

Natural Environment 1: Local Plan Inquiry hearing 13th May 2026

Whilst we support the NE1 policy, we believe the boundary supporting the NE 1 policy to the north of Pinhoe, specifically at Church Hill, has been incorrectly drawn.

This statement supports our initial objection, which the city Council have further rejected. Our initial objection, drawings and references used within that document remain relevant.

We think the inclusion of housing and the field to the south of Woolsgrove House within the NE 1 policy is flawed for the following reasons:

Policy NE1,10.5, states that the Exeter Landscape Sensitivity Study appraised open countryside within and around Exeter. The subject homes and Land we are referring to have been included within this zoning, however they are neither open countryside, nor visible in the immediate surrounds, and therefore do not meet the study criteria or need protection from development.

The subject houses and field are not featured within the Green Infrastructure Plan, and neither is the field identified within the Exeter biodiversity map. The field is excluded from the pale Green zoning. This suggests that it is accepted that the location of the field and homes are not landscape sensitive, nor offer biodiversity or critical Green infrastructure opportunities.

The Exeter Landscape Sensitivity Assessment assessed Land parcels “playing a role in the strategic landscape setting of the city. Predominantly this included ridges, slopes, tree and wooded areas and open undeveloped skylines, strong river Valley corridors and areas of distinctive rural landscape value in close proximity to the urban area. Many of these areas would be well used for informal recreation such as Valley parks and contribute to the Green infrastructure network”.

The subject properties, and especially the field forming part of site 36 offers none of the above. They’ve been covered by a blanket extension of policy NE 1 that is unjustified and unsustainable and causes unnecessary hardship to the residents and owners of the properties within this designation when a straight line would form a definitive urban boundary, clear to all.

Nothing about the field element of site 36 elevates it into the valued landscape category, it is an undeveloped landlocked privately owned field surrounded by housing, which masks it from the neighbourhood. It is not rural in nature.

Under the Exeter Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, the subject houses and field to the south were included with land to the north to form a package straddling this accepted urban boundary of Exeter, and is identified as LP12. This existing urban boundary has been referred to in three planning appeals for the sites to the north and east and was upheld by the inspectors as being the settlement boundary for the City of Exeter.

We feel that inclusion of Lands both above and below this accepted settlement boundary line has resulted in the wrongful drawing of the boundary for policy NE1 at this location.

In the Sensitivity Assessment for this parcel of Land, referenced LP 12, it refers to the Land parcel being sensitive to housing particularly on the upper levels as it would intrude up the Hillside. We agree, Land to the north of the existing housing, Woolsgrove, Woolsgrove House, One and 2 Hill cottages and the Turret would intrude up the hillside.

However, any development, on the The field below these houses, would not intrude upon the hillside, as it would be below the level of the existing housing. The Assessed Sensitivity Evaluation on LP 12 for housing was high/medium. The upper levels being high and the lower levels medium.

In terms of landscape value, for LP 12 under “Tranquility “, discussed the upper slopes adjoining Church Hill and Church Lane, but did not refer to the field to the south of Woolsgrove House, which is surrounded by housing on all sides.

Under Landscape Susceptibility factors, the settlement pattern refers to incremental settlement edge dwellings and small sheds. Nowhere else on the NE 1 boundary around Exeter have houses been included within the policy.

Under the heading of Settlement Edge Character, it was stated that the incremental settlement edge dwellings are apparent on the lower hillside forming a loose edge with Green space and new housing development rising up the slope to the south and Southeast. This indicates it is accepted that the settlement edge is exactly that and dwellings have been approved up to this location, for example the adjoining Nexa fields development discussed in detail later.

Under Visual Relationship of the Area with the Settlement, it was stated that the upper slopes act as part of the prominent backcloth and setting to the City linking to other areas to the east and west; the lowest slopes below existing housing are less widely apparent. This suggests a medium classification of the field below Woolsgrove House.

The existing houses on the urban boundary should not be included within Land zoned NE1. The Land is already developed, it does not have an under developed character. Neither do the houses comply with the uses proposed for development permitted within the NE 1 area, namely agriculture, forestry etc. Should these homes need to be replaced, for example, following a fire, the NE 1 policy as drafted and affecting these homes would prevent a rebuild. This is unfair on the people who live in these homes, and been constructed for the best part of 100 years.

Inclusion within the NE1 allocation is unjustified as these properties play no part in a quality landscape setting for Exeter. The release of site 36 for residential development is acceptable from a landscape setting point of view and can be controlled through the planning process and enable much needed homes to be built in a sustainable location.

We support policy NE1 in protecting the upper slopes beyond the existing urban development, and feel a line can be drawn easily to the north of the tarmac private driveway serving most of these houses. This takes out the unsustainable nature of the policy in relation to existing housing.

It is noted that none of the new build housing to the east and west of these properties is included within policy NE 1 and again, it is unsustainable to include Brownfield Land i.e. existing residential Land within the policy designation.

This existing urban settlement boundary does not breach the skyline, as it is located halfway up Church Hill. Therefore, there is no need to add additional safeguards, beyond existing planning policies at this location.

Both the Landscape setting areas and valued landscape assessments, as mentioned above, confirm the slopes below the existing urban development boundary are classified medium in terms of sensitivity to housing development.

When considering the Nexa Field's application to the West of site 36 the planning officer stated in his Report committee dated 27th of April 2020,....." *it is necessary to consider the context within which the application site (Nexa Fields) is located. Recent approvals and development at Pinhoe Quarry and Home Farm respectively will have resulted in an extension of the urban area in this location. The site will be set within the context of these two major residential schemes and within the existing established development to the south. It is considered that its contribution to overall landscape character of area in strategic terms is now diminished. In light of recent appeal decisions it would be difficult to argue that the landscape quality of this site should be given a greater weight than the provision of housing in this instance. Accordingly, it is considered that the principle of residential development in this location is acceptable.*"

The city council approved this full planning application on the 6th April 2021 and Construction of Nexa Fields started in March 2022, the site has been fully completed April 2025.

Nexa Fields abuts the subject field to the south of Woolsgrove House, and was originally all part of the same field.

This subject field, together with Woolsgrove were submitted by all the owners for allocation for residential development. This was considered by the city Council under site reference number 36. We feel its consideration was materially affected by the non-referencing of the Nexa Fields development when considering the relevant planning history for the site.

Whist Woolsgrove passed the assessment, the field element did not. We feel this is due to the fact that when considering the site sustainability assessment stage A, it was incorrectly stated that the landscape sensitivity assessment assessed the field was "highly" sensitive to residential development. This is incorrect, as stated above, the landscape sensitivity assessment described this lower area, below the existing urban settlement boundary, as having "medium" sensitivity to residential development.

Taking into account the acceptance of housing development at Woolsgrove, sat higher than the subject field and also the construction of 40 homes at Nexa Fields together 500 homes to the east and west, approved at appeal, all on land of medium landscape sensitivity, the subject field can be classified as a sustainable residential development site.

We therefore suggest that it was incorrect to dismiss the residential potential of site 36 as a whole, it is sustainable, and within the urban area of the city, and is in fact an infill site. An acceptable scheme will require planning permission in the usual way. Its inclusion within the NE1 zoning is unjustified, as it plays no part in providing a quality landscape setting for Exeter.

In conclusion, and for the above reasons, we believe that the boundary for policy NE 1 should be drawn along the northern edge of the tarmac private drive, to exclude existing housing and Land to the south. This provides a definitive, sustainable and indisputable urban development boundary to the north of city, at Church Hill, Pinhoe.

Liz and Nigel Escott
24th April 2026