

Response to Gladman Developments Ltd

The Chardstock Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group understands that Gladman Developments Ltd (hereafter Gladman) make regular submissions to East Devon District Council (EDDC) on the area's draft neighbourhood plans. We therefore presume that they have neither a particular interest in nor knowledge of the community. Indeed, in their repetition of the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Current Practice Guidance, they offer no detail that is specific to Chardstock.

Gladman's argument for development would seem to hang largely on the implication in EDDC's Local Plan that 'there may be some scope for small scale growth to assist the Council in meeting its full OAN'. They omit, however, the context in which this needs to be placed: 'In rural areas and beyond our villages the policy approach is one of development constraint and countryside conservation whilst recognising the needs of those who live or work there. There will be scope for small villages without Built-up Area Boundaries to benefit from limited development specifically to meet a proven local need, for instance for affordable housing or local employment, but generally these settlements will be expected to look to the larger settlements to provide general housing, employment and facilities' (§15.23). The Steering Group considered this issue in some detail, having commissioned Devon Communities Together to undertake a housing needs survey, and considers that the way the CNP is written already allows for such development should it become necessary.

In compiling Chardstock's Neighbourhood Plan (CNP), the Steering Group paid close attention both to the NPPF and to EDDC's Local Plan (completion of the document was held up for several months while the latter was being finalised). At that juncture, Chardstock parish was declared unsustainable in planning terms – a point that Gladman seem to have overlooked in their submission. This was established in the Small Towns and Villages Development Suitability Assessment (STVDSA) and is clearly stated in Strategy 27 of the Local Plan, where Chardstock does not appear in the list of settlements with a built-up area boundary. The reasons for this are enlarged on in the Sustainability Report that forms an appendix to the CNP.

Gladman has further ignored the strategies in the Local Plan that deal with sustainable development, sustainable transport, development in the countryside, and landscape conservation and enhancement and AONBs, all of which are highly relevant to Chardstock. They have failed to note that the majority of the parish is in the Blackdown Hills AONB and therefore subject to additional protection: 'When considering development in or affecting AONBs, great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing their natural beauty and major development will only be permitted where it can be shown that it cannot be reasonably accommodated elsewhere outside of the AONB.' Gladman's suggestion that new development 'can enhance the existing natural environment' is of course entirely a matter of subjective opinion, but the results of the Issues Questionnaire prove strongly that, were Chardstock to be considered sustainable, the local community would not be persuaded by this argument.