

Feedback on potential development sites at Axminster

September 2024

In the Spring of 2024 we undertook further consultation on the East Devon Local Plan under Regulation 18 of the plan making regulations. This consultation ran from Thursday 16th May 2024 to Thursday 27th June 2024.

The consultation was centred around a series of topic matters, see [Further Draft Local Plan Consultation - East Devon](#) with three, in particular as noted below, specifically relevant to potential land allocations for development in areas covered by this report.

- New Housing and Mixed Use Site Allocations

We received consultation feedback through the Commonplace on-line consultation platform as well as receiving feedback in the form of emails and pdf documents that were sent in directly. This report primarily draws on information received through the consultation portal. We have used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to produce the summary comments contained in this report. We would stress, however, that the AI outputs have been reviewed and considered by officers alongside original submissions. The AI outputs are regarded as providing an accurate and very useful summation of matters raised in feedback and the strength of comment. All comments made through the online system can be viewed at: [Have Your Say Today - East Devon Local Plan Further Consultation - Commonplace](#)

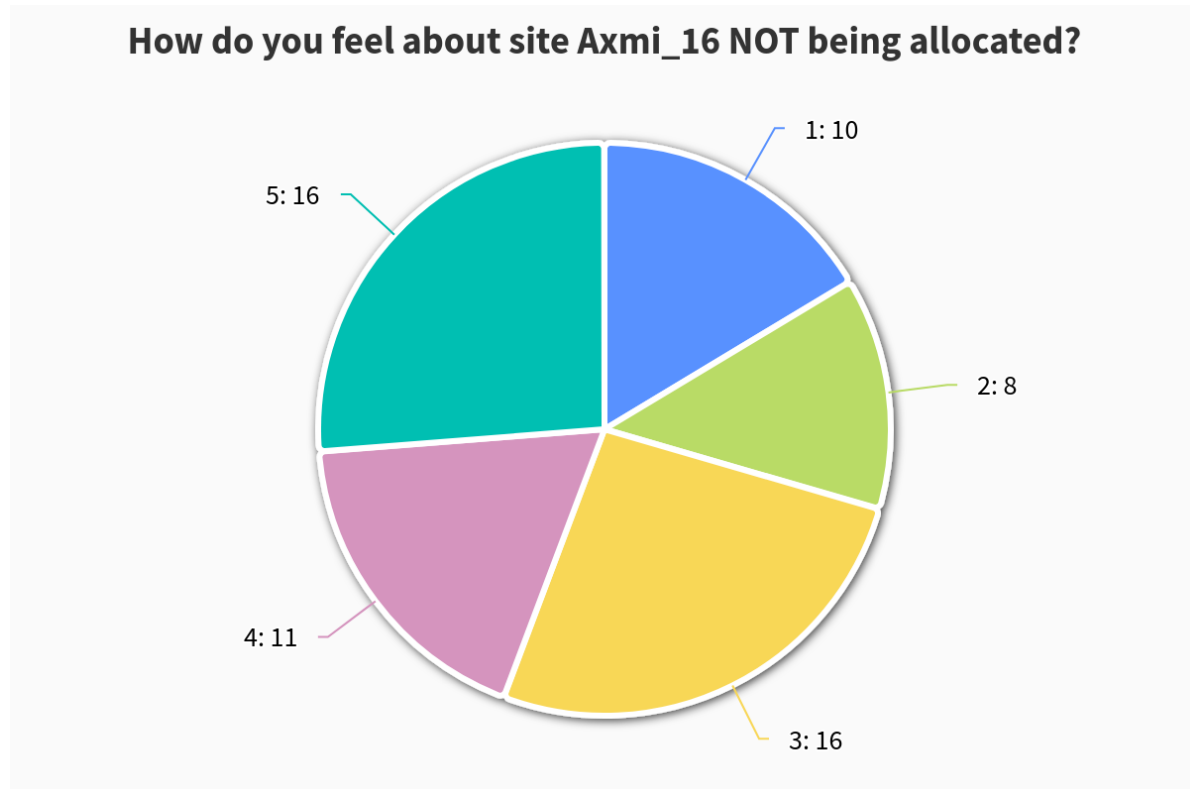
To date we have not summarised non-on-line submitted comments that we received, though from officer review we would consider that those submitted by members of the public are in line with the sentiments and views expressed through the on-line route. There were, however, also some comments made by agents (typically acting for land owners promoting development) and by various bodies and organisations that did not come in through the portal. In these non-general-public submitted comments there were some differing views expressed (differing to the general public feedback that tended to be opposed to development). We make some specific note in this report to some of the concerns raised.

We would highlight that this further round of Regulation 18 consultation should be considered alongside the first Regulation 18 consultation that we undertook and which ran from 7 November 2022 to 15 January 2023. Comments from the first round of consultation can be viewed at [Comments made during the Draft Local Plan Consultation and Feedback Report - East Devon](#)

To gain a full picture of feedback both sets of comments should be reviewed. It may well be that some individuals and organisations did not comment at the second round of consultation as they considered that they had raised all relevant matters that they wished to comment on at the first stage of consultation.

Summary of main issues raised on sites at Axminster and surrounds

Axmi_16



5 - Very satisfied

1 - Not at all satisfied

Why do you feel this way and do you have any other comments?

The responses to the question about site Axmi_16 not being allocated express a range of perspectives. While some commenters support the non-allocation decision, citing concerns about infrastructure capacity and the need to preserve commercial uses in the town centre, others argue that the site's brownfield status makes it suitable for residential redevelopment. There are also calls for a balanced approach that considers the wider needs of the growing Axminster community.

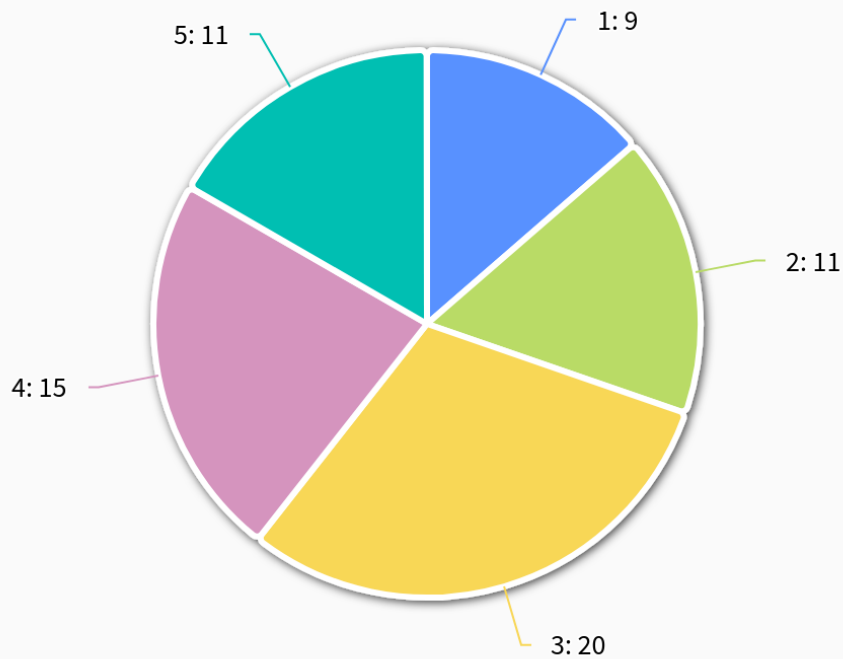
Key points raised, in order of frequency:

1. Infrastructure and Service Capacity Concerns
 - Doubts about the ability of Axminster's infrastructure, including roads, schools, and public transport, to support additional housing development
 - Worries that the town has already reached a saturation point for new housing
2. Importance of Retaining Commercial Uses

- Views that the site should remain in commercial use to support the town centre and local amenities
- Concerns about the loss of important facilities like the Co-op store
- 3. Support for Residential Redevelopment of Brownfield Sites
 - Belief that brownfield sites like Axmi_16 are suitable for housing development
 - Potential for the site to provide much-needed affordable housing
- 4. Calls for a Balanced Approach
 - Acknowledgment of the need to consider the wider benefits and impacts of development allocations
 - Suggestions that Axminster has already experienced a high level of housing growth

Axmi_17

How do you feel about the option to allocate site Axmi_17?



5 - Very satisfied

1 - Not at all satisfied

Why do you feel this way and do you have any other comments?

The responses to the question about allocating site Axmi_17 in Axminster reveal mixed opinions, with concerns about environmental impact and infrastructure capacity balanced against recognition of the site's potential for development. Many respondents emphasize the importance of preserving green spaces within urban areas, while others see the site as a suitable location for housing due to its proximity

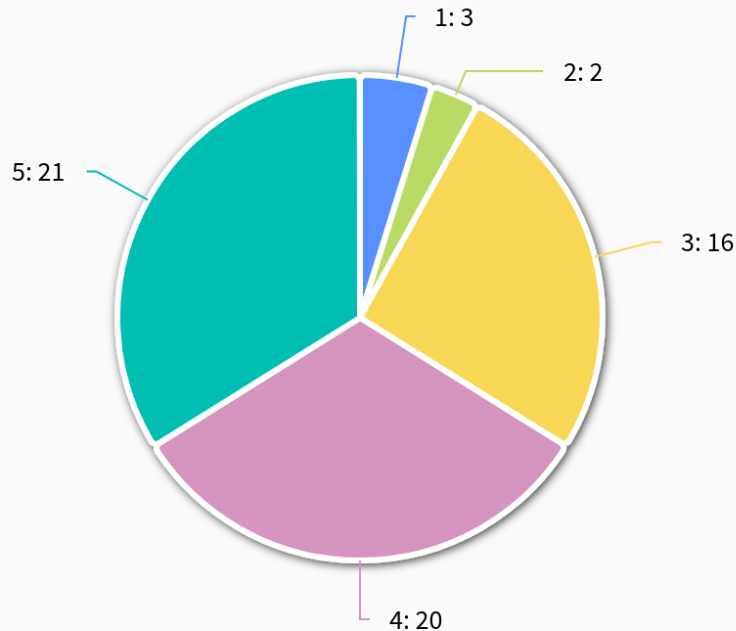
to existing infrastructure. There are also calls for any development to prioritize affordable housing and local needs. Concerns about flooding and the loss of recreational facilities are recurring themes.

Key points raised, in order of frequency:

1. Preservation of green spaces and environmental concerns
 - Importance of maintaining urban green spaces for biodiversity and flood management
 - Concerns about loss of wildlife habitats and environmental impact
2. Infrastructure and town capacity
 - Worries about existing infrastructure's ability to support more development
 - Need for improved facilities (e.g., doctors, dentists) to support growth
3. Support for development with conditions
 - Recognition of the site's potential for housing due to location and access
4. Calls for development to prioritize affordable housing or local needs Flooding concerns
 - Mentions of the site's propensity to flooding
 - Importance of green spaces as natural flood management
5. Recreational facilities and open spaces
 - Concerns about loss of recreational areas
 - Suggestions to partially develop while maintaining some open space
6. Traffic and accessibility
 - Concerns about increased traffic through town centre
 - Recognition of good road access and proximity to transport links
7. Archaeological considerations
 - Mention of site's archaeological potential and historical significance
8. Alternative development suggestions
 - Proposals to use the site for allotments or tree planting
 - Suggestions to focus on brownfield sites instead
9. Local authority ownership considerations
 - Potential for site to address local housing issues due to council ownership
10. Concerns about overdevelopment
 - Perception of Axminster as already experiencing significant development
 - Calls to consider development in other areas

Axmi_18

How do you feel about the option to allocate site Axmi_18?



5 - Very satisfied

1 - Not at all satisfied

Why do you feel this way and do you have any other comments?

The responses to the question about allocating site Axmi_18 are mixed, with a slight lean towards support for the allocation. Those in favour view it as a suitable infill development in an existing built-up area, while those against raise concerns about access and the limited scale of development. Some respondents emphasise the need for affordable housing and local resident prioritisation if the site is developed.

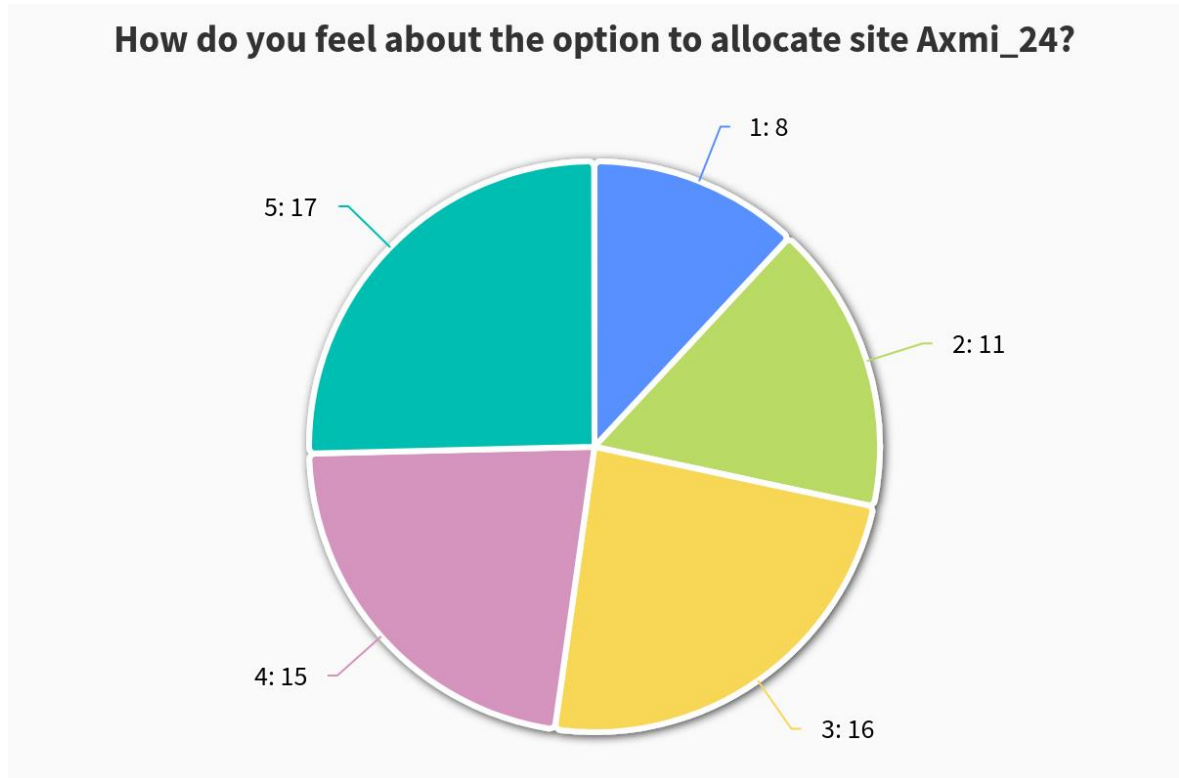
Key points raised, in order of frequency:

1. Suitable infill development
 - Good location within existing built-up area
 - Preferable to developing greenfield sites
2. Concerns about access and infrastructure
 - Poor access to the site
 - Potential increase in vehicle traffic
3. Affordable housing needs
 - Preference for social housing or affordable homes for local residents
4. Limited scale of development
 - Site doesn't provide significant housing or infrastructure benefits
5. Archaeological considerations
 - Former WW2 military hospital site, likely disturbed

6. Design considerations

- Need for sympathetic design considering impact on neighbouring properties

Axmi_24



5 - Very satisfied

1 - Not at all satisfied

Why do you feel this way and do you have any other comments?

The responses to the question about allocating site Axmi_24 are mixed, with significant concerns raised about environmental impact, infrastructure capacity, and flood risk. While some respondents view it as a relatively sustainable option compared to more rural sites, others emphasise the importance of preserving green spaces and protecting the local ecosystem. There are also calls for careful consideration of the overall development strategy for Axminster.

Key points raised, in order of frequency:

1. Environmental concerns
 - Loss of valuable green space and biodiversity

- Proximity to River Axe Special Area of Conservation
- Impact on local wildlife and ecology
- 2. Flood risk and drainage issues
 - Poor drainage and steep slopes
 - Site located on a flood plain
- 3. Infrastructure concerns
 - Doubts about Axminster's ability to support more housing
 - Need for increased school and GP capacity
 - Traffic and road infrastructure issues
- 4. Relatively sustainable location
 - Good site location with nearby facilities
 - More sustainable than rural sites
 - Increase density
- 5. Agricultural land preservation
 - Concern about impact on nearby farm and food security
- 6. Archaeological considerations
 - Potential for archaeological finds, need for evaluation