



Policy & Community Team
Exmoor National Park Authority
Exmoor House
Dulverton
Somerset
TA22 9HL

SENT BY E-MAIL AND POST

31st July 2015

Dear Sir / Madam

EXMOOR LOCAL PLAN PUBLICATION DRAFT CONSULTATION

Introduction

Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the above mentioned consultation. The HBF is the principal representative body of the house-building industry in England and Wales. Our representations reflect the views of our membership, which includes multi-national PLC's, regional developers and small, local builders. In any one year, our members account for over 80% of all new "for sale" market housing built in England and Wales as well as a large proportion of newly built affordable housing. We would like to submit the following comments and in due course attend the Local Plan Examination Hearing Sessions to debate these matters in greater detail.

Housing Needs and Supply

The Northern Peninsula Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment (SHMAA) Update published in January 2015 provides an assessment of housing needs for West Somerset, North Devon and Torridge District Councils including any administrative areas in the Exmoor National Park. The objectively assessed housing need (OAHN) for Exmoor National Park is identified as a range between 664 – 744 dwellings for the plan period 2011 – 2031. A preferred OAHN is set out as 685 dwellings. The selection of a preferred OAHN at the lower end of the range is questionable. As explained in recent Local Plan Inspector's Reports at North Somerset and Brighton and Hove the upper end of a range is more appropriate.

Moreover the derivation of the OAHN is not obvious from the evidence contained in the Northern Peninsula HMA SHMAA Update Final Report dated January 2015 by Housing Vision. The Report is not easy to translate so it is difficult to determine if the OAHN established in the SHMAA work will meet

demographic projections, economic growth, market signals, affordability and boost housing supply as claimed. The HBF has submitted representations to Local Plan consultations for other authorities in the Northern Peninsula Housing Market Area (HMA) which are critical of proposed OAHN figures. The National Park Authority together with other Northern Peninsula HMA authorities should provide further clarification.

The SHMAA establishes that the OAHN for the National Park area in North Devon is 205 dwellings comprising of housing needs for 131 affordable houses and 74 market houses. The OAHN for the National Park area in West Somerset is established as 480 dwellings comprising of housing needs for 306 affordable houses and 174 market houses.

The Housing Topic Paper dated June 2015 sets out that under the Duty to Co-operate 205 dwellings will be provided in the housing requirement set out in the North Devon & Torridge Joint Local Plan to meet OAHN arising in the National Park in North Devon. These dwellings will be provided in North Devon but outside the National Park. With regards to the 174 market housing needs arising within the National Park in West Somerset there is no such agreement between the respective authorities. Indeed as set out in the Duty to Co-operate Statement dated May 2015 under Strategic Priority of Housing Provision the National Park Authority states that West Somerset Council's response to the formal request for assistance with unmet housing needs was "*unable to accommodate*". As a consequence the National Park Authority has submitted objections to the West Somerset Publication Draft Local Plan in March 2015. This unresolved matter of unmet housing needs should be agreed before the submission of the Exmoor Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination.

The Exmoor Local Plan seeks to meet the needs of local communities through policies to support the provision of local needs affordable housing for those who may live and / or work on Exmoor as set out in **Strategic Priority 2, Objectives 12 & 13, Policy GP1(c) and Policy HC-S1 Housing**. The Local Plan does not specify any housing requirement figures for open market nor affordable housing instead a rural exceptions approach is proposed with no housing target only an estimate of local housing need of 306 units over the plan period 2011 – 2031 and no land allocations. The latest Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) estimates a potential land supply of 249 dwellings. This suggests a shortfall between the potential housing land supply and the estimated local affordable housing need.

Open market housing will only be permitted in the form of principle residence housing in Local Service Centres and Villages, if necessary to fund affordable housing. The settlement hierarchy is defined in **Policy GP3 – Spatial Strategy** comprising of three Local Service Villages at Dulverton, Lynton & Lynmouth and Porlock, eighteen named Villages, Porlock Weir (Replacement Development from Coastal Change Management Areas) and Open Countryside everywhere else.

The text box accompanying **Policy HC-S1** should refer to the Written Ministerial Statement dated 25th March 2015 as well as the NPPG.

Section 106 Planning Obligations / CIL

Under **Policy GP5 Securing Planning Benefits – Planning Obligations** the National Park Authority proposes not to adopt a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) at this time but to keep this proposal under review. However by deciding not to have a CIL the National Park Authority should consider the implications if any of the recently imposed pooling restrictions on Section 106 contributions which became effective on 5th April 2015.

Housing Standards

From the reference to dwelling sizes in **Policies HC-S2 (b), HC-D1 (1d), HC-D2 (1d), HC-D3 (1b), HC-D5 (1d), HC-D6 (1e), Hc-D9 (1d) and HC-D17 (2b)** it is not obvious if the National Park Authority is proposing to adopt the nationally described space standard. If this is the intention then in order to do so the National Park Authority must comply with national policy in the form of the Written Ministerial Statement dated 25th March 2015 which states “*the optional new national technical standards should only be required through any new Local Plan policies if they address a clearly evidenced need, and where their impact on viability has been considered, in accordance with the NPPG*”. Paragraph ID: 56-020-20150327 of the NPPG sets out “*where a need for internal space standards is identified, Local Planning Authorities (LPA) should provide justification for requiring internal space policies. LPAs should take account of the following areas :-*

- *need – evidence should be provided on the size and type of dwellings currently being built in the area, to ensure the impacts of adopting space standards can be properly assessed, for example, to consider any potential impact on meeting demand for starter homes.*
- *viability – the impact of adopting the space standard should be considered as part of a plan’s viability assessment with account taken of the impact of potentially larger dwellings on land supply. Local planning authorities will also need to consider impacts on affordability where a space standard is to be adopted.*
- *timing – there may need to be a reasonable transitional period following adoption of a new policy on space standards to enable developers to factor the cost of space standards into future land acquisitions”.*

The above comments on compliance with national policy are also relevant to the reference to adaptable homes in **Policy HC-S2 (a)**.

Car Parking Standards

It is noted that **Policy AC-D3** refers to parking standards. The National Park Authority should re-check for compliance with national policy as the Written Ministerial Statement dated 25th March 2015 states “*This government is keen to ensure that there is adequate parking provision ... in new residential developments The imposition of maximum parking standards under the*

last administration lead to blocked and congested streets and pavement parking. Arbitrarily restricting new off-street parking spaces does not reduce car use, it just leads to parking misery. It is for this reason that the government abolished national maximum parking standards in 2011. The market is best placed to decide if additional parking spaces should be provided. However, many councils have embedded the last administration's revoked policies. Following a consultation, we are now amending national planning policy to further support the provision of car parking spaces. Parking standards are covered in paragraph 39 of the NPPF. The following text now needs to be read alongside that paragraph: "Local Planning Authorities should only impose local parking standards for residential and non-residential development where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage their local road network."

Neighbourhood Planning

Paragraph 184 of the NPPF requires that Neighbourhood Plans should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider area therefore Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan in the case of Exmoor Local Plan these strategic policies are set out in **Policies GP1 to GP5**. A Neighbourhood Plan only takes precedence over non-strategic policies of the Local Plan (paragraph 185 of the NPPF) in the determination of decisions on planning applications (paragraph 183 of the NPPF). Therefore a precedence in favour of the Lyton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan as set out in **Policy ES-S2** should not usurp the strategic policies of the Exmoor Local Plan. Further consideration should be given to this policy by the National Park Authority to determine whether or not it conforms to national policy.

Conclusion

For the Exmoor Local Plan to be found sound under the four tests of soundness defined by paragraph 182 of the NPPF, the Local Plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and compliant with national policy. There are a number of concerns about the soundness of the Local Plan in particular **Policies HC-S1, HC-S2, HC-D1 to D3, HC-D5, HC-D6, HC-D9, HC-D17, AC-D3** and **ES-S2** as outlined above. The National Park Authority should re-consider these policies otherwise the Local Plan is at risk of not been positively prepared and properly justified and therefore inconsistent with national policy and unlikely to be effective. It is hoped that these comments are of assistance to the National Park Authority in informing the next stages of the Exmoor Local Plan. In the meantime if any further information or assistance is required please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully
for and on behalf of **HBF**



Susan E Green MRTPI
Planning Manager – Local Plans

e-mail: sue.green@hbf.co.uk Mobile : 07817 865534