

### Environmental Quality

The strategic objectives that this section address are as follows:

- SO1: To protect and enhance the Green Infrastructure Network
- SO2: To maintain, enhance and conserve the areas distinct landscape characteristics, biodiversity, and cultural and historic environment
- SO3: To ensure that design is well designed, promotes local distinctiveness and integrates effectively with its setting
- SO4: To protect and enhance the character, appearance and setting of the towns and villages
- SO5: To address and mitigate the effects of climate change on people, wildlife and places; promoting the safeguarding and prudent sustainable use of natural resources

**5.1** High Peak Borough Council has prepared a Local Plan that interprets and delivers guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework in a way that ensures the Council is able to deliver development that meets the specific needs, character and distinctiveness of the Local Plan area.

**5.2** The spatial portrait identifies those unique elements of the plan area that the development strategy needs to address. One of the three main strategic themes is protection of the area's distinct landscape, cultural and historic environment described by the term - its Peak District Character. This section of the Local Plan sets out the preferred approach to delivering development that reflects, maintains and enhances the Borough's Peak District Character - with regard to climate change, landscape character, biodiversity, design, the built and historic environment and Ecological and Green Infrastructure Networks.

**5.3** The character of the Peak District is exceptional, it is an area of national and international importance and buildings - either singly within the landscape, or collectively in towns and villages - contribute greatly to that character. The Local Plan seeks to protect Peak District Character through delivering sustainable development.

**5.4** This approach is supported by the NPPF that states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. In addition, the NPPF (paragraphs 94 - 95) requires local authorities to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Sustainable development is key to tackling the linked challenges of climate change, resource use, economic prosperity and social well-being, and cannot be achieved without sustainable buildings.

**5.5** In the context of High Peak's strategic theme of Peak District character, sustainable building design means delivering an effective protection of the environment, both locally in terms of its special character and globally in terms of climate change. It also involves the prudent use of scarce natural resources. Sustainable design can contribute to Peak District character by helping to: deliver energy efficiency; minimise surface water run-off; protect the local environment through the conservation and improvement of habitats and contribute to the protection and enhancement of landscape character – all strategic objectives of the Local Plan.

## Climate Change

**5.6** In 2009, High Peak Borough Council collaborated with Derbyshire Dales District Council and the Peak District National Park to commission a feasibility study to assess the potential for renewable and low-carbon technologies (including micro-generation) across the Peak Sub-Region. The Peak Sub-Region Climate Change Study concluded that there was potential for a range of different types of renewable/low carbon technologies to be used across the area, with heat pumps being the most suitable technology for High Peak. The study was updated in 2011 by the report: Low Carbon Energy Opportunities and Heat Mapping for Local Planning Areas Across the East Midlands: Final Report; Prepared for East Midlands Councils by Land Use Consultants, Centre for Sustainable Energy and SQW.

**5.7** In line with the DECC (Department of Energy and Climate Change) methodology and Natural England advice, the assessment of technical potential for the above study involved a landscape sensitivity assessment for wind. This identified the sensitivity of each landscape character area within the Peak District National Park and the remaining areas (ie outside of the National Park) of High Peak and Derbyshire Dales to wind developments. The potential for commercial scale wind energy within High Peak is heavily constrained by legislation to conserve and enhance the National Park and the need to protect its special qualities. The high quality landscapes within High Peak and outside the Park also result in reducing the potential for wind technology and bio-energy crops.

**5.8** The Peak District National Park Authority's Landscape Strategy and Action Plan 2009 will be used to help assess any impact of a proposed development on the setting of the National Park and where harm to the National Park's landscape setting is identified, the Strategy will be taken into account when determining the application. Also of relevance is The Peak District National Park Authority's Supplementary Planning Document "Climate Change and Sustainable Building".

**5.9** The Peak Sub-Region Climate Change Study suggested that an alternative approach to using targets for renewable energy consumption or CO<sub>2</sub> reductions was the development of a policy based upon achieving set levels in the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) for new domestic development or BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) for new non-domestic development, where standards exist for a particular building type. However it is recognised that such a policy approach for climate change, whilst having the benefit of drawing in wider environmental issues, will involve higher development costs. The Government has since withdrawn the Code.

**5.10** The approach in the Local Plan will seek to reflect the energy hierarchy set out below:

- Reduce the need for energy
- To use energy more efficiently
- To use renewable energy
- Any continuing use of fossil fuels to be clean and efficient for heating and co-generation

**5.11** Taking these factors into account, the Council's preferred approach is to help protect and promote Peak District character through working with developers to bring forward energy efficient development including, where relevant, to a specified level of BREEAM. A significant advantage of using BREEAM is that it involves independent assessment and accreditation, overseen by the UK Accreditation Service. This means that the Council does not need to employ expert staff to

## 5 Development management policies

assess a development's credentials, but is able to rely on a trained and licensed independent assessor. At the same time, developers and local communities can have confidence that a development is fairly assessed against objective criteria.

**5.12** The Council is able to demonstrate that policy requirements will not have an unreasonable adverse impact on development viability, when considered alongside all other requirements. The "High Peak Local Plan Viability Test incorporating site viability and deliverability appraisal" has assessed new non-residential development based on costs associated with achieving the BREEAM good standard. The evidence on economic viability shows that office and industrial forms of development are not currently viable. However it should be noted that the report makes clear that any viability issues in relation to employment uses arise not as a result of Planning Policy obligations, rather they are as a result of relatively low values for employment development at the present time. In addition, one of the important aims of schemes such as BREEAM is to drive change in the supply chain and thereby to reduce costs.

**5.13** However the Council recognises that non residential development is likely to come forward not on a speculative basis but with demand for example from owner occupiers wishing to expand, or for business agglomeration reasons. On this basis, some additional flexibility is included in the Policy such that the Council will consider a case based on evidence of viability if an applicant can demonstrate that the requirement for a specific BREEAM level cannot be met. This will be considered by the Council on a case by case basis.

**5.14** Non residential developments will be expected to achieve a good or above assessment using the BREEAM standards. Since the Government has withdrawn the Code for Sustainable Homes and replaced it with new optional technical housing standards, as appropriate, the Council will introduce Building Regulations optional requirements in relation to water in the Buxton Sub-Area, subject to a viability assessment. As discussed in relation to Policy S7 (Buxton Sub-Area Strategy), enhanced water efficiency standards are required in the Buxton Sub-Area in order to minimise the phosphate load into the River Wye from the Buxton Sewage Treatment Works. The River Wye forms part of the Peak District Dales Special Area of Conservation (SAC) where phosphate levels have been highlighted as a potential concern in the Habitat Regulations Assessment.

**5.15** To ensure requirements do not affect the viability of new developments, or they do not adversely affect the deliverability of other objectives of the Local Plan, they will only apply to non domestic development over 1,000m<sup>2</sup>. Pre-assessment (design stage) certificates that set out the estimated performance of the development against BREEAM will be required to be submitted.

**5.16** The strategic approach will therefore be to address climate change - without adversely affecting the quality and distinctiveness of the local environment by:

- Directing development to sustainable locations.
- Promoting low carbon, sustainable development.
- Maximising carbon reductions in new build by reducing the need for energy.
- Using energy more efficiently; and
- Generating energy from low carbon or renewable sources.

## Policy EQ 1

### Climate Change

The Council will adopt strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In addressing the move to a low carbon future for High Peak, the Council will plan for new development in locations and ways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adopt the principles set out in the energy hierarchy.

The Council intends to meet part of its future energy needs through renewable or low carbon energy sources and will therefore encourage and support the provision of renewable and low carbon technologies, including both stand-alone installations, and micro-renewables integrated within new or existing development.

A low carbon future for High Peak will be achieved by:

- Requiring new development to be designed to contribute to achieving national targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using land-form, layout, building orientation, tree planting, massing and landscaping to reduce likely energy consumption and resilience to increased temperatures
- Ensuring that renewable energy installations do not have an adverse impact on the integrity of any European sites, (including by project- level HRA where appropriate), wildlife sites, protected species or habitats, or the landscape and landscape setting of the Peak District National Park
- Supporting opportunities to deliver decentralised energy systems, particularly those which are powered by a renewable or low carbon source
- Supporting connection to an existing decentralised energy supply system where there is capacity to supply the proposed development, or design for a future connection where there a firm proposals for such a system
- Ensuring that renewable / low carbon energy generation developments and associated infrastructure are supported by requiring Design Statements to include an assessment of how any impacts on the environment and heritage assets, including cumulative landscape, noise and visual impacts, can be avoided and/or mitigated through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures
- Applications for new build residential development in the Buxton Sub-Area should meet the optional national technical requirement for water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day to minimise the phosphate load to the River Wye via discharges from the Buxton Sewage Treatment Works, unless it can be demonstrated that doing so would adversely impact on a scheme's viability.
- Unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be technically feasible or financially viable, requiring that commercial developments over 1,000m<sup>2</sup> the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) good standard as a minimum
- Promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable / low carbon energy in new development and through retro-fitting of existing buildings
- Supporting sustainable waste management by provision of space for recycling and composting

- Supporting the use of sustainable design and construction techniques including the use of recycled materials in construction, including where appropriate the local or on-site sourcing of these building materials
- Supporting high water efficiency standards and measures to recycle and minimise water consumption

#### Supporting Guidance and Evidence

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Climate Change Act 2008
- Renewable Energy Directive 2009
- Flood and Water Management Act 2010
- Peak Sub-Region Climate Change Study
- Low Carbon Energy Opportunities and Heat Mapping for Local Planning Areas Across the East Midlands: Final Report
- Planning for Climate Change - guidance for local authorities; April 2012
- Landscape Strategy and Action Plan; Peak District National Park Authority; 2009

### Landscape Character

**5.17** The High Peak landscapes are one of the defining characteristics of the plan area. They define the sense of place, have a strong influence on local distinctiveness, and have been instrumental in shaping local settlement patterns. Local communities value their beauty, their variety, their tranquillity, their accessibility and the contribution they make to the quality of life. They are an important resource in attracting people to live and work in the area as well as driving the local tourist economy.

**5.18** In order to protect, and where possible enhance, landscape character - development brought forward should as a minimum both assimilate into the landscape, and avoid adverse impact on landscape quality. To achieve this, and to improve the flexibility of planning in rural areas, the Council is pursuing a landscape character based approach to managing development in the countryside.

**5.19** Landscape Character is defined as the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape. It is based on the premise that the combination and arrangement of the physical attributes of the landscape such as scale; geology and land-form; soils and land-use; ecology and tree cover; settlement pattern; the degree of enclosure and the nature of the highways network, be they natural or man-made - give different areas a distinctive character. However non-physical attributes such as tranquillity and low levels of light pollution, leading to dark skies, also form part of the character of the landscape, these latter issues are addressed through Policy EQ10: Pollution Control and Unstable Land.