



Northumberland National Park Authority

Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Methodology

June 2017

Contents

Contents	1
1. Background	2
2. Methodology	3
Stage 1 – Identification of sites	5
Assessment Area	5
Approach to site size	5
Desktop review of existing information	5
Call for Sites	6
Stage 2 – Site assessment	9
Estimating the potential of each site for housing and economic use	9
Estimating the suitability of sites for housing and economic use	10
Estimating the availability of sites for housing and economic use	12
Assessing the achievability of sites for housing and economic use	13
Overcoming constraints identified that impact on suitability, availability and achievability	14
Stage 3 – Housing and Economic Development Potential from Windfall Sites .	14
Stage 4 – Assessment Review	15
Stage 5 – Final Evidence Base	15
Appendix A: Glossary	16
Appendix B: Assessment of Potential Impacts	17
Appendix C: Assessment of Potential Constraints Affecting Sites	22

1. Background

- 1.1. Paragraph 159 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local planning authorities to assess the availability of land in the local area that could be suitable for housing or economic development (such as office space, tourism, agricultural use).
- 1.2. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) indicates that this study should be undertaken by means of a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), the specific purposes of which are to:
 - identify sites (and broad locations where necessary) with the potential for development;
 - assess the extent of development potential of the land identified; and
 - assess the suitability for development and the likelihood of development coming forward (availability and achievability) on the land identified.
- 1.3. This document sets out the approach that will be taken by Northumberland National Park Authority to prepare and undertake a HELAA.
- 1.4. The study will form a key part of the evidence base for the National Park Authority's Local Plan. It will be used to ultimately test whether there is sufficient land to meet the objectively assessed need (OAN) for housing and economic development in the National Park over a given period of time as set out by the Local Plan.

Please note that the HELAA does not allocate land for development. If it is considered appropriate to do so, this is the role of the Local Plan itself. This assessment identifies where land may be suitable for development. However, this does not confer any planning status on a site, nor guarantee that a site would be granted planning permission should an application be submitted for consideration.

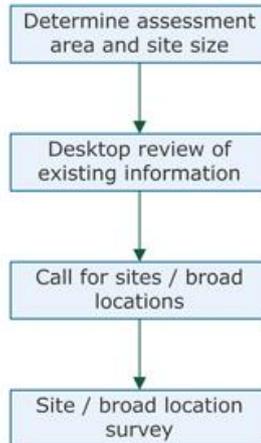
A site identified in a HELAA as suitable for development means only that it will be considered as part of a Local Plan preparation for potential development in the future and, where relevant, to be included on a statutory Brownfield Sites Register. No firm commitment by the authority or other parties to bring a site forward for development is intended, or should be inferred.

2. Methodology

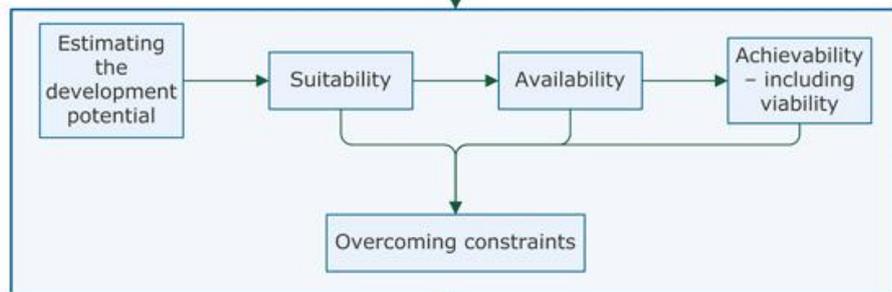
- 2.1. A consultation draft HELAA Methodology (September 2016) was consulted on over a 6 week period from the 3rd October to the 14th November 2016. All comments received were considered and where justified amendments have been made to inform this final methodology document.
- 2.2. The methodology has been drafted in accordance with the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment section of the National Planning Practice Guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- 2.3. It should be noted that the previous housing land availability study for the National Park was incorporated into a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for Northumberland County Council (NCC), dated 2012. The County Council has now progressed further with its Local Plan and has produced a more recent SHLAA (May 2016) used as evidence for the NCC Local Plan. The NCC SHLAA follows a revised methodology (2015) but excludes land within the National Park.
- 2.4. An Employment Development Technical Paper was published by Northumberland County Council in 2016. This collates evidence from an Employment Land Review (2011), Employment Land and Premises Demand Study (2015) and other employment land needs studies to give an account of how the gross employment land requirement is calculated. An Employment Land Schedule identifies the status of employment plots across the county from 2014 – 2015. This has informed an Employment Land Site Option Appraisal, June 2016, which assesses the suitability, availability, achievability and deliverability of potential employment sites. This study omits the area of the National Park.
- 2.5. Northumberland National Park Authority will explore how it can work with the County Council on the preparation of future HELAAs. This methodology also considers the role of the Northumberland SHLAA Partnership which comprises representative stakeholders in Northumberland with valuable skills, knowledge and expertise in relation to housing and housing delivery.
- 2.6. The processes set out in the methodology for the Northumberland County Council SHLAA (May 2016) and the Employment Land Site Option Appraisal (June 2016) have been taken into account when developing this methodology.
- 2.7. The remainder of this document puts forward the detailed HELAA methodology for the National Park which aligns with the five key stages set out in national guidance, depicted below.

Figure 1 - National Planning Practice Guidance – Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

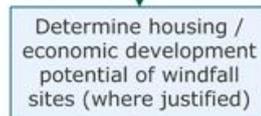
Stage 1- Site / broad location identification



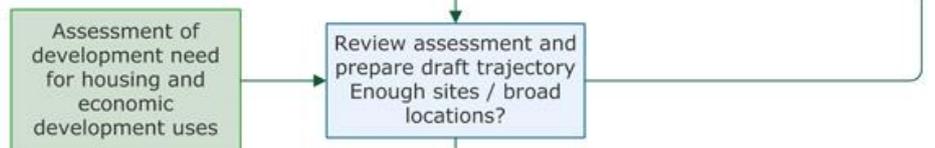
Stage 2 - Site / broad location assessment



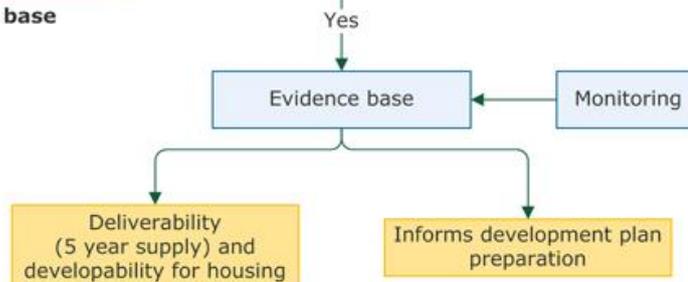
Stage 3 - Windfall assessment



Stage 4 - Assessment review



Stage 5 - Final evidence base



Stage 1 – Identification of sites

Assessment Area

2.8. The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment will cover the entire area of the National Park. Settlements immediately outside the National Park border will not be included having been assessed within the Northumberland County Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and Employment Land review (ELR) studies that form part of the evidence base for their Local Plan (Core Strategy).

Approach to site size

2.9. NPPG indicates that the assessment should consider all sites and broad locations capable of delivering five or more dwellings or economic sites of 0.25ha (or 500m² of floor space) and above. The guidance recognises that a minimum site size threshold may not always be appropriate and alternative criteria may be considered.

2.10. Given the rural nature of the National Park and taking into account historic patterns of housing delivery that indicate that the majority of residential development has been for single dwellings, it is anticipated that small sites will continue to deliver a significant proportion of housing in the area. Previous business needs studies have established that small businesses are the most common type within and surrounding the National Park indicating that employment sites are not generally large in scale. Therefore all sites to come forward will be included in the assessment regardless of size.

2.11. Taking into consideration existing and emerging policy direction in the National Park, the strong likelihood that the Local Plan will not allocate sites for development means it would not be necessary to consider broad areas for housing or economic development.

Desktop review of existing information

2.12. National Planning Practice Guidance requires local planning authorities not to simply rely on sites that they have been informed about but actively identify sites through the desktop review process that may have a part to play in meeting the development needs of the local area. The types of sites to be considered at the desktop review stage include:

- Sites with planning permission for housing that is unimplemented or under construction.
- Sites on which a planning application has been refused or withdrawn
- Land in the authority's ownership / surplus or likely to become surplus public sector land.
- Vacant / derelict land and buildings.
- Additional housing opportunities in established uses or underutilised facilities.
- Sites in adjoining villages or rural settlements and rural exception sites.

- Sites on which a relevant submission for pre-application advice has not come to fruition.

2.13. These sites will be identified from various sources, including:

- Authority records (including planning records)
- Land use / property databases
- OS maps and aerial photography
- Officer knowledge where available
- Land Registry

Call for Sites

2.14. In addition to identifying sites through the desktop review, the authority will issue a Call for Sites. This process enables land owners, developers and others to bring to the authority's attention any available or potentially available land in any area of the National Park.

2.15. The following information will be requested during a Call for Sites:

- Location of the site;
- Size of the site including an appropriately scaled site location plan;
- Potential type of development;
- Potential development scale / yield; and;
- Any physical, ownership, legal or financial constraints that could prevent development on the site.

2.16. The authority will publicise any Call for Sites on its website as well as sending emails and letters to those on the Local Plan Consultation Database. Site submissions may be accepted outside of the formal Call for Sites, but whether or not it would be accepted for assessment would be subject to the progress of the Local Plan production. If the site cannot be included in the HELAA the details will be kept on record and considered for future assessments.

2.17. As required by the government under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act, the National Park Authority keeps a register of associations and individuals who wish to acquire serviced plots of land to bring forward self build or custom house building projects. In addition to this register the authority welcomes the submission of sites considered suitable for self or custom house building in the National Park. Any sites submitted through this form will be considered for inclusion in the HELAA, by request of the land owner. For more information on the Self and Custom Housebuilding Register visit:

www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk/about/planning/policy-guidance/self-build-and-custom-housebuilding-register/

Brownfield Land

- 2.18. On 16th April 2017, the government brought into force the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017. These regulations require each Local Planning Authority to prepare and maintain a register of brownfield land in the local authority area that is suitable for housing development. The authority is required to publish its Brownfield Land Register by 31st December 2017 and keep this up to date by reviewing it at least once a year.
- 2.19. The purpose of the register is to provide house builders with up-to-date and publicly available information on all brownfield sites available for housing locally. The aim is to help housebuilders identify suitable sites quickly, speeding up the construction of new homes. They also aim to allow communities to draw attention to local sites for listing, including derelict buildings and eyesores that are primed for redevelopment and that could attract investment to the area.
- 2.20. As part of the process to identify sites for inclusion in the HELAA, the authority will also determine which of those sites meet the requirements for inclusion onto the Brownfield Land Register.

Site Survey

- 2.21. All sites identified through the desktop review and the call for sites will be collated and the following details of each site recorded through a site survey.
- Site size, boundaries and location;
 - Current land use and character;
 - Land uses and character of the surrounding area;
 - Potential physical and environmental constraints (e.g. access, contamination, steep slopes, flooding, location of infrastructure/utilities); and;
 - Initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for housing or employment use, or a mixed-use development comprising housing or employment use.
- 2.22. At the site survey stage it may be necessary to discount any sites which clearly contravene national planning policy and legislation.
- 2.23. Although national guidance does not indicate specific criteria for discounting sites at this stage, the county-level SHLAA methodology lists the following designations which were identified in the North East England SHLAA Regional Implementation Guide, 2008. For the purpose of the HELAA for the National Park these will be recorded as Category 1 designations.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
 - Ramsar Sites.
 - Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
 - National Nature Reserves.
 - Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
 - Historic Parks and Gardens.

- Health and Safety Executive Inner Zones.
- Areas identified as a flood zone 3b.

2.24. Any sites identified to be affected by one or more of the Category 1 designations will be recorded but are unlikely to be taken forward for a full site assessment or site visit. A site in close proximity to a Category 1 designated area will not be automatically discounted, but the extent to which this could affect development potential will be considered at the next stage of the HELAA.

2.25. Sites considered to be more realistic candidates for potential development will then be assessed in more detail.

Stage 2 – Site assessment

- 2.26. The initial stage of the site assessment will involve an Officer undertaking site visits. Given the National Park's unique characteristics and special qualities, each site identified within the National Park will be visited as part of the overall assessment.
- 2.27. A site visit will provide the opportunity to clarify that the information acquired through the desktop survey or call for sites is accurate. Officers will subsequently assess the sites following the stages below.

Estimating the potential of each site for housing and economic use

- 2.28. NPPG indicates that estimating the development potential of each identified site should be guided by the existing or emerging plan policy including locally determined policies on density. The approach taken will be dependent on whether the site is being assessed for housing or economic use potential.

Development potential for housing

- 2.29. The capacity of a site is the starting point to estimate its development potential. Northumberland National Park Core Strategy (2009) does not include any policies which specify a minimum net density for housing development, recognising the previous delivery of housing on small-scale sites.
- 2.30. Capacity estimations will be made on a contextual site-by-site basis, using locally established densities based on historic delivery and existing characteristics. It will be important to consider the character and significance of the surrounding built form and landscape to ensure any development would be appropriate to secure the conservation and enhancement of the National Park.
- 2.31. In determining when and whether a site could be developed for housing, the assessment will involve testing each site for its suitability, availability and achievability. This information will form the basis of identifying whether the site can be considered deliverable, developable or uncertain as defined in the NPPF, set out below.

Deliverable – a site is available now, offers a suitable location for housing development now, and is achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. Sites with planning permission should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that schemes will not be implemented within five years.

Developable – a site should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that it will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.

Uncertain – the assessment is inconclusive as to whether a site could support housing. This may require further more detailed investigation into the capacity to overcome specific constraints. The potential yield of uncertain sites would typically be forecast for later periods of the plan.

Development potential for economic use

- 2.32. Assessing a site's potential for economic use will be based on the most up to date existing and emerging evidence of economic and demographic trends which indicate employment land needs in the National Park.
- 2.33. The assessment will be undertaken on a site by site basis, taking into consideration the shape and topography of the site and the surrounding landscape. Nearby land uses and access to infrastructure and services will also affect the potential of a site to deliver economic development.

Estimating the suitability of sites for housing and economic use

- 2.34. As outlined in NPPG paragraph 19, the suitability of a site for development now, or in the future, should be assessed against national planning policy, local planning policy (where up to date and in compliance with the NPPF), and emerging Local Plan policy. A site's suitability will also be influenced by other key factors, including impacts upon the site which could be brought about by development; physical constraints affecting the site; and the market attractiveness of the location and proposed use.
- 2.35. NPPG indicates that land allocated for residential or economic use can be automatically considered as suitable for such development. The current Local Plan for the National Park does not allocate sites so this would not apply. Sites with planning permission for housing or economic use would, however, be automatically deemed suitable.
- 2.36. The assessment of sites will be a dynamic process as the Local Plan progresses, with the need to update the suitability of sites in light of any emerging policy changes.

Impacts of Development

2.37. Officers will use their planning judgment and experience, as well as consulting specialist NNPA officers where relevant, to identify the potential impact of development upon:

- The National Park's Special Qualities (as identified in the Northumberland National Park Management Plan 2016-2021);
 - A landscape rich in biodiversity and geodiversity
 - A rich cultural heritage
 - True sense of tranquillity
 - Distinctive landscape character
- Nature Conservation
- The Historic Environment
- Compatibility with Neighbouring Uses
- Amenity; including
 - Open Space of Public Value
 - Transport and Roads

2.38. When assessing the suitability of each site a 'Red', 'Amber', 'Green' (RAG) approach will be applied.

2.39. 'Red' impacts are those that are considered detrimental with no possibility of reasonable mitigation. Any sites on which development would have an impact identified to be 'red' will be considered unsuitable for development and thus discounted from further assessment.

2.40. The existence of any 'amber' impacts will indicate that a site could be suitable for development but the nature and extent that could be achieved may be compromised. For the site to be suitable some mitigation may be required and the feasibility and extent of that mitigation would need to be identified through further research.

2.41. Where a site is affected only with 'green' impacts, it will be automatically considered suitable for development.

2.42. Further details on how officers will assess the specific impacts outlined above are provided in Appendix B.

Physical Constraints affecting the Site

2.43. As well as the existence of any identified impacts that could be caused by development of a site, particular constraints affecting a site would also influence how suitable it would be for development. Listed below are the potential constraints, as directed by NPPG, which will be assessed using the 'RAG' approach as explained above.

- Access
- Flood Risk
- Utilities Infrastructure
- Utilities Capacity
- Ground Conditions
- Hazardous Risks

2.44. If development of a site would likely be constrained by any one or more of the above factors, this may not immediately rule out the site provided reasonable mitigation measures are identified.

2.45. Appendix C provides more detailed criteria against which each site will be assessed.

Market Attractiveness

2.46. The assessment of a site's suitability for development will include making an initial judgment on whether it can be considered attractive to the market. Evidence from a range of sources will be used, including emerging data from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and other business / economic needs assessments.

2.47. It is recognised that market attractiveness will also influence the assessment for achievability therefore this will be explored in further detail in that section.

Estimating the availability of sites for housing and economic use

2.48. A site would usually be considered available if it is in ownership of a developer or a land owner who has expressed an interest to develop or sell land for development.

2.49. Factors that would usually indicate a site is not available for development include legal or ownership problems such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or covenants.

2.50. Such details will be sought from site information acquired through the call for sites process and through targeted consultation with developers and land owners. Due to established relationships between the National Park Authority and land owners, further information about sites should be readily available.

2.51. Where NPPG indicates that past delivery rates of developers and land owners should be taken into account when estimating the availability of sites, it could be considered that non-delivery or slow delivery of some sites in the National Park has also been influenced by the wider economic climate and unique characteristics / special qualities of the area. These factors will also be taken into consideration when the achievability of sites is assessed.

Assessing the achievability of sites for housing and economic use

2.52. A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that a particular type of development will be delivered on the site at a particular point in time.

2.53. The assessment for suitability will have considered the likely market attractiveness of development on each site; however to ascertain achievability, this will be assessed in more depth. This assessment essentially determines whether sites are economically viable, making a judgment based on cost factors as well as market factors.

Table 2 – Site Achievability Assessment Factors

Market Factors	Cost Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacent uses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site preparation costs (including a consideration of mitigating any physical constraints).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic viability of existing, proposed and alternative uses in terms of land values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any exceptional works that would be necessary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractiveness of the locality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant planning standards or obligations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of potential market demand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospect of funding or investment (including addressing any identified constraints).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developer build-out rates. 	

2.54. This assessment will be informed by evidence from previous and emerging studies on the viability of both residential and non-residential development.

2.55. NPPG indicates that viability testing of plans does not require the testing of every site. However, due to the relatively small number of sites anticipated to be included in the HELAA for the National Park, this is considered feasible. All suitable and available sites will also be subject to further viability testing as part of the overall viability assessment of the Local Plan.

2.56. Feedback received from developers on build-out rates will also enable a judgment to be made on the capacity of a developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period.

Overcoming constraints identified that impact on suitability, availability and achievability

2.57. Where constraints have been identified the assessment will consider what action would be needed to remove them, for example, investing in new infrastructure; dealing with fragmented land ownership; environmental improvement; or reviewing a development plan policy which is currently restricting development.

2.58. Judgments will be based on information provided through the call for sites process and through further discussions and advice sought from specialist officers.

Stage 3 – Housing and Economic Development Potential from Windfall Sites

2.59. Windfall sites are defined in the NPPF as “sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available”. Therefore sites identified in a HELAA would not usually be considered as windfall.

2.60. However, given that no land has been allocated in the National Park, all sites that come forward would be classed as windfall sites. Land may also become available through the release of ‘rural exception sites’ for affordable local needs housing.

2.61. Paragraph 48 of the NPPF states that windfall allowances should not include development within residential gardens. However, a recent High Court ruling¹ has concluded that rural areas can be excluded from this prohibition, given that the definition of “garden land” in this context should only extend to garden land in built up areas. Consequently, the assessment will consider whether residential garden sites in the National Park could be included in a windfall allowance.

¹ Dartford Borough Council v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CO/4129/2015) 21 January 2016

Stage 4 – Assessment Review

- 2.62. In line with National Planning Practice Guidance, all of the sites assessed will be collated with details of the development potential. This information will inform an indicative trajectory setting out how much housing and economic land can be provided and at what point in the future.
- 2.63. If any shortfalls are identified against the objectively assessed need for the National Park, assumptions on the development potential will be revisited.
- 2.64. If there is still a shortfall in supply, additional sites will be sought and assessed using the same methodology above. However if it is clear that housing / employment needs cannot be met within the National Park area, the Authority will consider how the need might be met in neighbouring local authority areas in accordance with the duty to cooperate. For example, this could involve liaising initially with the County Council to identify potential capacity in and around the gateway settlements to the National Park.

Stage 5 – Final Evidence Base

- 2.65. NPPG sets out a number of standard outputs a HELAA is expected to generate. These are:
- a list of all sites or broad locations considered, cross referenced to their locations on maps;
 - an assessment of each site or broad location, in terms of its suitability for development, availability and achievability (including whether the site/broad location is viable), to determine whether a site is realistically expected to be developed and when;
 - more detail for those sites which are considered to be realistic candidates for development, where others have been discounted for clearly evidenced and justified reasons;
 - the potential type and quantity of development that could be delivered on each site/broad location, including a reasonable estimate of build out rates, setting out how any barriers to delivery could be overcome and when; and
 - an indicative trajectory or anticipated development and consideration of associated risks.
- 2.66. The above findings from the HELAA will be made publicly available in an accessible form and will be used, alongside other sources of evidence, to support the housing and economic development policy approach of the Northumberland National Park Local Plan.

Appendix A: Glossary

Call for Sites: A process taken by a local planning authority in which individuals, organisations and others are invited to submit any sites considered to have potential for development.

Covenant: An agreement by lease, deed or other legal contract.

Local Plan: A document, or suite of documents, that guides all development in a given local planning authority area; its policies therein steer how planning applications are determined.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): The document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): Further guidance for the implementation of the Government's planning policies, accessible online and updated periodically.

Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN): The development need for both market and affordable housing within a given area.

Ransom Strip: A parcel of land needed to access an adjacent property from a public highway.

Rural Exception Site: A small site used for affordable housing in perpetuity where such site would not normally be used for housing.

Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Register: A Register held by the local planning authority as evidence for the demand for self-build and/or custom housebuilding in the relevant area.

Windfall Site: A site which has not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. This would usually comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.

Appendix B: Assessment of Potential Impacts

Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Conservation								
RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if development of the site would have a detrimental impact on biodiversity, geodiversity and/or nature conservation which could not be reasonably mitigated or compensated as appropriate.	AMBER: Development of the site may have a detrimental impact on biodiversity, geodiversity and/or nature conservation but this could be reasonably mitigated or compensated as appropriate.	GREEN: Site is most suitable if development of the site would have a neutral or positive impact on biodiversity, geodiversity and/or nature conservation.						
<p>Policy 17 of the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009) seeks to protect, enhance and restore biodiversity and geological conservation interests across the National Park.</p> <p>The desktop survey stage may have identified sites found to be affected by a Category 1 designation (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Ramsar Sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), National Nature Reserves), and, where necessary, excluded these from further assessment.</p> <p>This stage of the assessment will consider the impact that development could have upon the following land designations/priorities of the National Park Authority:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Protected species and habitats</td> <td>Local nature reserves</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Integrated network of habitats</td> <td>Minerals Safeguarding Areas</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ancient woodlands</td> <td>Protection of soil resources</td> </tr> </table> <p>Opportunities to access and interpret biodiversity and geodiversity resources of the National Park.</p>			Protected species and habitats	Local nature reserves	Integrated network of habitats	Minerals Safeguarding Areas	Ancient woodlands	Protection of soil resources
Protected species and habitats	Local nature reserves							
Integrated network of habitats	Minerals Safeguarding Areas							
Ancient woodlands	Protection of soil resources							

The Rich Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment

RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if development of the site would have a detrimental impact on the National Park’s rich cultural heritage and/or historic environment which could not be reasonably mitigated.

AMBER: Development on the site may have a detrimental impact on the National Park’s rich cultural heritage and/or historic environment but this could be reasonably mitigated.

GREEN: Site is most suitable if development of the site would have a neutral or positive impact on the National Park’s rich cultural heritage and/or historic environment.

Policy 18 of the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009) defines cultural heritage as the physical remains of past human societies evident in the landscape and those cultural traditions we have inherited such as language, craft skills, folklore and knowledge.

The desktop assessment process, as explained in paragraph 2.21, will have already identified Category 1 designations; for example, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Historic Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Therefore the assessment of a site’s suitability will include identifying any impact development could have upon the significance of the heritage assets listed below:

Archaeological Sites	Sites on the Sites and Monument Record
Historic Landscape	Historic Battlefields
Grade I, Grade II or Grade II* Listed Buildings	World Heritage Sites

The assessment will identify both the effects that development could have on an asset’s setting but also any contribution that could be made by an asset’s setting, for example potential opportunities for enhancing and better revealing the significance of an asset / addressing heritage at risk.

The National Park Authority’s Historic Environment Record will be the starting point to identifying any cultural heritage assets and/or historic environment features relevant to the site.

The True Sense of Tranquillity

RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if development of the site would have a detrimental impact on the sense of tranquillity which could not be reasonably mitigated.

AMBER: Development on the site may have a detrimental impact on the sense of tranquillity but this could be reasonably mitigated.

GREEN: Site is most suitable if development of the site would have a neutral or positive impact on the sense of tranquillity.

The sense of tranquillity in Northumberland National Park is recognised as one of its most special qualities. Policy 19 of the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009) seeks to ensure tranquillity is conserved and enhanced and identifies the following factors which will be taken into consideration when assessing the suitability of a site for development:

- Level of noise and traffic that could be generated
- Sense of openness
- Quiet enjoyment of the landscape

The dark skies over the National Park contribute greatly to the sense of peace and have been protected since the designation of the International Dark Sky Park (gold Tier) in 2013. The level of light potentially generated by development would also be included in the assessment.

The National Park's Distinctive Landscape Character

RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if development of the site would have a detrimental impact on the landscape character which could not be mitigated.

AMBER: Development of the site may have a detrimental impact on the landscape character but this could be reasonably mitigated.

GREEN: Site is most suitable if development of the site would have either a neutral or positive impact on the landscape character.

Policy 20 of the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009), reinforced by the Landscape Character SPD (2011), recognises the importance of creating and maintaining a living, working landscape which conserves and enhances its distinctive qualities whilst being responsive to change.

Key characteristics of the National Park's landscape, as set out in the Landscape Character SPD, include:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Upland Burn Valleys | Rounded Hills |
| Foothills and Fringe Valleys | Rolling Uplands |
| Moorland Forestry Mosaic | Rolling Upland Valleys |
| Outcrop Hills and Escarpment | Sandstone Upland Valleys |
| Parallel Ridges and Commons | Upland Commons and Farmland |
| Glacial Trough – Valley Sides | Basin Valley and Fringes |

The Landscape Character Area map (2010) will be the starting point to identify the characteristic types relevant to the site.

Compatibility with Neighbouring Uses

RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if the potential development of the site would be incompatible with neighbouring/ adjoining uses with no scope for mitigation.

AMBER: The potential development of the site could have issues of compatibility with neighbouring/ adjoining uses; however, these could be mitigated.

GREEN: Site is most suitable if the potential development of the site would be compatible with neighbouring/ adjoining uses.

Policy 3 of the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009) seeks to support the wellbeing of neighbouring residents or occupiers of a site and the local community. The factors below are identified, which will each be considered in assessing the compatibility of any potential new development use of a site:

Visual impact
Noise
Waste

Pollution
Odour

Open Space of Public Value

RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if development of the site would result in a loss of open space that is of public value.

AMBER: Development of the site may result in a loss open space that is of public value but this could be mitigated.

GREEN: Site is most suitable if development of the site would not result in the loss of any open space.

Policy 3 of the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009) recognises the importance of protecting open space that contributes to local amenity and provides public value. Such space can include play space, playing fields, sports pitches, sports facilities, semi-natural space, parks and green corridors.

The contribution of open space to the character and setting of a settlement will also be considered at this stage of the assessment.

Transport and Roads

RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if development of the site would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or the rights of way network.

AMBER: Development may have a detrimental impact on highway safety or the rights of way network but this could be reasonably mitigated.

GREEN: Site is most suitable if development of the site would not have a detrimental impact on highway safety or the rights of way network.

Policy 3 of the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009) recognises the contribution of highway safety and the rights of way network to the wellbeing of local communities.

Appendix C: Assessment of Potential Constraints Affecting Sites

<u>Access</u>		
RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if there is no possibility of creating access to the site.	AMBER: There are potential access constraints on the site, but these could be overcome through suitable development.	GREEN: Site is most suitable if access by all means is possible.
<p>Access is an important consideration in determining the suitability of a site for development. Access is needed for both construction and occupation phases of a development.</p> <p>A site with no access or without the potential to provide suitable access cannot be considered suitable for development.</p>		

<u>Flood Risk</u>		
RED: Any site within an area identified as flood zone 3b will have already been recorded and discounted.	AMBER: The site is within flood zones 2 or 3a and/or is within an area at high, medium or low risk from surface water flooding.	GREEN: Site is most suitable if it is at low risk of flooding (within zone 1).
<p>Flood zones are defined by the Environment Agency and can be identified from the Environment Agency's flood area map. Flood Zone 1 represents an area with less than a 0.1% chance of flooding (1 in 1000 year flood event). Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3a represent areas with greater than a 0.1% chance of flooding and a 1% chance of flooding respectively (1 in 1000 year and 1 in 100 year flood events). The functional flood plain (Zone 3b) comprises land where water has to flow or be stored in time of flood.</p> <p>The Environment Agency Flood Zones only show flood risks as of the situation today. However, when planning for new development the risk over a lifetime of development needs to be considered. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the National Park will identify flood zones based on the lifetime of the development in certain areas. When this information has been updated this will be used for the purpose of this assessment.</p> <p>Surface water flooding can also be an issue. The Environment Agency has published a surface water flood map for England which identifies high, medium, low and very low surface water flood risk, together with information on velocity and depth. A low risk surface flooding event has a similar likelihood of occurring as flood zone 2 events of between 0.1% and 1% chance.</p>		

<u>Utilities Infrastructure</u>		
RED: N/a	AMBER: Utilities infrastructure is present on the site that could compromise the nature or extent of development achievable.	GREEN: Site is most suitable if there are no constraints from utilities infrastructure.
<p>Utilities infrastructure is important for supporting local communities through the provision of essential services and facilities.</p> <p>This infrastructure can include gas/water pipelines, national grid transmission lines, mobile reception masts etc. and can be above or below ground. The existence of such infrastructure apparatus within the boundary of the site would not immediately make it unsuitable, however the development potential may be limited and additional costs for mitigation may be generated which could affect the viability of the site.</p>		

<u>Utilities Capacity</u>		
RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if current infrastructure capacity is inadequate and not capable of being provided without compromising the landscape.	AMBER: The current infrastructure provision is inadequate but there is potential for improvement.	GREEN: Site is most suitable if the current infrastructure capacity is sufficient.
<p>General development principles within the Core Strategy and Development Policies document (2009) include the requirement that all new development and uses of land within the National Park should <i>support the wellbeing of local communities by ensuring that appropriate services and infrastructure are capable of being provided without compromising the quality of the landscape.</i></p> <p>The suitability assessment will involve identifying where the current infrastructure provision may not be adequate for the potential development and considering if/how this could be provided.</p>		

<u>Ground Conditions</u>		
RED: N/a	AMBER: The site is affected by a ground condition issue which could be mitigated.	GREEN: Site is most suitable if the ground condition is favourable for development.
<p>It is known that in some southern and central areas across the National Park, land has previously been used for coal mining. The Coal Authority holds coal mining data in a national database. This will be the starting point for identifying if a site is within a Coal Mining Risk Area.</p> <p>A secondary condition that will be assessed is ground contamination. This will involve making a judgment as to how any land that is potentially contaminated could be remediated to allow for development.</p> <p>The topography of the site is also a consideration and any apparent steep slopes could affect how suitable the site is for development.</p> <p>A site would not automatically be discounted from further assessment if found to have any ground condition issues as these are unlikely to present an insurmountable constraint to development. However necessary mitigation measures could generate further costs to the development, affecting the viability of the site.</p>		

<u>Hazardous Risks</u>		
RED: Site is not suitable and will be recorded and discounted if it is subject to a hazardous risk that cannot be mitigated.	AMBER: the site is subject to a hazardous risk but this can be mitigated.	GREEN: Site is most suitable if it is not affected by any hazardous risks.
<p>Hazardous risks that might affect a site can include previous landslips and/or subsidence that can indicate a site is particularly prone to such issues.</p>		