

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting Wednesday 31 January 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

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## Exmouth Motorhome Parking & Extension of Estuary Long Stay Car Parking area

### Report summary:

A summary of the considerations of the Exmouth Motorhome Task and Finish Forum containing a recommended phased approach to improving the overnight stopover offer in this area.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

- (1) That Cabinet approve the phase one recommendations of the Exmouth Motorhome Task & Finish group using the capital funds initially allocated to create a dedicated motorhome facility on the site of Estuary Coach & Lorry Park as below;
  - Install a drive-over grey wastewater (shower & dishwater) disposal point in Maer Road Car Park
  - Install a chemical toilet waste disposal point in Maer Road car park – connected directly to the sewerage network
  - Install a fresh water tap in Maer Road car park.
  - Reduce the maximum permitted number of consecutive overnight stays to 3 nights – this is in line with other authorities and prevents the risk of paid habitation within the car parks.
  - Improve the signage stating the rules and restrictions for overnight stays within both car parks – including ground markings along Queen’s Drive Echelon to designate bays suitable for overnight stays, leaving a safe distance between vehicles.
  - Convert the coach parking area within Estuary Long Stay Car Park to parking for cars, creating 86 additional spaces to help meet the increased demand for long stay parking in this part of town.

### Reason for recommendation:

Since the dedicated motorhome parking area on the site of Estuary Coach and Lorry park was envisaged in 2019, demand for car parking in Exmouth has increased significantly and the two car parks along the south-eastern coastline which currently allow overnight stopovers for motorhomes have become popular and well established. The dedicated Task & Finish group considered the potential for creating a new overnight parking area within Foxholes car park but concluded that enhancing the current overnight offer in the existing car parks and freeing up Estuary Coach Park for alternative parking was the preferred way forward. The proposed recommendations have been split into two phases, separating those that are achievable within the short term, and those that will require further consideration, including planning advice and wider public consultation.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk;

**Links to background information**

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

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**Report in full**

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Following an extended trial period, overnight motorhome parking is permitted in two Exmouth car parks along the south-eastern section of coastline. Queen's Drive Echelon (79 spaces) offers direct sea views and convenient beach access for vehicles up to 5.3m in length, and Maer Road (217 spaces) which is slightly set back from the seafront but benefits from a greater capacity and dedicated bays for larger vehicles.
- 1.2 Foxholes is the other EDDC owned car park located in this vicinity but does not currently permit overnight motorhome parking. (See appendix A). This car park is due to be resurfaced in early 2024, and the adjoining toilet block is also being refurbished within the same time period.
- 1.3 Between the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 and the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 (2 years), there have been 7,097 paid overnight stopovers in Maer Road and Queen's Drive Echelon Car Parks. These stays have generated income of £78,078 at the current £11.00 per night fee, which also includes 24 hours parking at that location.
- 1.4 As far as overnight sleeping is concerned, there is a safety requirement for vehicles to leave a space of at least 3m (about the size of one bay) between vehicles, which reduces the overnight stopover potential of each location to approximately half of its total parking capacity. Due to the 24/7 nature of overnight stays, is not currently possible for EDDC to manage this stipulation, although Motorhome owners tend not to want to park in adjoining bays for privacy reasons, especially where they have side opening doors.
- 1.5 There are almost 400,000 Motorcaravans registered with the DVLA in the UK and Motorhome tourism is valued at over £1billion. There is also an unknown quantity of conventional vans which have been converted for sleeping, and as far as overnight

stopovers are concerned, East Devon do not currently distinguish between the two types of vehicle.

- 1.6 There is currently no limit to the number of consecutive overnight stopovers that can take place in EDDC car parks, essentially permitting a vehicle/occupants to stay indefinitely upon payment of the nightly fee
- 1.7 The current site of Estuary Coach and Lorry Park has been identified as a possible location for dedicated motorhome parking, with capital funding of £148,966 currently allocated to provide dedicated motorhome parking with facilities at this location. Up until the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023, this site was unlawfully occupied by a group of “vanlifers”, who remained at the site following the completion of coastal defence works in 2020, it has now returned to its original use as a coach & lorry park
- 1.8 The Environment Agency have raised concern over high bacteria levels in the Maer stream which flows behind Maer Road car park, the bacteria levels were reported as being 18 times what would ordinarily be expected. This section of stream has the ability to directly impact bathing water quality at Exmouth beach. The bacteria present in the stream is likely to have been contributed to by Motorhome toilet waste being deposited into the watercourse or nearby drains.
- 1.9 The expansion of the Exmouth Controlled Parking Zone by Devon County Council in the Colonies area of Exmouth (restricted streets marked on Appendix B) has led to a significant increase in demand for EDDC annual parking permits in the town and specifically demand for Estuary long-stay car park.

## **2. Motorhome Task & Finish Forum**

- 2.1 The Exmouth Motorhome Task & Finish forum comprising of EDDC officers, Exmouth Town, EDDC District and Devon County Councillors that reviewed the initial overnight motorhome parking trial, reconvened this summer to review the current arrangements and consider options for improving the overnight parking offer.
- 2.2 Following the initial T&F forum meeting, and the meeting of Exmouth Town Council on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023, a proposal was made to EDDC to “request that a comprehensive scoping exercise for fully serviced motorhome parking at Foxholes carpark and/or alternative site(s) was undertaken as soon as possible”
- 2.3 The requested assessment document was produced and considered by the T&F forum at a meeting in November, before a final recommendation was formed.
- 2.4 The main considerations made by the Task & Finish forum were as follows.
  - Whether the resurfacing of Foxholes car park and the refurbishment of the adjoining toilet block was an opportunity to offer Motorhome parking with dedicated facilities in this car park.
  - If the area that was proposed for dedicated Motorhome parking in 2019, for which the Capital funding has been allocated, is still the most appropriate location.
  - Is there a sustainable demand for Motorhome tourism.
  - Should EDDC provide facilities for Motorhome users, including options such as waste disposal, fresh water, electric hook-ups, and public conveniences.
  - How can the additional stipulations regarding overnight-stopovers be communicated and managed, such as the requirement to not place items outside, park at a minimum distance of 3m from other vehicles whilst sleeping, and ensuring the lawful disposal of toilet and “grey” waste (shower and dish water)
  - How can any improvements be funded.
  - How does the approach to overnight motorhome parking correlate with the wider tourism vision for Exmouth
  - Can concerns raised in relation to the current motorhome offer be alleviated in time for the 2024 tourism season.
- 2.5 Parking management information, as well as consultation with CAMpRA (Campaigners for Real Aires in the UK) was used to inform the final recommendation.

### **3. Recommendations/Proposal**

- 3.1 The recommendations/proposal for improving the motorhome offer in Exmouth are split into two phases, firstly phase one for deliverables that are achievable in the short term, and a second phase for proposals that will require wider consultation and consideration, including additional budgetary and planning considerations.
- 3.2 Phase one recommendations – to commence immediately.
- Install a drive-over grey wastewater (shower & dishwasher) disposal point in Maer Road Car Park (see appendix C for an example image)
  - Install a chemical toilet waste disposal point in Maer Road car park – connected directly to the sewerage network (see appendix D for an example image)
  - Install a fresh water tap in Maer Road car park.
  - Reduce the maximum permitted number of consecutive overnight stays to 3 nights – this is in line with other authorities and prevents the risk of paid habitation within the car parks.
  - Improve the signage stating the rules and restrictions for overnight stays within both car parks – including ground markings along Queen’s Drive Echelon to designate bays suitable for overnight stays, leaving a safe distance between vehicles.
  - Convert the coach parking area within Estuary Long Stay Car Park to parking for cars – creating 86 additional spaces to help meet the increased demand for long stay parking in this part of town (appendix E). This would be as an alternative to providing dedicated motorhome parking in this area, which was initially envisaged pre-pandemic. (See appendix F)
- 3.3 Phase two recommendations – for further consideration
- Explore the possibility of providing motorhome only bays within Maer Road Car Park, inclusive of electrical hook-up points – similar to what may be provided at a privately owned campsite.
  - Look to provide additional facilities for motorhome users within Maer Road car park, such as public conveniences and showers.
  - Increase the cost of overnight stopovers to fund the provision of new facilities and the cost of cleansing and maintenance.
  - Provide better physical management of the restrictions placed on overnight stopovers outside of normal working hours, such as the requirement to park at a safe distance from neighbouring vehicles, and the rules relating to BBQ’s and other items stored outside of vehicles. This will help alleviate some of the ASB and other safety issues associated with overnight stays within our car parks.

### **4. Costs & Funding**

- 4.1 If agreed the existing Capital funding of £148,966 allocated for the dedicated Motorhome facilities at Estuary Long Stay would be used to fund the first phase of recommendations, with any surplus carried over to fund phase two.
- 4.2 The works to create the additional parking spaces in Estuary Long stay are estimated to cost between £55,000-£65,000
- 4.3 The 86 additional spaces at Estuary Long Stay will bring in additional parking income and the new facilities in Maer Road will make the overnight stopover offer more attractive to travelling visitors.
- 4.4 The works to install the water supply and waste disposal facilities in Maer Road are estimated to cost up to £37,500 (depending upon the final specification)
- 4.5 There will be a cost associated with the supply of fresh water at Maer Road, this will be unlikely to exceed £1,500 per annum.

## 5. Rationale

- 5.1 The recommendations for improving the overnight stopover offer in Exmouth were split into two phases to ensure that the elements that are urgently required to improve the overnight offer and protect the environment in the short term were not unnecessarily delayed by the second phase.
- 5.2 There was unanimous agreement within the Task & Finish group that the phase one proposals would represent a positive improvement and help encourage responsible overnight stays within our car parks.
- 5.3 If phase one is agreed by members, then the works to deliver these can commence immediately and the benefits of the improvements will be seen this summer.
- 5.4 By committing to focusing the improvements in Maer Road and Queens Drive Echelon Car Parks as oppose to pursuing a dedicated motorhome facility on the current site of Estuary Lorry Park, then this site can be instead be used to extend the long stay car park and create an additional 86 parking spaces for cars which can be used by Exmouth town modular permit holders, and other long stay visitors.
- 5.5 12 coach and lorry parking spaces would be retained from the 16 which are currently available. This should prove to represent sufficient based on current and anticipated demand. (See appendix E)

## 6. Case for extending Estuary Long Stay Car Park

- 6.1 Devon County Council extended the Exmouth Controlled Parking Zone into the “Colonies” area of Exmouth in August 2023 – see appendix B
- 6.2 Since this change, demand for Annual and Monthly Town modular permits has increased significantly, see below

|             | Exmouth Town Modular Permits - August to December |         |                   |              |
|-------------|---|---------|-------------------|--------------|
|             | Annual  | Monthly | Annual Equivalent | Income       |
| <b>2021</b> | 614   | N/A     | 614               | £ 123,412.00 |
| <b>2022</b> | 515   | 817     | 678               | £ 169,478.00 |
| <b>2023</b> | 607   | 2004    | 1007.8            | £ 216,155.00 |

|             | Exmouth Town Modular Permits - April to July |         |                   |              |
|-------------|--|---------|-------------------|--------------|
|             | Annual                                       | Monthly | Annual Equivalent | Income       |
| <b>2021</b> | 541  | N/A     | 541               | £ 57,897.00  |
| <b>2022</b> | 632  | 401     | 732               | £ 87,896.00  |
| <b>2023</b> | 707  | 1106    | 983.5             | £ 109,910.00 |

- 6.3 There are 1,126 long stay car parking spaces in Exmouth, and 1,805 active permits as of the 4<sup>th</sup> January.
- 6.4 The Parking Services Team have received over 20 written complaints relating to the shortage of parking in Exmouth this winter, there weren't any from the town last year.
- 6.5 The increased demand, combined with the introduction of the £2 all day winter parking offer has caused a shortage of parking at key times, with some visitors reporting that they will be reluctant to return.
- 6.6 The Exmouth Placemaking Plan will include recommendations relating to parking in the town, however the outcomes from this are likely several years from being realised.
- 6.7 Expanding the size of the car park by 86 spaces will increase the long-stay parking capacity of the town by 7.5%.
- 6.8 As well as providing more parking for residents and visitors, easing the parking pressure will enhance the visitor experience and encourage more return visits.
- 6.9 Between April and December 2023 there were 523 paid sessions at Estuary Coach and Lorry Park, generating income of £1,981. This amounts to less than 2 paid parking sessions per day on average.

6.10 The recommendations of the Task & Finish forum correlate with the draft principles and objectives of the East Devon Parking Strategy

**Financial implications:**

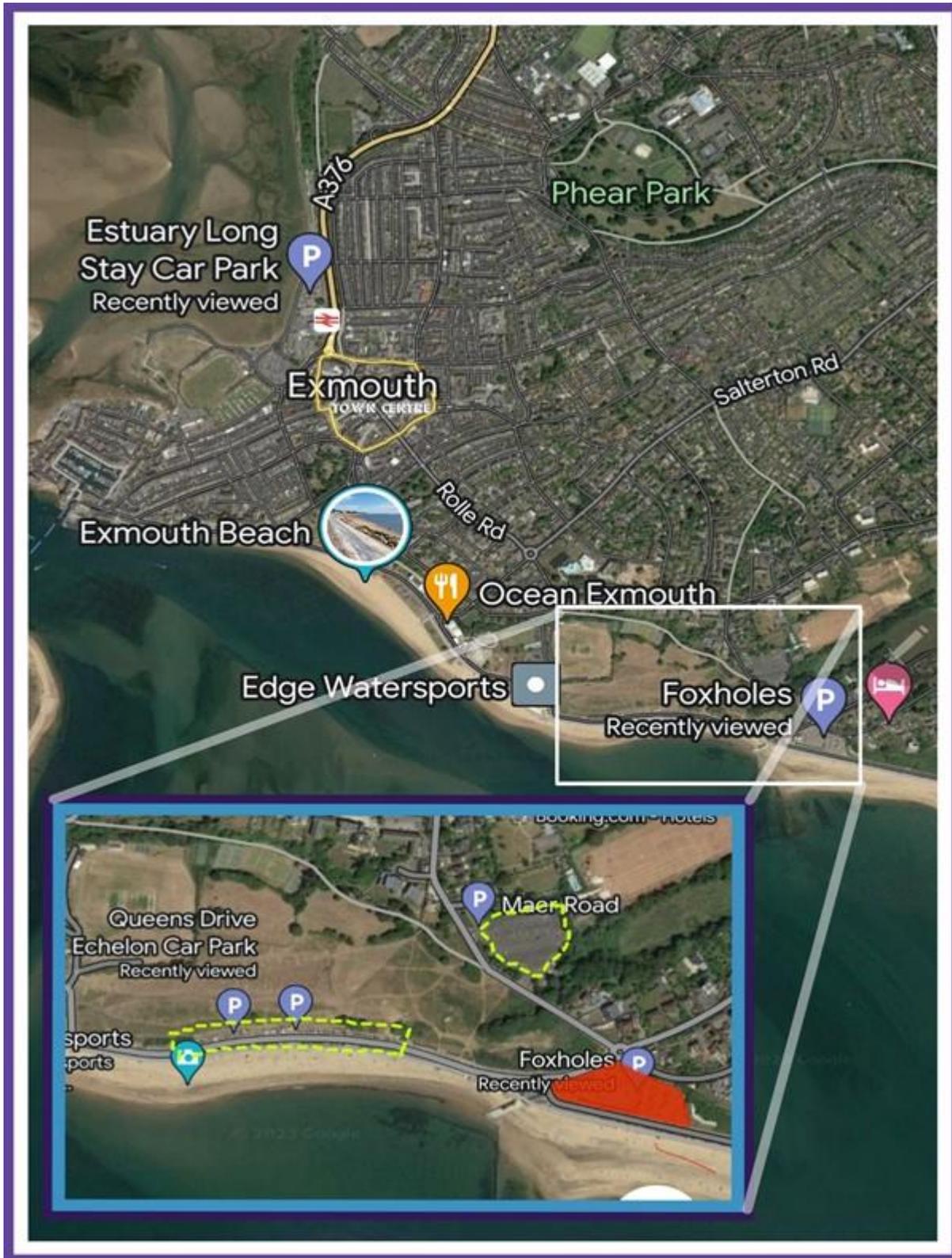
Financial implications are as set out within the report including the request to re-allocate the Exmouth campervan capital budget, that has previously been approved, to complete these works.

**Legal implications:**

There is no direct comment to be made in relation to this report, any individual issues which may arise will need to be considered subsequently

**Appendices below:**

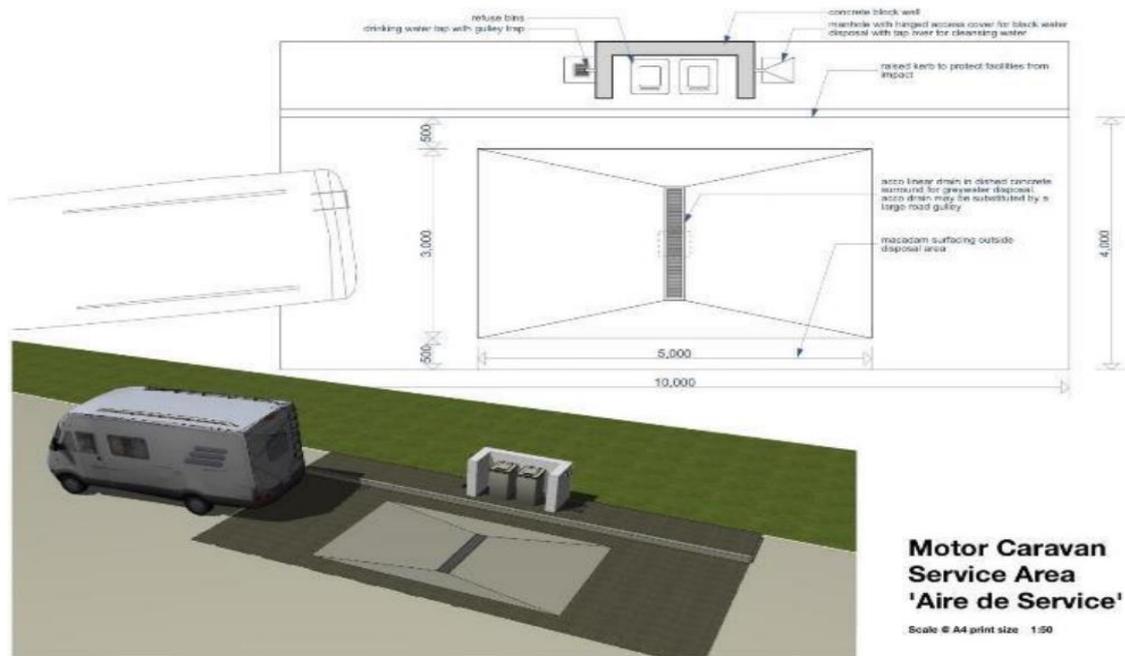
**Appendix A** – Map showing the car parks that currently permit overnight stopovers in relation to Exmouth Town – as well as the location of Foxholes Car Park marked in red





## Appendix C – Example of a grey wastewater service point

### Typical Layout for a Service Point

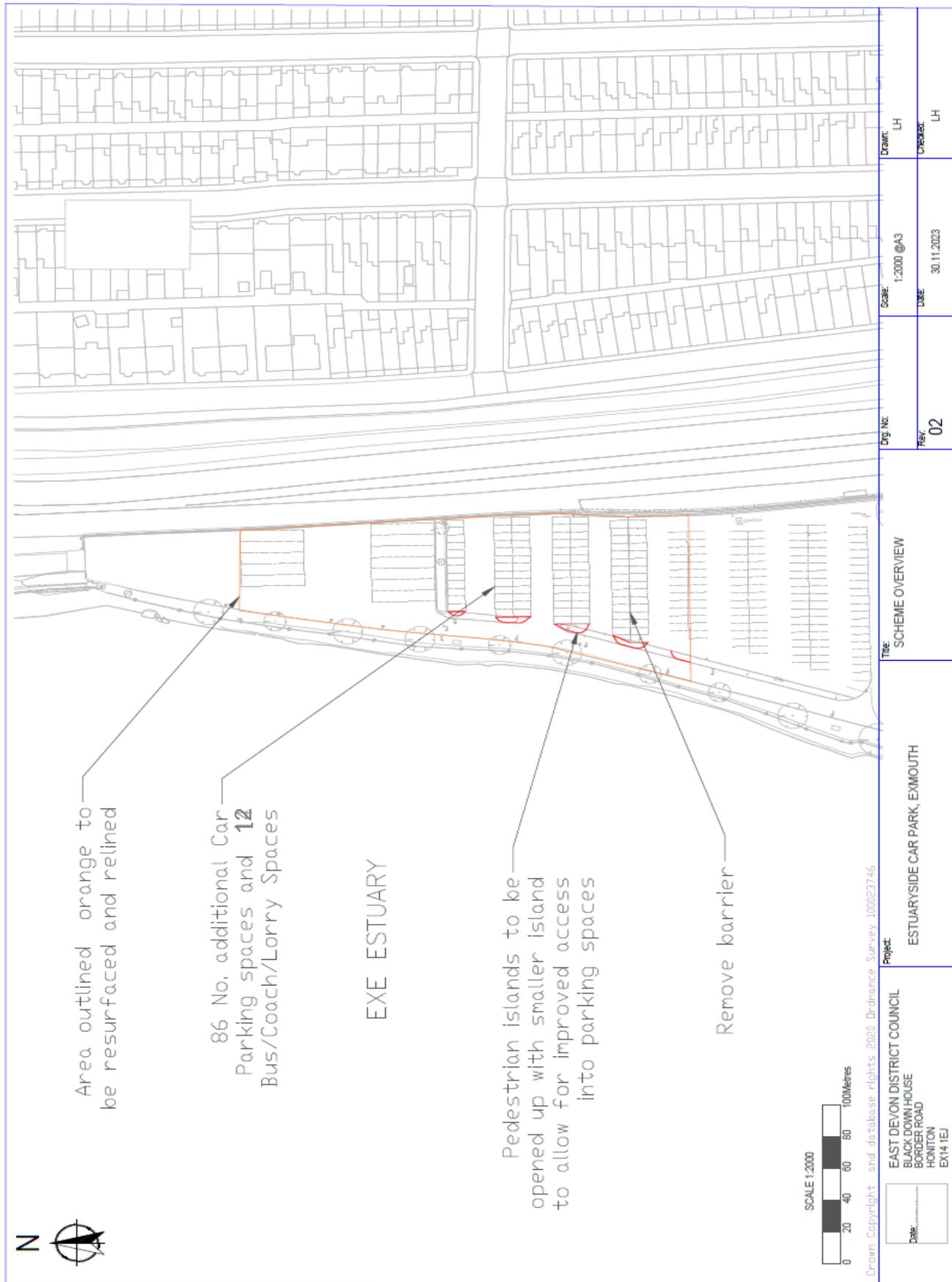


**Appendix D – Example of a chemical/black waste (toilet) disposal service point**



# Appendix E

Proposed layout change for Estuary Long Stay Car Park – Creating 86 additional car spaces and reducing the number of lorry parking spaces to 12



# Appendix F – Proposed layout for the dedicated motorhome parking area on the site of Estuary Lorry Park

