

YDNP Local Plan - Consultation no.6: Land for Housing Development

Sedbergh Economic Partnership (SEP) is a collaboration of local organisations and business whose aim is to develop and deliver economic growth in Sedbergh.

In 2021 the Partnership agreed a new vision and ambition for growth to utilise the services and resource that Sedbergh holds to help it become a sustainable town for the future. The Sedbergh Framework for Growth lists key priorities for growth to help Sedbergh deliver its vision:

- 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.

Key points

- a) Sedbergh's vision to be 'a sustainable and prosperous market town' requires an ambitious house building programme to support it.
- b) SEP rejects the notion of demographic shrinkage in Sedbergh as evidence shows significant un-met housing demand and unfilled employment opportunities. There are currently 46 vacancies in the town and businesses struggle to recruit, primarily due to lack of local labour supply and travel to work distances, exacerbated by poor public transport and lack of housing availability.
- c) Whilst SEP welcomes land potentially allocated for housing, it is vital that more housing sites are identified between now and 2040 to sustain and grow existing employment, supporting infrastructure, amenities and services.
- d) SEP supports the notion of principal residences for all new builds, especially as the number of second homes and holiday lets is approx. 15% of existing housing supply. Currently, a positive factor for Sedbergh and its future health as a working market town is the number of "destination" services and facilities such as the vets, solicitors and estate agents, pharmacy, GP and dental surgeries which draw people to Sedbergh from a wider hinterland. To maintain the good level of services, the resident numbers need to be sustained at the very least - a decrease in population will have a detrimental impact.
- e) The 2020 report Sedbergh: Economic Case for More Housing concluded that the Park's strategic market housing assessment had underplayed the demand for housing in the Sedbergh area. Coupled with the demand for housing from the local Housing Authority's own study and Cumbria Choice Letting data on demand, it is apparent that additional housing is needed in Sedbergh, above the agreed 50 homes per annum park-wide target set by YDNPA. It is helpful to read in the consultation (para 57) that YDNP has recognised that Sedbergh has both need and capacity to deliver a higher percentage of the housing target from other settlements across the park. Please refer to the Sedbergh Economic Partnership's submission The Sedbergh Framework for Growth for capacity details.

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Q1. Are the potential housing development sites that have been identified appropriate for development? If not, why not?

The housing sites identified in the allocations document are considered appropriate, practical and desirable with good access to the main centre, local amenities and workplaces. Active new housing site, Kings Yard, should not be listed as a new development site as it reduces the number of new sites and units considered necessary to achieve much needed housing growth in Sedbergh. The proposed 92 units across the 4 sites seems high in terms of density unless there is a high number of HMO/ flats/apartments. The guidance states the need for 1-bed / 2-bed homes but evidence from local estate agents shows that working families in Sedbergh are desperate for 3 bed homes (as they outgrow their 2-bed house and leave the town for housing more readily available in larger conurbations such as Kendal).

Q2. Are there any alternative sites that should be considered for housing development?

Businesses in Sedbergh need a workforce and often compete with businesses from other areas, particularly in the skilled labour market. Without adequate housing delivery, it places a significant hurdle in the way of potential recruitment and economic sustainability.

The consultation document refers to considering increasing Sedbergh's share of housing allocation (para 57) and this is supported. To deliver this, more housing sites need to be identified than those in this consultation document – the 4 proposed sites plus occasional small windfall sites will not generate what is needed - perhaps the previously discounted sites should be revisited and reviewed.

Identified sites need to provide a mix of housing to meet demand. This includes the building of affordable homes, HMOs, key worker homes and a wider distribution of house sizes to accommodate the needs of the local community and potential working families moving to the area, not just 1 or 2 bed units. More sites are necessary to enable delivery of much-needed shared accommodation, sheltered housing and an extra care facility.

As referenced in the Sedbergh Framework for Growth, Sedbergh ideally needs a minimum of 130 principal residence houses built within the local plan period (2023 – 2040). This represents approximately 10% housing growth and serves to sustain numbers for school places and jobs, together with supporting existing services and community activities (number of volunteers, running local events, groups etc).

Q3. Are the housing development boundaries shown on the accompanying maps appropriate? If not, what changes are needed and why?

Sedbergh is recognised as a key service centre and an area for housing growth in the consultation documentation. The development boundary around Sedbergh is very tight to existing development showing little room for developments. Also, without change, it will deter potential applications for housing sites due to existing exemption site policies and their effect on viability.

Perhaps an area showing a slightly wider boundary or relaxed perimeter/ buffer zone could help the housing outlook for Sedbergh and encourage development to be come forward, especially should a change in land ownership present a development opportunity before 2040. Any extending of development boundaries should, where feasible, be circular around the town so as to prevent the centre moving westwards.

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Some relaxation of development boundaries in nearby settlements is vital to Sedbergh as an important hub (schooling, jobs, services) for the surrounding areas of Dent, Garsdale, Killington, Millthorpe, Moorcock, Casterton (large local employment base) and Middleton among others.

Q4. Are the important open spaces identified on the accompanying maps appropriate? If not, what changes are needed and why?

SEP welcomes the plan, by the Parish Council, for Coach parking facilities in Sedbergh. This would be well-placed at New Bridge, an area earmarked in the allocation maps for green space. SEP ask that this allocation be reconsidered to help support and grow the visitor economy of Sedbergh.

Sedbergh Economic Partnership

May 2023