

Dartmoor National Park Authority
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SENT BY E-MAIL ONLY TO
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4th February 2019

Dear Sir / Madam

DRAFT DARTMOOR LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

Introduction

Thank you for consulting with the Home Builders Federation (HBF) on the above mentioned consultation. The HBF is the principal representative body of the house-building industry in England and Wales. Our representations reflect the views of our membership, which includes multi-national PLC's, regional developers and small local builders. In any one year, our members account for over 80% of all new "for sale" market housing built in England and Wales as well as a large proportion of newly built affordable housing. We would like to submit the following responses to the above mentioned consultation.

Plan Period

It is noted that the proposed plan period is 2018 – 2033. The 2018 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum fifteen year period from adoption to anticipate and respond to long term requirements (para 22). The National Park Authority (NPA) timeline proposes that the Dartmoor Local Plan will not be adopted until 2021 meaning that the remaining plan period will be less than fifteen years. The NPA should re-consider the proposed plan end date.

Sustainable Development

It is noted that **Bullet Point (d)** of **Strategic Policy 1.2 (1)** proposes to "make efficient use of land and infrastructure in particular by prioritising the use of previously developed land and buildings". The 2018 NPPF promotes an effective use of land in meeting the need for housing and other uses in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed land (para 117). However the 2018 NPPF does not refer to prioritising. The NPA should re-consider the wording of this Bullet Point.



Delivering Good Design

It is noted that the wording of **Bullet Point (2)** of **Strategic Policy 1.6(1)** includes reference to supplementary design guidance. Such a reference is not compliant with the Regulations by conferring development plan status onto supplementary design guidance which does not have statutory force and has not been subject to the same process of preparation, consultation and examination. The NPA is referred to the recent High Court Judgement between William Davis Ltd, Bloor Homes Ltd, Jelson Homes Ltd, Davidson Homes Ltd & Barwood Homes Ltd and Charnwood Borough Council Neutral Citation Number : [2017] EWHC 3006 (Admin) Case No. CO/2920/2017. The NPA should re-consider such referencing which should be deleted from this Bullet Point.

Meeting Housing Needs

Strategic Policy 3.1 (1) sets out an indicative housing delivery of 65 dwellings per annum rather than a housing requirement figure. It is proposed that housing is delivered in eight Local Centres, sixteen Rural Settlements and eighteen Villages & Hamlets across the National Park via allocated sites (16 proposed housing allocations in Local Centres), windfall development and rural exception sites.

The 2018 NPPF sets out that plans should meet need unless specific policies indicate that development should be restricted (para 11(b)(i) & Footnote 6) which does not exempt the NPA from meeting housing needs but illustrates that there may be policies which will limit the ability to do so. The NPA should assess the potential for development against both housing needs and the key purposes of its National Park designation. If it is possible to meet housing need then such needs should be met. If the NPA is unable to meet those needs then co-operation with neighbouring Local Planning Authorities (LPA) namely Teignbridge District Council, Mid Devon District Council, South Hams District Council and West Devon District Council should ensure that any unmet needs are delivered elsewhere in the Greater Exeter Housing Market Area (HMA) and Plymouth & South West Devon HMA.

The Duty to Co-operate Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) states that the NPA is seeking to ensure that its housing need is met outside the National Park across the two above mentioned HMAs (para 7.4.4). Any development inside the National Park will be focused on delivering local affordable housing need. It is understood that this proposal is incorporated into the technical work to support the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan but this Plan has not yet reached its draft stage of preparation. The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan assumes that around 600 homes will be built within the South Hams / West Devon part of the National Park during its plan period. This Joint Plan has reached the main modifications stage of its Examination.

At this time, it is not clear if housing needs will be met in full across both HMAs.

It is vital that the NPA agree a SoCG with the relevant neighbouring LPAs in the two HMAs which sets out an agreed position on objectively assessed housing needs (OAHN) and the meeting of any unmet needs arising due to constrained delivery in the National Park. Such a SoCG should be concluded and signed before the Dartmoor Local Plan pre-submission consultation.

Size & accessibility of new housing

It is noted that **Bullet Point (2)** of **Strategic Policy 3.2 (1)** requires all new dwellings to meet but not materially exceed the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) with exceptions only permitted if demonstrated by evidence and **Bullet Point (3)** requires all new dwellings to meet Building Regulation Part M Category 2 standards (M4(2)) unless evidenced as not possible or not viable.

The 2018 NPPF sets out that housing needs for different groups should be assessed to justify any policies on the size, type and tenure of housing including a need for affordable housing (paras 61 & 62). These housing policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence which supports and justifies the policies concerned (para 31). If the NPA wishes to adopt the higher optional technical standards for NDSS and M4(2) homes as requirements in its planning policies then this should only be done in accordance with the 2018 NPPF (para 127f & Footnote 42). The Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) dated 25th March 2015 stated that *“the optional new national technical standards should only be required through any new Local Plan policies if they address a clearly evidenced need, and where their impact on viability has been considered, in accordance with the NPPG”*.

The NPPG sets out that *“Where a need for internal space standards is identified, LPAs should provide justification for requiring internal space policies. LPA should take account of the following areas need, viability and timing”* (ID: 56-020). The NPA should consider the impacts on need, viability and timing before introducing the NDSS.

The NPA should comply with the criteria set out in the NPPG (ID 56-005 to 56-011) in relation to its proposed M4(2) requirement. All new homes are built to Building Regulation Part M Category 1 standards which include level approach routes, accessible front door thresholds, wider internal doorway and corridor widths, switches / sockets at accessible heights and downstairs toilet facilities usable by wheelchair users. These standards are not usually available in the older existing housing stock (if built more than circa 10 years ago) and benefit less able-bodied occupants. If the Government had intended that evidence of an ageing population alone justified adoption of the higher M4(2) optional standards then these would have been incorporated as mandatory in the Building Regulations which the Government has not done. It is incumbent on the NPA to produce a local assessment evidencing the specific case for Dartmoor which justifies the inclusion of optional higher standards and the quantum thereof.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

It is noted that **Policy 4.4 (1)** states that all new dwellings with a private driveway or garage should provide an electric vehicle charging point. Before imposing such a requirement the NPA should engage with the main energy suppliers to determine network capacity to accommodate any adverse impacts if all dwellings have a re-charge facility. If re-charging demand became excessive there may be constraints to increasing the electric loading in an area because of the limited size and capacity of existing cables and new sub-station infrastructure may be necessary. Such costs should be included in the NPA's viability testing otherwise there may be an adverse impact on housing delivery. It is the HBF's opinion that the promotion of electric vehicles should be undertaken nationally in a standardised way implemented via Building Regulations after the Government's proposed future consultation to be undertaken by the Department of Transport. The HBF is wary of the imposition of locally derived policy requirements for the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

Conclusion

It is hoped that these representations are of assistance to the NPA in preparing the next stages of the Dartmoor Local Plan which to be found sound under the four tests of soundness as defined by the 2018 NPPF should be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy (para 35). If the NPA requires any further assistance or information, please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully
for and on behalf of **HBF**



Susan E Green MRTPI
Planning Manager – Local Plans