

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting 3 October 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Methodology for the designation of Green Wedges in the new Local Plan

### Report summary:

During its deliberations on the 'Working Draft East Devon Local Plan', this committee agreed in principle that Green Wedges should be designated between nearby settlements which could be at risk of coalescence or loss of identity. In order to draw the boundaries properly, it is essential that we follow a defined process in a logical and transparent way: this report details the methodology proposed for achieving this. The criteria chosen seek to reflect the discussions and decisions taken by Strategic Planning Committee. Green Wedges in the current local plan will be reviewed, existing areas may change and additional areas may be identified.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

That Strategic Planning Committee:

1. Endorse the proposed methodology for defining Green Wedges, set out in appendix 1 of this report, and its use in the preparation of Green Wedge boundaries for consultation.
2. Agree that the proposed Green Wedges be brought to Committee in early 2024 for Members consideration.

### Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that feedback is provided by East Devon District Council to reflect and highlight concerns and considerations raised by this council.

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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** Medium Impact

**Risk:** Medium Risk; It is important that we set out how Green Wedge boundaries are to be defined to ensure a rational process is followed and can subsequently be justified

**Links to background information** See links in Appendix 1.

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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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Green Wedges are areas of land that are locally designated through the Plan making process. In East Devon, Green Wedges are a long-standing local landscape designation but there is a requirement, as part of the local plan review, to reassess the policy and designations to ensure that they remain proportionate and appropriate.
- 1.2 General policies controlling development in the countryside apply in Green Wedges, but, in addition, there is a general presumption against development which is inappropriate in relation to the purpose of the Green Wedge. In East Devon, in locations where settlements are in close proximity and where there is considerable pressure for new development, it may be necessary to have additional Green Wedge protection in order to prevent coalescence and maintain their separate identities. The Green Wedge will perform a strategic function, and therefore be considered a strategic Local Plan policy, as a buffer between areas of development in order to prevent coalescence.
- 1.3 The current Local Plan identifies 10 parcels of land as Green Wedge areas, however as some wedges comprise more than one parcel of land, they are defined on the proposals map as 6 areas which comprise:

- a) Land to the East of Exeter and South of the A30 and an area to the South of Poltimore.
- b) Land adjoining the Exe estuary and West of the A376 North of Lympstone to the Royal Marines site and North of Exton to Marsh Barton.
- c) Land to the North and North East of Exmouth.
- d) Land between Budleigh Salterton and Knowle.
- e) Land between Seaton and Colyford and Colyford and Colyton.
- f) Land separating the villages of Rockbeare and Whimble from the new community (Cranbrook) site.

The adopted policy states:

*“Strategy 8 - Development in Green Wedges*

*Within Green Wedges, as defined on the Proposal Map, development will not be permitted if it would add to existing sporadic or isolated development or damage the individual identity of a settlement or could lead to or encourage settlement coalescence.”*

1.4 In addition, several made Neighbourhood Plans include policies with similar aims to Green Wedges (although they may use different terminology). These will be taken into account in the new assessments. Once the new Local Plan is adopted it will take precedence over any 'made' Neighbourhood Plans where there is a conflict between the two. Including green wedge / equivalent designations from made and advanced emerging neighbourhood plans in the assessment work for the Local Plan will not guarantee their endorsement in strategic policy but will give the opportunity for fresh objective consideration as to whether these areas, alongside those areas currently designated in the existing Local Plan and others, can and should be carried through into the Local Plan as strategic Green Wedge designations.

## 2. Current Position

2.1 The first stage in preparing the new Local Plan was the Issues and Options consultation, which set out differing options/approaches that the plan could take, and ran from January to March 2021. In this consultation the Council identified the possibility of "Support(ing) designation of open spaces (for example Green Wedges) between settlements and local landscape protection areas" and this received support from respondents although a need to review the existing Green Wedge designations was identified.

2.2 After considering the feedback on the Issues and Options consultation, and suggested alternative policy approaches, at the Strategic Planning Meeting on 11th January 2022, Council Members discussed the proposed approach to Policy 71 (set out below) and resolved that:

*"Green Wedges are designated following a landscape review to ensure that sufficient land is designated to restrict development and therefore prevent settlement coalescence and protect the separate identities and character of settlements in close proximity to each other.*

*Extensive areas of Green Wedge that go beyond the area needed to achieve this aim would unnecessarily restrict development that would otherwise be acceptable".* They indicated that the Green Wedges in the current local plan should be reviewed as a starting point.

Alternative policy approaches- to not have Green Wedge areas in the plan; to have more extensive areas of Green Wedges; and to have very tightly defined and small Green Wedge designations- were rejected after considerable discussion.

### **71. Policy – Green wedges**

It is proposed that a Policy be included to protect the separate character and identity of settlements in close proximity and prevent their coalescence, protecting their openness, role and function. In accordance with criteria to be established, development will not be permitted where it would conflict with the purposes of the green wedges, which are to:

- prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain a sense of place and identity for neighbourhoods
- maintain the open character of a green lung contributing to health and wellbeing for residents
- provide accessible formal and informal recreation, sport and play
- provide valuable wildlife corridors and habitat
- protect areas of landscape importance and visual amenity

Policy will specify the location of the green wedges and they will be identified on the proposals map.

- 2.3 The Green Wedge policy in the adopted local plan has two main objectives- to protect the separate character and identity of settlements in close proximity and prevent their coalescence. The proposed approach to Policy 71 included 5 purposes, however it has become apparent whilst producing the methodology, and in response to the draft Plan consultation feedback, that some of these purposes may be considered as ‘additional benefits of designation’ rather than a main purpose of it. As such, they will be addressed through other policies in the plan and there is limited evidence available to justify them as essential to Green Wedge designation.
- 2.4 Given the Committee resolution, and the fact that the adopted policy has been successfully applied for many years, protecting character and identity and preventing coalescence are the focus of the proposed methodology and it is proposed that the wording of the Policy in the next draft Local Plan will be amended to reflect this.

### **3. Proposed Methodology**

- 3.1 In order to achieve a consistent approach to the drawing of Green Wedges we will need to follow a methodology that sets out the circumstances in which they will be designated. This approach has been used successfully during the preparation of Local Plans in other authorities.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.2 A set of criteria and a detailed assessment process has been devised to guide the detailed work of defining Green Wedge boundaries for inclusion in the next consultation on the local plan. This methodology is set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 It is anticipated that this work will be ongoing through the Autumn. The methodology will be a public document.

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#### **Financial implications:**

There are no financial implications requiring comment.

#### **Legal implications:**

There are no legal implications requiring comment.

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<sup>1</sup> [Report \(charnwood.gov.uk\)](http://report.charnwood.gov.uk)  
[www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PE22%20Green%20Wedge%20Study.pdf](http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/PE22%20Green%20Wedge%20Study.pdf)