

Dartmoor National Park Authority
Examination into the Core Strategy Development Plan Document
Hearing Sessions

The response of the Dartmoor National Park Authority to the Draft Issues

Matter 1 : ACHIEVEMENT OF THE RESTRAINED LEVEL OF HOUSING GROWTH SET OUT IN THE EMERGING REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (RSS)

1 Table 1 (p49) of the CS shows a significant projected population annual increase in the NP between 2011 and 2016, roughly equivalent to the 2004-2006 change, but more than the 2006-2011 increase. Is there an explanation for this? What are the implications?

1.1 The population projection figures have been checked by a demographer who has done work for Devon County Council and the South West Regional Assembly. The figures that were used to prepare the population projections contained a data error, which although only a relatively small number had a big effect on the 2011 percentage increase. The entire dataset has been reworked and the following figures derived , which will be used in the final version of the Core Strategy.

2004 population	33853	increase on 2001 figure	+0.9%
2005	34054		+1.5%
2006	34224		+2.0%
2011	34635		+3.2%
2016	35230		+5.0%
2021	35299		+5.2%

2 Whilst not a target or ceiling, the draft RSS's 50 dwellings per year "estimate of provision against strictly local needs only" is currently being exceeded, but mainly by the provision of market housing rather than "local needs" housing. The paper "The Provision of Affordable Housing in DNP" (CD9/) at paragraph (¶) 7.3 highlights a 2000-2006 building rate of 112 homes per year with 19% affordable. Has the trend changed since policies in the 2004 adopted Local Plan (LP) have had time to come into effect? Does Table 3 (p51 of the CS) imply that it has not?*

2.1 The Local Plan was approved in the summer of 2004 and it was conceded that the impact of those policies on the numbers of houses built would take time to trickle down. It was only to be expected that the full impact of the new policies in the local plan would not begin to impact on dwelling completions until well after their adoption.

2.2 However, perhaps surprisingly and tellingly, the numbers of new dwellings granted planning permission between April 2005 and March 2007, are at a similar level to dwelling completions for the period 2000-2006. Most of these permissions are for open market housing. This reinforces the view of the Authority that a more determined policy stance in favour of promoting affordable housing and reducing opportunity for open market housing is entirely warranted.

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3 Will the Core Strategy (CS) policies deliver the draft RSS vision of housing for "strictly local needs only"? Is the CS any more restrictive than the adopted LP, or more promotional of affordable housing?

3.1 The Authority is very conscious of the reference in the Draft RSS that the housing figure for the Dartmoor National Park should be for 'strictly local needs only' and indeed as a 4/4 Authority it had an influence in this wording. It welcomes this clear message that open market housing to meet strategic housing requirements is not appropriate in the National Park.

3.1 The new Core Strategy is much more restrictive of open market provision in the smaller settlements than its predecessor local plan with a general principle that only affordable housing should be allowed in these settlements.

3.3 In the Local Centres, COR15 also sets a very high **minimum** requirement for affordable housing (at least 50%) but still acknowledges that there are circumstances where market housing would be permissible in order that the most suitable sites in the Local Centres come forward and that development is viable. In seeking to respond to community and environmental interests in the individual Local Centres some limited flexibility is felt to be needed in order to deliver those wider community and environmental benefits and Policy COR 15 recognises this.

3.4 The Authority at the exploratory meeting indicated that, together with partners, it would carry out housing need surveys (where these do not exist already) in each of the Local Centres to aid the detailed policies and any allocations in the Development Control and Site Allocation DPD. There may be specific types of market development that would assist in meeting the requirements of an individual community and the results of the surveys could advise on the nature of any specific types of market housing that would best meet a locally generated requirement. The Authority is conscious that the Plymouth HMA particularly flagged up small units and market housing for the elderly. However the Authority feels that such needs should be sought within the overall restrictions imposed by COR15 and it is felt that this is the correct approach within the national park. Additions to paras 5.9.13 and 5.9.14 in the schedule of changes are proposed to make this clear.

4 Are the terms "local needs housing" and "affordable housing" synonymous?

4.1 As far as this strategy is concerned they are synonymous though as discussed in the above response to question 3, the provision of market housing, where such housing is permissible under COR 15, could assist in providing housing for which there is a local requirement and which is

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currently underrepresented in the housing stock. Additionally of course, the Core Strategy does give scope for the provision of housing to meet the needs of farming and forestry and other rural businesses.

5 Has the inclusion of garden land within the national definition of previously developed land ("brownfield") created any difficulties, particularly in small settlements?

5.1 Because of the high prices commanded for any building land in the National Park, there has been substantial interest in private garden development in recent years. The Authority has concerns about this in terms of the cumulative impact on the local environment. While the development of previously developed land remains favoured, the Core Strategy indicates that the Authority will take a more cautionary approach to all issues of open space within settlements. This includes the contribution to the local environment that private gardens make. It is expected that this will lead to more detailed policy guidance in the Development Control and Site Allocations DPD. The Core Strategy will reduce pressure on such land by reducing hope value in the Rural Settlements.

6 Are there situations where family market housing has been treated as meeting "local needs", and if so, on what evidence?

6.1 No, though no doubt some of the market housing that has been permitted in recent years has been occupied by local families and has therefore helped to meet the housing requirements of those local families. Clearly though those families have had the resources to access the open market. Existing market housing and the modest provision of additional market housing as provided for in the Core Strategy will provide continued opportunity.

7 Is market housing effectively limited to the 8 Local Centres and then only as a mechanism for delivering affordable housing? Are there circumstances where this would apply in Rural Settlements?

7.1 Effectively yes and an alteration to Policy COR 15 is proposed in the schedule of changes to make this clear. The policy COR 15 does however give some flexibility for the proportion of affordable housing sought to be varied in exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to enable development of significant environmental or community benefit to proceed within the local centres.

7.2 The Authority contends that the principle of 'affordable housing only' in the Rural Settlement is an important one but concedes that there may

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be wholly exceptional situations within a Rural Settlement which emerge during the period of this strategy where the redevelopment of previously developed land is essential on environmental grounds and redevelopment is demonstrably unviable without market housing. We would regard this as a matter for an allocation in the Development Control /Site Allocations DPD where such special circumstances can be identified. The Authority is acutely conscious of one such situation within the National Park, which led to the allocation of 2 garage sites at Mary Tavy in the adopted Local Plan. This is a saved proposal of the plan. That land currently remains undeveloped but it has been the subject of ongoing discussion with the community and with developers, a development brief has been produced and the principle of redevelopment is widely supported by the community.

8 Is there a justification for including Wrangaton in the list of Rural settlements?

8.1 Wrangaton itself has no community facilities, is very small and is one of a number of such hamlets in the national park. If Wrangaton were to be included in the list then consideration would need to be given to a large number of like hamlets and groups of dwellings. There is a post office, garage and public house (currently closed) close by but they are located at Wrangaton Cross on the line of the old A38 and are separate from Wrangaton itself. While these facilities are no doubt important to the local population, they are essentially roadside facilities disconnected from the hamlet of Wrangaton. Moreover, there is very little in the way of adjacent development at Wrangaton Cross and very little village 'feel' at either Wrangaton or Wrangaton Cross. The Authority therefore does not feel that there is a justification for Wrangaton being included in the list of rural settlements.

9 Is Princetown rightly included in the list of Local Centres?

9.1 It is considered that Princetown is appropriately defined as a Local Centre. In terms of its services and facilities it scores 9.7 out of a possible 12, higher than Horrabridge at 9 (Core document CD10/15 refers). Princetown, while not possessing a substantial rural hinterland in population terms, is an important provider of services for smaller moorland communities to the east. The settlement is regarded by all local authorities in the area as a place where resources to aid community regeneration and improve local facilities should be channelled, which would strengthen its role.

The Authority does not feel that a change to the plan is merited.

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10 Should Ashburton and Buckfastleigh be defined as District Centres in line with PPS6? Would there be any additional benefit in clarity?

The Authority considers that to introduce a separate category for Buckfastleigh and Ashburton would be unnecessary and actually diminish clarity. The catchment areas for the two settlements are small in population terms and their individual populations are much smaller than Bovey Tracey, which has been identified by Teignbridge District Council as a District Centre. PPS6 gives no absolute criteria for assessment and the Authority has continued to use the Devon Structure Plan categories for the definition of Dartmoor's settlements. The Authority is not proposing strategic policy differences between Ashburton and Buckfastleigh and the other identified Local Centres in the National Park and sees no compelling reason for a separate designation for them.