existing freight line and to improve the accessibility and connectivity of South East Northumberland to the wider North East.
- 8.4.5 It is therefore considered that the NECA Transport Manifesto can be given moderate weight in the determination of this planning application. The scheme is considered to directly support the delivery of a scheme which is identified as a strategic transport priority for the North East Combined Authority.

8.5 Transport for the North Strategic Transport Plan (2019)

- 8.5.1 Transport for the North (TfN) is the first statutory sub-national transport body in the United Kingdom. It was formed in 2018 to make the case for strategic transport improvements across the North of England. As a partnership, TfN brings the North's local transport authorities together with Network Rail, Highways England and HS2 Ltd and Central Government, to facilitate discussions on the transport infrastructure needed to drive transformational growth and rebalance the UK economy.

- 8.5.2 TfN's Strategic Transport Plan specifically supports the re-instatement of passenger services on the Northumberland Line, between Ashington and Blyth; this rail intervention is prioritised by TfN in the shorter term, in the context of the Department for Transport's Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline process.
- 8.5.3 The scheme which is the subject of this application for planning permission would directly support the aims of the TfN Strategic Transport Plan, to re-introduce passenger services on the Northumberland Line.
- 8.5.4 It is therefore considered that the TfN Strategic Transport Plan can be given moderate weight in the determination of this planning application. The scheme is considered to directly support the delivery of a scheme which is identified as a strategic transport priority for the Transport for the North.

8.6 The Road to Zero Strategy (2018)

- 8.6.1 Whilst there are local policies pertaining to climate change within the Northumberland Local Plan, the climate crisis and the measures set out by Government in the 'Road to Zero: Next steps towards cleaner road transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy' is a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.
- 8.6.1 The Strategy states that in 2016, road transport accounted for 91% of UK greenhouse gas emissions in transport¹⁸.
- 8.6.2 The amount CO2 emissions per passenger per train is 14 grams. In contrast, a private car can produce 158 grams per passenger¹⁹. As such, a modal shift to public transport has the potential to dramatically decrease our national energy consumption.
- 8.6.3 The scheme which is the subject of this application for planning permission would support the aims of the 'Road to Zero' strategy, by seeking to establish a viable alternative to the private car that may encourage a modal shift from car to rail travel. Such a modal shift would likely result in air quality.
- 8.6.4 It is therefore considered that the 'Road to Zero' strategy can be given moderate weight in the determination of this planning application. The scheme is considered to support the Government's ambitions to move toward zero emissions.

¹⁸ Page 28 The Road to Zero: Next steps towards cleaner road transport and delivering our Industrial Strategy (2018)

¹⁹ P79 Transport for the North Strategic Transport Plan 2019

8.7 Northumberland Economic Strategy (2018)

8.7.1 The Northumberland Economy Strategy 2019 – 2024 was formally approved by the council's cabinet in December 2018. The council's ambition as set out in the strategy is to deliver inclusive, industrial growth to support a more productive, prosperous economy.

8.7.2 Priority 5 of the Economic Strategy states that one of the key deliverables to better connect the county is:

“Invest in high quality passenger transport including the reopening of the Northumberland to Newcastle rail line to passengers.”

8.7.3 The scheme which is the subject of this application for planning permission would directly support the aims of the Northumberland Economic Strategy, to reopen the Northumberland Line to passenger services.

8.7.4 It is therefore considered that the Northumberland Economic Strategy can be given substantial weight in the determination of this planning application. The scheme is considered to directly support the delivery of a scheme which is identified as a strategic economic priority for the council.

8.8 Ashington Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (2010)

8.8.1 The Ashington Town Centre SPD was formally adopted by the council in February 2010. The SPD sets out a strategy for integrating a comprehensive retail-led redevelopment scheme in the north-eastern part of the town centre with other areas of the town whilst tackling issues concerning pedestrian and vehicle conflict on the current main arterial route through the town.

8.8.2 The SPD offers support for Policy TI of the Wansbeck District Local Plan, which supports the re-introduction of passenger services on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Railway Line.

8.8.3 The scheme which is the subject of this application for planning permission would directly support the re-introduction of passenger services on the Northumberland Line, supporting increased access and footfall to deliver the retail-led regeneration of the town centre.

8.8.4 It is therefore considered that the Ashington Town Centre SPD can be given moderate weight in the determination of this planning application. The scheme is considered to support the regeneration of Ashington town centre.

8.9 Nexus Metro and Local Rail Strategy (2016)

8.9.1 The Nexus Metro and Local Rail Strategy, produced in conjunction with the North East Combined Authority, sets out the proposals for the improved integration between local rail and Metro services, and the potential to exploit under-used and disused railway assets and alignments across the North East region.

8.9.2 The Metro and Local Rail Strategy identifies that the restoration of passenger rail services to the Blyth, Bedlington and Ashington areas is a strategic priority for the NECA because of the significant regenerative benefits of the scheme.

8.9.3 The strategy identifies that Northumberland Park would provide an interchange station to enable easy access between rail, Metro and local bus services – given that park and ride facilities are already available at the station.

It is therefore considered that the Metro and Local Rail Strategy can be given moderate weight in the determination of this planning application. The scheme is considered to directly support the delivery of a scheme which is identified as a strategic priority for both NECA and Nexus.

8.10 Summary

8.10.1 It is considered that there are various considerations that are material to the determination of this planning application. This section has sought to identify and apportion due weight to each of those considerations, to assist the local planning authority in the determination of this application.

8.10.2 It is considered that there are no material considerations that would be sufficient either individually or in conjunction with other considerations that would preclude the granting of planning permission for the submitted scheme.

9 Case for Planning Permission to be granted

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 This section brings together the information presented within this planning statement and provides a reasoned conclusion for the support of the application.

9.2 Accordance with local and national policies

9.2.1 This planning statement has demonstrated that the proposed railway station and overall scheme accords with the relevant national and local planning policies.

9.2.2 This statement has identified the many and various economic, social and environmental benefits that will be delivered as a result of the proposed development, including the potential for the development to act as a catalyst for further investment and wider regeneration within Ashington and South East Northumberland more widely.

9.2.3 The scheme will improve the opportunities for use of alternative modes of transport to the private car, helping to better meet the needs of those without access to the private car and encouraging those with access to the private car to consider using a more sustainable mode of travel, which will help reduce carbon emissions and deliver many environmental and health benefits including improving local air quality.

9.2.4 The scheme represents a sustainable development; the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore this scheme should be supported.

9.2.5 The material considerations that pertain to the application have been identified. This has included demonstrating that there are no material considerations which would prevent the approval of the scheme.

9.2.6 It is requested that the scheme which is the subject of this planning application therefore be approved as submitted.

9.3 Benefits of the Scheme

9.3.1 This planning statement has demonstrated that the proposed railway station would accord with both local and national planning policies in terms of encouraging use of public transport through the provision of improved access to the railway network.

9.3.2 The proposed railway station at Ashington will deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits.

9.3.3 The economic benefits of the scheme include:

- The scheme will deliver the transport infrastructure which is required to attract inward investment, create additional employment opportunities, enhance economic vitality and encourage further growth in South East Northumberland.
- The development will facilitate increased access to employment and training opportunities throughout South East Northumberland. The provision of passenger rail services at this location, could encourage employers to locate to this part of Ashington especially given its proximity to the town centre and existing bus services.

9.3.4 The social benefits of the scheme include:

- The scheme will improve journey times for residents, local people, and those wishing to travel from Ashington to Newcastle, including onward journeys from Newcastle's central station.
- The development will provide a safe and secure railway station, with appropriate lighting and CCTV camera provision to encourage all parts of the community to use the transport services and the railway station.
- The nature of the scheme will encourage a sub-modal shift to more sustainable transport methods within the local area.
- The development will incorporate ramp and stepped access to the platform and signage to the railway suitable for users with disabilities.
- The development includes facilitating infrastructure improvements to the cycle and footways adjacent to the site, providing a safe and pleasant route for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The development would provide transport infrastructure that would encourage sustainable travel and would accommodate projected future growth in Ashington in terms of population, employment and housing.
- The development will contribute to building strong, vibrant and healthy communities by encouraging social inclusion, improving the accessibility of local services and the use of sustainable travel modes.
- The development will make it physically simpler and more convenient to use and access public transport infrastructure in Ashington. The consequential modal shift will assist in improving local air quality.
- The scheme will deliver environmental and physical improvements to the site, in doing so it will assist in the regeneration of the area and of Ashington more widely.

9.3.5 The environmental benefits of the scheme include:

- Encouraging the use of healthy and sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and use of improved public transport.
- Facilitating a sub-modal shift to sustainable transport methods, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from a reduction of cars on the road network.
- The development will make it physically more convenient to use and access public transport infrastructure in Ashington. The consequential modal shift will assist in improving local air quality
- The scheme includes the installation of a sustainable urban drainage system which will alleviate flooding and allow the immediate area to accommodate extreme rainfall events with less risk of adverse impacts on adjacent land uses
- The development will be undertaken in accordance with a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP), which will minimise the environmental impacts traditionally associated with urban redevelopment schemes.
- The development will decrease dependence on the private car for residents and local people, in so doing it will reduce carbon emissions
- The development will implement a strategy for providing a structured approach to landscaping at the site; introducing native shrub and tree planting

9.3.6 The economic, social and environmental benefits associated with the development would be delivered jointly and simultaneously. As such, the proposed development can be considered to represent a sustainable development.

9.3.7 It is therefore requested that planning permission be granted for the scheme as submitted.

9.4 Conditions

9.4.1 Planning conditions, when used properly, can enhance the quality of development and enable development to proceed where it would otherwise have been necessary to refuse planning permission, by mitigating the adverse effects.

9.4.2 The objectives of planning are best served when the power to impose conditions on a planning permission is exercised in a way that is clearly seen to be fair, reasonable and practicable.

9.4.3 Section 70(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables a local planning authority in granting planning permission to impose “*such conditions as they think fit.*” This power needs to be interpreted in the context of material considerations such as the National Planning Policy Framework, the supporting guidance on the use of planning conditions, and relevant case law.

- 9.4.4 A pre-commencement condition must not be imposed on the grant of permission without the written agreement of the applicant except in the circumstances set out in the Town and Country Planning (Pre-Commencement Conditions) Regulations 2018.
- 9.4.5 Paragraph 55 of the NPPF stipulates that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum, and use only where they satisfy the following tests:
1. necessary;
 2. relevant to planning;
 3. relevant to the development to be permitted;
 4. enforceable;
 5. precise; and
 6. reasonable in all other respects.
- 9.4.6 The plans, surveys, assessments and other information submitted in support of this planning application are considered to be sufficient to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that the scheme would accord with the relevant policies and that there are no material considerations that ought to preclude the granting of a planning permission for the scheme.
- 9.4.7 Although a considerable amount of information is submitted in support of the planning application, it is anticipated that additional details may be required to enable the local planning authority to be assured that the proposed mitigation will be sufficient to deliver the environmental and other benefits that pertain to the scheme. In these situations, to avoid potential prolongation of the determination period, the applicant would wish the local planning authority to attach a condition to a planning permission requiring the submission of a scheme with the additional details/ design information.
- 9.4.8 In line with the tests set out in paragraph 55, this section of the Planning Statement seeks to present an overview of those matters which could be the subject of conditions on a planning permission, in order to seek to avoid possible delays to determination of the planning application as a result of requests from the local planning authority for further information.
- 9.4.9 The applicants would respectfully request the opportunity to review the wording of any draft conditions which are to be imposed, prior to the granting of a permission.
- 9.4.10 Figure 9.1 presents an overview of those matters which could be the subject of conditions on a planning permission.

Condition Subject	Relevant submitted information	Suggested scope of condition
Design	Proposed Plans, Design and Access Statement	Submission of external materials samples, boundary treatment details, CCTV scheme, shelters etc
Trees	Proposed Plans, Arboricultural Impact Assessment	Submission of arboricultural method statement, Tree protection plan
Landscaping	Proposed Plans, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	Submission of finished site level details, hard and soft landscaping details, landscape management plan, platform furniture details, signage details
Ecology	Ecological Impact Assessment including Biodiversity Net Gain calculation	Submission of a scheme for biodiversity net gain
Construction	Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan	Submission of a detailed Construction Environment Management Plan
Contaminated Land	Coal Mining Risk Assessment, Geo-technical Desk Based Assessment	Submission of a remediation scheme, verification report, unexpected contamination details if found
Drainage	Proposed Plans, Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment	Submission of a drainage scheme incorporating sustainable drainage details
Lighting	Proposed Plans, Lighting Statement	Submission of a lighting detail
Highways	Proposed Plans, Transport Assessment, Stage 1 Road Safety Audit to be submitted during determination of application.	Submission of cycle storage details, s278 works details, car park management plan, EV charging details, bridleway/ public rights of way details. RSA stage 1 is anticipated to be submitted during determination. Notwithstanding this submission there may be a requirement for further safety audits and these may be the subject of condition(s) attached to the grant of a planning permission
Archaeology	Heritage Statement	No condition anticipated
Noise	Noise Assessment	Detailed design of the proposed noise attenuation barriers; Details of PA system.
Air Quality	Air Quality Assessment	No condition anticipated

Figure 9.1 Schedule of proposed conditions

- 9.4.11 Figure 9.1 has been drafted to include only those matters which could potentially be pre-commencement or pre-operational conditions and does not include those matters which are likely to be the subject of 'compliance' conditions.
- 9.4.12 It is respectfully requested that the precise wording of all conditions, including suitable trigger points for discharge where relevant, be agreed with the applicant prior to formal determination of this application for planning permission.

9.5 Additional information

- 9.5.1 In the event that additional information, clarification or further details concerning the proposed development are required during the determination period this will be provided upon request.
- 9.5.2 The applicants wish to continue to work closely with the local planning authority to ensure the application can be determined as expeditiously as possible. To this end, we are content to attend meetings as required by officers.

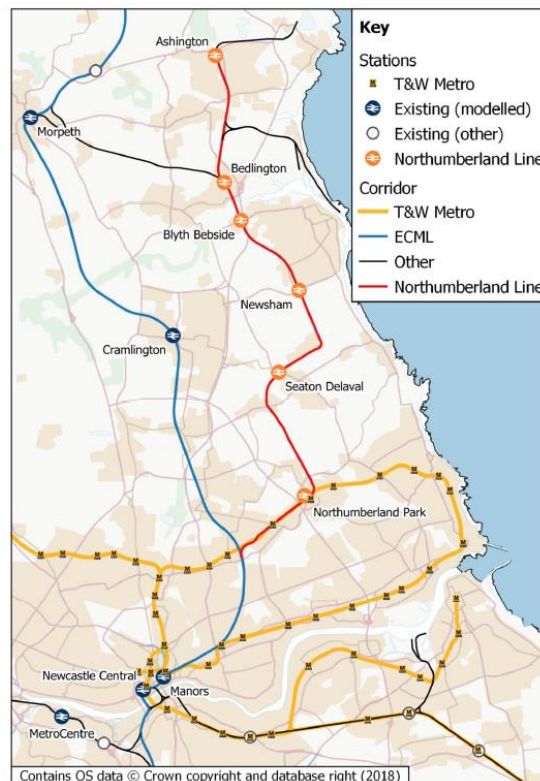
Appendix A- Economic Assessment

Overview

Passenger train services operating on the railway line between Ashington and Newcastle were withdrawn in 1964 as part of the Beeching Cuts; the rail network in this area continues to be used for freight and as a diversion route for East Coast Main Line passenger services. The re-opening of the Northumberland Line between Ashington and Newcastle is a key priority of Northumberland County Council to improve connectivity within this area of South East Northumberland and to the wider North East region.

The proposed scheme will deliver five new stations, and upgrade/expand a sixth station to provide interchange with the Tyne & Wear Metro network at Northumberland Park. The route of the Northumberland Line is shown in the figure below.

The Northumberland Line Scheme Extents



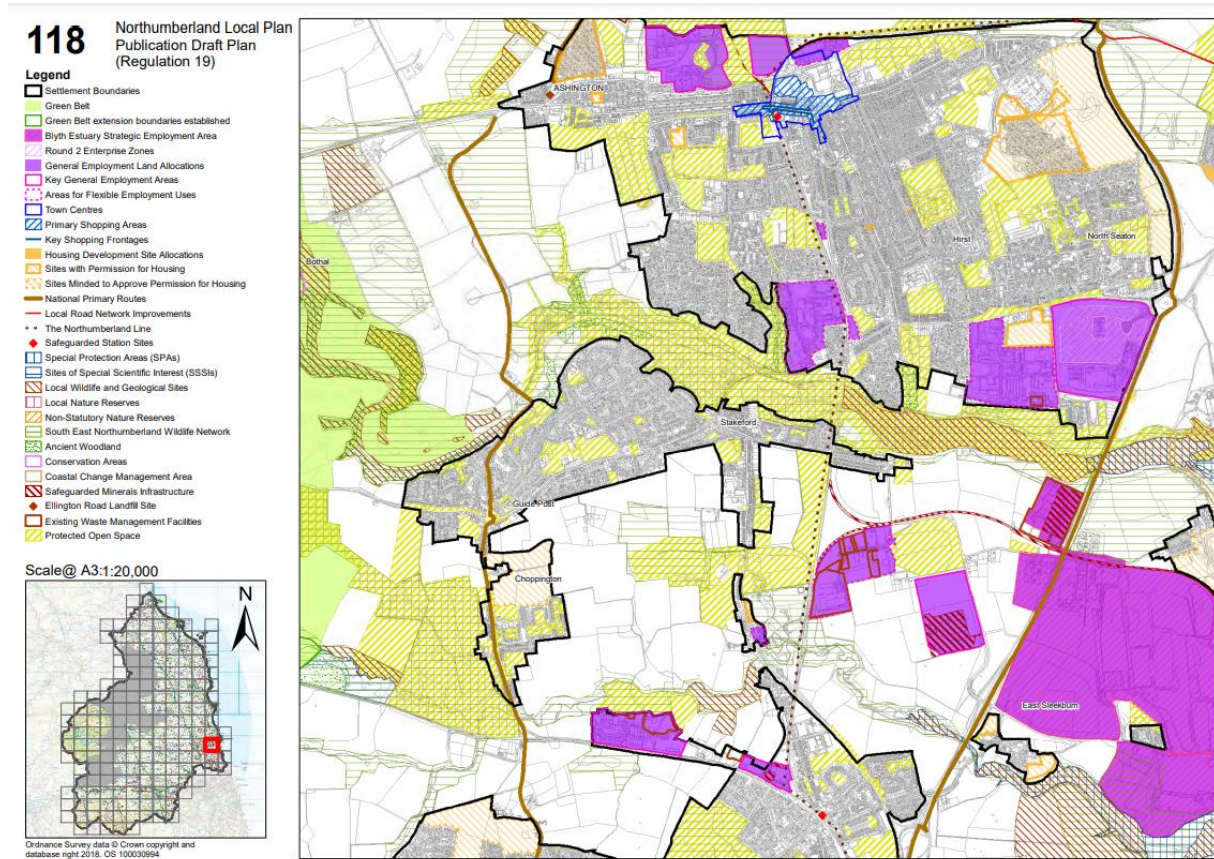
The Outline and Updated Business Cases for the Northumberland Line scheme demonstrate that the scheme delivers high value for money, improves travel times by public transport within, and beyond, South East Northumberland, and provides regeneration benefits to the area. The following sections of this report summarise the economic benefits associated with a station being located in Ashington.

Ashington

Ashington is the most northerly station proposed as part of the Northumberland Line. It will serve the town of Ashington and surrounding catchment, with Ashington having a population of 27,000 inhabitants in the 2011 Census. The success of the town was built on the mining industry, but since the closure of the mines in the late 20th century, Ashington has suffered from issues of social deprivation. This manifests itself in higher than average levels of unemployment, lower resident earnings, a higher than average percentage of the population in poor health and a higher proportion of residents without any qualifications when compared to regional and national averages. According to the index of multiple deprivation, the proposed Ashington station is located within the top 10% of deprived lower super output areas nationally.

Despite the decline in industry in Ashington in previous years, significant investment and regeneration is now ongoing in Ashington town centre; a multi-screen cinema and restaurant complex is being constructed at Portland Park, next to the proposed station, and there is provision for 1,600 houses in Ashington in the Northumberland Local Plan.

Northumberland Local Plan: Ashington



Source: Northumberland County Council²⁰

In terms of existing transport connections, the town is served by a bus network that provides connections to other towns in South East Northumberland and Newcastle. These bus services are essential to residents of Ashington given that 33% of households do not have access to a car or van. However, despite the reliance of Ashington residents on public transport connections, bus journey times are much slower than that of the private car; this is illustrated in the following table.

Journey Times to Key Employment Sites (AM Peak)

Origin	Destination	Bus Time (mins)	Car Time (mins)	Distance (miles)
Ashington (Central)	Newcastle city centre	64	35	18.3
Ashington (Central)	Cobalt Business Park	72	20	14.7
Ashington (Central)	Seaton Delaval	53	20	10.7

Source Google maps/Traveline (highway journey times represent quickest routes, but journey times are variable)

Long public transport journey times compared to the private car are limiting the potential for Ashington residents to access employment, education and leisure opportunities across the wider North East region; this poor public transport accessibility also

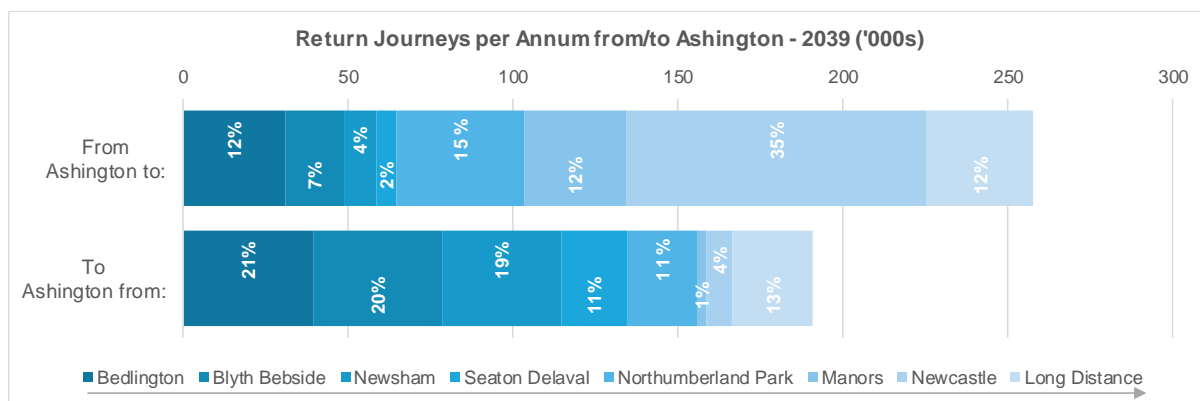
²⁰ <https://northumberland-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/planning/localplan/reg19?>

reduces the attractiveness of Ashington as an area in which to invest. Within the Northumberland Local Plan, it is acknowledged that the provision of new transport infrastructure is essential to achieving the growth aspirations for Ashington.

Economic Assessment

The Northumberland Line scheme is forecast to generate circa 1.45m annual return journeys by 2039²¹ across the entire scheme. Ashington station is forecast to generate 18% of all rail demand and attract 13% of all rail demand. The figure below shows the distribution of annual rail demand at this station, which is forecast to have circa 900,000 entries/exits by 2039.

Distribution of Annual Rail Demand (2039)



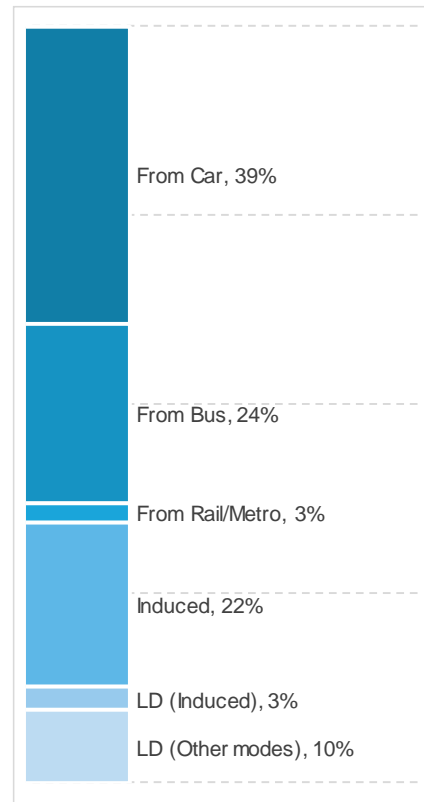
Source of Rail Patronage

²¹ These forecasts are aligned to a service proposition that has 2 trains per hour operating between Ashington and Newcastle, taking 32 minutes. Rail fares would be set at a similar level to those used on the Tyne & Wear Metro.

It is estimated that during an average morning peak hour in 2039, 143 passengers will board a train service at Ashington, with a further 95 passengers alighting at this destination. Nearly 50% of the demand originating from Ashington station will use the Northumberland Line to travel to Newcastle Central station or beyond; 60% of inbound passengers to Ashington originate from the three nearest stations, Bedlington, Blyth Bebside and Newsham.

The figure to the right summarises the source of patronage at Ashington in the future forecast year of 2039. Modal transfer from car is the primary source of demand for the scheme at this station, accounting for over 40% of rail demand (once long-distance movements are considered), whilst just over a quarter of new rail demand is forecast to transfer from bus. Demand transferring from existing rail services (via Morpeth) or existing Metro services (via Northumberland Park) represent less than 5% of the total rail patronage.

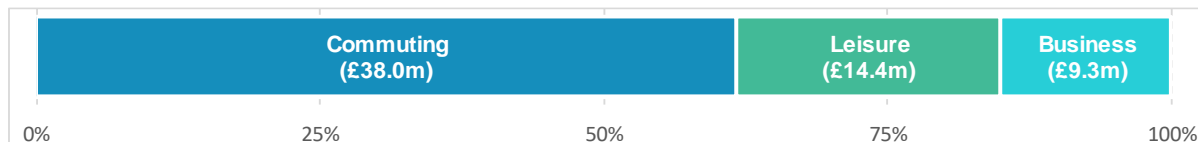
25% of passenger journeys using this station are estimated to be new journeys that would not have been made previously in the absence of the scheme.



The introduction of the rail service will provide a quicker public transport option ‘door-to-door’ from Ashington into central Newcastle, other Tyne & Wear destinations, and neighbouring towns, than can currently be offered by rail (via stations on the East Coast Mainline) or bus. It will also be a more competitive option for existing car users to consider, especially once the full times and costs of the journey are taken into consideration.

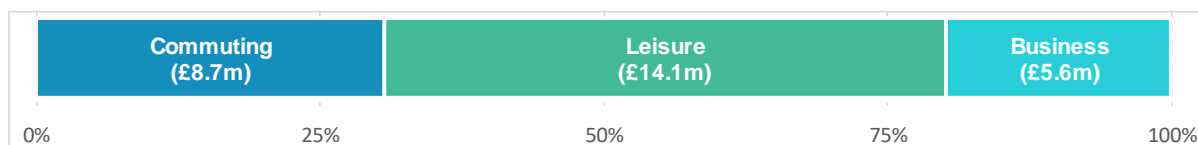
The User Time Saving (UTS) benefits generated by Ashington passengers (£61.7m) represent 18% of the scheme’s total UTS benefits; UTS benefits by journey purpose are presented in the figure below.

User Time Saving Benefits Generated by Ashington Station Demand (£ million, 2010 prices)



The Northumberland Line scheme also impacts on road usage; it removes car journeys across the rail corridor through mode transfer to rail, whilst some new short distance local journeys by car will be generated around stations. The overall net impact is a reduction in car-km and a decongestion benefit. By 2039, the annual net impact in car-km associated with rail demand generated at Ashington station is forecast to be a reduction of 3.95m car-km (a 5.95m reduction in car-km due to modal transfer balanced by a 2.00m increase in car-km associated with local station access). Demand at Ashington station is forecast to contribute 20% of the scheme’s total decongestion benefits (circa £28.4 million); decongestion benefits by purpose are presented in the below figure.

Decongestion Benefits Generated by Ashington Station Demand (£ million, 2010 prices)



The wider economic benefits of the scheme comprise the sum of the agglomeration and the labour supply benefits and have been estimated at a Local Authority District (LAD) level. Since the forecast model only provided full travel costs for movements within Northumberland at LAD level, it is not possible to further disaggregate the outputs at a station-by-station level. Outputs represent a conservative estimate of the overall benefits of the scheme as only Northumberland impacts have been estimated.

The welfare impact of agglomeration (effectivity density) impacts resulting from closer perceived proximity between individuals and businesses account for 93% of the welfare benefits estimated. Labour supply impacts, related to employment effects derived from improved accessibility on a region poorly connected to employment centres, accounts for the remaining 7% of wider economic benefits. The below table **Error! Reference source not found.** presents the present value of wider economic benefits from the scheme, appraised over 60 years.

Northumberland Line Wider Economic Benefits (£ million, 2010 prices):

Welfare Impacts	Agglomeration	Labour Supply	Total
Estimated Benefits (£m)	£47.2	£3.3	£50.5

The quantification of the wider economic benefits from the scheme has been endorsed through consultation with businesses, organisations and the general public, who agree that the scheme will improve connectivity to employment opportunities, increase the labour catchment area for businesses and improve the attractiveness of Ashington as an area in which to invest. This should help to reverse the socio-economic problems that currently exist in Ashington and result in a much more prosperous future for residents of the town.

Summary

In summary, Ashington is an industrial town in South East Northumberland that is struggling to overcome social deprivation following the decline and closure of the mining industry in the 1980s and 1990s. The town has strong development opportunities through the Local Plan and at Portland Park, that will bring economic benefits in the future. However, for those without access to a car or van, they are currently reliant on the bus network for mobility. Journey times to key destinations by bus are often at least twice as long as the car, which is hindering the economic growth of the town.

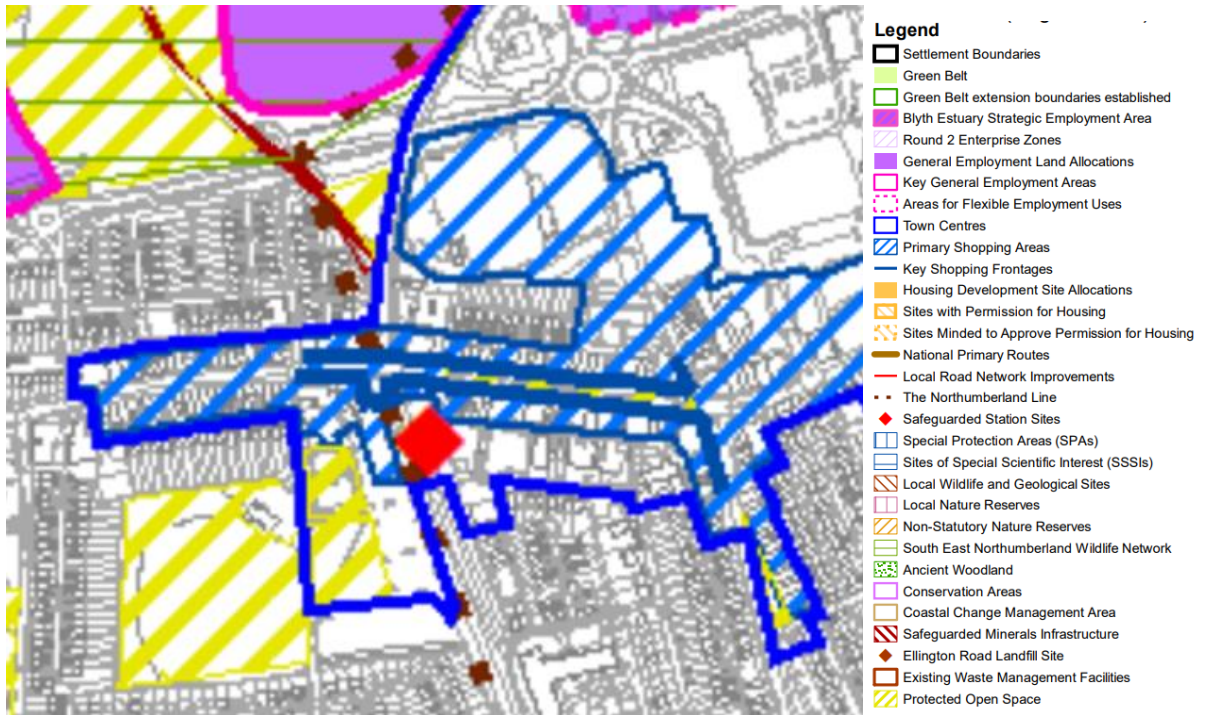
Connecting Ashington to the heavy rail network will bring substantial benefits for both residents and people visiting the town. Rail will provide quicker journey times to key destinations, which are faster than the bus and are comparable to the car. This will not only improve accessibility to employment, education and leisure opportunities, it will also encourage modal shift from existing car users, and have environmental benefits through a reduction in traffic congestion and car emissions.

With regards to passenger numbers, by 2039, Ashington station is anticipated to have around 900,000 entries and exits at the station. Forecasting work undertaken predicts that users will use the rail line to travel to/from Ashington and other communities along the Northumberland Line, with other users traveling to Newcastle or beyond. Notably, 25% of rail trips will be made by people who would not have made the trip had the passenger service not been introduced.

The Northumberland Line presents Ashington with a great opportunity to help address deprivation, bring economic growth to the town, and connect residents to the wider North East region. This will help to reverse the socio-economic problems that currently exist in Ashington and result in a much more prosperous future for residents of the town.

Appendix B- Adopted and Emerging Local Plan Policies Map

Emerging Northumberland Local Plan policies map



Adopted Wansbeck District Local Plan policies map

