

LEAVE DEVON ALONE

Community Information Pack

Understanding the Proposed XLinks AI Data Centre & Battery Energy Storage System

A factual guide for residents, businesses and visitors.



Welcome to the Meaning of LDA

Thank you for taking the time to read this information pack.

This guide has been produced by Leave Devon Alone to help people understand the proposed XLinks AI Data Centre and Battery Energy Storage System planned for land near Great Torrington. Over the last few months, these proposals have become one of the most talked about developments in North Devon. The scale of the project has led to widespread discussion throughout our towns, villages and farming communities, with many people wanting clear, reliable information about what is being proposed.

The proposed development would cover more than 800 acres of countryside. To put that into perspective, that is an area larger than many people can easily picture. It would introduce large scale industrial infrastructure into what is currently a predominantly rural landscape. Planning documents for projects like this often run into thousands of pages. They contain technical reports, environmental studies, engineering drawings and specialist assessments. Whilst these documents are publicly available, they are not always easy to read or understand without experience of the planning system.

That is why this guide has been written.

Our aim is to bring together the key information in one place, using straightforward language that everyone can understand. We want local people to be able to read about the proposal, understand how the planning process works and make up their own minds based on the available information. This document is not a replacement for the official planning documents. Instead it is intended to help explain them and provide context for the discussions taking place across North Devon.

Leave Devon Alone was formed by local residents who believe communities should be well informed before decisions are made that could have a lasting impact on the places where they live, work and spend their time.

People will naturally have different opinions about the proposals. Some will support them, others will oppose them and many will still be deciding how they feel. Whatever your view, we believe everyone should have access to clear information and the opportunity to take part in the planning process. Throughout this guide you will find explanations of the proposals, maps, photographs, planning information and answers to some of the questions we are most frequently asked. Since the campaign began, more than 23,000 people have signed petitions, our campaign has reached over 500,000 people, and thousands have joined our community to learn more about what is being proposed. We hope this guide helps you understand the proposals and encourages you to explore the planning documents for yourself before forming your own opinion. Thank you for reading.

About This Guide

This guide has been produced by Leave Devon Alone, a community campaign established to help local residents understand the proposed XLinks AI Data Centre and Battery Energy Storage System near Great Torrington.

The proposal is one of the largest developments ever put forward in North Devon and has generated significant public interest across the county.

Planning documents for developments of this scale can run to thousands of pages and often contain highly technical information. This guide has been written to bring together key facts in one place, using clear and accessible language.

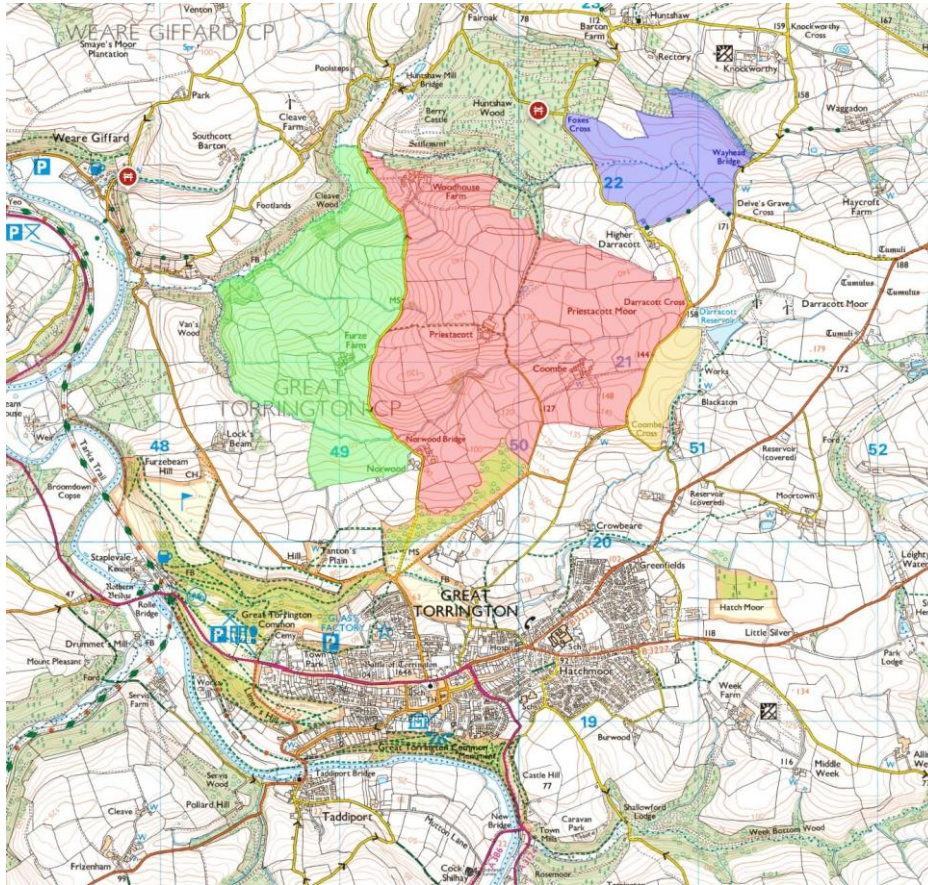
Our aim is to explain what is being proposed, how the planning process works, and where people can find further information should they wish to explore the project in more detail.

Throughout this document, we have included maps, photographs, explanations of technical terms and summaries of the issues being discussed by local communities.

We encourage every reader to examine the available information, consider a range of viewpoints and reach their own conclusions.

What is being Proposed?

XLinks has announced plans for the Devon Data Campus, a major new development on land between Great Torrington, Huntshaw and Weare Giffard in North Devon.



The project consists of two separate planning applications that the developer intends to submit to Torrridge District Council. One application is for an AI Data Centre Campus, and the second is for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). Although they are separate applications, they are intended to form one wider campus.

Together the proposals would occupy more than 800 acres of countryside, making this one of the largest industrial developments ever proposed within the Torrridge district. The site is currently made up of predominantly agricultural land and lies close to several rural communities, including Great Torrington, Huntshaw and Weare Giffard.

According to information published by the developer, the proposed AI Data Centre would provide up to 1.5 gigawatts of computing capacity, supported by an on site 1.8 gigawatt Battery Energy Storage System. The developer says the project is intended to support the UK's growing demand for artificial intelligence computing and energy infrastructure.

Projects of this size involve far more than the construction of a single building. They typically include multiple large buildings, electrical infrastructure, internal roads, drainage systems, security measures, utility connections and landscaping. Detailed plans and environmental assessments are prepared as part of the planning process before any decision is made.

As with all major planning proposals, the applications will be considered through the planning system. The role of Torridge District Council is to determine the planning applications in accordance with planning law and relevant legislation planning policies, taking into account consultation responses and other material planning considerations.

The proposals have generated considerable discussion across North Devon. Some people see potential opportunities associated with investment and employment, while others have raised concerns about the possible effects on the countryside, farming, biodiversity, transport, landscape and nearby communities.

This guide has been written to explain the proposals in plain English, helping readers understand what is being proposed, how the planning process works and where they can find further information before forming their own views.

At A Glance

Developer:	XLinks
Project:	Devon Data Campus
Planning Authority:	Torridge District Council
Applications:	AI Data Centre and Battery Energy Storage System
Location:	Land between Great Torrington, Huntshaw and Weare Giffard
Area:	More than 800 acres of countryside

Who Is XLinks?

XLinks is a UK infrastructure company established in 2019. The business originally became known through its proposal to import renewable electricity from Morocco to Great Britain using one of the world's largest subsea electricity cable systems.

The Morocco to UK Power Project was presented as a large scale renewable energy scheme combining solar generation, wind generation and battery storage. However, in June 2025 the UK Government announced that it would not support the project through a Contract for Difference. Without that support, the project did not proceed as originally planned.

Since then, XLinks has continued developing other projects, including the proposed Devon Data Campus in North Devon.

The Devon Data Campus is separate from the Morocco project. It has been promoted as a major artificial intelligence computing campus supported by a large Battery Energy Storage System. Together, the proposals would occupy more than 800 acres of land between Great Torrington, Huntshaw and Weare Giffard.

Rather than submitting one planning application, XLinks intends to submit two separate applications to Torridge District Council. One relates to the AI Data Centre and the second relates to the Battery Energy Storage System. Although considered separately through the planning process, both developments are intended to operate as part of the same overall campus.

As with any planning application, the proposals will be assessed against national planning policy, local planning policy, environmental assessments and consultation responses before any decision is made.

At the time of writing, no planning permission has been granted.

Why North Devon?

One of the most common questions asked by local residents is simple.

Why was this location chosen?

According to information published by XLinks, the proposed Devon Data Campus has been identified because of its access to existing electricity infrastructure and its potential to support future demand for artificial intelligence computing within the United Kingdom.

The proposed site is located between **Great Torrington, Huntshaw** and **Weare Giffard**, in predominantly rural part of North Devon. The surrounding landscape is made up of largely agricultural land, farms, hedgerows, woodland and small rural communities.

The company has stated that the site's proximity to the National Grid transmission network is one of the key reasons it is considered suitable for a development of this scale. Large AI data centres require significant and reliable supplies of electricity, together with supporting infrastructure capable of operating continuously.

Unlike many commercial developments, AI data centres cannot simply be built wherever land is available. They require access to high capacity electrical infrastructure, substantial cooling systems and enough land to accommodate buildings, supporting equipment, internal roads, drainage systems and security measures.

The proposed Devon Data Campus would also include a Battery Energy Storage System. According to the developer, this would support the operation of the campus and form part of the wider electrical infrastructure serving the site.

The location has prompted considerable discussion within the local community. While the developer has identified technical and infrastructure reasons for selecting the site, many residents have questioned whether a predominantly rural area is the most appropriate location for a development of this size.

Questions have also been raised about the relationship between the proposed site and the surrounding countryside, agricultural land, local roads, nearby homes and villages.

These issues form part of the wider planning process and are among the matters that planning officers and decision makers may consider when assessing the applications, alongside planning policy and technical evidence.

The Planning Process

Large planning proposals do not receive approval overnight. Before any decision is made, developers are expected to carry out consultations, prepare technical reports and submit detailed planning applications for consideration by the local planning authority.

The proposed Devon Data Campus is expected to be submitted to **Torridge District Council** as **two separate planning applications**. One application relates to the proposed AI Data Centre campus, while the second relates to the Battery Energy Storage System. Although submitted separately, the proposals are intended to operate together as part of the wider Devon Data Campus.

Prior to the submission of any planning application, developers often undertake public engagement to present their proposals, answer questions and gather feedback from local communities.

Update**

The public information events that were originally scheduled for **July 2026** have since been **postponed until September 2026** by XLinks.

According to the company, the additional time is intended to allow for wider engagement before the planning applications are submitted. Following the submission of the applications, Torridge District Council will publish the planning applications documents on its planning portal. Members of the public will then have the opportunity to read the documents and submit comments before a decision is made. The applications will be reviewed by planning officers alongside specialist consultees, technical reports and the relevant planning policies. Planning decisions are based on planning law and what are known as **material planning considerations**. These include matters such as landscape, ecology, highways, flooding, heritage, visual impact, noise and other relevant planning issues.

Petitions and public comments help demonstrate the level of community interest, but planning decisions are not determined solely by the number of objections or signatures received.

Once the consultation period following submission has ended, planning officers will prepare a report and recommendation. Depending on the nature of the application, the final decision may be made by Torridge District Council's Planning Committee. Throughout this process, residents, businesses, community organisations and statutory consultees all have opportunities to contribute to the planning record.

What is an AI Data Centre?

Artificial Intelligence, often shortened to **AI**, is becoming an increasingly important part of everyday life. From internet searches and online shopping to medical research, banking and scientific modelling. AI systems rely on powerful computers to process enormous amounts of information.

Those computers are housed inside specialist facilities known as **Data Centres**.

A data centre is a secure building containing thousands of computer servers. These servers work continuously to store information, process data and provide digital services used by businesses, governments and individuals around the world.

An **AI Data Centre** performs a similar role but is designed specifically to support artificial intelligence. AI applications require significantly more computing power than many traditional digital services, meaning they often need larger buildings, more electrical capacity and more advanced cooling systems.

Unlike office buildings or factories, the majority of activity within a data centre takes place inside secure server halls. These areas are carefully controlled to main stable temperatures, protect equipment and ensure continuous operation.

Because servers generate large amounts of heat, cooling systems form an essential part of any modern data centre. Depending on the design, cooling may involve air based systems, liquid cooling technology or a combination of both. Electricity infrastructure, back up systems, security measures and network connections are also key components of the overall site.

Data centres operate around the clock. Their role is to provide reliable digital infrastructure capable of supporting services that many people now use every day, often without realising it.

The proposed Devon Data Campus has been described by XLinks as a facility intended to support future demand for artificial intelligence computing within the United Kingdom. According to the company, the project would provide substantial computing capacity alongside supporting energy infrastructure.

As with any major development, the detailed design, environmental impacts and planning considerations will form part of the planning process and will be assessed before any decision is made.

Did you know?

Every time you use cloud storage, stream a film, send an email or search the internet, your information is like to pass through one or more data centres somewhere in the world. Artificial Intelligence systems use similar facilities but generally require much greater computing power than traditional digital services.

What is a Battery Energy Storage System?

Battery Energy Storage Systems, commonly referred to as BESS, are large scale facilities designed to store electricity for use when it is needed.

Unlike traditional power stations, battery storage facilities do not generate electricity. Their purpose is to store electricity produced elsewhere and release it back into the electricity network when demand increases or when additional power is required.

As renewable energy sources such as wind and solar become a larger part of the Uks electricity supply, battery storage has become increasingly important. Electricity generated by renewable sources cannot always be used immediately, particularly when demand is low. Battery storage allows surplus electricity to be stored and used at a later time.

A typical Battery Energy Storage System is made up of large battery units housed within secure containers or purpose built enclosures. The site may also include transformers, substations, cooling equipment, fire protection systems, security fencing, access roads and control buildings. The proposed Battery Energy Storage System forms part of the wider Devon Data Campus. According to the developer, it would support the operation of the proposed AI Data Centre and contribute to the management of electricity supplied to the site. Developments of this nature are designed to operate continuously and require careful engineering, monitoring and maintenance throughout their lifetime. Modern battery storage facilities incorporate safety systems intended to monitor temperature, detect faults and reduce operational risks.

As with any major planning proposal, the Battery Energy Storage System will be assessed through the planning process. Matters such as landscape impact, ecology, transport, drainage, noise, visual appearance and other planning considerations will be examined before any planning decision is made. Battery storage is now used in many parts of the United Kingdom as part of the country's changing energy infrastructure. The scale, location and design of individual developments vary depending on the needs of each project and the characteristics of the surrounding area.

Why Does The Development Cover More Than 800 Acres?

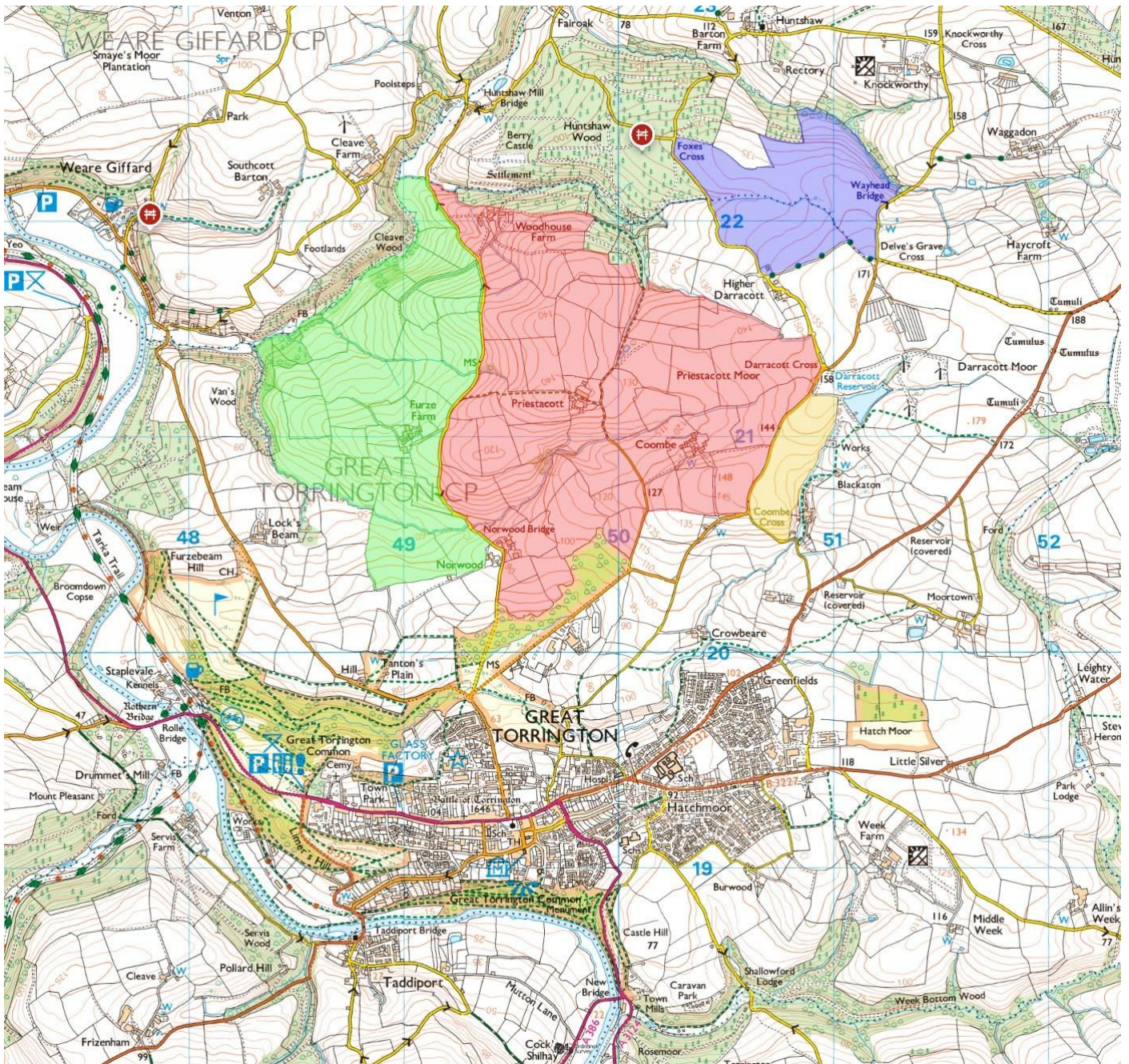
Large developments require for more space than the buildings alone.

According to the developer, the proposed Devon Data Campus would include an AI Data Centre, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and the supporting infrastructure needed for both to operate. This includes internal roads, electrical equipment, drainage systems, landscaping, security measures and other operation facilities.

The proposed development would cover **more than 800 acres**, with different parts of the site serving different purposes. Not every acre would contain buildings, but the entire area forms part of the proposed development boundary.

The scale of the site has become one of the most discussed aspects of the proposal. For many people, it is difficult to visualise just how large 800 acres is, particularly when looking at planning drawings or maps.

The following page puts the size of the proposed development into context using maps and comparisons with familiar places.



How big is 800 acres?

Numbers on their own can be difficult to imagine.

When people hear 800 acres, it is often hard to picture what that actually looks like on the ground. The proposed Devon Data Campus would cover an area extending across hundreds of fields and a large section of the countryside surrounding Great Torrington.

The proposed site is larger than many people realise when first looking at a map. Rather than being confined to one field or one parcel of land, it stretches across a broad rural landscape made up of working farmland, hedgerows, woodland and country lanes.

To help put the scale into context:

- **800 acres is approximately 323 hectares.**
- It is roughly the equivalent of **more than 600 football pitches.**
- The site extends across multiple farms and fields rather than a single piece of land.

Because the site covers such a large area, it has become one of the most discussed aspects of the proposal. Many residents have visited public roads and footpaths around the site to better understand its size and relationship with the surrounding landscape.

The Existing Landscape

The proposed Devon Data Campus is located within the rural landscape of the Torridge district, an area shaped by agriculture over many centuries.

The site is made up predominantly of agricultural land, divided into individual fields by traditional Devon hedgebanks. These hedgebanks are a distinctive feature of the county and are more than simple field boundaries. Many provide habitats for birds, mammals, insects and native plant species while also helping to reduce soil erosion and manage surface water.

The surrounding landscape also includes mature trees, small areas of woodland, streams, far tracks and quiet country lanes. Public footpaths and bridleways allow residents and visitors to experience the countryside, connecting nearby villages and providing access to the wider landscape.

Agriculture remains one of the areas principle land uses. The fields surrounding the proposed site support livestock grazing and other farming activities that contribute to the local rural economy.

Landscape is an important consideration within the planning process. When a major development is proposed, planning authorities assess how it may affect the appearance, character and setting of the surrounding area. This includes considering existing land use, topography, vegetation, public viewpoints and the relationship between the development and neighbouring communities.

These assessments help decision makers understand how a proposal may fit within the existing landscape and whether any measures could reduce its visual or environmental impact.

Planning Policy

Every planning application submitted in England is assessed against planning law and planning policy. The purpose of the planning system is to balance the need for development with the protection of people, communities and the environment.

Planning decisions are not based on public opinion alone. Instead, planning officers and councillors must consider whether a proposal complies with national and local planning policies, together with any other relevant planning considerations.

For developments within the Torridge district, applications are considered against the **Torridge Local Plan**, the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** and any other relevant planning guidance. Depending on the proposal, specialist organisations such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, Devon County Council and Historic England may also be consulted.

Planning officers review a wide range of information before making a recommendation. This can include environmental surveys, transport ass, landscape studies, flood risk assessments, ecological reports, heritage assessments and public consultation responses.

Where concerns are identified, developers may be asked to amend their proposals, provide additional information or introduce measures to reduce potential impacts. These are often referred to as **mitigation measures**.

For larger developments, the planning process can take many months. Throughout that time, documents may be updated as new information becomes available or following feedback from consultees and the public.

Understanding planning policy helps explain why certain issues receive significant attention during the planning process and why others may not be taken into account when a decision is made.

Key Planning Considerations

Planning authorities may consider issues such as:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ■ Landscape and visual impact. | ■ Noise and lighting. | ■ Sustainability. |
| ■ Biodiversity and ecology. | ■ Heritage and archaeology. | ■ Effects on neighbouring properties |
| ■ Traffic and highway safety. | ■ Agricultural land. | |
| ■ Flood risk and drainage. | ■ Design and layout. | |

Material Planning Considerations

One of the most common misunderstandings about the planning system is what the council can and cannot take into account when deciding on a planning application. Planning decisions are made using planning law and planning policy. This means that objections and supporting comments are more effective when they relate to issues that are relevant to planning. These are known as **material planning considerations**. A material planning consideration is any issue that may affect the use and development of land and is relevant to deciding whether planning permission should be granted.

Examples include:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ■ Landscape and visual impact | ■ Noise, vibration and lighting | ■ Public rights of way |
| ■ Ecology and biodiversity | ■ Air quality | ■ Impact on neighbouring properties |
| ■ Traffic generation and highway safety | ■ Design and appearance | |
| ■ Flood risk and drainage | ■ Agricultural land | |
| | ■ Heritage assets | |

Planning officers assess these matters alongside technical reports submitted by the applicant and responses from specialist organisations. Some issues, while important to individuals, are **not normally material planning considerations**. These can include personal opinions about the applicant, competition between businesses, or concerns that are unrelated to the planning merits of the proposal. When submitting concerns on a planning application, it is often helpful to explain **how** you believe the proposal may affect a planning issue and, where possible, refer to information contained within the planning documents. Well reasoned comments that relate to planning issues help decision makers understand the concerns being raised by the community.

Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to read our Community Information Pack.

We hope this guide has helped you better understand the proposed Devon Data Campus, how the planning process works, and why so many people are taking an interest in the future of this part of North Devon. Whether you have only just recently heard about the proposals or have been following the project from the beginning, we believe that everyone deserves access to clear, straightforward information before forming an opinion.

If you would like to stay informed, ask questions or support the campaign AGAINST THIS, we'd love to hear from you.

Stay Connected



Official Website

<https://www.leavedevonalone.info/>



Official Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61591580641368>



Community Discussion Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1433528225204907>



Official Petition

<https://www.change.org/NoDevonDataCentre>



Support the Campaign

Our campaign is entirely community funded. If you would like to help us continue producing information packs, leaflets posters and community resources, you can support us through our official GoFundMe.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/LEAVEDEVONALONE>



Email Us

LeaveDevonAlone@outlook.com

Finally, thank you for taking an interest in your local community. Whatever your views on the proposals, an informed community is a stronger community, and every voice deserves the opportunity to be heard through the planning process. **Together we can make sure Devon's future is shaped by informed discussion and community involvement – LEAVE DEVON ALONE .**