

# Achieving Sustainable Communities in the Lower Wensleydale Area



**plan**ourfuture

A Local Development Framework  
Issues and Options Consultation Paper

November 2009





# Foreword

What will your town or village be like by 2026? It's not an easy question, but it is one that we need to try and answer with your help. Richmondshire's Local Development framework (LDF) will help shape future development across all parts of the District outside of the National Park. This includes Richmond, Leyburn, Catterick Garrison and the villages to the north and south. The National Park Authority is responsible for development in the rest of Richmondshire.

The LDF will be a set of policy documents that shape an overall direction for development in these places. These policies will help determine future planning applications for, amongst other things, housing, economic or green energy developments, once the LDF is adopted. Before we can write these policies we must understand local conditions. We need to find out about where people live and work and how they travel. We also need to recognise the sensitivity of the local environment and our local heritage to development.

This consultation report is one in a series of ten:

1. Achieving Sustainable Communities - Settlement Hierarchy
2. Achieving Sustainable Communities in the Central Area
3. Achieving Sustainable Communities in Lower Wensleydale
4. Achieving Sustainable Communities in the A66 North Richmondshire Area.

5. Scale and Distribution of Development
6. Economy
7. Environmental Assets
8. Housing
9. Infrastructure
10. Climate Change

Each report asks a series of questions about issues we need to debate. For example, how should we treat small villages in terms of development? Or how should Richmond and Catterick Garrison grow? You can make detailed responses to any of the questions using the on-line form on our website or by writing to us using the contacts below. Or simply get in touch with us to talk about the LDF.

Please ask if you would like this document in a different format or language.

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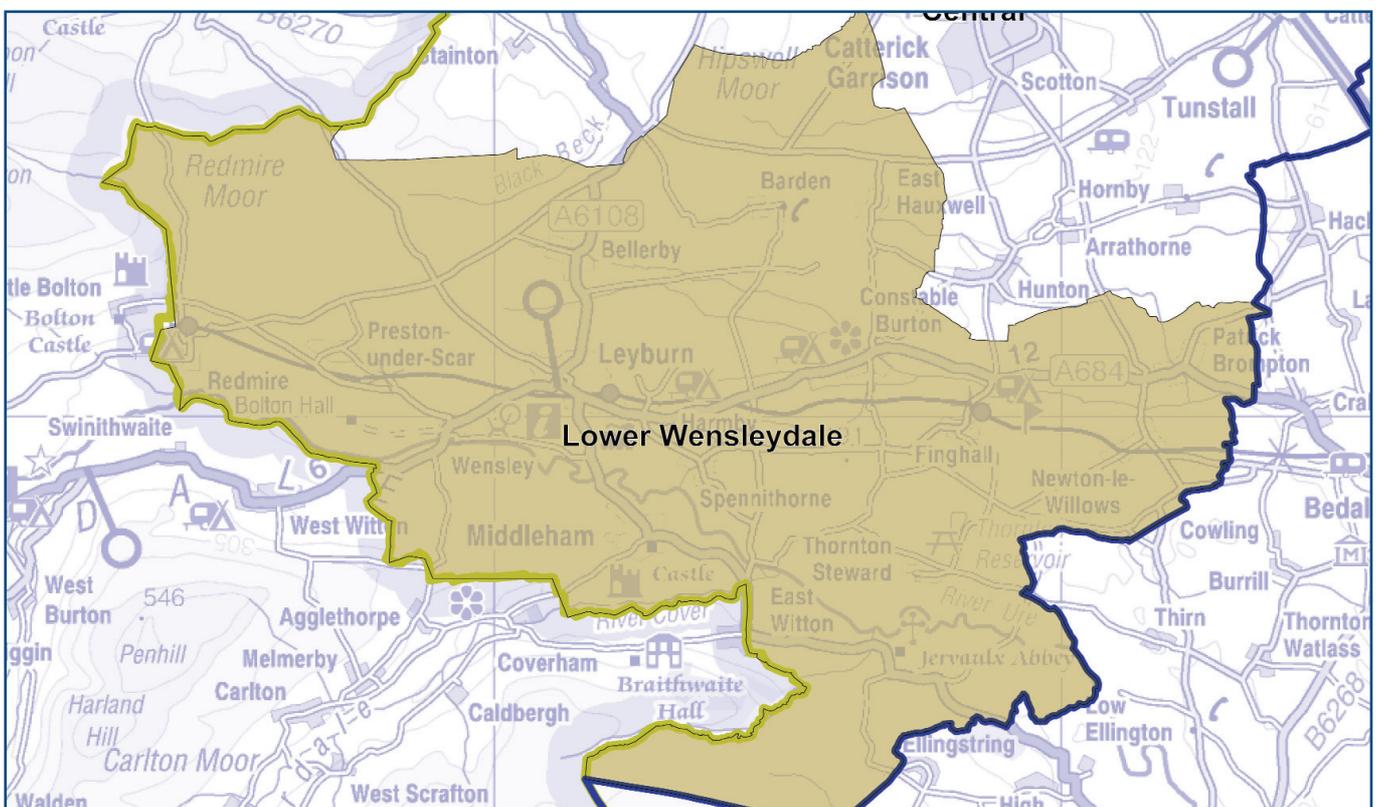
# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This consultation paper is one of a series. It aims to look in greater detail at the Lower Wensleydale area to guide decisions about where services and facilities are located and where development can best be delivered to ensure the most sustainable future for local communities.
- 1.2 As outlined in the Achieving Sustainable Communities in Richmondshire paper - the first in the consultation paper series, this area focuses on Lower Wensleydale with Leyburn at its centre and extending to include settlements in the west to the National Park boundary and in the east to the district boundary.
- 1.3 This is an important rural area of Richmondshire with distinctive and high quality landscape. Although it has a small

population, fundamental decisions need to be made to determine how this area and the settlements in this area will feel, appear and function into the future.

- 1.4 This paper outlines our current understanding of the area as based on available evidence and consultation and poses a series of questions about places within the area. It is primarily concerned with the:

- future of the Lower Wensleydale area as a whole
- means of securing the future sustainability of Leyburn
- need to balance the expectations of different settlements
- role of this area in support of the National Park area



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— National Park Boundary

— District Boundary



## 2. Key Features of the Lower Wensleydale Area

- 2.1 Lower Wensleydale is an attractive rural area rich in environmental and historic heritage neighbouring the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It has a strong local identity focussed on the Local Service Centre at Leyburn. Historically this area has provided the gateway for travellers heading west over the dales, with Middleham and Bolton castles a reminder of its historic significance. It is also an agricultural area with a strong horse racing tradition.
- 2.2 Its main settlements are Leyburn and Middleham, which provide a central focus for several smaller villages. Leyburn is the Local Service Centre serving a local resident population of around 6,600 people, of which 2,120 live in the town. Its position has produced a market town serving the local agricultural economy and a stop for travellers on the route across the northern Pennines. This traditional role has evolved into a visitor gateway to Wensleydale and neighbouring dales.
- 2.3 Leyburn sits at a crossroads and operates as a hub for public transport in this area. Access to the area may be improved as the A1 is upgraded and the Wensleydale Railway progresses towards Northallerton. Its connections favour east west travel along Wensleydale towards the Vale of York. The reinstatement of the Wensleydale railway is providing an alternative to car transport locally, and this may extend to the national network.
- 2.4 Its rural attractiveness sustains a strong housing market that creates affordability issues and limits available workforce. An ageing population and the lowest household income in the District may impede the longer term vitality of this area. Although the area is well located for tourism, research indicates that the majority of tourists are day visitors.
- 2.5 Local employment is closely related to supplying the needs of this rural area. Agriculture and land based businesses are numerous and Leyburn supports a number of light industrial businesses. The horse racing industry is prominent in this area and is estimated to contribute an additional £3.1M into the local economy from an annual turnover of the stables of £12.7M. (Lower Wensleydale Study 2009)
- 2.6 The Plan our Future survey for the Lower Wensleydale Area collected information from over 500 local people in spring 2009. Their responses reflect the remoter rural aspect of Lower Wensleydale and the limited capacity of local centres to fully meet a range of needs. The main deficits were retail, health care and leisure. Results suggest that this area faces more strongly to the south of the county, towards the Vale of York, rather than the Tees Valley. A range of quality of life issues is identified by respondents including traffic and waste. Affordable housing is highlighted as a strategic issue by nearly half the respondents, but they recognise that the scope for resolving this is limited because of local constraints to development.



2.7 Our understanding of the Lower Wensleydale area will be enhanced with publication of detailed research in November 2009. The Lower Wensleydale study aims to:

- provide robust plans which clearly map the future direction of the area in order to attain sustainable prosperity in the region for the economy, society and the environment, and
- empower a group of individuals to become the driving force to the implementation of the action plans, improving the sustainable performance of the area's primary settlements. Community empowerment is an important aspect of this study and the methodology undertaken has reflected this.

This study covers a wide range of issues. The spatial issues arising from it will be addressed in developing the LDF. Links to the published reports will be made on the LDF website when they become available.

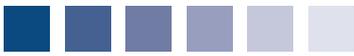
### Issue LW1 : The Central Area

LW1a

Does the description above pick up the essential features of the area?

LW1b

Does Lower Wensleydale represent an area with a separate character and identity, which should be reflected in the LDF strategy?



## 3. Influences

3.1 The following documents outline a set of general principles for our discussion about Lower Wensleydale:

- Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)
- Richmondshire Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)
- Richmondshire District Council Corporate Plan

3.2 The RSS defines Lower Wensleydale as a remoter rural area. It creates a framework for valuing and enhancing the high quality environment in this area with Leyburn as the Local Service Centre linked to opportunities and facilities in neighbouring areas. The outcomes it expects for Lower Wensleydale are:

- Its outstanding environmental and built assets have been safeguarded and enhanced through a conservation-led approach.

- There has been a diversification of the local economy to one based on small scale local enterprises.
- Housing provision has focussed on meeting local affordable needs.
- The long term sustainability of local communities has been enhanced by establishing links and networks within the sub area and neighbouring sub areas to facilitate complementary economic diversification and accessibility to opportunities and facilities.

*(Policy RR1)*

3.3 The current Richmondshire Sustainable Community Strategy sees Leyburn as the hub for the Lower Wensleydale area. The Lower Wensleydale area has been identified in the Richmondshire District Council Corporate Plan as a discrete area for the organisation of council services and strategy.



## 4. Area wide issues for Lower Wensleydale

- 4.1 A set of issues has been identified, following on from the key features outlined in section 2, and the influences described in section 3. The area wide issues are outlined below and the settlement specific issues are looked at in the next section.
- 4.2 The rural aspects of the Lower Wensleydale area bring with it a range of issues familiar in Richmondshire. At the heart of these issues is the need to balance a high quality living environment with the need to meet local needs in a fairly sparsely populated area. The following are suggested to be the main spatial issues which the LDF should address:

- How can access to facilities and opportunities across this area and to neighbouring areas be improved?
- What links need to develop within Lower Wensleydale and with its neighbouring areas to facilitate complementary economic diversification?
- How does this area support the economy and communities in the National Park?
- Can this area's strong housing market be better balanced to enable more people the choice to live and work here, though a better mix of housing in terms of type and tenure?

### Issue LW2 : Area wide issues

#### LW2a

Do the issues in para 4.2 pick up the main challenges for the area?

#### LW2b

What other issues should be considered and what is the evidence for these issues?

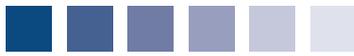
- Should further local employment opportunities be provided in this area?
- What do the horse racing and other economic sectors need to help sustain them?

### Settlement hierarchy

- 4.3 The settlement hierarchy proposed in the Sustainable Communities in Richmondshire Paper may help us address these issues by providing a framework to consider how local communities function and interact with each other to meet local needs. It is important that we debate the implications of this hierarchy. This is started below, together with options that have been considered in developing it.

Settlement	Population
Leyburn	2,120
Middleham	870
Newton-Le-Willows	430
Harmby	390
Bellerby	360
Redmire	350
East Witton	240
Thornton Steward	200
Patrick Brompton	180

Settlement	Population
Preston Under Scar	180
Spennithorne	180
Constable Burton	160
Finghall	150
Wensley	100
Barden	50
East Hauxwell	30
Garriston	30
West Hauxwell	20



## 5. Leyburn, the Local Service Centre

5.1 Leyburn has been identified as the Local Service Centre for lower Wensleydale in both the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Sustainable Communities Strategy. This recognises its central role in meeting a range of local services to this part of the District. The extent to which it can continue to maintain this role is affected by several factors, which are similar to those outlined in paragraph 4.2

- How can Leyburn be supported to continue to provide a range of necessary local services?
- How can it become more accessible to the area it serves and provide effective links to the neighbouring principal town?
- How can younger households become established in the local area?
- Can Leyburn also expect to develop in a complementary to the proposed Garrison Town Centre, in the same way as Richmond?
- What is Leyburn's capacity for expansion and to what extent should it develop in

the context of its environment and neighbouring centres?

5.3 The map below shows Leyburn in its local context. We need to consider the main constraints and the potential directions which might be considered for possible development.

### Issue LW3 : Area wide issues

LW3a

How well does Leyburn fulfil its potential as a Local Service Centre?

LW3b

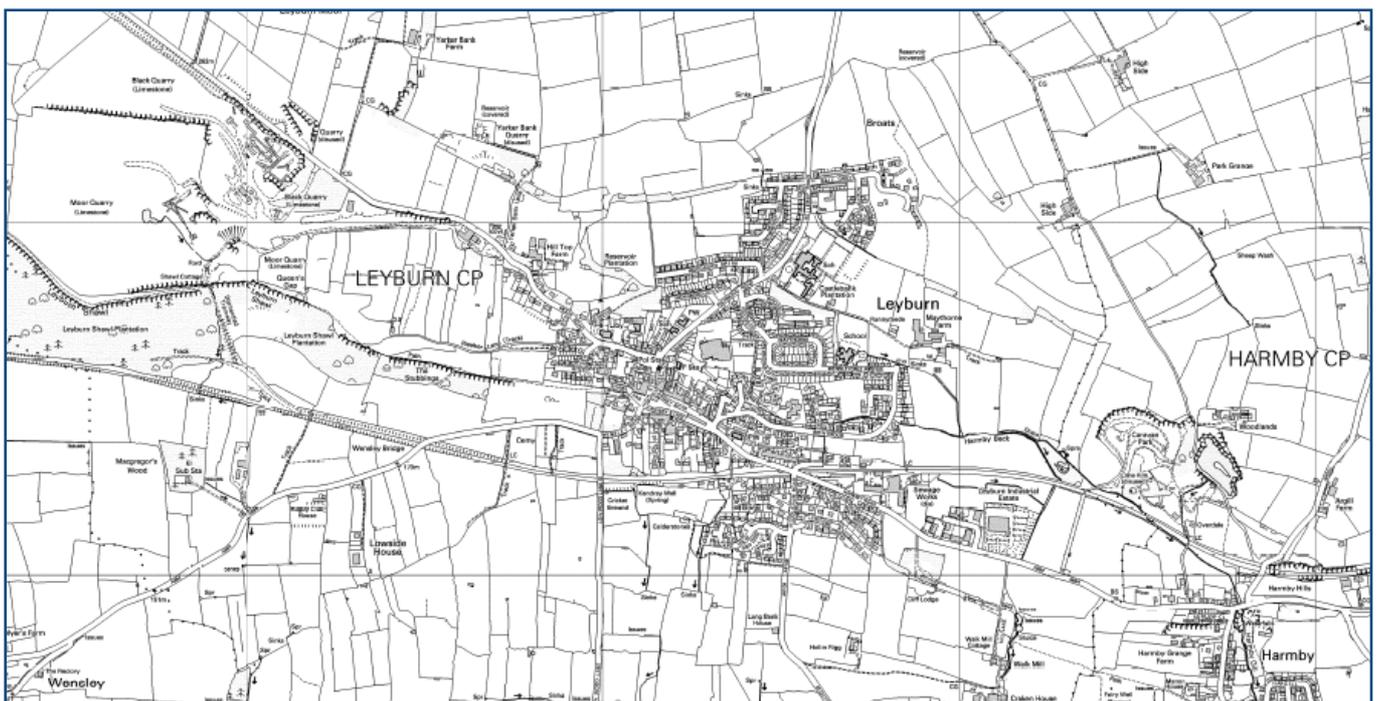
How can Leyburn be supported in the future to better perform this role?

LW3c

Can Leyburn have a complementary role to the Garrison in the provision of local services and facilities?

LW3d

Referring to the map below, what scope is there for Leyburn to physically grow through new development?



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## 6. Service Settlements

6.1 The Achieving Sustainable Communities in Richmondshire paper poses the question of what should determine service villages and the approach taken. It outlines that the selection of appropriate Service Settlements is a matter for debate, and views are sought both on the principle, and on potential candidate settlements. It suggests that selection of a Service Settlement might be based on a number of considerations, including:

- the availability of a good range of community facilities and services, for example a primary school, food shop, community hall and sport and recreation facilities
- their spread throughout the sub-area aiming to ensure that all the sub-area is within good reach of services
- good public transport access to higher order settlements (including outside the District), including in the early morning and late afternoon
- potential for some further development and local support for such growth
- availability of local employment.

6.2 The size, location of existing services in this area suggests that Middleham is a leading candidate for Service Settlement designation. The next largest villages are Newton le Willows, Harmby, Bellerby, and Redmire. They are much smaller with populations in the range 430 to 350. None have a primary school and each have only minimal services. Apart from Redmire, they are close to the Local Service Centre of Leyburn.

6.3 Service Settlements are proposed to be identified because they offer a range of basic services that are accessible from a small hinterland. They complement the higher order centres and help distribute services over a wider area, which is particularly important in a rural area like ours. It is important that the choices we make, both in selecting Service Settlements and helping to sustain them, ensure that they progress within the overall context of the District and their neighbours. For example, to what extent can housing need and choice be realistically met in each Service Settlement? The answer to this will depend on the character of each village, the availability of appropriate sites and access to relevant services like schools and work. It could be that some of these choices can be better met in larger centres.

### Issue LW4 : Service Settlement

#### LW4a

Does Middleham best fulfil the role of a Service Settlement in Lower Wensleydale - as a place to support the retention and enhancement of facilities capable of serving a wider neighbourhood?

#### LW4b

Should any other settlements be considered as Service Settlements?

#### LW4c

What should be the general approach towards designated Service Settlements in terms of the provision of facilities or scale of new development?



## 7. Small Settlements

- 7.1 In the Service Settlement discussion we have thought about the case for making one or more of the larger villages a focus for the provision of very local services and potentially some development. So what of the remaining settlements in Lower Wensleydale? We know, from the Settlement Facilities study that they have few facilities and are mainly places to live with a level of local economic activity in, for example, agriculture. These settlements are not very isolated and the people living in them will access services in the larger centres.
- 7.2 The presence of a primary school may create a more clustered community through its catchment area. In Lower Wensleydale the only primary school outside of Leyburn is at Spennithorne. Is there an approach we can take that has a realistic possibility of creating sustainable change amongst the villages surrounding this school? One answer may be to treat them as a cluster for development purposes. In terms of general development policy this would mean allocating an amount of development across the villages in the cluster, but detailed allocations would need further work to determine what was feasible on the land available within each village of the cluster.

### Issue LW5 : Small Settlements

#### LW5a

Should all the small villages be treated equally - or is there an argument to separate out some, for example with some facilities, better accessibility, or greater potential - as a separate tier in the hierarchy, for which a distinct policy approach might be taken?

#### LW5b

Should we group some of the smaller settlements into geographical clusters and develop a policy approach for each cluster?

#### LW5c

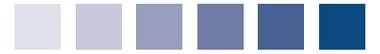
What should be the general approach towards the lowest order settlements - in terms of provision of facilities or new development?

#### LW5d

Is it sustainable to continue to allow development in these locations, where access to facilities locally or by travel to other settlements, is limited?

#### LW5e

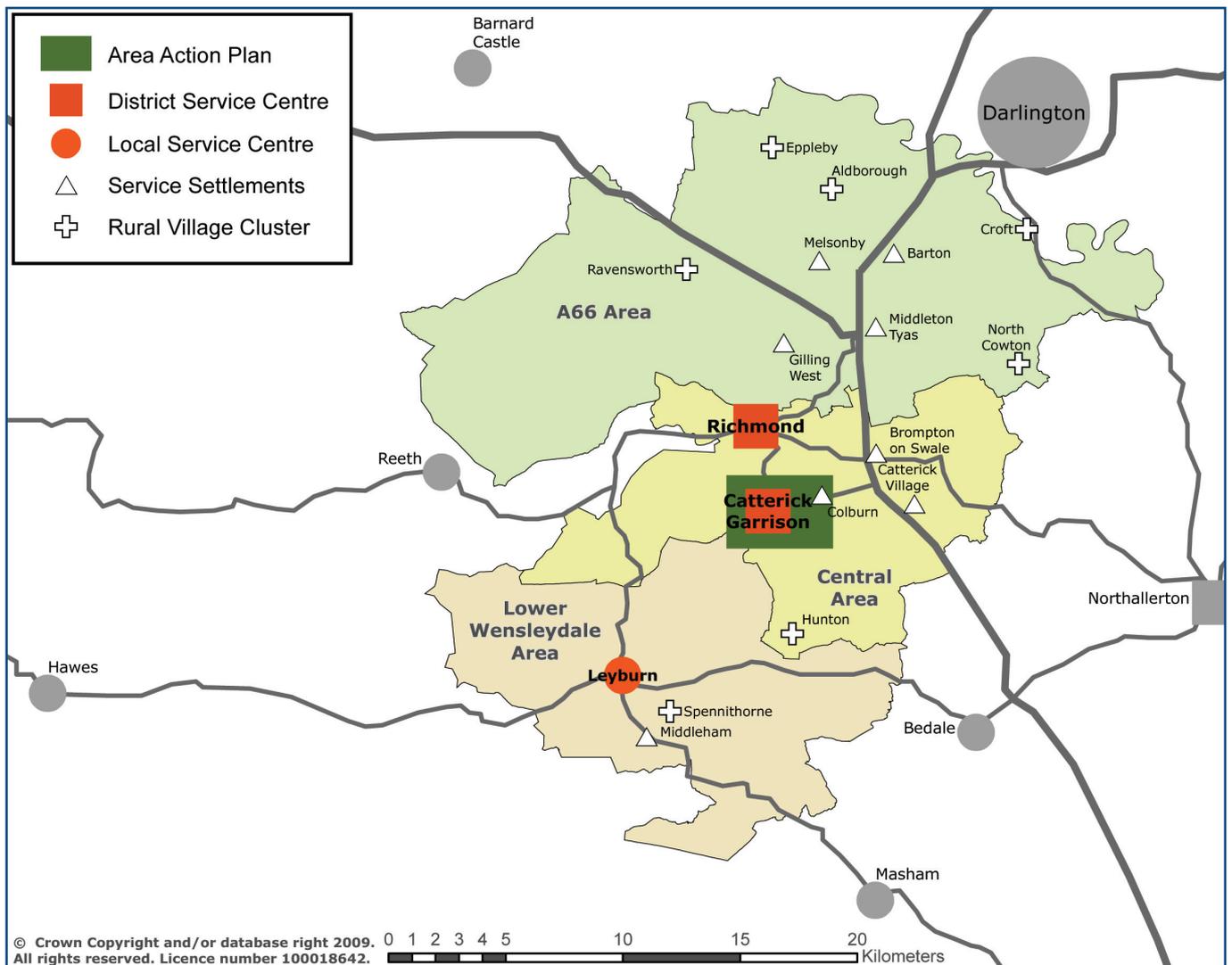
Would allowing some limited development in these settlements make them more sustainable - eg. by making some facilities more viable - or would the scale of development be unlikely to make this realistic?



## 8. Lower Wensleydale in the wider context

8.1 This paper has concentrated on Lower Wensleydale and setting out its settlements in an order that reflects the extent to which they can meet local needs and how they relate to each other. But Lower Wensleydale is not an island and we now have to return to the overall strategic context of the District in the LDF. The map below summarises the debate so far.

8.2 Is it realistic to expect solutions to all of the issues we have been looking at to be solved within the area? For example secondary health care services are located outside of the area, as are major retail and leisure opportunities. Given what we know and expect for this area, how should we expect these needs to be met?





8.3 We can only begin to look at this question now and will need to come back to it when we have also debated the Central and A66 areas. But at this stage it is reasonable to ask, in general terms, about the general pattern of growth expected across the three sub areas covered by the Richmondshire LDF. This will be influenced by internal pressures, like the potential for military related growth at Catterick Garrison and external pressures from neighbours. Possible answers to these questions are developed in the consultation paper on the Scale and Distribution of Development.

### Issue LW6: Strategic Options

#### LW6a

To what extent can Lower Wensleydale area change to meet local needs in the future?

#### LW6b

To what extent could these needs be met outside of this area?

#### LW6c

What is the most sustainable balance of development between Lower Wensleydale and the rest of the District - in terms of the three Sub Areas and the levels of the hierarchy?

See the paper on the Scale and Distribution of Development for a detailed look at these issues.





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