

East Devon Local Plan

<https://eastdevonlocalplan.commonplace.is>

Miles from a rail station, isolated from the nearest bus route, serviced by narrow country lanes often standing in surface water from the run-off from local fields. No shops, no schools, no local public amenities. But in choosing Farringdon as a place to live none of this mattered. What brought us to Farringdon were the green open spaces, the protected environment for flora and fauna, the native trees, some dating back hundreds of years, the hedgerows, the deer, foxes, bats and owls, the kestrels and kites and the thriving local community, home to award winning local businesses and historical buildings. These are the things that mattered most to us when locating to East Devon, and clearly also to the majority of our neighbours, as evidenced by our Neighbourhood Plan calling for the protection of the green rural setting that was recently adopted by our parish council with the unanimous support of Farringdon residents.

A green, open and ecologically friendly landscape is what Farringdon offers and as residents we do everything possible to preserve it for current and future generations. Imagine then our surprise to be informed that the East Devon Local Plan includes a full set of planning policies and proposals with Farringdon selected as part of the preferred option for the development of a “new town” accommodating 8,000 new homes. A plan that includes a major new road that, if built, would divide the parish in two and result in loss of prime agricultural land and local farming produce. No consultation, no opportunity for residents to express their views and opinions; a top-down development plan launched seemingly to satisfy the interests of a minority of land owners and property developers in the area against the interests of the majority of existing home owners.

The plan has major implications for Farringdon and neighbouring villages and is antagonistic to and incompatible with the adopted Neighbourhood Plan. Farringdon residents are not NIMBY's. We live just a few miles away from the other “new town” and have seen its impact. No local community should be subject to years of disruption to day-to-day living. Cranbrook provides all the evidence that is needed to show how long-term and harmful such upheaval can be for people unfortunate enough to find themselves on the edge of or swallowed up by such a large-scale development.

I strongly object to the selection of “preferred option 1” as a solution to the housing needs of East Devon and I request an urgent review of the Local Plan and the process adopted in its production and roll-out. Option 3, that calls for incremental growth across the region to satisfy housing demand over the coming 20 years, offers a more sensible and balanced approach. Population growth and housing demand is in any case uncertain and rather than committing time and resources to another new town, authorities will be better placed and able to focus attention on those other targeted objectives and visions highlighted in the East Devon Local Plan, such as better communities, sustainable transport, a resilient economy, protection of the environment and action to ameliorate the consequences of climate change. These priorities, if given the attention they deserve, will win the support of all of us who wish to preserve the character of East Devon. The current emphasis on large-scale development and destruction of the environment is unhelpful and will lead to years of heated dispute and disagreement.

Dr Geoff Norman

