

Introduction

Clinton Devon Estates are the owners of a very large area of land within East Devon. As part of its interests, the Estate undertakes residential and commercial development and manages substantial farming and forestry operations. It is also an important custodian of the area's environment, notably the Pebblebed Heaths National Nature Reserve. The Estate therefore has considerable interest in the future form of development in East Devon.

The Estate has provided representations to the Council as part of previous consultations on the draft local plan and via the related call for sites process. They therefore have considerable interest in the policies and objectives as now set out in the current draft of the plan. On behalf of Clinton Devon Estates, we have therefore reviewed the plan and a number of observations on the policies are set out below.

Strategic Policy PB05: Biodiversity net gain

Strategic Policy PB05 requires that 20% biodiversity net gain (BNG) should be provided as part of all forms of major development. Where this level of provision is unviable, clear evidence to this effect needs to be provided. Any off-site provision should be provided in the immediate locality of the proposed development.

The policy also stipulates that any development which is currently exempt from BNG will still be required to provide an ecological enhancement, commensurate to the scale of development involved.

Response

The requirement to provide 20% BNG is extremely onerous and the Estate OBJECTS to the policy as currently worded. Experience of the current, nationally mandated requirement to provide 10% BNG already demonstrates how difficult the process of delivering BNG is, with very high levels of bureaucracy and delay associated with the process. Doubling this requirement to 20% is only likely to add to the complexity and degree of difficulty with achieving the required level of BNG and to act as a particular disincentive to the delivery of much needed development. It is also considered that the additional requirement; to compel currently exempt forms of development to also provide a level of BNG is also unreasonable and will add to an already complex process especially given the ambiguity regarding the degree of enhancement required in such circumstances.

The policy is not considered to be sound. The Estate considers that this policy has not been positively prepared, is not justified and given the uncertainties surrounding the BNG process, is not effective.

CLINTON DEVON ESTATES
RESPONSE TO THE EAST DEVON LOCAL PLAN 2020 – 2042 (REGULATION 19 PUBLICATION
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Seeking as it does to double the current national requirement, we would also suggest that the policy is not consistent with national policy. BNG is already required to be delivered as a result of national legislation. Given that this requirement will remain and within the context of the concerns outlined above, we would suggest that this policy is unnecessary, unsound and should therefore be deleted.