

From: Mr. Derek C. Grandin &
Mrs. Rita A. Grandin

13 January 2023

Chief Planning Officer
East Devon District Council
Blackdown House
Border Road
Heathpark Industrial Estate
Honiton Devon
EX14 1EJ



Dear Sir,

Draft Local Plan for East Devon

As residents of Whimple, at the above address, for the past 27 years in a small Close built on the site of a former builders/coal yard – a true brown field site – we would like to express a view on some aspects of the Draft Local Plan, particularly as it affects Whimple village.

Lest you should feel that even after 27 years, we might still be categorised as 'incomers' to the area, we would wish to point out that Mrs. Grandin was brought up in West Hill and was educated at the King's School, Ottery St. Mary, whilst Mr. Grandin was originally from South Dorset but was always familiar with the East Devon/Exeter area. We both spent nearly 40 years living or working in London (10 years) and Reading (30 years) in the civil service and/or university administration. But it was always our intention to return to East Devon after retirement.

During our 30 years in the Maiden Erlegh area of Reading, we had the (doubtful) privilege of watching at first hand the new (Reading) suburb of Lower Earley being planned and developed under the guidance of the planners of the (then) Wokingham District Council. In our view Wokingham have made a better job of creating the new community of Lower Earley, than East Devon District Council have done (to date) with Cranbrook. Wokingham involved the existing contiguous communities of Earley and (to a lesser extent) Woodley from the start in what was being planned for Lower Earley and have created a more cohesive entity than appears to be developing in Cranbrook. Here, the plans of individual developers who acquire land and then put forward their own plans for separate housing estates, unrelated to nearby sites, hold sway, so that Cranbrook gives the appearance of a collection of housing estates rather than an integrated community. It is astonishing that the so-called Town Centre for Cranbrook is only just beginning to emerge, some 15 years after the start of this new town development. In contrast, Lower Earley had its shopping centre, including a large Asda, and a concert hall/leisure centre (which was graced by an opening concert by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra) at a much earlier stage in its development. It would appear that East Devon D.C. is much less successful in achieving what it hoped for from Cranbrook than Wokingham D.C. was with Lower Earley.

In this context we would mention the proposed encroachment by developers into Whimple parish council territory at Lower Cobden Farm (thus violating the original planned 'green wedge' between Cranbrook and Whimple) and the proposed development at Treasbere Farm south of the old A.30. Both of these proposed developments are outside the original designated Cranbrook area and appear to be examples of greedy developers holding the whip hand in such proposals.

In passing, we would comment that we hope that the District Council will have more success in exercising control over what is built in the second new town now proposed for the southern side of Exeter airport in the Farringdon area. (Perhaps, if there is a change of national government in or before 2024, the District Council should lobby for 'new town powers' to ensure that councils get what they and local electors/residents want rather than what developers are keen to supply, in the interests of profit rather than need.)

Turning to Whimble village itself, there is, in our view, a case for stating that since Whimble (and for that matter Rockbeare) are so close to the eastern and southern boundaries of Cranbrook, there should be no development at all in those East Devon areas, since in general this part of the district has already had more than its fair share of development and the various disruptions caused during the building period. Any development should be confined to small Close-like developments to provide affordable or social housing to enable the offspring of existing residents to marry, settle down and continue to live in the area, if that is their desire. One could say that Cranbrook is already providing the necessary housing for incomers to this part of the district and that Whimble should only grow naturally and organically to meet the needs of expanding families who already live in the area. There is in our view little need for any type of large housing estate in the Whimble area, even if a developer may think otherwise. In any case, any such large development would likely swallow up valuable agricultural land, some of which is already the target of firms, mostly based elsewhere, who wish to swamp the area with so-called solar-energy farms!

We have carefully read the summary commentary on the 14 sites put forward for consideration for future development in Whimble and note that at this stage only some 5 sites were considered at all suitable. Of these 5 sites, 'Whim_11: Land at Station Road' is considered (seemingly reluctantly) as the preferred allocation for up to 33 homes. Since ostensibly this would represent a continuation of the Slewtton Cescent development (which has happened during the time we have lived in the village) the choice of this site would seem logical. Furthermore, it would not result in the loss of agricultural land, it having been the former village cricket ground before its re-location. We would therefore not wish to oppose its use but would hope that it would provide the source for the aforementioned affordable or social housing to meet the perceived local need.

With regard to the other 4 sites which have been recommended as possible '2nd-best' choices providing up to 315 homes, if needed, as follows:

	<u>Up to:</u>
Whim_03: Land to the South Side of Grove Road	70 homes
Whim_07: Land fronting Broadclyst Road	5 “
Whim_08: Land West of Church Road and Bramley Gdns	180 “
Whim_13: Land North of Church Road	<u>60</u> “
	<u>315</u> “

We would only state that 3 of the sites, 03, 08 and 13, would involve the loss of valuable agricultural land, particularly site 08, whilst site 07 seems to be frequently waterlogged in winter.

(We ought to state in this context that it seemed to be impossible to print-out in full the Whimble map, only the top-left section being possible (see sample page enclosed): this would seem to vitiate the consultation process re Whimble to some extent.)

In general, in our view, we would not wish to see housing development on sites 'Whim_03, 07, 08 and 13', as we believe developments comprising up to 315 houses would be impossible for the village to absorb due lack of infrastructure and spare capacity in the local primary school and medical practice, roads and in particular pavements for pedestrians.

Furthermore, the direct bus service from the village only provides access to Ottery St. Mary and Sidmouth and some local villages, albeit on a two-hour frequency. The bus service to Exeter can only be accessed from the Hand & Pen on the old A.30, involving a one-mile walk from the village along a winding road without pavements. This tends to mean that Whimble residents use their cars to get anywhere rather than public transport.

Access to Exeter used to be very feasible by rail from Whimble station, giving access to the centre of the City at Central Station. However, with the growth of Cranbrook, the service to and from Whimble has been cut by some 50% (to a broadly 2-hour service) in order to provide a fully frequent service from Cranbrook station. Again this has meant more Whimble folk taking to their cars to get to Exeter (and Honiton in the opposite direction) instead of using the train.

Urgent action needs to be taken to install several 'passing loops' so that a $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ hourly metro service in each direction between Exeter and (say)Yeovil Junction could be provided, which would compensate for an inadequate bus service to the area and hopefully take traffic off the roads. All of this action needs to be taken before further housing provision is contemplated in those villages like Whimble and Feniton which are served by South West Trains to and from Exeter, but have a less-than-useful service time-wise.

We hope that our submission is of use and will provide further food for thought before the next stage of the Local Plan for East Devon is formulated.

We are sending a copy of our submission to Meg Booth, Director of Climate Change, Environment & Transport at Devon County Council and to our local East Devon district councillor for Whimble, Richard Lawrence.

Yours faithfully



Derek C. Grandin



Rita A. Grandin

East Devon Local Plan 2020-2040 -

