

East Devon District Council
East Devon Local Plan 2020-2042 – Regulation 19
Publication Draft Consultation

[sent via email]

Date: 28/03/2025

Letter ref: CP/00790

Dear Sir/Madam

**East Devon Local Plan 2020-2042 – Regulation 19 Publication Draft
Representations on behalf of Mr and Mrs Parks regarding land at Meeting Lane,
Lympstone (GH/ED/72)**

We write on behalf of Mr and Mrs Parks to make representations on the Local Plan Regulation 19 Publication Draft consultation with reference to land which they own at Meeting Lane, Lympstone. Mr and Mrs Parks have submitted duly made representations in respect of previous iterations of the draft plan and welcome the opportunity to comment further on the draft plan.

At this stage in the plan-making process it is particularly important for any representations to be framed around the requirements of national policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that local planning authorities should submit a plan for examination which is considered to be “sound” – namely that it is:

- *Positively prepared* – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs;
- *Justified* – an appropriate strategy, taking account the reasonable alternatives and based on proportionate evidence;
- *Effective* - deliverable over the plan period; and
- *Consistent with national policy* – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the NPPF.

It is with these requirements in mind that these representations have been prepared.

Plan period

It is unclear why it is proposed for the plan period to start from 2020, some five years ago now, when the plan is not expected to become an adopted one until 2026 at the earliest. That would not seem to be *Justified* taking account of the reasonable alternatives. It would seem far more logical and straightforward for the proposed plan period to commence in 2025.

Strategic Policy SP01: Spatial strategy

We generally support the spatial strategy set out within draft Strategic Policy SP01. We support the identification of Lympstone as a Local Centre and its elevation, in comparison with the current Local Plan, above the Service Villages within the settlement hierarchy. This recognises that Lympstone is suitable for additional development to reinforce the service role that it performs in respect of its surrounding area. It is appropriate and entirely *Justified* therefore that the plan identifies Lympstone as a higher tier settlement than the Service Villages.

However, this elevated status within the settlement hierarchy is not reflected in the scale of housing (92 homes) that is actually allocated at Lympstone in comparison with some of the lower tier Service Villages. It is significantly below the levels at some of the other Local Centres (124 at Broadclyst and 216 at Woodbury) and even either lower or not dissimilar to the scale of housing proposed at many of the lower tier Service Villages (72 at Clyst St Mary, 102 at Feniton, 55 at Newton Poppleford, 64 at West Hill, 83 at Whimple).

This anomaly would appear to have arisen from the site selection process which was largely driven by the outcomes of a series of meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee rather than an objective assessment of sites and the proposed spatial strategy. It is neither a *Justified* strategy nor an *Effective* one as it proposes to deliver more housing in settlements which have been found to be less sustainable than Lympstone, despite there being more land that is suitable for accommodating more housing within Lympstone, as we explain later in this letter.

Strategic Policy SP02: Levels of future housing development

We recognise that the Council has sought to take advantage of the provisions of paragraph 234 (a) of the revised NPPF and has therefore proposed to plan for only 80% of the local housing need for East Devon now identified under the standard method, published on 12 December 2024. This has two significant implications which needs to be borne in mind now at the plan making stage.

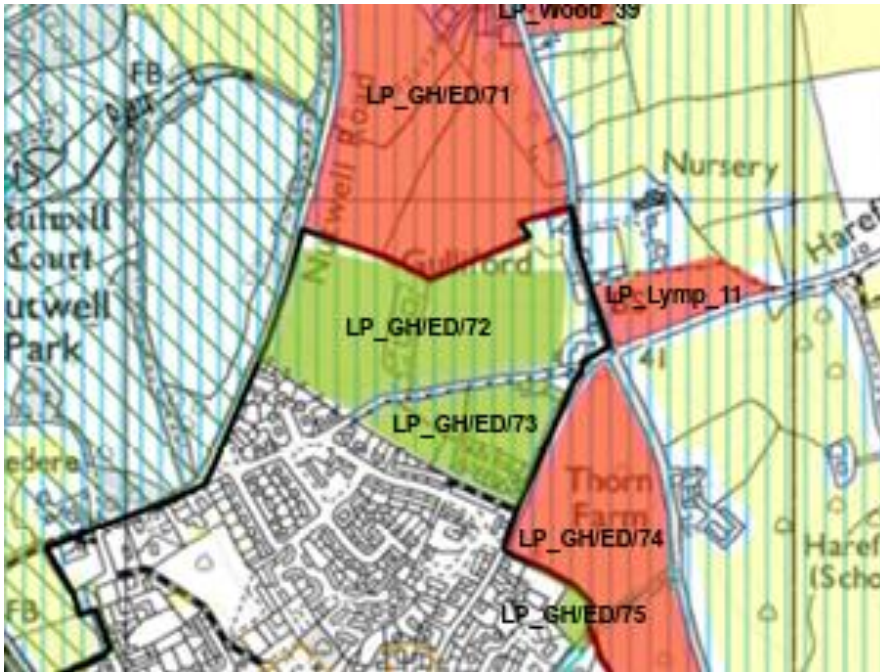
Firstly, it means that the plan will require a very significant update within five years of adoption in order to otherwise bring it in line with the revised NPPF. There is nothing in the draft plan, including in *Chapter 17, Implementation and Monitoring* to indicate the need for this or when and how it will be undertaken. This is a key omission requiring modifications in order to make the plan sound in respect of all of the tests identified above.

Secondly, having regard to paragraph 78 (c) of the NPPF it means that almost from adoption of the plan, the Council will need to effectively demonstrate a six year housing land supply for the purposes of decision making. This does raise important questions as to how *Positively Prepared* the draft plan is and how *Effective* it will be over the plan period. Opportunities for allocating more land for housing that can be delivered in the early years of the plan period should not be passed up as a consequence.

Strategic Policy SD10: Development allocations at Lymptstone

We support the allocation of Mr and Mrs Parks' land at *GH/ED/72a - Land at Meeting Lane* for housing. The site is available and suitable for housing development.

However, the Local Plan Review preferred options consultation which ran between November 2022 - January 2023 identified a much larger area of land at Meeting Lane, Lymptstone (LP_GHED/72) as a preferred choice site allocation for 131 new homes and 0.52 hectare of employment land as illustrated on the plan extract below.



This followed an assessment by the Council of all potential development sites within Lymington which concluded in respect of all the land at Meeting Lane (GH/ED/72) that it is,

“Well related to settlement and limited sensitivities. Good pedestrian access. Whilst in the existing coastal preservation area very limited views to the sea”.

Then in September 2024, in a report to the Strategic Planning Committee the entire allocation was proposed to be deleted with the following explanation,

Whilst the west field is slightly contained within a 'bowl' with a ridge to north, the east field is open and more exposed. Views of site generally show an undeveloped, wooded skyline, but lightly settled on SW edge where there are existing dwellings. Within Coastal Preservation Area. Overall, a high/medium landscape sensitivity to new development”.

The following month however, in a report to the Strategic Planning Committee of 29 October 2024, it was recommended that the southern part of the western field only should be allocated, with an explanation as follows:

“If whole site is not suitable for allocation, could a smaller part be allocated?”

Yes – potential to allocate the south western part of the site for development, adjacent to existing dwellings and better contained within the existing landform than the rest of the

site. Around 1.5 hectares is potentially suitable for around 42 dwellings (indicated on map below) but need to consider impact on Nutwell Park to west including Grade II Nutwell Court, and the location within the Coastal Preservation Area”.*

Consequently, the Reg 19 version of the plan only proposes a part of Mr and Mrs Parks’ land which is available for development despite the Council’s most recent assessment (in September 2024) only identifying the eastern field as “*open and more exposed*”. There has been no explanation as to why the whole of the western field would not be suitable for allocation.

Indeed, the western field currently contains two existing very large, modern agricultural barns adjacent to its eastern boundary which is its highest point. A residential development across the whole of the western field would be far less prominent within the landscape than these existing barns.

Given that the currently proposed level of housing at Lympstone is, as has been identified above, significantly below the levels at some of the other Local Centres and even either lower or not dissimilar to the scale of housing proposed at many of the lower tier Service Villages, we consider that there is an opportunity to correct this anomaly by allocating more land at Meeting Lane, including at least the whole of the western field which the Council’s own evidence appears to support.

As evidenced by the findings of the Council’s own assessment, the development of the whole of the western field would not adversely affect the objectives of the Coastal Preservation Area policy and would be capable of respecting the setting of the adjacent Nutwell Park. We object to the omission of the wider western field as a proposed allocation because it makes *Strategic Policy SD10: Development allocations at Lympstone* neither *Positively Prepared* nor *Justified*. However, this soundness issues could be remedied by extending the *GH/ED/72a - Land at Meeting Lane* allocated site to include the whole of the same field. The allocation of the whole of the western field would enable an increase in the number of dwellings within the allocation, which we suggest should be increased to in excess of 60 dwellings.

Mr and Mrs Parks have been working with a local SME housebuilder and have undertaken technical and planning preparatory work which has confirmed the deliverability of the western field to provide homes that are in keeping with the surrounding area, provides connectivity to footpaths and bus stops and provide open space for people's wellbeing.

We can also confirm that all of the land originally identified by the Council at the preferred options stage remains available and deliverable for development.

Yours faithfully

SIMON COLLIER

Director