

Ward Councillors Report October 2018

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Accidents in Newton Poppleford and Speed Watch.

Concerns continue to be raised about the number of accidents in the village; another crash into the bridge near Woodley’s Joinery, another near to Newton Poppleford Village Hall. Here were two more accidents earlier this month at the Half-Way Inn. Apart from the misery caused to the individuals concerned, traffic is often also redirected around Venn Ottery/Southern. I was walking my dog around this area last time this happened and the speed the HGVs came along the tiny lanes was astonishing, the sheer volume of cars is also shocking.

Speeding through the centre of the village continues unabated, especially at night time. The Parish Council share these concerns and are downloading data captured by the VAS cameras in the village for analysis. Given how many times these VAS cameras flash throughout the day and night, it is clear that a lot of traffic is exceeding the speed limit. Historically when speed checking is carried out by the police in Newton Poppleford, results show that speeding is a ‘perception’ rather than a reality. I will be interested to see if the VAS camera gives the same results, my suspicion is that residents are right and speed limits are often ignored. I will update you on the data in my next report. PC Steve Lee, our local Policeman is working on a speed watch through the village in response to requests from residents.

Housing Need in Newton Poppleford

I checked recently with EDDC on how many people were registered with **Devon Homes Choice** for either council housing, or housing association rental or shared ownership housing given that the King Alfred Way development is now being built with 16 so called 'affordable' houses on it. The numbers registered were quite low. I do hope more local people register with Devon Homes Choice to be considered for these new houses because although I have always been completely against this development, to see the 'affordable' housing element go to residents from outside of the village would add insult to injury. It remains to be seen what will happen about the 'doctors surgery' now Coleridge Medical Centre are no longer interested in renting the building; there is far more focus now on online appointments, telephone consultations etc.

Broadband in our Parish.

With so many residents in our parish working from home, I am grateful to our Devon County Councillor Claire Wright for an update on Broadband in our area. Claire reported the following:

Further to my report at the last PC meeting, the Gigaclear rollout has been delayed! A report is expected by DCC officers by Gigaclear asap as to their plan of action on how to get on with things.

Essentially, before the delay announcement, Newton Pop was not going to be targeted for fibre to the home broadband any time soon because it already has superfast broadband, although there are a few outlying properties in the north of the parish, who can make a case for connection as they currently have a poor service.

Harpford doesn't have superfast bb so was set to receive fibre to the home bb in quarter 1 of 2020. This date will now have slipped unfortunately.

I will update you more when I hear more re the Gigaclear position.

The Parish council bid to refurbish the public toilets.

The on-going delay with this is due to being unable to agree the Heads of Terms. The parish council want reassurance that in the event EDDC break the lease in less than the 20 years offered, (for example if EDDC decide to take back the toilets so they can build on the car part) the PC can receive back a percentage of the money spent on refurbishment, the amount of this to decrease over the lifetime of the works. The time it has taken to get to this point is astonishing. The Chairman of the Asset Management Forum understands the position of the parish council and is discussing this with officers. I hope to have better news next month, we have been actively pursuing this matter since August 2017.

General Housing need in East Devon

Earlier in the year I responded to a survey of local authority councillors into attitudes towards development in the English countryside. This was my response to one of the

questions which is going to be used in the book. It was written in haste so is not worded particularly well but it does summarise what I believe to be the case:

'Local need is different from local demand. Local need is housing for local people. Local demand shows that however many houses you build in rural Devon, there will always be a demand by those thinking they are 'going to live in the country' rather than the truth of the matter which are they are going to live in urban sprawl. There seems to be endless 'demand' for new housing in Devon from those living outside of that area. This rarely reflects actual local need but are built to meet government targets (with Local Planning Authorities swapping allocations and builders swapping allocations to build the ghettos of the future). The quality of new builds is often shockingly poor which goes directly against 'sustainability' - current development is not supposed to impact adversely on future generations'.

Campaign to Protect Rural England Report on Housing 2018

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is also concerned about inflated housing numbers. They commissioned independent research leading research firm, ORS (Opinion Research Services) to find out how many houses are being built throughout Devon, and how many we really need using housing projections, targets, costs and tenure, numbers planned and population trends across the entire County. The report was released at their conference on Friday 12th October in Tiverton. I could not attend due to teaching commitments but I am grateful to a fellow Independent Councillor Geoff Jung took notes which I précis below:

Housing Numbers.

The CPRE report claims there is a considerable over-estimate of housing need numbers, which cannot be justified thorough the analysis of evidence. The CPRE report suggests that standard methodology that the Government has introduced for assessing housing needs lacks robustness and cannot be justified.

The report clearly demonstrates that over the next 10 years an average of **4300** are required as opposed to **5800** in the whole of Devon's Local Plans. (**1500** extra per year **25%**)

In the case of East Devon, the Government calculated that the required "build out" numbers for homes should be **844** per year. This figure is below East Devon's own Local Plan target figure of **950** per year. East Devon is successfully achieving these figures which generously fulfil the Government requirements

In East Devon, the percentage oversupply is calculated at **40%** of homes required against the Local Plan Target suggesting a build out figure of only **570** homes per year.

Note regarding the GESP

It is becoming increasingly well known that the emerging Greater Exeter Strategic Plan proposes even more development than proposed in the East Devon Local Plan. There is a lack of land to build on in Teignbridge and Exeter so the GESP plan is to increase development in the rural districts in East Devon Therefore the EDDC local Plan plus the GESP plan propose more than 950 per year

Migration and population changes

There were fewer births than deaths between 2006 and 2016 therefore the increase in population is a consequence of inward migration.

There is an out migration by UK young people aged 20 to 24 and inward migration from similar aged international young people. This can be explained by people leaving the area after School, College or University and International students attending College or University in Plymouth and Exeter.

An extra 13,000 households formed between 2006-2016 from the existing population. There is a steady flow of inward migration from mainly other parts of the UK across all age groups from 30 and over, with only a small peak at retirement age of 55-64. Contrary to previous understanding of migration trends, there is a clear reduction of inward migration for the 65s and over.

Migration to East Devon is almost entirely from the UK with a large percentage from other parts of Devon, the largest flows from Exeter to East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge between the ages of 25-54, generally with a family.

For the over 55s East Devon, Torbay and Teignbridge have a net in Migration.

As many people suspected around **2/3** of the new housing provided is to meet the needs of people moving to the area, but this is doing little to fulfil a need for housing among local people forming new households.

People moving to Devon bring valuable skills and knowledge which contribute to the local economy, inward migration creates significant demand for extra housing, but also requires suitable level of extra provision of services in health and education.

Note: If a growing population means a better quality of life, why are people leaving towns and cities and moving to rural areas (which are increasingly becoming areas of suburban sprawl).

Barriers to ownership

There are barriers to home ownership in Devon:

The predominant number of homes being delivered are unaffordable to young households and too many comprise dwellings designed as “executive” housing. Building more houses has done nothing to bring house prices down to an affordable price, another of the myths we are expected to believe in order to accept high levels of development.

The affordability ratio in Devon is around 8.5% This makes it very difficult for first time buyers.

Housing needs

It is important that new housing of the right size, type and tenures provided for local newly-forming households, located in the right place to meet their needs.

New towns such as Cranbrook have not produced sufficient lower priced properties to rent or buy, with too many being open market prices well above the “affordable” level.

There is a need for affordable housing, or housing with occupancy restrictions, especially in rural areas, to encourage local households to stay, particularly younger ones and those on low incomes who work in the local economy.

The Office for National Statistics projections show that the population aged 75 and over in Devon will rise from 124,900 to 205,400 an increase of 80,500 (40% increase due people living longer)

Building specialist accommodation for older people generally releases a family home to the market or rent. However, they need to be attractive to older people, and well located.

East Devon, Plymouth, Teignbridge and Torbay are likely to require the largest amount of housing for older people.

Pricing

House price differences may lead to migration between various parts of Devon, with Exeter out migrating to surrounding rural areas, and lower earning households migrating to less expensive areas of Devon.

Cranbrook (25% Affordable) and Sherford (Plymouth, 20% Affordable) have not initially produced sufficient lower priced properties to rent or buy, with too many open market prices well above the “affordable” level.

The average 2-bed house in Cranbrook in Sept 2018 was £199,995 and a 3-bed £245,995. The overall balance between owners and renters did not change between 1981 and 2011 with around 33% being rental stock.

The CPRE Conclusions are:

New Housing development should;

- Be in or around urban centres, where transport, infrastructure and services exist.
- Prioritise the development of previously built-on “brownfield” land before greenfield land is considered, wherever possible.

NOTE in East Devon there are few brownfield sites of significant size available

- Be in keeping with the area where it is developed, in terms of size and type of development.

- Be planned to accommodate the needs of a growing elderly population, including housing specifically for older people, and options for them in general housing.
- To limit the number of second homes to release more properties, by councils increasing Council Tax on empty and second homes.

The CPRE report is free to CPRE members and £36 to non-members.

Thanks again to Independent Cllr Geoff Jung for access to his notes from the day.

EDDC Full Council Meeting 24th October 2018 – Notice of Motion on Housing Numbers

Inflated housing numbers have also been raised as a concern by Independent Councillors at EDDC and a Notice of Motion (A Motion is a request made by a Councillor for an issue to be discussed at a Council Meeting and for a decision to be made) was proposed for the Full Council Meeting on 24th October to force a discussion on this point.

“This Council expresses its deep reservations at the government requirements for future housing delivery in the East Devon District Council area. The Council is concerned that the requirement for a minimum of 844 homes per year might be more than would be necessary to meet local housing need, would be damaging to the countryside, quality of life and would prove deeply unpopular with the people of East Devon. The Council therefore agrees to further consideration as to whether there are exceptional circumstances and more realistic assumptions of demographic growth that would justify a lower figure which would be required to be fully evidence based and which, if demonstrated, would be fed into the GESP process. A request is made for a budget for the Policy Team to commission expert evidence to assess in light of it being contrary to officer views as reported to Strategic Planning Committee in September. The public should be engaged as part of any assessment in the normal way”.

Proposed by Councillor Ben Ingham, Seconded by Councillor Roger Giles
Supported by Councillor Megan Armstrong, Councillor Susie Bond, Councillor Matthew Booth, Councillor Cathy Gardner, Councillor Peter Faithfull, Councillor Geoff Jung, Councillor Rob Longhurst, Councillor Dawn Manley, Councillor Geoff Pratt, Councillor Val Ranger, Councillor Marianne Rixson.

Tory councillors voted against this on the grounds they had not read the CPRE report and referred the matter to the next Strategic Housing Committee in November.

Motion put forward by Conservative Councillors re DBS checks

“That this Council supports elected Councillors from May 2019 obtaining their own basic Disclosure and Barring Service check and the voluntary disclosure of the result and further that the Council will facilitate the publication of the result of the check on the Councillor pages of the Council’s website.”

Proposed by Councillor Ian Hall, Seconded by Councillor Iain Chubb
Supported by Councillor Brian Bailey, Councillor Bruce De Saram, Councillor Mike Howe and Councillor Pauline Stott

The proposer asked for a recorded vote. There was a clear lack of understanding in the room by some councillors who made comments like 'I have *passed* my DBS' as if it was a test with a surprise result. If you have no criminal record, your report will come back clear, it is as simple as that. The Basic DBS check is extremely light weight; the basic check is the only one that can be obtained by an individual. The enhanced checks can only be undertaken by authorised bodies for example by employers or councils for those in certain professions who may come into contact with vulnerable people (eg teachers, nurses, care roles, even taxi drivers etc)

The reality is a clear DBS might just mean you just haven't been caught for a particular crime yet... Jimmy Saville might have had a clear check for many years, although the Safeguarding policies in place today may have ensured that suspicions were taken more seriously and informers would have had a clear route to follow.

I mentioned at Full Council that overseas criminal records might not be captured in a UK DBS check. That was glossed straight over.....

There was a report today (27th October 2018) about wide spread abuse at a home for very emotionally damaged and neglected children in Suffolk - all those workers would have had clear enhanced DBS checks. A clear DBS check does not guarantee or predict behaviour.

I am not against DBS checks of course, they play a part, I do worry they can give a false sense of security to those who do not fully understand the limitations of them. It also raises questions over record keeping, Data Protection etc.

River Otter Beaver Project

We were lucky enough to have Mark Elliott from the Devon Wildlife Trust talk to us at Harpford Hall on the Beaver Project. Mark is a very knowledgeable and engaging speaker. The hour flew by and Mark was happy to answer all our questions. It was a really fascinating talk with plenty of eye-catching slides – the benefits the Beavers are having on the river appear to be mainly positive. He confirmed that Beavers are not carnivorous and do not eat fish or other river residents! They have had a really positive effect on frog spawn for example, which is benefitting from the dams they make, raising sitings from 10 I think in the first year of the project to approximately 680 last year. Otters are starting to share their lodges and benefit from improved water quality. Otter numbers are also very healthy. He explained how that works. He also showed us conflict management techniques, and how any adverse effects of the Beavers such as undesirable flooding of some farmers' fields were simply and successfully managed.

Val Ranger
Ward Cllr
Newton Poppleford and Harpford.
27th October 2018