

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



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Conclusions & next steps

Pages 474-482

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Issues raised that are not necessarily directly relevant to the Local Plan

A number of respondents raised issues that are not directly relevant to or potentially fall outside of the local plan.

Particular attention is drawn to the following matters that were raised:

- A respondent commented that every policy and every budget decision by every EDDC department must now focus on the biodiversity and climate change and prioritise these two overwhelming emergencies.
- A considerable number of respondents raised matters around infrastructure provision. In some cases, these were with respect to provision associated with or required to accommodate new development and as such are clearly planning related. There were also comments about existing capacity and how this could or should inform planning decisions about future development.
- There should be a local tax on land designated for development.
- Car parking charges should be reduced to help businesses.
- There should be greater provision for the youth of Seaton who are poorly served. The (former) Jurassic centre become a bowling alley or youth club.
- Suggestion that we need less people in the UK as it is too many people that is creating the need for too many houses.
- Opposition to aggregate application near Ottery St Mary on account of adverse environmental impacts including in respect of loss of bog habitats and impacts on Devin banks from vehicles.
- Grass verges should be better managed, as happens in Dorset.
- Hedgerows should be sustainably managed.
- The state of properties in Seaton providing private rented accommodation is dire and landlords should be more accountable to maintain properties to minimum standards.
- How can we stop landlords getting hold of multiple properties possibly subsidised by local money?
- Liberate some existing housing stock from second homes and holiday lets.
- Consider Liverpool's £1 house sale for disused and decaying housing stock.
- Fear that houses will end up being bought by buyers from outside the area.
- Second homes and holiday lets need to be discouraged by levying more Council Tax, to provide more homes for local people and less need to ruin the countryside.
- In open space management the council should look to minimise the use of pesticides on its green spaces, implement sustainable tools - such as battery powered devices, rather than petrol driven and should look for ways to increase biodiversity in its green spaces.

This could be done by reducing unnecessary mowing, decreasing mowing frequency in appropriate areas and encouraging fauna and flora to flourish. This needs to be done through communication with the public but has been done to excellent standards by Salisbury City Council among others.

- As soon as Local Plan maps are published there will be lots of real estate deals and potential for people to sue if they are put at a disadvantage.
- Planning is driven by investors and developers and not the local population.
- Bus/train station shelters are poorly designed so do not actually shelter from the weather for example, Exton Station and bus shelters with sloping shelves to sit on.
- Electric vehicles are extremely dangerous to walkers and cyclists because they are silent, heavy, and are prone to battery fires.
- Speed limits are too high, there should be a 20mph speed limit in towns and villages to improve safety, reduce pollution and improve amenity.
- Many CO2 emitting cars will be on the road after the 2030 Government deadline.
- EDDC should check that road signs, safe paths and street lights have been delivered in new developments.
- Much more could be done to utilise the numerous back lanes in East Devon that are for access only.
- Restore the Honiton Road Park and Ride bus in Exeter which has been replaced by the 4/4A service with no guarantee of a space on the bus.
- All Park and Ride services are expensive, it's far cheaper to drive and park.
- Improve integration between local bus services and train stations with integrated ticketing via a Devon Metro system.
- Need a reliable train service by resolving industrial disputes, replacing the trains, and adding carriages.
- We need a new tax on aviation fuel given the huge greenhouse gas emissions from air travel.
- Each town should have its own transport website containing bus and train timetables, bike shops, bike hire, maps of cycle paths etc like www.gettingaroundexmouth.org
- The Commonplace consultation platform was frustrating to use, hard to understand, and confusing.
- Do not close public toilets as this may risk public health, especially on beaches.
- Increase tax on second homes.
- There should be a 20mph speed limit across many more roads – it was observed - a 20mph limit benefits all road users and the whole community: casualties fall 20%, noise almost halves and active travel rises. Climate, safety, active travel, place-making, the economy and quality of life are all helped.

Responses to the Sustainability Appraisal

Consultation on a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report took place alongside the Draft Local Plan. The SA report assesses the policies and sites in the Draft Local Plan against a series of environmental, social and economic objectives. It also assesses alternative policies and sites, where reasonable, and explains why the preferred policies and sites have been chosen over the alternatives.

Whilst relatively few consultation responses relate solely to the SA report, many Draft Local Plan responses also mention the SA report. A summary of main consultation issues that mention the SA report follows below, by topic:

General

- Impacts on well-being only considered future residents and not the impact of proposed sites on existing population/residents.
- Not adequately considered the impacts of flood risk.
- Need to consider the cumulative effects across the plans.
- Exeter Airport is identified as a significant noise source, so ensure residents of new development are not within the flight path.

Overall distribution options

BDW refers to the SA P110 which assess 4 options for the distribution of the objectively assessed need for housing. Option A is the closest option to that taken forward in the Reg 18 plan. BDW agrees with conclusions about option A. However, even Option A did not consider the sustainability credentials of the distribution of residential development with the Reg 18 plan. There are distribution differences between Option A and the draft plan. So the Plan's distribution has not been assessed. Future SAs should ensure that the sustainability credentials of the proposed distribution is properly assessed.

Scale of Future Housing development

BDW refers to the SA consideration of two options for the level future housing growth (ie Policy 3 requirement). The first based on 18920 (standard method need rate); the second adding a 20% uplift to need. BDW considers that 20% uplift is an unreasonable alternative, based on the assessment work available.

But BDW considers that the SA should have assessed a number of options including uplifts to the requirement of 5%, 10% and 15%. They are deliverable. These are reasonable alternatives that should be considered in future iterations of the SA.

New settlement

- Do not agree with SA report stating new settlement options have a minor impact on transport, loss of 100s acres of land, infrastructure impact, M5 Junctions 29/30.
- SA report has not considered the reasonable alternative for a dispersed option that spreads houses to existing towns (including Cranbrook) and villages without a needing a new town – this would benefit housing delivery as higher number of developers and would mean greater flexibility.
- Disagree that no infrastructure is apparently needed for the first 2,500 dwellings (page 232, bullet point one)
- Disagree that Option 1 is likely to have a major positive effect on minimising carbon emissions, it has not considered the massive carbon footprint of the new town versus growing existing rural settlements, and the impact of travel before on-site facilities are built.
- Overall minor negative effect for Options 1 and 2 is not right as the effects of such a large development could never be described as “minor”.
- Comment regarding local lanes and low traffic volumes is not correct as new town will have at least 8,000 cars.
- Proximity of NCN Route 2 is 1.5km from the options and not on a desire line.
- Disagree that Options 1 and 3 benefit from proximity to train stations because of lack of parking at Topsham, Exton and Newcourt.
- Does not consider health and well-being of existing residents.
- Access to services commentary is unrealistic for 8,000 homes as Exeter, Topsham and Cranbrook are the only service centres of a sustainable scale, all ready access by car.
- Whilst Options 1 and 3 benefit from proximity to Exeter, neither has access by sustainable travel choices.
- Mitigation measure of linking to Clyst Valley Regional Park applies to Options 2 and 3 as well as Option 1.
- Mitigation measures do not mention any improvements to M5 Junctions 29 or 30 which are already at standstill at peak times.
- Seems like reasons for Option 1 mean it has simply been preferred because it is developer controlled.
- Energy from Waste at Hill Barton is mentioned – this is not low carbon in itself.
- Pegasus on behalf of Land Value Alliances support the findings which show that Option 1 is preferred.

- Turley, on behalf of Bloor Homes and Stuart Partners, consider that the SA is sound and has utilised a robust and transparent methodology to demonstrate that Option 1 is the most sustainable reasonable alternative for the delivery of a new community at East Devon. They state that the SA is correct in identifying that Option 1 will result in a number of major positive sustainability impacts in key areas such as: climate change mitigation, the provision of new homes, jobs & employment opportunities and connectivity & transport.
- Not correct to say that the location of the three options has been refined to ensure they do not converge with existing settlements – Option 3 is very close to two settlements, and close to another two.
- Not true that Option 3 provides a largely traffic-free route to Exeter to the north.
- The proximity to train stations is not a benefit as trains are at capacity.
- Evidence states a large area of Grade 1 agricultural land covers northern part of Option 1, the remainder being Grade 3 – this applies to Option 3, not Option 1.
- There is already unacceptable water pollution in the area, which will be made worse.
- Jobs commentary only focuses on jobs during construction, on-site jobs won't be available until construction is complete, so rating should be downgraded to “?”.
- Transport commentary has not considered additional development along the Exmouth Road.
- The 20 minute neighbourhood principle is not applied in terms of food security, despite this being stated in mitigation measures.
- Option 3 is not connected to the Clyst Valley Trail as separated by a dual carriageway.

Exmouth

- There is no bus service along Hulham Road, and the distance to the train station mean that residents will have to drive there, so sites in this area should not be scored as positive on connectivity and transport.
- Objective 1 text for Exmo_03 is incorrect as there is no mature vegetation on the site that is not typical of that found in surrounding gardens.
- Objective 2 text for Exmo_03 does not recognise the potential to extend the pavement along Bapton Lane to improve safety for pedestrians. The removal of trees to do this will reduce maintenance/cost of trimming the trees.
- Objective 6 text for Exmo_03 should note that the site is partly brownfield as it contains foundations and parts of walls of old buildings.

Ottery St Mary

- SA is incorrect in stating that developing GH/ED/26 and Otry_01a would be too visually intrusive as could amalgamate north/north west fields with proposed development at Otry_01b.
- GH/ED/27 and Otry_10 will have multiple and significant constraints, namely construction noise, mental health impacts, flood risk, loss of privacy, water quality impacts on R. Otter, land instability for Salston Barton properties, significant visual impact, poor road access.
- Reasons for including GH/ED/27 and Otry_10 are not clear as other sites are rejected for the same reasons.

Lympstone

- Bus services at Lympstone have recently been cut, and residents in most recent developments do not use the train because there is no direct pedestrian route to the train station, so should not be a major positive effect for access to services (objective 10) and connectivity (objective 13).
- The use of “as the crow flies” distances to facilities is mis-leading as there are no inter-connecting paths so true distances are much higher than stated.
- LRM on behalf of Barratt David Wilson consider that the SA’s finding on Page 109 that Option C is preferred as it promotes development at existing settlements where there is a range of jobs, services and facilities’ is robust. It supports the need for new development at existing settlements where there is a range of jobs, services and facilities.

Feniton

- The rural nature of Feniton means there is a rich habitat for a wide variety of species – it is not true that all sites are improved grassland as there is regular crop rotation. Therefore, should be a negative effect for Objective 1 except for the playing fields.
- Feniton sits in a natural bowl so proposed sites will spoil its setting. Agree that Feni_05 offers an opportunity for improvements, but all other sites should be negative for Objective 2.
- Section on reasons for alternatives being rejected states Feni_08, 09 and 11 are open and exposed, and highly visible from Hembury Fort Scheduled Monument, so should be negative for Objective 2.
- Objective 4 should be negative for all sites as the mere presence of a railway station does not make Feniton “sustainable” given the infrequent service (Office of Rail and

Road statistics show that on average 6 people got on or off each train that stopped at Feniton; PC survey showed 98% of residents didn't use the train) – mass housing will increase traffic, turn Feniton into a dormitory town, and degrade quality of life.

- The lack of jobs, facilities and public transport in Feniton mean that developing sites will increase car use for these things, so Objective 4 should show a major negative effect.
- Objective 4 comment that all sites are being linked by good quality footpaths is completely inaccurate.
- Objective 5 should be negative for all sites as flood mitigation will help current problems, but concreting over greenfield sites will make flooding worse.
- The combined foul and surface drainage system, sewage pumping station and sewage treatment plan in Feniton cannot cope with further households and added surface water run-off, irrespective of SuDS. Should be a double negative for Objective 5.
- Feni_09 is also Grade 1 agricultural land and should be major negative too.
- Objective 8 should be negative for all sites as a car is required given the limited range of facilities accessible on foot, primary school is over capacity, pop-up Post Office is in old Feniton and only open a few hours a week.
- Objective 10 should be neutral at best given the limited range of services in Feniton, primary school at capacity, and limited service at the train station.
- Objective 11: Feniton has the lowest jobs to workers ratio, and the limited train service means it is not a major advantage for accessing jobs.
- For Objective 13, it is too simplistic to say that the presence of train station means a positive score for all sites – should be neutral effect as vast majority of journeys from Feniton are by car, along mostly single track country lanes.
- Feniton should only accommodate modest growth to meet local need like any other Tier 4 settlement given the jobs and services available locally.
- Need to ensure that the borehole drinking water supply is not polluted by new development.

Hawkchurch

Hawkchurch PC - The Sustainability Appraisal misrepresents several aspects:

- It reads for the most part as though there is an available bus service – the bus service should be discounted as it is not sustainable (being one service per week as detailed in the response).
- The accessibility assessment is misleading given the dependency on car travel.
- It suggests there will be no impact on the setting of the listed buildings, we disagree - we believe the proposed level of development would impact their setting, including the Grade 1 listed church.

- It refers to employment space being retained. The storage barns are just that and not an employment area. The community shop is run by volunteers – there is no current employment on the proposed site.
- On page 466 section 8 of the table headed 'Home', the document refers to 'Significant positive where site offers maximum yield >100. All other sites have potential to deliver up to 100 dwellings with a marked positive effect...' This appears to be something left in from another assessment as neither site offers a maximum yield greater than 100.
- The health and wellbeing commentary misrepresents the impact: The scale of development would impact the many walkers in the village, both through the increased traffic and the change in character of the area (35% of household have at least one person who walks daily – the PROW are a significant feature of the Parish). The children's playground is adjacent to the junction of the proposed access road and the main street and close to the site – which includes proposals for light industrial employment space – so actually close to potential noise sources.

West Hill

- The distance to facilities quoted for West_05 as "just under 1km" is not accurate and should be corrected to say it is well over 1.5km to shops/school/village hall, with distances varying from 1.6km to 2.3km.

Local Plan consultation responses may also be relevant to content of the SA report without actually mentioning SA – for example in commenting on the merits of policies or suggesting alternative policies or sites. These are noted in the Local Plan responses set out for each policy and will be addressed as appropriate in future versions of the SA report.

Conclusions and next steps

In this report we have sought to set out a summary of the key themes and issues that have been raised in the consultation on the draft East Devon Local Plan. We have recognised that there were policy aspects and details missing from the plan that would and will require extra work and engagement. However, and more significantly, through the consultation process all and every aspect of the plan is open for debate and as such can change in the light of feedback received.

We recognise that through the consultation work there were some significant challenges that were raised in respect of many of the policies in the plan and especially to many of the sites that were proposed as allocations for development. The plan we produce will ultimately need to be considered by a Planning Inspector at public examination and they will be considering it in the context of Government legislation and policy, specifically as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. We note, however (and specifically at the time of drafting this report) that there is uncertainty over possible changes to legislation and Government policy. There is, therefore, a degree of uncertainty looking forward, not the least in respect of housing numbers that the Council may determine as appropriate to plan for and accommodate – there may be greater clarity later in the year over this matter through possible changes by the Government and through Council assessment of matters.

In this report there is no comment made on the comments received, and specifically no recommendations on if or how the plan might be change in respect of feedback received. Going forward, however, the Strategic Planning Committee of East Devon District Council will need to determine appropriate local plan policy, and therefore any plan changes, in response to the consultation feedback and any other existing or new or emerging considerations.

Later in 2023 it is likely that the Council will produce a new Local Development Scheme, a project plan for local plan/Development Plan Document production. This will set out what is likely to be a new timetable for production of the local plan.

As part of the future local plan making work we would envisage that further consultation will take place at this Regulation 18 stage of plan making. After this we will move onto the next formal stage of plan making where, at the Regulation 19 stage, the plan (as may be revised) is made available for comment and these comments, the plan and supporting evidence and material is set to the Planning Inspectorate for a public examination.

Timetables for the above work are, however, to be defined.