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# Luppitt Neighbourhood Plan

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## THE BALANCED COMMUNITY SECTION

with an audio introduction by Michele Turner, a Parish Councillor and member  
of the LNP Steering Group

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Luppitt Parish Council

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# 4. A Balanced Community

## 4.1 Introduction

The Luppitt parish community, like many other rural communities, faces particular neighbourhood challenges. These stem in the main from a relatively inflexible housing supply which is unaffordable for the younger generation, few local employment opportunities, limited parish facilities, a lack of public transport, patchy broadband and sparse local authority services. The Government acknowledges this dilemma in *National Planning Practice Framework - 'Rural Housing'* which states:

*'A thriving rural community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, cultural venues, public houses and places of worship. Rural housing is essential to ensure viable use of these local facilities.'*

In considering the smaller villages and hamlets of East Devon, the Local Plan sets out EDDC's position in paragraph 15.19:

*'In rural areas and beyond our villages the policy approach is one of development constraint and countryside conservation whilst recognising the needs of those who live or work there. There will be scope for small villages without Built-up Area Boundaries (BUAB) to benefit from limited development specifically to meet a proven local need, for instance for affordable housing or local employment. Paragraph 15.20 recognises the need for local village facilities - these locations cannot meet residents' daily requirements but improvements to the range of services and facilities which they offer will be encouraged.'*

Community facilities in Luppitt are limited and the stock of housing has remained fairly static over many years. Despite this, Luppitt can still identify with the Government's description as *'a thriving, rural community in a living working countryside'*. For that to continue, however, some improvement in housing supply, local facilities, employment and the availability of reliable broadband is necessary. The community in Luppitt is ageing as the younger generation is priced out of the limited housing stock and moves away. Meanwhile, available property tends to be purchased by non-residents leading to growing numbers of incomers. The once largely self-sufficient farming community has become almost totally reliant upon the car or van deliveries for its basic needs. These factors are all too common in rural communities and have become part of the modern dilemma which can be summarised as follows:

- Continued inflation in property prices excludes many residents, especially the younger generation, from owning their own homes and, therefore, forces dependents to move out of the area. A positive approach to the provision of at least some truly affordable housing could help redress the balance in an ageing local population and allow younger parish dependents to remain within the community.

- The rural peace and tranquillity of East Devon attract non-resident second home owners, and some dwellings have become holiday letting cottages - such demand effectively reduces housing stock for resident occupation. Whilst little can be done to prevent incomers from purchasing local houses and farms as second homes, planning policies through this Neighbourhood Plan could influence the outcome of planning applications for holiday cottages, where planning permission for change of use is required.
- Local facilities are quite limited but, with the exception of the loss of the school and post office, this has always been the case. The results of the *2018 Luppitt Parish Questionnaire* reaffirmed that roughly half of the community wishes it to remain that way with the other half seeking some new facilities including specifically a village shop and a more active pub. The addition of some further local facilities could reduce road trips and pollution and increase the sense of village community and improve self-reliance.
- Businesses and homeowners require fast and reliable broadband to carry out everyday activity. The current broadband service does not come close to the services available in urban areas. Well-organised, sustained pressure on the Government, local authority, and the service providers could help to speed up delivery of a top quality service.
- Opportunities for employment in Luppitt are currently limited to a handful of local businesses. The re-use of redundant traditional farm buildings for small-scale business and industrial use, combined with a positive stance towards attracting new enterprise, could increase the potential for local employment. This in turn will improve village vitality and sustainability by retaining the younger generation in the parish and reducing car journeys.

This Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address these imbalances through parish-focused planning policies and community actions. However the results of the *2018 Luppitt Parish Questionnaire* made it clear that any improvement in housing, facilities or employment must be balanced with the overriding desire to protect the landscape, natural environment and character of Luppitt for future generations.

## 4.2 Aims and Objectives

| Aims  | Objectives  |
|---|---|
| 1. To enhance the vitality of the parish whilst protecting the natural environment and landscape. | 1.1 Through the policies in this Plan the Parish Council will take a positive stance towards retaining the younger generation in the parish whilst addressing the needs of the older generation and working towards a well-balanced community within a framework of protection for the natural environment and landscape. |
| 2 To maintain and enhance a strong sense of 'community' within the parish.                        | 2.1 The Parish Council will investigate the feasibility of organising an action group of parishioners to work with the Parish Council to identify projects and initiatives to help maintain a strong sense of community that embraces both existing and new residents.  |

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|   | <p>2.2 The Parish Council will resist the further loss of local facilities and services.</p> <p>2.3 The use of existing parish facilities will be encouraged and promoted.</p>  |
| 3. To improve 'broadband' services across the parish  | <p>3.1 The Parish Council will work to establish the coverage and quality of 'broadband' across the parish.</p> <p>3.2 The Parish Council will keep abreast of the availability of broadband services within the parish.</p>  |
| 4. To support commerce within the parish whilst protecting the natural environment and landscape. | <p>4.1 Take a positive stance towards small-scale farm 'diversification' where additional local employment can be created and there is no harm to the landscape and neighbouring properties.</p> <p>4.2 Resist large scale and intensive proposals for agricultural, horticultural, haulage and contracting business and other commerce that may have an adverse effect upon the character of the parish.</p> <p>4.3 Encourage the re-use of redundant traditional farm buildings in appropriate locations for conversion to small-scale business uses and tourism.</p> |

### 4.3 Housing Supply and Demand

The last survey of housing was undertaken as part of the 2011 census<sup>19</sup>. It found 202 dwellings in Luppitt of which 143 were detached houses, 42 semi-detached, 13 terraced and 4 were flats. There are no permanent caravans and the figures above include a small group of council houses at Millrise, several of which are now in private ownership. Around 30 properties (15% of the total supply) are either second homes or holiday cottages, so the permanent resident population lives in 172 households (2.68 persons per household). Of these, 134 properties are owner occupied, 19 are privately rented and the remaining 19 are either social or 'other' rented, based upon the latest data.

Over the last ten years, roughly 20 applications for new dwellings (including replacements and conversions) were approved. However, whilst physical supply has increased marginally, the actual availability of the housing stock for parish residents has tended to diminish, as properties have been converted to holiday cottages or houses used only at weekends by those normally domiciled elsewhere. Whilst little can be done to limit second homes through the planning process, a balance must be struck between the provision of holiday letting cottages that make a contribution to the local economy and the use of that same unit of accommodation were it to be used for local resident housing.

In addressing this issue the *2018 Luppitt Parish Questionnaire* found that a majority (68%) of the community agreed that there is a need for more homes in the parish in the period to 2031. It also found that an overwhelming majority (83%) had a strong preference for any

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<sup>19</sup> Appendix 3 - Population and Parish Statistics

new development to take place on brownfield, rather than greenfield land (farmland, woodland and amenity land), and considered that the types of housing to be most beneficial to the community would be affordable housing, smaller open market housing, farm dwellings subject to an AOC and annexes. Housing is discussed more fully in Section 7. 'New Development and Change of Land Use' and it is important that the views of the parish community are a primary consideration when planning applications for development are made to help correct a growing imbalance in housing supply.

#### **4.4 Community Facilities and Services**

Luppitt is a lightly populated parish that has never had the critical mass to support a wide range of facilities. In the past, it had a busy post office and village school but, in common with many other rural communities, closure of both was decided by administrations outside the parish. In the distant past, each household was more or less self-sufficient, growing their own vegetables, baking bread, and buying locally produced milk, butter, meat and eggs. These were the characteristics of a 'sustainable' community.

Today, parish facilities include a village hall, pub, children's playground, cricket field, tennis court (now used as a car park), and the church. Most of these are well used, as are the local footpaths and bridleways and the 'open access' areas including Hartridge and Dumpdon Hill. As to whether additional facilities should be encouraged, the community was fairly evenly split<sup>20</sup> in its response to the *2018 Luppitt Parish Questionnaire*. 51% felt that the limited facilities help to protect the undeveloped charm and beauty of the parish given that, in planning terms, the lack of essential facilities defines the parish as 'unsustainable' and, therefore, unsuitable for further development. The opposing view (49%) was almost equally strong in its wish to see transport used less and the community become a little more self-sufficient with suggestions for additional facilities including a community-owned shop or mobile shop, a 'lively' pub selling food, a bus service and additional leisure and sport facilities. Such facilities can provide for the wellbeing of the community and play an important role in the development of a vibrant and sustainable neighbourhood.

As to the way forward, it is recognised that the need to use certain facilities outside the parish (supermarkets, health services, schools and transport connections) will always make some car trips inevitable. Further, as the technological world continues to develop at a pace, groceries and all manner of purchases can be ordered on-line and swiftly delivered by transport van or lorry. Far from the self-sufficient past, this is the new reality. An improvement in village facilities through the enhancement of those facilities and, possibly some additional facilities in the future, will help to increase a sense of place and provide opportunities for people to meet and interact socially. As community spirit improves and village participation by individuals increases, a more balanced and healthy community will develop. It is, therefore, expected that the Parish Council and the community will continue to support and encourage the use of the existing facilities and to enhance and improve those facilities where appropriate and to reflect growing demand.

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<sup>20</sup> P9, Transform Research Analysis Report available at [www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk)

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that arises out of planning permissions for built development. The levy is collected by the local planning authority and pooled to fund local infrastructure projects. With a Neighbourhood Plan in place, 25% of the CIL collected in respect of planning permissions within Luppitt parish would be retained for the benefit of the parish and could help to fund local community facilities.

## 4.5 Broadband

The broadband service in Luppitt is variable. For some it is good, but for others it is slow, unreliable or non-existent. The lack of a universal, fast and reliable service is a serious handicap for those wishing to set up in business or work from home, and frustrating for those who simply wish to keep in touch via the internet and to use its facilities. Future improvements towards superfast broadband will be encouraged and supported by the Parish Council where it is sensitively sited and sympathetically designed.

## 4.6 Economy and Employment

Analysis of the *2018 Luppitt Parish Questionnaire*<sup>21</sup> shows that only 48% of parish residents are economically active, i.e. in full- or part-time employment, self-employed or currently unemployed. 27% are economically inactive, i.e. typically retired, and 18% are in full-time education, i.e. at school, college, university or on a training scheme. Of the remaining 7%, some are carers and others look after the home.

Farming continues to be an important influence upon the character of Luppitt, but the local economy is now far less reliant upon agriculture for local employment. Most commercial farms are owned and operated by local families with little non-family employment except for seasonal contracting. Lifestyle and hobby farmers also tend only to employ contractors occasionally, which together results in very few full-time employees working in the local farming enterprises. Today, less than 20% of the local population are employed in 'agriculture', which includes both farming and contracting.<sup>22</sup> A hundred years ago it would have been closer to 100%.

It is acknowledged that many farms in the region are under financial pressure. Such pressure to survive inevitably leads to changes in farming practices and for some to consider 'diversification' into non-farming areas of business. This in turn may present challenges for the planning system. The Parish Council will look carefully at proposed schemes and support diversification where it can, particularly schemes that create local employment, providing that such proposals comply with the policies in this Plan and do not have an adverse impact upon neighbouring properties or the landscape. However, intensive enterprises in agriculture, contracting or horticulture will generally not be supported as they are considered likely to be harmful to the established rural character of the parish and the landscape<sup>23</sup>. Larger non-farming employers in Luppitt include the Otter Brewery (employing 35 full-time staff around a fifth of whom live in Luppitt); the Woodhayes Rural Business Centre which provides office units for letting, meeting rooms, a gallery/conference centre and

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<sup>21</sup> P4, Transform Research Analysis Report available at [www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk)

<sup>22</sup> Appendix 3 Population and Parish Statistics

<sup>23</sup> Luppitt Landscape Character Assessment available at [www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk)

is home to the local NFU office. Other employers include A R Tucker (agricultural contractors); and Paul Prettejohn (garden and agricultural machinery specialists).

The extent to which further business will be attracted to Luppitt in the future is partly a matter of market forces, but the availability of business accommodation is a key element for those not wishing or able to work from home. Opportunities may exist for the re-use of redundant traditional farm buildings for conversion to small office/business units, artisan workshops, art studios, and live/work units. In the interests of creating additional vitality in the parish, the Parish Council will generally support small-scale employment generating schemes, where proposals comply with the policies in this Plan and do not adversely affect neighbouring properties or the landscape. Scale is important, and the Parish Council will resist applications for large scale businesses, industrial or distribution schemes which are seen as too large and out of character with Luppitt's rural environment. Parish 'character' is independently described and recorded in the *Luppitt Landscape Character Assessment*<sup>24</sup> and its 'rural environment' is further described in the *Blackdown Hills AONB Management Plan*<sup>25</sup>.

Tourism is a sector through which Luppitt contributes to the local economy via the many holiday cottages, lodges and B&Bs scattered across the parish. The extent to which support will be given to planning applications for holiday accommodation in the future is discussed in Section 7.

## **4.7 Policies - A Balanced Community**

### **Policy BC1 - Protecting Parish Facilities**

Development leading to the loss or change of use of an existing community facility (including, but not limited to, St Mary's Church, the village hall, pub, children's playground, cricket field and tennis court) will be strongly resisted unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need or demand for the facility or that it is no longer economically viable.

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<sup>24</sup> Available at [www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk)

<sup>25</sup> [www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk](http://www.blackdownhillsaonb.org.uk)

## 4.8 Community Actions - A Balanced Community

**CA1 Community Action Group** The Parish Council will investigate the feasibility of organising an action group of parishioners to work with the Parish Council to:

(a) actively promote existing parish facilities and services and investigate improvements and enhancements that could be made to those facilities and services;

(b) identify, promote and manage projects and initiatives to help maintain a strong sense of community that embraces all parish residents.

## 4.9 Policy Justification

A thorough consideration of the basic issues and concerns facing the Luppitt parish community was undertaken through public consultation. This included many hours of discussion in steering group and sub-group meetings and opinions recorded in the responses to the *2018 Luppitt Parish Questionnaire*. The key output from the questionnaire, as analysed by *Transform Research Consultancy Ltd*,<sup>26</sup> is summarised in Appendix 8.

Proposals to address these concerns are in general conformity with the Local Plan and are supported by the National Planning Policy Framework:

NPPF Policy - '*Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy*'

*28 - Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should:*

- *support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;*
- *promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;*
- *support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres; and*
- *promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.*

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<sup>26</sup> Available at [www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk](http://www.luppittparishcouncil.co.uk)

The Local Plan is also supportive:

*Local Plan Policy - Strategy 4 Balanced Communities*

*By balanced communities we mean that in any area or neighbourhood there is a match between jobs, homes, education, and social and community facilities. Ideally these should complement the range of ages of the resident population and have appropriate access for those with disabilities. Key components of a balanced community include:*

*a) Securing employment provision across East Devon - this should reduce the need for commuting - where housing is proposed we will require new job provision.*

*b) Securing social, educational, green infrastructure and health and community facilities - these facilities play a central part in community life and new housing should help secure their provision and keep the community vibrant and viable by making financial contributions towards their provision or by providing such facilities on site where necessary.*

*c) Getting more age-balanced communities - many East Devon communities have an overtly aged population profile. Where this is the case we will encourage residential development that will be suited to or provide for younger people and younger families.*

