

WADDETON PARK LTD
REPRESENTATIONS ON THE EAST DEVON LOCAL PLAN (2020 – 2042) REGULATION 19
CONSULTATION DRAFT (MARCH 2025) BY BELL CORNWELL LLP

INTRODUCTION

Waddeton Park Ltd is a very well-established and successful local housing land promoter and investor with considerable interest across the district. Waddeton Park Ltd has helped to facilitate new homes, affordable housing and other uses in the area. Specifically, Waddeton Park Ltd has interests in land at London Road, adjacent to the Cranbrook built-up area boundary, which they consider has potential for residential development. We attach a plan that shows this land (please refer to the Framework Plan produced by Clifton Emery Design)

Given the nature of their long-standing interests across the district, Waddeton Park Ltd is an important local stakeholder and is interested in the proposals in the East Devon Local Plan for future development in the district.

Against this background, Bell Cornwell LLP has reviewed the policies and information set out in the East Devon Local Plan (2020 -2042) Regulation 19 Consultation Draft and makes the following representations.

CHAPTER 12. OUR OUTSTANDING LANDSCAPE

Policy OL05: Green Wedges

The Local Plan Policies Map identifies a number of Green Wedges in the district. Policy OL05: Green Wedges provides the policy for these designated areas.

Paragraph 12.16 of the supporting text to the policy explains that Green Wedges are a long-standing local landscape designation, in place to maintain open green networks between settlements to prevent coalescence and preserve local identity. New buildings are not prohibited in such areas, but are restricted to ensure the openness, role, and function of these landscapes are not adversely affected.

Land to the south of London Road, next to Cranbrook, is shown on the Local Plan Policies Map as lying within the Green Wedge between Cranbrook and Rockbeare.

Firstly, it is our view that the northern part of the Rockbeare to Cranbrook Green Wedge land i.e. that is approximately in the area of our client's land – should not be designated as Green Wedge. It is our view that the land, by virtue of its context, being alongside the Cranbrook built up area boundary, does not meet the requirements for Green Wedge designations. In coming to this conclusion, we note EDDC's own landscape officer's views to this effect when assessing planning applications 15/0371/MOUT and 15/1825/MOUT (for a larger scheme on land to the south of London Road), which

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were that *“a more limited road frontage development, as indicated on figure 1, could be acceptable, as it will have a more limited impact on the character of the local landscape and would be visually much better contained. It would be more in keeping with the development form seen along this part of the London Road.”* A copy of the landscape officer’s response with the Figure 1 referred to is included with these representations.

It is also very notable that as part of the preparation of the Cranbrook Plan DPD, the Council itself, when considering the potential for development along the southern side of London Road close to Rockbeare, concluded in the DPD Issues and Options Report (2016) that development north of Rockbeare is not visible as the village is protected by the sharp ridgeline that runs through the landscape at this point. The report also states that it is an option for some limited development to the south side of London Road that would not encroach on the setting of Rockbeare village to be considered for the longer-term development of the town.

A key evidence document for the Cranbrook Plan DPD was the Landscape and Visual Appraisal Consultation Draft, produced by Hankinson Duckett Associates in November 2017. This report is a detailed assessment of the landscape in the area local to Cranbrook. The report concludes that beyond the hills to the north (of Rockbeare), the village has a low sensitivity to additional development.

It is clear from an extensive review of documentation that there has been a consistent message from the Council and its professional advisors that there is scope for some limited development to the south of London Road, without undermining the function and purpose of the Green Wedge. Given the wider growth requirements established in the draft Local Plan and in national policy, it is vital that the designation of land as Green Wedge is undertaken very carefully so as to ensure that any designation does not sterilise development opportunities which might otherwise apply to the land.

The best strategy to meet the ambitious housing delivery objectives for the district would be to allow some careful loss in certain locations. In relation to the Rockbeare and Cranbrook Green Wedge, we suggest that our client’s land to the south of London Road should not be designated.

There is clearly a balance to be struck between designating land which truly meets Green Wedge purposes and not prohibiting low value land, which does not have the same degree of importance in relation to Green Wedge purposes, from being developed. We note that the Council has taken this pragmatic approach in other areas of East Devon; at Seaton, for example, where sites Seat_02, Seat - 03 and Seat_13a were released from the Green Wedge designation in order that they could be allocated for housing. It is our client’s firm view, supported by previous analysis from the Council’s

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own landscape officer, that their land at London Road is not needed to serve as Green Wedge. In light of this, the land should be removed from the Rockbeare and Cranbrook Green Wedge boundary so that its potential to provide development in a very sustainable location can be realised.

Finally, it is noted that there is no definition of the word 'intrinsic' in the context of draft Policy OL05. This is an addition to the current policy wording (Strategy 8) and must, therefore, either be defined so that it is clear what the implications of this insertion are, or removed.