

## West Hill Parish Council Response to Emerging Local Plan Consultation May/June 2024

West Hill Parish Council wishes to respond to the consultation on the EDDC Emerging Local Plan.

### **Background**

The purpose of the Green Wedge is to protect the character and setting of settlements and preventing coalescence. This is a very important matter for the communities of Ottery St Mary & West Hill as evidenced during the development of the made Neighbourhood Plan when the communities worked together to maintain separation of the two settlements. This is reflected in the “Settlement containment” area defined in Policy NP4.

### **Further Consultation May-June 2024: Draft Local Plan**

We note the draft Local Plan includes

- a. a Green Wedge between Ottery St Mary and West Hill, and
- b. the proposed boundary of the Green Wedge reflects the “Settlement containment” area included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

**West Hill Parish Council strongly supports the implementation of points (a) and (b) above.**

Our response to the questions raised in the Emerging Local Plan Consultation May/June 2024 is informed by resident’s feedback gathered at the West Hill Drop-in Session on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

The consensus view of those who attended is summarised below.

1. The principle of green wedges to prevent coalescence between neighbouring settlements is supported.
2. The boundary of the proposed green wedge between Ottery St Mary and West Hill is considered to be sensible and reasonable.
3. Whilst there is general understanding of the need for new housing and in particular affordable housing, the inclusion of preferred development sites inside the green wedges is confusing.
4. The most commonly expressed view is that the green wedge boundary should exclude the preferred development sites leaving the green wedge as an area in which there would be no further development.
5. There is concern that if a preferred development site is included in the green wedge then building on that preferred site would set a precedent that development is permitted inside the green wedge which appears to conflict with the understanding of what the green wedge stands for.

**West Hill Parish Council supports points 1-5 listed above.**

West Hill Parish Council has confined its response to one of the eight topics, Green Wedges, and in particular the Green Wedge between Ottery St Mary and West Hill. Our response to the consultation questions is set out below:

**We welcome your views as to whether the policy wording is appropriate:**

**Policy – Green Wedges**

Green Wedges are defined on the Policies Map and are identified as areas between settlements where constraints on development are essential to prevent physical or visual coalescence and/or maintaining the character and identity of those settlements or a sense of intrinsic separation.

Development will not be permitted in defined areas if that development would create in its own right or add to existing sporadic or isolated development or damage the individual identity of a settlement or could lead to, encourage or start to lead to actual or potential for settlement coalescence.

**Q Do you think the wording of the Green Wedges policy is appropriate?**

West Hill Parish Council considers the first paragraph of the wording is appropriate. The second paragraph is confusing as it leaves open the option for development to take place in the Green Wedge which appears to be contradictory with the purpose of the Green Wedge.

**Q: Do you think that sites proposed for new housing or employment development should be included in the Green Wedges (would the development be appropriate inside a Green Wedge?) or should the Green Wedges be redrawn to exclude them?**

West Hill Parish Council and members of the public considered it confusing and contradictory for the consultation to present a defined Green Wedge and to propose a development site within the Green Wedge.

Visitors to the Parish Council drop-in session expressed a strong view that the green wedge boundary should exclude the preferred development sites leaving the green wedge as an area in which there would be no further development.

The proposed boundary reflects the Settlement Containment Area defined in the current Ottery St Mary and West Hill Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The NP was developed by extensive community engagement and consultation.

West Hill Parish Council very strongly supports the proposed boundary without amendments.

There is concern that if a preferred development site is included in the green wedge then building on that preferred site would set a precedent that development is permitted inside the green wedge which appears to conflict with the understanding of what the green wedge stands for.

Cadhay Lane, between Exeter Road and Strawberry Lane is a clearly identifiable transition from urban Ottery to rural environments. Should the preferred allocation Otry\_01b be approved the transition between Ottery St Mary and the rural environment becomes unclear and confused. Should this site be approved, over time, we are concerned the land to the west of Ottery St Mary becomes increasingly vulnerable to development and the Green Wedge further eroded.

## Land between Ottery St Mary and West Hill

**Q How satisfied are you with the proposed Green Wedge between Ottery St Mary and West Hill?**

**WHPC Response**

5 Very Satisfied

**Why do you feel this way and do you have any other comments?**

West Hill Parish Council acknowledges the Draft Plan includes a proposed Green Wedge between the settlements of Ottery St Mary and West Hill.

West Hill Parish Council strongly supports the proposal for a Green Wedge between the settlements of Ottery St Mary and West Hill.

The proposed boundary reflects the Settlement Containment Area defined in the current Ottery St Mary and West Hill Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The NP was developed by extensive community engagement and consultation.

West Hill Parish Council strongly supports the proposed boundary.

Cadhay Lane, between Exeter Road and Strawberry Lane is a clearly identifiable transition from urban Ottery to rural environments. Should the preferred allocation Otry\_01b be approved the transition between Ottery St Mary and the rural environment becomes unclear and confused. Should this site be approved, over time, we are concerned the land to the west of Ottery St Mary becomes increasingly vulnerable to development and the Green Wedge further eroded.