



WINSFORD CONSERVATION AREA

It is proposed by Exmoor National Park Authority that Winsford is designated as a conservation area. This document will provide you with guidance explaining what this means, how it may affect you and your property, and what the next steps are likely to be.

What is a Conservation Area?

Across Exmoor National Park there are currently 16 conservation areas including settlements such as Dulverton, Porlock, Dunster, Lynton, and Lynmouth. Conservation areas exist to protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place—in other words the features that make it unique and distinctive.

Various factors contribute to the special character of a conservation area.

These include:

- the quality of the buildings
- the historic road and path layout
- boundary and surface treatments
- quality of the public realm
- the contribution of trees and green spaces.

The designation of a conservation area does not mean every building will be preserved or that no changes are allowed. Change is inevitable and may be necessary for the day-to-day life, prosperity, and enhancement of an area. Designation helps ensure changes respect the area's character and appearance.

What is special about Winsford?

Winsford is one of the most picturesque villages in Exmoor National Park.

Believed to have Saxon origins, Winsford occupies a central position within the National Park and its history is closely linked with that of Exmoor as a whole.

Several routes converging on the village, especially that leading south west towards Tarr Steps, are of considerable antiquity.

Likewise, several cottages bear evidence of early origins, with external stone stacks, some in the front lateral position, which typifies the local vernacular style. The substantial Parish Church with its tall late 15th century tower indicates that Winsford has been an important community since at least medieval times.

The open spaces and trees are another notable characteristic feature of Winsford. The central village green provides an important amenity space and contains a number of fine specimens of trees including Beech, Ash and Oak.

The village contains 12 listed buildings including 4 listed bridges and the grade I listed church. It also contains 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The historic village core is largely unspoilt by modern development.

Exmoor National Park Authority has a duty to from time to time assess areas that may be worthy of designation as a conservation area. A recent assessment of historic settlements across the National Park highlighted that Winsford meets the criteria required and would seem to be an obvious candidate to become a conservation area.

How will it affect me and my property?

Where planning permission is required for works within a conservation area Exmoor National Park planning policy is supportive of new development and alterations to existing buildings that are well designed and employ good quality materials. Works that do not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area are unlikely to be supported.

Within Exmoor National Park, areas that are inside and outside conservation areas have the largely the same 'permitted development rights'. These allow minor alterations such as changing doors and windows, to be carried out without planning permission. The impact on your permitted development rights will therefore be very limited. Permitted development rights are more restricted inside the National Parks than in other areas of the country.

The primary implication that conservation area status will have is that Planning Permission would be required for the total or substantial demolition of any building over 115m³ in size or for the demolition of a boundary wall over 1 metre in height next to the highway or 2 metres elsewhere. There is a general presumption against the loss of buildings or features which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Additional planning controls within conservation areas can be applied via Article 4(2) Directions. These remove specific permitted development rights

meaning that planning permission is required for minor alterations such as the replacement of windows and doors. No article 4s is currently suggested in Winsford.

It is important to note that there are different requirements if your property is listed and that commercial building and flats have different permitted development rights.

Works to trees in Conservation Areas

A major element in the character and appearance of a conservation area are the trees. Ill-considered works to trees can result in their unnecessary loss but can also harm the appearance of the area surrounding them and spoil the setting of nearby buildings.

It is likely that the most noticeable impact on you should Winsford become a conservation area will be that you will be required to give Exmoor National Park Authority 6 weeks notice when you plan on carrying out works to certain trees.

This includes cutting down, topping, lopping, uprooting and wilful damage or destruction (such as severing a root system). To notify ENPA you will need to complete a simple and free application form specifying the tree(s) concerned, the works proposed, and the reasons behind the works. The application can be found on the ENPA planning website and can be submitted online or via post.

There are exemptions to this requirement which include:

- If the tree is less than 75mm (3 inches) in diameter 1.5m (5ft) above

the ground.

- If the tree is dead or the branches to be removed are dead.
- Pruning of a fruit tree.
- Works are urgently necessary to remove an immediate risk of serious harm. There is no exemption for a dying tree. It is the owner's interest to contact the National Park in such cases as there is a burden of proof on the person carrying out the works to show the tree was dead or dangerous.

Normal Tree Protection Order (TPO) procedures apply if a tree in a conservation area already has TPO. You may also need a felling license from the Forestry Commission in certain situations.

For hedgerows, if laying is being carried out as part of the regular maintenance of the hedge, permission would not be required, but if there is proposal to remove (or lop, top or uproot) hedgerow trees greater than 75mm diameter at 1.5m permission would have to be sought.

It is an offence under s.211(1) of the Planning Act to carry out works to trees in a conservation area without giving notice unless the works are in one of the exempted categories. It is also an offence to carry out works where notice is given but consent is refused.

If a tree subject to an application is considered to be of high amenity value or helps define the character of the Conservation Area, ENPA may refuse consent to fell by placing a TPO on that tree

In some cases where a tree is removed there may be a requirement to replace it with a new tree. Once approval is granted it stands for 2 years.

What's happening now?

The Parish Council has been consulted on the proposal and has agreed that a period of wider public consultation should begin.

This consultation period will run for 6 weeks from the date of this letter. There will be a public drop in session held in the village hall during this period. The date for these sessions is on the letter provided with this leaflet.

To inform this consultation a draft conservation area appraisal has been produced that provided more detail on what makes Winsford special. It can be found online at: www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/conservation-areas-planning

Hard copies are also available to view at the National Park Offices and will be in the village hall for the duration of the consultation period. Your ideas and thoughts about this document are a key part of the appraisal.

At the end of the consultation period all of the comments received will be taken into account.

Following the consultation, a recommendation as to whether to proceed with adoption will take place. If adoption does proceed a paper will be presented to the Authority Members of National Park Committee who will decide whether or not the designation should take place. This is likely to take place in late 2022 or early 2023. Public speakers and comments are welcome at the committee meeting.

