



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment

Scoping Report



Pen-y-ghent

for the

Housing and Minerals & Waste Development Plan Documents

Draft for Consultation - January 2008

Part of the Yorkshire Dales Development Framework
2006 - 2021

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Abbreviations

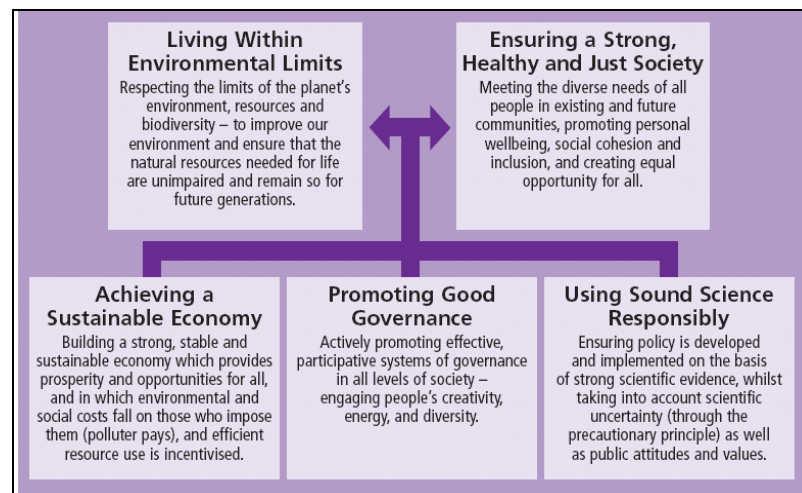
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report (Measurement of the impact of planning policy)
DPD	Development Plan Document (A part of the Yorkshire Dales Development Framework that is subject to examination by a Planning Inspector)
LDF	Local Development Framework (the replacement for Local Plans and County Structure Plans)
LDS	Local development Scheme (the Authority's project plan for the YDDF)
MPS	Minerals Planning Statement (National Planning Policy for Minerals)
PPG/PPS	Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements (National Planning Policy)
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy (The regional plan for Yorkshire and the Humber)
SA	Sustainability Appraisal (Requirement of 2004 Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act. The process by which sustainability considerations are incorporated into the planning policy preparation)
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment (Requirement of European Directive 2001/42/EC. The process by which effects of plans and policies upon the environment are assessed)
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement (The Authority's strategy to engage the public in planning policy and planning applications)
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document (detailed policy guidance and explanation)
YDDF	Yorkshire Dales Development Framework (the LDF for the National Park)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The planning system has recently undergone a major step change through the provisions of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. This has fundamentally altered the way in which plans and policies are prepared, structured and reviewed. Fundamentally, this will see the replacement of the old system of Local Plans with a new policy regime collectively known as the Local Development Framework (LDF);
- 1.2 The LDF will be made up of a variety of documents that set out strategic and detailed planning policies for the National Park, as well as procedural documents that set out the way in which the Authority will consult interested parties and how we will monitor the effects of our policies. In the National Park, the LDF will be known as the Yorkshire Dales Development Framework (YDDF).
- 1.3 The Authority are beginning the LDF process with a review of housing and minerals & waste policies. This will ultimately result in the adoption of two Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which will supersede the policies contained within the Yorkshire Dales Local Plan (2006) and the Minerals & Waste Local Plan (1998). Once adopted, these DPDs will be used to guide decisions on planning applications for housing and minerals & waste proposals within the National Park;
- 1.4 All DPDs produced under the new planning system are required to be the subject of a sustainability appraisal (SA). This report constitutes the initial scoping report for the SA of the Housing and Minerals & Waste DPDs.

2. Sustainability Appraisal & Sustainable Development

- 2.1 The purpose of SA is to ensure that planning policies produced as part of the LDF promote the principles of sustainable development. In short, sustainable development is most commonly defined as development that ***meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*** (Brundtland Commission, 1987). This requires the integration of environmental, economic and social considerations in all policies and decisions.
- 2.2 The government has produced an overarching UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005) that places sustainable development firmly at the centre of all its activities. This strategy identifies five guiding principles in the pursuit of sustainable development:



- 2.3 National planning guidance in the form of Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) reiterates the importance of sustainable development. It states that sustainable development should be adopted as the core principle underpinning the whole planning system. SA accompanies the development of planning policies prepared under the new system and ensures that sustainable development considerations are fully incorporated within the process.
- 2.4 The SA incorporates the requirements of two separate pieces of legislation. All DPDs and SPDs prepared as part of the LDF are required to undergo a SA by the provisions 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. There is also a separate requirement under the provisions of a European Directive (2001/42/EC) to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in order to fully evaluate the effects of the planning document upon the environment. For the purposes of the YDDF, the two requirements are combined in one assessment under the collective title of 'sustainability appraisal'.
- 2.5 The SA is not in itself a decision making tool. Its purpose is to ensure that the environmental, economic and social effects of all policy options are fully understood and the degree to which resulting policy responses will deliver objectives of sustainable development. It is also intended to be an iterative

process where the development of policies is constantly informed by the SA and revisions are made as necessary throughout the process.

3. The Appraisal Process

3.1 The SA Scoping exercise has been carried out in accordance with the following government guidance:

Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents (ODPM, 2005)

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities (ODPM, 2003)

A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (ODPM, 2005)

3.2 The guidance splits the SA process into five distinct phases as follows:

Stage A – Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope;

Stage B – Developing and refining options and assessing effects;

Stage C – Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report;

Stage D – Consulting on the preferred options of the DPD and the SA Report;

Stage E – Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the DPD.

The present report corresponds to the requirements of Stage A. This is a pre-production stage that establishes the context for the SA and a framework against which to assess the effects of the DPDs. The actual appraisal of the DPDs will take place in the subsequent stages of the process and will culminate in the preparation of a final Sustainability Report to accompany the submission of the Housing and Minerals & Waste DPDs.

3.3 **Stage A – Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope**

The first stage of the SA process consists of a number of elements:

3.4 **Identifying other relevant policies, plans, programmes**

The Authority are required to identify other policies, plans and programmes that are of relevance to the DPDs. This forms part of the process of informing the development of the DPDs, identifying relationships between it and a range of other documents. These documents are wide-ranging, covering a variety of subject areas across varying geographical scales, to ensure that a full range of sustainability issues are addressed.

It is important that both synergies and potential tensions are identified as part of this exercise, as these may have implications for the future direction of policy. The plans, policies and programmes reviewed are identified in Appendix 1 together with their key objectives/requirements and potential implications for the DPD. The list is not exhaustive, but is intended as an overview of the key documents that will inform the development of the DPD.

3.5 **Collecting baseline information**

The collection of baseline information has two main purposes. In the first instance, it helps to identify the current situation and recent trends across a range of environmental, social and economic themes. Secondly, this information can then be used to identify where the key issues facing the National Park lie, and provide a basis from which to monitor the impacts of the DPD. Collecting baseline information ensures that there is a firm evidence base from which to begin the development of a robust SA, and which can also then be used later in the process to assess its effects.

A general set of baseline information can be found in Appendix 2 which provides contextual information about a range of environmental, economic and social matters within the National Park. Baseline information is also included within the matrix in Appendix 4. This information is targeted more specifically at the individual sustainability issues and objectives in order to allow the effects of the DPD to be assessed in as accurate and meaningful a fashion as possible.

Much of the information sourced for the baseline has been collected from existing National Park reports and datasets. Notable amongst these is the Yorkshire Dales National Park Management Plan and the attendant State of the Park Report. The Management Plan sets out the overall vision for the future of the National Park and identifies a number of aims, principles and objectives relating seven themes:

- Landscape
- Communities and Culture
- Access and Recreation
- Understanding and Enjoyment
- Nature Conservation
- Historic Environment
- Economy and Employment

The State of the Park Report monitors progress that has been made in achieving the aims and objectives set out in the Management Plan and also establishes any issues that need to be incorporated in future versions. The last State of the Park Report was published in 2005.

Overlapping the SA of the DPDs with the Management Plan yields a number of benefits. Firstly, it ensures that the process is consistent with the identified aims, principles and objectives in the Management Plan. This promotes a corporate approach across the Authority's policy activities but also enables coverage of a comprehensive range of sustainability issues. Secondly, since the Management Plan has at its core the statutory purposes and duty conferred on National Park Authorities by the 1995 Environment Act, this ensures that they are firmly embedded within the SA process. It is worth noting that an Environmental Report was produced alongside the Management Plan in accordance with the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC, which mirrors the requirement for a SEA of DPDs.

3.6 Identifying sustainability issues & developing the sustainability appraisal framework

Using the review of plans policies and programmes and the baseline review, a preliminary list of sustainability issues facing the National Park were identified. Each issue has been linked to baseline information wherever possible to ensure that a clear link between the issue and the evidence base is established.

Two workshops were held to discuss the sustainability issues identified. These workshops were attended by representatives of the following organisations:

- Richmondshire District Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (Members & Officers)

NB: Representatives of English Heritage, Yorkshire & Humber Regional Assembly, Cumbria County Council & Craven District Council were also invited but were unable to attend.

The workshops gave an opportunity for the list of sustainability issues to be reviewed and as a result they were subject to a number of amendments and refinements.

Having finalised the list of sustainability issues, the workshops were then used to identify a corresponding list of objectives. In total some 27 issues and related objectives were identified, which have been grouped together under 14 main headings. The sustainability framework is summarised in Appendix 3 and a full list of issues and their related objectives can be found in Appendix 4.

In accordance with the guidance, it was important that the list of objectives were both manageable, but also sufficiently comprehensive and distinct to enable meaningful analysis to take place. Where possible a quantitative indicator has been identified for each objective to ensure that there is a basis from which to monitor the impact of the DPD upon the sustainability objective (Appendix 4). Together, the sustainability objectives and indicators form the basis of the sustainability appraisal framework from which to begin assessing the effects of the DPDs.

3.7 Difficulties encountered

The benefits of overlapping the SA of DPDs with the Management Plan and State of the Park report are set out above. The main issue with this approach occurs as a result of a recent review of the Management Plan. A new Management Plan was published in 2007 and included a review of the objectives included in the previous version published in 2000. As a result, the new Management Plan objectives do not correspond exactly with the baseline information derived from monitoring of the old Management Plan. This effectively breaks the link between baseline and indicator, so that monitoring effects of the DPD accurately become more difficult.

In some cases it has proved difficult to establish useful indicators for each of the identified objectives. It is important that the indicators are meaningful in relation to the objectives they correspond with, rather than simply being loosely related to them. In some instances it has been deemed necessary to make qualitative judgements where a quantitative indicator would be inadequate or not meaningful. A good example of this is the objective relating to governance. While indicators such as election turnout could be used for this objective, it would not provide a meaningful tool for monitoring the full range of considerations encompassed within 'governance', and would not therefore usefully describe the effects the DPD would have upon the objective. It must also be borne in mind that when monitoring the effects of the DPD upon an indicator, planning policy is just one of a number of influences upon that indicator. Change should not therefore be wholly attributed to the effect the DPD is having where there is obvious cause to suspect outside influences.

Obtaining accurate and up to date information for baseline and indicators can also prove challenging for a number of reasons. Census derived information is restricted to ten year intervals, while other surveys are similarly periodical, so that up to date information is not always available. Another recurring issue when collating information is sourcing data that relates specifically to the National Park. Many datasets are tailored to administrative areas, often at District level. This presents a problem given that the National Park embraces only part of three districts, and methods such as pro-rata calculations need to be adopted.

The SA scoping report will need to be constantly updated, so that when new data becomes available, this can be incorporated into the baseline and indicators to take account of changing circumstances.

3.8 Consultation

In accordance with the requirements of the SA process, the views of a number of statutory consultation bodies will be sought regarding the content of the scoping exercise described above (Stage A). The report will also be made available to a wide range of other bodies for comment.

Responses are particularly sought regarding the following aspects of the report:

- Is the list of related plans, policies and programmes sufficiently comprehensive? Are there other documents that should be included?
- Are the baseline information and indicators adequate to judge the impact of the DPDs upon sustainability issues? Are other baseline information or indicators more appropriate for judging these effects?
- Is the list of sustainability issues sufficiently comprehensive? Do you consider that there are any other issues that should be included, or some that are not necessary?

- Are the sustainability objectives identified reasonable? Do they resolve the issues sufficiently? Should other objectives be included?

A five week consultation period will allow the relevant Authorities the opportunity to comment on the above matters and any other issues they feel are relevant. Responses should be received by the Authority no later than Friday 15th February 2008.

4. Next Steps

4.1 Stage B – Appraisal of objectives and options in DPDs

Following completion of Stage A of the process, the next stage involves testing the objectives and options of each of the DPDs against the sustainability framework that has been developed. Each of the DPDs will begin by looking at a series of objectives, issues and options from which to start shaping future policies. Ultimately these issues and options will be refined to produce a set of preferred options, at which point the final direction of policy will become clearer.

4.2 Before moving to the preferred options stage, it is necessary to test the individual objectives and options against the sustainability framework. This will ensure that their sustainability merits are understood before committing to a particular preferred policy option.

4.3 The appraisal process will require judgements about the extent to which the objectives and options presented will affect each of the sustainability objectives and associated baseline situation. Consideration will need to be given to the magnitude, geographical scale, duration and permanence of these effects together for the potential for any synergies that may result in cumulative effects. It may be appropriate to consider the possibility for mitigation of some of these effects in concluding their overall likely impact.

4.4 Ultimately, each objective and option will be given a score to indicate its likely performance in sustainability terms and therefore which are likely to be the most appropriate options to take forward to the next stage. The process will then be repeated in respect of the chosen preferred options, but with a more in-depth analysis of the sustainability merits of each option.

4.5 Stage C – Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report

The results of stages A and B of the sustainability appraisal process will culminate in the production of a Sustainability Report. This report will be issued for public consultation alongside the draft versions of the DPDs. It will set out how the chosen policy approaches have been tested against the sustainability framework, including the reasons for selecting the chosen options, the anticipated significant effects of the policies and any proposals for mitigation where appropriate. An outline of the probable layout of the report has been included at Appendix 5.