



OPEN REPORT LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE - 8th April 2026

DERBYSHIRE DALES LOCAL PLAN – Site Selection Methodology

Report of Director of Place and Economy

Report Author and Contact Details

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Wards Affected

All Outside of the Peak District National Park

Report Summary

This report sets out the methodology for undertaking site selection work.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee endorse the proposed methodology.

List of Appendices

None

Background Papers

[Derbyshire Dales Local Plan - Proposed Assessment Methodology for Site Selection and Prioritisation - Housing Land Allocations](#), Local Plan Sub-Committee, 16th July 2024

[Derbyshire Dales Local Plan - Planning Inspectorate Advisory Visit and Implications for Local Plan Preparation](#), Local Plan Committee, 19th November 2025

Consideration of report by Council or other committee

The constitution, as amended at Council on 29th May 2025, establishes that Council is now deemed to be responsible for the preparation and adoption of the revised Derbyshire Dales Local Plan, guided by the recommendations of this Committee. The

methodology will be applied to shape what sites are included within a draft version of the Local Plan Review, scheduled to be considered by Council in July 2026.

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from Press or Public

No

Derbyshire Dales Local Plan – Site Selection Methodology

1. Background

- 1.1 In July 2024 the Local Plans Sub Committee the Local Plan Sub Committee endorsed a proposed methodology for the evaluation and prioritisation of sites for inclusion in the Local Plan. Since then, there has been changing circumstances with national policy and guidance. Advice provided by the Planning Inspectorate and reported to this committee in November 2025 was to demonstrate a “robust process of selection has been followed and why sites had been rejected or allocated”.
- 1.2 The methodology drafted in 2024 has been reviewed and this report sets out a revised approach.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) makes it clear that the “purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner”. The NPPF sets out the economic, social and environmental objectives that the planning system should achieve. Paragraph 9 of the NPPF (2024) states:

These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

- 2.2 Paragraph 33 of the NPPF (2024) states:

Local plans and spatial development strategies should be informed throughout their preparation by a sustainability appraisal that meets the relevant legal requirements¹⁸. This should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains). Significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued. Where significant adverse impacts are unavoidable, suitable mitigation measures should be proposed (or, where this is not possible, compensatory measures should be considered).

- 2.3 There is no adopted guidance on site selection, however, in draft guidance published by the Government to accompany the new planning system, there is a section on site selection. After assessing sites for suitability, availability and achievability (SHLAA work), sites should be selected which LPAs think meet their proposed local plan’s vision for the area. The draft guidance states:

Here are some example factors you could consider when deciding on your draft allocations. Draw on any relevant evidence you've developed already through the process, in particular during the assessment of the sites (this list is not exhaustive):

- *the type and category of the sites determined in stage 2*
- *settlement hierarchy and function (linking to related evidence and the plan vision and spatial strategy)*
- *proximity to existing settlements*
- *existing and future connectivity by private, public and active transport*
- *accessibility to services and facilities*
- *the efficient use of land*
- *alternative or competing land uses such as employment, minerals extraction or safeguarded land*
- *timescales for delivery to ensure new development can be provided throughout the plan period – for housing sites consider the deliverability and developability of sites*
- *ability to deliver strategic development, either alone or combined with other sites (linking to the plan vision and spatial strategy)*
- *any relevant environmental considerations or objectives of the plan*
- *economic sustainability considerations such as jobs and skills, regeneration and social inclusion*
- *local considerations, such as constraints relating to neighbouring or nearby uses or existing or emerging policy designations*
- *other new or emerging local plan evidence – for example, your whole draft plan's viability study may give you a more complete picture of how sites meet the needs of your area.*

2.4 This is draft guidance is consistent with established current practice in local plan production.

2.5 The draft guidance goes on to say:

The number of sites you'll need to select to put forward to allocate depends on the proposed spatial strategy of your plan. There are several things to reconsider if, after several iterations, you do not have enough appropriate sites to put forward as draft allocations for your plan.

Amongst other things, this could include (in no order of priority):

- *how you selected sites in this stage - are there any more that could meet your proposed strategy and vision for your area in your proposed local plan*
- *how you assessed sites in Stage 2 - could you change the mitigation criteria and local considerations used?*
- *the assumptions you made around density and development potential - were they right?*
- *the reasonable alternatives to your spatial strategy, and whether you could do further assessment of these*

If you still do not have appropriate capacity within your draft allocations, having exhausted all reasonable options to do so within your plan area, you should be able to justify this and explain the reasons why.

This will form part of the examination of the plan and will directly affect whether the sites element of your proposed plan is considered sound. You may need to explore options to meet any needs somewhere else.

- 2.6 A typical question posed by Inspectors during Local Plan examinations is “Have the sites allocated for development in the plan been appraised and selected in comparison with possible alternatives using a robust and objective process?”.
- 2.7 The draft methodology seeks to follow the guidance which will help to answer this question.

Draft Methodology

- 2.8 The sites that will be subject to the selection process will be limited to those sites that, after the site assessment process (SHLAA) are considered to be deliverable or developable over the plan period.
- 2.9 The site assessment process will consider all evidence submitted to the Council about each site to the date when the assessment has been completed.
- 2.10 The consideration of sites will follow a three part process:
- A. consideration against policy factors
 - B. consideration against the development strategy, reflecting the vision and objectives for the plan
 - C. consideration of outcomes from the Sustainability Appraisal Process

Part A consideration against policy factors

- 2.11 The factors that will be taken into account when considering which sites should be allocated are as follows:

| Factors | Considerations |
|---|--|
| <i>settlement hierarchy</i> | Sites associated with higher tier settlements will be considered more favourably than lower tiers and countryside. |
| <i>proximity to existing settlements</i> | Sites within existing settlements will be considered more favourably than those adjacent, then those further away from settlements. |
| <i>existing and future connectivity by private, public and active transport</i> | Sites where there are a range of connectivity options will be considered more favourably than those that rely on the private motor vehicle |
| <i>accessibility to services and facilities</i> | Sites which are more accessible to services and facilities. |
| <i>alternative or competing land uses such as employment, minerals extraction or safeguarded land</i> | Alternative or competing land uses will be taken into consideration and the |

| | |
|---|---|
| | impacts of a particular use happening instead of another will be considered. |
| <i>timescales for delivery to ensure new development can be provided throughout the plan period – for housing sites consider the deliverability and developability of sites</i> | Sites that can be delivered earlier in the plan period will be considered more favourably. |
| <i>ability to deliver strategic development, either alone or combined with other sites (linking to the plan vision and spatial strategy)</i> | Alone or with other sites deliver a significant number of homes and / or strategic infrastructure improvements |
| <i>any relevant environmental considerations</i> | Less of an impact on environmental designations Taking into account habitats and biodiversity, flood risk. |
| <i>economic sustainability considerations such as jobs and skills, regeneration and social inclusion</i> | Proximity to, or provision of, places of work including rural employment opportunities |
| <i>emerging local plan evidence</i> | Are there any implications from the emerging evidence base including infrastructure constraints for individual sites and when considered cumulatively |

Part B - consideration against the preferred development strategy, reflecting the vision and objectives for the plan

- 2.12 The Plan Vision and Strategic Objectives were agreed by the Local Plan Committee on the 17th September 2025. Spatial Strategy Options for a spatial strategy will be tested through the SA process. Sites will be considered against the preferred Strategy.

Part C - consideration of outcomes from the Sustainability Appraisal Process

- 2.13 Sustainability Appraisal of a Local Plan is required under Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The NPPF (February 2019) also requires SA of DPDs. The SA must incorporate the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). The SEA Regulations transpose the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) into English law and applies to a range of plans and programmes, including DPDs. The purpose of the SEA Directive is to ensure a high level of environmental protection, and to integrate the consideration of the environment into the preparation and adoption of plans, with a view to promoting sustainable development. Within the context of local planning in England, it is accepted practice to integrate the requirements of SA and SEA into a single assessment process as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance³ (updated 2019).
- 2.14 An SA scoping report has previously been published that includes 17 objectives to assess the Plan and alternatives against. The SA will assess

site allocation options for their sustainability effects. These assessments will be considered as part of the site selection process.

- 2.15 If after considering sites against this methodology there are insufficient sites to meet identified needs, then a review of the criteria and assumptions on each site will be undertaken in accordance with the guidance outlined above. This does not necessarily imply that additional sites will be added in or that densities will be increased but these will be reviewed and considered.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 3.1 The draft methodology follows government guidance and will assess alternatives.
- 3.2 An alternative approach would not be to set out the methodology or document how sites are selected, however, this will lead to issues at examination as Inspectors will not be able to consider if the Council has followed national policy.
- 3.3 Therefore, the proposed approach is recommended.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 None required.
- 4.2 The Local Plan has already been subject to public consultation in accordance with the Plan making regulations, namely Regulation 18, (The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) and details outlined within the District Councils Statement of Community Involvement. A further consultation will be undertaken under Regulation 19 on the Local Plan before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

5. Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 Work will commence on assessing sites in April, with initial assessments against the methodology presented to the Local Plans Committee on the 29th April.

6. Policy Implications

- 6.1 No direct policy implications for the District Council as a consequence of this report. The Local Plan itself will have policy implications, and these will be covered in future reports where relevant.

7. Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications as a consequence of this report. Any that do arise following the implementation of the above recommendations will be contained within existing budgets. The financial risk is, therefore, assessed as low.

8. Legal Advice and Implications

- 8.1 The proposed site selection methodology accords with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and is consistent with national policy expectations set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The approach provides a clear, transparent and defensible basis for assessing reasonable alternatives, which is essential to ensuring that the Local Plan can be robustly justified at examination.
- 8.2 It is important that the methodology is applied consistently and that the decision-making process is fully documented, as Inspectors will expect evidence demonstrating why sites have been selected or discounted. Provided this is done, there are no legal impediments to the Committee endorsing the methodology. Further legal considerations will arise as the Local Plan progresses to Regulation 19 consultation and subsequent submission for examination.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1 The methodology has no direct equalities implications. The review of the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan, its strategy and policies, will be subject to a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment.

10. Climate Change Implications

- 10.1 The methodology has no direct climate change implications. The assessment of sites will include factors associated with mitigating the effects of climate change. The review of the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan will include revised policies which will seek to mitigate the effects of Climate Change and be subject to a Climate Change Impact Assessment. The Local Plan as a whole will also be subject to Sustainability Appraisal which will assess the impacts of the Plan on matters such as climate change. Should any impacts be identified, this process will also help identify any necessary mitigation to address them.

11. Risk Management

- 11.1 The Derbyshire Dales Local Plan is one of the Council's pivotal plans and strategies ensuring the spatial delivery of the District Council's aims and objectives as set out in its Corporate Plan. Any significant delays in undertaking the review of the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan will increase the risk to the District Council of delivering its key aims and objectives and also the time by which the District Council can get a revised Local Plan adopted.
- 11.2 The longer that the Local Plan review takes to complete the greater the risk to the District Council that the future shape and direction of new development will not be plan-led, rather it will be determined by decisions made on un-coordinated planning applications, often on appeal. A detailed risk assessment relating the preparation of the Local Plan is set out in the adopted LDS.

Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from: -

| | Named Officer | Date |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Chief Executive | Paul Wilson | 26/03/2026 |
| Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer | Karen Henriksen | 26/03/2026 |
| Monitoring Officer | Kerry France | 26-03-2026 |