

Welcome to our January 2023 newsletter

GOOD WISHES for 2023 to everyone in West Hill from your Parish Council. We hope that you find this newsletter informative

There are important events coming up for attention this year. A major one is that local elections will be held in May and it will be important for residents to stand for election as a Parish Councillor. You are welcome to speak to current Councillors about the role.

Further, East Devon District Council will be taking forward work on developing a new East Devon Local Plan that will set out a future template as to how much and where development can take place in West Hill. The timetable for this work is currently unclear. Further, with a current planning application for housing development on land north of Oak Road that has led to over 100 objections from residents, and potential for other such developments, it is important the Parish Council continues to represent your views to shape the future of our woodland village.

The Parish Council of 4th January resolved to keep the Parish Precept, an element of your Council Tax, unchanged for the third year, at £56,875.

Following the resignation of Councillor Alan Cook following many years of service to West Hill, the Council was pleased to co-opt Neil Bromley at the Council meeting on 4th January. Welcome Neil.

A reflection on the achievements of your Council will take place at the Annual Parish Meeting on 10th March, please put that date in your diary with further details nearer the date. We always welcome your ideas and support.

Cllr Della Cannings, QPM, WHPC Chairman

PS. We always welcome new volunteers to help deliver our newsletter. Please contact the Parish Clerk if you'd like to join our lovely group of WHPC posties (who never go on strike. Well, not yet!)

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STOP PRESS

Straitgate Quarry – Planning Appeal Decision

In early January the Planning Inspectorate published its decision to overturn Devon County Council's refusal to allow a quarry to be built near Daisymount. Over a 10+years period the proposed 100-acre quarry at Straitgate Farm will see more than a million tonnes of sand and gravel extracted and transported to Hillhead Quarry for processing,

Parish Councillors were extremely disappointed to learn of the outcome of the Planning Appeal. Over recent years the Council has submitted its objections to the various planning applications and in summer 2022 Councillor Townsend attended the Planning Appeal Inquiry, along with many other speakers, to voice the Council's strong objections to the application.

The Council is aware of residents' concerns, particularly with regards to the impact of the movement of large lorries on Barrack Road, B3180/Daisymount junction and West Hill. The Parish Council will wait to see if DCC will be challenging the Planning Inspectorate decision before working with other authorities to explore options for safeguarding Road Safety.

2023 – A New Year, a New Start?



It's the time of year when many of us consider New Year's resolutions and new projects including new jobs or roles.

Could 2023 be the year for a new start for you? Is 2023 the year to put your skills and experience to a new use?

Have you considered using your skills and experience as a **West Hill Parish Councillor**?

Ok, we understand that most people will instantly say NO! It's not for me! Perhaps you could think again– **West Hill needs you!**

There are many talented, knowledgeable, passionate people living in the village. Whether it's the lack of recreational space, Local Planning issues, road safety, trees – whatever your issue please consider joining the Parish Council to “**do something about it**”. You're too busy? As the saying goes “*The best person to get something done is a busy person*”.

All seven of the Parish Council seats will be available in the upcoming 4th May 2023 Election.

We hope you will consider standing as a candidate. It's very straightforward. All you have to do is complete a nomination form and submit it to EDDC. An election will not be called if there are fewer than 7 candidates and you will be elected “uncontested”.

In the following sections we have provided some information on the role of a Parish Councillor. Further details are available on the EDDC website.

2023

Parish Council Election Timetable

5th Apr Deadline for nominations

4th May Polling Day

9th May New Cllrs take office

Who can be a Parish Councillor?



To stand for election on a parish council, you must:

- be a UK or commonwealth citizen,
- be a least 18 years old.
- be on the electoral register of the parish, or;
- during the previous 12 months have worked in the parish
- or, for the whole of the previous 12 months lived in the parish or within three miles of the parish boundary.

Why become a Parish Councillor?

It's true that being a councillor can be challenging but it's also highly rewarding. No other role gives you a chance to make such a huge difference to the quality of life of people in your local area and to influence the way issues are dealt with locally. By becoming a Parish Councillor you become someone your community will look to for help, guidance and support, a community leader with the power to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve. Seeing your community change for the better, as a result of decisions you have helped make, is something that can give you a sense of achievement and pride. There can be many reasons why you might want to be a councillor:

- to represent the views of local people and ensure that community interests are taken into account
- concern about a specific issue and wanting to do something about it
- having good ideas for the council and community in a time of scarce resources
- it's great experience for younger people (and is a great addition to their CV)

It's not for people like me!

It is important that councils reflect and represent the communities they serve, but also have a broad range of skills and life experience. Groups made up of people from different backgrounds, age groups and with different skills tend to make better decisions. You don't need any special qualifications. Skills gained through work, raising a family, caring for relatives, volunteering or being active in community or faith groups are highly valuable.

Many councillors fit their council work around their job, studying, caring responsibilities, and other volunteering work. How much time you spend on your duties is largely up to you and will depend on the different roles and commitments each councillor takes up. By law, if you are working, your employer must allow you to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform your duties as a councillor. You can find out more via the www.gov.uk/time-off-work-public-duties website in the Time off work for public duties section.

What decisions does the Parish Council make?

The Parish Council can make decisions on issues that affect the local community. It has statutory duties and powers which are set out in law. For example, the Council has the power to raise money through taxation; the precept (the Parish Council's share of the council tax). Councillors then decide how the precept can be spent for the benefit of the community

It's true to say that on its own, the Parish Council has limited powers to make decisions. But it does have the ability to negotiate with, and the power to influence, those other organisations that do make the final decisions, such as East Devon District Council and Devon County Council. In this respect a Parish Council is extremely powerful. The organisations that make the final decisions know that a Parish Council gives the best reflection of how a community feels about something, and its views will be taken seriously.

The Council meets every month and considers planning applications and any other matters referred to it by local residents, East Devon District Council, Devon County Council etc.

How much time does it take up?

WHPC usually meets once a month for the Council Meeting, to which members of the public are also invited. Meetings may last two or three hours, depending on the agenda set for the meeting. There are also working groups to deal with specific subjects, such as community engagement. In addition to the regular meetings, individual councillors represent the Council at other meetings, such as the Exeter Airport Consultation Committee. Such meetings won't happen every day, so it's not going to take over your life.

Don't take our word for it!

The best way to find out what it's like to be a Parish Councillor is to talk to someone who's doing it now. Come along to a Parish Council Meeting or speak to one of our councillors and find out what they think of the role. Check out our special 'Become a Councillor' page on the WHPC website for more information.

A Parish Council can only be as effective as the people willing to stand as councillors. Without residents prepared to come forward there can be no Council.



West Hill Parish Council needs you!

Dates for your new 2023 Calendar

30th
January

West Hill Events to celebrate the Coronation

WHPC have organised a community meeting for groups and individuals to get together to discuss plans for village celebrations over the long weekend of the Coronation of King Charles III, 6th – 8th May 2023. As with the Platinum Jubilee events last year, the Parish Council hope to facilitate and consider grant applications to assist any proposed community events. The meeting is open to all residents. Please come along to the meeting at the Narthex, St Michael's on **Monday 30th January starting at 7.30pm.**

10th
March

West Hill Annual Parish Meeting

The WHPC Annual Parish Meeting will be held on **Friday 10th March 2023** in the Village Hall starting at **7.30pm** with doors opening at 7.00pm. This community event is a great opportunity to find out what's happening in the village. All residents of West Hill are invited. Please come along and hear from the Parish Council, village groups and organisations about their achievements, concerns and plans for the future. Our guest speaker this year will be Emily Lezerri from Ottery Health Matters. She will be talking (briefly!) about local initiatives on how the health and social care professionals can work with community and voluntary action groups to improve the health and wellbeing of local people. The Parish Meeting is your opportunity to participate in and contribute to the thriving community that is West Hill. Please make a note in your diary and come along.

28th
March

Defibrillation Familiarisation Session

There are two defibrillators in the Village, one outside the Legion Clubhouse and the other at 11 Eastfield. Both are available for public use. ***Do you know how to use them?***

The next Defibrillator Familiarisation Session will be held at the British Legion Club, School Lane, West Hill, on **Tuesday 28th March 2023** with a start time of 7.00pm. You do not have to book - just turn up on the evening. Please come along and learn how to operate one so you are prepared for any emergency.

Other Council News

Covid Memorial Tree - With the agreement of the St Michael's PCC the Parish Council will be planting a Devon Heritage Apple Tree as a memorial to those who passed away during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be placed beside the WHPC bench in the community garden area in the grounds of St Michael's Church. It will provide an opportunity for those who have lost loved ones to sit in quiet contemplation and remembrance. The tree is a variety named 'Upton Pyne', a dual purpose mid to late-season apple raised by a Mr Pyne of Topsham around 1910. It will produce attractive oblong shaped yellow apples with scarlet flush for the community to harvest and it is notable for its pretty pink blossom.

New Pedestrian Path to the Village Hall - The Parish Council has continued to work with the Village Hall Trustees to advance this project. The commissioning phase is now nearing an end, as a tender pack has been supplied for contractors to bid for the necessary work. The sealed bids are to be received mid-January, and then the Council and the Trustees will need to then consider the affordability of the work, where funding support will be sought and look to sign a contract.

Did you know that during the year the **playpark is inspected** on a regular basis? Each week Councillors visit the playpark to check for litter and minor issues. Once a month a RoSPA qualified inspector from EDDC visits and then there is an annual inspection by RoSPA itself. This year's RoSPA inspection was carried out on 9th September 2022. Apart from the playboat, all the other equipment met the required safety standards and only a few minor remedial actions were recommended. As previously reported, Council took the decision to remove the playboat. This is due to take place on 20th January.

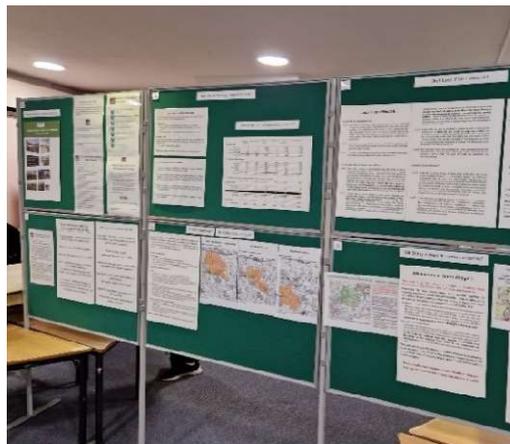
East Devon Local Plan 2020-2040 News

East Devon District Council's (EDDC) Draft Local Plan was published on 7th November 2022. A public consultation opened on the same day to seek the views of East Devon residents and local Town/Parish Councils. The consultation ended on 15th January 2023.

The Parish Council has sought to make residents aware of the Local Plan proposals for West Hill and East Devon and also, how comments could be submitted to EDDC. Our newsletters have provided a regular update on the work of EDDC's Strategic Planning Committee as they developed the draft plan. In addition a WHPC Drop-in session was held on 18th November. Councillors were pleased that so many residents, 120+, attended the event (on a Friday evening in November!).

The many display boards set out some of the key proposals:

- The Government's Housing target for East Devon is 18,920 new homes by 2040. Many have already been built but sites for 7,500 have yet to be agreed. 2/3rds of East Devon is covered by Areas of Natural Beauty (AONB) or other protection measures. As a result the 7,500 homes have to be located in the remaining 1/3rd.
- The plan set out proposals for a new town of 2,500 homes to be built on the west side of east Devon plus expansion at towns and Villages.
- 17 potential development sites in West Hill put forward by Landowners
- 51 proposed new homes in West Hill on EDDC's 1st and 2nd preference sites
- A new settlement boundary for West Hill



WHPC was pleased that the developers for the proposed 1st and 2nd preference sites attended the session to answer residents' questions. The session was extremely busy as attendees took the opportunity to study the information provided and to raise questions and concerns. These ranged from matters local to West Hill but also on the implications for the wider East Devon Area. Common concerns expressed included

- Delivering the housing target would result in irreversible changes to the character of East Devon, it's green spaces and towns/villages. Two thirds of East Devon is an AONB.
- There is little/no mention of infrastructure to support the new homes. Current infrastructure is inadequate.
- EDDC's consultation website is difficult to use/superficial.
- Why is there a proposal to change the West Hill's Built Up Area Boundary?

West Hill Parish Council's Working Group has studied the proposals in detail and prepared a response taking the analysis and resident's feedback into account. The Parish Council's response submitted to EDDC is available on the WHPC website. It addresses key proposals including the West Hill Settlement Boundary, each of the 17 potential development sites, the "green wedge" between West Hill and Ottery St Mary and also the second new town proposals

What happens next?

EDDC will review the public's comments and a revised Draft Plan is expected to be published later this year.

We hope EDDC will also consider Michael Gove's Written Ministerial Statement on Local Housing Targets and set out a clear direction for proposed changes to the NPPF which may have implications for the Local Plan Review now underway. It is hoped there will be more flexibility on housing numbers, and more emphasis on local decision-making.

What will it be like to live in West Hill in 2040? Please get involved

At the December 2021 Parish Council meeting Cllrs decided to undertake a project that will shape the future of West Hill: to develop a **Neighbourhood Plan for West Hill**. It's quite an undertaking and the project will take a number of years. Councillors hope that many West Hill residents will take the opportunity to get involved at some stage to influence the plan.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

Neighbourhood Plans are part of the English Planning System. Through the Localism Act 2011 the Government gives local communities a direct say in the future development of their neighbourhood, parish or town. It is a planning document which guides and shapes development in the local area and is created by local people.

In simple terms, a neighbourhood plan is:

- Written by the local community, the people who know and love the area, rather than the Local Planning Authority.
- A document developed by the community which sets out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop over the next 10, 15, 20 years in ways that meet identified local need and make sense for local people.
- A document that sets out additional planning policies for the area – planning policies are used to decide whether to approve planning applications. It sits alongside the Local Plan.
- Must focus on guiding development rather than stopping it and need to be in general conformity with national policy and our local planning policies.

How is a Neighbourhood Plan Used?

West Hill Planning Applications are assessed against policies set out in **each** layer of the planning system:

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF sets out planning policies applicable across the UK.

East Devon Local Plan

The East Devon Local Plan sets out policies that apply across East Devon and provide a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities

West Hill Neighbourhood Plan

The West Hill Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies specific to West Hill which underpin the vision of the community and maintaining the special character of West Hill.

Doesn't West Hill already have a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan covering the Ottery St Mary and West Hill area was established in 2018. The work to create the plan was carried out before the creation of West Hill Parish Council but involved many people from West Hill.

A Neighbourhood Plan must be reviewed and updated every 5 years or so. West Hill Parish Council has considered this and decided there were significant advantages for West Hill to have its own Neighbourhood Plan, focussing on the unique character of the Village. We understand Ottery St Mary Council also have plans to develop a new Neighbourhood Plan alongside their Regeneration Project.

How to get involved

We hope many West Hill residents will take the opportunity to get involved and help shape the future of West Hill. We'll need lots of help! As the project gets underway we'll publish details of how to

- volunteer to help with Neighbourhood Plan preparation.
- attend a workshop, etc.

Other Planning News

Works on protected trees – the arboricultural report

The Parish Council has recently considered several planning applications involving extensive works on protected trees. Sometimes applicants don't provide much supporting information other than perhaps a rough sketch and a photo. This makes it difficult for us and Planning Officers to understand why the works are necessary. West Hill is a woodland village and we try to balance the needs of residents and trees alike. Can we suggest that if you are looking to do extensive tree works you consider asking a tree surgeon to prepare an arboricultural report to support your application?

Planning Application for Land at Oak Road

Morrish Homes has submitted a planning application to build 23 new homes on a field off Oak Road. Details of the application 22/2533/MOUT are available on the East Devon District website. The application is for the creation of a new access onto Oak Road and the outline plans for 23 new homes.

Over 100 objections have been submitted by members of the public.

The Parish Council has submitted its **strong objection** to the application and has set out reasons why it feels the development is unacceptable.

This response took into account the concerns expressed at an Extraordinary Council Meeting on 3rd January. Over 50 people attended to voice their concerns.



Did you knowPhoto ID will be required when Voting at a Polling Station?



From May 2023 individuals who wish to vote in person at a Polling Station will be required to produce photographic ID to prove their identity before they will be issued with a ballot paper. This is a national change implemented as part of the Elections Act 2022 as a protection against voting fraud. It will apply to the local District and Parish Council elections in May 2023 and all subsequent elections.

Remember to
bring photo id
on polling day!

What you need to do for the May 2023 elections

To vote in person voters must be on the electoral register and bring a suitable form of photographic ID to their polling station. The most commonly used IDs include:

- Passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a Commonwealth country
- Photographic driver's licence issued by the UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state (including provisional)
- European Economic Area (EEA) photographic ID Card
- An identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (PASS card)
- A Blue Badge
- A concessionary travel pass funded by HM Government or local authority

A full list of the photo ID that will be accepted is available on the www.electoralcommission.org website.

Only original documents will be accepted; scanned images or copies will not be accepted. Expired documents are accepted if the photo is still a current likeness of the elector.

No suitable photo ID? Don't delay - Act now

Voters who do not produce valid photo identification at the polling station will not be allowed to vote on the day. Individuals without an accepted form of photo ID can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate which can be obtained free of charge from East Devon District Council. This is a document containing an elector's name and photograph.

Please apply now for one if you need to and don't leave it until the last minute. You must be on the electoral register to apply. Further details will be published on the EDDC website in due course. Alternatively, you may wish to apply to EDDC for a postal vote.

Postal voting

Postal voters will not be affected and will be issued with their postal ballot papers as usual. Details of how to apply for a postal vote are available on the EDDC website www.eastdevon.gov.uk

West Hill Community SpeedWatch – needs your help



Vision Zero South West is a campaign, spearheaded by Devon & Cornwall Police to halve road deaths across the two counties by 2030. Local SpeedWatch activities are a key part of this initiative. They inform, advise and remind drivers of speed limits on our roads. West Hill has an active group operating at several sites around the village but they need more help.

Are you willing to join the team and lend a hand? As little as an hour a month at times of your choice will be a big help. Full training is given. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Richard on 01404 812 370