

# Avalon Update

February 2026

Welcome the Avalon's new bi-monthly newsletter, keeping you up to date with everything planning and heritage!

## Team News



- Alex and Chris take on Padel at the **Konker's Charity Padel Tournament!**
- **Training Matters!** Our team have attended some Mental Health in the Workplace Training run by the Diversity Trust.
- Avalon helps inspire the next generation of planners at the **Exeter School Careers Convention.**
- Murray, Nick and Simon will be heading to Leeds for the **UKREiif Conference** in May. Let us know if you'll be there too.
- **We're recruiting** in Exeter and Bristol. Follow us on Linked In for more details.

## Project Success

### Historic England Article 4 Directions Project

Recently our research into heritage-related Article 4 Directions has been published by Historic England. Our report concluded that Article 4 Directions – (a direction made under Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) – are an important part of the Heritage Protection system. It identified clear drivers and barriers, including LPA resourcing, officer time and the success of stakeholder engagement, alongside opportunities to address barriers through comprehensive digitisation of A4Ds, published best practice and officer training initiatives.



## Royal Clarence Hotel, Exeter



Exeter's listed Royal Clarence Hotel was destroyed by fire in 2016, and several proposals for its reinstatement had stalled. Exeter-based developers Nooko bought the site in 2025, and last December instructed Avalon to provide a detailed heritage statement and strategy, to explain how their reinstatement plans minimised adverse impact on surviving historic fabric.

We produced the report rapidly, and were delighted that our conclusions were endorsed by Historic England and the City Council. Nooko gained their planning and listed building consent in January 2026.

## Shrivenham Primary School

Avalon recently advised on the refurbishment of the Grade II listed school, supporting its sensitive adaptation for use as a specialist school for children with additional needs. A key aspect of the project involved proposals to upgrade the school's windows, which comprised a complex mix of frames and glazing of differing ages, condition and heritage value.

Working closely with the design team and local authority, we undertook a detailed, significance-led assessment of the existing windows, analysing the relative age and importance of both the glass and frames. This enabled a refined strategy that prioritises the retention and repair of the most significant historic fabric, while justifying the selective replacement of later or poorer-quality windows. The agreed approach delivers meaningful improvements to thermal performance and environmental control—crucial for the building's new use—while safeguarding the architectural character and historic interest of this important listed school.



## Wild Goose Lodge, Slimbridge



Planning permission has been granted for the change of use of a former youth hostel to a SEND school at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire by Stroud District Council's Planning Committee, in line with the Officer's recommendation.

Working collaboratively with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) Highways and Stroud District Council from the outset, we were able to identify opportunities and measures to significantly reduce the associated vehicle trip movements to and from the school, to overcome previous concerns relating to highways and pedestrian safety.

The scheme will provide a long-term home for our client, Belong Learning CIC, who work with young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan, helping to address a demonstrable need for additional SEND provision across Gloucestershire.

## Land at Metcombe, East Devon

Avalon successfully secured Permission in Principle (PiP) for up to 4no. dwellings on land east of Tipton Vale – you can find the application [here](#).

Despite the site being located outside of a designated Built-up Area Boundary (BuAB) and falling within a County Wildlife Site designation, Avalon put forward a robust justification that was sustainably located, that the proposals would provide a modest contribution to local housing supply for which there is currently significant shortfall in East Devon, and that sufficient mitigation measures could be secured at the subsequent Technical Details Consent (TDC) stage to address any ecological and landscape constraints.

The PiP consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the considerations of matters of principle for proposed development (limited to location, land use and amount) from the technical details of the development.



# Current Projects

## Dartmoor Landscape Recovery



We've been working with the Central Dartmoor Landscape Recovery (CDLR) project to prepare Heritage Impact Assessments as part of Defra's Landscape Recovery scheme. The project aims to restore central Dartmoor to a thriving, resilient landscape with strong ecological networks, supported by sustainable and viable farming.

Dartmoor is a deeply significant cultural landscape which contains internationally important archaeological remains, from Middle Bronze Age settlements to medieval tin-streaming and industrial activity. Our work helps ensure that these remarkable assets are carefully considered and protected as part of the area's long-term landscape recovery.

## Spectrum Building

Working with Knight Frank, we are delighted to have provided heritage consultancy to help secure planning permission and listed building consent to convert Norman Foster's seminal Grade II\* listed Spectrum Building into a new factory for drones.

The conversion will generate 1,100 new high-tech jobs within this landmark high-tech building. Originally built as Renault UK's distribution centre, the Spectrum was designed with flexibility at its core. The approved plans respect that legacy, involving minimal impact on its special architectural interest while delivering significant heritage benefits.



## Ashton Court, Bristol



The heritage team have been instructed by Bristol Historic Buildings Trust to help develop proposals for the future development and conservation of the interiors at Grade I listed Aston Court on the outskirts of Bristol.

We are pleased to be involved at a very early stage of discussions with key stakeholders and hope that this is the start of a bright future for this building which is currently on Historic England's At Risk Register.

# National Planning Policy Framework

## Unpacking the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) draft

Running until 10th March 2026, the Government has launched a consultation on the proposed wide-scale reforms of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The package of planning reforms is aimed at unlocking more homes in the right places while supporting economic growth and sustainability. Alongside a clearer and more comprehensive NPPF, they set out the key proposed policy changes that could significantly affect how development is planned and delivered in England.

For more information click [here](#).

## We're Recruiting

We are recruiting for a Planning Director/Senior Planner in **Bristol** and a Planner in **Exeter**.

Please contact Murray for more information on: [murray@avalonplanning.co.uk](mailto:murray@avalonplanning.co.uk).



## Diary Dates

- Murray, Nick and Simon will be heading to Leeds for the **UKREiif Conference** in May. Let us know if you'll be there too.
- **Plymouth Office Summer Party** – look out for more information about our Summer Party – celebrating our planning connections in and around Plymouth.

### PLANNING

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