

**Northumberland National Park – Local Development Framework
Core Strategy and Development Policies – Preferred Options**

Sustainability Appraisal Report – September 2007

Non-Technical Summary

A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been undertaken to accompany the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies – Preferred Options document that will form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the Northumberland National Park.

The National Park LDF, once complete, will replace the Northumberland National Park Local Plan, which was adopted in 1996. SA is a statutory process for assessing and mitigating the effects of particular plans and programmes – including LDFs. The SA process also incorporates the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive.

The SA has been completed by the Strategic Policy and Initiatives Team within Northumberland County Council. The SA has informed the development of the Core Strategy – Preferred Options and has run in parallel to the Core Strategy – Preferred Options drafting process throughout. It builds directly on the work undertaken at the Core Strategy – Issues and Options stage and, in particular, the Sustainability Appraisal undertaken of the Core Strategy - Issues and Options. A Preferred Options document with draft policies was the subject of a consultation that ended in February 2007 and that, together with a parallel Sustainability Appraisal, has influenced this current consultation.

Working from baseline information on a wide range of topics relating to the National Park and following earlier consultation with key stakeholders and the public, a series of 20 sustainability objectives (SO) have been defined. These SO's cover environmental, social and economic concerns. In due course, each element of the National Park LDF will be assessed against these SO's.

The draft has been appraised against the SA objectives and this SA Report demonstrates how the process has operated and reports on the outcomes. The overall conclusion of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy Preferred Options is that it should make a positive contribution to National Park objectives. The Core Strategy will sets out the overall strategy for future development in the Park. The Development Control Policies (previously addressed in a separate document) are now included in the Core Strategy. These will influence the Land Allocations Document, the Otterburn Training Area Action Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents.

This SA Report forms part of the public consultation on the Core Strategy and Development Policies – Preferred Options. The formal consultation is directed to the Statutory Bodies, the public and other interested parties.

1. Introduction

The Core Strategy and Development Policies Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report represents the third stage of the SA of the Northumberland National Park Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF comprises a folder of Development Plan Documents (DPD's) including the Core Strategy and Development Policies, Land Allocations, Area Action Plan for the Otterburn Training Area and a number of Supplementary Planning Documents. The Northumberland National Park LDF, once complete, will replace the Northumberland National Park Local Plan, which was adopted in 1996.

This Core Strategy Preferred Options Sustainability Report has been completed by the Strategic Policy and Initiatives Team within Northumberland County Council and should be read in conjunction with the Northumberland National Park LDF Core Strategy – Preferred Options Report, published by the Northumberland National Park Authority (October 2007). The Issues and Options SA and the previous Preferred Options SA are still available on the NNPA website. The Scoping Report for the sustainability appraisal also remains on the Northumberland National Park website (www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk) and may be read as background to this document.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 gives the spatial planning system the specific objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. A widely used definition is that of the Brundtland Commission in 1987: "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." To ensure sustainable development under the new planning system, local development documents are required to be subject to a SA.

2. Strategic Environmental Assessment/ Sustainability Appraisal

European Directive 2001/42/EC potentially requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of a wide range of plans and programmes. A SA is conducted in conformity with the SEA Directive. However, while an SEA is concerned with environmental effects, the SA is an iterative process that considers the environmental, social and economic consequences of a plan and its policies, and seeks to identify ways of achieving a proper balance between these three considerations.

SA is a method of assessing the extent to which a plan or programme contributes to sustainable development. The Government defines sustainable development as:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- Prudent use of natural resources
- Maintenance of high and sustainable levels of economic growth and employment

The standard SA process is defined in ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)¹ guidance on Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, issued in November 2005. Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires LDD's to be prepared with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

2.1 Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

The first stage of the SA is defined in the guidance as 'stage A – Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope.'

Consultation on the scope of the SA is required under the SEA Directive and the Scoping Report guidance detailed above. It is a specific requirement under the SEA Directive that the Scoping Report is sent to four statutory Consultation Bodies, as listed:

- The Environment Agency
- Countryside Agency²
- English Nature³
- English Heritage

The SA scoping report was issued for consultation in August 2005 to statutory bodies and other relevant public authorities and government bodies.

Within the production of the scoping report, the SA objectives were defined in order to allow the potential impacts of the plan to be measured. As a result of feedback from the SA scoping stage, the SA objectives were refined and four new SA objectives were added. The objectives, as listed in figure 1 below, have been used to assess the Core Strategy Preferred Options.

¹ ODPM became DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) in summer 2006

² From October 2006, The Countryside Agency and English Nature have joined with the Rural Development Service to become Natural England. The consultation role of this new Body covers the matters previously covered by the Countryside Agency and English Nature.

³ As above

Figure 1 – Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

1. Foster the social and economic well being of the local communities
2. To protect the special qualities of the National Park from unsuitable development
3. Create local jobs within the community to support sustainable levels of local economic growth
4. Increase public involvement in decision making
5. To ensure good accessibility for all to jobs, facilities, goods and services in the region
6. To reduce flood risk to people and property
7. To ensure provision of affordable housing
8. To reduce crime and fear of crime
9. To ensure good local air quality and to reduce the causes of climate change
10. Encourage sustainable farm business in the National Park
11. Create, protect and enhance the quality and diversity of the landscape
12. To maintain a landscape rich in biodiversity and geodiversity.
13. Maintain or enhance SSSI's and NNR's
14. To protect and enhance the quality of the Park's ground and river waters
15. To protect and enhance the Park's cultural heritage and settings, and their diversity.
16. Support sustainable tourism and leisure consistent with protection of the environment
17. Support the enjoyment of the countryside and the health benefits to be gained from it.
18. Establish with partners, ways to reduce the impact of traffic and other intrusive activities
19. Reduce the amount of waste produced and increase the amount recycled.
20. Improve awareness of the National Park

3. Preferred Options Methodology

Stage C (see Figure 2 below) of the process is undertaken to develop and refine the options on the development framework. This stage involves defining the preferred options for the Core Strategy of the NNPA Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy will inform other DPD's such as the Land Allocations document and the Area Action Plan for the Otterburn Training Area.

3.1 Identification of options

The Issues and Options Report (June 2006) set out a number of broad issues which were consulted on during June and July 2006. The Issues and Options Report set out the issues with accompanying text and provides options for each followed by a question designed to encourage the consultee to choose an option.

Various options had a 'yes/no' question which was used to simplify the assessment whereas other question/ issues were provided with a choice of answers. On the former, the assessment of the option became discrete where as the latter were assessed and tested against the SA Framework to determine their performance in sustainability terms, with reference to the social, environmental and economic factor. This work has informed the development of the Core Strategy and Development Policies – Preferred Options DPD which sets out the overall strategy for future development in the National Park.

3.2 Assessment of Options

The elements of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Preferred Options are assessed on a short, medium and long term basis. For the purpose of this appraisal, 'short term' describes the effect the option would have within the initial 5-10 years from establishing said option; 'long term' would be the effects after 25 years; and 'medium term' would constitute the time frame in between. It should be noted however that this time frame is a general guidance. In some cases the time frame may need to be extended i.e. for air quality the long term may need to constitute 100 years to show the effect. This will be noted in any summaries should it be required.

Each option is graded against the 20 SA objectives as follows:

++	Major positive	+	Minor positive
--	Major negative	-	Minor negative
0	Neutral	?	Uncertain
x	No direct effect		

The assessment is a qualitative exercise based on the professional judgement of those responsible and takes into account the information and responses to consultation on all previous stages of the DPD preparation and SA process.

A composite version of the appraisal matrix is available on the Northumberland National Park website. The assessment of each element of the preferred options is summarised at the end of each table within the composite version. To assist the readers of this report, the next section includes each summary as found in the matrix thereby providing information of the issues' potential effect on sustainability.

4. Summary of Appraisal Matrix

This section concentrates on the findings of each issue as detailed within the full appraisal matrices found on the Northumberland National Park website as appendices to this report. The summary findings for each issue are detailed below highlighting the sustainable options and considerations to the effect of the options.

Section: A Living, Working Landscape

Policy 1 *Delivering Sustainable Development*

In order to deliver sustainable development all development proposals will be required to be accompanied by a Sustainability Statement which will demonstrate the extent to which the development:

- a. Conserves and enhances the special qualities of the National Park;*
- b. Makes efficient use of land, materials, and infrastructure;*
- c. Provides opportunities for all to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park;*
- d. Promotes the local communities economic and social well being and their ability to access to services;*
- e. Reduces the causes and impacts of climate change, particularly by maximising renewable energy generation and energy efficiency in buildings;*
- f. Demonstrates high quality design and sustainable construction;*
- g. Promotes accessibility via public transport, cycling, or walking;*
- h. Conserves scarce resources;*
- i. Conserves water resources, air, and soils;*
- j. Reduces the amount of waste produced and increases the amount recycled; and*
- k. Prevents inappropriate development in flood plains.*

This is a development of Policy 1 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

This overarching statement is a clear restatement of some of the main principles of sustainable development as they might be applied to spatial planning within the National Park. The proposed requirement for Sustainability Statements should ensure all these matters are fully considered in relation to specific developments.

Policy 2 *Climate Change*

In order to contribute to mitigating climate change and assisting adaptation to the impacts of climate change the National Park Authority will:

Facilitate the achievement of regional targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions the National Park Authority by supporting proposals which:

- a. Focus development in the most sustainable locations within the National Park;*
- b. Minimise the need to travel especially by private car;*
- c. Include opportunities for home working;*
- d. Promote walking, cycling, and the use of public transport.*
- e. Increase small scale renewable energy generation;*
- f. Minimise energy and water use and waste generation; and*
- g. Attain the highest environmental standards.*

Support proposals which allow for the successful adaptation to the impacts of climate change by:

- h. Locating new development in areas at least risk from flooding;*
- i. Enabling wildlife and habitats to adapt to climate change; and*
- j. Maximising positive opportunities resulting from climate change.*

This is a new policy, but relates to policy 23 from the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at approaches involving either the inclusion of an overarching policy addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation or an alternative approach based on separate policies to address each of the components of climate change where appropriate. The preferred approach is a combination of those alternatives and has been assessed to offer the best overall benefits in terms of sustainability.

The preferred option clearly offers very positive benefit in terms of SO 9 – to reduce the causes of climate change. One area of potential disbenefit may be through the impact of renewable energy technologies that could, if inappropriately sited and designed, have a detrimental impact on the Park's landscape and indirectly on its attractiveness for tourism etc. However, this will be addressed through the provisions of policy CS24 on renewable energy (see below) and definition of detailed criteria within the Core Strategy and Development Policies DPD.

Policy 3 *General Development Principles*

All new development, activities, and uses of land within Northumberland National Park must uphold and promote the principles of sustainable development; new development will be permitted when:

- a. The special qualities of the National Park will be conserved or enhanced;*
- b. The proposal demonstrates high quality design, protecting and enhancing local character and distinctiveness through careful integration with the existing built form, including but not restricted to ensuring:
 - materials are appropriate to the site and its setting;*
 - extensions are subservient to the main building and do not substantially increase its size;*
 - development should be sympathetic to existing buildings in terms of scale, height, massing, siting, form, materials and colour; and*
 - protection of open space which contributes to the amenity, character, and setting or a settlement;**
- c. The proposal supports the wellbeing of local communities by ensuring:
 - amenity is not adversely affected in terms of visual impact, pollution, noise and waste;*
 - the development will not have any detrimental effects on highway safety;*
 - the creation of a safe and secure environment;*
 - the provision of appropriate community facilities to meet the needs of new developments; and*
 - that appropriate services and infrastructure are available or provided to meet the needs of new developments.**

This is a new policy for the 2007 Preferred Options.

Appraisal Summary

This set of General Development Principles provides an important context for later more topic specific policies. This approach is assessed as performing positively against a range of the Park's Sustainability Objectives.

Policy 4 Major Development within the National Park

Major development will only take place in exceptional circumstances where proven to be in the public interest. This will include an assessment of:

- a. *The need for the development, including any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy and local communities;*
- b. *The cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the area or, meeting the need for it in some other way;*
- c. *Any detrimental effects on: the special qualities of the National Park; the ability for the public to understand and enjoy the special qualities; natural resources; and the transport network and the extent to which these could be mitigated;*
- d. *Any positive effects on: the special qualities; the ability for the public to understand and enjoy the special qualities; natural resources; and the transport network;*
- e. *The cumulative impact of the development when viewed with other proposals;*
- f. *The extent to which the proposal is designed and sited to respect the character of the landscape; and where appropriate, the settlement in which it lies; and*
- g. *The scope for adequate restoration of the land once the use has ceased.*

This is a development of Policy 2 in the 2006 preferred options consultation, with some additional criteria.

Appraisal summary

Potential positive social and economic impacts were identified as a result of this policy. The criteria for assessment of proposals should help to balance the social and economic needs of communities with environmental needs. Tourism and recreation are likely sources of major development; however, one of the key attractions to the Park is its environment and therefore protecting the environment also protects the tourism and recreation element of the local economy. There is also potential for job creation as this objective is considered as a part of the assessment of major development proposals. The policy allows for the consideration of provision of affordable housing through the assessment criteria and consideration of local need. A more neutral impact was identified against SO 5 – to ensure good accessibility for all to jobs, facilities, goods and services in the region, as both positive and negative impacts were predicted. There is potential for major development to improve transport links, for example, and to provide community benefits funding. However, the strict approach will ensure little major development within the Park so the benefits identified against this SO are unlikely to have a major influence.

The policy was also identified as having a potentially positive affect on the environmental Sustainability Objectives. Strict assessment will ensure that impacts on the special qualities of the Park, landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, tranquillity and cultural heritage are given thorough consideration and will help ensure their protection.

Policy 5 Major Development on the Fringe of the National Park

In responding to consultations for major development on the fringe of the National Park the Authority will seek to ensure that the development is of a high quality, appropriately located, and well designed in order that it will not adversely affect the special qualities of the National Park. This will include an assessment of:

- a. *The impact of the proposal on the sense of openness and tranquillity of the National Park when viewed from: important footpaths and bridleways in the rights of way network, National Trails, open access land, or key recreation sites;*
- b. *The impact of the development on the quality and character of the landscape when viewed with other proposals or existing schemes;*
- c. *The scope for the proposal to be amended in order that the impact on the special qualities can be reduced to an acceptable level; and*
- d. *Creation of additional levels of traffic.*

This is a development of Policy 3 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The key aim of this policy fulfils SO11 – to create, protect and enhance the quality and diversity of the landscape and therefore a major positive impact has been identified here. The impact on SO16 – to support sustainable tourism and leisure consistent with the protection of the environment is also fulfilled by this policy. The special qualities of the Park play a key role in its tourism and recreation industry, major development clearly visible on the fringes may impact on some of the views and elements which make the Park unique and thus have a negative impact upon tourism and leisure. Protecting them will help to maintain the industry.

Further potentially positive impacts were identified in terms of protecting and enhancing water quality. Responding to consultations on proposals on the fringe of the Park will allow consideration of impacts of external development on the Park's ground and river water.

In terms of the climate change objective (SO9), the impact is more neutral. The Park has a potential to help prevent any development which may cause a drop in air quality in the Park; developments, such as wind turbines, are a direct response to climate change but may conflict with the special qualities of the Park.

Policy 6 General Location of New Development

*The **Local Centres** of Alwinton, Elsdon, Falstone, Greenhaugh, and Harbottle will be the focus for new local needs development within the National Park.*

*Development will take place within the **Smaller Villages** of Charlton, Holystone, Ingram, Kilham, Kirknewton, Rochester, Stannersburn, Stonehaugh, and Tarsel/Lanehead where it contributes to the provision or protection of village services.*

*In the **Open Countryside** development will be limited to the reuse of existing buildings. New buildings will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:*

- a. *The development cannot take place in: an identified Local Centre, Smaller Village, or through the reuse of an existing building; and*
 - i. *it will conserve or enhance the special qualities of the National Park; or*
 - ii. *It will provide opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy the special qualities; or*
- b. *It is replacing an existing building and the new building is not materially larger than the building it replaces. If the building is to be rebuilt for residential use then evidence will be required to demonstrate that residential was the lawful use of the building immediately prior to its destruction.*

Policy 4 in the 2006 preferred options consultation covered similar issues but the policy has been amended to identify a settlement hierarchy in order to focus the majority of development in the most sustainable settlements.

Appraisal Summary

A number of social and economic benefits were identified in relation to this policy. The identification of communities able to sustain new development will simplify the process of site identification and help identify possible sites for affordable housing provision. Potentially positive impacts were also identified in terms of local job creation, encouraging development to keep within settlement envelopes will help provide local jobs and improve accessibility to jobs in the Park. The policy will also help identify areas for tourism development such as visitor facilities and holiday accommodation.

In terms of environmental SO's, the policy will help protect the special qualities of the Park as it will ensure the majority of development is focused in areas which have already undergone a broad assessment of suitability. The special qualities of the Park include its landscape, cultural diversity and biodiversity and therefore positive impacts were identified against these SOs too. These factors are all key factors in the tourism and recreation industry within the Park so positive impacts have been identified in terms of enjoyment of the countryside. Focusing development within settlements will also help to maintain key services.

Policy 7 *The Sequential Approach*

In order to meet development needs of the settlements identified in Policy 6 sites should be prioritised in the following order:

- 1. Previously developed land and buildings within the identified settlements;*
- 2. Greenfield sites within the identified settlements;*
- 3. Previously developed land and buildings adjacent to the built up area of the identified settlements;*
- 4. Greenfield sites adjacent to the built up area of the identified settlements.*

This policy is very similar Policy 5 in the 2006 preferred options consultation but it now links specifically to the settlements identified in policy 6.

Appraisal Summary

Positive benefits are identified in terms of maximising opportunities for business and job creation and the provision of affordable housing, subject of course to other policy considerations. Full consideration will need to be given to cultural heritage when assessing the impacts of specific proposals. No particular negative impacts have been identified in this proposed policy which results from the particular circumstances of the National Park and the pattern of settlement and previous development.

Policy 8 *Conversion of Buildings outside Settlements*

The change of use of existing buildings outside identified settlements to employment, including tourism, use will be supported where:

- a. The building is capable of conversion; and*
- b. The building is of sufficient size to accommodate the proposed use without the need for significant alterations or extensions which would detract from its character and appearance and that of the wider landscape.*

Change of use to residential will only be permitted where the applicant has demonstrated that the building cannot be developed for an employment or tourism use and where it meets the criteria above.

This is a development of Policy 6 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches but these were considered to be more limiting in delivering on a range of Sustainability Objectives. In particular positive opportunities have been identified in terms of creating and maintaining employment, supporting farm businesses and supporting tourism initiatives.

The policy provides the necessary caveats to ensure other relevant criteria are considered in relation to specific proposals.

Section: Thriving Communities

Policy 9 Community Facilities

In order to encourage and support the provision and maintenance of community facilities to serve the needs of the Park's population the National Park Authority will:

- a. Support the creation of new and the extension of existing community facilities where they are located within or adjacent to an identified settlement; and*
- b. Resist the loss of existing community facilities unless:*
 - adequate alternative provision exists within the locality or is to be made available; or*
 - it can be illustrated that the facility is genuinely no longer required.*

This is a development of Policy 8 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

This policy clearly scores very highly in terms of SO1 – to foster the economic and social well being of local communities. It is also assessed as offering positive benefits in terms of protecting the special qualities of the Park and helping to ensure local developments are accessible.

Policy 10 Managing Housing Supply

Housing development will be directed to the most sustainable settlements in line with the settlement hierarchy, to achieve a distribution approximately in line with the following proportions:

- 75% in Local Centres; and*
- 25% in Smaller Villages.*

If dwelling numbers increase to an annual average of 4 or more residential units, planning permission will not be granted for further new dwelling units. This will not be used to justify the refusal of:

- a. exception sites; or*
- b. small scale housing proposals which are required to enable the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the National Park; or*

- c. small scale housing proposals which are required to allow opportunities for the public to understand and enjoy the special qualities.*

The proportion of new housing on previously developed land will be maximised in line with Policy 7:

- By 2008 the target is to provide 25% of new dwellings on previously developed land;*
- By 2016, this will increase to 30%*

This is a new policy to the 2007 version that builds from policy 9 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Policy Appraisal

This policy is consistent with the broad thrust of the DPD to provide for the needs of the Park's communities in ways that do not threaten the special features of the protected area. It is assessed as contributing in a positive way against a number of the Parks' Sustainability Objectives.

Policy 11 *New Housing Developments*

All new residential development will be restricted to that required for people meeting the local need criteria. Occupation will be restricted to prevent their subsequent sale to those without a local need. They will not be available as second or holiday homes.

Subject to the exceptions set out in Policy 6, new housing will only be allowed in settlements with adequate services. Settlements will be regarded as having adequate services if, within it there is at least:

- a. Access to, or daily delivery from a shop selling food to meet basic daily needs;*
- b. Access to a school, either located within the settlement or via a school bus service;*
- c. Public transport connection to a larger settlement with a wider range of services; and*
- d. Either a village hall/ community centre or a pub.*

This is a new policy.

Policy Appraisal

The emphasis on local need and long term occupancy conditions for new housing should ensure that these remain available to local people at a lower price - but with limited housing availability, this may be offset by creating a premium for 'unencumbered' properties.

The second part of the policy, placing emphasis on locating new housing in settlements with adequate services, supports a range of the Park's Sustainability Objectives.

Policy 12 *Affordable Housing*

On all housing sites of 3 or more units or 0.1 hectares or more in the identified settlements applicants will be required to provide an element of affordable housing within the site, where a need for such housing exists. Depending on the assessment of need in the local area, the proportion of affordable houses sought will be between 30% and 50% of the total dwellings on the site.

Small scale housing schemes to provide 100% affordable housing will be considered on sites adjoining the identified settlements when supported by an up to date Housing Needs Survey. Housing provided in pursuit of this policy must be available to people in local housing need at an affordable cost for the life of the property.

This is a development of Policy 10 in the 2006 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches but these were assessed to be less effective than that proposed. In the particular circumstances in the National Park where only very limited housing development of any form takes place, the proposed approach is considered to offer the best practicable approach to ensuring the provision of affordable homes, in accordance with SO 7.

Policy 13 Transport and Accessibility

In order to maximise accessibility and minimise environmental impacts of traffic when assessing planning applications the National Park Authority will seek to:

- a. Protect existing Public Rights of Way, National Trails, open access land and other access routes for use by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians;*
- b. Encourage the creation of new access routes particularly when they create links between existing routes;*
- c. Encourage small scale developments and facilities that contribute to the use of the right of way network being more enjoyable;*
- d. Minimise the overall need for journeys, whilst seeking to maximise the proportion of journeys made by: public transport, bicycle, and walking; and*
- e. Ensure that the transport and accessibility needs of the whole community are taken fully into account when planning new development.*

This is a development of Policy 11 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The policy proposed recognises the particular circumstances found in the National Park. Whilst recognising that there may be problems associated with improved provision for car users, the policy also provides strong support for other forms of transport and thus is assessed as strongly beneficial in supporting tourism, enjoyment of the countryside and addressing overall transport impacts.

Policy 14 Provision for Gypsies and Travellers

Proposals for the provision of permanent accommodation to meet the needs of gypsy and travelling communities will be supported where they meet an established need identified by the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments carried out by Alnwick, Berwick upon Tweed and Tynedale Councils and allocation specified by the Regional Planning Body. Planning applications will be considered against the criteria set out in Policy 4.

This is a development of Policy 12 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

This policy seeks to ensure that accommodation requirements of gypsy and traveller communities are provided for in a manner that is consistent with recognised assessments of need. Specific planning applications will be assessed against the criteria set out in Policy 4, thus ensuring that potential impacts of such provision of permanent accommodation is fully assessed. This approach is assessed as performing positively against a range of the Park's Sustainability Objectives.

Section: A Sustainable Local Economy based on the Special Qualities of the National Park

Policy 15 A Sustainable Local Economy

In order to create and retain a sustainable local economy the National Park Authority will support proposals which enable:

- a. The creation of new businesses and expansion of existing businesses which relate to the special qualities of the National Park but do not negatively impact on them;*
- b. The expansion of existing employment uses particularly tourism, recreation, farming and farm diversification; and*
- c. Home-based employment activities.*

This is a development of Policy 13 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches, none of which was assessed to have negative impacts when assessed against the Sustainability Objectives. The preferred option policy is a combination of all the options considered at the earlier appraisal stage. It is assessed as strongly positive against SO1 (fostering economic well being) and SO3 (creating local jobs), and would contribute positively to a number of other Sustainability Objectives.

Policy 16 Tourism & Recreation Development

The National Park Authority will support proposals for sustainable tourism and recreation developments which:

- a. Maximise opportunities for visitors to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park whilst not adversely impacting on them;*
- b. Protect existing visitor facilities; or*
- c. Reuse redundant buildings to provide: self catering and/ or bunk house/ camping barn accommodation.*

This is a development of Policy 14 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches. The policy now proposed is a combination of all the options considered at the earlier stage and is assessed as offering strong benefits in terms of local job creation and the support of sustainable tourism.

Policy 17 Advertisements

The National Park Authority will support applications for advertisements where they meet the following criteria:

- a. They are sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building on which they are positioned and respect the character of the surrounding area;*
- b. They do not obscure or detract from architectural detailing;*
- c. Should be located against a backdrop which limits their impact on the landscape;*
- d. They do not distract, misdirect or confuse motorists; and*
- e. Directional signs for businesses providing services for visitors should be limited to one in each direction at the junction of a County Road with the Strategic Route Network.*

Appraisal Summary

This new policy recognises the potential significance of advertising to the promotion of local businesses - but also the importance of ensuring that these are sympathetically located and designed and do not detract from the special qualities of the Park. A balance has to be struck and the criteria identified are assessed positively against a number of the Park's Sustainability Objectives.

Section: A Richness of Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage

Policy 18 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

In order to protect, enhance, restore, biodiversity and geological conservation interests to contribute to delivery of biodiversity and geodiversity Action Plan targets development will only be permitted where:

- a. It will not adversely affect: internationally, nationally, regionally, or locally designated sites; or other habitats or species of nature conservation value;*
- b. Opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of development have been considered;*
- c. Conditions for biodiversity will be enhanced in line with Biodiversity Action Plan targets; and*
- d. It allows for the provision and maintenance of an integrated network of habitats to allow species to respond the impacts of climate change by allowing for habitat modification and/ or species migration.*

This is a development of Policy 15 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches and the approach adopted as the preferred option was assessed to be the most sustainable option. It performs particularly well in terms of SO2 – protecting the special qualities of the National Park, SO 11 – protection and enhancement of the landscape, SO 12 – maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and SO 13 – maintaining and enhancing SSSIs and NNR's.

In the longer term, the preferred option should also have significant benefits in terms of SO 9 – reducing the causes of climate change – by enhancing protection of key habitats that can act as 'carbon sinks'.

Policy 19 Cultural Heritage

The National Park Authority will support proposals which conserve, enhance, and promote the quality and integrity of the cultural heritage of the National Park, particularly those which:

- a. conserve and enhance Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and its setting;*
- b. give particular protection to Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, and Historic Battlefields by only permitting development which does not conflict with national planning policy;*
- c. preserve the special local architectural or historical interest of locally listed buildings;*
- d. recognise the opportunities for education and tourism founded on cultural heritage;*
- e. promote the role that cultural heritage has in helping to secure social and economic regeneration; and*
- f. assist local communities to celebrate and enhance their own cultural heritage, particularly by using locally appropriate arts, traditions and skills.*

This is a development of Policy 16 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches. The preferred option is a combination of these. It is assessed as strongly beneficial in terms of SO 2 – protecting the special qualities of the National Park and SO 15 – to protect and enhance the Park's cultural heritage, settings and diversity.

There may be some potential for conflict between the identification of further conservation areas and SO 7 – to ensure the provision of affordable housing. This will have to be considered in more detail if proposals for additional or extended conservation areas do emerge in due course.

Section: A True Sense of Tranquillity

Policy 20 Tranquillity

Development proposals which conserve or enhance the tranquillity of the National Park will be supported. In order to determine the extent to which tranquillity is affected there will be an assessment of the impact:

- a. of the level of noise generated as a result of the development;*
- b. on the sense of openness of the National Park; and*
- c. on the quiet enjoyment of the landscape from public rights of way and open access land.*

This is a development of Policy 17 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches – the preferred approach is a combination of those alternatives. Through conservation and enhancement of tranquillity, supported by tranquillity mapping it is assessed that the proposed approach will make a particular

contribution to SO 2 – protection of the special qualities of the National Park and SO 11 – protection and enhancement of the quality and diversity of the landscape. The proposed Landscape Strategy SPD will further develop this work in due course. This very clearly links to Policy CS21 – Landscape Character.

Section: A Living, Working Landscape

Policy 21 Landscape Quality and Character

The natural beauty and heritage of the National Park will be conserved and enhanced whilst being responsive to landscape change. All proposals will be assessed in terms of their impact on features and should be responsive to the landscape character and sensitivity as defined in the Landscape Supplementary Planning Document. Development which would adversely affect the quality and character of the landscape will not be permitted.

This is a development of Policy 18 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches – the preferred approach, involving the preparation of a detailed Landscape Strategy was assessed to be the most sustainable of those considered.

The Sustainability Appraisal has confirmed that the proposed approach will make a particular contribution to SO 2 – protection of the special qualities of the National Park and SO 11 – protection and enhancement of the quality and diversity of the landscape. The proposed Landscape Strategy SPD will further develop this work in due course.

Policy 22 Farming

In order to recognise the varied roles of agriculture which include the maintenance and management of the countryside the National Park Authority will support appropriate development proposals that will enable farming and farmers to become more competitive, sustainable, and demonstrate good environmental and farming practices.

This is a development of Policy 19 in the 2006 preferred options consultation

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage did not look at any alternative approaches to that now proposed. The Sustainability appraisal has identified the preferred option as having a particular benefit when assessed against SO 10 – to encourage sustainable farm business in the National Park.

Policy 23 Trees, Woodlands, and Forests

In order to maximise the social, economic and environmental opportunities that trees, woodlands, and forests present, support will be given to development proposals which:

- a. *Protect and enhance native trees and woodlands;*

- b. Where landscaping is required include native tree planting;*
- c. Contribute to the target to increase the proportion of native woodland in the National Park;*
- d. Develop woodland for sustainable uses such as biomass;*
- e. Promote the respectful recreational, economic and environmental use of woodlands and forests; and*
- f. Support appropriate small scale developments of the forestry industry.*

This is a development of Policy 20 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage did not look at any alternative approaches to that now proposed. Some clear benefits are identified associated with landscape, biodiversity and water matters.

Policy 24 Minerals

Mineral extraction will only be permitted in Northumberland National Park where it is meeting a need for local building stone, particularly that to provide materials for repairs to local historic buildings.

Proposals for extraction not for local use, including the extension to existing workings, will be considered against Policy 4.

This is a development of Policy 21 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at an alternative approach which would have involved allocation of specific sites. The preferred option was assessed to provide greater sustainability benefits and should ensure protection of key features of the National Park.

Policy 25 Military Training on the Otterburn Training Area

Within the wider context for the need for military training small scale development will be assessed in terms of its impact on the special qualities.

Proposals for significant extension of the boundary of the Training Area and the development of major new facilities, such as the construction or widening of substantial lengths of road will be considered against Policy 4.

This is a development of Policy 22 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

This impact of this policy is dependent on the application of detailed criteria set out in Policy 4.

Section: Environment and Resource Protection

Policy 26 Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency

The National Park Authority will support proposals for small scale renewable energy schemes provided they do not adversely affect the special qualities of the National Park. In order to reduce the causes of climate change the Authority require:

- a. In all new units of: residential, employment, community, and tourism development a minimum of 10% of total predicted energy requirements to be provided from renewable sources embedded within the development;*
- b. New developments to minimise the amount of energy used during construction and in their subsequent use through their location, layout, design and construction;*
- c. That developments meet the Eco-Homes and BREEAM ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ rating; and*
- d. That all new developments conform to the Code for Sustainable Buildings.*

This is a development of Policy 24 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches – the preferred option was assessed to offer the greatest potential benefits in terms of sustainability. The preferred policy offers particular benefits when assessed against SO 9 – to reduce the causes of climate change.

Policy 27 Waste Management

Waste management facilities will only be permitted in Northumberland National Park where the waste is generated from communities within the National Park and the facility will either: recycle, compost, or enable energy recovery from the waste. Proposals for all other waste management facilities will be regarded as major development and considered against Policy 4.

In order to minimise waste in the construction and operation of new developments, the National Park Authority will encourage the prudent use of existing buildings and existing building fabric and ensure new developments are designed to allow for the provision of recycling facilities.

This is development of Policy 25 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at an alternative approach that would continue the existing Local plan approach which does not allow for waste management facilities within the National Park. The preferred option is assessed is being more sustainable and offers particular benefits in terms of SO 19 – to reduce the amount of waste produced and increase the amount recycled.

Policy 28 Water and Flood Risk

All development within the National Park should make the most efficient use of water and enhance the sustainable use of the water environment. The National Park Authority will require that development is protected from flooding and that appropriate measures are implemented to mitigate flood risk in line with National Planning Policy.

This is a development of Policy 26 in the 2006 preferred options consultation.

Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken at the Issues and Options Stage looked at alternative approaches. The preferred option is a combination of all the alternatives considered at the Issues and Options stage. Reflecting the main focus of the policy, it is assessed as offering particular benefits when appraised against SO 6 – to reduce flood risk to people and property, and SO 14 – to protect and enhance the quality of the Park's ground and river waters.

Policy 29 Utilities and Infrastructure

The development of utilities and infrastructure projects which serve local community needs will be supported provided that:

- a. The proposal does not have an unacceptable impact upon the landscape, either individually or in combination with other proposals;*
- b. The siting and appearance of the proposed development seeks to minimise impact on the special qualities of the National Park;*
- c. Where electricity transmission lines are required they are undergrounded or, where the Authority is satisfied that this is not feasible, they follow a route of least impact;*
- d. Where the proposal relates to telecommunications development:*
 - the proposal must be part of a long term strategy for enabling local communities to access such technology; and*
 - if proposing a new mast, applicants should demonstrate that they have explored the sites outside the National Park, and if this is not possible, they have looked at the possibility of erecting apparatus on existing buildings, masts or other structures;*

Utilities and infrastructure developments which are to serve wider than local needs will be regarded as major development.

Appraisal Summary

This new policy recognises the importance of providing utilities and infrastructure, both to serve communities in the Park and more widely. It includes criteria against which the impact of such provision can be tested for local infrastructure. For infrastructure to serve wider than local need, the tests that will apply to major development, set out in Policy 4, will apply. Together, these tests confirm that the policy performs positively when assessed against a range of the Park's LDF Sustainability Objectives.

5. Overall evaluation of the effects of the Core Strategy and Development Policies - Preferred Options DPD

The overall conclusion of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy and Development Policies Preferred Options DPD is that it should make a positive contribution to National Park objectives. Integration of the Core Strategy with the Development Control Policies means that an overall strategy for future development in the Park is now linked directly to detailed policies that will guide the decisions of the Authority when making decisions on particular proposals. Many of the Core Strategy and Development Policies are assessed as making a direct positive contribution to a range of sustainability objectives. However, in some cases the

impact can only be fully assessed through more detailed work on particular Supplementary Planning Documents.

6. Proposed Monitoring Measures

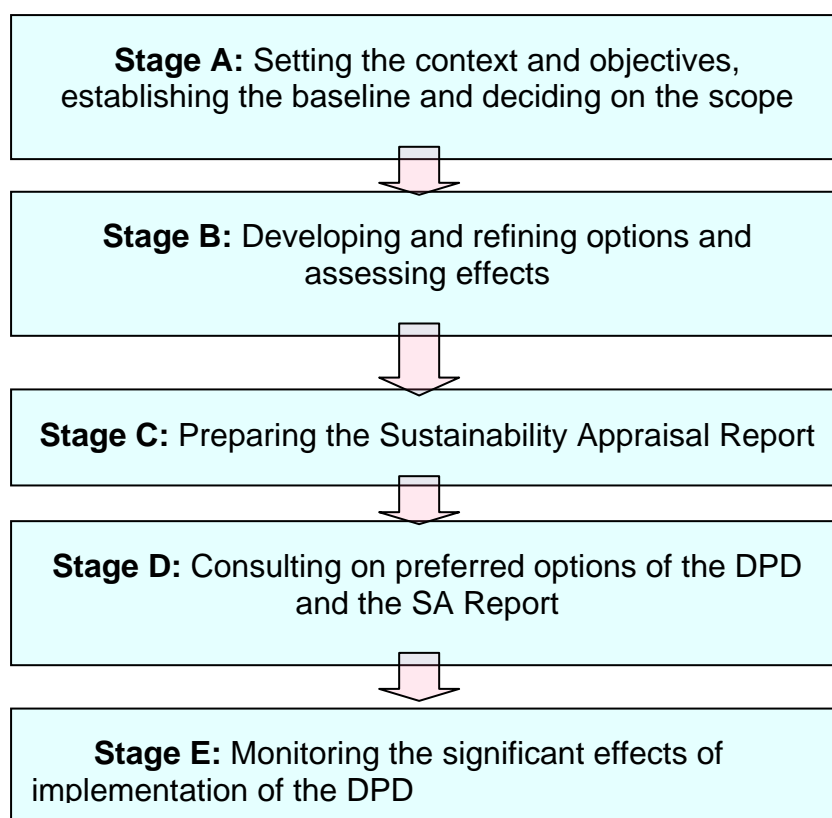
Detailed monitoring arrangements for the Core Strategy and Development Policies Preferred Options DPD will be brought forward as part of the proposals for the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) of the National Park LDF as a whole. This will be developed from existing monitoring arrangements of the current National Park Local Plan.

7. Next Steps

The Preferred Options are not yet finalised and are the subject to further public consultation of which this Sustainability Appraisal Report forms an important part. This Sustainability Appraisal Report will be open to consultation to the Statutory Bodies, the public and other interested parties alongside the main Core Strategy and Development Policies – Preferred Options report produced by the National Park. The consultation period runs until 10 December 2007.

Figure 2 below sets out the main stages and tasks in the Sustainability Appraisal process – for the Core Strategy and Development Policies DPD; this has now reached Stage D.

Figure 2. Sustainability Appraisal: Stages and Tasks



Any comments relating to the content of the Sustainability Appraisal Report should be sent to:

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