



Cross-border housing developments: housing targets, civic accountability and the lawful planning balance

Version 12

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Using Spofforth Park, Hallam Land's Stockeld Park proposal and Wetherby as case studies

Foreword

Housing is one of the defining public policy challenges of our time. Few people would seriously argue that we do not need more homes, including homes that are genuinely affordable and suitable for people at different stages of life. The question is not whether new housing is needed. The question is how, where and on what terms it is planned, delivered, funded and maintained.

This paper has been prepared from a civic perspective. It reflects Wetherby Civic Society's concern that development should strengthen places, not simply add numbers to a housing supply calculation. Wetherby is a successful and much-loved market town. Its appeal rests on more than its housing stock. It depends on its historic centre, riverside setting, independent shops, hospitality, events, public spaces, surrounding landscape, community life and accessibility to visitors from a wide area.

Those qualities are not incidental. They are part of the town's social, economic and civic infrastructure. They help explain why people want to live in Wetherby, visit Wetherby and invest in Wetherby. They also mean that growth around the edge of the town must be considered carefully, particularly where development sits in one planning authority area but has practical effects in another.

Cross-border development raises questions that ordinary planning assessments can miss. A council may count the homes. A developer may promote the site. A different community may experience much of the traffic, service demand, town centre pressure, landscape change and long-term management burden. That does not mean such development must always be refused. It does mean that the planning balance must be honest about where the benefits and impacts fall.

The case studies in this paper, Spofforth Park, Hallam Land's Stockeld Park proposal and the wider Wetherby development context, are used to explore those wider issues. They illustrate the importance of infrastructure, design, economic resilience, public transport, active travel, affordable housing, Section 106 delivery, estate management

and long-term stewardship. They also show why housing targets, however important, cannot be allowed to become a substitute for planning judgement.

This is not an anti-development paper. Wetherby Civic Society recognises the need for new homes and accepts that communities must play their part in meeting housing need. However, growth should be planned in a way that respects the real geography of people's lives. Roads, schools, health services, shops, employment, public spaces and community facilities do not stop at administrative boundaries. The planning system should not behave as though they do.

The purpose of this paper is therefore constructive. It asks councils, developers, statutory bodies, civic societies and residents to look beyond the red line boundary of an application site and to consider the wider place. It argues for clearer evidence, better cross-boundary cooperation, stronger design expectations, transparent infrastructure obligations and more accountable long-term management.

If housing growth is to command public confidence, it must be more than a numbers exercise. It must create places that work, places that are fair, and places that will still be valued long after the first planning permission has been granted.

Peter Catton, Chair Wetherby Civic Society June 2026

Author's Introduction

This paper has been written to support a more honest and practical conversation about housing growth around Wetherby. It does not argue against new homes. It argues that development should be judged in the real geography in which people live, travel, work, shop and rely on services, not simply by the administrative boundary on a planning map.

The case studies used in this paper show why housing targets, infrastructure, Section 106 obligations, estate management and civic accountability must be considered together. If growth is to command public confidence, it must be properly planned, fairly funded and capable of strengthening the places it affects.

Malcolm Gardner, Vice-chair Wetherby Civic Society June 2026

Executive Summary

Properly understood, this paper supports the national mission to build more homes by arguing that faster delivery depends on stronger public confidence, clearer infrastructure obligations and fairer cross-boundary planning, not on treating housing targets as a substitute for planning judgement.

Cross-border housing development is not simply housing built near an administrative line. It is development where the physical location, planning authority, transport use, public service demand, social identity and economic effects do not sit neatly within one council's boundary. The planning authority may count the homes towards its housing

supply, receive the planning fee and control the permission, while the neighbouring town may experience much of the traffic, service pressure, town centre impact and political tension.

This is the central policy problem illustrated by the Spofforth Park project, Hallam Land's Stockeld Park proposal and the wider Wetherby development context.

The national policy framework rightly seeks more homes. England has had a persistent housing supply problem. National government has moved from Regional Spatial Strategies, through the Localism Act 2011, the National Planning Policy Framework from 2012 onwards, the 2017 Housing White Paper, and then to the December 2024 NPPF update and the commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes in this Parliament. The 2017 Housing White Paper was explicitly framed around reforming the housing market and boosting supply, while the December 2024 planning update was introduced to accelerate housebuilding and support the 1.5 million homes target¹.

However, housing targets and five-year supply pressures cannot lawfully be treated as determinative. They are material considerations, sometimes weighty ones, but they cannot replace the duty to exercise planning judgement on the development plan, infrastructure, transport, heritage, landscape, environment, equality, Section 106 deliverability and cross-boundary consequences.

An authority that approved development predominantly because it contributes to numerical targets, without properly weighing these other matters, would risk fettering its discretion. That risk is sharpest on administrative borders, where a housing target sits with one authority, but the consequences fall across a wider functional area. Targets should trigger scrutiny, not close it down.

The weakness is not the principle of housebuilding. The weakness is the gap between national housing targets and the lived reality of local delivery. In cross-border schemes, the planning system can count homes in one area while exporting practical impacts to another. It can accept transport evidence that focuses on highway capacity while failing to ask whether the estate will lock in car dependency. It can secure Section 106 promises at permission stage but leave communities struggling years later with private estate charges, unadopted land, unresolved infrastructure, inaccessible open spaces, weak governance and unclear accountability.

The three case studies show different parts of the same problem.

Spofforth Park demonstrates the long afterlife of Section 106 estates: residents pay council tax and estate charges, public access may be encouraged or tolerated, yet adoption, maintenance, drainage, visitor parking, open space, public routes and management company governance can remain complex years after occupation.

¹ [Fixing our broken housing market - GOV.UK](#)

Hallam Land's Stockeld Park proposal illustrates the classic cross-border dilemma: a site in North Yorkshire, abutting the Leeds boundary at Spofforth Park, physically and socially tied to Wetherby.

Leeds City Council has already recognised this difficulty in relation to Hallam Land's Stockeld Park proposal for 210 homes north of the A661. Although the site falls within North Yorkshire, it would operate in practice as an extension of Wetherby, abutting the Spofforth Park development at Ingbarrow Gate. That makes it a practical test case for whether cross-boundary impacts are properly assessed, mitigated and funded.

The pressure on this edge is not confined to a single scheme. A separate proposal by Miller Homes for up to 100 homes off Sicklinghall Road — also on Stockeld Park land, but a distinct development from the Hallam Land proposal — is awaiting a formal planning application, adding to the cumulative development pressure on the Wetherby edge.

The wider Wetherby project shows how a town can be affected both by development at its edge and by local plan allocations within its own boundary, including concerns about parking, town centre access, community facilities, heritage character and cumulative pressure on services. It is also important that, on the Leeds Local Plan position, Wetherby's housing requirement appears to have been addressed through planned allocations to 2040. Further border development in North Yorkshire should therefore not be presented as necessary to meet Wetherby's planned housing requirement.

The economic impact is part of that planning balance. New homes can support a local economy, but additional population does not automatically strengthen a market town. The benefit depends on whether growth brings accessible employment, local spend, town centre footfall, visitor activity and business resilience, or whether it mainly adds commuter housing, road pressure and service demand. In a town such as Wetherby, whose economy depends on independent retail, hospitality, visitor appeal, heritage, events, free or convenient parking and ease of access from a wider Yorkshire catchment, housing numbers alone are a poor measure of economic sustainability.

This paper argues for a more disciplined approach based on SMART goals. Cross-border housing should be Specific in the impacts it identifies, Measurable in the obligations it secures, Achievable in the infrastructure it promises, Relevant to the functional geography of people's lives, and Time-bound in delivery, enforcement and review.

The goal should not be to stop all development at boundaries. The goal should be to stop boundary effects, and housing targets themselves, being used, deliberately or accidentally, to weaken accountability.

1. Introduction and methodology

This paper considers cross-border housing developments through three linked case studies: Spofforth Park, Hallam Land's Stockeld Park Proposal and the wider Wetherby development context.

The term “cross-border” is used in four senses.

First, there is the formal planning border. A development may sit in one local planning authority area, but place pressure on services, roads, schools, health provision, retail centres and community infrastructure in another.

Secondly, there is the travel-to-work area. Residents may live in one council area, shop in another, commute through a third, and use schools, health services and leisure facilities wherever they are practically accessible.

Thirdly, there is the identity border. A site may be legally within one parish, district or county, but be experienced as part of a neighbouring town.

Fourthly, there is the fiscal border. The council that receives council tax, growth benefits, planning fees or planning obligations may not be the same place that experiences the greatest social, environmental or infrastructure impact.

The methodology is practical and civic. It combines national planning law and policy, published government and parliamentary material, Civic Voice policy positions, case law, and local case-study evidence. The legal and policy framework includes the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 106 planning obligations, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011, the NPPF, the 2017 Housing White Paper, the 2024 NPPF update, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Environmental Impact Assessment regime.

A caution is needed. This paper is not a substitute for legal advice on any live planning application. The case studies are used to draw policy lessons, not to determine the merits of any individual planning application. Where matters are confirmed in public sources, they are cited. Where matters arise from local experience, they are treated as case-study evidence requiring verification before formal use in representations.

This paper is not written as an objection to development in principle. It accepts the need for additional housing, including affordable housing. Its concern is with the governance, geography, infrastructure, economic resilience and fairness of development where the authority that counts the homes is not necessarily the community that experiences the practical impacts.

Key terms used in this paper

Term	What it means in plain English
NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework)	The government's rulebook for planning in England. It sets out what councils must take into account when they decide planning applications and write local plans.
Local plan	A council's long-term blueprint for where new homes, jobs and infrastructure should go, and how

Term	What it means in plain English
	much of each. Once adopted, decisions must generally follow it.
Housing target / five-year supply	The number of new homes a council is expected to plan for. If a council cannot show a five-year supply of deliverable sites, it becomes harder to refuse new housing.
Material consideration	Any factor a decision-maker is allowed to weigh when deciding an application — for example traffic, flooding, design, heritage or effect on neighbouring areas.
Fettering discretion	A legal error where a decision-maker treats a target or policy as an automatic rule, instead of genuinely weighing it against everything else. Decisions must keep real judgement.
Section 106 (planning obligation)	A legal agreement attached to a permission that requires the developer to provide things such as affordable housing, school places, road works or open space.
EqIA (Equalities Impact Assessment)	A check on how a development affects different groups — for example disabled, older or low-income residents — so that harms can be identified and mitigated.
EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment)	A formal assessment of a development's environmental effects, including the combined ('cumulative') effect of several schemes together rather than one in isolation.
Cross-boundary / functional area	The real area a development affects — the towns, roads, schools and services its residents actually use —

Term	What it means in plain English
	which often crosses the administrative line on the map.

2. Policy and legal context

2.1 From Regional Spatial Strategies to localism

Before 2010, Regional Spatial Strategies provided a regional planning framework for housing distribution and strategic growth. They were imperfect and often unpopular, but they did provide a formal mechanism for considering housing numbers and infrastructure above individual district boundaries.

The Localism Act 2011 changed this structure. Its explanatory notes identify section 109 as providing for the abolition of the regional planning tier². The policy direction shifted towards localism, neighbourhood planning and local plan making.

That shift created a democratic gain. Communities and local planning authorities gained more direct influence. But it also created a structural risk. Housing markets, labour markets, school catchments, health access, transport corridors and environmental systems do not respect administrative boundaries. Removing the regional planning tier did not remove cross-boundary impacts; it made them more dependent on effective cooperation between councils.

This is why cross-boundary planning is not a procedural extra. It is central to sound planning.

2.2 The NPPF, housing need and national targets

The National Planning Policy Framework is the central statement of national planning policy in England. The December 2024 NPPF states that planning law requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, and that the NPPF is itself a material consideration in planning decisions³.

The NPPF supports housing delivery, but it does not turn planning into a housing arithmetic exercise. It also addresses sustainable transport, healthy communities, design, climate change, flood risk, biodiversity, the historic environment and infrastructure. These matters remain part of the planning balance.

The national housing context is important. The previous government promoted progress towards 300,000 homes per year by the mid-2020s, while the current government has

² [Localism Act 2011 - Explanatory Notes](#)

³ [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

committed to 1.5 million homes over this Parliament⁴. These targets explain why housing delivery carries significant policy weight. They do not explain away the need for proper planning judgement.

2.3 Cross-boundary planning in the NPPF

The December 2024 NPPF places emphasis on strategic planning across local planning authority boundaries. This is vital for housing, infrastructure, environmental resilience, economic growth and climate objectives⁵.

For Wetherby, this is not abstract. A development in North Yorkshire may functionally relate to Wetherby. Its residents may use Wetherby shops, roads, schools, health services, public spaces and community facilities. A proposal may therefore be legally in one authority but practically tied to another.

This means the planning question must not be:

“Which side of the line is the site on?”

It must be:

“Which communities, services, transport networks and public assets will the development actually use?”

2.4 Section 106 and planning obligations

Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority to enter into planning obligations with a person interested in land. These obligations may restrict development, require operations or activities, require land to be used in a specified way, or require payments to be made⁶.

Section 106 agreements are essential in major housing schemes. They can secure affordable housing, public open space, education contributions, highway works, public transport support, travel plans and community facilities. But they are only as good as their drafting, triggers, monitoring and enforcement.

In cross-border schemes, the risk is that Section 106 obligations are negotiated by one authority while the practical need or benefit sits partly in another. Without transparent cross-boundary monitoring, the agreement can appear impressive at committee stage but fail to address lived impacts after occupation.

2.5 Equality and environmental assessment

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public authorities to consider how their functions affect people with different protected characteristics. Government guidance

⁴ [Tackling the under-supply of housing in England - House of Commons Library](#)

⁵ [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

⁶ [Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#)

describes the duty as supporting good decision-making and requiring public bodies to monitor actual impact⁷.

This is directly relevant to cross-border housing. Poorly located estates can affect older residents, disabled people, low-income households, children, carers and residents without access to a car. Equalities assessment should not be a procedural appendix. It should shape the decision.

Environmental Impact Assessment is governed in England by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, and government guidance confirms that the 2017 Regulations apply to development given planning permission under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990⁸.

For cross-border developments, the key issue is cumulative impact. The question is not only whether one development, viewed in isolation, is acceptable. The question is whether multiple developments, traffic movements, drainage effects, landscape changes and pressure on green infrastructure together produce effects that have not been properly assessed.

2.6 Housing targets, discretion and the lawful planning balance

Housing targets are an important part of the planning system, but they are not a substitute for lawful planning judgement. They identify need, influence plan preparation, inform the weight given to housing delivery and engage national policy mechanisms such as the tilted balance. They do not remove the duty to consider the full range of material considerations before reaching a decision. In cross-border cases, pressure to approve homes, from local need, supply shortfall, national delivery expectations or political emphasis on numbers, is plainly relevant but cannot lawfully operate as an overriding rule.

The statutory framework requires wider judgement. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires the decision-maker to have regard to the development plan, as far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 reinforces the plan-led approach by requiring determinations to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise⁹.

The courts have repeatedly emphasised the distinction between identifying a material consideration and deciding the weight to be given to it. In *Tesco Stores Ltd v Secretary of State for the Environment*, the House of Lords confirmed the distinction between whether something is a material consideration, which is a question of law, and the weight to be given to it, which is a matter of planning judgement¹⁰.

⁷ [Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities - GOV.UK](#)

⁸ [Environmental Impact Assessment - GOV.UK](#)

⁹ [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#)

¹⁰ [G4 - Tesco Stores Ltd v Secretary of State for the Environment Others \[1995\] UKHL 22](#)

Housing need and housing targets may therefore be powerful material considerations, but they must still be weighed in the balance. They do not automatically determine the outcome.

The wider public law principle is that a public authority must not fetter its discretion. In *British Oxygen Co Ltd v Minister of Technology*, the House of Lords accepted that a public authority may adopt a policy to guide the exercise of discretion, provided it remains willing to consider whether the policy should not be applied rigidly in a particular case¹¹.

Translated into planning terms, a local planning authority may properly give significant weight to housing targets, but it must not treat those targets as an inflexible rule which prevents proper consideration of the individual merits and harms of the proposal.

R (Kides) v South Cambridgeshire District Council reinforces this: the case turned on whether the authority had discharged its duty under section 70(2) to have regard to material considerations before granting permission¹².

The cross-border lesson is therefore clear. Material evidence on infrastructure, transport, equality, environmental impact, neighbouring authority effects or Section 106 deliverability must be considered before the decision is made; a strong housing-supply argument does not displace that duty.

Housing targets are not thereby weak. The need for housing may, in some cases, carry decisive weight, but only after the full planning balance has been undertaken. That discipline matters most on borders, where the decision-maker must be particularly careful not to count the benefit narrowly while externalising the harm widely.

2.7 Civic Voice and the civic movement

Civic Voice has consistently emphasised the importance of the plan-led system, civic participation, heritage, good design and democratic accountability. Its response to the recent NPPF consultation warned that the detail of national policy matters greatly in the assessment of plans and planning applications¹³. Civic Voice's statutory consultee response also raised concerns about the resources and capacity needed for effective planning¹⁴.

These civic concerns are directly relevant to cross-border development. Communities are not simply resisting change. They are often identifying weaknesses in delivery, governance, design, stewardship and accountability that formal planning systems may miss.

2.8 Operational local plans, design guides and national design guidance

The legal and policy argument should not rely only on the headline position on housing land supply. The detailed wording of the operational Local Plans remains important. That

¹¹ [British Oxygen Co Ltd v Minister of Technology \[1971\] AC 610](#)

¹² [R \(Kides\) v South Cambridgeshire District Council and Others - vLex United Kingdom](#)

¹³ [NPPF-consultation-response-13-02-2026.pdf](#)

¹⁴ [Statutory-bodies-consultation-Civic-Voice-response-Jan-2026.pdf](#)

includes the Leeds Local Plan, the relevant former Harrogate planning policies now administered by North Yorkshire Council, and any emerging North Yorkshire Local Plan evidence. Even where a plan is argued to be out of date for housing supply purposes, its detailed policies on design, landscape, heritage, settlement character, access, open space, ecology, transport and infrastructure may still carry significant weight as part of the planning balance.

For that reason, any objection or civic response should include a policy schedule. This should identify the relevant Leeds policies, the relevant North Yorkshire or former Harrogate policies, and the design guidance or codes that apply. The assessment should then test the proposal against those policies at two levels: first, the detailed design and immediate environmental impact of the scheme; secondly, the strategic impact on Wetherby, Spofforth Park and the wider functional community.

Design guidance is particularly important. Local design guides and codes should be checked for density, building form, settlement edge treatment, open space, access to facilities, nature protection, biodiversity, parking, walking and cycling links, drainage and long-term stewardship. Where local guidance is limited, the National Design Guide provides a useful framework. It emphasises context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan. Those are not decorative matters. They go to whether the development functions as a sustainable place.

To make that test operational, major cross-boundary proposals affecting Wetherby should be assessed against the following policy and design questions. This is not intended to duplicate the officer report. It is intended to show that the housing figure is only one part of the statutory planning balance.

Policy or guidance source	Relevant test for Wetherby and boundary proposals	Why it matters
Wetherby Neighbourhood Development Plan	Does the proposal support Wetherby as a compact market town, protect its Conservation Area and visitor role, maintain town centre vitality, support local employment, and provide safe walking, cycling and public transport links?	The plan is part of the development plan once made and gives local expression to housing, economy, tourism, heritage, movement and town centre priorities.
Leeds Local Plan and Site Allocations Plan	Is the proposal consistent with the planned growth strategy for Wetherby, including existing allocations and infrastructure assumptions?	If Wetherby's planned housing requirement is already addressed in Leeds to 2040, further boundary growth should not be presented as meeting an unmet Wetherby need without clear evidence.
Former Harrogate and North Yorkshire planning policies	Does the proposal satisfy policies on good design, efficient use of land, amenity, landscape sensitivity, biodiversity, green infrastructure, open space and sustainable transport?	A plan may be argued to be out of date for housing supply, but detailed policies can still carry weight where they address design, landscape, access and infrastructure.
North Yorkshire Residential Design Guide checklist	Does the scheme reflect site characteristics, integrate with surrounding routes, provide connected walking and cycling, create safe open spaces, avoid car-	The checklist turns design principles into practical questions for applicants and decision-makers.

Policy or guidance source	Relevant test for Wetherby and boundary proposals	Why it matters
	dominated streets and provide suitable visitor parking?	
National Design Guide	Does the scheme satisfy the ten characteristics of context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan?	The Guide requires consideration of social, economic and environmental context, not simply housing delivery.
GOV.UK design process and tools guidance	Has there been early and effective community engagement, a clear design narrative, and a masterplan or design code that secures quality through reserved matters and delivery?	Design quality cannot safely be deferred or assumed, particularly on large or phased edge-of-town sites.
GOV.UK effective use of land guidance	Does the proposal make efficient use of land while respecting context, character, infrastructure, accessibility and the wider development strategy?	Efficient land use does not mean maximising units regardless of settlement role, local economy or infrastructure.
GOV.UK determining a planning application guidance	Has the decision-maker identified the development plan, all material considerations and the weight given to each, including cross-boundary impacts?	This supports the lawful planning balance and helps avoid treating housing numbers as determinative.
GOV.UK Environmental Impact Assessment guidance	Have cumulative effects been assessed across developments, including traffic, landscape, biodiversity, drainage, construction and public access?	The real impact may arise from the combined effect of several edge schemes, not from one site in isolation.
GOV.UK historic environment guidance	Have effects on the Conservation Area, listed buildings, setting, townscape, views and historic market-town identity been assessed?	Wetherby's heritage and visitor economy are connected planning considerations, not separate cultural preferences.

3. Case studies

3.1 Spofforth Park: the long afterlife of a Section 106 estate

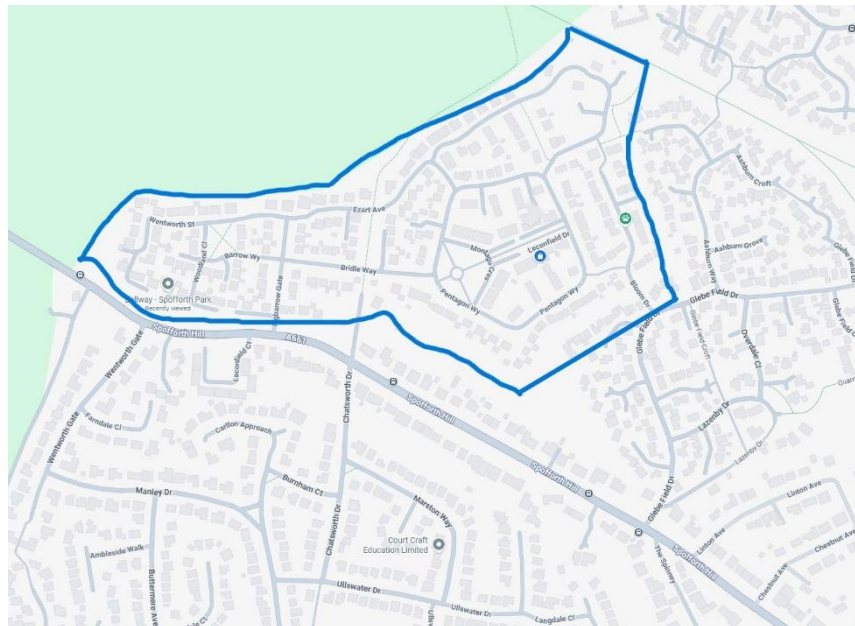


Figure 1 © 2026 Google maps.

Spofforth Park is a completed residential estate on the edge of Wetherby. Its importance as a case study lies less in the original decision to permit development and more in what happens after occupation.

Spofforth Park is not included because its issues are unique, but because they illustrate a wider national problem: the gap between promises made at planning stage and the long-term governance, funding and maintenance arrangements experienced by residents after occupation.

It illustrates the long afterlife of Section 106 estates. Residents may believe they are buying into a conventional estate. In practice, they may become members of a management company, pay estate charges, deal with unadopted roads or land, navigate visitor parking rules, seek permissions for alterations, and contribute to the upkeep of open spaces and shared areas.

This creates a fairness problem. Council tax is still payable in full, but some local maintenance is funded privately through estate charges. The House of Commons Library notes that freehold homeowners can be required to pay charges for the upkeep of shared areas and amenities on estates¹⁵.

The CMA's housebuilding market study identified significant concerns about the growing trend towards private management of public amenities on housing estates, including inadequate consumer protections and detriment for households. The CMA

¹⁵ [Freehold estate management - House of Commons Library](#)

recommended action to prevent the proliferation of private management arrangements and to support adoption of public amenities where appropriate¹⁶.

Spofforth Park also illustrates the problem of privately maintained land that may be publicly accessible. If residents pay to maintain land that is used by the wider public, including neighbouring areas or later development, the estate becomes a privately funded public asset. That may be acceptable only where it is transparent, fairly funded and democratically accountable. It is not acceptable where residents carry open-ended costs while the planning system treats the land as public mitigation.

3.2 Hallam Land's Stockeld Park Proposal: cross-border pressure and the edge-of-town dilemma



Figure 2 Map © 2025 Better Wetherby

Hallam Land's Stockeld Park Proposal illustrates the classic cross-border planning problem in a particularly sharp form. The proposed development is located within North Yorkshire, but it would sit directly on the boundary with Spofforth Park, which is within Leeds. In practical terms, therefore, the development would not be experienced as a self-contained North Yorkshire housing site. It would form part of the wider Wetherby

¹⁶ [Housebuilding market study final report](#)

edge, physically, socially and functionally connected to Wetherby and its existing communities.

This is the split geography described in the Executive Summary in its sharpest form: the housing-supply benefit would accrue to North Yorkshire, while the day-to-day impacts — on Spofforth Park residents and on the roads, schools, health facilities and town centre that Wetherby relies on — would fall on the wider Wetherby area.

The legal point in section 3.6 therefore bites here: a housing-supply argument cannot lawfully displace the other considerations set out there, and the decision-maker must ask whether the development is sustainable in its real geography — not merely whether it sits inside the determining authority's boundary.

The reported Leeds City Council objection to Hallam Land's Stockeld Park proposal reinforces this point. The council is reported as having raised significant concerns that the site should not be considered in isolation from the wider context of current and future planned development around Wetherby, and that the impact on local infrastructure must be understood before any decision is made. That is precisely the disciplined cross-boundary approach this paper argues for.

Hallam Land's proposal is also not the only development pressure on Stockeld Park land. A separate scheme on land off Sicklinghall Road, brought forward by Miller Homes for up to 100 homes, is proposed on Stockeld Park land but is a distinct development from the Hallam Land proposal. At the time of writing it is at the pre-application stage, proposed and awaiting a formal planning application. The existence of two separate schemes on the same landholding sharpens the cumulative-impact concern: each may be presented to the decision-maker as a standalone proposal, yet together they would add substantially to the development pressure on the Wetherby edge. This is precisely why Leeds City Council's call for the site not to be considered in isolation from current and future planned development around Wetherby carries particular force.

The location is important. The land is in the former Harrogate district and therefore falls within North Yorkshire Council's planning area, but it lies on the edge of Wetherby, north of the A661, and abuts the Spofforth Park residential development at Ingbarrow Gate. It is therefore artificial to treat the proposal as if its only meaningful geography is North Yorkshire. Its day-to-day geography is Wetherby.

The practical planning question is therefore not simply whether North Yorkshire has a housing land supply shortfall. It is whether this particular edge-of-Wetherby scheme is the right way to address that shortfall, given that Wetherby's own housing requirement within Leeds appears already planned for, and given that many of the service, transport and town centre consequences would be experienced in Leeds.

If permission were nevertheless granted, Leeds should be party to any Section 106 agreement or equivalent binding arrangement needed to mitigate impacts on Wetherby. Contributions for highway mitigation, school places, public transport, active travel,

health access, town centre impacts and green infrastructure should follow the geography of impact, not merely the geography of the red line boundary.

In section 3.8 terms, Hallam Land's Stockeld Park proposal should therefore be tested against three linked questions. First, does the detailed design respond to the immediate landscape, settlement edge and existing Spofforth Park community? Secondly, does the movement strategy provide genuine access to North Yorkshire facilities, or would daily life be orientated towards Wetherby? Thirdly, would any Section 106 agreement follow the geography of impact, including town centre access, highways, schools, active travel and green infrastructure within Leeds?

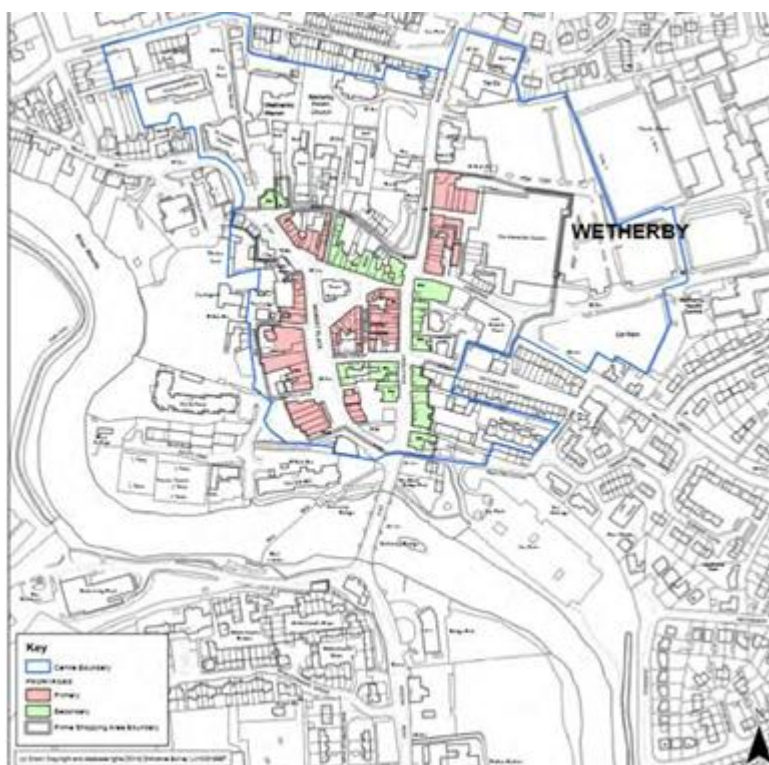


Figure 3 © 2025 Leeds City Council

3.3 Wetherby: town centre pressure, heritage and cumulative growth

The wider Wetherby context brings together town centre access, heritage, community facilities, transport, parking and edge-of-settlement development pressure. Wetherby is not simply a housing location. It is a functioning market town with a wider rural hinterland, a defined character and finite infrastructure capacity.

This matters because housing growth at the edge of the town can affect the town centre, the road network, public transport viability, parking demand, access to health and education, and the identity of the town itself. Local plan allocations within the town can also interact with cross-border developments outside the town. A town can therefore be

squeezed from both directions: development at the edge, and loss or pressure on central assets.

The Wetherby Neighbourhood Development Plan is important in this context. It describes Wetherby as a rural market town with strong links to its surrounding agricultural landscape, a long history focused on the market place, the Great North Road, Wetherby Bridge and the town centre, and a significant concentration of listed buildings within the Conservation Area. It also records that Wetherby has a manufacturing presence in the town and nearby Thorp Arch Estate, with many residents working in Leeds, at Sandbeck industrial estate, in the town centre or at Thorp Arch. That mix of heritage, employment, town centre activity and visitor appeal is part of the development plan context, not merely local sentiment.

The same plan identifies work and the economy as a key theme. Its objective is to further develop a vibrant and prosperous market town by supporting good quality jobs, businesses, shops and services, while protecting and enhancing the local environment. It notes that Wetherby is the principal settlement in the Outer North East of Leeds, serves a wide hinterland, has over 200 town centre businesses and depends on access, parking, independent shops, pedestrian safety, events, markets and attractiveness to visitors and shoppers. Those matters make the economic effects of edge and cross-boundary housing a material consideration in their own right.

In Wetherby's case, this concern is sharpened by the Leeds Local Plan position. On the Leeds Local Plan, and as confirmed locally by Leeds City Council planning officers, the planned housing requirement for Wetherby appears to have been addressed through allocations within the Leeds planning area to 2040. If that is correct, further large-scale housing immediately beyond the administrative boundary in North Yorkshire should not be treated as meeting an unmet need for Wetherby. It would be development over and above the growth already planned for the town.

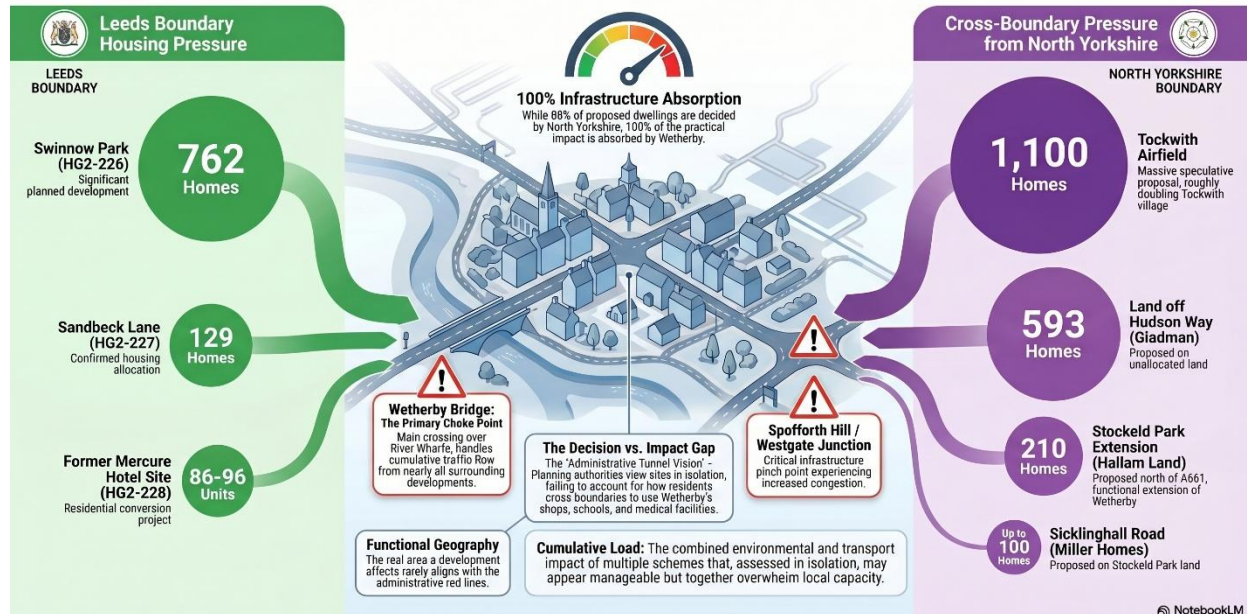
That distinction is important. A North Yorkshire Council border development may assist North Yorkshire's housing land supply position and may produce commercial benefit for the developer, but the practical burdens would fall heavily on Wetherby and its surrounding communities. Those burdens may include additional traffic through the town centre, pressure on schools and GP services, greater parking demand, increased reliance on car travel, and erosion of the settlement edge.

Where the benefit and the burden fall on different sides of the boundary in this way, the planning balance should say so explicitly rather than leave the distribution unexamined.

The transport position compounds the difficulty. Wetherby has had no rail link since its station closed under the Beeching cuts, and its bus services are barely adequate; the additional transport funding offered with these schemes tends to be local, connecting new development to the town centre rather than improving wider connectivity. The cumulative effect on car dependency is examined in Section 4.3.

This is the pattern that gives rise to concern about opportunistic development where schemes are unplanned, target-led or insufficiently mitigated around Wetherby. In such cases, schemes may be brought forward less because Wetherby has an unmet housing need and more because land is available, the administrative border is favourable to the promoter, and housing-supply pressure on a neighbouring authority creates a planning opportunity. Three current or recent schemes illustrate the issue that should be tested.

Wetherby Under Pressure: The Cross-Boundary Housing Crisis



The Gladman Developments consultation for a scheme of around 593 homes at Wetherby is the most prominent recent example of a land promoter bringing forward a large scheme outside the Leeds Local Plan allocations for the town. A scheme of that scale, promoted on land not allocated for housing in the plan that already provides for Wetherby's requirement, raises the cross-border questions this paper describes: who receives the measurable planning benefit, who counts the homes, which services are used, and where the practical impacts fall.

Hallam Land proposal for up to 1,100 homes at the former Tockwith Airfield, between York and Wetherby, is a second example. The 130-acre site is being promoted following North Yorkshire Council's housing requirement rising from around 1,500 to 4,300 homes a year under the December 2024 NPPF update. The chair of North Yorkshire's strategic planning committee has acknowledged that the uplift has opened the council up to speculative applications. Construction is anticipated to run from 2029 to 2042 and would roughly double the size of Tockwith village. Although the proposal includes a local centre, primary school land, health and sports provision, the scale is set by the developer's land position and by national housing-target pressure on North Yorkshire, not by a planned need for a settlement of that size at Tockwith. Wetherby would experience much of the

resulting traffic and town centre demand while sitting in a different authority area with no entitlement to the resulting Section 106 contributions or planning fee.¹⁷

Not every scheme around Wetherby fits this pattern in equal measure. The Persimmon Homes scheme at Sandbeck Lane, approved by Leeds City Council for 129 homes, is a useful comparator. The site is allocated for housing in the Leeds Local Plan, 46 of the homes are to be transferred to a local housing association for social rent and shared ownership, the scheme carries a Community Infrastructure Levy contribution of around £1.1 million and includes specific local commitments such as improvements to the Wetherby BMX track and enhanced bus services, and the developer engaged with the Wetherby Civic Society during the approval process. A scheme of that kind, built on an allocated site within the authority that has planned for Wetherby's growth, with genuine affordable provision and identifiable local benefit, is a different proposition from a speculative cross-border scheme of several hundred homes brought forward in response to housing-target pressure. The contrast underlines the point. The issue is not new housing around Wetherby as such, but whether proposals are properly planned, properly evidenced, fairly mitigated and assessed in the geography in which their impacts are experienced.

The economic question is therefore not simply whether more residents could spend money in Wetherby. Some will, and that is a potential benefit. The question is whether the pattern of growth strengthens the town centre economy, or whether it produces additional private car movements, pressure on parking, demand on health and education services, and limited local employment. High value housing may produce council tax income for the billing authority, but it will not necessarily produce proportionate town centre footfall, local jobs or visitor spend. In some cases, large peripheral housing growth can increase population without increasing local economic resilience.

This matters particularly for Wetherby because the town is not only a residential settlement. It is a market town and visitor destination. People visit for its Conservation Area, riverside, independent retail and hospitality, regular events, markets and community activities. Free or convenient parking has historically supported its role as a lunchtime stopping point and short-stay destination for people travelling on the A1 and A1(M), and for people moving east-west between places such as Harrogate and York, or further towards Liverpool, Manchester and Hull. If edge-of-town growth increases traffic and parking demand without strengthening visitor access, the net effect may be economic disruption rather than economic gain.

¹⁷ On the housing-target uplift opening North Yorkshire Council to speculative applications, see Gazette & Herald, "Tockwith: plan to build 1,100 homes at airfield site" (12 January 2026), reporting Cllr Arnold Warneken, chair of North Yorkshire Council's strategic planning committee. On the Section 106 distribution concern, see Wetherby Town Council, Extraordinary Planning Committee minutes, 18 August 2025, recording Ward Councillors Harrington and Stables's concern that Section 106 funding from a cross-border scheme will not be distributed to the areas providing the services.

The Harland Way and other walking and cycling routes also need to be assessed realistically. Better active travel links are desirable, but increased residential use can change the character and capacity of recreational routes. More cyclists travelling through the corridor, mixed with more walkers, families, dog walkers and visitors, may require design, maintenance, signage and safety investment. These are not reasons to reject growth in principle, but they are reasons to test whether the economic, tourism and movement effects have been properly understood and funded.

Cross-border developments therefore require more than a narrow housing-supply calculation. They require a proper assessment of functional geography, cumulative growth, infrastructure capacity and democratic fairness. The question is not whether North Yorkshire can count the homes, but whether it is reasonable, sustainable and lawful to impose the consequences of those homes on a neighbouring town whose planned requirement appears already met. Parking, town centre access, heritage, public transport, walking routes, community facilities and service capacity are material planning considerations, not secondary irritations.

The practical effect is that proposed development in and around Wetherby should be tested against the following locally relevant questions.

Issue for proposed development	Question to be tested in Wetherby	Planning significance
Housing need and mix	Does the scheme provide homes that meet local needs, including affordable homes, smaller homes, older persons' housing and family homes, rather than only high-value market housing?	Housing numbers are less persuasive if they do not meet the needs identified for the town.
Town centre economy	Will additional residents support Wetherby's shops, hospitality and services, or will they mainly commute, shop elsewhere and add traffic without strengthening the centre?	Economic benefit must be evidenced, not assumed.
Employment balance	Does the proposal include or connect to light manufacturing, office, professional, public service or local employment opportunities?	A town with housing growth but weak employment growth risks becoming more dormitory in character.
Visitor economy and tourism	Will the scheme protect convenient access, parking, public realm and the historic town-centre experience that support visitors, markets, events, Drovers Day and brass band concerts?	For a market town, visitor access and conservation area quality are economic infrastructure.
Movement and parking	Will residents realistically walk or cycle into town, or will the distance and convenience of car use increase parking pressure and congestion?	The National Design Guide requires genuine movement choice and reduced reliance on the car.
Harland Way and green routes	Can increased walking, cycling and leisure use be accommodated safely without degrading the route for existing users?	Active travel mitigation should consider capacity, conflict, maintenance and amenity.
Conservation and identity	Does the development reinforce Wetherby's market-town identity, or does it create a generic edge estate that weakens settlement character?	Design, heritage and local identity are material planning considerations.
Delivery and stewardship	Are open spaces, SuDS, routes, landscape buffers and play areas	A well-designed place must also be well managed and maintained over its lifespan.

Issue for proposed development	Question to be tested in Wetherby	Planning significance
	adopted or managed transparently, with costs fairly allocated?	

Those questions do not predetermine the outcome of any application. They provide a disciplined way of testing whether the development is sustainable in the place where its effects will actually be felt.

4. Thematic analysis

4.1 Benefits and harms of cross-border development

Cross-border development can bring genuine benefits. It can increase housing supply, deliver affordable housing, support local shops, fund infrastructure, improve public open space, create new footpath links, and support economic activity.

The difficulty arises when benefits and burdens are split across boundaries.

Benefit claimed	Cross-border risk	Proper planning response
New homes	Homes counted in one authority, impacts felt in another	Assess the functional housing and service area
Affordable housing	Affordable to buy, but not affordable to live in	Assess whole-life costs
Public open space	Privately funded but publicly used	Clarify maintenance responsibility
Transport mitigation	Junction works substitute for real modal shift	Test car dependency
Education funding	Contribution may not match actual school use	Model school demand across boundaries
Economic activity	Increased spend offset by congestion and parking loss	Assess town centre access and movement

The correct planning question is not whether there are benefits. There usually are. The question is whether the benefits are real, deliverable and fairly balanced against harms.

4.2 Infrastructure and wellbeing

Infrastructure is not only roads. It includes schools, health services, public transport, walking and cycling routes, utilities, digital connectivity, drainage, waste services, community facilities and green infrastructure.

Wellbeing is often underweighted in planning decisions. A technically acceptable junction can still create daily stress. A development can pass a highway test but remain car dependent. A new estate can include open space but still be socially isolated. A

footpath can exist on a plan but be unsafe, poorly lit, inaccessible or disconnected from useful destinations.

A robust cross-border assessment should therefore include a wellbeing infrastructure audit. This should test whether residents can reach schools, GP services, shops, parks, bus stops and community facilities safely and affordably.

Wellbeing factor	Question for cross-border assessment
Physical health	Can residents walk safely to daily services?
Mental health	Does the development reduce isolation or increase stress?
Social cohesion	Are residents connected to the town or isolated from it?
Green space	Is it accessible, maintained and fairly funded?
Air quality	Does traffic increase affect sensitive locations?
Noise	Are nearby residents protected from construction and traffic impacts?
Equality	Can disabled, older and low-income residents live well without car dependence?

4.3 Car dependency and transport

Cross-border estates are particularly prone to car dependency. They are often located on edge-of-town sites, where bus services are limited, rail access is absent, and walking or cycling routes may be indirect or unsafe.

The NPPF requires transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages and supports sustainable transport, walking, cycling and public transport¹⁸. For cross-border developments, this must mean more than a travel plan document.

The test should be practical:

- Can a household live on the estate with one fewer car?
- Can a teenager reach college?
- Can an older resident reach a GP?
- Can a disabled resident reach the town centre?
- Can a low-income worker reach employment without spending a disproportionate share of income on transport?

If the answer is no, the development is likely to lock in car dependency. That has consequences for congestion, climate targets, household budgets and equality.

¹⁸ [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

Wetherby illustrates the problem acutely. The town lost its rail link under the Beeching cuts of the 1960s¹⁹ and has had no station since, so there is no rail option to anywhere; bus services are barely adequate and themselves in need of improvement. Although the proposals include additional funding for transport, that funding tends to be directed at local transport — connecting new development to Wetherby town centre — rather than at the wider connectivity that would give residents a genuine alternative to the car. The result is an increased, rather than reduced, dependence on car travel.

By contrast, the Pannal comparator in Section 4.6 begins from the opposite position — an existing rail station and a long-standing Park & Ride ambition on the A61 — yet the cumulative growth of two adjacent schemes still risks outpacing the capacity that infrastructure is meant to provide, underlining that transport must be assessed against combined, not individual, demand.

4.4 Heritage, character and place

Heritage is not only listed buildings. It includes settlement form, landscape setting, field patterns, historic routeways, views, townscape, local materials and the sense of arrival into a place.

Cross-border development can erode heritage and character even where it is not inside the historic core. Edge-of-town development can alter the setting of a market town, blur settlement boundaries and weaken the distinction between town and countryside.

The problem is often not only the fact of development, but the type of development. Standardised volume-builder layouts can produce estates that could be anywhere. They may meet minimum design requirements while failing to respond to local distinctiveness.

The proper response is not nostalgia or pastiche. It is stronger design coding, landscape-led master planning, local materials, connected streets, meaningful green infrastructure and a clear understanding of which settlement the development relates to.

4.5 Equalities Impact Assessments

Equalities Impact Assessments should be central to cross-border developments. Poorly located or poorly connected development can exacerbate inequality.

Group affected	Potential cross-border impact
Disabled people	Inaccessible walking routes, poor public transport, loss of nearby parking
Older people	Isolation, difficulty accessing health services, unsafe crossings

¹⁹ Wetherby was served by a station on the Cross Gates–Wetherby and Church Fenton–Harrogate lines until passenger services were withdrawn in the 1960s under the Beeching closures; the lines through the town have not reopened.

Group affected	Potential cross-border impact
Children and families	School place uncertainty, longer journeys, lack of youth facilities
Low-income households	Higher transport costs, estate charges and energy costs
Carers	Increased time burden from fragmented services
Women and girls	Safety concerns on poorly lit or isolated routes
Ethnic minority households	Weaker engagement if consultation is not accessible

A robust EqIA should identify impacts, mitigations, owners, funding sources, delivery dates and monitoring arrangements. It should not simply state that no disproportionate impact has been identified unless the evidence supports that conclusion.

4.6 Environmental Impact Assessments and cumulative impact

The formal EIA regime is important, but it is not enough if assessments are too narrow. Cross-border developments require cumulative and functional assessment.

The issue is not merely whether one development is acceptable on its own. The issue is whether multiple developments, road movements, drainage changes, landscape effects and public access pressures together create a significant impact.

That is now the live position on the Wetherby edge. Hallam Land's Stockeld Park proposal for 210 homes and a separate Miller Homes scheme for up to 100 homes off Sicklinghall Road, both on Stockeld Park land, but distinct developments, the latter awaiting a formal application — would together place over 300 homes on the same settlement edge. Each may be screened and assessed as a standalone scheme; their combined effect on traffic, drainage, landscape and public access is precisely what cumulative assessment exists to capture.

A cross-boundary cumulative impact schedule should include:

Impact	Evidence required
Traffic	Existing flows, committed schemes, future developments
Drainage	Catchment effects, SuDS ²⁰ adoption, maintenance responsibility
Landscape	Cumulative urbanising effect
Biodiversity	Habitat connectivity across site boundaries
Air quality	Sensitive receptors, schools, town centre routes

²⁰ SuDS: Sustainable Drainage Systems are a set of design approaches used to manage surface-water runoff in a way that mimics natural drainage. They reduce flood risk, improve water quality, and create biodiversity and amenity benefits by using features such as swales, permeable paving, attenuation basins, and wetlands.

Impact	Evidence required
Public access	Pressure on paths, parks, public open spaces, green infrastructure ²¹ , SSSI sites ²² and a redefined green belt ²³
Construction	Combined disruption from multiple sites

Comparator — Pannal (Harrogate): the Pannal area south of Harrogate shows the same cumulative pattern in a different functional geography. Two schemes sit side by side. The larger is a strategic proposal of around 600 homes on a 63-acre greenfield site on the east side of the A61 Leeds Road, promoted by Miller Developments through the emerging North Yorkshire Local Plan as a ‘sustainable extension’ to the village; it is one response to the district’s need to allocate some 4,100 homes, with Pannal identified as a sustainable settlement served by rail, school, health and employment, and is linked to a long-standing ambition for a Park & Ride on the A61 corridor. Alongside it is an already-consented scheme: Phase 2a of Pannal Business Park (Bellway Homes), 128 dwellings on the former Dunlopillo brownfield site next to Pannal Station, with Phase 1, roundabout, access road and care home — already built. Together the two schemes represent some 728 homes in the Pannal area before any further Local Plan allocations. The comparator value lies in the layering. A large greenfield strategic allocation would sit immediately alongside a consented brownfield redevelopment, both feeding the same A61 corridor and the same station, school and health catchments. Assessed in isolation each may appear manageable; assessed together they raise precisely the cumulative questions set out in the schedule above, combined traffic on the A61, settlement-edge and landscape change, drainage and construction disruption across adjacent sites, and pressure on shared green and public space. The Park & Ride ambition underlines the

²¹ Green infrastructure: A strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural spaces — such as parks, woodlands, rivers, street trees, green roofs, and wetlands — designed to deliver environmental, social, and climate-resilience benefits. Green infrastructure supports biodiversity, reduces flood risk, improves air quality, and enhances wellbeing by integrating nature into urban and rural places.

²² SSSI: A Site of Special Scientific Interest is a statutory conservation designation under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, protecting areas of particular ecological, geological, or physiographical importance. SSSI status places legal duties on landowners and public bodies to safeguard the site’s features and to obtain consent for any activities that might damage them.

²³ Redefined Green Belt: A policy approach in which local authorities review and adjust existing Green Belt boundaries to reflect updated spatial strategies, housing need, or environmental priorities. Redefinition can include releasing lower-value parcels for development, strengthening protection for high-value landscapes, or redesignating land to support climate resilience, biodiversity networks, and accessible green infrastructure. It does not abolish the Green Belt; it reshapes it to better meet contemporary planning objectives.

transport point: infrastructure offered to make one scheme acceptable may in practice be needed to absorb the cumulative growth of both.

Pannal also carries a cross-boundary dimension, though a softer one than the Wetherby cases. The consented business park’s south-west edge meets the West Yorkshire Green Belt, so cumulative landscape and transport effects engage the county boundary even though both sites lie within North Yorkshire. As with the Wetherby schemes, the speculative-versus-planned distinction matters: the 600 homes are promoted, not yet allocated, whereas the 128 are consented, and the two should not be elided.²⁴

4.7 Section 106 duties and delivery

Section 106 agreements are essential, but they can create false reassurance if not properly monitored. Communities often hear promises at committee stage, then struggle years later to establish whether obligations were delivered.

Key weaknesses include vague triggers, delayed infrastructure, viability renegotiation, poor public reporting, unclear adoption arrangements and obligations that do not match the real geography of impact.

A better model would be a public Section 106 dashboard.

Obligation	Trigger	Delivery body	Beneficiary area	Status	Enforcement route
Affordable housing	Before occupation of phase X	Developer and registered provider	Host and functional area	Not started, underway, complete	LPA
Bus support	First occupation	Developer and transport body	Cross-boundary	Active or overdue	S106 clause
School contribution	Dwelling trigger	Developer and education authority	Named schools	Paid or unpaid	LPA
Public open space	Before occupation of X homes	Developer or management company	Estate and wider public	Complete or disputed	LPA and estate body

²⁴ The relationship to the Crimble Valley Special Landscape Area, and certain other site-boundary details used here, are drawn from local sources and Neighbourhood Plan maps and would require verification before formal use in representations, consistent with the methodology in Section 1.

Obligation	Trigger	Delivery body	Beneficiary area	Status	Enforcement route
Travel plan monitoring	Annual	Travel plan coordinator	Functional area	Submitted or overdue	Bond or penalty

The public should not have to use Freedom of Information requests to understand whether promised infrastructure has been delivered.

4.8 Affordable housing: affordable to buy or affordable to live in?

The planning system often treats affordable housing as a tenure category. Residents experience affordability as a monthly household budget.

A discounted purchase price may still be unaffordable once mortgage costs, deposit, rent on unsold equity, service charges, estate charges, energy bills, transport costs, childcare and council tax are included.

Product	Why it appears affordable	Why it may not be affordable to live in
Discount market sale	Lower purchase price	Mortgage, deposit and resale restrictions remain barriers
Shared ownership	Lower initial equity	Rent, service charge and staircasing costs
Affordable rent	Below market rent	Still high compared with local wages
Social rent	Stronger affordability	Limited supply and allocation constraints
First Homes	Discount on first sale	Transport, estate charges and mortgage costs remain

Every affordable housing statement for a cross-border development should include a whole-cost affordability assessment. It should model not only purchase price or rent, but likely service charges, estate charges, energy costs and transport costs.

4.9 Who pays, who uses and who qualifies?

Cross-border development requires a sharper fiscal and service test. The planning authority counting the homes may not be the authority whose taxpayers fund the practical infrastructure pressure. In the Wetherby context, the question is whether the additional costs fall on council tax payers in Leeds, on council tax payers in North Yorkshire, on the developer through enforceable obligations, or on residents through private estate charges and service charges.

The same question applies to access. If new estates are justified as part of North Yorkshire's housing supply, decision-makers should ask whether residents will be able to use facilities in North Yorkshire in practice. That includes whether there will be viable

bus routes to North Yorkshire service centres, whether schools and health services are realistically accessible, and whether walking and cycling routes connect to useful destinations rather than ending at the administrative boundary.

Affordable housing also needs a cross-boundary test. If affordable homes are provided on a North Yorkshire site that functions as an extension of Wetherby, will households in housing need in Wetherby or elsewhere in Leeds have any realistic opportunity to access them? If the answer is no, the affordable housing benefit may sit largely with North Yorkshire while the wider infrastructure burden falls on Wetherby. That should be made explicit in the planning balance.

4.10 Economic resilience, employment and town centre impact

Economic impact should be treated as a central cross-boundary issue. Housing growth can support a local economy where it increases sustainable local spend, supports existing businesses, provides a labour force for local employers, funds public realm improvement and brings people close enough to use the town centre without adding disproportionate traffic or parking pressure. It can be harmful where it increases population but not employment, weakens town centre access, displaces visitor parking, increases congestion or turns a market town into a dormitory settlement.

For Wetherby, the baseline is mixed and should be tested rather than assumed. The Neighbourhood Development Plan identifies the town as a prosperous market town with a manufacturing presence in the town and nearby Thorp Arch Estate, many residents working in Leeds, Sandbeck, the town centre or Thorp Arch, and more than 200 town centre businesses. It also identifies town centre access, car parking, independent shops, pedestrian safety, events, markets and visitor attractiveness as important to the town centre economy. That means the economic assessment of new housing should not simply count future residents; it should examine whether those residents will support the local economy or mainly commute out while relying on Wetherby for roads, parking, schools, health and convenience services.

The risk is not that Wetherby becomes a dormitory town merely because homes are built. The risk is that a cumulative pattern of housing without enough light manufacturing, office, professional, public service and local employment opportunities gradually weakens the relationship between living, working and spending locally. A town of high value homes can produce council tax income for public authorities, but that income does not automatically translate into resilient retail, hospitality, local jobs or a stronger town centre. In weaker economic conditions, a town that lacks employment diversity can also become more socially divided, with lower income households facing higher transport costs and fewer local opportunities.

A cross-border economic assessment should therefore test both benefits and risks. It should consider likely town centre spend, employment creation, commuting patterns, visitor access, parking displacement, public transport, the viability of independent retail and hospitality, the role of events and markets, and whether Section 106 or CIL funding can reasonably mitigate any harm. The assessment should also distinguish between

fiscal benefit to the authority that receives council tax and economic benefit to the town that experiences the day-to-day impacts.

This also follows the National Design Guide approach. The Guide treats economic factors, the pattern of uses and activities, access to workplaces, local services, movement, community facilities and lifespan as part of good design. A proposal that delivers dwellings but fails to support local employment, visitor access, town centre vitality or manageable movement patterns may increase population without strengthening the economy of the place to which that population relates.

For Wetherby, this is why luxury or high-value edge housing needs careful economic scrutiny. It may create council tax receipts for the billing authorities, and it may increase aggregate local spending, but those benefits do not necessarily fall where the practical impacts fall. If residents commute out, shop elsewhere, rely on cars, and compete with visitors for town centre access and parking, the local economic effect may be weaker than the headline housing number suggests.

4.11 Demographic disruption and long-term planning

Large estates can rapidly change a settlement's age profile, tenure mix, income profile and service needs.

Initial demand may be for nursery and primary school places. Ten years later, the pressure may shift to secondary schools and youth services. Twenty years later, the same estate may need adult social care, accessible housing adaptations, health capacity and better public transport for ageing residents.

Planning assessments often compress this into short-term delivery numbers. Cross-border estates need a 20-year demographic impact statement.

Timeframe	Likely pressure
Years 1 to 5	Construction, first occupation, early-years demand, primary school places
Years 5 to 10	Secondary school places, traffic patterns, youth services
Years 10 to 20	Household turnover, ageing residents, adaptations, adult social care
Years 20 plus	Estate renewal, infrastructure replacement, long-term stewardship

5. Developer behaviour and market dynamics

Developers are commercial organisations. They manage land, phasing, risk, sales rates and market exposure. That is not inherently improper. But the public interest requires transparency where commercial incentives affect public outcomes.

The Competition and Markets Authority’s (CMA²⁵) housebuilding market study identified concerns about the planning system, build-out, quality, innovation, private estate management and the incentives operating in the housebuilding market. It also highlighted the growing trend towards private management of public amenities on estates²⁶.

The public concern is not simply “developers make profit”. The concern is that public benefits promised at permission stage may be reduced, delayed or transferred into private household costs.

Behaviour	Public risk	Policy response
Over-promising at application stage	Committee approval based on benefits that later shrink	Binding and transparent heads of terms
Viability renegotiation	Affordable housing and infrastructure reduced	Independent open-book review
Tactical phasing	Infrastructure delayed until late occupation	Early triggers and bonds
Slow build-out	Housing need remains unmet	Delivery rate monitoring
Private estate model	Residents pay indefinitely for public-like assets	Adoption-first presumption
Fragmented applications	Cumulative impact hidden	Strategic master planning

Avaricious or tactical behaviour should not be assumed in every case. But neither should the planning system be naïve. Where public benefits are relied upon to justify harm, those benefits must be secured, monitored and enforced.

6. Service charges, estate management and the “second council tax” problem

Private estate management has become one of the most serious post-occupation issues in modern housing development. Residents may pay council tax, then also pay private charges for green spaces, shared areas, drainage features, play areas, private roads or other amenities.

²⁵ CMA: The Competition and Markets Authority is the UK’s independent competition regulator, responsible for promoting fair competition, investigating anti-competitive behaviour, and protecting consumers from unfair business practices. It has statutory powers to conduct market studies, enforce competition law, and review mergers to ensure markets work well for people, businesses, and the economy.

²⁶ [Housebuilding market study - GOV.UK](#)

The House of Commons Library has described the position of freehold homeowners who pay charges for the upkeep of shared areas and amenities on estates²⁷. The CMA has recommended measures to prevent the proliferation of private management arrangements and to improve protections for households²⁸.

The problem becomes sharper where the land is open to the public. Residents may pay for the maintenance of green infrastructure that benefits the wider community. This produces a fairness question:

If the public uses it, why do only estate residents pay for it?

The answer may vary. In some cases, estate-specific charges are reasonable. In others, adoption or public funding would be fairer. The key is transparency.

Every major development should include a stewardship table.

Asset	Publicly accessible?	Maintained by	Funded by	Review mechanism
Roads	Yes or no	Highway authority or management company	Public funding or estate charge	Adoption review
Open space	Yes	Council, trust or management company	Council tax, commuted sum or estate charge	Annual report
SuDS	Limited access	Water company, council or management body	Adoption or estate charge	Technical inspection
Play area	Yes	Council or management company	Public or private	Safety inspection
Landscape buffers	Usually visible/public benefit	Management company or council	Estate charge or commuted sum	Condition survey

Residents should know before purchase what they will pay, what they will control, what is open to the public and what may later be adopted.

²⁷ [Freehold estate management - House of Commons Library](#)

²⁸ [Housebuilding market study final report](#)

7. Voids, empty homes, second homes and holiday homes

Housing targets measure supply, but communities experience occupied homes. A dwelling that is counted as delivered but remains empty, held as an investment, used intermittently as a second home or converted into holiday use does not meet housing need in the same way as a main residence.

This matters in three ways.

First, it can distort the relationship between housing targets and actual housing availability.

Secondly, it can worsen pressure in neighbouring areas if new supply is not genuinely available to local households.

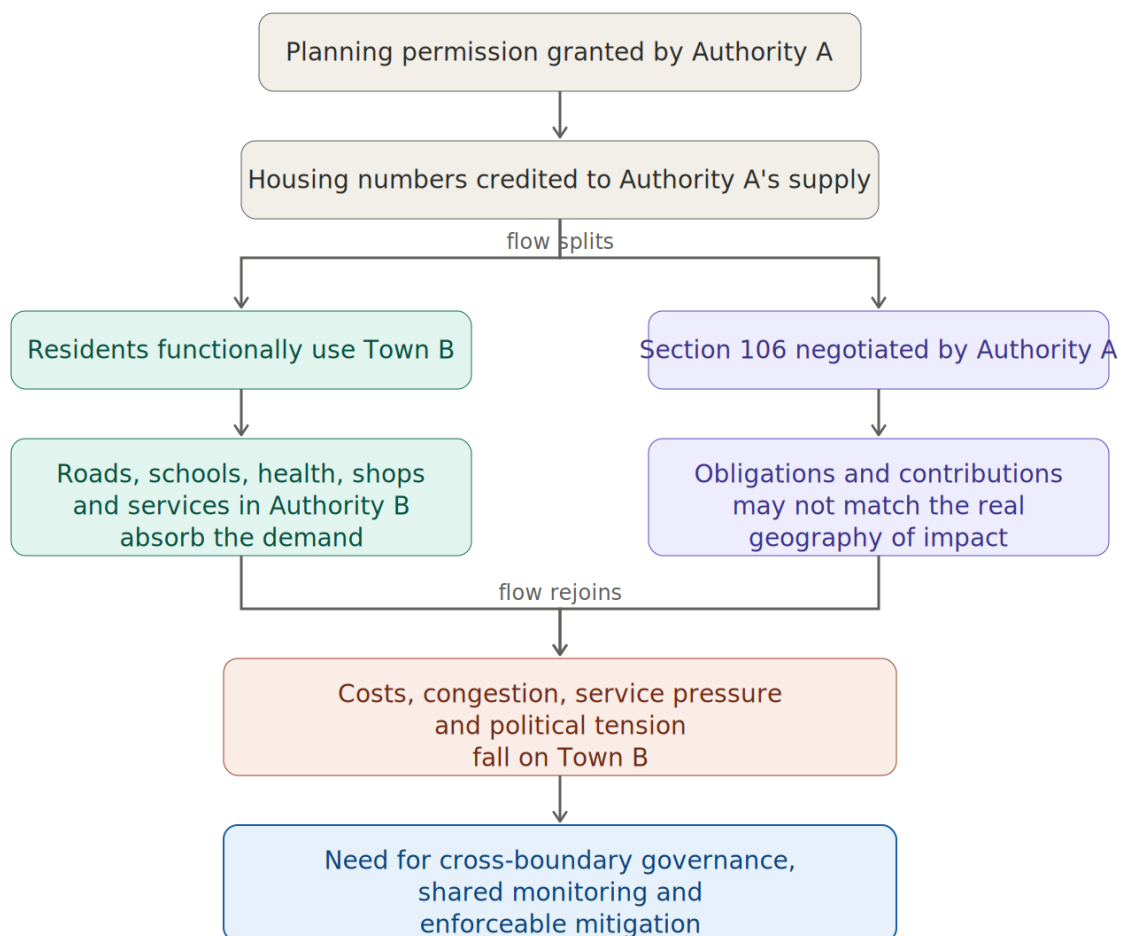
Thirdly, it can create resentment where communities experience the landscape, traffic and infrastructure impacts of development, but the social benefit is reduced.

Category	Planning relevance
Main residence	Contributes directly to ordinary housing need
Long-term empty home	Counts as stock but not effective supply
Investor-held vacant property	May restrict access for local households
Second home	Adds intermittent use and price pressure
Holiday let	Changes community character and service demand
Under-occupied large dwelling	May affect housing chain and care demand

Local authorities already hold useful data through council tax, electoral registration, planning enforcement and empty homes work. The missing link is planning feedback. Housing supply monitoring should consider occupation and use, not only completion.

8. Conceptual diagrams and tables

8.1 Cross-border impact flow



8.2 Policy eras

Period	Policy framework	Strength	Weakness for cross-border development
Pre-2010	Regional Spatial Strategies	Strategic planning above districts	Remote and unpopular
2011 onwards	Localism Act and local plans	Local democratic influence	Weaker regional coordination
2012 onwards	NPPF	National policy clarity	Risk of housing supply pressure dominating

Period	Policy framework	Strength	Weakness for cross-border development
2017	Housing White Paper	Strong focus on supply and reform	Delivery emphasis may underplay stewardship
2024 onwards	1.5 million homes and updated NPPF	Ambitious national delivery	Target pressure may distort local planning balance

8.3 Balanced discretion test

Question	Purpose
What housing target or supply issue is relied upon?	Identifies the housing benefit clearly
What weight is given to that housing benefit?	Prevents vague reliance on targets
What cross-boundary impacts have been identified?	Ensures the functional area is considered
Which neighbouring authorities and communities are affected?	Prevents administrative tunnel vision
What mitigation is secured, by whom and by when?	Tests whether harms are genuinely addressed
What residual harm remains after mitigation?	Allows an honest planning balance
Why is the decision — whether approval or refusal — lawful and reasonable?	Demonstrates that discretion has not been fettered

9. SMART goals and recommendations

9.1 For local councils

SMART goal	Requirement
Specific	Identify the functional impact area for every major edge-of-boundary housing proposal
Measurable	Publish a cross-boundary infrastructure schedule
Achievable	Require statements of common ground between affected authorities
Relevant	Tie mitigation to actual service use and travel patterns
Time-bound	Review delivery at permission, reserved matters, first occupation, 50% occupation, completion and three years after completion

Recommendations:

1. Establish a cross-boundary planning protocol for Wetherby, Leeds and North Yorkshire edge-of-settlement schemes.
2. Require neighbouring councils, parish councils and town councils to be consulted where functional impacts cross boundaries.
3. Publish a shared infrastructure map covering roads, schools, health, public transport, drainage, green space and community facilities.
4. Require committee reports to include a “who benefits, who pays, who maintains” table.
5. Require major edge-of-town and cross-boundary proposals to include an economic impact assessment covering town centre vitality, employment balance, visitor access, parking displacement, hospitality, independent retail, events, markets and tourism.
6. Treat town-centre access, parking loss and mobility impacts as equality and wellbeing issues where older, disabled or low-income residents may be affected.
7. Prepare a schedule of relevant operational Local Plan policies for Leeds, North Yorkshire and the former Harrogate planning area, including any design, landscape, heritage, transport, ecology, open space and infrastructure policies.
8. Require every major boundary proposal affecting Wetherby to include a policy compliance table against the Wetherby Neighbourhood Development Plan, Leeds Local Plan, former Harrogate or North Yorkshire policies, the National Design Guide, and relevant GOV.UK planning practice guidance.
9. Prepare a simple cumulative development map for Wetherby and its boundary areas, showing existing allocations, current proposals, service locations, movement corridors and administrative boundaries.
10. Ask Leeds City Council to confirm whether it has been consulted on each relevant North Yorkshire proposal, whether it intends to object or comment, and which officer will lead the response.
11. Ensure Leeds City Council is party to any Section 106 agreement where mitigation is needed for Wetherby roads, schools, town centre access, active travel, public transport, health access or green infrastructure.
12. Require committee reports to state clearly whether residents of new North Yorkshire estates will have practical access to North Yorkshire services, including public transport links to North Yorkshire centres.
13. Require affordable housing evidence to explain who will be eligible for the homes and whether households in housing need in Wetherby or Leeds will have any realistic access to them.
14. Use independent design review or a structured design checklist for major edge-of-town schemes, with particular attention to context, movement, parking, open

space, local economy, heritage, landscape, stewardship and long-term maintenance.

9.2 For national government

SMART goal	Requirement
Specific	Amend national guidance to require functional area assessments for major boundary developments
Measurable	Require annual reporting on Section 106 delivery and infrastructure triggers
Achievable	Use Planning Practice Guidance and model templates
Relevant	Align housing targets with infrastructure, affordability and occupation outcomes
Time-bound	Introduce guidance within 12 months and review after three years

Recommendations:

1. Strengthen Planning Practice Guidance on cross-boundary housing.
2. Require standardised Section 106 monitoring dashboards.
3. Restrict post-permission viability renegotiation unless fully transparent and independently reviewed.
4. Make “affordable to live in” a required part of affordable housing evidence.
5. Require housing land supply arguments to be accompanied, where relevant, by evidence on employment access, commuting patterns and local economic impact, so that housing delivery is not treated as a number separated from place-making and economic sustainability.
6. Require occupation and empty-home monitoring to inform future housing supply calculations.

9.3 For developers and landowners

SMART goal	Requirement
Specific	Publish a delivery plan for housing, infrastructure, affordable housing and estate transfer
Measurable	Include dates, triggers and penalties for each obligation
Achievable	Secure bonds or escrow funding for key infrastructure
Relevant	Align phasing with community needs, not only sales strategy
Time-bound	Publish updates every six months until completion and adoption or transfer

Recommendations:

1. Provide open-book viability evidence where obligations are reduced.
2. Commit to early delivery of public transport, active travel links and open space.
3. Show how the development will support the local economy, including access to employment, town centre footfall, visitor movement, hospitality, independent retail and sustainable travel to local services.
4. Avoid private estate models unless adoption is demonstrably impossible.
5. Publish clear resident information on service charges before sale.
6. Provide a long-term stewardship plan for publicly accessible land.

9.4 For estate management and service charge regimes

SMART goal	Requirement
Specific	Identify all land maintained privately but used publicly
Measurable	Publish annual budgets, contracts, reserves and performance reports
Achievable	Give residents meaningful control of management companies
Relevant	Address the “second council tax” concern
Time-bound	Require full transparency from first occupation and resident control by a fixed trigger

Recommendations:

1. Adopt a presumption that public open space serving the wider community should be adopted or publicly funded.
2. Where residents fund publicly accessible land, require a commuted contribution from the developer or public body.
3. Require estate management companies to distinguish between estate-only benefit and wider public benefit.
4. Provide residents with clear challenge rights, transparent accounts and meaningful control.

9.5 For lawful discretion and housing targets

SMART goal	Requirement
Specific	Every officer report for a major cross-border housing development should explain why housing targets do not, by themselves, determine the recommendation
Measurable	The report should list all material considerations considered, including cross-boundary impacts, and state the weight given to each

SMART goal	Requirement
Achievable	This can be delivered through committee report templates and statements of common ground
Relevant	It protects lawful discretion and reduces the risk that housing targets override infrastructure, equality, environmental, heritage and community impacts
Time-bound	Adopt within 12 months and review annually

Suggested committee report wording:

“Housing need, housing targets and housing land supply are material considerations and have been given appropriate weight. However, they are not determinative in themselves. The authority has considered the development plan and all other material considerations, including cross-boundary infrastructure, transport, environmental, heritage, equality, Section 106 and community impacts, before reaching its planning judgement.”

9.6 For voids, empty homes and second homes

SMART goal	Requirement
Specific	Record occupation status of new homes after completion
Measurable	Publish figures for long-term empty, second home and holiday use within major developments
Achievable	Use council tax, electoral registration and planning enforcement data
Relevant	Ensure housing targets reflect real supply
Time-bound	First report two years after first occupation, then annually for five years

Recommendations:

1. Include occupation monitoring in major housing permissions.
2. Share empty homes intelligence between neighbouring councils.
3. Consider whether high vacancy levels should affect future housing need assumptions.
4. Use council tax premiums and enforcement powers where appropriate.
5. Require affordable housing units to remain in genuine residential use.

10. Conclusion

Cross-border housing development is one of the clearest tests of whether the English planning system can reconcile national housing need with local accountability. The answer cannot be a simple “build” or “do not build”. The correct question is whether development is planned, delivered, funded and governed at the same geography at which its impacts are experienced.

Spofforth Park shows that the consequences of planning decisions last long after the committee report. Hallam Land’s Stockeld Park proposal show that a development can be legally in one authority but functionally tied to another town, directly adjoining an existing Leeds community at Spofforth Park. Wetherby shows that housing numbers, town centre access, heritage, infrastructure, public transport, parking, local employment, tourism, equality and community identity cannot be separated, especially where the Leeds Local Plan already appears to have addressed Wetherby’s housing requirement to 2040.

The national and local framework already contains many of the necessary principles. The NPPF recognises sustainable development, strategic cross-boundary planning, sustainable transport, infrastructure, healthy communities, design, climate, natural environment and heritage. The Wetherby Neighbourhood Development Plan identifies local priorities for the market-town economy, tourism, heritage, movement and local services. The National Design Guide, GOV.UK design guidance, effective use of land guidance, EIA guidance, historic environment guidance and North Yorkshire design material all point in the same direction: housing delivery must be assessed as place-making, not as arithmetic alone.

The gap is delivery.

Cross-border developments need enforceable, transparent and time-bound obligations. Section 106 agreements must become living public documents, not private legal files. Affordable housing must be tested against whole-life costs, not just tenure labels. Transport mitigation must reduce car dependency in practice, not simply model junction capacity. Economic impact must be assessed in terms of employment, town centre vitality, visitor access, parking and business resilience, not merely assumed from population growth. Public open space must not become a hidden private tax on residents. Housing targets must distinguish between units built and homes lived in. Economic impact should sit alongside these tests, because a larger residential population does not automatically produce a stronger town centre, more local employment, better visitor access or a more resilient local economy.

Most importantly, housing targets must not fetter planning discretion. They are important and may carry great weight, but they are not an automatic approval mechanism. The authority must still exercise judgement on the development plan and all material considerations, and weigh benefits and harms in the real geography of the development.

Nor should housing targets obscure the possible transfer of cost and pressure from one authority to another. If the measurable housing benefit is counted in North Yorkshire but material daily impacts are experienced in Wetherby, the decision-maker should identify that openly and secure mitigation accordingly.

The central SMART goal should be this:

By 2028, every major housing proposal within a defined distance of a local planning authority boundary should include a published cross-boundary impact statement, a whole-life affordability assessment, a cumulative infrastructure schedule, an equality and wellbeing assessment, a local economic impact assessment, a Section 106 delivery dashboard and a long-term estate stewardship plan, with monitoring at occupation, completion and post-completion review.

That is a practical and proportionate reform. It would not stop necessary housing. It would make housing growth more honest, more sustainable and more democratically accountable.

**Author Malcolm Gardner, Vice-Chair Wetherby Civic Society, Trustee of
Civic Voice June 2026**

Malcolm Gardner May 2026

Malcolm Gardner is Deputy Chair of Wetherby Civic Society, a Trustee of Civic Voice, an active member of the Yorkshire and Humber Association of Civic Societies, and lead director of Spofforth Park Management Company. He founded Visionary Network after a long career in local government, bringing practical experience in public administration, policy, data and place-based decision-making.

Wetherby

Wetherby's history is closely tied to its position on the River Wharfe and its role as a crossing point between Yorkshire settlements. Its name is usually traced to Old Norse, meaning "wether's farmstead". The town developed around its bridge and became an important stopping point on the Great North Road, the main route between London and Scotland. This brought coaching inns, trade, markets and travellers, helping Wetherby grow from a small riverside settlement into a busy market town.

In later centuries, Wetherby retained its market town character while adapting to changing transport and economic patterns. The town's historic core, bridge, inns and riverside setting still reflect its long role as a market centre and staging post for travellers. Today, Wetherby combines that heritage with its modern role as a thriving community between Leeds, York and Harrogate²⁹.

Wetherby Civic Society

Wetherby Civic Society was established in March 1994 and registered as a charitable trust later that year. It was created by local people who wanted Wetherby's history, buildings, streets and public spaces to be properly valued as the town continued to change. Its aims have always been practical as well as protective: to encourage good design, support thoughtful planning, improve local amenities and strengthen pride in Wetherby as a distinctive market town.

Since then, the Society has become a steady voice in local civic life. Its work has ranged from promoting Wetherby's heritage through walks, plaques, publications and interpretation, to commenting on planning matters and wider issues affecting the character of the town. At its best, the Society connects Wetherby's past with its future, helping to ensure that growth and change respect the qualities that make the town worth caring about.

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²⁹ "This short history draws on commonly cited accounts of Wetherby's development as a River Wharfe crossing, market town and coaching stop on the Great North Road."