

Planning Policy (Local Plan consultation)  
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**By E-mail Only**

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Dear Planning Policy

**East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2042 – Second Regulation 19 Publication Draft Consultation  
Land at Marcombe new Community**

These representations are prepared on behalf of Clyst Honiton (Holdings) LVA LLP (hereafter referred to as LVA) who have two land interests (Hill & Glanvill) which are located wholly within the proposed new community of Marcombe as is proposed by East Devon District Council (the Council). These combined land interests result in a significant share (approaching 25%) of the totality of the proposed allocation at Marcombe as is to be allocated via Strategic Policy WS01 of the East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2042 (hereafter referred to as LPR).

Accordingly, these representations are focussed on policy considerations in relation to Marcombe and build upon those submitted previously as part of the First Regulation 19 Consultation as well as previous representations made.

LVA strongly supports the emerging policy for the new community, however there are aspects of the plan (when read as a whole) and parts of Policy WS01 that remain of concern and we consider should be modified in advance of the submission of the LPR for examination in the interests of soundness.

**Landowner Consortium**

The Council is aware that LVA has been promoting land within the new community since 2019 when it acquired its first formal land interest within the new community. Since this time LVA has continued to promote the land via the emerging LPR and has engaged positively and proactively with the Council and as the Council is aware more recently acquired a second land interest within the new community.

In addition, LVA has been working on a collaborative basis with the established landowner consortium which includes Bloor Homes, Cherwell Group and Stuart Partners. As a collective the group benefits from many years' experience of both promoting and as importantly delivering land. Accordingly, the landholder group is in a very strong position to support the Council in realising its ambition of delivering a new community, with the group seeking to taking a positive and proactive approach in the delivery of both residential and employment land alongside social and community infrastructure in partnership with the Council.

The landholders recognise and support the Council's ambitions and shared objectives for the second new community and have welcomed the opportunity for ongoing discussions on collaborative working with EDDC and wider stakeholders. This has included a series of strategic meetings and workshops on key matters and including the production of a Heads of Terms document which confirms our collective agreement and approach to further collaborative working to deliver this important new community.

Beyond meetings with the Council, the landholder group has met regularly; has progressed initial joint technical work to support the feasibility and deliverability of shared infrastructure (having presented the outputs of this work to Council officers and their consultant partners) and the group intends to progress further joint technical and design work in order to continue to support the progression of the new community in a phased and coordinated manner. The group recognises and supports the need for infrastructure costs to be equalised and appropriately managed across the new community.

The landholder group is also clear on the need for that collaborative working to be progressed expediently to deliver on the shared objectives, including the delivery of new homes in line with the Council's trajectory, employment and jobs alongside housing delivery as well as the appropriate and where necessary early delivery of social and community infrastructure.

We remain committed to positive engagement with the Council in respect of the Local Plan and the proposals for the new community. Should any further information be required because of or to support this response then we would be happy to assist.

### **Spatial Strategy (SP01)**

LVA strongly supports the selected Spatial Strategy which seeks to direct significant levels of development to the West End of the District and LVA considers that such a strategy is supported by available evidence which confirms it is largely free from constraint, benefits from its position relative to Exeter and the strategic road network (M5) and therefore is a suitable location to help meet a significant proportion of the Council's need for the identified plan period.

LVA also strongly supports the identification of a second New Community (known as Marcombe) within the West End. We consider this represents the optimal strategy for meeting a significant proportion of the housing need through the planning of a new community.

Such a conclusion is further endorsed by Marcombe having been identified by the New Towns Taskforce as one of 12 suitable locations for the next generation of new towns. Whilst it is not yet known if Marcombe will be included within the final programme it is the case that the location, having been reviewed by an expert advisory panel and separate from either the Council or the landowners, has considered it a location which is suitable for the level of growth envisaged by the LPR.

### **Levels of future housing development (SP02)**

As the Council is aware, LVA has other land interests across East Devon and as part of representations in connection with those sites we have raised concerns with regard to the level of housing being planned for not being consistent with the latest national policy on housing need and proceeding on the basis of the 80% minimum threshold progressing under the transitional arrangements.

We consider that the Council in following this approach is seeking to plan for the minimum amount of housing and not seeking to boost significantly the provision of new housing nor giving any consideration to potential unmet housing need that might arise from neighbouring Exeter which has highly constrained housing area. It is also the case that affordable housing need within East Devon is significant and by planning for the minimum is unlikely to result in the full affordable housing need being met.

We remain concerned that having chosen this approach and given the timings around the transitional arrangements as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024), the Council is running the risk of planning for the minimum amount of housing and potentially missing the deadline for the submission of the Plan for Examination given the timings of this consultation and the available time to work through any necessary changes. Should that occur then the Council would need to go back a step in order to find an additional 20% of housing.

## Principles of Allocation (WS01)

Although this has been stated previously, we strongly support the selection of the new community location and allocation of this strategic scale development in order to meet the Council's housing needs. We also recognise that there is clear support within the NPPF for the positive planning of large-scale development which can be sometimes best achieved by the planning of new settlements.

### Scale of Marlcombe

We recognise the aspiration from the Council for the Marlcombe settlement to ultimately accommodate 10,000 dwellings but we consider the amendment at the second paragraph of Policy WS01 to be helpful in clarifying that the additional land to deliver the extra 2,000 dwellings falls outside of the scope of this Plan.

We consider it to be logical that for decisions regarding infrastructure capacity choices be considered within the realms of the long-term size of Marlcombe. However, it is important to ensure that the costings of the extra over provision are not borne by dwellings allocated within the first 8,000 dwellings as this would increase the already heavy infrastructure burden further and equally it may well be the case that any future expansion of Marlcombe either doesn't occur or policy choices move in a different direction.

We however accept that choices around the delivery of certain infrastructure i.e. identification of school sites has to be done in a manner which could facilitate future expansion. For example, EDU-13 identifies the need for a 2 Form Entry (420 place) primary school which is to be delivered after 2042 and only required in the event that Marlcombe is expanded from 8,000 to 10,000 dwellings. It follows therefore that there is no basis within this plan for either land or financial contributions could reasonably be sought.

### Masterplan

We note that the policy requires that *“Development will need to occur and proceed broadly in accordance with the masterplan shown below plan policy and on an agreed phased basis.”*

Whilst we accept and broadly agree that components of the presented masterplan are agreeable to us we do however consider that there are certain elements that require further consideration and will continue to evolve as the detailed layers of evidence (as the Site moves through subsequent planning application stages) which may require divergence from the high level masterplan that is contained within the policy document.

It must be recognised and agreed that the masterplan contained within only represents a snapshot and indeed a high-level version of a masterplan at a particular point in time and there should not be slavish adherence to it, particularly where alternative strategies are well evidenced and supported by landowners and other stakeholders.

As we have stated elsewhere that phasing of the allocation is of importance and this should be defined by evidence but also with input/agreement from/by relevant owners and developers within the development who will be key stakeholders responsible for and able to facilitate the timely delivery as envisaged by the Council's trajectory.

### Marlcombe Residential Provision

In respect of Affordable housing provision, we note that the policy requires provision in accordance with policy HN02. Policy HN02 is then worded on the basis that *“An aspiration for 40% subject to grant funding and bespoke viability work for the new community.”*

We consider it disappointing that the Council has not progressed further with the viability work for the new community, though we accept this may be in part due to the nature of transitional arrangements. Nevertheless, we have significant concerns that wording the policy in this way is only likely to create unrealistic expectations around affordable housing provision once the detailed viability evidence has been produced.

We would highlight that the viability evidence that the Council has produced to support affordable housing provision elsewhere in the district shows 25% at Axminster, 30% at all other proposed allocations and 35% at the West End and villages. It is evidently the case that the infrastructure that is required to deliver a new settlement is going to be substantially higher than that for developments on other allocated sites. It therefore seems illogical to assume that 40% affordable housing delivery is going to be achievable in the majority of scenarios.

We also note that in the Council's most recent experience in delivering *Cranbrook Strategy 34 – District Wide Affordable Housing Provision Targets* set a target of 25% whilst *Policy CB10 Cranbrook Affordable Housing* dealing with the Cranbrook Expansion Areas sets a target of 15%, in both instances this is with Community Infrastructure Levy rated as zero.

We accept that it may well be the case that a higher level of affordable housing can be delivered within certain parcels but believe this will only be capable of being achieved in limited instances where grant funding is available and such funding would supplement Section 106 provision. We consider it highly likely that the detailed viability modelling will show that 40% will be extremely challenging when set alongside other obligations and infrastructure delivery requirements.

Indeed, there is currently no evidence provided by the Council on what percentage of affordable housing is viable without grant funding. Indeed, whilst an Executive Summary of the Council's Outline Business Case for Marlcombe is provided and this talks about testing at both 35% (in line with wider draft policy as discussed above) and 20%, the associated viability work has not been provided, and we consider this should have been the case.

We also recognise New Towns Taskforce report (September 2025) identified Marlcombe as one of 12 potential suitable locations gave support for 40% affordable housing provision. We would note that such a statement was a recommendation to Government within the report and not a policy absolute and as far as we are aware may not be a selection criteria requirement in any event.

We understand the Council's thinking and we would all aspire to deliver as much affordable housing as is possible/viable, however setting unreasonable expectations which are not grounded in evidence are only likely to store issues for subsequent debate possibly when the Site is under application and Members consider that proposals are deficient as they fall significantly below some of the policy wording.

We consider that clarification should be provided on the level of affordable housing that is viable without any grant funding in order to ensure it is clear on what basis a viable and policy compliant affordable housing is to be secured from future proposals. This then assists in providing greater clarity on the level of grant funding that will be required.

### **Housing Mix & Specialist Housing**

In respect of bullet b) we note that there is an expectation for both a minimum of a 70-unit Extra Care Housing scheme and a C2 residential care home. Whilst we recognise the need in a general sense for such accommodation it is unclear how the evidence of need relates specifically at Marlcombe (as opposed other allocations) or which locations/areas that such a provision is to be made. We also note that Policy HN03 talks about 10% provision of either C3 Extra Care or C2 residential care home whereas criteria b) within the Marlcombe policy requires both.

We are also unclear as to what the Council expects in respect of “*specialist housing to support younger vulnerable people*” in terms of the level of provision, form or scale of what is envisaged. This again should be clarified.

We consider that if there are specific policy requirements which are applicable to the new settlement but divert from other policy requirements elsewhere in the Plan then these should be justified and the specific requirement for Marcombe reflected in the policy wording. As currently worded, we consider there is a degree of ambiguity.

### **Density**

We note that the policy as worded sets an average density of at least 45 dwellings per hectare and then goes on to discuss expectations for what it describes as high density 55-60 dwellings per hectare at neighbourhood centre and key destinations with a further increase within town centres of up to 75 dwellings per hectare.

We accept the premise that there will be higher density areas and these should be focussed in and around neighbourhood/town centres and along strategic road infrastructure. What remains to be seen is whether density at the levels envisaged can be accommodated alongside the other requirements envisaged by the policy and taking account of on-site topography requires further testing and assessment which we consider has not yet been achieved relative to the masterplan that is shown within the Policy wording.

Given the land within our control which includes the greater majority of the Town Centre, we have concerns whether it is realistic to achieve 75 dwellings per hectare alongside the other town centre use requirements.

It is equally the case that in other parts of the new settlement, outside of the centres, a density of less than 45dph might be appropriate. Accordingly, a greater degree of understanding and testing is required in order to ensure a deeper understanding of what is achievable and appropriate relative to the context of a locally distinct new community in East Devon and in line with the Vision for Marcombe.

### **Gypsy and Traveller Provision**

The policy sets out that the new community should make provision for gypsy and traveller pitches both within this current plan period and beyond. No evidence is provided as to support the inclusion of pitches within the new community as to other alternatives across the district. In the absence of evidence, such provision is unjustified and is therefore not appropriate for inclusion at this stage.

### **Town and Neighbourhood Centres**

We note that the proposal is to deliver a 12-hectare Town Centre. The policy then goes on to outline that up to 2042 the Town Centre allocation will deliver at least 5 hectares of land with completed and operational town centre uses, which is to include retail, business, cultural and leisure uses. The policy then suggests that the balance of 7 hectares will be delivered beyond 2042 and therefore outside of the Plan period.

What is unclear, given the discussion above around density is how the residential component is quantified within the town centre calculations given the high density that has been applied and is relied upon to help achieve 8,000 units that are allocated via this policy. We consider that greater clarification could be provided alongside adjusted policy wording.

We consider it crucial to unlocking the Town Centre as envisaged by the Policy is to ensure that access is provided early in the delivery of the new settlement. We welcome the broad alignment of the Primary Access Road through the proposed Town Centre but it is of importance that this is supported by appropriate controls around delivery.

We consider this has good logic but there needs to be greater clarity within the policy around the timing and expectation of how the Primary Access Road will be delivered. We would be supportive of a Partnership based model which allows for the timely delivery of critical infrastructure such as this road or the ability of landowners to have appropriate step in rights.

The timely delivery of the road will help to unlock the timely delivery of town centre uses, albeit this needs to be considered alongside the provision of housing both within the Town Centre and elsewhere across the Site as many Town Centre uses require a critical mass to ensure viable delivery.

Based on the Council's evidence (Technical Assessment of Housing Delivery – February 2025) the new settlement is forecast to deliver some 3,312 dwellings by 2042 (as set out below). We consider it of importance to carefully consider the delivery of town centre uses alongside such a housing delivery schedule.

Year	Annual Completions	Cumulative Completions
2029/30	144	144
2030/31	144	288
2031/32	216	504
2032/33	216	720
2033/34	216	936
2034/35	216	1,152
2035/36	288	1,440
2036/37	288	1,728
2037/38	288	2,016
2038/39	288	2,304
2039/40	288	2,592
2040/41	360	2,952
2041/42	360	3,312

**Table 1: Housing Trajectory Extract**

Given the lead in times required for development of this scale, assuming adoption of the Plan in 2027, it will be of critical importance that work associated with the delivery of Marlcombe proceeds at pace in parallel with the Examination and adoption of the LPR.

In order for this to be achieved it will be essential for the Council to work both pro-actively and collaboratively with the consortium in order that the relevant design and technical work is in place to support planning applications which will help to underpin the above trajectory. We consider it is therefore likely that planning application submissions will be required in parallel with the Examination phase if the above trajectory is to be achieved.

We consider it of fundamental importance that the Council takes a positive and proactive approach when it considers the phasing and delivery of the allocation so as to ensure that multiple parts of the site can come forward in a timely manner so as to boost housing and infrastructure delivery funding.

We understand that the Council has ambitions to create a Development Corporation to take forward and deliver parts of and manage the stewardship of the new community. In addition, alternative models for development, including the potential use of CPO powers are being considered. Whilst we recognise that the Council wants to control and ensure appropriate delivery at Marlcombe, we remain concerned that this shouldn't be at the expense of the pace of delivery given the Council's trajectory. As stated

elsewhere we favour a partnership-based model where each partner is tasked with delivering those aspects for which they have the greatest expertise.

### **Education facilities**

Although not located within the land within LVA's control one of the primary school is located adjacent to the Town Centre (on Ralph land) and the proposed education campus is located to the south of the LVA interest (based on the Marlcombe masterplan).

We note that the education request is significant in that an education campus (early years, primary, secondary, post 16 and SEND) on a site of at least 17.3ha alongside a further three primary school sites. The policy highlights then that the precise timing and delivery will be established through the phasing and infrastructure delivery strategies.

We consider that the "*precise timing and mechanism for the delivery of the schools*" should be further investigated and defined via the phasing and infrastructure delivery strategies and importantly capable of being adapted should there be a valid reason to do so.

We are of the view that education delivery needs to be carefully explored not least because it may have an implication on the ability and likelihood of achieving the Council's trajectory for housing delivery as primary school provision is likely to be required early in the settlement's lifecycle. It would be a significant failure were residential delivery unduly restricted by education delivery and we consider this needs to be considered alongside any agreement on delivery models.

Separately we are concerned that the Council seeks to rely upon the planned education infrastructure supporting "*a wide area in order to meet the needs of the plan*" then it is crucial to understand the timescales associated with the wider need and equally ensure that those proposals pay an appropriate balancing payment on the assumption that the education need as specified for the new community is greater than is required to compensate for limitations elsewhere in East Devon.

### **Wider Infrastructure**

We note that there is a section entitled wider infrastructure which is to come forward as part of the overall development proposals. We note that under B) that education uses are repeated and we question why it needs to be included in this part of the policy as this section appears to deal with matters not discussed above.

We assume that those requirements (other than SANG and Open Space) e.g. place of worship/leisure centre/health centre are uses that are capable of being provided within either the Town or District centres. For many of these latter requirements there is a lack of detail as to the scale/size requirements of the individual requests. We consider that the Council for many of the listed items under this category could be more precise. It is also the case that for many of the items listed under this heading there is no supporting evidence which justifies their inclusion. Without such justification it is difficult to be able to confirm positively that such infrastructure is required and not simply desired.

In relation to infrastructure items such as SANG the design and delivery will need to be progressed on a comprehensive basis with phased delivery to account for the relative trajectory of delivery of housing at the settlement. We have held the view, given the proximity of the Clyst Valley Regional Park that other opportunities for SANG could be explored beyond the allocation red line so as to define the best possible strategy for maximising delivery of residential development within the new community area.

## Masterplan, Infrastructure Delivery Strategy, Phasing Strategy and Financial Appraisal

As stated above we take the view that whilst the principle of the new settlement is contained within the Marlcombe Masterplan (Figure 7) they still require further revision in order to provide a technically and financially viable form of development. Equally we have already confirmed that the main landholder parties have been collaborating for some time on masterplanning matters and the group is continuing to do so as we move forward towards Examination.

The Plan is currently silent on how the Council expects to see a finalised Phasing Strategy, Financial Appraisal and indeed a more detailed masterplan given some of the shortcomings we have identified above and equally it is important to understand which parties are to be responsible for delivery.

### Delivery Model and CPO

As has been stated we as part of the landowner group have been in active dialogue with the Council and its partners for many months across a range of matters and one such matter has sought to explore the Delivery Model. We note that as currently worded Policy WS01 does not specify any particular delivery model other than the traditional delivery model. We are however aware from the on-going discussions that the Council has ambitions for the creation of a Development Corporation (or equivalent) to take forward and deliver parts of and manage the stewardship of the new community in the long term.

We like our landowner partners are concerned that the timescales of putting in place such arrangements has the potential to undermine the pace of delivery at Marlcombe which could place further pressure on the Council's trajectory, whereas we believe that the opposite should be occurring and that we should be seeking to work collaboratively to remove barriers to delivery.

We equally see that the Council may consider the use of compulsory purchase powers in order to assist the delivery of infrastructure. Whilst we appreciate that the Council may wish to keep this option open, we are clear that this will not be necessary for many parts of, if not all of, the new community because the traditional models of delivery can be effectively used, not least because the landowners are actively collaborating and seeking to bring the Site forward as quickly as is possible and seeking CPO is only likely to result in delay in delivery.

### Other Policy Concerns

Beyond the allocation policy we have some wider concerns with regard to other policies within the Plan and seek to deal with these together:

- **HN02: Affordable Housing** - as we have alluded to above, we have concerns in relation to aspects of the Council's evidence base, or lack thereof, when it comes to viability testing of affordable housing requirements. We take the view that any such assessment needs to be robust and consistent with other parts of the Council's evidence base. We therefore reserve the right to comment further on the matter as further evidence is produced and the wording for the affordable housing requirement to be clarified at a viable level.
- **PB05: Biodiversity Net Gain** – the proposed policy requirement for all major development for BNG should be at least 20%. We are of the view that there is no compelling evidence to require an elevated level where development proposals would otherwise be expected to achieve the statutory 10%. No compelling or thorough justification to support such a policy request. Equally government guidance is clear on this matter with the Planning Practice Guidance with no evidence provided on the impacts of viability of delivering 20% nor evidence for why it could be justified as being necessary.

## Summary

To conclude LVA is supportive of the inclusion of the new settlement as a key plank of the Council's Local Plan Strategy. We consider it to be well evidenced and clearly justified as forming part of the most effective strategy to meet the identified housing needs.

Whilst we strongly support the allocation it is evident that further work to clarify a range of items including but not limited to requirements of the Town Centre, viable affordable housing provision, infrastructure requirements, phasing and delivery strategy as well as governance need to be resolved ahead of any Examination. From our existing engagement with the Council, we believe this is entirely possible although the sooner these matters are resolved the better for all parties involved.

There are other elements of the emerging Plan that we are unable to support, most notably the policy concerning 20% BNG which is not necessary, is unsubstantiated and conflicts with national guidance and should be removed ahead of examination.

LVA is committed to continuing to work both with the local authority and its partners but as importantly with its landowner/developer partners as part of the consortium and we consider under a partnership model the realisation of Marlcombe can be best achieved irrespective of whether it ultimately benefits from New Town status or not.

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