



Development Management Policies

Consultation into Issues and Preferred Approaches

Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012



Additional Issue Recreation Hubs

July 2014

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1. Drivers and Strategic Context for the issue

National Parks Vision and Circular 2010

1.1. The National Parks Vision and Circular 2010 encourages proactive identification and promotion of new access and recreational opportunities and ways of delivering them whilst taking into account that 'activities which would have an adverse impact on the Parks' special qualities and other people's enjoyment of them may need to be excluded (in order to meet the requirements of section 11A (2) of the 1949 Act¹)'.

National Planning Policy Framework

1.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) supports sustainable rural tourism that takes 'account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it' (NPPF para 17 Core Planning Principle).

1.3. The NPPF states in paragraph 35 that developments should be located and designed to 'give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities'.

National Park Management Plan

1.4. Taking this context and the strategic context of the National Park Management Plan the Authority has begun a process alongside its partners of refreshing the strategic approach to tourism provision in the area.

1.5. The Local Development Framework Core Strategy was adopted in 2011 and explains that the spatial vision for the National Park is shared with that for the broader, partnership based, National Park Management Plan. The National Park Management Plan Vision was refreshed in 2012 and has four main components around a central statement as shown below. The Vision is a means of communicating a contemporary expression of our statutory purposes and duty as a National Park Authority.

National Park Management Plan Vision



¹ National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended)

1.6. In particular this document focusses on the management and promotion of some key visitor sites and seeks to provide a spatial planning framework to assist a range of partnership projects and programmes driven by the National Park Management Plan 2012-17. Five signature programmes have been developed to promote and deliver the management plan, one of these being:

Destination Pedal Peak District

- 1.6.1. Destination Pedal Peak District is about creating a distinctive Peak District tourism offer centred around the concept of a healthy and sustainable leisure experience in the national park.
- 1.6.2. This signature will also focus on the elements of managing a visitor destination in a national park. In the first instance the theme of cycling will be used as a catalyst to demonstrate the benefits of a visit. However, it will also link to other aspects of visits to the national park such as food or heritage.
- 1.6.3. In particular, the signature aims to attract more cycle enthusiasts, and to identify strategies for dispersal of cyclists beyond popular destinations.

The Local Development Plan

1.7. Previous Peak District National Park policies from the Structure Plan 1994² and saved Local Plan 20013 applied a zoning policy for the management of recreational uses through a combination of landscape character, land-use patterns and accessibility. Across 3 zones the following types of activity were considered appropriate:

Zone 1:

Informal, low-impact, active recreation uses acceptable with careful management, such as hostels, farmhouse accommodation, walking, cycling and riding routes;

Zone 2:

Informal recreation uses acceptable with careful management, such as small car parks, picnic sites, facilities linked to walking, cycling and riding. Consideration should be given to the re-use of existing buildings wherever possible in preference to new build;

Zone 3:

Development associated with the more intensive levels of recreation use, including larger car parks, information provision and visitor facilities.

1.8. The adoption of the Core Strategy removed the need for such zoning by relying instead on the Authority's adopted Landscape Strategy and Action Plan. However to assist the next generation of recreation management and to provide clarity for spatial planning in the National Park it may still prove useful to identify specific sites and locations (as opposed to the broad landscape zones previously used) where there is likely be the most intensive levels of recreation and tourism activity where development may include larger car parks, information provision and visitor facilities where appropriate. This would also give an opportunity to highlight and promote the links from gateway towns near to the National Park to the recreation hubs within the National Park and also promote linkage between hubs.

1.9. Forming the link between the Vision and the Core Policies of the Local Development Plan are a set of high level Aims and area-based Objectives. Several of these are of relevance to this consultation, by virtue of the need to achieve sustainable development and sustainable management of the National Park in the context of its statutory purposes.

² Replaced by the Core Strategy in 2011

³ These policies will still apply until replaced by the Development Management Policies document.

Spatial Aims for 2026

Landscapes and conservation

The valued characteristics and landscape character of the National Park will be conserved and enhanced.

Recreation and tourism

A network of high quality, sustainable sites and facilities will have encouraged and promoted increased enjoyment and understanding of the National Park by everybody including its residents and surrounding urban communities.

Climate change and sustainable building

The National Park will have responded and adapted to climate change in ways that have led to reduced energy consumption, reduced CO2 emissions, increased the proportion of overall energy use provided by renewable energy infrastructure, and conserved resources of soil, air and water.

Supporting economic development

The rural economy will be stronger and more sustainable, with more businesses contributing positively to conservation and enhancement of the valued characteristics of the National Park whilst providing high quality jobs for local people.

Accessibility, travel and traffic

Residents, visitors and business will access their needs in ways that conserve and enhance the valued characteristics of the National Park.

Spatial Objectives

National Park

Landscape and Conservation policies will:

- Seek strict protection of the Natural Zone
- Manage development through close consideration of landscape character
- Conserve and enhance Conservation Areas
- Work with partners to reduce the size and amount of road signage in open landscapes

Recreation and Tourism policies will:

- Manage off road recreation so that legitimate uses and users can enjoy the area without damaging the landscape or other users' enjoyment of it
- Enable development of appropriate sites and facilities in settlements shown on the key diagram
- Support low-key development or improvement of facilities in recognised visitor locations where they enhance recreation opportunities and understanding of the National Park
- Encourage and support sustainable travel options that jointly address visitors' and residents' needs

Dark Peak and Moorland Fringe

Landscapes and Conservation policies will:

- Protect the remoteness, wildness, open character and tranquillity of the Dark Peak landscapes
- Protect and manage the Eastern Moors upland landscapes including through the promotion of the Moors for the Future Project
- Seek opportunities to manage and enhance cultural heritage, biodiversity, recreational opportunities and tranquillity whilst maintaining the open character
- Manage the landscapes to mitigate the impacts of climate change
- Seek opportunities to protect and manage the tranquil pastoral landscapes and the distinctive cultural character of the Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe
- Seek opportunities to enhance recreation opportunities, woodlands, wildness, and diversity of more remote areas
- Protect and manage the settled, cultural character and the biodiversity and recreational resources of the Dark Peak Western Fringe whilst maintaining strong cultural associations with the Dark Peak landscapes

Recreation and Tourism policies will:

- Enable development of appropriate sites and facilities at key sites such as the Hope Valley, Stanage Edge, the Upper Derwent, Langsett and Longshaw
- In countryside locations between the remoter moorlands and surrounding urban areas, limit development to appropriate signage and interpretation, in line with the Recreation Strategy, Interpretation Plan and Working with People and Communities Strategy
- Help constituent councils to use the potential for activity that addresses poor health and improves equality of opportunity
- Support tourist accommodation that is particularly suited to the wilder and quieter areas, such as back-pack or farm-based tent and caravan sites

White Peak and Derwent Valley

Landscape and Conservation policies will:

- Protect and manage the distinctive and valued historic character of the settled, agricultural landscapes of the White Peak, while seeking opportunities to enhance the wild character and diversity of remoter areas
- Protect and manage the settled, agricultural character of the Derwent Valley landscapes, seeking opportunities to enhance wooded character, cultural heritage and biodiversity
- Manage floodplain landscapes to increase flood storage and enhance biodiversity
- Protect and manage the tranquil pastoral landscapes and distinctive cultural character of the Derbyshire Peak Fringe through sustainable landscape management, seeking opportunities to enhance woodlands, wetlands, cultural heritage and biodiversity

Recreation and Tourism policies will:

- Support the development of appropriate facilities in recognised visitor locations such as Bakewell, Castleton, the Hope Valley, Dovedale, Chatsworth and Ilam
- Support work that maintains and fills gaps in the rights of way network
- Protect the recreational value of the Manifold, Tissington, and High Peak trails
- Retain the continuity of the Monsal Trail and explore its further potential
- Consolidate Bakewell's role as a tourist centre and a hub from which to explore other attractions
- Support the change of use of traditional buildings to visitor accommodation
- Enable a new hotel in Bakewell

South West Peak

Landscape and Conservation policies will:

- Protect and manage the distinctive historic character of the landscapes
- Seek opportunities to celebrate the diverse landscapes
- Enhance recreation opportunities, woodlands, wildness and diversity of remoter areas

Recreation and Tourism policies will:

- Manage off-road recreation so that legitimate uses and users can enjoy the area without damaging the landscape or other peoples' enjoyment of it
- Support measures to improve visitor access into and around the area

Core Strategy

- 1.10. In 2011 the National Park Authority adopted its Core Strategy document October 2011 with a high level aim by 2026 that ***“A network of high quality, sustainable sites and facilities will have encouraged and promoted increased enjoyment and understanding of the National Park by everybody including its residents and surrounding urban communities”***
- 1.11. During the summer of 2012 the Peak District National Park Authority consulted on its preferred approaches for development management policy. Since that time follow up discussion has continued with parishes, agents and local authorities in order to make progress on a draft development plan document for publication.
- 1.12. This new consultation seeks views on an additional area of policy that has emerged over the last 2 years. **The issue focusses on recreation hubs.**

Active in the Outdoors - Recreation Strategy Action Plan 2013 - 2015

1.13. Key Actions

1. Healthy Lifestyles - Increased participation in recreation enhances overall health and wellbeing
2. Widening Participation - All people have more opportunities to participate
3. Less impact - More responsible visits and less impact on environment and communities in PDNP

Emerging Cycle Strategy

- 1.14. Recent activity includes successful bids to improve facilities and routes for cycling, but also to promote understanding and enjoyment of the National Park to a wide range of users, such as

walkers, horseriders, sightseers etc taking into account that some people know the area well and others may be experiencing the National Park for the first time. In early 2014 the National Park Authority consulted on its draft Cycle Strategy with a stated aim:

“for the Peak District to be one of the great places to cycle ... using the iconic landscapes of the Peak District as the inspiration for a diverse cycling experience for everyone; delivering lasting health, economic and community benefits⁴”.



Sustainable Transport Action Plan

A Sustainable Transport Action Plan was developed in 2012 with the ambition that the:

- National Park is known as a place you can easily and inexpensively travel to an around without a car
- Choice of travel options makes using public transport, walking and cycling more attractive and part of the National Park experience, and there is less reliance on the private car
- Transport infrastructure such as road signs and crash barriers are kept to the minimum, sympathetically designed and in keeping with the environment and valued characteristics of the National Park, while promoting safety
- Innovative travel solutions become part of the attraction of the National Park

One of the short term actions (2012-15) of the plan is to develop a plan for a cycle network for the Peak District

⁴ The final version of the Cycle Strategy is now being drafted following consultation and the above aim may be amended to reflect the comments made.

2. An Additional Issue - Recreation Hubs

Background to the issue

2.1. The National Park Authority aspires to achieve internationally recognised standards in conservation and promotion of opportunities for enjoying the special qualities of the protected area. The National Park holds the prestigious award of the Council of Europe diploma which provides assurance to government and its agencies, non-governmental organisations and the public that the National Park Authority is striving to maintain the highest standards of conservation and recreation management, over which there is regular monitoring and review. The National Park Authority is exploring the achievement of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism which is a method of demonstrating and ensuring that sustainable tourism is embedded into the framework.

2.2. The key issue is to manage, in a sustainable manner, physical points of access into the National Park (**gateways**) and places within the National Park that attract large numbers of people to enjoy a wide range of visiting and recreational experiences (**hubs**), providing facilities appropriate to their context and setting given the valued character of the landscape. The map below illustrates the close proximity of the National Park to a large number of towns and cities on its periphery (examples highlighted)

Peak District National Park in Relation to Gateway Towns



- 2.3. A physical gateway is commonly a settlement outside the National Park or on its periphery, which may provide accommodation and other services to visitors, channel people through transport interchanges and visitor centres and contain a local population who use the National Park as their local green space e.g. Leek, Matlock, Buxton, Glossop, Macclesfield, Holmfirth, Chesterfield, Sheffield, Ashbourne. The towns and cities have an important role in promoting and signalling the National Park and the entry point function that they provide by starting to provide National Park interpretation and messaging. The impact of the development on the setting of the National Park will need to be taken into consideration by adjoining local authorities under the primary legislation. Partnership working should enable sustainable tourism approaches that conserve and enhance National Park landscapes.
- 2.4. The Recreation Strategy and Action Plan for the Peak District National Park 2010 to 2020 identify the transport infrastructure in and around the Peak District National Park. The Strategy acknowledges that, “further discussion will be needed with partners to prioritise and guide investment in recreation infrastructure at gateways. If there is a proven need and the opportunity arises to influence location and investment in *major* new recreational facilities, there should be a presumption that the focus should be on gateways especially on the approaches to the National Park rather than in core areas. Gateways require high quality robust facilities and information on sustainable means of accessing the National Park. They provide a good opportunity to introduce visitors to the range of recreation opportunities available.”

What are Recreation Hubs?

- 2.5. A recreation hub is defined in the Recreation Strategy as a place within the National Park that attracts large numbers of people to enjoy a wide range of recreational experiences. They may contain basic infrastructure such as, small car parks, toilets, on-site visitor information and in some cases cycle hire. They can be the stepping off point for wider exploration and enjoyment and are more likely to be used for those pursuing specific interest/activities, possibly on a regular basis, and are defined by good access to the active recreation infrastructure such as:
- Climbing edges,
 - Caves
 - Bridleways for mountain biking and horseriding
 - Cycling trails (Manifold, Tissington, High Peak and Monsal Trails)
 - Network of walking routes
- 2.6. Active recreation hubs might include for example:
- Fairholmes in the Upper Derwent Valley;
 - Stanage and the North Lees Estate,
 - Castleton
 - Parsley Hay,
 - Langsett,
 - Dovestones,
 - The Longshaw Estate
 - Macclesfield Forest; and
 - The Goyt Valley
- 2.7. Clearly a recreation hub may also be regarded as a settlement, such as Bakewell, Castleton or Hartington that clearly attract many visitors and possess good range of facilities such as car parks, visitor information, shops and food and drink establishments. These locations also provide a starting point for accessing the wider countryside or nearby recreation sites such as trails and caverns.
- 2.8. Similarly a recreation hub may be an area which attracts a high degree of visitors for a particular recreational activity such as climbing or cycling but is situated in a wilder, less developed setting that is sensitive to change. In such locations only small scale, informal treatment may be appropriate

2.9. Ultimately, all locations will need to be considered in the context of their landscape character. So although development may seem to be of an appropriate type for a recreation hub location it may be unacceptable because of its local impact, e.g. because it would intensify existing development activity in the locality beyond acceptable levels. This could be in respect of the impact on the surrounding landscape, or the impact increased visitor numbers may have on the the resident community. This would need to be reflected in the policy but essentially by identifying locations for this purpose, the policy should aim to create a framework to give greater certainty to investment, and furthering a positive visitor management strategy. Such a strategy would aim to create a more enjoyable and sustainable visitor experience by:

- Providing good facilities and information
- Providing managed routes and parking areas
- Promoting sustainable transport alternatives to car use
- Encouraging visitors to be aware of and respect the countryside and resident communities

3. Scope for Alternative Approaches

3.1. The scope for alternative approaches under this issue depends on the degree to which:

- guidance is considered necessary; or
- the degree to which localised management plans may have been developed; or
- the degree of commitment (e.g. through financial backing or landowner agreement) to developing sites.

3.2. The former approach to recreation zones as established in the 1994 Structure Plan and saved Local Plan 2001 (see Appendix 1) was formally removed by the Core Strategy in 2011. As such it is not intended to bring forward a full zoning option. However the aspect of zoning that dealt with the highest intensity of recreation use, namely zone 3 (see page 4 above) does reflect the kind of management issues being discussed here for recreation hubs. Therefore options revolve around the merits of identifying specific recreation hub sites versus criteria based policy that could deal with sites in a generic way. The options are:

1. Identify specific recreation hub sites, detailing their particular characteristics and circumstances with specific criteria setting out the expectations for development at each location;
2. Identify sites linked to broad criteria applying generically as per replaced policy LR1 (see Appendix 1) but with a focus on recreation hubs. This would leave scope for individual site briefs, estate management plans or Supplementary Planning Documents to be produced as needed, or simply to determine on a case by case basis using generic criteria and guidance from the adopted Landscape Strategy and Action Plan. Within this option the policy may be constructed at different scales:
 - a. To include a broad definition of recreational hubs including a range of both settlements and countryside locations all that could satisfy the recreation hub definition; or
 - b. Construct a more limited list that focusses on hubs that have greater capacity for further development without harming the historic or natural environment setting or adversely affecting the residential amenity of the area.
3. Don't identify sites/locations but put in place generic criteria for any site to be considered as a recreation hub or gateway and apply alongside the Landscape Strategy and Action Plan

4. Preferred Approach – and scope of policy

- 4.1. The preferred approach is option 2b. This approach focusses on recreation hubs with a countryside location in places that can be developed without harm to the wider landscape. The policy would provide a framework for quality improvements to the facilities and infrastructure at range of countryside locations across the National Park in accordance with the adopted spatial aims and objectives of the Core Strategy and which would facilitate the high level aims of the Authority's Recreation Strategy and its emerging Cycle Strategy. It would expand the number of such sites from 4 in the former local plan (see Appendix 1) to the 11 set out here.
- 4.2. The policy would recognise that there are a wide range of recreation hubs across the National Park but for forward planning purposes a more limited set will be specifically identified for further development and improvement in response to the higher intensity of visitor levels that these sites are likely to experience and the role these locations play in accessing the wider landscape. The policy cross refers to policies DS1 and RT1 of the Core Strategy which already provide for recreation and tourism development in principle in both countryside and settlement locations.
- 4.3. This policy would expand on that basis to give greater detail as to the varying development expectations across the National Park. Moreover by cross referring to policy T7 of the Core Strategy the new policy would clarify the new allowance that the identified locations would give provision for additional car parking spaces for visitors without being tied to the principle of on-street restraint, a principle which would still apply elsewhere in the open countryside and in named settlements in order to reduce the overall impact of parked vehicles on the character and enjoyment of the National Park. In summary the policy aims to manage the visitor presence in the National Park in order to:
- promote the understanding and enjoyment of the area;
 - integrate visitor facilities in accordance with the Landscape Strategy;
 - minimise conflict with the resident communities;
- 4.4. As such policy could be constructed as follows:

Recreation Hubs

- Recreation and tourism development will be permitted in identified recreational hub sites provided that it is appropriate to the hub in terms of its form, character, location and setting.
- The following identified recreation hub sites will be identified on the Policies Map and a specific boundary will be drawn. Recreation and tourism development associated with more intensive levels of recreation use, including larger car parks, information provision and visitor facilities will be permitted provided that it is within the identified recreation hub sites:

Identified recreation hubs

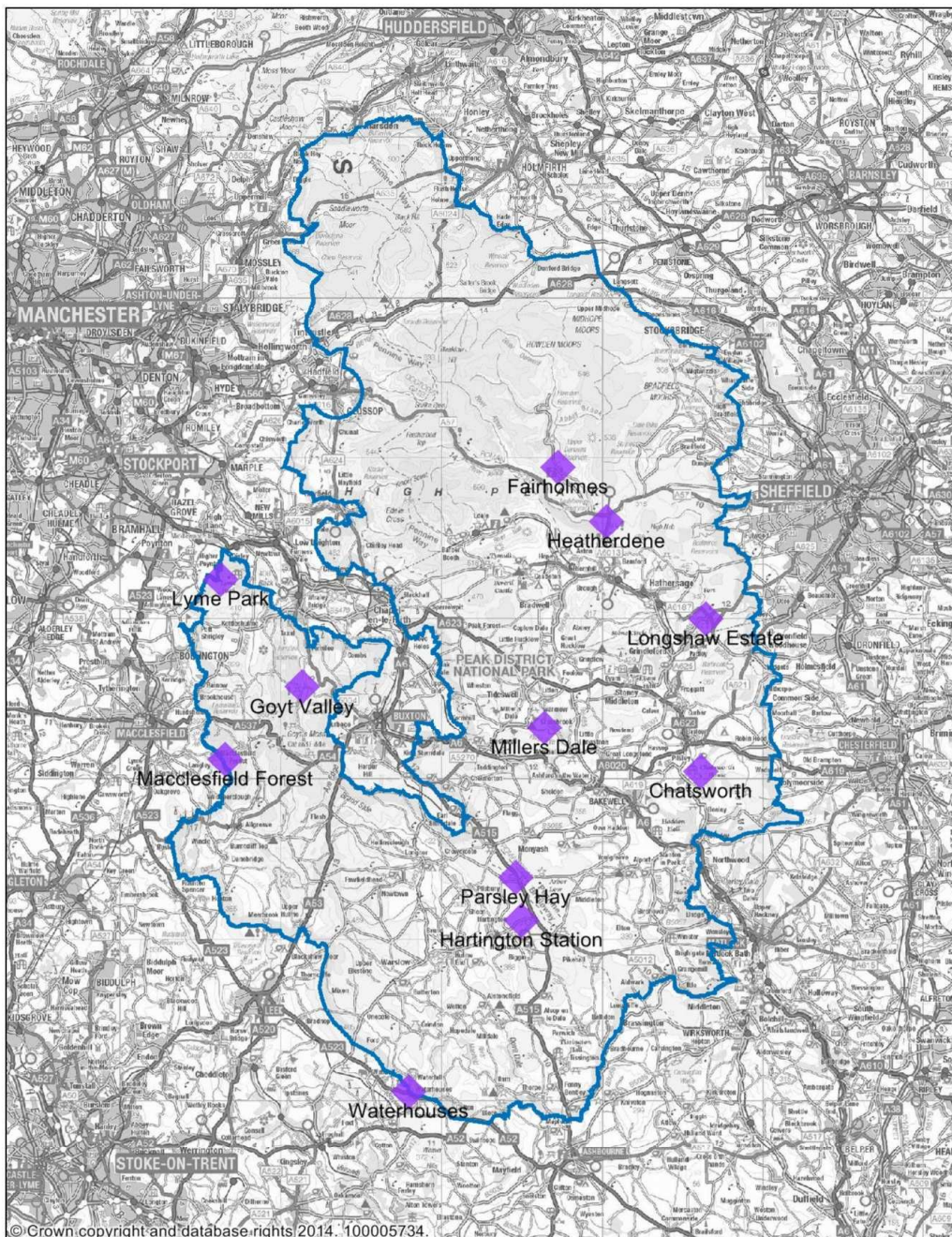
Upper Derwent (Fairholmes and Heatherdene), Lyme Park, Longshaw, Chatsworth, Millers Dale, Hartington Station, Parsley Hay, Macclesfield Forest, Goyt Valley, Waterhouses.

- Outside of the identified recreation hubs in other named settlements, recreation and tourism development will be permitted in accordance with policy DS1 and RT1 and T7 of the Core Strategy;
- In other recreation hub locations across the National Park only informal recreation uses acceptable with careful management, such as small car parks, picnic sites, facilities linked to

walking, cycling and riding will be permitted where development is compatible with other adopted policies (in particular DS1, RT1 and T7 of the Core Strategy with respect to recreation and tourism). Wherever existing buildings are available these should be re-used wherever possible in preference to new build.

- e. For proposals that affect the setting of the Natural Zone only informal, low-impact development, associated with active recreation uses will be permitted with careful management, such as walking, cycling, climbing and riding routes.

Illustrative Map to show identified recreation hubs



Legend

- ◆ Identified Recreation Hubs
- ▭ National Park

Appendix 1 – Former Local Plan policy LR1 (2001) subsequently replaced by the Core Strategy.

Policy LR1: Recreation and tourism development

(a) Recreation and tourism development will be permitted provided that it is appropriate to the recreation zone in which it falls in form, character, location and setting, and will not have an unacceptable impact on the valued characteristics of the area including both the zone itself or an adjoining zone, particularly the Natural Zone.

(b) The following Zone 3 locations are based on settlements. They are identified on the Proposals Map. Recreation and tourism development appropriate to this zone will be permitted provided that it is in or on the edge of the settlement in question:

Ashford, Bakewell, Baslow and Bubnell, Low Bradfield, Bradwell, Castleton, Eyam, Hartington, Hathersage, Hope, Stoney Middleton, Thorpe, Tideswell, Waterhouses.

(c) In the following Zone 3 countryside locations, a specific boundary has been drawn outside which development appropriate to this zone will not be permitted:

Upper Derwent, Lyme Park, Longshaw, Chatsworth.