

CHAPTER 35

North Molton Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

35.1 North Molton has a linear settlement pattern and is situated within the foothills of Exmoor. The village has a strategic position at the gateway to the National Park, which is only one kilometre from the eastern end of the village. North Molton is sited approximately 4 kilometres north east of South Molton and 3 kilometres north of the North Devon Link Road with access from Borners Bridge along a wooded valley. It is situated within the Area of Strategic Landscape and Development Constraint.

ENVIRONMENT

Landscape

35.2 North Molton is situated within a valley running east-west, with land rising steeply to the north and south. The village is located on the fringe of Exmoor and is situated within the Area of Great Landscape Value forming a buffer to the National Park. Proposals within this landscape setting will be considered against Policies ENV4 and ENV6 respectively.

Nature Conservation

35.3 There are no sites of national nature conservation importance around the village, although the South Exmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest is designated nearby within the National Park, outside the area covered by this Plan. However, there are several County Wildlife Sites around North Molton including Holdridge and Limeslake Woods to the south of the village. These sites are shown on Inset Map 23 and the Proposals Map where Policy ENV12 applies.

Historic Environment

35.4 The centre of the village is designated as a Conservation Area including The Square and the Church of All Saints which is a Grade I listed building. Much of the village outside the Conservation Area also retains its traditional character and includes a large number of listed buildings. The eastern end of East Street adjacent to the River Mole has a particularly attractive character and appearance and will be considered for Conservation Area designation during the Plan period.

Flood Risk

35.5 The River Mole flows southwards at the eastern end of the village. Properties either side of the River are situated within the area subject to flood risk as shown on Inset Map 23. To reduce any risk of flooding, all proposals will be assessed against Policy DVS6 with surface water controlled and managed through the use of sustainable urban drainage systems in accordance with Policy DVS7.

Sewage Disposal

35.6 The foul sewerage system in North Molton has limited spare capacity. The combined effects of the housing developments proposed for the village could require minor improvements to the sewerage infrastructure and treatment works serving North Molton. Developer contributions will be sought towards the costs of improving this infrastructure.

HOUSING

35.7 A development boundary is identified for North Molton in order to clarify where further residential development will be acceptable in principle whilst protecting the attractive landscape setting of the village. The development boundary for North Molton is shown on Inset Map 23, outside of which the principle of residential development will not be acceptable unless it complies with Policies HSG8, HSG9, HSG9A or HSG10. Within the development boundary, residential development will be permitted in accordance with Policy HSG2.

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35.8 North Molton has a range of local facilities including a shop which incorporates the post office, a primary school, village halls, as well as regular public transport links. As such, the village is considered suitable for some additional development provided that the landscape setting of the village is protected. Two sites have therefore been proposed for residential development, both on the western side of North Molton. However, these proposals can only proceed following minor improvements to the sewage treatment works.

Lower Poole Farm

35.9 Lower Poole Farm is situated to the south west of the village. It includes the farm complex and the adjoining field, which forms a natural infill site between the farm and the primary school. The site slopes to the north and is considered suitable for a mixture of housing and light industrial uses. The farm complex detracts from the visual character at this end of the village. Its comprehensive redevelopment will therefore tidy up the area and will also enable pedestrian links from the village to the sports field to the south in accordance with Policy TRA1A.

35.10 Development should utilise the existing access to Lower Poole Farm with improvements to the junction in accordance with Policy TRA6. However, subject to its feasibility and harm to the rural character of the village, an alternative access may be permitted using vacant land adjacent to the primary school. If the latter is not used as a vehicular access, it could provide a pedestrian and cycle link onto the site and connect to the community woodland and sports field. Contributions will be sought towards improving bus services to the village and a bus waiting facility should be provided close to its junction with Fore Street in accordance with Policy TRA1A. Any contamination on the site will need to be remediated in accordance with Policy DVS4.

PROPOSAL NMO1 (LOWER POOLE FARM)

1. LAND AT LOWER POOLE FARM, AS SHOWN ON INSET MAP 23, IS PROPOSED FOR A MIXTURE OF RESIDENTIAL AND LIGHT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (USE CLASS B1) WHERE:-

- A) AT LEAST 10 AFFORDABLE HOMES ARE PROVIDED;**
- B) PEDESTRIAN ACCESS IS PROVIDED THROUGH THE SITE LINKING TO THE SPORTS FIELD;**
- C) LANDSCAPING ALONG THE SOUTHERN AND EASTERN BOUNDARIES IS PROVIDED;**
- D) A BUS WAITING FACILITY IS PROVIDED WITHIN THE SITE; AND**
- E) CONTRIBUTIONS ARE SOUGHT TOWARDS UPGRADING THE SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS.**

2. A PLANNING OBLIGATION OR CONDITION WILL BE USED TO SECURE ANY CONTRIBUTIONS PROVIDED.

Land North of Back Lane

35.11 Land north of Back Lane is surrounded by houses on three sides. Development of the site would round off the north western part of the village, but requires improved vehicular and pedestrian links between the site and the village centre. The site is visually prominent within the AGLV and is adjacent to the Conservation Area. Consequently, the design should be of the highest standard with a significant amount of open space and extensive landscaping to reflect Policies DVS1, DVS2, ENV6 and ENV16. Due to the untidy nature of the Lower Poole Farm complex, sequentially that site should be redeveloped before the land north of Back Lane. For this reason, the land north of Back Lane should not be developed before April 2006 and providing it meets the requirements of Policy HSG1. Contributions will be sought towards improving bus services to the village.

PROPOSAL NMO2 (RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT NORTH OF BACK LANE)

1. LAND NORTH OF BACK LANE, AS SHOWN ON INSET MAP 23, IS PROPOSED FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WHERE:-

- A) AT LEAST 15 AFFORDABLE HOMES ARE PROVIDED ;**
- B) CONTRIBUTIONS ARE SOUGHT TOWARDS UPGRADING THE SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS;**
- C) VEHICULAR AND PEDESTRIAN LINKS TO THE VILLAGE CENTRE ARE IMPROVED; AND**
- D) THE SITE IS NOT DEVELOPED BEFORE APRIL 2006 AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY HSG1.**

2. A PLANNING OBLIGATION OR CONDITION WILL BE USED TO SECURE ANY CONTRIBUTIONS PROVIDED.

EMPLOYMENT

35.12 There are limited employment opportunities within the village. The local economy is based primarily on the provision of local services and agriculture.

35.13 The employment opportunities at Pathfields Industrial Estate, to the south of the North Devon Link Road, are the nearest concentration of commercial premises serving the village and its catchment. Proposal NMO1 identifies land at Lower Poole Farm for a mix of residential and light industrial development, as shown on Inset Map 23. As North Molton acts as a gateway to the southern part of Exmoor and there are potential opportunities within the village for commercial outlets to serve both tourists and the resident population. Further small scale commercial development will be encouraged within North Molton to diversify the local economy and meet the needs of the local community and visitors in accordance with Policy ECN3. Larger proposals (i.e exceeding 280 square metres gross) are likely to be out of scale in the village and harm the character of the street scene.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Sport and Recreation

35.14 Existing public open spaces for North Molton are identified on Inset Map 23. The main sports provision is situated to the south of the village on sloping land overlooking the settlement where there are football and cricket pitches, including indoor facilities. Vehicular and pedestrian access to these facilities is poor and improvements are sought as part of the residential redevelopment proposed at Lower Poole Farm by Proposal NMO1 and as part of the proposed community woodland (see Proposal NM04).

35.15 The need for a multi-use games area, tennis courts and additional changing facilities at the Sports Ground have been identified. Any proposal for additional facilities at North Molton Sports Ground will be generally supported, although they will need to be assessed in terms of their visual impact on the AGLV and on the suitability of the approach road in terms of both vehicular and pedestrian access in accordance with Policies TRA1A, TRA6 and ENV6. New proposals will be expected to encourage and facilitate improved access within and from the village particularly for pedestrians and cyclists to meet the requirements of Policy TRA1A.

PROPOSAL NM03 (NORTH MOLTON SPORTS GROUND)

PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE SPORTING AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, OR PROVIDE ANCILLARY SECURITY MEASURES, WILL BE PERMITTED AT THE NORTH MOLTON SPORTS GROUND AS SHOWN ON INSET MAP 23.

35.16 In addition to sports facilities, there is a pitch at the primary school and a children's play area south of Oakford Villas. All of these public open spaces are at the western end of the village and will be protected from other uses in accordance with Policy REC6. The Open Space Strategy for the District has identified the following deficiencies within North Molton:-

- ◆ *Multi use games area*
- ◆ *Facilities for young people*
- ◆ *Informal open space.*

Community Woodland

35.17 A community woodland is proposed to the south of Lower Poole Farm and surrounding the Sports Ground. Extensive tree planting in partnership with the South West Forest will be required. The woodland will provide a valuable local resource for informal recreation and incorporate an extensive network of pedestrian and cycle routes with connections to the Sports Ground. Additional guidance on community woodlands is set out in paragraph 10.10A.

PROPOSAL NM04 (COMMUNITY WOODLAND)

LAND SOUTH OF LOWER POOLE FARM, AS SHOWN ON INSET MAP 23, IS PROPOSED FOR A COMMUNITY WOODLAND.

Education and Healthcare Provision

35.18 North Molton has a primary school that has some spare capacity. Contributions will be sought towards the costs of providing additional primary school places based on the Code of Practice. Any proposals to provide healthcare within North Molton will be considered against Policy COM4.

Other Community Facilities

35.19 The former primary school, south of All Saints Church, is now surplus to educational requirements. The building is considered suitable for community purposes, including local office/business uses (Use Class B1), with potential residential re-use of the upper floor. In all cases the historic features of the listed building must be retained and the character and amenities of the surrounding properties not harmed. Proposals for the re-use of the Old School building will need to be in accordance with Policies DVS3 and ENV17.

PROPOSAL NM05 (FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL)

THE FORMER PRIMARY SCHOOL, SHOWN ON INSET MAP 23, IS PROPOSED FOR A MIX OF COMMUNITY, BUSINESS AND RESIDENTIAL USES.

Car Parking and The Square

35.20 The Square is situated in the historic core of the village and contributes to the character of the Conservation Area and the surrounding listed buildings. The Square is laid out for car parking to serve the village centre and will be safeguarded from redevelopment in accordance with Policy TRA8A unless alternative provision is made available.