



DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MID-COQUETDALE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA DESIGNATION

OFFICER DECISION ACTING UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Date of application	5 th February 2015
Date of decision	17 th April 2015
Name of proposed area	Mid-Coquetdale Neighbourhood Area

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Applying for the designation of a neighbourhood area is the first formal step Parish Council are required to take if they wish to exercise their neighbourhood planning powers. A 'neighbourhood area' is a defined geographical area in which a Parish Council wish to undertake neighbourhood planning – for example the area for which they wish to develop a neighbourhood development plan.
- 1.2 Before designating a neighbourhood area, the local planning authority must undertake a period of consultation. This provides an opportunity for members of the public, businesses and other interested bodies to make representations relating to the appropriateness of the area for neighbourhood planning purposes.
- 1.3 The National Park Authority is required to either designate the area or refuse to designate the area. If the decision is to refuse to designate an area, then reasons must be given.
- 1.4 This is the second application proposing the designation of a neighbourhood area in Northumberland National Park. The first being the Tasset & Greystead Neighbourhood Plan, currently undergoing pre-submission draft consultation. This report relates to the designation of a neighbourhood area for Mid-Coquetdale that comprises the combined boundaries of Rothbury Parish Council, Cartington Parish Council, Thropton Parish Council and Whitton and Tosson Parish Council.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 give local communities the opportunity to prepare a plan with statutory status, a 'neighbourhood development plan', for their area.
- 2.2 The Mid-Coquetdale Neighbourhood Development Plan is being led by a Steering Group which reports to Rothbury Parish Council. Rothbury Parish Council are acting on behalf of on behalf of themselves; Cartington Parish Council; Thropton Parish Council and; Whitton and Tosson Parish Council.
- 2.3 Rothbury Parish Council is the 'Relevant Body' for the purposes of Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and is therefore qualified to undertake neighbourhood planning. The purpose of the application is to enable Rothbury Parish Council to undertake neighbourhood planning and in particular to prepare a neighbourhood development plan for the Parishes of Rothbury, Cartington, Thropton, Whitton and Tosson.
- 2.4 Northumberland National Park Authority is the supporting Authority. Northumberland County Council is the lead support authority and will provide the majority of the support to the steering group at future stages of the plan preparation process.

3.0 Designating the Neighbourhood Area - Consideration

- 3.1 Designation of a Neighbourhood Area is the first formal stage in the preparation of any Neighbourhood Development Plan (although consultation and engagement work can start prior to this designation).
- 3.2 The Regulations explain that it is for the Parish Council (as the relevant body under the Regulations) to submit to the Local Planning Authority (Northumberland National Park Authority) an application to designate the area that the Neighbourhood Plan will cover. The application needs to include a plan and a statement explaining why the area is considered to be appropriate.
- 3.3 Rothbury Parish Council (on behalf of themselves and Cartington Parish Council, Thropton Parish Council and Whitton and Tosson Parish Council) on 5th February 2015 submitted a request that the National Park Authority formally designate a Neighbourhood Area to coincide with the boundaries of these parishes. The Parish Council included a map with their request and confirmed they were the relevant body under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to make such a request.

3.4 The Parish Councils justified the proposed area by explaining:

Rothbury Parish Council, Cartington Parish Council, Thropton Parish Council and Whitton and Tosson Parish Council have, following discussions and a meeting with NCC, each formally agreed and minuted their intention to work together to prepare a neighbourhood plan. The area proposed for neighbourhood planning purposes is defined as the local administrative boundaries of the four civil parishes. Part of Whitton & Tosson parish lies within Northumberland National Park. It is intended and agreed that Rothbury Parish Council will be the qualifying body for neighbourhood planning purposes as it has the largest population of the four parishes. There is a strong functional relationship between Rothbury parish and the three adjacent parishes, whose residents use Rothbury's many services. The parish councils feel it would be appropriate through a Neighbourhood Plan, to prepare local planning policies that can better address the needs and wishes of the local community.

3.5 In accordance with the Regulations, the National Park Authority has publicised the request to designate the Neighbourhood Plan area on its web page. In addition, posters have been erected locally and an advertisement was placed in the Northumberland gazette on the 13th of February 2015. The public consultation period lasted 6 weeks between 19th February and the 31st March 2015. No representations were received in relation to the proposal to designate the neighbourhood area.

3.6 It is considered that for the reasons the Parish Council have set out, the combined boundaries of Rothbury, Cartington, Thropton and Whitton and Tosson Parishes is an appropriate area to be designated for neighbourhood planning purposes. Only a small portion of the overall neighbourhood area is located within the National Park (i.e. a portion of Whitton and Tosson Parish that includes Great Tosson, Little Tosson and Tosson Mill – see Appendix 1).

3.7 The Neighbourhood Area has also been designated by Northumberland County Council, as majority of the Neighbourhood Area lies outside of Northumberland National Park and so is administered, including in respect of planning matters, by Northumberland County Council.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 The steering group will continue community engagement and information gathering work with a view to preparing a draft Neighbourhood Plan for the area. A launch event is planned for the 23rd April 2015. Formal consultation will take place before the proposed plan is submitted to the Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority then has to publicise the Plan again locally and notify statutory consultation bodies. Then, if the process set out in the Regulations has been followed and basic conditions have been met, the Plan can then progress to independent examination.

4.2 If the examiner's report is favourable, the Plan will advance to a Referendum. If the vote is in favour of the Plan, by a simple majority, the Local Planning Authority is required to confirm adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan and publicise this fact. At this stage the Plan becomes part of the Development Plan and must be used in the decision making process when determining planning applications.

5.0 DECISION

5.1 Mid-Coquetdale Neighbourhood Area is hereby designated for the purposes of neighbourhood planning, in accordance with section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and pursuant to the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

Tony Gates,
Chief Executive (National Park Officer)
17th April 2015

