

THE HILLYFIELD HARBOURNEFORD

APPEAL

Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Ss78 & s174

Conjoined Appeals:

APP/J9497/W//15/3140928

APP/J9497/W//15/3146596

APP/J9497/W//15/3146597

APP/J9497/W/15/3140928

APP/J9497/W//15/3168180

APP/J9497/W//15/3191100

Proof of Evidence

By

Lyndis Cole BSc, MSc

Retired Principal and Director of LUC (Land Use Consultants)

Summary

This proof of evidence considers the landscape and biodiversity effects of all existing and proposed developments being considered at this Inquiry. For landscape it follows the spirit of the latest Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 2013. It assesses (i) the visual effects on public views of existing and proposed developments; and (ii) the effects on inherent landscape character.

The source document on the landscape character of the area has been the Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor National Park (April 2017). This identifies the Hillyfield as lying within the Landscape Character Type (LCT) 5A *Inland Elevated Undulating Land* and at the national level falling within National Character Area 150 *Dartmoor*.

The Hillyfield lies in a deeply incised river valley with valley bottom pasture and with woodland clothing most of the valley sides with the exception of the lower eastern valley side where pasture climbs to the shoulder of the valley.

Visual effects: The assessment of effects from all relevant public vantage points demonstrates that none of the existing or proposed developments being considered can be viewed by the public. The one exception is potential car parking along the main access track to the Hillyfield on woodland open days on a maximum two days a year.

Effects on inherent landscape character: The valued landscape attributes that are of particular importance to the character of this local landscape are: bands of mixed and broadleaf woodland; a strong medieval field pattern on lower slopes and valley floors; a pastoral character; and a Dartmoor-wide concern to conserve tranquillity. With these attributes to the fore, the effects on inherent landscape character are assessed as:

- *Activities held on the site (training days, educational visits and woodland open*

day): These have a *Local* (contained within the holding) and *Minor* impact on landscape character by virtue of being able to choose less sensitive locations and the infrequency with which they occur (a maximum of three days a year).

- *Structures being enforced against in the valley bottom:* All effects on landscape character and biodiversity are *Very Local* (contained entirely within small parts of the holding) while impact on landscape character and biodiversity are *Moderate/Major* for the temporary tented workspace just within the ancient woodland site; and *Moderate* for the temporary field kitchen and two caravans – this is primarily in terms of landscape character, detracting from the natural pastoral character and tranquillity of parts of the valley bottom meadows, although too small to impinge on the valued medieval field pattern.
- *The effects of structures bring enforced against in the quarry:* As the quarry is self-contained and without any valued landscape attributes the two small barns have no impact on inherent landscape character while the two lorry bodies have a *Minor* negative impact reflecting their unkempt appearance. Again their sphere of influence is *Very Local*.
- *The effects of two proposed barns under prior-notification in the quarry:* For the above reasons their effect on landscape character and biodiversity would be *Neutral*. Indeed there could be an overall *Net Improvement* with the removal of the lorry bodies and rationalisation of the area enabled by the proposed barns.
- *The effects of the prior-notification and planning application for a multi-purpose barn:* I focus on the full planning application as this proposal is 0.5m higher

than the barn of the prior notification but in all other respects the same. I conclude that this proposal has a clear functional relationship with an existing hardstanding; is well located being visually tucked into the landform and viewed against a backdrop of trees; would be of a traditional design constructed from on-site timber, and would not harm the wider landscape as it sits in the valley bottom while maintaining the existing distribution of medieval hedgebanks. It would, however, be fully visible within the meadow in which it sits (already significantly compromised by the hard standing) adversely affecting tranquillity and pastoral character. But it would be largely screened from all other meadows thereby retaining their pastoral character and tranquillity.

I conclude, therefore, overall the multi-purpose barn would have a *Neutral* and *Very Local* impact on landscape character as it would allow the rationalisation and removal of the two caravans, the temporary field kitchen and the tented workspace.

Central concerns for this Inquiry

In considering the above there are four important factors:

Firstly, the existing and proposed developments being considered are needed to **enable** the continued management of the woodlands of the Hillyfield. These are a valued landscape attribute both nationally and more locally and are an important biodiversity resource. The proposed multi-purpose barn would, by helping conserve *and enhance* what is special and locally distinctive (in this case the woodlands), be in accord with policies COR1, COR3, COR8, DMD5, DMD14 and DMD34.

- Secondly, it is **traditional and sustainable woodland management** that is being pursued at the Hillyfield. Here

manpower replaces heavy machinery and management is regular and finely tuned. Such woodland management is strongly supported through relevant national, regional and local strategies including the Dartmoor National Park's own Management Plan and Landscape Character Assessment.

- Thirdly, the overall approach being followed at the Hillyfield mirrors in a microcosm the **National Park purposes and duty**. It is sustaining and enhancing natural beauty and wildlife, it is offering opportunities for enjoyment and learning, while seeking to create a woodland business that adds value to woodland products, sells these locally, with the monies raised by the business recycled back into the holding to enable the continued sustainable management of the woodlands – a virtuous cycle.
- Fourthly and finally, Dartmoor, like all UK national parks, is a **Category V Protected Landscape** (classified by IUCN). That is a cultural landscape that has been moulded by human influence over millennia. Here it is deemed particularly important to safeguard the 'traditional interactions' that are vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of these areas. In the case of ancient and broadleaf woodlands these traditional interactions are exemplified by traditional forms of woodland management. It is these traditional interactions that need to be kept alive with opportunities provided to pass these traditions on to the next generation through training and practical experience, as being encouraged at the Hillyfield.

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 On behalf of Doug King-Smith this proof of evidence, prepared by Lyndis Cole BSc MSc, is concerned with the landscape implications of the developments being considered at this Inquiry visually and on the landscape character of the National Park. It also takes account of biodiversity implications (for which a separate report was prepared by Stephen Lees of Land and Heritage Ltd).

2. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE: LYNDIS COLE BSc MSc

- 2.1 I have a degree in Geography from the University of Durham and an MSc in Landscape, Ecology, Design and Maintenance (LEDM) from London University. I recently retired as a Director of LUC (Land Use Consultants) where I worked for over 40 years as a landscape and environmental planner. LUC is a very well established and respected landscape and planning consultancy that has recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary with one of the largest grouping of landscape planners in the UK. I developed the LUC Bristol office and led and managed the large Landscape Planning and Management Team of LUC spread across three offices.
- 2.2 I wrote the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan 2007-2012 and supervised the first Dartmoor National Park Landscape Character Assessment having supervised many landscape character assessments and landscape sensitivity studies both in England and Wales, with a particular focus on those within protected landscapes. With Professor Carys Swanwick I was co-author of the 2002 Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland. In the last few years at LUC I designed and led the monitoring of the landscape effects of Environmental Stewardship (agri-environment scheme) across England for Defra; and led the development of the 156 National Character Area (NCA) Profiles for Natural England. For Defra I also developed a predictive tool to assess the potential landscape effects of proposed changes to agri-environment scheme payments.
- 2.3 I am familiar with the broader context associated with this Appeal in relation to Agricultural and Forestry Permitted Development Rights; Forestry Policy and Practice; and the special nature of Protected Landscapes.
- 2.4 I led two major research studies for Government on Permitted Development Rights for Agriculture and Forestry, the situations in which they apply, and the abuses that can occur, the recommendations of which still have influence today. I led the consultation reviews that led to the preparation of the first Forestry Strategies for England and separately for Wales, and advised the Forestry Commission for England on their first national Forestry Strategy. I was a member of the South East Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee and carried out a number of other

research studies on the management of small woodlands. Finally, I have a longstanding professional relationship with the protected landscapes of England and Wales. In addition to Dartmoor, I wrote the Management Plans for the South Downs just before they were designated as a National Park and the North Wessex Downs AONB and prepared the Guidance on the writing of AONB and National Park Management Plans in Wales and of National Park Management Plans in England on behalf of Government. I also led the last national review of the Welsh National Parks and undertook a major comparative study into the different approaches to planning in National Parks and AONBs, both on behalf of the Welsh Government, and on behalf of the Welsh National Parks considered options for how and in what areas they could work more closely together.

- 2.5 Throughout my career I have lectured widely on a range of environmental issues. I am a current member of the CPRE National Policy Committee.

3. LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

3.1 The central character of Dartmoor is of high granite moorland surrounded by an intimate farmed landscape of medieval origin to east, south and west which together form an inseparable whole. These distinctly different landscapes are linked physically and functionally by the wooded river valleys which radiate out from the granite moorland block cutting through the farmed landscape in deep sided valleys. The Hillyfield is in one such valley, that of the River Harbourne.

3.2 The importance of such wooded valleys to the landscape and biodiversity of Dartmoor is identified in the National Character Area (NCA) Profile for Dartmoor¹, which identifies one of the Key Characteristics of the area as:

“Mature hedgerow trees, valley floors fringed with wet woodland, and valley sides often cloaked in extensive areas of ancient semi-natural woodland, which create a sense of enclosure – a stark contrast to the central moorland”.

3.3 Drilling down to the character of the landscape in which the Hillyfield lies, the extant Dartmoor Landscape Character Assessment² illustrates that the Hillyfield lies wholly within Landscape Character Type (LCT) 5A *Inland Elevated Undulating Land* (Appendix 1). This landscape is described as having: *‘a strong farmed character – with areas of arable cropping interspersed within a predominantly pastoral landscape of medieval and later fields divided by Devon hedgebanks. Streams and valleys are lined with mixed and broadleaved woodlands, with some patches of species-rich neutral grassland, marsh and rush pasture. A dispersed settlement pattern of nucleated villages and hamlets is linked by a winding network of rural lanes. Levels of tranquillity are affected by the proximity of main roads skirting around the National Park’.*

¹ The National Character Areas (NCAs) define the landscape of England at the national level with a total of 159 NCAs identified. Dartmoor is 150
<file:///C:/Users/Lyndis/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/5AJK40NQ/150%20Dartmoor.pdf>

² A Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor National Park, April 2017
http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/948700/Dartmoor-LCA-report_V3_0_AGcompressed.pdf

3.4 The key characteristics of this Landscape Type 5A *Inland Elevated Undulating Land* that have particular relevance to the Hillyfield are:

- *Gently rolling farmland with occasional streams creating small wooded valleys*
- *Lower slopes are more wooded, with small linear bands of mixed deciduous woodland and trees lining tributary streams*
- *Lower areas and valley floors are more pastoral in character with small to medium medieval fields of rough sheep grazing and dairying*
- *Patches of species-rich neutral grassland, marsh and rough pasture provide nature conservation interest in valley bottoms.*

3.5 The specific landscape character of the Hillyfield holding has been described in Doug King-Smith's proof of evidence but is worth repeating here for context:

"The Hillyfield is an interesting valley with many different ecological and landscape features. The river winds through the valley bottom, past significant rocky outcrops in the woodland area, and then through the open valley bottom, flanked by woodland, pasture and lakes. It tells a tale from ancient to modern with old field-boundaries and enclosures, with evidence of the working of woodlands and fields over the centuries".

3.6 Likewise the nature of the Hillyfield holding has also been described in the Evidence presented by Doug King-Smith and is not repeated here. In summary this is an 18ha mixed agricultural holding with 11.5 ha of mixed woodland and 7.3ha of pasture actively managed under organic stewardship and rented out to a neighbouring organic farm for sheep and cattle grazing. The owner runs a small poultry business, offering free-range organic eggs and traditional and rare-breed birds. From a landscape and biodiversity perspective it is useful to remind ourselves that the mixed broadleaf and coniferous woodland of the holding hugs the often very steep slopes of the valley sides of the River Harbourne, in some areas rising over the lip of the valley rim so further restricting views into the valley bottom. Conversely the pasture follows the valley floor with an evident medieval field pattern and rises up in two fields on the shallower eastern side of the lower valley, reaching up to the rim of the valley at this point. Bisecting the valley-bottom pasture are areas of ecologically-rich willow carr and two, now silted, small lakes on the line of the river. There is a small derelict quarry at the northern end of the holding facing westward well above the valley floor, and a major leat just above the edge of the valley floor which is a substantial built structure now derelict after years of abandonment.

Designations / categorisations

- 3.7 Falling within the National Park, the landscape of the holding and its surroundings is of national importance and highly sensitive to change. This is clearly set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) which in para 115 states:
“Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks.”
- 3.8 As in the case of all UK National Parks, Dartmoor is classified as a Category V Protected Landscape by IUCN. That is a cultural landscape moulded by human activity over millennia, which continues to be a working landscape heavily influenced by the activities of farming and forestry.
- 3.9 In the case of Biodiversity the southern part of the Hillyfield’s woodland is identified as ancient woodland, with parts listed as semi-natural and parts plantation. This emphasises the ecological importance of the woodland and has guided the objectives of the woodland management plan. The woodland also includes the following priority habitats listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Upland mixed ash woods (compartment 3d); Upland oak wood (compartment 1); and Wet woodland (compartment 2). In addition, it is registered as a Section 3 woodland by the National Park Authority i.e. it is woodland of conservation importance (registered under Section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1985).

4. THE DEVELOPMENTS BEING APPEALED AT THIS INQUIRY

4.1 As has been described in detail in other Evidence, the developments being appealed at this Inquiry divide into three: (i) a Prior Notification Application (ref: 0259/15) for erection of two barns, June 2015; (ii) developments being enforced against, with the two Enforcement Notices issued in January 2016; and (iii) refusal of a Prior Notification and subsequent Planning Application for a multi-purpose barn which was refused in 2017, as follows.

:

(i) Prior Notification for two barns (Appeal 3140928)

Appeal against a Prior Notification for two single-storey timber barns: A machinery store 10.29m x 14.26m (146.7m²) and a Wood drying barn 7.3m x 24m (175.2m²).

(ii) Enforcement Notices

Enforcement Notice (1) (Appeal 3146596)

Appeal against a purported change of use of the Land (*at Hillyfield Farm*) from agricultural use to a mixed use for:

- (a) Agriculture and Forestry
- (b) Residential purposes
- (c) Recreational purposes
- (d) Running courses and activities available to the public, with or without payment

Together with the structures listed below:

(the letters in the list below are those used in the Enforcement Notices to identify the locations of these structures):

- Siting of two caravans used for residential purposes (8 & 9)
- Siting of a tented yurt-type structure (6)
- Siting of two lorry bodies used for storage purposes (14 & 15)
- Siting of a tented structure used as a field kitchen (3)
- Siting of a tented structure used as a covered workspace (11)

Enforcement Notice (2) (Appeal 3146597), with the developments being enforced against identified as:

- Two open fronted single-storey timber clad barns with low dual pitched roofs (16 & 17)
- Two timber structures housing compost toilets (2 & 10)
- A timber platform for the siting of the Yurt (see Enforcement Notice 1) (6)

The location of these structures is shown in Map HF-SSP-20180308 in the common appendix. These structures are illustrated separately in the common appendix.

(iii) Refusal of Prior Notification and subsequent Planning Application

- *Prior Notification Application (ref: 0001/17 and Appeal 3168180)* for a part open fronted single storey timber clad barn with dimensions of 20m x 8m giving a footprint of 160m² and with a height of 5.55m
- *Full planning application for a multi-purpose barn (ref 0438/17 and Appeal 3191100)*. This is essentially identical to that applied for under application 0001/17 with the exception that the roofline has been raised by 0.5m.

5. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (LVIA) OF THE DEVELOPMENTS BEING CONSIDERED AT THIS INQUIRY

- 5.1 In assessing the landscape effects of the above developments close attention has been paid to the latest (3rd edition) Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 2013. Given the relatively small nature of the individual developments being considered (when compared to major developments such as windfarms for which the Guidance was primarily written) this evidence focuses on the spirit of the Guidance concentrating on those elements most relevant to the scale of developments being considered.
- 5.2 Fundamentally the GLVIA requires that the effects of existing or proposed developments are assessed in two ways:
- A. *Assessment of visual effects:* Assessing the effects of the proposals on specific views available to people and on the **general visual amenity experienced by people (usually taken to be the general public)**.
 - B. *Assessment of landscape effects:* Assessing the effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right i.e. the effects on **inherent landscape character** regardless of who is viewing it. .
- 5.3 Both these aspects have been of concern to Dartmoor National Park Authority when commenting on the developments in question but with a particular emphasis on loss of inherent landscape character. These two assessments are considered separately below starting with the assessment of visual effects.

Assessment of visual effects

- 5.4 Following the GLVIA 2013 an early step is to identify the extent of the wider landscape around the development(s) from where they might be seen. For much larger developments this will usually involve computer modelling to define a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) or for smaller developments manually to define the Visual Envelope of the development by standing in the centre of the development site and identifying the extent of views out. But the latter is meaningless in the case of the Hillyfield in that woodland lies within and on the rim of the deeply incised valley with the landform and woodland cover blocking all views out.

- 5.5 The approach adopted in preparing this proof, therefore, has been to identify all the nearest **public** vantage points in the surrounding locality from which the Hillyfield can be seen. This is primarily views from public roads and a single public footpath. It also includes a views from Brent Hill to the west which, while further afield, is the highest point locally and benefits from permissive public access and long views to the Hillyfield. In the case of views from surrounding roads the viewpoints used are where gateways open up views otherwise obscured by hedgebanks. Further views could be opened up immediately after hedge-cutting along lanes but none were evident at the time of the relevant site visit on November 22nd 2016 when all deciduous foliage had fallen and when all but one of the photographs were taken.
- 5.6 The viewpoints identified are shown on the map in Appendix 2 – Hillyfield Viewpoints. In total there are 15 viewpoints with a photograph taken at each. Using arrows, the base of the arrow marks the position of the viewpoint and the direction of the arrow indicates the direction in which the camera was pointing towards the Hillyfield. Viewpoints 13 and 14 are represented by a single arrow as they are close together. All photographs were taken at a height of 1.7m above ground level on a clear November day. The one photograph (number 15) that was taken separately was that from Brent Hill, taken on January 7th 2017 again on a clear although slightly overcast day.
- 5.7 A page is dedicated to each photograph with arrows on the photograph indicating where the Hillyfield appears in the view. The map of the Hillyfield holding below each photograph indicates with a red boundary line which parts of the Hillyfield holding are being seen in the photograph from that viewpoint while an arrow indicates the direction from which the photograph was taken relative to the boundary of the Hillyfield.

5.8 In summary the 15 photographs and the visibility of the Hillyfield are as follows:

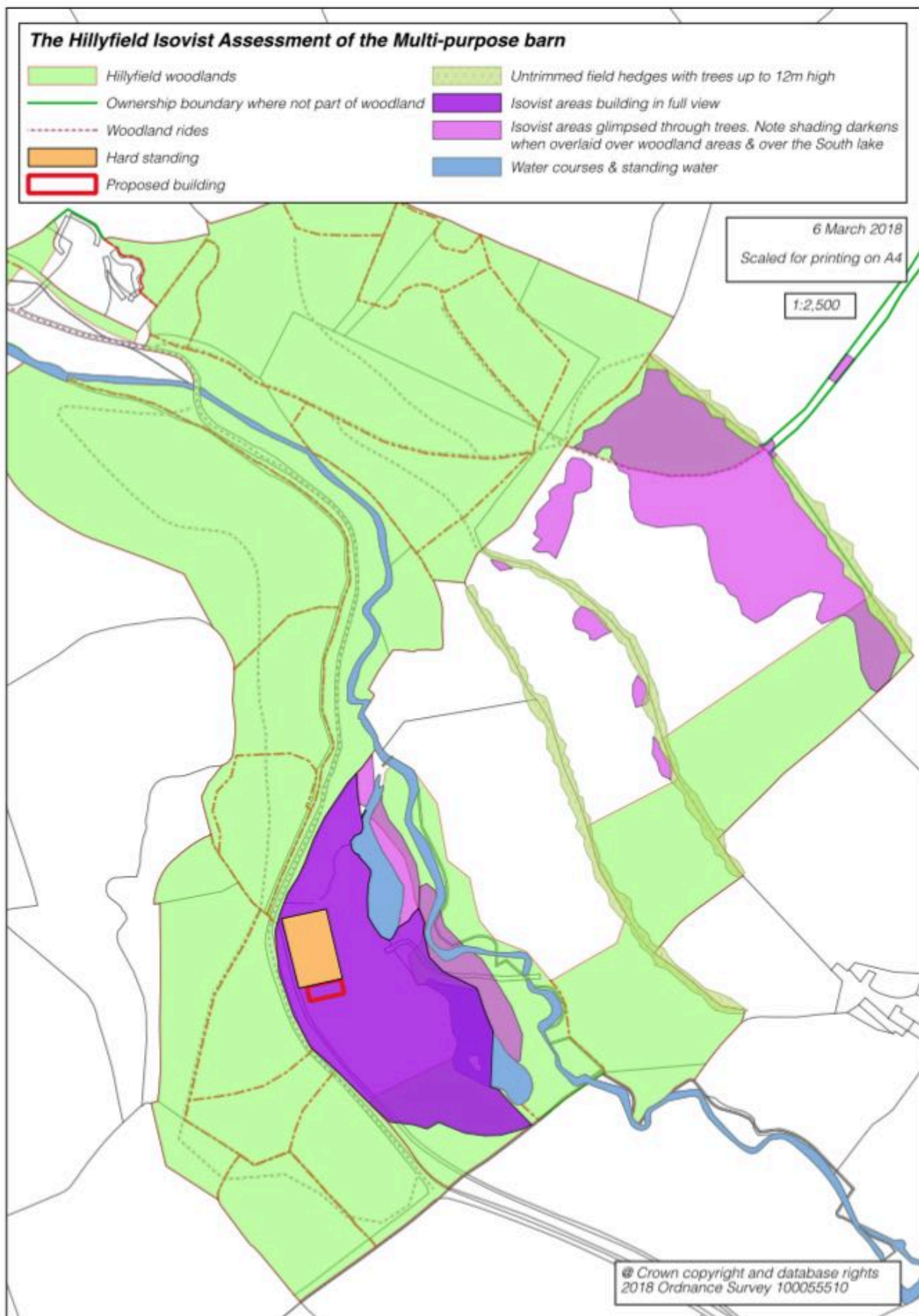
Table 5.1 Summary of the visibility of the Hillyfield from all identified viewpoints

View point	Location of photo	Direction of photo	Visibility of the Hillyfield (What part of the holding is visible?)
1	Drybridge over the A38	Looking W	Native broadleaf canopy of Tom's Brake
2	Entrance to the Hillyfield access track	Looking SW	Native broadleaf canopy of Tom's Brake
3	Gateway before Zempson Cross	Looking S	Coniferous canopy of Tom's Brake and ancient woodland canopy at Hillyfield Plantation
4	Zempson Cross	Looking SSE	Coniferous canopy of Tom's Brake and ancient woodland canopy of Hillyfield Plantation
5	Footpath between Zempson Cross and Zempson Bridge	Looking SSE	Coniferous canopy of Tom's Brake and ancient woodland canopy of Hillyfield Plantation
6	Driveway to Stipadon	Looking E	Upper slopes of native broadleaf woodland of Tom's Brake and ancient woodland of Hillyfield Plantation
7	Gateway NW of Harbourneford Cross	Looking E	Upper slopes of native broadleaf woodland of Tom's Brake
8	Gateway above Stippadon west of Harbourneford Cross	Looking E	Native broadleaf canopy of Tom's Brake and upper slope of pasture field of Hillyfield
9	South of Bloody Pool Cross	Looking E	Native broadleaf canopy of Tom's Brake, upper slope of pasture field and top of newly planted Hope Wood at Hillyfield
10	Gateway SE of Harbourneford Cross	Looking ENE	Canopy of conifer and native mixed broadleaf of Tom's Brake and lower stretch of new access route
11	Driveway below Hill View Crest Harbourneford	Looking E	Coniferous canopy of Tom's Brake
12	Access gateway to Hillyfield Farm, Harbourneford	Looking SSE	Mixed tree canopy at NE edge of ancient woodland of Hillyfield Plantation
13	Access gateway to Harbourneford Lodge (Brook Cottage) Harbourneford	Looking SE	Native broadleaf canopy of Tom's Brake and mixed ancient woodland canopy of Hillyfield Plantation
14	Secondary Access Gate to the Hillyfield. Harbourneford Lodge (Brook Cottage)	Looking SE	Native broadleaf canopy of Tom's Brake and mixed ancient woodland canopy of Hillyfield Plantation
15	Brent Hill (50m W of Triangulation Point)	Looking E	In foreground canopy of ancient woodland with canopy of Tom's Brake behind and upper pasture and newly planted Hope Wood of Hillyfield

5.9 From this I conclude that at no point is it possible from a public vantage point to view the existing and proposed developments being considered at this Inquiry, with the one exception of parking along the main access track and its associated stacking bay, which may occur on woodland open days, on a maximum of two days a year.

In nearly all cases views of the Hillyfield only reveal the canopy of the woodland (which is a significant landscape feature). The exception to this is viewpoints 6 and 7 lying WNW of the Hillyfield where, as the contours of the Hillyfield rise above the viewpoint, the viewer is looking into the slope of the woodland rather than its canopy. But from both these viewpoints there is no view to the valley bottom meadows or the possibility of seeing any of the existing or proposed structures being considered at this inquiry. In the case of the Quarry Meadow, views from Harbournford village properties are screened by a dense replanted hedgerow and 0.4ha of Osier beds. Indeed the only locality where existing or proposed structures might be seen is from *private* land (a single sheep grazed field) in the ownership of Hillyfield Farm where the structures in the quarry are viewed through two screens of vegetation and a woodland.

- 5.10 It should be stressed that this assessment of visibility has been made in the winter when views will be most revealing with a lack of foliage on trees and hedgerows.
- 5.11 As an adjunct to the above a separate Isovist assessment was made on March 6th 2018 to assess the potential visibility of the proposed multi-purpose barn from all meadow areas *within* the Hillyfield holding (having clearly established through the above exercise that there is no possibility of seeing the proposed barn from public vantage points). To do this two wooden structures the height of the proposed barn (6m) were erected at either end of its long axis with high visibility jackets hung on each structure so marking the height and length of the proposed barn. The visibility of these jackets was then assessed by walking all the meadow areas on the holding and plotting those locations from which all or part of the proposed barn might be seen. The purpose of this exercise was to inform a more subtle assessment of tranquillity discussed in the next section. See Map 1.



Assessment of effects on Landscape Character (and Biodiversity)

5.12 I now turn to the effects on inherent landscape character. The general landscape character of the area has been described in Section 3 based on the Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor as required by the GLVIA. The question is 'what are the valued attributes' of the landscape that define its character and have the potential to be affected by development'? These are features key to landscape character such that if any one attribute ceased to exist or was damaged, it would have a major impact on the character of the landscape concerned. In the case of this landscape (Landscape Type 5A *Inland Elevated Undulating Land*) the Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor defines the valued attributes as:

Valued attributes

- *An intricate, 'patchwork' landscape of productive farmland, woods, small settlements and rural lanes.*
- *Gently rolling topography dissected by small streams.*
- *Bands of mixed and broadleaved woodlands, along with patches of neutral and marshy grasslands [primarily associated with valley sides and bottoms].*
- *Strong medieval field pattern on lower slopes and valley floors [thought to date from the mid to late medieval period].*
- *Pastoral character with patches of rough grazing serving as a reminder of the close proximity of the moorland.*
- *Scattered villages, hamlets and farmsteads linked by a network of narrow winding lanes.*

5.13 It is these valued attributes that have primarily guided the assessment of effects on inherent landscape character outlined below.

(i) Prior Notification for two barns (Appeal 3140928)

5.14 The two proposed single storey timber clad barns (a machinery store 146.7m² and timber drying barn 175.2m²) would be located in the Quarry and would replace the two temporary timber drying barns (25m² each) and the two lorry bodies (30.7m²) currently used as a machinery lock-up. Although much larger in footprint, the proposed barns would allow removal and general rationalisation of the above existing structures being enforced against and an existing garden shed, such that the new barns would take up no greater space than the current structures in combination, allowing for the current gaps between structures. Thus there would be

no reduction in space for car parking when needed. No landscape concerns were raised by the LPA to this prior notification, as this is not a concern of an initial notification. From a landscape perspective the quarry is a self-contained space and no valued landscape attributes would be affected. I therefore conclude that there would be no impact on landscape character, indeed there could be an overall Net Improvement with the removal of the lorry bodies and rationalisation of the area.

Enforcement Notices

Enforcement Notice 1 – A purported change of use to include residential, recreational and educational uses

- 5.15 I conclude that the most likely effects on landscape character of this purported change of use, aside from the structures considered separately below, would be the presence of additional people and the presence of cars and car parking associated with activities on site.
- 5.16 *People:* From the evidence presented by Doug King-Smith, visitors to the Hillyfield can be summarised as follows:
- *Local volunteers* coming to undertake woodland management/conservation work across the holding, maximum once a month with a maximum of 24 volunteers on each occasion.
 - *Seasonal forest workers*, undertaking woodland / conservation work as above, with typically, at most, two to three workers present at any one time, rising occasionally to five or six (this has only occurred during a total of five months across four years).
 - *One-day events and workshops relating to the woodland setting.* Each event held at the Hillyfield attracts significantly less than 500 people and therefore only needs a Temporary Events Notice .These events are held in the valley-bottom at its most northerly end immediately to the east of the river and typically total six in any one year although in 2016 there were nine (**Table 5.2**). The majority are workshops / gatherings of under 20 people, although the woodland open days have attracted 200-360 visitors but typically only occur once or twice a year.

Table 5.2: Number of events held at the Hillyfield each year

Type	Number of events per year						
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Events of 150 -360 people				2	1	1	1
Events of 60 -149 people			1	1		1	
Activities of 20-59 people	1	1	1		2	1	2
Workshops/ Gatherings of 5-19 people	4	3	4	3	3	6	1
Total	5	4	6	6	6	9	4

Table 5.3: Characteristics of the events held at the Hillyfield

	Duration	Av. Length of stay	Peak period	Max, no. of parked cars at peak
Events of 150 -360 people	8 hrs	4 hrs	12 – 4pm	100
Events of 60 -149 people	8 hrs	4 hrs	12 – 4pm	60
Activities of 20-59 people	7 hrs	4 hrs	12 – 4pm	20
Workshop/ Gatherings of 5-19 people	7hrs	7hrs	10am – 5pm	10

Table 5.4: Car parking for events

Car parking	Quarry	Quarry meadow	River Meadow	Stacking Bay	Access Track	Total
Capacity in dry weather	34	33	45	16	28	156
Capacity in wet weather	34	23	-	16	28	123

5.17 From these figures I conclude that the effects on landscape character of the presence of volunteers and small workshops and gatherings of up to 20 people are likely to be minimal and certainly no more than a typical woodland on Dartmoor with a popular right-of-way running through it. Events attracting between 60 and 360 people clearly will have a significantly greater impact in terms of the presence of people, on the pastoral and tranquil character of the valley-bottom meadow where these events occur. However, even including the activities attracting between 20 and 59 people, these have only occurred on a maximum of three days in any one year and therefore taken in the round have a minor impact on overall landscape character, in time affecting only 0.8% of any one year.

5.18 *Car parking:* This is the other aspect of activities held on the holding that can affect landscape character. The *local volunteer days* attract a maximum of 10 cars on the 12 days a year when they occur, while 78% of the *seasonal forest workers* use sustainable (non-vehicular) forms of transport i.e. at most generating one car. Even the largest woodland open days, occurring once or twice a year, have not required parking for more than 100 cars.

Map 2 - Event Parking



- 5.19 From the perspective of conserving landscape character the main concern is respecting the character of the valley-bottom meadows – their pastoral and tranquil character and the retention of their medieval field pattern. The five areas used for car parking and their location are shown in **Table 5.4** and Map 2 respectively, which does include the valley-bottom meadows. However, as indicated by **Table 5.4** all car parking, other than that for woodland open days, can be accommodated solely in the Quarry and Quarry Meadows away from the valley-bottom. Furthermore, there is capacity for wet weather parking, even for the woodland open days, without utilising the valley-bottom meadows, with parking on these occasional days utilising the Access Track and associated Stacking Bay, so averting any impact on more sensitive areas.
- 5.20 In terms of biodiversity the valley bottom meadows are permanent pasture which over time will be encouraged through sensitive management to revert to their semi-natural form. This highlights the importance of containing the events to predetermined times and areas thereby limiting damage to diversifying grasslands and avoiding potential disturbance to protected species such as otter along the river corridor.
- 5.21 Overall, I conclude that the effects on landscape character *and* biodiversity of the activities that take place on the holding are *Local* (contained within the holding) and of *Minor* impact through a combination of being able to choose less sensitive locations for car parking and the infrequency with which impacts of note occur, with events of over 20 people only occurring on a maximum of three days in any one year. These activities of course are regulated under the 28-day rule.

Enforcement Notices (1) & (2) Structures being enforced against

- 5.22 I now turn to the structures being enforced against under Enforcement Notices 1 & 2. It is my professional view that the effects of these structures on landscape character (and biodiversity) of the holding are as follows (for ease, these are grouped by their location within the holding):

The quarry

- The *two single storey barns* located within the quarry are well sited against the main wall of the quarry and have Minimal effect on their surroundings, especially with their timber cladding. They do not affect any valued landscape attributes.
- The *two lorry bodies* also located in the quarry are again well sited next to the barns although they have an unkempt appearance which *detracts from their immediate surroundings* within the quarry. They do not affect any valued landscape attributes.

From a biodiversity perspective, as set out in the report submitted by Stephen Lees of Land and Heritage Ltd, the natural rock faces of the quarry provide a specialised habitat but are unaffected by the presence of the structures. The structures therefore do not have an adverse effect on biodiversity.

Valley-bottom meadows

- The *two caravans* and the tented field kitchen sited at different locations in the valley-bottom meadows currently have no particular aesthetic logic in their siting and have a *Moderate* but *Very Local* adverse effect on the landscape character of the valley-bottom meadows, with the natural pastoral character of the holding being a valued attribute of this landscape type along with the medieval field pattern which remains untouched by these structures.
- The *two compost toilets* and the *Yurt timber platform*, again sited around the valley-bottom meadow, are too small in scale to have a landscape effect but as for and would benefit from a rationalisation in siting

From a biodiversity perspective these meadows, as already noted, are permanent pasture which currently is not floristically diverse although with appropriate management this could be encouraged in the future. Currently, therefore, the above structures have minimal impact on biodiversity. In addition their siting away from the river corridor should minimise potential disturbance to protected species such as otter.

Woodland

- The *tented structure used as a covered workspace* is sited on the very edge of, but within, the ancient woodland site. Therefore, although temporary, and its location necessitated by the requirement to fell the larch under the Statutory Plant Protection Notices issued by the Forestry Commission, this structure is having a *Moderate/Major* but *Very Local* impact on the ancient woodland habitat which is a valued landscape attribute of this landscape type and highly valued for biodiversity. As a temporary structure its location could be moved allowing the natural seed source of the ancient woodland to regenerate.

5.23 Overall the effects on landscape character *and* biodiversity can be summarised as shown in **Table 5.5** below. In this case the identified levels of effect are sufficiently similar for landscape and biodiversity to be considered together.

Table 5.5: Summary of effects on Landscape Character and Biodiversity

Structure	Scale of impact (1)	Severity of impact (2)	Valued attributes affected	Which attribute(s)	Potential improvements/mitigation
2 barns	None	None	None	-	
2 lorries	Very local	Minor	None	-	Replacement with timber structures
2 caravans	Very local	Moderate	Yes	Natural pastoral character	Would benefit from relocation of these structures such that they are all in one location where they are not visually prominent and lie outside the ancient woodland
Tented field kitchen	Very local	Moderate	Yes	Natural pastoral character	
Compost toilets	None	None	None	-	
Yurt	None	None	None	-	
Tented workspace	Very local	Moderate/Major	Yes	Ancient woodland habitat	

(1) Scale of impact on the five point scale – *Very Local, Local (holding), Parish, Park-wide, Regional, National*

(2) Severity of impact on the five point scale – *Minor, Minor/Moderate, Moderate, Moderate/Major, Major*

5.24 Thus I conclude that all the effects on landscape character and biodiversity of the structures being enforced against are *Very Local* (contained entirely within small parts of the holding). In one case the severity of the impact is *Moderate/Major* (the

siting of a temporary tented workspace just within the ancient woodland site); and in two cases (the temporary field kitchen and two caravans) the severity of the impact (primarily on landscape character) is *Moderate*, detracting from the natural pastoral character and tranquillity of parts of the valley bottom meadows, although too small to impinge on the valued medieval field pattern.

(ii) Prior notification and subsequent planning application for a part open fronted multi-purpose barn

- 5.25 In this assessment of effects on landscape character I focus on the full planning application, in that the developments are the same (a part open-fronted timber clad barn 8m x 20m footprint (160m²) other than in the full planning application the height of the roofline has been raised by 0.5m to allow for an upper floor providing dormitory accommodation for volunteers.
- 5.26 Effects on landscape character were to the fore in both the officers' reports on the Pre-notification application and subsequently in the determination of the Planning Application. Their comments draw on the Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor as do mine.
- 5.27 In relation to the full planning application the Reasons for Refusal (RfR) relating to landscape were: *"The proposal represents unsympathetic development which, by nature of its isolated location, size, scale and residential accommodation, is considered to be detrimental to the character of the area, failing to enhance the special qualities of Dartmoor's landscape, specifically the pastoral character of the fields and the strong medieval field patterns. Furthermore, the proposal fails to respect the tranquillity and remoteness of the site. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies COR 1, COR 3 and COR 8 of the Dartmoor National Park Authority Core Strategy, Policies DMD5 and DMD34 of the Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document, and the core aim of sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework"*.
- 5.28 In support of these Reasons for Refusal the Tree and Landscape Officer had noted in his report that *".....The development will have a detrimental impact on the historic field system and the pastoral character of the area. The development does*

not respect the valued attributes as set out in the landscape character assessment. It does not conserve and/or enhance the character of the landscape and the building does not respect the tranquillity and sense of remoteness of the site, the development is clearly contrary to policy.

“The isolated development will contrast strongly with the predominantly pastoral landscape and the agricultural building does not reflect the building pattern found in this landscape.....”

The report goes on to conclude that: *“The proposed development will have a detrimental impact on the character of the area. This is an isolated development with no links to other buildings. The development will be contrary to policy COR 1 in that it does not respect or enhance the character, quality or tranquillity of the local landscape. It is contrary to policy COR 3 in that the development does not conserve or enhance the characteristic landscapes and features that contribute to Dartmoor's special environmental qualities. The development is also contrary to DMD 5 because it does not conserve/or enhance the character and special qualities of the Dartmoor landscape by respecting the valued attributes of the Dartmoor landscape, specifically the pastoral character of the fields and strong medieval field pattern. The building will not respect the tranquillity and sense of remoteness of the site. The development because of its design, scale and layout will not conserve or enhance the characteristic landscape of the National Park. The development does not enhance what is special or locally distinctive about the landscape character, and it is an unsympathetic development that harms the wider landscape”.*

- 5.29 In all cases I agree with the NPA that the concern over impacts relates specifically to the pastoral character of the fields and strong medieval field pattern, combined with their tranquil character. At all times it is also vital to remember the high importance and high sensitivity of National Park landscapes. However, the concerns expressed by the NPA raise important issues that need to be unpacked. To do this I have taken DMD5 as my starting point, as it is concerned specifically with protecting the character of Dartmoor's landscape, and I have reviewed each criteria of this policy (re-ordered to allow a logical flow to the discussion) making reference to other policy criteria as relevant:

5.30 DMD5: *Ensuring that location, site layout, scale and design conserves and/or enhances what is special or locally distinctive about the landscape and DMD34 (ii):it relates well to local landscape features and other building groups; (iii) It is located and orientated with respect to local topography so as to reduce intrusive effects:*

- *Isolation:* Much is made of the building's isolated location – true but given the functional needs of agriculture and sometimes forestry, isolated barns are not uncommon in the vicinity and most are in a far more prominent position than that proposed. Such buildings are meeting a functional necessity.
- *Functional relationship:* whilst not related to other existing buildings the proposed barn has a clear and direct functional relationship with the hardstanding (now implemented) for which planning permission was granted for forestry uses only. Thus there is a clear functional logic to its location directly adjacent to this hardstanding.
- *Scale:* At 160m² this would be a modest barn well below the Permitted Development threshold in size, that neatly fits along the narrower edge of the hardstanding
- *Design:* Apart from the roof material the barn would be entirely constructed from wood won from the site. Thus it would have a very small carbon footprint (highly sustainable) and the larch cladding would silver over time making it recede visually into its surroundings. It would therefore literally be of the place – something that is now rarely achieved but would have been the 'order of the day' in the Medieval period.
- *Relationship to topography and other features:* The barn would be recessed into the edge of the field in which it would sit, with its western elevation tucked into, but not damaging, an existing hedge bank. Indeed, at its western end the barn would be dug into the current ground level to achieve a constant floor level and reduce the external height of the barn. To the south, west and north the barn would be viewed against a backdrop of nearby trees such that it cannot be seen against a skyline and, with its timber cladding, over time would blend into its treed backdrop as the larch 'silvers off'.

5.31 DMD5:*Avoiding unsympathetic development that will harm the wider landscape*

Importantly, as noted in the visual assessment, the site of the proposed barn lies wholly at the bottom of a deeply incised valley with steep slopes rising to either side by at least 50m. Thus, as has already been described, the site of the proposed barn cannot be viewed from any public vantage point, being totally hidden from the wider National Park landscape. Further, not only would the barn be viewed against a backdrop of the nearby trees of a hedgebank but against the steeply rising wood clad slope of the western valley side – this is a visually contained location.

5.32 DMD5 *Respecting valued attributes of the landscape character type within which the development falls* and COR3 *Development will conserve and enhance the characteristic landscapes and features that contribute to Dartmoor’s special environmental qualities and in making an assessment of development particular regard will be had to* (of which the most relevant to this proposal are): *woodlands and trees, wildlife habitats; field boundaries.*

In this case these valued attributes are the pastoral character of the fields and their strong medieval field pattern thought to date from the mid to late medieval period. As part of this proposal no hedgebanks or field boundaries would be affected. The siting of the barn therefore would not change the pattern of the medieval field system, and no additional hedgebanks are proposed, as those proposed to partially screen and contain the hardstanding were conditioned out by the NPA. Indeed I would argue that the hardstanding at 1352m², now largely implemented, has a far greater visual impact with its stacks of stored logs, on the pastoral character of the meadows when compared to the proposed modest timber barn at 160m². In this respect it is interesting to note the comments of the Tree and Landscape Officer in support of the planning application for the hardstanding which are silent with regard to impacts on valued landscape attributes:

“Policy DMD5:.....The open unregularised storage of timber on the land causes harm to its character and appearance.....it is therefore considered appropriate to contain and control the use [through the provision of hard standing in one location]. The comments continue:

“Policy DMD34: There is considered to be a demonstrable need for hardstanding in association with the forestry use of the surrounding land, however, the site itself is on agricultural land. It is also considered to be proportionate in size to the size of the woodlands. It is in a valley location and relates well to the local landscape and is not intrusive.”

In short, I assess there would be no physical change to valued attributes (in this case the medieval field system) caused by the proposed barn. In terms of biodiversity, the permanent pasture on which the barn is proposed lacks species diversity and so biodiversity impacts would be minimal (and were not considered for the hardstanding), although there are significant opportunities to enhance species diversity through appropriate management. However, I agree there is the potential for change to the perceptual character of the pastoral setting which I consider with tranquillity below.

5.33 DMD5 *Respecting tranquillity and sense of remoteness of Dartmoor and COR1 (h) respect for and enhancement of the character, quality, and tranquillity of local landscapes and the wider countryside:*

It might be argued that the Hillyfield lying so close to the A38 is neither tranquil nor remote. For this reason I suggest that remoteness can be discounted from this discussion. However, the valley bottom meadows have their own sense of serenity and peace derived from the enclosing landform and trees and their natural pastoral character which combine to create a strong sense of tranquillity. For this reason, using an Isovist analysis, I have assessed the visibility of the proposed barn from within the site, focusing on its potential visual impact on the valley bottom meadows and the meadows of the holding more generally. The method used has been described earlier in para 5.11, Map 1.

From this analysis it is evident that the whole of the barn would only be visible from within the valley-bottom meadow in which it is located (Map 3). This, as already noted, is significantly compromised by the presence of the hardstanding and associated log piles that would, in fact, serve to screen much of the lower parts of the barn from the remainder of the meadow when viewed from the north and east. Conversely the proposed barn, even in winter, would be entirely screened from the

main valley bottom meadow directly to the east of the river by the tree belts along the river.

In addition, the proposed barn might be glimpsed from a small section of the access track and from the upper shoulder of the meadow that runs below the access track. But these would only be glimpses of the very upper part of the eastern elevation of the barn. Indeed in summer with foliage on the trees it is questionable whether even these views would be retained. Furthermore, the Isovist test of visibility used high visibility yellow jackets to mark the ridge height of the barn (purposefully aimed at ensuring they *could* be seen), yet with a grey profile roof, the ridge line is likely to be difficult to pick out.

I therefore conclude that potential loss of tranquillity and pastoral character only relates to the meadow in which the barn would be located, already compromised by the hardstanding. Further, the provision of the multi-purpose barn would lead to the removal of the temporary structures currently distributed across the meadows, namely, the two caravans; and the tented field kitchen; and separately the tented structure used as a covered workspace located just within the ancient woodland site. This would be a significant gain for tranquillity and pastoral character (and also the biodiversity of the ancient woodland site), containing and controlling these uses in a single location, as much as the hardstanding is providing a central collection point for cut timber.

- 5.34 Thus, contrary to the reasons for refusal, I conclude that the proposed multi-purpose barn is well and sympathetically located, with a clear functional relationship to the hardstanding; it does not harm the wider landscape as it is not visible; it would not lead to a physical change in any valued landscape attributes; and while the pastoral and tranquil character of the meadow in which it is located would be adversely affected this needs to be balanced against the positive gain for tranquillity, the pastoral character of the holding, and the biodiversity of the ancient woodland site, of bringing the (essential) uses of four temporary structures scattered in the vicinity under a single and permanent roof.

Map 3 - Location of Barns



Figure 1 - Location of Multi-Purpose Building

1)



3)



2)



4)



5)



Site of proposed multi-purpose barn: Position and height marked by two posts with yellow markers at their top:

- 1) Site of barn looking south across hard standing
- 2) Site of barn looking west with valley side behind
- 3) Site of barn looking west with valley side behind
- 4) Site of barn looking north west across meadow
- 5) Site of barn looking west from edge of meadow with river behind

Overall, therefore, using the same scale of measuring impacts as before, I would argue that this barn would have a *Neutral* and *Very Local* impact on landscape character – neutral because the rationalisation and removal of four existing structures in and around the valley-bottom meadows (see para 5.43). would compensate for any adverse effects on tranquillity and pastoral character associated with the proposed barn located in a meadow that has already been compromised by the hardstanding.

5.35 If, in the view of others, the proposed barn is still thought to impact on landscape character there are certain mitigation measures that could be considered. These are:

- Judicious gapping up of tree belts/ hedgerows on the eastern slopes of the holding to block views of the barn from the entrance track and upper shoulder of the eastern pasture if found that it will still be glimpsed in summer months.
- Planting a group of ultimately tall native trees at the edge of the hardstanding in line with the eastern elevation of the barn so screening this gable end from more distant views within the holding.
- Using timber stacks to screen the open front of the barn from views across the meadow from north and east.
- Reducing the height of the barn such that it is only visible within the meadow in which it is located, although it would be important to maintain the height necessary for its use as a wood workshop.
- Following a management regime aimed at increasing the floristic diversity of the meadow within which the proposed barn lies. Clearly this will not help screen the barn but it will provide a positive biodiversity enhancement potentially re-establishing an area of semi-natural neutral grassland which is a particularly rare grassland habitat. It will also help reassert the meadow character of the field within which the barn sits and will provide an attractive setting to the barn.

5.36 Finally, and potentially most importantly, there is the strong policy emphasis on development enhancing what is special or locally distinctive about the landscape and the environment of the National Park. COR 1: Requires that new development should take into account: *respect for and enhancement of the character, quality and*

tranquillity of local landscapes and the wider countryside; COR 3: Requires development to conserve and enhance the characteristic landscapes and features that contribute to Dartmoor's special environmental qualities and in making an assessment of development requires that particular regard will be had to [of specific relevance to this application]: woodland and trees, wildlife habitats and field boundaries: COR8 requires development to (vi) provide opportunities for the beneficial management of strategic nature areas and other habitats and species to promote adaptation to climate change and to sustain their contribution to the mitigation of climate change. DMD5 requires that development proposals should conserve and/or enhance the character and special qualities of the Dartmoor landscape. DMD14 referring to the natural environment, biodiversity and geodiversity states that development proposals will conserve, enhance and/or restore biodiversity and geodiversity within Dartmoor.

5.37 This is often a challenging but very important test for development to achieve in the context of a national park. Yet, in my view, the proposed multi-purpose barn would conserve the special qualities of this landscape. Even more importantly though, its sole purpose would be to *enable* the continued sustainable management of the woodlands of the holding in ways that are, and will, greatly enhance their landscape and biodiversity value. Thus the barn would make a significant contribution to the continued enhancement of the character and special qualities of the Dartmoor landscape. These woodlands are an identified and valued landscape attribute of the Landscape Type in which the Hillyfield lies (paras 3.4 & 5.12) and are a valued characteristic of Dartmoor's landscape as a whole (paras 3.1 - 3.2). They have high biodiversity importance. Thus the management of these woodlands represents a very positive enhancement of Dartmoor's landscape and biodiversity (I explore this further in Section 6).

5.38 I therefore believe, contrary to the reasons for refusal, that the proposals for the multi-purpose barn do conserve and enhance what is special or locally distinctive about the landscape and environment of the National Park and are fully in accord with policies COR1, COR3, COR8, DMD5, DMD14 and DMD34.

5.39 Further, the enabling role of the proposed multi-purpose barn and the existing and proposed developments at the Hillyfield, need to be seen in the context of the **national park purposes and duty** set out in Sections 61 and 62 of the Environment Act 1995, namely

- First purpose: "*conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage*" of national parks
- Second purpose: "promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities" of national parks by the public
- Duty: requiring NPAs to foster the economic and social well-being of the national park communities.

5.40 I would argue that in a microcosm the activities at the Hillyfield are responding to all aspects of the purposes and duty – they are sustaining and enhancing natural beauty and wildlife and, as set out in Doug King-Smith's Proof, within the 28 day rule, are offering opportunities for enjoyment and learning, while seeking to create a business that sustains the continuation of the above.

5.41 In particular this business, which solely adds value to the products of the woodland management and sells these locally, is precisely the type of business that is highly sustainable and the essence of what national parks stand for, with the monies raised by the business being recycled back into the holding to enable the continued sustainable management of the woodlands and the land more generally – a virtuous cycle.

5.42 So far the woodland management and supporting business have been sustained by the structures which are being enforced against. Everyone would agree that these are less than satisfactory but without them the sensitive woodland management at the Hillyfield could not have gone forward. For the woodland management and supporting business to continue, either the existing structures need to stay OR the multi-purpose barn needs to be allowed. This is why it is reasonable to argue that replacement of the existing structures with the multi-purpose barn is an overall enhancement because the uses they support are essential for the continued sustainable management of the woodlands (para 5.35).

5.43 As set out in the proof of James Shorten, if, despite the above evidence, it is still concluded that the multi-purpose barn would cause harm, the material considerations favouring the building can be summarised as follows:

- the very considerable landscape benefits arising from the management practices and activity the building enables
- the considerable ecological benefits arising from the management practices and activity the building enables
- the considerable benefits to those volunteering to work on site, including gaining work experience, enjoying meaningful work, and limited training opportunities
- the benefits to members of local communities, and visitors from further afield in being able to visit and enjoy the site, including the facilities provided by the building
- the benefits to members of local communities, and visitors from further afield being able to access training and attend courses on site, including the facilities provided by the building
- the benefits to the local economy of employment provided on site and forestry and agricultural produce being made available in the local economy, including the facilities provided by the building
- the building being an exemplar of sustainable construction, the majority of materials being sourced from the holding
- the building being an exemplar of 'off grid' development able to serve the needs of a progressive woodland business.

6. THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE WOODLANDS AT THE HILLYFIELD

- 6.1 As has been argued above, the management of the woodlands is a vital consideration for this Public Inquiry. Since the Hillyfield was acquired by Doug King-Smith the woodlands of the holding have been under sensitive and sustainable management.
- 6.2 Sustainable management of such woodlands is important to their long term survival and enhancement in the face of climate change which is heralding the spread of diseases new to the UK and increases the threat of windthrow and other damaging weather-related events. In turn, such management is necessary if woodlands are to provide important refuge areas as part of wider ecological networks and corridors.
- 6.3 The specific benefits that are being derived from the current woodland management are set out in the report prepared by Stephen Lees of Land and Heritage Ltd. These are:
- *Management under a comprehensive management plan (2014) approved by the Forestry Commission and drawn up by the former National Park Forestry Officer. This ensures a prioritised and careful approach which reflects the specific characteristics of this woodland, where biodiversity enhancement is considered hand in hand with commercial forestry considerations. This has the following objectives:*
 1. Develop and implement a truly sustainable approach to woodland [and farm] management that works closely with UKFS & Dartmoor National Park Authority Woodland strategy 2005 – 2010
 2. Manage woodlands in accordance with UKFS and Forestry Commission's practice guide 'Managing ancient and native woodland in England' wherever possible.
 3. Develop a low impact small scale community supported business in keeping with one planet vision
 4. Increase carbon storage by growing trees, locking up carbon in products and leaving brash to recycle rather than burning and encouraging locals to substitute high carbon footprint fuels with wood.
 5. All fixed power sources to be of green origins – hydro and solar.
 6. Involve the community by providing opportunities for local and visiting people to share and take part in co-creating an ecologically diverse and abundant woodland environment
 7. Provide sanctuary for people to enjoy, learn, share and be inspired in
 8. Consult broadly prior to embarking on major new projects

- *A considered response to the Statutory Plant Health Notices (SPHNs issued by the Forestry Commission, requiring the felling of the large Japanese Larch stands infected with *Phytophthora ramorum* to prevent the further spread of this disease. The larch have been felled sequentially without the use of heavy machinery and extracted by horse or winch thereby protecting soil structure and facilitating natural regeneration and the retention of tree species other than larch.*
- *Broadening of species diversity.* With the removal of larch the Hillyfield is being returned to a predominantly broadleaved woodland through a combination of planting and the encouragement of natural regeneration (with the original ancient woodland species, lying dormant in the soil, awaiting return of the right light conditions). Diversity of tree species is now a key recommendation of the Forestry Commission to help provide resilience to climate change and plant diseases. A diversity of native tree species is also vital for woodland ecology and supports a far greater range of invertebrates and groundflora than introduced conifer species, in turn greatly increasing the diversity of birds and mammals present.
- *The reintroduction of structural diversity in the canopy creating different light environments.* This is being encouraged through the reintroduction of coppicing of appropriate species (hazel and sweet chestnut) and the retention of trees of varying ages from young seedlings to old veteran trees. Indeed all veteran trees have been mapped and are being protected. The creation of rides through the woodlands too is adding to this varied light environment and is creating different edge habitats. Such structural diversity along with species diversity is very important for wildlife conservation increasing habitat diversity and resilience to climate change.
- *The removal of invasive species, primarily Cherry Laurel but also including Bamboo and Japanese Knotweed.* Before the current management started over 80% of the ancient woodland site was covered in a dense tangle of Cherry Laurel preventing natural regeneration and smothering out the native groundflora, including the iconic bluebell and dog's mercury – ancient woodland indicator species, which are now returning. Also returning through natural regeneration are oak, beech, ash and hazel. This clearance of

invasive species has involved complete cutting back and stump treatment, with stump treatment of regrowth a continuing exercise to safeguard previous clearance work (a step too often missed in woodland restoration).

- *The introduction of a deer control programme and deer protection of trees.* This is reducing deer damage and aiding recovery of the native ground flora which might otherwise be grazed out. Equally it is ensuring the regrowth of coppice stools and the growth of regenerating tree seedlings which are preferentially grazed by deer.
- *Development of a much more varied ground flora as a result of the above management efforts.* Iconic ancient woodland indicator species such as bluebell, primrose and wood sorrel are returning to the woods along with 29 other species identified by the Woodland Trust as indicators of ancient woodland (listed in Stephen Lees's proof on page 9).
- *Encouragement of rarities and protected species.* The woodland management plan records protected species and measures to ensure their protection, primarily around timing of works and avoiding disturbance. In addition the spread of rare and protected species is being monitored with creation of the right habitat conditions if they have been recorded in the vicinity. For example, the Doormouse has been recorded 1.5km away and it is probable that the Hillyfield is on the periphery of a Greater Horseshoe bat foraging route with a nationally important roost at Buckfastleigh with ideal habitats in and immediately adjoining the woodland – wet woodland, overhanging boundary trees, ponds and unimproved grasslands.
- *The retention of dead wood* (it is estimated that one third of woodland organisms live on the dead wood habitat). This is being achieved through leaving dead wood lying and retaining standing dead veteran trees.
- *Generally, allowing for more gradual change* which is less evident in the landscape and to which many woodland species can adapt when compared, for example, to clear felling and re-planting.
- *The planting of 2.1ha of new broadleaf woodland sharing a boundary with the existing woodlands* and a newly planted 455 metre length of mixed broadleaf hedgerow corridor as part of the new access track, completing what had been

a broken hedgerow network following the construction of the South West Water holding tank at Drybridge.

6.4 The report of Stephen Lees of Land and Heritage concludes:

1. The woodlands are managed to high ecological standards, to a Forestry Commission approved plan that conforms to the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Standards (UKWAS).
2. The management of the site has been heavily influenced by the presence of *Phytophthora ramorum* disease in the larch trees and the consequent serving of Statutory Plant Health Notices.
3. Selective low key harvesting and on site processing has enabled the management and larch felling to be spread out over a period that is likely to last ten years in total. This has slowed the rate of change within the woodland, minimising the disturbance to habitat and all the associated species.
4. The use of horse logging on some of the site has protected the groundflora and also enabled retention of broadleaved trees within the felled areas. This has therefore helped safeguard and enhance the ecological value of the site.
5. The landowner has worked hard to encourage natural regeneration of native species and to enhance the structural diversity of the woodland, which has had significant ecological benefits.
6. The sustainable local use of the harvested timber has provided a mechanism to help fund the ecological management of the woodland. On site conversion is increasingly seen as a way forward to help improve the commercial balance of conservation-led woodland management. It has been used by many conservation organisations, including Natural England and the Woodland Trust at East Dartmoor National Nature Reserve. Horse logging and mobile sawmilling have been undertaken on the reserve in a scheme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and led by Dartmoor National Park. (see <https://eastdartmoorwoods.org/2016/03/22/smoke-wood-skills-and-horses/>).
7. Overall, we commend the current management of the wood, which is achieving ecological enhancements and a high standard of management, despite difficult site conditions and the enforced major felling of diseased larch.

6.5 These are important benefits that would not be achieved without sensitive, phased and sequential management. Thus the developments being considered at this Inquiry should not be judged solely in their own right but as the *enablers* of the sustainable management of the woodlands which, without them, could not happen. This is a labour intensive management approach where manpower replaces machine and where 'little and often' and Continuous Cover Forestry replaces extensive clear felling. This has required the use of volunteer labour, as set out in Doug King-Smith's Proof, for which some form of accommodation has to be provided. Equally, funds have to be raised for the many costs of management. Thus the management activities need to generate an income through the sale of high quality dry firewood (most wood burning stoves require a moisture content under 17%) and through the primary processing of woodland products. As already noted this is a virtuous circle with the costs of woodland management being funded through the sale of products of that same management.

6.6 It appears that an important point underlying this Inquiry is the view of DNPA that potentially there is only one type of forestry management, namely, an approach which is occasional, cyclical and seasonal. Certainly it is true that most commercial forestry management is based on the clear felling of large forestry blocks by heavy machinery followed by restocking and periodic thinning with large intervening periods of inactivity. In the case of the Hillyfield felling was a given because of the *Statutory Plant Health Notices (SPHNs) issued by the Forestry Commission*. Thus the choice between clear felling and the sustained management of the woodland is an important consideration for this Inquiry:

- Clear felling would have potentially opened up the landscape by removing a significant area of valley-side woodland and, in so doing, would have damaged the woodland ecology, made woodland soils more prone to erosion and removed the potential buffering effect of the woodland to the noise and light intrusions of the A38, remembering that under the SPHNs there is no requirement to replant.
- By comparison, the Continuous Cover Forestry being practiced at the Hillyfield is maintaining a canopy throughout the life cycle of the wood and is

generating all the other benefits for landscape and biodiversity as identified above.

- 6.7 The Forestry Commission has long realised the considerable benefits of Continuous Cover Forestry both economically and in terms of silviculture, based on the selection of the best trees for felling each year, as exemplified by the French, and as beginning to be demonstrated at the Hillyfield. Through history woodlands, as described by Oliver Rackham³, have been places of continuous activity and rejuvenation and it is this traditional form of woodland management that sustained our woodlands in the past. This is the model being followed at the Hillyfield but it requires a considerable input of labour and wood management and processing.

Conformity with broader objectives for Dartmoor and with other national strategies

- 6.8 The type of woodland management described above conforms precisely to broader objectives for Dartmoor, as well as relevant national strategies, including:

Dartmoor National Character Area (NCAs) - opportunities

- 6.9 As introduced earlier, the NCA Profiles provide a national description of our landscapes and identify opportunities for conservation and enhancement of the landscape and biodiversity going forward. Amongst the specific Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEOs) identified for Dartmoor are:

Under SEO 3

“Supporting and encouraging local initiatives that promote the sustainable management of woodlands and hedgerows for wood fuel production. Encourage join-up between landowners and local communities and knowledge and skills sharing and enhancement.” (exemplified by the Hillyfield)

As an Additional Opportunity it also identifies the need to” *Protect and restore ancient and important woodland, managing and enhancing its contribution to*

³ Oliver Rackham (1980) *Ancient Woodland its history, vegetation and uses in England*. Edward Arnold

landscape character, biodiversity and recreation. Seek opportunities to support the local economy through wood products” with specific examples including:

- *Planning and managing the extension and connection of areas of semi-natural woodland, particularly along the steep river valleys.*
- *Encouraging initiatives that promote the use of local timber and wood products and facilitate communication and greater understanding between wood producers (large and small), processors and users.*
- *Encouraging management practices that ensure well-structured woodland with high-quality timber and, where appropriate, that achieve multipurpose objectives.*
- *Supporting the restoration of ancient woodland sites by removing conifer plantations and managing sites for the benefit of biodiversity and a range of ecosystem services.*

6.10 I believe all of the above are exemplified by the management of the Hillyfield. The reference to ecosystem services is considered separately below

Current Dartmoor National Park Management Plan 2014 - 2019

6.11 Turning now to the extant Dartmoor National Park Management Plan, a number of ‘Issues and Opportunities’ are identified. Of these, those relevant to woodland are:

- *Securing woodland management, particularly for smaller woodlands (exemplified by the Hillyfield)*
- *Developing new markets and added value to woodland products (being undertaken at the Hillyfield through primary processing and the development of niche markets based on the use of traditional skills, such as the making of hazel-weave coffins)*
- *Reducing the impact of conifer woodlands on landscape character (exemplified by the Hillyfield)*
- *Restoring plantations on ancient woodland sites to their former habitats (exemplified by the Hillyfield)*

6.12 The Management Plan goes on to identify four areas for prioritised action of which that relating to woodland is to:

- *Encourage sustainable management of existing woodlands and opportunities for new woodlands (exemplified by the Hillyfield).*

- 6.13 The Management Plan is alive though, to the difficulties of woodland management noting: *"Many valley woodlands are in steep and difficult to work locations.....There is an on-going challenge to bring the more accessible woodlands into positive management, particularly small woodlands that are not [normally] economically viable to manage. The increased interest in woodfuel and biomass for heating, milling timber and other woodland products means that this could change in the future.....opportunities to bring neglected woodlands back into management will also support the woodland economy and create jobs.....There is also interest in increasing community involvement in woodland."*
- 6.14 These are difficulties and potential solutions that the Hillyfield is responding to and trying to make economically viable, only to find that it is the planning response of the National Park Authority that is standing in the way.
- 6.15 In sum, the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan and the Hillyfield in microcosm exemplify the categorisation (by IUCN) of Dartmoor National Park (and all other UK National Parks) as Category V Protected Areas. That is *cultural landscapes* that have been moulded by human influence over millennia. These cultural landscapes are defined in the 1994 *Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories* as:
- "An area of land.....where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural values, and often with high biological diversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this **traditional** interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area"*
- 6.16 It's important to stress the emphasis on '*traditional interaction*' as it is this that has created the landscape of Dartmoor that we enjoy today. In farming terms it is encapsulated by the tradition of commoning on the commons of the open moor, handed down through the generations and responsible for retaining the open moors. In the case of ancient and broadleaf woodlands the traditions of woodland management – sequential coppicing, the selection of standard trees to grow on, charcoal burning etc - are perhaps less well appreciated although still practiced by a dwindling number of woodland owners, as at the Hillyfield, helping keep alive the

traditional working landscape of Dartmoor. It is these traditional interactions that need to be kept alive with opportunities provided to pass these traditions on to the next generation through training and practical experience, as being encouraged at the Hillyfield.

Landscape character assessment for Dartmoor

The above theme is picked up in the *Landscape and Planning Guidelines* of the Dartmoor Landscape Character Assessment for the Landscape Type in question, 5A *Inland Elevated Undulating Land*, where specific management needs identified for the landscape are to:

“Reinstate traditional management techniques to the landscape’s woodlands, particularly coppicing, to promote a diverse age and species structure and provide a low carbon fuel source to local communities.” (Being taken forward at the Hillyfield)

Functional Landscapes (Ecosystem services)

- 6.17 A strong theme of the Government’s Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement 2013 is the need to recognise the many ‘hidden’ benefits provided by woodlands through the functions they perform such as carbon sequestration, the capture of water run-off, prevention of soil erosion and so on.
- 6.18 This is picked up in the Dartmoor Management Plan which notes that *“woodlands play an important role in climate regulation through sequestering carbon, providing woodfuel as an alternative to fossil fuels and helping to protect water quality and reduce flood risk through intercepting pollutants and run-off.”*
- 6.19 This is further reinforced in the *Landscape and Planning Guidelines* of the Dartmoor Landscape Character Assessment where an identified management need is to:
- “Extend areas of mixed and broadleaved woodlands through natural regeneration and new planting (including with species suited to a changing climate). Focus the creation and extension of woodlands on slopes and valley bottoms, particularly where they can help reduce agricultural run-off from areas of intensive farming and absorb water in times of high rainfall to reduce the likelihood of flooding”.*
- 6.20 Again the Hillyfield is well located to perform these functions and its management is making a direct contribution to maximising these benefits. The *light touch* on the

woodland soils by avoiding the use of heavy machinery is reducing soil disturbance and compaction thereby reducing gully erosion and helping hold back run-off, soil carbon (derived from woodland litter) is held in situ and stored⁴ and the encouragement of natural regeneration and tree planting further helps hold back run-off.

- 6.21 The active management through coppicing and the encouragement of a mixed age structure increases carbon sequestration as it is known that growing trees sequester more carbon than their mature counterparts. Further, the sale of fire wood as an end product of management contributes to the woodfuel economy. Although, as stressed before, this wood must be well seasoned and *dry* to provide real calorific benefit.
- 6.22 Thus the management of the Hillyfield is in accord with the Vision and Ambitions of the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan and Landscape Character Assessment, the NCA Profile for Dartmoor and the Government's Forestry and Woodland Policy Statement 2013. It is an exemplar of sustainable woodland management and its delivery of ecosystem services, and in a microcosm reflects the expectations of the international designation of Dartmoor (and all other UK National Parks) as a Category V protected landscape.

⁴ *"Timber extraction may only represent a comparatively small return of carbon to the atmosphere: wood does not release CO₂ until it decomposes or is burnt. The oxidation of leaf litter and surface soil biomass in felled areas will add to net emissions in the short term. Where regrowth or restocking does not take place, there is a potential net loss of 50 t C/ha".* Taken from a report to Natural England

7. Conclusions

Visual effects

- 7.1 From the evidence presented in this proof I conclude that none of the existing or proposed developments being considered at this Inquiry can be viewed from public vantage points. They therefore have no visual impact on the landscape of the locality or the wider National Park, with the one exception of potential car parking along the main access track to the Hillyfield on woodland open days (maximum two days a year). However, once the hedgerow planted alongside the track is established this will screen cars from all vantage points.

Effects on Inherent Landscape Character

- 7.2 Turning to effects on the inherent landscape character of the locality, I conclude that activities held on the site in terms training days, educational visits and woodland open days (collectively referred to as events) have a *Local* (contained within the holding) and *Minor* impact on landscape character through a combination of being able to choose less sensitive locations and the infrequency with which impacts of note occur. Even including the smaller events, these have only occurred on a maximum of three days in any one year and for no more than 28 days in total a year. As argued in James Shorten's proof they are therefore covered by the 28-day rule.

Enforcements

- 7.3 In terms of the structures being enforced against within and adjacent to the valley bottom meadows, all the effects on landscape character and biodiversity are *Very Local* (contained entirely within small parts of the holding). In one case the severity of the impact on landscape character and biodiversity is *Moderate/Major* (the siting of a temporary tented workspace just within the ancient woodland site); and in two cases (the temporary field kitchen and two caravans) the severity of the impact (primarily on landscape character) is *Moderate*, detracting from the natural pastoral character and tranquillity of parts of the valley bottom meadows, although too small to impinge on the valued medieval field pattern.
- 7.4 Within the quarry, which is both self-contained and without any valued landscape attributes, the two small barns being enforced against have no impact on inherent

landscape character while the two lorry bodies have a *Minor* negative impact reflecting their unkempt appearance. Again their sphere of influence is *Very Local*.

Prior notifications

- 7.5 Turning to the two proposed barns in the quarry (a machinery store and a wood drying barn) I conclude that as the quarry is a self-contained space and no valued landscape attributes would be affected, their effects on landscape character and biodiversity would be *Neutral*. Indeed there could be an overall *Net Improvement* with the removal of the lorry bodies and rationalisation of the area enabled by the proposed barns.

Prior notification and planning application for a multi-purpose barn

- 7.6 My conclusions here focus on the full planning application as, from a landscape perspective, the nature of the barn is the same as the prior notification, with a footprint of 160m² (8m x 20m), the sole difference being that in the full planning application the roof line is raised by 0.5m to 6m in height.
- 7.7 Contrary to the reasons for refusal, I conclude that the proposed multi-purpose barn is well and sympathetically located, with a clear functional relationship to the hardstanding; it would be viewed against a treed backdrop at the bottom of a valley slope such that it would not sit on any skyline and is visually tucked into the landform; it would be of a traditional design constructed from timber harvested from the site – it would be for and of the place, something that is now rarely achieved but would have been the ‘order of the day’ in the Medieval period. It does not harm the wider landscape as it is not visible; and it would not lead to a physical change in any valued landscape attributes, maintaining the existing distribution of medieval hedgebanks.
- 7.8 *Within* the holding the proposed barn is largely screened from view through a combination of topography and intervening tree belts. The only area where it would be seen at its full height would be within the meadow in which it sits where the sense of tranquillity and pastoral character would be adversely affected. However, this meadow has already been significantly compromised by the 1352m² of hardstanding constructed with full planning permission for the purpose of timber storage. Further,

the provision of the multi-purpose barn would enable the removal of the temporary structures currently distributed in the vicinity, namely the two caravans; the tented field kitchen; and separately the tented structure used as a covered workspace located just within the ancient woodland site. This would be a significant gain for tranquillity and pastoral character (and also the biodiversity of the ancient woodland site), containing and controlling these uses in a single location, as much as the hardstanding is providing a central collection point for cut timber.

- 7.9 Thus, using the same scale of measuring impacts as before, I conclude that this barn would have a Neutral and Very Local impact on landscape character – neutral because the rationalisation and removal of four existing structures would compensate for any adverse effects on tranquillity and pastoral character associated with the proposed barn located in a meadow that has already been compromised by the hardstanding.

Central concerns for this Inquiry

- 7.10 So far these conclusion have focused on summarising a straight assessment of the landscape and biodiversity effects of the developments and proposals being considered at this Inquiry. However, there are broader factors of critical importance to this Inquiry.
- 7.11 Firstly, the existing and proposed developments being considered are needed to **enable** the management of the woodlands of the Hillyfield. These woodlands are a valued landscape attribute of Dartmoor’s landscape both nationally (captured in the National Character Profile for Dartmoor) and more locally, being identified as key landscape attributes in the relevant sections of the Landscape Character Assessment for Dartmoor (2017). They are also an important biodiversity resource. From the foregoing and the enabling role of the developments in facilitating this woodland management, I firmly conclude that the proposed multi-purpose barn would conserve *and enhance* what is special or locally distinctive about the landscape and environment of the National Park and therefore is fully in accord with policies COR1, COR3, COR8, DMD5, DMD14 and DMD34.

- 7.12 Secondly, at the Hillyfield the type of woodland management being followed is not the clear felling and replanting approach characteristic of commercial coniferous forestry where management activities are infrequent and rely on very heavy machinery following a peripatetic approach. Rather it is **traditional and sustainable woodland management** where manpower replaces heavy machinery and activities are relatively frequent. This traditional woodland management is strongly supported through relevant national, regional and local strategies including the Dartmoor National Park's own Management Plan and Landscape Character Assessment (Section 6).
- 7.13 Thirdly, the overall approach being followed at the Hillyfield mirrors in a microcosm the **National Park purposes and duty**. It is sustaining and enhancing natural beauty and wildlife and, as set out in Doug King-Smith's Proof, within the 28 day rule, is offering opportunities for enjoyment and learning, while seeking to create a business that sustains the continuation of the above. In particular the business, which adds value to the products of the woodland management and sells these locally, is precisely the type of business that is highly sustainable and the essence of what national parks stand for, with the monies raised by the business being recycled back into the holding to enable the continued sustainable management of the woodlands and the land more generally – a virtuous cycle.
- 7.14 Fourthly and finally, Dartmoor, like all UK national parks is a Category V Protected Landscape (classified by IUCN). That is a cultural landscape that has been moulded by human influence over millennia, where it is particularly important to safeguard the '*traditional interactions*' that are vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of these areas. In the case of ancient and broadleaf woodlands these traditional interactions are exemplified by traditional forms of woodland management – sequential coppicing, the selection of standard trees to grow on, charcoal burning etc. These are still practiced by a dwindling number of woodland owners, as at the Hillyfield, helping keep alive the traditional working landscape of Dartmoor. It is these traditional interactions that need to be kept alive with opportunities provided to pass these traditions on to the next generation through training and practical experience, as being encouraged at the Hillyfield.

7.15 It is my view that it would be a very significant missed opportunity if the proposed developments are not allowed. They provide the means to continue this valuable work at the Hillyfield in a way that would allow the site to function efficiently and would allow order to be brought to the site.

Lyndis Cole

11.3.2018