

Marlcombe New Town – Questions & Answers

Q1. Why should Marlcombe be built?

The number of new homes the government require us to build in the district cannot be accommodated in existing towns and villages and much of the district is protected as National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and so cannot accommodate new homes. Marlcombe presents an opportunity to build a sustainable new town in one of the less sensitive parts of the district and reduce development pressure on protected areas and existing towns and villages. Marlcombe will integrate new homes and infrastructure and deliver a high quality place at a scale which simply cannot be accommodated elsewhere.

Q2. Where will Marlcombe be located?

Marlcombe is proposed for land between the A30 and the A3052. It will be south of Exeter Airport and north of Westpoint and Crealy Adventure Park. It is being planned as a new, purpose-built community rather than piecemeal expansion of existing towns and villages.

Q3. How many homes are planned – and who will they be for?

The plan includes **8,000 homes initially (rising to a minimum of 10,000 in the long term)**. Our ambition is for at least **40% affordable housing**, and half of that will be for **social rent**. Affordable housing includes social rent, shared ownership, and affordable homes for buying. The aim is to help local people, including young families and key workers, access housing.

Q4. What about infrastructure – schools, healthcare, roads?

Marlcombe is being planned as a **comprehensive community**, with schools, GP and health services, shops, community hubs, and green spaces provided as part of the development. A new **Development Corporation** is being proposed to ensure delivery of infrastructure alongside housing.

Q5. Will the roads cope?

A phased transport strategy is a central part of the proposals. Marlcombe will prioritise **sustainable travel** – safe walking routes, cycleways and high-quality public transport links including new, high frequency bus routes. This will include links to both Cranbrook and Digby & Sowton stations where we are expecting there to be trains stopping more regularly. Road improvements are also being assessed, including works around Clyst St Mary roundabout and connections to the A30 and surrounding road network.

Q6. What about hospitals – won't this add more pressure?

The NHS and local health partners are being consulted. Marlcombe's design includes

provision for new health facilities and the development will be phased to align with investment in local healthcare capacity.

Q7. How will nature and the environment be protected?

Marlcombe is intended to be a **climate-resilient community**. At least 470 acres of green space, parks and play areas will be provided, with links to the **Clyst Valley Regional Park**. The masterplan will require biodiversity net gain, protection of existing habitats where possible, and climate-friendly design such as renewable energy and sustainable drainage.

Q8. Why build here instead of using brownfield sites?

Brownfield sites are sites that have been used for development in the past and are always prioritised where possible, but there are few available brownfield sites in East Devon and so they cannot meet the full scale of housing need in East Devon. Marlcombe is a planned settlement that can deliver housing **together with services and infrastructure**, rather than placing more pressure on existing towns and villages.

Q9. What about lessons from Cranbrook?

Cranbrook has shown both the challenges and successes of creating a new town. Marlcombe's planning is drawing on these lessons – including stronger upfront delivery of jobs and community facilities, better transport links, and greater emphasis on design and place-making.

Q10. Who owns the land?

The land is owned by a mix of private and institutional landowners. The council's role is to coordinate planning, masterplanning, and delivery in the public interest.

Q11. What is the timeline for delivery?

The council's **Strategic Planning Committee** considered the emerging masterplan in September 2025. Public consultation is expected in November 2025. The first phase of development is anticipated in the early 2030s, subject to further assessments and approvals.

Q12. How will sewage and utilities be managed?

New developments are required to provide modern sewage treatment facilities. Lessons have been learned from Cranbrook, and South West Water is being engaged early to ensure that Marlcombe has appropriate and sustainable infrastructure. Other waste water treatment options are also being considered, so that the waste water is processed in the town.

Q13. How can residents have their say?

We have already actively engaged residents through production of our new Local Plan over the last couple of years and through a consultation in September 2024 on proposed masterplan options. A further public consultation will begin later in 2025 and

includes more detailed proposals for Marlcombe than before. Residents will be able to give feedback on the emerging masterplan, and further opportunities for engagement will continue as the proposals move forward.

Q14. What happens next?

Marlcombe has been recommended as one of 12 “next-generation new towns” by the Government’s **New Towns Taskforce** and is subject to further assessments before being confirmed. East Devon District Council is working with national and local partners to shape how it is delivered, but housing numbers and the need for new communities are set nationally by Government.

Q15. If Marlcombe becomes a ‘next-generation new town’, what would that mean?

Government is expected to provide **additional funding and technical expertise** to support planning and early delivery. This could include support for transport, utilities, and infrastructure like schools and healthcare facilities.

Q16. Who is responsible for delivering Marlcombe?

While East Devon District Council leads planning and coordination locally, the council intends to set up a **Development Corporation** to oversee delivery and to ensure infrastructure, housing, services and design are properly integrated and delivered over time.

Q17. How will Marlcombe integrate with surrounding areas?

The plan anticipates good connectivity (transport, pedestrian/cycle links) to surrounding areas, including employment at **Exeter and East Devon Enterprise Zone**, train travel at **Cranbrook and Digby and Sowton**, and integration with the **Clyst Valley Regional Park**, and careful planning to respect existing communities and landscapes.