

Introduction

Bell Cornwell represents the owners of Darts Farm. Darts Farm is a national award winning, unique retail destination with its own and locally produced food at its heart but is also a destination for wellness, the home and garden and the great outdoors. Darts Farm is home to 13 different businesses with 400 people employed on-site and it supports 500 suppliers, most of whom are located in Devon and across the West Country. With close to a million visits a year, it therefore makes a major contribution to the economy of the area.

As an important local stakeholder, Darts Farm has a considerable interest in the future direction of development in East Devon and therefore in the approach proposed in the draft East Devon Local Plan. They have therefore reviewed the draft policies set out within the document and notably *Strategic Policy WS15: Employment Land at Darts Farm* and *Policy SE02: Employment development in the countryside*. Our client has a number of observations on these policies and these are set out below.

Strategic Policy SD14: Development (Neighbourhood Plan led) at Clyst St Mary

Policy SD14 states that development of “at least 72 dwellings” should be provided for at Clyst St Mary via allocations to be made within the Neighbourhood Plan. The policy adds that such sites should be well related, physically close to, or abutting the built form of the village.

Response

Darts Farm are broadly supportive of this policy. The new neighbourhood plan for the area, the Clyst St Mary and Bishops Clyst Neighbourhood Plan, is now at an advanced stage in its preparation and there must therefore be a strong expectation that this will be formally ‘made’ later this year. As part of the new Neighbourhood Plan, an area of land is proposed under Policy Bis C12 to be allocated for residential development and to provide at least 72 dwellings. In this regard, Policy SD14 is in close alignment with the neighbourhood plan.

A large part of the land which is proposed for residential development in the neighbourhood plan is within the ownership of Darts Farm. Initial master planning design work has been carried out by both Darts Farm and the owner of the other part of the allocation to confirm the form and layout of a residential scheme for the land. This work, which confirms that a suitable scheme is capable of being delivered on the land, has been shared with both the parish council and officers at East Devon District Council. Further joint work between the parties to develop the masterplan further is ongoing. The precise number of dwellings to be provided is yet to be confirmed but is very likely to exceed the 72 dwelling minimum.

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

Given the advanced state of the neighbourhood plan, its proposal to allocate land for housing purposes and the design work undertaken to-date, there must be a strong expectation that the objectives of Policy SD14 are credible and capable of delivery. It is vital that Policy SD14 retains flexibility on the number of dwellings capable of being provided in order that development of the land retains sufficient viability to provide for the other requirements of the neighbourhood plan policy and which relate to, amongst other things the delivery of a road link and large areas of green infrastructure.

Darts Farm therefore SUPPORT the policy and consider that, as worded and with the flexibility included on the minimum number of dwellings to be provided, the policy is sound.