

Briefing Note: East Devon Local Plan - new community proposals
Prepared by: Planning Policy team at East Devon District Council
This draft dated: 1 December 2022

This briefing note has been drafted to provide summary information, in a single document, about the proposals set out in the draft East Devon Local Plan, November 2022, for a new community to the east of Exeter. This note is supplementary to the local plan and references evidence documents and other material that is relevant to and has helped inform proposals.

Why is another new community being proposed?

There is a requirement for local planning authorities (this includes East Devon District Council) to periodically produce a new local plan. The existing local plan is becoming dated and we now need to look at development needs for future years. Government policy states that plans should look forward for at least 15 years and we have identified 2040 as an appropriate end date for the plan. For plan monitoring and statistical assessment reasons we have established 1 April 2020 as a base line starting date for the plan.

For more information on the plan and the consultation see: [Emerging Local Plan - East Devon](#)

What will the local plan do?

The local plan will help establish a vision and strategy for future development – essentially what is to be built where and why in East Devon for the years ahead. It will be the primary policy document to be used in the determination of planning applications. We are aiming to cover in the plan all the main development types that typically come up in planning applications that are determined by East Devon District Council. The local plan will not, therefore, address mineral extraction and processing proposals or development proposals for waste management and disposal as these are the responsibility of Devon County Council.

What is the current draft local plan consultation?

We are at an early stage of preparing the local plan and have produced a draft plan for consultation. This draft plan sets out what are intended to be a workable set of policies for determining planning applications. The plan also identifies ('allocates') areas of land that are seen from assessment to date as being appropriate or reasonable for development. However, it is stressed that it is a draft plan, we are welcoming feedback and all comments received will be taken into account in redrafting and refining the plan. We will also do more information gathering and assessment in the months ahead and we know that there are some subject matters in the plan that require more detailed assessment.

We have an online consultation platform and we encourage feedback through this wherever possible - [Have Your Say Today - East Devon Local Plan - Commonplace](#). Alternatively comments can be emailed to: planningpolicy@eastdevon.gov.uk. Comments are to be received by 15 January 2023.

Why do we need to plan for so many new homes in East Devon?

The Government has a standard methodology that establishes minimum levels of new homes that local planning authorities should plan for. In the case of East Devon, noting that we build in an extra 10% flexibility allowance, this amounts to planning for a figure of 940 homes per year (20,800 over 20 years from 2020 to 2040). Many of the homes we need to plan for are already committed to be developed, for example, they have planning permission or are allocated for development at Cranbrook. But we have to find land to accommodate the rest.

The future homes that are built will need to house existing East Devon residents, including people looking for their first homes or to 'move-on' when they need a bigger home, perhaps when they start a family. There will also be some people that want to 'downsize' to a smaller home. There is a real need for more affordable homes in East Devon and these will typically be achieved through schemes of mixed open market and affordable homes. East Devon also sees lots of demand for houses from people moving into the district from other parts of the country that we need to accommodate. Past survey work showed that 29% of people moving into newly built homes in East Devon already lived in the District and 41% were moving from adjoining neighbouring local authority areas (mostly from Exeter).

Why are so many new homes and jobs planned for the western side of East Devon close to Exeter? Can't we spread them more evenly around the district?

The draft local plan proposes a substantial number of new houses and employment provision on the western side of East Devon, close to Exeter. Exeter forms a major draw on East Devon, especially the western side of the district, with many people travelling into the City for work, education, shopping and leisure activities and there is also lots of infrastructure in this part of the District and many new jobs. Much of the rest of East Devon, specifically to the east, is constrained by designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the coastline, and more remote countryside. There are, therefore, a series of good planning reasons to concentrate development in the western parts of the District.

Why are you proposing another new community?

In order to achieve the levels of development that we are required to accommodate, noting the choices around building on the western side of the district, it was seen as desirable to plan for a new community, i.e. a second new town after Cranbrook. On the western side of East Devon we could have looked to build one or more brand new villages (or smaller new towns) or add a substantial number of new homes to existing villages. A drawback of these approaches would be, however, that smaller developments would be less able to deliver new infrastructure and facilities, such as a secondary school, community meeting spaces, new shops or a doctor's surgery. These are all facilities that exist or are to be built at Cranbrook and that require larger scale development in order

to be provided. We did also look at potential to build more homes at the existing main towns and larger villages of East Devon but many possible site options are heavily constrained.

A new community also enables us to design a place that encourages people to walk and cycle by placing homes close to jobs, schools, services and facilities in a way that is more difficult to do in existing towns where these can be some distance from the available land. We can also plan for zero carbon development including district heat networks more easily at this scale.

How big will the new community be?

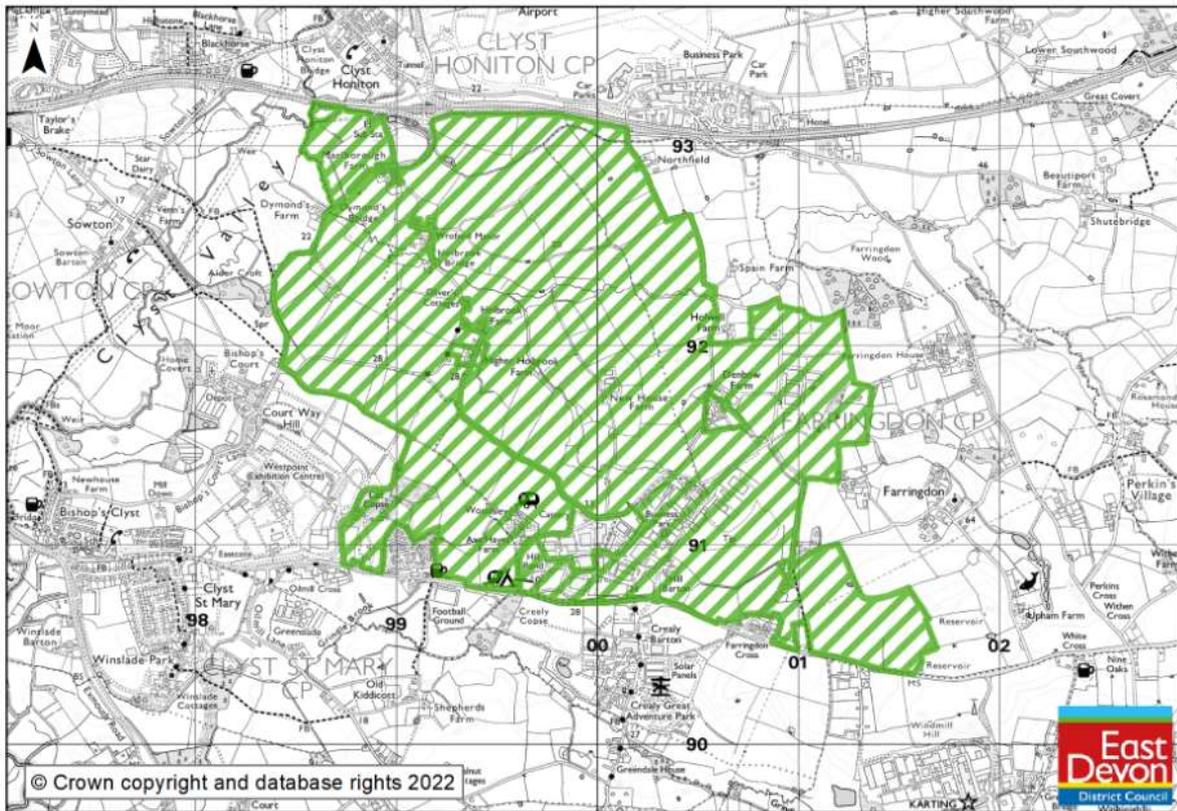
We currently envisage that the new community would deliver around 8,000 new homes and based on experience from Cranbrook, where many of the residents are younger families and households, we could see a population of around 20,000 or more residents. A town of this size would be larger than Honiton or Ottery St Mary but smaller than Exmouth. We would not expect to see development start for a number of years, perhaps not before 2030, and to build-up slowly initially. By 2040 we envisage that around 2,500 homes would be built with the remainder of the homes being built into and beyond the middle of the 21st century.

Where would the new community be built?

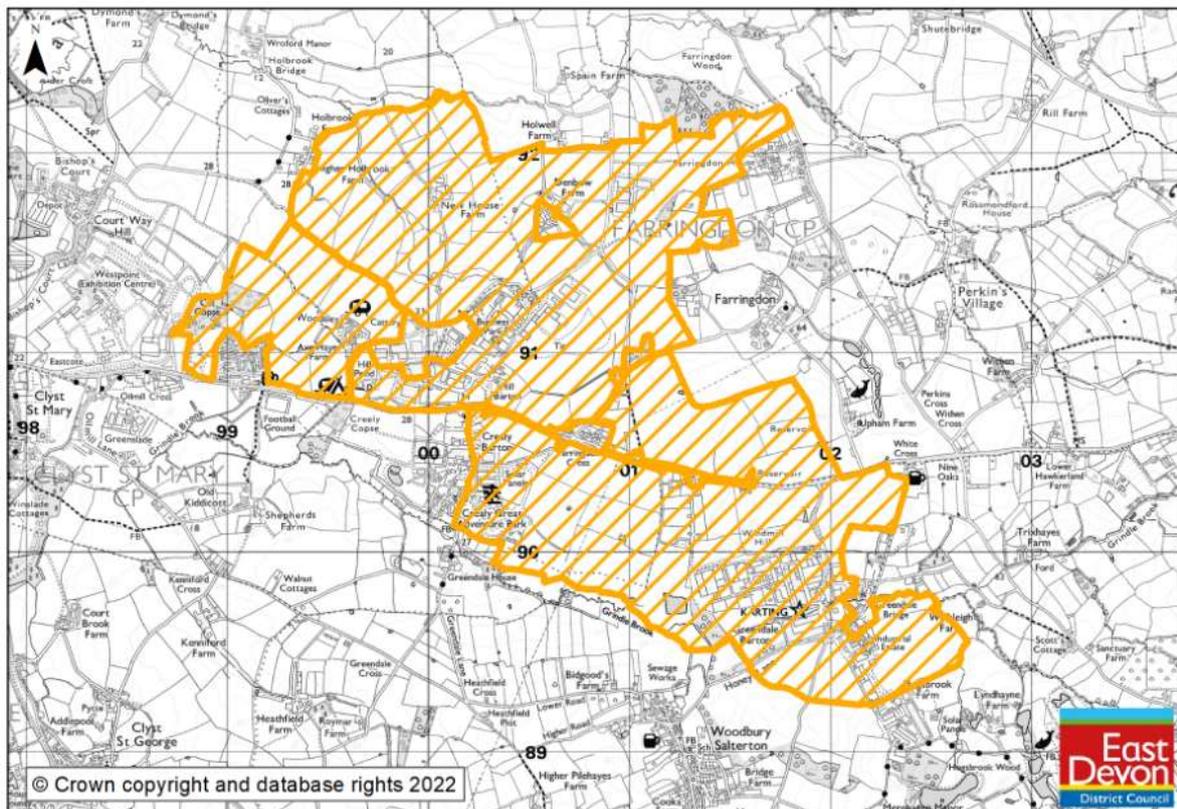
Over recent years we have provided the opportunity for land owners to promote their land for development. This has formed part of an exercise called a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). There were a substantial number of sites, some smaller scale and some large, that have been promoted for development on the western side of East Devon, with a particular concentration to the north and south of the A3052 highway. In looking at the possible options for a new community there were three broad areas of search that were identified. These are shown on the maps below/over the page and are briefly summarised:

- **Option 1** for the new community falls between the A3052 highway to the south and A30 highway to the north. This option offers the potential for highway access to both of these roads and it wraps around the existing Hill Barton industrial/business park. The option also abuts other existing employment sites and some existing housing along the A3052 highway and is close to the Devon County showground.
- **Option 2** for the new community straddles the A3052 highway with over half to the north of this road and under half to the south. Most of the part to the north coincides with areas of land which make up parts of Option 1. The part of Option 2 that falls to the north of the A3052 (like Option 1) also wraps around parts of the existing Hill Barton industrial/business park whilst the area to the south of this road covers parts of Crealy Park and Greendale business/industrial park. We would work on the basis of existing built uses being retained.
- **Option 3** for the new community falls entirely to the south of the A3052 highway with a small length adjoining this road. At its southern edge this option falls close to the village of Clyst St Mary with a small part of the option falling alongside the A376, Exmouth Road. Option 3 offers the potential for highway access to both of these main roads. Woodbury Salterton lies to the east of this option and the boundary sweeps over a number of existing properties.

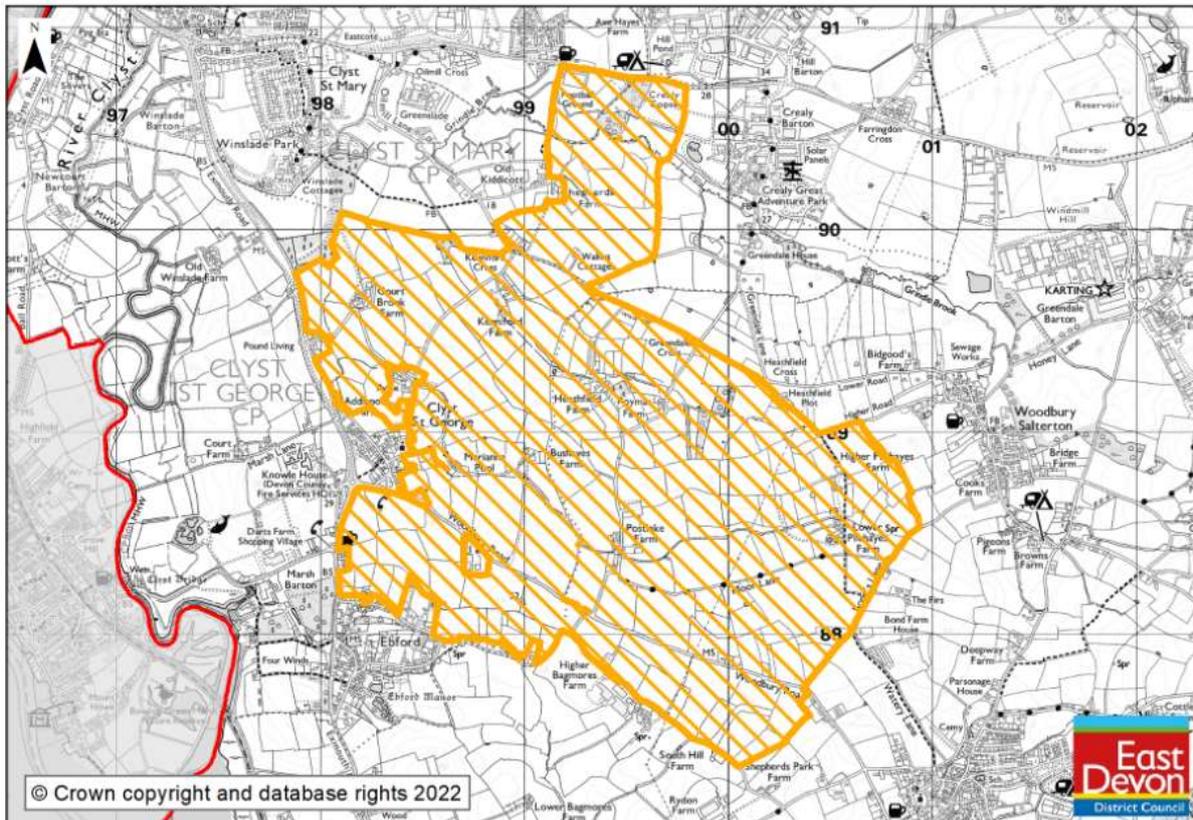
Site Option 1 for the New Community



Site Option 2 for the New Community



Site Option 3 for the New Community



Why are the options led by what land has been put forward by land owners and developers rather than what the community would want to see?

Sites can only be allocated in a local plan where we can show that the development will be delivered and for that reason we need a willing land owner. If the allocated sites are not developed then we will not have enough new homes and the government will require us to allow homes to come forward elsewhere including potentially where we would not want them as we are required to ensure that needs are met. Through the local plan we can however select the sites that are most suitable and ensure that the land is developed for the uses we would want to see and in the way that we would want to see them developed.

Why is option 1 identified as the preferred option in the consultation?

Consultants, CBRE, were appointed by the Council to assess the new town Options and their work will continue after the current consultation with further master planning and more detailed design work as well as looking at mechanisms and options for the best means of securing the delivery of the new town. That is, making it happen in practice to achieve the best outcomes possible (assuming we pursue the proposals).

The consultants work identified Option 1 as the best performing site option, see their report at: [Evidence Base and Supporting Documents - New Community - East Devon](#) However, Options 2 and 3 were also seen as potentially credible choices. Option 1 is shown as a proposed allocation in the draft local plan (and Options 2 and 3 are also shown as possible choices). Although option 1 scored

only slightly better than option 3 in our consultants assessment it involves fewer land owners, presents more opportunities to address issues with road capacity in the area, better access to existing jobs and connections to district heat networks and so is currently favoured. Comments can be made on any of the site options and also on our proposed policy wording for the requirements for a new town, see: [Have Your Say Today - 05 Future growth and development on the western side of East Devon - East Devon Local Plan \(commonplace.is\)](#)

What about the impact of a new community on roads, sewage systems and other infrastructure?

Part of the future work will be to look at and assess overall infrastructure requirements and demands that will be generated by and needed to support the new community proposals. The CBRE work forms a starting point in the overall assessment work and for example it refers to travel and traffic assessment work that will need to be ongoing as (if) proposals progress. It also starts to consider options for building in the required sewer and road capacity. We are also in contact with infrastructure providers such as the NHS and South West Water in respect to capacity and new facility provision. We would want to see the best green standards and designs built into the new community and as such would expect to see high quality green space, links to the Clyst Valley Regional Park and zero-carbon development.

What role do landowners and developers play?

We will need to work with land owners and prospective developers in building up proposals and their implementation. This will be work that is focussed around how the town is actually built. We are aware that a number of prospective developers have produced masterplans and pictures showing how they may see possible development occurring and what it could look like. It is useful and interesting to see their suggestions but at this stage no real weight should be attached to these. East Devon District Council will be producing overarching work which will extend into looking at how implementation of the highest standard might best be achieved and engaging with the affected communities on this work. To this end the Council is very keen to be very proactive in the overall development and is exploring options for how this can be best achieved and how we can be most actively involved.

What role do neighbourhood plans play?

We appreciate that residents of many communities have given up hours of their own time to work on neighbourhood plans to take a proactive role in how development comes forward in their community. We have many excellent Neighbourhood plans as a result and appreciate all of the hard work that has gone into their production. Neighbourhood plans are however required to be in general conformity with the Local Plan and so a new Local Plan does not have to accord with existing neighbourhood plans. Although we do not want to go against any neighbourhood plans we are required to plan for the needs of the district as a whole which means that new homes and jobs have to go somewhere and inevitably this leads to proposals within the Local Plan which are contrary to some neighbourhood plans. This cannot be avoided if we are to meet the government's requirements. In time neighbourhood plans will need to be reviewed and updated and we will be on-hand to help and support communities through that process.

When does the consultation end and what happens then?

The consultation on the draft plan ends on 15 January 2023, so please provide comments by this date. This, however, is only one stage in a number of stages of future work.

We will review feedback received and use this to test whether a new community, in principle, is a good idea to plan for, whether there are credible alternatives, and if we go ahead whether we have selected the right site and whether our policy approach is appropriate. We envisage doing more work in 2023 around these matters and will look at scope for further targeted consultation. If we go ahead with new community proposals our masterplan will be subject to consultation and we will also reach the final stage of plan making, the Plan Publication stage (this is likely to be in 2023 or 2024). At Publication stage, we again seek comment on the plan and these comments, the plan and supporting evidence will go to an independent Planning Inspector for examination.

How do we know that you will listen to our comments?

No decisions have been taken yet and all this work is in draft form only, so this is a genuine opportunity to influence the proposals that go forward into the final draft of the Local Plan. The best way to influence the Local Plan is to comment on in-principle matters such as the overarching strategy or bigger policies choices as well as more localised matters such as the impacts on the landscape, ecology, infrastructure and other planning matters. The impact of proposals on views from your home or its value are not matters that we can consider.

We cannot guarantee that we will agree with all of the comments we receive but we guarantee that we will give them full consideration and publish a document showing how they have been considered and how they have influenced and shaped the next iteration of the plan.

What if the planning rules change?

We have to work to the rules, including to the legislation, set by the Government that govern plan making and such matters as housing numbers that we need to plan for. The rules may change in the future and if they do we will need to reassess what we are doing and planning for. But until they do change (if they do) the intent is that we will carry on in line with the rules as they currently stand, with flexibility to adapt, if appropriate, at future stages of plan making should this be appropriate.