

CHAPTER 28

Woolacombe Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

28.1 Woolacombe is identified as a Local Centre that provides localised services and facilities for the residents and visitors of the village and surrounding rural community. The village is located within the Area of Strategic Landscape and Development Constraint identified in the Structure Plan.

28.2 Woolacombe is a premier recreational sports resort and major surfing centre at the northern end of Woolacombe Sand, where the beach and landscape setting of the village provide the main tourist attractions. The village is situated approximately 6 kilometres south west of Ilfracombe and 7 kilometres north of Braunton. The main access is along the B3343 from Mullacott Cross.

ENVIRONMENT

Landscape

28.3 Coastal downland encloses the village to the north and east with the sandy beach and dunes to the south of the village. The whole of the locality is situated within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coast where Policies ENV2 and ENV3 apply respectively. The development boundary for the village, which is shown on Inset Map 16, defines the extent of the Coastal Preservation Area where proposals will be considered against Policy ENV5. Much of the land surrounding the village is owned by the National Trust.

Nature Conservation

28.4 The rocky coastline to the north and west of Woolacombe forms the western end of the Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (VMCA) which stretches along the coast from Downend at Croyde to Hangman Point (within Exmoor National Park). The VMCA recognises the ecological and geological importance of the cliffs along this stretch of coastline. Proposals affecting the VMCA will be considered against Policy ENV12.

28.5 Barricane Beach up to the mean low water mark is designated as a SSSI to protect the fossil rich geology of the upper Devonian Morte Slates, which are of national importance. Mill Rock, situated on Woolacombe Sand approximately 700 metres south of the village, is also designated as a SSSI to protect unusual fish fossils. There is a further SSSI covering Morte Point to the west of Morteheoe, which is situated to the north west of Woolacombe. All proposals affecting SSSIs will be considered against Policy ENV10.

Historic Environment

28.6 The resort of Woolacombe grew rapidly following the opening of the Morteheoe and Woolacombe Station in 1874. The Victorian and Edwardian villas along the seafront form the basis of the Woolacombe Conservation Area, with many of the villas having been converted for use as hotels and holiday apartments. The Conservation Area also includes the shops within the village centre. Proposals within the Conservation Area will be considered against Policy ENV16.

HOUSING

28.7 A development boundary for Woolacombe is defined on Inset Map 16. Within the development boundary residential development will generally be permitted in accordance with Policy HSG2. In view of the limited housing opportunities in the area, affordable housing schemes may be permitted on sites adjoining but outside the development boundary in order to meet the needs of the local community in accordance with Policy HSG8. Outside the development boundary, residential development will not normally be acceptable unless it complies with Policies HSG8, HSG9, HSG9A or HSG10.

28.8 There are no large previously developed sites within the village. No land is proposed for residential development, although there may be opportunities for infilling.

28.9 The Telephone Exchange, Beach Road is another previously developed site that is considered suitable for residential redevelopment should it become available during the Plan period.

EMPLOYMENT

28.10 There are limited employment opportunities within the village with the local economy dominated by tourism.

Village Centre

28.11 The shopping core area in Woolacombe is concentrated along West Road, Barton Road and South Street and is identified on Inset Map 16. Many of the shops within the core area are seasonal. Proposals to extend their period of use will therefore be encouraged in order to retain and enhance retailing within the village. To further enhance its vitality and viability, non shopping uses outside Use Class A1 (shops) will only be permitted at ground floor level within the shopping core area where the number of shops exceeds 50% of the total number of units. In assessing applications for restaurants and cafes (Use Class A3), drinking establishments (Use Class A4), hot food takeaways (Use Class A5) and leisure proposals (Use Class D2), account will be taken of any impact on the amenities of surrounding uses in accordance with Policy DVS3.

POLICY WOO2 (WOOLACOMBE SHOPPING CORE AREA)

WITHIN THE SHOPPING CORE AREA DEFINED ON INSET MAP 16, DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED AT GROUND FLOOR WHERE NO LESS THAN 50% OF ALL GROUND FLOOR UNITS ARE WITHIN USE CLASS A1 (SHOPS).

Tourism

28.12 Woolacombe is a premier recreational sports resort and major surfing centre with a range of accommodation types. Of particular importance to Woolacombe are its four significant hotels which emphasise its status and character as a tourist resort. These hotels are the Narracott Grand, the Royal, the Watersmeet and the Woolacombe Bay. In order to retain Woolacombe's status as a tourist destination, these hotels will be protected from alternative uses.

POLICY WOO3 (WOOLACOMBE'S HOTELS)

PROPOSALS TO CHANGE THE USE OR REDEVELOP THE NARRACOTT GRAND, THE ROYAL, THE WATERSMEET AND THE WOOLACOMBE BAY HOTELS, AS SHOWN ON INSET MAP 16, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE IT WOULD HARM THE TOURISM CHARACTER AND STATUS OF THE AREA.

Caravan and Camping Sites

28.13 There are already a large number of prominent static and touring caravan and camping sites on the hills surrounding Woolacombe. All of these sites are located within the AONB, Heritage Coast and Coastal Preservation Area, where the provision of new or extensions to existing tourist accommodation will not generally be permitted in accordance with Policy ECN10. However, proposals to improve and upgrade the standards of existing accommodation and facilities may be permitted, but only where such proposals comply with Policy ECN11.

28.14 The area south of the B3343 between Mullacott Cross and the former Morteheo Station has been subject to pressures for tourist related development. Existing attractions include the Golf Driving Range, Willingcott Caravan Club site and a market site adjacent to the theme park 'Once Upon a Time'. This area is within the CPA and forms a prominent ridge providing an important visual setting along the main access towards Woolacombe and Morteheo. Further tourist attractions in the area will not be permitted unless they meet the requirements of Policies ENV5 and ECN13.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Sport and Recreation

28.15 Existing public open spaces for Woolacombe are identified on Inset Map 16 and will be protected from other uses in accordance with Policy REC6. The main provision is the football field and children's play area at Meadow Playing Fields to the east of Gora Lane adjacent to the primary school. There is also a pitch and putt course adjoining Woolacombe Bay Hotel, as well as tennis courts and a gym with community use. A new multi-use games area available to the whole community is proposed at the primary school. The North Devon Coast Path also provides an important recreational facility on both sides of the village, whilst Woolacombe Sand provides a major resource for informal recreation and outdoor sports.

Education and Healthcare Provision

28.16 Woolacombe has a primary school that has no spare capacity, although there is not expected to be any significant increase in demand for primary school places. The village falls within the designated catchment area of Ilfracombe Community College, which also has no spare capacity. Consequently, contributions towards additional places at these schools will be required for residential schemes of five or more dwellings and incorporating housing containing more than one bedroom. The level of contributions will be based on the Code of Practice which will be produced as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

28.17 The existing health centre for Woolacombe provides an important community facility for the village. Any proposals to expand or redevelop this surgery will be considered against Policy COM4.

Car Parking and Traffic Management

28.18 There are a number of private car parks serving the seafront and beach within Woolacombe which are well used, particularly during the main holiday season. The car parks along the Esplanade and Challacombe Hill Road are considered to be of strategic importance and will therefore be safeguarded from redevelopment in accordance with Policy TRA8A unless alternative provision is made available.

28.19 There is an identified need for a small short stay car park to serve the village centre. It would need to be relatively close to the shopping area but sited inconspicuously. No specific site has been identified for this car park.

28.20 To improve safety for pedestrians, traffic management measures along the main roads are required within and into Woolacombe together with a footpath linking camping and caravan sites as far as the Golden Coast Holiday Park to the village.

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