Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority **Item 8**

30 June 2026

Adoption of Yorkshire Dales Local Plan 2025 - 2040

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the outcome of the Yorkshire Dales Local Plan Examination and to adopt the Local Plan.

Recommendation

2. That Members note the Inspector's examination report and adopt the Yorkshire Dales Local Plan 2025 – 2040 for the purpose of making development decisions across the National Park.

Strategic Framework

3. The information and recommendation(s) contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and support the strategic planning framework, including:

    - **Corporate Plan objectives**

      26. Grant sufficient planning permissions (around 75) each year to support the completion of 250 new dwellings by 2030, of which at least half will be social housing, affordable or local occupancy homes to attract and retain younger working age households.

      27. Increase the proportion of dwellings that are permanently occupied by requiring all new dwellings to be for principal occupancy.

Background

4. The new Local Plan, which covers the whole of the National Park, is approaching completion after six years. It provides a framework for making planning decisions and is the single most important consideration when determining planning applications. It seeks to provide opportunities for high quality development to take place that will provide social and economic benefits for communities and businesses, while ensuring that the National Park's special qualities are conserved and enhanced.

5. The Plan is comprised of two main parts. The main text of the Local Plan is made up of strategic and detailed policies for determining planning applications. It is accompanied by a series of maps that allocate and designate land, either to promote development, or to provide particular protections.

6. Maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan is a legal requirement for the Authority and its preparation is a long and complex process. This reflects the rigour with which Local Plans are assessed before they can be formally adopted.

7. The Local Plan preparation stage took place over several years and included seven separate stages of public consultation. The Authority published a final 'Regulation 19' version of the Local Plan for consultation in March 2025, which gave stakeholders an opportunity to submit formal representations.

8. The Local Plan process culminates in a public examination where the Secretary of State appoints a Planning Inspector to determine whether the Plan is legally compliant and satisfies the relevant tests of 'soundness'. This includes consideration of any formal representations submitted at the Regulation 19 stage.

9. The Plan was submitted for examination in August 2025. The Planning Inspector, Mr Malcolm Rivett, formulated key lines of inquiry for the examination, which required the Authority and other participants to produce formal statements addressing the issues raised. The Inspector used these lines of inquiry to establish a programme of public hearing sessions to further explore the issues raised.

10. The hearing sessions were held over two weeks in December. The main issues revolved around objections to housing, including the approach to determining housing requirements, distribution and site selection.

Main modifications

11. To address some of the issues raised during the examination process, a number of modifications to the Local Plan were discussed and proposed either by the Authority, representors, but largely by the Inspector himself. Some of these modifications required further work to take place during the early months of 2026.

12. A final schedule of fifty 'main modifications' was produced and consulted on during April and May 2026. The main modifications are changes to the text of the Local Plan which, individually or cumulatively, alter the policies of the Plan. They are mostly changes of detail that will not affect the Plan's objectives and often amount to reordering or clarification of policy wording. Some of them result in changes being made to the mapping that accompanies the Local Plan text. The most significant changes are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

13. The modifications were published for a final round of public consultation in April and May. A total of 42 responses were received and were passed to the Inspector for consideration. This resulted in some further selected changes being agreed prior to the Inspector releasing his report of examination.

Inspector's findings

14. The Inspector's report can be found on the Authority's website: YDNPA-Report-2.pdf. It concludes that the Plan is sound subject to the modifications being applied.
15. The content of the report further underlines the prominent role of housing in the examination process. Importantly, the Inspector has agreed with the planned approach to the overall amount and distribution of housing in the National Park, including the 'extremely comprehensive' approach to site selection and land supply.

16. The Authority is now free to adopt the Local Plan, as modified, in accordance with the Inspector's requirements.

Policy outcomes

17. The new Local Plan provides a positive framework for development in the National Park over the next 15 years that is carefully balanced against the area's intrinsic special qualities. It brings together policy into a single document for the first time since the National Park was extended in 2016, providing a much clearer and consistent basis for decision making. **Appendix 2** provides a summary of some of the main policy outcomes of the new Local Plan, which include:

    - allocating sites to deliver nearly 400 houses as part of a more positive Plan-led approach to providing a minimum of 50 dwellings every year;
    - requiring all new housing to be occupied as principal residences to prevent further losses of housing stock to second or holiday home uses;
    - encouraging development that supports the transition of land management to nature-friendly farming and low carbon agriculture;
    - promoting active travel so that development is better linked to existing and proposed routes that promote physical activity;
    - encouraging development to incorporate decentralised sources of renewable and low carbon energy.

Implementation

18. The new policies are already being afforded weight in planning decisions, given their advanced stage of preparation. The Authority's Action Plan for 2025/26 contains the following commitments that are directly related to the Local Plan:

    - Engage with landowners and builders to support proposals for 5 allocated housing sites,
    - Complete Development Briefs for the larger allocated sites,
    - Work with Councils, the Rural Housing Enabler and community-led housing initiatives to progress proposals for 5 affordable housing exception sites, particularly in the north of the National Park

- Publish a new Design Guide and promote its use to secure high-quality developments.

19. Officers will monitor the implementation of the Local Plan through the production of an Annual Monitoring Report.

Financial Implications

20. Implementing the new Plan will involve continued staff and revenue budget provisions for development management and other policy monitoring/implementation activity. This will be offset, in part, by planning application fees and other financial incentives from central Government.

Legal Implications

21. Once adopted, the Local Plan will be given full legal weight in decision making. Legislation requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Local Plan's policies, unless material considerations dictate otherwise. Following adoption there will be six-week period in which a legal challenge can be lodged.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

22. The new Local Plan seeks to improve equality, diversity and inclusion by providing for development needs. The Local Plan was informed by an Equality Impact Assessment.

Conclusion

23. Adopting the Local Plan is a major milestone and the culmination of several years of work for Members, Officers and other participants in the process. The Local Plan has a crucial role to play in the achievement of sustainable development and the future of the National Park. The outcome is a clear and consistent basis for making planning decisions across the whole National Park, providing certainty and the confidence to invest in the development that is needed to sustain the National Park's communities and economy.

24. In adopting the Local Plan, thanks are due to the neighbouring authorities and all the stakeholders and consultees that have contributed to the process. Special thanks are due to the Member Champion for Sustainable Development, the Local Plan Advisory Group and ultimately to all Members of the Authority that have had to make the difficult decisions to keep the Plan on track. Those recommendations and decisions have overwhelmingly been proved to be robust during the examination process.

Thomas Harland
Planning Policy Officer

Appendix 1 – Main Modifications summary

A full list of all main modifications is available on the Authority's website:

Main modifications consultation - Yorkshire Dales National Park : Yorkshire Dales National Park

Below is a summary of the most substantive changes that have been proposed[1]:

Changes to site allocations

1) Changing the former Baliol School site in Sedbergh from an employment to housing site allocation (MM47)

This change reflects concerns over the viability of delivering an employment-led redevelopment of the site.

The Inspector was presented with a range of evidence to substantiate this claim based on objections lodged by the landowners of the majority share of the site.

The reallocation of the site for housing should incentivise its redevelopment and in doing so resolve issues associated with its long-term disuse and increasing dereliction. It will also provide an additional source of housing supply in the National Park's largest town.

Unfortunately, the presence of existing buildings on the site may mean that the national policy of 'vacant building credit' is used to reduce the proportion of affordable housing delivered on the site while eliminating the possibility of delivering business-led development, even as part of a mixed use. The Authority therefore contested the proposed change at the examination and the Parish Council expressed similar reservations as part of the main modifications consultation; however the Inspector has upheld the objections lodged and confirmed that he requires this change the Local Plan to be sound.

2) Amending the housing site allocations for sites THR4/5 and THR8 in Threshfield

These are the two largest housing site allocations and the Inspector required changes to the way in which they were described and depicted in the Local Plan.

The area of land allocated for the development of housing remains unchanged, however the Inspector has required that additional land, outside of this 'housing footprint' is demarcated for ancillary purposes, such as for landscaping, public open space, drainage, habitat creation and access/link roads connecting the developable areas to the highway and to one another.

For this reason, the overall housing site allocations now embrace a broader area, however the modification makes it clear that the development of dwellings on this additional land will not be permitted and that much of the land will be managed

[1] References in brackets (MMxx) relate to the numbering system for the main modifications. Other references in brackets relate to policy numbering.

as natural and semi-natural land comprising areas of open space interspersed with planting, walkways and water features.

Without including this additional land in the housing site allocation, there would be a risk that satisfactory access, landscaping, drainage measures would not be secured and delivered alongside the development of the housing.

3) Deletion of two small housing site allocations in Orton and Newbiggin-on-Lune (MM47)

This change was proposed by the Authority prior to the examination. It reflects changes to flood risk information published by the Environment Agency which cast serious doubt over the suitability of the site for housing development.

While the loss of the sites is regrettable, especially given the paucity of housing allocations in the former Eden District of the National Park, national policy requires that flood risks be given significant weight in planning decisions.

They were modest sites (15 dwellings combined) that would have made only a modest contribution to meeting affordable housing needs (3-4 dwellings). As a result of the allocation of the Baliol site in Sedbergh (above), the loss of these sites is more than compensated for numerically.

There may still be opportunities to pursue at least part of both sites on a windfall basis if the landowners can show how the flood risks will be mitigated for.

Changes to policy

4) Simplifying policy on biodiversity conservation and enhancement (MM8)

Although significant portions of this policy (CP9) have been deleted, this is because they are already requirements of national legislation and policy on Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). BNG requirements will continue to be applied in the National Park but including them in the policy would result in repetition. It would also result in the policy being out of step with any future changes to BNG rules, which are already in the process of being reformed.

The policy does still require that BNG measures are targeted at important habitats in the National Park and continues to require small-scale on-site enhancements that support nature and biodiversity, such as bird nest and bat roost boxes, swift bricks and landscaping/green infrastructure.

5) Revisions to the policy on major development (MM9)

This policy reflects long-established national policy that seeks to prevent major developments in National Parks, except where there is special justification. While the text of the Local Plan's major development policy (CP10) is largely unchanged, large portions of the policy justification have been deleted. This reflects the Inspector's view that the policy should not seek to prejudge whether certain developments are, or are not, major development. This is a judgement for the decision maker having regard to the particular facts of the case and must be made at the planning application stage.

6) Revisions to the policy on converting traditional buildings (MM16)

This policy is likely to be one of the most used policies in the Plan since it deals with the change of use of traditional buildings to a range of uses, including the conversion of barns to dwellings.

While the policy has been significantly re-ordered, this is largely to ensure clarity to aid interpretation. The provisions of the policy remain very similar to those of Policy L2 in the adopted Local Plan, which has delivered so many conversions of barns and other buildings over the last decade.

The most important change to the policy, requiring local occupancy restrictions for the vast majority of residential conversions, is not affected by the main modifications. The modifications simply help to clarify the exceptions to this general rule, which do allow principal residence or holiday letting occupancy in specified circumstances. This would only apply when a conversion forms part of a farm diversification project, or if the building has some other form of heritage significance (such as the re-occupation of a former dwelling that is a listed building or of equivalent significance).

7) Revisions to the policy on rural land-based enterprises (MM26)

Following discussion with the National Farmers Union during the examination, this policy (E2) has been reordered and simplified.

8) Revisions to policies supporting development on rural estates (MM30 & MM37)

These changes relate to the policies on Rural Estate Plans (E6) and the Bolton Abbey Estate (E14). They clarify the process behind and status of Rural Estate Plans, which are a means by which estates can set out long-term development objectives. They can be taken into consideration as part of the planning decisions, provided they are consistent with the objectives of the Local Plan and National Park Management Plan and have been endorsed by the Authority.

In relation to Bolton Abbey Estate, the modifications are largely for clarity. The most important change is to map the ‘core visitor area’ that the policy relates to, for the avoidance of doubt regarding its spatial application.

9) Revisions to appendices dealing with affordability and occupancy restrictions (MM48, MM49 & MM50)

These appendices deal with some of the technical details of securing restrictions on affordability, principal residence and local occupancy. Much of the explanatory text has been moved to the policy justification. As a corollary to this, a new table summarising the requirements that apply to different types/sizes of housing development has been added into Policy CP3 (MM2). The only significant added detail that stems from the modifications relates to the process for calculating financial contributions for affordable housing, where on-site provision is not possible. Some further work is currently taking place to determine the mechanisms for pooling and committing these financial contributions.

Appendix 2 – Summary of main Local Plan policy outcomes

Contribution to economic growth

A significant but perhaps underappreciated role of the Local Plan will be its contribution to investment in the area. Its site allocations and planning policies will raise land value, generate construction spending, deliver new house sales, increase visitor stays, support new infrastructure spending and enhance tax receipts.

The full economic value of the Local Plan will probably not be evident for 20 years, but it is likely to be substantial. Every new home completed will have a multiplier effect of around 1.5 times its value. Development of all 22 allocated housing sites, together with expected windfall housing completions (e.g. conversions & small infill developments), then the Plan's housing policies will direct hundreds of millions of pounds of investment into the local economy. Beyond housing, policies that support the development and diversification of farming and estates, local businesses and minerals development will further bolster economic growth.

Measured against this capital uplift is the cost of preparing the Local Plan. Excluding staff costs, the programme expenditure for the Local Plan over the seven years since work started amounts to less than £400,000. A significant portion of this cost is the fee payable to the Planning Inspectorate for conducting the examination, but it also includes expenditure on preparing evidence. The return on expenditure into the local economy will therefore be overwhelmingly favourable.

The financial stimulus is however secondary to the Plan's main objectives. The legacy of new households living permanently in the National Park and contributing to community life and supporting local services cannot be quantified in financial terms alone. Nor can the Plan's conservation policies, which will support the reuse of traditional buildings, secure wildlife enhancements and protect extensive landscapes from future harm.

Housing development

One of the most significant challenges the Local Plan seeks to address is housing. It releases sufficient land to maintain a minimum completion rate of 50 new homes every year, through to 2040. More than half of this target will be met by housing site allocations identified following an exhaustive process of site selection. In doing so, the Plan will enable the delivery of sufficient housing to help address some of the demographic challenges highlighted by evidence studies that informed the Plan. It is anticipated that the supply of land flowing from the Local Plan's policies will allow the minimum completion rate to be comfortably exceeded over the full 15-year period.

The Local Plan will require almost all additional homes in the National Park, whether newly built or conversions of existing buildings, to be restricted to 'principal residency', preventing them being lost to holiday or second home uses. Sites larger than two dwellings will be required to contribute between 20% and 50%[2] affordable housing for which there is a significant level of unmet need. Additional affordable housing will be supported by 'rural exception sites', on the edge of towns and villages. These sites are

[2] Varies according to site size and location.

normally expected to deliver 100% affordable housing. An important part of the Plan's implementation will involve stimulating development of these sites, especially in the northern and western areas where less housing sites are being allocated.

Finally, the Plan will also release more infill plots and has expanded the definition of local occupancy to widen the range of qualifying households. It will do this through expanded housing development boundaries and the facility for some new build in the smaller villages and hamlets that previously haven't benefitted from this opportunity. Alongside continued provision for barn conversion in a range of locations, the Plan provides potential for small scale developments restricted to local occupancy so that the needs of self-builders and other aspiring homeowners with local connections can live in the National Park.

Development in a National Park context

The new Local Plan will contribute to the delivery of many of the new National Park Management Plan objectives around renewable energy, visitor facilities, dark skies, nature friendly farming, climate resilience, repair and reuse of heritage assets, active travel and improved digital communications. Its principal policy frames sustainable development within the unique context of the National Park, balancing the challenges of securing community wellbeing and economic growth in a deeply rural landscape with the highest level of protection.

An essential role of the Plan is to safeguard the special qualities that make the National Park distinctive. Not only do these underpin a significant part of the local economy and enhance the area as a place to live, work and visit, they are also part of the nation's cultural fabric.

The Plan provides stronger protection for ancient woodland, ancient trees, water courses and the recently designated international dark sky reserve. It ensures that valued habitats and species are adequately protected, designating an ecological network that extends well beyond the nationally and internationally protected sites, while ensuring that development proposals don't just mitigate for their impacts, but also provide positive enhancements. The open upland and other important green spaces are specifically mapped and identified for protection against development.

The National Park's historic environment is protected in line with national policy, embedding the principle that not everything that has heritage significance is designated. It requires an informed approach to proposals affecting traditional buildings and sites with archaeological potential, so that their heritage significance is understood and responded to as part of the development process. Policy flexibilities introduced in the last Local Plan, which have secured new viable uses for many traditional farm and other buildings, are retained, with residential uses targeted at meeting local housing needs.

National Park purposes are embedded in the Plan and supplemented by strategic policies on landscape, design and dark skies which, backed up by a detailed Design Guide, will ensure that development in the National Park is high quality and sympathetic to its context.

Economic and tourism policies

The Local Plan will help support regional and local ambitions for the development of the rural economy during a period of agricultural transition. Development for agriculture and land management uses will be encouraged where they would be compatible with the special qualities of the National Park. The Local Plan policies also encourage further measures to diversify farm and rural estates towards nature recovery and sustainable tourism that will bring benefits to the local economy. Agricultural development arising from measures to comply with farming standards, environmental processes, or the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, will be encouraged while proposals for development needed to support significant increases in stocking levels that might risk harm to the landscape or other special qualities of the Park will be carefully scrutinised.

The Plan contains a new initiative to explore 'rural estate plans' with the larger land-owning estates, with the intention of providing confidence in long term investment in land management, tourism and other developments on their holdings.

Visitor accommodation and infrastructure will continue to be supported where it is compatible with special qualities. A range of accommodation types will be supported, including the conversion of traditional buildings on farms and estates to holiday letting; camping and campervan sites; touring caravan and motorhome sites (where screened); sites for camping pods/yurts/shepherds huts; and the remodelling of static caravan sites. There is an emphasis on the promotion of 'active travel' running throughout the Plan, ensuring that it complements the Active Travel Plan and aspirations to provide multi-user routes throughout the National Park.

In addition to land management and tourism the Local Plan will also support the growth of existing business and allow new business to develop on allocated sites, brownfield land and suitable small sites on the edge of large villages. A wider mix of new uses will be permitted on allocated business sites to stimulate delivery. The Plan provides additional flexibility for non-retail high street uses such as offices, food and drink, leisure and health services, reflecting changing consumer habits and the importance of maintaining vibrant town centres.

The Plan will continue to support enhancements to infrastructure so that fit-for-purpose communications, power and water and waste disposal amenities are rolled out in a way that is compatible with a protected landscape. In doing so, it is hoped that the Local Plan can play its role in facilitating solutions to the challenges associated with access to services in a deeply rural area.

The Plan also has a role to play in safeguarding socio-economic assets. As well as protecting heritage, habitat and landscape, the Plan will also ensure scrutiny of proposals that would lead to the avoidable loss of jobs, community facilities or valued types of visitor infrastructure.

The strategy for aggregates quarrying inside the National Park is managed decline. The post-war limestone and gritstone quarries are approaching general exhaustion. Permission will however be granted to work final reserves at depth where this will deliver mitigating environmental benefits, and the material will be exported by rail rather than road. New aggregate quarries will not be permitted because of the significant and permanent harm they would cause to the environment of the National

Park. Proposals for quarrying building stone or re-working mineral waste may also be suitable, subject to their impacts.

Climate change

Climate change considerations are given much greater prominence in the new Local Plan. The design policy and the proposed design code will require developers and land managers to indicate how their proposals will adapt to a changing climate, how they will reduce energy or generate their own and how they will minimise greenhouse gas emissions within new development.

Flood risk is treated as a strategic issue and the Local Plan fully reflects national policy on directing development to the lowest risk areas, based on current and future risk factoring in the impacts of climate change.

The Local Plan encourages the use of decentralised sources of energy, including on-site generation and will support renewable and low carbon energy proposals where they provide for the needs of communities and businesses inside the National Park.

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