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Our ref: DC/2016/118533/CS-
01/PO2-L01
Your ref: Local Plan Consultation
Date: 01 November 2019

Dear Mr Janota

**Dartmoor Local Plan 2018-2036
Final Draft (Regulation 19 Consultation)**

Thank you for your consultation on the final draft of the Dartmoor Local Plan review.

We have considered the plan section by section and compared with our response to the regulation 18 consultation in February 2019. We are generally supportive of the final draft of the plan, which includes some great policies and has incorporated many of our previous comments. Nonetheless, there are a few areas we consider need to be amended or clarified. Our comments and advice are as follows.

Section 1 – Vision, Spatial Strategy and Planning Applications

We consider it essential that the ‘**Vision for Dartmoor National Park**’ is broadened to reflect the important role the Moor plays in water management and the need for development, communities and the natural environment to be resilient and adapted to climate change.

The role the Moor plays in providing clean water and as the headwaters for most of Devon’s rivers is acknowledged in the ‘special qualities’ (**paragraph 1.1.8**). It is essential that these special qualities are protected and enhanced by working with natural processes. This is especially important in light of the expected impacts of climate change. New development on and around the Moor can contribute to the delivery of natural flood management and other works which they and existing development can benefit from.

In addition the commitment to minimising/mitigating contributions to climate change must be matched in the vision by a commitment to adapting to it. Regardless of how well society meets the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions a certain

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degree of climate change is now unavoidable and it is essential that development, communities and the natural environment upon which it all depends can adapt and be resilient into the future.

In **Figure 1.2** (goal 7) and **Policy 1.2** (part h) we recommend the wording 'avoid impact on flood risk' is altered to read 'avoid adverse impact on flood risk' or 'reduce flood risk'. As illustrated in comments above, development within (and around) Dartmoor should be seeking to provide a net betterment to flood risk for existing dwellings and businesses through sustainable means such as natural flood management (NFM).

We welcome the commitment in **Policy 1.7**, in respect of sustainable construction, to encourage reduction in carbon emissions beyond those required by building regulations. It is also important, however, that new buildings are adapted to climate change. Furthermore, the policy could be more specific with regard water efficiency and management measures (e.g. green roofs, rainwater harvesting, low flow taps, etc.).

Section 2 – Environment

We support the overall strategy for the environment set out in the plan. We are pleased to see that here, with regard to climate change, the strategy refers both to minimising impacts on climate and adapting to it. However, we consider that the strategy should also include reference to the water environment, reflecting the special qualities of the Moor and the fact that the environment section now includes a water environment specific sub-section.

In terms of risks to habitats and species we recommend that **paragraph 2.3.6** also notes the risks from the impacts of climate change. Some habitats may, for example, not be sufficiently resilient to deal with prolonged dry weather incidents.

We welcome the insertion of new text in **paragraph 2.3.16** addressing water quality and drainage issues in relation to priority habitats and species.

We recommend that the approach to mitigation set out in **paragraph 2.3.18** and **Policy 2.2** is clarified so that it is not in conflict with **Policy 2.3** regarding Net Gain. Whilst Policy 2.3 sets out the requirements in terms of net gain for development, Policy 2.2 part 3a iii) implies that a net gain in biodiversity will only be sought where on-site mitigation measures are not possible.

We support the changes to the sub-section relating to Biodiversity Net Gain (**paragraphs 2.3.23 to 2.3.31**) and its subsequent policy (**policy 2.3**). We especially welcome the new part 1 of this policy which acknowledges the wider environmental net gains that could be achieved through the realisation of biodiversity enhancements.

We recommend that **section 2.4** (Dartmoor's moorland, heathland and woodland) acknowledges the crucial role these habitat features play, especially woodlands, in flood management and protection of water quality. The health of soils is equally as important.

We support and welcome the new sub-section **2.7** (Water Environment) which captures the importance of the water environment for Dartmoor. We do, however, recommend that the section would fit better into the narrative of the plan if it is moved forward in the; perhaps after sub-section 2.3 but before sub-section 2.5.

We support **paragraph 2.7.1** but recommend that, in addition to highlighting the role the Moor plays in minimising impacts on climate change, it should also acknowledge the Moor's role in helping to adapt to the impacts of climate change too. We also welcome

paragraph 2.7.2 which recognises the opportunities for enhancement of the water environment (e.g. NFM) which development could help to realise and the benefits this may have for other environmental indicators.

We recommend some clarifications to **paragraph 2.7.4** which attempts to summarise the development and flood risk policy set out in the NPPF (e.g. Flood Risk Assessment and the sequential and exception tests). Whilst a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will help inform application of the sequential test more simply the purpose of a FRA is demonstrate the flood risks to and from a proposed development. It is the FRA which will inform the part of the exception test which requires development to be safe over lifetime (allowing for climate change), without increasing flood risks elsewhere and where possible reducing flood risk overall.

We would also encourage the plan to make provision for the possibility that major development in downstream Districts could provide contributions to off-site NFM works within the National Park.

We are pleased to see the inclusion of a new diagram (as requested in our previous consultation response) demonstrating the approach to the flood risk sequential test. Hopefully this will help provide clarity on the process for developers.

We fully support the principles set out in **Policy 2.9** (The Water Environment and Flood Risk). However, it is necessary to amend part 3 of the policy which essentially relates to NPPF sequential and exception test requirements. A development should only be subject to the exception test if the sequential test is satisfied, or as the NPPF puts it, if it is not possible consistent with wider sustainable development objectives for development to be located in an area of lower flood risk.

Finally on flood risk, is important that developers consider the issue of insurance against flood damages. The [Flood Re](#) scheme is a joint Government and insurance industry initiative to help property owners find affordable insurance in areas at risk of flooding. The scheme only applies to dwellings built before 2009. The scheme also only covers 3 claims. This matter strengthens the case for new developments to be directed to the lowest risk areas (the sequential approach) and, where they are in areas at risk, designed to be appropriately resistant and/or resilient to present and future flood risks.

Section 3 – Housing

It is good that **Policy 3.11** (Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation) refers to the need for a sequential approach in terms of flood risk. However, the policy or supporting text needs to specifically acknowledge that 'highly vulnerable' uses such as residential mobile and park homes (as opposed to camping and caravan sites) should not be permitted in the high probability floodplain.

Section 4 – Communities, Services and Infrastructure

We note that flood risk management infrastructure is not included as relevant infrastructure in this section. In areas at risk of flooding, where development is justified, developers can help contribute to the maintenance, improvement or construction of flood defences, the implementation of NFM measures or drainage networks thus providing sustainability benefits to the wider community.

Section 5 – Economy

The supporting text (**paragraphs 5.4.10 to 5.4.13**) to **Policy 5.6** (Camping and touring caravan sites) needs to acknowledge that these types of development are considered to be more vulnerable in terms of flood risk. Both the sequential and exception tests are

applicable to camping and caravan sites. It is also worth noting that it can be difficult to provide adequate warning to ensure people using these sites will be able to safely evacuate in time.

We consider that **sub-section 5.5** (agriculture, forestry and rural land-based enterprise development) presents a real opportunity to secure important enhancements in land management that can help achieve a net gain for the environment. We therefore recommend that **Policy 5.7** includes a requirement for land management plans like those required by **Policy 5.9** and set out in paragraph 5.7.4.

Section 7 – Towns, Villages and Development Sites

For **Proposal 7.4** (Chuley Road, Ashburton) it needs to be made clear that a strategic solution to managing flood risk is needed for the whole allocation, informed by a masterplan and SFRA level 2, rather than by adopting a plot by plot approach. The proposal must seek to reduce flood risk overall in the area, which requires a strategic approach for the whole allocation. This could involve contributions to NFM works upstream of the proposed allocation. The consequence of not doing this could result in one plot undermining the ability of another to manage or reduce risk adequately.

We also consider that **Proposal 7.12** (Thompson's, Moretonhampstead) needs to be amended. As noted in the sequential test your Authority applied to this site to support the previous examination in public the site represents an opportunity to provide for a reduction in flood risk overall to the local area. Accordingly we recommend that the words 'where possible' are removed.

Likewise for **Proposal 7.22** (Axminster Carpets, Buckfast) presents opportunities to reduce flood risks overall as well as potential opportunities to open up the mill leats.

Yours sincerely

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Sustainable Places Planning Specialist

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