



# MODBURY PARISH COUNCIL

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Chair: Councillor Barbara Price

Clerk: Bleddyn Griffiths

27<sup>th</sup> January 2026

**South Hams District Council Committee hearing: Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at Follaton House**

**Land at Sx 656 522 Barracks Road Modbury**

**Planning Ref 4116/24/OPA**

## **RESPONSE FROM MPC TO THE HEARING.**

The application from Bloor Homes was for outline planning permission for 75 dwellings, north of, and adjacent to, the recently built Palm Cross estate with all matters reserved other than access. Representatives of Modbury Parish Council attended the meeting and presented our views. Councillors unable to attend subsequently viewed the proceedings online.

Our concerns relate not only to the decision but to the conduct of the meeting and the precedents set by the rationale given by SHDC in support of the application.

MPC objected to the application on grounds of access. The location required all traffic to go through the existing estate and exit onto what, locally, is considered a dangerous junction on the A379, the main road from Plymouth to Kingsbridge. The objections made by MPC can be accessed on the SHDC planning portal. *They are here attached for ease of reference, together with the representation to the hearing on January 15<sup>th</sup>.*

Given that the central purpose of this application was to determine access, it is extraordinary that the Highways Officer was not present to speak to his report. Councillors were therefore denied the opportunity to challenge or seek clarification and were reduced to hypothesizing about key matters such as management of construction traffic and safe passage through and out of the site. Concerns raised by these matters were dismissed by an Officer saying that the report should stand as it was. This was a completely unacceptable way to conduct a hearing specifically focused on the issue of access. In the absence of the Highways Officer there should have been a colleague designated to attend or the hearing deferred.

The changes to planning instituted by national government to stimulate house building include changes in the way land supply should be calculated. This has resulted in SHDC no longer having a five-year land supply and developers seeking to employ the "Tilted Balance" approach to achieve planning permission in areas where this would previously have been

problematic. SHDC were aware of concerns regarding the possible consequences of this approach for communities in the South Hams. On 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025, a letter was sent to all parish councils outlining the situation regarding Neighbourhood Plans and the rationale by which it was believed that parishes which had NPs “made” within the past 5 years were shielded from opportunistic planning applications. The letter named Modbury, whose NP was made in 2023, and all other parishes with NPs made within that period. (*Letter attached*)

It was with this understanding that Modbury responded to the above application for 75 homes outside the settlement boundary. This boundary is depicted in our NP and ratified by SHDC. Our responses were carefully considered and approved by the full Parish Council and, we believe, represented a cogent response to the application.

Our submission to the hearing included interpretation of the position of Modbury’s NP in line with the letter of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025. By the time we were called to make our representation, however, any protection afforded by our NP had been effectively undermined and dismissed by the Officers. The reasoning why this protection was no longer in place was tortuous in the extreme and sought to rewrite history. The insistence of Officers that the Joint Local Plan provides only indicative targets for housing was wholly inaccurate, and the attempt to shift responsibility to the NP for not being proactive in bringing forward sites was nothing short of shameful.

When the JLP was produced Modbury was allocated sites and given a target of 175 homes under the Thriving Towns and Villages category. When we attempted to bring forward a more suitable site than one of those allocated in the JLP we were told that we could not substitute as it would not yield the exact same number of houses as the allocated site. This despite fulfilling criteria relating to accessibility, safe movement and balanced spatial development, as required by the JLP. It is clear from this that the target was not indicative, it was absolute, and Modbury attempted to be constructive in bringing forward an alternative site.

Modbury has already taken more housing than other communities of similar size. We have done our best to integrate the new estate into the rest of the town. We are not resistant to new homes for those who need them. We have always said that what we need is the right type of housing in the right place. Dismissing the settlement boundary to enable a large market-led development in a designated exception site does not align with the needs of the community and limits the amount of affordable housing which could be achieved with an exception site.

The Modbury NP was the result of 7 years of community consultation. It was produced in close consultation with SHDC and reflected the desire for balanced, accessible development to meet the needs of the local community. To be confronted at this meeting with a statement which completely disregarded what was meant to be an exercise in local democracy by telling us the goal posts had changed was disrespectful in the extreme. No one considered that we ought to have been informed of this change of position prior to the meeting.

We were shocked by the atmosphere of hostility in the meeting. Concerns raised by Councillors were disregarded by Officers, thereby creating an adversarial situation in which Councillors appeared to be bullied into accepting Officers’ recommendations. This was reflected in the vote in which more than half of the Councillors abstained.

We understand that Local Planning Authorities are under pressure from national government to provide development land. Unsurprisingly, pressure is also being applied by legal advisers for developers, as specifically mentioned in this case. Rather than discuss with local

communities how this can be managed, what is emerging is an unedifying rush to dismiss anything which might get in the way of fulfilling those demands. This includes NPs.

This is not just a decision on one planning application. It is about dismantling local democratic structures and will have far reaching consequences, not only for Modbury but for all the other parishes who mistakenly believed the advice they were given last year and trusted the LPA to represent their interests.

We urge all those other parishes in a similar position to Modbury to review their position and to contact SHDC about the status of their NPs.

We are entitled to a meeting to discuss all the above concerns. We look forward to your response.

Modbury Parish Council

27<sup>th</sup> January 2026