

REPORT TO WEST HILL PARISH COUNCIL

1 MARCH 2022

CLLR JESS BAILEY, OTTER VALLEY WARD (DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL) AND WEST HILL AND AYLESBEARE (EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL)

LOCAL PLAN

At the strategic planning committee meeting on 8th February, I strongly argued that the proposed option which would potentially see 470 houses delivered in West Hill should be rejected. I am glad that the majority of committee members agreed and, like me, voted against this. The committee had previously accepted West Hill should be classed as a 'tier 4' settlement (ie not very sustainable) by virtue of the fact that it does not have many jobs, services and facilities. It would have been quite absurd in my view to have allocated so many houses here in a location which is acknowledged to be unsustainable. This option also would have potentially seen 650 houses in Feniton, 710 in Whimple, 120 in Lymphstone and 110 in Clyst St Mary.

West Hill is still nonetheless set to be allocated over 100 new houses whereas many settlements of equivalent size and those that are larger (and more sustainable) are set to be allocated virtually none. This is unsatisfactory. Whilst I very much support the provision of housing for local need especially for our younger and less well-off residents, I do not support largescale development in unsustainable locations which serves primarily the interests of landowners and developers.

Over the past three recent strategic planning committee meetings at EDDC I have been consistently and robustly making the following points:

- a) that although there is likely to be a substantial allocation of houses (2,500) to a new town in the next local plan period (up to 2040) we have not seen work around the feasibility. My concerns are around the cost and timing of infrastructure delivery including a potential new road between the A3052 and the A30. It is essential that IF there is going to be a new town there must be affordable housing for local need without all costs being used up on other elements of infrastructure.
- b) the lack of proposed development on brownfield sites and lack of proposals to repurpose sites in existing use – meaning that virtually the entirety of the new development across the district is planned for green fields – 1000s of acres. This is unacceptable and it is important to protect our wonderful countryside and biodiversity particularly in view of the climate change emergency.
- c) It is essential that there should be a new and targeted call for sites, which focuses on the imbalance between the hierarchy of settlements (most houses in most sustainable locations) and the sites that have so far come forward. At present some of the most sustainable locations, have very few housing allocations whereas less sustainable locations such as West Hill are bearing a disproportionate burden. East Devon has seen very high levels of development previously and this presents a challenge in finding available sites.

The agenda for the meeting on 8th March was published yesterday and although I have not had a chance to review it yet, as a general comment I welcome the agenda items which will enable discussion around the potential new town and call for sites. [Agenda for Strategic Planning Committee on Tuesday, 8th March, 2022, 2.00 pm - East Devon](#). All EDDC meetings are live streamed on the council's youtube channel.

The timetable for the local plan process is set to be adjusted in order that further work can be carried out prior to the public consultation. The public consultation had previously been scheduled for early Summer 2022, but now it will be taking place in Autumn 2022. It is anticipated that prior to the draft local plan going out to public consultation the draft will be brought first to the strategic planning committee meeting in September.

EXCESSIVE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN EAST DEVON

In terms of the wider picture and policy considerations, West Hill is set to experience high levels of new development as a result of the Government's approach to housing provision which is 'top down' and aims to deliver 300,000 houses per year across the country. As a result of this top-down approach there is a requirement that EDDC makes provision for 918 houses – a very large number - particularly given the constraints in our district with two thirds of the district fall within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The figure of 918 houses is derived from a mathematical formula based on ONS statistics of 2014.

At the East Devon District Council meeting on Monday 21st February, I put forward a motion that EDDC would write to Michael Gove Minister for Levelling Up Housing and Communities challenging the approach to housing provision by mathematical formula in East Devon. In addition, I proposed that the government employs a more positive approach to solving the housing crisis rather than simply relying on the granting of more and more planning permissions. I also called on the MPs in our district to support our representations to Michael Gove.

My motion which received cross party support and the following has been agreed. The agreed wording is as follows:

AGREED WORDING OF MOTION

That on the 22 June 2021 the Strategic Planning Committee resolved:

1. 'That the need for robust evidence on housing need and supply to justify strategic policy on housing requirement provision to include in the local plan be endorsed in principle.
2. That the transparent and timely use of that evidence through the plan making process to justify local plan policy on housing requirement provision be endorsed.
3. That the questions raised in paragraph 6.3 of the report were considered and commented on and the consideration to not challenge government standard methodology at this time to help to inform officers' work in developing a housing strategy for the new local plan was agreed'.

This resolution has been the basis of the work done to date on preparing a draft Local Plan for the district for the period 2020-2040.

It is however apparent from consideration of the draft Local Plan to date that the implications of pursuing this approach are not acceptable to the communities of East Devon. Mindful of this and fully accepting that it is imperative that we continue our progress with the draft Local Plan this Council also agrees to write to Michael Gove the Secretary of State for Levelling Up Housing and Communities:

- (a) calling on him to review the standard methodology in the light of concerns about the reliability of the algorithm used and the AONB designations and other environmental constraints in the district; and
- (b) calling on the government to identify a more positive approach to solving the housing crisis rather than requiring the granting of more planning permissions.

In addition this Council calls on its MPs to support us in our representations to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up'.

BUDGET PROCESS

Both East Devon District Council and Devon County Council approved their annual budgets in February. The common theme to both Councils is that the Councils are trying to meet huge financial pressures in the face of substantial cuts in central government funding over a sustained period. EDDC have seen their funding reduced from Central Government by around 70% over the past 10 years. At Devon County Council residents now fund 80% of the cost of Council's costs as opposed to 60% in 2010. DCC's budget has shrunk by £140 million pounds per year in comparison with 2010.

DCC Council tax will increase by 2.99% to £45.18 for Band D homes and the EDDC will increase by £5 to £156.76 for band D homes.

As part of their cost saving measures Devon County Council has reduced County Councillors' locality budget from £10,000 to £8,000. This is disappointing as it is more important now than ever to be able to support community groups because of wider financial pressures. I was also disappointed that the Council has only allocated £100,000 for the roll out of new 20mph zones. The Independent and Green Group of which I am a member proposed £500,000 given the importance of promoting road safety and sustainable travel but regrettably our proposal was voted down. There are many communities across Devon clamouring for 20mph zones and given that each such scheme will cost between £15,000 and £25,000 it seems that only a very small number will be progressed in 2022-3. I think that DCC should be doing all it can to help achieve slower speeds and safer streets in our communities.

EDDC will be increasing the car parking charges in 21 prime car parks from £1 to £2 and in a further 6 car parks from £1 to £1.50. I understand that car parking charges have not been increased at all for around 10 years and that these new rates are at a comparable level with other car parks in surrounding areas. It is worth mentioning that residents can currently apply for an annual pass at £100 per town and each additional town costs £20 up to a maximum of £200. It is also worth mentioning that the daily charge is capped at £8, even in high season and during the five months of October – March you can park for £2 per day in any car parks.

SMALL COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME

I would like to make councillors aware of the new small community grant scheme

EDDC will fund:

- community led ideas and initiatives that will benefit East Devon's communities.
- We can give grants of between £300 and £500.
- We would prefer to fund smaller projects, rather than be contributing a small percentage of big costly projects.

Projects must help achieve either or both of the followin

1. One or both of the following key priorities listed in our Council Plan:

- Better homes and communities for all.
- A greener East Devon.

Please [see more details about what is included within each priority](#) and so whether your application would be eligible.

2. One or more of the priorities / actions listed in our [Poverty Strategy](#).

Full details can be found here [Small Community Grants - Introduction to Small Community Grants - East Devon](#)

