

Introduction

Bell Cornwell represents the owners of Darts Farm Limited (DFL). DFL are landowners with considerable land interests across Exeter and East Devon. Bell Cornwell have been instructed to review the latest draft version of the draft East Devon Local Plan (*the draft plan*) and our comments are set out below.

Observation on Draft Policy WS10

As part of the draft plan, Policy WS10 ‘*Land North of Topsham*’ proposes a very large amount of development (comprising 596 houses plus a range of employment and social infrastructure) on land between Topsham and Junction 30 of the M5.

Although a large of amount of development is proposed under Policy WS10, the land is subject to considerable constraint, being long and thin, bounded by the M5 motorway on one side and divorced from ready access to existing facilities. In recognition of this, the draft policy makes it clear that prior to any development coming forward on the land, a masterplan will need to be prepared with coordination between Exeter and East Devon, with the involvement of landowners, the Highways Authority, National Highways and others. The draft policy notes that as part of this work, a Development and Infrastructure Delivery Framework is needed and this is to include the provision of a comprehensive transport strategy “*to prioritise active travel and public transport*” in order to connect the land into the wider area and reduce car use; a particularly important consideration given the congested nature of the area due to its proximity to Junction 31, Sowton Industrial Estate and Sowton Motorway Services etc.

Whilst the land is within East Devon’s administrative area, it is right on the boundary with the Exeter City area. This cross boundary relationship will add complexity to the delivery of the allocation and will increase the need to look for opportunities to deliver the connections needed.

We are aware that in consideration of the issues identified above, some work has been carried out to consider how growth in the area around the Land North of Topsham could provide the appropriate accessible transport connections. Both the Clyst Road and Newcourt Road Access Strategy (CRNRAS) and the Clyst Valley and New Communities Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) identify locations for connections between the Land North of Topsham and the wider area. It is reasonable to expect that these studies will be used to inform the Delivery Framework for the allocation.

Importantly, both these studies identify the potential for a new link, either a bridge or underpass, across the railway, connecting Clyst Road to Newcourt Road – see (1) in the plan extract, below. This connection would create a more direct route for active travel users (i.e. pedestrians and cyclists) from the Land North of Topsham for persons wishing to access Exeter and the Newcourt railway halt. This is the most simple to deliver of the two connections across the M5 put forward (the other being at Point 2, to the north and which would require the crossing of both the M5 and the railway).

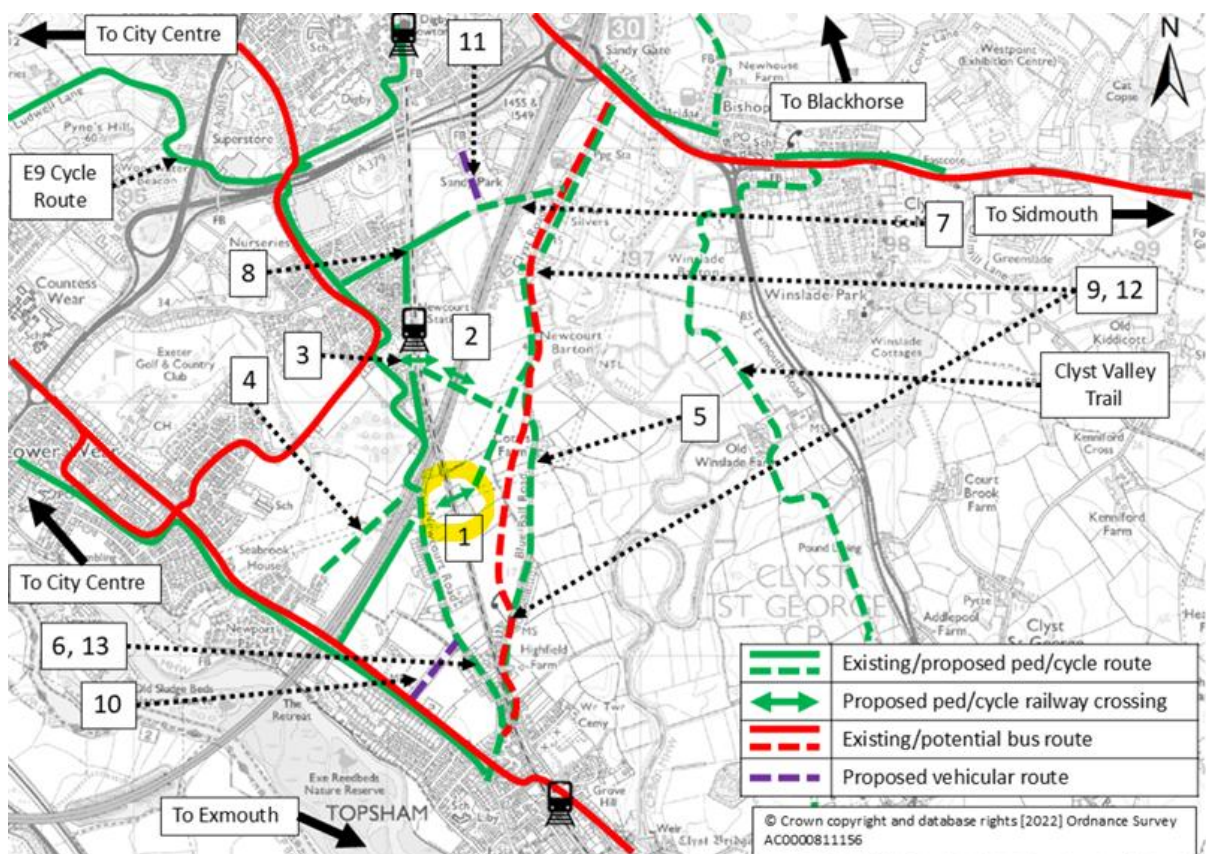


Figure 19: Map of the Key Transport Mitigation Measures

Darts Farm Land

DFL own land immediately adjacent and to the south west of that proposed for development under Policy WS10. Under Policy H2 of the emerging Exeter Local Plan, which will shortly be at examination, DFL’s land (known as Site 91) is proposed to be allocated for housing development. There is a high likelihood that it will therefore come forward for development in the near future. As the extract drawing below shows, the DFL land is extremely well placed to help deliver a crossing over the railway line identified as being needed as part of the delivery of the Land North of Topsham and at the Point 1 location.

As the CRNRAS and LCWIP studies indicate, a bridge connection between the southern edge of the WS10 and our clients land will enable a proper, non-car connection to be provided onto the existing Newcourt Road and then across the motorway via the existing bridge to give access to Exeter and notably Newcourt Railway Station. This is the easiest and most economically viable means of making that connection. The other alternative (at Point 2, see CRNRAS extract above) is much more complex and would need a bridge across both the motorway and the railway line to connect into the wider network.



As part of their expected Site 91 housing allocation, DFL are very willing to allow part of their land to be used to accommodate the installation of bridge to connect to the Land North of Topsham allocation and so help enable its delivery in a sustainable manner. Given the ‘in principle’ merits of a connection in this direction, especially relative to other options, and DFL’s willingness to help enable this, we would suggest that the wording of draft Policy WS10 be adjusted to make explicit reference to the provision of such a link. This is necessary to ensure that Policy WS10 meets the tests of soundness set out at paragraph 36 of the National Planning Policy Framework which requires development plan policies to be positively prepared, justified and effective. Darts Farm Limited would welcome the

DARTS FARM LIMITED
RESPONSE TO THE EAST DEVON LOCAL PLAN 2020 – 2042 (REGULATION 19 PUBLICATION
DRAFT) CONSULTATION (NOVEMBER 2025 – JANUARY 2026) BY BELL CORNWELL LLP

opportunity to have discussions with the Council on how they might assist with the delivery of a link onto their land.