

Lympstone Neighbourhood Plan

Speaking script for Cllr Rob Longhurst at Village Meeting 23 November 2012

Slide 1 – Introduction

Good evening

Thank you for coming to this presentation and discussion about new houses in Lympstone. This is an important and sometimes emotive subject, so it's important that the parish council gives everyone in the village the chance to hear about it and have their say.

This evening is mostly about housing, but it also deals with the wider work under way on the Neighbourhood Plan. The two are closely linked, as you will see.

I intend to talk for about 30 minutes – and this isn't 'death by powerpoint'. Afterwards you will have the opportunity to ask questions, both in open forum and individually of those who have been involved in the work on these proposals. You will also have the opportunity to each fill in a feedback form to be sent to EDDC.

Because you'll have a full opportunity to have your say in this way, I'm not proposing to take questions during my presentation.

Slide 2 – Contents

This is what I'm going to cover.

I will try to simplify and de-mystify the whole subject.

Some of this presentation uses the word 'we' and means a Parish Council Working Party. When the parish council was told by East Devon in August to review the village's building boundary line, it set up a working party.

This working party – a mix of councillors and volunteers from the village who were willing to put in the time – met numerous times and has now produced recommendations which have been accepted by the parish council.

The working party has worked in a rigorous and professional way under my chairmanship. Importantly, if there have been any potential conflicts of interest, either from land ownership or proximity, WP members have stepped aside for the part of the discussion on those specific sites. So no NIMBY-ism in the working party.

Slide 3 – Fit of Housing / Boundary Line work into wider Neighbourhood Plan

I said that the review of the building boundary line links to the development of the neighbourhood plan. This diagram shows the strands of the Neighbourhood Plan – the 4 squares and a circle on the left

Housing is one of 5 strands in the neighbourhood plan. Because the building boundary line and location of sites for housing development form part of the work to complete East Devon's new Local Plan, this is the most urgent part of the housing strand <as next slide explains>

Slide 4 – Fit of boundary line work with EDDC Local Plan

This slide says who is doing what and why.

You will see that we have had no choice but to work in the last 3 months to conduct and complete the review of the building boundary line.

You will also see that the EDDC Local Plan and our neighbourhood plan are closely linked.

Slide 5 - Number of new houses

The next part of this presentation deals with the number of new houses and where they should go – which the parish council sees as one of the most important decisions for the village in a long time. For the first time we – the village – can have the main say in this.

Slide 6 – Number of new houses & need

East Devon have decided that larger rural villages should add about 5% to their housing stock. For Lypstone, with around 800 houses, this means 40 more.

I have used ‘houses’ in these slides; it’s possible that a few might be flats.

East Devon think that the major growth in the district should be in larger towns such as Axminster, Honiton and Exmouth and especially at Cranbrook and on the eastern edge of Exeter. Without that policy we would be expected to add many more houses in the parish.

The growth in Lypstone should be mostly for local people – the young and the old as well as families, so we will need to consider the mix as part of our neighbourhood plan.

Slide 7 – Locations and sustainability

So we need to decide where the houses should go.

That isn’t just a general statement like ‘east of the village’. We have been tasked to look at individual sites which landowners have put forward to East Devon for consideration. This is the so-called SHLAA process. The parish council must work out the best available sites within given criteria.

Throughout our work we have looked hard at sustainability, which is a key tenet of government planning policy. The next slide spells this out, and we have incorporated sustainability into the criteria we have used to assess sites.

Slide 8 – Explaining sustainability

Sustainability means many things. From EDDC’s list of 20 sustainability objectives, the ones most important to the siting of new housing are :

1. To ensure everybody has the opportunity to live in a decent home.
2. To ensure that all groups of the population have access to community services.
8. To maintain and enhance built and historic assets.
10. To maintain the local amenity, quality and character of the local environment.
12. To promote and encourage non-car based modes of transport and reduce journey lengths.
14. To contribute towards a reduction in local emissions of greenhouse gases.

Slide 9 – Locational options

Looking at the building boundary line (or Built-Up Area Boundary), it’s very important to understand what it is.

It’s a black line on a map drawn about 15 years ago around the existing settlement. Many of you will have seen it on the maps in the display

There are some areas within the boundary line that don’t have buildings on. Some are open space like Candys Field and other are just ‘empty spaces’. Planners, such as East Devon’s normally see such empty spaces as the preferred places for new development, and they often score highest for sustainability as they are closest to existing amenities, schools and transport.

The rest of Lymptone parish outside the boundary line is technically 'open countryside', and planning policy is now to prevent new non-agricultural development there. Some of the land outside the boundary line has restrictive designations such as 'green wedge' and 'coastal protection area'. Other parts are at risk of flooding.

There is one important exception – land adjacent to the boundary line can be agreed – on an exception basis – for affordable housing. Affordable housing means social (rented) housing and shared ownership housing, generally wholly or part owned by a housing association.

And, as now, there may be periodic reviews of the boundary line, when planners decide that more building land is needed.

Slide 10 – Traffic

Decisions about where houses go need to be linked to an evaluation of their impact. In Lymptone's case traffic congestion and parking are particular issues on our village centre streets. So we have considered this along with the other criteria I will share with you later.

Slide 11 – Environment / heritage

And we all want to protect our heritage and environment, so we have looked at that closely. We need to make sure development is sited in the least intrusive places, and designed to be sensitive.

Slide 12 – Summary of general points

So to summarise, there are policies and rules that we have worked within.

This process is to bring forward land considered suitable for development from a strategic perspective - it is to say where we would LIKE development. It does not convey any other special right, privilege or status. All locations will have to go through the usual planning process and satisfy the normal planning criteria

I now want to turn to how we have dealt with the assessment of individual sites.

Slide 13 – Types of site

Types of sites for development

Firstly I need to make clear that we have dealt with three types of sites:

- those inside the building boundary line
- those outside but adjacent to the line
- And those outside and away from the boundary line – in 'open countryside'.
- We have looked at sites of many sizes, from a site suitable for a single new house, to some of many hectares suitable for 80 or more houses. We know, from the focus group we held on housing, that most people would prefer smaller developments of new houses – say less than a dozen, rather than big estates.

Slide 14 – Basis of analysis of sites

This slide shows the process we have used to decide on the preferred sites for housing development. We have considered 23 sites, regardless of their location in the parish.

We have used a rigorous process as we must be able to prove we have been objective.

I need here to say a bit about Goodmores Farm, an area on the edge of Lymptone Parish near Dinan Way. Goodmores Farm is partly in Exmouth and partly in Lymptone and is a likely site for new housing. We have accepted that this will happen; it doesn't count towards our 40 and we have not assessed the site as an 'edge of Lymptone / open countryside' site. What we have asked is that

money from the eventual developer under Section 106 and the like is spent for the benefit of Lymptstone.

Slide 15 – Criteria used

These criteria were based on the 20 Sustainability Objectives set down by East Devon. We tailored them slightly to accommodate the unique features of Lymptstone. We tested them with the focus group and re-assessed them. I believe we have got a good set of criteria against which we can objectively assess the locations.

Slide 16 – Listening to village opinion

It's very important to say that the Parish Council and the Working Party are committed to listening to what you as a village are telling us.

This doesn't mean that we can accept and act on every suggestion everyone makes – and sometimes the views of individuals will conflict. The parish council must decide what is best overall for the village.

The village meeting in April and the focus group in September were important ways of listening to you, and the main points are shown here. In particular the type of houses which are built influences the sort of people who live in them and that affects the way the village community develops.

Slides 17 / 18 / 19 – Maps showing potential development sites

Slide 20 – Analysis results

Here is the result of our analysis.

The last but one column gives the score for each site. I have ranked them in descending order of score. The last column gives a cumulative number of houses.

There is a small dispute with EDDC on how we treat windfalls – they say that these sites for less than 5 houses are to be treated as windfalls and not count towards the 40 target we have. So the number 43 in the final column if we take the first 7 sites becomes 41 from 5 sites without the two single sites shown.

We have fully evaluated the first ten to allow for drop outs or an increased target.

Slide 21 – Goodmores Farm

Most of this presentation has been about expanding the village. But there are pressures to develop elsewhere, with single sites in what EDDC call open countryside (eg on Upper Hulham Road, near Kings). And there's also an inevitability about developing Goodmores Farm. EDDC say in their draft local plan:

Goodmores Farm - mixed use development for 350 homes and around 5 hectares of land for mixed use employment (3 ha) and community and commercial facilities (2 ha).

The parish council think it best to accept this and fight for the right route for the Dinan Way extension and for Section 106 funding to come to the parish from the Goodmores Farm development.

Slide 22 – Other planning applications / SHLAA

The development of SHLAA and the new East Devon Local Plan, as well as our own neighbourhood plan all takes time.

So in parallel we're seeing one-off planning applications, of which the largest is the site north of

Glebelands. Although EDDC officers supported this, on Monday consideration of it was deferred January, giving time to see the results of our analysis and recommendations.

Slide 23 – What happens next

The feedback forms are important. PLEASE complete one and leave it before you depart tonight. We will look at them all – and every one will also be sent to EDDC.

Next week we will consider if the overall comments from the feedback forms and our discussions here mean that we should adjust our recommendations. We'll take the finished product - analysis and recommendations for sites for new houses – to the parish council meeting on Monday 3rd December.

Final words 'in summary'

In presenting to you our Parish Plan in 2010 I said that “this was one of the most important challenges facing Lypstone for many years” – I said the same thing when asking for your support in defeating the planned development on land to the North West of Courtlands Cross. At the risk of sounding like an old record I am saying the same again tonight.

East Devon have given their parishes a rare opportunity to be a part of planning their future – we can face this either with indifference, scepticism and negativity or we can see it as a positive opportunity to control our destiny and preserve “The Lypstone Way of Life” – I would urge you to see it as the latter.

Without doubt the most important factors in defeating the Courtlands development were the existence of the Parish Plan and the demonstrably massive local opposition. Our Neighbourhood Plan (with the input to this review) and your responses tonight will be the foundation stone on which we will fight future battles. The Planning Inspectorate have stated that from March 2013 if no Local Plan exists – then it is open season.

I foresee battles ahead for us – and to fight them we need the weapons – a strong Neighbourhood Plan and as ever the backing of the vibrant, forceful and committed community that is Lypstone.