STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION ON LDF CORE STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

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Topic Paper No. 6

Settlements, Services, Transport and Infrastructure

EXMOOR
NATIONAL PARK

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This report is also accessible from our website located under:
 www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/living-in-ldf-core-strategy.htm

We are happy to provide this information in alternative formats on request where reasonable.
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Issues

Settlements and community services:

1. Identifying what makes settlements sustainable in an Exmoor context and what is the appropriate approach to ensure that small rural communities are viable in the long term whilst conserving and enhancing their character.
2. Identifying a settlement hierarchy appropriate to Exmoor National Park's circumstances. At present the Local Plan classifies the settlements as Local Rural Centres and Villages with the remaining area as Open Countryside.
3. What can be done to enhance the character of Exmoor's settlements, by for example, undergrounding overhead electricity and telecommunication wires, repairing traditional fabric such as cobbles, removing the clutter of signs, conserving traditional shop fronts etc?
4. With the rise in the closure of shops, post offices and petrol stations there is a need to safeguard and sustain essential community services.
5. The need to safeguard Exmoor's schools and health services .
6. Accessibility to essential community services.
7. Influence of nearby towns in the provision of employment and services
8. Access to fast internet connections for accessing services and working from home – leading to the possible reduction in the need to travel.

Transport

9. Encouraging travel by sustainable means of transport, whilst recognising the need to travel by private modes of transport in a dispersed rural area such as Exmoor.
10. Improving the number and frequency of public transport including bus services and encouraging greater use of these services.
11. Ensuring that there are improved opportunities for safe horse-riding, cycling and walking as an alternative to car travel.
12. The reflection of local circumstances in setting the level of car and cycle parking provision that is appropriate for small-scale developments.
13. Working with partners to assist with problems of traffic speed, congestion and parking within settlements.

Utilities

14. New supplies or alternative sources of energy provision to rural properties.
15. Providing appropriately for the socio-economic need for modern telecommunications without adversely affecting the special qualities of the National Park through the visual impact of telecommunication masts.
16. Ensuring adequate provision of water and sewerage infrastructure including providing for the extension of sewage treatment plants.

The Exmoor National Park Management Plan 2007-2012

<u>Desired outcome</u>: By 2020 Exmoor's communities retain a continuity of connection with the land; people have access to affordable services and facilities, and there is a strong, diverse and sustainable economy that benefits from and contributes to the care and appreciation of Exmoor National Park.

<u>Objective H2</u>: To support the provision and retention of community facilities and services that are reasonably accessible and affordable to Exmoor's residents.

- ♦ Target H2.3: The potential for a new year round bus route linking Dulverton to Lynton and Lynmouth via Winsford, Exford and Simonsbath will be established by the end of 2009.
- ♦ Target H3.2: An up to date 'broadband' and communications infrastructure using modern technologies will be available by the end of 2010 to ensure potential access to businesses and households across the National Park, particularly where there is not good access via the telephone network.
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Key Statistics:

- ♦ The adopted Local Plan identifies 24 settlements within the National Park.

- ♦ Twelve settlements (as identified in the Local Plan) on Exmoor have access to a regular daily bus service. Other settlements are served by community transport schemes or demand responsive transport such as the West Somerset Slinky Bus.

- ♦ The recent round of Post Office closures has seen 3 Post Offices close on Exmoor, in Barbrook, Lynmouth and Brompton Regis.

- ♦ There has been a decline in the number of petrol filling stations within the National Park, the remaining filling stations are located in: Barbrook, Porlock, Roadwater, Wheddon Cross and Dulverton (2).

- ♦ The super output area West Somerset 005c (consisting of the parishes: Exmoor, Exford, Withypool & Hawkridge, Winsford, Cutcombe, Brompton Regis and Exton) is the most remote in terms of access to key services.

- ♦ New community services and facilities have been permitted within settlements on Exmoor: Dunster Tithe Barn community hall, a new medical practice in Dulverton, improvements and extensions to village halls in Winsford and Brompton Regis, and a new community-run village shop in Brompton Regis (located in the skittle alley of the local pub).

- There are six first schools, two primary schools and a middle school in the National Park compared with many more schools in the past. Falling role numbers have meant that many of these schools have federated to make the most efficient use of resources; enabling these remaining schools to stay open.

- Just over half of the working population drive or share a lift to their place of employment, while around a third work at or from home due to the high level of self-employment in the National Park. Very few use public transport and others walk to work.

- The average commuting distance is 13.37 kms (linear distance – 2001 census).

- Broadband take up is relatively low in the Exmoor area and depends on availability of the service. Predominantly 20.9-35.3% of households on Exmoor have broadband but some areas may be lower than 20% (State of the Countryside Report 2008).

- There are over 30 telecommunication masts within the National Park.

Policy and Strategy

National

POLICIES: PPS1 and PPS7: National policy states that sustainable development should be delivered in providing for homes, jobs, services and infrastructure needed by local communities whilst taking into account the need for accessibility, the environment and the effect of climate change.

♦ Planning authorities should focus most new development in or near to local service centres where employment, housing (including affordable housing) services and other facilities can be provided close together. This should help to ensure these facilities are served by public transport and provide improved opportunities for access by walking and cycling.

♦ Some limited small-scale development in or next to rural settlements (other than local service centres) should be supported - where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from, and have poor public transport links with, service centres.

♦ Planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to planning proposals designed to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities, e.g. village shops and post offices, rural petrol stations, village and church halls and rural public houses, that play an important role in sustaining village communities.

Draft PPS4 – Planning for Sustainable Economic Development: In rural areas, recognising that accessibility – whether by private transport, public transport, walking and cycling – is a key consideration, local planning authorities should:

♦ Support farm diversification schemes for business purposes that help to sustain agricultural enterprise and are consistent in their scale with their rural location and environmental impact;

♦ Recognise that a site may be an acceptable location for development even though it may not be readily accessible by public transport;

♦ Support small-scale economic development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from, and have poor transport links with, local service centres.

PPG8 - Telecommunications: In National Parks telecommunications proposals should be sensitively designed and sited and the developer must demonstrate that there are no suitable alternative locations.

PPG13 – Transport: Objectives are to promote sustainable transport choices and accessibility to jobs and services whilst reducing the need to travel (by car) by visitors and local people.

♦ It is recognised that the car will still be an important option for travel in rural areas.

♦ The objective should be to ensure, that jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services are primarily sited at the most accessible locations in the local area (i.e. local service centres) - local circumstances will need to be taken into account and what is appropriate in a remote rural area may be

- very different from rural areas near to larger towns.
- ♦ Traffic management can be applied in rural areas where measures should be drawn up in consultation with the local community, be sympathetic to the character of the area and maintain the accessibility and viability of local businesses. Local authorities may consider designating roads as quiet lanes. See DfT guidance: http://www.countryside.gov.uk/Images/quiet%20lanes%20dft_tcm2-22060.pdf
- ♦ Routes for cycling and walking should be considered as part of schemes for new development.

Regional

SW Regional Spatial Strategy:

Growth and development will be planned for and managed positively with a clear strategy to meet the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities. This includes making the best use of existing infrastructure, settlements, utilities and telecommunications and supporting the development for improvements to these aspects.

POLICIES: SD4, CSS, C, D, F, CS1, GI1, C1, RE6

RTS3 – Parking: This policy sets out that parking measures should be implemented to reduce reliance on the car and encourage the use of sustainable transport modes.
Parking standards should promote sustainable transport choices – with lower standards set for those parts of the region with higher levels of sustainable transport choices.
The total parking stock should be managed to *reflect local circumstances* and the relative accessibility by sustainable transport modes.

CS1 - Provision of Services and Community Infrastructure: Local Authorities are advised to work with their Local Strategic Partnerships and other relevant organisations to provide assessments of the need for a full range of community facilities and services suitable for all sections of the community.

HE1 - Planning for Healthcare: In preparing Local Development Frameworks, Local Authorities should work closely with healthcare providers to ensure that timely provision for health services is made. Local Development Frameworks should support proposals for the provision of additional healthcare facilities.

SK1 - Facilitating Access to Skills Training Education and Skills: Local Planning Authorities, should work with partners, including the Learning and Skills Council, Higher Education Funding Council, SWRDA and others to ensure the adequate provision of pre-school, school, community learning facilities, and facilities that support the higher and further education sectors.

Local

Local Plan

Local Rural Centres have been identified as the most suitable locations for new development and to sustain employment and services to meet the needs of the National Park and its community. Development must always be of a scale which will not harm the character of the settlement.

- Local Rural Centres provide the best range of services and are identified as: Dulverton, Lynton & Lynmouth and Porlock
- Villages act as focal points for those living across the moor and the following settlements are identified: Allerford; Barbrook; Bridgetown; Brompton Regis; Brendon; Challacombe; Cutcombe; Dunster; Exford; Exton; Luccombe; Luxborough; Monksilver; Parracombe; Roadwater; Simonsbath; Timberscombe; Winsford; Withypool; Wheddon Cross and Wootton Courtenay.

Development in areas of high risk flood or where the risk of flooding will be increased will not be permitted.
Development to improve or that requires increased levels of utilities and telecommunications that would adversely affect the landscape, quality of water sources or sewage disposal system will not be permitted.

POLICIES: S1, U1- U11

Transport
Policy for Traffic and Transport states that a framework for traffic management in the National Park will be made including consideration of the roads serving the development in question as adequate for the traffic likely to be generated. Levels of traffic which would cause the threshold of the physical capacity of the area to be breached will not be permitted. Alternative methods to the private car will be encouraged and included in development plans. Proposed car parks, bridge and road works should be designed to minimise harm to the surrounding environment.

POLICIES: TR1-TR12

Access to Services
Policy for access to community services and facilities state that these buildings will be safeguarded from change of use unless a suitable replacement service or facility is available within convenient distance or the use for commercial purposes cannot be continued in the longer term. Proposals for development of new services and facilities must provide satisfactory provision for access and parking. The effect on the surrounding area of these proposals will also be considered.

POLICIES: CSF1-CSF6

Is there further evidence that you wish to draw to our attention?

Do you have any further issues that you wish to raise?

Additional Information

Taylor Report – A Living Working Countryside (2008)
Recommendation 13:
The Government's planning policies should require local planning authorities to work with local communities to consider how the needs (environmental, social and economic) of every settlement or parish in their area can be addressed through the Local Development Framework as it is developed over time, working towards a clear vision of the future for each settlement built on consultation with the people who live there.

The report highlights the issue of living and working in rural areas as cannot live near where they work because it is unaffordable, or can't work near where they live because employment is increasingly directed to towns, restricting development has the effect of making communities even less sustainable environmentally, let alone socially and economically sustainable. Taylor states that "*the key emphasis of the planning system needs to move away from asking "is this settlement sustainable?", to "will this development enhance or decrease the sustainability of this community – balancing social, economic and environmental concerns*?"

♦ The review raises the issue of the 'sustainability trap' where beneficial development can only be approved if the settlement is considered sustainable in the first place. There is a widespread assumption that because smaller rural communities may have little or no services, shops, or public transport of their own they are fundamentally unsustainable – and therefore not suitable for development on the grounds of an implied greater need to commute and travel by car to access services and employment.

♦ This review supports the recognition that not all development in rural areas can be accessed by public transport set out in draft PPS4 (see above). The review states that this would help remove a significant barrier to rural economic development, including the re-use of disused farms or farm buildings.

♦ The issue of communities becoming more unsustainable is highlighted where the changing demographic of communities (more wealthy and older people and fewer poorer and younger people) impacts on demand and overall viability for local services, particularly schools, Post Offices and public transport.

♦ The aims of PPS1 and PPG13 to reduce the need to travel by private car is considered to effectively discourage development in rural areas, where there is inherently more necessity for travel and usually limited access to public transport. Narrow perceptions of sustainability such as this have become embedded in regional and local planning.

♦ The loss of rural enterprise, shops and services can compound pressure on vulnerable groups (lower income, immobile, elderly) to move out and increase the need to travel for services.

♦ Travel to work evidence illustrated that far more rural residents were likely to travel 1km or less to work than urban residents, and twice as many rural residents than urban residents are likely to work from home.

State of the Countryside Report 2008

- For nearly all service types, availability has fallen in rural areas since 2000, but supermarkets and cashpoints have seen an increase.
- Many services can be accessed over the internet, but by no means all those who have internet access use it for accessing services. Rural people tend to use the internet more for looking for goods and services (such as shopping for groceries and household goods), but less for education and training. Some of this difference may reflect the older population of rural areas.
- Internet access is higher in rural areas and around 70% of homes have had access to this facility in village and hamlet areas since 2005.
- Rural people travel around 10,000 miles per year compared with around 7,000 for all English residents; however the last ten years have seen no large increase in the distance travelled by rural residents for different modes of travel. Rural people use cars significantly more and use public transport or walking correspondingly less.
- Car ownership relates closely to income, but in rural areas, people with low incomes are more likely to own cars than in urban areas. The growth of car ownership for those in the lowest fifth of incomes continues in rural areas, but has stabilised for those on higher incomes, and those in urban areas.
- Over the ten *State of the Countryside* reports that have been produced, some of the most serious issues – of housing affordability, <u>access to services, and a lack of public transport</u> – have continued as major issues.

Report of the Rural Advocate 2007
- This report highlighted that it was not just the loss of key services that so concerned people, but also the important contribution that local services make to the vitality and sense of community within rural communities. The village shop, the post office and the doctor's surgery provide somewhere to meet with other people; without these, people argued, it was so much easier for some of the most vulnerable members of the community to become increasingly isolated and excluded from their community.
- The report emphasises the creative approaches communities have devised to retain and deliver important services locally such as: post offices relocated into village shops, community halls, pubs and churches; computer access being introduced into village halls; and churches doubling up as meeting rooms and music venues.

<u>**Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2)**</u>
Transport objectives:
- **Reduce social exclusion and improve access to everyday facilities by** improving access to employment and services including facilitating the co-ordination of activities of other authorities to improve accessibility of services.
- **Reduce growth in congestion and pollution and improve health by** improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport network, influencing travel behaviour, and widening travel choice.
Challenges:
- Sparse population densities on Exmoor, other upland areas and parts of the Somerset Levels presents challenges for the provision of appropriate

- transport infrastructure, the viability and accessibility of local services, and employment opportunities.
- Tourism places additional pressures on economy, environment and transport infrastructure, especially during peak seasons and times.
- The rural nature of Somerset and dispersed settlement pattern have made it difficult to sustain cost-effective bus services, with over 90% of our services either wholly or partially subsidised by the Council. There has been an overall decline in patronage on traditional fixed route bus services since 2002, which have been partly due to the introduction of more demand responsive services such as bus and car based community transport.
- Car travel is a significant transport mode in Somerset and is likely to remain so due to our dispersed rural community and the difficulties in providing cost-effective public transport in this environment.

The B3224/B3223/B3358 route across Exmoor is identified as a strategic road – coordinating public transport, maintenance, freight and safety programmes.

Significant investment priorities include: maintaining the road network to support the economy and access to services; increasing the number of people using public transport; ensuring lorries use appropriate routes to improve life in rural communities and; promoting smarter travel choices.

Other Regional Action Plans etc

The Way Ahead – Devon PCT
Important aims:
- Care as local as possible - and as specialised as necessary
- The most effective use of all our resources – for maximum impact
- A say and an influence - promoting partnerships in care
Health and Social Care:
Wider support for people in the community - will require more comprehensive access to individualised packages of care –development of support packages will play a key part in helping people to remain at home.
Developed community hospitals will have a pivotal role for the future and there is a real opportunity to host a range of services and make the most of these important assets.

Strategic Framework – Somerset PCT
Key elements of the strategy:
- improving health;
- eliminating waiting;
- improving health services.
Objectives for improving health services include
- Improving palliative care services
- Building 4 new community hospitals by 2012 (re-provision of a community hospital at Minehead) - to enable each development to provide a greater range of services in a more appropriate local setting.