

A NEW LOCAL PLAN FOR EAST DEVON OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL`S RESPONSE RE ISSUES AND OPTIONS REPORT CONSULTATION

A crucially important element of producing Local Plans is community engagement. Our democratic system quite rightly requires that the public shall be able to express its opinion, and that this should be given proper consideration. It is vitally important to know what the public thinks.

In addition to public consultation carried out by EDDC, Ottery St Mary Town Council has fully engaged with the public on the East Devon Local Plan in the past. OSMTTC has delivered letters to all residents of the Parish; it has held meetings in venues such as The Institute and The Old Boys School in Ottery, and Tipton Community Hall, and it has organised workshops, to help formulate the local position in drawing up the East Devon Local Plan.

Due to Coronavirus, the above traditional and important methods of engaging with people are not available at the moment.

It is therefore the strongly held view of Ottery St Mary Town Council that EDDC should not push ahead with this exercise until such time as there can be proper and full engagement with the public. Otherwise there is a substantial democratic deficit.

The next East Devon Local Plan must be much more focused on sustainability and carbon reduction requirements. Avoiding dangerous Climate Change should be a major theme of the Plan.

Sustainable transport availability should be a key determining factor in selection of development locations.

The River Otter is a major asset for local people and visitors which runs right through our parish. Over the last few years the quality of the water has led to the re-establishment of beaver communities and an increase in the number of otters in the river. The diversity of the flora and fauna along the riverbank has increased dramatically and there has been major replanting of indigenous trees along the riverside. In conjunction with the need for sustainable transport availability mentioned above, the sections of the old railway line between Feniton Station and Sidmouth, not already public rights of way should be joined up to provide a continuous cycle route from the main line railway station to the sea. This will be an additional benefit for businesses in the town.

Priority should be given to enhancing the vitality of shopping and hospitality venues in the town centre.

In the past there has been too little consideration of constraining factors when planning development. There must be detailed consideration of the availability of local infrastructure. If there is an inability (in Ottery`s case, for instance, for the local schools to accommodate the children generated by the planned development, or by the Coleridge Medical Centre to accommodate the additional patients) for infrastructure to meet demands placed on it, that should be a strong reason not to plan the development.

It is imperative that we move away from the old system of approving large scale development - and then trying to provide the necessary supporting services at some time in the future.

Planned development must be closely tied to existing infrastructure. We must also recognise, and take account of other restraining factors such as environmental constraints.

Call for Sites - Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA):

In the past landowners and developers have put sites forward for development. In spite of approved and built housing numbers for Ottery St Mary greatly exceeding the number specified in the existing EDLP, the map attached to the EDDC letter shows that Ottery St Mary is ringed to the north, east, south and west by no fewer than 14 sites put forward under this process. Some would-be developers have specified the site submission under the process, as a reason for approving the subsequent planning application.

Ottery St Mary Town Council expresses its concern at the damaging aspects of the Call For Sites process. The Town Council is specifically concerned about the inappropriate composition of the Panel which considers sites put forward. The Panel comprises representatives of the economic and housing industries, but no representatives from conservation bodies or from Town or Parish Councils. If East Devon District Council continues to use a Panel of people to assess sites put forward, it must use a balanced Panel - not one comprised wholly of people who it would be thought to be strongly in favour of development.

The construction of much residential building in the villages and small towns in East Devon within commuting distance of Exeter creates a demand from outside the south-west which would not otherwise exist and this is exacerbated by the major developers who market homes extensively in London and the Home Counties. We must concentrate on demand from home. A priority must be put on affordable and sustainable housing with smaller units suitable for first time buyers and second steppers and a reduction in the number of detached "executive" homes. There should also be a requirement for buildings to be designed to high standards of design.

OTTERY ST MARY TOWN COUNCIL
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