

The new emerging East Devon Local Plan – Preparing for Consultation Discussion Session

7pm Thursday 24th November 2022

Update since October webinar:

Feedback at October session	Update following November Strategic Planning Committees and Consultation Launch
<p>Requests to have an East Devon District Council officer present at public meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debated at Strategic Planning Committee on 01/11/22 • Members signed off on a plan to hold an event in each of the main towns and following feedback three further locations (Clyst St Mary, Feniton and Whimple) were added to the schedule of exhibitions to extend the reach into rural areas potentially most significantly affected by plan proposals/options. • The events are not specific to the location of venue – the same materials will be available at all of the events – and on-line • Intention for the events to be in the most accessible / central locations, and act as a hub for people in the surrounding areas. • Format to be drop-in sessions, rather than public meetings, giving people the opportunity to find about any aspect of the plan, and speak 1:1 with officers. • Using i-pads, officers will be able to help people at the events with using the consultation software.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate other communities may want their own event, but this is unlikely during this round of consultation due to resources and need for member approval.
<p>Greater clarity needed on local issues to enable Town and Parish Councils to consult with their communities and be clear what we are asking and what is proposed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers are available over the phone / on email to give advice to local councils, and have been doing so – both in terms of plan content and also assistance with using the consultation software.
<p>Need to ensure that the text space is sufficient or unrestricted for answers to give people the opportunity to say more than a couple of sentences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmed the comment boxes are 'free text' boxes without a word limit. • Data from Commonplace suggests that many people are using the scales and 'like' functionality – and comments and subscribers for updates is going up all the time.
<p>Requests to give more time for people to respond as the minimum six weeks proposed is too short/very tight and will be difficult for people, especially given it's the festive season.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following feedback and discussion with Members this was extended at Strategic Planning Committee to the middle of (15th) January 2023.
<p>Timing in the lead up to Christmas is seen as particularly difficult and at other times of the year, there would be more opportunity for piggybacking on other local events, particularly over the summer period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extension of the consultation period to mid-January may assist in some way, although this is clearly typically a quiet time in terms of other events.
<p>Likely to be a lot of people who will not or are not able to engage with an online-only consultation, and that putting one copy in a library is insufficient. Request for more 'hard copy' and 'in person' opportunities to engage,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard copies are now in all the main libraries. • Most responses to the consultation so far have been through the on-line software, but we are also receiving some emails and have had a small number of postal responses, all of which we will accept

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including local meetings to explain to people more about it and if they need help understanding it.	even though our preference to receive them through the system which will help with management and analysis of them.
Request that where local councils need to speak to somebody at EDDC they can get a fairly quick response, including related to using Commonplace to support the use of that software by as many as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd webinar (this one on 24th November) was planned for and included demo of and assistance with using the Commonplace software for this consultation.
Local councils present were planning to use their social media to push out the consultation, as well as including in newsletters and linking from websites, displaying maps, putting notices up in pubs, village shops, local noticeboards etc. and potentially leaflet drops. Would there be any funding available from EDDC to support this kind of activity? And/or can EDDC support with providing large-scale good quality maps?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following this feedback a poster was designed and issued and sent out electronically (in colour and black & white copy) to all of our local councils. • A pack of large maps showing proposed allocations and giving the accompanying policy was also sent to those with settlements in the settlement hierarchy or significant development proposed in their parish through the plan.
Can EDDC provide a summary of the Local Plan for individual communities, picking out the key things that are relevant to each community or to summarise the plan for those unlikely to read the 300+ pages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource has not allowed for a summary leaflet to be produced. On balance, we do not propose to pursue this due to risk/limitation of partial presentation of the information, and incorrectly assuming what people may be most interested in, when much of the plan is relevant to the entire district e.g. on tackling climate change or how we deliver affordable housing. • Commonplace' consultation webpages offer a condensed version of the plan, providing summaries of the chapters and the longer policies to endeavor to make the material more accessible,

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	<p>concise, and plain English, whilst including the key points of the text and the policies. We acknowledge that the material on Commonplace is still lengthy, but we have worked to make it as visually attractive, and easy to navigate and engage as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback will be useful as to how communities find using it, particularly to inform decision as to where it is suitable to use again at the next round of consultation on an updated draft and/or Publication version of the plan.
<p>Request for EDDC to be mindful that some local councils on the boundary of East Devon with other districts have got significant proposals just the other side of the boundary, for example solar farms, and consider whether there can be any coordination or recognition of this as these communities will need to look at it in the round.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will naturally need to consult with the neighbouring authorities and look at their current/emerging policies, so this is an opportunity for cumulative impact to be flagged.
<p>Requests to have an East Devon District Council officer present at public meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are not going to be able to attend all your locally organised public meetings, but hopefully by informing you via these webinars and any assistance we can give over the phone and by email and at our events, we can help you with raising awareness and supporting communities to engage.

Using the Commonplace Consultation Software

Ed Freeman gave a demonstration of the consultation on-line, showing layout and functionality in terms of viewing and commenting on the proposals. Key points to note:

- Access via our website, google search, link or QR code on our posters etc. – www.eastdevon.gov.uk/local-plan
- On the homepage, you can register by inputting your email address and click ‘keep me updated’ to receive news updates on the consultation (e.g. when we send out press releases).
- There is a link to a pdf of the full plan text and to supporting evidence documents on the homepage.
- Each chapter also has its own ‘tile’ on the home page. At a glance you can decide which areas you want to look at in more detail, click through to find a summary ‘plain English’ overview, relevant proposals or policies and submit comments on any or all as you see fit.
- Questions are embedded throughout and we are encouraging people to use this method to submit comments to us, as far as possible. This will facilitate our data management and analysis and reporting of the responses.
- For people with limited time, and acknowledging the whole plan is over 300 pages long, there is a short “Quick Survey” option which asks a series of high level questions and can be done in about 5 minutes. There is also the ability to respond using just a simple ‘emoji’ (sad face, happy face etc.) to show how you feel about any of the proposals/policies, and to click to ‘like’ others comments, so even without having to write anything, we hope this will help us to gauge reaction.
- An interactive map of all the sites is available under the ‘Site Map’ tab. This enables where you can click through to find more information about and comment on all the sites that made it through an initial sifting process – including those that are proposed for allocation and those that have currently been rejected. You can move to different locations around the district, similar to if using Google maps, for example, and click on the dots for any site.
- A high level timeline of the stages in the plan making process is shown under the ‘Timeline’ tab; a schedule of the exhibitions under ‘Events’ tab and a ‘news and updates’ tab which includes press releases and updates.
- Designed to be intuitive / user friendly, but the team are happy to help with any queries or guidance needed.

Addendum:

It was queried at the webinar whether 'unhappy face' responses were being recorded as the number underneath the sad emoji appears to stay at '0'. We have looked into this, and can confirm that it is working correctly, in that if you click on any of the faces, including the unhappy face, the response is being recorded correctly in the data. The numbers (0, 25, 50, 75, 100) that can be seen under the emoji faces represent the scale – i.e. from 0 = very unhappy through to 100 = very happy, so these always stay the same, and are not showing a count of the numbers of respondents who have submitted a response.

Q & A Notes

Consultation Exercise

Question: Where can responses be sent outside of the consultation software, and can you take into account comments made at your events?

Answer: We will write up a summary of the consultation events that will feed into our reporting, but to formally take account of comments we do need them in writing. We are encouraging as many responses as possible through the software for reasons given above, and appreciate assistance from local councils and neighbourhood plan groups with this, but if necessary, responses can be sent to our planning policy team email – planningpolicy@eastdevon.gov.uk

If responses needed to be submitted by post, the address is – Planning Policy Team, East Devon District Council, Blackdown House, Border Road, Heathpark Industrial Estate, Honiton, EX14 1EJ

Question: Will comments sent in by email or letter be entered into the same database as those coming through the Commonplace software?

Answer: We can certainly assure you that we will consider those comments and they will be reported to Members and published alongside those submitted through the consultation software. We will consider entering them into the software so that they can then be included in the automated data analysis, but we will have to take a view at close of consultation on whether this is practical in terms of resources and also to ensure we accurately represent people's views. This may not be possible if they are not direct responses to questions within the commonplace software, so we may have to report them separately.

Question: Is the quick survey going to be isolated in the analysis process so that it does not bias the results and findings, and will all comments made through Commonplace be put in the public domain?

Answer: Yes, we believe so. We are continuing to work closely with the Commonplace team about the output from the consultation so we will consider this elements as part of those discussions. We will seek to make all comments received available for anyone to look at and review.

Question: Do people have to answer all questions in the software, as this looks very time consuming and potentially difficult for those less 'IT-savvy'?

Answer: You do not have to answer all questions. You can answer as little or as many as you wish and come back to it as many times as you like to add comments, up to the deadline. People could perhaps go through it with a friend or neighbour with suitable technology at home, or they can view a hard copy in their local library. We can accept email or hand written responses as advised above. The important thing is that we need all comments to be submitted in writing, with our preference being for comments to be made through the software, but with other options available so as not to exclude anyone from the process.

Question: How have the consultation events been advertised, beyond social media?

Answer: We have advertised them via a press release so they should be picked up in local papers. They were also in the last EDDC Resident's Update weekly e-news bulletin that went out, they are on the consultation website, on posters in all libraries and via town & parish councils who have also been sent posters to use in the local area. Addendum: Since the webinar we also provided the details to all schools in the district asking if they would include in school newsletters.

Question: Can additional events be held in other locations, particularly in potentially affected communities, like Farringdon?

Answer: Members discussed the plan for the exhibitions in detail after the last webinar at the meeting on 1st November 2022, and we are working to the agreed approach. The request for an additional meeting in Farringdon specifically has been discussed with relevant Portfolio Holders but to alter the plan now would require a further resolution from the Committee. Additional events have been added to the original draft schedule and it is important to note that none are specific to the host community – we can help people at the event with any aspect of the plan. It comes down to resources that are not able to hold a separate event in every affected community individually, but we can keep this under review as we move forward and seeing how the planned events go. Addendum: More engagement will be considered with particular communities affected in 2023.

Question: Do you have to do this stage of consultation as part of the government's rules?

Answer: Yes, there are requirements to consult at this stage, and again, at the publication draft stage which is when the plans are essentially finalised from the Council's perspective and ready to go through for independent examination. Although we have to do these consultations, we genuinely think it is an important part of the process, because the local plan has a significant bearing on the lives of everybody in the district – those who lives and work here and visit the district – so it's only right and proper that we consult with those people that are affected, and take their views into account.

Ultimately we need to submit a plan that complies with the legislation, but there are lots of things in the plan that we do have freedom to move on. We need to engage and take on board the views of communities before we reach any decisions, and that's what we're doing.

Question: Is it going to really make any difference what people say, for example, if everyone was to put an unhappy face, would you listen and change the proposals, or is it really just a tick-box exercise?

Answer: It is early enough in the process now for us to be able to take views on board – as no decisions have really been made as yet. Fundamentally, all Members have decided upon is to consult on the work that's been done so far, and the options as they stand. So now is the time to comment and those comments can really make a difference. What we're most interested in as professional planning officers, advising our Members, is 'planning reasons' why we should or shouldn't go forward with particular proposals, because ultimately the local plan process is an evidence led process made on a sound planning basis. That is what is going to have most sway in terms of officer recommendations to Members, and members too will be keen to consider comments to help make informed decisions at strategic planning committee. We would therefore encourage people to really use their local knowledge of the sites and their communities, and give us good planning reasons why we should or shouldn't do something that can really inform our assessment.

Question: A number of policies in the consultation are incomplete – why has it been allowed/agreed to consult when this is the case?

Answer: We recognise that further work is needed, and we are still gathering evidence, but it was felt that enough work had been done to enable this first consultation to be launched. The consultation will assist us with refining the plan and finalising draft policies for the next stage.

Housing Numbers

Question: The adopted Local Plan is from 2013 to 2031, so is the new Local Plan an addition to that from 2031 to 2040, or does it supersede the adopted plan?

Answer: It is a new local plan, so it will ultimately supersede the current adopted plan. We've taken account of development coming through now that was planned for on the back of the adopted local plan (to 2031) in our housing numbers and assessments for the new plan, and extended the numbers to take account of what's needed in the remaining plan period to 2040 as well. We are at a fairly early stage of production of the new local plan, so the current adopted local plan remains in place, and will do until the new local plan reaches adoption, which is currently expected to be late 2024 / into 2025. The new Local Plan does not supersede the new Cranbrook plan - we would be looking to 'save' the Cranbrook plan (through to 2031 anyway).

Question: If the Government is to move away from its ambitious plans to deliver 300,000 homes per year, will EDDC be looking to revise the housing target for this plan as a result?

Answer: The Government use a standard method that calculates the housing need figure for each Local Authority area and we have work to that figure for east Devon in producing the draft local plan. There has been various discussions going back to last year at our Strategic Planning Committee about whether or not that's the appropriate thing to do. We are not however aware of any local authority that has successfully argued against delivering the figure that the standard method gives them. That would be a long and hard road to even pursue, with very little chance of success. It is our view as Officers that the arguments would not stack up, so our Members have agreed to proceed with the plan on the basis of meeting that figure. We are now aware that the figure is going to be challenging to meet, not least because of the environmental sensitivities of our district.

There was due to be a discussion in the Houses of Parliament recently about revising the guidance in terms of housing need figures, but we understand that has now been deferred for a future debate. Generally, there is a lot going on in the background in government, in terms of the housing need figures, potential changes to the housing system, changes to the planning system etc. which could all impact on the plan. However, government guidance is that local authorities should

proceed with production of local plans based on current Government guidance / legislation as it stands, and so that's what we're doing. We will obviously keep a close eye on any changes that come through, and look at revising and amending our proposals accordingly, if we need to.

Naturally, people are welcome to comment on the numbers if, for instance, they think the numbers are too high. This may prompt Members to look again at whether or not they want to challenge the figures coming through the standard method from government. However, it is important to note that even if the Government do ultimately change their position, there will be some requirement for us to have an evidence-based approach to whatever figure we do come up with using whatever mechanism and guidance is put in place instead. From our experience of working on previous local plans before the standard method was first introduced, this would not necessarily mean that the figures would drop dramatically if the Government do change their position on all of this.

Question: What consideration has EDDC given to not just meeting numbers and where land is available for building, but to locations where housing is needed?

Answer: The need figure we get from government is a district-wide figure, so that's what we're working to. We are planning to enable us to meet the needs of the whole district, including in terms of affordable housing, housing for older people, those with mobility difficulties, for key workers and so on. We do not have a finer grain detail than that in terms of locations necessarily. There are a number of local housing needs surveys that have been carried out in places across the district we can look at to inform the types of housing needed in a location, but many of these are getting quite old now.

Question: Are we in East Devon taking Exeter city over-spill?

Answer: No – not directly. The housing figure we are working to comes from applying the Government standard method for the district of East Devon. The standard method takes account to some extent of migration, but we're not explicitly taking growth off Exeter - they have their housing need figure from the standard method, and we have ours.

Exeter City Council also currently consulting on a new Local Plan and that proposes how they will try and meet their own house and needs within the city limits. A lot of that involves redevelopment of existing employment sites within the city, so there are possible implications for us there instead in terms of displaced employment uses, and we are submitting comments to their consultation process.

Relationship with Neighbourhood Plans

Question: How are you going to interpret the desires of - and views expressed in - the neighbourhood plans and emerging neighbourhood plans?

Answer: We are very conscious of the relationship with the neighbour plans. Ultimately, the local plan takes precedence on strategic matters, and the legislation requires neighbourhood plan to be in general conformity with the local plan, and not the other way round. Naturally we are likely to have some level of conflict between the two given that neighbourhood plans have been made and adopted in conformity with the currently adopted local plan. Just because something in the emerging local plan conflicts with a neighbourhood plan does not mean we cannot proceed on that basis. We need to look at all the available evidence and options. As desirable as it would be, it would be very difficult – most likely impossible - for us to produce a new local plan that meets the needs of the district as a whole, and satisfies the legislation, and does not conflict with any of the neighbour plans we have in place. There are inevitably going to be some conflicts which we will have to work through.

Looking ahead, the adoption of the new local plan may be an appropriate time to review a made neighbourhood plan, considering to what extent the two continue to remain in general conformity. We would not necessarily expect all neighbourhood plans to be immediately reviewed. We appreciate there's going to be a period of time for that to happen and that does not mean we are going to disregard the neighbourhood plans in the meantime, but we'll obviously have to be mindful of any conflicts in terms of how we make planning decisions.

Question: How do you ensure when you're working on an emerging neighbourhood plan at the moment that it complies with the new local plan?

Answer: We acknowledge that it is a difficult time to be developing a neighbourhood plan, when you've got both an emerging new local plan and an adopted local plan. Ultimately, once the new local plan is adopted, then it will take precedence over a 'made' neighbourhood plan, in so far as there is a conflict between the two. However, at the current time, emerging neighbourhood plans will continue to be examined for conformity with our adopted local plan. The further through the process the emerging local plan gets, then the greater weight it will carry and examinations will start giving some regard to it and the relationship with the emerging neighbourhood plan. So, neighbourhood plans need to continue to be developed in accordance with the adopted Local Plan, but being mindful of the emerging local plan, and the stage it has reached in its development.

Communities may wish to delay a new neighbourhood plan and instead engage fully in the consultations and opportunities to comment and shape the new local plan, and to consider whether to start or review a neighbourhood plan when the position is clearer. However, we will help communities working on a neighbourhood plan to navigate the process, and groups can also benefit from making use of the evidence base for the new local plan in their work.

Proposed Site Allocations

Question: Who, and how, has it been decided which fields would be suitable for development?

Answer: It starts with a 'Call for Sites' exercise where we go out to landowners and developers and ask them to put forward sites that they would be willing to bring forward for development. That has given us a pool of sites to consider, and then officers have assessed those sites and their suitability, partly with the help of what's called the HELAA panel (Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment panel). The panel is made up of various consultees and representatives from the construction industry, who advise us in terms of what's achievable and what's deliverable on those sites. After an initial sifting out of sites where there are fundamental reasons for not considering them further, the more detailed officer assessment work has looked at constraints and impacts, including relating to landscape, heritage, ecology and so on.

It is through all of that work that we've come forward with the sites that we are proposing for allocation at existing settlements and other strategic locations in the district. In terms of our scoring and assessment of those sites, you will see through the consultation, we have separated these into 'preferred sites' which we think are the best sites and should be allocated, and also a number of 'second choice' sites that we think have potential perhaps with some further work or mitigation. We have also included sites in the consultation that we have currently discounted, labelled as 'rejected' sites that we do not think are appropriate to come forward. We are seeking views on all of these, and people can comment if they agree or disagree with our assessments.

Question: Why are you consulting on the option of large scale growth at Whimple and Feniton?

Answer: Through the 'Call for Sites' (see above), a large number of sites came forward in those locations - much more than we would necessarily have anticipated or planned for. This has raised the question of whether they could be appropriate locations for a larger scale of growth, particularly given that we have a shortfall of good housing sites across the district. We presented this option to Members who took the view that they wanted to consult and engage the views of the community first before making a decision on the scale of growth that would be appropriate in those locations. We acknowledge that a larger scale of growth would put a strain on those community's facilities and infrastructure, so we would need to consider that. At this stage, no decisions have been made. Those decisions will only be made once we have the consultation feedback to inform Members' consideration and assessment of those options next year.

Question: Is it an appropriate way to seek feedback if some sites are already labelled as 'preferred sites' which could be seen by the public as the default to support and implies decisions have been made? Furthermore, is it fair when communities will be likely to vote for the option that least affects them, and anyone in the district can vote on the new community options even when they do not know the affected communities?

Answer: We understand the point, and they are all genuine options being considered at this stage. However, if we don't express some kind of views on the sites and present some kind of assessments, it will be difficult for people to understand where we're coming from as the Council from the work that's been done in the lead up to the consultation, and could be

misleading. On the new community, we've done lots of assessment work of those three options, and the options appraisal work that has been commissioned is published as part of the evidence base. It is not that it's decided, but it's still the preferred option by EDDC at this point. We are consulting on all the options whilst being open about where we are in our consideration / direction of travel, and the consultation results can influence this for the next stage. This is a work in progress with much more work to be done before we refine the options, and make any final decision in terms of which sites go forward.

Question: The Commonplace consultation website only shows the sites proposed/considered for development in the plan is what is termed “sustainable settlements”, but it does not tell people about all the other submitted sites (through the HELAA process) that are listed on the EDDC website. Can people comment on those sites, if they think they should be included in the plan as sites for development?

Answer: The Commonplace software includes all the sites that went through the initial sifting from the HELAA process and by officers and progressed to the more detailed assessment stage. Other sites are not presented as options where we considered that there are fairly fundamental reasons why they would not move forward as allocations through the Local Plan (i.e. not suitable/deliverable/achievable). We are trying to focus the consultation on what we consider to be genuine options and if we were consulting on every site that came through the HELAA process, it would be unwieldy and difficult to engage with, but that additional detail is available should people wish to comment. People are welcome to comment on anything that is on the website in terms of evidence and we will be happy to consider views on sites that are not specifically identified on the Commonplace software. Whilst there is no specific route to do that through Commonplace other than the general comments boxes, you could do this by emailing or writing to us.

Addendum:

- This link in the HELAA information on-line enables you to see sites submitted BY PARISH:
[HELAA 2022 Appendix E site lists.xlsx \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#)
- With the maps and further information in various appendices:
[Evidence Base and Supporting Documents - Spatial Strategy, Housing and Economy - East Devon](#)

Question: What has been the approach to allocations for employment?

Answer: In general terms, we are trying to deliver employment land within the towns alongside residential development. We are conscious that in the past we have had various employment that allocations that have not come forward because they haven't been viable in isolation, so by developing them alongside housing sites, this can help with delivery of the employment element, as well as creating to more sustainable places to live. The general principle is to look at ensuring homes and jobs are located close to one another, where people can walk and cycle to work etc. We include a policy in the plan that seeks mixed use development on medium to larger size housing sites, with the proportions related to the level of employment requirement an allocation of a particular size will need.

Question: If the strategy to include a new community is taken forward, could that potentially cancel out the need for other allocations in the vicinity, for example, in Clyst St. Mary?

Answer: No, we are not suggesting that a new community coming forward would necessarily mean that we would not progress other allocations nearby. Members will need to take a view on the total level of growth in that location and the impact of that as a whole.

Question: How many of your preferred options could this consultation change, if any, given that you have to find enough sites to deliver the total number of houses Government requires?

Answer: 'Preferred option' sites are the sites that we think are the best sites from the work we have done so far, and it is there are nowhere near enough of them to meet the housing needs. We are however going into this conversation with an open mind. Having identified them as 'preferred sites', they are perhaps the most likely sites to be allocated, but there's several aspects to this. This preference is based on planning officers' professional recommendations based on our planning assessment work, but ultimately, it's our Strategic Planning Committee which will decide what goes forward into the next iteration of the plan. In terms of influencing our recommendations to Members, as officers as are looking for

comments that might highlight through local knowledge, perhaps issues that we weren't aware of, or perhaps give us further information about those issues that mean we need to revisit our assessments, which might then lead to a different outcome. Members will also consider levels of public opposition to – or support for - a particular site. So whilst there are sites that we as officers think are acceptable, that does not mean this cannot be changed through the views coming through the consultation.

Developer Requirements

Question: How will you ensure we get the homes that we want and need for local people, including affordable and smaller homes and not only larger open market homes on the back of developers arguing that is all that works in terms viability?

Answer: There are various policies in the housing chapter of the draft plan about the mix and types/sizes of housing we want to see delivered – not only proportion of affordable housing, but also in terms of accessible and adaptable housing for older people and people with mobility difficulties. Through these policies we are setting standards which would apply across the district and to all sites – over a certain size. Viability obviously has a significant bearing on this and we need to do further work going forward as we refine the plan in terms of the requirements that we think are needed based on the evidence of need, and whether they can be met in terms of what is viable. If we do the viability work too early in the plan making process it will be out of date by the time we submit the plan, particularly in this economic climate with constant change. We will need to do that viability work at the right time to ensure that we are setting standards that are achievable. For now, we have set out in the consultation what we would like to achieve and what we think is necessary to meet the evidence we have of need, and we are seeking views on those policies at this stage how to inform that work.

Viability issues are always challenging and under the current Local Plan, it is fair to say that there are a number of sites where we have not achieved our policy aspirations in terms of affordable housing delivery. There will be a process of negotiation and we will be seeking to maximise what we can justify in setting our policy requirements and ultimately get the best deal for our communities. One key area where Government guidance has changed since the last local plan is that we are now required to do more viability assessment work as part of plan preparation which will give us a benchmark

for when it comes to the application stage which should put us in a stronger position and developers will have to clearly demonstrate what has changed in the intervening period.

Question: How are you going to be firm with developers to ensure that we get the infrastructure to support the push from Government to be net zero by 2050?

Answer: Net zero carbon requirements are embedded in the plan. We consider it to be an absolute requirement as it is a climate emergency and needs urgent action. It is therefore a key priority but it's going to be interesting to see when we do viability assessments as to the cost of achieving that. We are certainly endeavoring through the plan to ensure we do not make the situation any worse by building more houses that are constantly burning carbon to heat and power them. Members have been quite clear in the Council's declaration of a climate emergency that they want to take clear and decisive action about these issues. It may be that when we do the viability work that all of these requirements in the draft plan may not be viable, and there needs to be compromises, but the key message from this plan is that we expect all new homes and new developments to be net zero carbon.

New Community Proposals:

It was agreed at the webinar we would prepare a separate specific Q&A briefing note relating to the proposals for a new community on the western side of the district. This has now been prepared and is available to be read alongside these notes.