

From: Philip Shaw [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 January 2023 08:38
To: Planning Policy
Subject: Comments on Draft Local Plan (West Hill)

Categories: Reg.18 consultation

Dear Sir/Madam,

I understand that today (Sunday 15th January) is the last day to submit comments pursuant to the consultation process re the above.

I have just tried to get access to the eastdevonlocalplan.commonplace.is website to submit my comments, but I am getting a '405 forbidden' message so cannot get access. I am trying to gain access from outside the UK - would this make a difference?

Therefore, as a last resort I will try and submit my comments through this email address, but I am not even sure this address is active?

Also, I will be unable to comment on the wider consultation due to my inability to access the consultation portal.

West Hill

I understand that until recently all local authorities were under pressure to meet compulsory targets regarding housing targets but this may recently have been relaxed by central government so these targets are now advisory rather than mandatory. In addition I am led to believe that there is now more scope to consider the realistic needs of local communities and whether development in specific areas is actually sustainable - rather than building for the sake of it irrespective of the views of the people affected i.e. the local communities'.

I sincerely hope this is the case, as any further mass development within West Hill is wholly unrealistic & unsustainable from a common sense perspective.

West Hill has been developed substantially since the start of the current Local Plan implemented in 2013.

This is a small village of 'woodland' character & I note that members of the Strategic Planning Committee have made comments such as:-

'West Hill has been besieged with new housing over the last 10 years'

'West Hill is almost under siege'

'West Hill is getting inundated here and that just is not right'

The question is - is West Hill the right place to build new homes & does it need new homes?

The answer is clearly not, with the overriding aspect being that West Hill cannot sustain further mass development for the following reasons:-

The infrastructure is already 'creaking' and close to collapse.

The local GP service (Coleridge Medical Centre in Ottery St Mary) is already unable to provide an adequate service to the local community and it is almost impossible to arrange a face to face consultation within a reasonable time period. My family experience is that such a consultation can have a wait time of approx one month.

The local schools (primary in West Hill & secondary in Ottery St Mary) are already at capacity. Clearly we should not be relying on bussing children to school outside their local area, especially due to the environmental issues which are now a major consideration. I understand that in some instances children are taken to school by taxi at the expense of the local authority which cannot be considered a reasonable practice,

There is virtually no local employment within West Hill, so most residents need to commute to work (again contrary to environmental concerns due to excessive/unnecessary car use) - this is exacerbated by the very limited bus service within West Hill which is the sole public transport available.

There are few village facilities, limited to a small convenience store which is always under threat of closure (having recently changed ownership under the larger acquisition of McColls by Morrisons).

There are already concerns about traffic volumes within West Hill & the follow on safety issues of volume & speed of traffic.

Also, it is widely reported there are concerns re the sewerage infrastructure at Fluxton (which serves West Hill) being unable to cope with demand, resulting in unacceptable levels of discharge in to the River Otter.

The crux of all the above is that clearly West Hill cannot support further development and more appropriate sites should be chosen or even a new town developed in East Devon, which I understand is under serious consideration. Surely a new town with appropriate new infrastructure is the way forward as opposed to just building in small local Devon villages which already have inadequate infrastructure, even without the proposed new mass housing - it simply does not make sense to a reasonable person.

West Hill Sites Proposed in Draft Local Plan

The sites indicated in the draft plan (West 04/West 06) are not appropriate for development for the following reasons but not limited to the same and would be expanded upon if included in the Final Plan.

West 04

Access to site West 04 would presumably be via Windmill Lane. This is a small narrow lane which is already difficult to navigate and for example refuse lorries have to mount the pavement in parts to navigate the same.

When there are parked vehicles, road users have to give way to each other as it is impossible for vehicles to pass side by side - in addition there is blind spot on a bend in the lane, which is especially worse when there are parked vehicles. This means you are in effect negotiating the bend hoping there is nothing coming the other way at a speed which would prevent them from stopping if they suddenly encounter a vehicle approaching in the opposite direction. When I negotiate this bend, I do so with trepidation.

This lane simply could not cope with the increased level of traffic from a mass housing development, be it the vehicles associated with the new homes or delivery vehicles i.e. online shopping/supermarket delivery vans etc - not to say the potential problems with vehicular access for emergency vehicles.

I would also add that the junction access of Windmill Lane with Bendarroch Road is also unsafe as vehicles increase their speed up and down the steep hill of Bendarroch Road.

I understand the proposed developer for this site (Strongbox) have stated Devon County Council Highways Department had indicated Windmill Lane would be a suitable access for West 04. I would like to see the written evidence of this, as I fail to understand how this conclusion has been reached, if indeed this is the case.

Any proposed development of this site should be refused solely on the basis of the inadequate access via Windmill Lane.

Properties in Windmill Lane have also suffered from flooding over the years as West 04 is basically on the side of a hill and I am sure East Devon District Council would not accept responsibility for any increased flooding risks from allowing development of this site? Would they be prepared to give any such undertaking?

West 06

This flooding risk includes properties surrounding site West 06, where I understand the proposed developer would be Blue Cedar. This developer is responsible for the original Eastfield development which also borders this site. I understand over the last year or so the said developer dug large drainage channels along the site of West 06. I would like to know why these channels were dug, as subsequently various gardens in Perrys Gardens which lie to the low point of this site were severely flooded.

I further understand that this major issue was brought to the attention of numerous persons/bodies including East Devon District Council, Devon County Council & the local MP.

The evidence of previous flooding incidents and the fact the proposed developer even had the need to dig large drainage channels (reasons for which are unknown to me at present, but possibly to take excess water away from the original Eastfield development) is enough to show that development of sites West 04 & West 06 is not feasible.

It seems obvious to me that further mass development within West Hill or at the the sites specified within the draft local plan is simply not sustainable and I am sure if these were ever progressed there would be considerable opposition from local residents.

I note in the West Hill Parish Council response to the consultation it states the revised planning guidance is:-

'These reforms will help to deliver enough of the right homes in the right places and will do that by promoting development that is beautiful, that comes with the right infrastructure, that is done democratically with local communities rather than to them, that protects and improves our environment, and that leaves us with better neighbourhoods than before'.

I sincerely hope East Devon District Council will take this in to account when making any further planning decisions and not just just grant permission on green fields (as opposed to prioritising Brownfield sites) for the sake of it, with no regard to the local residents or whether it is appropriate or sustainable.

I am very concerned how planning decisions are made, as I am at a loss to understand how an application was recently granted for planning within the front garden of Hasta La Vista in Windmill Lane, which has resulted in a very cramped infill of a front garden which has severely impacted on the outlook of Windmill Lane - I hope this is not an indication as to how decisions will be made in the future as to sites to be included in the final Local Plan.

Now is the time to make the 'correct' planning decisions which will affect the present residents, future generations and of course the environment.

I would be grateful if this email response to the draft Local Plan consultation process has been received and will be included in the responses to the same, as I was unable to gain access to the consultation website as indicated at the beginning of this email.

Kind regards,

Philip Shaw