



North York Moors National Park Authority Local Development Framework



Planning Issues Consultation 2005

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This planning issues discussion paper is the first step in preparing the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, which will form a pivotal part of the North York Moors Local Development Framework (LDF). The Local Development Framework will replace the North York Moors Local Plan that was adopted in May 2003. For details of the documents that will make up the LDF and the programme of work for the next 3 years, consult the North York Moors Local Development Scheme (available from the National Park Authority either in paper form or via our website. See ‘How to Contact Us’ on page 16 of this issues paper).

- 1.2 Within this consultation paper the National Park Authority has highlighted a number of the broad issues that are important in developing the new Local Development Framework and we have listed a number of questions we would like you to answer. Please view these are ‘prompts’ - we would welcome your views on other planning policy issues that we have not covered within this paper. The Local Development Framework is an important aspect of the National Park Authority’s work, in that it provides the policies against which the 800 or so planning applications that the Authority deals with each year will be assessed, and which will steer future development to help create a vibrant, sustainable National Park.

- 1.3 In a national context the Core Strategy needs to be prepared with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. The Government’s aims for sustainable development are
 - Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
 - Effective protection of the environment
 - The prudent use of natural resources
 - Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

- 1.4 The North York Moors is in the fortunate position of having a relatively up to date Local Plan prepared under the former development plan process, and adopted in May 2003. With this in mind many of the principles and policies in the Local Plan may well remain up to date. We would welcome your views on this, and many of the questions in this paper aim to help inform this assessment.

- 1.5 The primary reason for electing to quickly introduce the new system within the National Park is to enable a thorough discussion and reappraisal of some of the ‘big’ issues that the area faces. In a range of consultation that the National Park Authority and others have undertaken over the recent past, the issue of housing has emerged as a major focus of attention. This paper seeks to provide a brief picture of the housing situation in the National Park and prompt comment and feedback. For more information, the National Park Authority has prepared a background paper addressing housing issues in more detail and this is available from the National Park Authority either in paper form or via our website. See ‘How to Contact Us’ on page 16 of this issues paper.

2. National Park Context

2.1 National Parks were designated under the twin purposes of conservation and public enjoyment set out in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The North York Moors was designated as a National Park in 1952. The 1995 Environment Act revised these purposes to the following:

- *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 Parks by the public.*

2.2 The 1995 Act places a duty on National Park Authorities in pursuing the two purposes relating to conservation and public enjoyment, *"to seek to foster the economic and social well being of local communities."* This new duty needs to be taken into account by the National Park Authority as it pursues the two purposes. There is a need to work and co-operate with the local authorities and other agencies whose task is to promote the economic and social development of the area.

2.3 Section 62 of the 1995 Act also requires all relevant authorities to *"have regard to the statutory purposes in exercising or performing any functions in the National Park and; if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, to attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area."*

2.4 National planning policy is set out in Planning Policy Statement 7, and states that

- National Parks have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty
- The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should be given great weight in planning policies
- The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations
- Planning policies should also support suitably located and designed development necessary to facilitate the economic and social well-being of these areas, including the provision of adequate housing to meet identified local needs
- Major development should not take place in these designated areas, except in exceptional circumstances.

Question

1. **How successfully do you think the current approach to planning in the National Park is being in achieving the 2 National Park purposes?**

- 2.5 A key role of the National Park's Local Development Framework will be to provide a framework for delivering change at the local level that reflects local needs and respects the special qualities for which the area is renowned.

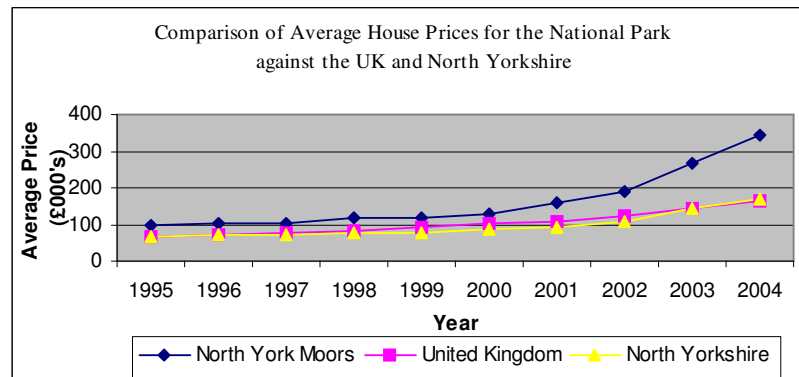
Questions

2. **From the perspective of you/your community/your organisation, what do you see as the main issues that the area faces and that the Local Development Framework should try to influence?**
3. **What do think are the main types of development that should take place/ are needed in the National Park?**

3. Housing

- 3.1 The North York Moors National Park is a highly attractive environment and as such there is high demand from people wishing to move to the area to either commute from it, retire to it or holiday within it. As a result of this demand many local people can no longer afford to enter the housing market. It is now a concern that some communities in the National Park are no longer mixed, working communities. There are around 10000 houses in the National Park, and at the moment around 30-40 new planning permissions creating new dwellings are permitted each year. This is clearly a tiny fraction of the overall stock of housing, and as such the Authority needs to find the most appropriate means of using the finite opportunities for development within the National Park, and decide whether to focus on specific types of housing.
- 3.2 Within the National Park house prices are rising rapidly, with decreasing availability of properties. Each year the National Park carries out an Annual House Price Survey. Figure 1 demonstrates the dramatic price rise in properties over the last 4 years. Since 2000 the average house price has risen to an all time high of £345, 675, this represents almost a three-fold increase over the last four years.

Figure 1



- 3.3 In the past tied accommodation and Local Authority Housing was available to help the lower waged section of the workforce but with the right to buy policies in respect of council housing, this stock of properties has severely declined in the National Park. The scale of this loss is such that subsequent housing association activity has not been able to compensate. In 1981 66% of housing was owner occupied, this has now risen to 73% in 2001. Over the same period of time Local Authority owned housing has dropped from 12% in 1981 to only 5% in 2001. Overall levels of second home ownership have not changed a great deal between the 1991 and 2001 census, with around 12% of properties falling into this category. However there are a number of parishes throughout the Park that have 2nd home ownership levels as high as 40% and this may put a strain on local services and amenities.

Levels of Development

- 3.4 In common with many rural areas, the scale of new housing development within the National Park has been relatively small. However over time this figure is still significant. Between 1981 and April 2005) over 1700 houses have been created through new build or the conversion of existing buildings to residential use. The population has been relatively stable over the last decade falling slightly from 24, 692 in 1991 to 23 939 in 2001. The National Park is thus reflecting general national trend of increasingly smaller households.

'Local Occupancy' Housing

- 3.5 In 1992 the Authority began applying 'local occupancy' conditions to new build properties in certain parishes. Most English National Parks now operate policies along these lines. People intending to live in such dwellings initially and subsequently are required to prove they meet a number of criteria which are listed below:
- Have permanently resided in the National Park for at least the last three years and need new accommodation, or
 - Do not live in the National Park but have a longstanding link to the local community, including a previous residence of over three years, or
 - Have an essential need from age or infirmity to move to a village to be near relatives who have been permanently resident within the National Park for three years, or
 - Have an essential need to live close to their work in a parish or adjoining parish within the National Park.
- 3.6 The adoption of the 2003 Local Plan saw this concept extended to include most new build dwellings throughout the National Park. This approach tries to ensure that sites for development address local, rather than external demand. Evidence from other National Parks suggests that properties with local occupancy conditions are priced at 15-20% lower than open market housing. The policy was not however specifically designed to influence the price of housing, and as general house prices have continued to increase, the cost of local occupancy housing is likely to have risen in line with this growth. Around sixty dwellings have received planning permission under this policy.
- 3.7 This condition does not apply to new housing the larger settlements listed in the Local Plan i.e. Helmsley, Thornton le Dale, West and East Ayton, Easington and Guisborough as the view was taken in the past that these larger settlements on the periphery of the National Park have a different role and character to smaller settlements, with more opportunity for 'organic' growth. There is scope to try and make the policy more slanted towards people demonstrably unable to enter the open housing market (as has been attempted in Exmoor and the Yorkshire Dales National Parks – see paragraph 3.8 below).

'Affordable' Housing in the National Park

- 3.8 The Authority has also operated a policy that enables development of 'affordable' housing schemes on sites that would not otherwise receive planning consent. Examples of this type of scheme in the National Park can be found at Danby, Chopgate and Egton, and these communities have given positive feedback about the success of the schemes. Such developments cater for those most in need of low cost accommodation and can be tailored to provide different types of tenures (rent, shared equity or shared ownership). These are managed by Housing Associations with rents set at appropriate levels with the express intention of meeting the housing needs of people unable to enter the open housing market. Local 'parish-based' qualification

criteria more specific to those outlined in paragraph 3.5 above are applied to such developments. Housing Needs Surveys carried out in partnership with the district authorities have indicated high levels of need within the National Park, with a substantial 'gap' between average household incomes in the area and the house prices. We could continue to use the exception policy and/ or adopt a different approach. One option would be to develop a policy that allows us to secure a proportion of affordable houses on larger housing developments (for example for every one open market house built, one affordable house would be built). Alternatively we could have a policy that prioritises the use of larger undeveloped sites within settlements for affordable housing only – instead of using these sites, as now, for 'local occupancy' housing, which will not help those people in the National Park struggling to enter the housing market.

- 3.9 There are other forms of specialist housing which there may be a need to provide in the National Park – such as sheltered housing for the elderly. This may grow as an issue., with 20% of National Park residents aged over 60 years of age, compared to the national figures of 15.8%. We would welcome your thoughts as to where such forms of housing should be located.

Location of Housing

- 3.10 Under the local occupancy policy 84 settlements are listed as locations where, if suitable sites exist, such development will be permitted. These settlements vary in size and the facilities they offer, and some have not had any housing development at all over recent years. An issue to consider is whether new housing should only be permitted in the more 'sustainable' locations within the National Park – for example, in villages that have a school, shop, pub and access to public transport. Elsewhere, housing development in the smaller settlements could be limited to the conversions of existing buildings. Alternatively an approach could be taken that would only allow the development of 'affordable' housing and not permit any new open market housing within the National Park – an approach that has been endorsed by the Planning Inspector who oversaw the recent inquiry into the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It is likely that from now on planning permissions will only be granted in the Dales for either affordable housing schemes, or for individual dwellings where occupants can demonstrate a need to be in that particular location, and show that their housing needs cannot be met in any other way. The Dales also apply a limit to the size of dwellings to prevent the creation of very large (and consequently more expensive) properties.

Conversion of Existing Buildings

- 3.11 The current Local Plan takes as its starting point that the re-use of buildings is a means of ensuring that attractive buildings are retained within villages and the wider landscape, albeit in an altered state. Local occupancy conditions are not attached to conversions. Within villages the policy permits the conversion of existing buildings to form dwellings with no restriction on occupancy, whilst outside villages conversion to residential use will only be permitted when it can be demonstrated that the building cannot be used for an economic purpose. The purpose of this approach is to try and encourage uses that assist in strengthening the rural economy. The conversion of buildings to residential use accounts for around half of all new dwellings created.

Questions

4. **Should some open market housing development continue to take place in the National Park? If so, where?**
5. **Should all new housing developed in the National Park be targeted towards people who cannot enter the 'open' housing market? Should the policies of the Local Development Framework try to prioritise the development of more 'affordable' housing? If so, where?**
6. **Do you think there is a role for local occupancy housing in the National Park? Do you think the qualifying criteria that are applied to the current 'local occupancy' housing are appropriate? What changes/additions to the criteria would you suggest?**
7. **In the case of the 'larger' settlements identified in the current local plan, should the Local Development Framework continue to treat them differently to smaller villages? Are the larger settlements identified the correct ones – should any be removed from/added to the list?**
8. **Should the Local Development Framework favour the re-use of rural buildings for commercial/community uses? Do you think that existing buildings could help to provide housing for local needs?**

4. Conservation of the Natural Environment

- 4.1 The National Park has a wealth of natural and semi natural habitats that are an integral part of the landscape. The moorland and upland heath of the North York Moors includes the largest tract of open moorland in England and Wales. The Park also contains a wide range of other habitat types which characterise the landscape and which are of significant ecological value. These include scrub, river valleys, coastal cliffs, rocky shores, broadleaved woodland and traditionally managed farmland. Within the National Park there are Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation – recognised as being of national and international importance for the habitats and species therein.
- 4.2 Individual trees, trees within hedgerows and small groups of trees are important features in the landscape, particularly where they help soften and enhance built development. Conservation Area legislation helps protect trees within Conservation Areas and planning legislation allows the Authority to make Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) on individual trees or groups of trees within the landscape.

Question

- 9. Based upon your knowledge of the planning decisions made by the National Park Authority, do you think that the important environmental features are being sufficiently well protected? What specific features do you think we should give particular priority to protecting?**

5. The Farming Industry

- 5.1 Of all activities in the National Park it is farming that has the greatest influence on the character and appearance of the landscape and the well being of the economy. Incomes from upland agriculture are continually threatened, through pressures on markets and changes in farm support mechanisms. Increasingly farmers are diversifying their businesses, supplementing their incomes through a range of wider activities. Within the Park 12% of jobs are in agriculture, hunting and forestry.
- 5.2 The current Local Plan has a range of policies focussing on farm-related development, and these identify the criteria against which proposals for agricultural worker's dwellings, farm diversification proposals, and new agricultural buildings will be assessed.

Question

- 10. What more could the plan do to help sustain the farming industry? What forms of farm diversification are appropriate?**

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6. Employment

- 6.1 There are three main types of employment that dominate the economy of the National Park these are farming, forestry and tourism. Apart from a small number of large organisations such as Boulby Potash Mine and North York Moors National Park Authority employment is generally limited to small businesses of which a high proportion (20%) are self employed.
- 6.2 Unemployment levels are low in the National Park, at around 1%. However unemployment in the Park varies widely across the Park boundary with unemployment levels in the coastal areas double that than in the west and the south of the Park. Many of the residents of the Park commute to places outside the Park for their work including to Middlesbrough, Scarborough and York. The average distance travelled to work by people resident in the National Park is 15.76 km
- 6.3 Supporting farm diversification is an important issue in the National Park. Due to agricultural reform there will be greater pressure on the National Park to accommodate farm diversification.
- 6.4 Within the National Park boundary there are a large number of rural buildings, both within and outside settlements, which can be reused for employment purposes provided that their original character is retained and improved. New building for employment use is likely to have a greater impact than the re-use of existing buildings. So, although new buildings have a role, they will not generally be permitted outside settlements unless they relate to farming or forestry.

Question

- 11. How can we help provide a diverse and healthy economy? What forms of economic development do you think should be encouraged in the National Park, and where should they be located?**

7. The Built Environment

- 7.1 The built environment is the most obvious example of human activity and man made heritage in the National Park. Much of the built environment of the National Park is of historic and architectural significance. This is reflected in the 42 villages that are designated as Conservation Areas and almost 3,000 buildings that are listed because of their historic or architectural importance.
- 7.2 The distribution and layout of villages and the open spaces within villages and around buildings contribute significantly to the character of each village and the local area. Small-scale traditional farms and farmsteads dispersed throughout the landscape complete the pattern of development that characterises the area. If the character and local distinctiveness of the built environment is to be maintained and the landscape of the National Park conserved and enhanced then it is important that new development should respect existing settlement character, patterns and layouts and the principles of traditional building design – although this should not stifle the scope for innovation. To help ensure that we achieve this, the National Park is currently developing Supplementary Planning Documents that covers all aspects of Design. The National Park is also in the process of carrying out Conservation Area Appraisals of all the Conservation Areas within the National Park.

Questions

- 12. Is the character and quality of villages in the National Park being successfully maintained? If not, how could planning policies help achieve this? What features detract from the appearance of towns and villages in the National Park**
- 13. Is the overall standard of new development sufficiently high?**

8. Communities in the National Park

- 8.1 The National Park contains many communities of differing sizes. Over half of the parishes in the area have populations of less than 250, and as such relatively few villages have a full range services and facilities. As a result those facilities that do exist can serve a wide area, and in particular in the more remote parts of the Park can be essential for people who do not have ready access to private transport, or would face a significant journey to reach an alternative location. The current local plan contains policies that seek to protect facilities such as village halls, schools, shops, petrol stations, post offices, libraries, village shops and pubs, and will only permit their use changing where the Authority is satisfied that the current use is simply not viable, or there is alternative provision close by.

Question

- 14. What facilities and services do you think are most important to communities around the National Park?**

9. Climate Change/Energy Efficiency/Renewable Energy

- 9.1 The UK government has signed up to the Kyoto Protocol and committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In order to meet these requirements the Government has set ambitious national goals to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 10 per cent by 2010 and 20 per cent by 2020. In addition the Government has set a target to generate 10 % of the UK's electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010. Increased development of renewable energy resources is vital to facilitating the delivery of the Government's commitments on both climate change and renewable energy. Such developments range from significant facilities – such as large wind farms and biomass plants, to smaller community/domestic scale developments. Whilst the Authority is actively trying to encourage the development of renewable energy technologies within the National Park, it is necessary that these developments be of appropriate scale and type given the importance attached to the quality of the landscape. The Authority is currently involved with a Community Renewable Energy project with 4 villages in the Park to try and develop ideas as to how best to assimilate types of renewable energy development appropriate within a protected landscape. The current local plan also is supportive of energy efficient forms of development, be that through the use of specific technologies or the design of development.

Questions

- 15. What kinds of renewable energy/ energy efficient development do you think are appropriate in the National Park? Should the focus be on domestic/community scale schemes?**

10. Tourism and Recreation

- 10.1 The second statutory purpose of National Parks is ‘to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park. Tourism plays a vital role in the local economy – in its own right and in helping to provide additional income for farmers through diversification - and this needs to be recognised. However, the types of tourism developments and facilities need to remain in keeping with the special qualities of the Park and its natural beauty, or they may begin to undermine the very reasons why people visit the area. New tourism and recreation developments need to be of a scale and design that relates to their particular location in the Park. Small-scale developments are seen as being more environmentally, socially and economically appropriate for locations in the National Park.
- 10.2 In 2003 there were 9.5 million visitor days spent in the National Park, this is a steady increase from 7.1 million in 2001. In 2003 0.5 million visitor nights were spent in serviced accommodation (B&B’s and Hotels) and 2.6 million visitor nights were spent in non-serviced accommodation (i.e. camping and holiday cottages). The average occupancy in 2003 for serviced accommodation was 46% and 61% in non-serviced accommodation. These visitors brought £191 million to the local economy and have helped create 4815 full time tourism jobs in the National Park.
- 10.3 The National Park is a very popular location for recreational pursuits. There are 1473 km of public footpaths and bridleways and other routes open to the public. The challenge is to meet the needs of visitors and local communities for recreational facilities whilst still protecting the surrounding environment.

Question

- 16. What forms of new tourist / recreational development do you think are needed in the National Park, and where should they be located? Are there some forms of recreational activity that should not take place in the National Park?**
- 17. Do you think there is a need for more accommodation for visitors in the National Park?**
- 18. The current local plan permits the development of small-scale caravan (and chalet) sites in areas of existing woodland? Do you think this is appropriate, or should new caravan sites in the National Park be resisted?**

11. Transport

- 11.1 One of the more controversial issues that the National Park has to deal with is transport issue both from local residents and the visitors to the National Park. There has been a steady increase in traffic throughout the 1990's and indications are that traffic levels are now almost 30% higher than they were 1994. It is important for the National Park to help provide access to public transport for both visitors to the park and for local residents to help reduce this increase in car usage. The total number of passengers carried on Moorsbus has risen three fold since 1998, and in 2004 there were improvements made so the service had more operating days.
- 11.2 One of the factors that is taken into account when making a decision on planning applications is the degree to which the proposed development can be accessed by public transport – the National Park aims to encourage development in the most sustainable locations.

Question

19. How can planning policies help to reduce the impact of traffic levels in the National Park?

12. Minerals and Waste

- 12.1 Minerals, including oil and gas, are important natural resources, which make an essential contribution to the nation's prosperity and quality of life. In rural areas their exploitation can be a valuable source of employment. Their extraction and transport can however have major implications for the local environment. The National Park has a considerable history of mineral extraction and although the majority of the workings are now redundant, some forms of mineral extraction do still occur albeit on a small scale. The largest current operation is at Boulby in the north of the Park where Potash is mined.
- 12.2 The National Park tries to ensure that developments within the Park boundary utilise traditional building materials. In the past many of these materials were available within the Park boundary and as a result there are a considerable number of small abandoned quarries. The current Local Plan allows reworking of these quarries providing the extraction is small scale and is intended to produce stone for buildings within the National Park and the immediately adjacent Parishes.
- 12.3 The majority of waste that is disposed of ends up in landfill sites, however disposal of waste within the Park by such means has previously been regarded as incompatible with the National Park statutory purposes because of the impact it can have on the environment. Increasingly though, efforts are being made to dispose of waste in more environmentally friendly ways such as recycling. The introduction of kerb side recycling throughout a number of locations in the Park is an important step towards a more environmentally friendly National Park. Within the National Park small scale local recycling facilities such as bottle or paper banks will be encouraged on appropriate sites.

Question

20. Should minerals and waste development continue to focus on providing for local needs only?

13. Other Issues

- 13.1 The above sections highlight some of the main planning issues faced by the National Park. If you have any other points to make, or feel that certain issues have been overlooked, please let us know.

Question

- 21. What other issues do you consider the Local Development Framework should address?**

14 What happens next?

- 14.1 All responses received by the National Park Authority will be acknowledged and then reported to and considered by Members. Your comments will help us to understand what policies are needed within the Local Development Framework.
- 14.2 We intend to produce a document identifying our preferred policy options in October, and there will be a further opportunity for you to comment then. We will contact everyone who has submitted comments with the precise details of that stage of consultation nearer the time.
- 14.3 We hope to be in a position to publish our Core Strategy – the first policy document in our Local Development Framework in March 2006, and once again you will have an opportunity to comment.
- 14.4 For more details of the overall process, look at the ‘North York Moors Local Development Scheme’ on www.moors.uk.net, or contact the Policy Team.

How to Contact us

Question responses can be sent by post to:

The North York Moors National Park Authority
The Old Vicarage
Bondgate
Helmsley
YO62 5BP

Or sent by e-mail to:

policy@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk

Further information on all aspects of planning policy can be sought by contacting the Policy Team (David Walker, Judith Ferrier and Chris De Silva) on 01439 770657 or at the above email address. All of documents that make up the new Local Development Framework are available in the Local Development Framework Section of the National Parks website www.moors.uk.net

Further information on National and Regional Planning Policy is also available on the following websites

Planning Aid
www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-advice/pa-paid.html

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
www.odpm.gov.uk/planning

The Planning Portal
www.planningportal.gov.uk

Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber
<http://www.goyh.gov.uk/>

Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Assembly
<http://www.yhassembly.gov.uk/>