

## **EAST DEVON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

### **CONSULTATION ON THE PREFERRED STRATEGY – SEPT – NOV 2010**

#### **COMMENTS FROM ROCKBEARE PARISH COUNCIL**

At this stage of the process Rockbeare Parish will focus on the big picture of East Devon's West End and how that impact's on Rockbeare parish.

It should be pointed out that whilst the preferred option is still out for consultation significant elements of the large scale development in East Devon's West have been signed off and are underway.

For Rockbeare the dominant factor in the preferred strategy is the concentration of development next to where the parish is situated. From the perspective of both EDDC and Exeter City, East Devon's West End is seen to be an ambitious attempt to create new housing, jobs and businesses on a scale that will significantly improve the prosperity of the whole of the wider Exeter area. The opportunity afforded by a new government to stop and take stock appears to have been missed or, maybe, deliberately avoided. A key question in 2010 must be whether the scale and ambition is sensible and deliverable in the very different economic climate of the coming decade? Secondly, now that that the big picture is emerging, is the forced urbanisation of East Devon's West End fair, proportionate or strategically sound? The vast majority of eggs are in one basket. We have heard about the upside but what are the downside risks?

From Rockbeare's end of the telescope the parish is looking at -

- 8000 new dwellings (Cranbrook/Blackhorse and Pinhoe) – 17500+ people
- 2 new business parks (one north, one south of the airport)
- A multi modal freight terminal
- A Science Park
- And projected volumes at the airport rising by 50% by 2015 and 100% by 2030
- ALL WITHIN 5 MINUTES DRIVE OF ROCKBEARE

In addition to this there is the prospect of some 7500 additional homes to the immediate north of the M5.

This is a truly daunting prospect for the 650 parishioners, the majority of whom like living in a rural area conveniently close to Exeter. A parish plan survey conducted in 2009 indicates that nearly 50% chose to move to Rockbeare in the last decade. A significant minority were born in the parish and chose to stay.

As a consequence the vast majority want to retain a separate identity from Cranbrook and its projected 12k + inhabitants, even though there is some recognition that there may be benefits in having the new facilities of Cranbrook conveniently close by.

We should be clear that the list above amounts to a fundamental and detrimental change to the living conditions in East Devon's West End in the sense that rural will inexorably become urban or at best fringe urban.

In response Rockbeare will pursue a number of objectives as follows –

- We will seek an explanation of why the previous top down planning has carried through with so little change despite clear signals from the new coalition Govt that localism is now the name of the game. Para's 7.1 to 7.4 suggest that this a done deal.
- We need to know what risk analysis has been carried out on the totality of the East Devon's West End concept with regard to its deliverability to acceptable standards including timeline and the human and environmental consequences of failure to do this.
- We strongly agree with para 7.28 of the document which rejects development south of the old A30/closer to Exeter Airport because "It would compromise the Green Wedge and might lead to the undesirable long term coalescence with Rockbeare".
- We understand that the Green Wedge is not being reviewed as part of this current process and thus remains as a feature of the last adopted plan. We are adamant that the retention of a Green Wedge between Rockbeare and Cranbrook as essential. Its size should be at least that in the adopted document.
- Rockbeare wishes to be formally represented - together with other interested parishes - at the official forums where the type and pace of development is determined , where changes are being considered to plans, and where planning agreements are being reviewed and associated monies are distributed. We intend to pursue this as a matter of urgency.

**Other issues –**

1 – There is clear reference to the new localism agenda and the need for EDDC to be "responsive to the views of Parish Councils"- para 5.2. The next paragraph specifically recognises the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies and then immediately backtracks

2 – Non car based transport is promoted without saying how these will be achieved. EDDC does not have the power to achieve this on its own. It should also be recognised that the proposed development at Cranbrook is in a rural area and that it's residents will need to rely substantially on car based transport. Further the likely future financial climate for central and local government suggests that subsidies for public transport will be reduced thus conflicting with this transport objective. Whatever the ideals the LDF must be a practical document recognising the realities.

3 – The strategy seeks to conserve and enhance the landscape quality and requires new developments to be assimilated into the landscape. The numerous significant features

planned for East Devon's West End, especially Cranbrook, will stress test this policy, possibly to destruction. The parish council wishes to see that the existing screening on the northern boundary of the old A30 will be maintained and enhanced so as to avoid the north side becoming predominately urban in character.

4 – Cranbrook is variously described as “a thriving, attractive, and bustling new town” and elsewhere as a “major new East Devon market town. This is spin. The detail suggests that Cranbrook will be wholly residential, with a small retail centre . Most inhabitants will work outside the town, towards or actually in Exeter and the settlement will function as an eastwards extension of the Exeter urban area.

5 – At para 6.5 the document specifically rejects the reduction of the scale of the Cranbrook development. The preferred approach identifies existing commitments at Cranbrook as 2,900 new homes and goes on to propose an additional 5,100 new homes at Cranbrook, Pinhoe, and north of Blackhorse making a total of 8000 new homes in the West End. All this is in addition to over 7,000 new homes being considered in the Monkerton, Newcourt, and South West Exeter Masterplan study areas. It has to be questioned as to whether this area as a whole needs and can sustain an extra 15,000 plus new homes over the next 15-20 years. Where will the jobs be for all these new residents? Attempting to link jobs directly to new housing land, as the LDF, proposes is overly simplistic in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

6 – Later in the document , in Chapter 7, there is more justification for the further expansion of Cranbrook to 5,000 homes with some 14 Ha land being for jobs. By their own stated standards of 1 Ha of employment land for every 250 homes ( policy CS24) the provision is geared to 2900 homes not 5000. Add to this deficiency the 6000 public sector workers who will be made redundant in the area over the next few years and the jobs deficit looks serious.

7. – The LDF as a whole is based on a premise of accommodating a set number of new houses within the plan period. This is not explicitly stated in the document nor is there an attempt to justify the target figures. We do not see the totality of the proposals, including those to the north of M5 to be realistic in the new economic climate we now face. We consider that promoting the eastward extension of Cranbrook is premature and is unlikely to be required within the plan period. The proposal should be omitted from the LDF proposals.

**Rockbeare Parish Council**

Tracey Bell

(clerk to Rockbeare Parish Council)

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ROCKBEARE PARISH COUNCIL – submission to the LDF Panel meeting on 30 August 2011

1. Rockbeare Parish is situated 10 miles to the west of Exeter City centre. 850 people live in 360 dwellings in an area roughly 3 miles east to west and 2 miles north to south. Over half the population lives in and around Rockbeare Village to the west of the parish and adjacent to Cranbrook. At present it is a rural area.
2. The LDF preferred strategy which you are currently examining proposes the following developments within a few minutes drive of Rockbeare.  
8000 new dwellings (5000@Cranbrook, 2200@Blackhorse and 800@Pinhoe)  
2 new business parks; one south , one north on the airport site(Skypark)  
An expanded airport  
A multi-modal freight terminal  
And a Science Park
3. As part of our Parish Plan process over 70% of the households filled in a questionnaire. The issue that emerged above all others is that the vast majority of parishioners like living in a rural area. They were either born to it or actively chose it – over 50% have done so in the past decade. They are very clear that they want the parish to retain its identity separate from Cranbrook and its projected 10,000 plus inhabitants.
4. In this context it is not clear that a systematic impact assessment was ever made of Cranbrook's effect on the villages and hamlets in its hinterland. If this is true it is a regrettable oversight.
5. There is a green wedge to the south side of old A30 to stop coalescence with Rockbeare. We need to understand the status of green wedges which we understand to be temporary and in the gift of the local planning authority. Clearly the parish view is that these wedges need to be made permanent to afford real protection from urbanisation.
6. The decision to have no defined boundary for "East Devon's West End " may suit developers and planners but for those of us who live there this flexible approach means the constant concern that our rural habitat is on a inevitable path to urbanisation. We ask the Panel to set at least an eastern boundary for the West End as the current limit of the existing outline consent for Cranbrook and the southern boundary as the old A30 within the parish and adjacent areas.
7. Public Transport:  
At present the Parish is served by bus services along the old A30 and more importantly through Rockbeare village Marsh Green and Rockbeare Hill (Service 380). The Parish notes that many people over 65 (33% in East Devon) and many young people rely on public transport for their lives and is concerned that provisions in the Cranbrook S106 agreement may see services – especially service 380 – sacrificed to ensure that Cranbrook is served. We seek assurances that this will not happen.

8. We note the serious representations that the amount of employment land allocated is excessive and should be reduced. This "earmarked" excess employment land could be reallocated from employment to housing which could ensure any reasonable housing targets can be met and in consequence the proposed allocations at Cranbrook particularly for additional housing are not required.
9. In addition to Cranbrook we are clear that Skypark, the science park and the intermodal freight facility will fundamentally change the nature of the area. They are an attempt to expand Exeter's economic capability and attract serious inward investment. They represent an ambitious vision geared to improving employment and prosperity in the Exeter hinterland. And the change of land use implied by much of this change is a massive opportunity for the speedy enrichment of certain landowners in the area. However seen from the other end of the telescope, in the parishes in the immediate vicinity, it represents a fundamental, enforced and detrimental change to the living environment of East Devon's West End.
10. So the question is – where is the section of the LDF that deals with the protection of those who already live in the area? What constraints to development will be enshrined in this plan e.g. giving the green wedges formal status and protection? Or is it really going to be open season for the developers as many of us fear?

David Miller  
Chair Rockbeare Parish Council  
26 August 2011