

## OTTER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

### COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT CONSULTATION ON THE EAST DEVON AND BLACKDOWN HILLS LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT - SEPTEMBER 2018

The Otter Valley Association has the following observations to make on this useful planning document:

Overall this is an excellent piece of work, being legible and comprehensive. There is a nice balance of observation, analysis, guidance and recommendations.

It has clear and concise descriptions of the marvellous and richly varied landscape that we have in this part of Devon, and of how precious it is. The document also identifies the many threats that there are to this fragile and vulnerable resource. For example, the repeated reference to avoiding intrusion of development onto the skyline and ridges – so important and yet this seems to have been ignored so often in recent planning decisions. We refer to a new estate built in Budleigh Salterton on the allotments, that is visible from a wide area and is an unnecessary and insensitive intrusion on the skyline, particularly when looking South from the B3178. Similarly, Foxholes in Exmouth was another classic mistake but sadly lessons have not been learnt. And again these errors have been repeated at Sandy Bay with recent expansion on the cliff tops, and at Ladram Bay with the extremely large Service and Maintenance building and yard on the skyline above the Holiday Park. These very poor planning decisions should not be repeated.

Our main point is that the value of this work is in the next stage, that is how the document is used and applied by the planners and councillors at East Devon when determining planning applications. In our view this is critical, and landscape assessments and analysis should be required and applied much more often in planning decisions.

The main difficulty with the document was in using the maps, as it is very hard to relate the map to the LCT categories, even when enlarged by 200%. Also the poor choice of colours were too similar and very hard to differentiate.

The document does not fully address the archaeology on the LCT 1C, the Pebblebed Heaths, nor does it highlight the serious damage to narrow lanes caused by modern tractors, in LCT 3B and other LCTs. Some of the sketches could have had more content.

In conclusion, this solid piece of work that needs to be a mainstay of planning strategy and guidance, feeding into strategic, local and neighbourhood plans. A lot of it must transfer into policy and be used to assist the decision maker in conserving and enhancing this landscape legacy, and stopping it from being further harmed.