



# EXMOOR

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## NATIONAL PARK

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24<sup>th</sup> April 2026

### EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE

**To: The Members of the PLANNING COMMITTEE of the Exmoor National Park Authority**

A meeting of the Planning Committee will be held in the **Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton** on **Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 1.30pm.**

The meeting will be open to the press and public subject to the passing of any resolution under s.100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

There is Public Speaking at this meeting, when the Chairperson will allow members of the public two minutes each to ask questions, make statements, or present a petition relating to any item on the Agenda. Anyone wishing to ask questions should notify the Corporate Support Officer as soon as possible, or at the latest by 4pm on the working day before the meeting of the agenda item on which they wish to speak, indicating a brief summary of the matter or matters to be raised (contact [Committees@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:Committees@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)).

The meeting will be **recorded**. By entering the Authority's Committee Room and speaking during Public Speaking you are consenting to being recorded. We will make the recording available via our website for members of the public to listen to and/or view, within 72 hours of the meeting taking place.

Members of the public may use forms of social media to report on proceedings at this meeting. Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chairperson so that those present may be made aware.

(The agenda and papers for this meeting can be downloaded from the National Park Authority's website [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)).

Sarah Bryan  
Chief Executive

As set out above, the Authority welcomes public engagement with its work and believes that everyone attending a meeting of Exmoor National Park Authority or one of its Committees has the right to be treated with respect and to feel safe at all times, including before, during and after the meeting they attend.

The Authority understands that some situations can be difficult and lead to frustration; however, the Authority is committed to promoting an environment where everyone feels listened to and respected and is not subjected to unacceptable behaviour. Further guidance is provided in our Customer Notice, available on our [website](#).

## AGENDA

### 1. Apologies for Absence

### 2. Declarations of Interest/Lobbying of Members/Unaccompanied Site Visits

Members are asked to declare:-

- (1) any interests they may have in relation to items on the agenda for this meeting;
- (2) any lobbying by anyone concerned with a planning application and any unaccompanied site visits where contact has been made with any person concerned with a planning application.

### 3. Minutes

- (1) To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2026 (Item 3)
- (2) To consider any Matters Arising from those Minutes.

### 4. Business of Urgency: To introduce any business which by reason of special circumstances the Chairperson, after consultation with the Chief Executive, is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency and to resolve when such business should be ordered on the Agenda.

### 5. Public Speaking: The Chairperson will allow members of the public to ask questions, make statements, or present a petition on any matter on the Agenda for this meeting or in relation to any item relevant to the business of the Planning Committee. Any questions specific to an agenda item can be posed when that item is considered subject to the discretion of the person presiding at the meeting.

### 6. Development Management: To consider the report of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities on the following:-

Agenda Item	Application No.	Description	Page Nos.
6.1	EXM/26/013/FULL	Proposed erection of steel frame building - at Land North of Chibbet Post, Exford, Minehead, TA24 7ND	1 - 14
6.2	EXM/26/068/FULL	Proposed temporary change of use of agricultural land for timber storage and associated wood chipping operations, including a defined operational area, maximum stack height of 3.5 metres, and associated temporary works (10 year permission) - at Land adjoining B3224 at Treborough Common, Treborough, Watchet	15 - 32
6.3	EXM/26/016/LBC	Application Under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations for listed building consent for the proposed replacement of existing publicly accessible defibrillator – at Exmoor National Park Authority, Exmoor House, Kemps Way, Dulverton, TA22 9HL	33 - 41

6.4          6/26/25/003          Update report          42 - 65  
Proposed conversion of existing church into a single  
affordable residential unit - at Roadwater Methodist  
Church, Roadwater, Watchet, TA23 0QY

7.      **Application Decisions Delegated to the Chief Executive:** To note the applications determined by the Chief Executive under delegated powers (Item 9).
8.      **Site Visits:** To arrange any site visits agreed by the Committee (the reserve date being Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2026 (am))

Further information on any of the reports can be obtained by contacting the National Park Authority at the address and telephone numbers at the top of the agenda. Details of the decisions taken at this meeting will be set out in the formal Minutes which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. In the meantime, details of the decisions can be obtained by emailing [Committees@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:Committees@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

## ITEM 3

### EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY PLANNING COMMITTEE

**MINUTES** of the Meeting of the Planning Committee of Exmoor National Park Authority held on Tuesday, 7 April 2026 at 1.30pm in the Committee Room, Exmoor House, Dulverton.

#### PRESENT

Mr S J Pugsley (Chairperson)

Mr M Kelly (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr T Butt Phillip

Mr A Bray

Mrs M Chilcott (substitute for Mrs F Nicholson)

Mr D Elson

Mr J Holtom

Mr R Hopley

Mr J Patrinos

Mr B Geen

Mrs F Smith

Miss E Stacey

Apologies for absence were received from: Mrs F Nicholson

**74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / LOBBYING OF MEMBERS / UNACCOMPANIED SITE VISITS:** There were no declarations of interest.

**75. MINUTES:**

- i. **Confirmation:** The **Minutes** of the Committee's meeting held on 3 February 2026 were agreed and signed as a correct record.
- ii. **Matters arising:** There were no matters arising.

**76. BUSINESS OF URGENCY:** There was none

**77. PUBLIC SPEAKING:** See Minutes 79 and 80 below for details of public speakers.

**78. APPEAL DECISIONS:** The Committee noted the **decisions** of the Secretary of State for the following appeal:

6.1 – Appeal dismissed against the refusal of planning permission at Triscombe Farm, Wheddon Cross, Minehead, Somerset, TA24 7HA, Ref: 6/15/25/001.

#### DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

**79. Application No: 6/3/25/009**

**Location: Land south of Hownel Lane, Brompton Regis, Dulverton, TA22 0LQ. Proposed demolition of ruinous structure and erection of agricultural building and associated works (amended description)**

The Committee considered the **report** of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities.

An update report was received following the application and report to the Committee on 6 January 2026, where the application had been deferred.

Officers outlined changes to the site plans and recommendations.

**Public Speaking:**

- 1) Neighbours – Mr and Mrs Veltink (written submission tabled)
- 2) Applicant – Mr P Veale

**The Committee's Consideration**

Members noted that the application site was served by a small parcel of land and the proposed building would be used to store bee keeping equipment and farm machinery. Members also noted that there was previously a small farm storage building on the site which was still evident in the landscape.

Members were reminded of Policy SE-S4 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan whereby permission for agricultural and forestry development would be granted, amongst other things, in exceptional circumstances for new isolated buildings required for agricultural purposes where it could be demonstrated there was an overriding functional need for the building, and that its size and scale were commensurate with the demonstrated need.

Members accepted that the proposal would be for agricultural purposes, that the land required maintenance and that the building would contribute to wider land management benefits. It was also accepted that the equipment that would be stored was necessary for agricultural purposes and there was a requirement for building space to accommodate the equipment which cannot be accommodated elsewhere. Thus, providing exceptional circumstances relating to an overriding functional need.

Members considered that even though there were buildings at Daws Farm, these were not divided from the parcel of land by the applicant specifically and the need for the building had not arisen from a change of farming practices. Members also placed weight on the fact that part of a building remained on the land – with one gable wall and a rear wall intact.

Based on the evidence before them, Members were satisfied that there was an overriding functional agricultural need for the building and the development would be in accordance with Policy SE-S4 of the Local Plan.

Members considered that whilst the building would be located away from other buildings, it would replace existing walls of a former building which were clearly visible in the landscape, and that its siting would benefit from hedge boundaries that would reduce its visual impact.

Due to its appropriate siting and small scale, Members did not consider the building would be prominent or significantly incongruous in the landscape.

Taking account of the characteristics of the area, Members considered that the proposal would conserve the scenic beauty and character of the landscape.

Members concluded that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the landscape. It would be in accordance with Policies CE-S1, CE-D1 and SE-S4 of the Local Plan, which in combination would seek to ensure that the high quality, diverse and distinct landscapes of Exmoor National Park were conserved and enhanced, and that new isolated buildings were not permitted unless there were exceptional circumstances.

**RESOLVED:** To grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:

- 1) The development hereby approved shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

**Reason:** In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, (as amended by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

- 2) The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the submitted drawings numbered: ARPC1, ARPC2, ARPC3, ARPC4-A & ARPC3-A unless otherwise required by a condition below.

**Reason:** For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the development accords with the approved plans.

- 3) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no external lighting shall be installed on the development hereby approved unless details have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The external lighting shall thereafter be installed and operated fully in accordance with the approved scheme.

**Reason:** In the interests of visual amenity, the conservation of protected species and habitats and to protect Exmoor's dark night sky in accordance with policies GP1, CE-S1, CE-D1, CE-S2 & CE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011- 2031.

- 4) The building hereby permitted shall not be used other than for agricultural purposes as defined in Section 336(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Where the development hereby approved ceases to be used for the purposes applied for within ten years from the date of this permission and planning permission has not been granted authorising development for purposes other than those set out under the above condition within three years of the permanent cessation of the authorised uses, and there is no outstanding appeal, the development must be removed.

**Reason:** For the strict control of development in the countryside and the Local Planning Authority wishes to ensure that the development is used solely for the purposes hereby permitted.

- 5) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and reenacting that Order with or without modification), express planning permission shall be obtained for any development under Class R of Part 3 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

**Reason:** To control any subsequent development of commercial activities in the interests of the visual amenities and character of the locality.

- 6) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with all ecological measures as set out in Section 4 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (Acorn, September 2025).

**Reason:** To ensure the works are carried out in accordance with the submitted details and in accordance with policy CE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031.

- 7) The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan and including:
- a) a non-technical summary;
  - b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the [HMMP];
  - c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
  - d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
  - e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The management measures specified in the approved HMMP shall be fully adhered to for the entirety of the 30-year period following the completion of development.

**Reason:** To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 8) Notice in writing shall be given to the Authority when the:
- a) Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP) has been implemented; and
  - b) Habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the (HMMP) have been completed.

**Reason:** To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 9) Within 6 months of the development being brought into use:
- a) the habitat creation and enhancement works set out in the approved Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP) shall have been completed; and
  - b) a completion report, evidencing the completed habitat enhancements, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 10) The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved (HMMP) shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved (HMMP) and monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved (HMMP).

**Reason:** To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

**80. Application No: 6/26/25/003**

**Location: Roadwater Methodist Church, Roadwater, Watchet, TA23 0QY.  
Proposed conversion of existing church into a single affordable residential unit  
(amended description)**

The Committee considered the **report** of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities.

**Public speaking:**

- 1) Neighbour – Mag Hatton
- 2) Neighbour – Anne Foster
- 3) Neighbour – Dave Sherman

**The Committee's Consideration**

Members noted that, on balance, officers considered that the benefits of delivering a local affordable dwelling in a sustainable village location carried greater weight than the loss of the existing community facility given that the building was no longer required for community use and the lack of parking provision.

The occupation of the dwelling would be restricted with the Local Occupancy Criteria for Affordable Housing set out in Policy HC-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031. Should the scheme be supported, a Section 106 Agreement would be in place to ensure the development remained as an affordable dwelling.

In relation to affordability, Members requested the developer address insulating the dwelling to modern standards to ensure future heating costs remain affordable.

The building was listed on the Historic Environment Record as a non-designated heritage asset and Members felt it was important to protect it and make use of the dwelling.

The building was once a chapel that did not have allocated off-street parking and most residents walked to services, dropped off attendees outside or parked in the village hall car park.

The original application proposed on-site parking which was subsequently removed to accord with the Highways Authority's advice and safety concerns. Members agreed that the proposed use as a dwelling was of lesser impact to domestic traffic movements than an alternative community use of the building.

<p><b>RESOLVED:</b> To grant planning permission subject to the conditions set out in the report and a signed S106 agreement to ensure that the occupancy of the dwelling is confined to persons in local affordable housing need.</p>
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**81. Application No: EXM /26/071/DOC**

**Location: Exmoor National Park Information Centre, The Pavillion, The Esplanade, Lynmouth, EX35 6EQ. Discharge of Condition 3 (Odour Risk Assessment) of approved application 62/41/25/007**

The Committee considered the **report** of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities.

**The Committee's Consideration**

Members noted that in October 2025, planning permission (reference 62/41/25/007) was granted for a replacement extraction unit and vertical flue on the rear of the building subject to conditions.

An Odour Risk Assessment was submitted, and North Devon Council's Environmental Health Officer was consulted, who considered the proposed staged approach to mitigation was justified and proportionate based on the circumstances.

**RESOLVED:** To discharge Condition 3 (Odour Risk Assessment) of approved application 62/41/25/007.

**82. Application No: EXM/26/037/ADV**

**Location: National Park Centre, Exmoor National Park Authority, Exmoor House, Kemps Way, Dulverton, TA22 9HL.**

The Committee considered the **report** of the Head of Climate, Nature & Communities.

**The Committee's Consideration**

Members acknowledged the siting and size of the flag and noted that this would be a temporary sign placed on a heavy pedestal base. Whilst the content of the banner could be changed, the advertisement consent would be for the banner itself.

**RESOLVED:** To grant advertisement consent subject to the conditions set out in the report.

**83. SCHEDULE OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS:** The Committee noted the **schedule** of Section 106 Applications being undertaken by Devon County Council on behalf of Exmoor National Park Authority.

**84. APPLICATION DECISIONS DELEGATED TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE:** The Committee noted the **decisions of the Chief Executive determined under delegated powers.**

It was noted that Application EXM/26/050/PNA/CA should state that prior approval was required.

**85. SITE VISITS:** If there were any site visits to arrange, these would take place on the morning of Friday 1 May 2026.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm

(Chairperson)

### Committee Report

Application Number:	EXM/26/013/FULL
Valid Date:	29 January 2026
Target Determination Date:	26 March 2026
Extension of Time:	8 May 2026
Applicant:	Mr R Vigars
Agent:	Ms Stacey Bosley
Case Officer:	Yvonne Dale
Site Address:	Land North of Chibbet Post Exford Minehead TA24 7ND
Proposal:	Proposed erection of steel frame building (14.6m x 36.5m).
Recommendation:	Refusal
Reason for bringing before Planning Committee:	This application is brought before Committee in accordance with the Approved Scheme of Delegation because the recommendation of the Officer is contrary to the view of Exford Parish Council who support the application.
Pre-commencement conditions agreed:	n/a

### Relevant History

6/13/24/002 - Proposed erection of steel framed livestock building and minor alteration to the field access. Part Retrospective on Land North of Chibbet Post, Exford, Minehead, Somerset.  
 Approved 15/11/2024

### Site Description & Proposal

The application site lies adjacent to and south west of the B3223, approximately 400 metres north west of Chibbet Post junction, and approximately 1.5km south west of the centre of Exford.

There are public rights of way to the south west of the site (approximately 503 metres) – DU 4/11 Footpath, to the north of the site (approximately 586 metres) – DU 4/10 Footpath, and to the east of the site (approximately 381 metres) – DU/4/9 Footpath. The site lies within the dark sky reserve critical buffer zone.

The application building would be used in conjunction with the applicants farming enterprise. The application papers indicate that the applicant owns the 3.5 acres at Chibbet Post (which is concurrent with the application site) and rents around 80 acres for grazing at Chibbet Farm and Buckworthy Farm near Exford. The applicant is also in the process of purchasing a further 30 acres of land at Sandyway.

The farm business comprises approximately 95 breeding ewes (along with 35 replacements) and the applicant hopes this season to have approximately 120 lambs.

There are buildings on or adjacent to some of the land that the applicant rents, but the agent has confirmed that these buildings are not available to the applicant for use. Nevertheless, the applicant already has a building on the land at the application site, with retrospective planning permission having been granted for a 119sqm building in November 2024. That building was for livestock.

### Proposal:

The application building was originally submitted for the storage of machinery, equipment and materials used in connection with the applicant's agricultural contracting business. The agent sets out that the reason for the application is wholly authentic and can be evidenced by the loss of the applicant's current business premises by termination of their lease. The correct fee for this type of application was not paid and consequently, the applicant changed the proposal to an agricultural building.

As such, the proposal is considered on the basis that it would be solely for agricultural purposes.

The application seeks to erect a building constructed of a steel portal frame with concrete panels at 2m in height with timber cladding to the eaves. The building would have a fibre cement sheeting roof, anthracite grey in colour. The agricultural doors would be constructed in metal sheeting, and the personnel door would be finished in anthracite grey colour.

The building would measure 14.6 metres by 36.5 metres providing 532.9m<sup>2</sup> of internal floor area for storage. It would be 6.1 metres to the ridge and 4.5 metres to the eaves.

The agent confirms that the building would be for the purposes of storage of fodder, machinery, and equipment only. The building would store approximately 100 bales of hay per annum which will be fed to the applicant's stock during the winter months. Along with storing the hay the remainder of the building would be used for housing machinery and equipment such as tractors, bailers, maintenance equipment etc used to manage and maintain the land owned and leased by the applicant. It is understood that some of these items are currently stored outside.

The proposal also includes a compacted stone track from the existing access and terminating to a yard area to the south east elevation of the proposed building.

### **Consultee Representations**

**ENPA Future Landscapes Officer – 18/02/26** - A pre-app site visit was made in September 2025 to discuss the draft proposal as it was at the time. From a landscape point of view this is not an ideal location, but it is understood that it is policy compliant in terms of need and mitigation measures will help to reduce the impact within the wider landscape. At field scale, the stockpiled materials, trailers and machinery have created a level of visual clutter in the upper half of the field which detracts from the visual amenity and erodes landscape character. The storage building would rationalise this.

The recommendations to minimise landscape and visual impact were:

Reduce the size and mass of the building. The application building has been reduced from over 1100m<sup>2</sup> to 532m<sup>2</sup> (24.38 x 45.72m down to 14.6 x 36.5m). Use recessive colours and materials including timber cladding to the walls and fibre cement to the roof. Box profile sheet walls have been changed to timber cladding with fibre cement roofing. Concrete panels form the lower 2m of the walls, which is higher than usual, and I wonder why it is so?

Mitigate visual impact by incorporating a hedgebank to provide screening in views on the approach from higher ground to the south-east. A grassland bund is proposed instead, planted with primarily small growing trees, rather than a hedgebank. It would be more in keeping with the landscape character and setting for a hedgebank to be formed from excavated material and planted with a native species hedge.

Keep the building close to the boundary and to existing buildings. The application building is set further from the boundary hedge by approx. 14m. It would be preferable for the building to be closer to the boundary. It would also then benefit more from the screening effect of the planted hedgebank/bund if it were set closer to the hedge.

The new track doesn't appear to link to the existing buildings, so the assumption is that it would not replace the route currently used.

**ENPA Future Landscapes Officer – 01/04/2026** - To clarify my previous comments, whilst the size of the building has been reduced, it remains a relatively large building and the position of the building within the site does not reflect the recommendations given at the site visit. It does not relate well to the boundary, leaving a large area between the building and boundary, nor does it relate well to the existing building. There is also no hedgebank for screening, as recommended. The track does not appear to service both the existing and proposed buildings, requiring the current route to be retained. Putting these factors together, the proposal does not reflect the recommendations made and is poorly sited in relation to existing features. The proposal doesn't give adequate regard to the landscape character and therefore would cause landscape harm.

**ENPA Ecologist – 12/03/2026** - The Exmoor Biodiversity Trigger List was incorrectly filled out as the Red Line Boundary is greater than 0.1ha. Therefore, we would normally expect to receive an Ecological Impact Assessment with the planning application. However, given that the BNG assessment only identified modified grassland habitat and an artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (track) to be present, I think for this proposal there is unlikely to be harm to ecologically valuable habitats. A Biodiversity Net Gain Statement, existing and proposed

habitat plans and Small Sites Metric (dated 08/01/26) were provided by Bateman Hosegood with this application.

The baseline habitat survey (conducted 05/12/25) identified modified grassland and artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface on the site of the proposed building. This is not the optimal time of year for surveying grasslands but as the Small Sites Metric tends towards overestimating habitat condition, it will be accepted in this situation. Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved by the creation of a modified grassland bund in moderate condition with 22 small trees and 2 medium trees. This should be achievable; however, no detail is provided as to how this habitat will be created which will need to be provided in the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan when this condition is discharged.

In addition to BNG and in line with Local Plan Policy CE-S3 and Appendix 1 of the Exmoor Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Guidance Note we would expect to see enhancements for biodiversity. The Exmoor Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Guidance Note includes some recommendations and suggestions for the applicant to consider those appropriate for their site but examples of what could be included are: at least three bat boxes on the timber paneling on the south west elevation and at least three swallow cups within the structure. These should be secured by condition.

Best practice measures should be followed to reduce entrapment risk to wildlife, including hedgehogs and badgers, as a precaution any open trenches or pits or large pipes (>200mm diameter) should be covered at night; and any open excavations should have a means of escape, for example by way of a sloped plank or sloped end to allow any animals to escape. Please secure by condition. To reduce risk of harm to common reptile species, should the vegetation grow to >10cm in height then any vegetation removal should be carried out with a phased approach to allow any reptiles present to disperse. A first cut down to 10cm and then a rest period of 24 hours before a cut down to ground level.

Due to the site's location within the Impact Risk Zone for the South Exmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest it is important that we ensure that the development cannot be used to increase livestock numbers in the future. Otherwise, a Simple Calculation of Atmospheric Impact Limits (SCAIL) would need to be conducted. Any permission granted should be conditioned to restrict the use of the development.

There is no external lighting proposed and this should be secured by condition. Given the size of the site and the scale of the BNG works it is probable that the applicant will be able to achieve 10% BNG onsite.

In addition to the statutory biodiversity gain condition (for which an informative should be added to any decision notice) and the HMMP condition please apply conditions to any permission granted:

- to restrict the use of the structure so that it cannot be used to increase livestock numbers,
- to secure enhancements as detailed above,

and for the following for which I have provided some suggested wording below:

- Prior to the installation of any additional external lighting on site, a “lighting design strategy for bats” shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall: a) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their resting places, foraging habitat and commuting routes; and b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (for example through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their resting places. all external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

**Exford Parish Council – 04/02/2026** - Exford Parish Councillors wish to encourage a young, working family who contribute to village life to be able to stay on Exmoor, although they expressed concerns of over developing the site, which is in a high and open location meaning the proposal would have an impact visually. However, during the site visit the applicant stated that the proposed building would be sunk into the ground taking into consideration the visual impact, this is not made clear in the planning documents. The applicant also stated that the entrance to the building on the Southwest side would be a track to allow for vehicle access, this is not shown on the plans. All parish councillors voted to support the proposal with concerns as mentioned.

**ENPA PROW & Access Officer** – No Response

**Somerset Council** – No Response

**ENPA Senior Ecologist** – No Response

**Somerset Highways Authority** – No Response

## Representations

Total – Objections	Total – Support	Total – No Objections
0	0	0

### Summary of comments:

No public letters of representation have been received.

## Planning Context

Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031 (inclusive of minerals and waste policies):

GP1 Achieving National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development

GP3 Spatial Strategy

SE-S4 Agricultural and Forestry Development

SE-S3 Business Development in the Open Countryside

RT-D12 Access Land and Rights of Way

CE-S1 Landscape and Seascape Character

CE-D1 Protecting Exmoor's Landscapes and Seascapes

CC-D1 – Flood Risk

CE-D2 Green Infrastructure Provision

CE-S2 Protecting Exmoor's Dark Night Sky

CE-S3 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

CE-S6 Design & Sustainable Construction Principles

AC-D2 - Traffic and Road Safety Considerations for Development

AC-S3 - Traffic Management and Parking

AC-D3 - Parking Provision and Standards

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material planning material consideration for all applications.

## Planning Considerations

The key planning considerations for this proposal are whether the location of the development can be supported under the Local Plan, impact on the character and appearance of the landscape, impact on the historic environment, and the impacts on protected species and habitats.

### LOCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE LANDSCAPE

The primary aspect of this application is to erect a new building to be used for agricultural purposes.

Policy SE-S4 states permission will be granted for new buildings, tracks and structures or extensions required for agricultural purposes where:

1.
  - a) it can be demonstrated that there is a functional need and its size and scale are commensurate with that need;
  - b) the structure is designed for the purposes of agriculture;
  - c) in the case of new buildings, the site is related physically and functionally to existing buildings associated with the business;
  - d) structures are sited appropriately and of an appropriate design;

- e) proposals do not generate a level of activity or otherwise detrimentally affect the amenity of surrounding properties and occupiers;
- f) appropriate measures are taken to ensure that proposals do not have an adverse impact on biodiversity or cultural heritage or cause other environmental impacts; and
- g) it can be demonstrated that opportunities have been taken to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and minimise surface water run-off.

Policy GP1 of the Local Plan relates to achieving National Park Purposes and sustainable development and states that sustainable development for the National Park will conserve and enhance the National Park, its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and its special qualities; promote opportunities for their understanding and enjoyment by the public, and in so doing, foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.

Policies CE-S1 and CE-D1 of the Local Plan seek to conserve, enhance and protect Exmoor's landscapes and seascapes. Policy CE-D1 states that development will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it is compatible with the conservation and enhancement of Exmoor's landscapes and seascapes.

Policy CE-S6 of the Local Plan outlines that development proposals should deliver high quality sustainable designs that conserve and enhance the local identity and distinctiveness of Exmoor's built environment, and that all new build development should positively contribute in terms of siting, massing, scale, height, orientation density and layout.

The proposed site lies within the 'Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons: Southern' landscape character type. The Landscape Character Assessment of Exmoor (LCA) sets out that the landscape comprises a patchwork of green fields, peppered with grazing sheep and cattle. On lower slopes, lush hedges create an irregular and smaller-scale field pattern, whilst on higher land where farm land and commons have been 'carved out' of the surrounding moorland, the fields are more geometrically-shaped and bounded by beech hedgebanks or fences. The beech hedgebanks, and the contrast between the fields and the moorland, are defining features of Exmoor.

The LCA sets out the defining qualities to protect, the perceived threats and issues to this landscape character type and guidance on proposed development.

One of the defining qualities to protect within this landscape character type, relates to the isolated pattern of farmsteads on middle valley slopes, tucked into landform (e.g. below break of slope, or nestled within combes) and associated with shelter planting. The LCA states that the perceived threats and issues to this quality are farm expansion (including ancillary activity e.g. storage, as well as new built form, associated agricultural dwellings, surfaced tracks and widened gateways) onto more exposed slopes.

The proposal building, as submitted, will sit in an elevated and exposed position which would be visible from surrounding roads and viewpoints.

Policy CE-S6 of the Local Plan requires the use of natural, traditional and sustainable materials in new development. However, the preamble to the Policy states in paragraph 4.167 that Policy CE-S6 applies to all types of development except agricultural and forestry buildings, the design aspects of which will be considered under Policy SE-S4.

The design of the building and its construction materials, through the use of timber cladding, concrete panels and fibre cement sheeting, are typical of modern agricultural buildings on Exmoor. The development consists of the erection of a new agricultural building, which is required for agricultural purposes.

The Authority's Future Landscapes Officer has commented on the application and noted the reduction in size from the pre-application enquiry and the use of recessive colours and materials. However, the height of the proposed building was queried alongside the introduction of a grassland bund rather than a hedgebank, which would be more in keeping with the landscape character. The Future Landscapes Officer also noted that the proposed building is approximately 14 metres away from the boundary hedge and stated that it would be preferable for the building to be sited closer to the boundary and this would also benefit more from the screening effect of the planted hedgebank/bund if set closer to the hedge.

The Future Landscapes Officer further clarified their comments and noted that *'whilst the size of the building has been reduced, it remains a relatively large building and the position of the building within the site does not reflect the recommendations given at the site visit. It does not relate well to the boundary, leaving a large area between the building and boundary, nor does it relate well to the existing building. There is also no hedgebank for screening, as recommended.'*

*The track does not appear to service both the existing and proposed buildings, requiring the current route to be retained. Putting these factors together, the proposal does not reflect the recommendations made and is poorly sited in relation to existing features. The proposal doesn't give adequate regard to the landscape character and therefore would cause landscape harm.'*

Officers offered the applicant the opportunity to amend the submitted plans to better reflect the comments made by the Future Landscapes Officer. The applicant provided a statement indicating that he is happy to replace the proposed bund with a hedge. However, he further sets out the applicant's reasons for keeping the proposed building away from the hedge and in its current proposed location. These include the ability to *'use some of this area on the lower side to store machinery, trailers and other farm related equipment that does not need to be stored under cover. This means it will be tucked away tidier, more secure and less visible from the road. Not allowing for this means the equipment will be stored towards the top of the field, closer to the road, where it will be clearly visible and look untidier. Personally, this is not what I want as I do not like to see fields with machinery and other things all over them, nor is it in keeping with the overall image of Exmoor.'*

*The second reason for not putting the shed closer to the hedge is that I can then also use the lower area to enter and exit the building with large equipment. However, by putting it close to the hedge, I will have to make the access on the top side, meaning the ground works for this area will be visible from the road. I had planned it so that what faced the road would be the side of the shed so as to blend in better and enclose it all below. Additionally, by forcing me to have the open side facing outwards, I am concerned that when it snows it will blow right into the shed and fill it up. As someone with 30 years experience as a council-registered snow clearer (plus my father longer than that), and having lived within 3 miles of the shed all of my life, I know where it blows and have considered this when planning the shed site.*

*As for the size of the shed, for context, I am currently renting an under cover area of approximately 700m<sup>2</sup>. I have sadly already had to significantly reduce this dry storage for this application and so asking me to further reduce this, is going to result in more of my equipment being stored outside'.*

Exford Parish Council have commented on the application and expressed concerns of over developing the site, which is in a high and open location meaning the proposal would have an impact visually. They further note that during the site visit the applicant stated that the proposed building would be sunk into the ground taking into consideration the visual impact, this is not made clear in the planning documents.

The proposed plans, as submitted, do not appear to show that the building would be set into the ground. The plans appear to show that the building would be sat on the ground, level with the existing building on site and that no excavation is required.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear (paragraph 189) that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks. That great weight should be weighed against any public benefit the proposed development may provide.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF relates to supporting a prosperous rural economy and states that planning decisions should enable, amongst other things the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new building and the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable.

The Landscape Character Assessment advises that new farm buildings should sit in folds of the landscape and be associated with mitigation planting comprising of native species.

The proposed use of the building has been amended from that originally submitted, however the plans submitted indicating the size and scale of the proposed building have not been amended.

Whilst there might be a functional need for a building, Officers are not convinced that the scale and size of the building proposed is justified or commensurate with that need nor is the proposed building sited physically or functionally to existing buildings on site.

Overall, it has not been demonstrated that the size and scale of the proposed building is commensurate with the need outlined. The proposed development is therefore not acceptable under Policy SE-S4 of the Local Plan.

Part of the justification for the proposed building is to remove the items which are stored on the site including equipment and machinery and to store them within the proposed building as this would reduce the visual impact. However, part of the reasons the applicant has given for not moving the building closer to the boundary hedge, which would also help to reduce the visual impact includes the ability to use some of the area between the hedge and the building to store machinery, trailers and other farm equipment that does not need to be stored under cover.

The proposed building does not sit within a fold in the landscape, but rather it would sit in an elevated, exposed position. The building would not relate well to the existing site boundary, leaving a large area between the building and boundary, nor would it relate well to the existing building on site.

As a result, the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the landscape through its siting, design and scale. It would therefore fail to conserve and enhance the landscape and would thus fail to accord with Local Plan Policies GP1, CE-S1, CE-D1 and SE-S4, which amongst other things requires new development to be consistent with National Park purposes and to conserve and enhance the existing landscape.

### HERITAGE ASSETS

Policy CE-S4 relates to cultural heritage and historic environment and states that Exmoor National Park's local distinctiveness, cultural heritage, and historic environment, will be conserved and enhanced to ensure that present and future generations can increase their knowledge, awareness and enjoyment of these special qualities and that development proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings, will be considered in a manner appropriate to their significance.

Policy CE-D3 states that development proposals that affect a heritage asset and its setting should demonstrate a) a positive contribution to the setting through sensitive design and siting; b) promote the understanding and enjoyment of the heritage asset and its setting or better reveal its significance and appreciation of

the setting; and c) avoid unacceptable adverse effects and cumulative visual effects that would impact on the setting.

Approximately 25m to the north east, and outside the red line area, of the proposed location of the building is an item on the Historic Environment Record – MSO12596 (World War Two Royal Ordnance Corps observation post west of Chibbet Post).

Given the positioning of the proposed building, the impact of the new development is considered minimal in terms of its effect on the non-designated heritage asset. Therefore, it is deemed compliant with policies CE-D3 and CE-S4, which aim to preserve and enhance Exmoor's local distinctiveness, cultural heritage, and historical environment.

### PROTECTED SPECIES AND HABITATS

Policy CE-S3 of the Local Plan relates to biodiversity and green infrastructure and states that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife, habitats and sites of geological interest within the National Park will be given great weight.

The proposed building is to be used for the purposes of storage of fodder, machinery and equipment. The building would store approximately 100 bales of hay per annum which will be fed to the applicants' stock during the winter months. Along with storing the hay the remainder of the building would be used for housing machinery and equipment such as tractors, bailers, maintenance equipment etc. used to manage and maintain the land owned and leased by the applicant.

The site lies within the impact risk zone for the South Exmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and it is important to ensure that the development cannot be used to increase livestock numbers in the future. If the proposed structure was to be used for housing livestock (and thereby assisting in increasing livestock numbers), a Simple Calculation of Atmospheric Impact Limits (SCAIL) would need to be conducted to ascertain any impacts from air pollution on the SSSI and its reason(s) for designation.

The Authority's Ecologist has commented on the application and has not raised an objection subject to the imposition of conditions in relation to statutory biodiversity net gain, habitat management monitoring plan, restriction of the structure so that it cannot be used to increase livestock numbers, secure enhancements in the form of at least 3 bat boxes on the timber panelling on the south west elevations and at least 3 swallow cups within the structure together with a lighting design strategy for bats.

The proposed development, subject to appropriate conditions, is considered to comply with policy CE-S3 of the Local Plan and statutory legislation and that the conservation status of protected species would be conserved and enhanced.

## OTHER MATTERS

The application building was originally submitted for the storage of machinery, equipment and materials used in connection with the applicant's agricultural contracting business. The agent sets out that the reason for the application is wholly authentic and can be evidenced by the loss of the applicant's current business premises by termination of their lease.

The application now proposes a solely agricultural building. In the event planning permission was granted and the building was used for a different material use, it would be at risk of enforcement action if the relevant planning permission had not been secured.

Officers also raised that should the building be used to accommodate livestock or increasing livestock numbers, a SCAIL assessment would need to be conducted and submitted due to its location with the impact risk zone for the South Exmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest and that Natural England would need to be consulted.

The agent subsequently confirmed that the use of the building would not be used for housing livestock and would be used for the reasons set out earlier in this report and would therefore be for agricultural purposes.

While there may be some limited views of the building from the nearby footpaths considering the site's context, existing built structures and the distance between the proposed site and the footpaths, the new building is not considered to negatively impact the enjoyment of public rights of way or adversely affect the condition of the access network, users interests or their character and appearance in accordance with Policy RT-D12.

### **Human Right**

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010 have been taken into account in reaching the recommendation contained in this report.

### **Planning Balance & Conclusion**

It has not been demonstrated that the size and scale of the proposed building is commensurate with the need outlined within the application papers that would satisfy Clause 1(a) of Policy SE-S4 of the Local Plan.

The proposed building would not sit within a fold in the landscape, but rather it would sit in an elevated, exposed position. It would not relate well to the existing site boundary, leaving a large area between the building and boundary, nor would it relate well to the existing building on site.

As a result, the proposed development would cause harm to the character and appearance of the landscape through its siting, design and scale. It would therefore fail to conserve and enhance the landscape, would not be sensitive to its surroundings and would thus fail to accord with Local Plan Policies GP1, CE-S1,

CE-D1 and SE-S4, which amongst other things requires new development to be consistent with National Park purposes and to conserve and enhance the existing landscape or the National Planning Policy Framework.

Taking into account the issues noted above and all other relevant material considerations, the proposed building would harm the character and appearance of the landscape, contrary to the Local Plan. There may be some public benefits associated with the proposed building including benefits to allow the existing business to develop and prosper and allow the landscape to be traditionally maintained, which are afforded reasonable weight.

However, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework great weight is given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues and the public benefits associated with the scheme would not outweigh the harm.

As such it is recommended that planning permission be refused.

### **Recommendation**

Refused for the following reason:

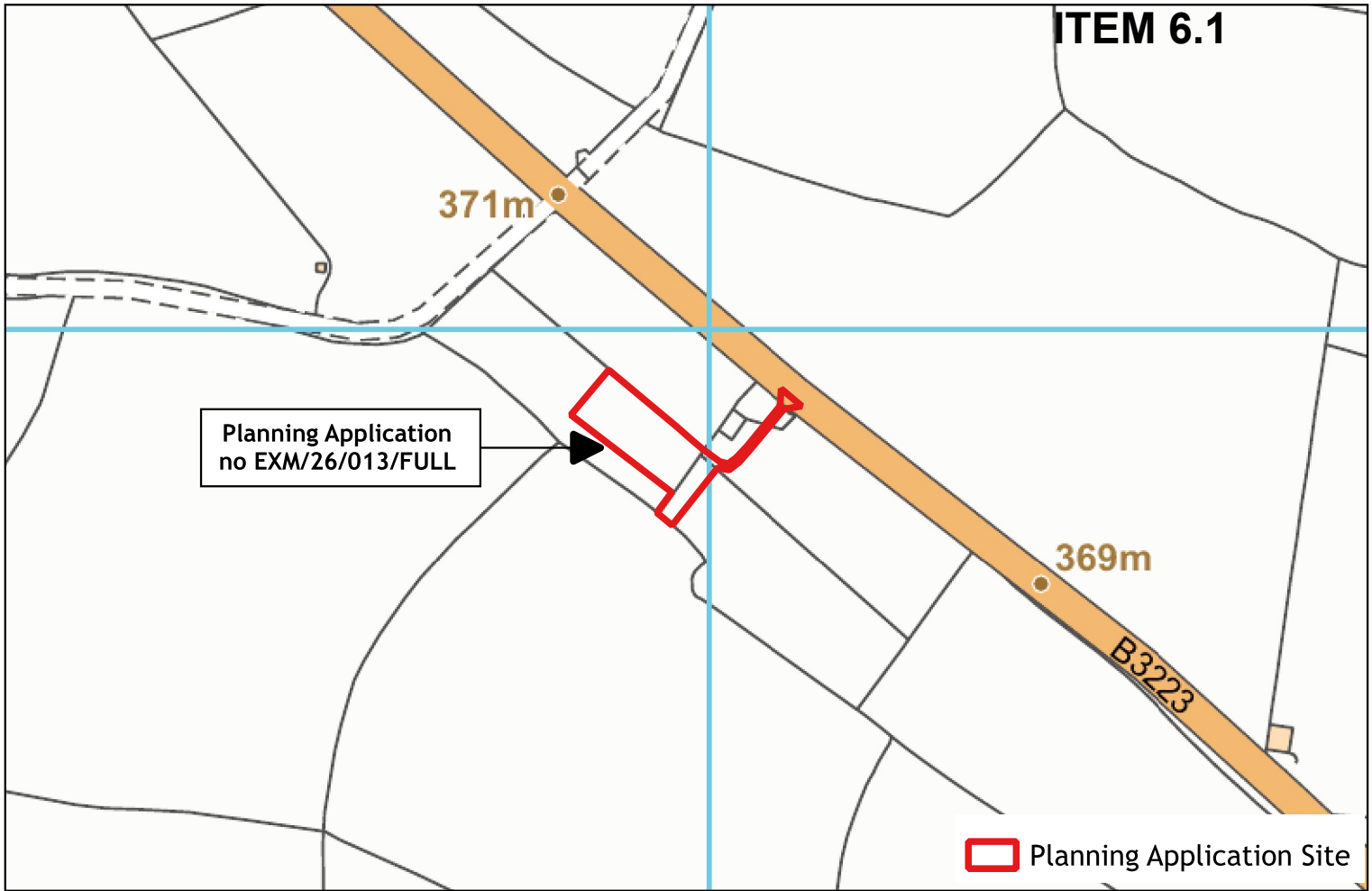
1. The development proposed, by virtue of its siting, design and scale, would harm the scenic beauty and character of this part of the National Park and would not be sensitive to its surroundings. Moreover, it has not been demonstrated that the size and scale of the proposed building is commensurate with the need outlined within the application papers. The development would not therefore accord with the National Park's first purpose, Policies GP1, CE-S1, CE-D1 and SE-S4 of the Local Plan or accord with Paragraphs 189 and 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **Informatives**

#### **1. POSITIVE & PROACTIVE STATEMENT**

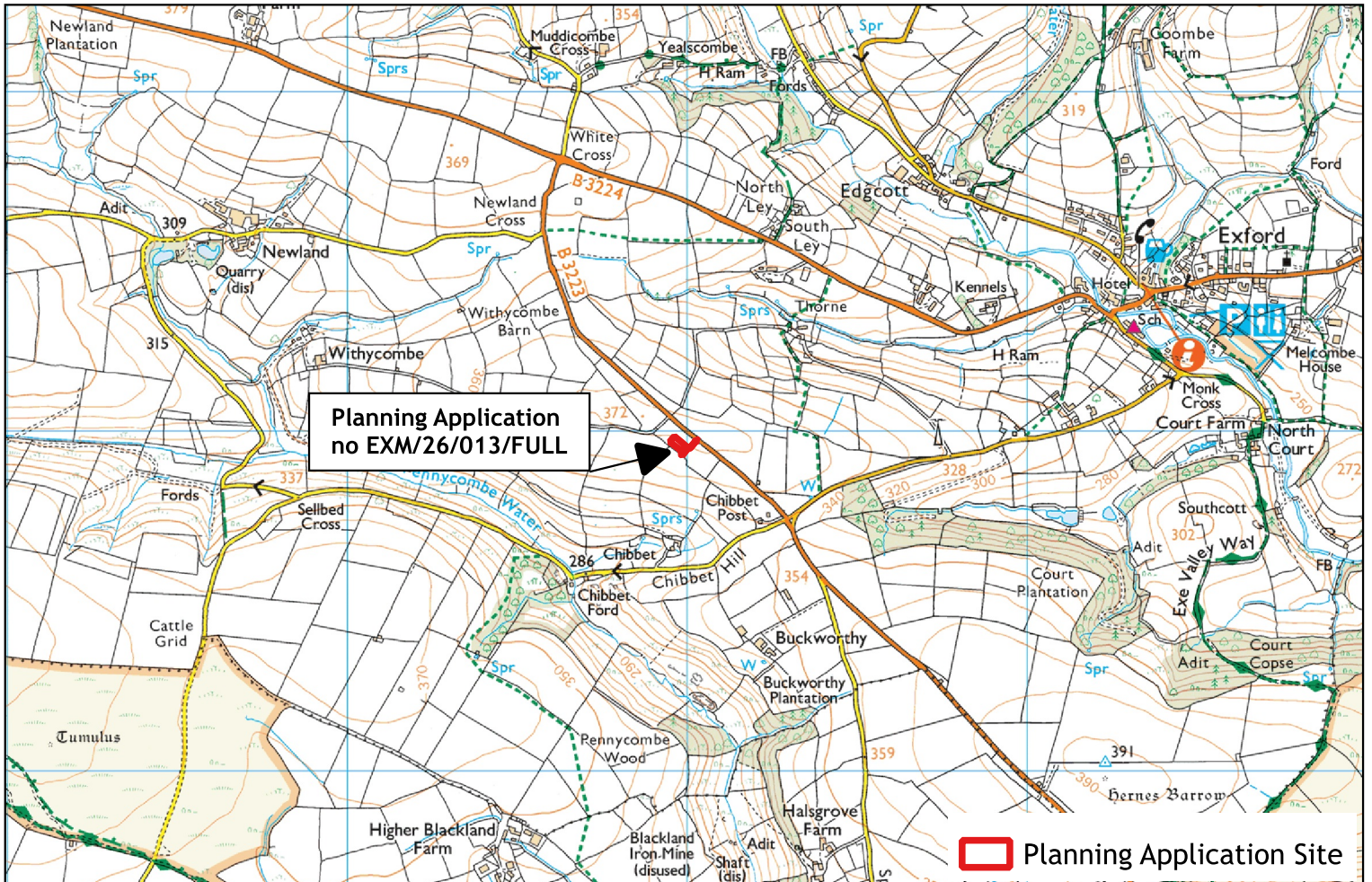
This Authority has a proactive approach to the delivery of development. Early preapplication engagement is always encouraged. In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, in determining this application, Exmoor National Park Authority has endeavoured to work positively and proactively with the agent/applicant, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure that all relevant planning considerations have been appropriately addressed to achieve a positive outcome. However, in this instance the relevant planning considerations have not been addressed and the application has therefore been refused.

# ITEM 6.1



Site Map  
Scale 1:2,500

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Overview Map  
Scale 1:20,000.00002

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**Committee Report**

Application Number:	EXM/26/068/FULL
Valid Date:	26 February 2026
Target Determination Date:	6 May 2026
Extension of Time:	6 May 2026
Applicant:	Sarah Weatherlake
Agent:	Mr Keelan Owen
Case Officer:	Joe White
Site Address:	Land adjoining B3224 at Treborough Common Treborough Watchet
Proposal:	Proposed temporary change of use of agricultural land for timber storage and associated wood chipping operations, including a defined operational area, maximum stack height of 3.5 metres, and associated temporary works (10 year permission).
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions
Reason for bringing before Planning Committee:	This application is brought to Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, as the Chief Executive considers that, acknowledging the related planning history and that Committee has previously considered applications for similar proposals at this site, the application ought more properly to be referred to Committee for decision.
Pre-commencement conditions agreed:	n/a

**Relevant History**

6/35/21/103

Decision: Refused

Decision Date: 20/01/2022

Proposed storage of timber and wood chipping operation to be used in conjunction with existing nearby combined heat and power generating business. Part retrospective.

6/35/21/104

Decision: Refused

Decision Date: 17/11/2021

Proposed additional use of agricultural land as dog exercise area, including erection of 1.9m high fencing with gates and pond, together with creation of 2 no. parking space (1 inside enclosure and 1 outside enclosure).

6/35/22/101

Decision: Refused

Decision Date: 27/09/2022

Proposed storage of timber and wood chipping operation used in connection with the applicant's existing combined heat and power generating business on land

form part of the parking area previously granted planning permission (6/35/08/101) for the nearby equestrian course. Resubmission of application 6/35/21/103. (Part retrospective).

6/35/97/103

Decision: Refused

Decision Date: 02/09/1997

Proposed storage of stone - Retrospective Application, Treborough Common, as described in then plans and drawings submitted

6/35/08/101

Decision: Approved

Decision Date: 20/05/2008

Retrospective application in respect of Change of Use of land to equestrian. Provision of horse gallop and jumps. Extension of existing bridleway, provision of parking and new access and creation of new pullover bay (Resubmission of application 6/35/06/101).

### Site Description & Proposal

The application site lies in the open countryside on Treborough Common. The site is to the south of the hamlet of Treborough, adjacent to the B3224 public highway to the west of Beulah Chapel.

There is access to the site from the B3224, which was also the access for the equestrian cross-country course that used to take place over the Common. Access can also be achieved from the north east, via a private track leading from the rural lane just above Coldharbour.

The site lies within the Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons landscape character type of the Landscape Character Assessment of Exmoor (2018). It encompasses a roughly rectangular area of land, which is part of the wider field, alongside the B3224.

Public rights of way, including a bridleway forming part of the Coleridge Way, pass over the access track for the application site

There has been a history of timber storage and associated wood chipping operations on Treborough Common, which has been unauthorised development. There have been two previous planning applications, submitted in 2021 and 2022, both of which have been refused, for timber storage and wood chipping on the Common.

This fresh application has been submitted following further discussions with Officers. It is a slightly revised scheme of those previously refused. It seeks retrospective planning permission for a temporary change of use of the land, for a

further 10-year period, to permit the storage and associated chipping of timber at the site.

The timber storage would be confined to an area approximately 50 metres in length alongside the roadside hedge boundary with the B3224. It would have a width of 29 metres, with two wood stacks either side of a 15-metre-wide access channel. The area of timber storage, including the area between it and the existing track, would be dressed in crushed stone and the site enclosed with a 1.2-metre-high post and wire fence. The maximum height of the timber stacks is proposed to be 3.5 metres.

The timber storage is directly related to the wood chip powered combined heat and power (CHP) installation, which lies approximately 1km from the application site, on the northern side of Treborough Common and is accessed via the private track over the Common. The timber is stored, and then chipped intermittently before being taken for use as fuel at the CHP plant. The papers submitted with the application explain that the proposal is for a further 10-year period because this timeframe directly reflects the anticipated remaining operational lifespan of the CHP plant.

The CHP plant was approved planning permission in 2016 under application reference 6/35/16/102. The machinery of the CHP is expected to reach the end of its serviceable life within the next 10 years. Therefore, the CHP plant will cease operation, at which time the timber storage and chipping operations would cease.

The two previous planning applications that were refused permission for timber storage and wood chipping are material considerations.

The most recent of these applications was submitted in 2022 and given application reference 6/35/22/101. That application was refused on 27 September 2022 for the following reason:

*The application site is not well related to the group of buildings that form the business site that this proposed development would be ancillary to. Policy SE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011 – 2031 requires extensions to business premises to be well related to an existing group of buildings. This proposed development would represent isolated development in the open countryside that is not well related to any existing building group. This isolated position, together with the incongruent form of the development on the edge of an agricultural field, not only conflicts with Policy SE-S3, but also results in material harm to the landscape character of the common and its historic value. The application is therefore contrary to Policies GP1, CE-S1, CE-D1, CE-S6, SE-S1 and SE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan, and Paragraphs 174 and 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

Whilst the storage of timber can be ancillary to forestry, in this case, the timber is not solely or mainly from the holding. It has been removed from the property where it originated and is stored on Treborough Common, which is a different planning unit. Moreover, the timber is stored on the site and then chipped for use in the

CHP plant. As such, it is not an operation that could reasonably be considered to be ancillary to forestry (or agriculture).

### Consultee Representations

**ENPA Woodlands Officer** – No objection.

I have considered the submitted information and have no objection to the proposals.

**Future Landscapes Officer** – The granting of a temporary 10 year consent for the use of this area for timber storage and intermittent wood chipping operations would regularise the use for that period and clearly define an area for this use, bound by a 1.2m post and wire fence on two sides to prevent spillage into the adjacent open ground.

The application states there would be no permanent buildings, no fixed plant, no containers and no external lighting associated with the proposed development and stacks limited to 3.5 metres. Use of the chipper is stated as being intermittent and only Monday to Friday between 08:00 and 17:00 to minimise potential noise intrusion and in this position it is away from the amplifying effect of the valley and the site is 1km from the nearest dwelling.

The roadside hedge provides screening from the road, which is more effective when in leaf. If this hedge were to be laid or coppiced during the temporary permission, the development would be much more visible, therefore it is recommended that the hedge is not laid and is maintained at a minimum height of 4-5m. The trees planted on the northern side of the hedge are too small to provide screening alone.

The nature of the proposal (no ground modelling or permanent structures) is such that it is reversible, and the site can be reinstated to agricultural land upon cessation.

On this basis I do not object to a temporary consent.

**Brompton Regis Parish Council** – Supports the application with the proviso that rights of way in the area of the application are secured and maintained.

**ENPA Ecologist** – The area of land previously used for timber storage is likely to have been of relatively low ecological value. However, this application does not cover the full extent of the land historically used for timber storage, nor the associated degraded habitat. I would therefore request that a condition is applied requiring the portion of land outside the red line boundary, where previous timber storage occurred, to be restored to its former grassland condition, or to a state

consistent with the surrounding habitat. Within six months of the date of this permission, a habitat management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The schedule shall include: A plan identifying all restoration work carried out; A five-year management and maintenance plan; and Measures to ensure protection of area from potential damage. Once approved, the restoration hereby required shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved five-year management plan and retained thereafter unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

ENPA PROW & Access Officer - No Response  
 Natural England - No Response  
 ENPA Conservation Manager - No Response  
 Somerset Council - Planning (West Team) - No Response  
 Somerset Highways Authority - No Response  
 Treborough Parish Meeting - No Response  
 ENPA Farming & Land Management Officer - No Response

## Representations

Total – Objections	Total – Support	Total – No Objections
0	0	0

### Summary of comments:

N/a

## Planning Context

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK LOCAL PLAN 2011 - 2031  
 GP1 Achieving National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development  
 GP3 Spatial Strategy  
 GP4 The Efficient Use of Land and Buildings  
 CE-S1 Landscape and Seascape Character  
 CE-D1 Protecting Exmoor’s Landscapes and Seascapes  
 CE-S2 Protecting Exmoor’s Dark Night Sky  
 CE-S3 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure  
 CE-S4 Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment  
 CE-D2 Green Infrastructure Provision  
 CE-S6 Design & Sustainable Construction Principles  
 CC-S1 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation  
 CC-D1 Flood Risk  
 CC-S5 Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Development  
 SE-S1 A Sustainable Exmoor Economy  
 SE-S3 Business Development in the Open Countryside  
 AC-S1 Sustainable Transport  
 AC-D2 Traffic and Road Safety Considerations for Development  
 AC-S3 Traffic Management and Parking  
 AC-D3 Parking Provision and Standards

## RT-D12 Access Land and Rights of Way

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material planning material consideration for all applications.

### Planning Considerations

The main planning issues in this case are:

- whether the proposal would comply with the spatial strategy of the Local Plan,
- the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the site and locality, and
- the effect of the development on highway safety.

#### Spatial Strategy

The application site lies outside of a settlement and is within an open countryside location.

Local Plan Policy GP3 provides a spatial strategy. The Policy, amongst other things, says that the spatial strategy aims to ensure that communities across the National Park continues to thrive so that they are economically resilient, environmentally sustainable, socially mixed and inclusive. It also says that to facilitate sustainable development across the National Park, development proposals should accord with the spatial strategy.

Clauses 2 and 3 of Policy GP3 refer to named settlements, including Local Service Centres, Villages and Porlock Weir. The application site does not fall within a named settlement. Therefore, these do not apply to the application proposal.

Clause 4 of Policy GP3 refers to development outside of named settlements and says:

*Outside the named settlements the area is identified as the Open Countryside where the focus of new build development will be on improving the sustainability of rural land-based businesses (HC-D8 New Build Dwellings in the Open Countryside, HC-D9 Rural Workers, HC-D10 Succession Farming – Second Dwellings on Established Farms and SE-S4 Agricultural and Forestry Development), providing opportunities for home-based businesses (SE-D1) and enabling self-build opportunities for local affordable housing in sustainable locations (HC-D6 Custom/Self Build Local Need Housing).*

In accordance with the Local Plan Glossary a rural land-based business is a business that manage the land in a way that conserves the National Park's special qualities. These can be defined as farming enterprises based on primary food production, rural estates, forestry, mixed enterprises (e.g. with equestrian activities and/or game shooting) and other businesses that manage the land for conservation and/or recreation.

The CHP plant is not a business that manages the land. As such, the application proposal would not be considered to be a rural land-based business. However, the applicant does have an existing agricultural business that is responsible for land

management, including Treborough Common, and has diversified with the CHP plant.

Local Plan Policy SE-S1 (A Sustainable Exmoor Economy) says, as well as other things, that in order to strengthen, enhance and diversify the Exmoor economy, business and employment development will be encouraged.

Local Plan Policy SE-S3 refers to business development in the open countryside. It is therefore a most relevant Policy.

## SE-S3 Business Development in the Open Countryside

1. Business development will be permitted for the change of use and conversion of an existing traditional building that is well-related to an existing group of buildings on a farmstead or in a hamlet where there is an existing dwelling, in accordance with policies SE-S1 and CE-S5.
2. Proposals for extensions to existing business sites or buildings that are well-related to an existing group of buildings on a farmstead or in a hamlet where there is an existing dwelling will be permitted in accordance with SE-S1 and where the scale and appearance of the development are compatible with local landscape character.
3. Additionally, proposals for the diversification of existing agricultural, or other primary businesses responsible for land management, through the re-use/change of use of an existing non-traditional building for business development may be permitted where the following will be achieved:
  - a) they are well-related to an existing group of buildings on the farmstead and accord with policy CE-S5;
  - b) the proposed business development supports an existing agricultural or other primary business responsible for land management and does not conflict with the existing farming or land management activity;
  - c) where proposals relate to the change of use of an existing building from an agricultural use to a business use (use classes B1, B2, B8 or sui generis), a condition will be attached to the permission to enable the building to be used for the purposes of agriculture or the permitted business use; and
  - d) a condition will be attached removing permitted development rights for the erection of new farm buildings on the holding.
4. The erection of new business premises in the open countryside will only be permitted for the redevelopment of existing employment sites, where existing buildings are replaced with no significant increase in size, and enhancement to the site and/or its setting is incorporated into the proposals where necessary to deliver an overall acceptable scheme, which is consistent with local landscape character.
5. Business use in buildings which stand alone or which do not relate well to existing buildings and are not part of a farm group or hamlet will not be permitted.
6. Where permission is granted for new B1 uses a condition will be attached to remove permitted development rights in respect of temporary changes of use, use as a state funded school, or a registered nursery.

In terms of this Policy, the application does not relate to an existing traditional building, and it is not well related to a group of buildings on a farmstead nor is it in a hamlet. The proposal does not therefore comply with Clauses 1 and 2 of Policy SE-S3.

In terms of Clause 3 of Policy SE-S3, even if the wider CHP development is a diversification of an existing agricultural business, the application site is not well-related to an existing group of buildings on the farmstead. It does not therefore comply with Clause 3.

The proposal would not redevelop an existing employment site. Consequently, it would not fall within Clause 4 of Policy SE-S3.

Although the application does not relate to a business use in a building, the application site does stand alone, and it does not relate well to existing buildings and is not part of a farm group or hamlet. As such, in accordance with Clause 5 of Policy SE-S3, the proposal should not be permitted.

Clause 6 is not relevant to this proposal.

Therefore, the application proposal does not comply with the spatial strategy of the Local Plan. It would not comply with Local Plan Policies GP3 and SE-S3, which together require that business development in the open countryside is well related to an existing group of buildings on a farmstead or in a hamlet, amongst other things. The weight to be given to this conflict, including the suitability of the location, is considered further below in this report.

### Character and Appearance

The landscape within the vicinity of the application site consists of open countryside comprising farmland, peppered with grazing sheep and cattle. The site is elevated where the patchwork of green fields and commons is evident. Fields are typically enclosed by beech hedgebanks or fences and, within the locality, are seen in the context of contrasting woodland and incised valleys. The remoteness of the site, as well as a marked lack of built development, combine to contribute to a prevailing sense of tranquillity and spacious character.

Policies CE-S1, CE-D1 and CE-S6 of the Local Plan, amongst other things, require that development delivers high quality sustainable designs that conserve and enhance Exmoor's landscapes and the distinctiveness of Exmoor's built environment. Policy CE-S2 refers to Exmoor's dark night sky and advises that, amongst other things, the tranquillity and dark sky experience of Exmoor National Park Dark Sky Reserve and the National Park as a whole, will be maintained and improved.

These policies are consistent with the Framework and the protection of the National Park and have regard to the purposes of designated National Parks and their status.

Policy RT-D12 relates to safeguarding access land and Rights of Way in terms of their condition, users' interests and character and appearance. Where proposals

would adversely affect the network, it will be necessary to meet a number of criteria including that there is a need for the development, that there is no appropriate alternative location, and any harm will be kept to a minimum.

The application site lies on the edge of the field, close to Public Rights of Way. Whilst the unauthorised storage of timber has taken place over a relatively large area, the application proposes that this would be confined to an area parallel with the B3224. The site would be bounded by a 1.2 metre high post and wire fence to restrict the area of timber storage to this site.

The application seeks a temporary use of the land. The wood chipping is carried out by a mobile chipper and, as such, there is no requirement for new buildings, fixed plant or containers.

The main activity is storage of timber, which has the most significant visual effect on the locality.

Stacks of timber stored in rows are a feature of the National Park. Even though the storage of timber is not ancillary to a forestry or agricultural activity, that is unlikely to be apparent to passersby, including users of the Public Rights of Way. Whilst “storage and littering” is identified as an Issue/Force for Change in the Landscape Character Assessment for Exmoor (2018), it is clear that this is due to localised examples of prominent machinery and scrap storage areas that create an uncared-for appearance.

Nevertheless, timber storage that is ancillary to forestry is typically much more transient in comparison to the activity at Treborough Common. However, the proposal, for reasons outlined earlier in this report, is for a further temporary 10-year period.

The temporary nature of the proposal is afforded weight. The site also benefits from a hedge boundary alongside the road, planning conditions can be applied that limit the height of the stacks of timber, and the site would be bound by a fence that would contain the extent of storage. These factors would combine to reduce its visual impact.

The Future Landscapes Officer has commented on the application. Having regard to the nature of the proposal, including that it requires no ground modelling or permanent structures, which is proposed for a temporary 10-year period, and which is reversible allowing the site to be reinstated to agriculture, they raise no objection.

Treborough Common, in historic landscape terms, was once an open landscape. Whilst a small enclosure is proposed, it would comprise a post and wire fence, which would reduce its visual impact. Moreover, the development does not involve the grading of the area, and the fence would be temporary and removable.

Having regard to these factors, therefore, due to the temporary nature and characteristics of the proposal, Officers are satisfied that it would not be prominent or significantly incongruous in the landscape. The scheme is a revised scheme

from those previously refused planning permission and, taking account of the characteristics of the area, the proposal would conserve the scenic beauty and character of the landscape.

As such, for the reasons outlined above, the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the site and its locality. It would be in accordance with Policies CE-S1, CE-D1, CE-S6 and CE-S2 of the Local Plan, where together they seek to ensure that the diverse and distinct landscapes of Exmoor National Park are conserved and enhanced.

### Highway Safety

The access to the site is from the B3224 and via an access previously granted planning permission. The proposal would not alter the existing, previously approved access arrangements.

Policy AC-D2 of the Local Plan says that development which will cause unacceptable levels of traffic in terms of the environmental or physical capacity of the local road network, or would prejudice road safety interests will not be permitted. Policy RT-D12 states that the public rights of way access network will be safeguarded, as well as other things.

The timber storage is in connection with the existing heat and power plant. As such, it is unlikely to have caused a material increase in traffic because the timber would have to be brought to the site as processed woodchips if it could not be stored as timber on the land.

The visibility splays and access arrangements from the B3224 are sufficient to allow safe access and egress. As such, the proposal would unlikely pose a significant highway safety hazard due to the arrangement of the site entrance.

There are two public rights of way (public footpath WL26/10 and public bridleway WL26/15) that pass to the western extent of the site. The proposed storage would be set away off these rights of way so as not to interfere with access along them.

Paragraph 116 of the NPPF advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Having regard to the scale of the development and associated traffic movements, the resulting impact of the development on the local highway network would be very limited.

The access to the site is not considered to be unsafe. The development would not give rise to any unacceptable highway safety impact and the residual cumulative impacts of the development on the local highway network would not be severe. Accordingly, the proposal would not conflict with Local Plan Policies RT-D12 and AC-D2, where together these policies seek to ensure new development does not cause unacceptable levels of traffic or prejudice road safety.

There would also be no conflict with Chapter 9 of the NPPF which states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

### Other matters

In accordance with the Ecologist's consultation response, the application site was likely to have been of relatively low ecological value. The unauthorised timber storage has taken place over a larger area of the wider land and that has resulted in degradation of the grassland. In the interests of the character and appearance of the locality and to ensure a consistent state with the surrounding habitat, it would be reasonable and necessary to add a condition in the event planning permission is granted to secure a scheme, including a management plan, for the restoration of the wider land.

The site lies in Flood Zone 1. The proposal would be unlikely to cause a material impact on flood risk.

There are no permanent buildings, no fixed plant, no containers and no external lighting associated with the proposal.

Planning permission is sought for a period of 10 years. This timeframe reflects the anticipated remaining operational lifespan of the woodchip CHP plant, which is approximately 1km from the application site and accessible via a private track. The CHP plant machinery is expected to reach the end of its serviceable life within this period and upon cessation of the CHP plant, the timber storage and chipping operations would cease. Fencing would be removed and any stone dressing would be lifted to allow the site to be reinstated to agricultural use.

The wood chipping operation takes place when a mobile chipper is pulled onto the site typically every three to four weeks. Once the wood is chipped it is taken to the CHP plant, stored and dried ready for use.

The nearest residential neighbour is approximately 800 metres away and at a lower elevation than the application site. The relationship to such neighbours and distance between is such that the proposal is not considered to cause harm to the living conditions enjoyed at those properties.

The papers submitted with the application explained that the proposal is intrinsically linked to the woodchip powered CHP plant, which relies upon a consistent and appropriately prepared supply of woodchip fuel. Consequently, there is an operational requirement to have a timber source close to the site.

The applicant explained that they have previously stored and chipped timber directly next to the CHP plant site, which is approximately 200 metres from residential neighbours. This resulted in complaints from local residents regarding noise from the chipping process and that experience led to the applicant relocating the timber storage and chipping activity to the area of the application site, as this is set much further away from residential neighbours and accessible to the site via a private track.

The proposal supports an approved renewable energy development located on Treborough Common and accessible via a private track. The CHP plant maximum output is approximately 8,640 kWh per day, which would equate to supplying in the region of 500-550 households.

The applicant has assessed potential alternative sites, which have been discounted due to challenges around access or greater potential environmental impacts, particularly in terms of living conditions of residential properties.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF relates to supporting a prosperous rural economy and states that:

*Planning policies and decisions should enable: a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings; b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states that:

*Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.*

The applicant has a farming enterprise, which takes place on Treborough Common as well as wider land. The proposal therefore would support the wider land based rural business. It is also fundamentally linked to the CHP plant and as such as spatial relevance with the location proposed. It contributes to strengthening the existing employment and renewable energy installation, which in turn strengthens the Exmoor economy which is supported by Policy SE-S1.

For the reasons outlined above, the proposal respects the character of the countryside and is sited away from residential properties. The proposal supports an existing renewable energy installation, which is an existing employment site that lies in an open countryside location. Additionally, the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on local roads. The scheme, therefore, is supported by paragraphs 88 and 89 of the NPPF and contributes to supporting renewable energy infrastructure in accordance with the NPPF.

Whilst the proposal does not strictly conform with Policy SE-S3, it clearly relates to an existing business development in this countryside location. The proposal

directly supports the generation of renewable energy within the National Park and is geographically and spatially related to the CHP plant.

### Human Rights

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010 have been taken into account in reaching the recommendation contained in this report.

### Planning Balance & Conclusion

The starting point for any planning decision is Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires decisions to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The scheme, for the reasons outlined above, would fail to meet the requirements of Policy SE-S3 of the Local Plan for Business Development in the Open Countryside. In so conflicting with Local Plan Policies SE-S3 and GP3. This is because the site is not well related to an existing group of buildings on a farmstead or in a hamlet.

Nevertheless, although it is physically and visually separated from it, the development is clearly related to an existing business development at Treborough Common. Moreover, the proposal relates to the storage of timber as the principal activity, which is a sight that is typical within countryside locations within the National Park. The application site is well suited to the geographical location as it is fundamentally related to the CHP plant and there are no other suitable available locations for the timber storage to take place that is accessible or closer to the CHP plant.

Therefore, the harm identified by the Policy would be relatively moderate having regard to the merits of the particular proposal. Consequently, the conflict within this Policy is given moderate weight in the planning balance.

Whilst the proposal would not lead to harm to the character and appearance of the area or highway safety, these are normal planning requirements. Therefore, they do not attract weight for or against the development. However, the character and appearance of the site, which one of timber storage that is not out of character within the rural context of Exmoor National Park, is a matter that is afforded weight.

There are a number of public benefits associated with the development. There is a general need to support the rural economy (paragraphs 88 and 89 of the NPPF and guidance in the Local Plan) and the proposed development would assist in providing this support.

The development contributes to the generation of renewable energy within the National Park. There is a geographical basis for locating the development at the application site as it clearly relates to an existing business development at this location. There are also social and economic benefits associated with the development. These are matters which are afforded reasonable weight in support of the scheme.

In this case, it is considered that the above material considerations outweigh the conflict with the spatial strategy of the Local Plan. The development supports an existing CHP plant, which lies in this open countryside location. It very clearly relates geographically to this site, the existing business use, and contributes to the production of renewable energy. Consequently, it provides economic and social benefits through the support of local employment and production of renewable energy.

This indicates that planning permission should be granted, notwithstanding that the development does not accord with the above-mentioned Local Plan Policy.

The public benefits set out above would accord with the National Park's core purposes and the duty and seeks to further those purposes in accordance with Section 245 of the LURA 2023. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions.

### Recommendation

Approved with Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the following approved plans:

DR-A-080-001 Location Plan

DR-A-080-003 Proposed Site Plan

DR-A-080-004 Proposed Elevations

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the development accords with the approved plans.

2. The development hereby approved including the timber storage, wood chipping operations, crushed stone and fencing shall be removed and the land reinstated to its former condition by 6 May 2036, unless a further planning permission is granted by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To confirm the terms of the planning permission in the interests of the character and appearance of this part of the National Park landscape.

3. No external lighting or floodlighting shall be installed at the site.

Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of this part of the National Park landscape and to preserve Exmoor National Park's designation as a Dark Sky Reserve.

4. Within 3 months of the date of this decision, a 1.2 metre high post and wire fence shall be installed in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure the timber storage area is contained in the interests of the character and appearance of this part of the National Park landscape.

5. The roadside hedge to the south of the application site, and on the northern side of the B3224, for the full length of the application site, shall be maintained at a height of no less than 4 metres above ground level. It shall not be topped, lopped, failed or laid below 4 metres above ground level for the duration of this planning permission. In the event the hedge is topped, lopped, laid or felled below this height, the timber storage and wood chipping hereby approved shall cease with immediate effect.

Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of this part of the National Park landscape.

6. The wood chipping operations hereby approved shall not take place, other than on two days per calendar month. The owner or operator of the site shall maintain a register of the days on which the wood chipping takes place for each calendar year. This register shall be made available on request for inspection by any duly authorised officer of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the character, appearance and amenity of this part of the National Park.

7. The storage hereby approved shall comprise the storage of unprocessed or un-engineered timber only. Moreover, there shall be no storage of timber in excess of 3.5 metres above the immediately adjoining ground level.

Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of this part of the National Park landscape.

8. Within six months of the date of this permission, a habitat management plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The management plan shall include: A plan identifying all restoration work to be carried out; A five-year management and maintenance plan; and Measures to ensure protection of area from potential damage. Once approved, the restoration hereby required shall be carried out during the first planting season following the date of the written approval of the habitat management plan and it shall be managed and maintained in accordance with the approved five-year management plan.

Reason: In the interests of the character and appearance of this part of the National Park landscape.

### **Informatives**

#### **1. CONDITIONS AND INFORMATIVES**

Please check all the conditions and informatives attached to this Decision Notice. If there are any conditions which require submission of details and/or samples prior to work commencing on site it is vital that these are submitted and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work starts. Given the High Court's interpretation of the Planning Acts and their lawful implementation it is unlikely that the Local Planning Authority will be able to agree to a sample/details after the commencement of works if that

sample/details should have been approved prior to commencement. If a sample/detail is not agreed as required prior to commencement and works have started then it is likely that this matter may only be able to be rectified by the submission of another application. To avoid delay, inconvenience and the need to submit a further application, please ensure that all appropriate details/samples are submitted and agreed at the specified time.

Please also note that due to other decisions of the High Court it is now not normally possible for the Local Planning Authority to agree to minor amendments to approved applications. It will be necessary to adopt a formal approach and that if changes to approved plans are proposed then it will be necessary to make a new planning application. Please ensure that works comply with the approved plans so as to avoid the possibility that works are unauthorised and liable for enforcement action.

### 2. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN EXEMPTION

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless: (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be Exmoor National Park Authority. There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements in the list below is/are considered to apply.

Statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements in respect of the biodiversity gain condition.

BNG is not required for retrospective applications.

### 3. MONITORING OF DEVELOPMENT

The applicant/developer is reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that the requirements of each planning condition are met and that the works are undertaken in accordance with the approved plans. Any failure to meet the terms of a planning condition or work which does not accord with the approved plans leaves the applicant/developer liable to formal action being taken. The National Park Authority endeavours to monitor on site the compliance with conditions and building works. This has benefits for applicants and developers as well as the National Park. To assist with this monitoring of development the applicant/developer is requested to give at least fourteen days notice of the commencement of development to ensure that effective monitoring can be undertaken. The Planning Section can be contacted at Exmoor National Park

Authority, Exmoor House, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9HL or by telephone on 01398 323665 or by email [plan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:plan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk).

#### 4. POSITIVE & PROACTIVE STATEMENT

This Authority has a proactive approach to the delivery of development. Early preapplication engagement is always encouraged. In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, in determining this application, Exmoor National Park Authority has endeavoured to work positively and proactively with the agent/applicant, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure that all relevant planning considerations have been appropriately addressed to achieve a positive outcome.

#### 5. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY INFORMATIVE

Public rights of way should be open, easy and safe to use, at all times.

Please note the following:

Care should be taken to avoid obstructing or interfering with the public rights of way or creating a hazard for users.

If it is impossible to avoid interference or potential danger, the appropriate legal steps, e.g. path closure application, should be taken in advance of any works. If this is likely to be necessary, please contact ENPA, who act on behalf of the Highway Authority or seek legal advice as soon as possible.

Any disturbance to the surface of rights of way should be avoided but if any such disturbance does occur due to the owner or occupier or their agents use of the way, the surface should be reinstated.

Where planning permission is granted, this does not authorise any person to stop up or divert any public right of way. Separate legal steps are needed for this.

The driving of a vehicle is only permitted on a public bridleway or footpath where the driver has lawful authority to do so.

Parking on the public right of way may be deemed to constitute an obstruction

Changes to the surface or drainage of a public right of way require prior authorisation from the Highway Authority, in this case ENPA as its agent.

New furniture, e.g. gates, being needed along a public right of way require prior authorisation from the Highway Authority, in this case ENPA as its agent. Where an increase in vehicular traffic or other alteration in the private use of a public right of way this route is expected as a result of the development, there will be other considerations such as the impact on the maintenance requirements of the right of way.



### Committee Report

Application Number:	EXM/26/016/LBC
Valid Date:	2 March 2026
Target Determination Date:	27 April 2026
Extension of Time:	TBC
Applicant:	Miss Zara Blackmore
Agent:	Miss Zara Blackmore
Case Officer:	Joseph Rose
Site Address:	Exmoor National Park Authority Exmoor House Kemps Way Dulverton TA22 9HL
Proposal:	Application Under Regulation 3 of The Town & Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for listed building consent for the proposed replacement of existing publicly accessible defibrillator.
Recommendation:	Approval subject to conditions.
Reason for bringing before Planning Committee:	In accordance with the authority's scheme of delegation, as the National Park Authority is the applicant.
Pre-commencement conditions agreed:	N/A

#### Relevant History

6/9/24/006LB - Application Under Regulation 3 of The Town & Country Planning General Regulations 1992 for Listed building consent for the proposed Internal rearrangement to reception area, 4 no. outdoor signage and installation of defibrillator (Approved: 01 May 2024).

#### Site Description & Proposal

Exmoor House is a Grade II listed building and was built as the Dulverton Union Workhouse in 1855. It is now the headquarters of the Exmoor National Park Authority. The property is located next to the River Barle, within a flood risk area. It lies to the north west of Dulverton Town Centre, within the Conservation Area. The building has a formal façade with the front central section jutting forward slightly of the bays at either side. This central bay comprises the main entrance into the building. To the rear (north) is a long two-storey wing with less formal architectural treatment but using the same stone. The Committee room occupies the first floor of this rear wing.

The T-shaped plan was originally divided down the middle, with men accommodated in the west half and women in the east. At first floor level, the physical division between the east and west halves was largely lost in the 1960s when the building was occupied by Dulverton Rural District Council, but it is still reflected in the current layout of the stairs, which allow ascent on the left or right and two doors giving access to the Committee room.

Under Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, this listed building application seeks consent for the proposed replacement of existing publicly accessible defibrillator on the east elevation of the building.

**Consultee Representations**

ENPA Ecology – No objection:

Thank you for consulting me on this application. I have no concerns from an ecological perspective.

Dulverton Town Council – Support:

Members of Dulverton Town Council support this Planning Application.

**Representations**

<b>Total – Objections</b>	<b>Total – Support</b>	<b>Total – No Objections</b>
0	0	0

**Policy Context**

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (LBCA) requires the decision maker to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (including minerals and waste policies):

- GP1 – Achieving National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development
- CE-S4 – Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment
- CE-D3 – Conserving Heritage Assets
- CE-S3 – Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a material planning consideration.

**Planning Considerations**

Under Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, this listed building application seeks consent for the proposed replacement of existing publicly accessible defibrillator on the east elevation of the building.

The application property has a Grade II listing. When making a decision on listed building consent applications, a local planning authority must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses (the Planning (Listed Buildings

and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 applies). Preservation in this context means not harming the interest in the building, as opposed to keeping it unchanged.

Policy GP1 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031 outlines how the development plan seeks to achieve and adhere to the National Park Purposes and states that Sustainable development for Exmoor National Park will conserve and enhance the National Park, its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and its special qualities; promote opportunities for their understanding and enjoyment by the public, and in so doing, foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.

Section 16 of the NPPF at Paragraph 207 states that 'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.'

Paragraph 208 states that 'Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.'

Further to this point, the definition of setting of a heritage asset under the NPPF is described as 'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

Paragraph 212 states 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.' Significance is defined as the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.

Furthermore Paragraph 213 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.'

Section 16 of the NPPF goes on to outline that where a development proposal would lead to harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, including cases where that harm is considered to be less than substantial, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including (where appropriate) securing its optimum viable use.

Policy CE-S4 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan also states that Exmoor National Park's local distinctiveness, cultural heritage, and historic environment, will be conserved and enhanced to ensure that present and future generations can increase their knowledge, awareness and enjoyment of these special qualities.

Furthermore Policy CE-D3 goes on to emphasise that development proposals affecting conservation areas and heritage assets should ensure that the character or appearance of the asset and the surrounding area is preserved or enhanced and should make a positive contribution to the setting through sensitive design and siting and avoid unacceptable adverse effects and cumulative visual effects that would impact on the setting.

Furthermore, clause 4 of the policy then outlines that development proposals affecting heritage assets that are required to adapt to, or mitigate the effects of, climate change will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: measures to adapt to climate change will safeguard the heritage asset over the longer term, and conserve their special interest; or measures to mitigate the effects of climate change will not harm the special interest or appearance of the heritage asset.

The proposed works relate to the replacement of an existing publicly accessible defibrillator affixed to the east elevation of the building. As such, the principle of such equipment in this location is already established.

It is acknowledged that the previously installed unit was finished in green, whereas the proposed replacement incorporates a more prominent yellow and green finish, making it marginally more noticeable within the public realm. However, officers consider this change to be minor given the modest size and functional nature of the equipment, and not harmful to the character, appearance, or setting of the listed building. Its increased visibility is also considered to be inherent to its purpose as emergency equipment.

The proposal does not involve any alteration to the historic fabric of the building beyond like-for-like fixing in an established location, however officers would recommend that a suitable condition be imposed to any consent granted requiring that the defibrillator shall not be fixed other than to the masonry joints between the face of the stone within the building, as required under previous consent reference: 6/9/24/006LB. Officers therefore consider the works would preserve the significance of the designated heritage asset, provided the works are carried out in strict accordance with the suggested conditions.

Officers further note that whilst no harm has been identified, the provision of a publicly accessible defibrillator for 24-hour community use is noted to carry clear public benefits.

Having regard to the above, officers consider that the proposed works would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building and would not result in any harm to its significance or character when compared to the previously existing lawful situation. The proposed works are therefore considered to accord with Policies CE-S4 and CE-D3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011–2031, Section 16 of the NPPF (including Paragraph 212), and the statutory duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

### Other Matters:

With regard to ecology and biodiversity, Regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 states that: “Without prejudice to the preceding provisions, a competent authority, in exercising any of its functions, must have regard to the requirements of the Directives so far as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions.”

As such, the Local Planning Authority consults its internal ecologist where appropriate to ensure that any implications under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 are properly assessed and addressed as part of the decision-making process.

Furthermore, Policy CE-S3 of the Local Plan states that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife, habitats and sites of geological interest within the National Park will be given great weight and also that any development or works likely to cause harm to legally protected species, or lead to the loss of or damage to their habitats, will not be permitted unless this can be mitigated or then offset so that local populations are at least maintained.

Having regard to the above, the Local Planning Authority at Exmoor National Park Authority have consulted their own ecologists on the proposals, who have confirmed they have no concerns from an ecological perspective. As such, officers are satisfied that the proposed works would be unlikely to result in any harm to protected species or their habitats. The proposed works are therefore considered to accord with Regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Policy CE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan.

### **Human Right**

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010 have been taken into account in reaching the recommendation contained in this report.

### **Conclusion**

For the reasons outlined within this report, officers are satisfied that the proposed works would not be in conflict with the Development Plan and would result in no harm to the grade II listed building, provided the works are carried out in strict accordance with the recommended conditions below.

The works are considered, when assessed in the round, to accord with Policies: GP1, CE-S4 and CE-D3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011–2031.

Furthermore, no material considerations have been identified that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with the Development Plan.

Officers therefore conclude that listed building consent should be granted.

### Recommendation

Approved with Conditions:

1. The works hereby approved shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: In accordance with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended).

2. The works hereby approved shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the submitted site and location plans and drawings numbered: Plan 1, Plan 2, Plan 3, Plan 4 & Plan 5 unless otherwise required by another condition attached to this consent.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the works accord with the approved details.

3. The defibrillator hereby approved shall not be fixed other than to the masonry joints between the face of the stone within the building.

Reason: To protect the character and historic interest of the listed building.

### Informatives

1. POSITIVE & PROACTIVE STATEMENT:

This Authority has a pro-active approach to the delivery of development. Early pre-application engagement is always encouraged. In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, in determining this application, Exmoor National Park Authority has endeavoured to work positively and proactively with the agent/applicant, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure that all relevant planning considerations have been appropriately addressed to achieve a positive outcome.

2. MONITORING OF DEVELOPMENT:

The applicant/developer is reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that the requirements of each planning condition are met and that the works are undertaken in accordance with the approved plans. Any failure to meet the terms of a planning condition or work which does not accord with the approved plans leaves the applicant/developer liable to formal action being taken. The National Park Authority endeavours to monitor on site the compliance with conditions and building works. This has benefits for applicants and developers as well as the

National Park. To assist with this monitoring of development the applicant/developer is requested to give at least fourteen days notice of the commencement of development to ensure that effective monitoring can be undertaken. The Planning Section can be contacted at Exmoor National Park Authority, Exmoor House, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9HL or by telephone on 01398 323665 or by email [plan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:plan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk).

### 3. CONDITIONS AND INFORMATIVES AND THE SUBMISSION OF FURTHER DETAILS:

Please check all the conditions and informatives attached to this Decision Notice. If there are any conditions which require submission of details and/or samples prior to work commencing on site it is vital that these are submitted and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work starts. Given the High Court's interpretation of the Planning Acts and their lawful implementation it is unlikely that the Local Planning Authority will be able to agree to a sample/details after the commencement of works if that sample/details should have been approved prior to commencement. If a sample/detail is not agreed as required prior to commencement and works have started then it is likely that this matter may only be able to be rectified by the submission of another application. To avoid delay, inconvenience and the need to submit a further application, please ensure that all appropriate details/samples are submitted and agreed at the specified time. Please also note that due to other decisions of the High Court it is now not normally possible for the Local Planning Authority to agree to minor amendments to approved applications. It will be necessary to adopt a formal approach and that if changes to approved plans are proposed then it will be necessary to make a new planning application. Please ensure that works comply with the approved plans so as to avoid the possibility that works are unauthorised and liable for enforcement action.

### 4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN:

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless: (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be Exmoor National Park Authority. There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply.

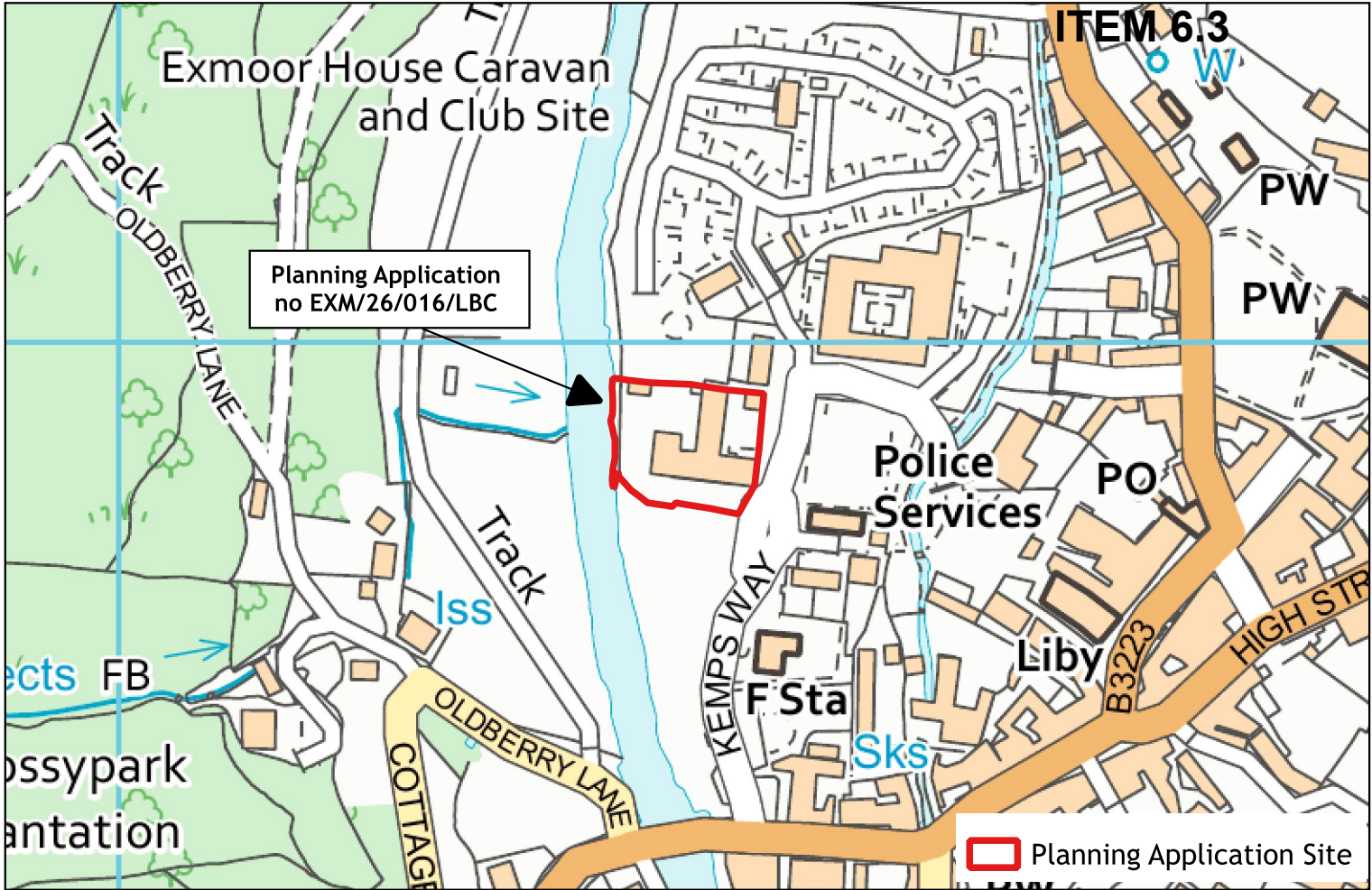
Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements in the list below is/are considered to apply.

## ITEM 6.3

BNG is not required for works to a listed building under a listed building consent application; however, it may apply to any associated or subsequent full planning application, unless a relevant exemption applies.

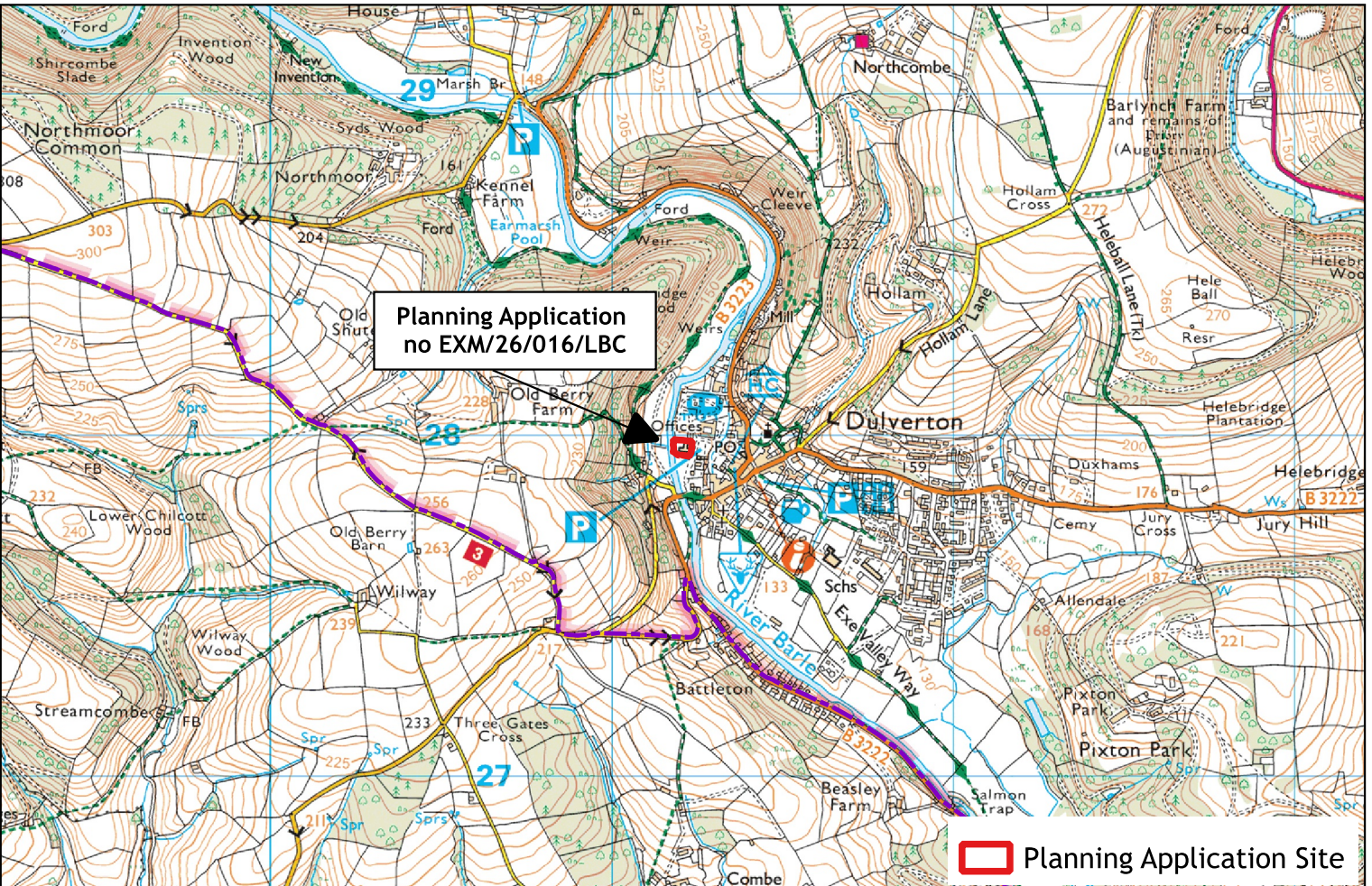
Exmoor House Caravan and Club Site

Planning Application no EXM/26/016/LBC



Site Map  
Scale 1:2,500

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Overview Map  
Scale 1:20,000.00002

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**EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**  
**5 May 2026**

**Application 6/26/25/003 – Proposed conversion of existing church into a single affordable residential unit (amended description).**

**ROADWATER METHODIST CHURCH, ROADWATER, WATCHET, TA23 0QY**

**1.0 Updated Plans – Correction of Drawing Error**

- 1.1 Since the application was previously reported to Committee on 7 April 2026, the applicant's agent/architect has submitted amended plans to correct a minor error on the previously submitted existing and proposed elevation drawings. The error related to the depiction of an additional window on the north-west elevation, which was shown in error on the earlier plans and has now been removed on the corrected drawings.
- 1.2 Officers acknowledge that the amended plans do not introduce any changes to the proposed development as originally assessed. The scheme continues to propose no external alterations to the building, and as such all-material considerations, planning balance, and the officer recommendation remain as set out in the main report.
- 1.3 The only consequential amendment arising from this correction is to Condition 2 (approved plans), which will be updated to reflect the revised drawing numbers.

### Committee Report

Application Number:	6/26/25/003
Valid Date:	22 April 2025
Target Determination Date:	9 June 2026
Extension of Time:	TBC – Subject to S106 Agreement
Applicant:	Mr Garrity Mr M Garrity
Agent:	Mr Elston Adam Elston
Case Officer:	Joseph Rose
Site Address:	ROADWATER METHODIST CHURCH, ROADWATER, WATCHET, TA23 0QY
Proposal:	Proposed conversion of existing church into a single affordable residential unit (amended description).
Recommendation:	Approved with Conditions
Reason for bringing before Planning Committee:	In accordance with the Authority's Scheme of Delegation, as the officer recommendation differs from the views of the Parish Council, which objects to the proposal.
Pre-commencement conditions agreed:	TBC

#### Relevant History

None relevant.

#### Site Description & Proposal

Roadwater Methodist Chapel is located within the village of Roadwater, within the parish of Old Cleeve. The building is identified on the Historic Environment Record (MEM23981) and is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. Dating from 1907, it was originally constructed as a Bible Christian Chapel.

This application seeks the conversion of the existing church building into a single affordable residential unit, as set out in the amended description. No external alterations are proposed as part of the scheme.

#### Consultee Representations

ENPA Senior Heritage Officer – No objection:

*The chapel has an entry on the Historic Environment Record (MEM23981) and is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. It dates from 1907 and was originally a Bible Christian Chapel. The proposed conversion respects they layout of the building with the openness of the church being retained. I am pleased to see no external changes are proposed to the building. My main concern is the use of internal wall insulation. While this does not require planning permission, I would suggest that great care is taken in its installation as it can result in condensation and dampness. I would suggest that the applicant reads the Historic England document:*

*Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating solid walls. I would like to see the gate pillar which is to be removed rebuilt on the other side of the new wider drive entrance, there appears to be space to do so. If the conversion of the building is permitted, I recommend that a level 2 historic building record is undertaken and that the following condition is applied: Condition: Prior to the commencement of the works a scheme for the recording of the building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall thereafter be implemented as approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. This work should include a collation of any available information or old photographs providing information on the original fixtures and fittings and historic use of the Chapel. Reason: To record the architectural and historic fabric of the building.*

ENPA Ecologist – No objection:

Updated response:

*Following my previous response submitted 28/11/25 I was made aware that a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Orbis Ecology, ref: ORB\_5441\_AM, 10 November 2025) had been submitted, but had not been made visible on the planning portal at the time. Now that I have seen the ecology report I revoke my objection from 28/11/25.*

*No bats or evidence of bats was found during the survey and it was concluded that bats cannot access the interior of the building or the basement/crawl space. The building was assessed as offering high suitability for roosting bats and has suitability to support a roost of high conservation status, but has low suitability to support hibernating bats. The basement/crawl space could provide a suitable hibernaculum if it was accessible to bats. The proposed works will not alter any potential roosts or access to them, as the works only involve insulating the ceiling with new ceilings below and repairing an internal gap in the plaster. However, without mitigation the potential impacts are disturbing bats during works to the ceiling and artificial light spill from external light sources onto bat roosts. These would cause an offence under legislation including the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. To mitigate for this, the works to the ceilings must only be undertaken between 1st October and 30th April to avoid the period when bats may be roosting within the building during the active season. A precautionary approach to the works should be taken and if bats are encountered during works it is recommended that works stop and advice is sought from a suitably qualified, licensed and experienced ecologist at the earliest possible opportunity. If insulating the ceiling requires any further works not stated here (replastering the small gap and insulation installation with a new ceiling) then an ecological consultant would need to be contacted to discuss if further mitigation or bat surveys are required.*

*There were multiple external gaps that were identified in the ecology report as providing opportunities for nesting birds; therefore, works should be carried out outside of the breeding bird season (which is March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, then the site should be surveyed by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to works. If active nests are found, then works cannot continue until young have fledged.*

*The ecology report recommends that at least one bat box and one swift box are installed in suitable locations on the building. It also suggested that, if the basement/crawl space would not be used during the winter, access could be provided to the basement/crawl space through a hole sized 40cmx30cm. In line with Local Plan Policy CE-S3 and Appendix 1 of the Exmoor Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Guidance Note we would expect to see 5 enhancements for a development of this size. Appendix 1 of the Exmoor Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Guidance Note provides recommendations and suggestions for the applicant to consider those appropriate for their site. This could include more bat and bird boxes installed in suitable locations or native tree or wildflower planting.*

*There is no external lighting proposed and this should be secured by condition. This includes during construction works to avoid any impact to possible bat roosts.*

*Please apply conditions to any permission granted to secure enhancements as detailed above and for the following for which I have provided some suggested wording below:*

- The works to the ceilings hereby approved shall not place between 1st May and 30th September inclusive to avoid disturbance to potential bat roosts during the active season.*
- The works to the ceilings hereby approved shall not place between 1st March and 30th September inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check for active birds' nests immediately before the works to the building commences and provides written confirmation to the Local Planning Authority that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. In no circumstances shall netting be used to exclude nesting birds.*
- The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with all ecological measures as set out in Section 6 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Orbis Ecology, 10 November 2025).*
- Prior to the installation of any external lighting on site, a "lighting design strategy for bats" shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall: a) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their resting places, foraging habitat and commuting routes; and b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (for example through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their resting places. all external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.*

Initial response:

*Thank you for consulting me on this application. Although the Design and Access statement states that the proposed change of use would have no impact on the existing roof structure, the proposal does include insulating the roof. Because of the design of the roof, the installation of insulation could have a significant impact if a bat roost is present. There could be potential for a bat roost to be present particularly as there are records of bats in the area. I would therefore like to request that a preliminary roost assessment is conducted and any required further surveys if identified by a consultant ecologist.*

Somerset Rural Housing Enabler – No objection:

*The application is for conversion of an existing building and this consultee response is on the subject of provision of affordable housing, notwithstanding any other planning matters such as the potential loss of a community facility or preservation of the existing built form.*

*I note that in the Design and Access Statement the applicant asserts that: “The proposed dwelling is to be the principal residence for the applicant as a self-build project.”*

*I further note that the same statement fails to list policies HC-S1, HC-S2 and HC-S3 as relevant (see page 5 of the D&A document), and that the application form cites ‘Market Housing’ as the proposed repurposing. However, the Design and Access Statement does discuss the difference between the standard 93m<sup>2</sup> limit on affordable dwellings and the 104m<sup>2</sup> of the existing building that would be retained following conversion.*

*My expectation is that were such a repurposing to be acceptable in respect of all other planning considerations, the resultant dwelling must be affordable (within the meaning of the NPPF) in order to comply with current Local Plan policies. There is some leeway to produce some principal residence dwellings where viability is an issue, but only where this supports the creation of affordable dwellings. So, I cannot see that viability, even if it were robustly evidenced, would be an acceptable reason to evade the production of an affordable dwelling.*

*Roadwater lies within the parish of Old Cleeve, which straddles the boundary of the National Park. I can confirm that on the 4th April 2025 (the latest date for which such data is currently available) there were 32 households registered on Homefinder Somerset citing a local connection to the parish of Old Cleeve, although it is not possible to disaggregate this figure into which settlement – Roadwater or Washford (which is outside the Park). Nonetheless, I view this is sufficient evidence that the need for affordable housing remains acute in this vicinity.*

*Those registered on Homefinder are generally seeking a rented tenure, although some may be able to afford an intermediate tenure such as a discounted market product provided that the discount was sufficient. The Exmoor National Park Authority commissioned work from Arc4 and Rural Housing Solutions, which reported in 2023, to establish the general state of the local housing market including*

*levels of discount necessary to ensure that those on prevailing local earnings can access such an intermediate product. The report suggests that in order to be within the financial reach of those on typical local incomes a 2 bedroom dwelling within Exmoor National Park requires a discount of between 40% & 50%.*

*Whilst the application form states 'Market Housing', the Local Housing Authority would have no objection in principle to the church being converted into an affordable dwelling on the basis of it being made available at a sufficient discount (from the market valuation) in perpetuity. Although the Exmoor Local Plan expects a limit of 93m2 on such a dwelling, I would suggest that this is not practical in the case of preserving a historic building whose footprint cannot, then, be altered.*

*Further, the Local Housing Authority supports the principle of self build as a route to creating additional affordable dwellings. However, the applicant would need to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the National Park Authority, that they meet the requisite local connection criterion and that they are otherwise unable to access alternative accommodation for their needs, such as purchase of an existing dwelling.*

*If the application were to be approved, it would necessitate a s106 Agreement to enforce the discount in perpetuity and ensure that the dwelling could only ever be sold to a suitably qualifying local household in need of affordable accommodation.*

*There are no other material observations.*

### The Environment Agency – No objection:

*Thank you for your consultation in respect of this planning application. As you are aware, we no longer provide bespoke advice on consultations for change of use. Please find attached our standard planning advice note and supporting Flood Risk Assessment checklist, which will allow you to determine the suitability of the application with regard to flood risk. If your Authority is minded to refuse any such applications on flood risk grounds, please notify us. If refusal of permission is appealed by the applicant, we would be happy to support you at appeal. Additionally, the applicant may like to request Product 4 data, which is a suite of supporting documents outlining the flood risk for an area. This is free. This can be requested from us by contacting: [DCISEnquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:DCISEnquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk)*

### Old Cleeve Parish Council – Object:

Updated response:

*The above proposal was reviewed by Old Cleeve Parish Council at its meeting on the 18 August 2025. Following consideration and discussion, Old Cleeve Parish Council resolved to maintain its OBJECTION to this proposal.*

*The Council notes that the revised proposal removes the previously proposed on-site parking provision. Whilst this amendment mitigates the concerns previously raised regarding highway safety and inadequate manoeuvring space, it gives rise to a new concern: there is no public parking available in the immediate vicinity of the site.*

*The Council further notes that the other issues raised in its earlier objection have not been addressed. In particular:*

### *Flood Risk*

*The proposed development is situated within Flood Zone 3, indicating a high risk of flooding. The Exmoor Local Plan requires developments to demonstrate resilience to climate change and flooding, and the Parish Council does not consider that adequate evidence has been provided to address this concern.*

### *Housing Policy*

*While the provision of affordable housing is welcomed in principle, the Council continues to request that, should permission be granted, a condition is imposed restricting occupancy to a principal residence only. This would ensure consistency with the Local Plan's aim of supporting sustainable and balanced local communities within the National Park.*

Initial response:

*The above proposal was reviewed by Old Cleeve Parish Council at its meeting on the 19 May 2025. Following consideration and discussion, Old Cleeve Parish Council resolved to OBJECT to this proposal due to concerns relating to flood risk, parking and highway safety.*

### *Flood Risk*

*The proposed development is situated within Flood Zone 3, indicating a high risk of flooding. The Exmoor Local Plan requires developments to consider climate resilience and emphasises the need for risk mitigation in flood-prone areas. Given the vulnerability of this location, the flood risk implications should be carefully assessed before granting approval.*

### *Parking & Highway Safety*

*The application proposes tandem parking without a turning head. The lack of manoeuvring space for vehicles to enter and exit the site in a forward gear is unacceptable, particularly given the site's proximity to the highway and limited sightlines. The development should not prejudice highway safety and should provide safe access for all users. It is also unclear whether the proposed parking area is of sufficient width to accommodate a standard vehicle. If the dimensions fall short of minimum requirements, this could lead to vehicles encroaching onto the neighbouring land, raising further concerns about practicality and compliance. Given the continuing pressure on local housing stock within the National Park, the Parish Council would also request that, if the application were to be approved, a condition be imposed to restrict the use of the property to principal residence only, thereby preventing its use as a second or holiday home. This would be consistent with the aim of the Local Plan to ensure that new housing within the National Park contributes to sustaining vibrant and balanced local communities.*

## Somerset Highways Development Control – Standing Advice:

*Standing Advice.*

### Representations

Total – Objections	Total – Support	Total – No Objections
1	0	4

### Summary of comments:

Officers note that four letters of representation raising concerns and one letter of objection have been received. The matters raised relate to highways and access, residential amenity and privacy, character and heritage, lighting and dark skies, use of the development, and land ownership issues.

### Planning Context

Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (including minerals and waste policies):

- GP1 - Achieving National Park Purposes and Sustainable Development
- GP4 - The Efficient Use of Land and Buildings
- CE-S1 – Landscape and Seascape Character
- CE-D1 - Protecting Exmoor’s Landscape and Seascape
- CE-S2 – Protecting Exmoor’s Dark Night Sky
- CE-S3 - Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure
- CE-S4 – Cultural Heritage and Historic Environment
- CE-D3 – Conserving Heritage Assets
- CE-S5 - Principles for the Conversion or Structural Alteration of Existing Buildings
- CE-S6 – Design and Sustainable construction principles
- HC-S1 – Housing
- HC-D1 - Vacant Buildings in Settlements
- HC-S2 - A Balanced Local Housing Stock
- HC-S3 - Local Occupancy Criteria For Affordable Housing
- HC-D4 - Accessible and Adaptable Housing for Exmoor’s Communities
- HC-D19 - Safeguarding Local Commercial Services and Community Facilities
- AC-D1 - Transport and Accessibility Requirements for Development
- AC-D2 - Traffic and Road Safety Considerations for Development
- CC-D1 – Flood Risk

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a material planning consideration.

## **Planning Considerations**

The main planning considerations in the assessment of these proposals relate to the principle of development having regard to the loss of a non-commercial community service & the housing policies of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan, together with design and heritage considerations, impacts on residential amenity, highways impacts, flood risk and ecology.

### General policy context:

Policy GP1 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan outlines how the development plan seeks to achieve and adhere to the National Park Purposes and states that Sustainable development for Exmoor National Park will conserve and enhance the National Park, its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and its special qualities; promote opportunities for their understanding and enjoyment by the public, and in so doing, foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.

Policy GP4, then goes on to set the principles on the National Park for achieving the efficient use of land and buildings and states that development proposals will be encouraged which demonstrate the efficient use of land and buildings including through: the redevelopment of brownfield land located within the built extent of the named settlements that does not have a high ecological value; or the re-use of existing buildings within the built extent of the named settlements, or within or well-related to hamlets and farmsteads. The policy then goes on to outline that development within or adjoining the named settlements should reflect the historic form and pattern of the settlement and make best use of land on the site in terms of the density of buildings and green infrastructure provision.

### The loss of non-commercial community services:

Policy HC-D19 of the Local Plan seeks to safeguard local community facilities. In this instance, the application relates to the loss of a Methodist Church which is a non-commercial service, and is therefore assessed against Criteria 1(a) and 1(b), as clarified by Criterion 2 of the policy.

In respect of Criterion 1(a), officers are satisfied that the information provided indicates that the facility is no longer required by the community. The submitted Design and Access Statement explains that the building has not been used for a number of years and was recently sold via auction as a redevelopment opportunity, with evidence of a long-term decline in attendance and increasing financial pressures associated with the upkeep and heating of the building. Officers note that whilst limited evidence has been provided to support this information, it has not been contested by any third parties, including the Parish Council or local residents, and is therefore afforded limited weight in support of the loss of this service.

In respect of Criterion 1(b), officers note that the building has historically been used for a range of community functions; however, according to the submitted information, these have not proven to be successful or sustainable. The ongoing use of the building for community purposes is constrained by practical limitations, most notably the

absence of on-site or readily available parking provision. Officers consider that this significantly limits the building's ability to function effectively as a community facility serving multiple users. By contrast, the proposed residential use would generate a materially lower level of activity, limited primarily to occupants and their visitors, and would therefore not give rise to the same functional constraints, which again officers afford limited weight to in support of the loss of this service.

Furthermore, officers note the presence of alternative and more suitable community facilities within close proximity, including the village hall located approximately 60 metres to the northeast, which benefits from improved parking provision and a wider range of facilities. In addition, a number of alternative places of worship are available within the locality, including St Giles Church in Leighland, St Peter's Church in Treborough, St Bartholomew's Church in Rodhuish, All Saints Church in Monksilver, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Washford. Collectively, these provide a range of accessible and viable alternatives to serve the community's needs, which officers afford moderate weight in support of the loss of this service.

Having regard to the above, and taking these factors together, officers are satisfied that the proposal complies with the relevant criteria of Policy HC-D19. Whilst each of the above considerations is afforded limited to moderate weight individually in support of the loss of the community service, collectively they are taken to carry considerable weight in justifying the loss of the community facility in this instance.

In accordance with Criterion 6, and in the absence of any realistic prospect of the building being retained for community or employment uses, the proposed conversion to an affordable dwelling is considered to represent an appropriate alternative use in principle, subject to the below considerations.

### Principle of the development (housing provision):

Policy HC-S1 sets out the overarching approach to housing provision within Exmoor National Park. The policy makes clear that the primary purpose of new housing development is to meet the needs of local communities, with a particular emphasis on the delivery of affordable housing for local occupancy. In this regard, new housing will only be permitted on an exceptional basis where it responds to an identified local need. The policy identifies three principal forms of housing that may be supported in this context. Firstly, affordable housing that remains affordable in perpetuity and is occupied by persons in proven local housing need. Secondly, dwellings required to meet the essential functional needs of rural workers, including those in agriculture, forestry or other land-based enterprises, as well as succession farming in accordance with relevant policies. Thirdly, extended family dwellings, where justified in accordance with Policy HC-D5 and secured for occupation by local persons in perpetuity. In addition, the policy supports the provision of accessible and adaptable housing for older people and other vulnerable members of the community, where this meets an identified local need. Such provision may also be supported where it facilitates the delivery of affordable housing through cross-subsidy as part of a wider development or conversion scheme. The policy also confirms that, consistent with the National Park's exceptional approach to housing, new housing development will not be permitted solely to meet open market demand, and housing land will not be allocated for this purpose. Open market housing will only be supported in limited circumstances,

where it is essential to enable the delivery of local need affordable housing within Local Service Centres or Villages, or where it relates to the re-use of a vacant building in accordance with Policy HC-D1. Finally, the policy notes that the provisions relating to vacant building credit will only apply where consistent with national guidance, and may be subject to review should that guidance change.

Policy HC-D1 sets out the limited circumstances in which Principal Residence market housing may be permitted through the change of use or redevelopment of an existing vacant building within a Local Service Centre or Village. The policy is explicit in requiring clear and robust evidence to demonstrate that a building is genuinely vacant, including that it has been actively marketed for a minimum of three years and has not been made vacant to facilitate redevelopment.

Policy HC-S2 seeks to ensure that new residential development contributes towards the delivery of a balanced and sustainable housing stock within Exmoor National Park. The policy requires a mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures to meet the needs of local communities, both now and in the future, whilst also ensuring that homes provide a suitable standard of accommodation. The policy places particular emphasis on accessibility and adaptability, encouraging new dwellings to meet relevant Building Regulations standards, including the provision of accessible and wheelchair adaptable homes where a need is identified. In respect of affordable housing, the policy requires that such dwellings remain affordable to local people in perpetuity and are appropriately sized, with a general expectation that they do not exceed 93sqm unless a clear need is demonstrated. The policy also provides for the removal of permitted development rights, particularly in relation to extensions, to ensure that dwellings remain of an appropriate size and continue to meet identified local needs. Overall, the policy seeks to secure well-designed, appropriately sized and accessible housing that supports the long-term sustainability and inclusivity of Exmoor's communities.

Policy HC-S3 sets out the local occupancy criteria for local need affordable housing within Exmoor National Park. The policy requires that such housing is occupied by persons with a proven housing need who cannot afford to access accommodation on the open market and who have a strong local connection to the parish or surrounding area. The policy defines a range of qualifying local connections, including established residency within the parish or National Park, strong local ties, essential employment within the area, or a need to live close to family or support networks for welfare or medical reasons. To ensure that affordable housing continues to meet local needs over time, the policy requires occupancy to be secured through a planning obligation in perpetuity. It also introduces a cascade approach, allowing occupancy criteria to be widened in stages where no eligible local occupants are available, whilst still prioritising those with the strongest local connections. Overall, the policy ensures that affordable housing is retained for those with a genuine local need and maintains a clear and robust mechanism for controlling occupancy in the long term.

Policy HC-D4 supports the provision of accessible and adaptable housing to meet the needs of older people and other vulnerable members of the community with a proven local connection. The policy encourages the delivery of homes that can be adapted over time to meet changing needs, helping to support independent living within local communities. Proposals must accord with the wider housing strategy set out in Policies HC-S1, HC-D2 or HC-D3, and ensure that dwellings are of an appropriate size in

accordance with Policy HC-S2. Development should be well integrated within existing communities, allowing for convenient access to services and facilities, and must meet relevant Building Regulations standards for accessible and adaptable or wheelchair user dwellings. The policy also requires that occupancy is secured in perpetuity for local persons through a planning obligation, alongside a Principal Residence condition. In addition, permitted development rights will typically be removed to ensure that dwellings remain appropriate to their intended purpose. Overall, the policy seeks to ensure that accessible and adaptable housing is appropriately located, well designed, and retained for those in local need over the long term.

Officers note that the Housing Needs Survey for Old Cleeve and Withycombe (2019) identifies an affordable housing need within the parish, including smaller units for single persons and couples as well as 2- and 3-bedroom family accommodation. This lends support to the principle of development in this case. This position is further supported by comments from the Somerset Rural Housing Enabler, who has advised that, as of April 2025, there were 32 households registered on Homefinder Somerset with a local connection to the parish of Old Cleeve. Whilst this figure cannot be disaggregated between individual settlements within the parish, it nevertheless provides clear and up-to-date evidence that there is need for affordable housing in the locality.

In this case, the submitted Design and Access Statement confirms that the building has not been used for a number of years, and officers note that this position is not disputed by any local residents or the Parish Council who were consulted on the scheme. On that basis, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, officers have no reason to dispute that the building is currently vacant. The proposal would therefore represent the re-use of an existing building in the settlement, in accordance with Policies GP4 and HC-D2.

The proposed development would utilise the existing building with no increase in footprint, resulting in a single dwelling of approximately 104sqm. Whilst this marginally exceeds the 93sqm threshold set out in Policy HC-S2, officers note that paragraph 6.68 of the Local Plan provides flexibility where an existing building exceeds this but is not capable of subdivision into more than one dwelling. Given the scale and configuration of the building, officers are satisfied that the provision of a single dwelling is appropriate in this instance.

Officers acknowledge that the proposal does not meet the requirements of Policy HC-D1, in that it has not been demonstrated that the building is redundant through active marketing for a minimum period of three years. However, as the proposal seeks to deliver a local affordable dwelling rather than an open market dwelling, it is more appropriately assessed against Policy HC-D2, the requirements of which officers consider the scheme to meet.

Further to this, it is necessary to ensure that, for the development to be carried out in a fully policy-compliant manner, the occupation of the dwelling is restricted in accordance with the Local Occupancy Criteria for Affordable Housing as set out in Policy HC-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan. In this regard, the applicant and their agent have confirmed their intention to enter into a Section 106 Agreement to secure the required local occupancy restriction, should the scheme be supported.

Taking all of the above into account, officers consider that the principle of the development, in terms of providing a local affordable dwelling through the conversion of an existing building within the settlement which is in proven need of affordable homes, is acceptable, subject to all other material considerations addressed within this report.

### Design and heritage:

Policy CE-S5 of the local plan sets out the principles for the conversion or structural alteration of existing buildings and states that, the conversion or structural alteration of any existing building will be permitted where the proposal; accords with the relevant policies in this Plan in terms of the intended use; clearly demonstrates that the building is capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction and is suitable for the existing building in terms of the intended use and the intensity of that use, in relation to its capacity, structure and character without substantial alteration. Clause 4 of the policy then states that; In addition to clause 1, proposals for the conversion or structural alteration of non-traditional buildings, will only be permitted if traditional buildings are demonstrated to be incompatible with the intended use or no such buildings are present, and where: the building is of permanent and substantial construction; and environmental and visual enhancement to the building and/or its setting are incorporated into the proposals where necessary to deliver an overall acceptable scheme.

Policy CE-S6 establishes the principles for design and sustainable construction. It requires that development proposals deliver high-quality, sustainable designs that conserve and enhance the local identity and distinctiveness of Exmoor's built and historic environment. Applicants are expected to demonstrate that new development positively contributes to its setting in terms of siting, massing, scale, height, orientation, density, and layout. Additionally, the materials and design elements of new buildings or conversions should complement the local context through the use of traditional and natural sustainable building materials, with an emphasis on the use of locally sourced materials where possible. Furthermore, Clause 1g of the policy requires that the use and activity of the development should not detrimentally affect the amenities of surrounding properties and occupiers including overlooking, loss of daylight, overbearing appearance, or other adverse environmental impacts.

Policy CE-S4 sets out that Exmoor National Park's local distinctiveness, cultural heritage, and historic environment should be conserved and enhanced to ensure that present and future generations can increase their knowledge, awareness, and enjoyment of these special qualities. The policy also states that development proposals affecting heritage assets, as identified on the Exmoor National Park Historic Environment Record, and their settings, will be considered in a manner appropriate to their significance. This includes designated conservation areas, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, and registered historic parks and gardens, as well as locally important historic sites and features, such as Principal Archaeological Landscapes.

Policy CE-D3, which concerns the conservation of heritage assets, outlines that development proposals affecting conservation areas must ensure that the character

or appearance of the area is preserved or enhanced. Proposals should deliver high quality design and incorporate materials that reflect the scale, architectural quality, and detailing of the area. Furthermore, in relation to heritage assets and their settings, proposals should demonstrate a positive contribution to the setting through sensitive design and siting. They should promote the understanding and enjoyment of the heritage asset and its setting, or better reveal its significance, while avoiding any unacceptable adverse effects or cumulative visual impacts on the asset's setting.

Furthermore, clause 4 of the policy then outlines that development proposals affecting heritage assets that are required to adapt to, or mitigate the effects of, climate change will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: measures to adapt to climate change will safeguard the heritage asset over the longer term, and conserve their special interest; or measures to mitigate the effects of climate change will not harm the special interest or appearance of the heritage asset.

The building is identified on the Historic Environment Record (MEM23981) and is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. Dating from 1907, it was originally constructed as a Bible Christian Chapel. The proposed conversion retains the overall form and layout of the building, including the openness of its internal space, and is therefore considered to respect the character and significance of the asset.

The Authority's Senior Heritage Officer has been consulted and has raised no objection to the proposals, noting that no external alterations are proposed. They have, however, highlighted the need for care in the installation of internal wall insulation to avoid potential issues of condensation and damp. Officers note that, as these works are internal and therefore not a matter for planning consideration per se, this can be addressed by way of an informative, including reference to relevant Historic England guidance.

In addition, the Senior Heritage Officer has recommended that a programme of historic building recording (Level 2) be secured by condition in order to record the architectural and historic fabric of the building. Officers endorse this recommendation and consider that such a condition is reasonable and necessary in this instance.

It should also be noted that the Senior Heritage Officer commented on the potential removal and relocation of a gate pillar; however, officers note that the scheme has since been amended and this element no longer forms part of the proposals.

Overall, officers consider that the proposal represents an appropriate form of development that preserves the character and appearance of the building and its setting and is therefore in accordance with Policies CE-S4, CE-S5, CE-S6 and CE-D3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan.

### Impacts on residential amenity:

Regarding residential amenity, the site provides sufficient space to accommodate an appropriate level of outdoor amenity for future occupiers. Furthermore, officers consider the proposed use is not considered to give rise to any unacceptable impacts on neighbouring properties in terms of loss of light, overlooking or overbearing impact. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policy CE-S6 in this regard.

It is noted that a number of representations have been received from local residents in respect of the previously proposed parking provision, which has since been omitted and is addressed within the highways section of this report, as well as concerns relating to potential overlooking from existing and any future window openings.

In respect of overlooking, officers have carefully considered the relationship between the proposed development and neighbouring properties. The submitted plans indicate that the lowest window-pane height from internal floor level is approximately 0.7m on the north-east elevation. This opening is modest in scale and serves an existing arrangement facing the soft boundary treatment with adjacent properties. All other windows have window-pane heights ranging between approximately 1.4m and 1.7m above internal floor level, which are considered to be relatively high, such that views would be directed outward at eye level rather than down into neighbouring gardens.

Importantly, these windows form part of the existing building in any case, and the proposal does not introduce any new window openings or a first-floor level. As such, the degree of overlooking would remain materially unchanged from the existing situation. On that basis, officers are satisfied that the proposal would not give rise to any additional unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity in terms of overlooking or any other adverse environmental impacts in accordance with clause 1g of Policy CE-S6.

### Highways impacts:

Policy AC-D1 sets out the requirements for transport and accessibility in relation to new development. The policy requires proposals to prioritise safe and sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport, and to demonstrate that opportunities to enhance supporting infrastructure have been fully explored. The policy also seeks to ensure that development provides appropriate access for all users, avoids severance of communities, and integrates effectively with existing transport networks and nearby services. In addition, any necessary highway works must be proportionate to the scale of development and designed to conserve or enhance the character of the area. Where proposals are likely to generate significant traffic, the policy requires the submission of appropriate supporting information, such as Transport Assessments or Statements, and Travel Plans to demonstrate that sustainable transport outcomes can be achieved.

Policy AC-D2 relates to traffic and road safety considerations in the assessment of development proposals. The policy requires that the capacity of the local road network is sufficient to accommodate the level of traffic likely to be generated, having regard to the Exmoor Route Network. The policy makes clear that development will not be permitted where it would result in unacceptable impacts on the environmental or physical capacity of the highway network, or where it would give rise to adverse impacts on road safety.

In respect of highways and parking, it is noted that the original submission proposed on-site parking provision. However, this arrangement did not accord with the Highway Authority's standing advice, as the site is unable to accommodate sufficient space for

the safe turning of vehicles. As such, it could not be ensured that vehicles would enter and leave the site in a forward gear, which raised highway safety concerns.

In response to this, the scheme has been amended to remove the proposed tandem parking spaces, such that no on-site parking is now proposed. Officers acknowledge that the site, by virtue of its constrained nature and relationship with the highway, is fundamentally unable to accommodate policy-compliant parking and turning provision. This is an inherent limitation of the existing building arrangement, rather than a constraint arising from the proposed development itself. On that note, concerns were also raised by a local resident in respect of land ownership, boundary treatment and rights of access. However, the amended scheme has omitted the previously proposed parking provision and associated works, including the removal of boundary walls. As such, these matters are considered to be adequately addressed within the amended scheme.

Notwithstanding the absence of on-site parking, the site is located within a sustainable village location, within short walking distance of a range of local amenities including a community shop, post office, recreation ground, village hall and public house.

It is acknowledged that future occupants may need to rely on on-street parking within the locality, which there is provision for. Whilst this is not ideal, officers do not consider that this would give rise to severe or unacceptable impacts on highway safety or the operation of the local road network. In reaching this view, regard is had to the fact that any alternative use of the building, including its former use as a place of worship or as a community facility, would be likely to generate a greater, level of vehicular movements and associated parking demand as expressed above.

By comparison, the proposed use as a dwelling of modest scale is likely to generate a relatively low-level of domestic traffic movements. On this basis and having regard to the site-specific constraints, officers are satisfied that the development would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or capacity. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies AC-D1 and AC-D2 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan.

### Flood risk:

Policy CC-D1 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan states that development proposals will be permitted where they are consistent with the sequential approach to flood risk, ensuring that areas at little or no risk of flooding are developed in preference to those at higher risk. The policy requires that development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, does not prejudice land used for current or future flood management, and is compatible with relevant Catchment Flood Management Plans or Shoreline Management Plans. It also requires that development is designed and laid out to reduce flood risk, including the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems to minimise surface water run-off and avoid pollution. Where appropriate, proposals should be supported by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment. In circumstances where development is approved on an exceptions basis following the application of the sequential test, planning obligations or contributions may be sought to ensure that development is adequately protected from flooding throughout its lifetime, provided that any necessary flood defences do not conflict with National Park purposes.

In this case, it is noted that the site spans Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3, as identified within the submitted Flood Risk Assessment. The front part of the building, including the main entrance and bedrooms, is located within Flood Zone 1. The rear section, including the kitchen, lies within Flood Zone 2, with the very most rear-most part of the building, being limited to the store and organ room falling within Flood Zone 3.

The proposed use as a dwelling is classified as “more vulnerable” development within the Planning Practice Guidance. Whilst such development is not ordinarily appropriate within Flood Zone 3, it is important to consider the specific layout and characteristics of the proposal in this instance.

Importantly, the main living areas and all sleeping accommodation are located within Flood Zone 1, along with the primary access and escape route from the building to the highway. This ensures that occupants would have safe access to and from the property in an area of lowest flood risk. Furthermore, officers would note that the areas of the building that fall within higher flood zones are set at a higher internal floor level, with the rear of the property elevated approximately 1 metre above external ground level, thereby providing an additional level of resilience to potential flood events.

Officers are satisfied that the proposed internal layout has been designed having regard to flood risk, and that it would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere as the development does not introduce any new operational development within areas of higher flood risk, nor would it prejudice existing or future flood management measures.

It is also noted that the Environment Agency has been consulted on the application and has raised no objection to the proposed development.

Taking all of the above into account, including the siting of the most vulnerable living spaces within Flood Zone 1 and the provision of a safe means of escape, officers consider that the proposal accords with Policy CC-D1 and is acceptable in flood risk terms.

### Ecology and biodiversity:

With regard to ecology and biodiversity, Regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 states that: “Without prejudice to the preceding provisions, a competent authority, in exercising any of its functions, must have regard to the requirements of the Directives so far as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions.”

As such, the Local Planning Authority consults its internal ecologist where appropriate to ensure that any implications under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 are properly assessed and addressed as part of the decision-making process.

Furthermore, Policy CE-S3 of the Local Plan states that the conservation and enhancement of wildlife, habitats and sites of geological interest within the National Park will be given great weight and also that development likely to cause harm to legally protected species, or lead to the loss of or damage to their habitats, will not be

permitted unless this can be mitigated or then offset so that local populations are at least maintained.

Officers note that the Exmoor National Park Authority's Ecologist has reviewed the proposals. Whilst an initial objection was raised due to the absence of ecological information, this has since been withdrawn following the submission and review of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Orbis Ecology, dated 10 November 2025).

The submitted report confirms that no evidence of bats was identified and that the proposed works would not result in the loss of any roost features or access points. However, the building is identified as having some potential to support roosting bats, and there are also opportunities for nesting birds within the structure. As such, the Ecologist has advised that, in the absence of appropriate mitigation, there would be a risk of disturbance to protected species, which could give rise to an offence under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

To address this, several precautionary mitigation measures have been recommended, which officers endorse. Officers also feel that it is necessary to include suitable Informatives to any permission granted reminding the applicant and any contractors of the legal protection afforded to protected species.

In addition, biodiversity enhancement measures, including the provision of bat and bird boxes, are recommended in accordance with Policy CE-S3 and the Exmoor Biodiversity Net Gain Technical Guidance.

Subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions to secure these mitigation and enhancement measures, along with a restriction on external lighting to avoid impacts on bat activity, officers are satisfied that the proposal would not result in harm to protected species or their habitats.

Accordingly, the development is considered to accord with Policy CE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan and the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, provided that the works are carried out in strict accordance with the recommended conditions.

### **Human Rights**

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010 have been taken into account in reaching the recommendation contained in this report.

### **Conclusion**

For the reasons outlined within this report, and as set out within each subsection of the Officer Considerations section above, officers are satisfied that the proposal would not be in conflict with the Development Plan.

The development is considered, when assessed in the round, to accord with Policies: GP1, GP4, HC-S1, HC-D1, HC-S2, HC-S3, HC-D4, HC-D19, CE-S5, CE-S6, CE-S4, CE-D3, AC-D1, AC-D2, CE-S3 & CC-D1 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011–2031.

Furthermore, no material considerations have been identified that would indicate a decision other than in accordance with the Development Plan.

On balance, officers consider that the benefits of delivering a local affordable dwelling, in a sustainable village location, carry greater weight than the loss of the existing community facility given the evidence available that the building is no longer required for community use, the availability of alternative facilities within the locality and the functional limitations of the site, including the lack of parking provision.

Officers therefore conclude that planning permission should be granted.

### Recommendation

Approved with Conditions:

1. The development hereby approved shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, (as amended by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the submitted site plan, location plan and drawings numbered: 3138/203 A, 3138/202, 3138/102, 3138/201, 3138/101, 3138/103, 3153/200 and 3153/100, unless otherwise required by another condition attached to this consent.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the development accord with the approved details.

3. Prior to the commencement of the works a scheme for the recording of the building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall thereafter be implemented as approved unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority. This work should include a collation of any available information or old photographs providing information on the original fixtures and fittings and historic use of the Chapel.

Reason: To ensure that an appropriate programme of historic building recording and analysis is secured in advance of works to the dwellinghouse, in the interests of safeguarding and recording the significance of the Grade II listed building, in accordance with Policies CE-S4 and CE-D3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031.

4. The works to the ceilings hereby approved shall not commence between 1st May and 30th September inclusive unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check for active bat roosts immediately before the works to the buildings commences and provides written confirmation to the Local Planning Authority that bats will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect such species on site.

Reason: In accordance with policy CE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031 and to accord with Regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

5. The works to the ceilings hereby approved shall not commence between 1st March and 30th September inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check for active birds' nests immediately before the works to the building commences and provides written confirmation to the Local Planning Authority that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. In no circumstances shall netting be used to exclude nesting birds.

Reason: In accordance with policy CE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031 and to accord with Regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

6. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with all ecological measures as set out in Section 6 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Orbis Ecology, 10 November 2025).

Reason: To ensure the works are carried out in accordance with the submitted details in accordance with policy CE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031 and to accord with Regulation 9(3) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

7. Prior to the installation of any external lighting on site, a "lighting design strategy for bats" shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- a) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their resting places, foraging habitat and commuting routes; and
- b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (for example through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their resting places.

Any external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that any external lighting installed on site does not adversely affect bats or their supporting habitat, in the interests of safeguarding protected species and maintaining the dark skies and ecological integrity of the National Park, in accordance with Policies CE-S2 and CE-S3 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

8. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), express planning permission shall be obtained for any development within Classes A, B, C, D and G of Part 1 to Schedule 2 to the Order.

Reason: To protect the appearance and character of the traditional buildings and to control the size of the dwelling interests of ensuring the size of the dwelling is such that it remains affordable in the interests of the local community, in accordance with HC-S2 and HC-D7 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031 and in the interests of visual amenity.

9. Any gas, electricity, water, sewage, telephone and cabling services to the development the subject of this application shall be placed underground.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policy CE-S6 of the Exmoor National Park Local Plan 2011-2031.

### Informatives

#### 1. BATS & BAT ROOSTS:

The applicant and their contractors are reminded of the legal protection afforded to bats and bat roosts under legislation including the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during works it is recommended that works stop and advice is sought from a suitably qualified, licensed and experienced ecologist at the earliest possible opportunity.

#### 2. BIRDS & BIRD NESTS:

The applicant and their contractors are reminded of the legal protection afforded to nesting birds under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In the unlikely event that nesting birds are encountered during works it is recommended that works stop until the young have fledged and advice is sought from a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist at the earliest possible opportunity.

#### 3. INTERNAL WALL INSULATION:

The applicant is advised that the installation of internal wall insulation within historic buildings can give rise to issues of condensation and damp if not appropriately designed and installed. Care should therefore be taken to ensure that any such works are undertaken in accordance with best practice guidance. Reference is made to Historic England guidance, in particular "Energy Efficiency and Historic Buildings: Insulating Solid Walls", which provides advice on suitable approaches for traditional buildings.

#### 4. MONITORING OF DEVELOPMENT:

The applicant/developer is reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that the requirements of each planning condition are met and that the works are undertaken in accordance with the approved plans. Any failure to meet the terms of a planning condition or work which does not accord with the approved plans leaves the applicant/developer liable to formal action being taken. The National Park Authority endeavours to monitor on site the compliance with conditions and building works. This has benefits for applicants and developers as well as the National Park. To assist with this monitoring of development the applicant/developer is requested to give at least fourteen days notice of the commencement of development to ensure that effective monitoring can be undertaken. The Planning Section can be contacted at Exmoor National Park

Authority, Exmoor House, Dulverton, Somerset, TA22 9HL or by telephone on 01398 323665 or by email [plan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:plan@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk).

### 5. POSITIVE & PROACTIVE STATEMENT:

This Authority has a pro-active approach to the delivery of development. Early pre-application engagement is always encouraged. In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, in determining this application, Exmoor National Park Authority has endeavoured to work positively and proactively with the agent/applicant, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure that all relevant planning considerations have been appropriately addressed to achieve a positive outcome.

### 6. CONDITIONS AND INFORMATIVES AND THE SUBMISSION OF FURTHER DETAILS:

Please check all the conditions and informatives attached to this Decision Notice. If there are any conditions which require submission of details and/or samples prior to work commencing on site it is vital that these are submitted and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority before work starts. Given the High Court's interpretation of the Planning Acts and their lawful implementation it is unlikely that the Local Planning Authority will be able to agree to a sample/details after the commencement of works if that sample/details should have been approved prior to commencement. If a sample/detail is not agreed as required prior to commencement and works have started then it is likely that this matter may only be able to be rectified by the submission of another application. To avoid delay, inconvenience and the need to submit a further application, please ensure that all appropriate details/samples are submitted and agreed at the specified time. Please also note that due to other decisions of the High Court it is now not normally possible for the Local Planning Authority to agree to minor amendments to approved applications. It will be necessary to adopt a formal approach and that if changes to approved plans are proposed then it will be necessary to make a new planning application. Please ensure that works comply with the approved plans so as to avoid the possibility that works are unauthorised and liable for enforcement action.

### 7. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN:

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless: (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be Exmoor National Park Authority. There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is

## ITEM 6.4

begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements in the list below is/are considered to apply.

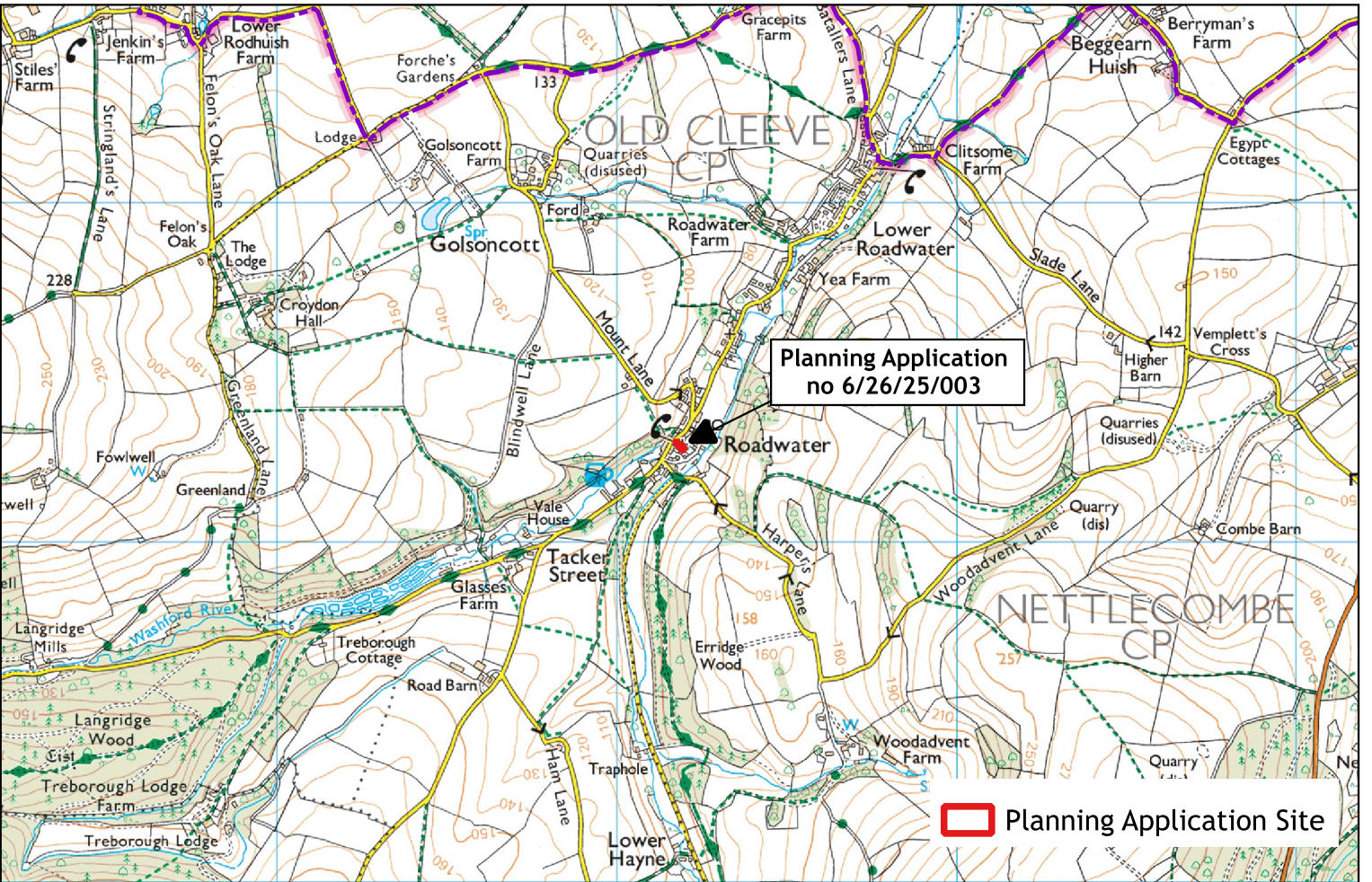
BNG is not required for development which does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres of on-site habitat and / or 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows.



Site Map

Scale 1:2,500

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Overview Map

Scale 1:20,000.00002

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**Application decisions delegated to the Chief Executive**

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
6/26/25/013	10 Apr 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr & Mrs Bishop

FOUNDRY HOUSE, ROADWATER, WATCHET, TA23 0RG

Proposed removal of existing open lean-to roof and construction of a single-storey extension to form utility and WC, including installation of timber windows and doors.

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
6/26/25/014LB	10 Apr 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr & Mrs Bishop

FOUNDRY HOUSE, ROADWATER, WATCHET, TA23 0RG

Listed building consent for the proposed removal of existing open lean-to roof and construction of a single-storey extension to form utility and WC, including installation of timber windows and doors.

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
6/29/25/008	08 Apr 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr R Stevenson

FAIRGARDEN, BOSSINGTON LANE, PORLOCK, MINEHEAD, TA24 8HD

Proposed single storey side extension to South-West Elevation (amended description).

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
6/9/25/021	31 Mar 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr R Parkin

Woodside, 19, BATTLETON, DULVERTON, TA22 9HT

Proposed erection of garage, garden walls and raised decking area.

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
62/41/25/008	08 Apr 2026	Withdrawn	R Sijmonsma

ROCK HOUSE HOTEL, LYNMOUTH, EX35 6EN

Proposed siting of a mobile electric-fired sauna. Retrospective.

## ITEM 7

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/010/FULL	26 Mar 2026	Approved with Conditions	Robert Youell

Little Quarne Farm  
Dunkery Road  
Exford  
Minehead  
TA24 7EA

Proposed installation of bi-fold doors and construction of store room and pergola off existing building.

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/011/CLE	26 Mar 2026	Certificate Of Lawfulness Granted	Mr Harrison

Leyland  
13 West Street  
Dunster  
Minehead  
TA24 6SN

Lawful development certificate for the existing use of the conversion of an attached stable building into habitable living space, including the formation of internal and external openings to facilitate integration with the primary dwellinghouse

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/024/VOC	30 Mar 2026	Approved with Conditions	George Shirlaw

13 The Olde House, Tea Room  
High Street  
Dunster  
Minehead  
TA24 6SF

Change of use of ground floor retail space to tea room (Class A3), as per amended plans dated 20/03/08, without complying with condition 1 of approved application 6/10/08/106 to vary opening hours.

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## ITEM 7

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/025/FULL	10 Apr 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr and Miss Horrell and White

Pennycombe Cottage  
Withypool  
Dulverton  
Minehead  
TA24 7RP

Proposed demolition and erection of a replacement dwelling and associated works. Part retrospective.

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/027/HH	25 Mar 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr Christopher Morrissey

Mill Cottage  
Rainsbury Hill  
Upton  
Dulverton  
TA4 2HU

Proposed demolition of attached barn and boiler room to be replaced with a new single storey extension. To create off-road parking and a new detached garage including a replacement sewage package treatment plant (PTP).

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/029/FULL	27 Mar 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr & Mrs J Reeves

Reeves Restaurant, The Willow Rooms, 20-22 High Street, Dunster, Minehead, Ta24 6Sg

Proposed Reinstatement Works to Rear Wing Following Fire Damage.

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/030/LBC	27 Mar 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr & Mrs J Reeves

20-22 The Willow Rooms  
High Street  
Dunster  
Minehead  
TA24 6SG

Listed Building Consent for Proposed Reinstatement Works to Rear Wing Following Fire Damage.

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## ITEM 7

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/032/FULL Dunkery Lodge Paddock Manor Road Alcombe Minehead Somerset TA24 6EW	01 Apr 2026	Refused	Marie Mclean-Foreman

Proposed partial demolition of barn and conversion of barn to dwelling and associated works.

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/035/FULL Litton Farm Sandyway Withypool Dulverton EX36 3LU	30 Mar 2026	Approved with Conditions	Ms Clare Williamson-Cary

Proposed change of use and conversion of barn to 1 no. holiday accommodation unit and associated works.

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/038/CLE Lower Tippacott Bungalow Brendon Lynton Devon EX35 6PU	01 Apr 2026	Certificate of Lawfulness Refused	Mr D & Mrs C Hernaman

An application for certificate of lawful use regarding the occupation of Lower Tippacott Bungalow in breach of condition 2 of planning reference N.I.6134, continually and without break for a period more than ten years prior to the date of this application.

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/047/DOC Kitnors Bossington Road Selworthy Minehead TA24 8HQ	30 Mar 2026	Approved	Mr David Jenkins

Discharge of Conditions 3 (soft landscaping schedule) & 4 (biodiversity enhancement) of approved application 6/29/25/004

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## ITEM 7

<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
EXM/26/052/VOC	09 Apr 2026	Approved with Conditions	Mr Simon John

Torcliff  
Lester Point  
Combe Martin  
Ilfracombe  
EX34 0DL

Proposed Loft Conversion to include new staircase to the rear, without complying with condition 2 (plans) of approved application 62/19/22/004. (amended plans).

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
GDO 25/10	27 Mar 2026	Prior Approval Approved	Mr Chris Lerwill

Verwill Lands, Lane To Holdstone Farm, Combe Martin, EX34 0PE

Prior Approval for proposed extension (36.57m x 24.38m) to agricultural building to store hay and straw from weather.

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<b>Application</b>	<b>Decision Date</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Applicant</b>
GDO 25/16	14 Apr 2026	Withdrawn	Mr K Branfield

Westwater Farm, Worth Lane, Withypool, Dulverton, Somerset, TA24 7RQ

Prior approval for general purpose agricultural building 18.28m x 13.71m

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