

## Public consultation: East Devon new Local Plan 2020-2040

### Some observations

These observations and comments relate to the East Devon AONB aspect of the draft plan, particularly to the field noted in the consultation document as 'east of The Lookout'. However, immediately east of The Lookout is a row of four detached houses that were constructed about forty years ago, not a field. The orientation of the field to which the new Local Plan refers is west of The Lookout, not east as noted in the draft plan.

#### Note

*It is not clear to me from the draft, nor from the map within the draft that is presented therein, whether or not this field is an ongoing entity for consideration, or a field that has already been rejected from inclusion in this consideration at an earlier, preliminary, stage. Nevertheless I contribute the following.*

To confirm, the field west of The Lookout is within the East AONB, a designation which will celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, in 2024. Re-designating this field so as to underwrite and promote its suitability for the development of housing and/or commercial enterprise I would regard as inappropriate and contrary to its present designation which embraces the notions of landscape beauty and tranquillity.

The field, whose gradient is to the south east and extends upwards from about the 110 metres contour at its lowest extremity, is bounded by hedgerows. This boundary forms a generally slightly irregular rectangular enclosure. The eastern hedgerow is attractively curved as it progresses up the hill, an example of those described by the respected historian WG Hoskins 'A new survey of England: Devon' (1954) and 'English Landscapes: How to read the man-made scenery of England' (1973).

It was William Hoskins who first recognised how the Saxons more than a thousand years ago had the capability with their oxen-drawn iron bladed ploughs to till the heavy clay soils that dominate this landscape. The Saxons bequeathed this heritage for successive generations to visually enjoy and admire.

In Natural England's National Character Area assessment of the Sid Valley and its environs, the site is particularly visible and has a high scenic value from which, and to which, there are outstanding views. This field, together with all those in the AONB that bound the urban areas of Sidmouth and Sidford, provide a frame of outstanding intrinsic landscape value.

Until a change of land ownership a decade or so ago the field's land use included the growing of corn, the grazing of livestock, the cropping of hay and the making of silage. In recent times the field has been left as fallow, subsequently becoming a stronghold of wildlife. Deer are a daily occurrence, possibly having become residents in the nearby hedgerows not just in the adjacent woodlands, likewise buzzard, fox, kestrel, and less frequently, sparrow hawk, red kite, barn owl and wryneck. A further welcome dynamic to the value of this field has emerged.

Following this consultation, should any undeveloped parts, including any field, of the East Devon AONB within and surrounding the Sid Valley be deemed to be suitable for urbanisation, which thereby would initiate the erosion of the protection afforded by its landscape designation more than two generations ago, it would cause unnecessary harm to the scenic character of this heritage landscape. A negative difference to the lives of local people and the tourist economy would result which I view as unacceptable.

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