

Leekfrith Parish Neighbourhood Plan

2018 - 2033

Public Consultation Document

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1. Introduction & Acknowledgements

This Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies for the use and development of land in the Leekfrith Neighbourhood Area covering the period from 2017-2032. Once adopted, it will be used by the local planning authorities (alongside other strategic plans) to make decisions about development in the Leekfrith Neighbourhood Area.

As the responsible body for writing the Neighbourhood Plan Leekfrith Parish Council has involved people who live, work and do business in the Neighbourhood area at every stage: in developing a vision for their community and in the choices which will help to shape their neighbourhood.

Any non-planning ideas that were suggested as part of the consultation are still important and addressed in a separate chapter,

The Parish Council would like to thank everyone who contributed, and the many people who are still contributing, to the preparation of this Plan.

2. Neighbourhood Plan Area

The policies in this plan relate to Leekfrith Neighbourhood Area which was designated by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and by Peak District National Park Authority in March 2015. The geographical area is the same as that defined by the boundary of Leekfrith Parish. It is shown with a red dotted boundary on the map in Figure 1 and covers an area of about 3,000 hectares.

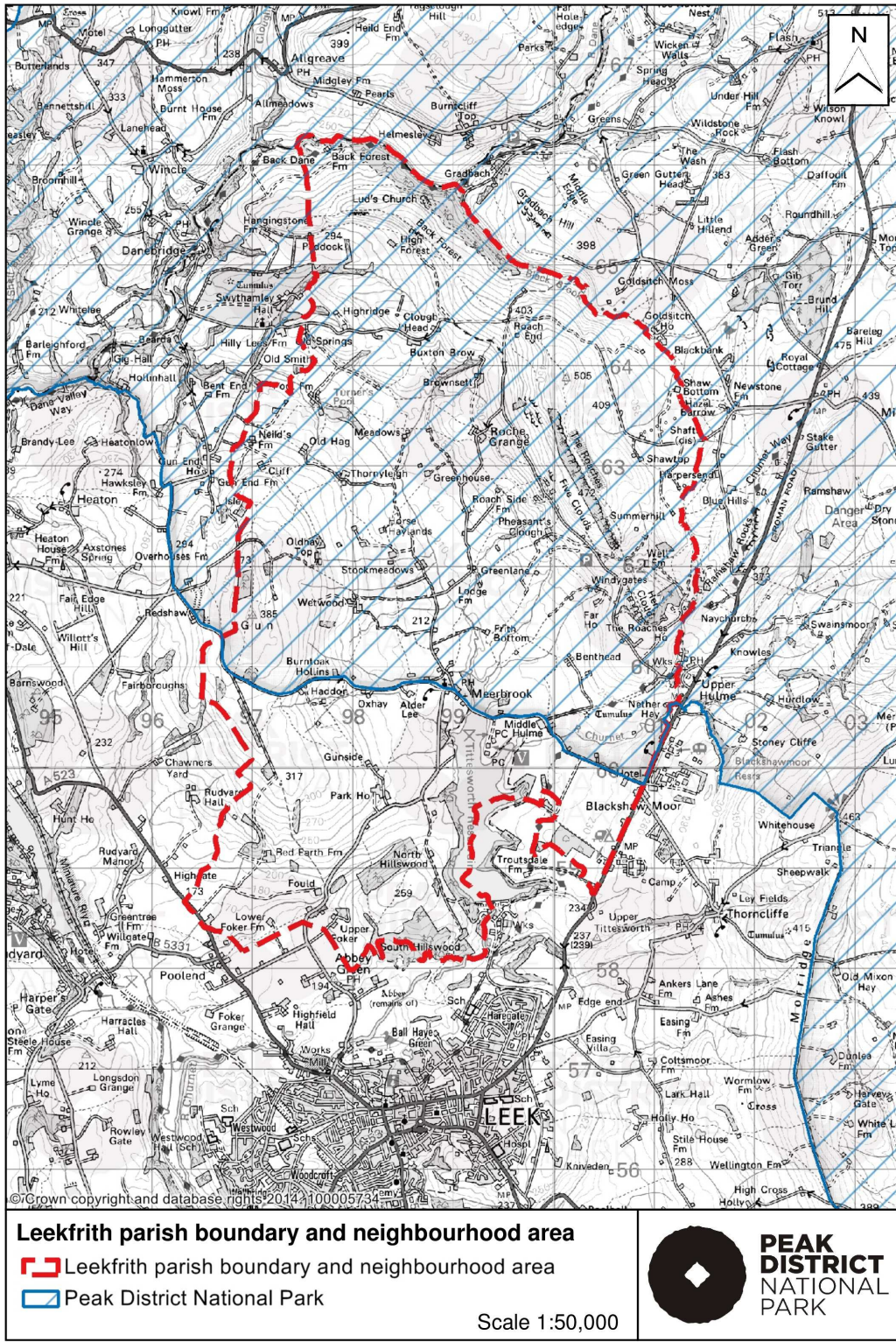


Figure 1

Key :

Red dotted line = Leekfrith Parish Boundary
 Blue dotted line = Peak District national Park Boundary

3. Leekfrith Parish ... a treasure trove!

Leekfrith parish is a beautiful rural area on the south western edge of the Peak District. It is large in area but sparsely populated. There are 306 people on the electoral role and 150 houses.

The Parish contains the small village of Meerbrook and the hamlet of Upper Hulme, both are Conservation Areas, together with a few houses and small farms in the surrounding area.



Photo by M Mcgriskin

The northern 2/3rds of the Parish are in the Peak District National Park and the southern 1/3 rd is part of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council area.

The Roaches and Hen Cloud, outcrops of Millstone Grit dominate the area. The Roaches, rise to 1,658 ft. (505 m.) and is very popular with climbers. Gun, a hill on the west side of the township, rises to 1,263 ft. (385 m.). The valley between the Roaches and Gun is drained by Meer brook. The brook originally flowed into the River Churnet, but since the mid 19th century it has flowed into Tittesworth reservoir. The reservoir originally lay mostly in Tittesworth, but it was extended around 1960, involving the flooding of a number of properties and now lies mostly in Leekfrith. The reservoir is operated by Severn Trent Water Authority, and dominates the valley floor.

The Roaches and Tittesworth reservoir both attract large numbers of tourists, which add to the economics of the area and are most welcome to share in the beauty of our area, but also cause significant issues with car parking.



Photo by M Mcgriskin

The village of Meerbrook has an Anglican church, a small Methodist chapel, a public house 'The Lazy Trout', a village green and a village hall, all in close proximity to each other. These are the focal points of the parish and even though we live far apart there is a vibrant community here. It is this spirit of community that is highly valued by the parishioners.

House prices in the area are very high because of the mainly

detached nature of the housing stock and the desirability of the surroundings. This makes it difficult for the younger generation to find suitable housing in the area.

The population of Leekfrith, in age, tends towards the older end of the spectrum.

In the hamlet of Upper Hulme there is an old Dyeing Mill built around the turn of the 20th century with additions throughout the early part of the century which has given rise to a hotch-potch of buildings. Many of these buildings are in poor repair: some are let to small businesses. This area is a prime candidate for sympathetic redevelopment.

Leekfrith has history...

In early 2017 several gold 'torcs' (neck bracelets) were found within Leekfrith Parish. They are of national importance and may well be the oldest gold artefacts found in the UK. They date from 400-250 BC. In 2015 a burial urn was found on the top of the Roaches believed to be about 3500 years old.

4. Vision

To develop a Neighbourhood Plan that will help to maintain, enhance and secure the longevity of the community in the Leekfrith Parish.

V1. A community of all ages.

As in many rural communities the average age of our population is increasing. The lack of suitable housing makes it difficult for younger people to buy a house in the village. At the other end of the age range, many older people in the past have left the community they love because they cannot down-size to a smaller home within the community. We want to have housing suitable for all ages so that our community can remain flourishing and sustainable.

V2. Where the focal points of our community are valued and protected

All communities need places of focus. In our community the Village Hall, the Church, the Chapel and the Pub at present fulfil this role admirably. The school is also important and although it is in Tittesworth parish it is on our border. Where possible our plan should ensure their long-term viability.

We also want to look at providing other points of focus which could improve communication and cohesion between all of us in the community, providing benefits to health and well-being.

V3. A community where suitable businesses can thrive and employ

There are many small businesses thriving throughout the parish and this entrepreneurship should be encouraged. We want an environment which encourages people to set up a range of businesses, giving employment opportunities for local people.

V4. Conservation

Our location is beautiful being blessed with both the Roaches and Tittersworth reservoir. Any improvements we make must enhance the special character here and our quality of life.

We welcome the many visitors who want to share this beauty, but the numbers are such that careful management is required so as not to spoil what we have.

5. Neighbourhood Plans and the Planning System

The parish of Leekfrith is partly in the Peak District National Park and partly in the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council area. Neighbourhood Plans must have regard to national policy, be in general conformity with local policies and contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. To this end the Peak District National Park Authority's Development Plan, Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2011, the Local Plan 2001 and the draft Development Management Policies 2016 and SMDC's Core Strategy and the emerging Local Plan have been considered.

The Neighbourhood Plan gives local people the power to decide where new housing should go and how the Parish should develop. Without this Neighbourhood Plan, these decisions would be made by either the Peak District National Park Authority for those areas inside the Peak District National Park or by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council for the rest.

6. Evidence for Policies and Legal Compliance

The Neighbourhood Plan has emerged from significant research and consultation and this is presented as part of the policy evidence base in Appendices and in the Consultation Statement. The Basic Conditions Statement demonstrates the Neighbourhood Plan's compliance with legislation.

- Appendix 1..... Our survey to parishioners
- Appendix 2 Our survey analysis overview
- Appendix 3 Our survey analysis
- Appendix 4Housing needs survey
- Appendix 5Data on illegal car parking on the Roaches

7. The Policies

7.1. DEVELOPMENT OF UPPER HULME MILL

Our parish is very rural and even the centres of population are no more than a few houses. In line with National Policies the emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan has an aspiration, based on historical data, that 4-8 “windfall” unplanned dwellings will transpire during the lifetime of this plan within the SMDC part of the parish. There is no requirement for this Neighbourhood Plan to identify specific plots. In the past, local people have been much more creative in their identification of suitable plots than anyone in the political system. The Peak District National Park has no specific allocation of housing however delivery of dwellings in the National Park counts towards the housing targets set out for constituent local authorities within the Park. So any development in the PDNPA area within the parish will count towards SMDC's housing allocation.

A housing needs survey in the parish, conducted in October 2014, identified a need for 3 houses during the next five years. There was also an indication of the desire for older people to ‘downsize’ but stay in the area, and for a mix of housing types to suit young families.

From our vision we would like to build houses for the young and the not so young and initially we considered allocating plots of land in Meerbrook for possible development. After consultation we dropped this idea because the sites were unlikely to become available, they were not particularly efficient sites and there was little support in Meerbrook.

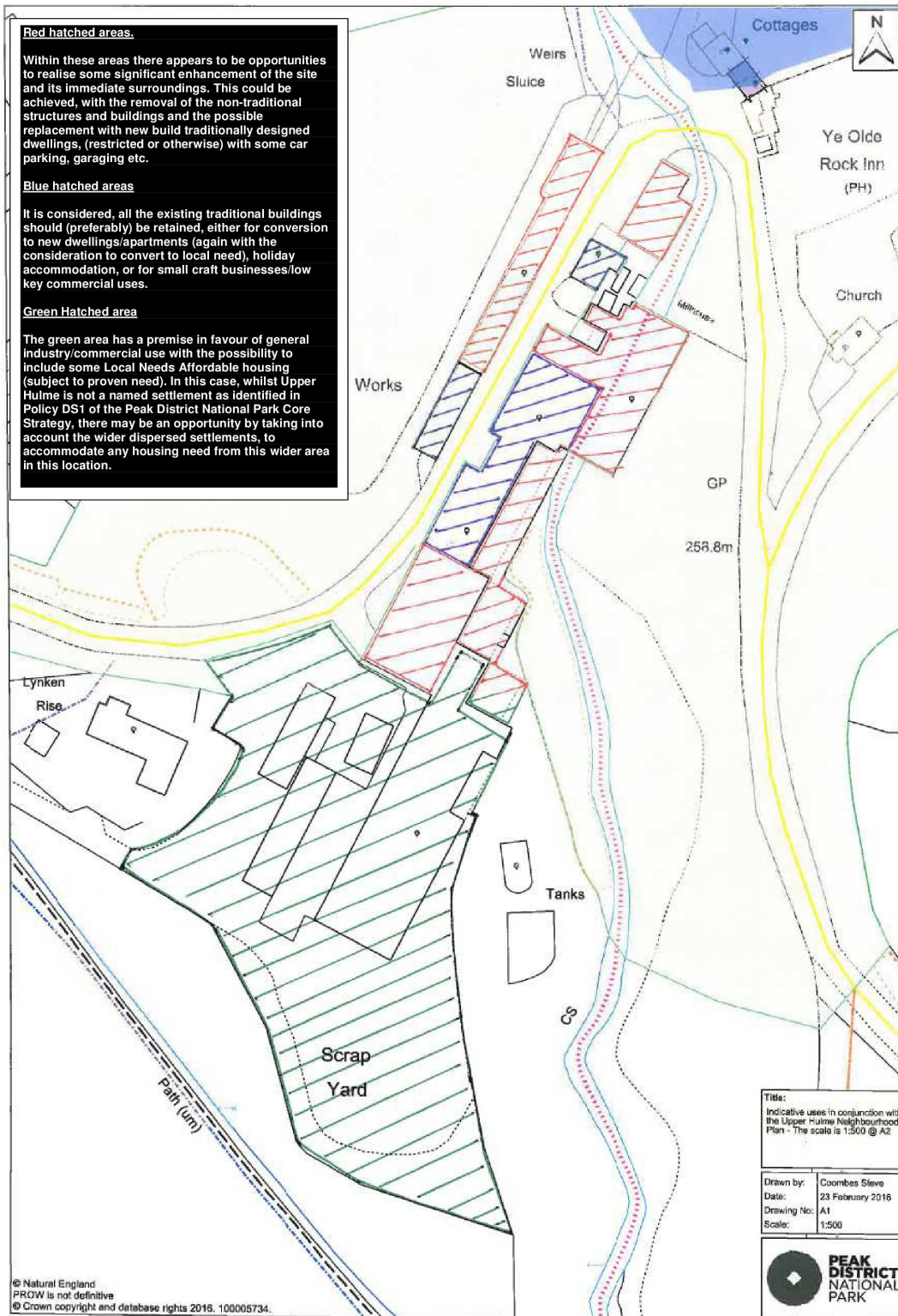
Conversely the industrial site in Upper Hulme offers land for building of houses and industrial units which is supported by the owners, is supported by the parishioners, would enhance the visual amenity of the area and its development is supported in general by the planners of the PDNPA.

After much consultation with the PDNPA planners and the Upper Hulme Mill owners, the Planners created a diagram of the area giving an idea of what could be possible in terms of demolition, house building and industrial units. (See Figure 2 below). This diagram is an indication only but is a very positive step to show the owners and possible developers what could be done. No development will occur without the owners permission.

Affordable and open market housing is required, the proportions of which will depend on the requirements at the time of development. There is enough land available to far exceed any conceivable requirements of the parish (possibly 40+), but no limits should be applied as an increase in population will enhance the long term viability of the community.

Parking on the main road through the hamlet of Upper Hulme would cause significant problems as highlighted by parishioners in the area.

Figure 2



Policy 1

Development of the Upper Hulme Mill site broadly in line with the diagram above (figure 2) is supported by this plan. The percentage of affordable and open market housing will depend on the prevailing conditions at the time of application. A number of light industrial units will also be supported. The number will depend on the details of the development and how they are integrated with the housing.

The site is wholly within the PDNP so details of the design of the housing and units will be considered by the PDNPA and this plan does not seek to change that other than car parking requirements must be sufficient to ensure that parking on the main road through Upper Hulme is completely discouraged.

The proposed site is within 500m of special environmental sites i.e. South Pennine Moors SAC and Peak District Moors SPA. Any proposed development at the site must carry out and publish a Habitat Regulations Assessment before any development takes place to ensure no potential adverse effects.

7.2. FULL TIME RENTAL OF HOLIDAY COTTAGES

There are several holiday cottages in the parish. These tend to be developed from outbuildings of existing farms, as such they are sparsely distributed within the parish and do not encroach upon the character of the parish. Some of these holiday cottages suffer from under occupation through lack of demand or the owners no longer being interested or capable of injecting the work required by the high demands of the holiday rental market and create a situation where the parish has under-occupied dwellings yet no accommodation for young families, or older residents wishing to downsize. Conversion of holiday cottages for use as long term rental within the PDNP is subject to strict controls. We have worked with the PDNPA and SMDC to facilitate relaxation of these controls in certain circumstances so as to better match the needs of the residents and tourists with the dwellings available.

The flexibility outlined in policy respects the tourist nature of the area, whilst offering change of use between two types of residential use (ancillary holiday use and ancillary residential occupation). Depending on the nature of the holiday accommodation, this may provide rented accommodation for people, for whom life in the community is desirable or essential, but for whom purchase of a house is impossible.

The flexibility will be a temporary arrangement subject to review. This policy continues to address National Park and SMDC purposes of conservation and tourism, whilst offering scope for people to stay and enjoy the National Park in line with demand. It also offers the community a way to address some of its concerns over the range of accommodation available to sustain it.

Policy 2

The renting of ancillary holiday accommodation, on the general rental housing market will be permitted provided

- i. The ancillary holiday accommodation has adequate indoor and outdoor living space and is not so closely related to adjoining properties that permanent residence would cause unacceptable harm to their amenity and
- ii. The ancillary holiday accommodation has been made available for holiday use through recognised marketing channels for holiday accommodation for the whole of the two years prior to the application, at a competitive price for the size and standard of the accommodation offered, and such marketing shows a lack of demand that proves that holiday use of the accommodation is unviable; or

- iii. There is evidence provided that the ancillary holiday accommodation cannot be operated as ancillary holiday accommodation by the current owners for other non-financial reasons such as age or infirmity; and
- iv. The letting of the property for other than ancillary holiday use requires no additional infrastructure; and
- v. The ancillary holiday accommodation remains under the control of the owner of the main house to which the accommodation is ancillary.
- vi. Where the above criteria are satisfied, permission will be granted on a temporary basis for 2 years.

7.3. PARKING ON THE NARROW ROADS THROUGHOUT THE PARISH

Throughout the parish the roads are very narrow and completely unsuitable for car parking. Any car parking that does take place causes unacceptable congestion, safety issues and difficult access for farm and emergency vehicles. Any development that would directly or indirectly lead to car parking on these roads should not be permitted..

Policy 3

The majority of roads in the parish are narrow, and have soft verges. Any development proposal must provide a transport statement that considers the parking implications of the proposal. The proposed development must demonstrate suitable parking arrangements that avoid unacceptable harm to the highways network.

7.4. PARKING AT THE ROACHES

Visitor parking on the Roaches has been a problem for at least 3 decades and a number of attempts have been made to solve the problem without success. On good weather days at the weekend the numbers of cars visiting the Roaches substantially exceeds the capacity of the present car parking. Cars then park on the verges and on bends making access difficult for anyone to get through. Parishioners are sometimes trapped in their homes due to cars parking in their driveway. There are many non-transport accidents on the Roaches as it is a well used climbing location and emergency vehicles often have difficulty gaining access. Farm businesses in the area stop operations outside the farm at weekends because of the difficulty of access. Farms are 24/7 businesses so this is a significant problem. Even though other parts of the National Park with comparable visitor numbers such as Stanage Edge and Dovedale have adequate car parks the PDNPA have consistently denied an adequate facility at the Roaches. We have investigated a new approach in conjunction with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) which now manages the Roaches. We are proposing an overspill car park which will operate on those good weather days when there is not enough space in the lay-byes by using the 28 day rule for using land or buildings for an alternative use without the need for formal planning consent. A suitable piece of land has been identified. (see figure 3 below). It is envisaged that temporary removable ground protection matting will be required to make this facility accessible throughout the year. Funding will be required for this development to go ahead.



Figure 3

Policy 4

This plan supports the alternative use of the land specified in Figure 3 for car parking for up to 28 days per calendar year.