

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report:

Forth Yards Draft Masterplan Vision and Principles Supplementary Planning Document

November 2025

Purpose of this Document

This document outlines the Council's consideration of whether the Forth Yards Draft Masterplan Vision and Principles SPD should be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) involves evaluation of the environmental impacts of a plan or programme. The Government Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal guidance sets out the legal assessment process that must be followed. Often within the planning context, the SEA requirements are met by incorporating it within a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which is a requirement for Development Plan Documents.

There is no legal requirement for Supplementary Planning Documents to be accompanied by Sustainability Appraisal. However, guidance for SEAs states that "in exceptional circumstances" there may be a requirement for SPDs to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment where it is felt they may have a likely significant effect on the environment that has not been assessed within the SEA/SA of the Local Plan.

To assess whether a SEA is required the local planning authority must undertake a screening process based on a standard set of criteria, to establish whether the draft SPD is likely to have a significant environmental effect. This must be subject to consultation with the three consultation bodies: Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England. A Screening Process has been followed and forms the main content of this report.

Table 1: Proposed Scope of the Forth Yards Masterplan SPD

Table 1 sets out the proposed scope of further guidance that will be provided in the Masterplan SPD

Baseline Evidence, Local Character Analysis and SWOT • Historical development over time. • Character and Contextual Analysis • Constraints and Opportunities • Spatial parameters and principles based on understand of the place
Vision and Place-making Objectives • Vision. • Set of placemaking objectives
Scenario/Option Testing and Design Evolution • Summary of option development and testing
Co-ordinating Levels Strategy (pre and post development levels to co-ordinate infrastructure and development/place)

Land Use Framework Plan and written guidance • Land use mix, quantum and distribution • Housing mix and type • Commercial & Retail • Social Infrastructure (e.g. education/health) • Employment uses • Cultural/destination uses • Energy Centre • Meanwhile uses
Green Infrastructure Framework Plan and written guidance • Strategic Open Green spaces (inc Highline and Victoria Park) • Recreational & Amenity green space • Semi-natural • Allotments • Outdoor Sports & Play • Green corridors/streets/linkages • Strategic SUDS/attenuation areas , flow paths and outfalls • Flood mitigation (surface and pluvial) • Strategic Landscaping & Trees • Ecological mitigation and enhancements • BNG Strategy
Movement Framework Plan and written guidance • Strategic Proposals Tyne Crossing • Highline and connections to it • Vehicular access/junction improvements (on and off site) • Street Network and Circulation • Street Hierarchy & Typologies • Public transport/Mobility Hub • Active travel (cycle,ped) • Parking Strategy/Standards • Servicing
Urban Design Framework Plan and strategic design principles • Development block structure • Gateways and Landmarks • Heights and Density (ranges) • Scale & Massing • Frontage Principles • Public Realm • Retaining, restoring and enhancing historical and heritage features/structures
Sustainability and Energy Framework providing guidance and proposals on site-wide and building scale opportunities for sustainability, zero carbon living and a 20 minute neighbourhood
Social Value and Health Framework • Interventions to enhance social value and health outcomes building on Social Value Strategy and Health audit/analysis
Illustrative Layout- indicating further detailed evidence of how a high-quality design and layout can be achieved within the parameters and principles agreed in the Masterplan Framework
Design Guidance/Strategic Design Code

Guidance for site wide and character areas should be provided for the following components in written text, plans, cross sections, axonometric and sketches/images

- Urban Form/Density/Heights.
- Block and Plot Typologies
- Key Public Spaces/place and design principles/frontage and boundaries.
- Street and Pedestrian/Cycle Routes
- Landscape Principles
- Architectural Principles and Materials

- **Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan**
- Ground remediation and earthworks requirements
- Existing structures strategy
- Transport requirements
- Energy and Utility Requirements
- Flood Mitigation Requirements
- Surface and Foul Water Strategy
- Waste and Recycling
- Green infrastructure
- Social Infrastructure
- Phasing

Delivery Strategy

- Delivery Partner Role
- Phasing
- Stewardship Arrangements
- Planning application strategy

Forth Yards Draft Masterplan Vision and Principles SPD

A Publication Draft of the Forth Yards Masterplan Vision and Principles SPD is currently being prepared by the council, with the intention of being formally adopted by Newcastle City Council.

This draft SPD has a role in supplementing local plan policies set out in the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP) adopted in March 2015 and the Development and Allocations Plan (DAP) adopted in June 2020. The document will provide additional guidance to support policies in the Local Plan and will be a material consideration in the consideration of planning applications in Forth Yards, additional to existing Local Plan policies, which have already been subject to an SEA.

The draft SPD is aligned with Newcastle's adopted Local Plan policies. It aims to provide further guidance covering key topics that the design of developments within the Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site will need to address through the planning application process. This aligns with the council's wider aims, including the

provision of quality housing and easy movement in a vibrant, growing, and inclusive economy.

Policy Context

Policy D3 of the CSUCP, 'Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site', sets out that Forth Yards is allocated for mixed-use development. It requires that development improves access to and around the site, including connections to the River Tyne, provides a high-quality landmark entrance that respects the surrounding heritage, and provide public space between Redheugh Bridge Road and Pottery Lane.

Policy D3 allocated Forth Yards as a "Development Opportunity Site", rather than a "Key Site", meaning that the site was recognised as a major site for development, but not considered to be central to delivering the Plan's vision investment. As a result, the level of evidence produced relating to suitability of the site is broader, and further guidance is needed to set a framework for guiding future development. It has been decided that this will be conducted in the form of an SPD.

The Screening Process

The key to the screening decision is the determination of whether the SPD is likely to have significant environmental effects, using the criteria set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive.

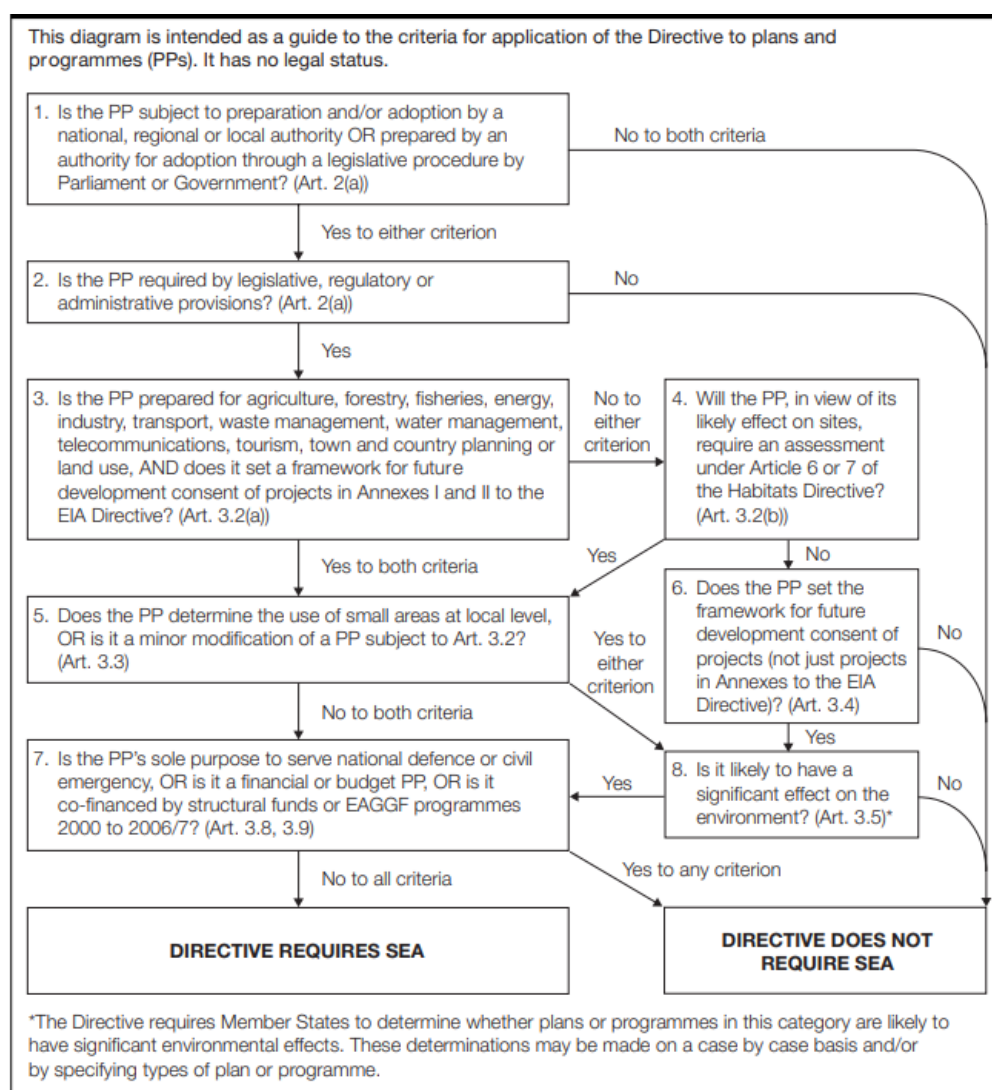
Newcastle's Local Plan, the Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP) and the Development and Allocations Plan (DAP) have been subject to the preparation of a Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating SEA.

Despite no longer requiring sustainability appraisal, SPDs may still require SEA. The ODPM practical guidance provides a checklist approach based on the SEA regulations to help determine whether SEA is required. This guide has been used as the basis on which to assess the need for SEA.

The three consultation bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency, and Natural England) will be consulted to determine whether they agree with the conclusion of this report, in determining whether the draft SPD has a "significant environmental effect" and therefore requires SEA. Should it be determined by the local authority and consultation bodies that SEA does need to be undertaken, the council will need to undertake the Scoping stage of SEA.

Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

The figure below illustrates the process for assessing whether a full SEA is required for a planning document. This has informed the screening of the SPD in Tables 1 and 2 below.



Source: A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2005)

Table 2: Establishing the need for SEA

Stage	Answer	Reason
1. Is the SPD subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament of Government? (Article 2(a))	Yes	The SPD is to be prepared and adopted by the local authority: Newcastle City Council

2. Is the SPD required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a))	Yes	The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 allows SPDs to contain policy that is justified and does not conflict with the adopted development plan (Reg 8(3)). Once adopted, the SPD will be a material consideration in the assessment of applications in the Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site. The SPD will not supersede development plan policies and will sit at the bottom of the hierarchy of local planning policy documents.
3. Is the SPD prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article 3.2(a))	Yes	The SPD is for town and country planning purposes and sets a framework of guidance for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive (Urban Development Projects).
4. Will the SPD, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment for future development under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive (Art. 3.2(b))	No	The policies that the SPD is supplementing have themselves been subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment.
5. Does the SPD determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP (Plan or Programme) subject to Article 3.2? (Article 3.3)	Yes to first criterion	The SPD provides further guidance to support Local Plan policies at a local level within the Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site and wider surrounding area, covering 35 hectares of previously developed land. It will set a framework that encourages appropriate land use at a local level.

6. Does the SPD set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Yes	The SPD sets the framework for guidance of future development consent of projects. This will be a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications in Forth Yards.
7. Is the SPD's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is a financial or budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7?	No	The SPD does not serve national defence or civil emergency, nor is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	Yes	The SPD will be a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications in and immediately outside of the Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site, setting the requirements in terms of infrastructure delivery, design form and environmental requirements for future development projects across the area. It is predicted that future development on the site could result in a significant effect on the environment of the site.

Table 3: Likely Significant Effects on the Environment

Table 2 assesses the Fourth Yards Masterplan SPD against the criteria for determining the likely significance on effects on the environment, from Schedule 1 of the Regulations.

SEA Directive Criteria and Schedule 1 of Environmental	Significant effect Yes or No and Newcastle City Council Response
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Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	
1. Characteristics of the Forth Yards Draft Masterplan Vision and Principles SPD – having regard to:	
a) The degree to which the SPD sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources.	Significant Effect: Yes The draft SPD would contribute to a framework of policies and guidance for future projects in the area. The SPD would be in conformity with local and national policy. The development framework set out by the SPD, with regard to location, nature, and size, is considered to be of a significant scale.
b) The degree to which the SPD influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.	Significant Effect: No This SPD adds further detail to existing policies within the Local Plan. The Masterplan SPD will sit at the lowest level in the hierarchy of planning policy documents and will provide supplementary planning guidance to assist in the delivery of Policy D3 in the CSUCP. This will be a material planning consideration but will not form part of the Development Plan for Newcastle upon Tyne. The SPD will influence planning applications in the Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site but will not influence other plans and programmes.
c) The relevance of the SPD for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	Significant Effect: Yes. The SPD will support a positive impact on delivery of sustainable development. The SPD is relevant to the integration of environmental considerations and would assist in the promotion of sustainable development together with Local Plan policies.
d) Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme SPD.	Significant Effect: Yes The SPD will support the enhancement of the environment in Forth Yards through guidance to encourage sustainable design.

	There are a range of relevant environmental problems locally, including flood risk, land contamination, surface and foul water drainage, and air and noise quality. Environmental principles, for example SuDs, will be addressed within the framework as necessary.
e) The relevance of the SPD for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	Significant Effect: No The SPD supplements the policies in Newcastle City Council's Local Plan which take into account environmental legislation established by the EU, but it does not introduce any new policy initiatives. The SPD does not directly influence the implementation of community legislation on the environment. The SPD will provide a site-wide drainage strategy which will reference the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC).
2. Characteristics of the effects of the area likely to be affected:	
a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects	Significant Effect: Yes The SPD sets a framework that is likely to guide development of a scale and nature that could result in significant and potentially irreversible environmental effects. While the SPD itself does not grant consent or initiate development, the principles and spatial guidance it establishes — including infrastructure delivery, land use intensity, and design form — are expected to shape future proposals in ways that materially affect the environmental baseline.
b) The cumulative nature of the effects	Significant Effect: Yes The SPD only provides guidance on the design of developments within the Forth Yards Site and does not itself lead to development. The design guidance does not extend significantly beyond the Council's policies which have already been subject to SEA.

	Should the development be followed as envisaged, the cumulative effects of the SPD masterplan will significantly alter the environment of the Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site and surrounding sites.
c) The trans-boundary nature of the effects	Significant Effect: Yes The SPD sets a framework for development that could influence the wider Tyne Gorge landscape, including potential infrastructure such as a new river crossing. While not explicitly committed within the Local Plan, the SPD will also introduce spatial and design principles for the site that may result in trans-boundary environmental effects — including impacts on landscape character, the setting of heritage assets, movement networks, and ecological connectivity across the River Tyne. These effects may extend into neighbouring authorities (such as Gateshead) and warrant consideration within the SEA.
d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	Significant Effect: No The SPD will not create significant risks to human health or the environment. Contaminated land is identified as a current risk to human health in the Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site. Subsequent development guided by the Forth Yards Draft Masterplan Vision and Principles SPD would lead to risk reduction through land remediation. Exposure to busy roads, including Scotswood Road, is identified as a risk to human health. Sufficient infrastructure, including pedestrian and cycle crossings will be required to reduce this risk. Currently no other risks to human health have been identified. It is expected that the SPD will ensure the delivery of positive health outcomes from development, for example through the

	delivery of active travel infrastructure, and green infrastructure.
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Significant Effect: Yes The spatial extent of the SPD will cover approximately 35 hectares - larger than the area covered in the Local Plan Policy D3 of the Core Strategy and Core Urban Plan, which was subject to an SEA. The SPD guidance applies to a local area and the magnitude and spatial extent of potential effects which will limit its spatial extent and magnitude. However, within the Masterplan area the magnitude for change would be significant. The current Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site does not include any housing and would therefore not have a significant effect on the existing population of the area. However, the site will provide approximately 3,000 new residential units, which significantly impact the population of Newcastle upon Tyne and over the phasing of development would potentially impact upon the population of occupants of new developments.
f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; or ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii) Intensive land-use	Significant Effect: Yes Local Plan policies relating to environmental protection and design will apply alongside the SPD. The SPD will highlight the site-specific character, and the need for appropriate and contextual design responses. Heritage assets, including the collection of listed bridges along the gorge, and non-designated heritage assets, such as the Tyne Waterfront at Elswick and Forth Goods Yard Undercroft spaces are identified in the SPD to ensure that the quality of the development will positively impact surrounding environment. It is considered that development guided by the masterplan will have the potential to have a positive impact on the value and vulnerability of

	the area, including through intensive land-use from decontamination works and urban development. It is also expected that development will have an impact upon the natural and cultural characteristics of the Tyne Gorge, and will impact the current environmental characteristics of the site.
g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status	Significant Effect: No There are no landscapes of national or international recognition that will be affected by the SPD. The majority of the Forth Yards site is brownfield land. The SPD will not give rise to any significant impacts other than those fully considered in the council's Local Plan, which were subject to SA's.

Table 4: Likely Issues in relation to Key Environmental Topics

The Table below sets out some of the potential issues in relation to key environmental topics outlined in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations

Topic	Potential effect
Population & Human Health	Site is adjacent to area of high deprivation, no residential areas currently on site, exposure to roads
Biodiversity	Protected habitats and species on site, impact of development on River Tyne tidal mudflats (e.g by increased surface water outfalls)
Cultural Heritage	Impact on Tyne Gorge and other designated and non-designated heritage assets
Landscape	Visual impact and impact on character of Tyne Gorge and Central Newcastle townscape through increased scale, height and massing of new buildings
Soil	Former industrial uses and contamination

Water	Fluvial and pluvial flood risk, contamination of water
Air	Air quality from proximity to strategic road network
Noise	Exposure to sources of noise
Climatic Factors	Projection of warmer winters and drier summers, drought and flood events, micro-climate issues, carbon emissions associated with development
Material Assets	Rail, road barriers fragment movement,
Cumulative	Impact with other proposed development projects

Statement of Reasons for Determination

On the basis of the screening process, it is the council's opinion that the impact of the Forth Yards Draft Masterplan Vision and Principles SPD, through responses to the SEA Directive Criteria, **will have significant environmental effects that would require an SEA**. This is considered as a necessary process due to the scale of development detailed in the framework and the potential cumulative effects that development informed by this SPD would have on the environment.

Upon adoption, the SPD would become a material consideration in the assessment of planning applications in Forth Yards, additional to existing Local Plan policies, which have already been subject to an SEA, including Policy D3 Forth Yards Development Opportunity Site.

The three statutory environmental bodies will be consulted over this SEA Screening Report for the Forth Yards Draft Masterplan Vision and Principles SPD.