

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 WS01: Development of Second New Community

Strategic Policy WS01 proposes the development of land to provide a new community within the western part of the district. During the life of the draft plan, the new community is to provide for a maximum of 8,000 homes plus employment land, social and green infrastructure. The policy notes that provision for a further 2,000 homes will need to be made in the area but that this requirement will be addressed as part of a future plan review and with the benefit of further technical work.

The extract of the Policies Map which accompanies the draft plan allocates a specific area of land for the new community, with this being located to the north of the A3052 (Sidmouth Road) in the area around and to the north of the Hill Barton Industrial Estate. The area shown on the policies map reflects that which is subject to the ongoing masterplan which is being developed.

Response

Darts Farm SUPPORTS the policy as proposed. It also SUPPORTS the proposal to identify the land shown on the Policies Map and which identifies the location of the new settlement to be on land to the north of the A3052.

The position of the new settlement as shown in this policy is the product of a considerable amount of analysis, including consideration of a range of different options, engagement with all the relevant landowners and technical work to confirm that a properly balanced new community is capable of being delivered on the land. Although work on the supporting masterplan continues, there must some

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considerable confidence that a new settlement is capable of being delivered in the location shown. As the draft masterplan makes clear, there are a range of advantages to the location being proposed, including the ability to provide a link between the A30 and the A3052, proximity to existing major employment locations and Exeter airport and to the Clyst Valley Regional Park. These advantages all help underpin the merits of the location shown.

As it stands therefore, it is considered that Strategic Policy WS01 should be considered sound in that it has been positively prepared, is justified in that the new settlement will provide an important part of the Council's housing delivery strategy, is likely to be effective given the merits of its location and is consistent with national planning policy.