

# Open Letter from Farringdon Parish Council

## Marlcombe Proposal – Democratic Legitimacy, Land Impact, and Changed National Context

To East Devon District Council,

Farringdon Parish Council writes on behalf of its residents in response to the Government's decision not to proceed with the Marlcombe proposal as part of the national New Towns programme.

The Parish Council considers it necessary to state, with clarity and without repetition of earlier consultation material, that there is no democratic mandate within Farringdon for a development of this nature or scale. Opposition within the parish has been consistent, sustained, and formally expressed over several years. That position is a matter of public record and cannot credibly be characterised as residual, unrepresentative, or already addressed.

Marlcombe would impose a direct, permanent, and disproportionate impact on Farringdon. The proposal entails the loss of approximately 500 hectares of open countryside and productive arable land, and would result in the effective absorption and long-term overshadowing of an existing rural parish by a settlement many times its size. This represents a fundamental transformation of place, not a matter of mitigation or design detail.

The Parish Council notes that Marlcombe was advanced on the basis of exceptional national support, including infrastructure-first delivery, special governance arrangements, and central funding mechanisms. The Government's decision to withdraw that support constitutes a material change in circumstances. Assertions previously made regarding certainty of delivery, infrastructure provision, and strategic necessity can no longer be relied upon.

In this changed context, continuing to promote Marlcombe raises serious concerns regarding soundness, deliverability, and democratic legitimacy. While East Devon District Council may retain the legal power to allocate land, the continued exercise of that power in the absence of national backing and local consent is a matter of choice, not obligation.

The Parish Council is particularly concerned that pressing ahead would:

- expose the Local Plan to heightened risk at examination due to reliance on uncertain delivery mechanisms;

- result in the irreversible loss of high-quality agricultural land without commensurate or secured benefit;
- and further undermine confidence in the planning process among the communities most directly affected.

Farringdon Parish Council therefore calls on East Devon District Council to:

1. Pause the further promotion of the Marlcombe proposal in its current form;
2. Formally acknowledge that the withdrawal of Government support represents a material change in strategic context;
3. Reassess the proposal with full and proper weight given to the clearly expressed opposition of the affected parish and the risks now inherent in proceeding.

Any decision to continue regardless would be understood locally not as a technical necessity, but as a deliberate policy choice taken in the absence of both national endorsement and local democratic support. The Parish Council is clear that such a course would have lasting implications for trust in local planning and governance.

Alana Sayers (Mrs)

*Farringdon Parish Clerk*

Farringdon Parish Council

East Devon

*\*This letter was agreed at an extra ordinary special FPC meeting held at Farringdon Village Hall 2 April 2026 in the presence of Farringdon residents , EDDC representatives and members of the public.*