

**Comments on the ecological potential of the former Loddiswell Primary School
playing field at Elmwood Park, Loddiswell following a site meeting with Liz Montague
(Wild About Loddiswell), Lynne Kenderdine (Devon Wildlife Trust) and
Marc Biddle (Deer Wood Trust) on 26th October 2021**

As a Loddiswell resident since 1996 and experienced professional ecologist, I have taken a keen interest in the wildlife and habitats of the village over many years. Loddiswell is a quiet rural parish and this field offers one of the few remaining green spaces within the village centre.

The ecological survey carried out as part of the planning application for the housing development (Ref: 3752/19/OPA) identified the importance of the site for dormice, reptiles, hedgehogs and bats and, as a professional ecologist, I support this evidence and add that the site also supports a remnant ancient woodland flora along the southeast edge (recently subject to TPOs) and would note that it has been used by hunting barn owls over recent years and provides nest sites for breeding siskins and bullfinch amongst other birds. Mature hedges have a huge value for wildlife, particularly for landscape connectivity, and whilst these are often stipulated for protection in development schemes, these planning guidelines are all too frequently ignored by developers in the name of 'access' and then 'replaced' with poor facsimiles of these ancient structures and vital wildlife corridors. The grassland retains a variety of wildflowers within the sward and was identified by Lynne Kenderdine as being eminently suitable for green haying enhancement through DWT's Avon Valley Project. This could result in a very special flora being enabled to develop.

As Loddiswell falls within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the following statement applies: "In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty." (Section 85(1) of The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).

According to the SD AONB Planning Guidance document (South Devon AONB Partnership (2017), 'Planning for the South Devon AONB: Planning Guidance v1'), AONBs are obligated to ensure that "...a planning authority must take steps to accomplish the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB; and must have regard to that purpose in exercising any function in relation to, or affecting land in, an AONB."

Natural England in its 'Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England' sets out an evaluation framework for natural beauty criterion. This lists a range of factors that contribute to natural beauty including 'Relative tranquillity'. This factor would be seriously compromised should this site be developed for housing.

This site provides a vital green space between existing housing developments and could be further enhanced for the benefit of both wildlife and people, for recreation and mental wellbeing. For people of limited mobility, many of the village footpaths are inaccessible whereas this green space could be made easily accessible for all. With the setting up of the new 'Wild About Loddiswell' group, I am confident that, as a community and in partnership with the AONB, Devon Wildlife Trust, and other interested parties, we can muster the support and resources required to develop this site in a sympathetic manner which has nature conservation and community wellbeing at its heart.

In conclusion, I am strongly in favour of cancelling plans to allow a housing development on this remaining fragment of village green space and instead seeing a partnership created between the community, parish council, AONB and wildlife organisations to manage the site for the benefit of nature and the local community.

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