

## Land adjacent to Barnards Hill Lane

A previous East Devon Local Plan 2020 – 2040, dated December 2021, included considered land that adjoins Barnards Hill Lane and Poplar Tree Drive, under reference LP\_Seat\_02. It covers the land shown below and distant views from above Axemouth and the golf course. It shows the urban conurbation of Seaton and the fringe of Colyford beyond. The recent suggestion for discussion is for 40 dwellings on this site. Other designated areas that increase Seat\_03 (70 dwellings) and Seat\_05 (100 dwellings) and Seat\_13a (39 dwellings) fall within the general comments to be noted.



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development to the east of this site have retrospectively erected external spotlights and there is no reason to suspect a development of Seat\_02 would be any different. The impact on ecology could be catastrophic. The Manor Farm caravan park has erected night-time flood lighting which is also likely to have an impact on bat and other nocturnal wildlife, and the proposed development will add to the movement of them to a point of destroying their natural migration and feeding sites.

### Traffic and Roads

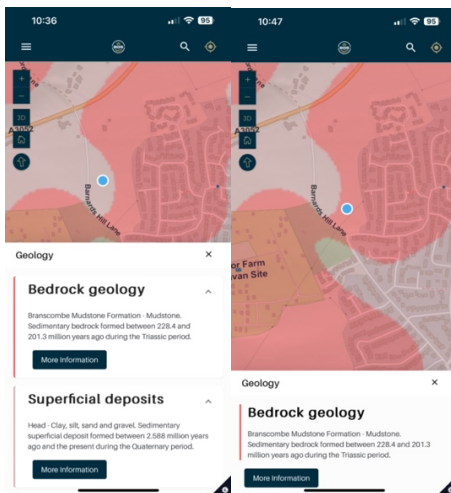
Access to the site would require major roadway amendments and the increase in traffic would impact the amenity value of the area negatively. Extra vehicle movements with those who will need to commute to places of work outside of Seaton will contribute to an already busy road system.

### Flooding

Seat\_02 floods and it is very clear from monitoring the site that is currently agricultural, that despite ploughing, after light rainfall, standing water at the north-east corner is considerable. Flowing water off the fields to the west of Barnards Hill Lane forms a river, and excess water floods across the site Seat\_02 down the south-east corner. The December report states the land is slightly elevated and gently slopes from west to east, whereas the land is set some height over the developments to the east and south, and the land drops considerably from north-west to south-east, with a tilt towards the east along its eastern boundary. As a result, water floods into the development to the eastern edge of Seat\_02, particularly towards the southern end.

The impact of a development would be to create a large impervious area that would contribute significantly to future flooding. The existing storm drains in the area frequently over flow due to low capacity under moderate to heavy rainfall; under storm conditions flood water cascades down the upper most element of Barnards Hill Lane, collecting some water run-off from site Seat\_02 but also the allotments, then continues down the developed newer element of Barnards Hill Lane for some distance before water is finally drained into the road gulleys. Excess water from a development of Seat\_02 would add a significant burden to a system that is already not able to cope.

Whilst permeable surfaces can assist in rainwater discharge, in reality, the sub-base make up and effectiveness is never as efficient as being able to state categorically that 100% of water falling on such surfaces can freely drain into the natural soils below. On this site, the geological map indicates that part of the site to the west comprises of Head (silts, clay with sands and gravel mix) with the remainder of the site (and that underlying the Head), to be Branscombe Mudstone which is an impervious layer that allows rainwater to freely run-off on the surface.



In addition, there are a number of springs that discharge out of the sloping site all along this hill side, contributing to the surface water run-off. Between the property of Barnards Mead and the development below to the east, there a 1.5-2.0m deep ditch that collects water from the gardens and from the farm land to the north of Barnards Mead. The ditch flows most of the time, but under heavy rainfall, the ditch becomes full and from inspection a raging torrent that turns and runs to the east steeply down to a culvert to the south of Mulberry Rise, and must pass under Rowan Drive. Currently, there is no such culvert to safeguard Oaklands Close or Lime Way, which due the fall of the land is at greater risk than further north where there is a ditch and culvert.

### Housing needs

Seaton has had extensive housing development over the years. Currently there are 60 empty properties including those for sale in Seaton. There any many houses and flats being built along the seafront and estuary significantly enhancing the area and providing accommodation that reflects the general demographic age of the population. These developments are a major contribution to not only housing, but also improving Seaton’s building stock and visual appearance. A great success in my view. But the lack of employment in Seaton and surrounding villages is recognised in the East Devon analysis. The need for further housing is questionable and anyone buying is either retired or would have to commute some significant distance to where there is employment. This creates vehicle congestion.

Housing suitable for retired persons is not selling currently, and the newer developments being built would cater more than amply for the needs, otherwise it would attract second homeowners that drive up the value of the remaining properties making it impossible for young families to live in the area. Too much housing creates these issues and negatively impacts on the desirability to live in Seaton.

### Services

There has been a lot of negative news about untreated sewage entering rivers and the sea. Seaton has an existing sewage treatment works. What often happens is that developments are approved with no coordination with how the incoming and outgoing services are to cope with the extra demand. In the case of sewage, the onus is on the Water authority to deal with it, but this takes time and money to prepare for the increase in flow. If indeed if is even possible to extend the capacity.

There is a great risk of untreated sewage entering the estuary which is a wildlife haven and then at Axmouth Harbour, a working fishing port and recreational area adjacent to the up and coming Seaton Quay development.

Other service suppliers, such as electric, gas, telecoms and water, all suffer due to the extra burden on existing properties and new ones alike. Broadband is one service that Barnards Hill lane suffers with, and any future development will impact negatively on such supplies

Schools, doctors and other medical and social needs all need to be catered for, and increased number of people will have a negative burden on existing services which must play a crucial part in establishing existing service supply capacity as a critical part of planning new developments, with reports from all suppliers making statements to viability to accommodate an increased population. Without such infrastructure information and projections on development will lead to poorer basic facilities within Seaton that would impact seriously on existing residents.

### Other Matters

Seaton has extensive history, especially Roman occupation. The site nearest Seat\_13a is crucial, as is the area to the north of Seat\_02 and Seat\_03, where the Seaton Stash was discovered. Such sites will not be exclusive to the area, but the ones that have been discovered, and I suspect that there will be sites elsewhere of equal importance that fall within the areas set aside for development, even though archaeological investigation had not yet been undertaken. Planning must not be granted, even in speculative form, without extensive ground radar investigation so East Devon District Council have the full facts. Otherwise, unscrupulous developers will be left to undertake their own and that would bias towards a favourable outcome for them, at complete detriment to the amenity value and historic benefit of the area.

### Summary

It is my considered opinion that any development of the site Seat\_02 would be not only detrimental to the landscape, but it would also impact on services, congestion, flooding and ecology. I do not believe there is a housing need in Seaton, and the provision of anymore would not serve those who work in Seaton or even would live here permanently.

The Green Wedge is an important break between the conurbations of Seaton and Colyford and there can be more merging of the two. Sadly this valuable space has been eroded over the years, such that there is precious little left to distinguish between the two.

The proposal to allow 40 houses on Seat\_02 would fill the entire site. This would be catastrophic for all the reasons stated above, and must not be allowed. There is no need for them and to build houses for commuters and holiday second homes would be a loss to the amenity value of the site. Many people walk up Barnards Hill Lane to take in a unique view that is not available anywhere else. To lose this would deny residents the opportunity to enjoy the Seaton they love, and cause upset and anger if this development were given approval to proceed.

Devon Wildlife quoted very recently: *With just over five years to go until 2030 – when the UK Government has a legal obligation to have halted the continuing loss of wildlife – the next government will be responsible for turning nature's loss into nature's gain.*

*In the past few weeks, we've barely seen nature feature as a priority in political party agendas. Politicians still seem to fail to grasp the depth of concern over disappearing wildlife and the serious impacts of climate change.*

*Nature is not an optional extra. We need a healthy environment for a thriving economy, for long-term food security, for our own health.*

*We care about nature and we know we are not alone. 82% of the public think that nature is important for our well-being and economic prosperity. 57% consider environmental issues to be at least as important as other issues facing the country.*

I therefore urge East Devon County and Local Councils to act now and consider all these issues and vote against the development of houses on this site and indeed other sites where they would negatively affect the town and services and wreck precious wildlife areas as well as increase traffic movements here and elsewhere.

Dated June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024  
By Mr R M Wallbank

