

# Feedback report on consultation on the draft East Devon Local Plan (Regulation 18) that was consulted on from 7 November 2022 to 15 January 2023



**PDF 1 of 10**

Introduction

**Pages 1-31**

July 2023

## Executive summary

Consultation on a draft East Devon Local Plan starting on 7 November 2022 and ended on 15 January 2023. Summary comments on responses received to the plan are highlighted in this feedback report but at this stage we do not provide comment on or suggest responses to issues raised. Consultation was based around a draft version of what (with some omissions) a final local plan could look like. Though it is recognised that more work needs to be undertaken on the plan and any aspect of the plan could change in response to comments received.

The consultation was supported by exhibitions and the plan featured on an online portal, where comments could be made directly, as well as documents being available in pdf format and people could comment by sending in emails and letters. We received comments from around 2,500 people and organisations through online channels and around 1,000 through letters and emails, there were also some petition received.

All of the policies in the plan were available for comment as well as sites that we had assessed as offering potential for built development. Most people commenting on the plan were unhappy about one or more aspects of the plan, though there were some (limited) statements of outright or more typically qualified support. Proposed land allocations for development came in for the greatest level of criticism with nearly all sites proposed as allocations coming in for at least some objections.

Larger sites tended to see greater levels of objection with the principle of a proposed new town east of Exeter being a specific case where objection numbers were particularly high. It should be noted, however, that there were some respondents, including from developers and some members of the public that favoured new town development.

Whilst responses from the public out-numbered responses from those promoting land for development there was feedback from land owners and specifically agents acting for them. These included qualified support from those favouring development at proposed allocation sites and also objection where the plan did not allocate specific land or sites for development.

A great many respondents highlighted that the Government may be making changes to the requirement to accommodate specified housing numbers determined through a standard, England wide, defined methodology. Many saw this as leading to an outcome where the Council should plan for lower levels of overall housing development.

Many of the comments received questioned the ability of existing social, community and physical infrastructure to meet existing population needs and people raised the concern that with additional house building, and an increased population, services would be further and unacceptably stretched. From many members of the public there was the view that levels of development, especially housebuilding, should be established at and by local communities and allied to this some expressed the view that existing (locally established) Neighbourhood Plans were not being followed.

Many responses questioned whether the houses being planned for development would meet a local need and allied to this was concern that new homes built would not be genuinely affordable and would encourage increased in-migration.

We also had feedback from a range of amenity and environmental groups and bodies and from a wide range of public sector bodies and organisations as well as from service and infrastructure provider companies and bodies. Many of these organisations commented on matters that were specific to their operational activities and roles. A theme in some comments received was that there was too much development concentrated in the west of the district and it should be more dispersed across East Devon, though some respondents favoured the concentration of development.

Whilst all policies in the plan came in for at least some comments there were some subject areas covered in the plan, notably around built and natural environment protection themes, that came in for higher levels of praise or support.

There were also comments that challenge the plan making process and democratic legitimacy of the work that had been undertaken and also some negative observations around the consultation exercise and the way the online consultation platform was used/worked.

There was the opportunity for people to comment on matters that the plan was silent about but respondents thought it should address or cover.

Over the coming months the feedback received will be assessed and plan refinement and redrafting will need to take place before moving onto subsequent stages of plan making.

## Contents

Executive summary .....	2
Contents.....	4
Introduction .....	6
What is a local plan and why we are producing one? .....	7
The draft plan that was consulted on and the consultation software .....	8
The consultation strategy .....	10
The people that responded and a note on statistical validity .....	12
Where to view consultation responses.....	24
Policy by policy summary of comments received.....	25
General Comments on the plan – not recorded at policy specific .....	26
Chapter 1 - Introduction, evidence and policies.....	32
Chapter 2 - Vision and objectives .....	33
Chapter 3 - Spatial strategy .....	38
Chapter 5 - Future growth and development on the western side of East Devon .....	89
Chapter 6 - Strategy for development at Principal Centres, Main Centres, Local Centres and Service Villages .....	119
Chapter 7 - Tackling the climate emergency and responding to climate change .....	325
Chapter 8 - Meeting housing needs for all .....	357
Chapter 9 - Supporting jobs and the economy and vibrant town centres.....	392
Chapter 10 - Designing beautiful and healthy spaces and buildings .....	404
Chapter 11 - Prioritising Sustainable travel and providing the transport and communications facilities we need.....	412
Chapter 12 - Caring for our outstanding landscape .....	425
Chapter 13 - Protecting and enhancing our outstanding biodiversity and geodiversity.....	439
Chapter 14 - Open space and sports and recreation facilities .....	456
Chapter 15 - Our outstanding historic environment .....	463

Chapter 16 - Ensuring we have community buildings and facilities .....	468
Chapter 17 - Implementation and monitoring of the local plan.....	470
Chapter 18 - Have we missed anything? .....	472
Issues raised that are not necessarily directly relevant to the Local Plan .....	474
Responses to the Sustainability Appraisal .....	476
Conclusions and next steps .....	482
Appendix 1 - Feedback on comments on the Commonplace platform .....	483
Appendix 2 - Feedback from in-person submissions at the consultation events .....	485

## Introduction

This report provides feedback on responses that have been received to the East Devon consultation draft local plan (autumn 2022), and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal report. The draft plan was consulted on under Regulation 18 of the plan making regulations [The Town and Country Planning \(Local Planning\) \(England\) Regulations 2012 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk). The consultation starting on 7 November 2022 and ending on 15 January 2023.

In this report we summarise, or in some cases quote directly, what has been said but **do not** seek to respond to points raised. Over the course of 2023 (and potentially beyond) more detailed assessment of matters raised may be undertaken and Strategic Planning Committee of the Council will need to determine appropriate policy responses in respect of any plan redrafting.

This report, by its very nature, can only give a ‘snap-shot’ overview and whilst every effort has gone into seeking to give a reasoned balance view of matters raised it is stressed that to get a complete understanding of all issues all comments should be read in their entirety.

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## What is a local plan and why we are producing one?

The local plan sets out policy to guide and regulate development. It will be the key East Devon District Council document that is turned to in respect of determining planning applications. In this respect it will be part of the Development Plan for East Devon, which will also include the Cranbrook Plan, any Made Neighbourhood Plans and the Devon County Council adopted minerals plan and waste plan. The new local plan, when adopted, is intended to supersede the existing adopted East Devon Local Plan which was adopted in 2016 and the East Devon Villages Plan which was adopted in 2018.

The Government establish national planning policy, in the form of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/national-planning-policy-framework) (NPPF), with the most recent draft being published in 2021 and it advises at Paragraph 33 that:

*“Policies in local plans and spatial development strategies should be reviewed to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and should then be updated as necessary.”*

The Council has undertaken a review and concluded that a new plan should be produced. It should be noted that the Government, following a consultation in early 2023, had advised that a new NPPF would be published in spring 2023. However, at the time of drafting this report the new NPPF had not been published. The Government are also making changes to planning legislation that could impact on future plan making work with these changes expected to come through in late 2023 and with another redrafted NPPF also potential going to be issued later this year.

## The draft plan that was consulted on and the consultation software

The draft plan was prepared to reflect the shape, form and content of what could be a reasonable plan for submission for examination by a planning inspector, although there were some gaps in policy coverage that need to be addressed.

All matters in the plan were consulted on to promote comment and review. Nothing was, or is now, determined or fixed, and the comments we have received from feedback will be used to inform future drafts of the local plan.

The plan was produced as a printed document in pdf format along with pdfs of various maps (the Policies map) showing lines, boundaries and areas that policies apply to. To encourage engagement and feedback we also published the plan (most policies in full and summary commentary around policies) on a consultation software platform called Commonplace. This same software also had a mapping function that showed potential development sites that we sought feedback on as well.

The previous consultation, undertaken in 2021 on 'Issues and Options' was conducted online using ESRI StoryMaps (as a more user-friendly alternative to a standard PDF). This presented the information being consulted on and Granicus Firmstep was used to collect responses submitted online. Members were in favour of a more unified system for the consultation on the Draft Local Plan, which didn't involve switching between platforms to view information and then comment on it separately.

A corporate decision was made to invest in Commonplace, an online citizen engagement platform, for use across the entire Council, rather than a planning-specific consultation tool. Commonplace enabled the consultation to be presented in a more engaging and interactive way, that works equally well on a desktop computer as it does on a tablet or smart phone. Consultation material could be viewed and comments made within the same window (as requested by members).

Commonplace presented the draft plan by breaking down each chapter into a 'tile', within which users could read background information and the specific text of proposed policies. Users could then provide direct feedback by submitting a comment (with no word limit in place).

The same opportunity for feedback was given for proposed residential & mixed use land allocations and options for the proposed new settlement, which were accessible by a list (ordered in the town or village the allocation was located) or by the use of an interactive map.



The interactive map showed each of the proposed sites using a colour coded ‘traffic light’ system to show preferred allocations, second choice sites and also those that have been dismissed as an option at this stage. This enabled users to comment on all potential site options but also give respondents a clear indication of the Council’s preferred sites and strategy at this stage to inform responses.

JPEG maps (rather than an interactive map) were also provided on other areas which were part of the consultation (e.g. employment allocations, areas considered suitable for wind/solar energy, etc). There was also a ‘quick survey’ tile for people who did not have the time / inclination to comment on the entire document.

### **Issues and problems that were reported on**

A number of online respondents struggled using Commonplace, with negative feedback including not being able to use the interactive map, frustration at each individual comment being acknowledged separately, confusion and annoyance over the use of emojis, difficulties in navigating through the tiles and using the platform overall, lack of clarity over whether comments had been successfully submitted/ documents uploaded and that the consultation seemingly excluded people who are not IT literate (even though the idea was that the web site was intuitive and simple to use).

A selection of the negative feedback received is presented in **Appendix 1** to this report.

### **Cookies and issues raised**

An issue was also raised regarding the lack of a cookies/ privacy notice on the Commonplace web site and the fact that there was no upfront cookie consent request, which one respondent suggested was in breach of Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR).

The Council and Commonplace were subsequently reported to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) for a cookie consent breach, however, no action was taken.

There is some ambiguity in the regulations relating to cookie consent in the circumstances of the consultation; Commonplace informed the Council that they had contacted the ICO and advised them of the issue but the ICO responded that there was no need to inform them.

## The consultation strategy

Consultation is a two-way process in which people are informed about the options available to them and are asked for their opinion on what is being considered. The Council wanted to ensure that communities in East Devon are aware of and able to comment on the topics which matter to them most.

In 2021, the Council ran a consultation on the Issues and Options concerning the next Local Plan. The overwhelming majority of respondents to the questionnaire were either in the 56-70 or 70+ age groups, and members advocated that more effort should be made to specifically seek the views of younger residents in the consultation on a draft version of the plan itself.

Many of the topics covered in the Draft Local Plan affect the district's younger residents, specifically including future housing provision and the lack of affordable homes – cost and availability of housing have been suggested as a major cause of both younger people leaving the area and the increase in the average age of an East Devon resident.

It was decided to set out a strategy including ideas on how we can better engage with the District's under 50s and, in particular, the 18-24 age group who do not traditionally engage in planning consultations.

Throughout the consultation, we utilised the Council's social media accounts to better engage with the younger demographic, including regular posts on Facebook and Twitter and the creation of topic-specific videos for YouTube. Members of the Devon Youth Council and East Devon representatives in the UK Youth Parliament were contacted to help publicise the consultation.

Additionally, online newsletters/updates were published throughout the consultation period, along with regular press releases being issued to the local media, adverts on the EDDC web site and online webinars for parish and town councillors. There were, face-to-face engagement events with the public, held in Whimple, Ottery St Mary, Axminster, Clyst St Mary, Sidmouth, Honiton, Exmouth, Feniton and Seaton; these events are covered in more detail elsewhere in this report. Some parish council and local community groups also organised their own events, such as a paper-based questionnaire organised by the Axminster Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. A group proposing a new garden village at Greenhayes organised a separate online petition.

After a Local Plan introductory video was published on YouTube in November 2022, other video topics which followed included: Climate Change (published Dec 13th 2022; 172 views as

of Jun 6th 2023); and Housing (published Jan 19th 2023, 262 views as of Jun 6th 2023). Viewing figures were not as high as hoped.

Press releases were issued throughout the consultation period on topics such as: 'Will the new East Devon Local Plan help meet your housing need?', 'Could more be done to make new developments more environmentally friendly in East Devon?' and 'What do you think of proposals for a second new town in East Devon?' Local media outlets to cover the Local Plan included the Midweek Herald newspaper and the Nub News series of websites.

Criticisms of our approach included not directly contacting people who live near a proposed allocated site (in the way the Council would contact people living near an area affected by an actual planning application). However, the Local Plan impacts on everyone in East Devon and engaging with everybody that might have an interest in the plan and proposals within is very difficult. For example, we could have done a postal mailshot to every household in East Devon, but this would have been very expensive, and we query whether that would have been a good use of Council money. In the future, perhaps we should consider erecting a notice next to every site that we suggested as a possible allocation for development in the draft plan?

## The people that responded and a note on statistical validity

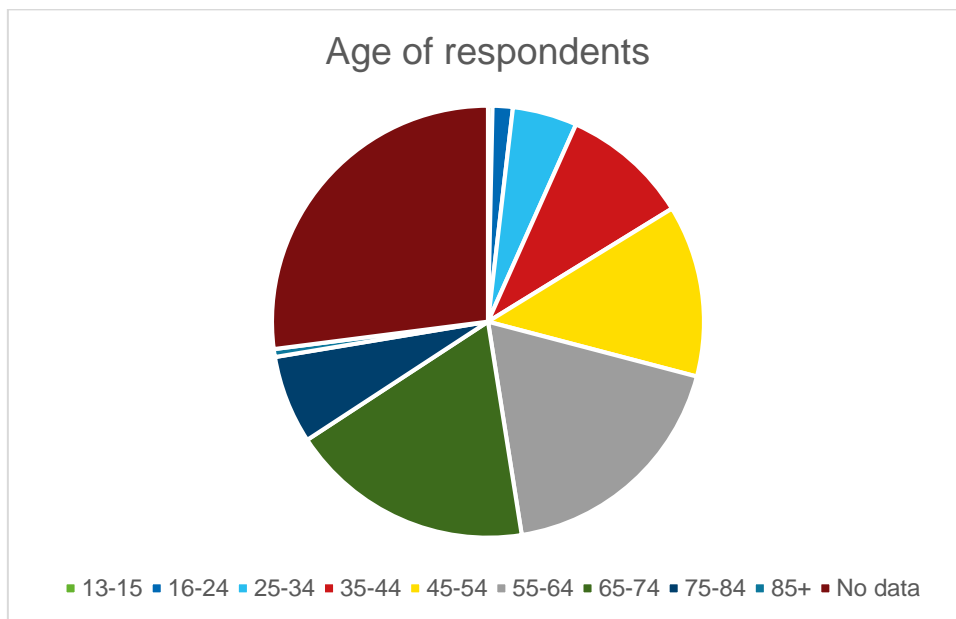
Through the consultation software we asked people to provide background information on where they lived, their age and whether they were responding as a private individual or in some other capacity. These questions were asked to understand more about the characteristics of those responding.

Most responses received, where people provided information (noting there was no obligation to do so) were from people that live in East Devon though there were also responses from other parts of the country as well, though many of these were from agents representing clients or from other bodies or organisations.

Of those respondents who answered the question ‘What is your connection to the area?’, 94.41% said they lived in East Devon with 2.98% stating that they worked in the district; other responses included that the respondent commuted through East Devon, owned a business in East Devon, studied in East Devon, volunteered in East Devon, was a consultee, a developer or a landowner.

Out of the respondents who stated where they live, 1,671 (94.03%) out of 1,777 lived in East Devon and 106 (5.97%) lived outside of East Devon; 602 respondents did not state where they lived.

The majority of respondents who provided detail about their age were middle-aged or older, with 56.75% of respondents aged 45 or above. Respondents aged 44 or under represented just 16.23% of those who took part in the consultation, with 27.03% not providing information about their age.



### In-person consultation events

Early in the consultation period a series of in-person consultation events were held at accessible community venues across the District. This gave interested parties an opportunity to speak to Officers face-to-face, provided assistance with technical queries and ensured large scale maps and supporting information were available for viewing and discussion. iPads also enabled the consultation software to be explained and demonstrated, and feedback could be given during the events using the iPads, verbally or in writing using the short response forms provided, a summary of these responses is given in **Appendix 2** to this report.

Venues were mainly selected on the basis of being located in the main towns, close to public transport and town centres, but several events were also held in villages where proposals for substantial growth were under consideration. Where several villages in close proximity could be impacted by new town proposals, the most accessible location was chosen. Events were held during the afternoon and into the evening to maximise potential for attendance.

The events were well attended and generally well received. Attendees fed back that they appreciated the opportunity to view the proposals, although they didn't necessarily agree with them. A summary of each event is set out below.

Venue	The Guildhall, Axminster
Date, time	Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2022, 3pm until 7pm
Weather	Very cold, frosty and misty
Approximate number of attendees	150 – 200 The hall was very busy for the first three hours but much quieter for the last hour.

Demographic profile	Mostly older and middle aged people
Most frequent comments/questions	<p>Concern about the impact of housing levels on infrastructure, particularly roads, schools and health facilities.</p> <p>Concern that housing levels in Axminster were much higher than other East Devon towns.</p> <p>Concerns that no site notices had been put up to show allocations and that people had found out about plan and exhibition by accident.</p> <p>The majority of site specific concerns related to Axmi_02 and included lack of clarity about highway access, loss of beautiful green fields that people use for walking and potential impact on heritage assets.</p>
Other settlements	There were quite a few people from Chardstock who expressed concerns about the level of housing proposed in the village. The narrow lanes linking Chardstock to the main road, difficulties caused by school traffic along this route and general lack of infrastructure were the main concerns.
Other comments/questions raised	<p>Axminster has already had a lot of housing and relief road has not happened.</p> <p>Concerned about impact of development on water quality in River Axe.</p> <p>Concerns about traffic congestion in town centre.</p>
Any other comments	<p>Some people were reluctant to comment online and were pleased that there was an opportunity to complete a comments sheet at the exhibition.</p> <p>Axminster Town Council representatives and EDDC Councillors were also in attendance and were very helpful.</p>

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Clyst St Mary Village Hall</b>
Date, time	Friday 2 December 2022, 2pm until 6pm
Weather	Grey and cold but dry.
Approximate number of attendees	<p>Estimated at around 200.</p> <p>The exhibition ran from 2.00pm to 6.00pm with a steady flow of arrivals throughout the afternoon though numbers tailed off towards the end. People attending stayed for varying lengths of time with many around for longer durations.</p>
Demographic profile	Mostly middle and older aged, but later on (around 4.00pm through to 6.00pm) some younger people.
Most frequent comments/questions	<p>Most attendees were interested in and raised question and challenges around the proposals for the new community and the sites shown in the consultation draft plan. There was (not surprisingly) overarching opposition, in principle, to proposals for development of the new community and no clear pattern in comments or questions to suggest that any particular site was more or less favoured than any of the others. That said, Option 1 which as shown as a favoured site in the consultation plan, came in for more comments and challenges than the other site options with some attendees suggesting that it was inappropriate for a favoured option to be shown in the consultation and highlighting that assessment work was not clear cut in significantly favouring Option 1.</p>

Some attendees had seen presentations by land owners/agents that included masterplans of proposals and queried whether these formed part of the development proposals and part of the consultation (the answer to which is no and if proposals for a new community progress there will be Council led master planning work).

In challenges to the principle of the new community a number of people raised questions and concerns around the scale of proposed development and the degree to which it would overtly impact on and superimpose a significant urban form on what is currently a rural environment made up of small groups of dwellings.

A key theme coming forward in comments and questions related to the overall impacts on and ability of existing infrastructure to cope with additional demands and whether and when new infrastructure would be provided. The ability of the highway network to cope with additional vehicle pressure was high on many people's topic matters for discussion with many of the view that roads at the present time are inadequate with long queues for much of the day and pollution being a real concern. Attendees questioned the ability of the roads to cope with the additional vehicles the development would generate and whether, or if, roads could or would be upgraded. The traffic modelling in the CBRE assessment work came in for criticism with some suggesting it was inaccurate and it failed to take into account real life congestions nor to adequately address the real life impacts that future development would cause. There was some scepticism that new residents would do other than drive cars.

A wide range of further infrastructure capacity matters were also raised highlighting concerns over current capacity, the demands and needs new development would generate and if, when or whether new infrastructure would be provided. Provision of health and medical care, schools and sewage were amongst key matters raised. Many of the attendees questioned the overall need for the scale of house building set out in the plan overall with challenges relating to whether it was the (high) levels that generated and were the driver for the proposals for the new community. Some suggested that it came across as an easy answer to plan for a new community to accommodate the identified scale of housing, but there were better or alternative answers and options.

A number of attendees suggested that there were differing strategic choices or options that the plan should be pursuing. Some highlighting that they felt the overall amount of development the plan is accommodating is too high. There were also observations that rather than planning for a new community (close to Exeter) there should be other locations that should be looked at for more development, specifically including observations that development should be dispersed at higher levels more widely across the rest of East Devon.

Other comments/questions raised	<p>There was some more general interest raised in questions around the plan, though in many cases, such as scale of housing provision, such considerations overlapped with challenges and queries around the new community proposals.</p> <p>Beyond the new community proposals there were some (though limited) questions raised about development elsewhere in the District including in respect of development at villages and sites shown in the draft plan as allocations or land that is not allocated in the plan.</p> <p>Some people raised the conflict with the recently ‘made’ Farringdon Neighbourhood Plan, and questioned the point of doing an NP if it is ignored by EDDC when preparing a Local Plan. It was suggested that EDDC Officers must have known about the potential for a new settlement in the area when the Farringdon NP was being prepared and if so, was this not/why was this not mentioned by EDDC to those preparing the NP?</p>
Any other comments	<p>The overwhelming number of questions raised and comments made directly related to the local plan, its status and timescales and proposals for work going forward. Some people raised concerns that there had been inadequate notice given for the exhibitions and that in the time available to make comment there was a significant amount of material to seek to take into account and that time constraints made in challenging or impossible to fully/properly review background material.</p> <p>There was also concern raised that developers and agents promoting sites and schemes for development were given the opportunity to do so to committee but those that did not consider the sites or potential approaches of the plan to accommodate development were not afforded the same chances.</p> <p>It was strongly suggested that a consultation event should have been held in Farringdon, given its proximity to the preferred option for a new settlement. It was also suggested that the event was held at an inconvenient time for those at work. Whilst many attendees expressed opposition to the new community proposals (in particular) there was a view that the event was to be welcomed and thanked council staff and members for being available to address matters raised and provide further information and comment.</p>

<b>Venue</b>	<b>The Ocean, Exmouth</b>
Date, time	Thursday 8 December 2022, 3.00 pm until 7:00 pm
Weather	Dry and sunny until sunset, but it was a cold day and a very cold early evening.
Approximate number of attendees	<p>Estimated at around 200.</p> <p>There was a steady flow of arrivals throughout the afternoon though numbers tailed off somewhat towards the end. People attending stayed for varying lengths of time with many around for longer durations.</p>
Demographic profile	Mostly middle and older aged, but with some younger adults, and some children with parents/guardians especially in the early evening.
Most frequent comments/questions	Most attendees were interested in and raised question and challenges around proposals in and around Exmouth, there were comparatively limited questions and issues raised about sites or matters beyond Exmouth.



Most of the sites shown as proposed allocations in the plan came up in questions and criticism, but there were also questions raised about the appropriateness and suitability of Exmouth to accommodate growth (and the scale proposed in the plan) and also about the processes and procedures used to arrive at the proposals. In questions asked there were matters raised around the suitability of sites with landscape impact considerations being a particular matter of concern noting that one larger site allocation falls within the East Devon AONB. Amenity impact concerns also featured in questions relating to proposed allocations as did adverse nature conservation considerations.

In commenting on and relating to proposed allocation sites in the plan a number of questions and comments raised related to the suitability of Exmouth to accommodate growth and indeed whether the town could or should now be regarded as full. It was highlighted in some comments that the outer edges of Exmouth, where allocation sites and site options are generally located, fall some distance (up to 5 km) from the town centre (which is located very much in the south west of the town). It was also suggested that there was limited scope to attract new jobs to the town (particularly non-tourism jobs) and as such there is and would be through further housebuilding a mismatch between residential accommodation and employment opportunities, exacerbating the dormitory role of the town. There were, however, questions raised around employment allocations in the town.

Allied to the in-principle questions around growth at Exmouth there was considerable debate and questioning around infrastructure capacity at and to serve the town. Highway congestion was raised by many attendees with particular reference to roads, and their capacity, leading northwards from the town towards Exeter. Questions and challenges were also raised across a broad spectrum of matters to include health provision, school capacity, sewage capacity and policing. These related to if, when or how additional infrastructure would be provided or supplied.

Some attendees questioned the overall need for the scale of house building set out in the plan and related these to recent Government announcements around greater flexibility for planning authorities to plan for lower levels of housing growth. It was contested that East Devon District Council should be more pro-active in setting out a case for lower levels of house building in the plan.

There was some comment in questions asked about the lack or absence of engagement to date with local communities and bodies in plan making. It was highlighted by some that local bodies have extensive local knowledge and local community inputs should have been sought at the outset in respect of proposing land allocations for development and wider policy matters. It was highlighted by some that they consider that the proposals for Exmouth run counter to the Made neighbourhood plan for the town.

There were also some questions and comments around accommodating development in other locations in the rest of East Devon, with some respondents being of the view that there were more appropriate places than Exmouth to accommodate growth (more development at the new community was suggested as a better alternative to Exmouth growth).

Other comments/ questions raised	<p>There was a range of queries raised that fall outside of the scope of the local plan with traffic congestion and speeding vehicles most commonly being referenced, but also concerns relating to new housing being unaffordable, even where defined as “affordable housing”.</p> <p>Beyond Exmouth there were comparatively limited questions raised about proposed development elsewhere in the District, though some proposed allocations sites at some villages were raised in comments as well as questions around the three possible new town sites.</p>
Any other comments	<p>The overwhelming number of questions raised and comments made directly related to the local plan, its status and timescales and proposals for work going forward. Whilst many attendees expressed opposition to site allocations at Exmouth there was a view that the event was to be welcomed and attendees thanked council staff for being available to address matters raised and provide further information and comment.</p>

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Youth Centre, Feniton</b>
Date, time	Tuesday 13 December 2022, 3.00 pm until 7:00 pm
Weather	Overcast and cold.
Approximate number of attendees	Estimated at around 100 to 150. There was a steady flow of arrivals throughout the afternoon though numbers tailed off somewhat towards the end. People attending stayed for varying lengths of time with many around for longer durations.
Demographic profile	Mostly middle and older aged, but with some younger adults, and some children.
Most frequent comments/ questions	<p>Most attendees were specifically interested in proposals for Feniton and the conclusions from the site assessment work (as shown on the Feniton inset to the Policies Map). Linked to assessment of sites many attendees referenced and objected to the possible option of higher levels of development at Feniton with infrastructure capacity concerns specifically being noted. Flooding matters and sewage capacity were dominant themes raised by attendees in questions and comments.</p> <p>By way of context setting it should be noted that the inset map for Feniton shows a range of sites around the village that were submitted in ‘calls for sites’ and which have been assessed. One assessed site, land at Burland Mead, was classified as “Preferred”, it was coloured in green and is proposed as an allocation in the Local Plan for development. Some assessed sites were classified as “rejected”, they were coloured in red and are not proposed as allocations. And some were coloured in yellow/amber, they were classified as “second choice” but were/are not proposed as allocations for development in the plan as currently drafted. As drafted the plan, therefore, proposed smaller scale growth at Feniton.</p> <p>Many people raising questions and comments challenged the judgement and underlying assessment that had led to the classification of sites as “second choice” (the yellow/amber sites). The opinion of many was that they should have been</p>

	<p>recorded as “rejected” and that they are not suitable or appropriate for a second choice classification or for development. There were concerns that such matters as adverse landscape impacts and flooding impacts have not been appropriately taken into account in individual site assessments, whilst there was also the view that there was insufficient infrastructure in or at Feniton to support the individual or the collective impacts of development of the “second choice” classified sites.</p> <p>A number of those asking questions referenced the super planning appeal at Feniton from a number of years back and commentary and conclusions set out in the Inspector’s report. These conclusions were cited in comments made to argue a case for the unsuitability of sites at and around the village to accommodate development. It was noted that one site rejected at the appeal has been given a “second choice” classification and another a “rejected” classification. A third site at the appeal was granted consent and has been partly built-out, though this site, its lack of completion and flooding issues associated with it came up in questioning.</p> <p>Many attendees specifically raised concerns and issue around flooding in Feniton and the potential for new development to exacerbate or worsen existing problems. Such concerns were noted in the context of recent and scheduled works to alleviate flooding but some suggested they were to date unproven and incomplete and also would (if or when completed) only offer scope to address problems in some (specifically easterly) parts of the village.</p> <p>The one site that is proposed for allocation in the current draft of the local plan was generally supported (or at least accepted) as a site for development. However, some localised issues of trees at the site and their possible loss from development were raised as were concerns about the amount of housing that site development might accommodate (concerns of over-development were highlighted). There were also matters raised about sewage capacity at and around the site with existing problems of sewage rising into existing homes highlighted and concerns that further development would exacerbate these current problems.</p> <p>Some attendees questioned the overall need for the scale of house building set out in the plan and related these comments to recent announcements around greater flexibility for planning authorities to plan for lower levels of housing growth.</p>
<p>Other comments/questions raised</p>	<p>There was a range of queries raised that partially or more fully fall outside of the scope of the local plan with existing localised traffic congestion being one such concern (one that was suggested would be exacerbated by further development). More significantly, however, were concerns and challenges around the whole subject matter of flooding at the village, including whether flooding at the village was properly understood and alleviation measures have been appropriately identified and planned for. There were also questions around where responsibilities for actions in respect of existing flooding should lie and whether works that should have previously been built may exist, are appropriate and are operational, and in indeed where responsibility for assessing and managing these lie.</p> <p>Beyond Feniton there were some, but comparatively limited questions raised about proposed development elsewhere in the District, though there was some debate around development at Ottery St Mary and some villages close by and also interest in the new town proposals.</p>

Any other comments	<p>The overwhelming number of questions raised and comments made directly related to the local plan, its status and timescales and proposals for work going forward. Whilst many attendees expressed opposition to site assessments and a possible outcome of larger scale growth at the village there was a view that the event was to be welcomed and attendees thanked council staff for being available to address matters raised and provide further information and comment.</p> <p>Some people mentioned that the Commonplace consultation software was difficult to use.</p>
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Venue	The Beehive, Honiton
Date, time	Wednesday 7 December 2022, 3pm until 7pm
Weather	Grey and cold but dry.
Approximate number of attendees	<p>150.</p> <p>The exhibition was advertised as running from 3.00pm to 7.00pm, however there was an influx of people from 2.40 when staff opened the doors in order to help an attendee with mobility requirements and noticed a crowd of people filling the corridor. After an initial very heavy influx of visitors, there was a steady flow of arrivals throughout the session. The room was 'full' of attendees for the first two and a half hours (to the extent that it overflowed into the corridor), and quieter for the last hour. People attending stayed for varying lengths of time with most staying at least 10 minutes and a significant number staying for over half an hour.</p>
Demographic profile	Mostly older people with some middle aged. Only a few younger people (under 30) and 4 children (0-16).
Most frequent comments/questions	<p>The impact of additional housing on infrastructure – schools (primary and secondary) and the GP are already at or over capacity. How will these facilities cope with the extra houses proposed in the Local Plan?</p> <p>The impact of additional surface water run-off from Honi_01 on houses in the Heathpark estate which have suffered flooding in recent years and now cannot/find it hard to obtain insurance cover. This included concerns re the gully which is over flowing and not maintained</p> <p>Lack of details re the access to the sites to the west of the town. Concern that access would be via narrow country lanes, through an existing housing estate or through the industrial estate.</p> <p>Objection to encroachment into the AONB and that circa 80 houses is not 'minor' as per the NPPF guidance</p> <p>Sewage is at capacity and already backs up in some houses</p>
Other settlements	A group of people from Upottery attended to object to the lack of new housing allocations in the village and its categorisation as 'unsustainable'.
Other comments/questions raised	<p>Honiton has grown hugely over the last few decades – why does it need more housing when the infrastructure is so poor?</p> <p>What is happening re sports pitch provision?</p> <p>Why hasn't Gittisham been consulted properly when the housing is in that parish?</p>

	<p>The site to the east of the town will abut older persons' park homes. Families will detract from their amenity</p> <p>The maps do not accurately reflect the extent of flooding</p> <p>Will the numbers be revised in light of the Government statement</p>
Any other comments	None

<b>Venue</b>	<b>The Institute, Ottery St Mary</b>
Date, time	Wednesday 30 November 2022, 3pm until 7pm
Weather	Grey and cold but dry.
Approximate number of attendees	<p>200.</p> <p>The exhibition ran from 3.00pm to 7.00pm with a steady flow of arrivals throughout this time. The room was 'full' of attendees for the first three hours, and quieter for the last hour. People attending stayed for varying lengths of time with many around for longer durations.</p>
Demographic profile	Mostly older people with some middle aged. Only a few younger people (under 30).
Most frequent comments/questions	<p>The impact of additional housing on infrastructure – schools (primary and secondary) and the GP are already at or over capacity. How will these facilities cope with an extra 288 houses proposed in the Local Plan?</p> <p>Similarly, there were concerns that the road network in Ottery is inadequate as it is largely served by small, narrow roads.</p>
Other comments/questions raised	<p>Ottery St Mary has already had its 'fair share' of new housing – why does it need more?</p> <p>The site off Strawberry Lane (LP_Otry_10 and LP_GH/ED/27) feels remote and would have an unacceptable landscape impact.</p> <p>What is happening to Tipton St John primary school given it frequently floods. Would prefer for it to stay within the village.</p> <p>Southern part of LP_West_04 in West Hill is subject to flooding and is home to bats.</p>
Any other comments	None

<b>Venue</b>	<b>Gateway, Seaton</b>
Date, time	Thursday 15 December 2022, 3pm until 7pm
Weather	Grey and cold but dry.
Approximate number of attendees	<p>200.</p> <p>The exhibition ran from 3.00pm to 7.00pm with a steady flow of arrivals throughout this time. The room was 'full' of attendees for the first three hours, and quieter for the last hour. People attending stayed for varying lengths of time with many around for longer durations.</p>
Demographic profile	Mostly older people with some middle aged.

Most frequent comments/questions	<p>Concern on the impact of additional housing on infrastructure in the town, particularly the GP and primary school.</p> <p>Seaton has already met its Local Plan housing requirement, so why is more needed? Similarly, why are you doing a new Local Plan now, given the current one goes up to 2031?</p> <p>Sites on northern edge of town should be rejected as located in green wedge. Also adverse impact on bats.</p> <p>LP_Seat_05 was dismissed at appeal a few years ago, so should not be allowed to go ahead.</p> <p>Why is there a need for more housing? The Govt has removed housing requirements, so do we still need these houses?</p>
Other comments/questions raised	<p>New development will have an adverse impact on flooding – the underlying geology is not suitable for sustainable drainage systems.</p> <p>How will access be obtained to LP_Seat_02?</p> <p>Cannot trust developers to deliver good quality development, as they often renege on affordable housing and other contributions.</p> <p>Colyford Road is already busy/dangerous, and LP_Seat_05 would make this much worse.</p> <p>Unhappy that the hospital has closed – what is happening to this?</p> <p>House prices are too high – even “affordable housing” is not affordable to most.</p> <p>What does the Coastal Preservation Area designation mean?</p> <p>How did you come up with the sites initially?</p> <p>When will the sites be built?</p> <p>Questions on the impacts on Colyford from Seaton related development and some questions around allocation sites and rejected options in Colyton.</p>
Any other comments	<p>What is the green pipe currently being buried along the northern edge of LP_Seat_03?</p>

Venue	Sidmouth
Weather	Cold clear
Approximate number of attendees	120 The exhibition ran from 3.00pm to 7.00pm with a steady flow of arrivals throughout the first part of the afternoon. Quieter than other events. Last 2.5 hours had very few visitors. People attending stayed for varying lengths of time with many around for longer durations.
Demographic profile	Middle age and older in the main. A few younger individuals.
Most frequent comments/questions	<p>Need for infrastructure to be in place first before development is planned: Roads, sewage, surface water, access to services (doctors / dentist etc).</p> <p>Concern over new town and increased congestion / foul water.</p>

Other comments/questions raised	<p>Requests to push back to Government on housing figures.</p> <p>Requests to address second home ownership through policy / taxation.</p> <p>Cycle lanes and sustainable transport should be prioritised.</p> <p>Multiple requests that the park and change scheme be considered at Sidm_01.</p> <p>Criticism that this wasn't included in the plan for public consultation.</p> <p>Concerns over limitations restricting the extension of affordable homes in Policy.</p> <p>Question over the proportion of specialist older person dwellings proposed on allocated sites in Policy 41.</p> <p>Queries regarding the settlement boundary methodology / detail.</p> <p>Several raising concern over future of Budleigh Salterton community hub which occupies a preferred allocation site, and various concerns over sites (allocated and rejected) at Sidbury, including re. traffic issues through this village.</p>
Any other comments	<p>Lack of concern over the preferred sites in general. Low turnout attributed to the small scale of the proposed allocations in the Sidmouth context.</p>

Venue	The Victory Hall, Whimble
Date, time	Tuesday 29 November 2022, 1630 hrs until 2030 hrs
Weather	Grey and cold but dry.
Approximate number of attendees	<p>150 - 200.</p> <p>The room was packed with attendees for the first three hours, and quieter for the last hour. People attending stayed for varying lengths of time with many around for longer durations.</p>
Demographic profile	Mostly older and middle aged people.
Most frequent comments/questions	<p>Concern about the impact of additional housing on infrastructure in the village, particularly the road network.</p> <p>Many queries about the level of housing proposed and whether all the 'second' choice sites were to be allocated.</p> <p>Don't want Whimble to merge with Cranbrook.</p>
Other comments/questions raised	<p>There were several people concerned about the scale of allocation proposed in Broadclyst (Brcl_12).</p> <p>Several people were interested in the new settlement proposals and concerned that an exhibition had not been arranged in Farringdon Village Hall.</p>
Any other comments	<p>Whimble was the first exhibition held. Paper comment slips asking people how many homes should be built in Whimble (from a selected range) were made available and some people added additional comments, but the more general comments slip used in subsequent exhibitions was not available.</p> <p>One person praised the site selection methodology.</p>

## Where to view consultation responses

Responses to the consultation can be viewed on the Council web site with contact details redacted, where appropriate, and to accord with our privacy standards. In a very limited number of cases selected text has been redacted where it was considered that it could be read as racist, slanderous or otherwise unacceptable.

Where people or organisations made contact via the Commonplace consultation portal their comments can be seen on the software platform at:

<https://eastdevonlocalplan.commonplace.is/>

The responses that came in, outside of Commonplace, i.e. that were sent in as emails or as paper copies or letters or petitions in the post and in respect of documents that were uploaded on to Commonplace (as opposed to be posted directly on the portal) can be viewed at:

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan/comments-made-during-the-draft-local-plan-consultation/>



## Policy by policy summary of comments received

This section of this report provides a policy-by-policy summary commentary of key matters raised by respondents to the consultation. In some cases, policies in the plan specifically allocate sites for development and some sites will be referenced in this section of the report.

We start by highlighting some more generic issues and matters raised in consultation responses.

In providing a summary of comments made we have not typically sought to attribute comments to specific individuals or organisations. However, we have made certain exceptions where, for example it is a government agency or body or other organisation which undertake or have specific roles defined in legislation or Government policy/guidance that address key planning matters. In selected other cases we also highlight where a body or organisation has made comment, especially on specific technical points, we do so because we felt it would be beneficial for readers of this document to know who has raised a given issue. Most comments made and reported on were submitted by individual members of the public.

It is reiterated that we provide a summary of comments only and for a full picture all comments should be read in their entirety.

## General Comments on the plan – not recorded at policy specific

This section of this document highlights a number of general comments about the plan and processes applied that are not necessarily specifically about any chapter of specific plan policy.

### Comments about the need for a plan

The Council has determined that there is a need for a new local plan but some respondents questioned this by raising the following points:

- Several people noted that the current local plan has an end date of 2031 and felt that a new plan should not be produced until this end date.
- In noting the end date of the current local plan, it was suggested in some comments that the intent/aspiration behind the Council producing a new plan is to see/support significant extra levels of new development.
- In the context of opposing production of a new local plan (now) some respondent's highlight that many neighbourhood plans are in place (Made) and a new local plan should not be produced as it would supersede neighbourhood plans that were voted for through in a referendum.
- A challenge was raised that we should not plan for 15 years into the future, rather decisions should be taken in the context of needs at any given time.
- Neighbourhood planning process was seen to be too convoluted for smaller parishes that may wish to develop and grow.

### Comments about data in the plan

- The local plan draws on data and information to inform and justify policy. However, some data was challenged.
- There was a concern raised that (some) data used in the plan is out of date, particularly the use of 2011 census data.

### Comments about democratic process and engagement

Some respondents challenged the democratic legitimacy of the plan, plan making process and plan content. Comments received included:

- Consultation is a pretence to give local people a say, this will not actually happen.

- Council has failed to consult with towns and villages prior to the draft version being issued.
- A specific concern was raised that there was not a local plan meeting held in Farringdon village hall.
- Concern was raised that there was a failure to consult with villages and towns ahead of producing the draft local plan, including on The Role and Function of Settlements report and this was contrary to/undermined neighbourhood plan work.
- EDDC should ask parish/town councils how many new dwellings they feel would benefit their communities.
- Concern was raised that there should be far more on the ground consultation with people local to an area around their needs.
- Concern was raised that the plan is developer/development led and is about ‘developer profiteering’.
- There was a call for the publication of names of the landowners who responded and how much of the land they have "offered" is allocated as well as those that have lobbied for development.
- A respondent advised that mapping was unclear as features such as AONB boundaries and SSSIs were not clearly depicted.
- Concerns that plan making processes have not been transparent with non-public discussions (specifically on new town options).
- The consultation contains leading questions which are not ideal for gathering objective responses.
- Why are acceptable sites coloured green on green – not very accessible.
- Consultation website was difficult to use and navigate and crashed at times.
- Much of consultation time was over Christmas and New Year.
- In future anyone who stands to be directly affected by a matter like a change to a Settlement Boundary should be advised personally and in writing about this before a formal consultation begins.
- Devon and Cornwall Police were disappointed that none of their comments made on the Issues and Options consultation have been incorporated into the Draft Local Plan.
- Drawing settlement boundaries to include development sites is pre-emptive and unfair.
- All householders potentially affected by the new settlement options should have received letters to notify them of the consultation.

### **Relationship with Neighbourhood Plans**

Throughout the consultation responses there were lots of comments that were about and related to neighbourhood plans. Key matters raised included:

- It was positive to see that communities active currently in emerging Neighbourhood Plan preparation or with a 'made' Plan were able to draw on this work to inform preparation of responses to the Local Plan consultation. For example, in Axminster where a questionnaire was organised by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and in Whimble where representations were informed from results of recent Neighbourhood Plan community consultations.
- There were also some positive comments about the draft Local Plan in relation to preparation or implementation of Neighbourhood Plans. These included that Neighbourhood Plans had been positively referred to in the draft Plan and noting that various strategic policies lent in-principle support that should further Neighbourhood Plan aims/policy objectives, such as relating to delivering a mix of housing types including self-build, creation of active travel routes, and potential for supporting valued views identified in Neighbourhood Plans through proposed policy on Areas of Strategic Visual Importance.
- In general, however, many respondents felt that their Plans/work on preparing them had been ignored in the emerging Local Plan, and some questioned the value of having produced a Neighbourhood Plan. This was particularly the case where their community had a Neighbourhood Plan relatively recently 'made' and/or where there are significant conflicts with the emerging LP proposals. It was even considered inappropriate by some respondents for a new Local Plan that would supersede made Neighbourhood Plans to be produced at all, and/or for it rely on the Government's standard method for calculating housing needs, given the number of 'made' neighbourhood plans which have all been subject to democratic vote in community referendums.
- Overall, the extent of conflicts between Neighbourhood Plans and the emerging Local Plan, and the 'policy blind' approach taken, was a recurring cause for concern/criticism regarding the Local Plan process so far. There were numerous calls for Neighbourhood Plans to be taken greater account of. Conflicts identified of particular or common concern included those arising from: options for a proposed new community; newly proposed or changed settlement boundaries; sites proposed for allocation at odds with Neighbourhood Plan policy to prevent settlement coalescence and retain rural character, and; the role and function of settlements in the proposed settlement hierarchy. Neighbourhood Plans highlighted through the representations where conflicts / potential conflicts were felt to be particularly significant included Broadclyst, Budleigh Salterton, Clyst St George, Colyton, Exmouth, Farringdon, Lymptone, Ottery St Mary & West Hill, Otterton, Sid Valley.
- Responses suggested that growth aspirations expressed in Neighbourhood Plans should fundamentally inform how much development should take place at given settlements and as such should inform the Local Plan strategy. Sites being contrary to / not supported by Neighbourhood Plan policies (or current Neighbourhood Plan preparation) was a common reason cited for not supporting their allocation in the Local

Plan. In particular, there were calls for sites outside existing development boundaries not to be allocated if contrary to neighbourhood plan policy. It was also expressed by some that neighbourhood plans would be the best route to determine new development sites, particularly for smaller scale development and for specific types of housing needed (especially affordable housing and smaller homes), and that communities should be able to bring to bear the power of Neighbourhood Plan.

- Where sites are to be allocated in the Local Plan going forward, there was a request to ensure that these are required to be developed in accordance with Neighbourhood Plan policy requirements where these exist. There was also a desire to see policies in made Neighbourhood Plans translated / incorporated into (or referred to in) Local Plan policy, for example, regarding Green Wedges, Local Green Spaces and other green / recreational space designations, local wildlife sites, local heritage assets etc.
- On the work still to be done highlighted in Local Plan Strategic Policy 3 regarding setting housing requirements for all of our Designated Neighbourhood areas, there was some support expressed for this in principle and for the intention to consult on the methodology. A plea was made that the figures set be realistic to help avoid speculative development in unsuitable locations. There was however also some criticism/concern about this forthcoming work area about the draft Local Plan allocations having already pre-judged local requirements. Going forward it was advocated that local town and parish councils should be asked about many dwellings would benefit their communities, and for consideration of the required housing type(s) and target market(s), and for the Local Plan to work alongside Neighbourhood Plans to encourage small pockets of organic growth for appropriate dwellings.
- Overall there was therefore significant concern about the emerging Local Plan and what it means for neighbourhood plans in the district and an expectation for further detailed consideration of the relationship and consultation with those communities.

### **Duty to cooperate**

- Exeter City Council highlight the importance of the Duty to Cooperate and joint working. They highlight the need for a Statement of Common Ground to address the following:
  - The collective strategic response to the climate emergency
  - Development strategy and cross boundary development impact mitigation
  - The partnership approach to mitigating development impact on European sites
  - Landscape setting
  - Employment strategy
  - Transport strategy
  - Education strategy
  - Community facilities (health, education and cultural infrastructure)
  - Flood risk and coastal change management.

- Exeter City Council highlight the Joint Strategy for East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge as setting an overarching common approach that will address some Duty to cooperate matters.
- Comments on behalf of landowner interests state that the plan has not considered whether neighbouring authorities can meet their development needs so plan cannot be found to be sound. It is further commented that Exeter City Council's position that it can meet its own development needs is incorrect because this relies on building on high performing brownfield employment land that is undeliverable. It is considered that this will result in East Devon having to accommodate a significant proportion of ECC's development "needs". It is concluded that East Devon is failing in its Duty to Cooperate, to responsibly and sustainably identify and allocate the most appropriate land for development and that further work must be done to ensure that development is delivered in the most sustainable locations around the Exeter area (irrespective of whether it's in EDDC, TDC, MDDC or ECC).
- Comments on behalf of a site promoter in Axminster query the extent of land available to deliver homes in Exeter, the statements made in the urban capacity assessments, and whether this is realistic. They think that EDDC will need to consider an uplift in housing numbers to accommodate some of Exeter's need, or at least to have a contingency in place to react if that becomes clearer over time.
- Exeter Cycling Campaign point out that some of Exeter's Park and Ride proposed sites are in East Devon

### **Presentation of the local plan**

- The Devon Wildlife Trust welcomes photographs in the plan and advises that they should aim to show good integration of semi-natural habitats into developments, with a diversity of habitats included. Habitats such as woodland, wetlands and heathlands are part of the wider East Devon landscape and should be fully integrated within developments. They say that Figure 7, showing new housing at Cranbrook, provides a poor example of green space within new development, with green space limited to tightly mown grass and the occasional non-native shrub.
- The documents are bland, difficult to follow and use a highly bureaucratic formulae making it very difficult for ordinary folk to review - an index to find references to specific villages would be helpful.

### **Start date, end date and Legal issues related to the plan**

- The Avenues Residents Association (Exmouth) consider that, as we are now in 2023, the plan cannot have a start date of 2020, it should reflect, start at, the year of adoption. It considers this to set a dangerous and possibly illegal precedent that appears to imply

that EDDC will use whatever the final form of the LP is to back-date any changes to the new Plan versus the preceding Plan. They believe the current timetable for reviewing the draft plan should be suspended pending clear guidance on changes from the Secretary of State and suggest that, not to do so, would leave the Council vulnerable to legal challenge.

- Some developers anticipate delay in the Local Plan's plan-making process and conclude that the end date of the plan period should be extended by up to two years i.e. to 2042 so that the plan is providing 15 years from adoption.
- In not insisting on solar panels on new houses The Avenues Resident Association assert that EDDC exhibit a supine approach when dealing with developers and rarely show the moral courage to go to court in defence of what is right.

### **MP's comments**

- Simon Jupp, MP for the East Devon constituency, submitted comments in which he notes and highlights concerns raised by a number of his constituents (across parts of the eastern side of East Devon) about:
  - the planned overall scale of development;
  - the principle of development at specific settlements; and
  - the suitability of certain listed sites for development.
- The matters raised by Simon Jupp MP, as reported to him by constituents, are reflected in comments on the plan as recorded in this report (elsewhere/further on). It is highlighted as well that Simon Jupp MP raises concerns around a large proportion of the planned housing growth falling on/towards the western side of East Devon with much less to the east.