



Exmoor National Park Statement of Community Involvement


The SCI sets out how Exmoor National Park Authority intends to consult the public and other stakeholders on future planning policy documents and planning applications.



If you have any queries or questions relating to this document please get in touch with the Policy & Community Team using the contact details below:

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INTRODUCTION

1. This 'Statement of Community Involvement' (SCI) sets out how Exmoor National Park Authority intends to consult and engage the public and other stakeholders on future planning policy documents,¹ and planning applications.
2. It is not intended to set out rigid procedures or fixed processes but rather to describe our approach and suggest appropriate ways in which people and communities may be involved at different stages. We will use this SCI as a guide in preparing planning policy and considering planning applications.

Overarching Aims for Community Involvement in the Planning of Exmoor

Exmoor National Park Authority aims to ensure

- 1. that all those with an interest in the National Park have the opportunity to submit their views in relation to planning matters, and**
- 2. that consultations are structured to facilitate active involvement and are tailored to the type of planning document involved**

subject to the constraints of the planning system, resources, deadlines and circumstances beyond the control of the National Park Authority

3. This SCI is an interim or temporary version setting out how consultation will be managed during the Corona Virus pandemic. It is intended to review this SCI once it is considered appropriate to do so.

¹ Includes Local Plans as defined by The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 section 6, Supplementary Planning Documents, and neighbourhood planning documents.

Note on Interim Statement of Community Involvement - October 2020

The corona virus outbreak has meant some changes to the Authority's decision-making roles and consultation methods in respect of its planning function. In summary:

- **Decision-making.** Authority meetings are being held as virtual meetings;
- **Contact.** Pre-application discussions or discussion on submitted planning applications will be carried out by email, video link, or phone only;
- **Parish Councils.** Notification of planning applications to Parish Councils will be by email;
- **Local consultation.** Neighbour notifications by direct letter will continue to take place over this temporary period;
- **Site notices.** Where planning officers are unable to conduct site visits, site notices will be sent to agents or applicants who will be expected to display them prominently. The Authority will request photographic proof that this has been done.
- **Site visits.** Only external site visits will be carried out, where possible, by officers. If officers need to access private land, that will take place only with the prior agreement of the site owner. Officers will obey social distancing principles and it will be at the discretion of both the officer and applicant/owner as to whether a visit can be completed. The overriding factor in this decision is the health and safety of both the officer and the applicant/site owner;
- **Payments.** These will preferably be made electronically via the BACS system. Card payment over the phone or cheque through the post will, however, remain available.
- **Planning Surgeries at Porlock and Lynton.** These will not take place while restrictions are in place to manage the corona virus outbreak including social distancing rules;
- **Planning Policy Consultation.** The Authority is not intending to carry out any new public consultation events whilst the social distancing rules are in place. Where it is judged that wider consultation is required alternative remote methods will be considered such as questionnaires and surveys.

The Authority will do its utmost to continue to run an efficient planning service during these difficult times, and we ask for the co-operation of applicants and all those participating in the planning process in assisting the Authority to achieve this.

It is intended that once restrictions have lifted the Authority will review its Statement of Community Involvement to remove interim measures put in place in response to the corona virus outbreak.

'Tracked changes' through the remainder of this document show how interim arrangements will operate.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

4. Exmoor National Park Authority is an ‘all-purpose’ planning authority, responsible for land use planning for the whole of Exmoor National Park. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) will affect all planning matters in the National Park (including minerals and waste planning).
5. In Somerset, Somerset West and Taunton Council and Somerset County Council are responsible for all local government functions except for planning in that part of the National Park within Somerset. In the Devon area of the National Park, North Devon District Council and Devon County Council are responsible for all local authority functions except for planning in that part of the National Park within Devon.
6. The National Park Authority is comprised of 22 members. This includes appointees of the Secretary of State who provide specialist National Park expertise and perspectives, representatives of local parish council interests; and nominated representatives of North Devon District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council, Devon County Council and Somerset County Council.
7. Unlike local councils, the Authority represents not just the locality, but the area as a National Park. This means that, in addition to the local interests of, for example, local residents, businesses and landowners; those from elsewhere but with an interest in National Parks, or the special qualities of Exmoor must also be engaged and their views taken into account.
8. Exmoor National Park was designated as a National Park in 1954 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The purposes of National Park designation as amended by the Environment Act 1995 are:
 - To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park area
 - To promote opportunities for understanding and enjoyment of the National Park’s special qualities
9. Exmoor National Park Authority was established as an independent authority in 1997 under provisions set out in the Environment Act 1995. The Act sets out two primary duties for the Authority:
 - To do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to, the accomplishment of the National Park purposes. For example, the rights of way network is managed and maintained by Exmoor National Park Authority which has delegated powers from Devon and Somerset County Councils.

- To seek to foster the social and economic well-being of local communities in the National Park.

Values

10. Our values are reflected throughout the work of the Authority and are:

Sustainability: using resources responsibly, cost effectively and efficiently and providing a model for more sustainable ways of working

Customer focus: being responsive to the needs of the public, partner organisations and each other and going the extra step to engage people in our work

Respect: treating everyone, both within and outside the Authority, with respect and providing equality of opportunity for all

Improvement: actively seeking ways to improve our services and performance, seeing problems as challenges not obstacles in an environment that encourages people to be flexible and innovative

Professionalism: providing a high quality, professional service based on high standards and excellent communications

Team Work: working together to achieve the Authority's objectives, supporting colleagues and committing to achieving the Authority's vision

COMMITMENT TO ENGAGEMENT

11. Exmoor National Park Authority promotes better awareness and engagement amongst local communities and other interested parties to have a say in the planning and sustainable development of Exmoor National Park, and how the Authority itself undertakes its responsibilities.
12. This Statement of Community Involvement complements the Authority's broader commitment to improving engagement, the Exmoor National Park Partnership Plan 2018 – 2023² sets out a long-term visions and ambitions for Exmoor National Park and was developed in consultation with partner organisations, communities, visitors and businesses. The NPA facilitates the

² <https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/about-us/key-documents>

Plan but it relies on partners to help deliver the ambitions in it. Partnership groups and delivery partners are listed on the Authority's website.³

13. The Authority continues to build upon its long tradition of partnership working to fulfil its aims and obligations under the planning system. Participation is encouraged through fora and groups; such as the Exmoor Consultative and Parish Forum.
14. The Authority's Equality Statement⁴ also sets out the approach to working with our partners, in line with the Equality Act 2010, in seeking opportunities to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic under the Act and those who do not.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING

15. The Authority adopted its first Statement of Community Involvement in 2006. This Interim Statement of Community Involvement replaces the previous version updated in 2015. It fulfils the statutory requirement in Section 10A of the 2012 Local Plan Regulations (as amended in 2017) that Statements of Community Involvement must be reviewed every five years.
16. This interim version (October 2020) has been produced in response to revised working arrangements necessary since the outbreak of the corona virus. It will be withdrawn and replaced once the Government announces that restrictions are no longer in place.
17. The Localism Act 2011 reformed the way local plans are prepared; this led to the introduction of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It also introduced Neighbourhood Planning. This SCI specifies the support and advice available from the Authority to Neighbourhood Planning Groups wishing to make a Neighbourhood Development Plan in line with the requirement for planning authorities to support neighbourhood planning.⁵
18. The Duty to Cooperate places a legal duty on local planning authorities and public bodies to engage constructively on an ongoing basis to maximise the

³ <https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/about-us/partnership-working#:~:text=Exmoor%20National%20Park%20Authority%20works%20in%20partnership%20with,the%20conservation%20and%20enhancement%20of%20the%20distinctive%20>

⁴ Exmoor National Park Authority – Equality Statement - <http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/about-us/key-documents>

⁵ The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017

effectiveness of preparing local plans in relation to cross boundary strategic matters such as those relating to the housing market, travel to work areas, river catchments and ecological networks.

19. The planning system continues to place a strong emphasis on full consultation with everyone involved in planning – that is, how land will be used, conserved, developed or improved. Paragraph 16 c) of the NPPF states: Plans should be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan-makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees. This SCI includes additional detail on how the Authority will engage communities on the preliminary stages of Plan-making and the Local Development Scheme.
20. In the past, exercises such as the ‘Your Future Exmoor’ events attended by almost 1000 of the National Park’s population, have shown that people have a real interest in the National Park and the planning policies and decisions that will affect the area and its communities. Their input influenced the preparation of the 2017 Local Plan and demonstrated that public involvement in planning for Exmoor can make a real difference.

RESOURCES

21. A wide range of Authority staff and members are engaged in the various partnership work outlined and can contribute to engagement of the relevant groups with the Authority’s planning service. Specialist Authority staff also contribute to the development of planning policy or comment on planning applications.
22. The **Development Management Team** assists the community and other stakeholders with their involvement in planning applications. It is supported by customer support, monitoring and Planning Investigations staff who are able to provide general advice and information on planning applications.
23. The **Policy and Community Team** is responsible for the Authority’s planning policy function which includes preparation and consultation on local development documents, strategic planning matters, neighbourhood planning and planning policy monitoring. They are able to advise on local planning documents and opportunities to engage in shaping them.

PUBLICITY NETWORKS

24. The Authority uses a wide network for the dissemination of planning information, particularly in relation to plan-making. Documents are made available on the Authority's website and people/organisations on the Authority's contacts database and Parish/Town Councils and Parish Meetings are emailed at key stages when planning policy documents become available for consultation or adoption.
25. The Authority will ensure that local planning policy documents (and copies of strategic environmental assessment documents) are available for inspection ~~at Exmoor National Park Authority's Head Office at Exmoor House, Dulverton and~~⁶ online on the National Park Authority website. Copies of documents related to plan making may also be made available during opening hours at:
- National Park Centres at Dulverton, Dunster and Lynmouth;
 - Local libraries such as those at Minehead, Porlock, Lynton, Dulverton, Combe Martin and Barnstaple;
 - Local Information Points - these include a number of village shops and tourism outlets which have an agreement with Exmoor National Park Authority to provide basic information about their immediate location and services offered by the Authority;⁷
 - Other local community services (including shops and public houses).
26. Many of these outlets are available to display consultation material through the goodwill of the businesses or other organisations concerned. The Authority will continue to use such networks on an informal basis or to deposit leaflets outlining planning matters.

National Park Authority Publications

27. The Authority has two publications and these are used to draw attention to forthcoming consultations (where publication dates make this possible) and the recent publication of local development documents. The timescales involved preclude reference to planning applications. These are ~~currently published annually and are~~ 'ParkLife', aimed primarily at local residents and businesses, and 'Exmoor Visitor', which is targeted towards visitors to the National Park.

⁶ [Temporary amendment of regulations 35 and 36 of the Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 removing requirements to make certain documents available for inspection at premises and to provide hard copies on request.](#)

⁷ <http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/enjoying/national-park-centres/local-information-points>

Other Opportunities for Engagement

28. The Exmoor Consultative and Parish Forum provides a mechanism for consultation and involvement of key local stakeholders on the Authority's activities. The Forum, which is being facilitated through virtual meetings during the corona virus outbreak, comprises representatives from the Exmoor parish/town councils, a number of organisations, including statutory agencies, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and other groups from, or with an interest in, Exmoor National Park. Details of the chair and vice chair of the Forum are on the Authority's website.⁸
29. The Forum receives updates on the Authority's activities which can include preparation of local development documents, and it has the opportunity to provide input and comment on their content and processes. Members are able to question the Authority and its officers on local planning documents and significant planning applications.
30. In addition to this Forum and the representation by five parish council Members of the Authority itself, great emphasis is given by the Authority to its involvement with parish and town councils of the National Park. In terms of planning, they are routinely consulted on all planning applications within their respective parishes and local development documents. The Authority is also represented on Somerset West and Taunton Council's Exmoor Panel which brings together parish and town councils in the National Park.
31. The Authority provides training to the Parish/Town Councils on planning matters, including planning applications, and provides information and updates on the preparation of local planning documents.

Equality

32. Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Duty requires public authorities to have due regard for equalities considerations when exercising their functions.
33. When consulting on planning documents, it is also important that the protected characteristics of the Equalities Act are taken into consideration; ensuring that all groups of people have the opportunity to access relevant material and are able to participate.
34. In relation to planning applications, a combination of site notices, on line information ~~and face-to-face meetings~~ means that we have a variety of

⁸ <https://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/about-us/committees/exmoor-consultative-and-parish-forum>

methods to help ensure that the public are informed about proposals in their local area.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PRACTICE

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING

The following principles will determine the Exmoor National Park Authority's approach to engaging the community in informing the determination of planning applications and in preparing planning policy documents:

- Openness, fairness and impartiality
- Maximising opportunities for constructive engagement of relevant communities and undertaking joint consultations where appropriate
- Balancing the resources available for the Authority's responsibilities
- Reaching out to those who have not previously been involved in planning matters
- Ensuring information is clear and avoiding jargon
- Providing feedback on the changes made as a result of consultation
- Recognition that the Authority must act within its powers and responsibilities laid out in legislation

STATEMENT OF INTENT

35. The Authority will publicise planning applications, invite comments on them, and take such comments into account when it makes decisions on them.
36. The Authority will consult widely on planning policy documents, using a range of methods according to the nature of the document and the likely interest in it. Drafts of planning policy documents will also be published for comment. The comments received will be considered when the Authority is making decisions as to whether to modify these documents or in designating a neighbourhood area. Interested parties will be able to request to be consulted on future local planning documents, and will be advised when the document's preparation reaches the appropriate stage.
37. The Authority will review its arrangements and methods of community involvement as part of the Authority Monitoring Report. This will include an

assessment of the effectiveness of these arrangements and consideration of change as a result of suggestions received or emerging examples of good practice.

METHODS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

38. Community involvement can take a wide variety of forms, and each has its advantages and disadvantages. As engagement and participation approaches evolve, it is likely that the methods and practices employed by the Authority will also change. The Authority will use a variety of approaches in preparing its local planning documents and will attempt to ensure that these are carried out at times and places convenient to local communities and other stakeholders. The selection of consultation methods will be informed by the guiding principles for community involvement and will balance considerations such as the potential to engage a significant portion of groups most affected or interested, minimise consultation fatigue as much as possible, and take into account any preferences indicated by communities themselves and the availability of resources.

39. Examples of the methods that may be employed include:

- Distribution of documents including availability on the Authority's website, and opportunity to respond via a form, a letter or e-mail;
- Availability of planning officers by phone to discuss proposals or issues;
- Web-based / digital consultation to enable participation on plans and policies via discussion, comments and mapping;
- Surveys which might involve questionnaires, interviews or similar;
- Public exhibitions where informative posters and other material are displayed, and planning officers are in attendance to discuss matters with individual members of the public;
- Drop-in sessions, workshops (where members of the public have the opportunity to engage in group debates and practical exercises);
- Meetings (where the public and community leaders have an opportunity to address the meeting and also put questions to planning officers and other key players) as appropriate.

Publicising consultations through:

- emails/letters,

- press releases⁹ and publications such as ParkLife/ Exmoor Visitor;
- social media.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

40. The nature of the National Park and the type of development generally occurring within it sets the context for this part of the Statement of Community Involvement. As a relatively remote and sparsely populated rural area, with mainly scattered small settlements, the pace of development is, for the most part, modest.

Major Planning Applications and Applications of Wider Interest

41. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) presumes against major development within the National Park.¹⁰ As a consequence, there are likely to be few developments of large scale or significant impact. However, this is a matter of planning judgement. The Local Plan includes a Major Development policy which provides an interpretation of major development in the context of the NPPF, which will not necessarily be consistent with the Development Procedure Order definition of major development for the categorisation of planning applications.¹¹ The environmental quality and national status of Exmoor also means there are individuals and organisations across the country that have a legitimate interest in how this national asset may be affected, and any implications for the wider family of National Parks.
42. Such applications are likely to include most developments which are ‘major’ applications, but also may well include applications which do not technically meet this definition of ‘major’ including those defined by the Local Plan policy for major development.
43. For major planning applications and those applications where Exmoor National Park Authority judges, on the basis of the nature of the application, or the expression of the relevant communities, that an application would have significant implications or interest for the local, or relevant regional or

⁹ If an article appears in the press, on the radio or on a news or interest website the content of the article or broadcast is at the discretion of the media organisation

¹⁰ MHCLG (2019) National Planning Policy Framework, para. 172

¹¹ The formal definition of ‘major development’ (for the purposes of consultation on planning applications) is set out in The Town and Country Planning (Development Procedure) (England) Order 2010, and includes – minerals development (i.e. mining, etc.); waste development; housing development of more than 10 units or 0.5 hectares; new building(s) with floorspace 1,000 sqm or more; development of land 1 hectare or more.

national, community, the National Park Authority will pursue a flexible and pragmatic approach with regard to engaging the community such as:

- notifying both local communities and the wider range of parties including those with a national interest in the National Park, to enable public involvement in the assessment of proposals;
- continuing to provide, as resources permit, pre-application advice to potential applicants. We encourage pre-application discussions with planning officers.
- encouraging those promoting a development to consult any individuals or communities who may be affected by their proposals to ensure that concerns can be considered and addressed by the applicant before any application is made. Where a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is in place, the applicant is required to ensure that pre-application consultation has been undertaken effectively.¹²

Other Planning Applications

44. The generally limited amount and size of development, and the small size of the settlements, tend to mean that local communities and individuals are understandably interested and concerned about the potential impact of developments that would be regarded as relatively modest in other contexts.

45. The NPA will continue to provide, as resources permit, pre-application advice to potential applicants. We encourage pre-application discussions with planning officers, even for minor schemes, in order to assess whether the principle of development is acceptable and to identify any potential issues that can be resolved prior to the submission of an application. Note that this will not normally include public consultation by the Authority, as this will take place when (or if) a planning application is actually made.

46. All potential applicants are encouraged to discuss their proposal with anyone likely to be affected by or interested in their application in advance of proposals being finalised and an application submitted. The planning case officer or other planning officer will be available at reasonable notice to discuss or explain the proposal by telephone or via email if that is considered appropriate ~~or in person at Exmoor National Park Authority's offices in Dulverton or at the surgeries at Porlock and Lynton.~~

47. In addition, the Authority will:

- publish a weekly list of new applications received on its website and also send the list to the parish/town councils in the National Park (if they have an application in their Parish), Somerset West and Taunton

¹² Exmoor National Park Authority – Planning Performance Agreement Charter

Council, North Devon Council, Somerset County Council and Devon County Council;

- make planning applications available for inspection ~~at on the~~ Exmoor National Park Authority's ~~offices and on its~~ website;
- Display, or arrange a site notice to be displayed at the site (or nearest highway in the case of sites with no highway frontage);
- advertise relevant applications in the local newspaper;
- notify neighbours by letter;
- notify the relevant town/parish council or parish meeting, statutory consultees and other bodies likely to be interested in the application based on their individual requirements;
- allow consultees at least 21 days to submit initial representations
- ~~where an application is presented to the Exmoor National Park Authority for its decision the applicant, supporter, objector or other interested parties have the right to request to speak to a meeting of the Authority for a maximum of two minutes before the decision is made (recording of meetings are available at our website)~~ Where an application is presented to the Exmoor National Park Authority Committee for its decision the applicant, supporter, objector or other interested parties have the right to request to speak to a virtual meeting of the Authority for a maximum of two minutes before the decision is made (recordings of meetings are available on our website).
- publish decisions on planning applications on the Authority's website www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/planning

Getting in Contact about Planning Applications

Unless you have been advised who the case officer is, in the first instance please contact:

Email: plan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Write to: Planning Team
Exmoor National Park Authority
Exmoor House, Dulverton
Somerset TA22 9HL

PLAN MAKING

Local Plans

48. Local Plans (together with neighbourhood plans) form the ‘development plan’ for each local planning authority. All decisions on planning applications should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Local Plans can contain development strategies, detailed policies, supporting text and maps.
49. Local Plans and Supplementary Planning documents must be prepared in accordance with the relevant regulations in force at the time which include the legal requirements for the stages when a plan should be consulted on and who should be consulted.¹³ Planning guidance sets out specified procedures including for consultation. These include preparation of a local development scheme, statement of community involvement, a sustainability appraisal, habitat regulations assessment and examination by an independent planning inspector.
50. We will consult statutory organisations (specific consultation bodies) including Councils, infrastructure providers and Government bodies as legally required or otherwise appropriate, as well as Town / Parish Councils, Parish Meetings, and those on the Authority’s register which is maintained to include contact details of any person or organisation who has expressed an interest in the Plan (see para 78). This may also include local businesses, voluntary and other organisations (including those identified as general consultation bodies) and the general public.
51. The intention is to ensure that there are opportunities for a wide range of local and national organisations / the public to input into the plan’s development.
52. The nature of the consultation will depend on formal regulations, and partly on the subject matter. For example, whether it affects just one village, or is about a specialist topic, or is of more general interest and effect.
53. Where there is a need to progress plan-making while restrictions are in place to manage the corona virus outbreak, the Authority will seek to achieve effective and practicable community engagement. This is likely to use online engagement such as digital consultations, video conferencing, and the use of social media. Documents will be available for inspection on the Authority’s website. The National Park Authority is mindful that not everyone has access to a reliable broadband signal and / or internet access. We will consider how

¹³ Town and Country Planning (Local Plan) (England) Regulations 2012

best to ensure those sections of the community without internet access can still be involved. This may include allowing individuals to nominate an advocate to share views on their behalf and/or consulting by telephone or in writing.

54. Legally, local plans must be subject to a review process every five years to determine whether they need reviewing. If evidence from this review indicates that a full or partial review of the Local Plan is needed, the Authority will publicise our intention to start an Exmoor National Park Local Plan review (including the preparation of a revised LDS) on our website, through press releases, Parklife/Exmoor Visitor as appropriate, using social media and through emails/letters and updates through the Authority's networks and at fora/meetings.
55. The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a project timetable which gives information and detail about the preparation and review of local plan documents and supplementary planning documents in the National Park. The LDS is useful for anyone involved in the plan-making process as it sets out when each document is available for formal consultation. The LDS is available online on the Exmoor National Park Authority website.
56. There are various points in the preparation of Local Plans at which organisations and individuals may become involved. These are set out in paragraphs 61-65 below.
57. As the Local Plan is in preparation consultation documents will be published setting out options, evidence, and draft policies. The final publication of the Plan gives the public an opportunity to make formal representation to a Planning Inspector for independent examination.
58. Planning policy consultations will normally be held for a minimum period of six weeks. Opportunities to submit comments online or electronically will be made available wherever possible.
59. The accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a 'Strategic Environmental Assessment') provides an analysis of the potential impact of the proposals (or options) in terms of the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability. As such it provides an important tool informing the selection and balancing of the contents of the local development document. Comments will be invited on both the local plan and the sustainability appraisal which will evolve alongside it and for consultations on supplementary planning documents.
60. Following consultation, once we have had an opportunity to consider all responses, the comments received, or a summary of them and an indication of how they have been addressed, will be published on the website. This may

be published alongside subsequent stages of consultation.¹⁴ Comments at drop-in sessions will be summarised. Whilst all comments received will be taken into account, it should be noted that we cannot always act upon each one as, in addition to varying views often being put forward, wider considerations must also be taken into account such as national policy and legislation. Those who responded to a consultation and Town / Parish Councils / Meetings will be notified of the adoption of new planning policy documents.

Early engagement

Evidence gathering

61. At the start of Local Plan preparation, neighbouring authorities and bodies with technical knowledge will be approached. Possible methods of involvement/consultation may include discussion, emails and/or letters to assist with evidence gathering. Planning guidance encourages local planning authorities to publish documents forming part of their evidence base as they are completed on their website in an accessible format, rather than waiting until options are published or a local plan is published for representations, to keep communities informed and involved. The Authority will therefore endeavour to publish evidence on its website as it becomes available and to ensure that it is written in plain English

Identification of issues

62. Local communities including Town / Parish Councils/ Meetings, stakeholders, statutory bodies and adjoining authorities will be asked for ideas, views and information on the issues the Plan will address. Possible methods of involvement / consultation may include through the Authority's website, emails/letters, press releases and Parklife/Exmoor Visitor, and use of social media and drop-in sessions / workshops and meetings as appropriate.

Options

63. Local communities and Town / Parish Councils/ Meetings, local businesses, stakeholders / interest groups, statutory bodies, and adjoining authorities will be asked to provide their input into options for the plan. Possible methods of involvement / consultation may include use of the Authority's website,

¹⁴ This excludes any comments made at Publication stage which will be considered through the Local Plan Examination by an independent Planning Inspector.

emails/letters, press releases and Parklife/Exmoor Visitor, and social media and drop-in sessions workshops and meetings as appropriate.

Draft Plan

64. Local communities and Town / Parish Councils/ Meetings, local businesses, stakeholders / interest groups, statutory bodies, and adjoining authorities will be consulted on the draft plan. Possible methods of involvement / consultation may include use of the Authority's website, emails/letters, press releases and Parklife/Exmoor Visitor, and social media and drop-in sessions workshops and meetings as appropriate.

Publication Plan

65. Local communities and Town / Parish Councils/ Meetings, local businesses, stakeholders / interest groups, statutory bodies, and adjoining authorities will be consulted on the Publication plan. Possible methods of involvement / consultation may include use of the Authority's website, emails/letters, press releases and Parklife/Exmoor Visitor, and social media and drop-in sessions workshops and meetings as appropriate.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

66. These have a lesser status than local plan documents. They give further detail in relation to policies which are already in the development plan (e.g. the Local Plan) and should help applicants make applications or aid infrastructure delivery. We will formally consult statutory bodies, Town / Parish Councils / Meetings and local interest groups on a draft version. Earlier informal consultation arrangements may be held depending on the subject matter and resources available. A formal examination by a Planning Inspector is not required.

Evidence Gathering

67. Those with technical knowledge will be engaged - possible methods of involvement / consultation may include discussions and use of emails / letters.

Identifying Issues

68. Local communities and Town / Parish Councils/ Meetings, local businesses, stakeholders / interest groups, statutory bodies, and adjoining authorities will be consulted. Possible methods of involvement / consultation may include use of the Authority's website, emails/letters, press releases and Parklife/Exmoor Visitor, and social media and drop-in sessions workshops and meetings as appropriate.

Draft Supplementary Planning Documents

69. Local communities and Town / Parish Councils/ Meetings, local businesses, stakeholders / interest groups, statutory bodies, and adjoining authorities will be consulted. Possible methods of involvement / consultation may include use of the Authority's website, emails/letters, press releases and Parklife/Exmoor Visitor, and social media and drop-in sessions workshops and meetings as appropriate.

70. The Authority may also produce technical planning guidance/advice which is not subject to consultation because it covers topics of a technical and factual nature.

Neighbourhood Planning¹⁵

71. Neighbourhood development plans, neighbourhood development orders and community right to build are all elements of neighbourhood planning. Once a neighbourhood development plan is brought into force it becomes part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area.

72. Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) are prepared by local communities for their own Parishes or areas with the support and advice from the Local Planning Authority. NDPs are produced by a Neighbourhood Planning Group. This could be formed by a Town or Parish Council, or where there is no recognised council, a Neighbourhood Forum.

73. Local planning authorities are required to set out their policy for discharging their duty to give advice or assistance to qualifying bodies to facilitate proposals for neighbourhood development plans (NDPs) or neighbourhood

¹⁵ This advice and assistance also applies to Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders.

development orders (NDOs), including proposals for the modification of NDPs.¹⁶

74. They are required to support qualifying bodies in the production of their plans and are ultimately responsible for formally incorporating the eventual plan into their statutory planning framework.
75. Exmoor National Park Authority will act as the lead local planning authority (LPA) for Neighbourhood Plan Areas wholly within the Exmoor National Park boundary. Where a Neighbourhood Plan Area falls partly within the National Park and partly within a neighbouring District Council local planning authority (LPA) area, the NPA will liaise with the LPA with the expectation being that the LPA with the main settlement or majority of population within its boundary will act as lead.
76. The role of the Authority is to offer advice and assistance and to take the draft plan through a consultation and examination stage and on to final adoption. In addition, any draft plan or order will need to be subject to a public referendum. As the National Park Authority is not an Election Authority (i.e. it does not hold elections or referenda) responsibility for any referendum will rest with the relevant district council.
77. The following table explains the roles and responsibilities of the qualifying body and the Elections Authority and the National Park Authority and sets out where the National Park Authority will offer support and advice.

Stage	The National Park Authority will...
Designation of a Neighbourhood Plan Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the Neighbourhood Plan process • Check that the designation of area application is valid and complete • Publicise designation of area application • Designate the area as a Neighbourhood Area where it meets the relevant conditions

¹⁶ Regulation 4(a) of the [Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 \(Commencement No 3\) Regulations](#) brought section 6 of the act into force

<p>Draft Plan Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster an open and collaborative approach to the development of the NDP. The Neighbourhood Planning Group will carry out consultation for a minimum of 6 weeks on the early stages of the NDP. A Consultation Statement must then be submitted to the Exmoor National Park Authority along with the draft NDP indicating what consultation has been carried out and how it has informed the preparation of the draft NDP. • Offer advice and support, for example on meeting basic conditions, consideration of the need for environmental assessments, suitability of supporting evidence and consultation statement, compatibility with national planning guidance and Local Plan policies. • Share existing information and evidence base work held by the Local Planning Authority, as appropriate and subject to any data protection or confidentiality issues. • Provide an indicative housing provision figure if requested by the qualifying body • Provide constructive comments on the emerging plan and other supporting documents (e.g. Basic Condition Statement) prior to formal submission.
<p>Submission to Local Planning Authority</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate, check and publicise the submission for a minimum of 6 weeks. As a minimum, the documents will be published on website and comments

	invited from prescribed statutory bodies and those who have previously indicated an interest.
Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Appoint the examiner and publish all required documents ● Make arrangements for any hearing, publicity, notification and make documents available on website as directed by the examiner ● Undertake modifications to the NDP as recommended by the examiner ● Publish a decision statement on the Authority's website
Referendum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inform the electoral authority (EA) as soon as possible of the likely timescale for referendum. ● Work with the EA to ensure that the timings and resourcing of referendum are reasonable, clearly understood and agreed in advance. ● Meet the reasonable costs of the referendum.
'Made'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Publish the decision statement on website, advising that the document is now 'made' and forms part of the local plan. ● Send a copy of the decision statement to the Neighbourhood Planning Group and advise any person who asked to be notified that the NDP has been made.

Consultation Register

78. If you wish to be notified about the preparation of local planning documents (local plans), planning policy, neighbourhood plans or supplementary planning documents, your details will need to be held on the consultation register. These details are only used for planning policy consultations and held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

To ensure that your details are logged on our system please contact us by:

Emailing: localplan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Writing to: Policy & Community Team
Exmoor National Park Authority
Exmoor House
Dulverton
Somerset
TA22 9HL

79. Please note that while restrictions due to the corona virus outbreak remain, it is preferred that correspondence is conducted via email if at all possible.

How we will use your information

The Authority is registered with the ICO and processes data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). The information you share with us in relation to planning policy consultations will be retained on a file and/or electronic database indefinitely for the purpose of providing background evidence for decisions made.

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 requires that all representations must be available for public inspection (which includes the Press). Comments received will usually be acknowledged, and will be placed on file, on our database and published on our website with your name and the organisation you represent. Personal contact details may be used to provide updates in relation to any representation you may make or notify you of any future consultations, if appropriate. Anonymous submissions cannot be taken into account.

You should not include any personal information in your comments that you would not wish to be made publicly available or make any discriminatory comments. Personal contact information (address, telephone number and email) will not be published. We reserve the right to withhold any comments or parts of comments that are offensive or defamatory. By submitting your comments you are confirming they are your personal views and you agree to accept legal responsibility for your comments and accept that they will be publicly available.