

Sedbergh Growth Framework (bitesize)

SEP background

The current Sedbergh Economic Partnership (SEP) was established in 2018 and brings together public, private and third sector organisations working collaboratively to increase the economic prospects of Sedbergh. The Partnership includes elected members across all tiers of existing and new local authorities, Yorkshire Dales National Park, Settlebeck School, local businesses, Farfield Mill, Cumbria Tourism, Sedbergh Community Trust, Sedbergh Community Interest Company, Sedbergh School, Cumbria Farmers Network and an independent Chairperson.

The SEP recently renewed its terms of reference and has good public/ private/ voluntary sector representation; this is important to ensure that work and projects are well formed and based on a broad cross-section of knowledge and opinion. It also serves to help inform attending public authority members and officers about the needs and concerns of the business sector and local community. SEP produced the Growth Framework, an economic growth plan for Sedbergh and engage a project coordinator in support.

Extract from Growth Framework

Sedbergh stands at a tipping point. The opportunity to achieve long term sustainability of the town population has never been greater. The importance of quality environments to work and live have become more apparent following the recent worldwide pandemic. Sedbergh is well placed to meet existing and new demand in housing and take advantage of incoming economic opportunities which will help the sustainability and resilience of this town.

Sedbergh cannot stand still for fear of stagnation. Roll numbers in schools are falling, the average age of residents is increasing, the burden on volunteers who organise and support community action is growing and high street vacancy numbers may go up.

Sedbergh has capacity for growth. Education and employment are vital for the health and wellbeing of this community. The schools have capacity for more students, the medical centre has space for more registered patients and the utilities infrastructure will have capacity for more homes and more businesses. Hospitality and tourism represent a real growth prospect.

To support sustainability and growth **Sedbergh needs to proactively address a shrinking workforce** by attracting working age residents. All roads lead to more new housing which is needed to support the future health and prosperity of Sedbergh, its residents, its services and its businesses. It is important that any new housing supports local needs and that employment space for artisans, fledgling and established businesses is forthcoming.

Sedbergh needs to promote itself to relocating families, bringing their own businesses to town from the Northwest and further afield. Now is a good moment to highlight Sedbergh to policy makers and decision takers at the new unitary authority to help it develop as a prosperous and sustainable market town.

Sedbergh needs the support of the planning authority, housing authority and the economic development agencies to help deliver growth, both in economy and in housing to help sustain Sedbergh's services and assist a prosperous economic future.

Vision

When defining the vision for Sedbergh, the starting point is to recognise the overall vision for the National Park, of which Sedbergh is the largest settlement.

“Through their passion for this special place, local people and businesses will keep the Yorkshire Dales National Park a thriving area. Its unique cultural landscape will be treasured for its stunning scenery, exceptional heritage and wonderful wildlife, and every year millions of people will be inspired to be part of it”.

In supporting this aspiration, Sedbergh’s vision, collectively agreed by Economic Partnership members, is:

- A prosperous market town well served with economic infrastructure including superfast broadband, good transport connectivity, vibrant shops and services, education excellence, a good supply of housing and quality visitor accommodation.
- A destination place that enjoys a distinctive natural environment and celebrated cultural heritage together with an envied quality of life for residents and an offer of hospitality excellence for its visitors.
- A sustainable (and viable) Dales town that supports growth of community and business from within, a town where people of all ages enjoy opportunities to learn, to work and to be active.

Main themes (Sept 2023)

1. Build More Houses
2. Vibrant Main Street
3. Better Connectivity
4. Healthy Business Environment
5. Promote Sedbergh (work and visit)

Theme 1 - Build More Houses

Key issues:

House prices are above average, lack of rented accommodation, few houses on the market, limited first time buyer options, no single occupancy solutions. Housing market stifles employment market as workers cannot move to the town; growing families cannot move out to larger units and free up existing, lack of young families moving in doesn’t help roll numbers. Growth Framework Target = 10%, approx. 130 new homes. YDNP need a ‘rural housing enabler’ to help be the link between housing authority, planning authority, landowner and developer. Also need a targeted above shops housing grant scheme to convert upper floors into small housing units on Main Street.

Latest:

Station Road development is underway with first occupiers due in October. Demand of the homes has been high. Development provides 49 houses in a mix of open market, social rented, affordable homes and shared ownership options. Broadacre Homes keen to deliver elsewhere in town if an appropriate site available. Kings Yard site looking for a developer to start the build. The site will deliver 7 houses inc. 2 local occupancy.

Baliol development (large, allocated site) stalled awaiting resubmission of the planning application. The development hopes to offer a viable mix of open market homes, commercial space (inc. new nursery site), affordable homes and rentals. Baliol site has been submitted to YDNP for consideration for purely

residential use in the next Local Plan. Several other sites across Sedbergh being considered by YDNP for housing allocation.

Theme 2 - Vibrant Main Street

Key issues:

Main Street is Sedbergh's shop window, it needs to be vibrant, open, full and welcoming both to regular shoppers and to visitors. Current occupiers all run different opening hours, lack of evening economy options including takeaways, vacancy rates are increasing and parking areas to support the Main Street are limited especially on event days. Unit sizes are small and long-term empty properties remain.

Latest:

The owners of shop units at Browns and Udales are willing to host pop-up shops in the run up to Christmas, up to 12 weeks. Artisan Markets have helped footfall to the Main Street last few months. Shop Local campaign has been running but need additional footfall from visitors (plus coach parties).

Al Fornos has been sold as a potential Wine Bar/ Coffee Bar. New Gun Dog café opening more days and extending menu. Haddock Paddock has recently changed hands. Udales has had interest but asking price too high and building very derelict.

The Dalesman won Pub of the Year in the Cumbria Tourism Awards. The Information Centre is an excellent resource for signposting visitors. Sedbergh Parish Council exploring parking options for residents to alleviate pressures on main car parks. Electric charging points now available in Sedbergh.

Theme 3 - Better Connectivity

Key issues:

Sedbergh has no regular public transport provision. Local transport volunteers operate in the town but limited. No connection to the main line station at Oxenholme. Employees cannot get to Sedbergh from neighbouring towns, businesses suffer trying to recruit. Restricted opportunity for residents to travel out of Sedbergh using local transport. Broadband delivery may have stalled with lack of additional funding support for B4RN to continue into town and no start date from the funded provider, Fibrus.

Latest:

Work underway via Council, MPs Office and local organisations to investigate transport options/ secure funding to identify new provider to deliver a regular service. Information Office playing an important role in collecting/ distributing information. Funding has been ringfenced to support sustainable transport projects but subject to Locality Board application.

Fibrus plans to commercially fund new broadband connections in addition to the Project Gigabit funded connections using wireless technology (poles rather than underground cabling like B4RN) – however no start date given. B4RN looking to deliver to more homes across the town centre but has not received government funding to help continue the rollout (local MP has raised the issue).

Theme 4 - Healthy Business Environment

Key issues:

No commercial units available to new or growing businesses, land allocated for industrial use remains undeveloped. Shared workspace provision missing from Sedbergh. No emergence of replacement business association. Employer vacancies remain unfilled despite best efforts to recruit - transport and housing are main hurdles, need to offer more apprenticeship opportunities.

Latest:

The land adjacent to Toll Bar industrial estate previously allocated for development has a landowner willing to explore options, may need Council input. Further adjacent land expected to become available for commercial development through next Local Plan.

Exploring options for workhub space in town centre which can be used by local people, visitors and contractors -number of options exist including upstairs room at Sedbergh Library.

SEP sharing information for businesses through social media channels to help keep local traders informed. Replacement business association not materialised; networking events needed.

Theme 5 - Promote Sedbergh (work and visit)

Key issues:

Concerns over Information Centre core funding with YDNP spend review, lack of marketing campaign for town, lost between tourist boards, limited public transport for visitors, insufficient coach parking, better connection needed between tourism assets (e.g. Farfield Mill) and Sedbergh Main Street. Cycling tourism is lacking but has good potential.

Latest:

The MyCumbria Card project has 12 businesses signed up, more expected- should help promote the town to large visitor database. Booktown project revitalised with latest literary festival well received.

Parish Council are pressing for coach parking solutions with YDNP and improving arrival points for visitors at Joss Lane car park. Work underway with tourist information providers to link suggested itineraries and walking routes to Sedbergh.

Key performance indicators (agreed at last SEP meeting)

Item	Target	Current
Pupil Roll Numbers (state schools)	90% (average)	90%
Shops vacancy rate	7% (national average 13%)	9%
Public car parking spaces	145 spaces (30% increase)	110
Electric charging points	6 charging points	2
Early years provision	40 spaces (to meet demand)	24
Housing units*	10% increase by 2040	1153 +170 (s/c units)
Adult extra-care facility	1 facility	0
Bus service	3 times a day, 7 days a week	Infrequent
Main events (visitor facing)	4 per year	3
Job vacancies	20 maximum	35
Apprenticeships (in Sedbergh)	10 active	Unknown
New employment sites delivered	1	0