



The Planning Framework

The Dartmoor National Park Authority is the sole Planning Authority within the National Park. As such, it is responsible for preparing, monitoring and reviewing all planning policies which directly affect development within the National Park and for controlling all those things which require planning permission. It has to decide whether planning permission is needed and has to be notified of all proposals for farm and forestry buildings or roads and various other types of development, which are in principle permitted by legislation.

National legislation contains basic principles by which development is controlled throughout the country. This is backed up by *Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs)* or *Planning Policy Statements (PPSs)* on specific topics which are periodically issued and revised by central government. *Regional Planning Guidance* provides a strategic planning framework for the south west of England and other regions to guide policy formulation at the more local level. This is to be replaced by the *Regional Spatial Strategy* (being prepared by the Regional Assembly). *The Devon Structure Plan* contains broad planning policies. The *Dartmoor National Park Local Plan* interprets and adds detail to those policies and provides additional planning guidance. The overall aim of the planning policies is to protect the landscape and the built environment while ensuring that the essential needs of the local communities can be met. Both the Structure Plan and the Local Plan will be replaced by the *Regional Spatial Strategy* and a *Local Development Framework* (being prepared by the National Park Authority).

Outside the towns and main villages of the National Park, planning permission for new buildings is generally granted only if the

purpose of the development is to do with agriculture or forestry, or some other operation which can only be carried on in the countryside.

Permission may also be granted if something of significant interest, such as an historic building, can be saved through development. The reason for such control is that development is there for a long time; usually much longer than the lifespan, or desires, of the applicant; and the impact of a scatter of new development on the landscape is very significant, often resulting in a steady deterioration in the appearance of an area.

Some buildings of architectural and historic importance are **listed** by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and alterations to them - including some internal ones - are very strictly controlled. Where whole areas within towns and villages are of particular value **Conservation Areas** have been designated. Here, extra care is taken over the detail of the buildings and the character of the area, and there is additional control over the demolition of some buildings and the felling of trees.

Tree Preservation Orders can be made to protect trees that form an important part of the landscape. Once made, the owner must consult with the Authority before felling, topping or lopping the trees unless they are dead, dying or dangerous.

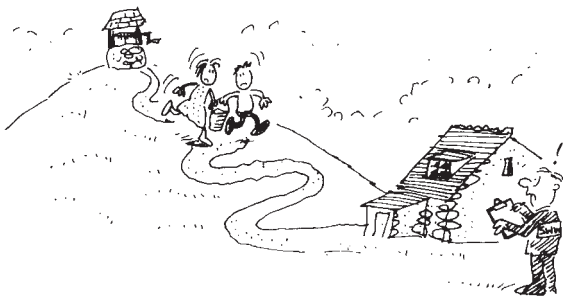


Factors considered by National Park Authority planners before recommending that permission is granted or refused.

- 1 Does the idea comply with the *Devon Structure Plan* and *Dartmoor National Park Local Plan*? These contain the overall policy framework for development within the National Park (to be replaced by the *Regional Spatial Strategy* and a *Local Development Framework*).

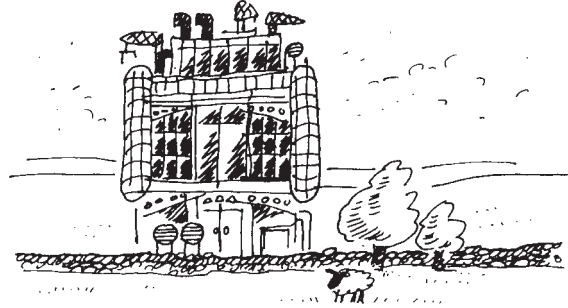
It is important to remember that in National Parks the conservation of the landscape is normally the most important consideration. Development will not normally be allowed unless it is required to meet local needs or will improve the character of the area.

- 2 Does the new development affect a Conservation Area, a Listed Building, or a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order?
- 3 Will traffic flow be affected? Will there be safe access to roads? Will there be parking problems? Is the proposal environmentally sustainable? The County Environment Director can give an expert opinion on matters concerning roads.



- 4 How will surface water and sewage be safely disposed of? Does the land lie in a flood plain? It is the job of South West Water and the Environment Agency to give guidance on these matters.

- 5 Does the position of the building, its shape and usage fit well into the surrounding landscape? Are the design and the materials to be used in keeping with the local character? The National Park Authority has produced guidelines to help make new buildings look in keeping with the surrounding area.



- 6 What effects will the development have on other local residents? Will it intrude on their privacy or create a lot of noise? Local people can make comments to the National Park Authority on all applications.

The Procedure

- 1 The application is received by the National Park Authority and is initially checked for validity and then registered on a computer handling system. A check is also carried out to ensure that the correct fee has been paid (the Government sets out a scale of fees for all types of application).
- 2 The Parish Council is sent a copy of the application and consultations are carried out with bodies such as the District Council, South West Water, the Environment Agency and the County Environment Director. They have 21 days to give their comments or advice.
- 3 Each application is advertised with a site notice. Parish Councils publish a list of applications received on their local noticeboard(s) and will make their copy of the application available to members of the public by arrangement. Any important applications are also advertised in the local press (this is required by law in the case of Listed Buildings and, in most cases, applications within Conservation Areas).
- 4 **Delegation** - in the interests of a speedier system a wide range of applications can be dealt with by the Director of Planning and Sustainable Development. This means that the application does not have to be considered by the Development Control Committee and it may take no more than 6 weeks to be decided.
- 5 **Report to the Development Control Committee** - this is necessary when a proposal is controversial and sufficient information has been received from the consultees. Representations made by the general public are considered and the officers formulate a recommendation, usually to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 6 **The Development Control Committee** - meets once a month. It consists of all 26 Authority members: seven County Councillors, seven District Councillors, five Parish Council representatives (appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) and seven members, also appointed by the Secretary of State, to represent the national interest.

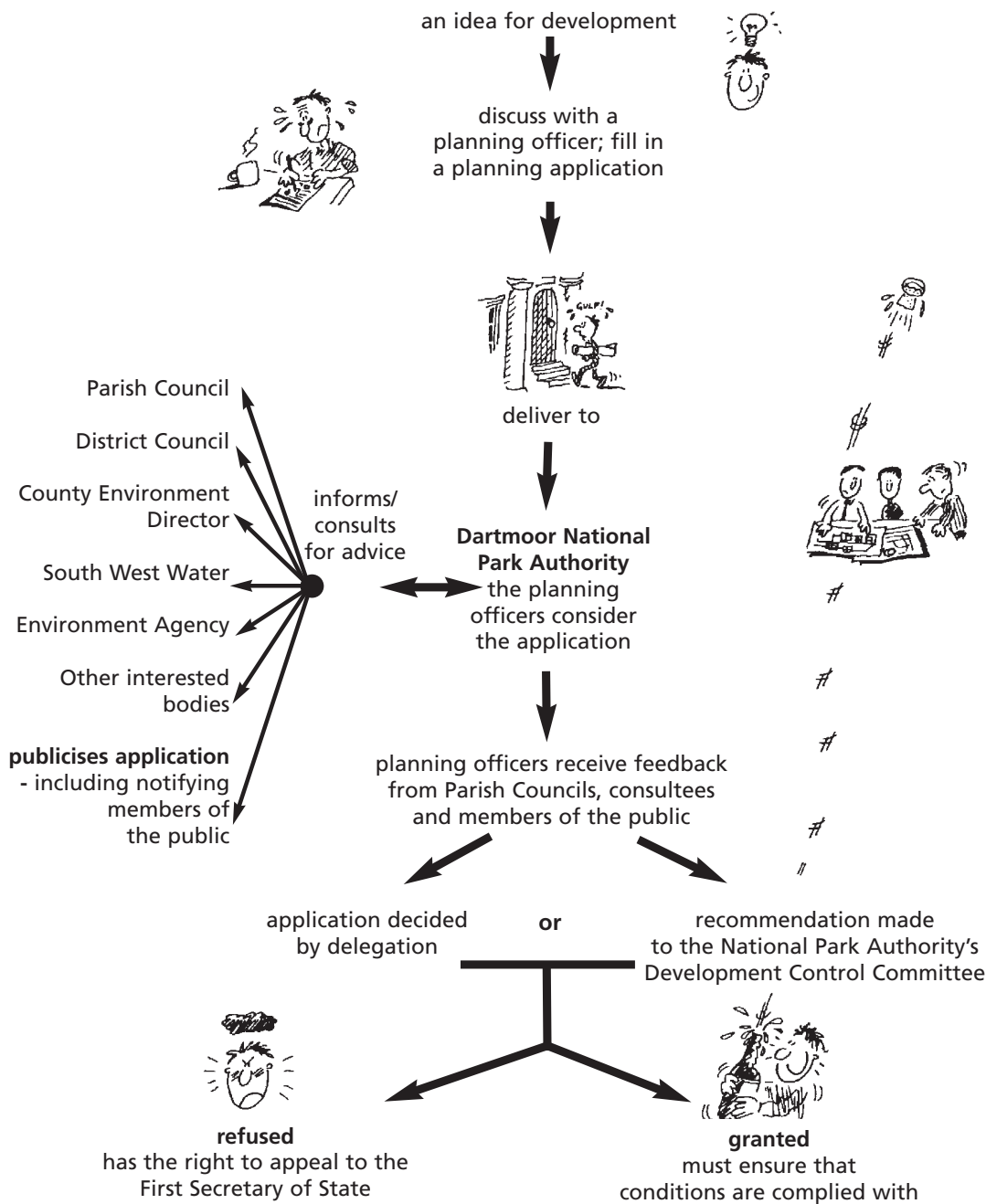
The Committee normally makes its decision on the basis of the report and recommendation. However, in some cases a site inspection is considered necessary and a panel of members visits the site, accompanied by the applicant and District and Parish Council representatives. The panel reaches a conclusion which is taken account of by officers in making a recommendation to the next meeting of the Development Control Committee.

- 7 **If permission is refused**, the applicant has 6 months in which to appeal to the First Secretary of State (the Deputy Prime Minister).

The appeal can take three forms:

- a) **Written Representations**: the parties involved state their case in writing and an Inspector is appointed to consider the case and make the final decision.
- b) **Informal Hearing**: an Inspector chairs a meeting where the parties discuss the issues involved in the consideration of the case. Again the Inspector makes the decision.
- c) **Public Inquiry**: an Inspector officiates at a formal meeting where all the representations are heard and witnesses can be cross-examined. The Inspector usually decides the case, but sometimes reports to the First Secretary of State who then makes the decision.

Flow diagram to illustrate the procedure for applying for planning permission



Further information available from our web site
www.dartmoor-mpa.gov.uk
 Visit the A-Z to access resources listed.

- Other publications:**
- *Dartmoor National Park Local Plan First Review 1995 – 2011 (Adopted Version)*
 - *Dartmoor National Park Management Plan 2001*
 - *Public Question Time*: public speaking in respect of planning applications, meetings
 - Development Control Charter
 - *Wildlife in Your Buildings*: what to do if you find swallows in your shed or bats in your roof.
- Other information:**
- Keep up to date - view the monthly Development Control Committee reports.

For further information, and a list of other Fact Sheets available, contact the:
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