

ED40 – Understanding and Responding to Dartmoor’s Economic Needs

12 March 2021

This document summarises how Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA) sought to understand Dartmoor’s economic needs and ensure that these needs were met through policies in the Dartmoor Local Plan 2018 -2036. This information was requested by the Inspector during examination hearings as part of discussion on Matter 6 on Friday 5th March.

1 Understanding Dartmoor’s economic needs

Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA)

Dartmoor National Park lies between two HMAs which have traditionally been identified as Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs), Greater Exeter and Plymouth. DNPA instructed an EDNA for the whole of the National Park to be undertaken as part of and in partnership with the Greater Exeter Authorities.

The EDNA used two Economic forecasts from Experian and Cambridge Econometrics (CE). The most recent SHMA for the Exeter Housing Market Area used both Cambridge and Experian projections to inform the jobs led housing projections, and therefore it was decided to use these two models to maintain consistency. From these forecasts floorspace and land requirements are then calculated in accordance with the methodology.

The assessment of future requirements contained within the EDNA are a model, and not designed to be a detailed prediction of exactly what will happen in the future. Any exercise which includes an element of forecasting includes substantial risk and uncertainty. Therefore, the results are not intended to be the basis of a ‘predict and provide’ policy response. Rather, the approach is designed to bring together available evidence in order that there is a clear basis on which to consider policy options, in conjunction with other complementary, or potentially competing evidence.

Employment Land Review (ELR)

The ELR developed a more detailed assessment of Dartmoor’s land supply and understanding of Dartmoor’s economic needs.

The ELR took the growth scenarios from the EDNA and developed them further by:

1. Assessing the quantity and quality of existing employment land across the National Park;
2. Identifying recent patterns of employment land supply and loss;
3. Providing analysis on current and potential future business requirements, taking into consideration:
 - Market intelligence, trends, signals and relevant research;
 - The likely demands of relevant business types for floorspace;
 - The views of those involved with economic growth and premises where appropriate;
 - An assessment of the suitability of existing (including vacant) and any proposed employment space and its ability to meet future demand.

The ELR develops the growth scenario further and concludes that the overall future Class B floorspace requirements range between 21,732m² and 26,451m². 16,180m² of each of these forecasts is renewal floorspace calculated by allowing for 1% of the existing stock to be renewed each year. This leaves between 7,154m² and 2,864m² of new floorspace coming forward on new employment sites. The EDNA identified a loss of 4,100m² B2 floorspace which reflects the general trend of decline in the general industrial sectors across Devon. The forecast loss of B2 was not counted against needs in other use classes as it is independent of needs in other sectors, a 1% annual renewal of B2 does still form part of the net loss of B2 floorspace.

Floorspace requirements were not translated into a land requirement because the density of Dartmoor’s employment sites vary so widely, this is evident from the employment site proformas within the ELR.

Economy Topic Paper

The Economy Topic Paper then sought to collate and analyse this and further evidence and importantly balance this against the demographic projections. In particular the topic paper identified the following trends, some of which will compete with the EDNA and ELR forecasts:

- Falling working age population
- A highly skilled resident workforce
- A high proportion of self employment
- Out-commuting is a strong feature of the Dartmoor economy
- There is a broad business base but these primarily operate in low wage, low qualification sectors meaning average wages are low
- Low wages are a key factor in there being an extremely high house price affordability ratio
- There is a trend of low productivity across Devon and this is reflected in the National Park

The Economy Topic Paper’s analysis also extended to consider the settlement hierarchy and recommends how Local Plan policy would best be able to support growth in appropriate locations and sectors, in particular identifying where detailed sector support is required.

2 Meeting Dartmoor’s economic needs

Site allocations

The HELAA identified a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development. The following employment sites were accepted for potential employment development:

- DNP14/077 - Brent Mill, South Brent
- DNP14/076 - Axminster Carpets Spinning Mill, Buckfast
- DNP14/108 – Crannafords, Chagford
- DNP08/035 – Whiddon Down

The SA/SEA and HRA undertook further analysis of these sites. The Development Sites Topic Paper then collated information and evidence and resolved to allocate 3 sites at the Reg 18 stage. Brent Mill, South Brent (DNP14/077) was then discounted at the Reg 19 stage because of flood risk.

The Reg 19 Plan allocates the following sites for employment development:

- Axminster Carpets Spinning Mill, Buckfast (Proposal 7.21 (2))
- Crannafords, Chagford (Proposal 7.8 (2))

The Whiddon Down site (DNP08/035) lies adjacent to the settlement boundary in a rural settlement and was not allocated because it could be progressed within policy.

In addition to the above, any employment allocations from the existing plan that had not come forward were reviewed. This led to the re-allocation of Chuley Rd, Ashburton (Proposal 7.4 (2)) for mixed use redevelopment.

Allocation	Site	Capacity (m ²)	Evidence
Proposal 7.4 (2)	Chuley Rd, Ashburton	Renewal only	
Proposal 7.8 (2)	Crannafords, Chagford	B: +1,300m ²	ELR Site proforma, 40% developable area and same density as neighboring site
Proposal 7.21 (2)	Axminster Carpets Spinning Mill, Buckfast	C2: +31,562m ² B2: -12,660m ²	Detailed planning permission
n/a	Whiddon Down	B: +500m ²	Indicative site layout (pre-application)

Total	B: 1,800m ² B2: -12,660m ² C2: +31,562m ²
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Table 1. Identified employment sites and approximate employment floorspace potential

Local Plan Policy

Following these processes the Local Plan strategy was developed to ensure there exists sufficient opportunity for identified needs to be met. Policies in the draft Local Plan took a holistic approach to tackling issues in the Dartmoor economy, its policies seek to address both demographic and workforce availability issues and provide opportunities to meet the needs identified:

- Policy 5.1 (2) part 4 seeks to protect existing business and employment sites which contribute to meeting Dartmoor's business and industry needs, this provides a flexible approach to safeguarding existing employment sites
- Policy 5.1 (2) parts 2 and 3 allows for the renewal and expansion of employment sites at all levels of the settlement hierarchy and in the open countryside, this allows opportunities for the 16,180m² of renewal floorspace identified in the ELR to be delivered by the market
- Policy 5.1 (2) utilizes the new 3 tier settlement hierarchy to enable greater flexibility over where employment development comes forward, allowing for sites to come forward within and adjoining the Local Centres and Rural Settlements in principle.
- Affordable housing policies seek to prioritise new affordable housing development and allow those working locally to be eligible to occupy it, thereby working to counteract the forecast decline in working-age population
- A flexible exception site policy allows for mixed-use employment and housing development in Local Centres and Rural Settlements
- A new approach to non-residential conversions in the open countryside prioritises low impact uses, generally associated with employment uses.

Conclusion

The sites identified above show that 1,800m² could be delivered against the need for between 7,154 and 2,864m² identified in the EDNA and ELR, resulting in a shortfall of between 5,354m² and 1,064m² (3,204m² mid-point) of B Class floorspace over the plan period.

The loss of Class B2 floorspace at Buckfast does reflect the decline in general industrial floorspace in the region, and losses on this site alone exceed those in the EDNA and ELR forecasts. This said, the replacement care village use will produce significantly more FTE jobs than the existing spinning mill when it was operational.

Overall the Local Plan and the evidence supporting it has sought to understand Dartmoor's economy with all available data. Dartmoor's economy is complex and there is strong evidence that it will not mirror national and regional trends over the next plan period given localised demographic trends which compete directly with the growth forecasts. The Local Plan therefore takes a holistic approach providing significant additional flexibility for employment development to be brought forward by the market, allocating sites where it can, and ensuring housing policies complement economic development policies, by helping counteract identified demographic issues and support growth. DNPA is confident and it is appropriate in a National Park context, that remaining is met through a broad range of positive plan policies. The effectiveness of this approach will be monitored through quarterly and annual consideration of delivery.