

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 2 April 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.30 pm. A brief adjournment took place from 11.20 am to 11.32 am.

86 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Strategic Planning Committee meetings held on 5 March and 12 March 2024 were confirmed as a true record.

87 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

88 Public speaking

There were no members of the public that wished to speak.

89 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

90 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential or exempt items.

91 Potential for designation of a Green Belt in the West End of East Devon

The report presented by the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management was before the committee to set out some historical background and Government policy on Green Belts and to highlight some challenges involved in seeking to pursue a Green Belt designation.

The key issues highlighted would include a high level of work to gather the level of evidence needed to support a Green Belt Designation and the need to work in conjunction with Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Mid Devon District Council to help make a genuine case for a Green Belt. As a result, Members were advised a Green Belt designation could not be done for this Local Plan but if Members wished it could be pursued for a later Local Plan.

During discussion Members acknowledged that although a Green Belt designation was too late for this Local Plan they were keen for officers to explore this issue when considering the next Local Plan.

Discussion on the report included:

- Clarification was sought on the progress of the Green Wedges and a concern was raised about the delay in the Local Plan timetable. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy

and Development Management advised that a report would be brought to committee after it was discussed at the newly formed Local Plan Working Group next week together with an update report on the timetable.

- Would a Green Wedge be considered if a Green Belt was not possible?
- It was suggested that the lessons learnt from Green Belts could be used to strengthen Green Wedges, Coastal Protection Areas and the Clyst Valley Regional Park.
- Green Belts do not need to go all around an area they could be smaller areas of land between two communities.
- A Green Belt is a lot more permanent than a Green Wedge.
- Although it would be good to consult with neighbouring Local Authorities we do not need to do this.
- It was questioned whether informal conversations with neighbouring authorities about pursuing a joint approach to a Green Belt could take place now. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised if Members were happy he would raise this with officers at the neighbouring authorities.
- Reference was made to paragraph 4.2 in the report and the need to plan for climate mitigations now. This cannot be left for another few years.
- It was suggested that the current leadership should start preparing the groundwork for a Green Belt designation now so that after this Local Plan has been approved we can start on the Green Belt immediately.
- It was suggested the report was very one sided in its evaluation.
- As there is a need to protect our countryside so there is no justification to hold back and do nothing.
- The green space that sits between East Devon and East of Exeter needs to be looked at in more detail as it won't be long before the two are indistinguishable.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management acknowledged Members comments about the need for a Green Belt for the next Local Plan. He advised that in terms of the resource implications it was best to wait until the current Local Plan had been submitted for examination as this could impact on the deadlines for the current Local Plan.

During further discussion a concern was raised about the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development's advice about waiting until the current Local Plan had been submitted for examination. It was highlighted that there were still other strategic priorities to consider including the Green Infrastructure Plan and it was questioned whether there would always be a reason to not start doing this work.

A further concern was raised about other important items that Members should be considering which includes receiving a report on the boundaries consultation that had ended in January 2023.

In light of Members comments Councillor Ben Ingham proposed to amend the proposed recommendation to read:

'That committee does not endorse the proposal to seek to designate a Green Belt in East Devon in the current emerging East Devon Local Plan.'

Councillor Ingham also proposed the following motion:

'That this committee receives a further report scoping out the resources required to progress a Green Belt so that it can decide whether to recommend to Full Council that it place in budgetary considerations this year to finance recruitment and support for the evaluation of a new Green Belt within East Devon for the next emerging East Devon Local Plan.'

Seconded by Councillor Jess Bailey.

The Chair invited Councillor Todd Olive to address the committee with his amendments to the proposed motion.

The amendments were as follows:

1. That committee notes the risks outlined by officers but considers that there is a strategic case for undertaking further assessment on the potential for a West End or wider Exeter Green Belt.
2. That committee request that the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management, together with Council's political leadership, make urgent approaches to colleagues at Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge Councils as appropriate, to explore the political and practical appetite for undertaking a fuller assessment, and feedback to Committee as soon as possible on the back of these discussions.

The proposer, Councillor Ben Ingham did not support the second amendment as he did not want the decision to be based on what those discussions lead to. In response the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that it would be logical to consider whether or not neighbouring authorities would want to jointly resource the Green Belt work especially if Members wanted to receive a report on resourcing.

Councillor Yehudi Levine seconded Councillor Todd Olive's amendment.

RESOLVED:

1. That Committee notes the risks outlined by officers but considers that there is a strategic case for undertaking further assessment on the potential for a West End or wider Exeter Green Belt.
2. That Committee receives a further report scoping out the resources required to progress a green belt so that it can decide whether to recommend to Full Council that it place budgetary considerations this year to finance recruitment and support for the evaluation of a new green belt within East Devon for the next emerging East Devon Local Plan.
3. That Committee request that the Assistant Director for Planning Strategy and Development Management, together with Council's political leadership, make urgent approaches to colleagues at Exeter, Mid Devon, and Teignbridge Councils as appropriate, to explore the political and practical appetite for undertaking a fuller assessment, and feedback to Committee as soon as possible on the back of these discussions.

Councillor Jess Bailey left the meeting.

92 **Clyst Valley and New Communities Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**

The Committee considered and discussed the report presented by the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management setting out a proposed response to the Clyst Valley and New Communities Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

The aim of the consultation was to identify walking and cycling improvements to the West End of the district extending to Woodbury, Broadclyst and Whimble and to compliment any existing LCWIP's.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management referred to figure 2 in the report that gave an overview of the cycle route recommendations and how these would link into the Clyst Valley Trail, Killerton and Broadclyst, Cranbrook and the new community. Members were reminded that following the meeting on 5 December where Strategic Planning Committee Members resolved that option 1 would be the council's preferred approach for a new community, this would now be the basis that the council would be recommending that the LCWIP is reviewed to reflect option 1 only.

It was highlighted to Members that a lot of the focus was on the east/west movement in and out the city and it was important to comment that there is a need to link more communities in East Devon, including the new community, Woodbury, Woodbury Salterton, Clyst St Mary and Clyst St George.

Members were invited to submit their own individual comments on the consultation before the 7 April 2024 deadline.

Discussion on the LCWIP included:

- Clarification was sought about the cycleway between Whimble and Cranbrook along the railway line.
- It was hoped that the cycleways would be kept clear and tidy.
- The Chair highlighted an email response from a Broadclyst resident wanting Broadclyst adding to a sentence on page 34 and to add a further sentence to provide a safe and secure cycleway between Broadclyst and Westclyst for the children at Clyst Vale Community College. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised this was already part of the proposals.
- Pleased to be having these discussions as walking and cycling are important to the health and wellbeing of society. Need to encourage people to keep active.
- Could a comment be included about clearing away hedge debris after they have been flayed as this makes it dangerous for cyclists. Perhaps DCC could introduce a new policy?
- Maps are difficult to understand.
- Clyst St Mary and Clyst St George are dangerous to cycle and walk around and the Clyst Valley Trail is in the wrong place. A suggestion was made to add a strongly worded comment about forcing danger on cyclists, pedestrians and car users as DCC are proposing the wrong solution for Bishops Clyst. It was suggested to remove the gold line from Bishops Clyst down to Clyst St George and the pink line to be uprated as this is the offroad solution. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management acknowledged the points made and advised the concerns would be flagged from a safety perspective.
- A suggestion for a park and change so cycling can happen in rural areas.
- Cycle paths need to be kept separate from the traffic – mixing is dangerous.
- Support the comments about the lack of appropriate high-quality and attractive cycling and walking infrastructure from Exeter to Cranbrook.
- Cyclists in Cranbrook do not like the shared paths as they need to cross over road junctions and private paths.
- Whimble to Cranbrook abruptly ends at the eastern edge of Cranbrook.
- The Netherlands prioritises cyclists over vehicles. The NPPF favour development. We need to change the way of thinking and plan ahead of development.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management outlined the following comments that needed to be added to the council's response to the consultation based on Members discussion:

- Safety issues regarding Bishops Clyst.
- Segregated commuter routes.
- Maintenance of cycle paths.
- Emphasis needed on children being able to cycle safely to schools.

Councillor Mike Howe proposed the recommendation to include the comments outlined by the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management, seconded by Councillor Kevin Blakey.

RESOLVED:

That committee endorse the proposed response to the Clyst Valley and New Communities LCWIP consultation and approve its submission to Devon County Council with delegated authority to the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to agree to the final wording.

Councillor Todd Olive left the meeting during discussion and did not take part in the vote.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

B Bailey
J Bailey
K Blakey
B Collins
O Davey (Chair)
P Fernley
P Hayward
M Howe (Vice-Chair)
B Ingham
Y Levine
T Olive

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
K Bloxham
C Brown
R Collins
P Faithfull
G Jung
M Rixson

Officers in attendance:

Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management
Damian Hunter, Planning Solicitor
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

C Fitzgerald
M Hartnell
D Ledger

H Parr

Chair

Date: