



Northumberland National Park Authority

Local Plan 2017 – 2037



Issues Paper and Draft Infrastructure Plan

Spring 2017

Consultation Feedback Report

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1. Introduction and background

- 1.0. Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) is reviewing its Local Plan (currently the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Policies document, 2009). The aim is to produce a new plan that will set out how development should be managed in the National Park over the next 20 years.
- 1.1. The Issues Paper consultation represents the first formal consultation stage in the preparation of the Local Plan and meets the requirements of Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The public consultation took place between the 27th February and the 28th April 2017.
- 1.2. This round of consultation follows a review of the National Park Management Plan. The Management Plan 2016 – 2021 '*Distinctive Places, Open Spaces*' sets out a vision for the five year plan period, endorsed through a 6 week period of consultation in autumn 2015. It also identifies the broad issues affecting the National Park, including some relating to planning.
- 1.3. Informal consultation was also undertaken by NNPA prior to the statutory consultation stage. In autumn 2016, the authority worked in collaboration with local theatre company Cap-a-Pie and Newcastle University to host two workshops in the National Park (at Elsdon and Harbottle). These workshops explored a new and innovative way of engaging local communities in planning through interactive theatre. The sessions encouraged positive discussions around a range of planning issues, providing further opportunity for the Authority to understand what is important to people in their local area. These workshops were generally well received by the local communities involved and also helped the Authority to signpost the forthcoming issues consultation on the Local Plan.
- 1.4. Work on the evidence base that supports the emerging Local Plan is also underway. In September 2016, the National Park Authority sent out a Housing Needs Survey to residents of the National Park and a Business Needs Survey to local businesses. The results of these surveys will accompany other studies relating to housing and economic development, to enable the authority to gain a greater understanding of the detailed needs and aspirations of local residents and businesses. These studies will accompany other evidence on, for example, landscape character, flood risk, and biodiversity / geodiversity.
- 1.5. In the autumn of 2016, the Authority additionally consulted on three Local Plan supporting documents for a six-week period between the 3rd October until the 14th November 2016. The draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (September 2016) set out the broad principles that the Authority will follow when consulting on planning policy, planning applications, and when supporting communities with neighbourhood planning. Comments were also invited on the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (September 2016), and draft Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Methodology (September 2016). The responses received regarding each of these consultation documents broadly endorsed the Authority's approach.

- 1.6. The issues highlighted during the Management Plan review public consultation in autumn 2015 formed the basis for the vision, aims and objectives of the 2016-2021 National Park Management Plan. These issues (plus the vision, aims and objectives) were used to help draft the Issues Paper whilst also incorporating emerging evidence studies/surveys. The draft Issues Paper outlined what we thought the key issues were that would potentially affect future development within the National Park, posing a number of questions around the detailed aspects grouping them under a number of broad policy themes.
- 1.7. The Local Plan Issues Paper, together with an accompanying Preliminary Sustainability Statement (Spring 2017) and Habitats Regulations Assessment Preliminary Report (February 2017), were published for public consultation over an 8 week period between the 27th February and 28th April 2017.
- 1.8. This report provides an overview of this initial round of consultation including a summary and analysis of the comments received (section 3 of this report). It also explores how the Authority will take the responses into consideration going forward into the next stage of the local plan review (section 4 of this report).
- 1.9. Over the same 8 week consultation period, the National Park Authority consulted on a draft Infrastructure Plan (December 2016) an analysis of which is also included within this report.

2. Consultation methodology

Aims of the consultation:

- 2.0. At this stage of Local Plan preparation it is important to target as wide an audience as possible, in order to capture the entire range of planning issues affecting the area.
- 2.1. The main aims of the consultation were to establish how much people agreed with the issues as set out in the consultation document, and to identify any issues that could potentially be addressed through the planning policies for the National Park.
- 2.2. The next formal stage of consultation, a Policy Options Paper, will introduce some key principles for managing future development within the National Park. It will outline potential policy options under the themed headings, suggesting a preferred direction of travel or, where that is uncertain, seeking comments on alternative options. This Policy Options consultation will also meet the requirements of Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Consultation methods used:

- 2.3. A total of 12 consultation events were held over the 8 week consultation period each taking the form of one of three types, as follows:
 - Parish Councillor Workshops
 - Public Drop-in Sessions
 - Community Workshops
- 2.4. The first 2 events were parish councillor workshops. Councillors from parishes (either wholly within or partly within the National Park) were invited to attend either one or both of the workshops, held in Ingram and Wark respectively from 4.30p.m. – 7.30p.m. These locations were chosen to provide a workshop in both the northern and southern areas of the Park. The remainder of the events consisted of 5 public drop-in sessions and 5 community workshops.
- 2.5. Drop-in events were considered less restrictive than a one or two-hour meeting slot and were intended to create a less formal environment in which individuals were likely to feel more comfortable in voicing their opinions. These sessions were each held from 2p.m. until 7p.m. and located in the gateway settlements of Haltwhistle, Rothbury, Wooler and Bellingham, with one also held in Bardon Mill.
- 2.6. The community workshop events were held in 5 of the key settlements across the National Park at Falstone, Kirknewton, Elsdon, Harbottle and Stonehaugh. These workshops were shorter than the drop-in events, held from 2p.m. until 5p.m. They were also more structured, aimed at getting the views of the local community around the most important planning issues in their local area. These events generally followed a set agenda comprising;

- a short introductory presentation made by the Head of Forward Planning;
- a discussion around 5 key questions relating to planning in the local area; and
- a discussion around the restrictiveness and criteria of the current Local Needs Housing policy and the approach that could be taken in the new Local Plan.

2.7. Venues for the drop-in events and the community workshops typically included village/community halls and libraries, with the set up generally comprising;

- pop up banners and a large map of the National Park for reference;
- displays setting out the Local Plan review process and the proposals set out in the Consultation Draft Issues Paper;
- copies of the Consultation Draft Issues Paper document, associated environmental reports and an FAQs summary leaflet for reference and for attendees to take away;
- copies of the Issues Paper questionnaire;
- copies of the Infrastructure Plan Consultation Draft and associated questionnaire for those interested in this part of the consultation; and
- copies of the extant Local Plan - the LDF Core Strategy (2009) for reference.

2.8. In addition to being invited to a consultation event to discuss their ideas with an officer, respondents could also make a written representation, by email, post or via an online version of the questionnaire.

Publicity

2.9. In the weeks leading up to the consultation period, nearly 2,000 letters and emails were sent to residents, businesses, parish councils, land owners, statutory consultation bodies, general consultation bodies and other stakeholders.

2.10. Those living or working at addresses outside of the National Park but within parishes that straddle the National Park boundary were also written to. Where possible, invites to community workshops were localised, with information sent to residents and businesses regarding their nearest event. As a resource saving measure, where an email address was available an email was sent instead of a letter by post.

2.11. Having been made aware of a small quantity of undelivered correspondence and following discussions with consultees the authority recognises the importance of continuing to update its database of Local Plan contacts. The Forward Planning team will explore use of the authority's new Customer Relations Management system for future Local Plan correspondence.

2.12. In addition to sending information to identified stakeholders of the Local Plan, all of the necessary information and consultation documents were available to view on the authority's website. Regular posts regarding consultation events were also published on the authority's Twitter page.

- 2.13. Alongside the online publicity, posters with details of all consultation events and means of responding to the consultation were also put up in key public buildings in settlements within and surrounding the National Park (see appendix 1). The consultation was also widely publicised in local press with statutory advertisements provided in the Hexham Courant, Northumberland Gazette and The Journal. The National Park Authority also released a press notice on its website.
- 2.14. For the duration of the consultation period, consultation documents were made available for inspection at NNPA offices, information points and local libraries. Accessible formats of the document were also made available on request.
- 2.15. All publicity was undertaken in accordance with the adopted NNPA Statement of Community Involvement (September 2010).

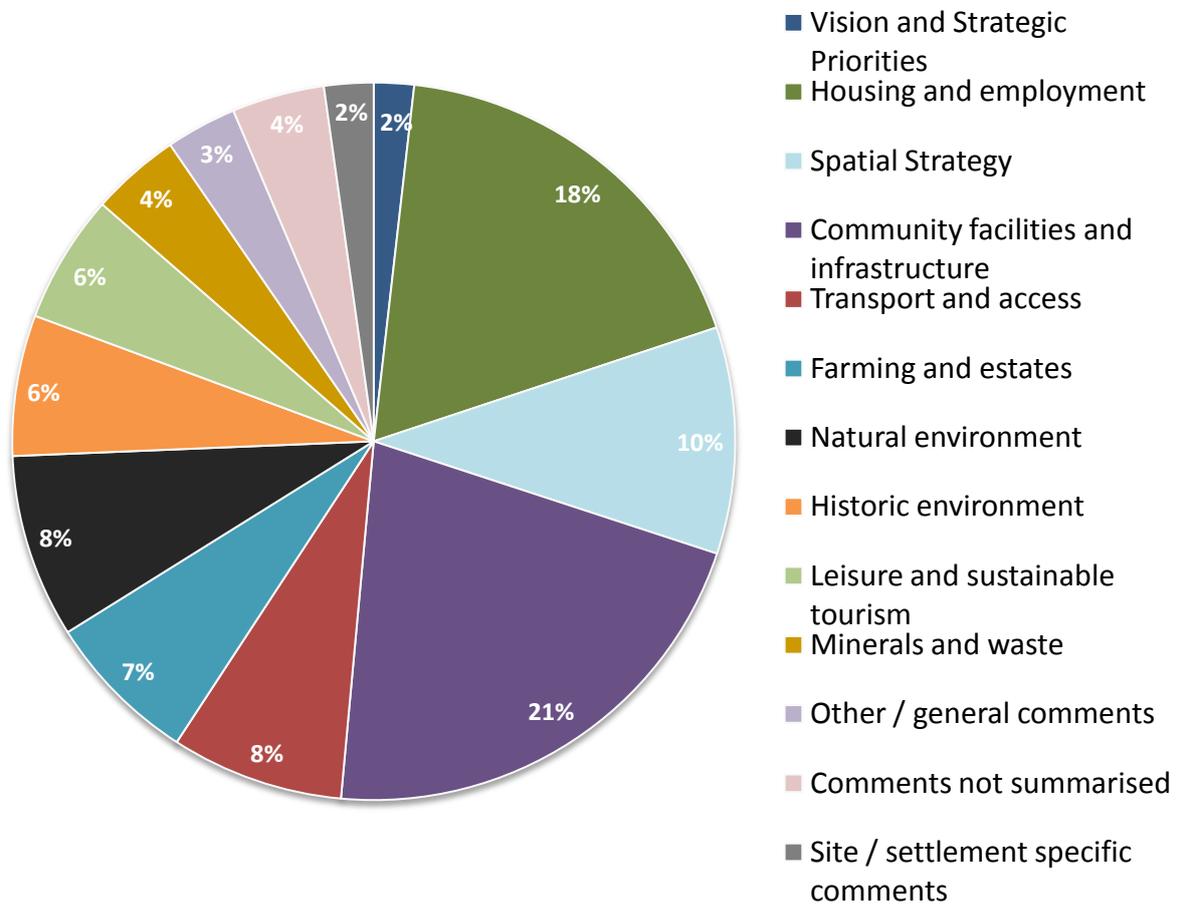
3. Consultation outcomes

Level of consultation response

- 3.0. A total of 27 written representations were received over the consultation period (comprising surveys submitted online and by post, emails, and letters). Although this was a fairly low level of written response, this was offset somewhat by the relatively high attendance at the consultation events. In total, 98 individuals attended the 12 consultation events, with an average of 11 attending each drop-in session and 7 attending each community workshop.
- 3.1. Discussions held at the events, together with the written responses, generated 725 individual comments. All of these comments have been summarised into 43 broad conclusions under the following thematic headings:
- 'Vision and Strategic Priorities';
 - 'Housing and Employment';
 - 'Spatial Strategy';
 - 'Community Facilities and Infrastructure';
 - 'Transport and Access';
 - 'Farming and Estates';
 - 'Natural Environment';
 - 'Historic Environment';
 - 'Leisure and Sustainable Tourism';
 - 'Minerals and Waste'; and
 - 'Other / general comments'.
- 3.2. The detailed comments are analysed by topic in the following sections.

Summary and analysis of consultation response

Figure 1 - Comments by topic



- 3.3. Detailed comments on specific sites and settlements (2% of total comments) are not included in this summary but will be taken on board in the Infrastructure Plan and any emerging settlement strategies.
- 3.4. 4% of the comments made were not relevant to any of the topics set out in the Issues Paper. These have been recorded and NNPA will consider how it can address these issues through other areas of its work.

Vision and Strategic Priorities

Broad conclusions

- Predominant support for using the same vision as the National Park Management Plan 2016-2021.
- A general agreement with the strategic priorities.

Detailed analysis

- 3.5. 63% of survey respondents agreed with using the same vision as the National Park Management Plan 2016-2021. 31% broadly agreed but made comments suggesting a need to emphasise or change specific elements of the vision. The remaining 6% made no comment. Attendees to consultation events were generally supportive of the vision however discussions were mainly focused on the more detailed planning issues.
- 3.6. Event attendees also generally agreed with the strategic priorities. 50% of survey respondents agreed with all of the strategic priorities set out in the Issues Paper consultation draft document. 38% agreed with some but not all of the strategic priorities and 13% made no comment or skipped this question.
- 3.7. The next steps in relation to how the vision and strategic priorities consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.0 - 4.1.

Spatial Strategy

Broad Conclusions

- New development should still be focused towards existing settlements that are served by community facilities and public transport. However there could be more flexibility for developing existing buildings outside of settlements provided there is sufficient infrastructure in place to support this.
- The current approach to Major Development in the National Park is generally considered appropriate, with some support for a more restrictive approach.

Detailed analysis

- 3.8. 10% of the comments received were in relation to the spatial strategy to be taken forward in the Local Plan.
- 3.9. Most respondents agreed with continuing an approach that focuses new development in the local centres and villages as set out by a settlement hierarchy. It was recognised that new development, and particularly housing, should be supported by local services and infrastructure, such as schools, broadband, doctors, employment etc. A handful of respondents would support a more restrictive approach, whereby no new housing development should be allowed in the National Park and instead this should be provided in the gateway settlements.

- 3.10. There was support for some relaxation of this approach however it was suggested that new development should still be located where infrastructure is available with a proviso that any development be sympathetic to its surroundings. Furthermore half of the survey respondents agreed that it should be easier to convert existing buildings to houses outside of settlements. However, a small number of respondents did emphasise the importance of this assessment being done on a case by case basis.
- 3.11. Respondents were also asked if there were any sites locally that they thought would be suitable for use as housing or employment land. Although this summary does not go into site specific detail, the general consensus was that brownfield, or land of lesser environmental value, should be prioritised for development. This somewhat endorses a continuation of the sequential approach in Policy 6 of the extant Core Strategy.
- 3.12. At present development in the open countryside is limited to the reuse or replacement of existing buildings. This is unless it can be demonstrated that the development cannot take place within an identified settlement or through the reuse of an existing building and where it will conserve or enhance and provide opportunities for the public to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park. Additionally, in locations outside of existing settlements, the conversion of buildings is subject to a hierarchical approach to their reuse which prioritises tourism and employment uses, with the change of use to residential use (affordable or open market house) only permitted where it can be demonstrated that an employment use would not be viable.
- 3.13. However, it is recognised that there may be a need for new buildings in the open countryside or outside of existing settlements, typically for agricultural use. The Issues Paper asked whether greater flexibility for the location of new development should be allowed by including farm steadings in the definition of a settlement. The response to this issue was mixed with an equal number of respondents agreeing with this potential approach to those who disagreed.
- 3.14. One respondent agreed in principle with greater flexibility for new development within remote agricultural steadings, providing that it could be considered a community. A further respondent thought that a settlement could only be established if part of a redevelopment of existing buildings that creates a nucleus of dwellings.
- 3.15. The current Core Strategy (policy 4) limits major development to that where it is proven to be in the public interest and would not adversely affect the National Park's special qualities. A high proportion of respondents (75%) appeared to be satisfied with the current definition and criteria for assessing major development in the National Park. 19% of those who responded to the survey would support a more restrictive approach to major development. A further 6% were unsure.
- 3.16. The next steps in relation to how the spatial strategy consultation response may be taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.2 – 4.5.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure

Broad Conclusions

- The vast majority of respondents agreed that, together with the provision of housing and employment opportunities, community facilities are vital to sustain local communities within the National Park.
- General support for encouraging small scale renewable energy generation which would not adversely affect the National Park's special qualities, and which could provide electricity to off-grid properties.
- A general agreement that both broadband and mobile reception coverage is variable but in some locations inadequate and this should be a key priority for the National Park Authority to address through the Local Plan and other means.
- General support for using a more explicit planning obligation-based approach, as necessary to gain infrastructure provision needed to support new developments.

Detailed analysis

- 3.17. Issues around community facilities and infrastructure were of high interest to consultation respondents (21% of total comments), with many respondents commenting on current limitations. It follows that respondents showed strong support for the improvement of facilities and infrastructure to support both existing and new development.
- 3.18. There was a generally positive response for planning policies that support renewable energy generation on a small / micro scale as a means to provide electricity to off-grid properties in the National Park. 75% of survey respondents were in agreement with this. Most responses demonstrated support for the principle of micro-renewables provided that they would not have an adverse impact on the special qualities of the National Park.
- 3.19. The responses received in relation to the potential policy approach on large scale renewable energy were however more mixed. Some respondents were totally against renewable energy generation on a large scale in the National Park with others being supportive of a flexible approach. Nevertheless some respondents asked for more clarity on the definitions of 'small', 'medium' and 'large' scale renewables.
- 3.20. The Management Plan consultation identified poor mobile reception and broadband coverage as a key issue particularly affecting those living and working in the National Park. This was also subject of much debate during the Issues Paper consultation (7% of total comments). Although there were mixed opinions on whether one service was more important than the other, the limited availability of both was considered a significant barrier to sustaining thriving communities in the National Park. It was also made clear that some areas of the National Park were better served with broadband and/or mobile reception than others. This reinforces the evidence emerging through the Housing Needs Survey, Business Needs Survey and draft Infrastructure Plan.

- 3.21. Although respondents generally accepted that there is a difficulty in serving remote rural areas with adequate mobile and broadband coverage, eight respondents suggested potential ways of addressing this issue. Three survey respondents agreed that planning policies should be supportive of additional mobile reception masts in the National Park and suggestions were made relating to the potential of mast sharing with the emergency services. This is something that has been considered through the joint accord between National Parks England and the Home Office, see paragraph 4.11 for more information. Nevertheless others thought that satellite infrastructure is better than hard wired, especially as underground cables are expensive to install, but if provided over ground could have an adverse impact on the landscape. It was also suggested that delivery would need to be joined up with the opportunity to 'piggy-back' on existing infrastructure recognised. Other respondents recognised the potential for community projects for example instating a booster signal or satellite to serve the local area. The need to learn from good practice particularly in Scotland was also mentioned.
- 3.22. The means of funding telecommunications infrastructure was also discussed, with the need for the National Park Authority to work closely with service providers emphasised. Respondents also thought that government funding should be more widely available for the provision of telecommunications and other infrastructure.
- 3.23. A number of comments related to other settlement specific infrastructure shortfalls such as the loss of health services or the importance of the local school / pub. Also, a few discussions at consultation events gave recognition to potential cross-boundary implications of the provision of facilities within or near the National Park. In particular, landscape impacts of renewable energy generation were of some concern. 44% of survey respondents agreed that where development outside of the National Park would have an impact within the National Park, the developer should be expected to pay for works that would reduce this impact.
- 3.24. The consultation responses also demonstrated a broad agreement with an approach which requires developers to make a financial contribution, where viable, to provide infrastructure necessary to support a development. One respondent considered that a Community Infrastructure Levy could be an appropriate method of ensuring funding for infrastructure and facilities.
- 3.25. Despite the National Park's infrastructure shortfalls identified, it was recognised through the draft Infrastructure Plan consultation that in some forms of infrastructure, such as access to green spaces, open countryside or public rights of way, the Park has overwhelming capacity.
- 3.26. The next steps in relation to how the community facilities and infrastructure consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.6 – 4.13.

Housing / Employment

Broad Conclusions

- There is not considered to be much local 'pressure'/demand for housing, with some respondents stating that they thought there was no pressure for any development in their local area.
- There is general support for provision of a range of small-scale affordable housing for local people that met a local need.
- Approach to providing local needs housing is generally considered about right, with more indication that the criteria may be too restrictive rather than not restrictive enough.
- Support for ensuring the permanent occupation of housing stock where necessary to keep a critical mass of a year-round community, crucial to the retention of community facilities and services.
- Some concern over the number of holiday homes being too high in particular locations with a support for a principal occupancy clause being applied if holiday homes were permitted to change their use to become permanent residences.
- Recognition and support for gateway settlements helping to meet the identified housing need provided that this development helped to fund the provision of infrastructure and services in settlements within the National Park.
- The Local Plan should be supportive of increasing employment opportunities / sustainable economic development within the National Park.
- Sustainable land use sectors i.e. forestry, farming and tourism have the most capacity to influence the special qualities of the National Park and therefore should be adequately supported where possible through the Local Plan.
- Need to explore new ways of supporting businesses and provide more jobs (e.g. supporting rural enterprise hubs or other shared infrastructure for small to medium sized enterprises).
- Recognition of the inter-relationship between the provision of infrastructure, housing and employment opportunities
- Recognition of the need to boost the number of working-age residents within the National Park in order to address the issue of an ageing population and that this would be difficult to achieve.

Detailed analysis

- 3.27. Issues around housing and employment were also particularly important to consultation respondents, constituting 18% of comments. Generally it was recognised that there is no significant pressure for housing delivery on a large scale and that the National Park is faced with a different challenge of meeting affordable housing need and housing that meets the needs of people with a local connection.
- 3.28. Objective 4.2.1 of the Management Plan aims to ensure the provision of a balanced range of housing that meets local needs. This acknowledges the role that affordable housing provision can play in ensuring there are opportunities for young adults and people of working age to live and work in the National Park

something which objective 4.3.1 also aims to achieve. This approach was tested and endorsed through the Management Plan review consultation and has been further supported and endorsed during this initial round of Local Plan consultation.

- 3.29. Some respondents thought that current planning policies may have potentially restricted the delivery of affordable housing. It was also suggested that planning policies cannot in isolation ensure that housing to meet local need and local affordable needs is built.
- 3.30. The current approach to restricting the occupancy of new housing for those with a local connection was generally supported, with many respondents (47%) supporting a continuation of the existing Local Need definition and a further 26% supportive of establishing less restrictive criteria. Other opinions in relation to the local needs test included the need for the criteria to be reviewed based on how effective they have been in enabling local people to live in the National Park and the need to work with parish councils and the county council. Another respondent thought that local needs restrictions should only apply to rural exception sites.
- 3.31. A number of respondents recognised the need for a suitable balance between permanently occupied housing and properties used as second homes, with the majority of these in favour of allowing more holiday homes to be used for housing. Nevertheless, two respondents raised the issue that there should be occupancy restrictions in such cases. There was a mixed response in relation to allowing other short-term uses of holiday homes, with some event attendees concerned about there being too many holiday homes.
- 3.32. It was also recognised that the gateway settlements around the border of the National Park could play a key role in meeting some of the housing needs of the Park. It was however further suggested that this should only be acceptable where it could be proven that such development would support facilities and services in National Park settlements.
- 3.33. Many comments received related to the interrelationship between employment, housing and infrastructure provision and the importance of addressing each of these simultaneously. Concern was expressed by a number of respondents of the prevailing economic conditions of the National Park, wherein wages are low (in comparison to house prices), and there is a perceived need for more jobs to retain a working age population.
- 3.34. In general, respondents supported the need to explore new ways of providing more jobs and helping businesses in the National Park to thrive, for example providing more support for rural enterprise hubs or other shared infrastructure for Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).
- 3.35. There were also a number of comments received which were specific to particular economic sectors, including farming, tourism and forestry. The issues raised are explored in more detail in the relevant sections below. Some respondents would be supportive of more focused policies that support the agricultural, forestry and tourism sectors, however other comments contradicted this, in that policies should

support a more varied economy and not give special recognition to specific sectors.

- 3.36. Some respondents recognised that there is a clear link between facilitating home working and the provision of infrastructure. For example, the need for effective telecommunications, postal service etc. It was suggested that making it easier for people to work from home could help to reduce the need for travel, offsetting issues brought about by long distances between settlements. However one respondent disagreed with amending planning policy based on home-based working being a lifestyle choice.
- 3.37. The next steps in relation to how the housing / employment consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.14 – 4.22.

Transport and Access

Broad Conclusions

- Effort should be made to reduce dependence on the private car / encourage the use of more sustainable forms of transport.
- The provision of a better and more widely available public transport service should be supported through the Local Plan.
- Support for the upgrading and maintenance of existing access tracks to improve public access, however some concern that this could potentially impact on the landscape and that some of the tracks could potentially be unsuitable for walkers as they were originally designed for vehicular use.
- Support for policies that would potentially increase opportunities for people to participate in cycling activity.
- The impact that high fuel costs have on rural communities should be addressed where possible.

Detailed analysis

- 3.38. 8% of comments received related to transport and access, with the majority of these recognising the need to reduce dependence on the private car in the National Park. Many of these respondents raised the importance of public transport which is considered to be more sustainable. Services are considered to be limited and it was also made apparent that public transport provision in the south of the park could be better than in the north.
- 3.39. It was also suggested by two individuals that re-instating a railway service could be explored. Aside from public transport, other suggestions included the promotion of car sharing and encouraging more walking. It was also advised that the spatial distribution of development should contribute to reducing the need for travel.
- 3.40. A handful of respondents accepted that there will always be reliance on the private car in the National Park due to the remoteness of settlements. There was

also mention of specific user groups that have no alternative to the private vehicle, such as the disabled, and that car parks need to meet the needs of these groups. The impact that high fuel costs have on rural communities was highlighted and a consequent priority could be improving electric vehicle infrastructure, as well as improving the quality of roads.

- 3.41. It was also suggested that there is a link between broadband and the need for travel, for example increased online shopping and more people working from home.
- 3.42. The role of the transport and access network in promoting visits to the National Park was also recognised and that the use of social media could particularly be exploited to promote particular routes.
- 3.43. Nevertheless, a mixed response was received in relation to using planning policies to increase public access to routes currently used for forestry, agriculture or shooting. Six respondents would support the upgrading and maintenance of existing access tracks to enhance public access. A further two said that they would support the introduction of new, well-designed tracks for public access. However, four respondents expressed concern in relation to potential landscape impacts of this and that some of the tracks could potentially be unsuitable for walkers as they were originally designed for vehicular use.
- 3.44. Seven comments were made in relation to cycling. Of these, six of the respondents would support policies which increase opportunities for people to participate in cycling activity. It was suggested that this would benefit local communities and visitors alike, in terms of health, access to nature and contributions to the tourism economy.
- 3.45. The next steps in relation to how transport and access consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.23 – 4.26.

Farming and Estates

Broad Conclusions

- General support for the Local Plan enabling agricultural businesses to diversify more easily.
- Some comments received regarding the potential to explore different management regimes such as removing stock and allowing vegetation to develop without grazing (*re-wilding*).
- The impact of Brexit is uncertain - mixed response as to whether this could be positive or negative for the agricultural sector.
- Strong support for allowing change of use of redundant farm buildings.

Detailed analysis

- 3.46. As reported in paragraph 3.35, respondents recognised agriculture as one of the key sectors that contribute to the National Park's local economy. Consultation responses relating to Farming and Estates amounted to 7% of the total comments received.
- 3.47. There was a general agreement that planning policies should make it easier for agricultural businesses to diversify. Further, the importance of striking a balance between encouraging rural economic growth and retaining sustainable land management was emphasised.
- 3.48. 31% of survey respondents said that they would support planning policies that encourage and support the uptake of better and more sustainable land management practices that conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park.
- 3.49. With a general agreement for planning policies to take a more supportive approach for farm businesses seeking to diversify, it corresponds then that 44% of survey respondents would support more flexibility to allow for redundant agricultural buildings to be converted into a more viable use.
- 3.50. Three individuals gave their opinions on "re-wilding", a topic that has been explored through academic research and much press coverage over the past two years. These comments were mixed on whether this would be positive or negative for farming practice in the National Park.
- 3.51. Potential agricultural implications of Brexit were also of interest with a further three respondents commenting on this however there remains uncertainty around how this may impact farming practice in the future.
- 3.52. It should be noted however that these two issues (re-wilding and Brexit) are outside the control of the planning system.
- 3.53. The next steps in relation to how the farming and estates consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.27 – 4.29.

Natural Environment

Broad Conclusions

- Strong support for greater protection of areas of tranquillity and dark skies.
- General support for a high level of environmental protection including taking an ecosystems approach in planning policies, however some uncertainty around what this means.
- Recognition for the role that forestry and woodland, in appropriate locations, takes in assisting in flood control and generally improving the environment.
- Support for policies that would reduce/mitigate downstream and other potential flood risk including the encouragement of using Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems (RSuDS).
- Support for incorporating an eco-system services approach in managing future development within the National Park.

Detailed analysis

- 3.54. 8% of the comments received related to the Natural Environment. Three respondents thought that conservation of the natural environment should be at the forefront of the Local Plan, to protect the National Park's landscape, habitats and wildlife from inappropriate change. It was also suggested that support for those who are promoting the natural assets of the Park should be available, however no suggestion as to the form this may take was made.
- 3.55. Respondents showed general support for incorporating an eco-system services approach in managing future development within the National Park. However some respondents required greater clarity around what this means.
- 3.56. Seventeen individuals had an opinion on how the Local Plan should address tranquillity and in particular dark skies. There was a general consensus that more protection should be afforded to the National Park's tranquil areas with most of these comments suggesting that the protection of dark skies is integral to maintaining high levels of tranquillity.
- 3.57. Seven respondents made a comment in relation to forestry and woodland. It was thought that planning policies should recognise the contribution that woodland and forestry make to improving the environment and assisting in flood control. Although these comments have been noted, forestry is not controlled through the planning system.
- 3.58. A further twenty individual comments were made in relation to how the Local Plan could address downstream flood risk. Four of these said that the Local Plan should encourage the use of Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems (RSuDS). This endorses the approach identified in the draft Infrastructure Plan which recognises the benefits of the National Park's green infrastructure network. Other comments related to positively managing the design and siting of new development; implementing low-tech small scale flood control systems; the reintroduction of

beavers; and drawing upon local knowledge to identify areas of land suitable for holding flood waters.

- 3.59. The next steps in relation to how the natural environment consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.30 – 4.33.

Historic Environment

Broad Conclusions

- Protection of the National Park's historic environment should remain a key element of the Local Plan.
- Mixed response as to whether the Local Plan should be more, or less, flexible in enabling heritage assets, such as Listed buildings, to be developed for other uses in the future.
- General consensus that design of development should respond to local vernacular whilst allowing for some innovation which would be rigorously assessed on a case by case basis.

Detailed analysis

- 3.60. Comments relating to the historic environment made up 6% of all individual comments. Most of these respondents agreed to a continued approach that affords a high level of protection of the National Park's archaeology, Conservation Areas and historic buildings.
- 3.61. Eight respondents argued their support for the development of Listed Buildings only where this would prevent its loss and ensuring works are sensitive to the building and its setting. A further eight respondents would also support some flexibility around allowing development of other heritage assets where this would enable their retention and future use.
- 3.62. Sixteen respondents commented on building design (equating to 2% of total comments). It is generally considered that high design standards need to be upheld to ensure that development will not have any adverse effects on the surrounding landscape. Three individuals thought that any new development should replicate the local vernacular with policies restricting any modern design. The remaining respondents (13) would however support some flexibility in allowing more innovative new builds and extensions to existing buildings.
- 3.63. The next steps in relation to how the historic environment consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.34 – 4.36.

Leisure and Sustainable Tourism

Broad Conclusions

- General support for ensuring policies make it more difficult to permit the loss of visitor accommodation (including support generally for a more flexible approach to allowing under-used agricultural buildings to be converted to holiday accommodation).
- Importance of increasing visitors to the National Park and support for having provision in the Local Plan which can help to make the Park an all-year-round destination.
- Mixed response to a plan approach that would make provision for Sill 'satellite' developments.

Detailed analysis

- 3.64. 6% of comments related to leisure and sustainable tourism. Most of these comments gave recognition to the importance of affordable visitor accommodation for supporting the tourism economy of the National Park. Five respondents, including 19% of survey respondents agreed that planning policies should make it more difficult to permit the loss of visitor accommodation.
- 3.65. At present policy 15 of the Core Strategy (2009) supports the conversion of buildings for self catering and/or bunk house / camping barn accommodation. As reported in paragraph 3.49, 44% of survey respondents said that they would agree with retaining a policy that supports the reuse of under-used agricultural buildings for holiday use. The remainder of survey respondents had no opinion on this.
- 3.66. Some respondents demonstrated support for increasing visitors to the National Park during usually off-peak times, insofar as this is sustainable and not to the detriment of the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park. Dark sky related tourism products were particularly recognised as making a positive contribution to supporting a year-round tourism economy.
- 3.67. Nevertheless there was some opposition to supporting the introduction of new tourism products. There was also some uncertainty around how planning policies can help to make the National Park an all-year-round destination.
- 3.68. 1% of comments were in relation to The Sill Landscape Discovery Centre. The Management Plan sets out that a key means to achieve a high standard and broad range of facilities, information and service within the National Park (objective 1.1.2) will be to explore the development of Sill satellite sites. The response received on this were mixed with some respondents pointing out that clarification would be required with regards to the exact of the form that such developments would take and another expressing concerns in relation to viability. Other comments in relation to The Sill project that were not relevant to planning policy were forwarded to the relevant National Park Officers.

3.69. The next steps in relation to how the leisure and sustainable tourism consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.37 – 4.39.

Minerals and Waste

Broad Conclusions

- Generally supportive response to encouraging nature conservation as an appropriate after-use for restored quarries.
- Safeguarding future minerals supplies in the National Park is considered appropriate, particularly when it would cover minerals needed to conserving and enhancing the local built environment.
- Need for easily accessible local recycling sites.
- The extent to which other types of waste, e.g. farm waste, could be managed through the Local Plan would be limited.

Detailed analysis

- 3.70. 4% of comments were in relation to minerals and / or waste management which demonstrated a broad agreement that nature conservation is an appropriate after-use for restored quarries.
- 3.71. There was broad support for a policy to safeguard future mineral supplies in order to ensure that development would not inhibit future extraction. However one individual was entirely against this approach and one other respondent thought that only small-scale working of walling and roofing stone should be acceptable.
- 3.72. Accessibility of local recycling sites was of concern to a handful of respondents. Nevertheless it was accepted that for larger municipal waste facilities, communities in the National Park will inevitably rely on sites outside the National Park. One individual recommended that all new development should incorporate appropriate storage and segregation facilities to encourage recycling.
- 3.73. The next steps in relation to how the minerals and waste consultation response may taken forward into the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review are set out in paragraphs 4.40 – 4.41.

4. Next Steps

Vision and strategic priorities

- 4.0. The extant Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2009) was prepared in the context of an earlier Northumberland National Park Management Plan on which it draws upon to set out a vision and six spatial objectives to 2024. The Issues Paper recognises how the national policy context has changed as well as social, economic and environmental conditions on a local and wider scale. It is proposed therefore, that the new Local Plan seeks to realise the vision and helps to deliver the new objectives of the Management Plan 2016 – 2021.
- 4.1. The consultation concluded that there is broad support for taking forward the vision adopted in the Management Plan and a general agreement with and endorsement of the strategic priorities outlined in the Issues Paper consultation document. The Policy Options Paper will explore how the more detailed comments could be reflected in the emerging Local Plan. An initial exploration of the potential policy implications are outlined below.

Spatial strategy

- 4.2. The original purpose of Core Strategy Policy 5 (General Location of New Development) was to ensure that new development was focused in sustainable locations best served by existing community facilities. This is a contributing factor in supporting the retention of these services and reduces the need for travel. Nevertheless the comments received through the consultation demonstrated some support for revising this settlement hierarchy approach.
- 4.3. The Policy Options Paper will need to explore the circumstances where new development outside of settlements could be acceptable. This could include allowing greater flexibility for the reuse of agricultural buildings in remote locations, for which the consultation concludes there would be some support. Some respondents also demonstrated support for enabling a farm steading to become a settlement, community or 'nucleus of dwellings'. Current policy seeks to avoid this occurring on a large scale across the National Park given the potential to dramatically impact on the special qualities of the National Park. Further work is therefore required to determine the approach going forward. This will include the undertaking of a Sustainability Appraisal will assess any impact revising the settlement hierarchy approach would potentially have.
- 4.4. The Issues Paper consultation responses support the retention of the sequential approach that requires brownfield sites to be prioritised for development, as set out in Policy 6 of the current Core Strategy. This corresponds with current national policy that requires Local Planning Authorities to prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed (brownfield) land, particularly when identifying land to meet housing need¹.

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, Paragraph 111

- 4.5. The consultation also indicates that the approach to assessing major development in the National Park should not be relaxed. This reflects recent research² which explored how the major development test has been applied across all of the English National Parks with a particular emphasis on the importance of Local Plans continuing to provide sufficient protection on a local scale. The Policy Options Paper will explore the potential options which would be most appropriate for Northumberland National Park, for example specifying how particular terms may be defined locally or considering a more restrictive or perhaps less restrictive approach.

Community facilities and infrastructure

- 4.6. The National Park Authority acknowledges that issues around community facilities and infrastructure are of much importance to those living and working in the National Park.
- 4.7. The comments in relation to community facilities and infrastructure broadly conclude then that the approaches as set out in Policy 8 and Policy 28 of the Core Strategy are still appropriate, so long as supported by an up to date Infrastructure Plan and Local Facilities Survey.
- 4.8. Policy 25 currently seeks to ensure that provision for renewable energy generation is provided on sites of all new residential, employment, community and tourism development. The current approach also requires 10% of the predicted energy requirements of the development to be offset by renewables. The responses relating to renewable energy generation suggest the need for a continued policy approach that encourages the provision of micro-renewables.
- 4.9. The Policy Options Paper will take this support into consideration, together with emerging evidence on the viability, landscape impacts and other constraints on the provision of micro-renewable energy. It is noted that clarification is required to define what is meant by small, medium and large scale.
- 4.10. It is anticipated that the emerging Infrastructure Plan will enable NNPA to gain a greater understanding of the specific limitations around mobile and broadband reception. This will also provide more certainty around how such utilities could be improved and help identify the policy options that could support this improvement.
- 4.11. It is anticipated that the Local Plan will support the objectives as set out in the Joint Accord between the Home Office and National Parks England which will see the roll-out of the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme. It is also proposed to extend the use of this so that commercial mobile services can also provide wider network coverage. Crucially the accord recognises the need to minimise any adverse impacts on the special qualities of the National Park.

² *National Parks – Planning for the Future* (December 2016); Campaign for National Parks, Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), the National Trust

- 4.12. The draft Infrastructure Plan also explored the potential approaches to addressing other infrastructure issues arising from a development proposal. It was generally supported through the consultation that developers should be liable to ensure any proposal is supported by adequate infrastructure and would not adversely impact existing facilities or services. Nevertheless, it is considered that the application of a Community Infrastructure Levy would not likely be an appropriate tool with the expectation that few development proposals would be liable to make a CIL contribution (Infrastructure Plan Consultation Draft, February 2017, pg. 19). As an alternative, a planning-obligation based approach on a case by case basis could be more effective in addressing site specific infrastructure issues. An emerging policy approach could require a development to be supported by pre-existing infrastructure without detriment to other users, or where infrastructure issues are highlighted that a developer would be required to provide the necessary services or make a commuted sum payment to address these issues.
- 4.13. The challenge is ensuring an appropriate level of contribution for each type of development to balance the viability of the scheme as well as affordability requirements and occupancy restrictions. The comments received that related to specific locations and settlements will also be drawn upon to identify potential infrastructure issues relating to proposals that come forward.

Housing and employment

- 4.14. The conclusions from the consultation reflect evidence emerging from the SHMA³ and reiterate the need for more affordable housing for families / young adults and housing for those with a local connection to the National Park. Respondents also expressed concerns that the extant policies may have been restrictive in the delivery of affordable housing which concurs with the Authority's monitoring of the Local Plan.
- 4.15. The Policy Options Paper will explore how a more flexible policy approach could contribute to addressing these issues, including means of providing more local needs and/or affordable housing. More detail around the potential implications of a more flexible approach to allowing residential conversions will also be explored in the Policy Options Paper.
- 4.16. NNPA recognises that a positive framework of planning policies can only contribute to the delivery of affordable housing / affordable local needs housing if there is effective partnership working between the authority and other key housing delivery organisations. A variety of other suggestions were made in relation to controlling the occupancy of new housing in the National Park and each of these will be tested through the Policy Options consultation.
- 4.17. The consultation responses also reinforce the need for a holistic approach to planning for sustainable economic growth. It was largely agreed among

³ It is the role of the Local Plan to plan for the amount, type, tenure and size of housing as evidenced through analysis of relevant secondary data, housing needs surveys, demographic forecasts (based upon population projections provided by the government) and consultation with key housing stakeholders. This information is set out in the Northumberland National Park Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), 2017.

respondents that in order to increase employment opportunities and boost the number of working-age residents within the Park, emerging strategy should recognise the role of housing and infrastructure provision in facilitating this. Any cumulative impact of emerging housing, infrastructure and economic policies will therefore need to be explored at the Policy Options stage.

- 4.18. The Policy Options Paper will also need to identify if and how particular economic sectors will be recognised. Most respondents supported the current approach (Policy 14) which gives special recognition to tourism, recreation and farming uses. Any emerging policy around the broad approach to sustaining the local economy will also need to complement the more specific emerging policies for particular economic sectors.
- 4.19. The need to support forestry development was also recognised and therefore the Policy Options paper will explore how the economic, environmental and social contribution from woodlands and forestry can be addressed through the Local Plan, particularly given that forestry development is outside the control of the planning system.
- 4.20. Current policy also seeks to ensure proposals for expanding existing businesses would not negatively impact on the special qualities of the National Park, and that the creation of new businesses directly relate to the special qualities. The consultation responses acknowledge the importance of ensuring adequate support for economic development that does not negatively impact on the special qualities. Emerging Local Plan policies will therefore need to balance flexibility in supporting business growth with the extent to which any proposals would either contribute to or impact upon the Park's special qualities.
- 4.21. It was recognised that policy should be more focused towards supporting Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs). This aligns with past business size trends in the National Park and evidence emerging from the Business Needs Survey sent out to businesses in the Park in 2016. It was further suggested that new approaches would need to be considered to providing more jobs and helping existing / emerging businesses to thrive. The emerging policy options could therefore explore how there could be more support for Rural Enterprise Hubs or other shared infrastructure.
- 4.22. With most respondents having acknowledged the increased popularity in home-working, the Policy Options Paper will explore the implications of this. The emerging economic evidence will also be drawn upon to inform the potential options to take forward in Local Plan. While the current approach seeks to support proposals for home-based employment activities which do not adversely affect neighbours or neighbouring land uses, future policy may be more explicit in supporting new build live-work units, the conversion of under-used out-buildings or the extension of existing residential buildings.

Transport and Access

- 4.23. The consultation responses in relation to transport largely endorse the approach taken in Policy 12 of the current Core Strategy which seeks to minimise the overall

need for journeys, whilst seeking to maximise the proportion of journeys made by public transport, bicycle, and walking.

- 4.24. Management Plan objective 4.2.3 seeks to enable an integrated transport network which offers an attractive alternative to the private car. However, the consultation responses have highlighted the potential limitations in achieving this objective. It is clear that this will not be possible through development policies alone and a proactive approach to advocating for transport infrastructure improvements needs to be taken with our key delivery partners
- 4.25. The Policy Options Paper and Infrastructure Plan will identify how the Authority could work pro-actively to ensure that public transport service providers are able to operate services viably, car sharing schemes are explored, and means of increasing the take up of walking and cycling are identified.
- 4.26. Respondents also recognised the importance of the public rights of way network. The comments received broadly demonstrate that the current objectives of policy 12 are supported and that a continued approach that seeks to maximise accessibility would likely be appropriate to take forward into the new Local Plan. The emerging policy options in relation to increasing public access on agriculture, forestry or shooting tracks may be constrained by rights of way restrictions. There may also be the need to address safety impacts and maintenance agreements. Any policy approach which seeks to provide more flexibility in providing new tracks for public access would need to consider how potential landscape impacts could be mitigated.

Farming and Estates

- 4.27. Policy 21 of the extant Core Strategy requires the National Park Authority to support agricultural developments which allow for farmers to be more competitive and sustainable, including where diversification would be involved. However, this approach is flexible and open to a degree of interpretation.
- 4.28. The comments received would therefore suggest that a more focused policy approach would be beneficial for farmers, helping them to recognise the types of diversification proposals that would be appropriate within the National Park. The policy options could therefore include more detail on the need to justify the scale or type of any new development associated with any potential farm diversification.
- 4.29. The current policy approach to the conversion of existing buildings outside of identified settlements (Core Strategy policy 7) specifies particular circumstances where this would be acceptable. This includes that conversion to residential would only be permitted where a proven local housing need exists. The consultation response indicates some support for a more flexible approach. However such a shift in policy that allows more flexibility in converting remote farm steadings to housing may not be sustainable, with long distances to local facilities and services. It may also be more difficult to provide the necessary infrastructure to remote areas. The Policy Options consultation will propose how an appropriate balance may be achieved.

Natural Environment

- 4.30. With support for retaining a high level of protection for the natural environment, it can be concluded that Policy 20 remains a suitable approach, assessing the impact of development on landscape character and sensitivity as defined in the Landscape Supplementary Planning Document.
- 4.31. Many of these responses emphasise the need for planning policies to protect the tranquil qualities of the National Park including the renowned dark skies. This could indicate that a review of Policy 19 is required. The Policy Options Paper could explore how a more explicit approach to ensuring development has no adverse impact on dark skies.
- 4.32. The National Park Authority acknowledges the contribution that carefully managed woodland and forestry makes to the local economy, cultural heritage and in enhancing the natural environment. Forestry practice itself is not controlled through the planning system; however associated developments commonly require planning permission or prior approval from the authority. The emerging policy options will need to recognise the social, economic and environment benefits whilst ensuring sufficient protection is afforded to the natural assets of the National Park.
- 4.33. At present the Local Plan requires new development to be directed away from areas at the highest risk of flooding and that appropriate mitigation measures are implemented in line with national planning policy. The review of policy 27 needs to take into consideration significant changes in national policy since 2009. Conclusions from the consultation broadly align with more recent planning guidance on addressing flood risk, for example encouraging Rural Sustainable Drainage Systems (RSuDS). More detailed proposals will be set out at the policy options consultation stage.

Historic Environment

- 4.34. Current policy (18) supports proposals which conserve, enhance and promote the quality and integrity of the culture heritage of the National Park. The consultation responses broadly supported retaining this approach. There was however strong support for potentially making it more flexible to develop heritage assets where a proposal would prevent the loss of the asset. The potential options for this will be explored further in the Policy Options paper.
- 4.35. There were mixed opinions on what the design policy should be in the National Park. This is naturally a subjective issue. The majority of respondents who commented on design would be supportive of allowing flexibility for some extent of innovation whilst being sensitive to local vernacular. Criterion 'b' of policy 3 seeks to ensure the design of new development protects and enhances local character. This policy also provides guidance on how this may be achieved but allows flexibility for the applicant to propose the detailed design, assessed on a case by

case basis. The consultation response therefore suggests that current policy is neither too restrictive nor too flexible.

- 4.36. The responses received supported upholding high building design standards and the emerging policy options will need to examine any potential tensions with other objectives of the Local Plan such as the delivery of affordable housing. The extent of any conflict will be explored through a Sustainability Appraisal.

Leisure and sustainable tourism

- 4.37. The consultation response indicates that Policy 15 is largely supported. Nevertheless the criteria within Policy 7 that proposals to convert a building outside a settlement need to meet could be more flexible. This will be explored in the Policy Options Paper.
- 4.38. As there was a mixed response in relation to using planning policies to extend the visitor season, the policy options will set out how this may be achieved and the particular benefits this could have. It was however recognised that supporting the retention and creation of visitor accommodation should be a priority. With the issue of holiday accommodation affordability also raised, market saturation would also help with regulating the cost of staying in the Park.
- 4.39. With strong support for protecting the Dark Sky Park status of the National Park and recognition of its contribution to the local tourism economy all year round, emerging policy could offer particular support to businesses that increase awareness / enable the experience of the Park's tranquillity and night skies.

Minerals and Waste

- 4.40. There was broad support for nature conservation as an appropriate after-use for restored quarries and also for safeguarding future mineral supplies. This endorses the current approach set out in Core Strategy Policy 23. The indicated therefore is that policy 23 is still largely fit for purpose.
- 4.41. Comments relating to the accessibility of local recycling sites will be used to inform the Infrastructure Plan and advocating for the retention of community facilities. Nevertheless the provision of these sites, including hours of opening are not in the remit of the National Park Authority and will be something that will need to be undertaken in partnership with the County Council.

5. Final conclusions

- 5.0. The combined feedback from consultation events and written responses generally endorsed the issues as identified in the Issues Paper Consultation Draft document.
- 5.1. There was a broad recognition that some emerging planning policies may require a more flexible approach than those set out in the current Core Strategy (2009). This is to take into account changing socio-economic circumstances of the National Park as well as changes in national policy; newly adopted wider Management Plan objectives for the National Park; and other policies, regulations and the strategies of partner organisations.
- 5.2. Current restrictions on the conversion of buildings outside of settlements to residential, was a particular policy area which was generally thought to be too restrictive. In terms of new buildings outside of settlements, some respondents thought that including agricultural steadings in the definition of settlements could be a potential way of providing more housing in the National Park. However, potential landscape impacts have been identified which will need to be fully explored in the Policy Options stage of the Local Plan review.
- 5.3. The majority of respondents also agreed that any new housing in the National Park would need to meet affordable and/or local housing needs.
- 5.4. A further broad consensus was the need for an increased working age population which corresponded to comments relating to increased employment opportunities. Most respondents also thought that the key economic sectors of farming, tourism, recreation and forestry deserved special recognition. In particular, it was generally agreed that farming businesses should be supported to diversify more easily.
- 5.5. The contribution of the National Park's Dark Sky Park status to the tourism economy was greatly recognised. Further, the acknowledged importance of visitor accommodation was demonstrated through support for ensuring future policy makes it more difficult to permit the loss of holiday accommodation. A more flexible approach to allowing under-used agricultural buildings to be converted to holiday accommodation was also generally supported.
- 5.6. The contribution of forestry to the local economy was also recognised but the Policy Options Paper will explore the extent to which local planning policy can influence the future development of this sector.
- 5.7. The Issues Paper and Infrastructure Plan consultation feedback also reaffirmed issues raised previous consultations relating to the quality and capacity of community facilities. Telecommunications and public transport infrastructure are thought to be particular limitations for those living and working in the National Park. Improving the quality of these services, as well as aiming to retain and enhance other important local facilities such as healthcare, schools and cafes is a key priority for the emerging Local Plan.

- 5.8. Addressing identified infrastructure shortfalls will need to be a collaborative effort between the National Park Authority, Northumberland County Council and key infrastructure providers. The consultation feedback also demonstrated strong support for an approach which requires developers to address brought about by particular schemes, while ensuring viability is not compromised. The final Infrastructure Plan will demonstrate the most appropriate approach in this regard.
- 5.9. Given the National Park designation, it is not surprising that there was general support for retaining a high level of environmental protection, particularly around flood risk management and adopting an eco-systems approach to development.
- 5.10. Protecting the National Park's historic environment was also considered particularly important. Emerging planning policy may as a result make it easier to develop heritage assets only where this is crucial to their retention. In relation to the design of new development, it was generally deemed important to respond to the local vernacular but with some flexibility for some innovation.
- 5.11. Given the moderate level of response to the consultation, the level of weight applied to this feedback will need to be proportionate. Nevertheless it is clear that across many of the policy areas respondents' views broadly align with emerging evidence base studies. The National Park Authority will take forward all of this evidence, as appropriate, into the Policy Options stage.

Appendix 1

Issues Paper Consultation Poster

LOCAL PLAN Northumberland National Park Authority

Have your say with our Local Plan Consultation

The aim is to produce a new Local Plan that will guide development and land use across the National Park, including how the environment will be conserved and protected, over the next twenty years until 2037. You now have the opportunity to shape how this Plan is starting to evolve. Come along to one of our public consultation drop-in events.

Date	Place	Time
7th March 2017	Village Hall, Bardon Mill, Hexham, NE47 7DX	2pm – 7pm
14th March 2017	Halwhistle Library, Westgate, Halwhistle, NE49 0AX	2pm – 7pm
23rd March 2017	Jubilee Hall, Bridge Street, Rothbury, Morpeth, NE65 7SD	2pm – 7pm
29th March 2017	Cheviot Centre, Padgepool Place, Wooler, NE71 6BL	2pm – 7pm
4th April 2017	Bellingham Town Hall, Bellingham, Hexham, NNE48 2AA	2pm – 7pm

In addition we are hosting community workshops in the following locations. These are aimed at local communities of the National Park to have their say on what are the most important issues relating to planning in their local area.

Date	Place	Time
16th March 2017	Matthew Ridley Memorial Hall, Falstone, Hexham, NE48 1AA	2pm – 5pm
6th April 2017	Village Hall, Kirknewton, NE71 6XF	2pm – 5pm
12th April 2017	Eldon Village Hall, Eldon, NE19 1AA	2pm – 5pm
20th April 2017	Harbottle Village Hall, Harbottle, Morpeth, NE65 7DG	2pm – 5pm
26th April 2017	Stonehaugh Community Village Hall, Stonehaugh, Hexham, NE48	2pm – 5pm

www.nnpa.org.uk/localplanconsultation

Appendix 2

Issues Paper consultation events

