

Dear Sir/ Madam,

My family have lived in Lypstone for more than 30 years. Having had involvement in developing the Local Neighbourhood Plan, I know the work that some individuals put in to draw up such documents and this is appreciated. However, the draft East Devon Local Plan 2020 - 2040 fills me with dread. It is sadly and frighteningly not fit for purpose. As such, **please register this letter as my wholehearted OBJECTION to this plan.** Please remember that decisions made to give land over to housing are NOT temporary, they cannot be retracted, the land is lost forever.

I object to ALL first and second choice sites for building in Lypstone Parish and those first and second choice sites in north east Exmouth, along the Hulham Road and approaching Lypstone Common.

The fact that East Devon District Council (EDDC) have taken it upon themselves to shift, adjust and blend extant Parish and Village boundary lines, without consulting local residents, demonstrates a red flag at the lack of empathy and respect shown to those who live here. The unclear and inaccurate labelling of sites is just one indication of deliberate obfuscation to be found throughout this plan and process. The allocation of proposed housing numbers distributed across Lypstone, Exmouth and Woodbury is inaccurate in its attribution to each and this prevents a clear and full 'picture' to residents without highly detailed and complex reconnaissance.

### **My objections to proposed house building on these sites include:**

#### **Lack of infrastructure**

- **employment** opportunities are minimal and limited in these areas therefore people will be travelling by car to get to work, most likely in Exeter
- Exmouth Community College, the only local secondary **school**, is oversubscribed and already transports students to Exeter by bus. Several of the local primary schools are oversubscribed, at least in certain age groups. The primary school promised as part of the vast Goodmores housing development has not materialised
- the **drainage**, sewer system and water provision is already beyond capacity. SWW operatives are almost permanently in the village trying to rectify a backlog of maintenance problems. They can't take on any more. The national shame that is brought to this area by sewage being dumped in the sea is a disgrace and has a deep negative impact on the tourist industry which supports many local residents. Don't add to this.
- **roads and travel** methods are beyond capacity, especially during the Summer months. Devon Air Ambulance and the Emergency Services already log the A376 as the 3rd most dangerous road in all Devon. The geography of this location, bounded by the sea and the estuary, prevent viable changes being made to this. Just another example of how additional houses can have life-threatening consequences. Bus routes through Lypstone have already been cut.

#### **Loss of a village identity** and respect of heritage

- just as Topsham has lost any delineation from Exeter, this threat of extensive house building would only lead to the **coalescence** of Lypstone with Exmouth. This is

something that neither entity either wants or needs and should NOT be imposed upon us. Planning needs to be managed with a strategy and vision not a reaction!

- Protecting **open spaces**, Green Wedge land and Coastal Preservation Areas is vital both within and between Lymptstone and Exmouth, not only for the natural environment but for the wellbeing of local people. It allows residents to retain a sense of place and have pride in where they live. People who feel connected with their community look after it better and contribute more to society. Part of the REUL Bill, shortly to be re-instated in law, exemplifies the crucial preservation of these green spaces.

### **Inappropriate housing**

- To threaten Lymptstone with building 500 houses is an outrage! A recent Fol request showed me that there are already 491 vacant properties in Exmouth and Lymptstone. Let alone the number of second holiday-homes (a further 603)! And yet, you think its ok to just dig up swathes of green land to tarmac them and build more. EDDC appear prepared to hide behind the childish rhetoric that “well, the Government told me I had to”!! This is NOT the right area in which to build these houses and now the Government DON’T tell you that you have to. In the most recent desecration of the natural landscape, ironically known as Goodmores, 317 houses are already being built, largely in Lymptstone. Of these, just **16** will be categorised as ‘affordable’. **Stop pretending to yourselves and others that you are fulfilling a need.** These proposals are purely and simply GREED, both from the developers and from landowners making the land ‘available’. By being party to this, EDDC are equally culpable. To quote an EDD Councillor at Lymptstone Parish Council meeting on 9th Jan 2023, “the developers were able to override the EDDC plans.”. Please demonstrate some integrity and put a STOP to it now.

### **Additional specific objections to -**

<b>Sites</b>	LYMP_08 Off Summer Lane - 14 houses
	LYMP_09 Junction of Exe View and Hulham Road - 54 houses
	LYMP_10a Upper Hulham Road - 75 houses
	LYMP_14 Below the Coles - 59 houses

These agricultural fields have a vital role to play for food production, either as grazing land or for arable cultivation.

This green space, on the easterly edge of Lymptstone and north-east Exmouth would be seriously eroded which directly contravenes EDDC policy. It would exacerbate coalescence between town and village and negatively impact the sense of identity for those in each. Hulham Road is a significant entry point into Lymptstone and deserves to retain its rural character and heritage, linking as it does with the internationally renowned Pebblebed Heaths. Lined with ancient trees of such importance that they have been protected by order since 1972 and listed as ‘a key element of the local landscape’, it is imperative that these trees, fields and hedgerows are protected. Recent research by Natural England has proven that the oldest trees provide the greatest carbon capture. To achieve alignment with Devon County Council’s Climate Policy, they must be protected and nurtured. Already threatened by excessive traffic on Hulham Road, these trees are increasingly reliant on the fields they border for hydration and nourishment.

Rather than being threatened, this longitudinal group of sites which form an important area of landscape and visual amenity, should be allocated *greater* protection from house-building. Together with the acreage planned for new woodland, they could form a green, wildlife corridor bridging the strip from the estuary edge to the ancient, pebblebed heaths (although bisected by A376). This could protect an area of natural environmental importance; enhance the mental and physical health of local people; appeal to visitors (with the commercial benefits that brings locally); showcase DCC's Climate Policy in action and limit the dangerous spill of light pollution encroaching across our County. This is an **opportunity** to nurture something special.

Closely linked with the imperative of maintaining these sites as green spaces is the ever-present threat of **flooding** to Lympstone. This is a two-pronged threat both from the estuary waters and from the surface water flowing rapidly downhill from the heaths after heavy rainfall. Hulham Road and Wotton Lane both regularly have torrents of surface water. Even adjustments in crop selection on this farmland impacts the equation of absorption rates so the suggestion of building on it should be a complete non-starter.

Mentioned earlier but of greatest relevance here is the aspect of **insufficient infrastructure**. There are no sewage system or sustainable utilities here. These sites are of significant distance (min.1.75 - 3 miles) from amenities (e.g. shops, school, railway station) in either Lympstone or Exmouth. The roads around them are, often single-width, lanes already unsafe as beyond capacity and with no potential for widening. Bus services have already been cut here. These routes and their gradient make walking to either railway station impossible for almost everyone. So, as EDDC say that houses are needed for young people, families with small children and/or older people trying to down-size.... **these sites are not going to work** for the target group. Consequently, why should Lympstone residents sacrifice their quality of life, the rural identity and heritage of the village for the sake of commuters to have executive houses and drive their cars to work elsewhere?!

### **Please also register my objections to the consultation process of this plan:**

- To develop any appropriate plan, a clear objective must first be established. The figures for housing demand were always flawed and based on outdated algorithms employed by the Government. Rather than reflect its electorate by questioning these figures, EDDC decided to accept them. In light of the recent Governmental shift, stated by Mr Gove, these housing figures are **no longer mandatory** but, again, EDDC appear to blatantly ignore the wishes of those they claim to represent and press ahead regardless, blinkered to the destruction they are about to cause. PLEASE STOP NOW!
- I consider the consultation process to be opaque, inaccessible and discriminatory. The Commonplace tool is over-complicated, illogical in its layout (separating proposed house numbers from maps etc) and built to discourage comments. Just because, "other Councils have used it" does not make it the right tool for this draft plan. I am an MSc qualified lecturer but still I found the Commonplace tool utterly baffling and unusable. We had to search the small print for alternative methods to respond via email or postal reply. I believe that adopting such a complex tool is indicative that EDDC don't actually want to hear the views of the people they purport to represent! The timing of the consultation period over Christmas adds to this belief. One councillor grumblingly mentioned his concerns that it might take him, "up to a week" to read the replies ... just

ONE week!! For decisions that will change our lives and those who come after us FOREVER.

- In his statement, Mr Gove expressed that local planning should, “Put local people at the heart of decision making.” The consultation open meeting held at Ocean, Exmouth on 8-12-22 proved how little some of the EDDC representatives know about this local area. I genuinely doubt those in attendance had ever walked round Lympstone. Knew nothing of the topography of the landscape or its impact on surface water; were unfamiliar with proposed site locations; repeatedly assured us that people would be walking from Hulham Road to the railway station (!!); were ignorant of the relevant and significant biodiversity here. If they didn’t go home utterly embarrassed at this draft proposal then they should have done.

### **EDDC need to:**

- **STOP** any proposed housebuilding schemes and re-evaluate how many properties; of what type; with what target market are actually needed. Then revisit what already exists and how it needs to be improved. There is so much brownfield potential just within Exmouth Town centre and immediate environs (e.g disused post office and police station areas; stretches of vacant retail units, land at Camperdown Terrace etc)
- **Listen** to local people, revisit Neighbourhood plans with them, work alongside them to encourage small pockets of organic growth with appropriate dwellings and support mechanisms already in place.
- Remove the sites east of Lympstone/ NE of Exmouth (LYMP\_08, \_09, \_10a, \_14) as utterly unsuitable for building and seize the opportunity to enhance this beautiful countryside environment for the health and wellbeing of all.
- Close the door to developers in order to regain some trust from the local people
- Re-look at the map. East Devon as a whole. Why should Lympstone and Exmouth be utterly devastated beyond all recognition while other areas east of us in the region be left unscathed? Look at the infrastructure - look at the potential within and around Honiton; the proposed site north of Hill Barton is near the motorway, near the airport, near the County’s employment hubs, near the hospitals. Building an extra 2000 dwellings at either of these locations would have a fraction of the negative impact compared to the devastating threat of 500 houses in Lympstone which would do little short of obliterate this village forever.

**Please do the right thing and put a STOP to this house building madness NOW.**

I understand that this letter will form part of a public comments document.

Yours faithfully,

Sophie Minter

