

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1: National Park Context**

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**Appendix 3: Letter from West Somerset Council to Exmoor National Park Authority**

## Appendix 1: National Park Context

### EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATION

A1.1 Exmoor was designated as a National Park in 1954. Approximately two thirds of the area of the National Park lies within West Somerset and one third in North Devon. It has a resident population of 10,273 people. Approximately three-quarters of the population are within the West Somerset area of the National Park, and a quarter within North Devon. A total of 42 parishes are within (or partly within) the National Park with most of the population living in small dispersed settlements. Exmoor National Park is one of the few upland areas in southern England. It provides a unique landscape of moorland, woodland, valleys, farmland and coast. Its remoteness, topography and climate have helped to maintain a large extent of well preserved, semi-natural upland landscapes and undeveloped coastline

### NATIONAL PARK STATUTORY PURPOSES AND DUTY

- A1.2 The statutory purposes of National Parks are set out under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by the Environment Act 1995, and are:
- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage (of the National Parks); and
  - to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities (of the National Parks) by the public.
- A1.3 The National Park Authority's primary responsibility is to deliver the statutory purposes. In pursuing National Park purposes, National Park Authorities have a duty to *"seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park and shall for that purpose co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of the National Park"*. Within the Parks, conserving and enhancing the landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage, dark skies and natural resources, and promoting public understanding and enjoyment of these should lie at the very heart of developing a strong economy and sustaining thriving local communities.<sup>2</sup>
- A1.4 Section 62 of the Environment Act also requires all relevant authorities to *"have regard to the statutory purposes in exercising or performing any functions in the National Park and; if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, to attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area"*, known as the 'Sandford Principle'.

### NATIONAL POLICY

A1.5 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should *'use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far*

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<sup>2</sup> DEFRA (2010) English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular, London: DEFRA.

as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework.<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 14 also states that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs unless:

- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.<sup>4</sup>

A1.6 The NPPF recognises the special circumstances in delivering housing within National Parks, which are given “*the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty...[and] great weight to the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage*”.<sup>5</sup> The purposes of National Parks and duties of relevant bodies set out in the Environment Act 1995 (sections 61 and 62) carry great weight and in themselves provide the context for interpreting policy.

A1.7 The NPPF refers to the Vision and Circular for the English National Parks and the Broads (2010) which sets out policy guidance specifically for the English National Parks for all those whose decisions or actions might affect them.<sup>6</sup> “*The Government recognises that the Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing and does not therefore provide general housing targets for them. The expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services*”. National Park Authorities are expected to “*include policies that pro-actively respond to local housing needs*” in their Local Plans, and to prioritise affordable housing for local needs.<sup>7</sup> It notes the importance of affordable housing in rural areas, including for the sustainability of National Parks and their communities recognising that high external demand for housing in National Parks has driven up house prices. The Circular recognises that Authorities have an important role to play as planning authorities in the delivery of affordable housing though they are neither housing authorities nor housing providers.<sup>8</sup>

A1.8 Public bodies have a duty to co-operate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to the strategic priorities. Joint working should enable local planning authorities to work together to meet development requirements which cannot wholly be met within their own areas – for instance because of a lack of physical capacity or because to do so would cause significant harm to the principles and policies of the NPPF.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Communities and Local Government (March 2012) National Planning Policy Framework, London: DCLG, Para. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Footnote 9 of Para. 14

DCLG (2014) Press Release: Councils must protect our precious green belt land [Online] Available:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/councils-must-protect-our-precious-green-belt-land>.

Planning Practice Guidance: Paragraph: 044 Reference ID: 3-044-20141006

<sup>5</sup> Department of Communities and Local Government (March 2012) National Planning Policy Framework, London: DCLG, paragraph 115.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Footnote 25 of paragraph 115.

<sup>7</sup> DEFRA (2010) English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision and Circular 2010, London: DEFRA, para 78.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Para. 76

<sup>9</sup> Department of Communities and Local Government (March 2012) National Planning Policy Framework, London: DCLG, paragraphs 178-179.

A1.9 National guidance for the delivery of housing in rural areas is that local planning authorities should respond to local circumstances and plan for housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through exception sites where appropriate.<sup>10</sup> It acknowledges that housing supply and affordability are issues in rural areas, recognising the role of housing in supporting the broader sustainability of rural settlements to ensure the viable use of local services and facilities to maintain thriving communities.<sup>11</sup>

## **LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

A1.10 An assessment of the landscape sensitivity of the National Park settlements to housing development demonstrated the limited capacity for new housing on greenfield sites within the National Park without detriment to landscape character.<sup>12</sup> The finite existing stock of accommodation, buildings and previously developed land/buildings is therefore an important component of future supply, to minimise the level of greenfield housing development within the National Park and ensure that, in the longer term beyond the plan period, there will still be some suitable housing sites in settlements to help meet the needs of National Park communities.

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Communities and Local Government (March 2012) National Planning Policy Framework, London: DCLG. Para. 5

<sup>11</sup> Planning Practice Guidance: Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 50-001-20140306 Revision date: 06 03 201

<sup>12</sup> Bryan, P (2013) Exmoor National Park Landscape Sensitivity Study, Dulverton: ENPA – updated to include Porlock Weir in 2015 (capacity for 326 units).