

Sidmouth Site Ref: Sidm_01

Land south west of Woolbrook Road, Sidmouth, EX10 0LZ
Resident Comments

Jan 2023

Comments on East Devon Draft Local Plan 2020-2040, Sidmouth

Mr & Mrs Mead

Uphills, Greenway Lane, Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 0LZ

RE: Strategic Site Sidm_01 Land south-west of Woolbrook Road, EX10 0LZ, and proposed new Settlement Boundary Line.

We are local residents in Sidmouth, and we live on Greenway Lane. We write to you with regard to the Draft Local Plan for East Devon, 2020-2040, which you contacted us about by email asking for our feedback.

We are writing specifically about the proposed development site LP_Sidm_01 (Land to the south-west of Woolbrook Road), and the proposed alterations to the Settlement Boundary Line (Built-up area boundary).

We understand from your Draft Plan Map that this site (Sidm_01) is to be the main development site within Sidmouth, and the preferred location for new residential development (circa 127 new dwellings?), which would help deliver the district-wide housing requirement.

We are aware of the comments and feedback made by local councillors for this development site (and site selections generally), and interim findings at Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, and we

acknowledge the points raised by councillors regarding infrastructure (including the local primary school) landscape sensitivity, impact on the historic environment, ecological impact, and flood risk.

We also wish to raise the following important points, and we trust that East Devon DC will take these points into consideration when finalising the Local Plan.

1. We strongly believe that the small area of woodland to the extreme north of site Sidm_01, which borders Woolbrook Road and Greenway Lane, should be excluded from this allocation for development on the grounds of its positive contribution to the landscape character of the surrounding area, including the East Devon A.O.N.B, and because of its ecological value as a habitat for local wildlife.

This small area of woodland contains a number of mature trees, and if retained, would provide an important landscape buffer between any new development and the wider A.O.N.B and rural setting. The woodland site also contributes positively to the landscape character of the area through its position at this gateway junction to Sidmouth.

The site is also a habitat for wildlife. As residents of Greenway Lane, we often see deer, badgers, foxes and pheasants in this woodland, and birds such as Owls, Woodpeckers, and Buzzards amongst many others.

If the council retain this area woodland within the development site, we would strongly request that this part of the site is excluded from the developable footprint, and is instead retained as a contribution to the public open space of any new development.

2. We strongly believe that the proposed new line of the 'Settlement Boundary' for Sidmouth should follow the line of Greenway Lane (indicated in red on the Local Plan Map extract), and exclude the small cluster of dwellings to the north of Greenway Lane.

These properties are characterised by their location within the landscape (and East Devon A.O.N.B), which is a 'countryside setting', and we feel that any expansion of the built settlement into this area could adversely impact the important landscape character of the area at this key gateway to Sidmouth.

Included within the above properties are the Grade II Listed Stowford Farmhouse (Listing NGR: SY1135889762) which is located within a rural setting and includes historic stable blocks and horse paddocks.

3. The landscape buffer / former railway line which bounds the site to the West, and is now a mature green edge, should also be excluded from this development site on the grounds of its positive contribution to the landscape character of the surrounding A.O.N.B and Coastal Protection Area, and its ecological value as a habitat for wildlife (as noted in point 1 above).

4. Due to the size of this potential development, and its strategic position at the gateway to Sidmouth, we strongly believe that the Council should take the lead in setting an agenda of 'design excellence' for this site. The aspiration should be for an award-winning development that contributes positively to the character of the town – and is not just an opportunity to meet the housing criteria.

We believe a specific Development Brief should be written for this significant site with the objective of design excellence. Our view is that there should be an absolute requirement set out in the Local Plan for the developer of this site to actively engage with the 'South West Design Review Panel' (chaired by Jonathan Braddick) as part of any Planning Application, and be required by East Devon DC to show how they are addressing the feedback given by the South West DRP.

Due to the size of this site, and the potential impact of this quantum of dwellings in Sidmouth, we strongly believe there should be supplementary planning guidance that explicitly requires any future planning application to be developed in accordance with the guidance set out in 'Building for Life' by the Design Council and in accordance with the 'Manual for Streets' by the Department for Transport.

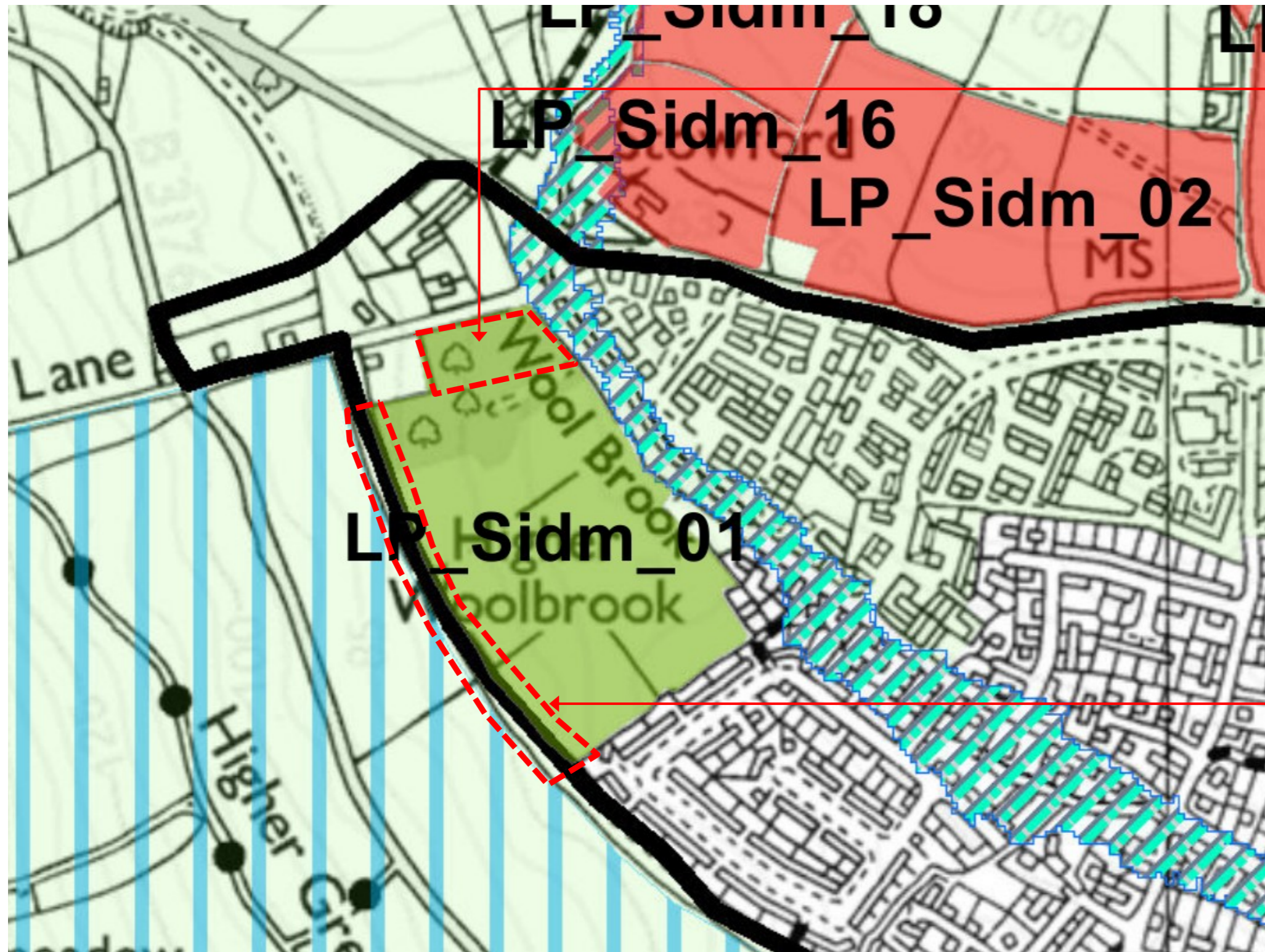
We are not 'anti-development', far from it. We welcome good design, and positive contributions to the townscape of Sidmouth, and we recognise the need for housing in the district. However, believe that a sensitive and contextual approach should be taken with any development of this scale on this site. We have all seen clear examples (and in our district) of poor-quality housing design by volume house developers, with little or no attempt at 'place making', and with little consideration to impacts on the surrounding area.

We feel very strongly that the council should take a lead on these issues and exclude the small woodland area identified above (to the north of site Sidm_01) from this allocation site, in order to retain and protect the important landscape character of the immediate area at this gateway location to Sidmouth.

We would welcome any conversation or feedback you may wish to have on this, and we trust you will take these important issues into consideration.

Kind Regards

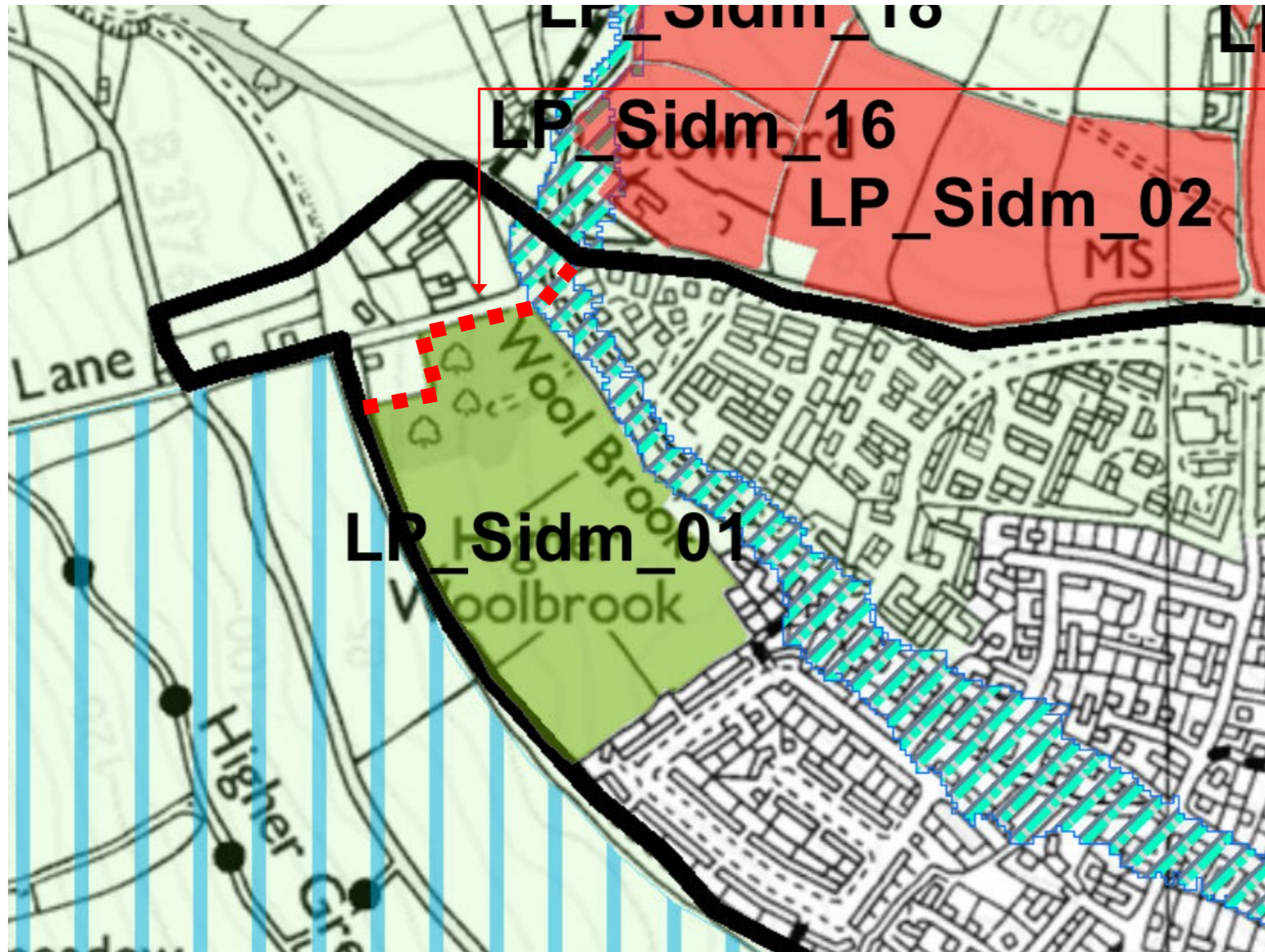
Mr C & Mrs L Mead



Allocation Site LP_Sidm_01

In our view, the small woodland area to the extreme north of site Sidm_01, which borders Woolbrook Road and Greenway Lane should be excluded from this allocation for development on the grounds of its positive contribution to the landscape character of the surrounding area, including the East Devon A.O.N.B, and because of its ecological value as a habitat for local wildlife.

The landscape buffer (former railway line) which bounds the site to the West, and is now a mature green edge, should also be excluded from this allocation for development on the grounds of its contribution to the landscape character of the surrounding A.O.N.B, potential impact of development on the Coastal Protection Area, and its ecological value as a habitat for wildlife.



Settlement Boundary Line

The small cluster of properties to the north of Greenway Lane should be excluded from 'Settlement Boundary'.

In our view, the proposed new line of the Settlement Boundary for Sidmouth should follow the line of Greenway Lane (indicated in red)