

Examination of the New East Devon Local Plan 2006-26

Mrs J Pawson
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By email only

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Dear Mrs Pawson,

As promised I am writing in response to the submission you made at the hearing on 5 March. Attached as an appendix to this letter is a response from the Council, kindly provided by Mr Dickins, which I hope you will find helpful.

I can only recommend modifications to the Plan which are necessary to make it sound. This is a very stringent test and I cannot recommend minor changes that might make a sound plan better. You will see from the appendix that Mr Dickins considers that some of the changes you seek may be beneficial but I do not consider that they are necessary to make the Plan sound.

The Council may make minor changes to the Plan and whether or not the changes referred to by Mr Dickins are made is a matter for the Council.

Yours sincerely

A Thickett

Inspector

Appendix

East Devon District Council's response to the written and verbal submission of Mrs J Pawson.

The Local Plan does include policy that provides for Green Infrastructure provision in Exmouth and specifically for cycling and footpaths. Cycling provision and future actions of the Council and its partners will however, and to a great extent, need to be addressed by policies and strategies that are over and above the broad policy approaches that can reasonably feature in a local plan. The Council is preparing a Green Infrastructure (GI) strategy for Exmouth which will address cycling, walking and broader access issues. In addition, a Cycle Strategy for Exmouth is being worked up with Devon County Council taking the lead which will be used to inform investment and other decisions and could be a factor in helping with determination of planning applications. It will also feed into the GI strategy.

In terms of Local Plan content the key point is that the plan has the primary role of forming the policy framework for use in determining planning applications. It refers to the Council's broader aspirations in respect of proposals and priorities for action and spending money but this is very much a subsidiary role. The Local Plan should not lose track of its primary function.

Notwithstanding these points, Policy EN2 of the Plan does refer to the Valley Parks in Exmouth and this policy would also resist the loss of proposed public open space that would help form part of the Valley Parks. Of importance, as well, is the fact that this policy refers to new and enhanced open space provision as part of the mitigation measures for impacts that would otherwise arise as a result of increased visitor pressure and use of the protected wildlife sites of the Exe Estuary and the Pebblebed Heaths. It would though be reasonable for Policy EN2 to refer to links to the National Cycle Network route and Exmouth town centre. The Valley Parks have recently been subject of the participatory budgeting process and have been awarded £100,000 to help deliver policy aims of improved cycle and footpath access.

In the plan there are references to enhanced recreation provision and access (for example Policy TC4) and as part of discussions around future planning applications it can be expected that the Council would seek to secure new cycling and footpath links.

With respect to the recently opened National Cycle Network link from Exmouth, running along side the Exe estuary, reference could be explicitly added to paragraph 10.4, that precedes Strategy 22, explaining the formal status of this route. It does need to be noted, however, that Strategy 22(5)(e) does already refer to improved walking and cycling provision.

It is appropriate for a Local Plan to safeguard routes for future transport links, including cycling. But this type of policy approach is typically only going to be credible where there is a costed programme or other policy commitment in support of a proposal. A safeguarding policy would be expected to be used to resist or regulate developments that would otherwise prejudice or prevent a transport scheme going ahead. One aspect of such a policy is that it could place a financial liability on the Council to pay compensation should permission be refused for a scheme that would otherwise be acceptable. In the absence of planned and costed proposals, the Council

does not consider it appropriate to safeguard routes which are not already committed through other mechanisms.