

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 23 October 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.02 am and ended at 1.10 pm

38 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meetings held on the 23 September and 1 October 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

39 Declarations of interest

Minutes 43: Cllr G Jung, Affects and prejudicial NRI; resident of Woodbury Salterton referenced in the report.

Minute 44; Cllr P Fernley, Affects and prejudicial NRI; site listed in report is close to home address.

40 Public speaking

A statement was read out on behalf of Councillor Peter Faithfull, Ward Member for Ottery St Mary. The statement set out his view of the expectation to provide more housing with reducing infrastructure. It included examples of the declassification of roads in and around Ottery St Mary, which he felt would result in less maintenance being carried out on those roads, which he considered would be detrimental and so he wished to see this decision reversed. An example was provided of improvements in Honiton that had resulted in the addition of a pavement. He asked why poor standards in road safety should be accepted just for the benefit of developers, and that this issue was wider than his Ward.

A statement from Upottery Parish Council was read out. The statement set out the view that decision to classify settlements as sustainable or unsustainable based on an arbitrary cut-off of seven out of eighteen facilities may not fully capture the unique strengths and potential of communities like Upottery and Woodbury Salterton. It included points for consideration by the Committee:

- Upottery has ultrafast broadband. This capability significantly reduces the need for travel and supports remote work, a factor that seems to be overlooked in the current assessment criteria;
- Upottery has a shop situated within the parish at the A303 Services, Yarcombe, as well as the thriving community shop in nearby Churchinford, both of which serve residents of Upottery. Additionally, Upottery has a primary school, while Dunkeswell, classified as sustainable, does not;
- The local pub, which served as a shop during the COVID-19 restrictions, demonstrates the strong community spirit in Upottery;

- Several settlements classified as sustainable also lack "strategic" facilities. A more nuanced approach to these classifications could better reflect the characteristics of each community;
- It is crucial that all communities, including Upottery, are given opportunities for limited growth;
- Upottery PC has been advocating for recognition as a service village since the Role and Functions of Settlements Report was published.

Cllr Ken Perry, representing Woodbury Parish Council, spoke to the report under minute 43 to correct elements that the Parish Council wished to challenge, as well as asking the Committee to reconsider the tier Woodbury Salterton was allocated to. He advised that the report stating that Woodbury Salterton had no shop was incorrect, because 1200 metres from the village centre is the shopping centre at Greendale. He also stated that, contrary to the report, Woodbury Parish Council owns and maintains a large allotment in the centre of the village which includes a communal area. The village pub and school were both experiencing long term viability issues. The Parish Council was not challenging the methodology used in determination of the settlement hierarchy but felt that the access to community services and facilities was sufficient to review the tier allocation.

41 **Matters of urgency**

None.

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

None.

43 **Settlement hierarchy - Upottery and Woodbury Salterton**

The Committee were asked to consider a report on the settlement hierarchy in the emerging Local Plan in relation to Upottery and Woodbury Salterton. The settlements have several facilities and services as well as a relatively high employment density, but are missing a shop, which makes them less sustainable places to live and to locate new development.

The Committee had previously resolved in February 2022 to review settlements in order to include more within Tier Four of the settlement hierarchy, Members resolved that they wished to include more settlements within Tier Four of the settlement hierarchy. The report set out that previous review, with the conclusion by the Committee on 8 March 2022 that no further settlements should be added to Tier Four.

The Committee were reminded that the exclusion from Tier Four does not preclude development at Upottery and Woodbury Salterton. A modest level of growth can come forward through community-led development in a neighbourhood plan or as a rural exception site and other means, where justified.

Making changes to the settlement hierarchy at this late stage will also delay preparation of the Regulation 19 Publication Draft Local Plan, with the implications set out in the report.

Cllr Jung spoke as Ward Member before leaving the meeting for the duration of the debate and vote. He re-iterated the earlier decisions made by the Committee on the

settlement hierarchy for these two settlements, and raised his concerns on the delays that changing the decision could bring about. He explained the involvement of the Parish Council on finding suitable sites for housing allocation historically, and some sites that already had outline planning permission. He supported the position proposed in the report.

Questions from the Committee were answered, confirming that broadband speed was considered as a factor in assessment, and that a pragmatic approach was taken in considering the walking distance to services both in terms of distance, ease and practicality. It was difficult to be precise on the amount of time that would be needed to review the settlements, due to the additional work required and the still unknown content of the new NPPF that was yet to be published.

Debate covered:

- Comparison of previous decision by Planning Inspector on an application in Rawridge to the proposal of retaining the two areas in the report at their current status. The Assistant Director responded after checking that decision quoted from a committee member that the main reason for the decision related to bringing the building back into use, which was more sustainable than a complete new build;
- Current policy should take account of the changed shopping habits, particularly after the pandemic, that many rural areas made use of via delivery methods rather than leaving their homes to shop. Upottery also had the neighbouring community larder at Churchinford;
- Shopping was only one of many elements considered during assessment for the sustainability of a site or community. Other options were open to local communities to pursue for growth of their area, such as Neighbourhood Plan, exception site planning application, community land trust, and local development orders;
- Weighing up what may be possible for residents in both working from home and deliveries against the merits of leaving their homes for those and other reasons, using sustainable means of transport such as walking or cycling. Traffic levels were clearly still hugely impacted by both commuting to work or school drop off journeys;
- Large costs and resources for local communities to pursue other growth options such as creating a Neighbourhood Plan. In response, the Committee were informed that grants were available to assist local communities, and the planning service itself also assisted where possible;
- Risk in reviewing these two communities would also be, to be consistent across the Plan, that other communities would also require review.

The recommendation in the report was proposed by Cllr Howe, seconded by Cllr Davey.

RESOLVED that Upottery and Woodbury Salterton continue to not be designated as service villages (Tier 4) within the settlement hierarchy in the publication draft Local Plan.

44 **Gypsy and Traveller Provision**

The report before the Committee set out how the need for accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers in the emerging Local Plan has been assessed and how it is proposed to meet that need.

Work to assess the housing needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople was commissioned by the partner authorities of East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and

Teignbridge. The consultants, Opinion Research Services (ORS), completed a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (referred to as a GTAA) in September 2024 which is the main source of evidence.

The GTAA set out findings for transit provision and permanent provision, the former not identified as needing a specific site in East Devon but needing a wider approach across the sub-region. Permanent provision for the period up to 2045 was 20 pitches for households that met the planning definition; 8 pitches for undetermined households and 4 pitches for households that do not meet the planning definition. No new plots were identified for travelling show people.

The Cranbrook local plan provides for 15 pitches on the Cobdens and Treasbeare Expansion Areas in two site allocations, with a realistic prospect of delivery in the next five years.

An allocation at the new community (proposed in the Local Plan) will provide 15 pitches, although delivery is unlikely to commence until the middle of the Plan period. Land for a further 15 pitches will be safeguarded beyond the plan period to meet some of the likely future need beyond that period but cannot be counted towards the need identified in the GTAA.

A further site, east of the M5 and south of the Exeter-Waterloo line is allocated for at least 5 pitches.

Cllr Fernley commented before leaving the meeting for the duration of the debate and vote. She supported the recommendation in the report, but did question the duty of care for the allocated site in relation to noise nuisance from the nearby motorway and railway line. The access road to the site was also liable to flooding.

In response, the Assistant Director advised the committee that any planning application for the site would have to have mitigation for any noise impact, but reiterated from previous discussion at Committee that the site was below the motorway and therefore there was less noise impact than may be expected. The centre of the site would be used for the pitches, which was not prone to flooding.

In response to a question on definition, the Committee were advised that there was a planning guidance note that set out the definition of travelling people.

The recommendation in the report was proposed by Cllr Ingham and seconded by Cllr Levine.

RESOLVED

1. that the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (September 2024) be used as the basis for calculating need in the Publication Draft Local Plan and the findings of the study be noted;
2. that the identified need will be met through the previously agreed allocations as set out in section 3 of the report, be noted.

East Devon Local Plan - redrafting of local plan chapters

The report set out some redrafted chapters of the local plan for proposed inclusion in the Regulation 19 draft of the plan. These drafts set out a steer on the policies that officers advised for inclusion in the plan.

The specific chapters considered by the Committee were:

- Chapter 8. Meeting housing needs for all;
- Chapter 9. Supporting jobs and the economy and vibrant town centres; and communications facilities we need
- Chapter 15. Our outstanding historic environment

Redrafting of Chapter 8: Meeting housing needs for all

Chapter 8 had been edited down, concentrating on the most significant issues and removing matters not directly relevant to planning policy considerations and local plan provision.

Key aspects included:

- Highlighting in policy the aspiration to secure accommodation for younger people to assist in supporting a younger workforce.
- Removal of First Homes from policy on affordable housing and more so for policy throughout the plan.
- Under affordable housing policy the emphasis is on social rent provision. The affordable housing policy will, however, need to be subject to careful scrutiny under viability assessment.
- Lowering expectations for elderly person housing delivery.
- Policy on accessible and adaptable homes seeks lower levels of provision;
- Removed the Policy that specified the mix, by bedroom sizes, sought on new housing development sites.
- Rural exception housing sites now has 15 dwelling upper size threshold removed.

The Committee were reminded that there was still a scheduled working group with a briefing from consultants on viability, with the detail on thresholds for this chapter coming forward to the Committee to discuss at their meeting on 22 November.

Comments on this chapter included:

- Housing needs anecdotally had been understood as a predominant need for smaller homes for both young people, and downsizers; the evidence presented from the Local Needs Housing Assessment for the overall district presented as a need primarily for 3 to 4 bedroom homes, with demand high from buyers migrating from other areas of the country to the District;
- The drafted policy did reflect that local communities will have differing needs and that a mix of housing was required for the different stages of life;
- It was difficult to control through planning policy who bought up smaller homes with the challenge of market forces;
- There was no reference to fire safety in relation to Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) as this was covered under Building Regulations;
- The assessment was undertaken by modelling of the demographics of the district, not by directly surveying individuals;
- The evidence to date was district wide and therefore did not reflect the rural and urban differences in housing need;
- Look to strengthen the wording of the policy HN01 on the requirement mix to link to the local need as and when a Neighbourhood Plan or a detailed supplementary planning document was produced. An action was noted to review the wording to reflect on the comments of the Committee;
- Use of the Housing Register debated on its merits of providing useful data to need, without being skewed by the lower bands of no local connection or able to

afford to purchase; the Devon Homes data needed to be treated with care and avoid direct reference to it, only to refer to other local data sources;

- Policy 10 needed strengthening on the description of housing needs;
- HN10 Rural exception sites, to review the wording relating to how sustainability criteria are treated for those sites outside a settlement boundary. An action was noted to review the wording to reflect on the comments of the Committee.

Redrafting of Chapter 9: Supporting jobs and the economy and vibrant town centres

Several changes have been made to Chapter 9 to reflect consultation responses and a desire to make the document and policies clear and focussed.

Key changes included:

- policy allowing employment development in the countryside has been rewritten to allow extension of existing businesses as well as intensification.
- Farm diversification policy has been amended to widen the range of diversification activities that will be supported and place less restrictions on prioritising E(g), B2 and B8 employment uses, but this also means that a viability statement is required to demonstrate how the activities will support the long-term sustainability of the farm holding.
- Policy requiring Employment and Skills Statements on major developments is now evidenced and reworded.
- Policy which sets out the settlements to which town centre policies will apply was amended to make it clear that Cranbrook town centre will be covered by the policies in the Cranbrook Plan.
- Policy which relates to town centre and primary shopping areas has been slightly amended to support the incorporation of cycle provision and enhancement of the natural environment where possible.
- Local Shops and services will continue to be supported but policy has been amended to apply to all tier 1-4 settlements (not just the smaller 3-4 ones) and to standardise the wording relating to the requirement to demonstrate a lack of viability if a facility is proposed to be lost.
- Policy relating to rural shops has the requirements amended so that at least 50% of the products being sold must be produced on the holding and the remainder must be sourced or produced from within a 10-mile radius.
- Sustainable tourism policy has an additional section which resists the loss of existing dwellings to holiday accommodation.

Comments from the committee included:

- The chapter did not have enough content to support the level of growth desired. In response, the Committee were advised of an additional chapter still under development relating to the West End, where a number of growth factors were set out;
- SE03 on farm diversification review, in looking to encourage development of industries from the primary produce (such as manufacturing cheese from a dairy farm) whilst not diversifying to such an extent that farming was lost. In response, the wording of the policy was felt broad enough to encompass a wide range of diversification options; however an action was noted to review the wording to reflect on the comments of the Committee;

- SE09 Rural shops percentage of goods from a ten mile radius of the holding was debated on how that could be adjusted to help maximise locally produced produce being sold. In response, it was explained to the Committee that the policy had been drafted to maximise locally produced products, to aid the economic benefits to the area and help support local businesses. The size of shops was also discussed on how the size could be limited to an appropriate scale to the location. An action was noted to review the wording to reflect on the comments of the Committee.

Redrafting of Chapter 15: Our outstanding historic environment

These policies had not undergone significant amendment since the Draft Plan Consultation, but were updated to current interpretation. Historic England are the key statutory body with an interest in this topic, so they were involved in discussions regarding redrafting the Chapter.

RESOLVED

1. that the revised Chapter 8 be endorsed, noting the actions identified for revision and that refinement was still required in readiness for the proposed Regulation 19 draft of the Plan
2. that the revised Chapter 9 be endorsed, noting the actions identified for revision and that refinement was still required in readiness for the proposed Regulation 19 draft of the Plan.
3. that the revised Chapter 15 be endorsed, noting that refinement was still required in readiness for the proposed Regulation 19 draft of the Plan.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

C Brown
O Davey
P Fernley
M Howe (Vice-Chair)
B Ingham
G Jung
Y Levine
T Olive (Chair)
H Parr

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
R Collins
P Faithfull

Officers in attendance:

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

Councillor apologies:

B Bailey
J Bailey
K Blakey

B Collins

Chair

Date: