

## EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK PLANNING COMMITTEE

Application No:	<b>6/8/12/105</b>	Grid Ref 292787 138452
Applicant:	<b>Mr R Webber, Shearwell Data Ltd, Putham Farm, Wheddon Cross, Minehead, Somerset</b>	
Location:	<b>Putham Farm, Wheddon Cross, Minehead, Somerset</b>	
Proposal:	<b>Proposed re-development of the site to replace an existing agricultural building and workshop lean-to with a purpose built B1 office, research and development and light industry workspace (2,159m<sup>2</sup> gross external area), 40kw roof mounted solar photo voltaic array, change of use and extension of existing agricultural storage building to B1 light industry (371m<sup>2</sup> gross external area), extension of car park, erection of replacement agricultural building (1,758m<sup>2</sup> gross external area) and associated yard area, landscaping together with the provision of a new access drive (approximately 830m) from the B3224 to existing business building including crossing Public Bridleway No. WL 6/22 supplemented by an Environmental Statement received 18/05/12.</b>	
Introduction:	<p>This is an interim report which sets out the details of the application proposals, consultee responses, representations and sets out the main planning issues for the consideration of the Planning Committee. At the time of writing, the agent has submitted further details and extra information to assist with the determination of the application and local residents have again been consulted. The Head of Conservation and Access has asked for and is considering the further detailed landscaping information before setting out her advice on the impact of the proposals on the landscape.</p> <p>This report will allow Members of the Planning Committee to begin to familiarise themselves with the proposals, the representations that have been made and to decide whether they wish to undertake a Committee Site Visit.</p> <p>When all the further representations have been received and considered, together with the views of the Head of Conservation and Access, the application papers will be updated and a further report presented to the Committee for decision.</p>	

**DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

The application site lies in open countryside to the south and south-east of Wheddon Cross and Cutcombe. The area is characterised by open grazing fields on valley sides with the fields bounded by hedgebanks. There are some copses of trees and more extensive areas of woodland in the wider area.

At the present time there is one large building and one smaller building on the site. The larger building accommodates Shearwell Data Systems in the north-western end of the building and the south-eastern section is a livestock shed. They are internally connected. The building has sheeted elevations and roof.

The main building has an approximate gross external area of 2,895sqm. This is made up of 1,424sqm of office and production space over two floors and approximately 1,358sqm of agricultural floorspace, with an extra 113sqm of mezzanine space. A smaller sheeted building to the west of the main building measures approximately 278sqm. The total floorspace on the site is therefore 3,173sqm, of which the footprint measures 2,438sqm.

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The business element falls within the B1 Business Use Class and is a mix of production, office, and research and development space. Approximately 50 full-time and 10 part-time staff are employed in the business on the site. The business is a supplier of visual and electronic ear tags, bolus, farm software and electronic identification (EID) to aid identification and management of cattle, sheep and other livestock both in the UK and internationally. In association with the business is the National Livestock Management Database which is a central repository for farm information, providing secure off-site backup electronic data facilities to farmers and the industry.

A tarmac car park is located immediately to the north-west of the main entrance to the building and is cut into the slope of the hill and accommodates about 45 car parking spaces in an informal way.

The site is accessed via a concrete and fenced drive across an open grazing field which connects to Popery Lane. Adjoining the access onto Popery Lane is an intersection with the Coleridge Way Bridleway and Lower Park Lane. A pair of semi-detached houses lies in the vicinity at this end of Popery Lane. Popery Lane is a single width lane, with occasional passing places, and connections with the main road network by the Cutcombe First School.

The Shearwell building and livestock shed was originally linked to Putham Farm house at the hamlet of Putham, to the south-east of the Shearwell building. The stone farmhouse at Putham has been separated from the land holding and the outbuildings to the farmhouse have been converted to separate residential units. There is also another dwelling, Higher Putham, amongst this hamlet. The owners of this property have converted an outbuilding, with planning permission, to form a small chiropractic clinic. Access to the hamlet at Putham is via Cutcombe, and the present joint access with Shearwell, before, passing along the lane immediately adjoining the Shearwell building.

In terms of planning history, a sheep and cattle building was permitted under Application 6/8/89/111. This was the original permission that allowed a building for farming purposes. This was permitted in June 1989.

In 1992 an application to consider the change of use of 6 of the 10 bays of the barn to light industrial was submitted for consideration. At this time the use was explained as the supply of mail order goods, woodwork/joinery, design and supply of agricultural buildings and stables and an animal tagging business. The application was approved on 9 September 1992.

An application to extend the sheep shed was submitted under Application 6/8/95/110. This was approved in February 1996.

The result of these permissions was a mixed use of the building, a combination of livestock shed in one section and the business element in the other. Subsequent internal and external changes, with the necessary planning permissions as required, have seen the business element expand.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

##### Summary

The application proposes to demolish the existing agricultural element of the main building and to replace it, on a very similar footprint, with an extension to the existing business

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accommodation. While the ridge height of the extension will be the same, internally part of the extension will be two storeys while part will be single storey. The single storey element is proposed to have a double height internal space to allow for production activities. An extension to the storage building alongside the main building and the proposed change of use of this building from agricultural to business use is proposed.

An extension to the car park and a new vehicular access passing across agricultural fields from the B3224 is proposed.

A new agricultural building is proposed to be constructed on land to the north-west of the car park and main building.

#### Detailed Proposals

##### Business Building

It is proposed to demolish, rather than convert, the agricultural element of the main building on the site. The proposals seek to erect an extension attached to the main business floorspace of additional office, workshop and production space. The extension is proposed to be built on the same floor level as the existing agricultural section of the building and this will link in with the business building at the same level. At the present time the ridge of the roof of the agricultural element of the building steps down on two occasions from the business part of the building. In the case of the proposed extension, the ridge will step up approximately 0.5m from the ridge of the existing business section. The ridge height of the extension will measure approximately 8.6m above the ground level, and at the southern end this will compare with the present ridge of the agricultural building of approximately 7.0m. The overall building will remain approximately 78m in length; with the end 50m to be replaced if approval were to be granted.

The present elevations of the building, except the front elevation, are clad in merlin grey pvc coated metal sheeting below a merlin grey metal sheeted roof. The agricultural element is grey ventair metal sheeting below a grey metal sheeted roof.

The application proposes that the new and existing roof and the elevations be reclad (with the exception of the entrance elevation). The agent has explained that the new extended and existing building will be clad with composite trapezoidal insulated panels coloured goose wing grey with contrasting darker vertical sections of merlin grey panels along the northern elevation. The agent explains that "although there are only limited views from a distance, the dark grey sections will appear as open breaks in the building". The south elevation of the building is proposed to be clad in goose wing grey with dark vertical sections and a section of "Energi" panels to provide an insulated solar air heating system.

The roof of the building, both existing and proposed to be extended, is specified to be covered in composite trapezoidal insulated panels coloured anthracite with overhanging eaves. The agent has explained that the anthracite colour and the type of panel has been selected due to its low reflectance value of 8.4%, compared to the existing merlin grey of 16.4%.

On the south-west roof elevation, which faces towards the rising field, it is proposed to erect a 40kw PV panel array. These panels would be attached to the new roof and consist of 6 rows of 34 panels. The papers explain that the proposed panels would have a matt black frame.

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The main entrance elevation to the building would remain unaltered. The other elevations show windows, a balcony area with balustrade, a fire escape and at the south-east end of the extension two large roller shutter doors. These would allow access to the double height production area. Adjoining the doors would be a yard area.

The lower areas of the yard would be raised to create a level surface, one of the openings closed and a packaged sewerage plant constructed in this area. The plant would be predominantly underground with the exception of the control cabinet.

#### Storage Building

In 2006 an agricultural implement store was approved on elevated land to the south-west of the main building. The building measures approximately 9m in depth and 30m in width. The present application seeks to relocate the rear wall and extend the building to the south-west by 3.05m. Instead of using the building for agricultural purposes, it is intended that the building will be used in conjunction with the business use on the site.

#### Access Track

As part of the application it is proposed to provide a second vehicular access route to the site. The plans show a tarmac access road linking from the existing agricultural access on the B3224, which is sited approximately 600m from the centre of Wheddon Cross. The plans show works to improve the access which have been designed in conjunction with the County Highway Authority. The agricultural access lies on a relatively straight section of road as it slopes down towards Wheddon Cross. However at the present time, visibility from the agricultural access is restricted to the north direction by a bank and vegetation, and to the south by vegetation and a ridge in the road.

The plans show the removal of about 94m of hedgebank to the north of the access by the removal of a section of hedge to provide a 2.4m by 120m visibility splay. To the south, the proposals involve the removal of 5m of bank and realigning 23m of the boundary, and this will deliver a 2.4m by 160m sight line. The width of the access into the site will be widened. Immediately adjoining the main road the width of the new tarmac entrance at the bell-mouth will be about 40m. The access then curves in on both sides until the width of the first section of the road is 6m. It is explained that the access layout is required so that a lorry preparing to leave the improved access can be passed by a lorry turning into the site.

The proposals also include the erection of entrance warning signage to the east of the entrance on the roadside verge and slow markings within the west bound carriageway.

Approximately 20m back from the carriageway edge is a gate which leads through to a grazing field. The width of the gateway is proposed to be widened and very shortly afterwards the access track is shown to be reduced in width from 6m to 3.05m. The proposed track then passes along the contour line, following the boundary with the field to the north for about 280m. At this point there is a field access through the double hedgebank boundary with the Coleridge Way Bridleway, which passes north-south.

The application sets out proposals for the new access track to pass across the bridleway. At the bridleway, the hedgebanks will be lowered and set back to allow both vehicle drivers and bridleway users better inter-visibility. The tarmac access will continue through the bridleway but there will be speed ramps down either side which will, it is explained, help ensure that drivers slow down while crossing the bridleway. The slope of the bridleway is proposed to be re-profiled "to remove (the) low spot where the water currently pools and

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the bridleway is suffering from surface deterioration". Either side of the proposed section of tarmac, the bridleway would have new sections of compacted stone surface. A warning sign would be sited on the verge on the way into the site, before the bridleway and the ramp down, to warn drivers of the approaching bridleway.

After the bridleway the proposed access track then passes to the east alongside the field boundary and to the south of a hedgebank for approximately 300m. It is then proposed to pass through a hedgebank before dropping down the field slope towards the existing Shearwell site. This last section again follows a hedgebank boundary. The track divides and one section serves the yard at the south-east corner of the extended building and another section runs to the north alongside the storage building and then drops down into the car park.

Five passing bays are proposed along the length of the access track.

The entrance from the B3224 and approximately half the length of the proposed access track is in separate ownership and the applicant has secured agreement to provide the access if planning permission is secured.

#### Car Park

The existing car park, as previously extended, presently measures approximately 55m by approximately 30m and accommodates, in an informal arrangement, approximately 50 cars parking spaces. The car park is set on the same level as the building and is partially screened by vegetation to the north-east and by the face of the hill which the car park has been cut into.

The application proposes to extend the car park by excavating out an area to the north-west of the present car park. The car park as a whole would then extend approximately 90m from the front of the building and by approximately 30m in width. The surface is proposed to be finished in tarmac with rolled chippings to match the proposed new access drive.

The car park is proposed to accommodate approximately 97 cars.

#### Agricultural Building

The application proposes to erect an agricultural building to the western part of the application site. It is explained that this is required to replace the building lost by the extension of the business. The proposed building has an approximate length of 72m and an approximate width of 23m. There is a wider section of the proposed building at the western side where the width increases to approximately 27.5m to accommodate a livestock handling area. This part of the building has a ridge height of approximately 8m, whilst the majority of the building has a ridge of approximately 7.5m. The ground floor area of the proposed building measures approximately 1,758sqm with an additional 125sqm of internal mezzanine.

The elevations are proposed to be clad in vertical timber Yorkshire boarding over a base of concrete panels, with the exception of the western end elevation which is proposed to be finished in a dark grey metal ventair system, which it is said, reduces rain blowing into the building. The roof of the building is shown as anthracite cement fibre panels with a series of roof lights.

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The plans show that the proposed agricultural building would, if permitted, be cut into the slope of the hillside. The building is shown running parallel with a hedgebank, and on the southern side where the land rises, the cut into the slope at the back of the yard area is between 3m and 4m depending on position. Stone finished yard areas are proposed around the building with a raised area to the southern side of the building to access the internal mezzanine. Large steel doors which are indicated to be finished in a dark grey colour are shown at each ends of the proposed agricultural building.

The site of the agricultural building is located partly in the field to the west of the present car park, but it also extends through a section of hedgebank and projects approximately 50m into the adjoining field. With the section of yard proposed to the western end of the barn, the proposed building extends up to the hedgebank of the next field boundary. From the northern yard section of the new agricultural building, to the south-east corner of the yard to the extended business building, the site extends over a distance of approximately 330m.

Finally the application proposes to spread topsoil in the further field to the west, where there are a series of dips in the field. The application papers explain that the sections where topsoil is proposed to be spread will be re-seeded.

A summary of the floorspace changes and increases is summarised as follows:

	Present Floorspace (sqm)	Total Floorspace (sqm)
<b>Business</b>		1,424
Ground Floor	802	
First Floor	622	
<b>Agricultural</b>		1,749
Ground floor	1,358	
Mezzanine	113	
Detached store	278	
Total Floorspace		3,173
Footprint of buildings		2,438
	Proposed Floorspace (sqm)	Total Floorspace (sqm)
<b>Business</b>		3,786
Ground floor existing	640	
Ground floor proposed	1519	
First floor existing	622	
First floor proposed	548	
Second floor proposed	86	
Detached Store	371	
<b>New Agricultural building</b>		
Ground Floor	1,758	1,883
Mezzanine	125	
Total Floorspace		5,669
Footprint of buildings		4,288

Total proposed increase in floorspace  $5,669 - 3,173 = 2,496\text{sqm}$

Total proposed increase in footprint  $4,288 - 2,438 = 1,850\text{sqm}$

**SUPPORTING JUSTIFICATION AND APPLICANT'S ANALYSIS**

The Planning Application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement that sets out details on a range of subjects important to the consideration of the proposed development. The key elements are set out below.

**Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

The papers include a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). This is an analysis of the potential landscape impact of the development; the business extension; the new agricultural building; the enlarged car park and the new access drive. The assessment has been made from approximately 30 different viewpoints and undertakes an analysis of the landscape impact upon the wider area, in particular from public rights of way and other public locations.

The detail of the LVIA has been expanded and is subject to further consultation.

**Landscaping**

As part of the application proposals the plans show a series of planting and hedgebanking proposals. Behind the northern visibility splay at the improved access, an area of tree planting is proposed including beech, sessile oak, rowan and sycamore. Along the first section of the proposed access track, the field boundary to the north is at present a wire fence. The application proposes to construct hedgebanks along this northern side of the proposed access, totalling approximately 160m in length.

As the proposed access track passes down the slope towards the main building, a further boundary hedgebank is proposed, together with a hedgebank to the south of the proposed agricultural building.

The other main element of landscaping is the management of the recently cut back hedge and tree screen along the north-east side of the existing agricultural building.

**Traffic and Transport Assessment**

This Assessment explains that presently all traffic to the application site, from the main road network, is required to pass down Popery Lane and this is narrow with hedgebanks on either side. For vehicles that come from the Taunton direction along the B3224, which links from the M5, there is a need to negotiate the cross roads in the middle of Wheddon Cross to access the Shearwell site.

In terms of the upgraded access onto the B3224, which is proposed to serve the Shearwell site, Somerset County Council's road safety unit has confirmed that there have been no accidents on this section of road in the last 5 years.

The assessment has documented the existing vehicle arrivals and departures to the application site. In the morning peak of 8am to 9am, there are 40 arrivals and the peak period for departure was between 16.30 and 17.30, where there were 36 car movements. The total employee cars arriving and departing the site was 58 per day. In terms of the weekly delivery movements for the 2 week study period, there were 44 arrivals and departures and this was made up of 28 vans and 16 lorries.

The analysis also examined where the vehicles came from. For employees on a daily basis, 9 came from Cutcombe itself, 11 from the Minehead road, 11 from the Exford direction, 22 from the Taunton direction and 5 from the Dulverton direction. This means

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that for employees, 38 of the 58 vehicle movements presently pass through the Wheddon Cross crossroads to access the site.

In terms of weekly van movements, 7 come from the Minehead direction, 10 from the Exford direction, 8 from the Taunton direction and 3 from the Dulverton direction. As a consequence, 21 of the 28 van movements into the Shearwell site come through the crossroads in Wheddon Cross.

In relation to weekly lorry movements, in terms of the study period the data shows that all the movements came from the Taunton direction and therefore all have to pass through the crossroads within the centre of Wheddon Cross.

The assessment acknowledges that the car park is proposed to be increased from 50 to 97 car parking spaces and that the proposed development is anticipated to create 50 additional jobs on the site. The report therefore projects that the increased employee vehicle trips will rise by 50 per day and also that the delivery vehicles would increase by 10 per week, comprising 5 additional van movements and 5 additional lorry movements.

The assessment then analyses the position if the new access were to be permitted and become operational. The new access would allow all employee, van and lorry movements from the Taunton direction to access the Shearwell site without the need to use the Wheddon Cross junction and Popery Lane. It is very likely that traffic to and from Exford would be encouraged to do the same as it would be more convenient to cross straight over at Wheddon Cross rather than turning left and then travelling past the school and using Popery Lane. Traffic to and from Minehead are likely to use the Popery Lane access thereby again avoiding the cross roads. As a consequence, the report concludes that the majority of vehicles accessing the site would not need to use the crossroads in the centre of Wheddon Cross.

The report also comments that the new access has been laid out to the requirements of the County Highway Authority, that efforts will be made to encourage employees to car share and that the combination of measures will improve highway safety in Wheddon Cross.

#### **Ecological Assessment**

Consultant ecologists have investigated the site and evaluated the proposals. The investigations showed no active bird nests were seen in the hedges to be removed or the bank around the area to be in-filled (at the south-east yard area). The survey found no nesting birds or barn owls in the agricultural building.

In terms of dormice, it is explained that there are very limited records available across the site and the wider area, however, the consultants consider it likely that dormice may be present in nearby woodland as well as in hedges around the fields in the area.

No badger setts were found on the site and in terms of bats there were no signs of bats in the agricultural building and there are no trees with potential bat roosts in any of the hedges to be affected. The report explains there is no suitable reptile habitat on the sites.

The report concludes that "because of the abundance of other suitable habitats for nesting birds and foraging/commuting bats, the (minimal) lengths of hedgebanks to be affected are considered to be of no significant ecological value".



The report recommends the timings for certain parts of the works and concludes that hedgebank planting takes place to ensure connectivity for dormice to replace the hedgebank which will be severed by the new agricultural building. It is concluded that “this replacement hedgebank would recreate habitat for use by nesting birds, dormice and foraging/commuting bats”.

### **Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage Strategy**

The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) undertaken by specialist consultants. Under the Environment Agency’s requirements, a FRA is required where the application site exceeds 1 hectare. There is no part of the application site in an area which has been identified as liable to flood.

The study examines how surface water presently drains from the site. Runoff from the present car park is collected in gullies and transferred to a large open ditch running the length of the Shearwell/agricultural building. This ditch drains to a stone lined sump connected to a surface water main under the farm yard at the south-east of the main building. That then drains to a larger water main/culverted water course under the garden of Higher Putham which connects into the system described below.

Runoff from the rear stone farm yard and the tarmac road junction (east of the sheep shed) currently flows down the private road towards the cottages of Lower and Higher Putham. Surface water runoff on the existing road is directed away from the entrance to Higher Putham by 2 no. raised humps in the road, and then drains into a stone lined sump and a culverted water course, before being culverted again under a track and yard area, and then outfalls into a steep open watercourse into woodland.

The application proposes to improve and supplement the present drainage systems. The agent has explained that the following measures will be put in place;

- Minor modifications from the farm yard to control the existing surface water runoff.
- The access road will be constructed with a sub-base of large stones and flanked with French drains.
- Potential runoff from the road, where it slopes down to the east yard, will be directed by the camber of the road to a bunded soakaway area with a high level overflow to the drainage sump in the yard.
- The new Shearwell Data building, which will replace the existing agricultural building, will drain from the roof (as the existing building does) directly to the open ditch and drainage sump.
- The construction of a road hump to direct surface water to the collection sump in the east yard will prevent surface water from flowing onto the private access drive.
- The open ditch will be cleared of debris and vegetation to increase drainage capacity.
- The existing concrete collection sump will be improved by constructing a new, larger concrete chamber.
- A new package Treatment Plant sewerage system is proposed

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- The car park extension will drain to a gully and a stone filled soakaway. The overflow from the soakaway will be directed to an open ditch.
- The replacement agricultural building and yard will drain from the roof guttering and yard gullies to two stone soakaway chambers intended to accommodate a 1 hour storm event.

The report concludes that with the mitigation measures which have been incorporated into the proposals, any impact in terms of flood risk is likely to be negligible. The report explains that the improvements to the existing yard will stop uncontrolled surface water runoff from that area.

#### **Ground Water and Land Contamination Assessment**

This report looks at previous and proposed land uses, and pollution and contaminated land issues. The report explains that “the proposed development and land use will not result in a change to the existing operations carried out on the site and will result in an improvement in the management of surface water on this site and effluent treatment”.

The report recommends additional work to reduce the risk of a pollution event by;

- Modification to the groundworks and surfacing of the farm yard, to improve the capture of surface water runoff
- Improvements to the surface water drainage system as set out in detail in the reports, and
- Installation of a package plant sewage treatment works to replace the septic tank based treatment system.

#### **Treatment of Excavated Materials Assessment**

The papers explain that the proposed development will involve the excavating of approximately 9,624 cubic metres of material comprising topsoil, subsoil and shillet. The analysis sets out that 1,573 cubic metres would be used in the formation of hedgebanks and 1,393 cubic metres to infill the yard area at the application site. Applications have been submitted for the resurfacing of a track at Goosemoor Farm which the papers explain would accommodate 5,075 cubic metres of stone and shillet and for the spreading of 900 cubic metres of topsoil at the farm holding at Amoor Lane. These applications are yet to be determined. The remaining 553 cubic metres of top soil are proposed, as part of this application, to be spread on the field to the west of the proposed agricultural building.

In respect of the topsoil to be spread on the field at the application site, it is explained that it will be used to remove dips and level out variations in the landform. The papers explain that “the average depth of spread over the area, which is approximately 0.5 hectares, would be 0.11m”.

#### **Lighting Assessment**

The report on lighting acknowledges the importance of the Exmoor dark skies and the agent sets out proposals to reduce the impact of the new buildings and activities on the area.

It is explained that no new external lighting is proposed. With the new office development the report explains the application incorporates the following to mitigate any light pollution impacts from internal light sources:

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- Internal blackout window blinds - all windows will be fitted with light restricting blinds to be utilised when natural light sources fall to inadequate and inefficient levels.
- No external lighting.
- No roof lights.

In respect of the agricultural building, the agent has set out the following design elements to minimise the light pollution from this proposed building;

- Ventair cladding to the west elevation.
- Solid door fittings for all openings.
- Fluorescent lamps and in particular the “use (of) sealed battens that have minimal upward light loss”.
- Roof lights – minimum number of roof lights to allow natural light to enter thereby reducing the need to artificially illuminate the spaces.
- No external lighting.

#### **Historic Environment Assessment**

This section of the papers explain that the Heritage Environment Record shows no nationally or registered historic sites or features on the application site. The Historic Landscape Characterisation mapping data together with the available mapping shows the land as 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century enclosed land. The report concludes by stating that “considering the low level of sensitivity against the magnitude of the works, the proposal is likely to have negligible impact on the historic environment”.

#### **Economic Impacts**

The Environmental Statement includes a statement on the employment impacts from the proposals. This explains that approximately 50 full time and 10 part time employees are presently employed at the site. It is explained that “over the course of the next 10 years, the applicant anticipates the level of the expanded business to generate a further 50 full-time jobs. Approximately 30 of those jobs are anticipated to be generated over the next 18 months”.

The report analyses the jobs market and in particular the relatively low level of Business Use Class types of jobs within the area. This section of the report concludes the analysis by explaining that;

“considering the economic profile of the Exmoor National Park and the threat that further loss of working aged or skilled population poses to that against employment growth forecasts, the proposal is anticipated to deliver moderately significant positive impact on the local employment market”.

The applicant has explained that “of the 65 members of staff, 38 live within Exmoor National Park. Of the 27 who live outside the National Park, six live in Minehead and nine in Watchet and Williton which I would describe as “local to Exmoor”. The remainder commute from areas outside the National Park”.

#### **PLANNING POLICIES**

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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The Development Plan is made up of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan and the Exmoor National Park Local Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was published in March 2012, is a material planning consideration that should be given due weight in the planning process.

#### SOMERSET AND EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY JOINT STRUCTURE PLAN

STR1 Sustainable Development

STR6 Development Outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages

STR7 Implementation of the Strategy

Policy 1 Nature Conservation

Policy 2 Exmoor National Park

Policy 5 Landscape Character

Policy 11 Areas of High Archaeological Potential

Policy 13 Locally Important Archaeological Remains

Policy 16 Provision for Land for Industrial, Warehouse and Business Development

Policy 18 Location of Land for Industrial, Warehousing and Business Development

Policy 19 Employment and Community Provision in Rural Areas

Policy 43 Access for People with Disabilities

Policy 48 Access and Parking

Policy 49 Transport Requirements of New Development

#### EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN 2001-2011

LNC1 General National Park Policy

LNC2 Lighting

LNC8 Protection of Best Agricultural Land

LNC12 Exmoor Biodiversity Action Plan Areas

LNC13 Mitigation and Compensation for Nature Conservation Sites Affected by Development

LNC14 Protected Species and Habitats

LNC17 Small Scale Renewable Energy Conservation

CBS12 New Development

E2 Business Development in the Open Countryside

E3 Safeguarding Existing Employment Land and Buildings

E4 Large Scale or Intrusive Industrial Development

A1 Agriculture and Forestry Development

U1 Water Resource Protection - Groundwater

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- U2 Water Resource Protection – Contaminated Land
- U3 Water Supply
- U4 Sewerage and Sewage Disposal – Capacity of System
- U8 Reduction of Flood Risk from New Development
- TR3 Traffic and Road Safety Considerations for Development
- TR6 Highway Design for New Development
- TR10 Car and Cycle Parking Provision
- TR12 Public Rights of Way

In terms of the **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF) key advice in relation to this application explains:

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It explains that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, economic, social and environmental roles. It explains that the roles should not be undertaken in isolation and; “to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions.”

National Park purposes should be given greater weight in the planning process than the presumption of favour of sustainable development.

The NPPF comments in paragraph 28:

Supporting a prosperous rural economy

Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.

To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:

- support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings;
- promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and
- promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

In terms of transport, paragraph 34 explains;

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“Plans and decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised. However this needs to take account of policies set out elsewhere in this Framework, particularly in rural areas.”

In relation to National Parks paragraph 115 states;

“Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.”

### CONSULTATION RESPONSES

#### Cutcombe Parish Council

Cutcombe Parish Council considered this application at its meeting on 19th June and has submitted the following comments:

- 1 Fully supported but some concerns were raised which no doubt can be addressed (see items 6 and 7 below).
- 2 Prior consultation with ENPA and the Parish was much appreciated.
- 3 Future employment opportunities in the Parish to be welcomed.
- 4 Reduction in traffic movements on Popery Lane to be welcomed: it is understood that delivery lorries will be encouraged to always use the new track.
- 5 Landscaping measures around the building are welcomed.
- 6 Concern was expressed that there might be some additional noise for nearby residents at Putham.
- 7 Concern was expressed that the new road crosses a bridleway: Council would like to see signage both sides of the bridleway and road set a reasonable distance back so that riders and drivers have adequate warning: it is understood that a traffic calming measure will be in place either side of the bridleway crossing to slow down traffic and that the hedges will be trimmed to give riders increased visibility.

#### Exton Parish Council

Councillors were of the opinion that the opportunities being outlined with regard to future employment for Exmoor were positive. Concerns were expressed with regard to increased traffic on the B3224 and the entrance to a new access drive. However, this could only improve the situation in Cutcombe itself, where a high number of vehicles were using a narrow country lane to access Putham at present.

#### ENPA Access and Recreation Team

This application affects public bridleway WL 6/22 and restricted byway WL 6/37 (Putham Lane).

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The proposed access track would cross bridleway WL 6/22. We have had detailed discussions on site with the applicant, his agent, and colleagues from Somerset County Council Highways team and Public Rights of Way team, and established the standards which Somerset County Council as Highway Authority would require of this crossing. These standards are reflected in the application. The premise of these standards and the resulting proposals is that bridleway users should not be unduly inconvenienced and the onus should be on the access track users to give way to bridleway users. The applicant will also be applying to this team for authorisation to change the surface of the bridleway for the short section where the track crosses. As a result of the proposed access track, there should be a significant reduction in traffic travelling along Putham Lane restricted byway which could result in improved safety and enjoyment for restricted byway users.

#### **Avon & Somerset Police**

Thank you for consulting Avon & Somerset Police in relation to the above planning application.

Having reviewed the documentation submitted in support of the application, I would comment as follows:-

1. Design & Access Statement:- the DAS should demonstrate how crime prevention measures have been considered in the design of the proposal. It does not appear to do so.
2. Crime Statistics:- a check of the reported crime statistics for the area of this proposed development (within a 500 metre radius of the grid reference) for the past year reveals the following:- 4 Offences. This area can therefore be regarded a very low crime area.
3. Perimeter Security:- the proposed earth banks and post & wire/stock netting fencing offer little or no security value and can only be regarded as boundary demarcation. The earth banks, whilst defining defensible space, may also reduce natural surveillance of the site. No detail is shown of the type and construction of proposed gates and whether lockable, etc, which they should be.
4. Landscaping:- planting, including the proposed hedgerows and trees, should not impede opportunities for natural surveillance and must avoid the creation of potential hiding places. Where visibility is important, particularly at the front of the development, plants should have a mature growth height of no more than 1 metre and trees should be devoid of foliage below 2 metres, so allowing a 1 metre field of vision. Defensive planting i.e. thorny shrubs can be used in appropriate locations to enhance security.
5. Car Parking:- appears to be in a fairly secure location within the development boundary in an area of reasonably good surveillance between the proposed new buildings. No indication is given of any secure cycle or motor cycle parking facilities being provided.
6. Lighting:- I note that there is only one existing external light, operated by movement sensor, illuminating the car park and that no new external lighting is proposed. Also, that the new building will be equipped with blackout blinds for use when internal artificial lighting is necessary.

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I understand the need to minimise light pollution in this location but query whether, from a personal safety angle, one light is sufficient to illuminate the extended car park during the hours of darkness.

7. Building Shell:- External staircase (NE Elevation) - I have some concerns regarding the security of this staircase, which leads from ground level to the roof terrace, as this appears to potentially allow unauthorised access to glazed doors leading to the canteen and IT Room/New Server Room on the first floor. If this externally designed staircase is essential, as opposed to an internal staircase arrangement, I recommend it be gated at the bottom and secured when the building is unoccupied. Bearing in mind the flat roof design, any potential climbing aids such as the external staircase, downpipes, litter bins etc should be appropriately designed or avoided. This is particularly relevant in respect of the PV installation which could be liable to theft and damage.

Roller Shutters (SE Elevation) - the two roller shutter doors providing vehicular access for deliveries should be appropriately secured internally and externally and alarmed.

External doors and windows - external doorsets should comply with BS PAS 24-1:2007 and BS PAS 23-1:1999 in order to offer minimum standards of security. Similarly, windows should comply with BS 7950:1997.

8. CCTV - is not a universal solution to security problems, however, it can help deter crime and assist in the identification of culprits if a crime is committed, it can also assist in the management of a facility. There is no indication in the documentation accompanying this application of any existing CCTV system or such a system being proposed for this development. If such a system is being considered, I am able to provide more specific information and advice.
9. Intruder Alarm System - similarly, there is no indication of any existing or proposed intruder alarm system being installed. Bearing in mind the isolated location and potential value of property on the premises, I recommend that a suitable monitored and verified intruder alarm system be installed. With regard to the high value goods and IT Suite, additional measures such as security fogging or offender marking devices can be included within the intruder alarm system. As with CCTV, I am able to provide further information and advice regarding such systems if required.

#### **Environment Agency**

Environment Agency Position: We have no objection to the proposed development subject to the following conditions regarding flood risk and the protection of controlled waters.

Flood Risk: The proposed development will only meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework if the following measures as detailed in the Flood Risk Assessment submitted with this application are implemented and secured by way of a planning condition on any planning permission.

Condition: The development permitted by this planning permission shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment by Harcombe Environmental Services dated 10/05/2012 and Acorn drawing number 13 r1 and the following mitigation measures detailed within the FRA:



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1. Limiting the surface water run-off generated by the 1:100 year storm so that it will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site and not increase the risk of flooding off-site.
2. Provision of sustainable drainage methods, notably the proposed soakaways and French drains. Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from the site.

Advice to LPA: It is pleasing to see sustainable drainage methods (SUDS) used to manage surface water arising from the development, particularly the French drains along the access road and the soakaways. However it is unclear how the soakaways have been sized, as the critical storm duration has not been calculated (instead an arbitrary value has been used). In addition, no infiltration testing (to BRE Digest 365 standards) has been undertaken therefore it is unclear whether the soakaways have the required capacity in the design rainfall event.

Informative: We recommend that the finished floor levels of the proposed buildings are set a minimum of 200mm above surrounding ground level. This will improve the flood resilience of the proposed built development.

Groundwater and Contaminated Land: We consider that planning permission could be granted to the proposed development as submitted if the following planning condition is included as set out below. Without this condition, the proposed development on this site poses an unacceptable risk to the environment.

Condition: No development approved by this planning permission shall take place until a remediation strategy that includes the following components to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site shall each be submitted to and approved, in writing, by the local planning authority:

1. A preliminary risk assessment which has identified all previous uses, potential contaminants associated with those uses, a conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptors of potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site.
2. A site investigation scheme, based on (1) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site.
3. The results of the site investigation and the detailed risk assessment referred to in (2) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.
4. A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (3) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

Any changes to these components require the express written consent of the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reasons: National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 109 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution. Government policy also states that planning policies and decisions should also

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ensure that adequate site investigation information, prepared by a competent person, is presented (NPPF, paragraph 121).

Advice to LPA: The submitted report "Contaminated Land and Groundwater Assessment" by Harcombe Environmental Services ref 1204-01 Wheddon Cross - CLGA dated 10/5/2012) does not include a water features survey or assessment of risk to private water supplies. Both these items were requested in our previous response to this consultation (DC/2012/11108). We are therefore unable to assess the impact of the development on any such features.

#### **ENPA Ecologist**

Main issue is loss of small section of species-poor hedgebank; recommendations within survey report must be followed including timing of work and replacement of hedgebank. I would also suggest that rather than a single species beech hedge, a mixture of native species of local provenance should be used including those found in hedgerow H1: ash, hazel, blackthorn and hawthorn.

#### **Wessex Water**

With reference to the planning application, Wessex Water can confirm the site lies within a non-sewered area of Wessex Water and the nearest water supply pipe is deemed private. We have no issues with the proposals.

**ENPA Landscape** – The Head of Conservation and Access has visited the site on a number of occasions to begin to assess the potential impacts from the application proposals. The agent has undertaken a further analysis in the form of an expanded LVIA and submitted further papers. The Head of Conservation and Access is examining the papers and will visit the site again before making her detailed comments.

#### **West Somerset Council - Lead Officer for Economic Development**

Economic development is a corporate priority for West Somerset Council and is articulated as follows:

A thriving and increasingly varied local economy where people will have the skill to work and prosper.

The key objectives that sit below that are to

- Broaden the variety of employment opportunities within the district

- Increase the opportunities for training and improving skills

Shearwell Data Limited is already considered an exemplar innovatory business for West Somerset, currently employing up to 65 people in what we term as knowledge economy occupations. These jobs attract higher salaries and lead to significant opportunities for skills training. I am aware of the high standard of in-house training that is delivered to all employees.

I understand that the proposed development is in response to significant expansion of the business that would lead to an additional 65 jobs, 30 of which would be appointed within the next 18 months. I would certainly want to work with Shearwell to ensure that as much local recruitment to those jobs as possible was achieved.

The growth of this business from an Exmoor Sheep Farm to a high tech global business, has been phenomenal, and has exhibited truly sustainable and ambitious farm

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diversification. I would be very concerned about the impact on the local economy of West Somerset and Exmoor if this business had to relocate away from the area.

Therefore, I hope that Exmoor National Park's Planning Committee will support the application.

#### **PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS**

The following is a summary of the representations received in relation to the original submission. Further details in the form of amended plans and amplified and additional details have been submitted. Local residents have been reconsulted and their views will be reported to the meeting along with any other additional information available at that time. Furthermore, any additional comments will be included in any final report when the application comes before the Committee before any final decision is made.

Residents at Putham have raised the following objections and concerns:

- 1 The proposal for an alternative access is welcomed, but with the increases proposed this will still result in a lot of traffic from the Minehead direction still using Popery Lane.
- 2 There is concern with the sheer extent of the scheme. This is heightened by the recent felling of the screen of mature trees set about 2.5m above and about 40/50m long immediately above the access drive to our own and neighbours' properties. The eaves height at the Putham end is approx 3.3m, not 5.29m as referred to on the south side. The trees virtually obscured the size and bulk of the existing sheep shed end and now the screen has been removed. The cross section at this end of the building is not correct and the view at this end of the proposal will have a major impact on amenity.
- 3 The application is for the creation of an industrial park on a "Greenfield" site, on farmland unrelated to the village, and 2km distant, in the middle of the National Park, and requiring a considerable degree of commuting to service it.
- 4 This is not an agricultural project aiding the local community or national park, but a monstrous industrial project, and it should be sited on an industrial estate, not on protected farmland.
- 5 Just because the applicant owns the land does not mean that he can build what he wants on it. If it is not profitable to buy suitable land in a suitable location, then the business is not viable.
- 6 Allowing the expansion would set a dangerous precedent for other applications.
- 7 The NPA should follow its advice on its web site which says that "Exmoor is a unique place with stunning natural environment" and approving this application will not be upholding the responsibility to "Keep Exmoor Special".
- 8 The employment arguments are noted, however it cannot be seen how it would be possible to find the number of additional employees locally, being in mind that some of those already employed travel considerable distances to work. The fact that it is anticipated that the major number of commuters from any one location will be from Taunton – 23 miles away, in itself not a very sustainable solution.

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- 9 The business use cannot be tied to Shearwell with any permission and therefore the site could be sold for an alternative non-local use without the need for any further consultation.
- 10 The NPA will clearly need to make a decision on the principle of whether or not to allow a scheme of this size.
- 11 A scheme of this size should be related to an existing village or settlement and it is unfortunate that the Auction Field site appears to have been ruled out. The scheme indicates other potential areas for a scheme of this size.
- 12 There will be considerable danger created by the installation of an access and exit to the B3224 and the viability of the proposed new road with regard to commercial vehicles and increased staff cars. Surely vehicles coming from the Minehead direction will continue to use Popery Lane and with the proposed increase in traffic, this to some extent defeats the object of the exercise.
- 13 There are concerns with the overall effect of this proposal on the wildlife of the area.
- 14 Given the very sensitive nature of this matter and the close community on Exmoor, does it make sense for the application to be dealt with by a higher authority?
- 15 One respondent comments that if the NPA is minded to approve the scheme, it is requested to review the position of the replacement building as this will contain windows on 2 stories, and towering the approach to Putham. The shed can now be clearly be seen from Kersham Lane, and indeed from approximately 180 degrees from east to west, with virtually no other buildings visible within the whole area.
- 16 It would be possible to extend to the south of the existing main building, albeit at a possible higher level, but with a dramatically reduced impact. The roof of the present building can already been seen from Dunkery, so this proposal will have a marginal impact on that view, but a major impact for the better on the amenity of residents at Putham.
- 17 There is no clear definition of how and where the enormous amount of spoil from the excavations for the extensive parking areas and buildings will be dealt with. There is concern at the loss of another field on this already reduced farm.
- 18 The application does not show a blue line around any other land in the same ownership, is this correct?
- 19 The need for a replacement sheep shed of the proposed size and bulk is questioned, bearing in mind 2 large new sheds have recently been erected at Goosemoor Farm.

The residents at the two houses at the eastern end of Popery Lane, adjoining the present access to the Shearwell site and Putham, have written 3 letters to comment and object on the following grounds;

- 1 The new packaged pumping station appears to be on a wish list and not part of the planning application. This needs to be urgently addressed before any groundworks start.
- 2 In terms of road safety, increased traffic coming from Minehead will continue to use the inadequate Popery Lane and traffic coming from Raleghs Cross may be faced with either a stream of emerging traffic or static traffic waiting to turn right into the

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new entrance. There should be reassurances through the planning process that suitable measures will be put in place and enforced, taking account of visibility and the fog, ice and snow prevalent at this height.

- 3 In terms of light pollution and the International Dark Sky Reserve it is considered that the proposed office policy of shutting the office blinds at night and closing the door when the light is on is weak. There needs to be assurances through the planning process and measures enforced so as not to compromise the dark sky status.
- 4 Given the large increase in commercial floorspace there should be some planning gain from the project for the benefit of the community. It is suggested that undergrounding the remaining overhead cables, particularly in Cutcombe, should be a priority.
- 5 It is questioned whether an agricultural building of this size is required, especially given the small acreage of agricultural land left at Putham. Will we see a change of use to business use in due course?
- 6 The new agricultural building, apart from the massive amount of earth moving would be in full sight of a large part of Cutcombe village, particularly in the area of Cutcombe Church. It would be better sited on the south side of the proposed access drive and of a proportionate size to the acreage left at Putham.
- 7 The proposed drainage appears rudimentary comprising ditches and soakaways. A SUDS system should be incorporated to take the vast amount of new run-off from the large new roofs. There is no rainwater harvesting proposed.
- 8 Extensive new build is planned on an agricultural greenfield land. There is no evidence that a brownfield site has been examined or the re-use of an existing building elsewhere. There is no evidence with this three site farming enterprise to justify the size of agricultural structure applied for on this site. Now is the time to move the business to another location and return the site to agriculture.
- 9 The current operation has caused no discernible noise pollution however, with the proposed expansion will sound attenuation measures be put in place and will working hours be limited by condition?
- 10 The proposed development will be the largest single industrial development on Exmoor for many years with screening required of up to 6.5m. Will any approval require native species to be exclusively used and mature specimens included to reduce the inevitable time delay while they reach an effective height?
- 11 There is no reference to upgrading the electrical power systems which will be required. It should be conditioned in any approval that there be no new visible power cables, telecom lines or other services permitted.
- 12 Up to 80 vehicles arriving or leaving the site at approximately the same time will be as visible as a main road from a distance along the proposed new road due to head and tail lights. There should be sufficient screening of banks or hedges specified to limit the impact.
- 13 The application shows speed bumps on the bridleway either side of the tarmac crossing which are clearly not appropriate for a designated tourist route (Coleridge Way) or necessary for its purpose.

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- 14 The bridleway is used by horses, walkers and cyclists. There should be gates either side of the new access drive to give priority to bridleway users and to control stock.
- 15 At the proposed new junction with the B3224, downhill speeds are currently between 50-60mph and it needs to be considered in conjunction with the extended breaking distances that downhill or poor conditions will add. Visibility is severely restricted by a bump in the road, which if removed, would greatly improve the visible range. It should be ensured by planning condition that viewing splays are maximised, the B road is re-profiled to remove “the bump” and that sufficient measures are in place to avoid accidents caused by large vehicles or numerous private vehicles waiting to turn right into the site at the same time.
- 16 There have been several accidents on the stretch of road near the proposed new access, including one runaway lorry resulting in serious damage at Wheddon Cross, and another causing two fatalities.
- 17 Given the numerous staff members that arrive daily along the road from Taunton, it must be assumed that the current qualified/employable local labour pool has already been exhausted. It is questioned whether sufficient research has been undertaken for this expansion to justify the case on the grounds of providing local employment.

Another representation raises the following objections (in two letters);

- 1 The NPA is urged to consider its responsibility to protect Exmoor and actively discourage the development of further large scale buildings in the rural countryside, to pro-actively support the principle of “Enhancing the qualities that make Exmoor special” and in addition, take action to support the commitment of reducing the carbon footprint.
- 2 The applicant successfully achieved the removal of an Agricultural Occupancy Condition on his former dwelling at Putham Farm because he claimed he had suffered losses made on his agricultural business over the preceding ten years and that he relied on income provided by his light industrial business Shearwell Data.
- 3 Putham Farm can now only be considered accommodation land as the farmhouse and the former stone barns have been developed to dwellings and have all been sold off. The Shearwell Data Industrial Building is therefore, by definition, not agricultural.
- 4 To reduce the carbon footprint, it would be far more efficient to restore the present industrial building to its original purpose for housing sheep and cattle and explore the viability to create a facility to accommodate the Shearwell Data business within the new Market Development at Wheddon Cross, within the village envelope and on the bus route, thus reducing the need to travel to a remote site in the countryside.
- 5 It is agreed that the creation of the proposed access road from the B3224 would be a great relief to the residents of Wheddon Cross and Cutcombe, however, this was dismissed when it was suggested in 2008.
- 6 If the new access road is permitted it seems far more environmentally beneficial to construct earth banks to be planted with native species hedge plants and avoid the need to transport considerable amounts of excavated material on an 8 mile round trip with all the CO2 that would be produced in the transportation to Goosemoor Farm and to the “land at Armour Lane”.

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- 7 The need for the development to be located at Putham Farm relies heavily on the applicant's claim that it is necessary to incorporate the industrial enterprise within the agricultural unit for product development and testing. This assumption is very questionable as other leading UK manufacturers producing similar products are all on industrial and business parks up and down the UK. The objector has produced a list of such UK companies and their addresses.
- 8 The development is more appropriate to be located on a business park and the obvious solution would be the Cutcombe Auction Field Development. If that is not possible there are business park developments available at Brushford, Williton, Wiveliscombe, Wellington and Deane Cross. The business could continue in its present location until it moves into the business park and then revert the existing building back to agricultural use.
- 9 The only plausible reasons for the present application are wholly for land value gain. Sixteen letters of support have been received from employees of Shearwell.
- 1 Permitting this application will not only guarantee the future of dozens of employees but generate many others and secure the future of the business.
- 2 Without this business I would be forced to move away from Exmoor.
- 3 Without Shearwell I could not find the same level of employment without travelling to Taunton, Bridgwater or even Bristol.
- 4 My job is convenient to me and I have seen the business grow over the past 22 years.
- 5 The new floor space will provide the space to manufacture yet cause minimum disruption to the village as it is within the existing site.
- 6 The new access road will alleviate existing traffic issues through the tight turn at Wheddon Cross which can only benefit residents within the village.
- 7 Contrary to what some objectors have said, the majority of staff live within Exmoor National Park itself, and the remainder live, for example in Minehead, Watchet and Williton, with the exception of only a handful of staff who come from areas outside the wider National Park such as Taunton. There are many people who car share. The company has always sought to employ local people wherever possible.
- 8 This is not an industrial park that is being created. The re-development of the main site will remain within the current footprint of the existing buildings and will therefore have no negative visual impact on the surrounding area. The additional agricultural building is a requirement for the existing farm, as the benefit of having an operational farm working parallel to Shearwell itself is invaluable for trialling and developing new products and ideas.
- 9 The barn is in constant use for agricultural purposes, there are about 2,000 sheep (4 flocks) so it is imperative that the barn is replaced as this is a working farm.

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A letter of support from Exmoor Farmers Livestock Auctions Ltd comments:

- 1 Shearwell is an important employer in the Wheddon Cross area and a leader in the field of animal identification. It is considered vital that the business is allowed to continue its progress and development at a time of otherwise economic hardship.
- 2 In particular the new entrance and access to the business is supported and it can be seen that the entrance has been designed in conjunction with the County Highway Department. A new access will provide an improvement and provide an access that does not need to go past the school and where the existing access is of very limited width.

A letter has been received from a local business proprietor setting out his support on the following grounds:

- 1 The redevelopment of the site allows this important employer to grow their successful business which is at the forefront of electronic animal identification and data.
- 2 The village of Cutcombe/Wheddon Cross needs an employer such as Shearwell to attract working people to the area to support the school, garage/shop, pub, as well as numerous other businesses in the area.
- 3 The new entrance will provide better access to the company whilst improving safety by significantly reducing traffic through the village past the school and its narrow road.

#### MAIN PLANNING ISSUES

The main planning issues are considered to be whether the principle of the development is acceptable in this open countryside location in terms of National Park purposes and planning policies, and, if so, whether the specific impacts, such as landscape, highways and amenity are compatible with this location within the National Park.

#### Planning Policy

The Exmoor National Park Local Plan was adopted in March 2005. The Plan sets out the planning strategy for the National Park. The General National Park Policy LNC1 applies to all applications and states;

*Development proposals in the National Park will be expected to be compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of Exmoor, and the public understanding and enjoyment of those qualities. In considering applications the Authority will give the greatest weight to these purposes and in the case of conflict greatest weight will be attached to the first purpose. Due regard will be had for the economic and social well-being of the communities in the National Park.*

The application site is considered to be in open countryside and not located within or adjoining a defined settlement. In terms of the proposed business development Policy E2 concerns "Business Development in the Open Countryside". The Policy states:

*In the open countryside and outside settlements, the erection of new business premises will not be permitted. In these locations extensions to existing commercial premises and the conversion of existing buildings to business use may be permitted where there is no adverse effect on important planning interests which the Plan seeks to protect.*

*Applications for building conversions or adaptations should have specific regard to the requirements of CBS1.*



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The business element of the application is an extension, albeit substantial, to the present authorised business building on the site. The policy does not limit extensions to a particular size or scale. In this case, for extensions, the policy test is whether there is an adverse impact on important planning interests which the Plan seeks to protect.

It is important to distinguish the difference within the policy between an extension to an existing business, which can be considered acceptable as a matter of principle, and the introduction of a new business in a new building in the open countryside, which is not acceptable as a matter of principle under the policy.

Policy E2 needs to be considered in the context of Policy E4 which concerns large scale or intrusive industrial development.

The supporting test to Policy E4 at paragraph 5.20 explains;

“It is important that employment needs in the National Park are met in a way that is compatible with National Park objectives, and the creation of new large scale employment opportunities such as major industry would be inappropriate and in direct conflict with statutory National Park purposes. The large buildings required, traffic generation, parking and loading operations associated with such uses are likely to make a significant impact on the landscape of the National Park and amenity of local communities.”

Policy E4 states that:

*Proposals for large scale, intrusive or environmentally damaging business development will not be permitted in the National Park.*

The policy is intended to oppose larger scale business developments that are in conflict with National Park purposes, have a significant impact on the landscape and the amenity of local communities. It is important to judge the business development proposals in this planning application against these tests to see whether the application is compatible with Policy E4 and meets the principles set out in E2 and LNC1.

In terms of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan, which was adopted in April 2000, there are a range of policies which are applicable to this application.

Policy STR6 concerns “Development Outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages”. This policy says that in such circumstances, development should be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel.

Structure Plan Policy 2 concerns the general principles for development proposals within the National Park and is similar to Local Plan Policy LNC1. Policy 2 explains that National Park purposes should be given priority over other planning considerations and “provision for development should only be made where it would not conflict with the purposes of National Park designation.

The strategic policies seek to direct employment development with significant traffic movements to public transport hubs and the larger settlements. Policy 19 in respect of rural areas explains that “in rural areas provision should be made for development which creates or enhances local employment, shopping or community facilities, including development necessary for the purposes of agriculture and development associated with the diversification of agricultural units”.

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Representations from some local residents have sought to argue that other locations are preferable to the present application site if the business use was wished to be expanded. They have highlighted possible sites in Wheddon Cross at the Livestock Market and in surrounding towns such as Dulverton, Minehead and Williton. These comments are noted and understood, however, a key issue before the Planning Authority is whether in terms of planning policy and other impacts the application site proposals can be considered acceptable, not whether other sites may be judged more preferable.

In relation to the business element of the application, Policy E2 allows the extension of business premises in the open countryside providing there is no adverse effect on important planning interests which the Plan seeks to protect and Policy E4 will not be breached where the development is compatible with National Park purposes. The key issues in this case are whether the development conserves or enhances the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of this part of the National Park. The consideration of the landscape impact (and any mitigation) is the main planning determinant in terms of the compliance with these planning policies.

There is also the need to consider the wider principles of sustainable development. The NPPF explains that “to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system. The planning system should play a role in guiding development to sustainable solutions”.

The NPPF requires development to be located where it minimises the need to travel but also balances this approach with the need to take account of policies in the NPPF particularly concerning rural areas. In terms of rural areas, the NPPF requires planning policies to support rural economic growth, and to promote a strong rural economy Local Plans should “support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings”. Supporting rural economic growth is a material planning consideration, the weight to be attached in each situation is a matter for the decision maker having regard to other factors including the location and scale of proposals.

In the case of the present application, objectors raise concerns that the sheer scale of the proposals on this site is not compatible with this being a sustainable development. The site is not accessible by public transport and is not located in a village. However, many Exmoor sites, including some villages do not have a bus service and the applicant argues that the majority of staff come from various locations across Exmoor and the business has been locally based for many years. An important part of the applicant’s case is the link between the production, testing and demonstration of the products in the adjoining agricultural building and this generates a requirement for a rural location. (Objectors dispute this need). The applicant argues that this is an established business with the potential to expand and that the proposals have been thought through with care. Furthermore, it is argued that the proposals can be accommodated on this site without harm to National Park purposes, and with the provision of the new access, the impact of traffic on Wheddon Cross will be reduced. The applicant believes that given the hi-tech nature of the business, its need for a link to a farm building that necessitates farm land, and the location of the present employees, this is a sustainable location for this building in its expanded form. The Committee will need to consider this issue of rural sustainability and link this with the scale of the proposals which form the application to come to a view on acceptability.

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Separate from the issue of sustainability is the question of whether the scale and therefore the impact of the proposals is compatible with National Park purposes. Large scale does not necessarily equate with harm and the Committee will need to judge, having regard to all the information and advice, as to whether the proposals can be accommodated satisfactorily within this landscape such that there is compatibility with National Park purposes and that the location in terms of rural development is sustainable.

To conclude on this issue, the Local Plan policies allow for the principle of an extension to an existing business building providing the scheme is compatible with National Park purposes and there is no adverse impact on important planning interests that the Local Plan seeks to protect. The scale and impact of the application proposals are key components as to whether these requirements are met.

In terms of the agricultural building, this is only required because the business building is proposed over its redeveloped footprint. Local Plan Policy A1 sets out the policy tests against which new agricultural buildings are to be judged. This policy requires that;

- There would be no unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape, wildlife, or historic environment of Exmoor,
- There would be no unacceptable level of noise, water or air pollution, or conflict with neighbouring land uses
- Access and traffic circulation can be adequately catered for, and
- The proposals comply with the elements of Policy CBS12 concerning the need to protect, and respond to opportunities to enhance, landscape character and incorporate landscape design appropriate to the site and character of the area.

The analysis for the need for the agricultural building and landscape impacts are considered below. It is important that an agricultural building of this scale and bulk is judged against National Park purposes and in particular its compatibility with the landscape.

#### Landscape Impacts

While it is important to analyse each element of the proposals it is also important to consider the overall impact of the changes to the landscape and the compatibility with National Park purposes. The works are substantial, in that they entail a further 2,496sqm of floorspace, a new access road, and a car park extension and associated landscaping works, in addition to the present buildings and car park.

The main buildings part of the site is visible from a number of locations to the south, east, north and north-west. The rising land to the south-west prevents views into the main site from that direction. There are a variety of lanes in the vicinity that will allow views into the site and public footpaths in the mid distance to the north and east. The site is visible from Dunkery Beacon. The Beacon is approximately 5km to the north-west and the Shearwell site is seen in a very wide open landscape in the context of the village and other isolated development.

The main building lies alongside the Putham access and is a linear building. It is cut into the slope and runs along the contour line. The section of the building to be demolished and replaced will have a very similar footprint but has a higher ridge. The replacement

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materials, including a less reflective roof material, are considered to have a beneficial impact in terms of its wider appearance in the landscape compared with the present situation. The application gives the opportunity to manage the planting along the lane side of the building. The building will be clearly seen across the valley from Kersham Ford approximately 800m away. The existing business building is visible from the Cutcombe Church area, but this is the front elevation and not the side of the building and from this view the business floorspace will be added to the rear end of the structure and therefore less visible.

The car park will be cut into the existing grazing field and extend further to the north-west. The present car park is generally well screened by boundary vegetation and the proposed car park will be cut into the slope at the same level.

The agricultural building is substantial. It will follow the contour line around the hillside to the north-west and be visible in view from parts of Cutcombe. It is set behind a hedgebank but will be clearly visible across the valley from the Cutcombe Church area.

The access track for most of its length follows existing field boundaries, and where there is a wire fence boundary this is proposed to be replaced by hedgebanks to mitigate the potential impacts. The alterations to improve the agricultural access onto the B3224 will be significant as the bell mouth will be widened and splays provided.

Officers have undertaken an initial assessment and asked the applicant to undertake further analysis as part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. The application is being considered by the Head of Conservation and Access, as a qualified Landscape Architect, and who is very familiar with the National Park. Her detailed assessment is awaited.

As explained, the landscape impact, and whether the proposals are compatible with National Park purposes, is a very key issue as to whether the planning policies are complied with and whether the application is acceptable. This report has been prepared to set out the key issues and allow the Committee to begin to judge the impact of the proposals. Given that the Head of Conservation and Access is still to set out her views, there is the opportunity for the Committee to visit the site and to begin to consider the landscape and other impacts of the application at this interim stage.

#### Design, Materials and Layout

The existing Shearwell building has been converted from an agricultural building permitted in 1989. While the front elevation has been re-faced much of the character and materials of the sheep shed still remain. The application proposes to re-clad and re-roof the existing converted element of the building and to use the same materials for the extension to the business building. It is considered that the materials are acceptable for a business building and that the arrangement of windows, together with the stepped roof and vertical darker cladding elements will help to reduce the impact of the building. The height and bulk of building given its substantial floorspace is considered the best that can be achieved. The extension could in theory be cut into the hillside to the west of the existing building; however, this would result in further very substantial excavations, be more visible from the north and the Dunkery direction and may lead to more internal rooms without exterior windows. The proposed footprint of the building follows very closely the existing footprint. This minimises the impact of the building from the Dunkery direction, however from across

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the valley the building will be as long as the present structure. This business building, being approximately 80m in length, is a substantial structure in a rural location. The business building incorporates renewable elements such as cladding that facilitates warm air to circulate and 40kw PV panels would provide an important contribution to renewable energy generation in a way that has an acceptable landscape impact.

The storage building is proposed to be enlarged by extending down the roof to form a cat slide. The present cladding materials will be retained and used for the extension. The building is grouped with the main building and faces into the site such that any activity will be screened in the wider landscape.

The agricultural building is designed to be clad with Yorkshire boarded elevations and an anthracite cement fibre roof, and these are materials for farm buildings that have been considered acceptable within the National Park. The stepped ridge and overhanging eaves are helpful design features. The ventair cladding to the west elevation will be largely screened so may be judged to be acceptable on this occasion. The main issue is the landscape impact resulting from the size and bulk of the proposed building and this is a separate matter from the design and appearance. If this size of building is necessary on this section of the farm holding at Putham, then the siting is the best that can be achieved. Nevertheless it will be necessary to judge whether the landscape impact is acceptable such that the agricultural building meets National Park purposes and the related planning policies.

In terms of the car park, this is sited in a logical position between the business building and the proposed agricultural building. The hillside to the west provides a backdrop and the boundary planting to the north and east help to soften the appearance of this element of the proposals. A car park of this size, to accommodate approximately 100 cars, is a consequence of the business space increase and is considered acceptable if the landscape impact is compatible with National Park purposes.

#### **Highways and Traffic Impacts**

At the present time, unless coming from Cutcombe itself, all vehicles have to access the application site via passing by the School and then Poper Lane, which is narrow with occasional passing places. In addition, as there is only one point of access to the site, many employees and commercial vehicles must use the crossroads in the centre of Wheddon Cross. The Highways report with the application sets out the traffic movements to the site.

While the business expansion will increase traffic movements to the site, the provision of the second access will help mitigate any highway consequences. The access off the B3224 has been designed to the specifications of the Highway Authority and this will enable all traffic coming to and from the Taunton and Dulverton directions to avoid the centre of Wheddon Cross. This is a significant highway and amenity benefit for that village location.

The new access has been designed with passing places so is, for the majority of its length, only single width. There are alterations proposed to the crossing with the bridleway to ensure there is inter-visibility and that vehicles are required to slow down and have regard to potential users of the Coleridge Way. Both the County Highway Authority and the ENPA

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Access Team are satisfied with the details of the proposals and that they will safeguard bridleway users.

Local residents have raised concerns regarding the access off the B3224 and in particular the potential for vehicles to be waiting on the carriageway to turn right into the new access and the potential highway danger that this will pose. There will be times when vehicles will have to wait on the highway and the application seeks to minimise the hazard by the siting of the access with appropriate sight lines, a slow warning sign and ensuring that the agricultural entrance is widened, tarmac-ed and improved, so that a lorry turning into the new access can pass a lorry waiting to come out onto the B3224. The County Highway Authority has confirmed that it has no objection to the application proposals.

To conclude, in terms of highway safety and the capacity of the road network to accommodate the traffic movements, it is considered that the proposals are acceptable and are judged beneficial in reducing the need for vehicles to traverse the crossroads in the centre of Wheddon Cross.

#### **Impact on Neighbouring Amenity**

There are residential properties at the hamlet of Putham that use Popery Lane/Lower House Lane to access their site. These residents must pass along the lane immediately to the east of the main Shearwell building and the new development will be very apparent. The land drops to the south and the extended business building will be raised up from the adjoining lane. The established vegetation along that boundary has been cut back but the agent has explained it will be retained as part of the construction works and will be allowed to grow back and will partially screen the extension. The enlarged car park and agricultural building, if permitted will be visible to the residents of Putham as they drive past. There will clearly be an increase in the activities on the Shearwell site, however, it is not considered that it will affect their amenities such that material harm is caused.

In terms of the impact of the extended business buildings and the combined impact of activities on the site in relation to the dwellings at Putham themselves; the houses are generally set away from the business site. The end of the extended building will be approximately 100m to the north of the nearest dwelling. The business activities fall within the B1 use class which is compatible with a residential amenity. The agricultural yard at the south-east end of the present agricultural building will be replaced by a yard which will serve the business building. There will be large roller shutter doors and areas for the storage of waste and the packaged sewerage treatment plant. However, given the separation to the residential properties, the screening and the overall nature of the proposals, it is not considered that the business activities and specific siting and details in the application will cause material harm to the amenities of the neighbours at Putham.

The semi-detached cottages at the end of Popery Lane are the other properties that are also close to the access of the Shearwell site. While the agricultural building will come within a field of these properties, and the yard approximately 170m from their curtilages, it is not considered that the use of the building and yard for agricultural purposes will so affect their amenities that a refusal could be justified on these grounds.

In terms of traffic movements, these semi-detached properties are visible from Popery Lane and the provision of the second access, which should accommodate the majority of

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the commercial vehicles, may reduce the traffic passing their properties, despite the overall increase in traffic resulting from the proposed enlarged facilities, if permitted.

The new access track from the B3224 does not pass any residential properties and it is not considered that the use of the track by vehicles will materially affect the residential amenities of the properties at Putham.

In conclusion, while it is acknowledged that if the application is permitted there will be more activity, buildings, an enlarged car park and a new access drive, because of the siting and relationship to adjoining properties it is not considered that there will a material impact on the residential amenities of neighbours.

#### **Lighting**

The prevention of light pollution, especially in the open countryside, is an important planning consideration within the National Park.

Policy LNC2 in respect of lighting explains that:

Applications for development which include external lighting will not be permitted where:

- i. The lighting scheme proposed is excessive to achieve its purpose;
- ii. There would be sky glow, light spillage from the site or unacceptable glare;
- iii. There would be an adverse impact on local amenity, landscape, wildlife or the historic environment of the National Park.

The car park has one light that the applicant considers is suitable. The proposals do not involve any further external lights.

The proposals incorporate design features to assist with the prevention of light spillage from the site such as the internal specification of lights to the barn and solid doors. In respect of the business building there are no rooflights and blackout blinds are proposed to the windows which the applicant says will be used after the hours of darkness.

The physical measures are considered to be acceptable in this case to help ensure that the spill of lighting from the site is minimised. Further external lighting can be controlled through the addition of a condition in any permission. What cannot be so easily controlled through the planning process are the activities of individuals such as remembering to close a door or pull down a blind. However, the application incorporates appropriate physical measures, minimises the external lights and the applicant has indicated that work practices will be adopted to help ensure that light spillage is minimised. While the latter cannot be guaranteed, the measures proposed are considered to be the best achievable and meet the requirements of Policy LNC1.

#### **Ecology**

The application papers include an ecology report which sets out recommendations. The National Park Conservation Adviser (wildlife) is satisfied that the proposals will have no material impact on wildlife providing the recommendations of the report are followed. Indeed the proposals include much longer sections of new hedgebank than will be lost and therefore there is the potential not only to compensate but to improve the potential habitats on the site.

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#### **Agricultural justification**

The application site presently contains two agricultural buildings; a substantial part of the south-east section of main building and the free standing storage building. These provide a total floorspace of approximately 1,749sqm. Both would be lost to agricultural use as part of the application proposals.

A replacement agricultural building with a total floorspace of approximately 1,883sqm is proposed.

The application site is surrounded by grazing land predominately in use for sheep. The land at Putham amounts to approximately 64 acres and the site is farmed in conjunction with the farmland and buildings and Lower House Farm which amounts to approximately 141 acres. The two areas of farm land are close by but not contiguous.

The agent has submitted an analysis of stocking rates and building sizes to justify the need for the agricultural building proposed. These papers show, having regard to stocking rates, agricultural floorspace requirements and land size, that there is a need for the application agricultural building. The much larger farm building is proposed on the smaller agricultural land holding.

The argument is also raised that there is a need for an agricultural building on the Shearwell site to not only farm this land but also to be able to trial and demonstrate products.

Officers have sought independent advice on the agricultural justification for the size and location of the building proposed, the relationship between the two farm units and the case for this size of building on the Putham Farm site. Officers will be able to update the Committee when this information is available.

#### **Excavated Material Assessment**

The application proposals include details of how the excavated materials will be dealt with. The car park and the agricultural building were they to be permitted and undertaken would produce large amounts of spoil. Topsoil is proposed to be spread in the field to the north-west and it is considered that the final appearance will have an acceptable impact on the wider landscape.

There is extensive use of the resulting spoil in the form of new hedgebanks, along the proposed access drive, to the west of the business building, in the yard and to the boundary of the yard in to the south-west corner of the site, as well as with hedgebanks to the south of the new agricultural building.

These proposals will utilise a substantial quantity of the material on the site in a way that is acceptable in landscaping terms, provides new habitats and will form structural planting and features appropriate to the area.

There are also two separate applications to spread material on sites elsewhere; one at the farm at Armoor Lane and the other on a track at Goosemoor. Both these applications are subject to separate considerations and were they not to be acceptable alternative off site means of disposals would need to be arranged by the applicant.



### **Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage**

It is not considered that the site is prone to flood risk given the location and surrounding agricultural land; and the Environment Agency identify the area in the lowest flood risk category. The Environment Agency has asked for the measures set out in the consultant's report to be the subject of conditions to ensure they are implemented as part of any development.

The application papers set out proposals to address surface water drainage. At the present time there is a relatively simple system of ditches that leads to water being culverted and piped into a nearby area of woodland. The application seeks to upgrade the system and provide a series of soakaways to address water run-off from the proposed agricultural building and French drains alongside the access track.

The Environment Agency comments that "it is pleasing to see sustainable drainage methods (SUDS) used to manage surface water arising from the development particularly the French drains along the access road and the soakaways". The Environment Agency has sought further clarification on whether the soakaways have been sized to meet a calculation on critical storm duration as well as information on infiltration speed which may need testing.

The application also includes details on the packaged treatment system which is proposed in the south-eastern yard of the site which will serve the business building and replace the septic tank in the field to the east. The Environment Agency has been consulted on the details of this element of the proposals and their views are awaited.

The plans show that the system of drainage from and through the south-eastern yard will be improved to minimise the possibility of run-off draining towards the properties at Putham.

It is considered that the treatment plant will have a material impact upon the residents of Putham. The plant is separated from these houses, substantially underground and will meet modern standards.

To conclude on this issue, subject to the final clearance of the Environment Agency on the outstanding issues, it is considered that these aspects of the proposals are acceptable.

### **Other Planning Issues**

One resident has raised the issue of a planning and community gain that could come from the proposed development and highlights that a contribution could be made to the undergrounding of cables in Cutcombe. The Authority has not adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy and the requirements of any Section 106 Agreement and/or related payments are required to be directly related to the development in hand. In this case there are no off site works that are required to facilitate the delivery of the development and therefore it is not considered that there is a case or policy requirement for any commuted sum to be provided as part of the development.

The Architectural Liaison Officer at Somerset and Avon Police has made a series of suggestions to assist with crime prevention. It is acknowledged that the site lies within a very low crime area. It will be possible to include a thorn mix in the planting around the site and the additional planting to the banks adjoining the proposed business building will increase the potential security of the site.

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While increased external lighting may increase the potential security of the site there are other planning implications which are considered to carry greater weight and link to National Park purposes.

All the matters have been raised with the agent and he is conscious of the need to ensure that the site is safe and secure. It has been explained that measures will be put in place and the applicant intends to discuss these as necessary with the Police Liaison Officer rather than setting them out publicly in the application papers.

Having regard to the rural nature of the site and the natural security of the car park from the front of the building and other measures which can be put in place without the need for planning permission, it is considered that the issue of crime prevention has been addressed acceptably in this case.

#### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

This application proposes substantial development which needs very careful consideration. This is an initial report that explains the proposals, summaries the consultation responses and representations and begins to highlight those issues which have been clarified and those which require further information and consideration. Such issues such as highways, drainage, ecology, historic environment have no technical objections from specialist consultees, whilst further analysis is being undertaken on the landscape impacts following the submission of an expanded Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Information has also been sought on the agricultural justification and the Environment Agency is due to consider the details of the package treatment system.

This point in time allows the Committee to familiarise themselves with the details of the application. There are substantial and detailed objections from some local residents and there is also support for the application from Cutcombe Parish Council, other local businesses and the Economic Development Section at West Somerset Council.

The site lies in open countryside and the application seeks permission for substantial works in the form of additional business floorspace, car park extension, replacement agricultural building and new access drive.

The Authority will need to assess whether this proposal is compatible with National Park purposes and other policies in the Development Plan, having regard to the advice in the NPPF on sustainable development and other planning matters.

The economic and employment benefits to the National Park are material planning considerations; however, if there is conflict between planning issues compliance with National Park purposes is the overriding planning consideration.

The applicant argues that this is a sustainable location to expand this established business, that there are close links with the land requiring a farm location and the works can be accommodated in the landscape without harm, such that the proposals comply with Policy E2 which allows extensions to business premises in the countryside.

Objectors argue that the sheer scale of the proposals mean there is a fundamental objection in principle to the expansion of a business use on this National Park site and that the impact of the activities is not compatible with this open countryside location. It is argued that now is the time to relocate the business to a more sustainable site in a nearby location.

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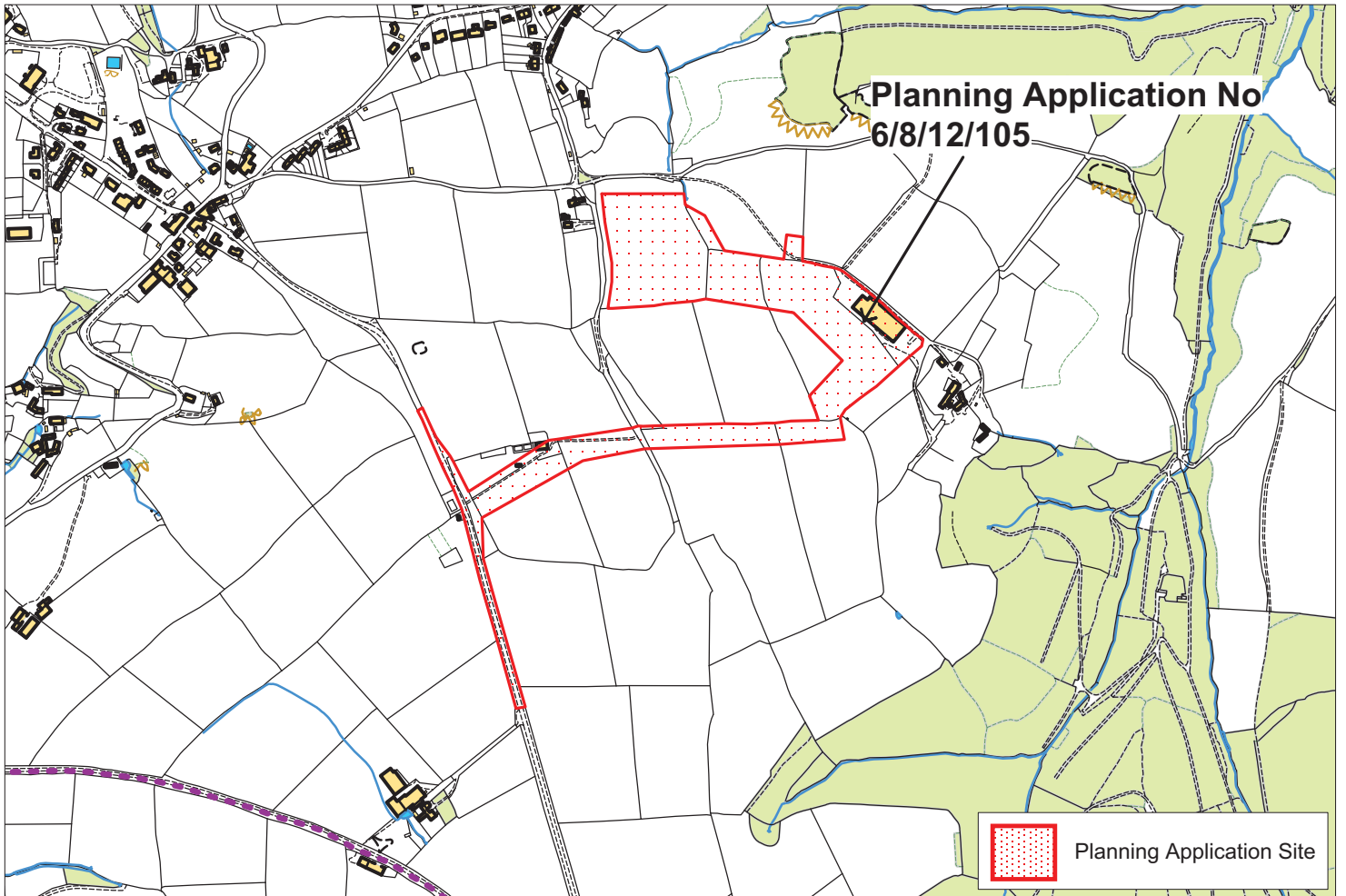
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The Committee will need to consider all these planning issues and it is recommended that the application is deferred for a Committee Site visit. This will assist Members to understand the potential impacts of the proposals, receive further advice on the landscape and other outstanding matters before bringing a further report back to a future Planning Committee Meeting.

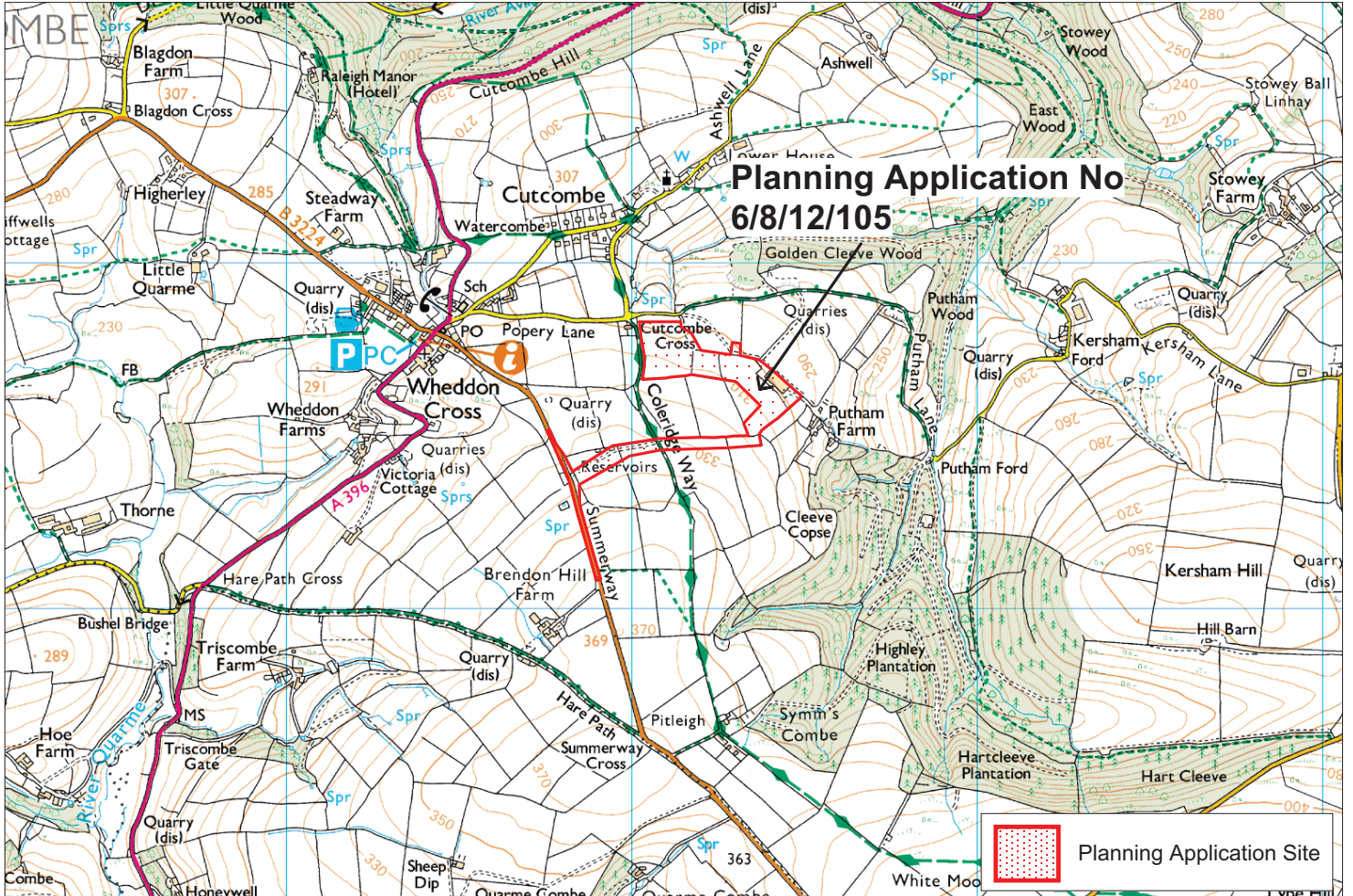
#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the application be DEFERRED for a Committee Site Visit. The provisional date for a site visit is Friday 14 September; other potential opportunities for a site visit would be either Monday 17 September or the afternoon of Tuesday 18 September.



Site Map  
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Overview Map  
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