

Affinity Woodland Workers Co-operative Limited

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9th August 2007

Development Control
Dartmoor National Park Authority
Parke
Bovey Tracey
Newton Abbot
Devon TQ13 9JQ

Dear Friends

**Low impact living development incorporating
sustainable agriculture & forestry, permaculture, and education**

We enclose our planning application for the above development at Steward Community Woodland from the date of expiry of the existing five year permission (which was granted on 12/8/02).

We look forward to hearing your reply.

Best wishes

Dan Thompson-Mills
Director & Secretary

Merlin Howse
Director

Beccy Cruse
Director

Peter Cow
Director

John Elsworthy
Director

Son Parsons
Director

Marylise Dufaux
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Ian Kirton ('Sef')
Director

Mel Davis
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Company Registration No. 3910698

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INTRODUCTION

No one can doubt the scale and the urgency of the environmental challenge facing humanity at this time. The far-reaching consequences of climate change are already upon us and will increase over time. Soon, if not now, the peak in world oil production will occur bringing about the end of the era of cheap oil. The vast majority of things that we use and rely on in our modern society depend on the availability of cheap oil for their production and delivery to us.

These twin challenges of enormous proportions require action now if we are to avert the worst negative effects and transition to a sustainable society. Steward Community Woodland is part of that solution. The project is pioneering the way to a lower carbon future (see Appendix 9). We set out below our Mission Statement.

MISSION STATEMENT

We are a co-operative of people living and working together at Steward Community Woodland by Dartmoor. We aim to foster environmental awareness and solutions by providing examples of sustainable land use.

Our community is based on the ethics of love, earth care, people care, and resources for need not greed. We aim to practice a positive impact lifestyle by:

- managing the woods and our lives using permaculture principles, and limiting use of fossil fuels;
- growing much of our own food (organically);
- generating enough income from the project's sustainable activities and from other ethically based work to meet our basic needs;
- building our own homes with materials from the wood and reused/recycled materials;
- reducing vehicle use, sharing vehicles and using biofuels;
- home educating our children with the aim of fostering wholeness, balance and empowerment;
- living together in community, respecting all life;
- generating renewable energy and exploring alternatives to the use of fossil fuelled woodland machinery;
- connecting with the wider community with honesty and clarity;
- learning from all around us and passing on our knowledge, skills and experience.

APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A FURTHER 5 YEAR PERIOD

We are a thriving woodland community with many strong and positive links within the wider local community. We are a working model of sustainability and positive action for the benefit of people, animals and the Earth. We are an asset to the National Park and the local area.

We set out in this application for renewal of our permission how we are meeting some of the aims set out in the original application (Summer 2000). We also make it clear where we have yet to fully meet some of the original aims and where we believe some aims were overly idealistic, unrealistic or unnecessary and have thus been adapted or replaced as appropriate. We are thus applying for permission for a further temporary period of 5 years to fulfil our amended aims across the board after which time we intend to apply for a permanent permission.

Thus, in this application, we set out what we have achieved in the time we have been at Steward Wood, present our amended aims, ethics and values, and show how these aims will be achieved over the next 5 years.

CONTINUED NEED FOR RESIDENCY WITHIN THE WOOD

We refer to the Appeal Decision (Ref APP/J9497/C/01/1067412) of Mr Tamplin and rely on the Inspector's reasons for the granting of permission within the scope of planning law, planning guidance, and planning policies, as well as Agenda 21 and related policies. In particular, Mr Tamplin states at paragraph 29:

“Were the group to live off-site, the evidence on housing costs in Moretonhampstead bears out the appellant's claim that conventional housing costs and the need to find employment to fund them would lead to the group having little time available for the project. Therefore it would become little more than a hobby and its purpose would become completely negated.”

Living on-site is essential for the continued viability of this sustainable project. Living in conventional housing in nearby towns and commuting to the site could only be supported by having full-time (and well-paid) jobs elsewhere, leaving us with little or no time to carry out the project. Living in the woods enables us to dedicate our time to the project and be fully committed to it. Living in the woods also enables us to home educate our children in a safe and nourishing environment. The part-time jobs that some members have involving work off-site (much of which is low paid) complements the work and activities carried out on-site. We reside in low impact, ecological dwellings and utilise renewable sources of energy while reducing our fossil fuel and vehicle use.

There is a proven need for sustainable land use and development (see the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and subsequent policies and agreements relating to climate change etc). Permaculture and forest gardening are examples of sustainable land use. They are low input and high output in terms of energy and resources but are intensive in terms of people power. Living on-site facilitates us to grow food and live without connection to any of the utilities (water, electricity, gas, sewage disposal). We provide all these services ourselves by ecological and sustainable means (filtered spring water, compost toilets, renewable energy, using wood from the land for fuel, etc). We minimise pollution by promoting and practising a way of life that reduces unsustainable consumption, its associated wastes and throw away culture. We reduce, reuse, repair and recycle wherever possible – and encourage others to do the same.

The detailed Carbon Audit (at Appendix 9) shows that our carbon footprint is 23% of the national average.

In short, this project is holistic in its nature and scope and would be impossible to achieve without a residential element.

See further on this subject at Appendix 5.

PLANNING CASELAW AND DECISIONS

We refer you in particular to the following planning decisions and caselaw:

- (1) *Petter & Harris v SSETR and Chichester DC* [CoA 1999, EPL 5-163.25]
- (2) South Somerset District Council decision (Ref 0401235 COU) on 23/6/05 granting 10 year temporary planning permission to Tinkers Bubble, Little Norton, Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Somerset TA14
- (3) Appeal decisions APP/C1435/C/03/1114412, 1114361, 1114413, 1114425, 1114426, 1114414, 1114415 concerning land at Quicken Wood, Framfield, East Sussex TN22 5HG
- (4) Appeal decision APP/K0805/F/06/2018725 regarding The Old Piggery, Keveral Farm, St Martins, Looe PL13 1PA

The case of *Petter & Harris* is cited in Mr Tamplin's Appeal decision. The judgment states that although profitability is often an indicator of financial viability it is not an essential component and a non-profit making holding may satisfy the "underlying purposes of the policy." This lead to the subsistence policy of paragraph 8 of PPS7 which states: "Some enterprises which aim to operate broadly on a subsistence basis, but which nonetheless provide wider benefits (eg. In managing attractive landscapes or wildlife habitats) can be sustained on relatively low financial returns."

South Somerset District Council granted the low impact community at Tinkers Bubble planning permission for 5 years in 1999. This decision was referred to in our original planning application and in our Appeal. The community has since been granted a further 10 year permission.

We refer you in particular to paragraphs 17, 19, 20 & 24 of the Quicken Wood appeal decision which we attach in full at Appendix 4.

Although the Appeal decision regarding Keveral Farm has been withdrawn (due to technical errors regarding the conditions set out by the Inspector), the Inspector's decision concerning sustainability shows the current stance on this issue by the Planning Inspectorate. We set out below paragraphs 28 & 29 of the Inspector's decision:

"28. Encouraging sustainable development is central to current national guidance. The 'ecological footprinting' evidence put to the inquiry demonstrates that the impact of individuals living at Keveral Farm is some 38% of the average impact of a UK individual. Their lifestyles reduce their impact on the environment by 62% when compared to the UK average. The majority of the community work either full time or part time on the farm. Permitting a small affordable dwelling at Keveral Farm would contribute to reducing travel and would support sustainable objectives.

29. I conclude that there is general support in the development plan for the change of use of this small agricultural building to a dwelling. Any shortcomings in the evidence of a reasonable attempt to secure a business use for the building seems to me to be outweighed by the sound basis for regarding this conversion as a much needed affordable dwelling for an organisation that has demonstrated an impressive degree of sustainability.”

CONDITIONS AND GUARANTEES

The five year planning permission granted by Mr Tamplin was subject to conditions and guarantees to ensure that only environmentally benign, low impact development and activities could take place on the land. Most of those conditions were proposed by ourselves. These conditions have provided assurance that the granting of a change in land use classification could not allow inappropriate high impact development and that the project has continued in its aims of sustainable land use and being of benefit to the local community and economy.

We propose in the granting of a further temporary planning permission of five years that:

- (1) The Settlement Area (ie. the area of human habitation) be limited to the defined area within the middle of the woodland holding as set out in the original permission – see map at Appendix 1.
- (2) The project shall continue to be managed in a way as to comply with the detailed “Fifteen Criteria for developments associated with sustainable land-based rural activities” as produced by the Rural Planning Group. The Criteria relate to, inter alia, minimisation of car use and waste; integration of the project into the local economy and community; easily dismantlable structures made of local materials which are not visually intrusive; autonomous provision of water, energy and sewage disposal; ecological management of the site; sustainable practices for agricultural and forestry activities.
- (3) No fossil fuel powered generator shall be operated on the site at any time.
- (4) No later than 1st April each year, we shall submit to the DNPA a written report giving details of the activities carried out during the previous twelve months in compliance with the Fifteen Criteria, the Business Strategy and the Management Plan forming part of this application.

HUMAN RIGHTS

We refer to our rights under Articles 8 & 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (as incorporated into British law by the Human Rights Act) and to the Appeal Decision of Mr Tamplin (see Ref above) on this subject (in particular paragraph 37). We also draw your attention to the appeal decision on Article 8 concerning Brook Farm, Butleigh (Ref APP/Q3305/A/04/1138976).

COMMUNITY HISTORY

The project was begun in April 2000 by a group of ten adults (with no children). We were starting a highly innovative project and had a lot of enthusiasm. We were mostly young people, very idealistic, and fired up by a passion to change the world for the better. We were all environmental and social justice campaigners with varying skills and experience of low impact living and horticulture. None of us had any background in woodland management so we began to study, consult with experts and observe the land. The land has always been kind and generous to us.

The early years of the project were challenging and exhilarating. We undertook the complex process of building a community from scratch. We had the physical challenge of building dwellings and infrastructure, clearing an area of rosebay willow herb and brambles to create vegetable beds, etc. At the same time, we were creating and evolving a structure for living together as a community. We were also building our links with the wider local community, developing our business ideas and woodland management plan, working to achieve planning permission, and we also spent much time campaigning for social change (from the woods and elsewhere).

This early stage involved much dedication and hard work. The Planning Inspector, Mr Tamplin, noted that having been in the wood over two winters living according to our principles "there is no doubt that...the group...has entirely genuine intentions, determination and commitment to this experiment" (paragraph 30).

By early 2002, a number of members had left for various reasons and for the following two and a half years we had just four adults and a young child living on site. It was an incredible feat of human endeavour that so few of us with a newborn child managed to carry on living here for so long and continue the project. There was also help from a member of the group who shared her time between the woods and her house in Moretonhampstead.

The day to day tasks of maintaining the structures, maintaining and developing our renewable energy systems, managing the woodland, making firewood (all by hand), gardening and other subsistence living, washing, childcare etc took up much of our time. However, we also continued the Visitor Work Weekend programme and ran our first two week residential permaculture design course in August 2003 – this eventually led to more members joining the community. We also hosted some courses (eg. a Forest School Leadership course run by Bridgwater College) and continued doing lots of outreach and voluntary work (eg. building a demonstration bender and running a stall at the South West Forest Woodfair each year). It was also a time of continuing our training and learning in various fields. We completed various orders for wood (ash poles, coppice wood, larch trees for constructing a barn at Proper Job) and our permaculture course was a great success. However, as we were not generating sufficient cash income from our activities on the land to meet all our needs, we supplemented our income with other work (in particular working at Proper Job and website design).

In the Summer of 2004, three adults and three children joined the group, more than doubling the size of the community, and another adult joined the following summer. This led to a lot of work on maintaining and improving our structures and

infrastructure to ensure that all members of the community had decent, comfortable and warm dwellings. Also we undertook a review and revision of the project's aims and objectives, developing our ideas as to how to take the project forward with this new and expanded mix of people. Because of this great effort in accommodating many new members, and particularly in having several children on site, much of our income from the land continued to be subsistence and to meet our financial needs. Peter continued to work one day a week at Proper Job, Merlin worked part time from his bender developing websites and he taught computer courses at Moretonhampstead Library, while John worked with children in care, and Nicky as a Forest School Leader. We also earned money from our woodland activities (eg. selling split larch fence posts) and held another successful two week permaculture design courses with 15 students in August 2005. Home education became a key part of our activities and the community benefited greatly from Son's craft and children based skills.

In the Spring of 2006, a further family joined the group and it felt that the community had fully come of age. After much debate, we decided in March 2006 to use a petrol chainsaw to process felled trees. This speeded up the process enormously of collecting firewood and making building materials, giving us much more time to do other things. Furthermore, it is now leading us to use and develop a chainsaw planking tool.

The training and voluntary work undertaken, developing skills and experience (for example, in the area of Forest School and bushcraft) is now paying off with more paid work coming in. We intend to develop this further by running residential camps and retreats. Our training in chainsaw use, and woodland management (in particular Continuous Cover Forestry) has helped and informed our management of the woods. Running permaculture design courses at Steward Wood (the third this Summer), Peter completing the Permaculture Diploma, and all the improvements to structures and infrastructure to accommodate visitors comfortably, now means we are looking to hold at least one full course a year at the woods along with short introductory courses.

We are contributing to an awareness and development of sustainable practices through our voluntary activities (eg. Transition Town Moreton, SCW Open Days, and breastfeeding peer counselling) and through our commercial activities (permaculture courses, Forest School, work at Proper Job, etc). Our ongoing programme of having WWOOFers come to stay ('Willing Workers on Organic Farms') allows people to experience and take part in sustainable practices and community living. For example, Jeff who lives in Sheffield, came to stay with us for 6 weeks in 2003. What he experienced and learned here changed his life enormously. He took a greater awareness and practice of sustainability into his own family life (eg. changing his behaviour in terms of energy use) and also took that into his work within the Church. There is an enormous cross-fertilisation of ideas, skills, practices etc between Steward Community Woodland, the local community, local businesses (eg. Proper Job) and organisations (eg. Moretonhampstead Development Trust), and volunteers and WWOOFers.

We now have a fourth family undergoing a trial period to become members. Owen has highly experienced, specialist woodland skills which he is bringing to the

community, and Chris has much enthusiasm for gardening and home education. Daz, a long term WWOOFer, has brought his two donkeys to the woods – they have been helping move split wood, compost, etc. We have a lot of interest in people joining the community which is a sign of our success and how we are thriving. We now wish to take this forward with planning permission for a further five years.

BUSINESS STRATEGY

Our aim is to meet our needs, financial and otherwise, from a variety of sources, some based on site and some off site, but all based on the permaculture ethics of Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share.

The mind map overleaf sets out our projected sources of income for the coming 5 years.

Commercial Activities On-Site

Timber products and saw logs:

We will be offering saw logs, and possibly planked timber, for sale to the local community from our own Scots Pine in the near future. Please see our Woodland Management Plan at Appendix 7 for more details.

Herb and Tree Nursery:

We plan to establish a tree nursery which will also be used to propagate culinary and useful plants such as herbs. This will result in saleable trees, plants and plant products, produced without the use of pesticides, which will be a source of income.

Woodland Crafts:

We have sold various crafts from the woodland and at Proper Job during our time here, for example handcrafted fenceposts and rustic planters. We intend to develop this further by making and selling rustic chairs and tables, walking sticks, baskets and re-useable sanitary wear.

Son is currently producing 100% recycled, washable sanitary wear to provide an alternative to disposable sanitary products. This will reduce the volume of landfill in the local area and be a source of income.

Courses:

Permaculture design – Peter recently completed his Diploma in Applied Permaculture Design, and will be convening and co-teaching one fully residential two week Permaculture Design Course every year at the woodland. We have held three such courses over the last 3 years. The courses turn over about £7,000 each time, and members of the community are paid for catering and teaching work. Peter will also be running at least two 'Introduction to Permaculture' weekend courses every year, with a projected turnover of about £400 each time.

Renewable Energy – Merlin is developing appropriate technology workshops and courses, focussed on sharing his knowledge and expertise to enable people to provide themselves with off-grid renewable energy solutions. He plans to start running these courses next year.

Bushcraft/Fieldcraft Skills & Nature Awareness – Dan has been developing these skills over several years and is now about to undertake a year long indepth training in this area with Trackways. Following the completion of that training, Dan intends to offer residential camps and courses for people to learn and develop these skills.

Low Impact Building & Maintenance – When we are building or maintaining our eco structures, we plan to advertise for people to pay to come and participate in the project. While the visitors learn about eco-construction, we benefit by having help and receiving money.

Wild Food Forays & Fungal Forays – Dan has been offering Wild Food Forays for a number of years and intends to develop these further. Also, we will continue to organise Fungal Forays with local expert, Dr Christian Taylor.

Vegetables & Eggs:

As we further develop our food growing at Steward Wood especially through use of a polytunnel, we intend to sell produce, in particular salad packs, through local markets

and shops. We intend to establish a free-range organic flock of Black Roche chickens to feed ourselves. We plan to offer excess eggs for sale to local people.

Mushrooms grown on logs:

We intend to propagate specialist mushrooms on cut logs from our own trees. We will sell these to local shops, hotels and restaurants.

Forest School:

The Forest School model is operating successfully across the country with schools, nurseries and other children's groups, and offers a opportunity for the local community to directly benefit from the site at Steward Wood. It is a programme working with children and young people in the outdoors, helping to develop their social skills, self-esteem and independence. The concept uses the outdoor environment to educate, build self-esteem, inspire and appreciate our natural surroundings.

Dan and John have undergone training as Forest School leaders at Bicton College, and Son has much expertise in craftmaking, nature games, and other children's activities. We have a dedicated Forest School site in a corner of the woodland, with a shelter and fire-pit, where we have been running sessions with various groups, including children involved in Woodcraft Folk, home-ed children, language students, and Basque teenagers. Dan has also been involved in running sessions with children from Chagford School at Epona, a community land project above Chagford.

We plan to develop the Forest School work further, inviting Moreton School and other school groups to come along as well as continuing to build on the links already established.

Retreats:

Green Paganism/Earth Wisdom - We plan to offer fee-paying courses and retreats which will encompass environmental awareness in a woodland environment, from a spiritual perspective. Interest levels indicate that this will be a source of financial income in the future. It also corresponds with our Mission Statement, in that it will educate visitors about sustainable lifestyles.

Website Development & Server Administration:

Taking advantage of renewable energy generated at the woods to power his laptop computer, Merlin is able to provide website services to local individuals and community businesses (such as Proper Job). He intends to continue doing so over the coming 5 years.

Work Off-Site

In addition to the commercial activities carried out on site, we also earn money from activities off site. Sometimes these are the same activities carried out at other locations, for example running Forest School sessions, teaching permaculture design courses. Also, some members of the community have part-time jobs based off-site. Sef, Peter & Dan work at Proper Job in Chagford, a community composting, reuse/recycle centre. Merlin teaches computer courses at Moretonhampstead

Library and offers computer support to people living in the area. John works for Herts Care, looking after children in care. Dan helps run Forest School sessions, for example with children from Chagford School on some land above Chagford. Peter has recently taught permaculture design courses in Ashburton and Dorset. Owen (currently a trial member) works part time as a tree surgeon. His tree surgery skills have already proved very useful at the woods.

We are not looking to earn all our financial income from activities on site. Our cash income is from a mix of work off site and income generating activities on the land. All our activities off site are strongly connected to the project and have the same ethical basis.

Our activities off-site make an important contribution to the economic, social and educational life of the wider community, and there is a cross-fertilisation between our work and jobs off-site and the project. For example, by some members working at Proper Job, Steward Community Woodland and Proper Job both benefit from the sharing and learning of skills, resources and expertise. Many useful materials and compost are brought from Proper Job back to Steward Wood, and we sell products at Proper Job such as our rustic planters. Furthermore, Proper Job cannot afford to pay high wages. With our low housing and living costs at the woods, we can happily work at Proper Job at the low wage level.

Subsistence Agriculture, Livelihoods & Lifestyle

While we generate financial income from our activities on and off site, a key factor in our sustainable livelihoods is the subsistence element. Rather than maximising income and profits from our business activities, we aim to provide for as much of our material needs as possible from the land and by ourselves, thus reducing the need to earn large sums of money. Subsistence is a significant and bonding element of our community and ethos – and it allays very significant costs (financial and environmental) that would otherwise be incurred if we lived elsewhere.

*We estimate that on average **65%** of our basic needs are met by subsistence.*

The subsistence goods and services we provide for ourselves include:

Food

Water

Fuel wood

Wood as building material

Electricity generated through renewable services

Sanitation and composting (organic waste recycling)

Shelter

Homemade furniture, clothing, toys, etc

Social goods such as shared childcare, shared transport

Maintenance of the low impact structures and infrastructure by ourselves (rather than employing plumber, electrician, boiler man, builder, etc)

Entertainment (insofar as human intercourse at the settlement reduces the need to 'go out')

The sum total of these subsistence benefits results in a lifestyle which requires a considerably lower financial expenditure than would be engendered if we lived in houses scattered about in local villages or towns. The reduced level of transport is also a reflection of the fact that this lifestyle provides us with physical and social goods and services which we would otherwise have to seek elsewhere.

Paragraph 8 of Annex A of PPS7 states:

“some enterprises which aim to operate broadly on a subsistence basis, but which nonetheless provide wider benefits (eg in managing attractive landscapes or wildlife habitats) can be sustained on relatively low financial returns”.

This sentence suggests (without actually spelling it out) that subsistence land management ought to carry with it “wider benefits.” Our subsistence activities bring with them three wider benefits.

The first of these is that the subsistence lifestyle is by no means introverted, but provides the basis for a number of educational courses, on permaculture, biodiversity, low impact building, renewable energy, bushcraft skills, retreats etc. These are a benefit to the people who attend, and bring in a commercial income. There is a growing demand from the public for this kind of “back to the land” education and it is a common form of rural diversification carried out by farmers with a strong traditional or subsistence leaning. Visitors (such as ‘Willing Workers on Organic Farms’) also benefit by learning skills, taking part in the permacultural activities, etc.

The subsistence element, as well as being pursued for its own sake, is therefore also an important component of our commercial and educational activity.

The second of these wider benefits is that actually specified in Annex A, namely managing an attractive landscape and wildlife habitat. See our management plan for details. Many of the landscape benefits are a direct consequence of our dedication to traditional, non-mechanized and subsistence methods of managing the land. This is unsurprising since these were the techniques that created the valued landscape in the first place.

The third benefit is the high degree of sustainability achieved by the development. PPS7 states that:

“sustainable development is the core principle underpinning land use planning . . . Decisions on development proposals should be based on sustainable development principles, ensuring an integrated approach to the consideration of:

- social inclusion, recognizing the needs of everyone;
- effective protection and enhancement of the environment;
- prudent use of natural resources;
- maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.”

Our settlement performs well in respect of all of these four principles:

- it provides access to land, opportunities for land-based work and affordable housing for people who might not otherwise be able to afford these ; and it provides services which allow the public to participate;
- we have a detailed management plan for protecting and enhancing the land;

- our use of natural resources such as water, energy, waste sinks etc is very restrained compared to nearly all other developments;
- the project provides stimulating and healthy outdoor employment and combines well with similar ethically-based employment nearby at a time when opportunities for rural employment are declining.

Another helpful guide for assessing sustainability is Ecological Footprint Analysis. Paragraph 1.6.2 of the *Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West* states: “The South West’s ecological footprint is unsustainable as it stands. If everyone on the planet consumed such a quantity of natural resources and energy as an average South West resident, three planets would be needed to support life on Earth. Consequently a shift is needed towards ‘one planet’, lower consumption, with lifestyles which are more efficient.”

The means of reducing our ecological footprint are detailed below.

Paragraph 38 of Planning Policy Statement 3 on Housing emphasises: “the contribution to be made to cutting carbon emissions from focusing new development in locations with good public transport accessibility and/or by means other than the private car and where it can readily and viably draw its energy supply from decentralized energy supply systems based on renewable and low-carbon forms of energy supply, or where there is potential for this to be realized.”

Our settlement is sited so as to take advantage of the potential for decentralized energy generation. All of our structures are heated entirely with wood derived sustainably from woodland of considerable amenity value. If we lived in town we would (a) need more wood to heat larger and less well-adapted dwellings which typically take 7 to 9 tonnes of wood to heat; and (b) need to transport it to our homes. We would not be able to have a micro hydro scheme to generate electricity from water. As for public transport, we are fortunate to have good transport links.

We are thus attaining a far higher standard of sustainability than that achieved by conventional housing developments; and this achievement is conveyed to those who visit or take courses at the settlement. The dissemination of this degree of sustainability constitutes a wider benefit of the subsistence approach to land management; and the high level of sustainability is a significant material consideration for the renewal of our planning permission.

COMMUNITY AND STRUCTURES

We are a community of nine adults and six children. All the adults are members and directors of Affinity Woodland Workers Co-operative. One member is due to leave in August. We currently have a family of two adults and one child undergoing a trial period to become members. It is possible that an additional family (2 adults and 2 children) and another adult will start trial periods in the autumn/winter. Thus, we anticipate being a group of up to thirteen adults and nine children soon. We would like scope to house these extra members comfortably at which point we believe we would be close to the capacity of the wood, of our infrastructure and of the human dynamics.

At present, we have the following structures on site which are all covered by the existing planning permission:

- 7 individual dwellings
- Longhouse
- Kitchen
- Compost Toilet
- Bathhouse
- Workshop
- Bikeshed*
- Forest School Shelter*

All the structures, other than those with an asterix, are within the Settlement Area (a designated area set out in the existing planning permission). We also have an arrangement with the DNPA for a limited number of tents to be erected at any one time (up to eight hike-type tents with no tent remaining for more than 14 nights).

We are now applying for permission for the following structures:

- 9 individual dwellings
- Longhouse
- Kitchen
- Compost Toilet No.1 (existing one)
- Compost Toilet No.2* (alongside the Glade)
- Compost Toilet No.3* (between the Growing Area and the Forest School Area)
- Bathhouse
- Workshop
- Bikeshed*
- Forest School Shelter*
- Shed* (in Growing Area)
- Greenhouse* (in Growing Area)
- Polytunnel* (in Growing Area)
- Storage Shed* (by Bikeshed)
- Tents* (mainly in the Glade – for WWOOFers and course students)

Again, all the structures, other than those with an asterix, are to be within the Settlement Area.

As you can see, we are applying for two more individual dwellings which we need to allow our community to expand a little more as well as house visitors comfortably (especially in the winter). If one or two more individual dwellings were to be built, they would be sited within the Settlement Area and be within the scope of the permission and planning conditions (including the Fifteen Criteria). We need another compost toilet to be set up alongside the Glade for use by visitors camping in the Glade. It would also facilitate partially-disabled people to stay at the woods and attend courses. A compost toilet between the Growing Area and the Forest School area is needed for people working in the Growing Area (especially those with children) and for people attending Forest School sessions. These would be of a similar design to the existing compost toilet but smaller (as they will be used less). We need a shed (to store tools), a greenhouse (for propagating plants), and a

polytunnel (for growing a greater range of plants and for growing over a longer period in the year) in the Growing Area. The maximum size of the polytunnel would be 7 x 20m (3m in height) and the greenhouse 12' x 6'. We would site these structures sensitively in relation to their visibility by our neighbours. In particular, we would site the polytunnel so that it could not be seen from any of the neighbouring properties. The storage shed alongside the bikeshed would be for storing materials on their way on and off site, as well as giving greater capacity for housing children's buggies and the like. In addition, as we have WWOOFers and other visitors staying throughout the year, we need scope in the new permission for tents to be erected extending the existing arrangement to allow up to 20 tents for up to 20 nights each at any time of the year. This is needed, for example, to facilitate the holding of more permaculture design courses with up to 15 students along with WWOOFers staying on site.

All our existing dwellings and structures are made of wood from the land, reused timber and other reclaimed materials (such as board and windows) and are all canvas covered. We would like scope within the new permission to employ other eco-build techniques, namely:

- Cob Construction
- Strawbale Construction
- Cordwood Construction
- Rammed Earth Construction
- Timber Cladding
- Log Cabin Construction
- Earth Sheltered Dwellings
- Turf Roof
- Thatch Roof

This will enable us to experiment with and demonstrate other types of eco-build as well as enable our dwellings to be more efficient (for example by providing greater insulation) at the same time as being beautiful and in harmony with the character of the woodland and the existing structures. We enclose some photographs at Appendix 11 of such structures built elsewhere to give a feel for what such structures at Steward Wood might look like. We need scope to improve/rebuild our existing structures using one or more of these techniques as well as building any new structures. Any such structures would of course adhere to planning conditions, including the Fifteen Criteria. Some of these techniques, such as cob, have been employed in the area for many hundreds of years. Furthermore, these types of structure have been given planning permission in many other places (details supplied upon request). In particular, there are timber clad structures, and structures incorporating cob, strawbale and thatch at Tinkers Bubble, all within the scope of their temporary low impact planning permission (see earlier for details).

These eco-build techniques are not incompatible with a temporary permission as they all result in structures which are easily dismantlable and often biodegradable. For example, cob can easily be broken up with a sledgehammer and will biodegrade readily.

VEHICLE USAGE AND ACCESS

Part of Steward Community Woodland is a section of disused railway track that once served Moretonhampstead. At the point where the track crossed the A382, there is a highly visible entrance which provides safe access to and from the road. There is ample parking on the track for the limited number of vehicles used by the project and for our neighbours. We have granted rights to all three of the neighbouring cottages allowing them access and parking.

We are committed to reducing vehicle usage, sharing vehicles and using biofuels. We have the following objectives:

- Continue to increase levels of self-sufficiency on the land thus reducing the need to travel.
- Encourage walking, cycling and public transport use among ourselves and our visitors. We now have four electric bicycles (which we charge mostly from renewable energy systems) which enable us to go on longer journeys by bike. We are also looking forward to the construction of the community path and cycleway along the route of the disused railway track between Moretonhampstead and Bovey Tracey which will make it easier and safer to make journeys by foot or bicycle.
- Use bio-fuels.
- No petrol cars.
- Co-ordinating and sharing journeys.
- Realistic price per mile charged on shared vehicles to discourage 'unconscious' usage.
- Avoiding short trips.

In the original permission, there was a condition restricting the number of residents' vehicles on site, which we ourselves had proposed. The number of vehicles on site is important and relevant in terms of our environmental impact (because of the embodied energy in a vehicle, the spare parts, oil use, etc). But we believe that reducing vehicle usage is the key factor in cutting our carbon footprint. Carbon emissions produced by a vehicle vary by the amount of fuel used and the type of fuel. The Carbon Audit (at Appendix 9) shows how low our carbon footprint is in relation to transport.

We have found that having a restriction on the number of residents vehicles on site has caused much difficulty when attempting to meet the changing needs of the community, which has expanded since 2002. In particular, we have four families living on site with the need to take children on educational trips. We aim to find a balance between keeping the number of residents vehicles well below the norm of two per household, minimising vehicle use and meeting our transport needs in a rural location which may change over time.

We are fortunate now to have an excellent local source of biodiesel, from Devon Biofuels based near Spreyton. With this good, local and dependable source of biodiesel available, we are ready and able to commit to only using biofuels in our vehicles from now on. This feels an important step to take and will reduce significantly more our carbon footprint in relation to transport.

FOOD GROWING

We love gardening and growing organic food is an integral part of our lives. We produce healthy, nutritious food and herbal medicines for ourselves. Furthermore, by increasing our capacity to feed ourselves, we reduce our dependence on international agriculture and global transport networks which are reliant on fossil fuel and pesticide use. The fostering of awareness of organic food growing methods and solutions is highly relevant in the context of the uncertainties of the national and international climatic and political future.

Year on year, we have been able to direct more resources towards soil preparation and food growing, particularly with the addition of two more resident families since 2004. *As a result, we estimate that our carbon footprint in relation to the food that we eat is 20% of the UK average (see the Carbon Audit at Appendix 9).*

We have our main Growing Area (incorporating a Forest Garden) where we grow a wide range of produce in quantity and it has proved productive to grow food around living structures in raised beds. We plan to expand on this by experimenting further with ways of integrating food growing space amongst our structures. More raised beds are planned, and we will also be experimenting further with forest garden techniques (cultivating crops suitable for woodland edges).

We plan to expand the range and quantity of food grown in the Growing Area by introducing a polytunnel and greenhouse. By extending the growing season of a variety of different foods, this will increase our capacity to produce food all year round in this climate.

We also plan to establish a tree and herb nursery, in which we will nurture culinary and medicinal herbs, broadleaf trees (particularly of local provenance), and fruiting trees.

We will continue to make our own compost from food waste. This is clearly an excellent way of minimising our reliance on resources outside the community, whilst improving our crop yield. Humanure is also produced from the compost loo which we use to fertilise comfrey plants and fruit bushes.

We have many WWOOFers, course students and other visitors throughout the year who are able to gain knowledge of organic, resource efficient and practical food growing methods whilst staying at Steward Community Woodland (a working demonstration of sustainable land use), as well as sharing the skills and knowledge they have.

HOME EDUCATION

All the children at Steward Community Woodland currently choose to be home educated.

Given the prospects of climate change and other environmental challenges, we believe that living at Steward Wood with the children fully integrated, is the best way to teach our children important skills in sustainable living, being in harmony with nature.

We encourage the children to have active involvement in every aspect of communal living as part of their education. This includes generating their own power, keeping themselves clean and warm, growing and cooking food, providing shelter, woodland management, dealing with waste, and relearning lost skills of communication and resolving conflict in a peaceful way.

The children of Steward Community Woodland are also able to pass on their skills and knowledge to other children and adults through play and other communication. Visitors are frequently amazed when the older children demonstrate their skills in firewood chopping, fire making, cooking, music, and contribution to social interaction.

As well as learning from living at Steward Community Woodland, all the children take part in activities within the wider community. These activities include: swimming, judo, tennis, camping, music lessons, walking on the moors, gymnastics. They take place within the context of visits to the library, museums, and the Miniature Pony Centre, youth clubs, festivals, the local resource centre Proper Job, the Woodcraft Folk, and local home education groups. The latter two groups sometimes come to Steward Community Woodland for Forest School sessions.

The visitor work weekends, WWOOFing and courses at Steward Community Woodland (attracting people from a range of backgrounds and occupations) has brought great opportunities for learning for the children. They are able to learn directly from visitors, seeing every one as a potential new teacher, and having the confidence to talk and ask questions, at the same time as sharing their own knowledge.

It has become clear that for our children to learn a more sustainable future that they can in turn pass to their children, they need to live sustainably. Steward Community Woodland offers many opportunities for this.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

See Appendix 8 for our detailed report on this subject.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The residents of Steward Community Woodland interact with the wider local community through a large variety of projects and groups. The possible contributions

of effort and time are maximised through the extra free time and energy that residents have at their disposal, as all have a low cost of living due to the subsistence lifestyle of Steward Wood.

We have a significant positive effect on the local community through the activities we are involved with, some of which are listed below.

Proper Job - this is a community-run, not-for profit business. It receives partial funding from the DNPA, and has recently received an Edward Morshead award from the Authority. The project is pioneering the use of local, recycled, resources to local companies. For example, it has recently received funding from the DNPA for a new project to shred cardboard for sale as animal bedding.

It is a recycle, reuse and composting site. It has direct benefits for the local community by facilitating the re-use of a wide variety of resources and selling affordable, high-quality second-hand goods. It facilitates recycling of local waste, reduces the volume of waste sent to landfill, and makes and sells compost made from local green waste. Proper Job has an impact on up to seven thousand local people.

The running of Proper Job is facilitated by employing three people who currently live at Steward Community Woodland. Sef is the site manager, Dan and Peter are yardsmen. Low-resource, subsistence living means that these people can afford to work at Proper Job.

Med Theatre - Dan and Peter have been involved in several productions of this community theatre group.

Breastfeeding support (peer counselling) - Beccy, Mel and Chris are all trained breastfeeding peer counsellors and provide advice and counselling on a voluntary basis.

Teaching IT to the local community, computer repair & support – Merlin provides IT tuition and support within the local community by running courses, the U3A IT group, and IT surgery in conjunction with the Moretonhampstead Development Trust. He also provides computer support to local individuals and community businesses, such as the King George V Playing Fields Trust.

Transition Town Moreton – Dan & Peter initiated this local project. As humanity faces the twin challenges of the end of the era of cheap oil and climate change, Transition Town Moreton sets out to generate discussion of the issues and to harness our collective creativity and energy as a community to create a sustainable way of life. Dan & Peter along with others have organised talks, film showings, a renewable energy evening, a permaculture course, as well as producing a newsletter and networking with other individuals and groups.

Woodcraft Folk – Dan & Son have been involved in the Wray Valley Woodcraft Folk group for several years, helping to organise children's camps and activities.

APPENDIX 1

[Settlement Area Map]

APPENDIX 2

What is Permaculture?

We can live in a more natural and environmentally friendly way and significantly improve our quality of life. By thinking carefully about the way we use our resources - food, energy, shelter and other material and non-material needs - it is possible to get much more out of life by using less. We can be more productive for less effort, reaping benefits for our environment and ourselves, for now and for generations to come. This is the essence of Permaculture - the design of an ecologically sound way of living - in our households, gardens, communities and businesses. It is created by cooperating with Nature and caring for the Earth and its people.

Permaculture is not exclusive - its principles and practice can be used by anyone, anywhere. It encourages us to be resourceful and self-reliant. It is not a dogma or a religion but an ecological design system which helps us find solutions to the many problems facing us - both locally and globally.

"Permaculture, originally 'Permanent Agriculture', is often viewed as a set of gardening techniques, but it has in fact developed into a whole design philosophy, and for some people a philosophy for life. Its central theme is the creation of human systems which provide for human needs, but using many natural elements and drawing inspiration from natural ecosystems. Its goals and priorities coincide with what many people see as the core requirements for sustainability." – Emma Chapman

Permaculture tackles how to grow food, build houses and create communities, and minimise environmental impact at the same time. Its principles are being constantly developed and refined by people throughout the world in very different climates and cultural circumstances.

Permaculture Principles

From "Permaculture - Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability" by David Holmgren:

- Observe and interact. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."
- Catch and store energy. "Make hay while the sun shines."
- Obtain a yield. "You can't work on an empty stomach."
- Use and value renewable resources and services. "Let nature take its course."
- Produce no waste. "Waste not, want not. A stitch in time saves nine."
- Design from patterns to details. "Can't see the wood for the trees."
- Integrate rather than segregate. "Many hands make light work."
- Use small and slow solutions. "The bigger they are, the harder they fall."

- Use and value diversity. “Don't put all your eggs in one basket.”
- Use edges and value the marginal. “Don't think you are on the right track just because it is a well-beaten path.”
- Creatively use and respond to change. “Vision is not seeing things as they are but as they will be.”

APPENDIX 3

Taking responsibility for climate change

“The UK Government considers climate change to be one of the most serious threats facing the worlds environment, economy and society”

(A Warm Response - Our Climate Change Challenge, Devon County Council Strategy Document, September 2005. <http://www.devon.gov.uk/climate-change-strategy.pdf>)

Climate Change affects us all and we have all had a role to play in its development. One of the great challenges of this century is for us each to take personal responsibility for our impact on our environment and climate, to mitigate the effects of our previous behaviour and to develop adaptation strategies for the changes to come. The Steward Community Woodland project is, in part, an attempt to do just that.

The primary key objective of Devon County Councils (DCC) “Climate Change Strategy Document, SO(C)1” is...

“To create “agency” for action with the members and officers of Devon County Council, our partners and, most importantly, the people of Devon towards climate change by raising awareness of its causes and impacts, and outlining potential responses.” (p83)

Of “agency” it says

“We have ‘agency’ when we know what to do, we think our contribution is important, we can decide for ourselves and we have the infrastructure and resources to act” (p 75)

At Steward Community Woodland we have agency. We now seek to renew our planning permission in order to be able to continue and develop our project.

DCC states, and we agree, that a characteristic of climate change mitigation is that it is likely to be...

“ a long term activity that will require routine examination of ways of working as well as the deployment of new technology, new regulatory frameworks and challenging cultural change.” (p. A4 - 1)

The strategy document also stresses the need to

“...promote behavioural change by persuading individuals and groups that they can make a difference in terms of their own lifestyle choices and in mobilising their communities.” (p. 75)

At Steward Community Woodland we are making the lifestyle choices necessary to address climate change, and participating in mobilising our community and exploring new appropriate technologies. But it is for the National Park Authority to choose whether or not to adopt “new regulatory frameworks” such as those capable of managing our low impact development.

We suggest that our commitment to addressing the climate change issue should be a material consideration when assessing this application. In December 2006, the Department for Communities and Local Government published a consultation document “Planning and Climate Change” as a supplement to PPS1. This document states there is an urgent need for action on climate change and

“in considering planning applications before development plans can be updated to reflect this PPS, have regard to this PPS as a material consideration which may supersede the policies in their development plan.” (p15)

APPENDIX 4

[Quicken Wood decision]

APPENDIX 5

Multiplicity of tasks on a permaculture holding

Simon Fairlie is the director of Chapter 7, a voluntary organization offering planning advice and assistance to smallholders, low impact developers, caravan and shack dwellers and other low income people in the countryside. He is the author of *Low Impact Development*, published by Jon Carpenter in 1996, and he has given evidence to a number of government inquiries and research reports on low impact development and affordable housing. Below is an excerpt from Simon Fairlie’s writings concerning functional need:

There is still one area in particular where Annex A of PPS7 remains inadequate as a tool for assessing some low impact proposals: the matter of functional need. Paragraph 4 states:

“A functional test is necessary to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for one or more workers to be readily available at most times. Such a requirement might arise, for example, if workers are needed to be on hand day and night:

(i) in case animals or agricultural processes require essential care at short notice;

(ii) to deal quickly with emergencies that could otherwise cause serious loss of crops or products, for example, by frost damage or the failure of automatic systems.”

This wording has remained unchanged through three successive drafts since 1992, during which time there have been radical changes in farming practice. In my experience, its emphasis on “emergencies” is inappropriate for multifunctional smallholdings, typically producing a range of products for a local market — rather than specializing in one or two enterprises which benefit from economies of scale. Although there may be a need to address emergencies, **the main need to reside on land results from the requirement to carry out a variety of small-scale activities sporadically over a very long day, and to mesh these in with domestic activities, including child-care.** The frequency of movement between the working sphere of activity and the domestic sphere is so great that transport between the farm and a home sited two or three miles away becomes not just “inconvenient”, but a practical and economic impossibility — and unsustainable to boot.

In the case of community applications involving several households, the advice on functional need is even more inappropriate. There are very few, if any, emergencies which can occur on a farm which require a dozen or so people to be at hand to address. A surprise hurricane, like that which occurred in 1987, is the only example I can think of. It only takes one or two people to deal with a cow in labour, or crops which require sudden frost protection, or to scare off a fox. If the advice on functional need is to be applied literally, and the examples given of “emergency” situations considered to be the only valid forms of need, it effectively means that rural communities with multiple members can never comply, and hence are prohibited from establishing themselves in the English countryside.

This is clearly not the intention of the civil servants who drafted Annex A, whose purpose is not to ban certain types of farms or businesses from the countryside, but to provide guidelines with the “aim of detecting attempts to abuse (eg through speculative proposals) the concession that the planning system makes for such dwellings.” (Annex A para 2).

Paragraph 15 states that local planning authorities, in respect of “other occupational dwellings” should

“ apply the same criteria and principles in paragraphs 3-13 of this Annex, in a manner and to the extent that they are relevant to the nature of the enterprise concerned.”

I submit that the examples (i) and (ii) given in paragraph 4 of Annex A, concerning the functional need to address emergencies, are not of great relevance to an assessment of the need of a low impact community and its inhabitants to live on site.

The question which needs to be asked is whether the low impact community as a whole — rather than each of its individual members — needs to live on site, in order to function as a viable unit providing the environmental, social and economic benefits which it aspires to.

My view is that it does. I have considerable knowledge of communities with a significant level of subsistence land management in the UK. There are not very

many of them — perhaps 30 or 40 throughout the country — and I know of none which functions successfully with its members living off site, either in one large residence detached from the land they manage, or in several dispersed houses. The majority of these communities (eg Old Hall, Monckton Wylde, Lauriston, Keval Farm etc) are installed in large country houses or farmhouses with land attached. These properties could be bought very cheaply in a run-down condition in the 1960s and 1970s, but are now well out of the price range of any group of people making their living through agriculture and ancillary activities.

It is hard to imagine how a social organism of this kind could maintain itself if its land were separated from its domestic realm. The benefits of land-based communities derive, almost by definition, from the co-operation that results through the clustering of work and domestic activities. Throughout a single day innumerable personal interchanges take place involving such matters as the exchange of commodities, co-operation on a work project, loan of tools, help with minor emergencies, child care and school trips, shared meals, shared journeys, consultation about decisions and so forth. It is manifestly very difficult to profit from these benefits of community existence when different members are constrained to driving back and forth between their private living quarters and the co-operatively held land.

APPENDIX 6

[Accounts 2005-6]

APPENDIX 7

[Woodland Management Plan]

APPENDIX 8

[Renewable Energy at Steward Community Woodland]

APPENDIX 9

[Carbon Audit]

APPENDIX 10

Fifteen Criteria for Developments associated with sustainable land-based rural activities

- (1)** The project has a management plan which demonstrates:
 - [a] how the site will contribute significantly towards the occupiers' livelihoods;
 - [b] how the objectives cited in items 2 to 14 below will be achieved and maintained.
- (2)** The project provides affordable access to land and/or housing to people in need.

- (3)** The project provides public access to the countryside, including temporary access such as open-days and educational visits.
- (4)** The project can demonstrate how it will be integrated into the local economy and community.
- (5)** The project can demonstrate that no activities pursued on the site shall cause undue nuisance to neighbours or the public.
- (6)** The project has prepared a strategy for the minimization of motor vehicle use.
- (7)** The development and any buildings associated with it are appropriately sited in relation to local landscape, natural resources and settlement patterns.
- (8)** New buildings and dwellings are not visually intrusive nor of a scale disproportionate to the site and the scale of the operation; and are constructed from materials with low embodied energy and environmental impact, and preferably from locally sourced materials, unless environmental considerations or the use of reclaimed materials determine otherwise. Reuse and conversion of existing buildings on the site is carried out as far as practicable in conformity with these criteria.
- (9)** The project is reversible, insofar as new buildings can be easily dismantled and the land easily restored to its former condition.
- (10)** The project plans to minimize the creation of waste and to reuse and recycle as much as possible on site.
- (11)** The project has a strategy for energy conservation and the reduction, over time, of dependence on non-renewable energy sources to a practical minimum.
- (12)** The project aims over time for the autonomous provision of water, energy and sewage disposal and where it is not already connected to the utilities, shall make no demands upon the existing infrastructure.
- (13)** Agricultural, forestry and similar land-based activities are carried out according to sustainable principles. Preference will be given to projects which conform to registered organic standards, sustainable forestry standards or recognized permaculture principles.
- (14)** The project has strategies and programmes for the ecological management of the site, including :
- [a] the sustainable management and improvement of soil structure;
 - [b] the conservation and, where appropriate, the enhancement of semi-natural habitat, taking into account biodiversity, indigenous species, and wildlife corridors;
 - [c] the efficient use and reuse of water, as well as increasing the water holding capacity of the site;
 - [d] the planting of trees and hedges, particularly in areas where the tree coverage is less than 20 per cent.

(15) The project can show that affordability and sustainability are secured, for example, by the involvement of a housing association, co-operative, trust or other social body whose continuing interest in the property will ensure control over subsequent changes of ownership and occupation.

More information on the criteria including commentary can be seen at www.tlio.org.uk/chapter7