

Date of Meeting 14 December 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release None

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## **Working draft of the proposed East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2040**

### **Report summary:**

This report introduces and highlights key matters within the working draft of the proposed new East Devon Local Plan covering the period of 2020 to 2040. It is stressed at the outset that the working draft plan is, by design, not a complete and finished document though it does set out a proposed framework for the plan highlighting suggested policy approaches on key subject matters. The working draft local plan also proposes a number of areas of land for allocation for development, these include provision of a second new town in East Devon. There remain, however, important decisions and actions to be taken before a final draft plan can come back to committee, not the least in respect of identifying additional land to meet future development needs.

### **Is the proposed decision in accordance with:**

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### **Recommendation:**

#### **That Strategic Planning Committee:**

- 1. Recommends endorsement, in principle, of the proposed working draft local plan.**
- 2. Recommends agreement to delegate authority to the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management to progress with refinement and final formulation of draft policies, including through engagement with internal staff and key public sector outside partner bodies and service providers.**
- 3. Having considered paragraph 6.9 of the report give a clear steer on a favoured approach to ensure allocation of sufficient and appropriate sites to meet housing and other development needs, noting that as currently drafted there is a significant element of the housing need for which suitable sites have not been identified.**

### **Reason for recommendation:**

To enable work to be completed on a draft local plan that under agreed timetables will come back to Strategic Planning Committee in March 2022 with a recommendation for public consultation.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** High Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk;

**Links to background information** Links are provided in the body of the report.

**Link to [Council Plan](#)**

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The existing East Devon Local Plan, that covers the period from 2013 to 2031, is now becoming increasingly dated and it is appropriate for a new local plan to be produced. In accordance with previously agreed timetables and following on from work undertaken in 2021 officers of the planning policy team have now produced a working draft local plan which forms Appendix 1 to this committee report.
- 1.2 It is stressed at the outset that the working draft local plan is, by clear design, not a finished document that is ready for public consultation now; it is an initial working draft of options which it is for members to consider and indicate if they endorse the direction of policy development. The intent is, in accordance with previously agreed timetables, that the working draft plan will be refined over the coming weeks to form a proposed draft plan for public consultation. As part of the plan making work the Service Lead will have due regard to Environmental Assessment (including in respect of Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment) in formulation of the draft policies prior to bringing the draft plan to Committee in 2022.
- 1.3 In summary some of the key things that the working draft local plan does do are listed below - it:
  - establishes a suggested overall document structure for a consultation local plan – this includes specific chapters;
  - sets out a recommended spatial distribution strategy (or put more simply what levels and types of development should go where and why) and highlights alternative spatial distribution options;

- gives a clear steer on recommended policies for inclusion in the plan and highlights alternative options for these plan policies;
- makes recommendations on land allocations for future development and highlights alternative options for land allocations; and
- advises on the appropriateness of planning for a second new town in East Devon on the western side of the District.

1.4 It should be noted that the working draft plan contains some background and explanatory material that we would not envisage featuring in the draft plan for consultation. However, there will be extra text added, policies will need to be formally drafted, and potentially some more added, and in some cases additional justification for policies will be required.

## **2 Relationships to and implications for Neighbourhood Plans**

2.1 The new local plan will, when adopted, form part of the Development Plan for East Devon. The Development Plan also includes mineral and waste local plans produced by Devon County Council (they are the planning authority for mineral and waste planning matters), the Cranbrook Plan (when adopted) and any Made Neighbourhood Plans.

2.2 There are currently 21 Made neighbourhood plans in East Devon and these are read alongside the existing local plan when determining planning applications. Emerging neighbourhood plans are also given weight according to the stage of plan preparation they have reached. We have 2 plans due to go to referendum in the near future, at least 3 more rapidly approaching formal Submission, and many more in the pipeline. Our suite of Made neighbourhood plans will also sit alongside the new local plan in decision making once it is adopted. Situations can arise, however, where there are policy differences or contradictions between a local plan and neighbourhood plan. As a general rule of thumb it is the case that the most recently adopted/approved plan policy takes precedence. Though it is also worth noting that neighbourhood plan policies cannot supersede a local plan strategic policy; strategic policies have to be explicitly defined and justified as such.

2.3 On adoption of the new local plan there could therefore be potential for some Made neighbourhood plan policies to be superseded by new local plan policies. In drafting the new local plan proposed policy matters we have been mindful of this consideration but also mindful of the need for policy development, the requirements set by Government and the need to apply national policy. Very specifically, as well, we also need to identify land to allocate for development which is perhaps the starkest challenge for the new local plan. In some cases it may be necessary to allocate land for development to meet the needs of the district when this is not what a neighbourhood plan for a given area is seeking.

2.4 In the chapters of the proposed working draft local plan that identify settlements and identify possible scope for development we summarise key messages coming through in the neighbourhood plans. We trust these summaries will be helpful to members in their considerations. We have, as well, sought to align our thinking and approach, where viable, with the policy approaches set out in neighbourhood plans. In addition there are many matters that neighbourhood plans may address that are not covered by the local plan. The consequence is that for some subject matters and policy considerations it will be the case that parts of neighbourhood plans are not superseded, though in some cases parts will be. It is important to note, however, that we will work with communities to consider any conflicts arising and where necessary help with updating of plans.

## **3 The overall plan making timetable**

3.1 The Council is required to produce a document called a Local Development Scheme (LDS) and this sets out details of planning policy documents that are scheduled for

production and associated timetables, see: <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/media/3722144/east-devon-lds-feb-2021.pdf>

- 3.2 The production of this working draft local plan sits within the timetabling of this LDS which advises of the following full timetable:
- Issues Consultation – starting January 2021.
  - Draft plan – consultation starting early summer 2022.
  - Publication – consultation starts October 2022.
  - Submission – March 2023.
  - Inspector’s Hearings – July 2023.
  - Adoption – February 2024.
- 3.3 The Issues consultation was completed as scheduled and this working draft local plan comes before the Draft Plan that is scheduled to come to Strategic Planning Committee, with a recommendation for public consultation, in March 2022. More detail on previously agreed timetabling can be seen in papers to Strategic Planning Committee on 30 March 2021 at which committee agreed to receive a (working) draft plan in December 2021, see item 119 at:  
<https://democracy.eastdevon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MIId=1664&Ver=4>
- 3.4 It is worth highlighting that the draft plan that does go out for public consultation will allow respondents to express their views on proposals and that through consideration of feedback received that plan will then be refined and redrafted. This will lead on to the Publication stage of plan making and at this point the council should be satisfied that they have a sound and fully justified plan that is fit for submission for examination by a Planning Inspector.
- 3.5 At Publication stage, and before Submission for examination, the plan is made available for consultation. By this stage the Council should be content that the plan reflects their intentions and is a sound strategy for the district. As a result consultation at this stage is about understanding the remaining objections to the plan for the purposes of the examination process rather than making further changes to the plan. Any comments received at the Publication consultation stage will, along with the plan and supporting evidence documents and other papers form the submission documents for the Examination. As part of the Examination it is standard practice that the Planning Inspector will want to make Main Modifications and these will also need to be available for public comment. After that point the plan, subject to the Inspector issuing a report advising so, can be adopted.

#### **4 The proposed distribution strategy for future development**

- 4.1 The working draft local plan advises of a clear strategy for the distribution of future development. This strategy proposes the continuation (as set out in the existing local plan) of a substantial part of future development being concentrated on the western side of East Devon. As part of this strategic approach the plan advises of the appropriateness to plan for a second new town.
- 4.2 Across the rest of East Devon development levels are proposed to be more moderate with most of the rest of the new development (that is not planned for the western side of the district) going to the main towns. Villages with a good range of facilities would typically see modest provision for development and beyond these settlements the rest of East Devon, including villages with lower levels of facilities, hamlets and countryside areas would see limited development.

- 4.3 The strategy for the distribution of development, with a concentration of future development on the western side of East Devon, reflects the opportunities that lie in this area and also the constraints that exist in much of the rest of East Devon.
- 4.4 It is important to recognise that the new local plan will provide for development that is over and above that which is already committed for development through sites that already have a planning permission and those allocated for development in the emerging Cranbrook Plan. It is highlighted at this point, as well, that whilst we are referring to it as a new district local plan the intent is that it will not cover (other than potentially for a very few policies) the geographical area that is covered by the Cranbrook Plan. The future planning policy framework for Cranbrook will continue to be contained within the Cranbrook Plan.

## **5 Potential development site assessment work**

- 5.1 To support development of the local plan the Council has undertaken various 'calls for sites' through an exercise called the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). The HELAA presents an opportunity for land owners and their agents to identify and promote land that they consider is appropriate or suitable for development. As part of the HELAA work there is a panel of experts that will assess the technical suitability for sites submitted for development. It is advised that the panel do not make decisions, or even recommendations, on which land areas should be allocated or made available for development. The Panel's remit is restricted to advising on whether sites are technically developable given such matters as can highway access be achieved or are there flood risk considerations. It is for East Devon District Council to use and interpret the Panel findings, and other evidence and assessment, to reach a conclusion on which sites to allocate for development.
- 5.2 The HELAA Panel will be assessing sites in December 2021 and early in the new year with an expectation that their report outputs will be concluded in early 2022. As such they will be ready to inform production of the actual draft plan. There has, however, already been a lot of assessment work undertaken of HELAA submission sites and this assessment work has helped officers draw preliminary conclusions on the potential suitability of sites for development. The recommended allocations in the draft local plan draw on this officer assessment work but it is stressed that it is preliminary assessment only. The officer site assessment work is available in three attached documents:
- Assessment Western side of East Devon;
  - Assessment Principle and Main Centres (larger towns); and
  - Assessment Tier 3 and 4 Settlements (smaller towns and larger villages)
- 5.3 Sites assessment work has not yet been undertaken following detailed scrutiny and judgements have been made ahead of receipt of HELAA panel findings. Bearing these 'health warnings' in mind there are potentially going to need to be changes and refinements to site assessment and allocations in the actual draft plan. However, in presenting initial site assessment work in the working draft local plan we consider that it provides Committee with a good understanding of what is potentially available and credible for development.
- 5.4 The officer site assessment work in the working draft plan has led to provisional proposed site allocations for development and it has also helped test and articulate the proposed spatial strategy in the plan.

## **6 Levels of growth and the availability of suitable sites**

- 6.1 The working draft local plan quantifies the amount of future house building that is seen as appropriate. To align with the Government standard methodology for calculating appropriate housing provision it is appropriate to accommodate 918 new homes per year which over a period of 20 years, 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2040, equates to provision of 18,360 new homes. Dates given are the precise proposed working dates for the local plan – though we may need to review the end date to ensure we have a plan that covers at least 15 years into the future from the point of adoption. Returning to the figure of 18,360 dwellings we have added an additional 10% flexibility buffer as provision against potential non-delivery of some sites for currently unforeseen reasons. It is not intended to necessarily increase the total number of homes delivered over the plan period but it is an acceptance that some sites may not be delivered and so providing some flexibility is necessary to ensure that an adequate housing land supply is maintained. However, we would want to keep this figure under review and a reduced buffer or no buffer may be a credible option if there is sufficient certainty over site delivery as work progresses. At this stage and working with this buffer generates a total gross housing figure for 2020 to 2040 of 18,360 plus 1,836 which equals 20,196.
- 6.2 Committee should be aware that they can choose to plan for more housing if they so wish noting that Government policy encourages planning authorities to do so. Justifying a case for planning for less would, however, be far more challenging to sustain, though some planning authorities have asked neighbouring or nearby authorities (under the Duty to Cooperate) to take some of their need. It is worth highlighting that where authorities have not appropriately taken such neighbourly requests into account some plans have failed at examination. Taking these issues into account does not necessarily mean accommodating those houses but it does require meaningful and recorded dialogue and associated assessment to justify the approach that is ultimately taken.
- 6.3 An additional element of the NPPF is that we should identify 10% of our overall housing requirement (1,836 homes) on small sites, which the Government define as anything under 1 ha in size (or approximately 30 homes or less). On this basis, taking into account existing commitments and proposed allocations, we have estimated that we will be able to identify a total of 1,530 homes on smaller sites, which leaves a shortfall of 306. Although further work needs to be done on what can or cannot be counted in this figure, Members should be aware of the potential need to identify more homes on smaller sites to meet this requirement.
- 6.4 It should be noted that applying the Government methodology in the future, and as plan making progresses, could result in changes to the levels to plan for. Furthermore we also need to be mindful of other factors that could result in potential increases in appropriate housing provision. The bullet point list below is not comprehensive of all considerations that could lead to a need or desire to plan for more housing but key possible reasons could include:
- Providing housing for a neighbouring authority (under the Duty to Cooperate);
  - Ensuring that enough houses are built to support a large enough population to provide a workforce to fill potential future jobs - if the Council advocated a high jobs growth agenda this may become a particular consideration. We currently have consultants investigating this matter; and
  - Providing additional affordable housing – most affordable housing is built through Section 106 agreements with developers building open market housing. If the desire or need is seen to secure more affordable housing then it may be appropriate to plan for more housing overall.
- 6.5 Returning to the current working assumption of needing to provide for around 20,200 new homes for the 2020 to 2040 period we can deduct a figure of around 13,300 from this total

as this amount of housing is already accounted for through existing commitments to development – specifically from dwellings that:

- were built from 2020 to 2021 (2021 being the current end date of monitoring records);
- dwellings that are currently under-construction or have a planning permission for development;
- dwellings that are allocated for development in the Cranbrook Plan; and
- dwellings that we can reasonably predict will come forward as ‘windfalls’ – windfalls being dwellings/sites that are not explicitly planned for on allocated land but that otherwise are built, typically under plan policies that allow for such development.

- 6.6 The deduction of commitments from need (i.e. around 20,200 minus 13,300) leaves us with a requirement to allocate land for (at least) around 6,900 new homes in the new local plan. This figure should however, be regarded as an approximate guide and it is liable to change as we refine housing number assessment work and also Government expectations or requirements may change, as could the 10% flexibility buffer.
- 6.7 In drawing up the working draft plan we have been critically aware of this 6,900 new homes need figure. However, we would advise that at this stage we have identified provision for around 6,000 new homes. Deducting this figure from the 6,900 needed leaves a requirement of land for 900 homes that is currently unidentified. We may, as well, need to look at establishing housing numbers for designated Neighbourhood Areas and policy of the local plan could look to Neighbourhood Plans bringing some housing forward. We envisage giving this further consideration early in the new year, in liaison with neighbourhood plan groups, ahead of the plan going out to public consultation.
- 6.8 **Site assessment and meeting the full housing need** – In the working draft local plan we explicitly comment on and advise on the need to find further suitable sites for housing. We set out possible options for how the remaining need may be met. Supporting evidence to the working draft local plan (as appended to this committee report) undertakes an assessment of site suitability for development. Officers have undertaken a ranking assessment of sites on a scale of 1 to 6, with 6 being very suitable for development and 1 being a very poor choice for development. In drawing up recommended allocations in the working draft local plan we have, at this stage, minimised from allocation sites that were assessed as scoring 1, 2 and 3 (i.e. the poorest sites) and typically selected allocations from the sites that scored 4, 5 or 6 (i.e. the better performing sites). In the main towns of East Devon (the Tier 1 and 2 settlements) most sites achieving a score of 4, 5 or 6 are proposed as allocations. In the small towns and villages (Tier 3 and 4 settlements) the better performing sites (those scoring 4 or above) mainly feature as proposed allocations, though at present many are not chosen.
- 6.9 The Working Draft local plan (summary details only) contains the options tabled below – but do please refer to the actual working draft local plan for full details. Very importantly it should be noted that there is some considerable overlaps between the categories in the numbers counted below (i.e. the options identified and the housing numbers within are not typically mutually exclusive of one another).

Option Ref	Summary of options for providing extra housing to meet the full housing need	Approximate extra homes delivered
a)	<p>Allocate more of the fair or better performing sites (i.e. sites scoring 4 or above) across the plan area. In the plan we have not allocated all sites that score a 4 or above (this is especially so in villages). If we were, however, to take this approach, it could add quite considerably to the total levels of housing provision, though it may run counter to the proposed distribution strategy of the plan,</p>	Up to 2,280 extra homes.
b)	<p>Target more growth to selected Tier 3 and 4 settlements as opposed to all Tier 3 and 4 settlements. This is really a variation of option a) above and it seeks to establish more strategic planning logic for where any extra development should go. Under this approach we are suggesting larger villages with railways stations and a good range of services, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feniton;</li> <li>• Whimple; and</li> <li>• Lympstone</li> </ul> <p>could be appropriate places for development, as could two larger villages that in or are close to the western side of East Devon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clyst St Mary and</li> <li>• West Hill.</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that in the case of Whimple, in terms of number capacity assessments, we have included a number of sites that achieved a score of 3, as they were considered to be better performing 3s rather than less good performing 3s.</p>	Up to 2,200 extra homes.
c)	<p>Look to villages below Tier 4 for growth. Under the proposed plan strategy we do not propose making housing allocations at villages below Tier 4. However, if this strategic approach were to change and we did consider such locations for development then the expectation is that some additional capacity could be identified. To date site assessment work has not been undertaken for settlements below Tier 4, but based on HELAA submission sites, and if we were to allocate around 10 to 20 houses at 31 extra villages we can make an estimate of possible extra capacity.</p>	A capacity of 310 to 620 extra may be possible.
d)	<p>Allocate all sites at Tier 1 to 4 settlements that are assessed as scoring a 4 or above (i.e. all sites scoring a 4 or above that are not currently allocated) <b>plus all sites that score a 3</b>. This option is really a variation on Option a) but it lowers the site suitability threshold. What it does do is generate a considerably greater number of sites and therefore houses that can be added to the overall supply and as such opens up a range of site selection choices. Some sites scoring a 3 are at the better end of this scale, perhaps close to a Score of 4. However some scoring a 3 are at the other extreme, closer to a scoring a 2.</p>	Up to an extra 7,620 homes.



Option Ref	Summary of options for providing extra housing to meet the full housing need	Approximate extra homes delivered
e)	<p>Targeted the allocation of sites that perform less well to the larger (Tier 1 and 2) towns of the District. This option is a variation of the above. By looking to the main towns there is a more in-principle coherent planning logic (according to the proposed plan strategy) for housing growth. Under this option the sites for development may not be ideal but they are in locations that are suited under the proposed plan strategy for development. The towns identified are specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Axminster;</li> <li>• Cranbrook;</li> <li>• Exmouth;</li> <li>• Ottery St Mary;</li> <li>• Honiton;</li> <li>• Seaton; and</li> <li>• Sidmouth</li> </ul>	Up to an extra 4,870 homes.
f)	<p>Allocate more than one new town or new village/s. An extra new town (over and above the one that is proposed for allocation) could accommodate many extra houses. But capacity maybe constrained by being in competition with the new town currently proposed. Allocations of new villages, for say a 1,000 dwellings each, could also potentially add substantially to supply.</p>	A further new town could perhaps add up to 2,500 extra homes up to 2040 and many more after this date.
g)	<p>Search for extra sites. This option may generate extra good sites to develop but as it has not yet been undertaken and possible numbers are an unknown, but they may <b>not</b> be particularly high.</p>	Unknown
h)	<p>Not plan for sufficient housing. Whilst we could seek to present a case to not provide for sufficient housing it is likely to be very hard case to sustain.</p>	None
i)	<p>Be less restrictive to development in the AONBs. In our assessment work we have identified AONB designation as typically being significant constraint to development. However, if we were to <b>not</b> regard AONB designation as an important consideration it may elevate the suitability of a number of sites, but such an approach would be likely to challenge Government policy, especially in respect of larger sites.</p>	Unknown as work has not been undertaken.

**6.10 The views of Committee are explicitly sought on how we should plan to meet the housing need in full.**

6.11 It should be noted, as well, that should housing need figures increase then so will the amount of additional suitable housing land to be identified. Furthermore should any suggested development sites that are currently proposed for allocation in the working draft plan not be allocated, or site capacity figures go down (note commentary on employment matters below), then further housing land will also need to be found. Perhaps at its most stark should the Council decide not to plan for a second new town then there will be a need to provide for a further additional 2,500 homes elsewhere on top of the current identified shortfall.

6.12 The working draft local plan, as well as identifying proposed housing development sites, also includes a number of sites that it is proposed should be allocated for employment

development. The Government are less rigorous in quantifying demands for employment land provision but there is a need to undertake an exercise called an Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) and also the local plan should include an economic strategy. A first draft of an economic strategy, see the working draft plan, has been completed and has informed proposed plan policies for employment land provision and other elements of plan policy. We have also been able to draw, to some degree, on a past EDNA that was produced in support of the then Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP). The past EDNA work is, however, now becoming dated and circumstances have changed significantly since completion on account of the passage of time and the impacts of Covid with different working patterns now being seen. Working with neighbouring authorities we are to commission consultants to produce the new EDNA and early outputs should be available early in the new year to inform the draft local plan. For the time being, however, we are working with the evidence that we do have and that is available.

- 6.13 One of the challenges that we have faced in plan making to date is identifying suitable sites to allocate for employment uses. Whilst the opportunity existed through the HELAA work for owners to promote their land for employment purposes few chose to do so. We are also aware that some of the sites that are allocated in the existing local plan do face delivery challenges. Such challenges are not insurmountable but may take some time to address, as such there is seen at present to be a shortfall in readily available employment land.
- 6.14 One option that we would suggest is appropriate for providing more employment land is to look to more mixed use developments and specifically to seek to require employment provision on some housing allocations sites. Such provision may be especially appropriate on bigger sites and essential on the biggest, specifically a new town. However some smaller sites could also be appropriate for employment provision and help to improve self-containment and minimise out commuting, including in smaller settlements and villages.
- 6.15 More work is needed on looking at and into employment allocations and provision before we get to a draft local plan that is ready for public consultation. However, it is worth noting that if we go down the route of seeking employment uses on some housing allocation sites this could reduce housing capacity and generate a further need to find additional housing land.

## **7 Overall draft plan content**

- 7.1 This report, so far, has concentrated on development distribution, housing matters, employment provision and site allocation choices. These are all critical matters and feature in various points across the plan and its chapters. However, these form just part of the plan mix, with the overall plan covering key matters that are relevant for determination of planning applications.
- 7.2 By way of summary the following chapters are included in the working draft plan with very brief comment made on key matters within and the approach taken.

1	<b>Introduction</b> – a short introductory chapter sets the scene for the rest of the plan and the work that is being done.
2	<b>An overview of what East Devon is like</b> – this chapter sets out a simple picture of key aspects of East Devon.
3	<b>Vision and objectives of the plan</b> – this chapter sets out a vision for the local plan that is drawn from the new Council Plan. It does ask, however, whether members may wish to see a more spatially defined vision that reflects on the varying geographical areas that define East Devon and the characteristics that make up these parts.
4	<b>The spatial strategy of the plan</b> – this chapter establishes the proposed spatial strategy for the distribution of future development, as discussed already in this committee report.
5	<b>How we have assessed the potential suitability of sites for development</b> – the intent is that this chapter will not feature in the consultation draft plan but is included in this version in order to summarise how we have assessed sites and their suitability for development – material in this chapter will feature in future supporting technical documents.
6	<b>Future growth and development on the western side of East Devon</b> – with the western side of East Devon being identified as a specific focal point for development this chapter includes policies for specific developments proposed in this part of the district. These include another new town, major housing development alongside the M5 south of Junction 30, new employment sites and it also provides for amendments to and potential expansion of the Clyst Valley Regional Park and the future of Exeter International Airport.
7	<b>Strategy for development at the Principal Centre and Main Centres</b> – this chapters provides policy coverage and shows proposed development site allocations for the main towns of East Devon.
8	<b>Planning for Local Centres and Service Villages</b> – this chapter provides policy coverage and shows proposed development site allocations for the smaller towns and selected villages, those with the greatest range of facilities, in East Devon.
9	<b>Development in small villages, hamlets and the countryside</b> – this chapter provides policy coverage for the rural parts of East Devon outside of areas listed above.
10	<b>Tackling the climate emergency and responding to climate change</b> – significant provision is made for policy that seeks to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. Policy is very ambitious in its aspirations and seeks to set the framework for planning and development in East Devon to play its part in moving to a net zero position. Policy is also included on flooding and coastal change consideration.
11	<b>Meeting housing needs for all</b> – text and proposed policy sets out the proposed approaches to accommodating future housing needs, explicitly including future affordable housing provision.
12	<b>Supporting jobs and the economy and vibrant town centres</b> – proposed policy and plan text explains how we consider economic growth should be promoted and accommodated. A particular focus is placed on the role of town centres.
13	<b>Designing beautiful and healthy spaces and buildings</b> – text and policy highlights the importance of design quality and how we will seek to secure master planning for future development sites.
14	<b>Prioritising sustainable travel and providing the transport and communications facilities we need</b> – this chapters sets out policy promoting the importance of walking and cycling, public transport and general accessibility issues. Policy addresses parking standards as well as broader communication considerations.

15	<b>Caring for our outstanding landscape</b> – proposed policy in this chapter provides for the protection and enhancement of the East Devon landscape.
16	<b>Protecting and enhancing our outstanding biodiversity</b> - proposed policy in this chapters provides for the protection of biodiversity interests, it proposes high targets for biodiversity net gain and sets out the importance of mitigation measures to allow for development to go ahead without damaging wildlife sites and interests.
17	<b>Ensuring access to open space and sporting and recreation facilities</b> – proposed policy provides for sporting and recreation facility provision.
18	<b>Our outstanding built heritage</b> – policy seeks to ensure built heritage assets are protected.
19	<b>Ensuring we have community buildings and facilities</b> – proposed policy seeks to ensure we protect community facilities and sets out considerations in respect of new provision.
20	<b>Implementation and monitoring of the local plan</b> – this chapter sets out considerations relevant to implementing proposals as well as how we will undertake monitoring in order to understand the use and effectiveness of policy and what development is occurring.
21	<b>What happens next</b> – in conclusion we summarise matters around the work and steps ahead.

7.3 It should be noted that there will, over and above working draft plan content, be some other additional, mostly smaller scale or more detailed or local area specific policy matters, that will potentially be included in the draft plan. These will be worked on and worked up in the coming weeks. Views are welcomed, however, on matters that are felt to be currently missing from the plan and that should be addressed.

## 8 Compliance of local plan with Government policy

8.1 To help ensure we are covering relevant matters in the local plan we will undertake various compliance tests. The Planning Advisory Service (an organisation sponsored by the Local Government Association) produce various compliance checklists and we have worked through these and have produced summary documents of conclusions reached. For example, we have checked whether the Working Draft Local Plan meets the plan-making requirements as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework – a compliance report is appended to this committee report.

8.2 On a related note we have also summarised the main issues arising from consultation on the Local Plan Issues and Options (January – March 2021), and provided a response explaining how each main issue has been taken into account in respect of production of this working draft plan. This report is appended to tis committee report. This assessment work will eventually form part of the Consultation Statement that we are required to prepare, which will identify who we will consult and how, along with how the main issues raised in consultation have been addressed in the local plan.

## 9 Evidence and viability assessment

9.1 In this committee report and in the working draft plan we have made reference to various evidence documents that we are drawing on, have produced or will be producing. Policy in the plan does need to be backed up by evidence reports and documents and dependent on the nature of matters being addressed they may need to be quite detailed and can get into complex considerations. The more the Council may wish to deviate from normal or conventional policy approaches the stronger the evidence may need to be and if the aspiration is to challenge Government standards or expectations then evidence may need to be very compelling.

- 9.2 At plan examination we can expect an Inspector to be very concerned with the nature, quality and robustness of evidence used to justify plan policy. One consideration is that evidence can become dated so in a number of cases reports and work may need reviews and updating as future plan making progresses. Further evidence production will be carried out over the months ahead as plan production proceeds. We should, however, seek to ensure that all evidence is in place at the time of and to justify the Publication and Submission of the plan.
- 9.3 One key strand of evidence work that is not yet started and which will need to be carried out next year is a whole plan viability assessment. This is a plan making requirement and a Planning Inspector can be expected to rigorously assess whether proposals in the plan and contributions sought from development will be viable in financial terms. We are likely to appoint outside consultants to undertake viability assessment of the plan and they will work with emerging policies once we have greater clarity over what they will be saying and land that will be allocated. The result of testing could be that standards and asks that ideally may be sought through plan policy may need to be toned down or reduced in order to ensure that the plan will pass viability tests. Part of this overall work may involve seeking to balance competing policy demands and in so doing determining where priorities may lie.

## **10 Consultation strategy**

- 10.1 The aspiration will be to ensure that the draft plan, once approved for consultation and consultation starts, is made widely available in forms and formats that encourage and allow for widespread engagement. The drafting of the document should seek to achieve this though we do also need to be mindful of the fact that the local plan will be a technical document that needs to conform to specific standards and legal requirements in content and production. That does not however mean that we cannot present the information in a more visually engaging and interactive format for consultation purposes and for people to more easily access the information contained within the formal plan document following its adoption.
- 10.2 To support future public engagement and specifically consultation on the draft plan we will be producing a Consultation Strategy. This will set out how we will engage with our communities and other consultees at the draft plan and publication draft plan stages including proposals for engaging with all groups in society.

## **11 Next steps**

- 11.1 To accord with the previously agreed plan making timetable the next version of the local plan will be a proposed consultation draft that is scheduled to come back to Strategic Planning Committee in March 2022. Prior to that, in January 2022, committee meetings are scheduled at which developers and agents will be able to make presentations about sites they are promoting. Members may wish to also use the January meetings and also a meeting of committee in February 2022 to refine their thinking.
- 11.2 The working expectation of officers is that the current working draft plan will be amended and refined over the coming weeks/months into a plan that is ready for public consultation. The basic format of the plan is proposed to be retained with the same chapter structure as well as the proposed policy areas. However, we intend to develop the proposed matters that policies cover into real working policies that could be applied in practice in

determining planning applications. In the consultation draft plan we would plan to retain commentary around options that we have dismissed and the reasons for their dismissal.

- 11.3 However, to be able to get to the position of being able to progress further with plan preparation committee will need to provide a clear steer that they are happy with the work to date and the general approach being advocated or advise of the alternative approaches that they would want officers to pursue. Furthermore clarity is needed, in particular, on how Committee may wish to address the housing need that is currently unmet in the working draft of the plan so that officers can build appropriate extra provision into the next draft of the plan, noting that if committee wanted to remove any sites that are proposed for allocation this would add to the need to be met.
- 11.4 If committee wish to see significant changes made to the approach being taken or extra work or assessments undertaken then this should be explicitly highlighted and it should be noted that programmes, workloads and timetables may need to be adjusted accordingly.
- 11.5 Alongside refinement of the draft plan further work will also be needed under the Duty to Cooperate to engage with neighbouring authorities, statutory consultees, infrastructure providers and other parties.

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### **Financial implications:**

The costs of preparing the Local Plan are covered within the existing Planning Policy base budget. The majority of these costs are associated with procuring evidence, testing the viability of the plan, and consultation, however, there are also unavoidable costs arising from the examination of the plan (which is a statutory part of the decision making process). A significant annual expenditure increase of £75k was provided for within the 21/22 budget and has been carried forward into the proposed 22/23 budget to accommodate the aforementioned new burdens on the service.

### **Legal implications:**

The proposed draft is an initial working draft of policies which is before members for consideration and provision of comments as to the direction of policy development. Environmental Assessment of proposals and alternatives must be an iterative part of policy development and the choices made in the plan. There is nothing within legislation which prescribes when an EA must be carried out prior to adoption of a local plan, it is proposed to be carried out as policies are finally formulated. There are no other legal comments other than as set out in the report at this stage of the plan development.”