

Report to: Strategic Planning Committee



Date of Meeting 5 December 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Joint Strategy for East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge

Report summary:

A joint strategy covering the local authority areas of East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge has been prepared following resolutions to undertake this work by the partner authorities in 2021. The strategy is intended to document the key shared issues which we are working together on. It seeks to help to address the requirements of the duty to co-operate but also to stand as a document that can be issued to illustrate to other organisations and to government the on-going joint working between the authorities to support funding bids and other work.

Members are asked approve the joint strategy.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Strategic Planning Committee approves the Joint Strategy (Appendix 1) subject to this being agreed by the partner authorities, with delegated authority given to the Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Strategic Planning to make any amendments arising from the resolution of the other authorities provided these do not materially alter the content of the document.

Reason for recommendation:

To enable the prepared joint strategy to be recognised as an agreed statement of joint ambitions that the partner authorities are working together to achieve.

Officer: Ed Freeman – Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Medium Impact

The Joint Strategy includes shared ambitions to help mitigate the effects of and adapt to climate change and move towards a net zero carbon future.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation should form a key part of joint planning work. By its nature, climate change cannot be addressed by one authority working in isolation. Measures to tackle climate change also need to acknowledge cross- boundary transport movements and other strategic matters. The Joint Strategy supports the Devon Carbon Plan and considers the carbon emissions and climate change impacts of development and transport over a wider area than just Mid Devon. Because of this, the Joint Strategy can be more beneficial to climate change policy compared with seeking to achieve carbon neutrality in just one district

Risk: Low Risk;

The Joint Strategy has been jointly prepared by four authorities, with support from Devon County Council. This means that Committee decisions will be required from the four authorities at similar times to enable the Joint Strategy to be adopted across the Exeter, East Devon Mid Devon and Teignbridge area. There is a risk that one or more of the authorities does not approve the Joint Strategy. To help avoid this eventuality, officers have been working with their relevant Cabinet Members / Portfolio Holders to discuss the Joint Strategy's content and intended purpose and the decision making pathway for its adoption.

A risk of not adopting the Joint Strategy is that the Council will be without a jointly agreed document with other Councils that will be capable of being used to demonstrate continued collaborative working and shared ambitions across a range of strategic priorities and for the delivery of infrastructure. This may be to detriment of seeking to secure funding for infrastructure projects from Government and other potential sources.

Links to background information [Agenda item - Joint Strategy for East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge - East Devon; Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 14th July, 2021, 6.00 pm - East Devon; Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 27th July, 2021, 6.00 pm - East Devon](#)

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

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

1.0 About the Joint the Strategy

- 1.1 Consultants LDA Design have prepared a non-statutory Joint Strategy, called 'Our Shared Coordinates', following instruction from East Devon, Exeter City, Mid Devon and Teignbridge district Councils and which has been supported by Devon County Council. This has followed decisions taken by each Council's respective committee(s) in the summer / autumn of 2021, which gave approval for the preparation of a Joint Strategy for the planning administrative areas of the four authorities. Strategic Planning Committee originally

recommended that the council prepare the joint strategy at their meeting on 22nd June 2021 and this recommendation was subsequently agreed by Cabinet at their meeting on the 14th July 2021 and Council on the 27th July 2021. Subsequent reports document the challenges of resourcing this work which led to consultants being appointed to undertake this work in July 2022.

- 1.2 The Joint Strategy reflects the ambitions and proposals of existing and emerging Local Plans. It sets out shared ambitions across a range of strategic planning matters across the four local authority planning areas, together with a high-level list of infrastructure matters that have cross-boundary significance for supporting the delivery of planned new homes, jobs, services, transport and other development.
- 1.3 Approval of the Joint Strategy will demonstrate the commitment to ongoing joint working across the area on strategic matters. This will help to show the Council's compliance with the duty to cooperate, which is a requirement of preparing planning policy. Preparing the joint strategy will therefore support the preparation of the new East Devon Local Plan.
- 1.4 Exeter City Council, East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils are taking equivalent reports through their committee processes in late 2023.

2.0 The purpose and content of the Joint Strategy

2.1 The purpose of the Joint Strategy is to:

- Demonstrate the joined-up strategy and policy approach the Councils have taken across the functional area.
- Articulate the clear benefits of working together as a cohesive area to address strategic opportunities and challenges.
- Serve as the starting point for identifying key strategic infrastructure and funding challenges.
- Provide a framework for more wider collaboration with key stakeholders who are central to the spatial place-making agenda in the area

2.2 The Joint Strategy will benefit the four Councils through helping to establish a recognisable 'brand' and serve as a prospectus for the area, which may assist when making bids for Government (or other) infrastructure and delivery funding.

2.3 The Joint Strategy is a prospectus-style document, which includes a 'Vision', a 'spatial strategy' and an ambition to position the area as one of the best places to live and work in the UK. In order to achieve this ambition, the Joint Strategy identifies six 'shared coordinates' for delivering sustainable growth which responds to the area's strategic challenges and opportunities:

- Net Zero
- Quality Places
- Jobs and Prosperity
- Nature
- Homes
- Connectivity

2.4 Each of the six shared coordinates are explained in their respective chapters, together with references to initiatives for each that are supported through existing and emerging Local Plans. The Joint Strategy is not a development plan document, and as such does not set policies for the development and use of land and buildings, or include site allocations for development. It will not be used as a decision making tool for planning applications. This will be the role of Local Plans prepared by the four authorities and neighbourhood plans prepared by local communities.

2.5 The importance of investment in infrastructure (such as transport, green infrastructure, utilities and health care) to support growth is a cross cutting theme throughout the document. To this end the Joint Strategy includes a high level list of strategic infrastructure matters that have cross boundary significance, where the four authorities will continue to work in partnership and with Government agencies, transport and utilities providers to secure funding and investment. These infrastructure themes are:

- SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) and nature recovery network provision.
- Strategic waste water and water supply improvements
- Strategic energy grid improvements for import, export and distribution.
- District heating investments and renewable energy projects.
- Education improvements-primary, secondary, further, higher and special educational needs.
- Strategic healthcare provision.
- New railway stations and line improvements.
- Strategic active travel routes and trails.
- Improvements to the Strategic Road Network
- Multi-modal Exeter transport package.

More detail about infrastructure matters can be included in each authority's Infrastructure Funding Statements and Infrastructure Delivery Plans.

2.6 The Joint Strategy will be capable of being updated overtime, including its high-level list of infrastructure matters.

3.0 Stakeholder engagement

3.1 The Joint Strategy (**Appendix 1**) has been subject to a focused consultation with identified key stakeholders. The focused consultation with key stakeholders has served to raise awareness of the Joint Strategy and its intended purpose. Key stakeholders have included:

- Natural England
- Historic England
- Environment Agency
- National Health Service

- South West Water
- National Grid
- Western Power (now National Grid Electricity Distribution)
- Network Rail
- National Highways
- Active Travel England
- Devon County Council (as Local Education Authority, Local Transport Authority, and Minerals and Waste Planning Authority)
- Devon Housing Commission
- Heart of South West Local Enterprise Partnership
- Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership
- East Devon AONB Partnership

3.2 Comments have been received from 11 of the key stakeholders consulted. These comments are detailed in **Appendix 2**, together with responses to these and changes made to the Joint Strategy where it has been agreed these are necessary.

3.3 The Joint Strategy has not been subject to a public consultation since it is a non-statutory document and it does not introduce new policy or alter the content of existing and emerging Local Plans, which have themselves already been subject to public consultations at key stages in their preparation and also, in some cases, independent examinations.

Financial implications:

No direct financial implications.

Legal implications:

The legal implications are set out in the report.