

Part 3: Landscape Planning Guidelines





Introduction

3.1 The Purpose and Format of the Landscape Planning Guidelines

3.1.1 The landscape planning guidelines are intended for use by planners, developers, land agents and members of the public in preparation of submitting planning applications, and by Exmoor National Park Authority Members when making planning decisions. The purpose of the landscape planning guidelines is to provide pre-application guidance to ensure that new development considers and fits comfortably into its landscape surroundings, and makes a positive contribution to landscape and settlement character. To do this, it is necessary to think about, and understand, the relationships between buildings/ structures and their landscape settings. The landscape planning guidelines (together with the relevant sections of the Landscape Character Type / Landscape Character Area profiles in Part 4) help provide the necessary tools to do this. Exmoor National Park Authority will use the document to guide decision making on the acceptability of proposals. Applicants should therefore make an assessment of their proposal against the criteria set out in the landscape planning guidelines.

3.1.2 The landscape planning guidelines are intended to provide additional guidance in relation to policies in the *Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031* (see 3.2.1). The Local Plan, along with Neighbourhood Plans, forms the statutory development plan for Exmoor National Park, including for minerals and waste development. It links to the *Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan* which sets out Exmoor's special qualities, the long term vision, objectives and priorities to be achieved on Exmoor. It provides a framework for integrating the various activities of the National Park Authority and for stimulating and co-ordinating action by other agencies. The Partnership Plan vision and objectives are shared with the Local Plan. The Local Plan also sets out the strategic priorities and policies to guide development in the National Park, and a spatial strategy directs development to the most sustainable locations.

3.1.3 Exmoor National Park Authority has prepared a number of existing design documents, and the landscape planning guidelines are intended to

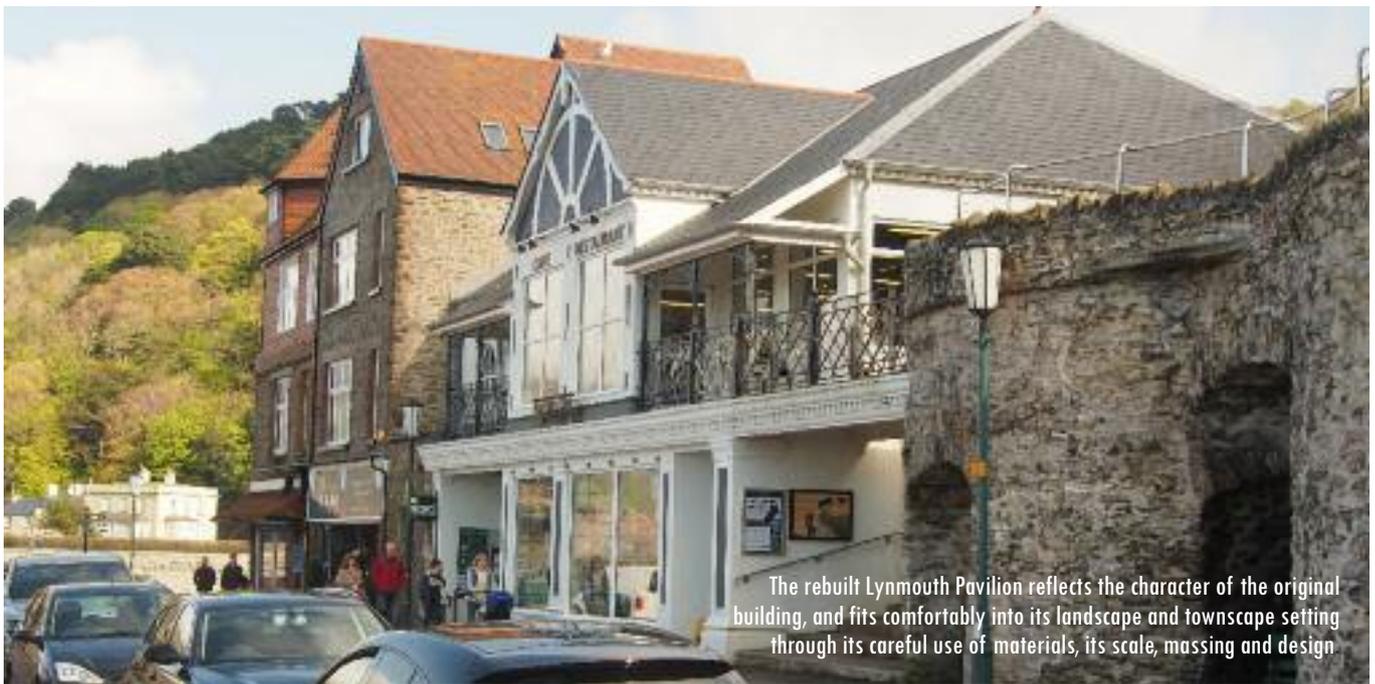
complement these, and to be used in conjunction with them. Other key documents to be considered are:

- ***Landscape Sensitivity Study***
Exmoor National Park Authority 2013¹
This document focusses on the 22 named settlements in the adopted Local Plan 2001-2011. The study was amended to include Porlock Weir to ensure it is consistent with the named settlements identified in the new Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031. It provides an assessment of the landscape sensitivity of these settlements, which in turn informs their capacity to accommodate small-scale housing development on greenfield sites within or adjoining the existing settlement, whilst conserving and enhancing the National Park's nationally important landscape.
- ***The Exmoor Design Guide***
Exmoor National Park Authority 1995 and any future design guidance
This document provides a detailed analysis of Exmoor's buildings in terms of their style, materials, scale, features, layouts etc. It provides architectural advice on details such as windows and roof pitches, and is intended to assist those engaged in designing, extending and converting buildings in the Exmoor National Park.
- ***Conservation Area Appraisals***
This series of documents relate to each of the 16 Conservation Areas within Exmoor National Park. They contain a substantial amount of detailed information on the buildings within each Conservation Area, including their form, design features and materials, as well as a summary of significance for each Conservation Area. The information within the Conservation Area Appraisals is therefore a useful source to aid understanding of local distinctiveness and vernacular styles, which can inform the design of new development.

¹ Updated in 2015 to include Porlock Weir

3.1.4 The landscape planning guidelines contain a number of sections. Following this introduction, there is a list of relevant planning policies which should be taken into account when new development is being considered. However, it is important to note that the Local Plan should be read as a whole, because other planning policies in the Local Plan will also have regard to the conservation and enhancement of landscape character. This is followed by a general explanation of the sensitivities of the Exmoor landscape to

development. The sections on advice for developers and general guidelines on the integration of development into the landscape provide guidance on how to use landscape character to inform design, and how to look at development sites within their landscape context. It is important to also refer to the Landscape Character Type / Landscape Character Area profiles in Part 4 for guidelines relating to specific areas of the National Park.



3.2 Relevant Planning Policies

3.2.1 The landscape planning guidelines will be particularly relevant when addressing the planning policies. However, when applying for planning permission it is important that the Local Plan is read as a whole to ensure all relevant policies are taken into account:

Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031	
GP1	General Policy: National Park Purposes And Sustainable Development
GP3	General Policy: Spatial Strategy
GP4	General Policy: The Efficient Use Of Land And Buildings
CE-S1 CE-D1	Landscape And Seascape Character Protecting Exmoor's Landscapes And Seascapes
CE-S2	Protecting Exmoor's Dark Night Sky
CE-S3 CE-D2	Biodiversity And Green Infrastructure Green Infrastructure Provision
CE-S4 CE-D3	Cultural Heritage And Historic Environment Conserving Heritage Assets
CE-S5	Principles For The Conversion Or Structural Alteration Of Existing Buildings
CE-S6 CE-D5	Design And Sustainable Construction Principles Advertisements And Private Road Signs
CE-S7	Small Scale Working Or Re-Working For Building And Roofing Stone
CC-S2	Coastal Development
CC-S5	Low Carbon And Renewable Energy Development
AC-S4	Electricity And Communications Networks
SE-S4	Agricultural And Forestry Development

3.3 The Sensitivities of Exmoor's Landscapes to Development

3.3.1 This section describes the key characteristics of Exmoor's landscapes which are particularly sensitive to development. To understand the sensitivities it is first necessary to consider the special qualities of the National Park defined by the National Park Authority, and described in Section 2.2.3

3.3.2 These special qualities of Exmoor inform what is sensitive about the landscape to the introduction of new development. The landscape sensitivities listed below should remain at the forefront of all design and decision making.

- **Smooth, uncluttered horizons** which form a backdrop in views and are sensitive to visual disruption as a result of development;
- **Expanses of open moorland** with few buildings or structures and long views which are sensitive to new built structures (both within and beyond the National Park boundary) that create visual interruptions and changes in character;
- **Mosaics of historic field patterns** developed over several centuries which are sensitive to loss as a result of new buildings and/or settlement growth;
- **Intact settlement patterns** with strong physical and visual relationships between settlements and topography, rivers or springs, which are sensitive to settlement expansion that changes these established relationships and patterns;
- **Ancient farmsteads** with groups of buildings often built in **sheltered valley-side locations**, which are sensitive to the introduction of new agricultural buildings that have a different scale and character;
- **Tranquil areas** where connections can be made with the natural environment, which are susceptible to cumulative development, noise and urbanising influences within the landscape and lanes;
- **Rivers and streams** which are sensitive to in-river and riverside recreational pressures altering character and reducing tranquillity.
- Recognisable **visual unity** in certain Landscape Character Types, giving rise to **characterful villages** which are susceptible to expansion that lacks distinction or relationship with traditional built form, despite a lack of a single strong vernacular style across the National Park;
- **Dark night skies** which are susceptible to light intrusion from new development and street lighting both within and outside the National Park.

3.4 Advice for Developers

3.4.1 This section provides a method to help applicants and agents to consider development proposals within their landscape and visual context. Planning applications must have regard to planning policies and include consideration of landscape context and impacts on views in order to be fully considered.

Read the relevant general guidelines in the following section

for the type of development which you are considering, and adhere to these guidelines when considering the location and design of your development.

Consider the landscape context of your site

Start with an assessment of the wider area surrounding your site, before 'zooming-in' to the site itself. Consider such matters as site elevation, landform, existing vegetation, access.

Identify which Landscape Character Type (LCT) your site is in, and any others nearby

For example, if your site is within LCT F (Enclosed Farmlands) but close to Type D (Open Moorland) then you will need to think about the impacts of the development on Type D as well as Type F. Part 4 contains information and planning guidelines for each LCT.

Work out where your site can be seen from

To do this, go to the site and look out. Note any viewpoints, hill summits, roads, public rights of way, open access land, settlements or historic sites that you can see. Your site may (probably will) be visible from these places, and you will need to consider the impact of your development on the views from these locations.

Think about potential views of the site from different directions and angles

Remember that a location which appears against a backdrop of land in one view may form the skyline in another view.

Analyse your site, explain and reconsider if necessary.

Consider whether your proposed development meets the guidelines below, and demonstrate how it sits acceptably in the landscape. Consider alternative sites or designs if the proposal doesn't fit with the character of the surrounding landscape, is highly visible, or it is difficult to apply the relevant guidelines. Reconsider the proposed development if it still does not comply or is detrimental to National Park purposes. Remember that not all developments are going to be acceptable in a very sensitive landscape such as Exmoor National Park

3.5 General Guidelines on the Integration of Development into the Exmoor Landscape

3.5.1 This section sets out broad guidelines on integrating development successfully into the Exmoor landscape. These guidelines apply to all landscapes within Exmoor National Park. National Park-wide guidelines have been provided in respect of:

- **New developments in open countryside;**
- **New developments within/ adjacent to existing settlements;**
- **Vertical features (e.g. communications masts and wind turbines)**

3.5.2 The Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment (2018) demonstrates that the landscape of Exmoor is very varied. The report identifies and describes both the Landscape Character Types (LCTs), and the individual Landscape Character Areas contained within them. Every development site should be considered in the context of the LCT it is sited within and in the context of the LCTs adjacent to it. In certain areas the Seascape Character Assessment should also be used to inform. Each development site should also be considered in the contexts of wider views in which it will be seen. Part 4 of the Exmoor Landscape Character Assessment (2018) contains LCT-specific planning guidance, which should be referenced.

3.5.3 Certain developments may require additional information regarding landscape context and landscape and visual impact to be submitted as part of a planning application. Where an Environmental Impact Assessment is required through legislation, or where proposals are significant in terms of scale and/ or impact, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be required. For other projects, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal may be required.

3.5.4 Consideration needs to be given to the potential impacts of development beyond the National Park boundary, including urban development (e.g. around Minehead), agricultural developments, telecommunications infrastructure, renewable energy developments (wind farms and solar farms) and highways works. Some of this development will inevitably have an impact on the National Park itself, as in some places there are extensive views from the National Park, including across neighbouring settlements. Therefore this guidance should also be used in connection with proposals for development outside the boundary which may have an impact on the setting of the National Park. Under Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995, Relevant Authorities are obliged to have regard to National Park purposes i.e. firstly **To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area;** and secondly **To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities by the public.** Whilst doing so, they should seek to foster social and economic well-being of the National Park's communities.

3.5.5 Exmoor National Park Authority partners such as Local Authorities, other protected landscapes partnerships and Highways Authorities are therefore also encouraged to make use of these guidelines and to consider potential effects on Exmoor National Park and its setting in their decision making. As well as visual impacts, detrimental impacts on tranquillity through noise or movement should also be taken into consideration.



3.5.6 Guidelines for new developments in open countryside

<p>Minimise the visibility of the development and negative impacts on landscape character</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure that new development fits with the surrounding landscape through avoidance of sites on skylines and prominent spurs of land, particularly within or where they would impact on LCT A (High Coastal Heath) and LCT D (Open Moorland). ● Consider the prominence of the site when seen from popular viewpoints such as hill summits, car parks, settlements and public rights of way. Choose a less prominent site if possible. ● Consider how new development is sited in relation to any nearby buildings in terms of scale, massing and form – for example use shorter span frames to break up large buildings. ● When siting a new building, ensure it is well-related to existing building groups. ● Materials for roofs and walls should be able to weather naturally and be non-reflective. Colours should be carefully selected to be recessive and to blend in to the landscape backdrop. Wooded or well-treed backdrops may help to reduce the visibility of a structure by providing a background which is relatively easy to blend into. ● Minimise external lighting and light spill from buildings.
<p>Work with the form and existing features of the landscape</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aim to site new buildings in folds of the landform to provide screening, shelter and better visual integration with the landscape. ● Make use of existing contours, minimising earthworks and the need for cut and fill. ● On sloping sites, align new buildings parallel with contours, break up rooflines to reflect the landform, and avoid siting development high up on open slopes. ● Retain existing landscape features (e.g. field boundaries, trees, hedges, hedgebanks and streams), especially those which link the site to the surrounding landscape. ● Use existing access tracks where possible, rather than new ones. ● Locate new farm buildings in the context of existing ones to form a group, and to create a sense of continuity between old and new farm buildings.
<p>Identify opportunities to enhance landscape character</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where screening is required, use native species of trees in traditional patterns (e.g. use beech hedgebanks, rather than clumps of conifers). ● Use traditional hedges and hedgebanks to help screen and integrate development and access tracks.
<p>Consider the landscape and visual impacts of all parts of the development, not just buildings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make sure that boundary and surface treatments are low-key and respond to the rural character, and do not visually stand out. E.g. bright white concrete yards and tracks can be highly visible. ● Retain existing gateways, gateposts etc. and avoid widening of lanes and entrances unless absolutely necessary, in order to retain the character of rural lanes and tracks. ● Locate functional features such as feed stores/ silos and machinery storage areas within/ behind buildings, or provide adequate screening. ● Consider the impacts of the proposed new development on all aspects of tranquillity, including sound and movement.

3.5.7 Guidelines for new developments within/ adjacent to existing settlements

<p>Fit with the built form of the existing settlement to enhance sense of place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider the existing relationship of the settlement with the landscape and the traditional settlement pattern, whether this is nucleated or dispersed. For example, if a settlement has traditionally been located in the valley floor, try to avoid extending development up the valley sides. ● Make sure that new development is integrated appropriately within or adjacent to the existing settlement pattern, and not seen as separate from it. ● Identify the existing street pattern and character, and reflect this in the proposed buildings. ● Ensure that the scale and form of the proposed building fits with the size of the site, and is consistent with neighbouring buildings.
<p>Complement existing buildings and enhance local distinctiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Buildings of a size, scale or location which would impact on important views (e.g. of church towers and other built landmarks) should be avoided. ● New buildings should reference and consider the materials, colours and design of traditional buildings which lie in the vicinity in order to reinforce local distinctiveness of built form. ● New buildings should fit with existing buildings in terms of their size, height, scale and massing. ● Ensure that new development plots reflect typical plot characteristics in the vicinity (for example, consider density, size, shape, boundary treatments and ratio of building to space).
<p>Respect and enhance the character of the landscape which forms the setting to the settlement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development within or which would impact on LCT A (High Coastal Heath) and LCT D (Open Moorland) should be generally be avoided unless it is essential to help conserve or enhance its special qualities. ● Development in prominent locations, particularly skylines and ridge tops, should be avoided. ● Ensure that the proposed building relates to topography and ground levels, and minimise use of cut and fill. ● Make maximum use of existing trees and landscape features to help integrate new built form, along with new native planting. ● Carefully design landscaping, including new boundary treatments, access roads, gateways and driveways to retain the character of settlements. Avoid suburban influences such as ornate metal gates and brick walls. ● The urbanisation of rural lanes through widening, kerbs, hedge removal etc. should be avoided. Where realignment of hedgerows for visibility splays is unavoidable, incorporate traditional hedgerows or hedgebanks into the design. ● Minimise external lighting and light pollution from streets and buildings.

3.5.8 Guidelines for vertical features

<p>Locate structures sensitively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Structures should not be sited within (or where they will be seen in the context of) LCT A (High Coastal Heaths) and LCT D (Open Moorland). The interruption of smooth moorland horizons should be avoided. ● Seek to locate structures where they will be seen against a backdrop of land/ trees rather than against the sky. ● Locate structures in the context of existing buildings where possible. Failing this, locate structures so that they are seen in the context of existing vegetation, particularly trees, where the vertical prominence of the feature can be seen in the context of comparative natural features. ● Consider the visibility of structures from viewpoints, hill summits, roads and settlements, and minimise any impacts (both individual and cumulative) on views or tranquillity. ● Structures should not be sited where they would have unacceptable adverse impacts on the settings of Scheduled Monuments and other designated or local heritage assets.
<p>Design structures and ancillary development to minimise their visibility and impact on landscape character</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where structures will be seen against a land/ vegetated backdrop, paint them a recessive colour to help them blend in. ● Carefully consider use of colour and materials when designing structures and ancillary items (e.g. dishes). This may include customisation to reduce visual and landscape impact. In highly sensitive locations these could be site-specific. ● Use matt finishes, particularly on moving parts, to avoid them catching the light. ● Use existing tracks for access wherever possible. Where new tracks are unavoidable, ensure that they are designed and situated to be as discreet as possible e.g. two wheeled tracks with a grassed centre. Follow existing field boundaries rather than cutting across fields. Use traditional hedgebanks or banks alongside access tracks to help them blend into the surrounding landscape where this appropriate. ● Use appropriate surface treatments for tracks, hard standing and base foundations that are recessive in colour to blend in to the landscape. ● Use appropriate native planting to screen ancillary structures such as generators and utility boxes. ● Where appropriate, provide for the undergrounding of services to minimise the visual impact on the wider landscape in sensitive locations. ● Lighting structures on vertical features should be avoided to protect Exmoor's dark night skies.