



# EDDC Regulation 19 Consultation: Representations

Land off Northcote Hill, Honiton

**Boyer**

Prepared on behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd. | February 25

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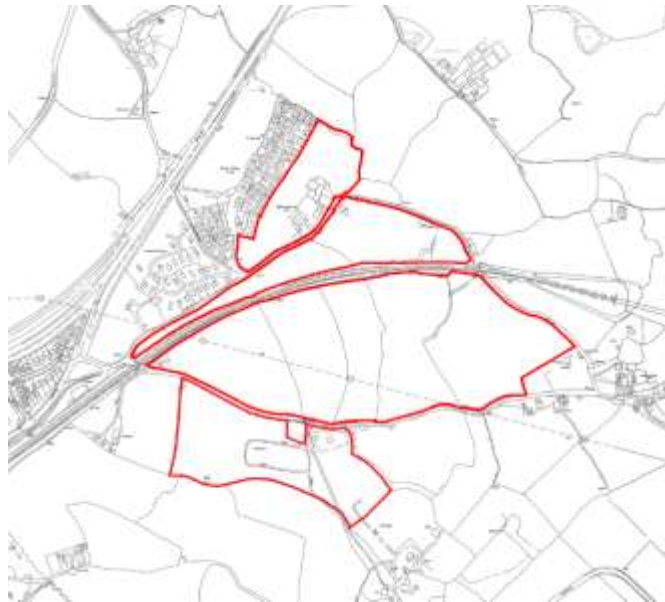
## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1. Site Location Plan**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared by Boyer on behalf of Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd, in response to the East Devon District Council (EDDC) Local Plan (Regulation 19) Consultation Document (hereafter referred to as the “Draft LP”), in promotion of land off Northcote Hill, to the east of Honiton (the site).
- 1.2 Representations have been previously submitted as part of EDDC’s Regulation 18 Consultation undertaken in 2022, and the second Regulation 18 Consultation in 2024.
- 1.3 The site is dissected by the East Devon Railway Line into two parts, identified as Phase I (north of the railway line) and Phase II (south of the railway line). It is welcomed that both parts have been identified as allocations within the Draft LP:
- The land north of the railway line, which is proposed by the Council as a residential Local Plan allocation of approximately 100 homes; and referred to as ‘land north of Northcote Hill, north of the railway line’ (GH/ED/39a); and
  - The land south of the railway, which is proposed by the Council as a residential Local Plan allocation of approximately 100 homes; and referred to as ‘land south of Northcote Hill, south of the railway line’ (GH/ED/39b).
- 1.4 We support the principle of both allocations; however, we strongly consider that the number of homes proposed for the land south of the railway line (Phase II) must be increased to 285-300 homes. This increase is essential for ensuring that the allocation (and future scheme) makes effective use of the land and optimises its potential to accommodate an appropriate amount and mix of development as well as making a meaningful contribution towards meeting housing needs in East Devon (in accordance with NPPF 2023; Paragraph 135e).
- 1.5 Increasing the number of homes on land south of the railway line will enable the proposed development to offer more public benefits, such as a neighbourhood hub and significant public open space, potentially including a community park.

### Land off Northcote Hill, Honiton



**Figure 1: Site Location Plan**

- 1.6 Together, the site can create a sustainable new neighbourhood to the east of Honiton, providing approximately 400 homes. This includes 115 homes on land north of the railway line; and 285-300 homes on land south of it. By doing so, the proposed allocation would significantly contribute towards the Council's housing land supply, in accordance with the Council's spatial strategy.

### Phase II Supporting Documentation

- 1.7 These representations should be read alongside the following technical reports, which support an increased quantum of development proposed for Phase II:
- Vision Document (prepared by Stantec) (which includes a concept masterplan for land north and south of the railway line);
  - Tree Survey Report (prepared by RPS);
  - Drainage Technical Note (prepared by Phoenix Design);
  - Ecology Deliverability Report (prepared by EAD Ecology);
  - Heritage Technical Note (prepared by TCMS);
  - Landscape Visual Assessment (prepared by Stantec); and
  - Transport Appraisal (prepared by TPA);

### Test of Soundness

- 1.8 These representations respond to the relevant draft Local Plan policies, with particular consideration given to the NPPF's tests of soundness:

- Positively Prepared;
- Justified;
- Effective; and
- Consistent with National Policy

### **NPPF Transitional Arrangements**

- 1.9 It is acknowledged that EDDC state that the Plan should be examined under the 2023 version of the NPPF, in line with the NPPF Transitional Arrangements set out at Paragraph 234a). This requires Regulation 19 Consultation to be reached before March 12<sup>th</sup> 2025, with a draft housing requirement that is at least 80% of the authority's Local Housing Need (LHN) figure.

#### *Unpublished Evidence Base*

- 1.10 It is evident, however, that this Regulation 19 Consultation does not include the full suite of evidence base, with the following documents noted as 'still to follow':
- CCF-001 - Water Cycle Study
  - CCF-002 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Surface Water Zone
  - CCF-005 - Coastal Change Topic Paper
  - HCO-004- Playing Pitch Strategy
  - HCO-005 - Open Space Strategy
  - HCO-006 - Sports Facilities Study
  - HRD-004 - East Devon Heritage Strategy (2024-2042)

#### *Two Phased Regulation 19 Consultation*

- 1.11 Introductory text within this Draft LP also confirms that EDDC will be undertaking a second phase of Regulation 19 Consultation in Spring 2025, which will include additional detail regarding the new community (Strategic Policy WS01) and 'other inter-related local plan matters'. The Draft LP proceeds to state, '*once this evidence work is completed, and policy gaps in the plan can be filled in, and further policy refinement undertaken, the second phase of consultation will take place*'.
- 1.12 It is evident that the new community is an integral part of the Draft LP strategy, and the delivery assumptions are fundamental to ensure EDDC achieve a housing requirement that is within 80% of their LHN figure. We raise significant concerns regarding EDDC's approach in releasing piecemeal evidence that underpins this new community. It is evident that the approach to undertaking the Regulation 19 Local Plan in two parts is to allow EDDC to benefit from the NPPF Transitional Arrangements set out at Paragraph 234a). It is our view

that this does not represent effective plan-making or the Government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes.

- 1.13 The Draft LP in its current consultation form therefore fails to meet Section 19a) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 as a copy of each of the submission documents has not been made available for consultation. It cannot therefore be considered that this Draft LP meets the definition of a comprehensive Regulation 19 Consultation.
- 1.14 Notwithstanding this, should this Draft LP be examined under the provisions of the previous NPPF (2023), these representations reference the soundness of this Draft LP against the requirements set out within the NPPF (2023).

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC POLICIES

2.1 This Chapter discusses the Strategic Policies in chronological order.

### Strategic Policy SP01 – Spatial Strategy

2.2 Strategic Policy SP01 confirms that new development will be directed towards the most sustainable locations in East Devon, with the most sustainable location identified as the West End of the District, followed by the Principal Centre of Exmouth and the Main Centres of Axminster, Honiton, Ottery St Mary, Seaton and Sidmouth.

2.3 We support Honiton's identification as a Main Centre, which is to accommodate significant development across the Plan period *'to serve its own needs and that of the wider surrounding areas'*. Honiton is a sustainable settlement with a range of facilities and services, a mainline railway line and well placed to accommodate new development.

2.4 We support this settlement hierarchy and agree that it accords with the key tenet of the NPPF (2023), directing housing growth to the most sustainable locations.

### Strategic Policy SP02 – Levels of future housing development

2.5 Strategic Policy SP02 states that housing provision will be made for at least 20,909 homes between 2020 and 2042. This housing requirement equates to an annual housing delivery of 950 dpa across the draft Plan period, representing 80% of East Devon's Local Housing Need (LHN) as calculated using the Standard Method (NPPF 2024). East Devon claims that this allows the local community to benefit from the NPPF transitional arrangements by building approximately 238 fewer homes each year.

2.6 Strategic Policy SP02 outlines a stepped trajectory, setting an annual target of 850 homes from 2020/21 to 2031/2032, which then increases to 1,070 homes per annum from 2032/33 to 2041/42.

2.7 We object to this policy for the following reasons:

- **Reason 1** – The stepped trajectory places a significant reliance on meeting EDDC's cumulative housing supply shortfall in the second half of the plan period. This approach **does not represent effective plan-making**;
- **Reason 2** – The Plan over-relies on housing delivery within the new settlement. Historical housing supply issues associated with the delivery of Cranbook affirm that this approach is **not justified**;

2.8 These reasons are discussed in further detail below.

### Reason 1 - Stepped Housing Requirement/Trajectory

2.9 We object to EDDC's strategy of adopting a stepped housing trajectory.

Year	Housing Requirement	Completed	Estimated Delivery	Shortfall/ Surplus	Cumulative requirement	Cumulative delivery	Cumulative Shortfall
2020/21	950	867*	-	-83	950	867	-83
2021/22	950	1,039*	-	+89	1,900	1,906	+6
2022/23	950	998*	-	+48	2,850	2,904	+54
2023/24	950	623*	-	-327	3,800	3,527	-273
2024/25	950	-	1,297	+347	4,750	4,824	+74
2025/26	950	-	781	-169	5,700	5,605	-95
2026/27	950	-	660	-290	6,650	6,265	-385
2027/28	950	-	645	-305	7,600	6,910	-690
2028/29	950	-	448	-502	8,550	7,358	-1192
2029/30	950	-	1,471	+521	9,500	8,829	-671
2030/31	950	-	1,428	+478	10,450	10,257	-193
2031/32	950	-	1,294	+344	11,400	11,551	+151
2032/33	950	-	1,494	+544	12,350	13,045	+695
2033/34	950	-	1,276	+326	13,300	14,321	+1,021
2034/35	950	-	1,208	+258	14,250	15,529	+1,279
2035/36	950	-	1,318	+368	15,200	16,847	+1,647
2036/37	950	-	1,243	+293	16,150	18,090	+1,940
2037/38	950	-	1,078	+128	17,100	19,168	+2,068
2038/39	950	-	1,213	+263	18,050	20,381	+2,331
2039/40	950	-	911	-39	19,000	21,292	+2,292
2040/41	950	-	819	-131	19,950	22,111	+2,161
2041/42	950	-	646	-304	20,900	22,757	+1,857

\* These figures have been derived from EDDC's HMU (Published in November 2024), which notes that the figures had been updated to reflect the loss and gain of units from the proposed care home.

- 2.10 East Devon faces significant challenges by relying on a stepped housing trajectory.
- 2.11 Firstly, it is important to remember that the Plan's housing requirement does not meet the district's housing need and falls approximately 238 homes per annum short.
- 2.12 Secondly, by providing only 80% of housing need, it is essential that as many homes are delivered as quickly as possible. However, the Plan proposes a cumulative housing shortfall over 6 years (2025/26 – 2030/31), with a notable deficit of 1,192 homes in 2028/29. Over the

first four years of the plan period, at best, this represents the delivery of only 55% of East Devon's housing needs. This backlog is not proposed to be addressed for 7 years, until 2031/32.

- 2.13 While it is acknowledged that other local authorities have adopted a similar stepped approach, EDDC's circumstances differ. Unlike other authorities with stepped housing trajectories, East Devon doesn't have Green Belt constraints and is able to accommodate development through plan making.
- 2.14 It is considered that the draft LP must uplift its housing supply, particularly within the first half of the draft LP period.

#### *Affordability Ratio in EDDC*

- 2.15 EDDC has significant affordability issues. ONS Data published in 2024 confirmed that East Devon's house price to income ratio was 9.98. This is a significant affordability ratio which means the price of an average house in East Devon costs around ten-times average earnings. This is higher than the South West (at 9.27) and considerably higher than the average for England (8.26).
- 2.16 EDDC published a draft Housing Strategy in December 2024, which confirmed that Devon Home Choice had, at the time of publication almost 6,000 people on its waiting list for social housing, 3,000 with a current housing need. Furthermore, the Strategy confirmed that East Devon is experiencing a significant housing crisis.
- 2.17 This clearly emphasises that a stepped trajectory approach is **not justified** and will exasperate an existing affordability issue in East Devon.

#### **Reason 2 - Over reliance of housing delivery within the new settlement**

- 2.18 It is noted that the Plan's stepped trajectory approach is due to a reliance on the delivery of Strategic Policy WS01: Development of a second new community east of Exeter.
- 2.19 While we do not object to the principle of allocating a new settlement, we do object to the delivery assumptions that have been applied; and the over-reliance on this draft allocation to deliver housing within the second half of the plan period.
- 2.20 The new settlement is proposed to accommodate 3,300 homes over the plan period, and is reliant on the creation of an agreed, 'whole community' masterplan, with delivery of the site to be on an agreed phased basis.
- 2.21 The draft LP proposes the delivery of 3,300 homes in the new settlement, an increase of over 1,000 homes compared to the 2,500 homes projected in the previous Regulation 18 draft LP. However, we have not seen robust evidence published since the Regulation 18 draft LP consultation to justify this uplift in housing delivery assumptions.
- 2.22 The draft LP relies on the new settlement to commence housing delivery in 2030 (para 4.8), with an average build out rate of 300 homes+ per annum. The proposed step change in the

Plan's housing delivery between 2028/29 and 2029/30 is evidently because of housing delivery assumptions associated with the construction of the new settlement.

- 2.23 We remain concerned regarding the Plan's over-reliance on the ambitious delivery assumption associated with the new settlement, given the significant infrastructure required to support the new settlement's growth. Based on our experience, the delivery of new towns is a slow and protracted process, with delays in delivery of housing common place. We would expect that the delivery of a new town of approximately 8,000 homes to be guided by the preparation of a separate Development Plan Document (DPD). Indeed, this would align with the Strategic Policy WS01 policy text, which states that a 'whole community' masterplan must be prepared.
- 2.24 The preparation of such a masterplan could not be prepared in advance of the draft LP being adopted. It is anticipated that the earliest that the draft LP would be adopted is in 2026, therefore providing less than four years to: prepare a Development Plan Document (assuming the 'whole community' masterplan would be secured in this way); preparation, submission and responses relating to EIA Screening/Scoping; preparation, submission, approved of Outline Planning Applications; preparation, submission, approval of Reserved Matters Applications; and discharging of all relevant planning conditions.
- 2.25 In the previous Draft LP (Regulation 18), which was published in 2023, the Draft LP stated, *"it is unlikely that any new homes will be completed until around 2030. On this basis, and at build out rates climbing to around 300 new homes per year, we can expect to see around 2,500 new homes built at the new town by the 2040 end date of the local plan"*. At the time of the Regulation 18 Consultation, the LDS stated that the Draft LP was due to be adopted in 2025. The Draft LP has not progressed at the rate it was anticipated. The current LDS expects the Draft LP to be adopted by late 2026 (12 months later) and yet proposes to allocate in excess of 1,000 additional homes within the new settlement. The delivery assumptions associated with the new settlement are not justified and must, therefore, be revised accordingly.
- 2.26 It is considered that housing delivery within the new town is unlikely to commence until mid-2030s. Consequently, to ensure the Plan remains deliverable and effective, the Council must reduce the overall housing numbers allocated to the new town within the plan period to ensure the Plan can be found sound.

#### *Cranbrook New Settlement – East Devon's Historic Delivery Issues*

- 2.27 Historically, EDDC have over-relied upon housing delivery from new settlements.
- 2.28 The adopted LP identified a housing requirement of 17,100 homes within the plan period (2013-2031), of which 10,563 homes were anticipated to be delivered within the West End. This included 5,270 homes to be delivered within the West End Strategic Allocations. Strategy 2 identified 4,370 homes to be delivered via Strategic Allocations within Cranbrook within the Plan period (2013-2031), with the new settlement delivering peak build out rates of "500 homes a year".

- 2.29 The following table compares the quantum of homes that were previously projected to be delivered from the West End (including the Strategic Allocations) (as set out within the adopted LP Appendix 2 Schedule of Housing Sites) against the actual delivery rates from the West End as published within the latest Annual Monitoring Report (November 2024).

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
West End Projected Delivery	486	531	515	584	725	774	746	772	674	649	611
West End Completions	486	531	403	335	326	392	560	455	568	518	358
Surplus/ Deficit	0	0	-112	-249	-399	-382	-186	-317	-106	-131	-253

- 2.30 The above table confirms that EDDC have consistently failed to meet their adopted LP projections for the West End. This is due to the adopted Plan's over-reliance on optimistic housing delivery assumption for Strategic Allocations during the plan period.
- 2.31 This underscores that EDDC's reliance on the new community to significantly contribute to the emerging LP's housing requirement is **not justified**; and will result in an **ineffective** Plan; therefore, failing to meet the tests of soundness.
- 2.32 The Council should prioritise meeting its housing requirement of 950dpa on a consistent, annual basis. It is, therefore, considered that the Plan's proposed stepped housing trajectory will not deliver its housing requirement, and it is not effective or positively prepared and, therefore, unsound.

### **Strategic Policy SP03 – Housing Requirement by Designated Neighbourhood Area**

- 2.33 We do not object in principle to Policy SP03, however, minor text revisions are required to ensure the policy is justified and accords with National Policy.
- 2.34 Greater emphasis should be placed on conveying that the figures represent a minimum housing requirement. Although wording to this effect is mentioned in the second part of the policy, reiterating it within the table would enhance clarity for readers and decision-makers.
- 2.35 Additionally, we have observed discrepancies between the figures in this policy and those in other policies within the Draft LP. Notably, the Honiton DNA housing requirement in Strategic Policy SP03 specifies 839 homes, while the Honiton allocations identified within Strategic Policy SD03 (Honiton and its development allocations) amount to 838 homes.

**Strategic Policy SP05 - Development inside Settlement Boundaries**

- 2.36 Whilst we agree with the principle of this policy, we object to the current policy wording, which appears to restrict and discourage Neighbourhood Plans from allocating sites beyond settlement boundaries.
- 2.37 The housing numbers within the Council's strategic policies and housing distribution should not represent a ceiling for growth. Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in force (in order to meet the basic conditions).
- 2.38 Should updated evidence be prepared in support of a future Neighbourhood Plan that suggests that there is a local unmet need for additional housing (beyond that identified within the adopted LP), the Council should not prevent additional sites from being allocated within the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.39 As currently worded, therefore, it is considered that this Strategic Policy is not sound as it does not align with National Policy and the Government's overarching objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes (NPPF; Paragraph 61).

**Strategic Policy SP06 - Development beyond Settlement Boundaries**

- 2.40 Strategic Policy SP06 states that in locations outside of the defined settlement boundaries, development will not be permitted unless it is in accordance with a specific Local or Neighbourhood Plan policy that explicitly permits such development.
- 2.41 While we support this policy, we consider that there is an inconsistency with Strategic Policy SP05, which appears to discourage Neighbourhood Plans from allocating sites outside of the Draft LP settlement boundaries. It should be acknowledged that Neighbourhood Plans can make alterations to the settlement boundaries to allow for additional housing growth where this is justified and accords with the Council's overarching spatial strategy, therefore meeting the NDP Basic Conditions Tests.

**Strategic Policy SP07 - Delivery of infrastructure**

- 2.42 We support the need for new development to be accompanied by appropriate infrastructure, delivered in a timely manner to support the needs of the community.
- 2.43 However, the draft policy requires new development proposals to be delivered alongside infrastructure that supports the needs of the "wider community." We object to this inclusion, as it contradicts with CIL Regulation 122, which requires planning obligations to be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 2.44 Policy SP07 needs greater clarity to reflect the tests at Regulation 122 to ensure the policy is effective and can be found sound.
- 2.45 It should be noted that land off Northcote Hill is capable of meeting the requirements of policy SP07 through the delivery of a number of public benefits, including extensive areas of public open space; highway improvements to support the vehicular trips likely to arise from

the proposed development; community park; neighbourhood hub; and enhancement of walking and cycling routes.

**Strategic Policy WS01: Development of a second new community east of Exeter**

- 2.46 We have significant concerns regarding the Plan's delivery assumptions for the new settlement. In particular, the effectiveness of the Plan given its over-reliance on the new settlement delivering 3,300 homes between 2030 and 2042.
- 2.47 This consultation document does not contain evidence to justify the delivery rates proposed for the allocation of the new settlement. It is noted that the Council intend to do a further Regulation 19 consultation later in 2025, at which time they hope to identify evidence to support the allocation's delivery rates. Given the current absence of evidence Policy WS01 is not justified and unsound.
- 2.48 Research undertaken by Litchfields 'Start to Finish' provides such empirical evidence for considering housing delivery in the context of preparing local plans. The research demonstrates that:
- the average timeframe for sites of 2,000+ homes from validation of a first planning application to the completion of the first dwelling is 6.6 years;
  - the average lower to upper quartile range for build-out rates for sites of 2,000+ homes is 100 to 188 dpa; and
  - looking ahead, the OBR's forecasted drop in housing transactions and worsening market conditions will likely lead to a reduction in build out rates over the beginning of the plan period.
- 2.49 It is highly unlikely that the new settlement would be started in 2030, and Policy WS01 is ineffective and unsound. We say this because prior to the preparation and determination of any future planning application significant work is required, inter alia, to:
- Undertake masterplanning work, public consultation and community involvement. Draft Policy WS01 proposes that the new community "*will need to occur and proceed on the basis of an agreed whole new community masterplan and on an agreed phased basis*". The policy proceeds to reference the requirement for a "*allocation-wide Masterplan*", which will set out the affordable housing provision across the entire allocation and housing tenure and densities.
  - Scope and coordinate the delivery of significant supporting infrastructure, including the construction of an operational, 5-hectare town centre.
  - It is assumed that a Development Plan Document (DPD) will need to be prepared to ensure the allocation is delivered in a coordinated manner. To prevent abortive work, it is anticipated that the DPD would not be prepared until the draft LP had been adopted. It is noted that the Cranbrook DPD was not adopted until October 2022, despite the LP having been adopted more than 6 years prior in 2016.

- Planning applications would be prepared and submitted following the adoption of the DPD to ensure they can demonstrate consistency with the approved masterplan. Noting the scale of the site, it is likely that any future application would proceed in Outline and would be considered as EIA development, therefore requiring additional assessments to be undertaken as part of the application preparation process, and an associated elongated determination timescale.

2.50 On this basis, a more realistic timeframe would be:

- 2025/26 - Adoption of the Local Plan
- 2026/27 – Consultation and approval of “Whole New Community Masterplan”
- 2028/30 – Preparation of Development Plan Document
- 2031 - Preparation and submission of outline planning application and EIA
- 2037 - Planning Committee resolution to grant and s106 agreement signed to allow planning permission to be issued and the first completion in 2036
- 2037 – 2042 - An average build-out rate of 120 dpa from 2036 to 2042 delivering 600 homes before the end of the Plan period.

2.51 This would leave 2,700 homes short of meeting the Plan’s housing requirement.

2.52 For this policy to be effective and therefore sound, the quantum of development proposed through the new town must be reduced to reflect a justified housing delivery figure; and additional housing sites allocated across East Devon to ensure the Plan’s housing requirement is met by 2042.

2.53 Land off Northcote Hill, Honiton (south of the railway line) should be allocated to deliver 285-300 homes, which would ensure the development can make a meaningful contribution towards EDDC’s housing land supply in the short to medium term, allowing for any unforeseen delays in housing delivery within the new settlement. By increasing the proposed allocation on Land off Northcote Hill, Honiton (south of the railway line), this will ensure that the allocation makes the most effective use of land, in accordance with national policy and guidance.

### **Strategic Policy SD03: Honiton and its development allocations**

2.54 We welcome the designation of Honiton as a Tier 2 settlement and a sustainable location for future growth and development.

2.55 It is welcomed that land south of Northcote Hill (north and south of the railway line) is identified as two draft allocations within the draft LP. Taylor Wimpey supports the allocations and can confirm that both sites are suitable and available for immediate development. Both sites can contribute to the Council’s immediate housing land supply.

2.56 We discuss each of these allocation in turn below.

- 2.57 Land south of Northcote Hill (north of the railway line) (site reference - GH/ED/39a) – An outline planning permission was resolved to be approved on the allocation site by East Devon Planning Committee for the development of up to 115 homes, public open space, sustainable drainage systems, landscaping, vehicular access via Tunnel Lane and associated highways improvements and infrastructure. The proposed development was for up to 115 homes.
- 2.58 Land south of Northcote Hill (south of the railway line) (100 homes) (site reference – GH/ED/39b) – We support the allocation of the site for residential development; and consider that the site has capacity for up to 285-300 homes. Taylor Wimpey have recently undertaken a full suite of technical work (summarised in section 4 of these representations) that confirms the site can comfortably accommodate a significantly higher quantum of development (285-300 homes) which could deliver an extensive community park and other public benefits including a neighbourhood hub. The enclosed Vision Document demonstrates how a landscape-led development, with homes provided alongside extensive areas of public open space, including a new community park, can deliver 285-300 homes.
- 2.59 Taylor Wimpey welcomes the site's identification as an allocation within the draft LP and considers that the allocation has the potential to make a more significant contribution towards the district's housing land supply as shown on the masterplan submitted with these representations, alongside the delivery of additional public benefits for existing and future residents.
- 2.60 Taylor Wimpey request that the proposed allocation at Land south of Northcote Hill (south of the railway line) is uplifted to 285-300 homes to ensure the allocation makes the most efficient use of the site in accordance with National Policy and Guidance.
- 2.61 The draft LP policy should be amended accordingly, and draft revised policy wording has been provided at **Section 5** of these representations.

#### **Strategic Policy CC01: Climate emergency**

- 2.62 Strategic Policy CC01 requires that developments must support East Devon's target to become carbon neutral by 2040, through:
- Supporting movement to net zero development; and
  - Maximising opportunities for delivery of low carbon and renewable energy, district heat networks, and energy storage facilities.
- 2.63 The policy is acknowledged; however, it should be recognised that the implementation of the Future Homes Standard (FHS) will largely influence the sustainability requirements that must be adopted for housebuilding across England. The implementation of the FHS will support East Devon's target to become carbon neutral by 2040, and therefore, any policy requirement which goes beyond the requirements of building regulations (now or in the future) must be justified and supported by relevant viability assumptions and assessment.

**Strategic Policy CC02: Net zero carbon development**

- 2.64 Strategic Policy CC02 requires all new homes to meet the energy efficiency requirements set out in the building regulations Future Homes Standard (FHS) 2025. It is anticipated that the FHS will come into force in 2025, therefore on adoption of this Draft LP it is assumed that this policy will be unnecessarily repeating other legislation and requirements and will therefore not be required.
- 2.65 The policy also requires all new developments to demonstrate at the application stage that the relevant standards can be achieved. It should be recognised that such information, which relates to detailed interior and exterior design will only be available at detailed design stage, therefore is unlikely to be available at the point of Outline planning application submission. The policy text should be revised accordingly.

**Strategic Policy CC05: Heat networks**

- 2.66 We consider that this policy is not justified and is unsound.
- 2.67 Strategic Policy CC05 proposes that all major developments within 1km of an existing heat network be connected, or provide a new heat network for proposals over 1,200 homes where no heat network currently exists. It is understood that Honiton does not, at present, benefit from a heat network. The allocations proposed at Honiton (including Land off Northcote Road (site references - GH/ED/39a and GH/ED/39b)) fall below the threshold of 1,200 homes and therefore it is not anticipated that a heat network would be required to be delivered as part of any of these allocations.
- 2.68 Further work is also needed to demonstrate that a heat network can be secured at an affordable price that would benefit from the same safeguarding as a domestic supply. As present, the ability to access heat networks is outside of the control of the developer/landowner and this Draft LP policy should be removed.

**Strategic Policy CC06: Embodied carbon**

- 2.69 This policy requires all major development to undertake an embodied carbon assessment submitted via a Whole Life Carbon Cycle Assessment (WLCCA) procedure.
- 2.70 This policy is underpinned by two pieces of evidence including CCF-018 - Whole Life Carbon Assessment for the Built Environment (2nd Ed.) and CCF-024 - RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment for the Built Environment (1st Edition - 2017). Both documents confirm the methodology and requirements for preparing a WLCCA. The reporting table requires significant amounts of information relating to the proposed development including GIA, Facilitating Works, Substructure, Finishes, Fixtures and Fittings. Strategic Policy CC06 needs to acknowledge that such inputs will not be available at the outline stage of a project or application and would require the assessor to adopt a considerable number of assumptions. This is impractical and goes beyond the remit of an outline application which is only seeking permission for the principle of development.

- 2.71 It is also noted that the Draft LP Viability Assessment (Core Submission Document CSD-004), makes no allowance for this policy requirement, confirming that the need to prepare an embodied carbon assessment is considered to fall within the remit of Professional Fees. Whilst we do not disagree with this approach, particularly given the high-level nature of Local Plan Viability Assessments, we note that the Draft LP Viability Assessment has applied the assumption that professional fees are reduced to 6% of build costs for developments in excess of 101 homes. We strongly consider that this assumption is insufficient and the assumption that professional fees fall to 6% of build cost on larger schemes is not justified and does not represent best practice in viability assumptions. Professional fees for all viability assessments should range between 8-10%.
- 2.72 We also object to the policy text which relates to the need to retain existing habitable buildings with new development (except for in exceptional circumstances).
- 2.73 At present, this policy is not justified. There may be instances whereby retrofitting and converting an existing building is less sustainable than its demolition and rebuild as a new build property, that would accord with the building regulations and relevant updated sustainability requirements. In such instances, where it is demonstrated that this is the case, the proposals for demolishing and rebuilding the dwelling should not be resisted.

#### **Strategic Policy AR01: Flooding**

- 2.74 We object to the following criteria within this policy, which is not effective and therefore unsound.
- 2.75 Criterion a) requires development proposed in a flood risk location from any source to demonstrate that there is no sequentially preferable location for development. We consider that additional clarification is required to ensure this policy aligns with the NPPF (2023). Whilst it is acknowledged that this Draft LP is likely to be examined against the previous NPPF (2023), planning applications will be determined against their compliance with the most up to date NPPF and NPPG. In respect of sequential tests (ST), these are only required to be undertaken in instances where build development/land rising/access or egress/internal road layout are located within areas at risk of flooding (from all sources). A ST is not required where POS is located within areas at risk of flooding. We consider that additional clarity is required to ensure this policy is not ambiguous to the decision-maker and therefore effective and sound. Further revisions to flood risk guidance are also expected to be published by the Government in the coming months and this policy should take account of this.
- 2.76 Criterion c) requires “*ensuring that space is provided on all development sites for the inclusion of SuDS designed to reduce the volume and rate of runoff to less than greenfield rates, as informed by the ‘Sustainable Drainage System – Guidance for Devon’. Surface water run-off should be managed as close to the source as possible.*” We have reviewed the ‘Sustainable Drainage System – Guidance for Devon’, which states that “*for developments on greenfield sites, runoff rates post development should never exceed greenfield runoff rates for the same return period event.*” There is no requirement for developments to deliver

a lower greenfield run off rate. Whilst we support an encouragement for developments to deliver a betterment in respect of greenfield run off rates, DCC guidance is clear that this is not a requirement, rather, existing greenfield run off rates shall not be exceeded. Notwithstanding this, the policy should clarify if the greenfield rates referenced in this draft policy are based on impermeable area or developable area. It should also be noted that you cannot reduce volume of runoff on a greenfield site unless there are soakaways, this policy must be updated accordingly.

- 2.77 We propose that the policy is reworded accordingly, as currently worded it is not justified and not supported by proportionate or robust evidence.

#### **Strategic Policy AR02: Water efficiency**

- 2.78 This policy states that all homes must meet the optional Building Regulation G2 standards of 110 litres per day. Supporting policy text states that the water cycle study provides clear evidence for adopting the stricter standard of 110 litres per day in East Devon to address water stress.
- 2.79 The Water Cycle Study has not been published and is not available to view as part of this Draft LP Regulation 19 Consultation. This lack of supporting evidence base clearly highlights that this policy is not supported by robust evidence and the stricter optional Building Regulations is not justified.
- 2.80 Furthermore, East Devon is not classified as a water stress area, promoting questions about the justification for imposing limits on water usage. Water consumption is a matter already covered by the Buildings Regulations Regime, making a specific plan policy on this matter unjustified.

#### **Strategic Policy HN01: Housing to address needs**

- 2.81 We support the principle of Strategic Policy HN01 and the need for new developments and housing to meet existing needs. We also welcome the recognition that up-to-date local housing need evidence assessments can be referenced when assessing existing and future housing need. To this end, we consider that the Plan should include housing allocations that deliver 100% of the housing needs of East Devon, rather than only 80%. As drafted the Plan falls approximately 238 homes per annum short of meeting the community's housing needs.
- 2.82 It also should be recognised that local market evidence and sales information, which should be considered within the wider remit of local housing need evidence, can be used as a method to determine appropriate housing need, and can often provide useful local intelligence beyond that set out in District wide evidence.

#### **Strategic Policy HN02: Affordable housing**

- 2.83 This policy prescribes the affordable housing requirements required on all developments across East Devon. For site allocations within Honiton, affordable housing is set at 30%. We agree with this approach.

- 2.84 The policy also prescribes the breakdown of affordable housing mix, delivering 65% Social Rent and 35% Intermediate or other forms of affordable housing, we object to this inclusion, which is inflexible and does not allow for market variance. An affordable housing mix should be prepared on a site-by-site basis and allow for changes in affordable housing need which may warrant an alternative tenure mix.
- 2.85 The policy text indicates that a departure from the affordable housing tenure mix prescribed in the policy can be proposed, but that this would need to be supported by viability evidence. We object to this approach. Market evidence should be considered sufficient to allow for a departure from the tenure mix, particularly when the overall quantum of affordable housing provision meets the requirements of this policy. This must be recognised within the policy text and additional flexibility should be provided to ensure this policy is effective and meets the test of soundness.

#### **Strategic Policy DS01 – Design and local distinctiveness**

- 2.86 We acknowledge Strategic Policy DS01 and the need for new development to be of high-quality design and locally distinctive.
- 2.87 Land off Northcote Hill lies on the edge of the Blackdown Hills National Landscape Area and therefore any future proposed development should consider the Blackdown Hills AONB Design Guide for Houses and accord with the principles of the National Design Code and Building for a Healthy Life, and any other local design guidance.
- 2.88 As illustrated on the supporting Vision Document, land off Northcote Hill can deliver an attractive, well-designed and landscape-led scheme that responds to the site's context and location. The developable areas are carefully located along the site's existing contours, with a large eastern green buffer to frame the development from the wider countryside. The concept masterplan demonstrates how the site can accommodate 285-300 homes on land south of the railway line, which will be integrated with the existing settlement of Honiton.

#### **Strategic Policy TR01 – Prioritising walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport**

- 2.89 We support EDDC's requirement for walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport to be the first natural choice for short local journeys.
- 2.90 In accordance with this policy, Land off Northcote Hill will prioritise sustainable modes of transport and ensure that walking and cycling is prioritised within the development's design. The scheme will deliver an attractive, landscape-led development with extensive areas of public open space, including a community park for the enjoyment of existing and future residents.

#### **Strategic Policy TR02 – Protecting transport sites and routes**

- 2.91 It is noted that the Council will support the delivery of sites and routes that are critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development, and this will include aiding the delivery of routes including the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, Bus Service Improvement Plans, Local Transport Plans.

- 2.92 Land off Northcote Hill (north and south of the railway line) is not located within a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure route. As set out within the accompanying Transport Note, however, the proposed masterplan will incorporate high quality walking and cycling routes throughout the development and provide off-site pedestrian improvements, including provision of footways to ensure future residents are able to safely access the existing facilities and services within Honiton.
- 2.93 In addition, the following soft measures could also be delivered as part of a future scheme, which would promote future residents to adopt more sustainable modes of movement:
- Vouchers to spend on walking and cycling equipment;
  - Information on the best walking and cycling routes;
  - Bicycle hire;
  - Bicycle Surgeries; and
  - The setup of community walking and cycling groups.

#### **Strategic Policy OL01 – Landscape features**

- 2.94 Strategic Policy OL01 states that development will only be permitted where the applicant is able to demonstrate that it will protect and enhance features and qualities that contribute to the character of East Devon's landscapes.
- 2.95 A number of landscape qualities are subsequently noted within the policy, including: landform and pattern of settlement; important natural and man-made features (including topography, field boundaries, trees and woodlands, areas of importance for nature conservation and rural buildings); adverse disruption of a view; and aesthetic and perceptual factors such as tranquillity, wildness and dark skies. The latter are characteristics rather than physical features of the landscape and the policy should be renamed to Landscape Features and Character to account for this.
- 2.96 Whilst we agree with the importance of several of the features and qualities within the policy, we do not consider that the failure to protect or enhance existing features, such as an existing tree, is of sufficient grounds to prevent development from being permitted. It is also clearly the case that development can deliver substantial quantities of new green and blue infrastructure features, including planting of different types; and enhancement of positive characteristics, both of which can provide a notable betterment to the existing landscape.

#### **Strategic Policy OL02 – National landscapes (areas of outstanding natural beauty)**

- 2.97 Strategic Policy OL02 gives the highest level of protection to the landscape and scenic beauty of the National Landscapes (NL) within East Devon and addresses development affecting its setting or appearance.

- 2.98 The draft policy states that development affecting the setting or appearance of a NL will only be permitted where it avoids harm and contributes to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the special qualities, character and natural beauty of the NL.
- 2.99 Given that NLs account for two thirds of the district we consider the inclusion of a relevant policy that protects the landscape and scenic beauty appropriate to ensure their character and natural beauty is conserved and enhanced.
- 2.100 However, the current policy appears to refer to development affecting a NL's setting within the same policy clauses as development within a NL, despite being outside of the NL. Whilst the setting of NLs requires a careful and sensitive approach to development to avoid or minimise impacts on the designated landscape, National Policy is clear that the scale of development within NL should be limited, whereas development within its setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid and minimise adverse impacts. National Policy does not require new development within the setting of a NL to enhance the special qualities, character and natural beauty of the NL.
- 2.101 In accordance with the NPPF, land outside of a NL but within its setting should not be given the same weight and level of protection as land contained within a NL. The policy should recognise this and be consistent with national policy and thereby be segregated appropriately.
- 2.102 It is welcomed that the policy recognises that development within the setting of a NL or indeed change to the setting of an AL will not necessarily cause harm to its character and natural beauty, noting that development will only be permitted where it "avoids harm".

#### **Strategic Policy PB01 – Protection of internationally and nationally important wildlife sites**

- 2.103 We acknowledge and support the recognition that internationally and nationally important wildlife sites should be protected and note that development proposals that would cause a direct or indirect adverse effect upon internationally and nationally designated sites will not be permitted unless particular criteria are met.
- 2.104 Land off Northcote Hill will not affect internationally and nationally important wildlife sites. The site lies outside of any Natural England 'SSSI Impact Risk Zones' relating to residential development.

#### **Strategic Policy PB04 – Habitats Regulations Assessments**

- 2.105 We support the requirement that new development must not adversely affect the integrity of sites protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. We also agree that, where potential adverse impacts are identified, suitable avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures will be required.
- 2.106 It is understood that the South-East Devon European Sites Mitigation Strategy (SEDESMS) is currently undergoing a review and will apply a new strategic approach to HRA mitigation. It is understood that this work is still on-going and is likely to be completed in early 2025. The

draft LP policy states that all residential schemes within 10km of any European sites will need to provide mitigation to offset recreational pressures. It is assumed that such mitigation will need to accord with the revised HRA mitigation that is yet to be published/completed. Until the updated HRA mitigation is completed and made available it is not possible to provide a comprehensive assessment of this Draft LP policy and understand whether it meets the tests of soundness.

- 2.107 The first part of Policy PB04 is not necessary, as it reiterates the Habitats Regulations Assessment, which are already established by legislation. The second part of the policy provides guidance for assessing impacts on certain European Sites in East Devon. This information would be better integrated into Strategic Policy PB01, rendering Policy PB04 redundant.

#### **Strategic Policy PB05 – Biodiversity Net Gain**

- 2.108 We strongly object to EDDC's Draft Policy PB08, which requires developments to deliver 'at least' 20% BNG to be calculated using the most up to date statutory metric. This is not justified, or supported by robust evidence base, and the policy is therefore unsound.
- 2.109 PPG<sup>1</sup> states that "*Plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain, either on an area-wide basis or for specific allocations for development unless justified. To justify such policies they will need to be evidenced including as to local need for a higher percentage, local opportunities for a higher percentage and any impacts on viability for development. Consideration will also need to be given to how the policy will be implemented.*"
- 2.110 In seeking to justify increasing the requirement for on-site BNG twofold, EDDC reference Evidence Document ENV-025 'Nature Recovery Declaration for East Devon'. This supporting document sets out the Local Nature Recovery Strategies within East Devon, and states that these have been "*designed to work closely alongside other measures in the Act. They will, for example, support delivery of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and provide a focus for a strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity*". This implies that the report has been prepared on the assumption that developments will be delivering the mandatory BNG (at 10%).
- 2.111 The statement notes the existing nature recovery plans/delivery partners (which include NLS, Clyst Valley Regional Park, Triple Axe Initiative and EDDC Countryside) and potential new projects, strategy and policy, none of which reference or justify the inclusion of a Draft LP policy that requires 20% BNG on all development sites.
- 2.112 This policy is not supported by robust evidence.
- 2.113 Notwithstanding the lack of suitable evidence to underpin this draft Policy, we also object to the viability assumptions included within the draft LP Viability Assessment (Core Submission

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 74-006-20240214

Document CSD-004), prepared by Three Dragons. The Viability Assessment makes a financial assumption of £1,188 per dwelling (greenfield) and £321 per dwelling (brownfield) to account for delivering EDDC's Draft LP policy of 20% BNG which is considered too low in terms of greenfield development regardless of whether it is delivered on site, or via credits. Within the supporting text of this viability assumption, Three Dragons reference a MCLG report (2019) which includes sensitivity analysis regarding the achieving 20% BNG and makes assumptions on the cost implications of this on developers. The MCLG Report states that increasing the BNG to 20% would result in a 19% net additional direct cost to developers (annual). It is noted that the MCLG Report concludes by stating "*our chosen policy approach, which sets out that 10% is the right level to demonstrate net gain, considers this trade-off among other issues*", which further emphasises that EDDC's proposal to increase the BNG provision to 20% is not appropriate. We have two key concerns regarding relying upon this MCLG report to justify EDDC's Draft LP viability assumptions:

- Firstly, the MCLG document cost benefit change by scenario is based on 2017 prices and is therefore 8 years' old at the time of this Regulation 19 Consultation.
- Secondly, there have been significant changes to the DEFRA metric since the publication of the MCLG Report, which has altered how BNG is calculated on site. Reliance upon this report and cost benefit change is not robust or justified.

2.114 In addition to the above, a requirement to deliver 20% biodiversity net gain presents challenges concerning the amount of land required to meet this requirement on site. Implementing a 20% biodiversity net gain would reduce the amount of developable land available, hindering the site's ability to efficiently deliver housing to its full housing potential.

2.115 We have significant concerns regarding the need for all new developments to deliver 20% biodiversity net gain, which is not underpinned by a robust evidence base and is not justified and, therefore, unsound.

#### **Strategic Policy PB06 – Local nature recovery strategy and nature recovery network (NRN)**

2.116 Strategic Policy PB06 proposals which result in the enhancement of existing and any subsequently defined NRNs and features that contribute to their importance, through habitat creation appropriate to network type, will be supported. The policy goes on to set out the requirements for developments located within NRNs as well as the requirements for biodiversity net gain within NRNs.

2.117 Land off Northcote Hill is located outside of a nature recovery network. The proposed development will deliver a comprehensive landscape-led scheme, which will deliver a mosaic of habitats and deliver areas of ecological enhancement, contributing to the site's biodiversity net gain.

2.118 This policy is supported.

**Strategic Policy OS01 – Access to open space and recreation facilities**

- 2.119 We support the principle of this policy and the need for new development to deliver new and enhanced high quality open space.
- 2.120 We object to the policy's suggestion that all development must consider the provision of formal sports provision including changing provision, pavilions and other supporting facilities it will generate. It should be recognised that the provision of formal sports facilities should be driven by the site's location and context and not all sites are suitable for formal sports provision. The Plan must acknowledge that certain sites (due to their context and topography) are not suitable locations for accommodating formal sports provision. Sporting facilities can be delivered in other, informal ways, including the provision of outside trim trail equipment, circular walking routes, which can deliver similar benefits and provide opportunities for health and well-being to all. The policy must be reworded accordingly to recognise the need to consider formal sports provision on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.121 Land off Northcote Hill proposes to deliver areas of new public open space, which will be for the enjoyment of the existing and future residents of Honiton. This could include a new community park, which will offer a variety of walking routes, informal recreation and biodiversity enhancements. The various areas of informal open space (including trim trail equipment) will contribute to the health and well-being of future residents. The proposals are landscape-led and informed by the site's context.

**Strategic Policy HE01 – Historic Environment**

- 2.122 We acknowledge the requirements of draft policy HE01 and the need for new development that will affect heritage assets to take account of their significance.
- 2.123 As demonstrated through the accompanying Heritage Note, by virtue of there being no heritage assets within proximity of the site, land off Northcote Hill is unlikely to lead to harm to the significance of any designated heritage assets in the local area. The proposed development, as show on the accompanying concept masterplan will ensure, through the design process, that opportunities are taken to enhance the historic environment where possible.

### 3. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES

#### **Policy HN03 – Housing to meet the needs of older people**

- 3.1 Policy HN03 requires that residential schemes for 50-199 homes are required to meet the requirements relating to older person homes.
- 3.2 The policy stipulates that for residential developments of 50-199 homes, a minimum of 10% of the homes should be designated for specialist older person housing (Class Use C3). While it is acknowledged that the provision of specialist housing for older persons is important, it is recommended that consideration be given to the viability of such provision, considering the specific location of the development. Site constraints may impact the feasible proportion of specialist older person homes that can be delivered. Additionally, it is important to recognise that residents of specialist housing may have particular locational needs, such as proximity to town centres or well-established public transport routes. They may also require closer access to community facilities and services. Therefore, it should be recognised that not all sites may be suitable for specialist housing delivery. In such cases, the Council should adopt a flexible approach when applying the requirements of this policy.
- 3.3 Market demand for housing to meet the needs of older people should also be considered as part of this policy. Should there be no demand for housing to meet the needs of older people, such homes should be reverted to market housing.

#### **Policy HN04 – Accessible and adaptable housing**

- 3.4 Policy HN04 requires that all new homes meet specific accessibility standards from Building Regulations Approved Document M. The requirements set out as part of the policy are as follows:
- 100% of new homes meeting M42(2) standards for accessibility and adaptability;
  - 100% of new specialist accommodation for older people meeting M4(3) wheelchair user standards; and
  - At least 5% of affordable housing for rent and homeownership to meet wheelchair adaptable or user standards.
- 3.5 We support that the policy gives recognition to site requirements/typology and viability, however, further consideration to viability of the requirements should be given.
- 3.6 The criterion requires for 100% of new homes to meet the requirements for accessible and adaptable homes under Part M42(2) of Building Regulations. It is noted that the Council's evidence base allows for an additional £1,400 per dwelling in build costs to meet the M4(2) requirements. Taylor Wimpey considers that that this cost should be increased to at least £2,000 per dwelling. As drafted the policy is unjustified and unsound. It is recommended that the Council's evidence base is amended to reflect a more robust figure to ensure the effectiveness of the policy in the adoption of this higher accessibility standard.

- 3.7 The second criterion requires that 100% of new specialist accommodation for older people must meet the requirements of M4(3) wheelchair user standards of Building Regulations. The Council's evidence base suggests that an additional £138/sq.m is sufficient to meet the costs of the M4(3) requirements. It is considered that the cost is insufficient to allow for these additional requirements and therefore that the evidence base be amended to reflect a more robust cost base.

#### **Policy HN05 – Self-build and custom build housing**

- 3.8 This policy sets out the requirements for the provision of self-build plots within new residential schemes. The policy states that on sites of 20 or more homes, 5% of those homes are required to be serviced custom or self-build plots while on larger sites (250 homes or more), a portion of plots must be designated for affordable housing with all self-build plots being completed within 3 years of purchase.
- 3.9 The Plan's evidence base (document 'HOU-017') which is based on 'Self-Build Demand and Supply' is out of date. This report covers the data provided for self-build need up until October 2021. This data is out of date and the policy is not robust and, therefore, unsound.
- 3.10 Whilst we support the aim of the policy in principle, the market demand for self-build plots needs to be reconsidered within the policy. The policy stipulates that self-build plots must be marketed for a period of 24-months before being able to revert to a 'normal' market housing. This is not considered to be reasonable. A development site may have been fully constructed and occupied within a 24-month period, and therefore the construction workers would have departed the site. It would not be reasonable for the developer to have to subsequently return to the development site to help construct a small number of self-build plots that had no demand during the 24-month marketing exercise. As a result, it will be commonplace that development sites are left with unsightly undeveloped plots of land, which often delay the provision of cycle and pedestrian connections or play facilities within the site. The marketing period within this policy should be reduced to 12-months.
- 3.11 It should also be noted that the developer cannot influence market demand for the self-build plots, and once the plot is sold, it is for the purchaser to obtain their own detailed planning consent. It should therefore be considered that no obligation can be placed on the developer to ensure that self-build plots are completed within 3 years of purchase, it is the role of the developer to deliver serviced plots.

#### **Policy DS01 – Design and local distinctiveness**

- 3.12 It is agreed that new developments should be of high-quality, locally distinctive design, following policies and national guidelines like the National Design Code. It is also agreed that developments must integrate well with the street scene, respecting the areas character, neighbouring properties and local amenities.
- 3.13 Criterion 13 requires new developments to include measures to secure the management of waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy during the construction and operational phases. It should be noted that, whilst developers can put measures in place to promote

certain waste management strategies, the developer cannot control the behaviour of future homeowners.

- 3.14 We would suggest that more effective wording of criterion 2 would be to “*include measures to promote the management of waste...*”. This would ensure that the policy is effective and meets the tests of soundness.

#### **Policy DS02 – Housing density and efficient land use**

- 3.15 It is agreed that residential development should optimise site density while preserving the area’s character and efficiently using land and that major developments must be supported by a design code supported by the Council.
- 3.16 It is considered that a design code for all major residential developments is excessive and that this should only be required for larger schemes. It is also noted that there is no guidance on what a design code should include, which raises the concern that officers could request an unreasonable level of detailed as part of the design code.
- 3.17 In the case of land at Northcote Hill south of the railway line (Phase II), it is considered that the allocation does not currently optimise site density through the effective use of land. According to the draft Local Plan, allocation GH/ED/39b is able to accommodate 100 homes. However, through further investigation, the technical information submitted alongside this submission clearly demonstrates that the site can accommodate 285-300 homes.

#### **Policy DS04 – Green and blue infrastructure**

- 3.18 It is agreed that new developments in East Devon should deliver high quality multi-functional Green and Blue infrastructure in accordance with Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework. However, the 5 principles referred to by Natural England are to be met at a wider local authority level, and not for individual sites.
- 3.19 Testing planning applications against these specific principles is, therefore, unjustified. To ensure the policy is sound, we propose removing this requirement.

#### **Policy TR03 – Travel plans, transport statements and transport assessments**

- 3.20 The policy sets out the requirement of a transport assessment/statement, followed by a subsequent travel plan, to be submitted as part of the application for schemes that will likely generate significant amounts of vehicular movements.
- 3.21 This policy is supported and a future planning application relating to land off Northcote Hill will be supported by a suitable Travel Plan and Transport Assessment in accordance with this Draft LP policy.

#### **Policy TR04 – Parking standards**

- 3.22 We acknowledge the requirements of Policy TR04, which set parking standards for new development within the district.

- 3.23 Draft LP policy stipulates 1.7 car parking spaces will need to be provided per dwelling across all residential developments within East Devon. This blanket approach offers no flexibility and does not consider a site's locational context, which may justify adopting an alternative approach to parking.
- 3.24 Whilst we do not object to the provision of a parking policy, or the policy text which requires parking provision to be of sufficient size to accommodate vehicles and to consider access/egress, we object to the inclusion of the restrictive minimum parking standards. At present this part of the policy is not effective.

#### **Policy TR06 – Digital connectivity**

- 3.25 Policy TR06 sets out the requirement that all major developments have access to terrestrial or satellite superfast broadband and high-quality communications.
- 3.26 Policy TR06 is overly restrictive, especially for sites in smaller, isolated communities where practicality and viability are important considerations.
- 3.27 It is important to engage in discussions with developers to determine the practicality and feasibility of providing superfast broadband connections near the site, The consideration should depend on the size of the development and the costs associated with the additional works required.

#### **Policy OL04 – Areas of strategic visual importance**

- 3.28 We agree that the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality of the District should be protected.
- 3.29 We also acknowledge the importance of views from publicly accessible areas and from recreational destinations. It should be acknowledged, however, that it is not always possible for new development to conserve and enhance views of important features in their entirety and/or from every location within a development site from which the view may be obtained; but that also development can open new opportunities for views of important features to be experienced by the public. The policy should be reworded to reflect these considerations.
- 3.30 Furthermore, it is noted that a change in a view will not necessarily cause an adverse effect. We consider that the policy wording should recognise this and should be revised to state that development which adversely affects key views of local landmarks will not be supported.
- 3.31 Finally, it is noted that views from public rights of way and other publicly accessible areas are not by definition views of any quality or merit.
- 3.32 For the policy to be justified it should be reworded to acknowledge that the types of views referred to are only subject to the policy where they are publicly accessible.

#### **Policy OL05 – Green Wedges**

- 3.33 It is agreed that Green Wedges can play a vital role in preventing urban sprawl and settlement coalescence by maintaining green space separation between towns.

3.34 We agree with EDDC's view on the importance of Green Wedges in that they are a '*long-standing local landscape designation that maintains open green networks between settlements*'. The importance of giving added protection against development in valued green areas is also agreed and therefore this Policy is supported.

3.35 Land off Northcote Hill is located outside of EDDC's defined Green Wedges. The development of these allocations would therefore accord with this draft LP policy.

#### **Policy OL10 – Development on high quality agricultural ground**

3.36 This policy states that development will be limited on the best and most versatile land (Grade 1, 2 and 3a) unless allocated within another policy. The policy goes on to set out the exceptions to the above, stating that development on this land will be granted exceptionally if sufficient land of lower grades is unavailable if the benefits of the development clearly justify and outweigh the loss of high-quality agricultural land.

3.37 This policy is supported given it accords with National Policy.

#### **Policy PB02 – Protection of regionally and locally important wildlife sites**

3.38 It is acknowledged that development proposals that negatively impact Regionally or Locally important wildlife sites will only be allowed if:

- there are no alternative sites that would cause less harm;
- if public benefits clearly outweigh the impacts on the site and surrounding habitats;
- if the sites have been surveyed by a qualified botanist; and
- if avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures are proposed, ensuring habitat restoration and no degradation to wider ecological networks.

3.39 Land off Northcote Hill is not located within a regionally or locally important wildlife sites, which is noted to include Local Nature Reserves (LNR); County Wildlife Sites (CWS); Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites (UWS); Special Verges designated for biodiversity. The proposed development will not negatively impact Regionally or Locally important wildlife sites and therefore will fully accord with the requirements of this Draft LP policy.

#### **Policy PB03 – Protection of irreplaceable habitats and important features**

3.40 Draft LP Policy PB03 states that proposals which would result in the destruction or degradation of irreplaceable habitats will be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

3.41 It is noted that hedgerows are included within the definition of irreplaceable habitats and the Draft LP policy states that "proposals resulting in the loss and/or degradation of these hedgerows, will only be permitted where the mitigation hierarchy has been applied and evidenced in earnest". It is noted that the Draft LP policy also states that "*compensatory hedges should be species-rich, include a bank, standard trees, and be mindful of temporal*

*time scales to become a functional habitat in their replacement ratios. Hedgerow translocation should always be considered first, as a preferential option to hedgerow destruction followed by compensation.”*

- 3.42 We support EDDC’s position that important hedgerows (as defined by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997) should be protected and their loss or degradation should only be permitted where the mitigation hierarchy has been applied and evidenced in earnest. However, we do not support EDDC’s approach to applying the same protection and importance to ‘species-rich Devon hedges’, which do not meet the criteria of important hedgerows.
- 3.43 We consider this approach is not justified given that Devon Hedges are located across Devon and are often located along the perimeter of sites. As a result, the removal of part of a Devon Hedge to deliver a suitable access point is often unavoidable.
- 3.44 The need to retain hedgerows on site, where possible, is adequately addressed under draft policy PB08: Trees Hedges and Woodland on Development Sites, which acknowledges that there may be instances where the removal of hedgerows is justified and unavoidable. It is therefore considered that there is no justification to include Devon Hedges within the Draft Local Plan policy PB03.

#### **Policy PB07 – Ecological enhancement and biodiversity in the built environment**

- 3.45 This policy requires the provision of biodiversity features in new developments, suggesting that as a minimum the following features are required:
- One integrated bird box per dwelling;
  - Provision of integrated bat boxes;
  - An integrated bat loft within all major developments;
  - Gaps in fences to facilitate the movement of hedgehogs; and
  - Provision of overhanging eaves for nesting house martins in all major developments
- 3.46 The policy is supported in general, however, the current wording of the policy does not offer sufficient flexibility in terms of the location of the above-mentioned features and implies that bird boxes are to be provided on each dwelling. It is suggested that bird boxes located on existing trees may be more beneficial rather than the provision of one integrated bird box per dwelling. The policy should be reworded to acknowledge this and additional clarity provided.
- 3.47 Concerns are also raised regarding Part C of the Policy due to uncertainties about enforcement and monitoring post-construction, which would complicate property sales. To address these concerns, it is recommended to strengthen the requirements of Part B by requiring one bat box per dwelling, or on an existing tree.

- 3.48 In regard to Part E of the policy, the requirement for overhanging eaves suitable for nesting house martins might not be appropriate from a design perspective. Additionally, bird box provisions are already covered under Part A of the policy, rendering Part E redundant.
- 3.49 These provisions should also only be provided where there is evidence that the relevant species is found at the site. Given that ecological appraisals are submitted alongside planning applications, these reports should be used in determining what biodiversity features should be provided for.

#### **Policy PB08 – Trees, hedges and woodland on development sites**

- 3.50 It is agreed that development proposals must retain healthy trees, hedges, and woodlands, especially those of ecological, historical or aesthetic value following BS 5837 standards, with detailed tree assessments and protection plans. It is also agreed that the loss of trees must be justified, with mitigation and replacement planting to support biodiversity net gain and the draft LP policy recognises that there may be instances where tree and hedgerow removal is unavoidable.
- 3.51 It is noted that the draft policy states *“woodland, trees and hedges are to be removed they should be accurately identified, with a clear justification set out for their loss, together with details of any mitigation or replacement planting as part of an overall approach to achieving biodiversity net gain”*. We support EDDC’s acknowledgement that development may require some loss of trees and hedgerows.
- 3.52 Any future application relating to Land off Northcote Hill will be accompanied by detailed tree assessments and protection plans in accordance with Draft Policy PB08.
- 3.53 The policy is considered overly prescriptive, potentially resulting in future planning applications that seek to remove more existing trees due to stringent guidelines governing the relationship between buildings and trees. Instead of preserving trees, the policy encourages replacing them elsewhere on the site, which is not considered the most optimal approach. As drafted the Policy is extensive in its restrictions and could benefit from a shift to a more flexible, general approach.

#### **Policy PB09 – Monitoring requirements for new planting schemes**

- 3.54 We object to this draft LP policy requirement, which requires annual inspection reports to be prepared and issued to the LPA for a period of 5 years following completion of the planting works. This is not considered to be justified. Developers will often transfer the ownership of the public open space to a Management Company, whom would be responsible for the on-going maintenance of the scheme’s planting. At this point in time, the developer will no longer have any ownership of the land and therefore cannot be held accountable for submitting annual inspection reports to the LPA, as alluded to within Part B of this draft LP policy.

**Policy OS02 – Sport, recreation and open space provision in association with development**

- 3.55 This policy sets out the requirements for the provision of open space for new developments, with the level of required open space required varying by site size. The requirements are set out below:
- Up to 20 homes – Amenity green space for informal play
  - 21-100 homes – LAPs and amenity green space
  - 100-300 homes – LAPs, LEAPs and amenity green space
  - 300-500 homes - LAPs, LEAPs, amenity green space and other types
  - Over 500 homes – LAP, LEAP, NEAP, informal play, amenity green space, and additional green space types.
- 3.56 Additional requirements for developments over 200 homes include:
- Doorstep accessible Greenspace (0.5ha within 200m) or;
  - Local accessible Greenspace (2ha within 300m). For sites over 300 homes, Neighbourhood Accessible Greenspace (10ha within 1km) is required.
  - Open space will be calculated based on an average of 2.26 residents per household, with some exceptions or contributions to off-site spaces allowed.
- 3.57 The draft LP policy provides some flexibility for diverting from the open space requirements, in instances where: the resident population may give rise to particular types of public open space; other substantive types of open space types are present; the site is constrained by size, the most meaningful contribution is generated by providing only certain types of public open space provision.
- 3.58 We support the Council's recognition that a flexible approach is required, however, at present, consider that the draft LP policy does not go far enough to recognise that there are other matters that influence the open space typologies that could be delivered on a site. This includes physical constraints such as topography and site context. Officers must acknowledge that certain sites are not suitable locations for accommodating certain types of public open space, especially formal sports provision, which requires specific topography and gradients. Sporting facilities can, however, be delivered in other, informal ways, including the provision of outside trim trail equipment, circular walking routes, which can deliver similar benefits and provide opportunities for health and well-being to all. The policy must be reworded accordingly to recognise open space standards should be considered on a case-by-case basis taking account of site constraints.
- 3.59 It should be acknowledged that, where on-site provision is not possible, financial contributions can be made to off-set pressures on existing sports and recreational facilities.

- 3.60 It is also considered that additional open space requirements for developments over 200 homes are not required, given that the policy already requires provision for LAPs, LEAPs and amenity green space. The provision of additional open space, above the Fields in Trust derived standard, would not only add cost to the development but also reduce the developable area of the site to overcome deficiencies of the wider area, which aren't specific to the proposed development.
- 3.61 If additional open space features are required, these requirements should be brought forward in the Local Plan through specific allocations.

#### **Policy OS03 – Location of facilities for sport and recreation and open space**

- 3.62 We support draft LP policy OS03, which supports the provision of new open space areas, sports facilities and parks and gardens or for the upgrading or enhancement of existing facilities provided that unacceptable adverse amenity or environmental impacts do not arise from development.
- 3.63 Land off Northcote Hill offers the opportunity to deliver extensive areas of public open space, which could include a community park, that would be a significant public benefit to the existing and future residents of Honiton. The proposed development would ensure safe pedestrian and cycle accessibility in accordance with this Draft LP policy.

#### **Policy HE02 – Listed buildings**

- 3.64 It is agreed that developments affecting heritage assets should enhance their significance and support conservation, contributing to local character. We support this policy which would appear to adhere to National Planning Policy.
- 3.65 Land off Northcote Hill is not constrained by heritage assets and offers the opportunity to deliver a sustainable landscape-led development that will deliver significant benefits to East Devon, making a meaningful contribution to the District's housing land supply.

#### **Policy HE03 – Conservation Area**

- 3.66 It is agreed that development involving Conservation Areas should conserve, enhance and be sympathetic in siting, scale, materials and design to retain their special interest as it accords with national requirements. We support this policy which would appear to adhere to National Planning Policy.
- 3.67 Land off Northcote Hill is not constrained by heritage assets and offers the opportunity to deliver a sustainable landscape-led development that will deliver significant benefits to East Devon, making a meaningful contribution to the District's housing land supply.

#### **Policy HE04 – Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments**

- 3.68 It is agreed that developments must protect the site and setting of scheduled monuments and archaeological remains. We support this policy which would appear to adhere to National Planning Policy.

- 3.69 As set out within supporting technical notes, Land off Northcote Hill is not constrained by archaeological assets. Any future application would be supported by a suitable geophysical survey to ensure compliance with this Draft LP policy.

**Policy HE05 – Historic Landscapes, Parks and Gardens**

- 3.70 It is agreed that developments affecting registered Historic Landscapes, Parks, and Gardens must conserve or enhance their character.
- 3.71 Land off Northcote Hill is not constrained by historic landscapes, parks or gardens and offers the opportunity to deliver a sustainable landscape-led development that will deliver significant benefits to East Devon, making a meaningful contribution to the District's housing land supply.

**Policy CF01 – New or extended community facilities**

- 3.72 This policy states that new community facilities or extensions to existing ones will be supported, provided that they meet the following requirements:
- The facility must be within, adjacent to, or close to built up areas such as towns, villages or settlements, including new land allocations in the Local Plan.
  - The facility must be accessible to local residents and within reasonable walking distance for most users. Its size and scale should align with the needs of the community it serves.
  - Development should promote shared spaces and facilities that cater to a variety of activities.
- 3.73 This policy is supported in principle but once again must be considered on a case-by-case basis. If additional community facilities are proposed as part of a new development, this should be considered and does not necessarily require such facilities to be in close proximity to existing built-up areas, noting that the additional footfall from new development could support a new community facility. The policy should be revised accordingly.

## 4. SITE ALLOCATIONS: LAND OFF NORTHCOTE HILL, HONITON (SITE REFERENCE GH/ED/39)

### Introduction

- 4.1 The sites are allocated in the Regulation 19 Draft Plan as follows:

*Land south of Northcote Hill – north of the railway (GH/ED/39a)*

*This site is allocated for a total of 100 homes and will form a medium-scale residential extension on the eastern side of Honiton. Vehicular and pedestrian/cycle access improvements would be required. The development will need to maximise opportunities for localised improvements/contributions to enhance sustainable travel modes.*

*Land South of Northcote Hill – south of the railway (GH/ED/39b)*

*This site is allocated for a total of 100 homes and will form a medium-scale residential extension on the eastern side of Honiton. Parts of the site are on more elevated ground and development will need to be sensitively planned to avoid adverse impacts on the nearby Blackdown Hills National Landscape area. Vehicular and pedestrian access improvements would be required, incorporating Northcote Hill into development. The development will need to maximise opportunities for localised improvements/contributions to enhance sustainable travel modes.*

### Draft LP Evidence Base - Sustainability Appraisal

- 4.2 The Council have assessed Land off Northcote Hill against the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Objectives (site reference GH/ED/39a and GH/ED/39b) and prepared a site assessment, set out below.
- 4.3 On review of the SA, we are able to provide additional evidence to support the assessment of the site. It is considered that this additional evidence will enable an updated site assessment to be considered by the Council, with regard to objectives relating to transport and landscape. The current SA has restricted the site's capacity 200 homes (100 homes for site reference GH/ED/39a and 100 homes for site reference GH/ED/39b).
- 4.4 Boyer has undertaken a critique of the Council's assessment (set out below) and prepared a revised site suitability assessment. With this revised assessment the site is evidenced to be a suitable site that can accommodate a greater quantum of development, allowing for the draft allocation to be subsequently increased within the Draft LP.

SA Objective	SA Score		SA Commentary	Boyer response relating to Land off Northcote Hill	Boyer Score
1. Biodiversity To conserve and enhance the habitat and wildlife of our natural environment.	+	-	GH/ED/39 The north of the railway site covered by improved grassland with small areas that have overgrown grass and grazed by sheep, and the south of the railway site, it has improved grassland and arable. Trees and vegetation on the edge of the site boundary. Two small woodlands within the site would have a negative effect.	Disagree – the accompanying Tree Report suggests that there are no TPO's, Ancient Woodlands or Veteran Trees on site, as well as the majority of trees on site being classed as low quality. Wooded areas on site would be retained as part of a future scheme.	+
2. Landscape To conserve and enhance the special qualities and distinctive character of our landscapes, undeveloped coast and seascape.	-		GH/ED/39 is outside but adjoins the National Landscape, which would have a visual impact on the National Landscape and likely negative effects.	Disagree – A Landscape Visual Assessment prepared by Stantec states that the site will be sympathetically designed in a manner that will have no negative effect on the adjacent National Landscape and that a sensitive form of development would be deemed acceptable.	0
3. Historic and built environment.	0		GH/ED/39 is located in a remote location in Honiton, with no designated heritage asset within 100m, so no significant effect.	A report written by TCMS Heritage concludes that there are no heritage constraints to development of the site.	0
4. Climate change and carbon emissions	0		GH/ED/39 has 9 out of 12 facilities within 1,600m of the site, and over 1km to the town centre, Hourly or better bus service	Disagree – The transport Technical Note submitted with these representations confirms that the site is within walking	+

<p>To minimise greenhouse gas emissions.</p>		<p>is available but with a distance, as all the sites are located in a remote location. Development is likely to increase car travel.</p>	<p>distance of Honiton Town Centre, with various leisure facilities (including restaurants and coffee shops), post office, opticians, dentist, primary school and community college all located within 20 minutes' walk from the site.</p> <p>Honiton railway station, rugby club, leisure centre, Honiton hospital and surgery are all located within 10 minutes cycle from the site.</p> <p>The proposed development is therefore founded on the 20-minute neighbourhood concept and promoted the use of sustainable modes of transport.</p>	
<p>5. Climate change adaption To adapt to the possible effects of climate change.</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>GH/ED/39 has medium/high flood risk (zones 2 &amp; 3) covering a minor part of the site and development could avoid those areas.</p>	<p>The concept masterplan demonstrates that any areas of the site at risk of flooding (from all sources) would be kept free from development. Any future scheme would be supported by a comprehensive drainage strategy that would demonstrate that the proposed development would be safe for its lifetime. In accordance with DCC aspirations, the proposed development would seek to deliver a betterment to</p>	<p>+</p>

			existing greenfield run off rates, therefore delivering a minor positive effect.	
6. Land resources To utilise our land resources efficiently and minimise their loss or degradation.	-	GH/ED/39 has Grade 2 agricultural land in the eastern part of the site, and Grade 3 agricultural land in the western part, so a negative effect.	Noted national mapping indicates that the site has some areas of higher agricultural land grading.	-
7. Water Resources To utilise our water resources efficiently and minimise their loss or degradation.	0	Development at the sites is unlikely to have any significant effects on water quality and quantity as none are located within a groundwater source protection zone or the River Axe SAC phosphates catchment.	Agreed – the site is not within a groundwater source protection zone or the River Axe SAC phosphates catchment.	0
8. Homes To provide and maintain a sufficient supply of good quality, financially accessible homes of mixed type and tenure to meet East Devon’s needs.	++	GH/ED/39 has a maximum yield of 100 plus homes, meaning a significant positive effect. All other sites have the potential to deliver less than 100 homes, so will have a positive effect. An appropriate mix of tenures and sizes including affordable housing is assumed for all sites.	Agreed – the allocations could deliver a significant quantum of homes and make a meaningful contribution towards EDDC’s housing need in the short to medium term. As shown through the site assessment work, the site could accommodate a greater quantum of development (in the region of 400 homes).	++
9. Health and well-being To support healthy, safe and active communities where people have access to attractive and	-	GH/ED/39 is within 800m of a 40% most deprived neighbourhood and open space/allotment and a play area, but adjacent to the railway line meaning a negative effect.	Disagree – The scheme will be developed in a manner that provides sufficient buffer from the adjacent railway line therefore delivering no negative effects. The proposed development would provide considerable areas of public open space for	0

functional recreation spaces			the enjoyment of existing and future residents of Honiton, the new public open space could include a community park, walking routes (with trim trail equipment) and is therefore centred on promoting healthy living and well-being. A 285-300 dwelling scheme on land south of the railway line could also deliver a neighbourhood hub, which would improve the facilities and services on offer within this part of Honiton.	
10. Access to services To provide accessible and attractive services and community facilities for all ages and interests.	+	GH/ED/39 is within 1600m from a primary school, secondary school, pub, shop, GP surgery, community hall, post office and library, a minor positive effect.	Agreed – the site is within walking distance of Honiton’s services and facilities. As indicated on the concept masterplan, the proposed development could deliver a Neighbourhood Hub that would serve existing and future residents, delivering an overall positive effect.	+
11. Jobs and employment To foster a strong and entrepreneurial economy and increased access to high quality skills training to support improved job opportunities and greater productivity.	+	GH/ED/39 is within 1600m to jobs in the town centre and have the realistic potential to deliver on-site employment due to the scale of development, so minor positive effects.	Agreed – the site’s proximity to Honiton town centre as well as public transport routes to further employment areas delivers positive effects to the development.	+

<p>12. Town centres To safeguard and strengthen the vitality and viability of town centres.</p>	<p>+</p>	<p>The rest of the sites are located in the town centre area or within 800m of an existing town centre, major positive effect.</p>	<p>Agreed – the accompanying transport Vision Technical Note confirms the site’s proximity to the town centre of Honiton, delivering a majorly positive effect.</p>	<p>+</p>
<p>13. Connectivity and transport To connect people and businesses digitally and physically through the provision of broadband, walking, cycling, public transport, road networks and other transport infrastructure both within and beyond East Devon</p>	<p>+</p>	<p>All the sites are located within 800m of A30 or A35 road and an hourly or better bus service.</p>	<p>Agreed - the site is within walking/cycling distance of a number of local facilities and amenities within Honiton as well as public transport opportunities such as Honiton Railway Station as well as bus services.</p>	<p>+</p>

4.5 The revised site suitability assessment for GH/ED/39 is therefore as follows:

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	
East Devon SA assessment	+	-	-	0	0	0	-	0	++	-	+	+	+	+
Boyer revised assessment	+	0	0	+	+	-	0	++	0	+	+	+		

The above revised site suitability assessment for land off Northcote Hill, Honiton (land north and south of the railway line), which has been assessed using the site's specific technical notes prepared by relevant technical consultants, demonstrates that the site can deliver 285-300 homes on land south of the railway line, and in excess of 100 homes on land north of the railway line, and continue to positively contribute towards EDDC's Sustainability Objectives.

### **Technical Reports**

- 4.6 These representations are supported by a full suite of Technical Reports, which have informed a concept masterplan for land north and south of Northcote Hill.
- 4.7 The technical reports demonstrate that the site can accommodate a greater quantum of development than set out within the Draft LP. The technical reports are summarised below.

#### *Landscape and Design*

- 4.8 A Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA) was prepared by Stantec in February 2025 which provides Landscape and Visual advice for the proposed residential development at Land off Northcote Hill, Honiton. The LVA provides a series of landscape development principles with the aim of avoiding or reducing any adverse effects on the landscape as a result of the development.
- 4.9 The assessment states that there is potential for sensitive development at the site that responds to the surrounding landscape areas based on a number of opportunities, constraints and development principles.

#### *Highways/Access*

- 4.10 A Transport Vision Technical note has been prepared by Transport Planning Associates (TPA) and sets out the key transport related opportunities for the proposed development. The report provides an assessment of the following:
- Existing Conditions and Accessibility;
  - Existing Local Travel Behaviour;
  - Transport Policy and Guidance;
  - Transport Vision Overview;
  - Access Strategy;
  - Masterplan Development and Virtual Mobility;
  - Walking and Cycling Vision;
  - Public Transport Vision;
  - Travel Planning and Other Sustainable Transport Measures;
  - Preliminary Junction Capacity Assessment; and
  - Summary and Conclusion.
- 4.11 A technical analysis, assessing the potential impact of the development on the local highway network demonstrates that Phase 2 (GH/ED/39b) can accommodate 300 homes rather than the 100 dwelling currently allocated in the Draft Plan.

- 4.12 The report highlights that the site is well located in the context of the local and transport highway network and is also well connected with facilities and amenities within Honiton and the surrounding towns and cities. The site is also within walking and cycling distance of a wide range of facilities and amenities in Honiton. The site is situated within close proximity to existing public transport facilities including Honiton Railway Station and a number of bus services. The report demonstrates the possibility to encourage travel via active transport, providing the opportunity to reduce levels of car use by future residents.
- 4.13 In terms of access, the report concludes that the site can deliver a safe and suitable access for both vehicles and active travel.

#### *Flooding and Drainage*

- 4.14 A Flood Risk and Drainage Technical Note has been prepared by Pheonix Design, which provides an assessment of any flood risk or drainage issues that may be present on the site. The assessment concludes that the site is identified to be of low risk to flooding from all sources, and that the NPPF/PPG Sequential Test and Exemption Test are not required. The assessment goes on to state that Sustainable Drainage Systems will be used to manage any surface water from the proposed development and will ensure that the site is safe from flooding for its lifetime.

#### *Ecology*

- 4.15 An Ecological Deliverability Report has been prepared by EAD Ecology which provides an assessment of the suitability of the site for development. The report confirms that there are no overriding ecological constraints to the development of the site. It is also considered that, where constraints are identified, that measures could be provided to ensure that enhancements deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain, as per the mandatory requirement, or 20% biodiversity net gain, as set out in emerging Policy PB05. The report also confirms that the development could be carried out in accordance with the national and local (adopted and emerging) biodiversity planning policies.
- 4.16 The report also sets out the scope for any further ecological work that will be submitted alongside a planning application. Several habitat surveys (set out within the TN), as well as an Ecological Impact Assessment would be required in order to ensure that all proposed habitats and species are protected or enhanced as part of the scheme.
- 4.17 An Ecological Constraints and Opportunities Plan has also been prepared by EAD Ecology and provides an overview of the site's ecological constraints and opportunities. The plan outlines the key ecological constraints for the site which include the hedgerows, scattered broadleaved trees and buildings, watercourse and pond, and lowland mixed deciduous woodland. The constraints include priority habitats which have the potential to support protected species as well as watercourse creating a buffer from development. However, these constraints are overcome via the key ecological opportunities.
- 4.18 The key ecological opportunities include the creation and enhancement of habitats within Green Infrastructure which will provide a net gain in Priority Habitats such as species rich

hedgerows, traditional orchards and wildflower meadows. Habitats with low ecological value, such as modified grasslands, offer opportunities for habitat improvement. Provisions for Biodiversity Net Gain will also be implemented.

- 4.19 A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan could also form a condition to a future planning permission which would ensure the long-term management of all retained and proposed habitats.
- 4.20 If species are identified on site, the provision of new reptile hibernation sites and boxes for birds, dormice, bats and invertebrates could also be provided within the Public Open Space as well as within the structure of the new buildings.

#### *Tree/Arboriculture*

- 4.21 A Tree Survey Report has been prepared by RPS, in February 2025, in respect of the proposed development. A total of 86 individual trees were surveyed during the assessment. Additionally, the survey recorded 55 tree groups, 1 woodland area, 30 hedges, and 2 scrub areas. Most of the trees on the site were located either in the old nursery to the south, within the woodland along the northern boundary, or as hedgerow trees. The rest of the survey area consisted mainly of open fields. It is noted that there are no TPO's, Ancient Woodlands or Veteran trees on the Site.
- 4.22 The report also provides considerations for the design and site layout, stating that the current and future potential of tree growth should be considered. It also highlights the need to avoid any works to Root Protection Areas.

#### *Heritage*

- 4.23 A technical paper has been produced by TCMS Heritage which represents a high-level summary of Archaeology and Built Heritage evidence base at this preliminary stage. The report sets out the Key Opportunities and Constraints, Proposed Strategy and Conclusions.
- 4.24 In terms of Archaeology, the key opportunities and constraints include the Dumpdon Camp Scheduled Monument which is located c. 2.5 km to the north of the site and is considered a dominant feature in the wider landscape. The site is said to have a negligible potential for archaeological deposits dating to Prehistoric and early Medieval Periods, a medium potential for deposits from Roman and Medieval Periods, which would be of low significance if present, and a high potential for deposits from the post-Medieval Period.
- 4.25 In terms of Built Heritage, there are no designated heritage assets within the Site.
- 4.26 The site is said to have a negligible contribution to the overall setting of Dumpdon Hill Fort Scheduled Monument (1018851) due to its very small scale within the otherwise extensive landscape setting of the monument. The report recommends that a non-intrusive geophysical survey is carried out as well as appropriate mitigation measures for the retention of existing historic hedgerows and patterns of field drainage within the site. The application should be designed to include mitigation measures to minimise any direct/indirect impacts on significant heritage assets.

- 4.27 To conclude, the report states that the heritage constraints do not represent an overarching constraint to the development and that there is no heritage reason for the site not to be allocated within the emerging Local Plan.

*Evolving Masterplan / Vision Document*

- 4.28 A Vision Document has been prepared by Stantec to accompany these representations which sets out the proposed vision for the Site. The vision for the site is to provide a vibrant and sustainable new development to the east of the town of Honiton which is well integrated within the existing settlement and landscape setting. The document relays how the development will provide a logical extension to the Honiton while retaining and enhancing a network of green open spaces for the enjoyment of the wider community. The site will accommodate new homes in order to meet local housing demand, including that of affordable housing, with the opportunity to provide a new neighbourhood hub. The site will also have excellent local connections to the existing settlement, encouraging active travel offering ample opportunity for sustainable and local living.
- 4.29 The proposal supports a form of development that accords with the ecological hierarchy and by focusing on avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures and can deliver biodiversity net gain.

*Summary / Planning Benefits*

- 4.30 The proposed development will deliver the following benefits:
- The provision of up to 115 dwellings on land north of the railway line and 285-300 dwellings on land south of the railway line, making efficient use of land and delivering a significant contribution to the Council's housing needs in the short to medium term;
  - The opportunity for the creation of significant areas of informal and formal public open space, including allotments, community park, play space and walking routes;
  - Delivery of a neighbourhood hub;
  - Delivery of ecological enhancements and on-site biodiversity net gain;
  - The provision of attenuation basins to the south of the site offering a sustainable urban drainage system (SuDS) which also offer a habitat for aquatic wildlife; and
  - off-site improvements to highways, improving traffic flow and enhancing pedestrian and cycle connectivity for new and existing residents.

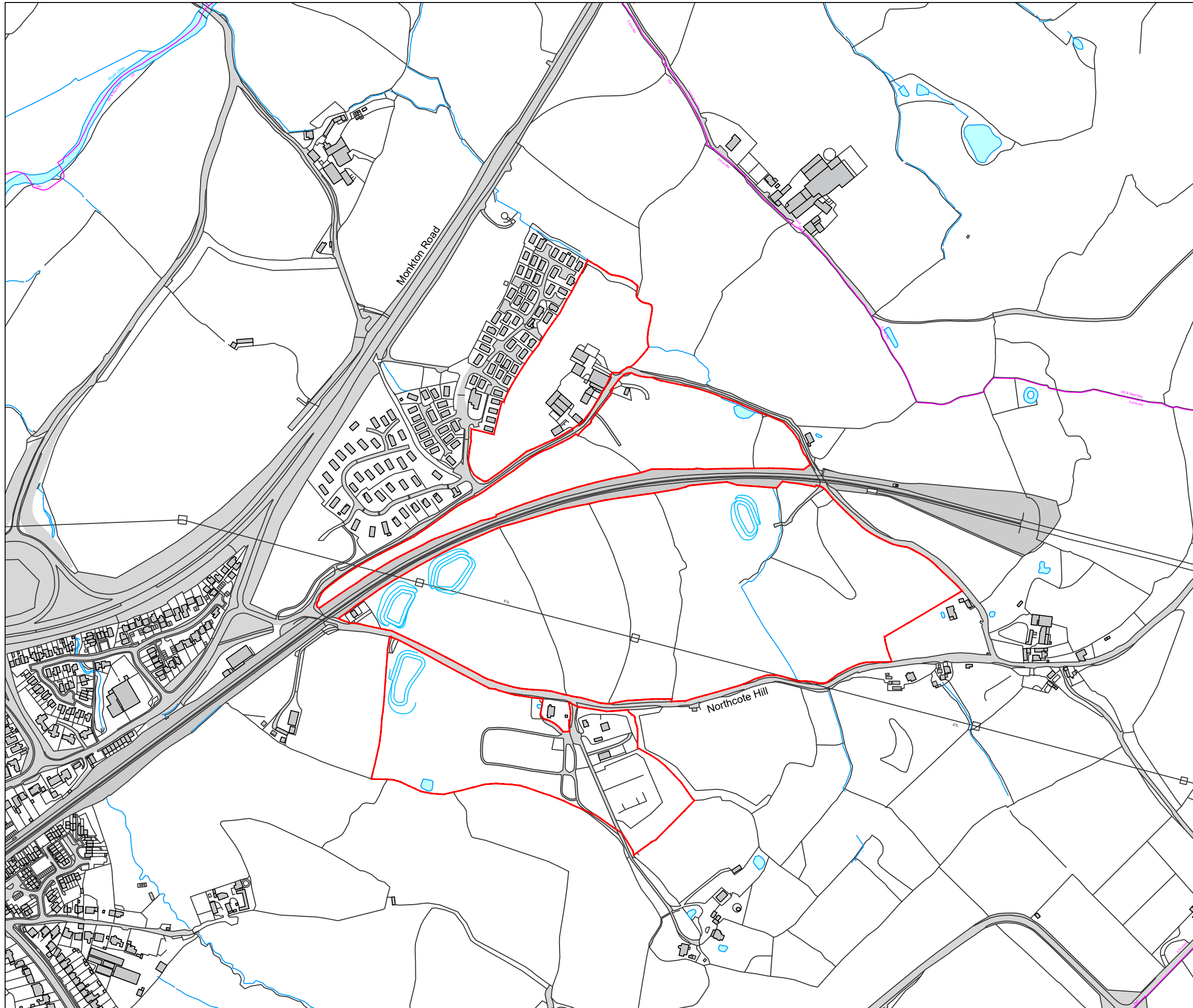
## 5. STRATEGIC POLICY SD03: LAND SOUTH OF NORTHCOTE HILL – SOUTH OF THE RAILWAY (GH/ED/39B)

- 5.1 These representations and accompanying Technical Notes demonstrate that the current draft allocation at Land South of Northcote Hill – south of the railway line (GH/ED/39a), which restricts the development of the site to 100 homes, does not constitute effective use of land or optimises the use of land to accommodate an appropriate amount and mix of development (in accordance with NPPF 2023; Paragraph 135e).
- 5.2 The Draft LP policy for land south of the railway line (GH/ED/39b) should be increased to 285-300 homes for the following reasons:
1. It would make efficient use of the site in accordance with national policy;
  2. It would enable the site to support additional uses in the form of a community park and additional facilities such as a neighbourhood hub, as well as making a more meaningful contribution towards EDDC's housing land supply and meeting the housing needs of East Devon in a sustainable location;
  3. The site is being promoted by a national housebuilder that is committed to delivering homes in the short-medium term – increasing the quantum of development on this allocation would ensure the draft LP delivers sufficient homes throughout the first part of the Plan period to meet its needs, noting the concerns raised regarding the delivery assumptions of the new settlement east of Exeter.
- 5.3 To ensure the draft LP makes the most efficient use of land the draft allocation should be revised as follows:

*Land south of Northcote Hill – south of the railway (GH/ED/39b)*

*This site is allocated for **300 homes** and will form a medium-scale residential extension on the eastern side of Honiton. Parts of the site are on more elevated ground and development will need to be sensitively planned to avoid adverse impacts on the nearby Blackdown Hills National Landscape area. Vehicular and pedestrian access improvements would be required, incorporating Northcote Hill into development. The development will need to maximise opportunities for localised improvements/contributions to enhance sustainable travel modes.*

## **APPENDIX 1. : SITE LOCATION PLAN**

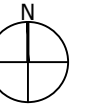


The scaling of this drawing cannot be assured

Revision	Date	Drn	Ckd
B Minor update to red line boundary	27.03.2025	LP	RS

### LEGEND

 Site Boundary



Project  
**Land off Northcote Hill**  
**Honiton**  
 Drawing Title  
**Red Line Boundary**

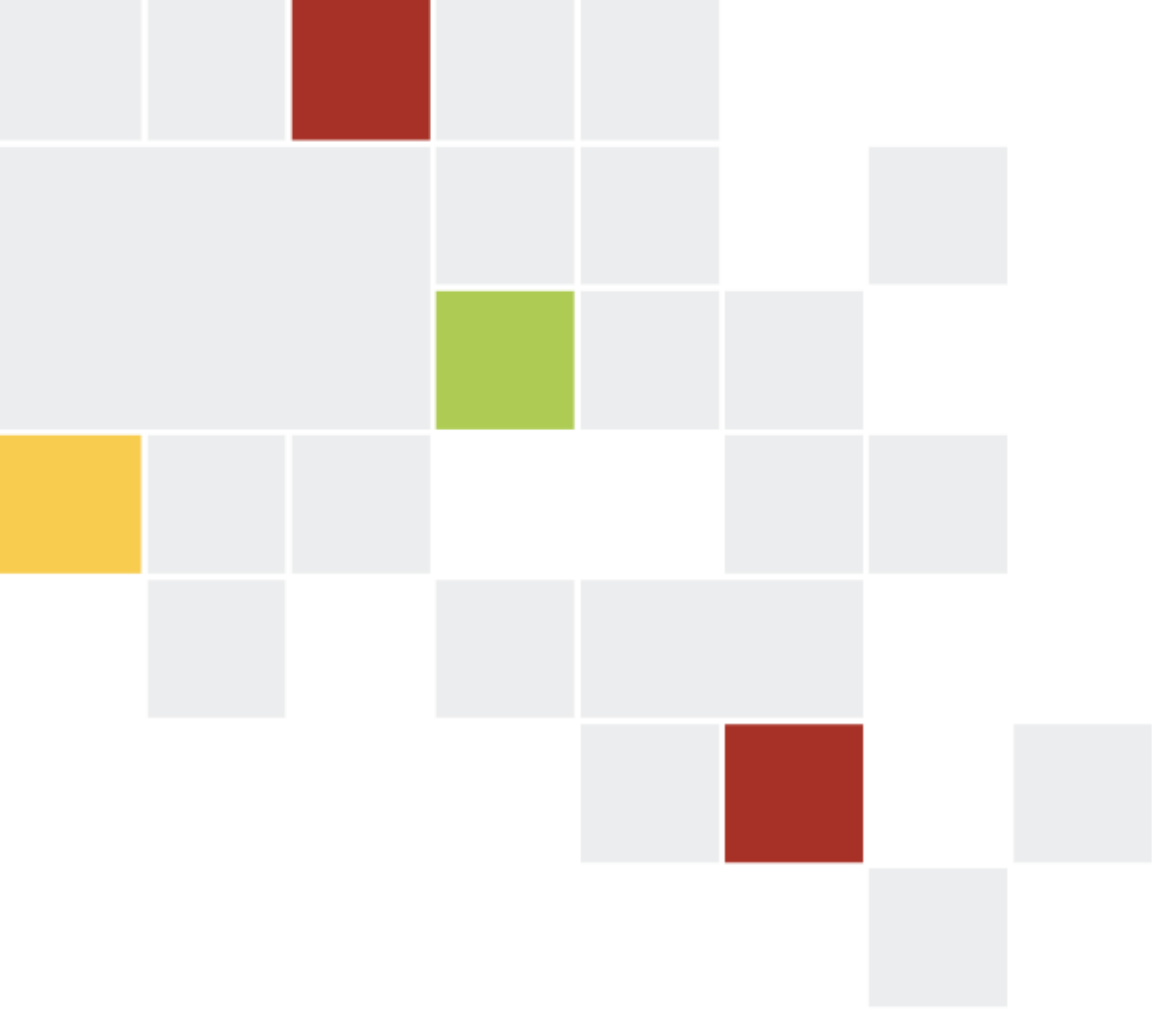
Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
27.03.2025	1:5,000	LP	RS
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
333102063	BL-M-04	B	



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