



YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

Yorkshire Dales Local Plan



Grassington

Annual Monitoring Report 2004 - 2005

Summary

- During the monitoring period (April 2004 – November 2005) the new Local Plan emerged and started to be used for development control decisions, superceding the adopted Local Plan (1996).
- The level of development in the National Park continues to be modest by regional or national standards.
- Most applications received would have a neutral or only slight impact on national park purposes. Pre application advice and negotiation frequently lead to improved schemes capable of meeting policy requirements. The approval rate for planning applications therefore remains high.
- Very few major applications were received during the monitoring period. Only one required an Environmental Assessment and no applications that could be described as ‘major development’, in a national sense, were received.
- The North Yorkshire Structure Plan housing requirement was exceeded two years early but the implications are not serious. The rate of residential application is now declining with the implementation of the new local needs policy. The new Local Plan housing policies represent the single biggest change in Yorkshire Dales planning policy for 10 years, but so far they remain untested.
- The shortfall of affordable housing in the National Park is apparent and particularly serious in the Craven Dales. However the gap is not going to be met in the foreseeable future by the policies of the new Local Plan alone.
- The housing strategy of the old and new local plans are being pursued, despite a number of departure decisions. Departure decisions are not linked to any specific housing policy but there is a relationship to location. Most policy departures are on sites in open countryside outside the Local Plan development boundaries.
- Brownfield sites are running out as barn conversions and previously used land is developed. This may lead to more pressure on greenfield land through the release of rural exceptions sites or future allocations for affordable and local needs housing.
- There is pressure to change the use of existing employment sites, visitor accommodation and some community facilities, into housing. However the policies are being used to resist this with some success noted during the monitoring period.
- Design quality and design detail remain the most frequently used areas of policy in the Local Plan.
- Interest in small scale renewable energy schemes is high but is not yet yielding many applications. More applications are expected next year.

- A small number of recreational proposals are challenging the balance between the National Park purposes of conservation and public enjoyment. During the monitoring period the agreement of management plans have helped deliver solutions, thereby avoiding outright refusal.
- Mineral extraction is at a level consistent with the last 5 years. Because of high levels of mineral reserves there is no sign of any reduction in extraction rates.
- The emerging local plan has been modified at public inquiry to accord with emerging national planning policy. It remains in general conformity with national and regional policy.
- Overall the policies of the adopted local plan and the new emerging local plan appear to be working. The overall aims of the Park are not being compromised by planning decisions and generally the planning system is delivering the majority of what applicants seek.

Introduction

This is the first Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) as required by the Planning and Compensation Act 2004. It:

- Reviews progress on the production of the Local Plan
- Reports on the nature of planning applications received
- Analyses the use of Local Plan policies
- Reviews progress on the production of the Local Development Framework.

Monitoring Period

The monitoring period is from the 31st March 2004 to the beginning of November 2005.

Until the 12th April 2005 the Authority was basing its planning decisions on the adopted Local Plan (1996). Thereafter the Authority resolved to implement the new Local Plan (2003) which had emerged from three years of consultation and the findings of an independent public Inquiry held during the summer of 2004.

This first AMR is therefore a review of the performance of the old Local Plan policies and the start of the new Local Plan policies. However in policy and strategy terms there is a good deal of continuity between both plans. Only the housing policies have changed significantly.

Progress on the Emerging Yorkshire Dales Local Plan

The new Local Plan reached post inquiry modification stage in October 2005. Consultation on the changes recommended by the Local Plan Inspector and accepted by the Authority ran until the 2nd December. The Authority will consider the representations received and may decide to issue a further list of modifications in the New Year. The objective is to move to formal adoption by Spring 2006.

Once the Local Plan is adopted, or close to adoption, work will begin on a Local Development Framework. The first policy reviews will cover housing, minerals and land allocations. There is no certainty about precisely when that will be but it is hoped that it can be before the end of April 2006.

Aims of the Local Plan

The primary aim of the Local Plan is to use the planning system to further National Park purposes and deliver social and economic benefit to communities within the Park.

The Plan recognises that most development is proposed for reasons of social or economic improvement and not for reasons of conservation or public enjoyment. Therefore, many of the detailed objectives and policies aim to facilitate development in ways that will cause the least harm to National Park Purposes. Fortunately most development proposals in the Yorkshire Dales have a largely neutral affect or are only slightly harmful to a strict interpretation of 'conservation' and 'enhancement'. Most applications are therefore permitted subject to conditions, or are negotiated into a form

where they are made acceptable with regard to their impact on National Park Purposes. This is borne out by analysis of development proposals received against each of the Local Plan objectives below.

Commentary on the Socio/Economic State of the Park

Comparison of the 1991 and 2001 Census (Appendix 1) reveals that;

- the population of the Park has increased across the three broad age sectors of 0-15, 16-64 and over 65. This however masks declines within narrower sectors, such as school and college age leavers.
- The rate of economic activity has also increased. There is now a higher proportion of the population available and capable of work than in 1991 and this is a useful indicator of the potential for the Park to increase its contribution to the local economy.
- In terms of employment by sector, agriculture has continued to decline sharply but is being replaced by an expanded service sector.
- Unemployment remains low and average district earnings are catching up with average British earnings. However average district earnings may mask lower wages inside the National Park.
- A high proportion of residents work from home or walk to work, although the number of cars within the Park has also increased by 36% in 10 years.
- House prices have increased by 78% since 2001. Average prices in the National Park are now around £226,000.

All of this paints a picture of an area that is performing quite well economically and which is attracting more people in than are leaving. Indeed the latest population estimate for 2004 reveals a further net increase of 570 persons (2.9%) since 2001 with the National Park population now estimated to be 20,110. Not all of this inward migration is by retirees either. Indeed one of the more encouraging socio/economic signs is the extent to which the Park population as a whole has not aged significantly and the fact that there are now more children than 10 years ago. It indicates that despite the rapid decline in agricultural employment during the 1990s, the Park has been relatively successful, economically and socially.

Serious barriers to improved socio/economic wellbeing remain however, not least the high price of housing. But whilst planning policy and planning decisions are not directly responsible for the increase in population or the growth in economic activity, it may perhaps be concluded that it has not harmed it either since the area undoubtedly remains attractive and its economy is reasonably dynamic.

Planning Application Caseload

Between April 2004 and September 2005 the Authority determined 1,071 planning applications. Householder applications were the most common type received at 39%. The next highest category is a miscellaneous list which includes developments such as access tracks, school extensions, overhead lines, demolition, and also most of the agricultural related development. This category was responsible for 12% of all applications. Change of use applications contributed 12%, Listed Building applications 11%, residential applications 9%. Everything else such as minerals extraction, offices and storage, advertisements and Listed building applications and conservation area consents represented less than 15 applications each or 1% of the total received during the monitoring period.

In terms of decision making 95 applications were refused and 74 were withdrawn. This gave an approval rate of about 90%.

If the very largest applications, such as the redevelopment of Embsay Tannery and the Arcow minerals approval, are excluded from the figures, and the assumption is made that the average planning permission will lead to at least £30,000 worth of development, then a very simplistic estimate can be made that during the monitoring period planning approval was worth £27m.

Policy Usage

During this first monitoring period two sets of local plan policies have been in use. Since April 2005 the new emerging policies have started to be used. The most commonly referred to parts of both Local Plans are their design policies. This very much reflects the emphasis on conservation and the objective of trying to fit new development into the high quality landscape of the National Park.

After the design and contextual policies, the next most commonly used are the built heritage policies. Again this is perhaps unsurprising given the number and extent of conservation areas in the national Park and the density of traditional buildings.

Policies dealing with residential conversions and domestic extensions have also figured prominently over the last 18 months. This has always represented a large proportion of development in the National Park but more recently it is also a reflection of high house prices and the ability of home owners to extend their property. It is probably also indicative of the expense of moving to a larger property and the lack of opportunities to build new housing within the Park.

The new local need policies H2 (New Build Housing in Service Villages) and H3 (Residential Conversion), which are introduced by the emerging local plan, are only just starting to be used in planning decisions and pre application discussions. They have been used to justify refusal but so far haven't been challenged at appeal.

Unsurprisingly, the other commonly used area of policy during the monitoring period has been the agricultural development policies AD1 and F1 (Farm Buildings and Structures).

Less frequently used areas of policy have been the nature conservation, transport and employment policies. The majority of the nature conservation policies seek to protect national designations and are only used rarely because new development naturally tends, to avoid those areas. Many of the transport policies are very specific or relate to the sort of large scale development that is rare in the national park and have not therefore been used during the monitoring period.

Monitoring Local Plan Policy

There are hardly any quantifiable targets or indicators within the new local plan against which to monitor performance. Instead commentary on progress with planning applications and pre application discussion is therefore offered against the policy objectives set out at the beginning of each chapter of the emerging Local Plan.

HOUSING

- *To help meet the housing needs of the local community, having special regard to their need for affordable housing.*

The North Yorkshire Structure Plan 3rd Alteration 1996, contains an indicative housing target for the Yorkshire Dales National Park of 500 net additions to the housing stock between 1991 and 2006. The table below reveals that this figure had been exceeded by 175 dwellings, a year ahead of the Structure Plan end date. This represents an annual rate of development 55% greater than that required. It is likely that by April 2006 over 700 dwellings will have been completed within the Richmondshire and Craven area of the park, since 1991.

HOUSING	North Yorkshire Structure Plan	Cumbria Structure Plan	Total
Requirement 1991 - 2006	500 (33dpa)	-	500 (33dpa)
Completions 1991 to Apr 2005	675 (48dpa)	199 (14dpa)	874 (62dpa)
Under construction (April 2005)	48	22	70
Total completions by 2006	723 (48dpa)	221 (15dpa)	944 (63dpa)
Commitments less 10%	150	10	160
Maximum Windfalls 2001 - 2006			400
Windfalls Likely to come forward 2001 - 2006			100

However the Structure Plan requirement of 33 dwellings per year is very modest and has always been regarded as indicative rather than a maximum ceiling to new house building. It could be argued that exceeding it has led to slightly more people migrating into the National Park than planned, but these numbers would be tiny in the context of wider demographic and social changes that have also taken place since the early 1990s.

The reasons given for the modest National Park housing targets in the North Yorkshire Structure Plan were to retard migration from West Yorkshire and to safeguard the environment, particularly around market towns. However it would be impossible to prove that building 18 more houses than planned per year has retarded regeneration within

West Yorkshire. Nor indeed is there a great deal of evidence that this extra amount of housing has damaged the conservation, enjoyment or Special Qualities of the National Park, to any measurable degree, since policy has directed it into existing towns and villages.

Allocation of land has never played a significant role in housing policy in the National Park. The 1996 Local Plan only identified a single site in Sedburgh (Cumbria). The new Local Plan contains two small allocations, neither of which have yet been subject to application. Therefore the 944 houses that will have been built by 2006 are almost entirely on unallocated 'windfall' sites. They have mostly been conversions of former agricultural buildings, small gap sites of less than 5 houses and infill development. Individually and cumulatively this level of development has not raised any landscape or environmental issues of more than local significance.

Both Local Plans nevertheless recognise that continued house building and future residential conversion is severely restricted by landscape, archaeological, built heritage and access constraints. The plots and conversion opportunities that have been developed over the last 30 years have been the easier ones. The more problematic and expensive sites remain. The net effect of a faster than planned rate of development has therefore been to consume the supply of housing land more quickly than intended. During the monitoring period planning permission was granted for a total of 120 new dwellings. 54 of these were on a single brownfield site at Embsay Tannery. No doubt some of these sites have been brought forward for decision before April 2005 in an attempt to get unrestricted occupancy before the implementation of the emerging local needs policy.

Since April 2005 the rate of residential application has begun to slow down. So far no local need permissions have been issued under the new policy although at least two schemes are at an advanced stage of negotiation.

It would appear then that the new local needs housing policy is prolonging the supply of remaining sites. It is not known what rate planning permissions and completions will eventually settle at although the Authority did suggest a figure of perhaps 20 permissions a year (a third of the historic completion rate) to the local plan inquiry. Such a rate of completion would certainly meet the regional objective of slowing down construction in this part of North Yorkshire. However it may be that the tighter policies of the new Local Plan will also increase pressure on other policy areas such as the reoccupation of former housing and replacement housing, both of which remain unaffected by the new local needs criteria.

The lack of affordable housing was cited as the most significant threat to the area in a survey of resident's opinions during 2004. Since then new district-wide housing needs surveys have been published by Richmondshire and Craven District Councils. Amongst other things they reveal the extent of the shortfall in affordable housing within the National Park.

Craven Housing Needs Survey October 2005	Richmondshire Housing Needs Survey May 2005	South Lakeland
250 (50p/a)	49 (10p/a)	New survey anticipated May 2006

Affordable housing shortfall Yorkshire Dales National Park 2005 – 2010

In April 2005 the Authority granted planning permission for 10 new affordable houses in Hawes. Meanwhile 6 units were being completed in nearby Askrigg. Both of these schemes were permitted as rural exceptions sites. In October 2004 permission was granted for a 40 bed sheltered housing development within the village of Bainbridge. This will shortly provide a net additional 15 bedspaces and may be regarded as a specialist form of affordable housing. It can therefore be seen that quite a lot is being achieved in Wensleydale towards addressing the shortfall of affordable Housing.

In the Craven area the shortfall is far greater but less housing is being built to meet it. Consent was granted for 10 units as part of the Emsay Tannery redevelopment and 8 new units have been permitted on an exceptions site in Grassington. There is however no likelihood that the shortfall of 50 houses a year in the south of the Park will be met without substantial additional funding and release of land.

A new district wide housing survey is due this winter in South Lakeland. In the meantime existing parish level surveys indicate a continuing shortfall in the north west of the Park, with no schemes at an advanced stage of discussion.

At the current rate of exceptions site release, and negotiated schemes, it is estimated that the average rate of completion of affordable housing in the National Park will amount to about 6 units a year over the next 3 years. This is less than a tenth of what is probably needed to adequately meet the shortfall. Next year housing policy is being reviewed as part of the new Local Development Framework. One of the options that will be investigated will be the deliberate allocation of land for affordable housing to help meet part of this shortfall.

With regard to the wider housing requirement of local communities, the Authority permitted some 197 extensions to domestic property. Whilst this complied with policy and may be regarded as meeting the 'housing needs' of the local community it should be appreciated that it has also had the affect of making the existing stock of housing less affordable.

The new local need housing policy (the single main difference between the 1996 Local Plan and the new Local Plan) is attempting to assist in the delivery of cheaper housing. By restricting the occupancy of new residential planning permissions by condition or legal agreement, an important side affect is to reduce valuation and make new housing 'more affordable' on resale.

The Inspector recommended that Policy H2 (New build housing in Service villages) should be limited to 90 square metres floor area to ensure that new permissions match the smaller households that are forming and deliver housing that is genuinely more affordable. Before April 2005 new housing permitted in the Park was un restricted in size

and density. Consequently many of the new houses that have been built over the last 30 years have been larger detached properties rather than smaller and cheaper houses and apartments.

The new policy has only been in use since April 2005 and has yet to deliver any permissions. However it has already been used to refuse a large house on a low density site. Next years annual monitoring report may reveal more permissions for smaller houses although it is still early days and the 90 square metre requirement may be challenged during the post Inquiry modifications stage.

- *To resist new housing development aimed at satisfying demand from outside the National Park, except in Key Service Centres.*

This is likely to be the key success of the new Local Plan. In his report of Inquiry findings the Local Plan Inspector recommended that the Authority pursue a local needs housing policy (see above). This is having the effect of targeting remaining plots and conversion opportunities at housing needs from within the Park rather than external demand for retirement homes, long range commuting and second homes.

The Inspector allowed exceptions to this strategy to be made within the four towns of Hawes, Reeth Grassington and Sedbergh and in relation to the reoccupation of former dwellings. However these exceptions were justified by other local plan objectives such as the provision of affordable housing (a 50% percent contribution) and the conservation of historic buildings through 'enabling' development.

- *To secure housing provision on sites that are environmentally acceptable with reasonable access to services and facilities in the interests of sustainable development.*

A list of villages where new build housing would be permissible is set out in the new Local Plan. Their defining criteria included the presence of at least basic services such as a village school, a shop, a pub and public transport.

At second deposit stage the Authority greatly expanded its proposed list of villages where barn conversion would be permissible. It did this in an attempt to widen the opportunity for local housing. However the decision to include some very small settlements with minimal or no services led to considerable debate during the Local Plan Inquiry. The debate revolved around the criteria for designation and the theoretical impact it might have on issues of sustainability and settlement character.

Between March 2004 and April 2005 a small number of residential conversions were permitted in the extended list of settlements. However in his report of Inquiry findings the Local Plan Inspector recommended that the list be returned to the shorter one set out in the first deposit plan (2002). The Authority accepted his recommendation and is now applying it.

In relation to this particular housing objective there is no definition in the Local Plan of 'environmentally acceptable' or even what 'reasonable access to services and facilities means'. Neighbouring authorities, for example, have much less restrictive policies on the

conversion of isolated barns yet share similar planning objectives of sustainable development and conservation of landscape character. The issue is however a very important one in the context of the Yorkshire Dales because of the very large number of traditional barns and because their current contribution to the landscape is an endearing quality of the national park. Consequently the policy is set tightly.

Next years review of housing policy will no doubt provide an opportunity to revisit the strategy and re examine all the Parks' settlements against more precisely defined criteria. This would help to meet the Inspector's criticism of the Local Plan methodology for selecting settlements suitable for new housing.

During the monitoring period, national policy changed with regard to dwellings in open countryside. Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) now permits housing for essential rural businesses to be located outside towns and villages where a compelling case is made. Previously only agricultural and forestry workers housing was permitted in open countryside beyond towns and villages. This amendment has been incorporated into the new local plan. During the period, four agricultural workers dwellings were permitted because the sustainability benefits of being located near to their place of work was judged to outweigh normal policy considerations within open countryside.

The policy on reoccupancy of former dwellings (H7) has yielded two new permissions. The objectives of this policy are to enable residential reuse where this will secure conservation of the built heritage and landscape character, for public benefit. Permission should therefore secure environmental enhancement, albeit at the expense of remoteness from public services and facilities.

- *To give priority to re-using previously developed land within settlements, including through the conversion of existing buildings, in preference to the development of greenfield sites.*

Of the 120 dwellings approved during the monitoring period, 22 were on greenfield sites. The rest were on previously developed land (including garden land), conversions or subdivisions. This compares favourably with the Regional Planning Guidance target of 60% of all new housing on brownfield land.

The local plan housing strategy permits infill development and the rounding off of small sites within towns and villages. The use of very tight housing development boundaries has limited the loss of greenfield land. Other policies in the local plan also protect important open space and prevent the development of land within villages that would be harmful to settlement character, residential amenity or the understanding of the historic development of the village.

The two main types of greenfield development that have been permitted are exceptions sites for affordable housing and agricultural workers' housing. The affordable housing schemes in Hawes and Grassington were permitted in accordance with Policy H5 (Affordable Housing on Exceptions Sites) and only after evidence revealed that alternative brownfield sites were found unsuitable or unavailable.

A third of residential approvals were conversions, sub divisions and reinstatements. The percentage of conversions has dropped, partly because of one application (Embsay Tannery) skewing the figures but also probably because many of the easier barns have now been converted. From this point onwards it may be that the number of greenfield sites begin to increase. If the Authority choose to allocate land for affordable housing this is also likely to consume greenfield land since there are very few brownfield options available.

EMPLOYMENT

- *To support a rural economy that provides diverse employment and maintains thriving, balanced communities.*
- *To support employment opportunities that promote sustainable economic growth, particularly those having their foundations in the National Park's special qualities*
- *To increase the quality and range of jobs in the National Park, particularly for young people.*
- *To protect existing businesses and support their expansion or relocation where these are compatible with the special qualities of the National Park.*
- *To protect and enhance the vitality and viability of retail centres.*

Land is allocated for employment uses in Hawes, Reeth, Threshfield quarry and Sedbergh. However applications have only been forthcoming during the monitoring period at Bruntacres, Hawes where permission has been granted to develop 3 plots. Unfortunately in Hawes unauthorised change of use from office and light manufacturing to retail has led to enforcement action because of concerns about the threat to the vitality of the retail high street.

This particular issue has raised a potential deficiency in policy. The local plan does not contain any specific comment about new retail uses on sites that could threaten the vitality of existing retail areas. This may be an issue for future consideration when employment and retail policies are reviewed, probably after 2009.

Eight applications have been approved to convert barns to new office, retail, light manufacturing and bunkouse uses. Most of these have been in the south of the park. Applications have been approved except in very isolated locations where intensification of use could cause significant harm to landscape character. Pre application advice has also been given on a number of potentially innovative conversion schemes. The main constraints tend to be signage and parking although these are usually resolved by improved design and use of conditions.

A handful of applications to change the use of modern agricultural buildings to alternative uses have been approved during the monitoring period. This included a significant application for the mixed development of training, offices and improved sales facilities at Hawes Auction Mart.

A particular problem that is becoming apparent is the increased number of applications that seek change the use from employment to housing. The Authority has dealt with three recent applications in Aysgarth, Arncliffe and Sedbergh to convert visitor accommodation or a residential home, into housing. Other applications have sought

change of use from garages and shops to housing. This is contrary to the employment objectives above which seek to retain employment uses within the National Park.

Policy E3 (Existing Employment Sites) requires stringent market testing of applications to ensure that continued business use is no longer viable. During the monitoring period the policy was successful in Askrigg where insistence on market testing eventually led to a business being sold for its current use rather than for conversion to open market housing, which would have been less helpful to the local economy.

In the long term the loss of employment sites and visitor accommodation may be more disadvantageous to the local economy than the short term benefits of building more housing. Particularly if the housing provided does not address local affordability. In the longer term the loss of employment sites will reduce the opportunity to make a living in the Park and therefore undermine efforts to meet local housing requirements. It may also lead to increased commuting from the Park and put pressure on the edge of villages for displaced business uses.

FARMING

- *To support the growth and diversification of the farming economy where this is in accordance with the special qualities of the National Park.*
- *To ensure the sensitive siting and design of new farm and forestry buildings and associated structures.*

A small number of applications have been approved under Policy F3 (Residential Lets and Self Catering Holiday Accommodation on Farm Holdings) for the conversion of farm buildings to holiday use. This is now the only means of permitting new self catering visitor accommodation within the Park. A number of agricultural businesses have also shown interest in a new aspect of this policy which permits farm buildings to be converted to local needs housing. No applications have yet been submitted although a good deal of pre application advice has been given.

An issue has arisen with the interpretation of criterion v) of Policy F3 which requires '*secure arrangements can be made to ensure that the accommodation will remain in the care of the main farm business.*' The objective is to ensure that holiday and residential lets are only permitted as a form of diversification for the main business of farming and are not simply sold off separately as a means of raising capital. This aspect of the policy needs to be tested, refined and monitored to find an appropriate mechanism to meet the policy objective.

Farms units continue to be split up, merged or sold off and this seems to be leading to applications for new agricultural buildings. The policy permits the development of new agricultural buildings where it is demonstrated that they are needed. During the monitoring period 60 new or extended agricultural buildings were approved. The main development control issues tend to be siting, design and scale. Negotiation with applicants about these details usually lead to permission.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- *To protect the range of existing community facilities and services in the National Park and to encourage opportunities to extend, enhance or provide new community facilities where needs are identified.*

60 applications for a wide range of community facilities were received including proposals for school extensions, alterations to village halls, skate parks, district council outreach offices, playing fields and disabled access. Only two applications were refused, both because of potential harm to a listed building.

Each year a number of enquires are received which seek to change the use of shops or pubs to housing. So far this pressure is being resisted by policy.

UTILITIES

- *To ensure a suitable provision of developments to support the expansion of the telecommunication network in the National Park, but in a way which is sensitive to the special qualities and the national landscape importance of the area.*
- *To protect water supplies and the environment to ensure a long-term sustainable water resource.*
- *To encourage adequate and suitable provisions of sewage facilities and to ensure appropriate surface water disposal.*
- *To support small-scale renewable energy schemes to meet local needs.*
- *To encourage the undergrounding of utility service lines where possible.*

15 applications for antennas were received. Most of these were for emergency service communications and broadband aerials and have not caused significant difficulties. The number of applications for mobile phone masts has tailed off, presumably as the roll out plans of each operator are completed.

The monitoring period revealed considerable pre application interest in small scale renewable energy projects, particularly the siting of micro wind, solar thermal and solar electricity panels. The local plan policies permit this scale of development subject to investigation of their individual impact on the landscape or character of listed buildings and Conservation areas. 6 solar schemes were approved and one refused, again because of its affect on the character of a listed building.

It is very likely that current pre application discussions will lead to significantly more applications next year.

NATURE CONSERVATION

- *To protect designated nature conservation sites and species of international, national and local importance.*
- *To stop and reverse the fragmentation of habitats and landscapes and the isolation of species populations.*
- *To maintain and, where possible, enhance the biodiversity value of the National Park.*

- *To protect, and where possible enhance, the special natural landscape features of the National Park.*

Despite the extent of the Park protected by national and international nature conservation designations planning applications rarely affect these areas.

The most frequently used Local Plan nature conservation policies tend to be those that deal with protected species and habitats, since these are more commonly affected by proposals to re use existing buildings. This can lead to conditions requiring recording or monitoring during development. It can also lead to mitigation measures such as the provision of a management plan or specific measures such as the provision of nesting boxes etc.

One particular application has led to a classic conflict between the conservation and recreation purposes of the National Park. The ongoing application at Grimwith Reservoir for a new sailing club house has raised issues of disturbance to a nationally important breeding area for Widgeon and Ringed Plover. This is being resolved through agreement of a new management plan covering use of the reservoir and has otherwise avoided outright refusal of consent. A management plan is also being used to resolve nature conservation and other outstanding issues involved with the redevelopment of Embsay Tannery near Skipton.

BUILT HERITAGE

- *To protect, and where possible, enhance the historic and cultural landscape of the National Park.*
- *To safeguard archaeological sites.*
- *To perpetuate the presence in the landscape of buildings and other features which help to explain the social and economic development of the area.*
- *To encourage new development which respects the character and appearance of its setting.*
- *To encourage the reuse of existing buildings where this can be accommodated without harming the character of the building, or its contribution to the character of the area.*
- *To give special protection to listed buildings and buildings within conservation areas.*
- *To protect agricultural land from encroachment by piecemeal development around settlements.*
- *To control the numbers and types of advertisements and signs.*

The built heritage is clearly one of the special qualities of the Yorkshire Dales. Analysis and negotiation of detailed issues of design and materials consume a large proportion of officer time in dealing with applications and pre application advice. This is a constant factor across the National Park that is illustrated by the number of built heritage policies in the Local Plan. The Authority's supplementary design guidance remains useful and relevant and there is no intention to revise it in the next three years.

Archaeology is a significant issue in the National Park. Archaeological assessments are frequently requested for development, particularly on the edge of towns and villages where agricultural field patterns and other remains are investigated prior to decisions,

typically on new agricultural buildings or affordable housing. During the monitoring period an archaeological assessment led to the refusal of one dwelling.

Despite the Park having three extensive barns and walls conservation areas and 14 conventional conservation areas, demolition has not been a significant issue. Only 3 applications for Conservation Area consent were approved, all for minor operations. The exception was Embsay Tannery where consent was granted to clear and decontaminate a large mill within the Conservation Area prior to the construction of new housing.

Issues of design detail continue to be important factors in discussion with applicants. In particular avoidance of inappropriate doors, windows, roofing materials, hard surfacing of front gardens and boundary treatment. Most of these are not specifically regulated by the planning system but can easily harm the character of traditional buildings and undermine the quality of the National Park. The design guide is helpful with some of these issues but no specific action such as the removal of Permitted Development Rights through the designation of an Article Four Direction, have been attempted during the monitoring period.

Applications that would affect listed buildings also take up a lot of officer time. The local plan policies seem to cover all the relevant criteria but there is a problem with the specific assessment of individual schemes. Some applicants and agents are not submitting an adequate enough level of detail and this is delaying decision making.

Both new and old local plans designate areas within villages as important open space. No permissions have been granted during the monitoring period that would lead to the loss of any of these areas.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

- *To conserve the natural resources of the National Park including water, land and air quality.*
- *To protect the special qualities of the National Park from damaging effects of all types of pollution, including those caused by noise and light.*
- *To minimise the effect of pollution on the amenities and the health and safety of residents and visitors to the National Park.*

The main issue here has been flood risk. The Park is perhaps more of a net contributor to flood risk than a victim of it, however in certain parts of Hawes and Embsay the submission of flood risk assessments as part of the planning application process has led to satisfactory mitigation measures. During the monitoring period no permissions were granted there were contrary to Environment Agency advice on flooding. The policy in the new local plan has been updated by the Inspector to accord with contemporary guidance and does not require early review.

SPORT AND RECREATION

- *To protect existing sport, recreation and open spaces where their loss would reduce the quality, quantity and accessibility of recreational opportunities for local people.*

- *To support the provision of new or improved community recreational facilities and open spaces where they meet an identified need and do not conflict with National Park purposes.*
- *To encourage sustainable sport and recreation developments for visitors that respect and are compatible with the special qualities of the National Park.*

Small scale and mostly uncontentious applications for community sports facilities, continue to be permitted. Importantly there have been no permissions that have led to the loss of playing areas or facilities.

There have however been a number of applications that have challenged the Sandford principle. This seeks to resolve conflict between the conservation of the Park and proposals for its enjoyment by the public. Three good examples have been Grimwith Reservoir, the Scott Trial and a proposal for a cave diving simulator near White Scar Cave.

The conflict between human use and breeding birds at Grimwith has already been referred to above. The Scott Trial is an annual off road motorcycle competition held in Swaledale which was recently granted temporary planning permission for a further 5 years. It doesn't benefit from the 14 day rule because it crosses a SSSI and a Special Protection Area for birds. However its obvious potential conflict with the conservation purpose of the national park was judged to be acceptable in this instance, because of the long history of the event and because English Nature advised that if well managed it would not cause any lasting harm to nature conservation. The cave diving simulator has not yet been determined but raises similar theoretical issues of conflict.

A small number of applications for private horse training facilities have been refused because of potential conflict with local landscape quality and their visibility from public views.

VISITOR FACILITIES

- *To support and encourage the development of facilities for visitors, including accommodation that are compatible with the National Park purposes.*
- *To support sustainable levels of visitor movement within the Park in line with the objectives of the Traffic and Visitor Management Strategy.*
- *To recognise 'honeypot' areas within the National Park where the cumulative effect of development needs special consideration, and also those quieter areas which need to be safeguarded.*

The Authority has received a significant application for the development of 40 holiday units at the former evacuation camp at Linton (near Grassington). The scheme which seeks to recreate a large country house challenges the Authority's visitor accommodation policies but is yet to be determined.

Some of the most commonly used policies have been those that deal with caravans. The Authority has a very strict line against the siting of more static caravans within the National Park and has stuck to this position, mainly through pre application discussion. However there is still interest in increasing the number of static caravans and in particular replacing existing caravans with double units. These are likely to increase

landscape impact and decrease site amenity by reducing privacy and internal landscaping. During the monitoring period both of the applications that were received for new static caravan sites were refused.

An amendment to the new Local Plan recommended by the Inspector and accepted by the Authority would permit the replacement of static caravans with wooden chalets. The intention is that wooden chalets will fit more appropriately into the National Park landscape but so far this new policy has not been tested.

Caravan rallies are an issue in the National Park but are not subject to regulation through the planning system. The Authority is consulted but there may need to be a revision of the criteria that it applies in its response since certain sites are raising issues of highway congestion and visual impact within concentrated areas such as Malhamdale. Certificated sites have also caused some problems during the last year with strong objections by the Authority not being acted upon.

The whole issue of visitor accommodation is probably an area of policy that should be reviewed after 2009.

TRANSPORT

- *To support the development of a safe, effective and integrated transport system to serve the needs of local residents and visitors.*
- *To support road improvements that are required for road safety reasons, to address local traffic problems, where their design accords with the special qualities and character of the National Park.*
- *To support opportunities for the expansion of the pedestrian, cycle and horse network.*
- *To reduce the impact of traffic on the special qualities of the National Park.*
- *To reduce dependency on motor cars for travelling to and within the National Park.*

Access and parking continue to be important considerations in most planning applications. In weighing the conservation of the character of Dales villages against parking and accessibility standards, the Authority frequently accepts lower standards.

It is possible that the detrunking of the A65 (Skipton to Kendal) and the consequent change of Highway Authority from the national Highways Agency to North Yorkshire County Council will lead to slightly less restrictive access criteria and thereby free up certain types of development.

Appeal decisions

The number of appeals lodged and their decision can be an indicator of the success of planning policy. During the monitoring period there were 21 appeals lodged. Most were appeals against refusal of housing including new build, conversion, change of use and residential conversion. Four appeals were allowed only one of which was for a dwelling. Four appeals were dismissed and two were withdrawn. The remainder are awaiting an appeal date or Inspector's decision.

There doesn't seem to be any implications for the Authority's policies arising out of these decisions or the number or type of appeals submitted. It should be remembered that the Authority has a high approval rate and this has the affect of limiting the amount of appeals that might otherwise be submitted.

So far the new local need housing policies have not been tested at appeal.

Enforcement

284 enforcement cases were recorded during the period. Of the 164 cases that were closed by September 2005, 63 were unauthorised building operations and 33 were breeches of condition. Unauthorised engineering operations, unauthorised change of use and unauthorised caravan development were the next most common forms of enforcement action.

The case load is very varied with no discernable patterns that provide lessons for policy. There are no current cases that raise issues of irreversible harm to the special qualities of the National Park.

Minerals

During 2003 there were six major aggregate quarries and one small building stone quarry operating in the park. Total aggregate sales were 3million tonnes (mt) of limestone and 1mt of skid resistant gritstone. 1.7mt of this was used for roadstone, 1.5mt for concrete aggregate and the remainder for construction fill. Only 42,000t were sold for non aggregate uses such as flux in iron and steel manufacture. Figures for 2004 are not yet available.

This level of sales from National Park quarries has remained the same over the 5 years to 2004. It amounts to one third of total crushed rock sales from the Yorkshire region. The regional minerals strategy seeks to reduce the amount and proportion of extraction from national parks but this is not yet being achieved because of the high levels of remaining reserves (140mt in the YDNP).

During 2004/05 one new permission was granted at Arcow Quarry, Ribblesdale. This is intended to remedy instability in the upper quarry faces rather than simply extract more aggregate. A restoration scheme has been agreed with English Nature.

Three applications are outstanding at Horton, Threshfield and Giggleswick to review old mineral permissions. Consideration of these is likely to lead to the imposition of modern planning conditions but they cannot be determined without Environmental Statements and there is no time limit to provide these. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is proposing to close this loophole. Discussion at Threshfield and Giggleswick is hoped to lead to closure and restoration.

Most of the quarry companies liaise and work well with Parish Councils. This is evidenced by very few complaints being received by the Authority, during the monitoring period.

The existing Minerals and Waste Local Plan was adopted in 1998 and has worked well. However it is now due for review and will form part of the new Local Development Framework from next year.

Departure Decisions

Since April 2004 15 applications have been approved contrary to policy and officer recommendation. 3 applications have been refused contrary to policy and officer recommendation.

Concern about decisions contrary to policy has led to criticism of the Authority by the Audit Commission and more recently has featured in the Authority's Performance Assessment. An Audit Commission study of departure decisions, published during the monitoring period, made specific recommendations to improve decision making. A summary of these are set out in Appendix 2 together with the Authority's intended action.

Most decisions contrary to policy concerned applications for residential development. The number of such decisions does seem quite high measured against the number of residential applications received each year and would tend to indicate dissatisfaction with the restrictive nature of the Local Plan housing policies. Five of the decisions were approvals contrary to policy in open countryside. However protection of open countryside is an issue of national policy and the development boundaries which define the distinction between built up areas and the countryside have only recently been confirmed through Local Plan Inquiry. At this stage there are no specific recommendations to alter planning policy or strategy as a consequence of either the Audit Commission or Performance Assessment reports. The review of housing policy next year should provide an opportunity to debate some of the recurring issues again.

Residents perception of the National Park and Planning Decisions

Two surveys of residents opinions about the National Park and the Authority's role as local planning authority have been undertaken since 1999. The latest survey was undertaken during the monitoring period in 2004.

Comparing the results of the 1999 survey with the 2004 survey reveals the following: (the 2004 figures are given first, followed by the 1999 figures in brackets.)

- 94% (93%) of respondents thought the Yorkshire Dales National Park is a special place
- 62% (60%) thought there are threats and pressures to the National Park as an area
- 86% (83%) of respondents thought the National Park Authority has been successful in helping to look after the Park as a whole
- 37% (43%) of respondents agreed that the Authority makes reasonable planning decisions; 37% (34%) disagreed

The main reasons given for the National Park being a special place were natural beauty, local people, built environment, tranquillity, wildlife and recreational opportunities. It may therefore be assumed that planning policies that conserve and enhance these qualities and which support local socio economic development would meet with approval. Perhaps this is borne out by that fact that only a third of residents disagree that the Authority makes reasonable planning judgements. However it is notable that residents confidence in the quality of the Authority's planning decisions reduced slightly between 1999 and 2004. The survey didn't reveal why this happened but it may have some connection with contentious applications that were being considered during that time.

Review of National Planning Policy 2004 - 2005

During the monitoring period nine new national planning policy statements were issued.

- Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development
- Planning Policy Statement 6: Planning for Town Centres
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Planning Policy Statement 10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management
- Planning Policy Statement 11: Regional Spatial Strategies
- Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks
- Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable energy
- Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control

PPS 7 and PPS 22 appeared in time for the Inspector to take them into account in his report of Inquiry findings and have been incorporated into the emerging Local Plan policies.

The other PPSs have less significant implications for the Local Plan. PPS 1 which incorporates the governments sustainability objectives was pre-empted by the new Local Plan which has sustainability as an aim of policy and which was subjected to sustainability assessment as part of its production.

The new PPS9 on nature conservation seeks to integrate biological and geological diversity into planning policy and decisions. It aims to restore and improve the quality of habitat for the benefit of wildlife. Biodiversity is already recognised as a key issue in the National Park and is well protected by the policies of the emerging Local Plan. The emerging policies conform with the new guidance in PPS 9 and it is not considered necessary to amend them.

PPS 11 and 12 set out guidance for the new Local Development Framework system that will gradually replace the Local Plan.

Two updates to PPG3 (Housing) were also made during 2005. PPG3 now permits the Authority to allocate sites specifically for affordable housing, something that it has not previously been allowed to do. This is potentially a very useful new aspect of policy but it is too late to incorporate it into the emerging Local Plan. This is an option that next years review of housing policy can look at. PPG3 continues to support policies that permit rural

exceptions sites for affordable housing, in line with Policy H5 (Affordable Housing on Exceptions Sites) of the emerging Local Plan.

The other update to PPG3 advises planning authority's to consider releasing employment land for housing uses. However the caveat is that the land allocated is no longer needed for employment purposes and that it should not apply to sites that would contradict the Local Plan housing strategy.

Only very small employment land allocations are identified in the new Local Plan. It is not considered that any of them are excessive or in any way surplus to requirements. Development is slow but is generally proceeding, except at Threshfield quarry, which would be wholly unsuitable for housing anyway. Also the Local Plan strategy seeks to retain employment and business sites wherever possible because of the lack of alternatives and the importance to the local economy of retaining a range of sites and uses. It is not therefore considered advisable that this change to PPG 3 should lead to any change in local policy.

A wholly new PPS 3 (Housing) is anticipated within the next 6 months. It is thought that this might attempt to accelerate the release of land for housing in response to the conclusions of the Barker report which found that lack of land supply was constraining house building to the social and economic disadvantage of the nation.

It is presumed though that any change in national guidance concerning the release of land for housing would have to conform to the figures in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for Yorkshire and the Humber. It is not anticipated that the RSS will contain a target for house building in the National Park. Instead it is expected that the RSS will require virtually all new housing in the Park to be directed at meeting local needs or affordable housing. If that is the case then a new PPS 3 is unlikely to have any significant new implications for housing land release in the Park.

Local Development Scheme Implementation

The Yorkshire Dales Local Development Scheme was submitted in March 2005 and amended in September. The start of the Local Development Framework is programmed for January with the gathering of evidence for Housing, Minerals and Allocations Development Plan Documents and the drafting of a Statement of Community Involvement. However all these activities are dependent on progress with the current review of the Local Plan. The Authority does not have the capacity to progress the Local Plan and start the LDF at the same time.

Work on the Agricultural Buildings Design Guide, the only Supplementary Planning Document programmed in the Local Development Scheme, has already begun and a draft is expected later this year.

Census Findings 1991 - 2001

- Resident population has increased by 1,154 (6.2%). The population of the Park is now 19,654. (*The population of England & Wales has increased 4.3% and North Yorkshire 6.3%*)
- The number of resident households has increased by 947 (12.8%) and now totals 8,363. Household size has reduced to 2.28, down from 2.43 in 1991.
- The proportion of the population aged 65 and over remains the same as in 1991 (21%), but is still significantly higher than the national average (16%).
- There has been a slight increase in the proportion of 0-15 year olds (0.7%).
- There has been an 8.1% decline in agricultural employment, down to 12.9% of employees. Residents of the park employed in service jobs have increased by 9.4% to 65.2% (close to the England and Wales average).
- Economic activity has increased by 10.2%, a significant increase. The rate now slightly exceeds the national average.
- Second and holiday homes have reduced by 136 properties. They still represent 15% of the Park's housing stock.
- The number of council houses in the Park has declined by a further 241 properties.
- ◆ more homes owned outright (ie. without a mortgage) than 10 years ago. Outright ownership in the National Park (47%) is much higher than the England and Wales average (30%).
- ◆ Local Authority and Housing Association stock is a third of the England and Wales average. The private rented and tied housing is more strongly represented in the Park than the national average.
- ◆ Mortgage ownership in the Park (27%) is below the national average (40%). Mortgage take up in the Park has declined everywhere except Littondale, Swaledale and Upper Wensleydale where there have been small increases.
- ◆ Each area has much higher than national levels of people who work from home and higher than average levels of people who walk to work. Commuting by car is consequently much lower than the national average. This reflects the pastoral nature of the Park but probably also a trend for people moving to the Park and working from home.
- ◆ There are now 3,161 more cars in the National Park than 10 years ago (increase of 36%)

Source: Office of National Statistics

Audit Commission Recommendations about the Planning Service 2005

The Authority's response is set out italics. Future Monitoring reports will help indicate whether decisions are continuing to depart to any significant degree from the Authority's policies. However there are no implications for the current policies themselves arising from the Commissions findings.

R1 Members and officers should visit completed developments that have been controversial, at least annually.

The Authority has already adopted this procedure and the first visits took place on 1 July 2005. Additional visits will be incorporated within normal committee site visits

R2 An annual monitoring report should be presented to the Planning Committee on progress in implementing Local Plan.

This is programmed fro December 2005.

R3 Officers should work with their counterparts at relevant authorities to ensure that the housing and economic needs of the Park are reflected in policies and that they are consequently taken into account in planning decisions.

Officers to implement in advance of the first policy reviews of LDF.March 06

R4 Regular private and informal meetings between officers and members should be held to discuss policy and procedural issues.

Officers to include planning issues in the Policy Development Forum programme and to liaise with Members on agenda items. In the event that the PDF option is unsuccessful, other alternatives, including Committee training days should be considered. January 06, or next appropriate PDF

R5 All members of the Authority should attend an open meeting, at least annually, to meet residents of the Park.

Members are already involved in a wide range of highly effective consultation and interaction with the residents of the Park. No action

R6 Dialogue between officers and members before committee should be encouraged to ensure all issues are addressed in reports; appropriate training should be given to ensure that officers and members understand the difference between this process and lobbying for a particular recommendation.

Further advice to be added to the Members Code of Conduct.

R7 Committee reports should make explicit whether applications meet policy tests, should address the sustainability of the proposed development and should indicate how officers have weighted considerations in coming to recommendations.

Development Control manual to be amended. Sustainability test only in appropriate cases.

R8 Members should demonstrate a proper weighting of agreed policy and substantiated material considerations when coming to decisions.
Where material considerations are considered to justify a decision contrary to recommendation or policy, the evidence which supports the material considerations will be recorded in the minutes.

R9 The size of planning committee should be reduced, whilst retaining balance.
This has been reviewed within the last 2 years and the Authority has decided not to pursue.

R10 The reference back system should then to be to the full Authority.
This has been reviewed within the last 2 years and the Authority has decided not to pursue.

R11 The Chairman of the Planning Committee should enforce Members' own agreed standards of behaviour, with mutual respect for others views, when debating applications.
Agreed. With training in the role of Chairman to be made available each year to Chairmen & Deputy Chairmen. Member Services Officer to arrange training after election of Chairmen & Deputies each year.