

Date of Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Settlement Hierarchy

### Report summary:

This report seeks to pick up on Members views expressed on the hierarchy of settlements and options for addressing the shortfall in housing sites in the working draft Local Plan. The report seeks Members views on which additional sites should be added to Tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy and which settlements beyond Tier 4 in the hierarchy Members would also wish us to look to as locations for growth. The report sets out the background to this and the evidence to aid Members consideration.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

That Members of Strategic Planning Committee:

1. Recommend whether they wish to progress the Local Plan based on one or other of the two options for expanding the number of settlements within tier 4 of the proposed settlement hierarchy as set out in the report.

### Reason for recommendation:

To provide clarity on the settlement hierarchy to inform further work on the new Local Plan and to scope a further call for sites.

Officer: Ed Freeman – Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management (Tel: 01395 517519; e-mail: [efreeman@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:efreeman@eastdevon.gov.uk)).

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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** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk;

**Links to background information** Minutes of SPC 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 - [Printed minutes 08th-Feb-2022 09.30 Strategic Planning Committee.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#); The role and function of settlements final report: [1. Role and Function study\\_SPC report 05.10.21.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#); The role and function of settlements draft report: [Item 9 Role and Function study\\_SPC report 20.07.21.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#)

**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. Background

1.1 At the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021 Members considered a draft report entitled “The Role and Function of Settlements Study”. The report set out officer’s consideration of the role and function of settlements within the district and proposed a hierarchy of settlements taking into account factors such as the services and facilities available in each settlement as well as whether they have a local role or serve a wider populace among other factors. The intention was that this work form an important evidence document to underpin development of a spatial strategy for the district.

Members resolved:

- “1. That the findings of ‘The Role and Function of Settlements as a draft document be considered and its use as evidence to inform production of the emerging Local Plan be endorsed.
2. All Members of the Council should send to the Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management all comment and amendments that they wish to be taken into account. The Service Lead – Planning Strategy and Development Management to then report back to the Committee at a meeting after the September meeting.”

1.2 Following this meeting some comments from Members were received and the information in the document was fact checked with the relevant town and parish councils. A final version of the study was then brought to Members at their meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021. This concluded that based on the available evidence the settlement hierarchy should be as follows:

- Tier One – Principal Centre: Exmouth
- Tier Two – Main Centre: Axminster, Cranbrook, Honiton, Ottery St Mary, Seaton, Sidmouth
- Tier Three – Local Centre: Broadclyst, Budleigh Salterton, Colyton, Lypstone, Woodbury •
- Tier Four – Service Village: Beer, Branscombe, Broadhembury, Chardstock, Clyst St Mary, Dunkeswell, East Budleigh, Exton, Feniton, Hawkchurch, Kilminster, Musbury, Newton Poppleford, Otterton, Payhembury, Plymtree, Sidbury, Stoke Canon, Tipton St John, Uplyme, Westclyst, West Hill, Whimple.

At the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 meeting Members resolved:

“That Strategic Planning Committee endorsed the findings of the Role and Function Settlements – Final Draft and endorsed its use as evidence which will be updated as further data and evidence comes forward.”

- 1.3 Following this resolution officers developed the spatial strategy put forward in the working draft local plan taking into account the evidence included within the study and as endorsed by Members.
- 1.4 At Strategic Planning Committee on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 in response to consideration of wording in the working draft Local Plan on the intent of policy regarding the settlement hierarchy Members resolved that they wished to include more settlements within Tier 4 of the hierarchy. Members also resolved that they would wish to undertake a further call for sites and that this should be focused on the settlements within the 4 tiers within the settlement hierarchy. It is therefore important before a call for sites takes place that there is clarity about which settlements should make up Tier 4 within the hierarchy so that the further call for sites can focus on these locations.

## **2. Potential Additional Tier 4 Settlements**

- 2.1 Two options for expanding tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy are included below. These have been informed by the evidence included in the Role and Function of Settlements Study:

### **Option 1:**

- 2.2 There were a small number of villages that did not ‘make the cut’ in terms of being considered suitable for inclusion in tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy but were reasonably close to having a comparatively greater level of services and facilities than those villages that are less well served. In Officers opinion these settlements like numerous others could only sustainably accommodate a modest level of growth to meet the needs of those communities and these were envisaged to be accommodated through other policies that enable locally led growth in rural areas through community led development, exceptions sites etc. However if Members wish to expand the number of settlements within tier 4 within the hierarchy then the following are considered to be the next most sustainable settlements:
  - Colyford ;
  - Rockbeare;
  - Upottery; and
  - Woodbury Salterton.
- 2.3 These settlements have several facilities/services (local and/or strategic) as well as a relatively high employment density. However, they are missing some key day-to-day facilities – there is no shop in Upottery, Woodbury Salterton or Rockbeare; and Colyford does not have a primary school.
- 2.4 Members are directed to the “Role and Function of Settlements Study” at [Item 9 Role and Function study\\_SPC report 20.07.21.pdf \(eastdevon.gov.uk\)](#) for the evidence to support this assessment. From there it can be seen that these are the settlements that have the next highest number and range of strategic and local level services and facilities. It is suggested that overall these 4 settlements are on a par with each other and if Members wish to lower the threshold for inclusion in tier 4 it would be possible to defend the logic of including these settlements.

## Option 2

- 2.5 There are a great many other villages in East Devon that fall below the tier 4 threshold. These range from those with nil or very few services and facilities to those with at least a few of the more basic ones. Bearing in mind government policy and the requirement to deliver sustainable development it is important that we use the evidence available on services and facilities to help to guide where we look to accommodate growth. We should therefore only look to those settlements with a reasonable level of services and facilities.
- 2.6 There are a further eight villages that stand out in respect of their offerings; they were recorded as having at least five facilities which include either a primary school or shop. They are therefore considered to form the next tranche of settlements that could be included in Tier 4 in addition to those identified in option 1. They are however missing some key facilities as noted in brackets in the list below:
- 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)
- 2.7 Again Members are asked to consider the principles of sustainable development and whether these are genuinely sustainable locations for general growth to be accommodated. Other policies put forward in the local plan would still enable some growth in these locations even if they are not included within tier 4. These would however be more limited and locally led development to meet identified needs in the community rather than wider growth requirements.

## 3. Policy Framework

- 3.1 It is important that when considering which settlements should be included within Tier 4 of the settlement hierarchy that there is consistency with the policy framework that Members have been considering as part of the working draft local plan.
- 3.2 One of the key concepts that Members supported was the 20 minute neighbourhood. It is considered important that settlements within Tier 4 can deliver a good range of services and facilities within 20 minutes easy walking or cycling distance and that the routes are safe and attractive so that there is a reasonable prospect that people will use them. If this is not the case then there is a danger that inclusion of a settlement within Tier 4 that cannot meet this proposed policy requirement would be identified as a place where general growth could be located but that cannot meet this policy requirement leading to a clear contradiction. It would also potentially conflict with clear policy aspirations to deliver zero carbon growth noting that locating development in the right locations is one of the main ways the planning system can address climate change.
- 3.3 As an example Awliscombe was identified at Members meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022 as a potential tier 4 settlement, however it has a level of services and facilities that is less than any of those listed in option 1 and option 2 above. This is because some facilities such as the sports pitch are located outside of the settlement and beyond easy reach of the settlement other than by car.

## 4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Members views on these two options are sought so that the scope of a further call for sites (which is discussed elsewhere on this agenda) can be determined and also to inform further work on the growth strategy in the new Local Plan.
- 4.2 It should be noted that the originally agreed hierarchy of settlements as set out in the report of the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 remains the most appropriate approach in officer's opinion having regard to the principles of sustainable development and in terms of delivering a spatial strategy that minimises the need to travel and in so doing addresses climate change.

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### **Financial implications:**

There are no direct financial implications.

### **Legal implications:**

To assist in the timely drafting of the new Local Plan policies a clear and settled approach to the Settlement Hierarchy must be formulated to avoid the risk of the Local Plan being found unsound at examination.