

Statement made by the Applicant in support of the planning application.

Beer Men's Shed is an Unincorporated Association which was founded by residents of Beer in March 2019 as a male mental health initiative and support group. It is a member of the UK Men's Sheds Association. Its current shed is located within the grounds of Mariners' Hall, Beer's village hall. The number of men taking part in its activities has grown to the level where it now needs a larger shed.

Beer Men's Shed has been successfully addressing a latent demand in Beer and the surrounding towns and villages from men who want a facility that helps them to feel less lonely, isolated or socially excluded. In these times when the welfare of men's mental health has been identified as being of great importance, Beer Men's Shed offers local men the opportunity to meet, make new contacts and friends and work together on projects that help the local community. In 2019 it received financial support from East Devon District Council, Devon County Council, Devon & Cornwall Police, Beer Parish Council, Action East Devon and others to enable it to have a small 25 sq.mtr shed built. This space allows a maximum of around 7 men to join in its activities simultaneously. Three workshop sessions are currently held each week in order to allow more men to participate. Since it was founded, Beer Men's Shed has completed some 100 projects and commissions for local authorities, local churches and local people.

It currently has 25 members, with more men making contact each week to ask if they can also join. The Shed's members believe that they should not actively seek additional members at this time due to the space limitations of the current building, as well as the added risks and dangers of having too many men working in a tight space with woodworking equipment that is potentially dangerous.

It is expected that a shed that is significantly larger would allow double the number of men to take part in the Shed's activities, and would help more men to benefit from this male mental health initiative.

The members of Beer's Parochial Church Council have been looking for ways and means of enhancing the vitality of the Church, and Beer Men's Shed has been working with the Church to support these goals, eg by replacing dilapidated church signage, building new display units for the old church bell and clock mechanism, making displays for use by children during church services. Finding a suitable site for a larger shed within Beer would normally be difficult to impossible, but fortunately Beer Men's Shed has received permission and support from the Diocese of Exeter to site its proposed new shed in the churchyard of the Church of St Michael in the centre of Beer village, subject to planning permission being given. All funds needed for having a new shed erected of the proposed dimensions mhave already been obtained from a wide range of sources, including East Devon District Council, Devon County Council, Beer Parish Council, Seaton Town Council, the Co-Op, Tesco, The National Lottery and the Foxglove Trust.

Having a second and larger shed built would allow more men to benefit from this local mental health initiative and would also help with the revitalising of the Church and its grounds.