

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held online via the zoom app on 8 March 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.50 pm. The meeting was briefly adjourned at 4.10pm and reconvened at 4.15pm.

88 Public speaking

Mr Andrew Preston spoke on behalf of Mr Peter Stodgell a landowner in Upottery in relation to Minute 95 Settlement Hierarchy who supported the proposal to include Upottery in tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy which had previously been omitted because the village did not have a shop.

Mr Preston commented that out of the 699 overall population 516 were of working age population with 73% being economically active highlighting that 13 villages out of the 23 identified in tier 4 had a smaller working age population. He considered the village sustainable as it had a reasonable range of local services, good employment provision, a primary school, community hall, pub, sports field, play area and bus service which compared favourably with other tier 4 settlements. He urged Members to consider Upottery as a tier 4 settlement as it had opportunities for limited sustainable development and to consider land at Manor Green as a potential housing allocation.

Councillor Roger Giles spoke on behalf of Ottery St Mary Town Council in relation to Minute 96 HELAA Spring 2022 Call for Sites. He thanked Councillors Mike Allen, Mike Howe and Ben Ingham for their support at the last Strategic Planning meeting on 22 February where they acknowledged that 1,300 dwellings proposed for Ottery St Mary was too many. He also referred to Feniton Parish Council's statement, read out by Councillor Bruce, criticizing the 650 dwellings proposed for Feniton highlighting that this could also have implications for Ottery St Mary's secondary school.

He raised the following three points:

1. The proposal for the additional dwellings in Ottery St Mary and West Hill runs counter to the Ottery St Mary and West Hill Neighbourhood Plan and would in effect ride roughshod over the neighbourhood plan process in East Devon.
2. Town and Parish Councils should be consulted about call for sites availability and site suitability before the consultation process and not afterwards.
3. The HELAA Panel was overpopulated with building company representatives and should be a balanced panel consisting of environmental and amenity groups with town and parish council representatives that could take account of constraints.

Finally, he asked the Chair to confirm whether the email he had referred to at the last meeting addressing the Local Plan proposals had been forwarded to Strategic Planning Committee Members as previously requested.

In response to the points raised by Councillor Giles the Chair advised that all members of the public and all town and parish councils would be given an opportunity to comment on the Local Plan at the consultation stage and these comments would be taken on board. With regards to the HELAA Panel invites had been sent to multiple agencies including Environment Agency, Natural England and Heritage England but were declined due to lack of capacity. He reassured Councillor Giles that the HELAA Panel was only an

advisory panel and it would be for Members of this Committee to decide on the Call for Sites.

89 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Members were happy to accept the minutes of the consultative Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on 22 February 2022.

90 **Declarations of interest**

Minute 93. New Community and Infrastructure Provision - Evidence and Timeline.
Councillor Jess Bailey, Personal, Devon County Councillor.

Minute 93. New Community and Infrastructure Provision - Evidence and Timeline.
Councillor Mike Howe, Personal, Bishops Clyst Parish Councillor.

Minute 94. Settlement Hierarchy.
Councillor Jess Bailey, Personal, Devon County Councillor.

Minute 94. Settlement Hierarchy.
Councillor Kevin Blakey, Personal, Cranbrook Town Councillor.

Minute 94. Settlement Hierarchy.
Councillor Mike Howe, Personal, Own and run a village community shop.

Minute 94. Settlement Hierarchy.
Councillor Mike Howe, Personal, Bishops Clyst Parish Councillor.

Minute 94. Settlement Hierarchy.
Councillor Olly Davey, Personal, Exmouth Town Councillor.

Minute 94. Settlement Hierarchy.
Councillor Paul Arnott, Personal, Colyton Parish Councillor.

Minute 94. Settlement Hierarchy.
Councillor Philip Skinner, Personal, Known to FWS Carter & Sons and the Stewart family. Owns a land in Talaton that is in the HELAA process which is not detailed in any documentation. Removed to the virtual lobby during this item and did not take part in any discussions and did not take part in the vote.

Minute 95. HELAA Spring 2022 Call for Sites.
Councillor Jess Bailey, Personal, Devon County Councillor.

Minute 95. HELAA Spring 2022 Call for Sites.
Councillor Mike Howe, Personal, Bishops Clyst Parish Councillor.

Minute 96. Response to Mid Devon Issues and Options Consultation.
Councillor Jess Bailey, Personal, Devon County Councillor.

Minute 96. Response to Mid Devon Issues and Options Consultation.
Councillor Mike Howe, Personal, Director to an industrial company in Cullompton.

91 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency.

92 **Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There were no confidential/exempt items.

93 **New Community and Infrastructure Provision - Evidence and Timeline**

The Committee considered the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management’s report signposting Members to the work undertaken so far on a new community and infrastructure provision which included the Garden Community and Delivery Vehicles initiatives and previous work done on GESP.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management outlined the further work to be done highlighting that consultants had now been commissioned to help assess the options for a new community covering the following key areas which would progress alongside the work on the Local Plan:

- Transport infrastructure;
- Energy infrastructure;
- Green infrastructure;
- Community infrastructure;
- Basic services such as electricity and water and also drainage issues that had been raised by Members at previous meetings.

He sought a steer from Members about whether they supported in-principle a new community to form part of a spatial strategy for growth.

Comments raised by non-Committee Members included:

- There is a need to consider development in rural villages before considering a new community;
- Town and Parish Councils need to be contacted to understand our rural communities needs because there is a shortfall of affordable houses in our rural communities;
- The new community should work with surrounding villages and not just be a community on its own.

Comments raised by Committee Members included:

- A new community is critical to the emerging Local Plan to help our Climate Emergency Strategy;
- There is a need to revisit the hierarchy of settlements to put houses next to jobs to help reduce commuting in cars;
- Clarification sought on the proposed funding for the garden communities programme. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that although the council had not yet received funding this year there was opportunity to receive it in a year’s time;
- An update was sought on the delivery vehicle initiative. In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that Members would need to confirm their preferred option first before an update can be provided as the delivery vehicle would need to be tailored to suit the new community option favoured by Members and referred Members to initial work hyperlinked within the report which sets out the main options;

- An update was sought on a precise timetable of the consultants work and whether everything would be ready in time for the consultation stage. In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management suggested circulating a full brief to Members if that was what Members wanted. He emphasised the work by the consultants would be developed alongside the Local Plan highlighting that not all the information would be obtained by the draft plan consultation stage but would be ready for consultation on the publication version of the plan.
- Concerns raised about how the new community would fit in with the hierarchy settlements. In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised this would depend on the size and scale of the new community Members' envisaged;
- It is important to get the correct infrastructure in place first and the need to learn from Cranbrook;
- Suggestion made to further consider Axminster and the East of Honiton proposal before considering a new community;
- Concerns raised about transport links. The new community would be reliant on roads as there would be no rail links;
- If a garden village consists of up to 4,000 dwellings would the new community be classified as a garden village? The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management suggested there could be potential for a number of garden villages as opposed to one large new community;
- Will a town of 8,000 houses be necessary; to provide 900 houses a year is an unrealistic amount by Central Government. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management clarified that the new community would bring forward 2,500 homes within the period of the new Local Plan. The 8,000 homes was a suggestion of the total scale of the new community
- The district is running out of suitable sites so it makes sense to plan ahead;
- The delivery of the delivery vehicle is critical so we don't end up with 3,000 houses with only one corner shop and no other infrastructure;
- Suggestion made to split the Local Plan and take out the new community in order to get it done properly;
- There is a need to concentrate on housing provision in current villages and towns.

The following amendment to Recommendation 2 was proposed by Councillor Mike Allen and seconded by Councillor Paul Arnott

That Strategic Planning Committee:

Agree to consider the inclusion of a new community as part of the spatial strategy within the working draft Local Plan subject to this being reviewed as further evidence comes forward.

Strategic Planning Committee noted:

The previous reports and debates that have taken place on the issue of a further new community, infrastructure requirements and delivery vehicles;

RECOMMENDATION:

Of agreement to consider the inclusion of a new community as part of the spatial strategy within the working draft Local Plan subject to this being reviewed as further evidence comes forward.

94 **Settlement Hierarchy**

The Committee considered the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management's report that sought Members' views on which sites should be added to tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy and which settlements beyond tier 4 should be considered

as locations for growth following the Committee resolution on 8 February 2022 that the Committee wished to include more settlements within tier 4 of the hierarchy.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management outlined the two options:

Option 1

To consider the following four villages that previously were not considered suitable but were reasonably close to having comparatively greater level of services and facilities:

- Colyton;
- Rockbeare;
- Upottery;
- Woodbury Salterton

Option 2

To consider a further eight villages that were not considered previously as they had some missing key facilities as noted in the brackets:

- Raymond's Hill (no primary school, no community hall);
- Offwell (no shop);
- Colaton Raleigh (no primary school);
- Clyst Hydon (no shop, no community hall);
- Clyst St George (no shop);
- Stockland (no shop, no bus service);
- Dalwood (no primary school, no bus service);
- Talaton (no primary school).

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management drew Members attention to an email received from the Clerk to Offwell Parish Council highlighting that the parish council did not support its inclusion within tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy.

Comments made by Non-Committee Members included:

- It was questioned about Exton's inclusion in the settlement hierarchy due to its small size and the limited amount of development;
- Suggestion was made to create an additional tier 5 to include hamlets to allow a small amount of development in rural communities;
- The endorsed Colyton Neighbourhood Plan which covers Colyford and Colyton states that Colyford is in countryside. This was supported by residents who wanted strengthened green wedge policies between Colyford and Seaton;
- Several Members raised concerns about Neighbourhood Plans and it was suggested that details of the Neighbourhood Plans should be provided for the proposed villages to enable Members to have the full information to hand;
- It was suggested that simply totting up the number of facilities within a settlement was not a good measure as villages may not necessarily need a shop as people can do online shopping or have essentials delivered by a van. There is a need to look carefully at facilities to consider what would bring a community together; The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that the hierarchy was about the most suitable sustainable settlements to locate growth and reassured Members that all settlements would fundamentally have the opportunity to have rural exception sites or community led developments coming forward whether they were in the hierarchy or not
- Need to consider car travel and although Exmouth is considered a sustainable location it still has a lot of traffic coming from outside of Exmouth into the town centre. People will still opt to travel by car;
- Clarification was sought about why Awliscombe had not been included in the options. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management referred to paragraph 3.3 in the report and advised that although Awliscombe did have a level of

services some services such as the sports pitch were located outside of the settlement and not in easy reach other than by car;

- Need to find a mechanism to allow a small amount of growth in villages. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that the hierarchy of settlements put forward in the working draft Local Plan seeks to achieve this which is led by evidence and will be discussed through consultation.
- Reference was made to the list of villages in option 1 and a need to understand how these communities felt about growth. In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that there would be consultation on the draft plan and that the hierarchy need to follow the evidence and have a planning logic behind it;
- Parish Councils have not been contacted about where they want houses to go in their villages;
- Support was expressed for an additional tier 5 option to help villages that want a small amount of growth;

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Mike Howe and seconded by Councillor Olly Davey.

Recommend no extension to tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy above that proposed in the working draft Local Plan presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 8 February 2022 and not to expand tier 4 settlements by more than 10% above current numbers.

In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised he was happy to take 10% as a rule of thumb but it could not become a policy as it would not be enforceable and there was no evidence behind the figure. He reassured Members that the principle of ensuring growth levels were appropriate for each settlement had already been applied and gave Feniton as an example where development had been moderated to a much smaller amount than could be accommodated there based on land availability.

In light of the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management's comments the Planning Barrister sought clarification from the proposer and seconder about the 10% figure and whether they wished to amend the motion to state 'as a rule of thumb to not expand tier 4 settlements by more than 10% of current numbers'.

The proposer, Councillor Howe emphasised that as some villages were being swamped by development he preferred the motion should read:

The Committee acknowledges that for the purposes of preparing the Local Plan, modest growth represents no more than 10% unless exceptional circumstances or infrastructure comes alongside supported by evidence like the Neighbourhood Plan or with infrastructure attachments to it.

The seconder, Councillor Olly Davey supported the amended motion.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That no extension to tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy above that proposed in the working draft Local Plan presented to Strategic Planning Committee on 8 February 2022.
2. That the Committee acknowledges that for the purposes of preparing the Local Plan, modest growth represents no more than 10% unless exceptional circumstances or infrastructure comes alongside supported by evidence like the Neighbourhood Plan or with infrastructure attachments to it.

The Committee considered the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management’s report that set out proposals for a further ‘call for sites’ to try to identify additional land for development.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management outlined the key targeted areas which included:

- tiers 1 – 4 in the settlement hierarchy;
- brownfields sites;
- regeneration and intensification opportunities;
- further site options within the western side of the district;
- sites for small scale housing developments;
- employment sites;
- gypsies and traveller sites

He drew Members attention to the third section in the report that outlined the different forms of engagement that would be undertaken including press releases, media coverage and contacting parish and town councils that Members had supported to encourage other sites to come forward in the district. This further work would then be required to be sent to the HELAA panel for a formal assessment.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised he would keep Members updated on the timetable and implications and reminded Members that the implications would depend on how many additional sites come forward.

Comments during discussion included:

- Concern raised about the lack of gypsy and travellers sites and issues in the past about parks being used which causes great stress within communities. A suggestion was made for the need for a strategy to encourage landowners to come forward with land as the report identifies a long standing challenge with very few sites coming forward as available;
- There is a need to consider employment provision as this is as important as housing in rural communities;
- Town and Parish Councils should be contacted to understand their need in the communities. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management acknowledged that further thought was needed about how to include parishes in this process.
- There is a need to focus on the top tiers of the hierarchy for the call for sites and to not focus on areas that already have submitted a lot of sites; In response the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised there was a need to treat everyone fairly and sites that may come forward would still have to be accepted and considered;
- Concern was raised that a strategic brownfield sites study had not been completed and that it would be regrettable if greenfield sites were considered without considering the brownfield sites; The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management accepted the need to go back through the urban capacity study to look at potential sites and suggested that the Housing Task Force could look at other sites the Council owned so they could be considered.

A further recommendation was proposed by Councillor Mike Allen and seconded by Councillor Philip Skinner to read:

In evaluating the proposed sites Officers should not presume a large new community to the West End will be approved.

Councillor Allen advised that he was not against the new community but that Members should not presume it is possible and that an open mind was needed when presented with further sites.

Further discussions included:

- Support a further call for sites to enable Members to understand what land is available and if there is a need to consider greenfield sites this should be considered to ensure appropriate land is available for development;
- There is a need to set the ground rules now before the consultation in order to follow through in the future.
- Support was expressed for recommendations 1 and 2 only;
- Several Members could not support recommendation 3 as it went against what Members had already agreed in the previous meeting;
- There are communities worldwide that ban the use of greenfield sites and only use brownfield sites where they combine employment and housing together;

RECOMMENDATION:

1. To endorse the proposal for a further call for sites to support production of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment;
2. Delegate authority to the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management to undertake this work;
3. In evaluating the proposed sites Officers should not presume a large new community to the West End will be approved.

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Response to Mid Devon Issues and Options Consultation

The report presented to Committee summarised the current Mid Devon Local Plan Issues Consultation that highlighted the potential for significant additional development in the Cullompton area which could impact on East Devon.

The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management sought Members endorsement to the proposed response which focussed on the issues most relevant to East Devon as detailed in paragraph 1.2 of the report.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Strategic Planning Committee endorse the proposed response in this report and delegate authority to the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management to submit comments accordingly.

DECISION:

The recommendation was approved by a Senior Officer. The Senior Officer Decision Notice is listed above under Additional Documents

Attendance List

Councillors present:

D Ledger (Chair)

O Davey (Vice-Chair)

M Allen

P Arnott

J Bailey

K Blakey

P Hayward

M Howe
B Ingham
R Lawrence
A Moulding
G Pratt
P Skinner

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

C Brown
B De Saram
P Faithfull
G Jung
P Millar
H Parr
V Ranger
J Rowland

Officers in attendance:

Ed Freeman, Service Lead Planning Strategy and Development Management
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer
Shirley Shaw, Planning Barrister
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

S Chamberlain
E Rylance

Chairman

Date: