

9. ACHIEVING ENJOYMENT FOR ALL

Objective 8. *To provide opportunities for people from all backgrounds and abilities, including young people and new audiences, to learn about and enjoy Exmoor National Park, leading to a greater understanding of Exmoor and its way of life.*

Objective 9. *To maintain and improve the recreational opportunities in the National Park particularly the rights of way network, access to open country, other quiet and active recreation based on Exmoor's special qualities; and ensure that opportunities for recreation can be enjoyed by people from all backgrounds and of all abilities*

Objective 13. *To improve the sustainability, resilience and self-sufficiency of the National Park's settlements by supporting the retention, provision of, and access to community services and facilities.*

RECREATION AND TOURISM

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

9.1. Recreation, tourism and environmental education developments provide opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of Exmoor National Park. Proposals for such developments will be supported where facilities and activities accord with the principles of sustainable tourism. The policies in this section will relate to all developments that help to increase the awareness of the understanding and public enjoyment of Exmoor National Park and its special qualities; this reflects the second statutory purpose of National Parks.

NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

- 9.2. In terms of sustainable recreation and tourism development the national policy guidance³⁹⁰ clearly demonstrates that such developments should be supported where they would have environmental, social and economic benefits to the area including for environmental conservation, rural businesses, visitors, and local communities. Such development includes the expansion of existing businesses in appropriate locations, where this will not compromise the National Park's special qualities, and recognising that tourism and recreation development may meet identified needs that are not provided by existing settlement facilities, and provide benefits for the education, health and well-being of local communities. The government published six key challenges³⁹¹ that should be addressed to ensure tourism is sustainable in a time of climate change (see CC-S1 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation).
- 9.3. The National Parks Circular³⁹² supports the aims of the NPPF and recommends that National Park Authorities continue to create a positive environment for sustaining rural businesses and developing future businesses appropriate to the high quality environment of the National Park, including those which capitalise on access, recreation and tourism. It encourages the identification and promotion of new access and recreational activities and ways of delivering them – recognising that not all forms of such activity are compatible and may need to be excluded if there are adverse impacts on the National Park's special qualities and people's enjoyment of them.
- 9.4. Where irreconcilable conflicts exist between conservation and public enjoyment then conservation interest should take priority - known as the 'Sandford Principle' (see policy GP1). However, such irreconcilable conflicts very rarely occur in the National Park.
- 9.5. The National Park Authority will continue to support and work in partnership with others to help deliver the priorities for tourism identified through the Exmoor Tourism Partnership and the National Park Circular.

³⁹⁰ National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG) 2012

³⁹¹ Sustainable Tourism in England – A framework for action: DCMS 2009. Six challenges include: (i) minimise impact and resource use, (ii) address impact of tourism transport, (iii) improve quality and make holidays accessible to all, (iv) improve the quality of tourism jobs, (v) maintain and enhance community prosperity and quality of life, (vi) reduce seasonality of demand.

³⁹² English National Parks and The Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular (DEFRA) 2010

CONTEXT

- 9.6. Tourism and associated recreation activities are recognised as the main contributors to the Exmoor economy, and the natural environment of the area is acknowledged as being central to the prosperity of the sector. The importance of tourism in Exmoor is expected to continue and increase in the long term; a trend that can be supported through tourism partnerships and appropriate policies³⁹³. It is important to support a year-round tourism economy and increase visitor spend to help sustain essential local services and facilities and the working age population. The significance of the tourism and recreation sector is recognised by local communities and offers the potential to conserve and enhance Exmoor's special qualities, influence rural regeneration, and to retain and re-circulate money locally.
- 9.7. The high quality landscape, wildlife, cultural heritage, and overall tranquillity that Exmoor provides are a major attraction for visitors and underpin the local tourism industry. In 2007 Exmoor National Park became the second English National Park to have been awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas³⁹⁴. This award recognises National Parks which are managing relevant development and activities based on sustainable tourism principles³⁹⁵.
- 9.8. Sustainable tourism is defined by The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas as: *“any form of development, management or tourist activity which ensures the long term protection and preservation of natural, cultural and social resources and contributes in a positive and equitable manner to the economic development and well-being of individuals living, working or staying in protected areas.”* Sustainable tourism contributes towards the delivery of National Park statutory purposes and, if managed correctly, will bring positive experiences to visitors and benefits that will help to maintain Exmoor's natural environment, cultural heritage and communities.

RECREATION & TOURISM CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.9. Policy RT-S1 supports the provision of tourism, recreation and outdoor education developments on Exmoor which encourage the quiet enjoyment and appreciation of the National Park special qualities whilst providing environmental, economic and social benefits. Tourism can bring a number of benefits for local communities including an improved range of services and facilities, and more jobs; whilst greater use of local products and services by tourism businesses can benefit the local economy and the distinctiveness of Exmoor. Impacts on landscape character and tranquillity, through intensity of activity and overall scale will be key considerations in determining whether proposals for recreation and tourism developments are acceptable³⁹⁶.
- 9.10. Tranquillity is one of Exmoor's special qualities; providing an experience of calm in an area protected for its high quality landscapes. It is important for people's health, well-being and improving quality of life; and also significant for Exmoor's economy, as people come here to escape the noise disturbance and visual intrusion experienced in more urban areas³⁹⁷. Some recreational pursuits such as motorised sporting activities and clay-pigeon shooting grounds are therefore considered unacceptable in the National Park as they have the potential to disturb the quiet enjoyment of others through generating a level of manmade noise disturbance that may be sustained for significant periods of the day, throughout the year (CC-S5 Pollution).
- 9.11. Policy RT-S1 and the associated development management policies (RT-D1 – RT-D9) provide scope to increase the diversity of visitor accommodation for potential visitors to Exmoor. This approach aims to build upon the tourism role of the towns and villages in the National Park and to provide farm diversification opportunities (SE-S3 Business Development in the Open Countryside).

³⁹³ Exmoor National Park Employment Land Review

³⁹⁴ Awarded by the Europarc Federation

³⁹⁵ <http://www.european-charter.org/become-a-charter-area/charter-principles>

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas – underlying principles

³⁹⁶ Beyond the picturesque – Principles for sustainable tourism in National Parks and AONBs: The Countryside Agency 2004

- 9.12. Tourism surveys³⁹⁸ are undertaken annually for the National Park and Greater Exmoor area. Survey data indicates that the length of stay increased in the non-serviced sector as the number of visitor days rose but number of visitors decreased; whereas the serviced accommodation experienced an increase in the number of short-breaks. There appears to be adequate capacity in terms of occupancy for both sectors; however occupancy levels increase during the main summer season (July-September) to between 80-90% for non-serviced accommodation. Visitor numbers can lead to additional pressures on natural resources such as water, although there are currently no issues of over-abstraction proposals should be mindful of water conservation and the requirements of policy CC-D3 Water Conservation.
- 9.13. The natural environment of Exmoor lends itself to certain outdoor recreation activities that rely on natural features and is ideally suited to quiet recreation pursuits including walking, cycling, and horse-riding that utilise the road network, rights of way and open access land. The actual and potential recreational value of Exmoor is important for residents and for those who visit the National Park; and has become an important location for international and national outdoor events. Water-based recreation is also popular in some areas of the National Park including canoeing and fishing. Rivers are important landscape features in the National Park and inform landscape character, and Wimbleball Lake (a man-made reservoir) has become a significant feature of the Haddeo landscape character area.
- 9.14. Policies RT-S1 and RT-D10 – RT-S2 aim to ensure that the use or intensity of sports and recreational activities should be compatible with Exmoor's rights of way, natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and will not result in cumulative developments that are likely to adversely affect these qualities, impinge on tranquillity and the enjoyment of the special qualities in an area. Opportunities to enhance the access network and green infrastructure provision (CE-S3 Green Infrastructure) through path improvements and new linkages, including across the National Park boundary, are encouraged. This will be particularly sought where development proposals can mitigate potential impacts on the access network (RT-D12 Access Land and Rights of Way).
- 9.15. Exmoor also provides opportunities for learning through a number of residential environmental education facilities used by schools across the country and managed by a number of public and private organisations. Most environmental education facilities have converted and changed the use of existing buildings and provide opportunities to reach a wide range of young people to encourage a deeper understanding and appreciation of Exmoor National Park and the benefits of outdoor recreation. Proposals which aim to provide these opportunities will be encouraged through the conversion or change of use of existing buildings in accessible locations in accordance with policy HC-S8 Residential Institutions.
- 9.16. The development of sites for recreation and tourism development on Exmoor should be small-scale in keeping with the pattern of development and conservation of the natural environment and cultural heritage of the National Park.
- 9.17. Proposals should be able to demonstrate that developments can be accessed safely and do not generate traffic levels that would have implications for the capacity of the access road and safety of road users. During the peak summer months traffic levels can rise considerably as many visitors to Exmoor choose to travel by car; this can lead to congestion in popular destinations. Where possible, proposals should be accessible by more sustainable modes of travel – this will be expected to be demonstrated through a travel plan if significant traffic movements are likely to be generated (AC-S1 Sustainable Transport and AC-D1 Transport and Accessibility Requirements for Development).
- 9.18. The overwhelming majority of recreation and tourism developments that have been granted permission have related to changes of use or conversions rather than for new buildings, and this approach will continue to be encouraged. Buildings that have been converted have varied in type but a large number of the proposals have sought to bring farm buildings and other vacant premises back into active and beneficial use - highlighting the importance of existing buildings as a resource. The reuse of existing buildings and premises represents an appropriate and sustainable basis as a means by which sustainable development can be achieved within the National Park where compatible with the heritage value of the buildings and any existing wildlife

³⁹⁸ STEAM reports are produced for the National Park Authority by GTS (UK) Ltd and provide a measurement of tourism at the local level from the supply side.

interest (CE-S5 Principles for the Re-use of Traditional Buildings and CE-S6 Principles for the Re-use of Non-Traditional Buildings).

- 9.19. On Exmoor a number of traditional farmsteads have converted buildings into holiday lets as part of a farm diversification scheme (policy CE-S5). There are very few examples where the conversion of redundant non-traditional (modern) farm buildings to tourism, recreation or education uses has occurred. This is due to the fabrication and structural limitations of such buildings which are often not suitable for such uses through conversion or change of use. However where traditional buildings are either not available or suitable, due to their historic or biodiversity interest, for the intended recreation or tourism use, the change of use of such non-traditional agricultural buildings may be permitted (Policy CE-S6 and clause 4 of policy SE-S3 Business Development in the Open Countryside).
- 9.20. New-build development for recreation, tourism or environmental/outdoor education facilities will be supported in principle, in sustainable and accessible locations consistent with Policy GP4 Spatial Strategy. Policy GP4 provides the overarching development strategy across the National Park; whilst development management policies RT-D1 – RT-D12 will have specific criteria including location, and appropriate measures relating to setting, scale and impacts. Tourism and recreation development should also have regard to policies CC-S1 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption and CC-D1 Flood Risk in terms of their design, siting and location.

RT-S1 RECREATION AND TOURISM

- 1. Opportunities to provide a high quality visitor experience on Exmoor through a diverse range of recreation, tourism and environmental education facilities will be encouraged, where it can be demonstrated that proposals for such development conform to the following principles:**
 - a) They underpin the quiet enjoyment of the National Park. Proposals that actively enhance the understanding and enjoyment of Exmoor's special qualities will be favourably considered.**
 - b) They do not adversely affect Exmoor's special qualities, including its wildlife, either individually or cumulatively through harmful levels of activity or use.**
 - c) They contribute towards a sustainable future for Exmoor's local economy and communities.**
 - d) They support the improved health and wellbeing of people living, working and visiting Exmoor through the benefits of recreation (RT-D10) and experience of tranquillity.**
 - e) They ensure appropriate and safe access by the road network and where possible by walking, cycling, horse-riding and public transport. Development that would generate significant transport movements should be accessible by sustainable travel modes set out in a travel plan (AC-S1, AC-D1).**
 - f) They safeguard the existing access network, including public rights of way, and access land; and provide enhancements where opportunities arise (RT-D12).**
 - g) They respond to opportunities to improve the quality and viability of existing recreation and tourism businesses, through appropriate restoration, extension, expansion or diversification (CE-S1, CE-S7).**
 - h) Their location is consistent with policy GP4 and they are of a scale compatible with their location and setting, in accordance with the relevant development management policy considerations for tourism and recreation (policies RT-D1 to RT-D12).**
 - i) They are consistent with the approach set out in policies RT-D1 to RT-D12 and the principles set out in policies CE-S5 and CE-S6 for the re-use of existing traditional and non-traditional buildings.**

SERVICED ACCOMMODATION

CONTEXT

- 9.21. Serviced accommodation is more generally referred to as Bed & Breakfast (B&B) establishments, guesthouses and hotels and forms a considerable proportion of the visitor accommodation available in the National Park. The national Quality in Tourism³⁹⁹ rating and classification of accommodation for VisitEngland states that hotel accommodation has a minimum of five letting bedrooms, is licensed and offers dinner – all bedrooms are en-suite or have a private bathroom. The proprietor or staff should be available during the day and evening (as a minimum) to receive guests and provide services⁴⁰⁰. Guest house accommodation is generally smaller than hotels with a less structured service providing for more than six paying guests and run on a more commercial basis than a B&B – more services such as dinner are provided by staff as well as the owner. Where the primary use of the property is for guest accommodation such as guesthouses and hotels – the use class is C1.
- 9.22. If the primary use of a building is a private dwelling house the use class is C3 and B&B accommodation may be provided. B&B accommodation is run by the owner with more of a family home feel and approach. As B&B accommodation is generally ancillary to the primary residential use of the dwelling, planning permission for a material change of use is only required if the essential residential nature of the property has changed – i.e. the guest accommodation ceases to be ancillary. Other factors such as the suitability of parking provision and impact upon neighbours' amenity are also likely to influence a decision about whether a material change of use is necessary.
- 9.23. Many hotels and guesthouses on Exmoor have historic provenance; built primarily for the purpose of providing guest accommodation. This is particularly relevant in locations such as Lynton & Lynmouth that became popular as a visitor destination in the 19th century, where a number of hotels were established from that time to meet demand. Other hotels and guesthouses across Exmoor were centred on the popularity of the area for field sports.
- 9.24. Hotels and guesthouses continue to be established in the National Park and contribute towards providing a unique experience for visitors to Exmoor. Extensive consultation highlighted that hotels and guesthouses, provided through changing the use and converting existing buildings, was suitable in many locations across the National Park. Existing buildings provide an opportunity for new serviced accommodation without the need for building new premises, which are considered to be less appropriate given the National Park designation and the potential scale of such development. The occupancy evidence available does not appear to support a need for new-build accommodation, however small scale extensions to existing serviced accommodation premises may enable the improvement to the overall quality and/or capacity over the longer term. For some proprietors owning and running a hotel or guesthouse is a lifestyle choice and, although they may operate at full business capacity during the peak season, they may not be at full occupancy, as the majority are micro-businesses employing no additional staff⁴⁰¹.

SERVICED ACCOMMODATION CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.25. The following policy provides for new serviced accommodation through the change of use of existing buildings where it should not result in significant alteration or extension and should have regard to cultural heritage policies (CE-S4 and CE-D3) and the principles for the conversion or structural alteration of traditional buildings policy (CE-S7). Any extension to existing premises should be subservient to the existing building/complex and appropriate in terms of materials, scale and massing with the host building (CE-S7). Extensions for staff accommodation should have regard to policy RT-D2 Staff Accommodation.
- 9.26. Following consultation⁴⁰², it is considered that there should be flexibility to enable new hotels and guesthouses to come forward, particularly those created from an existing residential use. Where permission is granted for a residential dwelling (use class C3) to change use to serviced accommodation under this policy (RT-D1) provision will be made by attaching a condition, to

³⁹⁹ Quality in Tourism (QiT) - the assessment service provided for VisitEngland. <http://www.qualityintourism.com/asp/letsgetassessed.asp>

⁴⁰⁰ VisitEngland Hotel Accommodation – Quality Standard 2011

⁴⁰¹ Exmoor National Park State of Tourism Report 2008 (2008 Survey of Exmoor Tourism Businesses)

⁴⁰² Your Future Exmoor consultation events and topic group meeting 2010

enable the use to revert to a dwelling house use in the future. In this particular situation, any extension to increase the floorspace of the hotel/guesthouse should not exceed 35% of the original floorspace of the property, in accordance with HC-D13 Residential Extensions – a condition will be attached in the granting of any permission to remove permitted development rights to prevent further extension when the use reverts to a dwelling house. If extensions to the hotel/guesthouse exceed the 35% proportion, then the property will not automatically be able to revert back to a dwelling house and proposals for change of use would need to meet the tests set out in RT-D3 Safeguarding Serviced Accommodation.

RT-D1 SERVICED ACCOMMODATION

- 1. Proposals for the provision of new serviced accommodation through the appropriate change of use and conversion of existing traditional buildings will be permitted where all of the following are met:**
 - a) the traditional character, appearance and setting of the building or building group is conserved or enhanced (CE-S4, CE-D3, CE-S5); and**
 - b) the building or building group is capable of conversion to serviced accommodation and any other ancillary requirements without significant alteration or extension (CE-S5); and**
 - c) the design layout of access and parking requirements are compatible with landscape character and built heritage (AC-S3); and**
 - d) the intensity of use does not compromise local amenity; and**
 - e) traffic generation can be accommodated by the local road network without adversely affecting road safety and capacity.**
- 2. Small scale extensions which are subordinate to existing serviced accommodation will be permitted in accordance with policy CE-S7 to improve the quality or capacity of the accommodation.**
- 3. In relation to proposals that seek a change of use from a residential dwelling (use class C3) to serviced accommodation (use class C1) a condition will be attached to a permission to enable the property to be used either as C1 Hotels or C3 Dwellings.**

STAFF ACCOMMODATION

CONTEXT

- 9.27. Some serviced accommodation businesses including hostels, may require staff accommodation in certain situations e.g. where they need to meet or maintain a certain quality standard for 24 hour service, or where staff are not employed locally.
- 9.28. Applicants should provide evidence to support any application for staff accommodation to show that alternative accommodation cannot be found in the local area, or be provided within the hotel premises. In circumstances where additional staff accommodation is needed, it should be through the reuse of existing buildings on the premises, or where this is not possible, a small-scale extension that is subordinate to the existing property could be provided. Independent, free-standing new build premises will not be permitted for such purposes. There will be no opportunities for successive conversions or extensions for the purposes of staff accommodation, although staff accommodation that is no longer required may be permitted to change to extended guest accommodation, a non-serviced holiday let accommodation unit, or a dwelling to meet local affordable housing need.

RT-D2 STAFF ACCOMMODATION

1. Proposals for staff accommodation will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that such accommodation is not available in the locality or cannot be provided within the existing hotel, guesthouse or hostel. Where this need cannot be met provision for staff accommodation will be permitted through:
 - a) the change of use and conversion of existing buildings that are within the curtilage in accordance with policies CE-S5, CE-S6 and CE-S4; or where this is not possible;
 - b) a small-scale extension to the hotel or guesthouse as a self-contained annexe.
2. Staff accommodation will be tied through a condition or planning obligation to the existing premises, to ensure that it cannot be sold separately or occupied as a separate accommodation unit – other than for staff or owners.
3. Where there is evidence that the need for staff/owner accommodation is no longer required, it shall only be replaced by: a local occupancy tie to meet local affordable housing needs (HC-S1); non-serviced holiday-let (RT-D4); or extension of guest accommodation. No further extension will be permitted for staff accommodation on premises where the previous staff accommodation has been lost to other uses.

SAFEGUARDING SERVICED ACCOMMODATION**CONTEXT**

9.29. Although some new hotels and guesthouses have been permitted through the change of use of existing buildings in recent years, a larger number have been lost to residential use, through demonstrating that the business could not be made viable in the longer term. It is important, where ever possible, that existing serviced accommodation is safeguarded over the long term as in many villages and in the open countryside they not only provide an economic benefit, but also a social function, for example: by having a public bar, function room or skittle alley. For the purposes of safeguarding serviced accommodation this policy will also apply to Youth Hostels. Where such a business is lost, it can have both economic and social implications for the local community. Furthermore, once lost, experience shows that they are unlikely to be replaced.

CHANGE OF USE CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.30. Any material change of use from serviced accommodation should in the first instance be to another business/employment use within the existing building – including residential institutions such as nursing homes (policy HC-S8).
- 9.31. If permission is granted for a residential dwelling to change use to serviced accommodation in accordance with Policy RT-D1 of this Local Plan there are provisions to then enable the property to revert back to residential use with no requirement for planning permission (see paragraph 9.26). It is hoped that this policy approach will encourage new hotels and guesthouses to continue to come forward, without the uncertainty of not being able to revert back to residential in the future if the venture is unsuccessful.
- 9.32. In certain circumstances, where a change of use is sought from an existing hotel or guesthouse (C1 use) to residential (C3 use), it is considered that a flexible approach may be beneficial where the hotel/guesthouse could revert to residential use as a principal residence home (policy HC-S5) without having to demonstrate that the existing serviced accommodation use cannot be continued or made viable by way of marketing. In such cases, the applicant will need to satisfy all of the tests below and provide evidence to demonstrate that the property:
- a) Was a single unit built for residential use and either existed as residential use on 1st July 1948 (when the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act was introduced) or was built as a residential property after this date - and can easily revert to a single residential unit providing a satisfactory living environment.

- b) Any alterations and/or extensions to the property since its hotel/guesthouse use is commercial have not exceeded would not meet the details of policy HC-D13 Residential Extensions.
 - c) No community service or facility is provided by the premises – including public bar. The National Park Authority will require evidence of whether the current owner has closed such facilities prior to making an application for the change of use.
- 9.33. If all of these tests are met it is considered that these premises can revert to residential use without having to demonstrate that the existing serviced accommodation use is unviable. In the interests of ensuring flexibility and the needs of future tourism trends it is considered that those hotels/guesthouses that meet the tests to revert to a principal residence home, will have conditions attached to their planning permission to enable the use of their property to be principal home (policy HC-S5) or serviced accommodation if the property remains as a single unit.
- 9.34. Where a change of use other than business/employment use is sought, or the property does not meet the tests outlined in paragraph 9.32 above (clause 1b) of policy RT-D3), the National Park Authority will require the hotel or guesthouse to demonstrate that the business cannot be continued or made viable. Evidence will be required to support such proposals and will include details of business performance and professional management, evidence of attempts to save the business, and proof of marketing. Evidence of marketing required to support the proposal should include:
- a) The property has been marketed for sale at a reasonable value that is consistent with its recent trading performance (or hotel market value if trading has ceased) for a period not less than 12 months. The guide price should reflect the potential earnings of the business and the cost of essential works;
 - b) Advertisement on site, in local newspapers, estate/property agents and, or otherwise as requested by the National Park Authority;
 - c) Re-advertising the premises (as above) at three month intervals if they fail to succeed in finding a willing buyer/occupier in the first three months of marketing;
 - d) The owner/applicant to supply the National Park Authority with the advertisement details including sales particulars with a guide price to reflect the market value of the hotel/guesthouse;
 - e) The owner/applicant to have provided the National Park Authority with written evidence of all enquiries received and the reasons why potential buyers/occupiers found the hotel/guesthouse to be unsuitable; and
 - f) To provide impartial evidence regarding viability and marketing of the property. An independent valuation of the property will be required from the District Valuation Office to inform the decision-making process.
- 9.35. The most favourable approach would be to diversify the business through the partial change of use of the building to non-serviced accommodation apartments (RT-D4), another employment use, community service/facility, or to meet local housing needs. A full change of use will be considered where the partial change of use would not be possible or feasible in terms of viability or other material planning considerations.
- 9.36. Additionally, there may be an opportunity to increase the range of accommodation on the site through provision of small scale alternative camping accommodation (see RT-D9 Alternative Camping Accommodation).
- 9.37. Where an applicant is seeking a change of use from serviced accommodation to residential, proposals should reflect the requirements set out in the policy below, in accordance with the housing policies in Section 7 Thriving Communities For clause 3 of Policy RT-D3, whether a building is able to accommodate more than one dwelling unit, will be judged on the basis of a maximum net internal floorspace of 90 square metres or less.

RT-D3 SAFEGUARDING SERVICED ACCOMMODATION

- 1. Development proposals that would involve the loss of existing serviced accommodation will only be permitted where:**
 - a) Other business/employment uses are to be created in the existing building; or**
 - b) The use can change to a residential principal residence dwelling (HC-S5) where evidence clearly demonstrates that:**
 - i) the use was formerly a single residential dwelling on 1st July 1948 or built as a single residential dwelling subsequently; and**
 - ii) there has been no excessive alteration or extension; and**
 - iii) the existing use does not provide an additional community service or function.**
- 2. For all other proposals relating to the change of use of serviced accommodation:**
 - a) It can be demonstrated that the current use of the building as serviced accommodation cannot be continued or made viable in the longer term and the property has been marketed as a going concern at a reasonable value for a minimum period of 12 months.**
 - b) In respect of 2.a), an independent valuation of the building will be required. Proposals which provide opportunities for the partial change of use of the building /complex that supplements the existing serviced accommodation will be favoured over full change of use where it is compatible with the cultural heritage of the existing building (CE-S4), local character and amenity. Changes that will be considered acceptable in principle include:**
 - i) Change of use to self-catering apartments (policy RT-D4).**
 - ii) Change of use to provide community services or facilities (HC-S7).**
 - iii) A mixed use development, based on the uses listed above including employment use.**
 - iv) Change of use to residential dwellings should meet the tests in clause 3 below.**
- 3. For hotels that are able to accommodate more than one dwelling unit, the proposal must address an identified local housing need and be affordable with occupation restricted to local people in perpetuity, unless it can clearly and robustly demonstrate to the satisfaction of the National Park Authority that:**
 - a) it is not financially viable, although the intention will still be to maximise the proportion of affordable homes within viability constraints (in accordance with clauses 3, 5 and 6 of policy HC-D1); or**
 - b) it would provide more affordable homes than are needed in the parish and the adjacent parishes, now and in the near future (in accordance with the criteria under clause 7 of policy HC-D1).**

NON-SERVICED ACCOMMODATION

CONTEXT

- 9.38. Non-serviced or self-catering accommodation is a popular form of visitor accommodation that provides a wide range of accommodation choice for visitors to the National Park including holiday cottages (for static caravan and chalet developments – see policy RT-D8). However this form of accommodation has also caused local issues where a high percentage of existing homes are used as holiday cottages – this has particularly affected some popular holiday destinations such as Lynton & Lynmouth and smaller settlements where the impact of a relatively small number of holiday cottages can significantly affect the vitality of the local community.
- 9.39. The local planning authority cannot directly control or influence the use of existing open market homes as holiday cottages although it is recognised that in some areas this would be particularly supported by local communities. Planning can only control the change of use and conversion of existing buildings to holiday accommodation or the development of new units – however within the National Park, given the number of self-catering premises already available and the stock of existing buildings with capacity for change of use or conversion, it is considered that new build holiday-let accommodation is not appropriate in terms of the statutory designation of the National Park.
- 9.40. In circumstances where self-catering complexes (a property where there is more than one holiday let unit with a holiday occupancy condition) may wish to expand, the creation of additional units and the small scale extension of existing units, through the conversion of existing buildings, may be allowed to improve the capacity and/or quality of existing accommodation – where this will not detrimentally affect the character or historic interest of the building(s). Self-catering complexes may also have the capacity to diversify the type of accommodation they offer through provision of alternative forms of accommodation (see RT-D9 Alternative Camping Accommodation). Extension of existing holiday-let units or diversification can increase non-serviced accommodation capacity during the main tourist season where availability is at its lowest⁴⁰³.
- 9.41. The change of use and conversion of existing buildings to holiday let accommodation will be subject to CE-S5 and CE-S6 which provide principles for the conversion and alteration of buildings and will only be permitted where it relates to: RT-D3 Safeguarding Serviced Accommodation in terms of the partial/full change of use of a hotel that has demonstrated that it cannot be made viable or continued in the longer term; the re-use of redundant buildings within hotel premises; or the diversification of a rural land-based business (para. 8.35). Proposals should also ensure that there is adequate utility provision close by including adequate access, and where the capacity of the local road network is not compromised.
- 9.42. The conversion of traditional farm buildings to holiday lets is a popular form of farm diversification. These rural buildings have historic significance, interest and sensitivity; therefore it is important that the whole farmstead complex of traditional buildings is not converted to ensure the retention of some of the original vernacular form and character of these traditional buildings – this will be decided on a case by case basis. This approach also enables space for ancillary storage, utility, or continuing agricultural use, and avoids the pressure for additional new build development in the future.
- 9.43. The evidence for occupancy levels is limited for this type of accommodation within the National Park. However policies in this Local Plan enable flexibility regarding ongoing use of such accommodation over the long term, not only through extension and diversification, but through change of use and variation of occupancy. Therefore if a holiday-let is no longer needed or viable according to changing circumstances, the use could be changed to a business or community use where it meets the requirements of the relevant policies. Holiday-lets fall within the same use class as a dwelling house, but the occupancy is controlled by condition so that it cannot be permanently occupied by a single person or household – permission to change the occupancy to housing that meets local affordable needs or for extended family members may be permitted where it meets the requirements of policy HC-D11 – this policy may also allow proposals to revert the unit to holiday accommodation if required in the future. This flexibility

⁴⁰³ STEAM Report 2010

will help to maximise the use of a unit over the long term to meet the needs of the local economy and community.

- 9.44. Some non-serviced accommodation units may be over 90sqm and in such cases where there is a proposal to change the occupancy to housing that meets local affordable needs, a further condition will be attached to ensure that the property is not sold separately and remains as part of the wider complex or building group.
- 9.45. Conditions will be attached to any planning permission for holiday-let accommodation to limit the occupancy to short let holiday purposes only, so that the property may only be occupied by any person for a period not exceeding 28 days in any calendar year. This ensures that holiday lets are available all year round, rather than seasonally and helps to reduce the seasonality of demand on Exmoor. The conditions will also expect owners to maintain a register of occupants for each calendar year that may be inspected on request to ensure that such accommodation is not being permanently occupied as a dwelling house.

RT-D4 NON-SERVICED ACCOMMODATION

- 1. Proposals for the change of use and conversion of buildings to non-serviced accommodation will be permitted where they:**
 - a) create additional unit(s) on an existing self-catering complex;**
 - b) accord with RT-D3 Safeguarding Serviced Accommodation clause 2b);**
 - c) reuse a redundant building associated with a hotel/guesthouse premises; or**
 - d) relate to the diversification of a rural land-based business.**
- 2. Proposals should also meet the following principles:**
 - a) the character and appearance of the building and its setting is conserved, and where they accord with policies on landscape character, cultural heritage and design (CE-S1, CE-S4, CES5 and CE-S6);**
 - b) in respect of changing the use of traditional farm buildings, the entire range of such buildings within a farmstead, will not be permitted to be converted to protect the historic character and significance of the buildings collectively;**
 - c) the design and layout of access and parking requirements are compatible with landscape character and built heritage, and the local road network has capacity to service the accommodation without adversely affecting road safety (AC-D1, AC-S3); and**
 - d) there are no adverse impacts on tranquillity and local amenity.**
- 3. Small scale extensions and alterations will be permitted to improve the quality and viability of existing non-serviced accommodation; where it would not adversely affect the historic character of the existing building (CE-S7). No new build units of holiday-let accommodation will be permitted.**
- 4. Where a non-serviced accommodation unit is no longer needed or viable a proposal to replace the holiday occupancy condition of the unit with an agreement limiting occupancy to meet a local affordable need for housing or housing for extended families will be considered in accordance with policy HC-D11. In respect of changes to business or community use, proposals should accord with the relevant policies in the plan.**

TENTED CAMP SITES

CONTEXT

- 9.46. Tented camp sites and camping barns offer more affordable forms of visitor accommodation in the National Park, providing wider opportunities for people to visit and experience Exmoor.
- 9.47. Camping on tented camp sites remains a popular form of visitor accommodation on Exmoor and is generally seen to be compatible with National Park purposes. There are a number of established small-scale camp sites across the National Park that range in type from backpacker campsites with few or no facilities to more established sites that offer a greater range of facilities such as toilet/shower blocks, laundry rooms, and play areas. Tented camp sites are, for the purposes of this policy (RT-D5), defined as sites where tents are brought on to the site and erected by people staying there; where there is no degree of permanence and with no facilities within tented structures such as toilets, drainage, and water supply.
- 9.48. Site requirements for tented accommodation tend to have less visual impact than touring caravan sites, due to less rigid landscaping requirements and layouts for pitches etc. However, the location, siting, access and layout of such sites will require particular consideration including in terms of visual impact, compatibility with landscape character and wildlife interests, accessibility and local amenity.
- 9.49. In terms of the provision of facilities for campsites, preference will be given to the conversion and change of use of traditional buildings and proposals must comply with policy CE-S5 Principles for the Re-use of Traditional Buildings. Where there are no traditional buildings present or if they are unsuitable in terms of capacity or their wildlife/historic interest, then conversion of non-traditional buildings may be considered with regard to policy CE-S6 Principles for the Re-use of Non-Traditional Buildings. In such cases provision for sewage disposal should accord with policy CC-D6 to ensure that water quality is safeguarded.
- 9.50. Conditions to ensure that the site is only occupied through the main holiday season will help to protect the local environment and to allow site to recover from any intensive camping use through the holiday season. Small scale extensions may be permitted to allow the campsite to improve viability or where appropriate diversify part of the site to alternative camping accommodation (see RT-D9) – environmental enhancement should be demonstrated as part of the proposal including biodiversity enhancements (CE-S2). This may also help vulnerable sites relocate out of sensitive areas including those at risk of flooding (CC-D1 Flood Risk). Where part of a site is relocated the existing area should be reinstated to its former use or included as part of a wider environmental enhancement scheme on the site.

RT-D5 TENTED CAMP SITES

- 1. Proposals for new small-scale tented campsites will be permitted where:**
 - a) They are well related to a named settlement, hamlet or farmstead.**
 - b) They are sensitively sited to ensure there are no adverse impacts on landscape character, visual amenity, or sensitive wildlife species and habitats.**
 - c) There is existing road access, and sufficient road capacity to serve the development.**
 - d) They are not located within an area at risk of flooding (CC-D1)**
- 2. Any facilities that may be required to service the campsite can be provided through the conversion of suitable existing traditional buildings consistent with policy CE-S5 and policy CE-S4 Cultural Heritage. Where such buildings are not suitable or available then the following opportunities may be sought:**
 - a) the conversion of structurally suitable non-traditional buildings that are functionally redundant (CE-S6); or**
 - b) the extension of existing buildings in accordance with the relevant policies in this plan.**
- 3. Opportunities for small extensions to existing campsite areas will be permitted where it does not conflict with principles listed above, and where environmental benefits are included as part of the scheme.**

CAMPING BARNs

CONTEXT

- 9.51. Camping barns are also often referred to as bunkhouses, backpacker accommodation and hostels. They usually provide very basic accommodation and in more isolated locations very few facilities are provided apart from basic shelter; these are often referred to as 'stone tents'. There are very few camping barns on Exmoor, especially those which are available to the wider public – some remote hostels for example are owned by organisations or private charitable trusts. Camping barns include those well-established facilities at Northcombe Farm near Dulverton and Woodadvent Farm near Roadwater, and two Youth Hostels (Exford and Minehead) within the National Park. Opportunities exist for a network of this type of accommodation to be created, particularly close to existing long distance trails such as the South West Coast Path and Two Moors Way.
- 9.52. This form of accommodation can bring redundant traditional farm buildings back into use, whilst allowing the integrity and historic fabric of the building to be preserved; proposals should have regard to the use of traditional materials for the repair and reinstatement of these buildings (see CE-S5 Principles for the Re-use of Traditional Buildings). Where traditional barns are located in a farmstead or building group it is relatively straightforward to access and provide modern services and utilities underground as these will normally be accessible close by; this may allow a broader range of facilities and improved quality of accommodation (e.g. hostel type accommodation) subject to considerations to conserve the historic character of the building.
- 9.53. Isolated barns are important features in the landscape and their original fabric and setting should be retained as significant elements of their built form and their contribution to the wider landscape character; so that even when it has been adapted to a new use the visual appearance remains as an isolated barn. To ensure that the conversion of isolated barns to camping barns does not detrimentally impact on their character, form and setting, no access tracks, parking areas or curtilage should be created. Maintenance of these facilities should be minimal; therefore utility services should only be provided on-site through sustainable measures such as composting toilets, if they can be accommodated discreetly. To ensure isolated camping barns are accessible, they should be located close to the rights of way network or access land.

RT-D6 CAMPING BARNs

- 1. Proposals for the change of use and necessary alteration of a traditional building to a camping barn or hostel accommodation will be permitted where it complements the historic character and appearance of the building, biodiversity interests, and its setting within the landscape in accordance with policies CE-S1, CE-S2, CE-S4 and CE-S5.**
- 2. Where the existing building is in a farmstead or hamlet in close association with an existing dwelling, or in a named settlement:**
 - a) parking and access arrangements should be incorporated within the hamlet/farmstead without detrimentally impacting on landscape character and visual amenity; or**
 - b) in a settlement is consistent with policies AC-D1 and AC-S3; and**
 - c) utility and service supplies will be routed underground (AC-D5).**
- 3. The change of use and conversion of a traditional barn or building in an isolated location to provide basic shelter in a camping barn (stone tent) with limited facilities for walkers, will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:**
 - a) the building can be managed effectively without new access provision;**
 - b) the proposal does not involve alterations to the external fabric and surroundings of the building that would materially affect the character or appearance of the building and its setting;**
 - c) the building is well related to the rights of way network or access land; and**
 - d) any bat and barn owl roosts that may be present are maintained or replaced.**

CERTIFICATED CARAVAN AND TOURING CARAVAN SITES

CONTEXT

- 9.54. Certificated caravan sites are small sites that are reserved exclusively for members of certain caravan and camping organisations. Under planning law these organisations can issue a certificate for these sites to temporarily site up to five touring caravans or motor-homes, without requiring planning permission⁴⁰⁴. They also inspect the sites to ensure that they meet basic requirements such as: a reasonably level site, safe highway access, drinking water, waste disposal and provision of disposal facilities for chemical closets.
- 9.55. Small certificated caravan sites will be encouraged where they are well integrated in the landscape, and avoid site improvements such as hard-standing and utility hook-ups which would require planning permission including changing the of use of the land. These smaller sites will help to ensure that Exmoor continues to offer a diverse range of holiday accommodation which provides farms and other rural enterprises with opportunities for diversification.
- 9.56. The National Park Authority is consulted before any certificate is issued to the landowner and will support proposals that are compatible with landscape and highway requirements and the wider National Park objectives. Proposals should particularly avoid areas at risk of flooding and avoid disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats including otter holts.
- 9.57. New commercial touring caravan sites are considered to be inappropriate within the National Park, due to the significant visual impact they can have on landscape character as a consequence of the degree of landscaping required to enable sites to accommodate the modern requirements of touring caravan parks; including access, parking, level pitches with hard-standing and associated utility and drainage provision. The adverse landscape impact is therefore considerable with or without caravans on the site. Consequently extensions to existing touring caravan sites or the provision for outdoor caravan storage facilities are also considered to be inappropriate in the National Park. Additionally Exmoor's road network has a high proportion of narrow, single track lanes that limits opportunities for such development, as they are generally unsuitable and impractical for towed caravans and large motor-homes to navigate safely.

RT-D7 CERTIFICATED CARAVAN & TOURING CARAVAN SITES

- 1. New certificated caravan sites will be supported in the National Park where:**
 - a) they are well-sited and integrated in the landscape and closely related to existing building groups or settlements, with appropriate landscape screening where necessary;**
 - b) they are in a location where there are no adverse impacts on sensitive wildlife species and habitats;**
 - c) access and parking requirements can be easily accommodated without adversely impacting on landscape character and the historic environment;**
 - d) new permanent buildings, site excavation or other site improvements will not be required; and**
 - e) they are not located in an area at risk of flooding (CC-D1).**
- 2. Proposals for new touring caravan sites, outdoor caravan storage facilities, or extensions to existing touring caravan sites will not be permitted.**

⁴⁰⁴ Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 – First Schedule, paragraph 5.

STATIC CARAVAN SITES

CONTEXT

- 9.58. There are very few static caravan sites found within the National Park. Those that do exist are generally small scale and have operated for a number of years.
- 9.59. Due to their colour, materials, form, uniform layout and permanency, static caravan sites often appear incongruous in the landscape, and can be detrimental to landscape and settlement character. Such forms of development are considered to be inappropriate within the National Park and will therefore be resisted. Opportunities to improve existing sites through reducing their overall visual and environmental impact by appropriate replacement accommodation units will therefore be encouraged. These sites should not be in an area with a high probability of flooding (flood zones 3a and 3b⁴⁰⁵) – see policy CC-D1 Flood Risk.
- 9.60. It is considered that static caravan sites could be replaced by appropriately designed holiday accommodation such as single-storey timber chalets, camping pods, yurts, traditional Romany caravans or similar structures which offer alternative forms of holiday accommodation (policy RT-D9 Alternative Camping Accommodation). The proposals should demonstrate an overall visual and environmental improvement in terms of form, layout, materials, colour and landscaping, in accordance with policies CE-S1 Landscape Character and CC-S7 Design and Sustainable Construction Principles. A reduction in the overall number of units/pitches will be expected where there are three or more static caravans on the site and the restoration of pitches should provide a benefit for wildlife. In terms of new chalet/log cabin holiday accommodation; these structures will only be permitted where they replace units on existing static caravan sites or chalet developments.
- 9.61. All forms of non-serviced/self-catering holiday accommodation will have a seasonal or holiday occupancy condition attached to any permission that may be granted to ensure that the unit(s) can only be occupied for holiday purposes⁴⁰⁶.

RT-D8 STATIC CARAVAN SITES

- 1. Proposals for new static caravan sites and chalet developments for the purposes of holiday accommodation, or the conversion of existing touring caravan sites for such uses, will not be permitted.**
- 2. Development proposals to improve the quality of existing static caravan sites and chalet developments through appropriate replacement forms of holiday accommodation may be permitted where:**
 - a) replacement holiday accommodation is of high quality sustainable design and the materials, colour, form, siting and landscaping positively relate to landscape character (sites with three or more static caravans will be expected to reduce the overall number of units/pitches);**
 - b) there is no intensification of use or activity, and the site is retained as a single business unit;**
 - c) the existing site area is not extended;**
 - d) the relocation of existing pitches to less sensitive areas to provide environmental enhancement is achieved and where the number of pitches is not increased;**
 - e) there is no increase in facilities or services required for the site; and**
 - f) the site is not located in an area with high probability of flooding (CC-D1).**
- 3. New timber chalet or log cabin holiday accommodation will only be permitted where they replace units on existing static caravan sites or chalet developments.**

⁴⁰⁵ Flood zone 3a: comprises land assessed as having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding (>1%) or a 1 in 200 or greater annual probability of flooding from the sea (>0.5%) in any year.

Flood zone 3b: comprises land where water has to flow or be stored in times of flood (functional flood plain) – as identified in the Exmoor and West Somerset Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 (2009).

⁴⁰⁶ Circular 11/95 Use of conditions in planning permission

ALTERNATIVE CAMPING ACCOMMODATION

CONTEXT

- 9.62. Consultation evidence supported a diversity of accommodation provision⁴⁰⁷ in the National Park. Alternative forms of camping accommodation have become more popular, offering a range of different holiday experiences. Enabling the provision of such accommodation may lead to a wider range of visitors to the National Park that benefits the local tourism economy.
- 9.63. This form of accommodation, includes structures which generally are considered to be ‘movable’ or easily dismantled (usually considered under case/planning law as a caravan or tent), however they tend to vary in terms of their materials and form and in some cases are likely to remain ‘on site’ permanently. Examples include timber camping pods, micro-lodges, traditional Romany caravans, shepherd huts, tree-houses, yurts, wigwams and teepees – these structures provide a ‘niche’ form of low-impact visitor accommodation that have limited physical connection to the ground.
- 9.64. The visual appearance in the landscape is one of the most significant impacts that such proposals are likely to have in terms of their arrangement and uniform appearance. However, alternative forms of accommodation can be more sympathetic in terms of colour and materials (e.g. timber) than static or touring caravans and proposals should ensure they are well designed, sensitively sited, and the overall number of structures remains low. The National Park Authority considers that structures can be more effectively screened in the wider landscape, when set against or within mature woodland or well-treed areas. Opportunities for site enhancement through the design and management of the site and associated planting e.g. for screening, will be encouraged (CC-S2 Biodiversity, CE-S3 Green Infrastructure and CE-D2 Green Infrastructure Provision).
- 9.65. Concrete pads or bases for the floor area of these structures are not considered to be acceptable. Timber platforms or decking which can be easily removed from the site, if required, are more aesthetically pleasing and have less impact on the ground surface. Careful consideration should also be given to the design and use of materials used for pathways leading to or between structures in terms of the colour and degree of permanence – light/contrasting colours and uniform paving should be avoided.
- 9.66. To avoid these temporary structures being considered as dwellings or mobile homes within the National Park (and therefore would be considered under more stringent policies of countryside restraint), such structures should provide basic holiday accommodation similar to that described under ‘tented’ camp sites (see policy RT-D5). These holiday accommodation units should have an internal floor space no larger than 25sqm and should only provide basic facilities for sleeping, seating and eating without installation of water services or provision of drainage facilities for washing and WC/showers included. This ensures that such structures do not generate a level of permanence that could increase the degree of landscape impact and site restoration should removal of structures be required. Additional facilities (if not already present) should be provided separately from the accommodation unit, as they are on camp sites, through the change of use and alteration of suitable existing buildings or as an extension to existing facilities to service the need of additional visitors (i.e. where visitor numbers are increased on site by the proposal rather than maintained at a similar level).
- 9.67. The policy allows for ‘small-scale’ alternative camping proposals as a diversification opportunity for existing accommodation providers and land-based businesses. It is not considered to be appropriate to set a maximum figure for the number of such structures – small-scale proposals will be determined by the National Park Authority in relation to factors including the scale of the existing accommodation enterprise, landscape character and/or the relationship with existing buildings and structures.
- 9.68. Alternative forms of camping accommodation could replace existing static caravans on sites where associated facilities are already present and where it can be demonstrated that the landscaping, siting, design and materials of the proposed structures are appropriate (see policy RT-D8). Alternative ‘camping’ experiences may also be permitted as diversification for land-based businesses or a diversification of accommodation offered by existing camping and caravan sites, hotels/guesthouses (C1 use) and self-catering complexes (where there is more than one holiday let unit with a holiday occupancy condition); with the intention of helping to

⁴⁰⁷ Tourism Topic Group discussion (2010)

strengthen and sustain rural tourism businesses. Bed & Breakfast businesses which operate within a residential dwelling (C3 use) will not be permitted to diversify in this way to avoid the proliferation of such structures within any residential curtilage. Proposals should be physically and functionally linked to an existing business, and not require the need for additional permanent residential accommodation, including staff accommodation. In all cases such structures should not be located in an area with a high probability of flooding. As they are sites with temporary structures used for holiday occupation then they would be classified as 'more vulnerable' subject to a specific warning and evacuation plan. The sequential and exception tests should also be applied (see policy CC-D1 Flood Risk)⁴⁰⁸.

- 9.69. The scale of the overall proposal should minimise the need for additional parking capacity through the extension of existing parking areas or creation of new parking facilities – particularly where greenfield land is utilised. Other approaches such as encouraging sustainable forms of transport (AC-S1) or informal/temporary parking arrangements (AC-D3) may provide alternative solutions to increasing parking capacity. In circumstances where the need for additional parking provision can be demonstrated, the scale should only meet the minimum parking requirement in relation to additional visitor numbers generated and not cause unacceptable harm to the National Park or its special qualities. Additional need for parking should not be generated where the proposed structures are replacing existing pitches for static caravans, chalets or touring caravans.
- 9.70. In terms of extensions to existing parking areas, the design should be well integrated with its surroundings in terms of landscaping, surface treatments and layout. For new parking arrangements, proposals should be well-related to existing buildings and make best use of any existing hard-standing. The creation of separate parking bays adjacent to the accommodation structure is not acceptable due to the increase of likely landscaping works and impacts on visual amenity and landscape character. Where the use of greenfield areas are proposed, the design of parking arrangements should reflect and respond to landscape character; utilising locally sourced low-impact natural materials for surfacing. More permanent and impervious man-made surface treatments (e.g. tarmac or concrete) should be avoided.
- 9.71. Conditions will also be attached to any planning permission to ensure that:
- Occupation is limited to holiday use only and the structure will not be used as a permanent residence;
 - Where structures become redundant they are removed and the site is reinstated to its former use;
 - Only the approved structures are placed on the application site and external finish and colour are maintained;
 - No fences, buildings or ancillary structures are erected without further granting of planning permission;
 - Any planting or landscaping schemes are in place prior to siting the structures, and existing landscape features retained. Alterations to the landscaping / planting scheme permitted would be subject to the written approval of the local planning authority.

⁴⁰⁸ National Planning Policy Framework Technical Guidance (Table 2) – (DCLG) 2012

RT-D9 ALTERNATIVE CAMPING ACCOMMODATION

1. Small-scale, low impact alternative camping accommodation proposals will be permitted where:
 - a) they are only used for the purposes of holiday accommodation;
 - b) the overall development is small-scale in terms of area and number of units and will not require additional permanent residential accommodation to manage the site;
 - c) the net floor space of each unit is less than 25sqm and will not be connected to a water supply or drainage facility;
 - d) they are of high quality sustainable design and demonstrate that the siting and landscaping strongly relate to the landscape and historic character of the area; and is appropriate to its setting (locations that are well screened by woodland or well-treed settings are preferred and should meet the tests in this policy);
 - e) there are no adverse impacts on sensitive wildlife species and habitats;
 - f) they have low environmental impact through avoidance of site treatments including excessive areas of hard-standing, site levelling, re-profiling, and fencing; and have limited physical connection with the ground;
 - g) the need for additional facilities is clearly demonstrated and commensurate with the level of anticipated need, are provided within an existing building or as a modest extension to existing facilities; and
 - h) where the need for additional parking is demonstrated, provision should reflect the minimum level of need.
 - i) Small-scale extensions to existing parking areas should be well designed, landscaped and integrated with the site and its setting.
 - ii) New parking provision should be well related to existing buildings and make use of existing hard-standing where possible. On greenfield areas, parking should reflect landscape character, be informal in layout, and avoid permanent impervious surface treatments.
 - iii) Separate parking bays adjacent to the proposed accommodation structures should be avoided.
2. The site is located outside areas with high probability of flooding (CC-D1), and:
 - a) where proposals meet the requirements of RT-D8 to replace existing units on static caravan sites; or
 - b) as part of a diversification proposal for land-based businesses, sited close to the farmstead and where additional site facilities can be provided through the change of use of existing buildings(CE-S5, CE-S6); or
 - c) as part of a diversification proposal for existing accommodation premises comprising hotels/guesthouses (C1 use), self-catering complexes, and camping and caravan sites; where there is capacity in terms of area, highway access, and existing facilities without impacting on local amenity.
3. Conditions will be attached to any permission to ensure that the site will be occupied and managed in a manner that will not harm the local area. Structures will be removed from the site should they become redundant to the approved use, and the site restored to its former condition - opportunities should be taken to enhance the restoration of the site that will support biodiversity and green infrastructure (CE-S2, CE-S3).

RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF POLICY

- 9.72. Exmoor is ideally suited to recreation pursuits that are based on its natural assets including walking, horse riding, cycling, watersports and interest in its natural beauty including wildlife watching and coastering (RT-D11 Equestrian Development; RT-D12 Public Rights of Way and Access Land). Recreational pursuits can be important in supporting the local economy through tourism, and providing employment including opportunities for apprenticeships and training. Appropriate facilities to enable recreational activities which encourage understanding and enjoyment of, and are compatible with, Exmoor's special qualities and contribute to the local economy and employment are supported⁴⁰⁹.
- 9.73. Policy RT-D10 Recreational Development applies to recreational development and is intended to enable people to enjoy the National Park in a sustainable way consistent with RT-S1 Recreation and Tourism. Proposals should accord with CE-S7 Design & Sustainable Construction Principles, CC-S5 Pollution, CE-S2 Biodiversity, CE-S5 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Traditional Buildings, CE-S6 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Non-Traditional Buildings, SE-S3 Business Development in the Open Countryside and AC-S1 Sustainable Transport and should also be consistent with the other policies in this plan. Proposals for recreational facilities to serve the needs of the local community will be assessed under HC-S7 Local Commercial Services & Community Facilities.

CONTEXT

- 9.74. Exmoor has proven to be an excellent venue for local, national and international outdoor events including, for example, the Exmoor perambulation, Exmoor Explorer mountain bike ride, Exmoor stagger run, Exmoor Golden Horseshoe endurance riding event, a stage of the National Tour of Britain cycle race and the International 'Ironman' triathlon. Some aspects of recreational activity, such as events that take place on a temporary basis (up to 28 days in a calendar year) do not require planning permission. In many cases, these can be accommodated without harm to the National Park or its users and can play a part in enriching the area. The National Park Authority encourages pre-application discussions to determine whether planning permission is required.
- 9.75. There are also a number of recreational pursuits which do not require physical activity which are appropriate to the National Park such as photography, painting and star gazing⁴¹⁰. The re-use of existing buildings for indoor recreational pursuits may also be suitable in the Exmoor context, for example, to provide recreational facilities during wet weather. Recreation facilities that also provide multiple functions sustainably such as wildlife habitats, carbon storage, food production and flood risk mitigation will be supported where appropriate in a National Park context⁴¹¹ (CE-S3 Green Infrastructure, CE-D2 Green Infrastructure Provision). National policy encourages the identification and promotion of new access and recreational opportunities and ways of delivering them⁴¹².

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPOSALS

- 9.76. As the leisure sector is fast-changing with patterns and popularity of uses changing over time, it is not appropriate to specify particular recreational activities within this policy or provide an area based approach. Proposals will be determined on a case-by-case basis using the principles set out in RT-D10 Recreational Development, to enable a flexible approach over the plan period.
- 9.77. The scale, design and intensity of use or activity are important factors in determining whether a proposed development is compatible with the locality, historic environment, environmental capacity, landscape character and visual amenity of the area. The cumulative impact of

⁴⁰⁹ Your Future Exmoor Consultation

⁴¹⁰ Exmoor became an international Dark Sky reserve in 2011, please refer CE-D1 Dark Night Sky

⁴¹¹ Functions include recreation, wildlife, carbon storage, food production and flood risk mitigation. NPPF 2012

⁴¹² English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular (DEFRA, 2010)

existing or proposed development will also be a material consideration in determining planning applications (CE-S7 Design & Sustainable Construction Principles).

- 9.78. The majority of recreational activities and facilities on Exmoor that utilise the outdoor natural resource are small scale and dispersed and these are most likely to be suitable in the Exmoor context. However, some recreational activities, particularly noisy pursuits, can conflict with the National Park's special qualities and enjoyment of them⁴¹³, particularly tranquillity (RT-S1 Recreation & Tourism). Other impacts on the National Park's special qualities such as biodiversity should also be key considerations for proposals. Activities which will conflict with the National Park's special qualities including through visual intrusion, noise and causing erosion are not appropriate in the National Park (also see CC-S5 Pollution). New recreational activities may also conflict with other recreational pursuits in the locality. To minimise impacts, a number of measures, some of which are outside the planning system, can be used such as voluntary codes of conduct, monitoring of illegal motor vehicle activity and use of temporary or permanent Traffic Regulation Orders as appropriate. Although often viewed as a 'green' use of the countryside, golf courses and extensions to existing courses are not considered to be compatible with the National Park's landscape due to the formalisation and standardisation of an area of beautiful and, relatively wild country and diverse biodiversity.
- 9.79. Commercial game shooting in Exmoor has expanded since the 1990s and it brings valuable income to the local economy, particularly through supporting tourism businesses outside of the main season. Activities and associated development such as rearing pens, game crops, feeding equipment can individually and cumulatively adversely impact the National Park and access to and enjoyment of it. Such development and activity should not harm the National Park including its natural beauty, wildlife and habitats, tranquillity, public safety or access rights⁴¹⁴. Issues surrounding signage and safety should also be addressed. The Greater Exmoor Shoots Association (GESA) is the membership organisation for local shoots based in and around Exmoor National Park. They are a lead partner in encouraging the good environmental management of Exmoor game bird shoots and minimising visual impacts⁴¹⁵. Guidance on voluntary codes of conduct is available from Exmoor National Park Authority.
- 9.80. Certain activities relating to the shooting of game may need planning permission. Where birds are reared and shot for sporting purposes for more than 28 days in a calendar year it is likely that planning permission is required even if the activity takes place on existing agricultural land unless the shooting use has become long established in planning terms. The National Park Authority will provide advice on whether planning permission is required. Proposals for commercial game shooting in the Exmoor context must demonstrate they are part of a farm diversification scheme (SE-S4 Agricultural and Forestry Development).
- 9.81. Development should be focussed in or adjoining named settlements (GP4 Spatial Strategy). Special justification for proposals to be located in the open countryside will be required. Where a recreational development is proposed in the open countryside, it should be closely associated with existing recreational development or should be farm diversification (SE-S3 Business Development in the Open Countryside). Occasionally, proposals may be capable of being accommodated in the open countryside away from existing development. In such cases, the development should enhance the understanding or enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park and applicants will be expected to clearly demonstrate that such a location is essential for the development.
- 9.82. Proposals should, in the first instance, make best use of existing buildings consistent with RT-S1 Recreation and Tourism and the sequential test in clause 2 of GP4. Spatial Strategy. Proposals should also ensure that access arrangements are adequate, that the local road network has the capacity to service the development including during the peak season and that any necessary parking can be accommodated unobtrusively. Travel plans may be required where proposals are likely to result in significant traffic generation. Opportunities for access by sustainable means will be encouraged (AC-S3 Traffic Management and Parking).
- 9.83. Where a building/structure for recreational development becomes redundant the development should be removed and the land should be restored to its former condition to minimise its

⁴¹³ English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular (DEFRA, 2010)

⁴¹⁴ Your Future Exmoor Consultation Events 2010

⁴¹⁵ National Park Partnership Plan 2012

impact on the natural environment and landscape of the National Park. Where appropriate environmental enhancement will be encouraged when the land is restored.

RT-D10 RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. **Proposals for recreational development that support a sustainable local economy will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that, individually and cumulatively:**
 - a) **they are consistent with, CE-S5 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Traditional Buildings and where appropriate CE-S6 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Non-Traditional Buildings. Where the National Park Authority is satisfied that no suitable buildings exist and the need for a new building is clearly demonstrated a new building may be considered where proposals are consistent with other policies in this plan. Siting should be well related to existing buildings;**
 - b) **the location together with scale, and intensity of use or activity (including seasonal impacts) is appropriate in relation to the historic environment, wildlife sensitivity (CE-S2 Biodiversity), environmental capacity, landscape character, visual amenity and existing enjoyment of the area;**
 - c) **it is in or adjoining a named local service centre or village (GP4);**
 - d) **Where they cannot be accommodated in a local service centre or village, the development will enhance the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park, and it can be clearly demonstrated that such a location is essential for development;**
 - e) **There is adequate access, including by sustainable modes of transport, parking can be accommodated unobtrusively and the existing local road network has capacity to service the development (AC-S1); and**
 - f) **The development will be removed and land restored to its former condition when the building/structure becomes redundant unless planning permission is granted for an alternative use. Environmental enhancement will be encouraged when the land is restored.**

EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF POLICY

- 9.84. Owning and riding horses are traditional and popular activities on Exmoor⁴¹⁶ for the community and visitors alike and can provide a valuable contribution to the local economy⁴¹⁷. However, if not carefully managed, the keeping of horses and associated development can detrimentally impact the character and quality of Exmoor's landscape. The welfare of horses can also be an issue.
- 9.85. There is the potential for formalised facilities such as manèges, livery yards and pony trekking centres to lead to negative impacts on the landscape such as the over-use of the surrounding access network which can have an environmental impact and affect other users such as walkers (RT-12 Access Land and Rights of Way). Additionally, equestrian development and the sub-division of fields can affect the landscape character of the National Park⁴¹⁸ (CE-S1 Landscape Character). Consultation demonstrated virtually unanimous support for avoiding adverse impacts on the landscape and other special qualities of the National Park associated with recreational activities including equestrian⁴¹⁹. Policy RT-11 whilst supportive of equestrian activities because they are part of the history and culture of Exmoor, seek to ensure the very best management of horses and pasture in the context of the National Park.

⁴¹⁶ Exmoor Landscape character assessment (2007) states various criteria of what key characteristics are found in the landscape of Exmoor. Horse grazing is referred to several times.

⁴¹⁷ Visitor survey, Youth consultation

⁴¹⁸ Stakeholder events 08/09

⁴¹⁹ Stakeholder events 08/09

NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 9.86. National policy supports a strong rural economy. This includes businesses and enterprises in rural areas that are a diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses which respect the character of the countryside⁴²⁰. Horse riding and other equestrian activities can fit in well with farming activities to help diversify rural economies⁴²¹.

CONTEXT

- 9.87. Horse riding, keeping and horse related development can be compatible with National Park purposes. Managed well, any visual intrusion or other potential impacts from associated buildings, enclosures, fences, increased traffic, light and noise pollution can be minimised to an acceptable level in the environment.
- 9.88. Landscape and wildlife impacts resulting from overgrazing can be minimised by ensuring there is an appropriate amount of land available for horse grazing. The British Horse Society recommends as a general guideline a ratio of two horses per hectare on permanent grazing (1-1.5 acres per horse)⁴²² this would be considered a minimum in the National Park because of the nature of the land⁴²³. The type of field boundary and sub-division of fields can also affect landscape character. Sub-dividing fields with a variety of materials such as electric tape fencing often gives an impression of clutter, fragmentation and over intensive use of the land. When keeping horses in areas accessible to the public, horse keepers should ensure they do not detrimentally impact the access network or cause risk to the public including as a result of the sub-division of fields. Impacts can be managed by following best practice advice for example:
- a) Local or traditional approaches should be used e.g. hedgebanks and native hedging (hedge laying is a traditional management technique and can positively contribute to local wildlife, biodiversity and support a traditional local craft)
 - b) Avoid or minimise sub-division of fields where possible. If sub-division is necessary mirror the lines of existing field boundaries and use low visibility/mute coloured materials.
- 9.89. Hedgerow regulations (1997)⁴²⁴ prevent the removal of all or part of hedgerows without first submitting a hedgerow removal notice to the National Park Authority. Horse owners also have a 'duty of care' to ensure horse waste is stored and disposed of responsibly to protect amenity and avoid ground and water pollution (CC-S5 Pollution).

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPOSALS

- 9.90. In some cases planning permission may not be required e.g. the grazing of horses on agricultural land is regarded as agricultural use. However in certain circumstances, planning permission will be needed for the change of use of land e.g. the sub-division of agricultural land into paddocks and shelters for horses is likely to be regarded as a change of use to recreational land. Usually, if the grazing is part of an activity such as a livery, it will require planning permission for change of use of the land.
- 9.91. The policy applies to horse related development including stabling/loose-boxes, manèges/exercise areas, livery yards, hay barns, feed stores, tack rooms, new gateways, tracks or access points onto highways, permanent jumps, lighting and any consequent engineering work such as earth moving. As it is the landowners or land managers responsibility to ascertain whether planning permission is required for any development, the NPA encourages discussions at an early stage to determine whether planning permission is needed and will provide advice if a formal application is required. Horse owners are advised to check whether the land they use for any equestrian activity has planning permission.
- 9.92. To minimise the effects on the National Park, horse related development where horses are to be kept should always be close to the property it is intended to serve. Where horses are to be 'kept' refers to the location where horses are to remain for the majority of the time; this may

⁴²⁰ NPPF 2012

⁴²¹ However there is some concern over the loss of agricultural land to equestrian use on Exmoor (SE-S4 Agricultural and Forestry Development).

⁴²² South West England. SWPLF Equestrian Guide. (2010)

⁴²³ Kent Downs AONB recommend 2.5 acres per 500kg horse for resting and rotation

⁴²⁴ Hedgerow Regulations (1997) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1997/1160/contents/made>

include structures/buildings used as shelter for horses. Existing buildings should be reused in the first instance, where they are available and appropriate for the type of equestrian development proposed – consistent with policies CE-S5 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Traditional Buildings and CE-S6 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Non-Traditional Buildings. New development will not be appropriate where it is not well related to existing buildings. Where new buildings are required, they should achieve a high standard of design (SE-S4 Agricultural and Forestry Development; CE-S7 Design & Sustainable Construction Principles). Consideration will need to be given to the siting, scale, design, materials, colour and landscaping of new development. External lighting can, in particular, lead to a site appearing prominent in the landscape and adversely affect the tranquillity of the National Park. Where artificial lighting is proposed, this should be consistent with CE-D1 Protecting Exmoor's Dark Night Sky and CC-S5 Pollution. Proposals must also demonstrate they do not cause harm to the natural environment and the access network, and are compatible with other policies in this plan.

- 9.93. Conditions will be used where appropriate and may include that:
- a) the development is limited to domestic use where the proposal is intended for this purpose;
 - b) the development should not cause harm to equestrian routes, this can include through limiting the number of horses;
 - c) the removal of the building/structure and restoration of the land to its former condition should the use cease to be operational unless planning permission is granted for an alternative use.
- 9.94. Some equestrian development can be incongruous in the landscape and its proliferation could therefore have an adverse impact on visual amenity and the landscape of the National Park. The cumulative impacts of equestrian development will be a material consideration in determining planning applications. In some cases a temporary consent may be considered in order to ascertain whether equestrian development will be acceptable in the longer term.
- 9.95. All proposals for equestrian development will be required to submit a land management plan as part of their planning application. The following factors, based on good practice guidance prepared by the National Park Authority, should be considered when compiling a land management plan for equestrian development including:
- a) Managing grazing
 - b) Managing waste
 - c) Means of enclosure and boundary treatments
 - d) Tree and hedge protection/management
 - e) Buildings and Structures
 - f) Impacts on Public Rights of Way
 - g) Soil structure
 - h) Managing invasive species e.g. ragwort
- 9.96. The land management plan should be relative to the scale of the proposed development and the activity likely to be generated; larger-scale equestrian development including pony trekking and livery yards will therefore be required to provide detailed land management plans to fully explain how the factors listed above will be addressed.
- 9.97. The policy would, in principle, provide for proposals for stabling at visitor accommodation businesses, such as hotels, where they would support equine tourism, provide short-term shelter for horses, comply with Policy RT-D11 below and other policies within this plan.

RT-D11 EQUESTRIAN DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Proposals for equestrian development will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that individually and cumulatively they:**
 - a) are consistent with RT-S1 Recreation & Tourism, CE-S1 Landscape Character;**
 - b) do not adversely affect the natural environment or amenity of the surrounding area or neighbouring properties either directly or indirectly including through pollution and visual intrusion (CC-S5; CE-D1);**
 - c) re-use existing buildings consistent with Policy CE-S5 Principles for the Conversion of Structural Alteration of Traditional Buildings or, where appropriate, CE-S6 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Non-Traditional Buildings. Where the National Park Authority is satisfied that no suitable buildings exist and the need for a new building is clearly demonstrated, a new building may be considered where proposals are consistent with other policies in this plan. Siting should be well related to existing buildings;**
 - d) do not cause unacceptable levels of traffic in terms of the environmental or physical capacity of the road network, and do not prejudice road safety interests (AC-D1);**
 - e) are appropriate to the landscape setting and the environmental capacity of the area in terms of the intensity of use or activity;**
 - f) are sited sensitively in terms of visual impact and, of an appropriate scale, well designed and, unobtrusive in their form, in terms of their height, position and materials including by means of enclosure. Proposals should reflect the character and form of existing traditional development (CE-S7);**
 - g) have adequate and suitable grazing land to support the development proposed;**
 - h) do not generate the need for a separate dwelling that cannot be met by an existing dwelling or through the conversion of a traditional building (HC-D4, HC-D12);**
 - i) are well related to suitable networks of equestrian routes which are capable of supporting the additional usage in accordance with RT-12 Access Land and Rights of Way; where appropriate, horses will be regulated to a number which will not cause harm to equestrian routes, the landscape or nature conservation; and**
 - j) ensure the site is managed in accordance with a land management plan agreed by the National Park Authority.**
- 2. In the case of development proposals that involve the keeping of horses, the development shall be sited close to the dwelling it is intended to serve.**

ACCESS LAND AND RIGHTS OF WAY

PURPOSE OF POLICY

9.98. Walking is a popular recreational activity on Exmoor, often being cited as the main reason for visiting the National Park⁴²⁵. Cycling and horse-riding have also become popular activities on Exmoor. Such interests utilise the extensive access network, which in the context of the policy includes Public Rights of Way (PRoW),⁴²⁶ access land⁴²⁷, statutory and permitted cycle routes, permissive paths and roads used for these purposes. By providing the medium for such activities the access network plays an integral role in promoting the enjoyment of the National Park for the public, for both visitors and local communities alike, and in doing so helps to achieve the second statutory purpose of the National Park. As the access network has an important influence on the number of visitors to Exmoor, it makes a valuable contribution to the local economy of the area including for a significant number of local businesses. Furthermore the access network is important to the biodiversity of the National Park, providing valuable habitats, environments and linkages for both plant and wildlife. It can also be an important element of the historic environment and is a valuable feature of the landscape character of Exmoor (CE-S1 Biodiversity, CE-S4 Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment, CE-S1 Landscape Character). Policy RT-D12 seeks to safeguard Exmoor's valuable access network.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

9.99. The access network currently provides a means of sustainable transport and enables popular recreational activities that promote healthier living which is advocated by National Policy. National policy also states that planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access and local authorities are encouraged to seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users such as by linking existing rights of way networks⁴²⁸.

CONTEXT

9.100. A high standard of maintenance, clear way-marking and the minimisation of any conflicts between path users and landowners are vital to the enjoyment of the access network. The legal responsibility for the maintenance of PRoW lies with Devon and Somerset County Councils, delegated to Exmoor National Park Authority for many years. Exmoor National Park Authority liaises with farmers and land managers to address any issues arising from PRoW across their land. Definitive map amendments are undertaken by the relevant Surveying Authority. A large proportion of the network is available to pedestrians, cyclists and also equestrian users, which reflects the historic and current importance of horse riding on Exmoor. Users' interests encompass the physical use and the understanding, enjoyment and experience of the access network including views and tranquillity. Opportunities to enhance the access network to improve the inclusiveness and enjoyment of the network to all users of all abilities will be sought.

9.101. Climate change may result in an increased need for maintenance of the access network. The Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan includes a priority and objective to ensure the maintenance and improvement of the rights of way network as a special quality of the National Park⁴²⁹. The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2005 (RoWIP) for Devon and Somerset also include objectives and priorities for improving the PRoW network for the benefit of all users on Exmoor.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPOSALS

9.102. Policy RT-D12 seeks to ensure that the existing access network, including PRoW and access land, is not adversely affected by development proposals. In recognition of their important role

⁴²⁵ Exmoor Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2005); Exmoor National Park Authority Visitor Survey (2010)

⁴²⁶ Public Rights of Way

⁴²⁷ Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000

⁴²⁸ NPPF 2012

⁴²⁹ Priority B2: Maintaining high quality rights of way, services and facilities to enhance enjoyment and understanding of the National Park
Objective 9: To maintain and improve the recreational opportunities in the National Park particularly the rights of way network, access to open country, other quiet and active recreation based on Exmoor's special qualities; and ensure that opportunities for recreation can be enjoyed by people from all backgrounds and of all abilities

in achieving the second purpose of the National Park, sustainable transport infrastructure, economic benefits and achievement of government's objectives including health and well-being, the authority will afford them protection from development that is likely to prejudice their current or future use. Proposals that enhance the network and improve existing routes including the provision of linkages between routes will be encouraged (RT-S1 Recreation & Tourism; AC-S1 Sustainable Transport; CE-S3 Green Infrastructure; CE-D2 Green Infrastructure Provision).

- 9.103. Where proposals are likely to result in an increase in the intensity of vehicular use on shared access routes, applicants will need to demonstrate that the safety, ease of use and enjoyment (including the condition) of the access network by all users will be maintained.

RT-D12 ACCESS LAND AND RIGHTS OF WAY

- 1. The access network will be safeguarded by ensuring that development proposals will not adversely affect:**
 - a) the condition of the access network;**
 - b) users' interests;**
 - c) character and appearance; and**
 - d) biodiversity or historic environment.**
- 2. Where proposals will adversely affect the access network applicants will be required to demonstrate that:**
 - a) the need for and benefit of the development clearly outweighs any harm to the current access network;**
 - b) there is no appropriate alternative location;**
 - c) any harm will be kept to a minimum;**
 - d) the affected network will be improved and enhanced to protect users' interests;**
 - e) opportunities have been sought to provide linkages between routes, and strengthen the green infrastructure network (CE-S3, CE-D2); and**
 - f) an acceptable diversion and/or compensatory land of equal or better quality are provided where necessary.**

SAFEGUARDING LAND ALONG FORMER RAILWAYS AND REINSTATEMENT OF THE LYNTON AND BARNSTAPLE RAILWAY

PURPOSE OF POLICY

- 9.104. Former railways are important historic assets which form a valuable component of the cultural heritage of Exmoor National Park. They can also be re-used as part of the access network e.g. as walking or cycling routes, are important wildlife corridors/links between habitats for species such as dormice and bats, become a part of the green infrastructure network or may be reinstated as part of the transport network (RT-D12 Access Land and Rights of Way; CE-S3 Green Infrastructure and CE-D2 Green Infrastructure Provision; AC-S1 Sustainable Transport). RT-D13 Safeguarding Land along Former Railways seeks to safeguard this important historic asset.
- 9.105. As it is probable that a proposal for the reinstatement of the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway will be received during the Plan period, Policy RT-S2 Reinstatement of the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway sets out criteria for assessing any such proposal to ensure any associated development does not harm the experience or enjoyment of the National Park, or its special qualities including tranquillity. Where a proposal is classified as major development it must accord with GP3 Major Development.

CONTEXT

Former Railways on Exmoor

West Somerset Mineral Line

- 9.106. The 11.5 mile West Somerset Mineral Railway was constructed to carry iron ore from mines in the Brendon Hills to Watchet harbour for shipment to Newport in South Wales. The Mineral Railway opened as far as Roadwater in 1857 and works had begun on the half mile long incline which carried the line to the summit of the Brendon Hills. The incline, completed in 1868, was twin track gravity operated and with a gradient of 1 in 4, it was perhaps the most significant standard gauge incline in the country.
- 9.107. By 1880 the upper section of the line was falling into dereliction and in 1883, when the mines closed and ore trains no longer ran, revenue from passenger and goods traffic was not enough to cover the cost of running services and maintaining the line, which closed in 1898.
- 9.108. In the early 1990s Exmoor National Park Authority purchased the trackbed of the railway's incline. It was scheduled as an Ancient Monument and a grant was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the conservation of the harbour at Watchet outside the National Park, as well as the railway and mine sites both within and outside the National Park⁴³⁰.

Lynton and Barnstaple Railway

- 9.109. The construction of the 19 mile long Lynton and Barnstaple railway began in 1895 and opened in 1898. Referred to as the 'The Toy Railway', as the height of the coaches was only 8 ft 7 inches, it was built as a narrow gauge to lower the cost of construction and to follow the natural contours of the countryside. The track, rolling stock and buildings were built to a high standard and in 1923 the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway was purchased by Southern Railway who commenced a major investment program including the relaying and re-fencing of the track. However, in the face of increasing competition from road transport, the line closed in 1935 and the rolling stock and track were sold. The remainder of the track was lifted the following year. Most of the buildings and some of the bridges survived. The former railway line lies partly within Exmoor National Park and part outside the National Park in North Devon District.
- 9.110. In 1979 a group was formed to restore the railway which in 1998 became the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway Trust and in 2004 opened a one mile stretch of the original track from Woody Bay to Killington Lane to the public⁴³¹. The Trust has an aspiration to extend the line

⁴³⁰ Jones, M.H. (2011) The Brendon Hills Iron Mines and the West Somerset Mineral Line: A New Account.

⁴³¹ Lynton and Barnstaple Railway <http://www.lynton-rail.co.uk/railway>

beyond the former railway station in Lynton to terminate at a new station closer to the settlement. The draft Lynton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan (ES-S2) proposes a policy regarding the reinstatement of the Lynton & Barnstaple Railway, including the provision of a new Lynton station and an effective link for passengers from the station to the centre of Lynton.

SAFEGUARDING LAND ALONG FORMER RAILWAYS

- 9.111. Policy RT-D13 seeks to safeguard land along the line of the West Somerset Mineral Line and the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway as linear continuous routes for their recreation and historic value, and their potential for sustainable modes of travel within Exmoor National Park. Land to be safeguarded is identified on the Plan Policies Map. It excludes land within the footprint of residential dwellings in existence when the Plan was adopted. Partial deviation from the original route will only be considered to achieve a linear continuous route when this cannot be reasonably achieved on the original route. Proposals for a deviation of the route should follow the character of the original route. Where a proposal for partial deviation of the safeguarded route is permitted and developed the agreed alternative route will be safeguarded as a replacement of the original route it substitutes. The National Park Authority will work with neighbouring authorities to ensure a consistent approach where lines cross administrative boundaries.
- 9.112. The safeguarding of former railways does not imply the acceptance of the principle for a reinstated railway scheme. Any proposals which may come forward will be assessed on their own merits and will be subject to rigorous examination consistent with National Park purposes, Plan policies and design principles.

REINSTATEMENT OF THE LYNTON AND BARNSTAPLE RAILWAY

- 9.113. The former Lynton and Barnstaple Railway is an important heritage asset contributing to the cultural heritage of Exmoor National Park. Any proposal for reinstatement should therefore seek to replicate the original historic former railway and further National Park purposes; this includes following the original line, reusing original buildings and replicating the siting, floor space, design, materials and appearance of the former railway and its associated structures/buildings. Any reinstatement of the line would need to consider implications of flood risk and accord with CC-S1 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and CC-D1 Flood Risk.
- 9.114. The former Lynton and Barnstaple Railway runs through open country within the National Park. Consequently, any additional new development from the original historic former railway including diversions from the original route and any new buildings will only be considered where it can be demonstrated, and the National Park Authority is satisfied that, no alternative solutions would meet the need for the development in any other way, and it is essential for the operation of the reinstated former railway or is a restoration of a historic feature and respects the character of the former railway.
- 9.115. To help protect the National Park landscape and its setting, the National Park Authority and Local Authorities will work together to agree a coordinated approach which favours the re-use of the original buildings associated with the former railway both within and outside the National Park. This principle ensures that any reinstatement is historically accurate and avoids or minimises new buildings in line with National Park principles. Where it can be demonstrated this is not possible, existing buildings in suitable proximity to the reinstatement may be considered (CE-S5 and CE-S6 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Buildings). New buildings will only be considered where it has been clearly demonstrated that there are no suitable existing buildings that can be re-used and that there are no alternative solutions which would meet the need for the building in any other way. The National Planning Policy Framework states that new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided⁴³² and the National Parks Circular states that the expectation is that new housing will be focused on affordable housing, supporting local employment opportunities and key services⁴³³. Proposals should also accord with policies in section 7 Achieving a Thriving Community of this plan and thus should not generate the need for a new separate dwelling.

⁴³² NPPF 2012, para 55

⁴³³ English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular (2010)

- 9.116. The design of all aspects of a proposal should reflect the traditional character and appearance of the original railway and ensure that the proposed development is integrated in its setting, this includes proposals for infrastructure, buildings or similar structures. The conversion or alteration of existing buildings should accord with CE-S5 and CE-S6 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Buildings. All proposals, including for new build, should replicate and reflect the original scale, floor space, layout, form, architecture, design, appearance, detailing, materials and boundary treatments of the former railway. Detailed documentary evidence should be provided with any application to demonstrate how a proposal has reflected the former railway including for proposals for deviations from the original historic former railway to ensure the new development reflects the character of the former railway. Landscaping should be incorporated as part of the proposal to conserve and enhance the National Park. This should have regard to the site and character of the area and also the traditional features of the former railway. Landscaping may include trees, hedges, walls, railings, fences and surface treatments (CE-S7 Design & Sustainable Construction Principles).
- 9.117. Proposals should take into account potential wildlife issues, this includes the impact on protected species both along the proposed route and associated buildings and should accord with CE-S2 Biodiversity.
- 9.118. Any potential pollution from a proposed development will need to be considered. It should be avoided where possible and in all cases the development should not cause any unacceptable adverse impacts to the National Park, including to air, soil, water, or as a result of light and noise pollution (CC-S5 Pollution).
- 9.119. Waste and resource use should be minimised through the reuse of buildings, materials and site waste. Sustainable construction methods are encouraged in the National Park however in the case of the reinstatement of a former railway, the priority will be the historical accuracy of the development. Sustainable construction methods should therefore be used, unless it compromises the historical accuracy and appearance of the reinstated former railway (CE-S7 Design & Sustainable Construction Principles).
- 9.120. The National Park Authority will work with Somerset and Devon County Councils as the Highways and Transport Authorities and transport providers to encourage sustainable transport for residents and visitors (AC-S1 Sustainable Transport). Any proposed development will need to ensure appropriate and safe access to the road network and should not cause unacceptable levels of traffic in terms of the physical capacity of the network including road safety interests and the environmental impacts of accommodating such requirements (AC-D1 Transport and accessibility requirements for development). The National Park Authority will expect any proposal to incorporate measures to enable safe access by transport other than the private car such as walking, cycling or public transport to minimise traffic generation and the need for parking. A travel plan will therefore be required to ensure the proposal delivers sustainable travel outcomes. Where necessary, a transport assessment, transport statement and air quality assessment may be required (RT-S1 Recreation & Tourism; Section 10 Achieving Accessibility for All). Proposals should also accord with RT-D12 Access Land and Rights of Way, CE-S3 Green Infrastructure and CE-D2 Green Infrastructure Provision.
- 9.121. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate to the National Park Authority's satisfaction that any highway infrastructure proposed as part of the development is essential to the proposal and that it will not lead to unacceptable impacts to road users or result in the severance of existing highway routes. In such cases, to ensure potential impacts would be acceptable in a National Park context, the proposed infrastructure (including crossings) should be of an appropriate scale and design, such as through the use of natural and traditional materials, to ensure that it will conserve and enhance the National Park (AC-S2 Transport Infrastructure).
- 9.122. There is a presumption against providing for permanent peak parking demand due to the impact on the natural and built environment in the National Park. Instead, there is a need to seek more sustainable solutions to the management of traffic and the demand for parking. The scale of car parking provision should therefore be minimised and be appropriate to the average daily usage annually and both the scale and design should be appropriate to the context of the National Park designation as well as the landscape character and setting of the site and area (AC-D2 Parking Provision and Standards). To address higher levels of parking which may arise for limited periods during peak season, temporary overflow measures may be permitted to accommodate peak parking demand where current parking arrangements are

causing environmental harm to the local area, the National Park, and/or is adversely affecting the quality of life of local communities and are in accordance with AC-D3 Temporary Parking.

- 9.123. Former railways are important historic assets which are valuable to the cultural heritage of the National Park. They can also be re-used as part of the access network therefore if the use of the reinstated railway line becomes redundant, the rail line (including alternative routes permitted) will be safeguarded for its recreational and historic value to help further National Park purposes. To ensure the line is retained as a linear access route a legal agreement will be sought as part of a planning permission (RT-D13 Safeguarding Land along Former Railways).

RT-D13 SAFEGUARDING LAND ALONG FORMER RAILWAYS

- 1. The land on the route of the former the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway and the West Somerset Mineral Line as shown on the Plan Policy Map will be safeguarded as important historic assets valuable to the cultural heritage of the National Park and protected from development that would prevent its reuse for expansion of the access network and/or the reinstatement of the former railway (RT-S2 Reinstatement of Lynton and Barnstaple Railway).**
- 2. Where proposals will enable the expansion of the access network and/or the reinstatement of the former railway partial deviation from the original railway route will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that a linear continuous route cannot be reasonably achieved by using the original route. Where a partial deviation of the original route is permitted and developed, the agreed alternative route will be safeguarded as a replacement of the original route it substitutes.**
- 3. Safeguarding of these routes does not imply the acceptance of the principle of any reinstated railway.**

RT-S2 REINSTATEMENT OF THE LYNTON AND BARNSTAPLE RAILWAY

1. Proposals for the reinstatement of the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway should be in accordance with other policies in this Plan and the following criteria:
 - a) The proposal should seek to reinstate and replicate the former narrow gauge railway including the line of the original route and the siting, design, appearance, floor space and materials of the associated structures/buildings. Any additional new development over and above the original historic former railway should provide demonstrable evidence that it is essential for the operation of the reinstated former railway or is a restoration of a historic feature and that there are no alternative solutions which would reasonably meet the need for the development in any other way;
 - b) Reinstatement proposals should:
 - i) Seek to re-use the original buildings associated with the former railway both within and outside the National Park.
 - ii) Where it can be demonstrated that the re-use of the original buildings cannot be achieved, existing buildings in suitable proximity to the reinstatement proposal may be considered.
 - iii) New buildings will only be considered where the National Park Authority is satisfied that it has been demonstrated that there are no existing buildings suitable for re-use.
 - c) The proposal should not generate the need for a separate new build dwelling and any dwelling proposals should accord with HC-S1 Housing, HC-D2 New Build Dwellings in Settlements, HC-D5 New Build Dwellings in the Open Countryside and CE-S5 Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Traditional Buildings;
 - d) Infrastructure, buildings and similar structures should reflect the traditional character of the original railway including through design, materials, scale, layout, form, architecture, appearance, detailing and boundary treatments;
 - e) Detailed documentary evidence to demonstrate how the proposal has reflected and replicated the original character of the former railway should be submitted with the application;
 - f) The proposal should be integrated in its setting in accordance with CE-S7 Design & Sustainable Construction Principles. Landscaping appropriate to the site and character of the area and having regard to traditional features of the former railway should be incorporated as part of the proposal;
 - g) Sustainable construction methods should be used, unless they compromise the historical accuracy and appearance of the former railway (CE-S7);
 - h) The proposal should accord with AC-D1 Transport and accessibility requirements for development and provide a travel plan (AC-S1 Sustainable Transport; RT-S1 Recreation & Tourism). The proposal should incorporate measures to enable safe access by walking, cycling and public transport and to minimise traffic generation and the need for parking. The proposal should also accord with RT-D12 Access Land and Rights of Way, CE-S3 Green Infrastructure and CE-D2 Green Infrastructure Provision;
 - i) Any proposed highway infrastructure will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that it is essential to the proposal and will not lead to unacceptable impacts to road users or lead to the severance of existing highway routes. Infrastructure, including crossings, should be of an appropriate scale and design (including through the use of natural and traditional materials);
 - j) Parking provision should be minimised and of a scale commensurate with the average daily usage annually and designed to ensure that it is integrated with the surrounding landscape character and setting. Provision of permanent parking to meet peak parking demand will not be permitted (AC-D2; AC-D3); and
 - k) If the use of the re-instated railway becomes redundant the rail line will be safeguarded as an important linear access route, for its recreational and historic value. A legal agreement will be sought to ensure the line is retained as a continuous linear access route (RT-D13).