

## EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN 5 YEAR REVIEW

### SUMMARY REPORT MAY 2022

#### 1. Background & Purpose of the Review

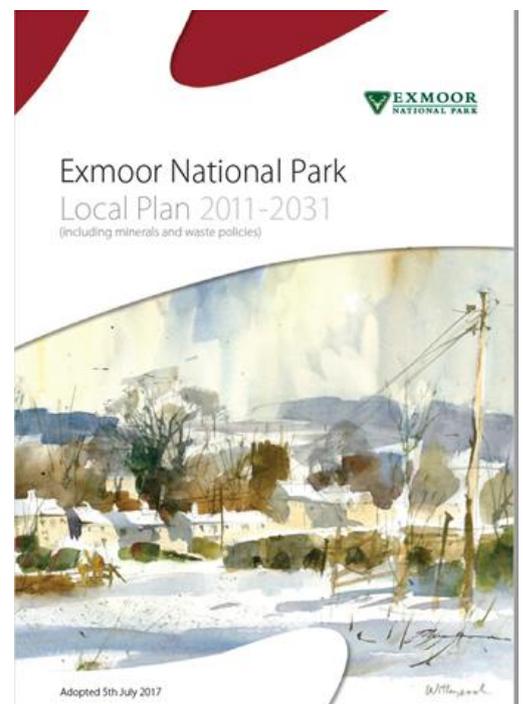
All Local Planning Authorities are legally<sup>1</sup> required to undertake a review of their Local Plans to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. The Exmoor National Park Local Plan was adopted in July 2017, and the 5 year review needs to be completed by July 2022. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the requirements for the review:

*Policies in local plans and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years, and should then be updated as necessary. Reviews should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of a plan, and should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy. Relevant strategic policies will need updating at least once every five years if their applicable local housing need figure has changed significantly; and they are likely to require earlier review if local housing need is expected to change significantly in the near future. (para 33)*

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)<sup>2</sup> provides advice on what authorities can consider when reviewing a plan. In addition, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has published the Local Plan Route Mapper guidance to assist Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in undertaking plan reviews and this has also been used to inform the review process.<sup>3</sup>

Exmoor National Park Authority is undertaking a review of the Local Plan to establish whether evidence suggests that a partial or complete review of the Local Plan is needed. It is important to emphasise from the outset that this does not automatically mean a full or partial review of the Local Plan needs to be carried out: the purpose of the review process is to ensure that a plan and the policies within remains effective and to establish whether any changes are needed<sup>4</sup>.

The outcomes of the review process are set out in this paper and three accompanying **Topic Papers**, on the Environment, Housing and Community, and Economy. The review is an ongoing process and the topic papers will be updated and added to following the workshop.



<sup>1</sup> Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012)

<sup>2</sup> NPPG, Plan making, Plan reviews, paragraphs 062 to 070 (reviewed Oct 2019)

<sup>3</sup> PAS Local Plan Route Mapper 2021 & [Toolkit Part 1: Local Plan Review 2021](#)

<sup>4</sup> NPPG Paragraph: 064 Reference ID: 61-064-20190315 Revision date: 15 03 2019

## 2. Approach

In determining whether a Local Plan needs to be updated, there are several different aspects to be considered:

- Follow the latest national guidance and legislative requirements for Local Plan Reviews<sup>5</sup>
- Consider changes in national policy and if the Local Plan is still policy compliant
- Look at what monitoring is telling us about the effectiveness of the current policies
- Research and understand the implications of new and updated evidence
- Carry out a review of housing delivery as required by Local Plan Policy M1-S1
- Consider changes to local circumstances, such as a change in local affordable housing need
- Check whether issues have arisen that may impact on the deliverability of Local Plan objectives and policies, particularly in relation to delivery of local need affordable housing, including significant economic changes that may impact on the viability of housing delivery
- Consider ENPA's appeals performance and whether this suggests specific policies need to be reviewed where appeals are being lost
- Explore whether any new social, environmental or economic priorities may have arisen
- Consider cross-boundary issues with neighbouring authorities and other strategic priorities with relevant statutory / partner organisations

It is important to also note that there are other issues to be taken into consideration when conducting the review. One of these is the context of changes to the planning system as part of the 'Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill'.<sup>6</sup> The Bill proposes changes to the planning system but these changes will not be introduced within the timeframe of this review process. ENPA has therefore continued to follow current requirements for the review.

## 3. National Policy Check and Evidence Review

Officers have checked that adopted plan policies still reflect current national planning policy including requirements in the 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).<sup>7</sup> The analysis has focused on changes since the 2012 NPPF because an independent inspector concluded that the Exmoor Local Plan policies were in line with the 2012 NPPF and much of the 2021 NPPF has been carried forward from 2012.

New and updated evidence has also been reviewed including on the economy, housing, biodiversity, historic environment and climate. An update of local housing need was commissioned to inform the review and Local Plan monitoring as required under policy M1-

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<sup>5</sup> Some of these are set out in PPG Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 61-065-20190723

<sup>6</sup> [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

<sup>7</sup> Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review: National Policy Checklist [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](#)

S1. Recent guidance<sup>8</sup> from the Planning Advisory Service has encouraged LPAs to consider the proportionality of the evidence base needed to support a Local Plan. It is the LPA's responsibility to produce the necessary evidence, but this will vary according to the local area and issues being addressed. The same principles apply to the Local Plan review process<sup>9</sup>.

#### 4. The Exmoor National Park Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)

The Local Plan policies are monitored through the Authority Monitoring Report. Data is gathered on monitoring indicators linked to the objectives and the Plan's policies. Since Local Plan adoption, AMRs have been published for 2017/18 - 2018/19<sup>10</sup>. The 2019/20 and 2020/21 AMR is nearing completion. Relevant data is summarised in the Topic Papers and a 2019-21 Interim Summary is available on the ENPA website<sup>11</sup>.

#### 5. Duty to Co-operate

A Duty to Co-operate meeting was held with four local authority partners on 27 September 2021. No significant issues with the current adopted Local Plan environment policies were identified at the meeting. A number of topics were discussed and are detailed in the Topic Papers.

Various points were identified to be taken forward as a helpful basis for future discussions but were not considered to require an immediate review of the Local Plan policies. It is recognised that Duty to Cooperate discussions are ongoing and that these matters and others will continue to be important considerations for future co-operation and to inform plan making. Statements of Common Ground have been signed by local authority partners who attended the meeting<sup>12</sup>.

Additionally, there has been engagement with statutory consultees including Natural England, Historic England, the Marine Management Organisation, and the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. Responses from engagement with statutory consultees are summarised in this summary and individual topic papers<sup>13</sup>.

A response to the online survey was received from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) which highlighted the adoption of the South West Inshore and Offshore Marine Plan in 2021.<sup>14</sup> The MMO noted that:

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<sup>8</sup> [Local Plan Route Mapper & Toolkit - reviewing and updating local plan policies | Local Government Association](#)

<sup>9</sup> Paragraph: 068 Reference ID: 61-068-20190723 Revision date: 23 07 2019

<sup>10</sup> [Exmoor - Annual Monitoring Reports \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> Exmoor National Park Authority Monitoring Report 2019-21 Interim Summary [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> Statements of Common Ground [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [The South West Marine Plans Documents - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- All public authorities taking authorisation or enforcement decisions that affect or might affect the UK marine area must do so in accordance with the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and any relevant adopted Marine Plan, in this case the South West Inshore and Offshore Marine Plan, or the UK Marine Policy Statement (MPS) unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise. Since the ENPA Local Plan was published prior to the plan creation, it would be important to consider the South West Marine Plan within a review going forward.

Exmoor National Park Authority officers have considered the 2021 South West Inshore and Offshore Marine Plan – ENPA had previously responded to consultations on the draft Plan. The UK Marine Policy Statement was published in 2011 and therefore predated the now adopted Exmoor National Park Local Plan. There are no proposals in the Marine Plan which apply specifically to Exmoor National Park. Adopted Exmoor National Park Local Plan policies are considered to provide sufficient flexibility to enable consideration of proposals in the context of the National Park designation and therefore officers do not consider that a change to Exmoor National Park Local Plan policies is needed in the light of the adoption of the South West Inshore and Offshore Marine Plan.

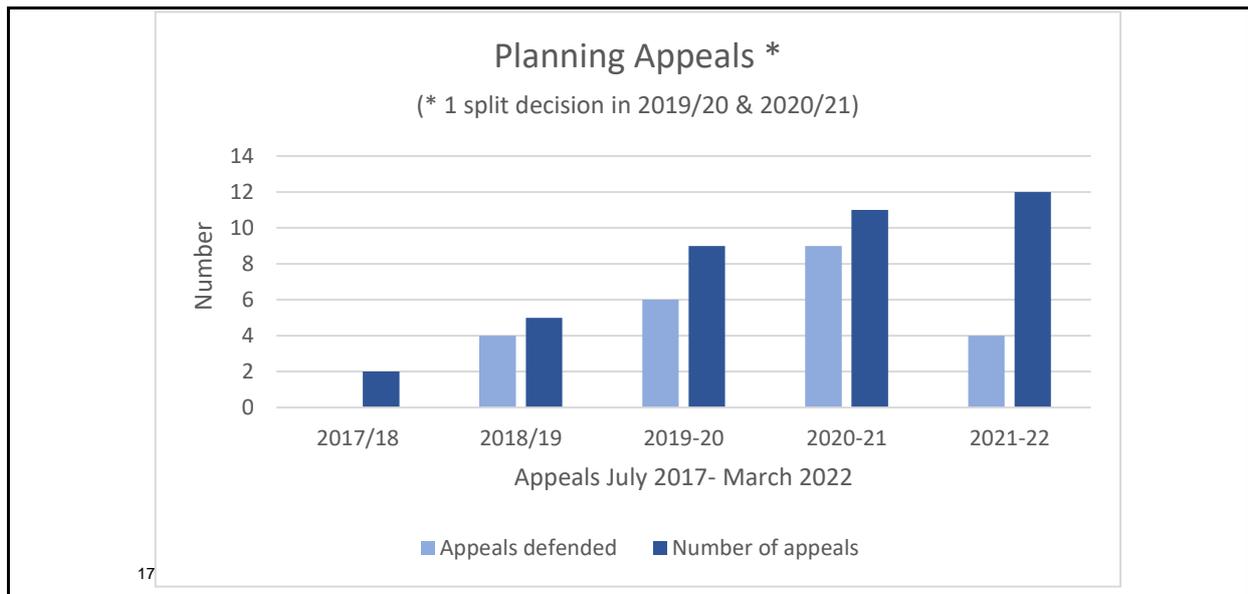
## 6. Review of Appeal Decisions and Development Management Comments

Officers have analysed planning and enforcement appeal decisions from Local Plan adoption to end March 2022<sup>15</sup>. The number of appeals has risen from a low number but this has not been a significant increase. There have been two 'split' appeal decisions since the Local Plan was adopted (allowing and dismissing different aspects of an appeal). In the graph below, these have been included as one appeal in the number of appeals for each of the two relevant years. There has been no significant change in appeals related to specific policy areas. Analysis of 'allowed' appeals 2017-2022 does not indicate that policies should be reviewed<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Appeal Decisions in Exmoor National Park July 2017-March 2022 [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk) Appeals excluded for which Local Plan policies did not apply.

<sup>16</sup> Exmoor National Park Planning and Enforcement Allowed Appeals 2017-2022 [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)



Discussions have also been held with the Authority’s Development Management team to consider their comments on how the policies are being implemented when determining planning applications or making recommendations for Planning Committee. Further discussions were also held to consider the implications of changes in permitted development that have been brought in since the Local Plan was adopted.

## 7. Stakeholder Engagement

The NPPF does not place any requirements on local planning authorities regarding stakeholder engagement during any 5-Year Local Plan review process. However, as the purpose of plan-making is to *‘provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings’* (NPPF para 15), it is important to gather stakeholder views on the current Local Plan and the need to review all or some of the policies.

### Stakeholder Workshop

A stakeholder online event was held on 2nd December 2021. All those on the Local Plan contacts database were invited to the workshop, along with representatives from Exmoor’s parish and town councils. 29 people attended the workshop representing a range of organisations, local authorities, parish/town councils or as individuals. ENPA members and officers also attended.

Background and a progress update on the Local Plan 5-Year Review were presented followed by a series of workshops to hear views on the Plan. Participants were divided into

three groups to ensure everyone had an opportunity to participate in a discussion on every topic. The workshop considered a series of questions. A summary of issues raised through the workshop is available<sup>18</sup>.

A number of areas for future work including possible planning guidance were also discussed. Officers considered the comments and reported these to Members in December 2021.

### **Online Survey**

An online survey was conducted following the workshop to gather views and enable those who were not able to attend the workshop to participate in the review. The questions were linked to those posed at the stakeholder workshop focused on the three topics, with an opportunity to raise other issues. The survey was available for six weeks from 11<sup>th</sup> January to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022. 33 respondents commented on the online survey which, together with additional responses, provided a range of views.

The survey responses are set out in a schedule and have been analysed and reported to members<sup>19</sup>. A number of areas for future work, including possible planning guidance, were raised.

Issues highlighted during both the stakeholder workshop and in response to the online survey are set out in the individual topic papers and summarised by topic below.

Feedback suggested that further work such as planning guidance would be helpful. It is considered that the workshop and online survey did not highlight issues which indicate grounds to suggest changes are needed to planning policies in the Local Plan.

## **8. Summary & Conclusions**

As a National Park, Exmoor has a higher level of environmental protection than other areas of the country which are not designated as Protected Landscapes. The policies in the Local Plan reflect this, and take as their starting point the statutory purposes of National Parks, which seek to conserve and enhance these special environments, as well as promoting understanding and enjoyment of them. In fulfilling these purposes, the National Park Authority has a duty to promote the economic and social well-being of local communities.

The Local Plan and its policies do not have the powers alone to deal with all issues, and there are limits to planning powers and what the planning system can deliver.

This five-year policy check of the Local Plan has identified several changes to national policy since the Local Plan was adopted in 2017. These changes are considered to have been relatively minor over the plan period so far, primarily a change in emphasis rather than a complete change in approach. Officers have reviewed the policies in the local plan against

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<sup>18</sup> Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review Stakeholder Workshop Summary December 2021 [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

<sup>19</sup> Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review Survey Responses Schedule [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

the current National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021). Following from this review it is considered that the approach in the ENP Local Plan is appropriate to the local context and National Park designation and **for the majority of the subjects covered under the broad topics of Environment, Housing & Community, and Economy, there is very good policy coverage in the Local Plan, and the current policies are in conformity with the NPPF.**

Where there are differences, the wording in the NPPF could be used as an additional material consideration when making decisions on planning applications and giving advice. Further work, separate from the 5-Year Local Plan Review process, is also being investigated to address some of the changes in the NPPF, for example the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD).

A number of topics were analysed under each Topic which were the subject of discussions with stakeholders. These are summarised below. Full details and background information are given in each of the accompanying Topic Papers<sup>20</sup>.

## Environment

### Biodiversity Net Gain

There are several policies in the Local Plan relating to landscape and the natural environment (contained in chapter 4 Conserving and Enhancing Exmoor, in the Local Plan pages 37 to 86). These policies tend to refer to enhancement rather than biodiversity net gain, however it is not considered that this is in conflict with national policy, but is a different way expressing it. The revised NPPF wording and the newly passed Environment Act will add greater weight and power to the implementation of these policies. There will also be new practices and procedures for dealing with biodiversity net gain which have not yet been worked out as a consequence of the new Act.

In other local authority areas the new biodiversity metric developed by Natural England is being used as a method to assess biodiversity net gain and used in conditions on planning consents. Further work could be done within the current Local Plan policies such as a new Supplementary Planning Document or other guidance to help clarify what is required and to meet the requirements of the Environment Act.

There are issues with Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the National Park and their condition, as set out in the information from the Authority Monitoring Report, with approximately 81% in an unfavourable and recovering condition. The reasons for the unfavourable recovering status relate to land management and mostly do not come under the remit of the planning system. Consequently the planning system can only act as part of a wider solution to the issues and problems that exist.

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<sup>20</sup> Environment, Housing and Community, and Economy Topic Papers [Exmoor - Exmoor National Park Local Plan 5-Year Review \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

## **Stakeholder responses**

- Policy change not needed to implement biodiversity net gain (BNG)
- Preparation of Exmoor specific approach / guidance / Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - provide clarity to applicants
- More proactive approach to engaging with Exmoor residents and guidance/advice needed to contribute to BNG & /or low carbon energy solutions
- Limitations of the standard biodiversity net gain calculator– useful for National Park to develop its own tool/metric.”
- Opportunities for gain through e.g. agriculture buildings and small-scale measures such as bird and bat boxes
- Positive contribution to historic environment
- National Park should go beyond minimum, set net gain at 20% and longer than 30 year habitat commitment
- Opportunity for off-site BNG to provide a new income stream for farmers - should include those who have already done a lot for biodiversity
- Important to ensure that off-site BNG is credible
- Biodiversity enhancement linked with climate emergency,
- Natural England confirmed that BNG can be implemented without a change to policies, provided support for the development of an Exmoor specific approach with detail on environmental enhancement and the Exmoor strategy for implementing BNG to expand upon and support the policy
- It also suggested there was an opportunity to develop a green infrastructure strategy, that the plan should address best and most valuable agricultural land, soils, irreplaceable habitats and air quality especially impacts on the natural environment.

## **Beautiful Design**

When dealing with design and creating beautiful and safe places there are many policies in the local plan covering this topic, such as GP1 Achieving National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development and CE-S6 Design and Sustainable Construction Principles. There are also policies on heritage, landscape, nature, shop fronts, extensions, biodiversity and green infrastructure, which may be relevant. All these policies are considered to contribute to creating and maintaining beautiful and safe places. The National Park Authority plans to develop a Design SPD next year.

## **Stakeholder responses**

- Revision of design guide welcomed - it can support existing policies and reflect the Government’s focus on beautiful design
- New guide should include modern design as well as traditional
- Landscaping important to enable more flexibility with design
- There is too much concern over preservation rather than adapting and changing
- Design requirements can make housing unaffordable
- Consider plan requirements for materials, particularly for windows
- Build nature into design as part of buildings

## **Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation**

There is also considered to be a positive strategy for delivering renewable energy within the Local Plan which is appropriate for a National Park and heritage coast, set out in chapter 5 Responding to Climate Change and Managing Resources of the Local Plan, pages 105 to 117. There is a general enabling and encouraging policy CC-S1 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation to support measures which may help reduce the impact of climate change, supported by policies dealing with specific issues including flood risk and coastal change. The Local Plan is unusual in that it includes policies for small-scale wind and solar energy development, and identifies areas of search where such development would be considered appropriate or not.

### **Stakeholder responses**

- Whether climate change has sufficient prominence - should it guide all other policies?
- Strengthening of policy from 'encourage' & 'promote' to mandatory requirements
- Climate change concerns regarding the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway
- Linking where people live and work to reduce the need to travel
- Development should demonstrate how it will use low carbon and renewable energy
- Opportunity for more locally generated power, especially hydro
- Support for community renewable energy (even if large scale)
- Need for enabling infrastructure for renewable energy
- More flexibility on renewables and listed buildings / Conservation Areas
- The need to retrofit existing housing stock
- Greater emphasis on retaining historic/traditional buildings because of their embodied energy
- Important to link nature and climate crises, allowing space for nature
- A Natural England response encourages the development of a separate approach to the climate change aspects of the plan in order to add further detail to existing policy hooks– linking to local nature recovery strategies and contributions to woodland creation and peat restoration through net gain.

### **Historic Environment**

The NPPF statements in relation to Heritage Assets and plan-making has changed very little from the 2012 version to the 2021 version, and since the Local Plan was adopted under the 2012 version it is considered there is no need to change the approach set out in the Local Plan. The objectives and the policies of the Local Plan are considered to provide a positive strategy to conserve the historic environment and promote enjoyment of it.

Correspondence received from Historic England related to how the historic environment should be considered as part of a Local Plan review, including highlighting the inter-relationships between housing, community, economy and heritage assets, as well as between the natural and historic environments. It was noted that any particular issues relating to the conservation and management of heritage assets located on or near to the

boundary of Exmoor National Park should also be discussed with neighbouring authorities, although Historic England was not aware of any such issues at that time.

A more recent response has been received from Historic England following attendance at the stakeholder workshop. The response noted:

- Historic England advice fed through into the interim topic papers, especially the environment and summary reports.
- the broad findings in relation to the NPPF and the historic environment,
- the progress on conservation areas and appraisals and heritage at risk; and
- intentions to consider the implications of the update to the Exmoor Historic Environment Research Framework and to progress a Design Guide SPD.

The response concluded that Historic England is comfortable with the proposed direction of travel for the Local Plan Review.

## **Minerals**

There are considered to be few changes in legislation or national guidance affecting the minerals related policies in the Local Plan. There may however be increased interest in using local stone for construction in the National Park in the future to meet the 'build beautiful' agenda, and this is considered to be covered by exiting policy CE-S7 Small Scale Working or Re-Working for Building and Roofing Stone.

Somerset County Council mineral's team has noted existing close working between the County and Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) on the Local Aggregate Assessment prepared by Somerset County Council in partnership with the ENPA. The response recognises that, in the National Park, major quarry working is very unlikely. Small building stone working may take place, although at the current time, there are no working quarries. The County will continue to engage with the ENPA on this and any other relevant mineral and waste work. No other specific mineral or waste issues were identified but if any were to arise, they could be dealt with through future joint working. E.g. through the review of the mineral and waste plans through the change to a Unitary Council.

## **Analysis of consultation responses on the environment**

There were a number of responses relating to enhancing biodiversity and biodiversity net gain including from Natural England who confirmed that biodiversity net gain could be implemented within the existing policy framework.

Comments on design were generally supportive of further work outside of the Local Plan but linked to it, such as planning guidance on design (including modern design). Policy CE-S6, seeks to ensure that design is high quality, sustainable and that it complements Exmoor's local character. This can include modern designs. The need to consider affordability was also raised as were biodiversity and climate change considerations as part of design. Policy GP1 and CE-S6 both include provisions on biodiversity and climate change (along with biodiversity policies (CE-S3, CE-D2), climate change policies (CC-S1, CC-S5, CC-D3

and CC-D4) and CE-D3 on heritage assets – this policy enables measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

A number of comments were received relating to strengthening the policy approach to climate change. While it is acknowledged that there could be scope to strengthen policies, it is considered that they provide a positive strategy for action to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. This includes Policy GP1 (Achieving National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development) which requires that opportunities must be taken for the needs of future generations, in terms of resilience, adaption & mitigation of climate change impacts and in relation to sustainable building, materials and minimising energy/waste.

Policy CC-S1 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation supports measures which may help reduce the impact of climate change, and the plan enables renewable energy proposals to come forward. Additional policies include those dealing with flood risk and coastal change.

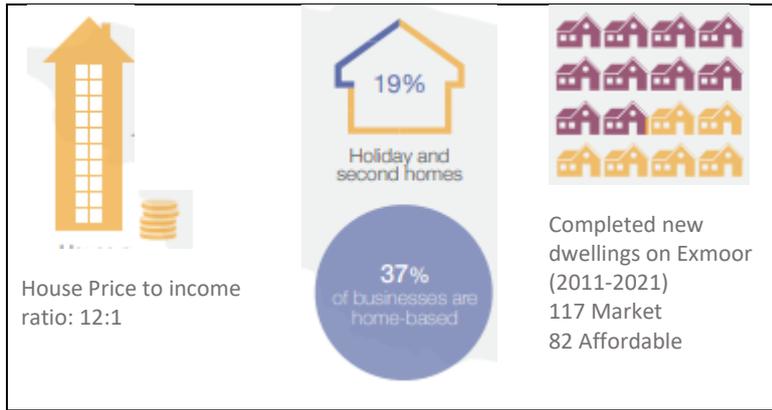
The National Park Authority declared a climate emergency in 2019, along with the UK government, and since then the impact of planning proposals on the climate are specifically set out in all reports to the Planning Committee, in addition to impacts on the natural and historic features for which the National Park is designated.

A number of responses raised concerns related to the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway. In the case of the Railway planning permissions, detailed environmental assessments were taken into consideration and concluded that, although a minor increase in greenhouse gas emissions is unavoidable with any heritage steam railway, steps can and should be taken to mitigate emissions including the use of local and recyclable materials and the planting of trees and hedges. The report also noted that the newer locomotives being used are more efficient and powerful than some historic engines. Additionally, a condition of the planning permission is the requirement for a carbon plan. The railway is part of the history and cultural heritage of the National Park, and its reinstatement is seen as consistent with promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of those special qualities.

## Housing & Community

Section 6 of the adopted Local Plan 'Achieving a Thriving Community' (pages 134-199) contains policies for housing and community services and facilities. The Local Plan provides a bespoke approach to planning for housing and community services and facilities on Exmoor to reflect local circumstances. A core objective of the Local Plan is to deliver affordable housing to meet the needs of local people.

Evidence is showing an increase in house prices and the affordability gap between house prices and wages, a significant proportion of market housing still used as second/holiday homes and a continued local need for affordable housing indicating that locally needed affordable housing remains a priority for the area.



From Rural Enterprise Exmoor Vision  
Updated completions and house price income ratio

Updated evidence suggests that projected levels of local affordable housing need have fallen (a reduction of 19% from 238 to 194 dwellings for the period 2011-31). Similarly, updated housing need evidence for Somerset West and Taunton District Council 2020-2040 covering the Somerset part of the National Park also shows a reduction in need beyond the end period of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan. This reflects Exmoor’s ageing population and is likely to be due to reductions in older households beyond 2030 who, on Exmoor, currently make up a higher than average proportion of households.

In practice, parish housing need surveys provide the local affordable housing need evidence to inform planning decisions. Updated surveys cover a high proportion of Exmoor’s population, and show that there are currently 53 households in local affordable housing need within ENP (compared with previous estimates of 90 homes required). This is only a snapshot in time and may not fully reflect the true need for affordable housing as not everyone who is in need will come forward. However, it provides evidence of affordable housing need across all parishes surveyed, an indication of how the housing needs of local communities are fluctuating, and where efforts to support affordable housing delivery need to be focused.

Local Plan policies provide a positive framework to maximise opportunities for local need affordable housing to come forward, providing certainty for affordable housing providers and households in local housing need including self/custom builders. Evidence from appeals decisions is not indicating a cause for concern. In terms of the existing housing stock, monitoring for all tenures of housing shows that most permissions for extensions are granted.

**Analysis of updated evidence and monitoring does not indicate that a review of the Local Plan housing policies should be triggered.** However, a number of topics have been investigated further which were the subject of discussions with stakeholders. These are summarised below.

### **Affordable housing delivery**

Whilst the changes in national policy and analysis of the evidence do not indicate a need to review the Local Plan policies, there are concerns over the level and speed of delivery of

sufficient affordable homes for local people. Higher house prices and an increased affordability gap between house prices and wages within the National Park are also exacerbating this situation. Further work is required to better understand the reasons behind this, although not all of the likely factors will be within the scope of planning, for example the availability of finance, either via grant or loans. The adopted Local Plan provides more flexibility than the previous Local Plan to deliver affordable housing through providing for cross subsidy “Principal Residence” housing but, on average, there were higher levels of delivery during the previous Local Plan.

One of the questions for further discussion is whether changes to policy will lead to improved delivery, or if efforts should continue to be focused on supporting delivery for example through Rural Housing Enabling and the Exmoor Rural Housing Network. Additional guidance could also assist delivery, for example for affordable housing

### **More housing for local people**

The evidence review included the Rural Enterprise Exmoor Vision produced in partnership with local authorities and businesses, and adopted by the Authority. One of the issues highlighted in the Vision is the need for more housing for local people, not just affordable housing. The Local Plan has policies enabling a variety of housing for local people: As well as all new affordable housing having local need occupancy ties which can include occupancy by people moving to Exmoor to take up work in the National Park, the Plan also enables housing for rural workers, succession farm, extended family and accessible and adaptable housing. The review process will need to consider the evidence and conclude whether any changes are needed to Local Plan policies for housing. Part of ongoing policy work is to consider potential impacts of changes. For example, the evidence gathered for the current Local Plan identified that suitable sites for new housing are very limited due to physical constraints such as flooding and landscape sensitivity, and flagged up the need to ensure suitable potential sites remain for future affordable housing for local people in the longer term.

### **Stakeholder responses - housing**

- Affordable housing (for people who cannot afford market housing) is the priority / even more important so they can live near family/ work
- Need for more affordable housing and more plots for affordable housing including on the outskirts of villages
- Affordable housing viability. Cross-subsidy as an option to deliver more affordable housing
- For cross subsidy, minimum number of market Principal Residence is too vague
- Allow for Principal Residence housing to deliver affordable housing in a different parish
- Delivery of affordable housing – need to establish whether it is a policy issue
- Limit new housing to three largest settlements
- No unrestricted market homes - become second and holiday homes
- Definition of ‘affordable’ thought to help some people – on lowest incomes- but not others

- Affordable housing should “remain so in perpetuity”
- Access to housing for local workers – some travelling in currently
- Need for workspace/buildings for working from home
- Lack of staff accommodation
- Local housing - employees of local businesses / local workers with a local but not local affordable need tie e.g. as in Yorkshire Dales
- Local wages lower than average in Interim Topic Paper (£18k rather than £28k p.a.)
- Advantages in allowing for local (non-affordable) housing – though may reduce number of affordable homes
- More housing for local people could have unintended consequences: undermining key priority of local affordable housing, particularly for the young, and extra pressure on biodiversity, suitable sites, landscape, and special qualities of remoteness, rurality, wildness and tranquillity
- Local connection criteria too stringent. Should include workers (in addition to agricultural and forestry or jobs benefiting the National Park) e.g. contributing to local economy
- Changes to farming and future needs of farming including new housing
- Housing for elderly and people with disabilities
- Look at interpretation/application of the current policies to be more responsive to e.g. need for self-build
- Local connection criteria and bordering parishes - Brushford
- Maximum floor space of 93m<sup>2</sup> too small e.g. for self-builds. Why does it apply to conversions? Different size limits on owner occupied compared to Registered Provider controlled housing. Need for outbuildings/space for working from home. Larger housing to move to
- Policies are good and progress is being made – patience is needed as development is a long process. There is now a strong pipeline of affordable housing
- Policies not out of date re NPPF, affordable housing delivery strategy not effective enough at enabling delivery of sufficient affordable housing
- Affordable self-builds permitted through the Local Plan - policy is working. Other factors may be affecting delivery
- Strengthen support for community land trusts.

#### **Non-policy related housing issues:**

- Concern and wish to prevent or limit second / holiday homes and shortage of rented housing compared to holiday lets. Changes to council tax for second homes
- The loss of the Rural Housing Enabler – now reinstated (in Somerset part of ENP) things seems to be happening - hoped will lead to development
- Loss of affordable housing grants for Registered Providers (RPs) - recently reinstated
- difficulties with Homefinder - does not reflect all local housing need
- Registered Providers (RPs) and scale of sites
- High cost of living on Exmoor
- Potential to look at managed (custom) build options

- Impacts of design requirements and ongoing maintenance costs / need for grants to offset higher costs
- Allow for modern designs of housing
- Greater emphasis on carbon reduction; energy use of materials and building methods
- Opportunities for landowners to release land for affordable housing as lower agricultural values on Exmoor
- Helpful to include plot values

### **Safeguarding community facilities**

Monitoring suggests there has been some loss of community facilities, some of which are outside of the control of the planning authority. In addition, proposals for changes and extensions to existing facilities are coming forward. In some cases, this has been to create ancillary additional facilities to support the existing business, in line with policies in the Local Plan, in others new facilities have been permitted or the replacement of existing facilities with another type of facility. The retention of facilities and services is an important part of maintaining thriving communities. Whilst not all losses can be controlled by planning, one of the questions for the review is to consider whether evidence shows that any changes to the policies are needed in relation to community facilities in future.

### **Stakeholder responses - community**

- Ageing and declining population and the impact on local community services and economy
- Loss of services due to demographics (elderly population) and spending priorities not changes to permitted development
- Example of Community Land Trust shop underway at Parracombe
- Other community shops set up, e.g., Exford, Winsford
- Concern over a local pub changing the way it opens and operates
- Need sensitivity to changes to local circumstances and commercial and community opportunities. New diversified uses preferable to derelict buildings. 'Change of use' should consider and encourage opportunities / benefits to the local community such as community facilities.

### **Analysis of consultation responses on housing and community**

A range of issues relating to housing and particularly housing for local communities was raised. The concerns of the National Park Authority about the level of delivery of affordable housing in recent years was echoed in responses which indicated strong support for local need affordable housing and including for local workers and concern over the increased costs of housing. There were comments on delivery. It was also noted that policies are good, progress is being made, that development is a long process but there is now a strong pipeline of affordable housing. Community Land Trusts were mentioned.

Some concerns were raised around provision for local workers e.g. people needing to commute into the National Park and staff accommodation. Policy HC-S3 which defines local connection for affordable (including self/custom build) housing includes a clause for local

workers in affordable housing need where work benefits the community / National Park. It can include a range of work including health, social care, community services, retail and tourism for example. Local non-affordable housing was raised and it was also noted that this could have unintended consequences in undermining the priority of local affordable housing, particularly for the young, and other impacts on Exmoor. The Plan contains a policy to enable staff accommodation (Policy RT-D2). Other issues, which also link to Exmoor's economy, related to the need for space for people, particularly younger people and families to work from home including through enabling additional buildings. Adopted Local Plan policies set internal floorspace standards of 93sqm which the Government defines as a 3-bedroom home. Additionally, Local Plan policies enable flexibility through enabling residential extensions (Policy HC-D15), outbuildings (HC-D16) and through a policy for home-based businesses (SE-D1).

A number of non- planning policy issues were raised and these are summarised above. This included widespread concern about second and holiday homes.

A number of comments were made about communities including the impact of population decline and an ageing population on local community services and the economy. Community efforts to manage community run facilities such as local shops were noted and the need to consider and encourage opportunities / benefits to the local community such as community facilities. Policy HC-D19 seeks to safeguard existing services and facilities from loss through change of use. The policy provides flexibility where requirements are met and changes should then be to community uses, employment or local need affordable housing.

## Economy

### **Business Development**

A number of policies in the Local Plan relate to business development (contained in section 7 Achieving a Sustainable Economy of the Local Plan pages 202-218). Policies provide a criteria-based approach for business development in/adjoining the named settlements and through the reuse of buildings, extensions and appropriate redevelopment in the open countryside. Policy SE-D2 safeguards the finite supply of existing employment land and buildings Policies are included for home-based businesses reflecting Rural Enterprise Work which has shown the very high number of self-employed, home-based, and micro businesses on Exmoor. The AMR monitoring indicates that the policies are enabling some new business as well as the loss of some. 10 live work/homeworking applications have been permitted since the Local Plan was adopted.

Section 7 of the Local Plan also contains policy SE-S4 for agricultural and forestry development. Monitoring through the AMR indicates that the policies are enabling agricultural and forestry development (75 agricultural and forestry buildings have been permitted since 2017 and 1,680m of agricultural and forestry tracks).

The Rural Enterprise Exmoor (REE) vision document provides helpful information and evidence to better understand the local economy as well as a series of findings. The vision does not seek to provide a detailed delivery plan, rather it is intended to provide partners

with guidance on key areas of focus for future activity, as well as to feed into the work of others. The work highlights the very high proportion of micro-businesses self-employment and home working in the National Park. The background research for Rural Enterprise Exmoor vision identified that there were nearly 1,300 businesses operating in the National Park - 60% more than were picked up from nationally available databases mainly because they were small or micro businesses. As a result, there may be a need to consider whether monitoring of the local economy can be improved.

## **Stakeholder responses**

### **Farming, the land-based economy and farm diversification**

- Changes to farming / current uncertainty
- Changes may impact on viability and farms may need to be bigger to survive
- A challenging time for land based businesses policies and support for diversification opportunities will allow businesses to plan for further change and upheaval.
- Changes to farming may lead to the farming operation being subsidiary to other income e.g. diversification - diversification into tourism was not thought to suit everyone.
- Agricultural ties for housing may prevent diversification
- Intensive farming / large buildings for livestock farming are not supported by policy. An alternative view was that there may be a lack of familiarity with the policies.
- Enable variation / extension of existing businesses needed locally (e.g. engineering fabrication on farms)
- Farming activities are supported by other micro business which need to be in the National Park.
- The current policies are too restrictive.
- Policies generally balance diversification and the environment appropriately.

### **Working from Home/Home-based Businesses**

- Opportunities, especially Post Covid, for those who work from home to move to Exmoor - could include micro-businesses which may also provide employment.
- Way to retain younger people / encourage working people to be based on Exmoor. Need for space / small buildings/ garden offices to enable people to work from home.
- Linked to digital communication.
- Work from home linked to climate change as it contributes to carbon reductions from reducing the need to travel. High speed digital infrastructure is therefore essential.

### **Recreation and Tourism**

Recreation and tourism policies are in Section 8 'Achieving Enjoyment for All' (on pages 220-250 of the Plan). REE and Exmoor National Park work provide a pre-Covid baseline, evidence on the impacts of Covid restrictions on business and Covid recovery. 60% of employment in the National Park is in tourism while accommodation and food and drink services are the largest business sector - 38% of total businesses and 44% of all employment. The work

highlights the challenges faced by the tourism sector as a result of Covid restrictions. Analysis of the AMR indicates that Plan policies are enabling tourism related development to come forward – 14 applications have been permitted since 2017. Six serviced accommodation businesses (hotels and guest houses) have been lost although one application was permitted in 2020/21. By contrast 17 non serviced accommodation applications (holiday lets) have been permitted since the Plan was adopted. Relatively low numbers of new camping accommodation including camping barns and alternative camping accommodation such as shepherd’s huts have been determined since the Local Plan was adopted. The figures do not include “pop up campsites’ which can operate for a limited number of days per year within permitted development rights. The number of days has been increased from 28 to 56 days during the Covid -19 pandemic.

Analysis of the AMR shows that Plan policies are enabling recreational development. In particular, 18 equestrian developments have been approved since the Plan was adopted.

### **Stakeholder responses - tourism, economic diversification and business**

- Current Policies may be too restrictive and need change
- Need to understand impact of increased tourism and appropriate balance and whether the impacts outweigh benefits.
- A need to diversify to other industries. Examples of alternatives to diversification into tourism could include emerging carbon bank / natural capital markets
- High proportion of micro-businesses on Exmoor
- Diversify economy for higher skilled, better paid jobs – more/larger business premises and sites - micro businesses may not provide high-paid skilled jobs
- Policies should prevent ad hoc economic development intrusive to local communities and / or landscapes

### **Electronic communications**

Electronic communications (and transport) policies are in section 9 ‘Achieving Accessibility for All’ on pages 252 to 273 of the Local Plan. Plan policies are considered to be in line with national policy and the NPPF is taken account of as a material consideration in decision making. Introducing high quality fast digital communications to the whole of the National Park has been challenging for a variety of reasons including a dispersed population, deep rurality and difficult terrain although Exmoor is not alone in having experienced delay in the rollout of communications infrastructure. It is not considered that this is due to Local Plan policies.

AMR monitoring shows that 16 telecommunication masts have been approved since adoption of the Local Plan. The Government has extended permitted development rights for electronic communications infrastructure in National Parks. Under existing regulations, an existing ground-based mast can be extended up to 20 metres above ground level through permitted development rights, or up to the height of the existing mast (if taller), without the need for prior approval which means that development is not managed through the Local

Plan. The Government has consulted on extending the height of masts in National Parks permitted in this way to 25 metres.

Innovative solutions and an approach suited to local circumstances continues to be needed to improve coverage. The Local Plan seeks to enable the roll out of infrastructure in a way that protects Exmoor's landscape. An appeal decision for an emergency telecommunications mast has been a concern.

Coverage and speed of connections remains an issue for businesses. The Rural Enterprise work and vision has highlighted digital connectivity as a key objective.

### **Stakeholder responses – digital communications**

- There are known problems: poor signal and internet, patchy coverage; need for a strategy to roll out improvements
- Vital for successful businesses
- Masts still needed now but technology may change e.g. cable or fibre, 2025 loss of copper phone service
- Impacts of masts (and ground based infrastructure) on the National Park

A Natural England response indicated support for policies which highlight landscape character as a determining factor in the siting of communications infrastructure and which advised that the landscape impacts of any further infrastructure proposals should be carefully considered before permission is granted.

### **Analysis of consultation responses on the economy**

A range of responses was received on different aspects of Exmoor's economy. This included recognition of changes in farming, the current uncertainty and challenges facing land-based businesses and the need to allow for diversification. Policy SE-S4 enables new agricultural and forestry development and it is considered, together with policies on rural worker housing to provide flexibility to respond to changing needs in a way that is appropriate for Exmoor National Park. Policy SE-S3 allows for new business development in the countryside – this includes farm diversification with additional flexibility for farm businesses. New emerging markets such as for carbon banks/natural capital, were mentioned as future types of diversification and the need to diversify the economy beyond tourism was also highlighted. The employment policies in the plan provide a flexible approach for new business development in settlements and in the open countryside (SE-S1 and SE-S3) SE-D2 safeguards existing sites and premises to ensure there is a supply of existing sites and to enable the market to respond to changing circumstances including micro-businesses.

Working from home was highlighted (as it was in responses on housing) and this was also mentioned in the context of climate change through reducing commuting and the need for digital connectivity. Policy SE-D1 provides for home-based businesses.

Responses emphasised that digital connectivity was now vital and needed to be improved. Policy AC-S4 and Policy AC-D5 apply to communications networks and telecommunications

infrastructure. Natural England highlighted the need for care in considering landscape impacts for infrastructure proposals.

### **Overall Conclusion on consultation responses and plan policies**

A wide range of responses was received to the consultations. Some comments related to issues which can already be addressed through existing Local Plan policies while others related to matters which are not controlled through the planning system / policy. Overall, after careful consideration, officers do not consider that a change to planning policies is needed.

Many comments and responses related to delivery and implementation and it is recognised that additional work is needed including to update information for applicants and to raise awareness e.g. through an updated local verification check list and planning guidance.

### 9. Lynton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan (The Lyn Plan)

Planning law requires that decisions need to be taken in accordance with the ‘development plan’ unless material considerations indicate otherwise<sup>21</sup>. The ‘development plan’ for an area can include ‘made’ neighbourhood plans.

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Toolkit advises that, in undertaking the review, policies in all of the development plan documents that make up the development plan, including any ‘made’ neighbourhood plans should be taken into consideration.

There is one ‘made’ neighbourhood plan within Exmoor National Park. The Lynton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan 2013-28 or the ‘Lyn Plan’.<sup>22</sup> It applies to Lynton & Lynmouth neighbourhood area (Lynton and Lynmouth parish containing the settlements of Lynton, Lynmouth and Barbrook). Exmoor National Park Authority agreed to ‘make’ The Lyn Plan in 2013 before the adoption of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan in July 2017. This brought the Lyn Plan into force as part of the development plan for Lynton & Lynmouth parish. The Lyn Plan policies were considered as part of the 2016-17 examination of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan. The Inspector’s report for Local Plan said the following:

*The Lynton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan came into force in 2013. Section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires any conflict between policies in the development plan to be resolved in favour of the policy in the last document to be adopted. This means that any conflict between the policies of the Local Plan, once it is adopted, and those of the Lynton and Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan (“Lyn Plan”) would need to be resolved in favour of the Local Plan policies.*

In effect, a number of Lyn Plan policies were superseded by the adoption of the more up to date Local Plan. An analysis of the Lyn Plan policies against the Exmoor National Park Local

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<sup>21</sup> Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

<sup>22</sup> [Lynton & Lynmouth Neighbourhood Plan \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](http://exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

Plan policies was undertaken as part of the Examination to assess the degree of conflict<sup>23</sup>. Lyn Plan policies were analysed as follows<sup>24</sup>.

- Policies that were in conflict with the Local Plan would be “resolved in favour of” the Local Plan policies. Some policies (e.g. on hotels and changes of use) had in any case, been discussed with the Town Council who preferred the more flexible Local Plan policy approach.
- Some were broadly similar to Local Plan policies (business development, community services and facilities, affordable housing cascades and Principal Residence dwellings).
- Lastly, some contained elements that were distinct from the Local Plan and which were not considered to conflict with it (Policies E8 Storage (safeguarding storage space) and E10 -Parking (safeguarding parking capacity)).

### **Analysis**

The adoption of the ENP Local Plan in July 2017 meant that decisions on planning applications in the Lynton & Lynmouth neighbourhood area (parish) had to be taken in accordance with the most up to date plan i.e. the Local Plan. Policies in the Local Plan therefore have precedence in decision-making. The Inspector’s report for the Local Plan examination said:

*It is... important to note that many of the policies of the Lyn Plan are unlikely to conflict with policies in the Local Plan. Those policies will be unaffected by the provisions of section 38(5). Moreover, it may well be that even the policies that are so affected could nonetheless potentially be capable of being a material consideration to weigh against determining future planning applications in strict accordance with the Local Plan policies. However, this is a matter to be considered by future decision-makers.*

There is no requirement to review or update a neighbourhood plan and a review would not be undertaken by the National Park Authority. Legislation enables three types of organisations to lead on neighbourhood planning: a parish or town council; a neighbourhood forum; or a community organisation<sup>25</sup>.

### **Officer conclusions**

Lyn Plan policies are considered, when determining planning proposals in Lynton and Lynmouth parish, either as part of the development plan or, more usually, as a material consideration and accorded appropriate weight. As part of the 5-Year Review of the ENP Local Plan, policies in the Lyn Plan have been taken into consideration.

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<sup>23</sup> [Consultation Statement \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](http://exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

<sup>24</sup> [EX30-ENPA-Response-to-Inspectors-Letter-re-policy-ES-S2-final.pdf \(exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Neighbourhood planning - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 41-014-20140306

## 10. Officer Conclusions

The Local Plan was adopted in 2017 and 5 years on, **there does not appear to be grounds to suggest changes are needed to planning policies in the Local Plan based on the review of national policy, updated evidence, Duty to Co-operate discussions, stakeholder engagement and monitoring.**

## 11. Next Steps

The outcomes of the review have been summarised in an Authority report together with recommendations to be presented at an Authority meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The officer recommendation is that a Local Plan Review is not required.

The decision on whether Adopted Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-31 policies need to be reviewed will be made and published with reasons by the Authority before 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022 in accordance with the legislation.

If a decision were taken to review the Plan, further work would be needed to scope the review and to prepare a project plan and updated Local Development Scheme. A Local Plan review would be required to follow the plan-making procedure, including preparation, publication, and examination by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> NPPG Paragraph: 069 Reference ID: 61-069-20190723 Revision date: 23 07 2019