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Welcome to our October 2025 Newsletter

This edition of our Newsletter is largely dedicated to reporting back the results of the recent survey undertaken as a part of our Neighbourhood Plan development. We had enough of a response to make us feel comfortable that the feedback is reasonably representative of the views of the village and this is therefore what we are going to base our plan on.

In any such survey there will very rarely be unanimity of view on any topic but there are some very strong common themes. There are also some views that are not really connected with the Neighbourhood Plan but are nevertheless very helpful in providing focus for future work for the Parish Council.

Thank you to everyone who submitted a response to the survey and I trust that you will see that you are helping to shape the future of our village.



Village Hall Footpath

Well, it has actually happened! The long-planned footpath connecting West Hill Road with the Village Hall and School is now in operation.

On 19th September members of the School Council and the Preschool joined Councillors to formally open the path. The feedback so far has been positive and it is certainly being well used. There are a few small jobs to finish but these will be completed very shortly.

The Parish Council and the Village Hall Trustees have jointly spent a lot of time and effort to get to this position and the fact that it is now in operation is a tribute to their tenacity in overcoming some extraordinary barriers. Many thanks and congratulations to all of the people who have been involved in this project.

Cllr Francis Pullman, WHPC Chairman



Planning Matters: Lower Broad Oak Road Appeal – *Implications for West Hill?*

Over the past year, the Parish Council has awaited the outcome of a planning appeal against East Devon District Council's July 2024 refusal of outline application 23/2612/OUT for five dwellings on Lower Broad Oak Road.

The Planning Inspector's decision to grant the appeal has raised concerns amongst the Parish Council as it may result in future applications for development outside the built-up-area boundary of the village.

In their report the Planning Inspector acknowledged the matters raised by EDDC:

- the site is located outside of the Built-up Area Boundary of West Hill
- in planning terms, the site was considered to be unsustainable as future occupants of the proposed development would be dependent upon private car for most journeys to and from the site due the excessive distance across steep terrain to the village centre.
- other matters included and impact on ecology and landscape views.

However, the Inspector allowed the appeal because EDDC Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of housing, resulting in the implementation of the "Tilted Balance," which was determined to outweigh the points raised by EDDC.

Next steps? Before construction can begin, EDCC will consider a 'reserved matters' planning application providing detailed plans for the site.

Local Government Reform - Devon

In December 2024, the Government proposed reorganising local government by replacing District and County Councils with new Unitary Councils, aiming for greater accountability and sustainability. The plan also includes devolving more powers and funding to local authorities.

Areas currently operating a two-tier system, such as Devon have been asked to submit their proposals for LGR by **28th November 2025**. The Government will make final decisions on reorganisation on a case-by-case basis in July 2026 and the new arrangements to go live on **1st April 2028**. Guidelines suggest that new authorities are based on existing boundaries and cover areas with a guideline minimum population of 500,000 people. Devon has a population of approximately 1.2m.

Councils across Devon – Devon County Council, District Councils, Exeter City Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council - are now working towards refining the possible options. Various proposals have been put forward as the Councils have been unable to agree a single proposal.

The District Councils, including East Devon District Council, favour a joint outline proposal known as the 1-4-5 Plan which proposes:

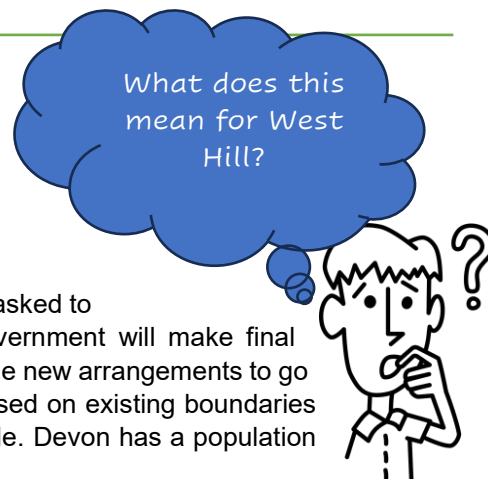
- A unitary including East, Mid, North Devon, Torridge, and Exeter.
- Retaining Plymouth unitary authority.
- A unitary combining the South Hams, Teignbridge, and West Devon areas with Torbay

Exeter City Council propose a three unitary model for local government reorganisation in Devon:

- An expanded Plymouth unitary
- An expanded Exeter unitary incorporating parishes (including West Hill) currently outside its boundary
- Rest of Devon

Multiple other proposals have also been submitted to Government by Plymouth, Devon County and Torbay.

The Parish Council will keep you informed as the process progresses.





Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey Report

A big thank you to all those residents who completed the Community Survey for the Neighbourhood Plan. A total of 374 responses were received, and 28 from young people (aged 11-17).

The survey responses have given us a clear message about residents' views and will form an excellent evidence base for further work on the Neighbourhood Plan. There was a high degree of agreement on most of the questions.



How you can help us - *Do you agree with our analysis?*

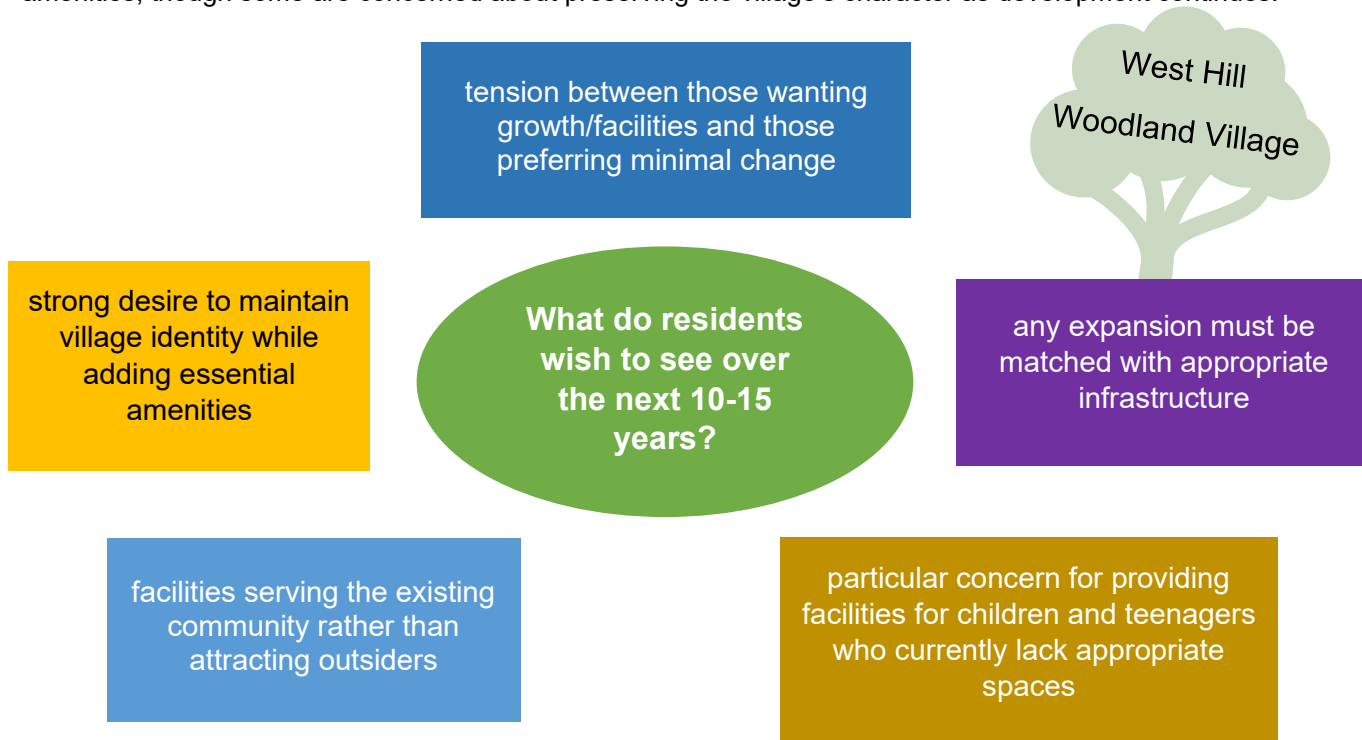
We encourage you to join us at the **Village Hall** on **Friday 17th October 3.30-6.30pm** where the survey results and our analysis will be on display. Please come along and give us your comments. **Your feedback** is important to the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The full results of the survey are published on the Parish Council website.

www.westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan-west-hill

What do residents value about living in West Hill?

Residents of West Hill value the village's peaceful rural setting, strong community spirit, excellent schools, and convenient access to services. They appreciate the balance between countryside living and practical amenities, though some are concerned about preserving the village's character as development continues.



Community facilities

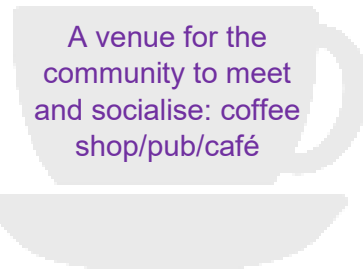
All of the existing community facilities were highly valued by residents: shop, Post Office, Village Hall, Primary school, Pre-school, Playpark, Royal British Legion clubhouse, Church, Woodland Trust land at Broadoak Plantation.

There was almost unanimous agreement that the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect existing and future community facilities.

Strong support for additional facilities:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Sports field / pitch | Additional children's play area |
| Informal public open space | Youth facility |
| Better provision for pre-school | |
| Better connectivity to enhance walking / cycling around the village | |

Improvements most frequently mentioned?




A venue for the community to meet and socialise: coffee shop/pub/café

A walking-cycle path to Ottery St Mary



Morrison's site

The 2024 planning application (withdrawn) for the Morrison's site prompted much discussion in the village. This was reflected in the survey responses. Residents had many ideas about how the site could be used plus concerns regarding potential loss of current facilities. Some re-development or additional facilities at the Morrison's site was **strongly supported**. The focus should be on updating existing amenities while preserving their original footprint.



Morrison's are leaseholders they do not own the West Hill site.

Potential future development of the Morrisons site that was supported


- Small retail units, especially independent traders and local businesses
- Small-scale residential flats: low-rise (1-2 storeys), affordable housing
- some demand for shared offices, co-working hubs, and studios for local professionals

Infrastructure:

- Installation of electric vehicle charging stations
- Upgrading bus stop facilities, including centralised stops within the village
- Improved landscaping and maintenance of current site
- emphasis on developing an appealing public meeting area

What People Would NOT Like

- Large-scale housing/flats particularly multi-storey developments
- Loss of car parking**
- Over-development - Concerns about losing village character
- Multiple retail units - Scepticism about commercial viability



Consistent and emphatic opposition

Housing

Residents want future housing development to respect the character and green spacious feel of West Hill.



There was mixed support for the concept of a new housing site that had to provide a much-needed community facility (e.g. sports field).

West Hill Design Code

- ✓ There is strong support for the development of **guidelines for the design and appearance of housing**, and support for the Design policy in the existing
- ✓ Design policy in the existing
- ✓ Neighbourhood Plan.

Street Lighting divided opinions

Residents would like safer walking/cycle routes but wish to avoid light pollution.

Respondents wanted:

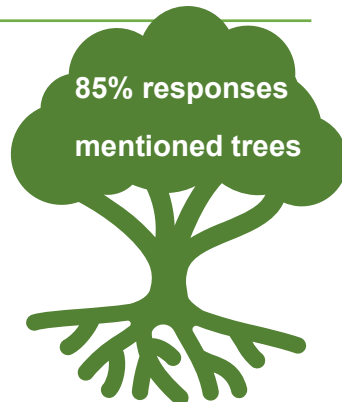
- to maintain privacy,
- low-density development,
- low-rise buildings ,
- high quality design



Natural features



Nearly all respondents identify with West Hill being a **"Woodland Village"** and say that it is important to them. They support protection of the characteristic green character of the village. The Green wedge between West Hill and Ottery St Mary is seen as important, as are West Hill's lanes bounded by trees and hedges, grassy verges, Devon banks, valued landscape views, and areas of woodland. More tree planting is supported.



85% responses mentioned trees

Young people

The comments suggest that young people value outdoor activities and social connection, but currently the village lacks adequate public spaces and amenities to support these activities safely and accessibly.

Public Playing Field/Sports Space

Family-friendly cafes

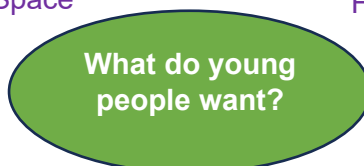
Better Play Areas

More shopping opportunities

Pavements and Paths

Library or book exchange

More village events





Survey Q31

Is there anything else you would like the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to consider?

Other Matters

Responses to question 31 mentioned wide-ranging issues some of which are outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. This feedback serves as a valuable reference for future considerations by the Parish Council. However, certain issues are beyond the jurisdiction of the Parish Council and fall under the responsibility of other authorities.

Here are some of the issues and concerns raised by residents.

**Traffic Speed
+ Safety**
(most frequently mentioned)

Many respondents raised concerns regarding road safety: requests for speed cameras, particularly on B3180 and Bendarroch Road; strong support for **20mph speed limits** throughout the village; concern that speed limits weren't enforced; requests for traffic calming measures and speed bumps.

Respondents wanted an increased presence of West Hill Community Speed Watch Team (CSW).

Could you spare 1 hour per month?
More volunteers = more CSW sessions

Please contact CSW via the Parish Council



Road maintenance and infrastructure:
Issues mentioned – potholes, poor road surfaces, worn road markings

If you come across a problem on the public highway or footpath, for example potholes, debris, faulty traffic lights, road markings or manhole covers, please report this to Devon County Council. The Parish Council is not authorised to work on the highway.

Members of the public can report a problem directly to Highways via their "Report a Problem" website:

www.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem

It's also possible to report problems by phone **0345 155 1004**. You will be asked to provide location details such as an address or What Three Words to enable the team to locate the problem.



Additional categories are available.

Report a problem

If you are **reporting an emergency** that requires immediate attention, please call us on [0345 155 1004](tel:03451551004). An emergency on the highway is defined as something that is very likely to present an imminent threat to life or serious injury or serious damage to property.

[Track an existing problem](#)

Pothole
Large 40mm vertical-edge hole that is also greater than 300mm wide

Parking
Request enforcement in residents' parking and on-street parking zones

Overgrown vegetation
Pedestrians forced into road, cars over central line, reduced visibility

Public rights of way
For example, blocked access or broken stiles

Hazardous or fallen trees
Trees that have fallen into the road or are leaning, unstable, diseased or dying.

Debris or obstruction
Thick mud, soil, stones, embankment slips, large branches, fallen trees

Defective road markings or signs
White and yellow, stop or give way lines

Trip hazard
Hole or significant difference in level on pavement or cycleway

Poor road junction design,
specifically West Hill Road/B3180 junction

Devon County Council Highways are responsible for highways across Devon other than National Highways such as the M5.

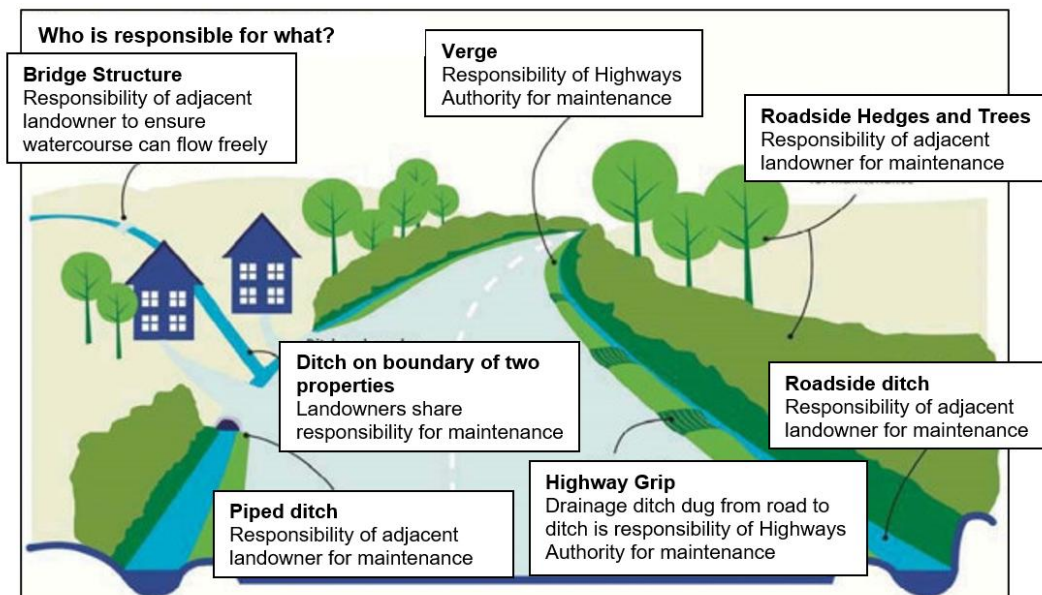
WHPC has repeatedly raised concerns about the West Hill Road/B3180 junction. DCC Highways reports: (a), due to high costs of re-engineering the junction and (b) no record of serious collisions, changes to the junction are unlikely to be prioritised.

Overgrown Hedges+Verges

Highways, Verges and Ditches - Who's responsible for what? Your property deeds may show that your boundary is the middle of the road. However Highways have authority over the highway and verges. Householders and landowners are responsible for ditches and hedges.

An overgrown hedge considered to be a risk for pedestrians or cars can be reported to DCC Highways via their Report a Problem page. Following inspection Highways may decide to contact the householder/landowner to request that they cut the hedge. DCC Highways may take action directly if there is an immediate danger.

Diagram provided by DCC Highways.



Trees

East Devon District Council Tree Officers co-ordinate a network of 53 Tree Wardens who are appointed by their Parish and play an active role in conserving and enhancing our local trees and woods. The Tree Wardens keep an eye on protected trees, raise awareness of the value of trees in the local community and to encourage people to look after trees carefully in conjunction with the Parish Council.

West Hill's **Tree Warden, Eileen Perkins**, is happy to provide advice to West Hill Residents and can be contacted via the West Hill Arboretum Group or the Parish Council.

East Devon District Council is the responsible for the management of the Tree Protection Order process (TPO's) across West Hill and East Devon.

In West Hill many trees have **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)** on them. Individual trees or whole areas may have preservation orders on them. EDDC Tree Officers can advise on TPO trees. If a TPO exists and maintenance is required, permission must be obtained from the council. Application forms are available from EDDC. Working on a protected tree without permission (apart from removing dead branches) is an offence and can lead to a fine up to £20,000.

Dates for your Diary

Digital Voice is coming to West Hill

Come and speak to us about our new home phone service, Digital Voice



Landlines in the UK are going digital by the end of January 2027.

Although the landline isn't going away, we know that you might have questions or would like to know more about this industry-wide change.

We'd love to talk to you about the UK's switch to digital landlines and will be visiting local towns and communities near you, where a member of our team will be on hand to tell you what Digital Voice is, why the change is necessary and what it means for you.

You don't have to pre-book, just turn up.

Where and when:

We're holding a drop-in session on the

- 
- **16th of October between 09:00 and 15:00**
 - **in the BT Truck, Westhill Village Hall Car Park, Beech Park, West Hill, Ottery Saint Mary EX11 1UQ**

For more information, visit www.bt.com/digitalvoice



Ottery St Mary

Tar Barrels

Members of the Parish Council have worked with the organising committee to improve parking arrangements in West Hill. Following concerns raised last year, the Parish Council asked for changes to minimise disruption for residents and ensure access for emergency vehicles.

Remembrance Sunday

Wreath laying at

West Hill War Memorial

10.15am

Sunday 9th November

11.00am service at St Michael's

Armistice Day

Two-minute silence

11.00am

Tuesday 11th November

West Hill War Memorial

Contact Us:

West Hill Parish Council welcomes your comments. Please contact our Parish Clerk, preferably by email clerk@westhillparishcouncil.gov.uk. Do you want to join our **mailing list**? We use this to send you updates such as meeting agendas. Details of our Privacy Policy are available on our website.

Thank you for your support!