

## EDDC Street Trading Policy Consultation 2023 – Vision Group for Sidmouth submission



Over the years there have been many ‘consultations’ about having street trading in Sidmouth – and every time residents have said ‘No’: <https://visionforsidmouth.org/do-we-want-street-trading-in-sidmouth/>

This was considered in 2008, 2012 and 2015 – but each time proposals to extend street-trading to Sidmouth was rejected: <http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.com/2015/07/street-trading-in-sidmouth.html>

In October 2016 further consultation made it clear that it would not be happening:

*Sidmouth’s overwhelming opposition to proposals for relaxed street trading laws could see the town excluded from East Devon-wide changes. The district council staged a public consultation on whether to lift current, widespread restrictions and allow people to apply to trade anywhere outdoors. Some 81 per cent of all respondents from Sidmouth said the changes would cause problems. Zero per cent of town businesses who responded said it would benefit them. East Devon District Council (EDDC) is now considering moving forward with its idea in other towns, but leaving Sidmouth as it is.*

[\[https://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/20456124.sidmouth-rejects-bid-relax-street-trading-laws/](https://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/20456124.sidmouth-rejects-bid-relax-street-trading-laws/)

And in March 2017, the District Council dropped all proposals for Sidmouth:

*East Devon District Council (EDDC) is proposing to designate the whole of the district as a consent street, meaning street traders would have to apply to EDDC for a licence to trade. However, following its initial consultation, EDDC now plans to exclude Sidmouth, which would retain a general ban on street trading, except for during folk week. [*

[https://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/20455013.views-sought-trading/ \]](https://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/20455013.views-sought-trading/)

It is clear, then, that Sidmouth is very much against 'street-trading' – and yet at the same time, it is very much for 'street-markets', which are quite different beasts. And this has been the opinion held consistently for years now:

<http://futuresforumvgs.blogspot.com/2016/12/street-trading-street-markets-and-high.html>

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Looking at the responses to the latest District Council consultation on introducing street-trading to Sidmouth, the opinions expressed are consistent with those from earlier consultations.

The Sidmouth Chamber of Commerce is against any relaxation of the current system, as it always has been – and yet would be open to food stalls on the Ham:

<https://eastdevonnews.co.uk/2023/02/24/street-stalls-sidmouth-consultation-2023/> and <https://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/23336218.concerns-street-trading-proposals->

[sidmouth/](#)

The wider business community in Sidmouth are also against the proposals:

<https://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/23341182.abolish-business-rates-street-trading-allowed/>

The Town Council would be in favour of granting consent status to the Market Square and streets branching off it – but only for food stalls and such like on a monthly basis, that is the equivalent of a regular farmers' market: <https://sidmouth.gov.uk/sidmouth-town-councils-chairs-statement/> and

<https://www.sidmouthherald.co.uk/news/23342168.street-trading-sidmouth-town-councils-view/> and <https://www.eastdevon.radio/news/local-news/sidmouth-town-councils-response-to-the-ongoing-street-trading-consultation/> and

<https://sidmouth.nub.news/news/local-news/street-trading-should-be-exception-rather-than-the-rule-in-sidmouth-town-council-chair-says-172511>

Looking at the 100 or so responses on social media, the overwhelming opinion is against the proposals – and yet there are many voices who would welcome the 'variety' and 'attraction' of stalls down-town.

Again, however, almost all of those welcoming a relaxation of the current system would like to see more 'food' stalls' – something which might “*extend our town retail offer (especially food - not more burgers or pizzas though!)*” Again and again, the comments seeing the introduction of more consent streets would only want licences allowed for a monthly farmers' market on the Ham or in the Market Square.

A further comment considered the practicalities of putting up stalls in the narrow streets of the town centre:

*The plan to make additional streets 'consent streets' is problematic to me and lacks detail for residents. It feels like they have never actually visited the streets because many of them would be hugely impractical I.e cause horrific traffic within the town, too far or set away from town to even notice, take away important parking spaces or restrict access for emergency vehicles. It isn't just the Ham and the esplanade. Kennaway, Blackmore gardens, Bedford Car Park are also regularly used well for trading - I can't believe we need more?*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1454300221320890/posts/5913798828704318>

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The Vision for Sidmouth Group's own initial comment reflects these concerns – and reflects the provisions set out by the District Council itself:

<https://visionforsidmouth.org/do-we-want-street-trading-in-sidmouth/>

1: The council makes it clear that street-trading will not be permitted if there are issues of safety, access, obstruction, parking and other practical encumbrances:

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/licensing/street-trading/street-trading-policy-and-application-guidance/stage-3-site-assessment/>

2: Furthermore, it makes clear that it “*The Council will not normally permit a new consent for the sale of goods or services which conflicts with those provided by nearby traders (whether street trading or in business premises).*”

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/licensing/street-trading/street-trading-policy-and-application-guidance/stage-5-consideration-of-applications/>

In other words, it seems clear to the VGS that by allowing across-the-board consent throughout the town centre's Conservation Area, the District Council will not only be

contradicting its own current policy guidelines, but will also be going against the overwhelming opposition expressed by the Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce, Sidmouth businesses and the Sidmouth community.

The District Council is clearly keen to bring Sidmouth into line with other towns in the District, where all town centre roads are 'consent streets':

*“The majority of East Devon’s streets are already ‘consent’ streets – allowing trading to take place, once an application has been submitted to and granted by EDDC.”*

<https://eastdevonnews.co.uk/2023/02/20/east-devon-street-trading-rules/>

However, there are other towns in the District which are 'exceptions' to this rule: *“Honiton High Street and part of Axminster town centre have ancient charters which allow weekly markets to take place. The proposed changes do not apply to these areas as the charter exempts them from being controlled by this more modern legislation.”*

And if Honiton and Axminster are allowed 'exception status', then East Devon's most old-fashioned and conservative town should also be allowed to continue with its current status. The overwhelming majority of comments from Sidmouth residents stress the 'unique quality' of the town – and that any large-scale allowing of street stalls would damage the town's character and setting. Sidmouth, after all, has the greatest number of listed buildings in Devon apart from Exeter.

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The Vision Group for Sidmouth in its submission would therefore urge the District Council to fully recognise the scale of the opposition to the full-scale, blanket recasting of Sidmouth's streets as 'consent streets'.

We would propose the following:

- 1: there should be no extension of the period of street-trading along the Esplanade beyond what is currently allowed during Folk Week;
- 2: there should be no general reclassification of Sidmouth's town centre as 'consent streets';
- 3: nevertheless, there should be a very controlled allowance of street-trading on the Ham and in the Market Square – with the clear and specific aim of creating a monthly local farmers' market – and that the granting of licences should be determined by the Town Council.

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Submitted 26 February 2023

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