



Local Plan 2017-2037

Policy Options

October 2017

What is this document all about?

From February 2017 until April 2017 Northumberland National Park Authority consulted on an 'Issues' paper for the review of the National Park Local Plan¹.

This round of public consultation presented a first opportunity for people who live, work and visit in the National Park to let us know what they thought should be included in the review of our local planning policies. Even though we did suggest issues to comment on it was left to organisations and individuals to decide exactly how they responded and what issues they wished to raise.

Consequently, we received a wide range of responses covering many issues and expressing varying viewpoints. The purpose of this consultation paper is to begin to express a preferred spatial strategy for the National Park suggesting a clear direction of travel where possible or where this is unclear or uncertain, to suggest some alternative options to discuss.

It is not the intention that the new Local Plan will simply refresh the existing one. There are clear areas where we think the direction of policy needs to change (for example based on updated evidence and changes to national policy) and this consultation paper sets out where we think those areas are. There are however, also other policies that we consider to be still relevant (e.g. either they comply with updated national policy or have been effectively used in the past) and would not wish to substantially change these if there is no sound basis for doing so.

In any event, whether the policies are changing or remaining broadly the same, they do still need a clear set of objectives. It is intended that the Local Plan will be capable of responding to changing circumstances and that the policies be positive where possible taking into consideration the potential overall benefits that could be delivered by a proposed development as well as avoiding any potential harm that could be caused.

We are keen to get your views on any part of this document (or indeed all of it). The National Park Authority does not have all of the answers so we need your help to ensure that we get the right planning policies for the National Park. This stage of the plan-preparation process is a key time for you to get involved as it is at this stage that the broad principles are established that will guide the detailed policies in the draft Plan.

¹ A Local Plan contains policies, proposals and text that guide decisions about new development over a specific period (preferably 15 years). It contains a policies map, which identifies land for development and land for protection from development.

Contents

1. Introduction	5
Current planning challenges facing Northumberland National Park.....	6
Environmental assessment	8
2. Vision, Strategic Priorities and Spatial Objectives.....	9
Our Vision	9
Strategic Priorities.....	10
Spatial Objectives	11
3. Potential Policy Options.....	12
Policy Analysis	12
Spatial Strategy.....	14
Issue 1: Settlements.....	16
Issue 2: Major development	17
Issue 3: Ageing Population	18
Community Facilities and Infrastructure.....	21
Issue 4: Lack of adequate mobile phone coverage and broadband provision within the National Park.....	22
Issue 5: Renewable energy provision.....	23
Issue 6: The maintenance of existing and the provision of new infrastructure and community facilities.....	24
Housing and Employment	27
Issues 7 and 8: Meeting our future housing and employment needs.....	30
Transport and Access	34
Issues 9 and 10: Transport and Access.....	34
Farming and Estates	35
Issue 11: Sustainable land management.....	36
Natural Environment.....	37
Issue 13: Protecting the Natural Environment.....	38
Issue 14: Flood Risk.....	38
Historic Environment	40
Issue 15: Heritage Assets (including those at risk) & Issue 17: Listed Buildings 7 Conservation Areas.....	41
Issue 16: Design	42
Leisure and Tourism.....	43
Issue 18: Recreation and sport facilities	44
Issue 19: Holiday accommodation, visitor facilities and sustainable tourism.....	45

Minerals and Waste.....	46
Issue 20: Ensuring a sustainable supply of minerals	46
Issue 21: Sustainable waste management.....	47
Appendix 1: Spatially relevant Management Plan objectives	48
Glossary of Terms	50

1. Introduction

- 1.1** Northumberland National Park is deeply rural in its nature. With a resident population of fewer than 2,000 spread over 1,049 square kilometres, its population density is the lowest in England at 2 persons per square kilometre (ONS).
- 1.2** The largest single settlement is Elsdon, located in the east of the National Park, with a population of around 240 (2011 Census). Other key settlements include Alwinton, Falstone, Greenhaugh, Harbottle, Holystone, Lanehead and Stannersburn, referred to in the current Core Strategy as the 'Local Centres'. The larger 'gateway' settlements, including Bellingham, Haltwhistle, Rothbury and Wooler are more populous, however these settlements are located outside of the National Park boundary meaning that only a fraction of their parish populations are resident within the Park.
- 1.3** Much of the National Park's population resides in the Local Centres, smaller villages and small nucleated hamlets, as well as isolated houses and farmsteads. Examples of these smaller settlements include Charlton, Ingram, Kirknewton, Rochester and Stonehaugh.
- 1.4** This Local Plan covers the whole of the National Park area. The purpose of the Local Plan is to provide consistency and clarity for local development decision-making, in the determination of planning applications. Local plans are also important in the delivery of sustainable development².
- 1.5** The Local Plan review follows the work already done in 2015-16 on the review of the National Park Management Plan. The Management Plan (2016-2021), adopted in March 2016, is a partnership document setting out how the statutory National Park purposes and the Northumberland National Park Authority's socio-economic duty will be delivered. It was prepared by representatives of local business, landowners, local communities and delivery agencies, and translates the local issues facing the National Park into 40 specific objectives for the Authority and its partners to deliver. The Local Plan is a delivery mechanism for some of the Management Plan objectives³, as well as a mechanism to deliver the wider requirements of the planning system as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework⁴.
- 1.6** This Plan is in its early stages – and consultation has already taken place earlier this year (Issues Paper February 2017). This Potential Policy Options paper is intended to stimulate a discussion about the options for planning policy over the 20 year period from 2017 to 2037. The next version will be a publication draft Local Plan that will include detailed policies and maps for further public consultation. A final version of the Plan will then be submitted for examination and scrutinised by a planning inspector and then adopted and implemented by the Authority.

² The ability to meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the needs of future generations.

³ See Appendix 2 for a list of all Northumberland National Park Management Plan objectives that are relevant to planning policy.

⁴ National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012. The Government's planning policy for England and the framework for local policy making.

Current planning challenges facing Northumberland National Park

- 1.7** The National Park is facing a variety of challenges that can be at least partly addressed through planning policy. For instance, the population of the National Park increased by 2.9% between 2001 and 2011 to 1,993 people which is stronger growth than the average for National Parks' (2.1%) but lower than the national average (7.9%)⁵. When compared to Northumberland as a whole, the National Park is estimated to have experienced a small decline in its population since 2011, following a low level of growth between 2001 and 2011⁶.
- 1.8** Further, over the 2001–2014 period, the profile of the National Park's population has aged, with the proportion being in the older age groups (65+ years) increasing relative to those in the younger age groups with the proportion of the population aged 65+ living within the Park increasing from 16% to 24% Between 2001 and 2014⁷. Future planning policy could, for example, encourage the development of new elderly care accommodation to meet the needs of the ageing population and also encourage the provision of appropriate family housing to assist younger households to stay in the National Park and encourage new households to move here.
- 1.9** Inter-Department Business Register (IDBR) data indicates that within the National Park boundary the number of businesses fell by 9% between 2009 and 2012 but recovered slightly in 2012. It also indicates that local employment fell by 14% in the period. The latest Census data suggest that the Northumberland National Park has a very small 'working age' population of less than 1,600 people with a particularly high proportion of whom are employed in skilled trade occupations (26%). There are also a relatively high proportion of people with elementary occupations and relatively few people with administrative, sales, customer service, caring, leisure and other service occupations compared to both the National Park and national averages. Northumberland National Park also has the highest concentration of agricultural businesses of all English National Parks⁸. However, the percentage of residents employed in farming and forestry has declined from 28% in 2001 to 22% in 2011⁹.
- 1.10** Local wages are also low in relation to house prices. Despite relatively low unemployment, there is still a need to widen out the range of jobs and business opportunities to improve quality of life and maintain people and services in the area. If farming continues to decline as a local employer, the Local Plan will need to help identify more opportunities for agricultural diversification that makes use of the assets available within farm businesses and rural estates.
- 1.11** In common with other sparsely populated rural areas, the National Park continues to lose its community facilities. Increased centralisation of health services, education, jobs and retail provision is having detrimental consequences for local communities and the wider attractiveness of the area for new families to move into. The Local Plan, therefore, needs to encourage the development of new services and protect existing ones.

⁵ State of the National Park Report 2015

⁶ Northumberland National Park Demographic Forecasts 2016

⁷ Northumberland National Park Demographic Forecasts 2016

⁸ Valuing England's National Parks (National Parks England 2013)

⁹ State of the National Park Report 2015

- 1.12** Reliance on broadband communication becomes even more important when other services are declining, yet high-speed broadband and mobile phone coverage is patchy (at-best) across much of the National Park. The Local Plan will need to support the provision of new broadband and mobile telecommunication infrastructure where it can be accommodated without serious harm to the national Park's special qualities.
- 1.13** There are no properties within the National Park that are connected to the national gas grid with approximately 10% of properties not being connected to mains electricity. The National Park's housing stock is older, frequently under-occupied and inefficient in energy use. The expense of adequately heating homes in the National Park has a negative impact on quality of life for households. Newer, smaller, modern, efficient homes are needed together with affordable energy solutions that will improve the performance of the existing stock.
- 1.14** The National Park needs to remain attractive and relevant to future visitors to support the local economy. This means encouraging existing visitors to keep returning, and attracting new visitors by offering accommodation and facilities that meet their needs.
- 1.15** Fundamental changes to the climate continue to be predicted during this century. The local planning system has a role to play by steering development into locations that support existing infrastructure and communities without consuming excessive non-renewable resources. Another role of planning is to steer development away from flood risk areas and to try to slow rainfall run-off and reduce downstream flooding. Planning decisions should also attempt to improve the resilience of new and existing development to extreme weather event risks such as flooding, wild-fires and the effects of climate change.
- 1.16** A lack of public and private finance to support new development and infrastructure is rebalancing the expectations of landowners and making financial viability a more important planning consideration than it used to be. On the one hand, the Local Plan should try to ensure that new development will make a fair contribution to local infrastructure. On the other, it must avoid making it so expensive that it doesn't happen at all.
- 1.17** The long-term challenge of maintaining and enhancing the area's wildlife and the conservation of its historic assets will continue. There is a potential opportunity in this Plan to change planning policy to increase the reuse of buildings, which could support conservation and produce social and economic benefits. This Plan could also provide a potential opportunity to do more to enhance biodiversity and maximise the benefits provided by natural capital and its associated ecosystem services.

How can the Local Plan help meet these challenges? The Plan could respond to the above challenges above by:

- allocating new sites for development,
 - supporting the development of appropriate non-allocated land,
 - encouraging the re-use of brownfield land and existing buildings and,
 - supporting and promoting the provision of new community facilities and infrastructure such as improved telecommunications.
 - protecting existing infrastructure, community facilities and rural services.
- 1.18** The new Local Plan will be specific about its aims and objectives but less rigid than the previous Plan about the means of achieving them. It will attempt to do this by adopting policies that allow more flexibility for applicants and decision-makers to decide how the desired outcomes will be reached rather than prescribing negatively-worded policies that depend on restrictive criteria to minimise harm.

1.19 This could mean accepting more development risk than has previously been the case in policy making, even though approval rates for planning applications are currently very high in the National Park. The new policies will still have to be based on evidence as they will be scrutinised by a planning inspector before they can be adopted. The Plan must also deliver consistent decisions and be seen to be fair by all users of the planning system. It must continue to deliver development that will not prejudice National Park purposes and will take opportunities where possible to enhance its landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage.

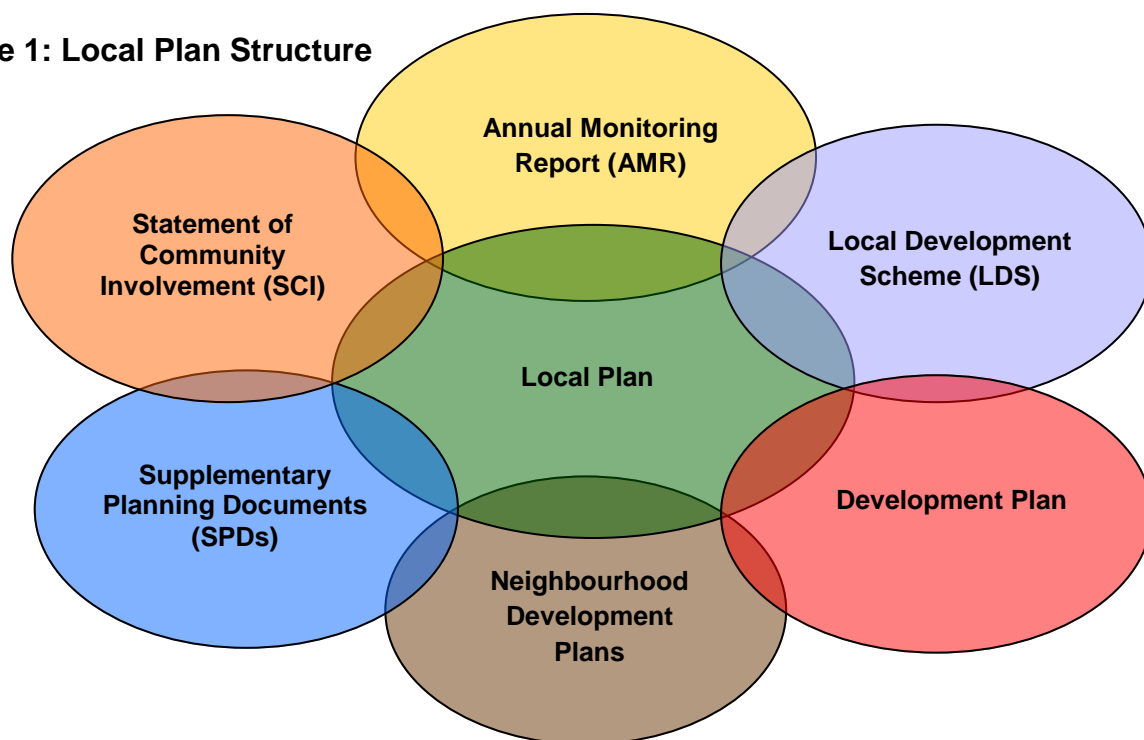
1.20 The new Local Plan will set out the planning strategy for the National Park over the next 20 years. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets clear expectations as to how a Local Plan must be developed in order to be justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared to deliver sustainable development that meets local needs and national priorities. The most appropriate approach to positively planning for development in the National Park will differ from that taken in areas with a larger, more certain, demand. Demand in the Park is generally small in scale and unpredictable, therefore it is considered unsuitable for the Local Plan to allocate land for specific uses.

1.21 Consequently, rather than planning ahead for a specific quantum of development, the emerging Local Plan will need to incorporate sufficient flexibility to facilitate 'windfall' development opportunity as and when needs arise, while protecting other public interests such as landscape character, neighbouring amenity, public safety and ecological value.

Environmental assessment

1.22 Local Plans are required to be tested by strategic environmental assessment. The purpose is to test the likely environmental impact of alternative policy options. Assessment is a continuous process that informs the Plan up until it being presented to a planning Inspector for formal examination. The Plan is also subjected to appropriate assessment at an early stage. This is a statutory requirement of the European Habitats Directive to determine whether the Plan might have a significant effect on internationally-designated habitats. At this early stage it seems unlikely that there will be policy options likely to have any significant impact on designated sites.

Figure 1: Local Plan Structure



2. Vision, Strategic Priorities and Spatial Objectives

2.1 In March 2016 a new National Park Management Plan was adopted following 11 months of public consultation and discussion¹⁰. The Plan was prepared by a steering group partnership of 14 organisations representing landowners, local representatives and public bodies. Its aim is to deliver actions that will keep the National Park a thriving place to live and work in and to visit. We think that it makes sense to include the same 20 year vision in the Local Plan. The Local Plan is one of the key delivery mechanisms for achieving the objectives set out in the Management Plan.

Our Vision

‘Northumberland National Park will be a truly welcoming and distinctive place, easily accessible to all. Its inspiring and changing landscapes, characterised by open spaces, tranquillity, diverse habitats, geology and rich cultural heritage, will be widely recognised and valued. The living, working landscape will contribute positively to the well-being of the thriving and vibrant communities in and around the Park.’

2.2 The Management Plan (2016-2021) outlines five strategic aims to achieve this vision, these are:

Aim 1 – A Welcoming Park: To put people and their connections with the landscape at the heart of the National Park.

Aim 2 – A Distinctive Place: To manage, conserve and enhance the distinctive natural and cultural qualities of the National Park.

Aim 3 – A Living Working Landscape for Now and the Future: To adapt to change by applying new approaches, together with traditional techniques.

Aim 4 – Thriving Communities: To ensure the thriving and vibrant communities have a strong sense of place and an economy grounded in the natural and cultural qualities of the National Park.

Aim 5 – A Valued Asset: To ensure the National Park is valued as a local, regional and national asset, with influence beyond its boundaries that is worth looking after now and for generations to come.

2.3 These aims have been translated into strategic priorities and spatial objectives for the Local Plan.

¹⁰ Northumberland National Park Management Plan 2016 - 2021. A partnership document that sets out how the statutory National Park purposes and social economic duty will be delivered.

Strategic Priorities

2.4 The strategic priorities for the Local Plan were set out in the Issues Paper as follows:

Strategic Priority 1: To support sustainable development and land management that conserves and enhances the National Park's distinctive natural and cultural qualities and protects its assets.

Strategic Priority 2: To support sustainable use of ecosystem products and services thereby enhancing natural capital across the landscape of the National Park, contributing positively to health and wellbeing.

Strategic Priority 3: To support and encourage sustainable economic growth to allow our local communities to thrive.

Strategic Priority 4: To support the provision of a range of housing that encourages more working age people and families to live in the National Park or one of its gateway settlements.

Strategic Priority 5: To support the retention and enhancement of community facilities, infrastructure and rural services in order to sustain our thriving communities.

2.5 The above strategic priorities were broadly supported by public consultation (Spring 2017) and have formed the basis (alongside the vision and Management Plan aims) of a set of spatial objectives for the Local Plan.

Do you agree with the proposed strategic priorities?

Yes/No/I don't know

Please give us your reasons or provide further comments:

Spatial Objectives

Proposed Strategic Spatial Objectives for the Local Plan

1. Support locally-sustainable development that will improve the National Park as a high quality place to live, work and visit.
2. Support development that will maintain existing services, infrastructure and community facilities or develop new ones for the benefit of local communities.
3. Support sustainable land management that conserves and enhances the National Park's distinctive natural and cultural qualities and protects its assets.
4. Support the sustainable use of ecosystem products and services.
5. Encourage development that will support a growing, sustainable, diverse and resilient local economy, to help make the National Park (and its gateway settlements) a more attractive option for young adults and people of working age to live and work in.
6. Use the planning system to help deliver the statutory National Park purposes of: conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage; and, the promotion of opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Special Qualities of the National Park by the public.
7. Encourage development in locations with the best access to existing services and facilities, and where it will not be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change or will increase resilience to it.
8. Support innovative, high-quality and more sustainable building design that complements the distinctive character of the National Park.
9. Ensure the landscape of the National Park continues to be responsive to change while at the same time conserving and enhancing its character.

2.6 We would like to know what you think of these proposed objectives that will guide the formulation of the detailed planning policies.

Do you agree with the proposed spatial objectives?

Yes/No/I don't know

Please give us your reasons or provide further comments:

3. Potential Policy Options

3.1 For consistency with the Issues Paper (February 2017) we have grouped the emerging policy options under broad policy themes as follows:

- Spatial Strategy
- Community Facilities and Infrastructure
- Housing and Employment
- Transport and Access
- Farming and Estates
- Natural Environment
- Historic Environment
- Leisure and Tourism
- Minerals and Waste

Policy Analysis

3.2 Based on an analysis of the policies contained within the current Core Strategy and the outcome of the public consultation held on the Issues Paper in early 2017. The extant Core Strategy policies that we think should broadly remain the same are:

- Policy 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
- Policy 3: General Development Principles
- Policy 4: Major Development
- Policy 5: General Location of New Development
- Policy 7: Conversion of Buildings outside Settlements
- Policy 12: Transport and Accessibility
- Policy 14: A Sustainable Local Economy
- Policy 15: Sustainable Tourism
- Policy 17: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy 18: Cultural Heritage
- Policy 19: Tranquillity
- Policy 20: Landscape Quality and Character
- Policy 21: Farming
- Policy 22: Trees, Woodlands, and Forests
- Policy 23: Minerals
- Policy 24: Military Training on the Otterburn Training Area
- Policy 26: Waste Management
- Policy 28: Utilities and Infrastructure

3.3 The policies where there is an option to revise the existing policy or replace it with a new one would be:

- Policy 8: Community Facilities
- Policy 9: Managing Housing Supply
- Policy 10: New Housing Development
- Policy 11: Affordable Housing
- Policy 13: Provision for Gypsies and Travellers
- Policy 16: Advertisements
- Policy 25: Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency
- Policy 27: Water and Flood Risk

3.4 Policies which we do not think should be included in the new Local Plan (either because they are outdated or no longer fit-for-purpose are:

- Policy 2: Climate Change
- Policy 6: Sequential Approach

3.5 We have also identified the potential for a number of new policy options or approaches in the following areas:

- The protection of National Park Statutory Purposes.
- Principles of High Quality Development.
- Provision of new community facilities/infrastructure and the protection of existing community facilities/infrastructure.
- Infrastructure required to support a new development.
- Local Green Space.
- Biodiversity enhancement.
- Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services.
- Agricultural diversification/rural land-based enterprises.
- Protection of Heritage Assets/Enabling the Development of Heritage Assets
- Dark Skies.
- Visitor facilities.
- Self-catering accommodation.
- Local Needs Housing/local connection test/principal occupancy.
- Self and custom-build housing.
- Rural housing/rural workers' housing.
- Replacement dwellings.
- Elderly care accommodation.
- Live/work units.
- Re-use of buildings.
- Safeguarding employment uses.
- Safeguarding mineral resources.

3.6 Consequently, this Policy Options paper should be read in conjunction with the extant Core Strategy and General Development Principles document (2009) and the Local Plan Issues Paper (2017).

Do you agree with this overall approach?

Yes/No/I don't know

Please give us your reasons or provide further comments:

Spatial Strategy

3.7 An important part of Plan making is determining where future development will go. This is referred to as the 'spatial strategy'. The intention is to deliver development in places that are more sustainable than the alternatives would be. Typically this means encouraging development in the locations that already have existing infrastructure capacity like public transport, community facilities and public services such as waste collection, health services and schooling. Spatial strategies typically try to minimise the loss of greenfield land because of its long term, alternative potential for food production, biodiversity, landscape value or recreational use.

3.8 Local Plans are required to comply with government policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The framework includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development¹¹. For **plan-making** this means that:

- Local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
- Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:
 - 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; or
 - specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

3.9 The UK government guiding principles for sustainable development include living within environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society and achieving a sustainable economy. In national planning policy terms sustainable development is regarded as 'positive growth' i.e. delivering economic, environmental and social progress for current and future generations. The National Planning Policy Framework regards the fundamental purpose of the planning system as making development as sustainable as possible.

3.10 There are three dimensions to sustainability:

- economic – contributing to a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that appropriate opportunities are realised;
- social – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, through the supply of housing, accessible local services and by creating a high quality built environment;
- environmental – protection and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment; minimising waste; and, mitigating and adapting to climate change.

3.11 In the context of the Northumberland National Park, development will be sustainable where it achieves the three dimensions and helps keep people living and working in the area with a good quality of life. In doing so, however, it should not erode the Special Qualities of the Park, which are its unique assets that lie at the heart of developing a stronger and more sustainable local economy.

¹¹ NPPF paragraph 14

3.12 There is also a further element to sustainability within the context of this Local Plan. Northumberland National Park was designated in 1956 to benefit the whole nation. Its particular purposes are set out in Section 61 of the Environment Act 1995:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the national parks;
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities [of the national parks] by the public¹².

3.13 In addition to the two National Park purposes the Authority also has a duty to ‘seek to foster the socio-economic wellbeing of local communities within the National Park’.

3.14 Consequently, as well as delivering sustainable development, the Local Plan should also aim to avoid outcomes that would prejudice the purposes for which the National Park was designated. Conversely, new development will be particularly welcome if it actually contributes to the delivery of National Park purposes. We therefore propose the following definition of sustainable development for the Local Plan:

Development will be considered sustainable when it produces balanced and prosperous communities, maintains local services, sustains agriculture and land management practices, supports a strong economy to deliver jobs and housing, provides low-carbon energy and transport, facilitates improved communications and infrastructure and delivers climate change mitigation and adaptation, in particular by avoiding the threat of flooding. Sustainable development should also not prejudice the purposes for which the National Park was designated.

Do you agree with this definition? Yes/No/I don't know

3.15 With the limited exception of some shooting tracks and upland footpaths, the large areas of moorland between remain almost wholly undeveloped. The undeveloped character of open upland (which covers 20.4% of the Local Plan area) is a special quality of the National Park, enjoyed by the public and key to the area's tranquillity. Extensive parts of it are protected as habitats and species of European interest. Very little development is likely to be proposed or needed there during the Plan period so open upland will be identified on the policies map as land under development restraint. Similarly, the Otterburn Training Area (accounting for approximately 24% of the National Park area) will also be identified on the policies map.

3.16 The Government also now requires planning authorities to engage with local communities to identify local green space that is demonstrably special to them. These areas will then be identified on the new Local Plan policies map and protected from future development. National policy on Local Green Space affords them equivalent status to urban greenbelt, however in doing so it affords opportunity to accommodate agricultural buildings and infill development. In a nationally protected landscape like the National Park, the degree of protection afforded by designation should be higher than Green Belt, so a more cautionary approach may need to be adopted.

¹² If there is a conflict between the two, then the ‘conservation’ purpose takes precedence – this is known as the ‘Sandford’ principle. More detailed government guidance about the implementation of National Park purposes including aspects of planning policy, are set out in the 2010 Circular ‘English National Parks and The Broads’.

Issue 1: Settlements

3.17 The current spatial strategy (Policy 5) is based on a settlement hierarchy that focuses new development, such as housing and new business premises, firstly in the eight largest local centres, then the smaller villages which are more sustainable locations. The settlement hierarchy has worked well over the lifetime of the current Plan and it therefore makes sense to keep it as part of the spatial strategy in the new Local Plan. Future development such as new housing, new employment and visitor-related facilities would be expected to focus in the Local Centres, with a more modest scale of housing, growth of existing business or essential infrastructure, focused on meeting local needs, located in the smaller villages.

3.18 Outside settlements, current policy (Policy 7) allows the conversion of existing buildings outside of the identified settlements for employment use and only allows conversion to residential for affordable housing where a proven need exists. The review of this policy could potentially lead to a widening of conversion opportunities (including residential), perhaps linked to an assessment of the character and location of individual buildings. This could add more managed flexibility for the location of new development during the Plan period and is one of the potential options we have included in this paper.

What we propose to do

We propose to allow the conversion of buildings to residential use as well as business/employment/tourism use in locations outside of the identified settlements (i.e. local centres and smaller villages). This would however be subject to the requirements of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 55 which states that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as:

- the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside.
- where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets.
- where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting.
- the exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling.

Such a design should:

- be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas
- reflect the highest standards in architecture
- significantly enhance its immediate setting
- be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Issue 2: Major development

3.19 It has been national planning policy since the late 1940s to try to avoid very large-scale development from taking place within national parks. The assumption is that there are less sensitive landscapes elsewhere or alternative solutions to the siting of major scale development in a National Park. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF requires major development to avoid national park locations except in the most unusual circumstances where it is in the clear public interest to do so.

3.20 National planning policy presumes against major new development in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty because of the likely harm it would cause to the nation's long term interest of conserving these places. Major development is defined here as development of more than local significance, which will also have a long-term impact on the landscape, wildlife or cultural heritage of a National Park because of its scale and form. Examples from other National Parks include reservoirs, power stations, large housing estates, dual carriageways, military firing ranges and high voltage overhead power lines.

3.21 This scale of development has a significant impact on the qualities of a National Park whether it is located inside or adjacent to its boundary. Major development is, therefore, only permitted inside National Parks in exceptional circumstances. Proposals are subject to the most rigorous examination and have to demonstrate that they are genuinely in the nation's interest if they are to proceed.

3.22 Other than some limited post-war quarrying, forestry, military training operations and the recently opened Sill: National Landscape Discovery centre the Northumberland National Park has largely avoided major development. This is partly because it is bypassed by the main communication and infrastructure corridors but also because it does not contain any large settlements.

3.23 The Otterburn Training Area (OTA) is the second largest military training area in the UK after Salisbury Plain and is used to provide live firing and other training facilities for The Ministry of Defence. The Training Area covers approximately 23,000 hectares, the majority of which is hill and moorland used for upland hill grazing. It is acknowledged that military operations at the OTA make a major contribution to the country's defence capability, and provide essential facilities which could not be easily replicated elsewhere contributing to the local economic and social well-being of Park communities. However, it is the role of the Local Plan to ensure that these operations or any potential future expansion of the operating base do not harm the National Park's special qualities, particularly the landscape.

What we propose to do

We propose to continue the existing approach and revise extant Core Strategy policy 4 to reflect updated national policy and guidance.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Issue 3: Ageing Population

3.24 The 2011 census and demographic forecasts have identified a continuing, strong, increase in the proportion of the resident population over 65 years of age. The National Park is generally remote from health facilities and services and has a housing stock that is poorly suited to the needs of the elderly.

3.25 A particular challenge for the Authority and its partners lies in providing suitable accommodation for those residents who wish to remain independent but with the peace of mind that health care and support networks are close at hand.

3.26 While conventional, affordable and local-market housing may cater for the needs of some elderly people, higher dependency in later years often demands a different form of accommodation, generally falling within the 'residential institution' planning use class.

3.27 This could take the form of conventional elderly or nursing homes but, increasingly, the ‘extra care’ model is a favoured solution. Extra care is sometimes referred to as “very sheltered housing” or “assisted living”, offering elderly people the security and privacy of their own home but with a range of facilities on the premises and access to 24-hour care and support services if required.

3.28 Northumberland County Council has taken the lead in preparing strategies that cater for elderly people’s accommodation which is based on evidence of need¹³. Successful schemes have demonstrated not only the benefits in terms of catering for the needs of its occupants, but also the benefits that extra care facilities can provide in terms of employment and host facilities and services for, the wider community.

3.29 Exact housing needs of the older population will be established through evidence base studies such as the Housing Needs Survey and Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Current county-wide trends signal a potential shift towards “at-home” or “extra” care; self-contained homes with design features and support services to enable self-care and independent living. Some existing residents of the National Park may have elderly residents who would need to move closer to them.

3.30 Whilst an extra care model could relieve the burden on stretched health and social care services, it may lead to an increase in development proposals like home adaptations/extensions or separate annexes. It is unlikely that there will be new build extra care development within the National Park. However, the provision of sheltered or extra-care accommodation could be a potential option should any viable schemes come forward on suitable sites in sustainable locations.

3.31 Should we include a specific policy in the Plan that would deal with elderly people’s accommodation with the objective of facilitating the development of new facilities? This would have a set of criteria that would be used to determine whether a proposal would be acceptable or not.

¹³ Northumberland County-Wide Housing Needs Survey 2012

What we propose to do

Develop an increasing range of housing and support products for older people.

We propose to include a specific criteria-based policy in the Plan that deals with elderly people's accommodation with the objective of facilitating the development of new facilities in suitable locations where appropriate.

We also believe that extra care schemes should try to incorporate community facilities as an integral part of development, so as to both aid the integration of the facility into the local community and to supplement or replace lost or threatened local services.

We could explore the potential for the development of appropriately sized properties that would help older residents move into accommodation that would provide a closer match to their needs.

We could consider adopting lifetime homes for all new developments to increase the number of homes suitable for older people.

Plan for a dwelling-led growth scenario increasing the working-age population of the National Park by 2% over the plan period meaning a potential requirement of approximately 5 net additional new family dwellings per year.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Which of the following options do you agree with?

1. Continue the approach set out in extant policies 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 revising them if necessary to reflect updated national policy and guidance. **Yes/No**
2. Include a criteria-based policy allowing change of use of buildings outside existing settlements to low-intensity uses¹⁴ whilst restricting high intensity uses¹⁵ to existing settlements. **Yes/No**
3. Include a policy to safeguard the National Park's statutory purposes by restricting intensive development outside of settlements. **Yes/No**
4. Include a policy setting out what we consider to be our principles for high quality development including design, transport, human safety, amenity and environmental safeguarding. **Yes/No**
5. Plan for a dwelling-led growth scenario to reverse the trend of an ageing population in the National Park. **Yes/No**
6. Continue the approach to major development as set out by extant Policy 4. **Yes/No**
7. Include policy supporting the provision of new family housing to meet identified needs and plan for enough housing to reverse the trend of a declining population. **Yes/No**
8. Delete extant policy 6 – Sequential Approach. **Yes/No**
9. Delete extant policy 2 – Climate Change. **Yes/No**

Are there any other options that you think should be considered?

¹⁴ Lower intensity uses would be low key employment/business uses (such as light industrial, commercial storage and workshops without outside storage or significant vehicular journey generation), barn pods, camping barns, equestrian and agricultural uses.

¹⁵ Higher intensity uses will be permanent residential dwellings, ancillary living accommodation, live work units, group visitor accommodation (bunkhouse barns and holiday lets) and intensive employment uses (such as retail, offices, restaurants/cafes).

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

3.32 Community facilities are important for maintaining the social fabric and well-being of the National Park's communities. They include buildings and spaces that provide places to congregate and socialise (village halls, pubs), learn and develop (schools, nurseries), worship (churches, chapels), and businesses and public facilities that provide for the basic day-to-day needs of communities (post offices).

3.33 Despite their importance, community facilities come under threat from time to time. In such a rural area, they often rely on public subsidy, voluntary effort but perhaps above all, adequate use. There is a risk that short to medium term changes in circumstance, whether the withdrawal of a grant for a local sports facility or a reduction in the number of children attending a primary school, could result in the loss of a community facility forever. The planning system needs to guard against this. By the same token, as community needs change and evolve, there is a need for the planning system to keep pace, supporting new or improved facilities as and when they are required.

3.34 We don't propose formally to define what is or is not a community facility¹⁶, or to identify them on the policies map. We feel it is best to maintain flexibility so that future policy could respond flexibly to the particular circumstances of individual communities and the facilities they rely on. The exception to this will be local green space.

3.35 National planning policy stipulates that there should also be an opportunity for communities to suggest specific green spaces for protection against development in the Local Plan¹⁷. These spaces should hold a particular local significance, be close to the community they serve and should not be extensive tracts of land. We invite suggestions from communities explaining which open spaces are important and why. A call-out for sites to be considered for assessment as local green space has been undertaken alongside the public consultation on this Policy Options Paper.

3.36 It should also be noted that national policy gives Local Green Spaces equivalent status to urban greenbelt, however in doing so it affords a potential opportunity to accommodate agricultural buildings and infill development. In a nationally protected landscape like the National Park, the degree of protection afforded by a Local Green Space designation should be higher than Green Belt, so a more cautionary approach may be required.

3.37 Infrastructure can cover a wide range of developments including everyday utilities (water, gas, telecommunications, electricity) in addition to transport infrastructure (such as roads, car parks and public transport facilities), flood mitigation/adaptation, and community facilities (including sports, recreation, health, schools and other services). It is possible to use the 'Community Infrastructure Levy' (CIL) to establish a standard charging schedule for new infrastructure, so that developers are required to pay for new infrastructure required as a result of the development they are proposing. The levy is payable at set rates for specific development types, usually per square metre permitted. This money can be pooled so that the infrastructure can be planned strategically over time.

¹⁶ Communities have the option of nominating land or buildings as 'assets of community value' under Chapter 3 of the Localism Act 2011. The fact that any land or building is not included on this register shall not be taken to mean it is not capable of being defined as a community facility for the purposes of this paper.

¹⁷ National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 76

3.38 Due to the very modest scale and volume of development in the National Park, it isn't feasible for the Authority to charge developers in this standardised way. It is generally expected that most development will not give rise to the need for additional infrastructure, but it is, however, possible that for some larger, unplanned developments or developments where infrastructure is at or near capacity, it will be necessary for the applicant to secure necessary improvements to infrastructure before development can proceed. This will depend on the location of the development and the type of infrastructure required. For example, for some infrastructure there are legal duties to accommodate additional demand where as for others, such as surface water drainage, it is necessary to explore more bespoke solutions.

3.39 As part of this we will need to work with the County Council to explore how we could potentially use existing pots of s106 or CIL funding to improve infrastructure provision within the National Park particularly from developments permitted in the gateway settlements and adjoining parishes.

Issue 4: Lack of adequate mobile phone coverage and broadband provision within the National Park.

3.40 Broadband and mobile phone services in the National Park are generally very poor so, in support of wider social and economic goals and in conjunction with funding schemes from national government, it is vital that this infrastructure is improved.

What we propose to do (see also Issue 6 – new infrastructure - on pages 23-24)

We want to support this and any other essential infrastructure wherever possible where it can be accommodated without serious harm to the national Park's special qualities.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Issue 5: Renewable energy provision

3.41 At a national scale, targets for reductions in carbon emissions of 80% by 2050 relative to 1990 levels, have been embedded in law. Capacity studies reveal that there are significant physical, infrastructural and environmental constraints on renewable energy in the National Park¹⁸. These result in assumptions that the National Park will only contribute very modestly to regional and sub-regional capacity through microgeneration technologies, chiefly small scale wind, solar, hydro and biomass technologies. The National Park's main contribution to national targets will be through its carbon 'sinks' – forests, woodlands and huge areas of peatland, which absorb carbon from the atmosphere.

3.42 Nonetheless, the Authority wants to see greater take up of small-scale renewable and low carbon technologies. With no mains gas supply, energy choices are already quite restricted in the National Park. Reliance on expensive domestic oil, liquid petroleum gas and solid fuels to heat properties has left many households vulnerable to fuel poverty, and has a negative effect on the viability of local businesses, especially farms.

What we propose to do

In line with Government guidance, and with the aim of meeting Government climate change targets, the Local Plan will give positive consideration to renewable energy schemes of a size, scale and design and in a location that is appropriate, that is where consistent with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park.

We will need to consider the level of prescription in the policies and propose to be more specific about the approach we will take to particular technologies and also the distinction between small- and large-scale projects.

We propose to identify areas that are clearly unsuitable for some forms of renewable/low carbon technologies and also conversely, areas where there could be potential opportunities.

We could potentially also limit freedoms to install some renewable low-carbon technologies without planning permission whilst identifying some technologies that could potentially be problematic by removing certain permitted development rights.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

¹⁸ Northumberland National Park draft Infrastructure Plan (2017)

Issue 6: The maintenance of existing and the provision of new infrastructure and community facilities

3.43 Infrastructure provision will be key to the delivery of sustainable development, including economic growth and meeting the development needs of the National Park. As such, the Authority will support new infrastructure that addresses current shortfalls or enhances provision, subject to its associated impacts being acceptable.

3.44 Existing infrastructure will inevitably need to be replaced or upgraded over time. The Authority recognises that it is essential for meeting the day-to-day needs of communities, so will respond positively to any proposals while ensuring that they represent the optimal solution for communities and the special qualities of the National Park.

3.45 It is unsurprising to find that the National Park's infrastructure has limitations. This is a legacy of its intrinsic remoteness, which imposes physical limitations on infrastructure deployment, but which also results in small supply markets, making deployment of extensive and advanced infrastructure economically unviable for many providers.

3.46 Consequently there needs to be a certain amount of realism regarding the potential for significantly improved infrastructure provision in the National Park, while at the same time highlighting and addressing those areas that are a fundamental constraint on the area's social and economic development.

3.47 Major developments in the National Park are rare, and when they do occur, they seldom raise significant infrastructure issues. Many of these major developments represent 'one-off' proposals, often redundant or under-utilised sites that offer the opportunity for redevelopment, sometimes including change of use, or developments in relation to an established business or operation. This is not to say such developments do not raise infrastructure issues, but that they are very much a minority, although classed as major, are towards the very bottom end of the major development spectrum, and rarely involve the development of greenfield sites requiring significant new infrastructure.

3.48 The key infrastructure issues currently identified within the National Park are¹⁹:

- A decline in healthcare services within the National Park and resultant distance to and pressure on medical care facilities in surrounding settlements;
- Limited public transport provision throughout the Park;
- Distance to educational facilities;
- Limited broadband and mobile phone coverage.

3.49 Perhaps the two biggest overall infrastructure issues will be responding to the growth needs of an ageing population; and overcoming access to services that are increasingly being centralised and moved further away from the Park's residents.

¹⁹ Northumberland National Park Infrastructure Plan 2017

What we propose to do

We propose that the Local Plan will continue to support new or improved provision of facilities, subject to it being appropriately located to serve the needs of the local community.

We want to ensure that any new development would only be permitted if the infrastructure required to service it had adequate capacity. Where additional or enhanced infrastructure would be necessary directly as a result of the proposed development, the applicant would be expected to provide a financial contribution equivalent to the cost of remedying the infrastructure shortfall. This contribution could also be secured through a section 106 legal agreement.

We also propose to explore with the County Council the potential for using existing pots of section 106 or CIL money for the provision of infrastructure within the National Park particularly from developments permitted within the gateway settlements and their hinterlands.

We propose to resist change of use of a building or development on land, that would result either in the loss of a community facility or the significant erosion of the viability or quality of a community facility. This would not be an outright ban. We recognise that some services could potentially become unviable or require rationalisation. However, we would test such proposals rigorously, and applicants would be expected to make a strong case that there is no longer a demand for the facility or that it would no longer be needed or that alternative provision of equivalent standard had already been secured.

We recognise the dangers in this potentially reactive, case-by-case approach to infrastructure planning. Although we would not be charging a Community Infrastructure Levy on new development, we will be contacting infrastructure providers to assess capacity issues so that we can anticipate where developments, individually or cumulatively, might give rise to the need for improvements. If we become aware of the potential of any serious or recurrent infrastructure shortfalls, we will review our approach to CIL in the National Park.

Proposals for new or improved infrastructure provision would only be permitted provided they are justified (for instance, essential to improve the quality of life, health and safety of people living, working and visiting the National Park). Proposals would need to demonstrate that they represent the least harmful/intrusive option for provision of that infrastructure, having regard to all foreseeable impacts (visual, ecological, historic environment, amenity and safety) and in light of operational requirements and technical limitations.

We also propose to potentially designate local green space to protect important parcels of community land from future development. We invite suggestions from communities explaining which open spaces are important and why. We would need to ensure that designation was consistent through the use of criteria. We propose that these criteria are that the open space:

- provides a recreational resource for the local community, or
- allows important public views into or from within a settlement, or
- is of historical significance in contributing to an understanding of the development of the settlement or is recognised as an important archaeological resource, or contributes to the setting of important buildings or the appreciation of their historical interest, or
- is important to the character or setting of the locality.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Which of the following options do you agree with?

- 10.** Revise extant Policy 8 to reflect latest national policy and guidance. **Yes/No**
- 11.** Add a new policy to cover the potential designation of Local Green Space in appropriate locations. **Yes/No**
- 12.** Include a policy to support and facilitate the provision of new and improved infrastructure (including mobile phone and broadband). **Yes/No**
- 13.** Include a policy that would require development proposals to demonstrate that there would be adequate infrastructure in place to support the delivery of the development. This would be either provided as part of the development or secured through a financial contribution via section 106 agreement. **Yes/No**
- 14.** Revise renewable energy policy to include provision for innovative energy provision solutions including on-site storage, PICO-hydro and electric vehicle charging points (where appropriate). This policy would continue to support small-scale renewables whilst restricting large-scale renewables. **Yes/No**
- 15.** Include a policy relating to schemes generating energy from renewable sources where these are of a location, scale and design appropriate to the locality and which contribute towards meeting domestic, community or business energy needs within the National Park. **Yes/No**

Are there any other options you think need to be considered?

Housing and Employment

3.50 Planning authorities must quantify their ‘objectively assessed need’ for housing, and if necessary set out an annual target for housing delivery in their Local Plan that will support projected household growth together with any other specific housing requirements²⁰. It also requires local planning authorities to maintain a rolling housing land supply during the first 5 years of the plan period. However, it is expected that no such figure will be applied to the Local Plan given the likelihood that specific sites for housing development will not be allocated. Instead it is expected that unplanned windfall sites will make up a proportion of future housing supply alongside the provision of housing in settlements and sustainable locations just outside the Park boundary, for example in gateway settlements such as Wooler. Going forward, the emerging Local Plan and its housing evidence will allow the Authority to have a clear view on where its housing supply is likely to come from.

3.51 Northumberland National Park is an area with a high proportion of vacant homes (including retirement and holiday homes) which currently stands at 20% of existing housing stock and as such is an area (alongside rural parts of the rest of Northumberland County) where there is a need to provide a wider range of housing choice. In addition approximately 98% of dwellings within the National Park are houses or bungalows with 60% of these being detached, 24% being semi-detached, 14% terraced, 2.1% flats and 0.3% being caravan or mobile accommodation. Further, approximately 6.2% of all the 871 households in the National Park live in affordable housing mainly renting from a social housing landlord with the Northumberland Housing register indicating that there are approximately 29 households in the National Park area that are classed as being ‘in-need’²¹.

3.52 The population of the National Park is ageing with the number of residents aged 65 or over being projected to increase by approximately 63% by 2037 (to 1,023 persons). This presents a major strategic challenge to provide appropriate housing and enable adequate adaptation of current stock to support these residents. Evidence²² suggests that the key drivers in determining the tenure and type of future housing within the National Park are:

- The need to continue development to reflect the housing choices of residents, taking into account the changing demographic profile of Northumberland National Park;
- Developing an increasing range of housing and support products for older people;
- Delivering additional affordable housing to help offset the identified net shortfalls; and diversifying the range of affordable options by developing Intermediate tenure dwellings and products;
- The economic viability of delivering affordable housing on sites across Northumberland National Park.

3.53 National planning policy also requires planning authorities to identify sites for Gypsy and Traveller pitches where there is evidence of need. If there is no evidence of need then authorities are required to set out an exceptions policy, similar to that applied to affordable housing. The purpose is to provide criteria that will guide development, should a need become apparent during the Plan period.

²⁰ NPPF Paragraph 47

²¹ Census 2011 & Northumberland National Park Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2017)

²² Northumberland National Park Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2017)

3.54 National planning policy protects National Parks from development that would be harmful to their Special Qualities. The National Park Circular states that these areas are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing, and that the focus should be upon providing for local housing need. The Local Plan is not, therefore, expected to release inappropriate amounts of land in response to all types of demand. Instead, it is expected to prioritise locally derived housing needs, by releasing a supply of sites that would support the social and economic needs of communities that live and work in the area²³.

3.55 The Special Qualities of Northumberland National Park make it a particularly desirable place to live, but its rural character and openness also make it vulnerable to new residential development. National planning policy strictly controls house building outside towns and villages for reasons of sustainability and to protect the character of the countryside. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and that new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances.

3.56 Delivering on all the objectives and aspirations for housing provision within the National Park will be challenging. There is a limited amount of stock to begin with and until at least the medium term, there will be very limited sums of public subsidy available. Given such finite resources, there are tensions inherent in trying to address the needs of young people and families whilst at the same time meeting the housing needs of older people. Accordingly, it will be essential that the Local Plan develops a very clear understanding of how we are going to deliver and manage these competing priorities.

3.57 The latest Census data suggest that the Northumberland National Park has a very small 'working age' population of less than 1,600 people. However, the local rate of economic activity (76%) is significantly higher than the National Park and England averages of 70%. This is due to a relatively high number of full-time and particularly self-employed workers, while part-time employment is relatively low meaning that rates of economic inactivity are therefore lower than average.

3.58 Farming (and forestry) is the dominant industry within the National Park being the primary economic sector employing residents (22%) and could account for two thirds of businesses and 55% of jobs located within the National Park, however this being said, the percentage of residents employed in farming and forestry has also declined from 28% in 2001 to 22% in 2011. The economically active population has increased from 74% in 2001 to 76% despite an increase in the number of retired people. This is due to the relatively high numbers of full-time and particularly self-employed workers whilst the number of people looking after the home/family, long-term sick/disabled, and students has declined (consistent with a decline in the younger population)²⁴.

²³ DEFRA (2010) English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular (paragraph 78).

²⁴ Northumberland National Park State of the Park Report 2015

3.59 Without a viable local economy that supports people and communities to live and thrive, the landscape and its associated qualities would eventually degrade through lack of conservation and management. The public would then not be able to enjoy the National Park to the same extent and the wider benefits it brings to the nation and to society would be eroded. The health of the local economy is, therefore, of key importance to the future of the National Park. The recent opening of the Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre and its associated rural enterprise hubs will provide a boost to the economy of the National Park and wider region to the tune of approximately £5 million per year in additional visitor spending.

3.60 The established brand and quality of Northumberland National Park presents business opportunities that are wider than just tourism and farming. Certain types of business thrive in designated landscapes that have strong rural identities and high perceived qualities of life. There is a direct link between protected landscapes and business success²⁵. The promotion of national parks and their special qualities tend to be an asset to business rather than a constraint. National parks attract home workers and footloose micro enterprises. Consequently the local plan should explore how to best support sustainable land-based rural enterprises.

3.61 The development of new bespoke buildings for shared residential/business use is a potential opportunity that could fit well into the National Park context. It could be used to promote the National Park as a place to live and work by solving the problem of having to find two separate properties at the same time. It could attract new, low-impact, high-quality and skilled jobs, develop stronger business networks and entrepreneurship, support construction of new local occupancy housing, support existing services and reduce carbon emissions from commuting and modern energy-saving technologies. There are a wide range of low impact uses that could potentially be compatible in the deeply rural context of the National Park. These could include workshops, light manufacturing, food processing, professional services, packaging, journalism, music production, internet sales etc.

3.62 A flourishing local economy depends on sustaining existing businesses and keeping sites available for new business. Given the high demand for retirement and second homes in the National Park, once a piece of land changes its use away from employment, normally to housing, it is unlikely to change back. Whilst this might not matter in an area with plenty of surplus brownfield land, it is much more of a problem in a protected landscape that has a lack of alternative sites and employment opportunities.

3.63 The Authority is not planning to meet a specified employment land requirement. It is extremely difficult to plan in this way for such a rural area, particularly given the predominance of micro-business and home based working. Instead, one employment policy option could be to pursue an opportunity-based approach, facilitating development as and when the need for them arises for example.

²⁵ Valuing England's National Parks April 2013

Issues 7 and 8: Meeting our future housing and employment needs.

What we propose to do (see also Issue 3: Ageing Population).

Rural exceptions sites

We propose to allow rural exceptions sites in (or on the edge of) local centres as they are the most appropriate sustainable locations with existing infrastructure to absorb development whilst also providing access to facilities for new households. However, small exception sites in smaller villages could also potentially be acceptable. Evidence of need would come from a housing needs survey or some more recent survey or evidence endorsed by the National Park Authority. The unavailability of alternative sites would not be regarded as outweighing the potential harm that an unsuitable exceptions site might cause.

We also propose an approach whereby tied affordable residential accommodation for local workers (within close proximity to agricultural or forestry enterprises), including temporary workers, would be permitted in the countryside as an exception provided:

- it is essential for the workers to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside
- it is in keeping with the local context, and does not adversely affect National Park Purposes
- is retained in perpetuity as accommodation for local agricultural and forestry workers, and
- other residential properties on the farm or economic unit have not been sold or redeveloped for other uses within the recent past.

In addition to the approach described above, the Local Plan could limit the size of such accommodation for agricultural or forestry workers. The allowance of additional affordable residential accommodation for local workers could be restricted to instances where there has been no sale of another residential property on the estate.

Housing required for business operations and rural workers' housing

We propose to support new-build live/work units within existing local centres and smaller villages. The conversion of buildings to live/work uses would also be considered in relation to the wider encouraging the conversion of redundant or disused farm buildings.

New houses for rural based enterprises could potentially be located within or adjacent to the farmstead or other existing group of buildings, but would not be located in isolated locations. Approval of new agricultural dwellings could potentially lead to the sale of existing farm houses and create further pressure for additional housing. Conditions could, therefore, be attached that would restrict the occupancy of existing houses on the same agricultural unit, unless there were material mitigating circumstances that could be demonstrated. There is also the potential for the occupancy to be established in perpetuity through a section 106 legal agreement.

Such conditions would not be relaxed in response to subsequent changes in the circumstances of the occupier of the farm, unless it could be demonstrated that the current and anticipated future need for agricultural workers' dwellings in the locality would be otherwise adequately met. Other types of rural enterprise dwellings potentially permitted would also be subject to precise occupancy restrictions through planning conditions or legal agreement.

We propose to allow housing where it is demonstrated that it would be essential for someone to live at their place of work. Gamekeepers and managers of larger established visitor accommodation could potentially fall within the definition of essential rural-based enterprises, although dwellings for additional farm workers would likely make up the majority of potential applications. National policy requires that the need for new housing in isolated locations should be based on the nature and demands of the enterprise. The size of the new dwelling would need to be justified in relation to the reasonable operational needs of the enterprise. The objective would be to provide for the needs of rural enterprises including future occupiers in addition to initial occupiers.

Self-build and custom housebuilding

We would welcome proposals for self-build and custom-built housing. Whilst there is very little brownfield land in the National Park it is anticipated that there could be potential demand for self-build schemes on the small sites below six units. Self-build could be a good opportunity to create a home tailored to a household's individual requirement. It could also be a good way to provide cheaper housing by avoiding the cost of developer profit. Self-build would be subject to a Section 106 occupancy restriction thereby ensuring it is targeted locally and making it cheaper to re-sell.

We will support the establishment of Community Land Trusts as a way of encouraging affordable housing for local people where the CLT proposals are consistent with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage e.g. community-led housing.

Affordable Housing

We propose to set out a proportion for affordable housing provision of all residential development proposals, subject to confirmation that this level is achievable from the Viability Assessment. Affordable homes would normally be required to be built on-site, unless it could be demonstrated to be unsuitable, where a financial contribution would be required. The housing provided would need to remain available as affordable housing for people with a local connection in perpetuity.

We propose to include a 'local connections' policy for the provision of affordable housing within parishes and settlements in the National Park, with local connection being defined as those households unable to access the open housing market and having a residential, employment, family or primary carer connection within first the local parish (whether wholly or only partly within the National Park).

We also propose to explore with the local housing authority the potential of spending a proportion of existing section 106 money set aside for affordable housing provision in the National Park, particularly where this money has been paid from developments within the gateway settlements and/or parishes split by the National Park boundary.

Business development

We could support flexibility for development by permitting new or expanded small-scale business development in or on the edge of local centres and smaller villages, having regard to environmental capacity, road capacity and amenity safeguards.

The Local Plan could also potentially contain employment planning policies with the objective of being more supportive of business. They could provide greater flexibility in terms of the mixture of business uses permissible on a site and could support the appropriate diversification of the rural economy, particularly the opportunities presented within farmsteads and rural estates.

We also propose to keep existing suitable buildings and parcels of land in employment use.

We propose the application of an advertising procedure that would be applicable to proposals that would lead to the significant and permanent loss of local business uses and jobs. The objective would be to test whether the site or use still has demand for its continued economically beneficial operation either in its current form or some equivalent use.

The details of the marketing test would need to ensure that they were effective and reasonable. The approach would need to be proportionate to the scale of employment or business use affected to ensure that it would not unnecessarily hinder the ebb and flow of small business operations.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Which of the following options do you agree with?

- 16.** Continue to focus housing provision in existing settlements as per extant Policy 5. **Yes/No**
- 17.** Include a policy supporting the provision of community-led housing, self-build and custom housebuilding in suitable locations where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 18.** Include a more detailed criteria-based policy to provide affordable housing in suitable locations where appropriate and where viable (for example on rural exceptions sites potentially on the edge of existing identified settlements). **Yes/No**
- 19.** Include a criteria-based policy to support the provision of rural workers' housing in suitable locations where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 20.** Include a criteria-based policy to support the provision of live/work units in suitable locations where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 21.** Include a criteria-based policy to allow the replacement of residential dwellings where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 22.** Include a criteria-based policy to support the provision of elderly accommodation where appropriate in order to meet the identified need. **Yes/No**
- 23.** Revise the local needs housing criteria to include the rest of parishes split by the National Park boundary and in exceptional circumstances gateway settlements. **Yes/No**
- 24.** Revise/replace extant policy 13 to reflect updated national policy and guidance on the provision of suitable accommodation to meet the identified needs of gypsies and travellers. **Yes/No**
- 25.** Include a criteria-based policy to safeguard existing employment uses to prevent their loss to another use. **Yes/No**
- 26.** Continue to support a sustainable local economy as set out in extant policy 14. **Yes/No**

Are there any other options you think need to be considered?

Transport and Access

3.64 The Local Plan needs to consider how accessible places are and how well they are served by public transport – both in terms of social accessibility and carbon reduction. While the Local Plan can dictate where development should be focused, it is Northumberland County Council – the Local Transport Authority (LTA) – that is responsible for local transport and highways matters alongside bus operators as key transport partners.

3.65 NNPA can influence decisions on sustainable transport through working with these partners on actions and projects as part of delivering the *National Park Management Plan (2016-2021)* objectives. These are primarily operational matters rather than planning matters and are not dealt with further in this *Options Paper* which instead focuses on planning-related transport and accessibility issues that could have specific policies in the Local Plan.

3.66 There is a clear case for new developments being focused in places that have good public transport services providing easy access to key facilities, which presents a key challenge for the local plan to address. In the National Park, there are a limited number of locations that have good accessibility to services and facilities by non-car modes (e.g. the Hadrian's Wall Bus AD122).

Issues 9 and 10: Transport and Access

What we propose to do

We propose that the Local Plan continues to support improved access to the National Park by means other than the private car (including walking and cycling).

We propose to support the provision of a more widely available public transport service.

We propose to support the upgrading and maintenance of existing tracks to improve public access where feasible and appropriate.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Do you agree with the following option(s)?

27. Continue the approach as set out in extant policy 12 revising if necessary to reflect updated national policy and guidance. **Yes/No**

Are there any other options you think need to be considered?

Farming and Estates

3.67 The landscape of the National Park has been shaped by farming and other rural land-based enterprises (defined for the purpose of this paper as farming, shooting estates, rural estates, wildlife trusts, National Trust land, the military, and forestry estates; which manage land holdings larger than 5 hectares). Agriculture and Forestry remain the Park's primary business sector, with 22% of residents being employed in this sector²⁶. To maintain many of the Special Qualities of the National Park it is important that beneficial types of farming and land management continue and the Local Plan aims to support sustainable development necessary for those activities to continue to thrive.

3.68 Livestock grazing and management of land for moorland shooting are central to the appearance of the National Park landscape and its habitats. They are by far the most important sector in land use terms. The National Park Management Plan recognises that the landscape is shaped by farming and land management practices and it contains a number of objectives to support these industries and to improve the value of their produce and their environmental outputs.

3.69 Most agricultural operations are either not classed as development or are permitted without the need for formal planning permission. However, above certain thresholds, some farm buildings and structures do require consent because of their size and potential economic impact. The role for planning policy in the National Park is to help farmers and land managers find the best locations, designs, materials and solutions to meet their operational requirements but with the least harmful impact on the special qualities of the area. This is usually successful and most farm businesses are able to develop a range of buildings and structures to undertake their modern operational requirements.

3.70 The Authority supports proposals to diversify farm and estate businesses. Diversification can extend to almost any new business proposition as long as it is appropriate in scale and impact to its rural context and remains subordinate to the primary land-based enterprise. Development may involve conversion of traditional buildings and re-use of modern agricultural sheds or the construction of a new building or structure. The Authority also supports farm and estate diversification because of its inherent economic benefits and because it can support farming and land management activity, which conserves and enhances landscape quality.

3.71 As diversification potentially enables development to take place in open countryside where it would not normally be permitted (for landscape and sustainability reasons), it would need to remain tied to the primary use of the land, usually through the means of a legal agreement. The purpose of the legal agreement would be to prevent the new business from being sold off separately, which might otherwise undermine agricultural operations or lead to harmful sporadic development.

3.72 There have been cases where diversification activities have outgrown a farm holding or the environmental capacity of their site, causing the agricultural use to be abandoned or leading to harmful retrospective issues for residential amenity and damage to the landscape. It is important in the National Park context – where farming and estate management are delivering key habitat and landscape benefits – that their viability continues to be supported by diversification, but not to the extent that the main land management activity is threatened

²⁶ State of the Park Report 2015

or the Park's special qualities are harmed. If the new business activity cannot grow beyond a scale that would otherwise harm the qualities of the area, then it could be time to move to a new site with greater capacity or else restrict further growth.

3.73 The potential implications of Brexit will also need to be considered further once outcome of the detailed negotiations is known. This could be a potential opportunity or a threat for the agricultural sector and something which National Parks England is currently discussing with Defra.

Issue 11: Sustainable land management

What we propose to do

We propose to permit the development of new agricultural buildings, structures and shooting tracks where they are justified by the scale of farm operation or are essential for sustainable land management, subject to criteria protecting the environment of the National Park.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Issue 12: Sustainable rural economic growth

What we propose to do

We propose to support the further diversification of rural, land-based enterprises by permitting the conversion of suitable buildings (including to residential uses under the review of traditional farm buildings) and the development of land at a scale where there is environmental capacity to accommodate it. This would be subject to tying the new use to the existing, rural land-based enterprise to prevent it from being sold separately (without consideration of the material planning implications).

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Which of the following options do you agree with?

- 28.** Include a criteria-based policy to promote the provision of land-based rural enterprises in suitable locations where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 29.** Continue to assess proposals in terms of their potential impact on landscape character as per extant policy 20. **Yes/No**
- 30.** Continue to support farm diversification as per extant policy 21. **Yes/No**
- 31.** Continue approach set out in extant policy 22 in relation to maximising the opportunities provided by forestry whilst protecting the National Park's natural and cultural assets revising them if necessary to reflect updated national policy and guidance. **Yes/No**

Natural Environment

3.74 The National Park designation provides the highest status of protection relating to conserving landscape and scenic beauty. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) draws upon the requirements of legislation and other government policy that underpins this conservation and enhancement of the environment. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF sets out that:

- great weight be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, and
- the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in these areas.

3.75 In addition, the NPPF makes it clear that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment through the protection and enhancement of valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils, minimising the impacts on biodiversity and, where possible, providing net gains in biodiversity. It also recognises the wider benefits of 'ecosystem services' (para.109).

3.76 The location of Northumberland National Park in the northern upland of England puts it at an important ecological crossroads between other rich habitats. The historic low level of development and the extensive green spaces between its settlements, however, mean that there is a lot less pressure on these networks in the National Park than in more urbanised areas or intensively-farmed land elsewhere. It is unlikely that ecological networks will be a constraint to most types of new development in the National Park but they may present opportunities to shape development in ways that could enhance their functionality.

3.77 The role of the Local Plan and the planning system is to protect designated sites and species from developments that would be harmful and to mitigate the impact of development on other more locally-important habitats such as woodland, individual trees, roadside verges and geomorphological features.

3.78 The new Local Plan presents a potential opportunity to make small and proportionate biodiversity gains on an application-by-application basis; a strategy that is encouraged by national planning policy. This would require certain types of new development to include proportionate enhancement measures. To ensure that these measures would be affordable, their cost should be minimal in relation to the overall value of a scheme.

3.79 Development costs in the National Park are already competitive because the Authority does not charge an infrastructure levy on planning permissions. There could, therefore, be potential financial scope for small scale biodiversity enhancement measures to be included in relevant planning proposals. The policy option would only apply to developments that have some form of biodiversity impact e.g. new buildings, housing, extensions, development of land and provision of infrastructure.

Issue 13: Protecting the Natural Environment

What we propose to do

We propose to maintain the current levels of protection for international, national and locally designated habitats and species, proportionate to their importance.

We propose to map ecological habitat and species networks across the National Park in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework but do not expect this to be a constraint to most forms of new development.

We propose to introduce a simple schedule of biodiversity enhancement measures that is affordable and proportionate to the scale of most new development permitted.

We propose to include a criteria-based policy which ensures the conservation, management and enhancement of the National Park's landscape, supported by sector, issue and/or area specific policies.

In addition to adopting the criteria-based policy above which seeks the conservation, management and enhancement of the landscape, the Local Plan could also include a policy to restrict development in areas which are considered – through an objective assessment of landscape sensitivity – to be especially sensitive to change.

Do you agree with this potential approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Issue 14: Flood Risk

3.80 Flooding is playing an increasing role in everyday lives. Already high rainfall totals, flashy watercourses and steep gradients bring challenges in managing flood risk; challenges intensified by the predicted effects of climate change. It is important that development plays its part in the overall flood risk strategy set out in Local Flood Risk Strategies and Catchment Flood Management Plans prepared by the County Councils and the Environment Agency.

3.81 To help predict and manage the risks, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared in partnership with the County Council. If necessary a separate assessment will be prepared for the National Park in consultation with statutory agencies responsible for flooding. This contains the latest flood mapping of the National Park and refines the information to determine the variations in flood risk from all sources of flooding. It improves understanding of the extent and type of flood risk so that decision making is better informed. It is used to assess sites that are potentially allocated in a Local Plan and will inform planning applications.

What we propose to do

We propose that all developments should be expected to demonstrate that they would minimise and reduce the rate of surface water run-off. This would include incorporating measures to attenuate run-off in accordance with a drainage hierarchy for rainwater in order of priority as follows:

- continuing natural discharge processes;
- storing for later use;
- infiltration techniques in areas of poor porosity;
- storing water in open water features for gradual release to a watercourse;
- storing water in sealed water features for gradual release to a watercourse;
- discharging direct to a watercourse;
- discharging direct to a surface water drain;
- discharging direct to a combined sewer.

Using the hierarchy, we propose that developments on previously developed land will generally be expected to incorporate a reduction in surface water run-off rates while development on greenfield sites will be expected to result in no net increase in surface water run-off, unless not technically feasible or viable.

Where development takes place on a site that is known to hold water, or over which water flows in times of flood, we propose that compensatory provision, as well as a net increase in the available area, should be secured elsewhere. We intend to identify strategically important areas of flood water retention so that they can be protected from development and will support proposals to improve their retaining qualities wherever possible.

Do you agree with this potential approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Which of the following potential options do you agree with?

- 32.** Continue the approach set out in extant policies 1, 3, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24 and 27 revising them if necessary to reflect updated national policy and guidance. **Yes/No**
- 33.** Include a policy to require developments to include proportionate bio-diversity enhancement measures where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 34.** Introduce a criteria-based policy to protect wildlife, species and habitat networks where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 35.** Include a new policy to support and promote the use of natural capital assets in the National Park and make the most of the associated ecosystem services benefits to the benefit of all who live in, work in and visit to the National Park. **Yes/No**
- 36.** Revise/Replace extant Policy 25 with a criteria-based policy that reflects updated national policy and guidance (including sustainable rural drainage systems). **Yes/No**
- 37.** Include a policy to protect the International Dark Sky Park designation from inappropriate

development. **Yes/No**

Historic Environment

3.82 A heritage asset is any building, monument, site, place, area or landscape that has some degree of significance because of its heritage interest. This significance relates to its value to present and future generations and could include archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic factors.

3.83 Where a heritage asset is considered to have some significance, the planning system needs to ensure that this is conserved by ensuring appropriate alterations to and uses of the building, or by ensuring development that could affect its setting is appropriate. Some heritage assets are designated – notably listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments. These automatically have a high level of protection through legislation and national policy. However, they represent only a fraction of what is significant about the historic environment of Northumberland National Park.

3.84 Undesignated heritage assets represent the bulk of the resource, but we believe that they shouldn't be automatically dismissed as being less important than designated assets. Designations have not always been made as consistently as we would like, so it is necessary for planning proposals that affect them to be carefully assessed to ensure something important will not be lost or damaged. In particular, traditional farm buildings have tended to be omitted from listings by virtue of policy decisions, rather than their intrinsic architectural and historic importance. There is a clear case here to try and redress the balance.

3.85 There are occasions where the public interest urges that, if a heritage asset is 'at risk', its conservation could be secured through a planning permission that would not otherwise be in accordance with policy. This is referred to as enabling development. It might involve permitting the conversion of an 'at risk' building, or permitting a related development, the revenue from which could cross-subsidise conservation works to the building at risk.

3.86 Enabling development needs to be carefully assessed to weigh the disadvantages of departing from policy with the benefits of conserving heritage assets. All cases are individual, and Historic England has published detailed policy and principles. We don't therefore believe there would be much benefit in attempting to provide any further interpretation in the Local Plan, other than to say we will consider proposals on their merits in the light of Historic England's approach.

Issue 15: Heritage Assets (including those at risk) & Issue 17: Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas

What we propose to do

We propose to outline the approach of the National Park Authority and its partners in relation to heritage at risk, that is monitor the condition of designated heritage assets, identify those already at risk or vulnerable, exploit opportunities to secure their repair and enhancement, including the use of the community infrastructure levy, and take a proactive role in addressing heritage at risk, working with partners and communities and seeking external funding as necessary.

All development proposals that affect a heritage asset will be informed by an assessment of its significance and the impact of the proposal upon that significance. Applications will not be determined until all reasonable efforts have been made to understand and respond to significance.

Any development affecting designated or undesignated heritage assets or their settings will be expected to conserve or enhance its significance.

Any harm to or loss of significance of a heritage asset will be required to demonstrate that there is no alternative solution that would have a lesser impact and demonstrate public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss. The protection offered to heritage assets will be hierarchical in accordance with the level of significance of the asset. We propose that there should be scope for undesignated assets to be afforded equivalent protection to those that are designated, if they can be shown to be of equivalent significance.

Where a proposal involving any level of harm to or loss of a heritage asset is permitted, development shall not proceed until agreed mitigation, or appropriate recording, has taken place.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Issue 16: Design

3.87 It is important that new development is to a high standard of design and quality, so that it can serve many generations to come with a need to balance new and innovative high-quality design with more traditional vernacular design. Most development has a visual impact but some forms of development also have a long-term impact on the intensity of use in an area, for example in terms of vehicle movements or use of services such as shops, waste collection or water supply. If new development is of a high quality it will add to the high quality of the National Park environment and will tend to encourage spending, create employment and maintain quality of life for residents. This is also important in relation to the design of exterior lighting and the maintenance of the International Dark Sky Park gold status designation obtained in 2013.

3.88 Signs and advertisements are important to business because they enable customers to more easily and safely locate them. In supporting existing and new business uses, we will also support reasonable requirements for advance signs and advertisements on business premises. Signs and advertisements are, of course, designed to be noticeable and can, therefore, sometimes have a marked effect on the appearance of buildings and the character of villages. Clearly, there is a need to protect the appearance of the National Park from advertising and signage that would cause harm to its landscape beauty, the setting of listed buildings and conservation areas and public safety. Signs should be compatible with the building to which they are attached or the context in which they are located.

What we propose to do

We propose to introduce a policy to ensure that the design of new developments would be informed by, and respond positively to the site, its surrounding context and landscape setting, so that the scale, height, proportions, massing, form, materials and appearance of buildings and structures would be both sympathetic and complementary.

We also propose that the policy would ensure that the design of new development would conserve or enhance the archaeological, architectural and historical character and appearance of the site and its setting; be of high quality, having visual interest that reinforces local distinctiveness; ensures that the proposed development would be environmentally sustainable, minimises the consumption of resources, and be long lasting and adaptable; maintains or enhances the ecological, geological and geomorphological value of the site; and would be accessible for all users including those with a range of mobility needs.

We propose to review the existing policy on signs and advertisements and take a positive approach to signage where it is reasonably necessary to advertise a business or direct visitors to it. In considering the number, size, materials, colour and location of new signs, we will have regard to their impact on the character of the building, its surroundings and public safety.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Which of the following potential options do you agree with?

- 38.** Include a specific criteria-based policy to protect both designated and non-designated heritage assets. **Yes/No**
- 39.** Include a specific criteria-based policy to enable the re-development and re-use of heritage assets (including listed buildings) where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 40.** The Local Plan could include a policy which encourages the re- use of buildings at risk with a more flexible approach to new uses. **Yes/No**
- 41.** The Local Plan could adopt a more permissive policy approach to new uses, including residential, which allows for greater variety of proposed uses. **Yes/No**
- 42.** The Local Plan could include a policy seeking to secure the optimum viable use for historic/traditional farm buildings that is consistent with, or least harmful to, the character and appearance of the buildings affected and their wider setting. **Yes/No**
- 43.** The Local Plan could include a policy to permit and encourage work to improve the energy performance of heritage assets consistent with their character and appearance and that of their wider setting. **Yes/No**
- 44.** The Local Plan could encourage the consolidation of the existing local lists and add new entries within conservation areas identified according to established criteria as part of the Conservation Area Appraisal process. Heritage assets of strong merit will be afforded consideration under the determination process. **Yes/No**
- 45.** Use the guidance set out by English Heritage when assessing any proposals for enabling development. The use of enabling development would be exceptional in the National Park. **Yes/No**

Are there any other options you think need to be considered?

Leisure and Tourism

3.89 The National Park is designated because of the value of its landscapes, tranquillity, dark skies, wildlife and cultural heritage and the opportunities they offer for the public to visit and enjoy them. Successive visitor surveys confirm that it is the scenery, open spaces, opportunities for walking and tranquillity that are the main reasons why people visit the National Park. These special qualities, however, need to be supported by infrastructure such as car parking, footpaths, trails, access areas, toilets, shops, cafes, pubs and interpretive material to accommodate visitors and facilitate their enjoyment of the area. These facilities need to be maintained and sometimes improved and extended and that will often require planning permission.

3.90 Other leisure facilities do not relate directly to the special qualities of the National Park but are nevertheless an important part of the wider visitor experience of it. It is essential that these facilities are as good as they can reasonably be within the proviso that they do not themselves prejudice National Park purposes (e.g. dark skies observatory).

3.91 The National Park Management Plan contains specific objectives to promote the National Park as a leading sustainable tourism destination and to improve the quality and variety of its tourism offer without harming its distinctiveness.

3.92 The contribution that the Local Plan can make is centred mainly on reviewing planning policy for new or improved visitor accommodation and considering the need for new facilities and their relationship to the special qualities of the National Park.

3.93 The development of sites for purpose-built visitor accommodation could offer potential local benefits in terms of new employment and increased spending as well as extending the range of visitor accommodation in the National Park. Quality design, high insulation, eco standards and holiday occupancy conditions could make these sites suitable for year-round use. The careful redevelopment of these sites could also offer permanent landscape and biodiversity improvements.

3.94 Since one of the statutory purposes of the National Park are to promote opportunities for the public to enjoy and understand the area, the question should be asked whether planning policy should attempt to safeguard existing visitor accommodation and visitor facilities from change of use that would erode the role of the National Park as a visitor destination.

3.95 The planning system should not, however, be used to block the normal ebb and flow of business so the use of planning policy to test the continued viability of visitor facilities would have to be proportionate to the contribution those uses make to National Park purposes. It is not intended to block the change of use of, say, bed and breakfast accommodation to alternative uses.

Issue 18: Recreation and sport facilities

What we propose to do

We propose to support recreational opportunities in the National Park particularly the rights of way network, access to open country, other quiet and active recreation based on the National Park's special qualities.

We propose to encourage a high quality visitor experience within the National Park through a diverse range of recreation, tourism and environmental education activities.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Issue 19: Holiday accommodation, visitor facilities and sustainable tourism

What we propose to do

A more flexible approach to the development of visitor facilities could help support a more rounded quality experience that will help keep visitors returning to the area throughout the year (e.g. dark skies activities) and in all weathers to enjoy the primary special qualities of the National Park and importantly, maintain spending in the local economy.

The Local Plan policies will need to provide a safeguard against inappropriate development. The most sensitive areas of the National Park and other areas where tranquillity is a particular quality – could be specifically excluded by the policy.

It is proposed that a marketing test be added to the Local Plan to check that there is no reasonable market demand for the continued operation of a key visitor facility or important form of visitor accommodation that contributes to National Park purposes, before considering its change of use to something else.

The proposed approach is to encourage the development of visitor facilities and attractions that will enhance understanding, enjoyment and improve access to the special qualities of the National Park but in ways that will avoid conflict with its natural beauty, wildlife or cultural heritage.

A new policy could also introduce flexibility for other visitor-orientated development that does not directly relate to the special qualities. Such a policy would not automatically rule out the development of indoor or artificial outdoor facilities and attractions that will support use of the National Park by a wide range of groups over a longer visitor season. Careful siting, quality design, management methods, planning conditions and legal agreements should ensure that this development would not erode the natural or special qualities that attract visitors to the area in the first place.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Which of the following potential options do you agree with?

- 46. Continue to support a sustainable tourism and recreation as per extant policy 15. **Yes/No**
- 47. Include a criteria based policy to allow camping in suitable locations where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 48. Include criteria based policies to allow the provision of new indoor and outdoor visitor facilities in suitable locations where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 49. Include a criteria-based policy to allow the provision of new sustainable self-catering visitor accommodation in suitable locations where appropriate. **Yes/No**
- 50. Include a criteria-based policy to allow the conversion of under-used or redundant buildings to holiday accommodation in suitable locations where appropriate (particularly in relation to dark skies tourism). **Yes/No**

Minerals and Waste

3.96 The National Park produces an amount of primary minerals for use in the construction industry. There is currently only one operational crushed rock quarry within the National Park that has extant planning permission for mineral extraction. In the absence of new permissions, mineral working is finite in the National Park. The issue for the Local Plan is whether the physical extent or the operational time horizons of this quarry should be permitted to extend and, if so, under what circumstances.

3.97 National planning policy requires that Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) are defined in Local Plans to identify the total area covered by a mineral resource. The purpose of MSAs is to prevent the sterilisation of resources by alternative development. There is, however, no presumption that the resource identified within the MSA will be worked.

Issue 20: Ensuring a sustainable supply of minerals

What we propose to do

We propose to define Mineral Safeguarding Areas on the Local Plan policies map and also introduce a minerals safeguarding policy in the draft Plan. Mineral extraction would only be permitted in Northumberland National Park where it would have no significant environmental effects and where it is of a scale appropriate solely to meet and identified need for local building stone, such as the provision of materials for repairs to local historic buildings, and where the need for stone cannot be met elsewhere outside the National Park.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Issue 21: Sustainable waste management

What we propose to do

We do not think it would be suitable to allow non-inert waste to be disposed of within the National Park. This is a continuation of the approach taken by our current policies and we have no evidence to suggest that the modest waste arisings from within the National Park are not capable of being processed and disposed of outside the National Park. We will, however, keep this position under review pending the outcome of the sub-regional waste study.

We will only support proposals for recycling sites where they meet the needs of local communities and would not have detrimental impacts.

We will only permit the disposal of inert waste produced within the National Park, where it can be demonstrated that the material cannot reasonably be re-used or recycled, where proposals are small in scale and otherwise where it will not have detrimental impacts.

We are less certain about what the response to proposals for processing/disposal of organic waste should be. This sector continues to evolve and, in the context of this National Park, farm effluent is likely to be a particular contributor. Our initial thinking is that we would like to encourage these proposals where the waste has been produced from within the National Park or areas immediately adjacent to the boundary. We would also like to encourage cooperatives so that several farms can benefit from a single waste processing site. We do, however, need to expand our understanding of this area so we would welcome any feedback from consultees about this subject.

Do you agree with this approach? Yes/No/I don't know

Which of the following potential options do you agree with?

51. Include a criteria-based policy to allow for new quarries or the extension of existing quarries for the extraction of crushed rock or aggregates in suitable locations where appropriate. **Yes/No**
52. Include a policy to safeguard future mineral supplies by restricting development in appropriate locations so that the land is not sterilised by other potential development. **Yes/No**

Are there any other options you think need to be considered?

Appendix 1: Spatially relevant Management Plan objectives

Management Plan Objective	Relevant Local Plan Spatial Theme
1.1.2 – To achieve a high standard and broad range of facilities, information and service within the National Park.	Community facilities and Infrastructure.
1.2.3 – To improve information and infrastructure with more sites in the National Park accessible to all.	Community facilities and Infrastructure Transport and access.
1.3.2 – To use the resources of the National Park to provide increased access to vocational skills and training opportunities.	Housing and Employment.
2.1.1 – To protect and enhance tranquillity levels as the highest in England.	Natural Environment
2.1.2 – To conserve and enhance the National Park's distinctive characteristics and sense of place.	Spatial Strategy Minerals and Waste Natural Environment
2.1.3 – To ensure that all new development within or on the fringe of the National Park will conserve or enhance the natural and cultural qualities of the National Park.	Spatial Strategy
2.1.4 - To ensure that visitor and recreational use is sympathetic to the character and capacity of the locations in which it takes place.	Spatial Strategy
2.1.5 - To support the Otterburn Ranges in conserving and enhancing natural and cultural qualities and tranquillity.	Natural Environment
2.2.1 – To encourage and support land management practices to bring about measurable improvements in the natural environment.	Natural Environment
2.2.2 – To enhance geology and habitats to ensure resilience and that habitats are linked.	Natural Environment
2.3.1 – To protect and enhance the historic environment and archaeological sites within the National Park.	Historic Environment
3.1.1 – To encourage and support the uptake of better and more sustainable land management practices which conserve and enhance the National Park's qualities.	Farming and estates
3.1.2 – To ensure that all the National Park's rivers are of the highest quality and minimise the flood risk and impacts to communities and businesses.	Natural Environment
3.2.1 – To promote and implement sustainable land management practices which contribute to ecosystem services using the natural capital provided by the National Park.	Farming and Estates Natural Environment
3.2.2 – To encourage the production of renewable energy from sources compatible with the National Park's distinctive qualities.	Community facilities and Infrastructure Natural Environment

Management Plan Objective	Relevant Local Plan Spatial Theme
3.3.1 – To strengthen and diversify the markets for businesses that relate to achieving National Park purposes.	Housing and employment
3.3.2 – To grow the tourism market in and around the National Park.	Leisure and Tourism
3.3.3 – To retain, attract and develop new and traditional skills to meet the demand of enterprises and business growth in key sectors.	Housing and employment
4.2.1 – To ensure a balanced range of housing that meets local needs.	Housing and employment
4.2.2 – To ensure the retention of rural services.	Community facilities and infrastructure
4.2.3 – To enable an integrated transport network which offers an attractive alternative to the car.	Transport and access Community facilities and infrastructure
4.2.4 – To increase the use of renewable energy by communities in the National Park by 20% by 2021 and continue work on increasing energy efficiency.	Community facilities and infrastructure Natural environment
4.2.5 – To increase levels of public health and well-being	Community facilities and infrastructure.
4.3.1 – There are more young adults and people of a working age living in the National Park.	Housing and employment Community facilities and infrastructure
4.3.2 – There are more opportunities for employment and training in the National Park and its gateway settlements.	Housing and employment
4.3.3 – Reduce the impact from commuting out of the National Park or its gateway communities and encourage more home working.	Spatial Strategy Housing and employment
5.1.1 – To optimise opportunities for the National Park to contribute to the social and economic regeneration of Northumberland and wider North East Region.	Housing and employment
5.1.2 – The natural, cultural, social and economic infrastructure of the National Park is sustained through its use as a local and regional asset.	Community facilities and infrastructure Housing and employment

Glossary of Terms

Agricultural unit

A business presenting certificated accounts on land registered as an agricultural holding, whose primary purpose is the production of livestock, food and fibre.

Affordable housing

Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. (full definition in the NPPF)

Allocated site

An area of land identified for development on a Local Plan Policies Map.

Amenity

Amenity will be judged having regard to the physical and social features of a site and its surroundings which contribute to a comfortable and desirable living environment. Amenity is not defined in guidance or legislation. It is a matter of fact and degree and each case may be different. Amenity will be judged having regard to the condition of a site, the impact on the surrounding area and the scope for tackling a problem.

Ancillary domestic uses

Uses that support the main purpose of a development.

Assets of community value

A building or land that has been safeguarded by the district council at the request of the local community. Owners cannot dispose of them without informing the council and waiting until the end of a six week period to see if there is community interest in purchasing it.

Article 4 direction

Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 allows the local planning authority to restrict the scope of permitted development rights in defined areas.

Brownfield Land

Land that has already been developed for a use other than agriculture, forestry, mineral Extraction, waste disposal; or private residential garden.

Community Infrastructure Levy

A levy on new development by a planning authority for the purpose of raising funds for infrastructure required to support new development.

Conservation area

An area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Such areas are designated by local planning authorities under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Within such areas the local planning authority has a few additional powers over the demolition of buildings and the removal of trees.

Conservation deficit

The gap between the total project cost of restoring an historic asset and its value after restoration.

Commuted sums

Payments made by developers to the National Park Authority for use in support of affordable housing, conservation work to traditional farm buildings or compensation for the effects of development on biodiversity.

Cultural heritage

The buildings and historic places, monuments and artefacts that are considered worthy of preservation (commonly referred to as the 'historic environment') and the less 'tangible' traditions, customs and practices, aesthetic and spiritual beliefs, artistic expression, language and other aspects of human activity.

Curtilage

Usually an area containing or closely associated to, and used in connection with, a house or building. In relation to a listed building, the curtilage is an important element in determining the extent of the designation, but it is also a complex legal concept, so advice should always be sought from the Authority.

Diversification

Adding new business activities to traditional agricultural or rural estate land management. Examples include livestock and food products, energy crops, retail outlets, catering and visitor facilities.

Ecosystem services

The benefits people obtain from ecosystems such as food, water, flood and disease control and recreation.

Enabling development

Development that would otherwise conflict with policy or be considered harmful, is considered acceptable in this context because it would facilitate (or 'enable') benefits to built heritage that outweigh the harm. Typically the benefits are the generation of funds that will be used to pay for work to a listed building or other heritage asset (e.g. traditional farm buildings), that is in pressing need of substantial repairs

Extra care accommodation

A form of housing designed for the needs of older people. It provides varying levels of on site care and support.

Fuel poverty

A household is considered by government to be in fuel poverty if it has required fuel costs that are above the national median level and were it to spend that amount it would be left with a residual income below the poverty line.

Gateway Settlement

A settlement located outside the National Park that provides a range of services to communities within the National Park.

Greenfield Land

Land that has not been previously developed.

Heritage asset

A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape (designated or undesignated) that has heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.

Heritage statement

Heritage Statements describe heritage assets and their significance. Applicants are required to submit them in support of planning applications affecting a heritage asset in order to justify the impact of their proposed works on the heritage asset and its significance, including its setting.

Inert waste

Waste that is not chemically or biologically reactive and will not decompose. Examples include concrete, stone, building rubble and sand.

Infrastructure

The physical network of services and facilities that is required for an area to function properly. Examples include education, health, recreation, cultural services, communications, energy and waste management.

Land based function

Uses that derive their primary input from the land e.g. farming and rural estate management.

Legal agreement

See planning obligation

Listed building

A building or structure designated as being of special architectural or historic interest. The designation extends to any structure or object fixed to the building or within its curtilage where it forms part of the land and has done so since 1948. Demolitions, extensions or alterations that are likely to affect their special character will require approval from the local planning authority.

Local Centres

National Park settlements where local needs development is focussed with the potential to be hubs for community and visitor services such as housing, employment, retail, transport meeting places, leisure facilities, information and accommodation.

Mitigation

Works carried out during or after construction to reduce the environmental impact of development.

Neighbourhood Plan

A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a designated neighbourhood area. If adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the Development Plan for the area concerned.

Permitted development

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 permits certain minor alterations and extensions to be undertaken without the need to apply for planning permission from the local planning authority.

Planning obligation

Legal agreements made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 between a developer and the local planning authority. The Agreement is legally binding and normally restricts the use of the land in a stated manner or requires specified operations, activities or payments to be carried out in association with development.

Policies Map

The Policies Map shows the location of development opportunities, constraints to development and where certain planning policies apply.

Priority habitats and species

Species and Habitats of Principle Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Precautionary principle

Where the effects of doing something are uncertain, the action taken is required to err on the side of caution rather than risk damage that cannot be repaired. In the Local Plan context it is used to safeguard the integrity of European designated wildlife sites.

Rural based enterprise

Land-related businesses which, directly or indirectly, need to be located in the countryside rather than in existing settlements. Examples include agriculture, forestry and other activities that obtain their primary inputs from the site, such as the processing of agricultural, forestry and mineral products together with land management activities and support services including agricultural contracting, tourism and leisure enterprises.

Smaller village

A settlement with an identifiable core but very limited services.

Special Qualities

The Special Qualities make up the National Park's unique sense of place. They are a combination of visual qualities of the landscape, the qualities of the natural environment, and the cultural heritage giving the added dimension of a sense of time, depth and history. They also include more intangible qualities such as tranquillity, peace, solitude, wildness, space and inspiration.

Strategic flood risk assessment

A study carried out by one or more local planning authorities to assess the risk to an area from flooding from all sources, now and in the future, taking account of the impacts of climate change, and to assess the impact that changes or development in the area will have on flood risk.

Sustainable development

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is central to the economic, environmental and social success of the country and is the core principle underpinning the land use planning system. Simply stated, the principle recognises the importance of ensuring that all people should be able to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, both now and in the future.

Traditional buildings

Buildings constructed at any time prior to the early to mid 20th Century. During the first half of the 20th Century the use of mass manufactured building materials began to reach the National Park, but traditional methods of construction still persisted. They are typically of solid stone wall construction with flagged or slated roofs, incorporating natural and predominantly locally sourced materials.

Vernacular

A category of architecture based on local needs, construction materials and reflecting local traditions. The function of the building is the dominant factor, aesthetic considerations, though present to some small degree, are quite minimal.

Windfall sites

Unallocated sites that are developed for housing.