

## **EAST DEVON LOCAL PLAN 2006-2026 RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION BY MUSBURY PARISH COUNCIL**

Musbury Parish Council welcomes the chance for comment and notes that EDDC plans to be 'responsive' to our views as part of its endorsement of the Localism Agenda (page 22/ 5.2 and page 23/5.8). We were heartened by the remark made by Mike Allen, Chair of the LDF panel, who reflected the views of the vast majority of Musbury residents when he said at one of the Panel meetings that he ".....*would hate to see Musbury and its setting in the AONB ruined*"

Overall the Council supports the Local Plan (LP) both in general terms for East Devon and more specifically for the future of Musbury. At our local level the LP is seen as broadly in line with the findings presented in Musbury's Parish Plan 2009.

Our specific points follow:

Page16 – The vision for East Devon to 2031 (should this be 2026?)

**Empty homes** - There is no mention of bringing all the empty homes back into use to supplement new developments.

**Unsold properties** - The market for homes has slowed since 2009 and house prices overall have fallen. Many houses remain unsold after months, even years, on the market. Some are clearly over-priced but not all. Does EDDC have an assessment of the number of properties up for sale at any one time or the average length of time for selling? Why would new homes be more immediately attractive?

**Affordable** Since the term "affordable homes" is used many times throughout the Plan it would be helpful if a clear definition was to be found easily within the document . The key to making homes more affordable for working people is to reduce the ratio between earned income and house prices. 3.3 does make this link between job creation and average income but those jobs need to be higher paid to retain the educated young in the district and/or to attract younger incomers with appropriate skills and knowledge. Does the **Exeter and Heart of Devon Economic Development Strategy** detail how this will be achieved? We agree with 3.4 inasmuch as it says "*...plans for strategic allocations for housing and workspace will be sited in the best places to create the jobs and homes*"

Page19/ 3.15 Culture and Leisure in East Devon

This has narrow aims. Where are the aspirations for libraries, museums, galleries, music, theatre etc? East Devon (and indeed Exeter) is without a central focus for the arts – there is no venue that regularly receives professional touring groups/ exhibitions etc.

Inspiration of the young through these media has been shown to be critical in encouraging them to be aware of the broadest opportunities. Just as travel-to-work miles are important for the labour force, travel-to-culture miles are important factors for many parents for their children and many older retired people (often with money) choosing retirement destinations.

Page 36/ Draft Strategy 3- Musbury PC is in agreement with the strategy.

Page 37/ Draft Strategy 4

Musbury PC is in agreement with the strategy but has reservations about the reality of providing new jobs in line with housing.

Page 108/ Smaller Towns, Villages and countryside

Musbury PC agrees with the new approach using a 5% basic increase with the following provisos. Your 11<sup>th</sup> bullet point on this page states that April 2010's SHLAA indicated a '*good supply of potentially developable land to meet housing need in the more rural settlements*'.

All 3 sites for Musbury named in the SHLAA document are outside the Built-Up Area Boundary so that it would appear that, in some instances at least, the Rural Exceptions policy is more 'norm' than 'exception'. Are all these sites in the right place? Musbury occupies a unique and sensitive setting in the Axe Valley and the surrounding AONB, being visible from a number of vantage points and any further development, particularly on higher ground would certainly be in direct conflict with p.173 S5 para3 which states that "*development in the countryside will only be permitted .....where it would not harm the distinctive landscape*" .....i.e any development will not cause '*the adverse disruption of a view from a public place which forms part of the distinctive character of the area or otherwise causes significant visual intrusions*'.

As well as the vital consideration of Musbury's AONB setting, Musbury has well-documented drainage issues and there are already traffic and parking difficulties in the streets around the school, PO and Spar shop. There are also concerns regarding sewerage capacity.

Before any decision was taken on development sites for Musbury the Council would like to be able to state a preference for the best site. At this stage there is some feeling that, of all potentially available sites in Musbury, the Baxters Farm site (not one of the 3 in the SHLAA) will present the best option once the tenant has retired in future years. We note that 15.3 (page 109) states that '*suitability of places for growth.....should be informed by **detailed** local needs studies*'.

Page 110/15.5

While Musbury has better transport connections than many villages, there are no buses/ taxis on Sundays and few buses after 6.30pm.

Most home-working jobs are notoriously low-paid. Skilled high-paid jobs that can be done at home will rely on more large successful companies developing more patterns of work outsourcing. Start-ups and other entrepreneurial businesses could be encouraged with EDDC and other agency network support.

Page 111/ 15.7

This is a worthy aim but difficult to achieve. How does/ will EDDC define a local connection?

Musbury has 12 starter homes now administered by a Housing Association. These were built in 1994 on the understanding that they would be available to rent by young people living in, or with connections to the Parish. Despite initial assurances that the Parish Council would have an input into the allocation of these dwellings, this did not happen. While this was over a decade ago Musbury PC is cynical about the reality of the proposals.

15.11/ 15.12 -The theory sounds good but does it happen in practice?

Page 112/ 15.13

Musbury PC welcomes the attempts of the Devon/Somerset County Councils joint project to secure higher-speed broadband for the rural areas. This is essential if the aspirations of higher paid homeworking in IT are to have any chance of becoming a reality.

Regular and **more frequent** bus services are needed for those without their own transport.

Page 114/ Homes

*We support the statement that “each village will support growth at 5% **along with associated employment provision**”*

*‘New homes will integrate with existing settlements in accordance with existing Design Statements’.* Musbury has not produced a Design Statement (although a default one exists) but it would seek to ensure that any new homes take account of current best practice in melding budget, environmental and aesthetic considerations. We support the statements made on p.174 regarding Design Standards (paras 21.7 and 21.8) and statement D1 on Design and Local Distinctiveness

15.15

LP states that it aims to create *‘vital, socially balanced communities **without overwhelming their existing character**’.*

Most small villages like Musbury have a predominantly traditional outlook which resists change. Their older resident profile has also been noted throughout the LP. There is a very real problem here of changing the balance of the population without substantial support to the existing community. As a case in point: In recent months a young family with primary age children was moved here. The estate was built for the elderly and the majority of current residents are older people, many living on their own. The perceived anti-social behaviour of this family **in this location, with the particular neighbour profile**, caused problems for the warden, the police, and all the parties involved in the many instances of civil dispute and even criminal behaviour. Criteria for selection of residents for established communities is therefore critical.

Page 115/ 15.20

Musbury PC appreciates the need for affordable housing but wonders at the viability of a 66% quota (6-7 homes out of 10 for Musbury).

Page 117 Draft Strategy 24 - Musbury PC is in agreement with the strategy.

Page 154 Landscape and AONBs Draft Strategy 40

Musbury PC is in agreement with the strategy. In particular it would seek assurance that any site identified by the 2010 SHLAA met these criteria.

Page 157 Draft Strategy 41 - Musbury PC is in agreement with the strategy.

Page 151 Design and Local Distinctiveness in the Built Environment Draft Strategy 42 - Musbury PC is in agreement with the strategy.

We note the encouragement of Design Statements. Musbury PC does not want previous development in the village to be taken as the base template for acceptable future design and distinction. See comments for page 114 above. In this context and that of any SHLAA site selection Musbury PC also supports :

Page 173 S5

In particular it supports S5 3 which states that any development will not cause *'the adverse disruption of a view from a public place which forms part of the distinctive character of the area or otherwise causes significant visual intrusions'*.