

Date of Meeting: Friday 7 October 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Consultation on the draft East Devon Local Plan – first draft of the proposed local plan consultation draft

Report summary:

This report introduces, as appended, the first draft of the proposed East Devon Local Plan - consultation draft plan for autumn 2022. The proposed consultation plan is nearly complete but we are waiting on evidence reports, specifically in respect of new community site appraisal, and also finalising other aspects of the plan, before it is completed. The intent is that the final version of the proposed consultation plan will come back to committee on 1 November 2022 with a recommendation for consultation to run from 7 November 2022 to 21 December 2022.

In introducing this first draft Members will be able to review overall structure and content and if there are any concerns these can be highlighted and amendments made to the document in readiness for final consideration at the 1 November 2022 committee meeting.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

1. That Strategic Planning Committee recommend endorsement of the draft local plan, as completed to date and as appended to this report for public consultation, subject to refinements to the plan to be received at Committee on the 1 November 2022.
2. That committee recommend agreement to receipt of a further report on the 1 November 2022 with plan refinements incorporated and with a recommendation for consultation to take place in autumn 2022.
3. That committee make a recommendation for the scale of housing development that may be appropriate at Feniton and Whimple and recommend whether plan strategy should be adjusted (for the 1 November 2022 meeting draft) to identify these villages for strategic scale growth.
4. That committee advise whether they wish to hear presentations from land owners or their agents in respect of land that is being promoted for development on the western side of East Devon.
5. That committee recommend that the revised timetable (as set out in section 9 of this report) for consultation on the draft Local Plan be agreed.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that members are fully aware of and can endorse, in principle, the draft plan for public consultation in autumn 2022, subject to final amendments to come before committee on 1 November 2022.

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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

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 Members have received a number of reports over recent months that have led up to the appended 1st draft of the proposed consultation draft plan. A key milestone was reached in December 2021 when committee received a working draft local plan. This working draft plan set out a proposed structure and format for the plan and included recommended policy approaches. Committee debated much of the content of this plan in late 2021 and early 2022 and the written content of the proposed consultation plan is largely a refinement of paperwork already reviewed by Committee, albeit some chapters and sections have been amended and updated, though where so seeking to retain the broad approaches already agreed.

1.2 The local plan will need to include sites for allocation for development and site assessment reports have come before members in recent months. These assessment reports identify preferred sites for allocation for development along with what officers have termed as 2nd best choice sites. For the towns, Tier 1 to 2 settlements, committee has agreed to include identified sites in the consultation plan along with identifying sites, at and around towns, which were classified as poor allocations for development, these will be shown as such in the consultation.

2. Assessment of sites at Tier 3 and 4 settlements

2.1 Committee reports containing assessment of sites at Tier 3 and 4 settlements have been published but at the time of writing this report have not actually been debated by members. Committee decisions have not therefore been made - Committee meetings are scheduled for debate of sites at Tier 3 and 4 settlement on 29 September 2022 and potentially going onto 4 October 2022.

2.2 For the draft local plan we have, at this stage of writing, assumed that committee will endorse consultation on the preferred and 2nd choice sites but we can adjust the plan if different conclusions are reached at this committee meeting.

3. Capacity for development at Feniton and Whimble and plan strategy implications

3.1 In the above section an overview is given to the general picture for Tier 3 and 4 settlements. However, Feniton and Whimble are exceptional cases in that both are relatively small villages with limited facilities, but each settlement has capacity to accommodate a substantial numbers of houses on what are classified as preferred or 2nd best site choices.

3.2 If we were to include all of the preferred and 2nd best sites at the two villages, with a view therefore that they could ultimately become allocations in the local plan and accommodate large numbers of homes, it is suggested that committee should give consideration to whether plan strategy should be adjusted. Plan strategy does not currently refer to Feniton and Whimble accommodating substantial growth but if this were the actual or possible intent then this needs to be clear in the plan text and needs to be identified a key issue for which views are sought through the consultation.

4. Allocation of land for development of a new town and development more generally on the western side of East Devon

4.1 At the time of drafting this report we are waiting on evidence reports in respect of site choices and preferences in respect of the location of any proposed new town. Assessment work to date has established a series of options and these are being carefully reviewed. Whilst we have drafted generic suggested policy wording for the new town this does not yet apply to specific suggested sites or boundaries.

4.2 In respect of other development proposals elsewhere on the western side of East Devon, and policy for the Clyst Valley Regional Park boundary, we have suggested a number of land allocations for development and provided proposed policy wording. However, there is

further assessment work to be undertaken and therefore it is possible that we may want, from an officer perspective, to refine plan wording and possibly suggested allocation boundaries.

5. The 1 November 2022 Committee report and plan refinement

- 5.1 For reasons summarised above the appended draft proposed consultation document should be regarded as being very close to being the proposed finished document for consultation but not the absolute final document.
- 5.2 The intent is that the final document to come before committee at the 1 November 2022 meeting of Strategic Planning Committee. This reflects a slight delay to the programme primarily arising from delays in transport modelling work on the new community proposals and delays to committee meetings due to recent events.
- 5.3 In the redraft for the 1 November 2022 committee meeting we would not envisage any substantive redrafting, though as noted above we will need some additional text, specifically related to development on the western side of the District. We would also highlight, from an officer perspective, that we will look to tidy up any errors elsewhere in the plan or add additional text or make changes where they could provide greater clarity or will improve the plan.
- 5.4 By bringing a first draft of the proposed consultation plan to this committee it also provides scope for any changes recommended by committee to be made to the plan before a final agreement for consultation to start is reached (though deadlines for changes are tight). For the 1 November 2022 meeting the intention is therefore that committee will receive a tracked change redraft with proposed deleted text ~~crossed through~~ and new text underlined and in red. It is hoped that this would enable Members to quickly review the changes having debated any matters in detail at this meeting.

6. For the western side of East Devon - Presentations by agents/land owners at the 1 November 2022 Committee meeting

- 6.1 At previous committee meetings members have invited land owners or their agents to make site presentations in respect of land that they are promoting for development.
- 6.2 A number of presentations have already been heard from those with land interests on the western side of East Devon. Committee are asked to determine, however, whether they wish to invite land owners/agents, in respect to sites or land that has not already been subject to presentations, to present sites to the 1 November 2022 meeting.
- 6.3 This issue arises as site assessment work has been brought to Members at recent meetings based on the settlement hierarchy with the work progressing through from the Tier 1 settlement to Tier 4 settlements. There are however potential site allocations outside of these areas notably within new community proposals and a potential urban extension to the north of Topsham that are not included in the settlement hierarchy and have not therefore had the opportunity to present proposals to Members since the initial presentations made in January of this year. To ensure parity Members views are sought

on making time available for those who have not previously presented within the areas on the western side of East Devon to present to the committee.

7. Local plan evidence documents and sustainability appraisal

- 7.1 The local plan will be supported by a range of evidence documents and also a sustainability appraisal report. Whilst we have referred to some of these documents in the current draft for the 1 November 2022 agenda we intend to provide details of a full suite of evidence documents that have informed emerging plan policy and which will justify plan content. Our evidence collecting work is not yet, however, complete and consultation on the draft plan will form part of the future evidence gathering. Wider further evidence gathering will extend through 2022 and into 2023.
- 7.2 The intent is that the overall work will lead to a redrafted plan that will become the Publication plan. It will be made available for comment, under current timetables, in autumn 2023 and thereafter will be submitted (sent to the Planning Inspectorate) for examination. Before we get to the Publication Plan there may, however, be reason or grounds to undertake further targeted and limited consultation, perhaps on specific detailed plan content or matters.

8. Consultation proposals for the plan / the policies map

- 8.1 It is important when reading the draft Local Plan that the intention here is not to have the document itself front and centre within the consultation. The intention is to build a consultation around the document. The plan itself will be available for those who wish to review the entire document in detail but key themes and issues will be drawn out of the plan to form the focus of consultation.
- 8.2 The council is now using new consultation software, Commonplace. This software is visually attractive and designed to encourage people to get involved and provide feedback. There will be an opening/early page (called a 'tile') on the software that will be called 'quick survey' (or something similar) that will be rather like a succinct summary of key themes and issues in the plan, and we will ask a series of questions around the plan and content. By design the information presented and questions asked will be kept simple and this element of the consultation is especially designed for people that are not able or wanting to spend lots of time getting involved.
- 8.3 There will also be a mapping tile (or series of tiles/links) that show maps of each of the Tier 1 to 4 settlements with the sites at and around the settlement that have been assessed as potentially suitable for housing development. They will be colour coded as green for preferred sites, amber for 2nd best and red for those currently discounted. People will be able to click on these and make comments.
- 8.4 For the main body of consultation each chapter of the plan will have its own tile on the software, and this will:
- Provide a succinct introduction to the subject matter in the chapter;
 - Provide a link to a video for selected chapters, explaining more about the subject;
 - Give a summary introduction to each policy in that chapter;

- Set out the policy wording (or in most cases a summary of it);
- Have a comments box so that people can comment on the policy or its justification;
- Have a box to be completed if there are any further comments people wish to make on the chapter (for example if they think we have missed anything out);
- On each chapter tile there will also be links to a full pdf of that chapter of the plan.

8.5 There will also be links on the software to the full pdf Policies Map for East Devon and there will be larger scale inset maps for each settlement in the district that falls in Tiers 1 to 4 as well as for the major development proposals on the western side of East Devon.

9. Revised Timetable

9.1 As mentioned earlier in this report the timetable for consultation has slipped slightly due to recent events. It is hoped that Members will be able to agree the appended draft of the Local Plan (subject to any required changes and subsequent officer amendments as mentioned above) so that the consultation can be built around this document in readiness for consultation to start in early November. If possible a draft version of some of the consultation materials through the commonplace software will be made available for Members at the 1st November meeting.

9.2 The intention with this timetable is that it will enable any refinements to the plan to be made and a final version brought to Members at their meeting on the 1st November. At the same meeting the detailed assessment work on the new community options will be brought for Members consideration and instruction as to how this should be addressed in the consultation. Once agreed the consultation can be finalised and will be commenced as soon as possible after the 1st November meeting but by 7th November at the latest. It is envisaged that the consultation would then run through to the 21st December.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. The final Local Plan will have significant implications on the Councils finances. Its importance is highlighted by the financial benefits through business rates growth, housing growth/council tax receipts and through possible government incentive schemes.

Legal implications:

The proposed draft appended to today's report is a working draft of policies which is before members for consideration and endorsement of the current direction of policy development in preparation for the regulation 18 public consultation proposed to be in autumn 2022. It is clear that further refinements are expected following recommendations from the Committee as to development at Feniton and Whimple and further evidence as received. There are no other legal comments.