

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Clyst & Otter Rooms, Blackdown House, Honiton on 12 March 2024

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.50 pm. An adjournment took place at 11.28 am and reconvened at 11.40 am.

78 Declarations of interest

Members advised receiving lobbying communication from Mr Paul James who spoke during the public speaking section.

79 Public speaking

Paul James spoke on item 7 – Proposed Employment Sites for Consultation and addressed the Committee on site reference Wood_38 land adjoining Greendale Business Park to give his reflection on what businesses were facing due to current unavailability of employment land in East Devon.

Members were advised that the owners of Greendale Business Park who currently employs over 2,000 people and deliver vital services to East Devon had been approached by an applicant who wanted to consolidate three businesses and to operate from the business park as there were no other large suitable sites available. Unfortunately, Greendale were unable to accommodate this request due to being at full capacity and not being able to expand beyond its current boundary. Mr James advised that if the owners of the business park were permitted, they could expand the site sustainably and quickly and without the need to purchase any land which in turn would accelerate business rates contributions each year and increase job opportunities. Mr James urged Members to support the expansion of the business park to help local businesses to stay in East Devon which in turn would keep skilled jobs in East Devon and help maintain economic growth.

80 Matters of urgency

There were no matters of urgency.

81 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential or exempt items.

82 Creation of Local Plan Member Working Group

The Committee considered the Director of Governance and Licensing's report that sought Members agreement to the setting up of an informal working group to oversee the development of the East Devon Local Plan. The working group would be made up of the Leader of the Council, Chair and Vice Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee and four other members of the Committee.

The Director of Governance and Licensing reassured Members that the working group, which would meet on a regular basis every 2-3 weeks during the day, would simply be to

oversee the progress to ensure it keeps to the timetable and that it would not make any decisions in respect of the process of the Local Plan.

Discussion covered:

- Need to be flexible on the time on the meeting to accommodate Members who work during the day.
- What is the purpose of the working group if it will not be making decisions. It was advised that its purpose was to make sure the progress of the Local Plan was going in the right direction.
- Need to involve more Members to help set the direction.
- Some Members supported the need for the working group as it would help steer direction.
- Need to agree the principles of the working group.
- Some Members did not support the need for a working group expressing their concerns about it being done behind closed doors which could be perceived by members of the public that the direction of the Local Plan was being influenced which could damage the council's reputation.
- It was questioned whether there was capacity for regular meetings.
- Members were in support of the suggestion to invite specific ward members to discuss specific areas with the working group.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management acknowledged Members concerns and advised that the working group would help to keep the Local Plan progress on track and would also help to join up all the different elements of the Local Plan as they were all interconnected.

Following discussions, the Planning Solicitor emphasised that if Members agreed to the Working Group it should proceed without delay and requested a show of hands of Members who would be interested in joining the group.

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed to set up an informal Local Plan Working Group to oversee the development of the East Devon Local Plan and agreed that the Working Group should be made up of the Leader of the Council, Chair and Vice Chair of Strategic Planning Committee, Councillor Brian Bailey (Exmouth Ward Member), Councillor Jess Bailey (West Hill Ward Member), Councillor Todd Olive (Whimple and Rockbeare Ward Member) and Councillor Dan Ledger (Seaton Ward Member).

83 Proposed Employment Sites for Consultation

The report presented to Members provided an update on the proposed 'new' employment sites that had been assessed following a clear steer from the Greater Exeter Economic Development Needs Assessment on employment needs across the area.

It identified 80 hectares of additional employment land with an accompanying assessment of around 50 hectares based on the needs-based market made through enquiries. Members noted that the figure for current and future employment needs would be in the region of between 80 – 130 hectares.

The existing and proposed employment site allocations for Members consideration were outlined in appendix 1 which totalled 119.48 hectares of employment land which did not include an additional 35.9 hectares of land at Cranbrook and the second new community that could be allocated in the new Local Plan.

Members were also asked to consider whether the employment sites assessed in appendix 2 should be included in the Regulation 18 Addendum Consultation including some proposed draft wording on policy.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management updated Members on GH-ED-43 and asked for delegated authority to make some minor amendments and corrections to the site assessment following recent works completed to Long Lane and the amendments to the bus routes in that area.

Discussion covered:

- A concern was raised that a lot of development was being proposed on green spaces.
- A concern was raised that a lot of employment sites were being proposed close to Exeter which closes the gap between Exeter and East Devon. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that land in the eastern side of the district had been put forward during the first consultation so there was a good spread across the whole of the district.
- On behalf of Woodbury residents, the Portfolio Holder for Coast advised that the suggestion of Greendale Business Park being expanded further would not be beneficial and was not supported.
- Where is the economic opportunity for the eastern side of the district.
- Clarification was sought on Polt_04 and Polt_05 detailed on pages 54 – 58 and whether these two sites would be considered as one site. It was advised the two parcels of land had been put forward separately and therefore would be considered as separate.
- Need to consider potential pressures from other districts.

RESOLVED:

That the employment sites detailed in this report were to be consulted on as part of the Regulation 18 Addendum consultation planned to start at the beginning of April and that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management to make any necessary minor changes prior to the consultation.

84 **Designated Neighbourhood Area Housing Requirement in the new Local Plan**

The Committee considered a full detailed technical report that set out two options for calculating the housing requirement figures for each designated neighbourhood area based on whether to include a windfall allowance or to not include a windfall allowance.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management referred to the summary table in Appendix 1 Figure 2 that gave an indication of the likely figures for each area but advised Members this would require updating before the publication of the draft Local Plan.

He also referred to Appendix 2 which was a technical report that set out the context for the work which provided information on the policy position, lessons learned from other Local Plans which apply to East Devon and the assessments of each option. This was accompanied by Appendix G a summary table of Designated Neighbourhood Area Housing Requirement areas that set out how the figures had been calculated and which sites had been included.

Discussion covered:

- Members welcomed the detailed and informative report.
- Clarification was sought on some sites that were very close to different towns and how this would determine which town these sites would fall under. It was advised that the report had stated that the Designated Neighbourhood Areas would coincide with parish boundaries.
- It is important to be clear in Appendix 1 that the figures proposed will not require any more sites to be designated within neighbourhood areas.
- Clarification was sought whether the figures would change if planning permission was granted.
- There is a need to consider Coastal Preservation Areas and only development in these areas if there is a specific reason.
- Concerns were raised about some housing requirement figures in towns and villages.
- Clarification was sought on whether Members would be required to make decisions about what areas would have housing. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management advised that Members were only required to agree the methodology today and the figures presented were merely illustrative figures to help understand how the methodology works.
- Some concerns were raised that some communities will be swamped with houses.

Councillor Paul Hayward and Councillor Bethany Collins left the meeting during discussions.

RESOLVED:

1. That the technical report (Appendix 2 of this report) be endorsed as evidence setting out the rationale for the selection of the reasonable alternatives and as the basis for the calculation of Designated Neighbourhood Area Housing Requirement figures in the emerging Local Plan.
2. To note the calculations for Designated Neighbourhood Area housing requirement (Appendices F and G of the technical report), prepared in accordance with the methodology set out in the technical report.
3. That the method selection for the calculation of Designated Neighbourhood Area housing requirement be agreed and can now be subject to public consultation.
4. That the non-technical summary information (Appendix 1 of this report), including the summary table of housing requirements be agreed as the basis for the Spring 2024 public consultation, alongside the publication of the full detailed technical report with appendices as supporting information.
5. Delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management in consultation with the Chair of Strategic Planning Committee for any minor/non-material amendments for the final release.

85 **Coastal Preservation Area Policy Boundaries in the new Local Plan**

The report before Committee outlined the process to review the coastal preservation area policy boundaries to ensure they were up to date before their inclusion in the new Local Plan.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management introduced Chris Hariades, the Landscape Architect who was happy to answer any questions.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management provided a brief overview of their purpose which was to protect the undeveloped coast visible from cliff top, beach, sea or estuary or form part of the view from significant lengths of an access road, public footpath or bridleway leading to the coast. He referred to paragraphs 2.9 to 2.10 that detailed five distinct sections defined in the assessment.

Members noted that there were a few changes proposed at this stage which were:

- To correct anomalies in the previous boundaries.
- To include areas that were now considered important to protect.
- To omit areas where recent development had taken place and no longer appropriate to be included.

Members also noted that there were 10 potential allocations within the draft Local Plan that were within the proposed Coastal Preservation Areas and would subsequently be removed in the event that they were to be allocated but at this stage it was proposed for them to remain in the consultation until a decision had been made about their allocations. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Management highlighted that this equated to 882 homes which would need to be found elsewhere in potentially more sensitive locations to help meet housing need.

Discussion covered:

- The Portfolio Holder for Coast commented that over the last few years it would seem we used the Green Wedge designation more to determine if a planning application was acceptable in coastal locations than Coastal Protection Areas and suggested a more strengthened version than the one proposed as follows:

Coastal Preservation Areas

Coastal Preservation Areas Land around the coast and estuaries of East Devon, as identified on the Policies Map, is designated as a Coastal Preservation Area. The Coastal Preservation Area is defined on the basis of visual openness and views to and from the sea.

Development or any change of use will not be allowed if it would damage the undeveloped/open status of the designated area or where visually connected to any adjoining areas.

Only appropriate proposals which would increase biodiversity or habitat mitigation or provide improved public footpath or multi use trail within these areas will be supported.

This rewording would permit woodland creation, SANGS areas, country parks and multi-use or footpath trails that would benefit the coastal areas for nature and for increased public access. However, prior to any final decision the council may need to review Teignbridge Council's Policy EN2 – Undeveloped Coast. As we face them and benefit their coast on the opposite bank of the Exe it may be appropriate to mirror

their policies in this regard and prior to the next consultation compare the two strategies and possibly combine the two district strategies.

- How do National Landscapes compare with Coastal Preservations Areas.
- Reference made to page 326 and clarification was sought about the land not included in the Coastal Preservation Area. The Landscape Architect advised the area was above the normal tidal limit and not within the Coastal Preservation Area.

Councillor Jess Bailey left the meeting during discussions.

RESOLVED:

1. That the assessment supporting the Coastal Preservation Area policy of the Local Plan, set out in Appendix 1 of this report be endorsed.
2. That the draft Coastal Preservation Areas, drawn in accordance with the methodology set out in the appendix be subject to public consultation.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

B Bailey
J Bailey
B Collins
O Davey (Chair)
P Fernley
M Hartnell
P Hayward
M Howe (Vice-Chair)
B Ingham
D Ledger
Y Levine
T Olive
H Parr

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Arnott
I Barlow
C Brown
R Collins
P Faithfull
G Jung
M Rixson

Officers in attendance:

Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management
Damian Hunter, Planning Solicitor
Melanie Wellman, Director of Governance & Licensing (Monitoring Officer)
Chris Hariades, Landscape Architect, Development Management
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

K Blakey
C Fitzgerald

Chairman

Date: