

■ INTRODUCTION

2.1 This Chapter establishes at the outset the General Strategy of the Plan and defines “Guiding Principles” for the environment,

development and transport. These Guiding Principles form the basic framework for all the other policies of the Plan.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: THE ENVIRONMENT

All development must take full account of the need to protect the environment so that present day demands do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs or enjoy a high quality environment. All development must reflect the need to safeguard and improve the quality of life of residents, conserve energy resources and protect and, where possible, enhance the Plan area’s essential character and “main environmental assets” such as:

- *the Howardian Hills AONB and the Nidderdale AONB;*
- *the general attractiveness and diversity of the landscape;*
- *the open and undeveloped nature of the countryside;*
- *the York Green Belt;*
- *areas of wildlife and ecological value;*
- *the setting, form and character of settlements and their immediate environment;*
- *the quality of air supplies;*
- *the quality of streams, rivers and groundwater;*
- *the best and most versatile agricultural land;*
- *buildings and areas of special townscape, historic or architectural interest;*
- *sites of archaeological importance;*
- *land of recreation and amenity value;*
- *the public rights-of-way network.*

2.2 The importance of environmental considerations in maintaining and improving the quality of life is now widely recognised and the environment is more than ever a fundamental concern of planning. The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 requires that local plans include

policies for the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of the land and policies for the improvement of the physical environment, whilst PPG12 advises that policies should be in line with the concept of sustainable development.

- 2.3 The District is rich in the range and quality of buildings and areas of architectural, archaeological and historic interest. Much of the landscape is also of high quality, possessing a diverse natural beauty. This wealth of natural and man-made features combine to create a high quality environment which contributes to the culture and identity of Hambleton and to the quality of life of residents. A high quality environment is also important to the economy of the District, assisting in the attraction and retention of business, investment and visitors.
- 2.4 The Council will protect as much of the historic and natural heritage of the District as possible and secure the best possible quality of environment for residents in which to live, work, travel and enjoy recreational activities. The Environment Guiding Principle sets out the Council's commitment to protect the environment and identifies the most important features of the area's natural and built environment. The Principle covers traditional environmental concerns such as the countryside, landscape quality, nature conservation and the built heritage and also new environmental concerns such as sustainable development.
- 2.5 The Guiding Principle reflects the strategy of the Structure Plan which gives a high priority to the conservation and protection of the County's natural resources and environment.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2: THE SCALE AND NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT

Within the context of the level of development provided for in the Structure Plan a general policy of restraint will apply across the Plan area. There will be an increased emphasis on meeting the needs of the District in both urban and rural areas and as far as possible on reducing the extent to which development generated from outside the District is met.

- 2.6 The environment is under constant pressure for development and change. Although these forces can threaten environmental quality they result from the demands and aspirations of society for increased prosperity, better living standards, new homes, jobs and leisure opportunities. Changes in the urban and rural environment are inevitable and necessary but the degree of change and how and where it takes place must be managed and controlled to preserve the District's environmental quality.
- 2.7 Development restraint was an important theme of the North Yorkshire Structure Plan approved in 1980. The Panel in its report on Alteration No 3 confirmed that the Structure Plan strategy continues to be based on a policy of restraint because of the need to avoid unacceptable pressures on the quality of the environment in North Yorkshire. Within the overall context of providing for economic development and maintaining prosperity the Structure Plan seeks to relate the scale and nature of development more closely to local needs

- and to reduce the demand for development generated from outside the County.
- 2.8 The Local Plan reflects the Structure Plan strategy by putting increased emphasis on providing for local development needs and reducing the amount of development attributed to demands from outside the District. It seeks to achieve this by careful controls over the scale, location and nature of development. It is not the intention of the Local Plan to limit development to local needs only.
- 2.9 Ensuring the future prosperity of the District is a priority of the Plan. Provision

will be made for development which would benefit the local economy and provide jobs in both urban and rural areas, for the continued growth of housing and for the other needs and expectations of the local population to be met. Restraint will be exercised in relation to those development pressures generated by external influences which would bring little or no economic or social benefits to the local community but would have an adverse impact on the “main environmental assets” outlined in Guiding Principle 1.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The new homes, places of work and facilities required in the Plan area will be provided mainly in and around the market towns. The majority of this will take place in and around the “main towns” of Northallerton and Thirsk with a lesser level of development in and around the “small towns” of Bedale, Easingwold and Stokesley. Outside the market towns development will be limited to modest development in the villages and development in the countryside which helps sustain rural communities both socially and economically.

- 2.10 The Structure Plan requires that new development should mainly be directed to the market towns. These are the District’s most significant centres of population and housing; they are also the main service and employment centres for the surrounding rural areas. Concentrating development in the market towns will maximise the number of people with reasonable access to a wide range of facilities, jobs and choice of transport provision; maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services; and help protect more sensitive parts of the District. This locational strategy is intended to contribute towards reducing the need for travel in line with PPG13 (see Guiding Principle 4).
- 2.11 Most development is directed to Northallerton and Thirsk because the Structure Plan defines them as “main towns”. They are the largest centres of population, housing and employment;

physically and environmentally they are best able to accommodate development; they have the best employment opportunities; and the best services and facilities. Less development is to be directed to Bedale, Easingwold and Stokesley. These are defined by the Structure Plan as “small towns” and there has been public concern about the environmental effects of large scale development. In addition housing development in Easingwold and Stokesley attracts a high proportion of commuters and is less likely to meet the needs of District residents.

- 2.12 Speculative development in villages can result in a loss of settlement character. However, development of a sympathetic scale and character can have environmental, economic and social benefits. There will, therefore, be a selective distribution of development to villages.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4: TRANSPORT

New development will, where practical, be encouraged to locate where it could reduce the need for travel, especially by car, and enable the use of more environmentally friendly means of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling.

- 2.13 The growth in transport, particularly the use of the car is having a major impact on the environment, through carbon dioxide emissions, pollution, congestion and other adverse environmental effects. It is Government policy to reduce the need for travel and encourage more environmentally friendly means of transport.
- 2.14 PPG13 emphasises that planning has an important role to play in reducing the environmental impact of transport by influencing the location and nature of development. It goes on to say that this should be taken into account in preparing planning policies.
- 2.15 Despite the characteristics of the Plan area, in particular its rural nature and dispersed settlement pattern, the policies of the Plan can have an influence on the amount and method of travel. The Plan seeks to reduce the need for travel by directing the majority of new housing, employment, services and facilities to the market towns and constraining development in the villages and in locations likely to encourage long distance commuting. In addition, the Plan seeks to encourage public transport, cycling and walking by making proper provision for them.