

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 8 July 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.40 am and ended at 1.25 pm

1 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 May 2025 were confirmed as a true record.

2 Declarations of interest

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. Councillor Dan Ledger, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Lives opposite a site allocation in Seaton.

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. Councillor Geoff Jung, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Chair of Beach Management Plans for several areas relating to CCMA's.

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. Councillor Jessica Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Devon County Councillor.

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. Councillor Olly Davey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Exmouth Town Councillor.

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. Councillor Paul Hayward, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Devon County Councillor Axminster and an employee of Axminster Town Council.

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. The Chair, Councillor Todd Olive, declared an Affects Non-registerable Interest for the Committee Members that were also a Town or Parish Councillor.

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. In accordance with the Code of Good Practice for Councillors and Officer dealing with planning matters as set out in the Constitution, the Chair, Councillor Todd Olive, on behalf of the Committee advised lobbying on the site allocations in Exmouth.

Non-Committee Member

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. Councillor Aurora Bailey, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Ward Member for site allocation Exmo_20.

Minute 6. East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan. Councillor Nick Hookway, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Exmouth Town Councillor and Devon County Councillor for Exmouth & Budleigh Salterton Coastal Division.

3 Public speaking

12 members of the public had registered to speak on minute 6 – East Devon Local Plan – Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan.

Mr Thomas Shillitoe said that the Regulation 19 evidence demonstrated false statements and misleading evidence and that it was the responsibility for the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager to help the Committee to make informed decisions and not to mislead them. He urged the Committee not to be talked out of reviewing some sites and referred them to Exmo_20 which he claimed missed core evidence that demonstrated that it was not a viable site. He suggested that the reallocation sites should be restricted to sites that passed the HELAA process or were either first or second choice sites.

In response to Mr Shillitoe's submitted question 'can Mr Freeman confirm in his professional opinion if, on the 4th of February 2025 when advising Councillors at the Strategic Planning Committee, he believed that the Regulation 19 plan was sound and legally compliant?'. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager confirmed that he did believe that it was sound at that time but noted that there was some additional work that needed to be done and that he was confident that it will comply with all relevant legal tests by the time that it needs to be submitted for examination.

Mr Nigel Humphreys sought reassurance that the Regulation 18 process had been followed correctly in relation to site allocation Exmo_20. He referred to various Strategic Planning Committee meetings which had discussed Exmo_20 and in particular the meeting of 6 September 2022 in which documentation had specifically confirmed that Exmo_46 was being promoted instead Exmo_20. He also referred to two new sites Exmo_20a and Exmo_20b which had appeared in the report pack of the meeting on 1 November 2022 and advised that these two sites had not been mentioned or discussed. Mr Humphrey sought clarification as to when the Committee had agreed to remove Exmo_46 and reinstate Exmo_20 and when the Committee had agreed the two new sites Exmo_20a and Exmo_20b. In response the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager apologised for the confusion and confirmed that all the sites had been taken through the correct process advising that Exmo_46 was part of Exmo_20 which had been merged to create a larger site and then was divided up into Exmo_20a and Exmo_20b. He acknowledged there had been a lot of response for Exmo_20, which would be taken into account when preparing a future report to the actions, if any, that are needed for that site.

Mr Paul Griew, representing Sidmouth's Cliff Road Action Group addressed Policy AR03 – Coastal Change Management Areas (CCMAs) and suggested that this policy should either be dropped or amended as there was little evidence to support this policy nor does it appear to benefit any local purpose. If the Committee were minded to amend the policy Mr Griew advised that householders should be allowed to extend or alter their properties subject to the usual planning permissions at their own risk and that the policy should specifically state that the CCMA designation will be removed upon completion of these works.

Mrs Kerin Hamill said that the 1,110 comments from people commenting on Exmo_20 were being ignored and that the Local Plan was not sound as it went against many of East Devon District Council's policies. Mrs Hamill advised that the main site entrance would be onto the dangerous B3179 road and would have an adverse impact on trees, hedgerows and woodlands as well as the destruction of ecosystems by covering the site with concrete, bricks and tarmac. She pleaded with councillors to visit the site to see for themselves that the land was not suitable for development.

A statement was read out on behalf of Joanna Chalker who queried the site selection methodology which included a key criterion that the site was required to be within a 1600 metres walkable distance to services. She asked the Committee to reconsider Exmo_20 as it was incorrectly stated as being in a sustainable location as its main access point was 4340 metres from Exmouth train station and a 4 mile drive from Exmouth centre. Ms Chalker suggested that the Committee should consider Whimble for the reallocations due to its good road transport links and that it had a main line railway and was close to the secondary school at Cranbrook.

Ms Emily Glanfield submitted the following question:

Since 3rd September it has been confirmed that Exmo_20 has no meaningful vehicular access to Exmouth. It is accepted that housing would need to be concentrated on the Southern part of the site at Exmo_20, so the lack of vehicular access to Dinan Way would require cars to drive at least a kilometre in the opposite direction away from Exmouth town centre to join the main access at the B3179, a country road, before driving back down into Exmouth. The direct result of allocating Exmo_20 would be forcing cars to drive more miles, making longer, indirect car journeys from all of the proposed 700 homes. Furthermore the situation has changed significantly since 3rd September in that the long awaited Dinan Way extension is now finally underway, meaning that the Hulham road sites will link directly to the A376. Can you confirm that you still believe Exmo_20 to be the least worst option, and a sustainable and accessible location? In response, it was advised that the Committee would address this question in debate for this item.

Abi Mewse referred to cross-boundary impacts which she suggested had not been considered enough particularly when housing developments near parish borders (Cranbrook) will heavily impact neighbouring communities and services (Whimble). She addressed some procedural concerns specifically relating to Whim_08 (Bramley Gardens) that officers did not consider suitable but Committee had allocated it in the Local Plan. She referred to paragraph 5.5 of the report that suggests that allocations can no longer be challenged as they had already gone through a logical and comprehensive site allocation process which she did not agree with as the process appeared neither transparent nor evidence-led. Ms Mewse sought clarification about how and when members of the public can challenge the late-stage allocation of a site such as Whim_08 which was not supported by Planning Officers. Ms Mewse also asked a question about AI use and whether the Council had an AI policy in place to govern the ethical and responsible use of AI in planning decisions.

In response the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager confirmed that the procedural process had followed a very open and transparent process with all the site allocation decisions being made in public during Strategic Planning Committee and members of the public had been given an opportunity to comment on those sites through the consultations stage of the Local Plan. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager also confirmed that the Council did have a policy of AI use and that it was used in accordance with the Council's privacy notice published on the website.

Karin Rabik raised deep concern for Woodbury Common, which she said was one of the most highly designated conservation areas in the South West of England as it would be severely impacted by the major development of 700 houses at Exmo_20. Mr Rabik asked whether another site could be considered with less harm and risk to wildlife as the Common carried national and international ecological protection and was not only a site of specific scientific interest but also a special protection area for conservation, a nature

reserve and was also in the process of being included in the local nature recovery strategy of Devon as high value land.

Justin Shaw spoke about Whim_08 and noted that the Committee's original aspiration was to allocate sites that were recommended for allocation. However as the Committee was unable to meet the required housing numbers set by government Councillors had to reconsider sites that fell below the threshold and unfortunately Whim_08 was one of those sites.

Mr Shaw addressed the site Whim_08 and sought assurances from the Committee that due consideration will be given to tactical issues associated with this development that had originally not been recommended for development and where appropriate may be removed from the allocation. He also sought clarification on what feedback was being provided to the government to improve future housing development policy noting the feedback being captured throughout this process.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager reassured Mr Shaw that the Council had always and will always continue to push back on the government's housing numbers by pointing out the problems that East Devon District Council face with East Devon's severe environmental and infrastructure constraints. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager also reassured Mr Shaw that the Committee had been provided with all the necessary information for the sites to help them make informed decisions and pointed out that on occasions the Committee's views had differed from officers recommendations.

John Hamill advised the Committee that it was his fourth time addressing his concerns about the failings for Exmo_20 and felt that he was not being listened to. He referred to the 1,110 responses in the feedback report for Exmo_20 which proved that people were concerned and that he could not understand why this site was still being considered for allocation as it was clear there was overwhelming evidence against Exmo_20. He urged the Committee to listen to their electors and remove the site from the Local Plan.

Councillor Jo Yarwood spoke on behalf of the residents of Whimble raising concerns about flood risk issues and pedestrian safety for the two sites that had been allocated in the village. All the roads that lead into the village have single lane access and without pavements and that the increase in houses would lead to more cars in a village that already experiences near misses on a daily basis. Councillor Yarwood also raised a concern that the site Whim_08 would be encroaching onto the Green Wedge.

Tony Burch, a retired chartered Civil Engineer spoke about the mapping of the Coastal Change Management Areas for Cliff Road at Sidmouth. He referred to page 79 of the feedback report for Policy AR03 and opposed this policy as the Cliff Road CCMA map was not based on any erosion data that is in the LPA evidence library or elsewhere in the public domain and so it was not justified. He summarised 3 factual evidence points supporting his opposition and said in conclusion that the Cliff Road CCMA map was not justified with published erosion data and suggested that it was not sound or legally compliant and requested that the Cliff Road CCMA map be reviewed.

In response, the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager acknowledged the concerns raised by Mr Burch and advised that these would be discussed with the relevant officer.

There was one matter of urgency discussed under minute 276.

5 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were no confidential or exempt items.

6 East Devon Local Plan - Consultation feedback, timetable and future workplan

The report presented by the Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Manager provided the Committee with feedback on the first stage of the Regulation 19 Consultation and provided an update on the timetable for the production of the Local Plan taking into account any consequential changes.

Out of the 3,510 comments received on the consultations from individuals and organisations the key issues included:

- 1,100 responses had been received for site Exmo_20 raising concerns on biodiversity, flood risk, infrastructure and procedural fairness.
- Concerns had been raised by the housing development industry about the Council's Housing Strategy
- Concerns about under-classification of Feniton and Whimple.
- Concerns about the under representation of Exmouth's strategic role
- Concerns raised about infrastructure delivery, in particular, healthcare, education and utilities.

Some other key issues raised by statutory consultees included:

- Concerns about site allocations within a national landscape.
- Potential impact of wind turbines on heritage assets.
- There is a need for transport evidence for the West of East Devon.
- Concerns raised about the absence of some detail for proposals for the new community.
- Lack of capacity in primary health care in the West of East Devon.
- There is a need for additional evidence on water quality to understand the potential impact of additional housing.
- Impact to heritage assets needs to be addressed prior to any potential development.
- The requirement of a Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager drew the Committees attention to paragraph 4.2 of the report that provided clarification on the implications of two stage Regulation 19 process taking into account the new version of the NPPF. The Committee noted there was a need to be mindful about minimising any significant changes to the Local Plan to help keep within the transitional arrangements as this could have an impact on the housing numbers which could then be increased by a further 25%.

The Committee's attention was also drawn to paragraph 6 of the report which addressed the ongoing evidence work. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager advised that he was confident that the outstanding evidence documents would be completed in time to support the Local Plan consultation and referred to the revised timetable to help get the submission of the Local Plan to examination.

These key steps included:

- Ongoing study and assessment work to be done throughout the summer.
- Committee to receive the first redraft of Local Plan in September/October 2025. (The Committee noted that an additional meeting would be required).
- The second round of Regulation 19 consultation to take into account the second new community and the outstanding evidence work to run from October to November 2025.

The Chair invited questions from Councillors which included:

- Can more details be added to the agenda paper to help identify who is making the comments that had been received during the consultation? The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager advised that officers would be publishing all the comments, but these were still being worked on and gave reassurance that this would be clearer in the summary report.
- Clarification was sought about whether the council would be contacting the local MPs to address the high housing target figures. Although the Chair reassured Councillors that the MPs were already well aware of the council's views and advised that he would send an email to remind them.
- Clarification was sought from the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager about whether it was a surprise to receive negative comments from the statutory bodies. In response he advised that some comments were a surprise and gave an example that the Environment Agency had objected to the lack of a Water Cycle Study when it was not a requirement.
- Clarification was sought on when the Committee would receive the draft final version of the Local Plan. The Committee were advised that the final version would be brought back to Committee late September/early October to be able to begin the consultation in October.
- A question was raised about the lack of coverage for the consultation as 3,510 comments was not good for the East Devon area. The Committee was reminded that the consultation was undertaken in accordance with the instructions made by the Committee and in accordance with the published statement of community involvement.
- Clarification was sought on whether the Committee would be considering any brownfield sites for allocation of development. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager advised that both greenfield and brownfield sites had been considered but there were very few available brownfield sites in the district.
- It was questioned whether the particular sites in Exmouth, Honiton, Feniton and Whimple that had received higher than average comments in the consultation should be revisited. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager raised concerns about the consequences of revisiting those sites in terms of changing those decisions as the Committee did not have all the information to make informed decisions at the meeting and that a further report would be needed.
- It was questioned whether it would still be possible to meet the deadline taking into account the amount of work that still needs to be done on the Local Plan. In response a concern was raised about the amount of work, but reassurance was given that there was a lot of work progressing by officers to meet the achievable deadline.
- Clarification was sought on the comments received for the under representation of Exmouth's strategic role. The Committee was advised that although Exmouth is

the biggest town in East Devon it has environmental and other constraints that would not allow any further development.

- From the comments received in the consultation it was questioned whether there was a need to look to review 3 specific areas around the definition of employment, the settlement boundary and the coastal change management areas (CCMAs). The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager reminded the Committee that all comments would be taken into consideration and sought further guidance from the Committee about whether these areas should be addressed.
- Clarification was sought on what would constitute a ‘substantive review’ detailed in paragraph 5.5. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager clarified that it would depend on the size of the site and whether this would have a consequence on the headroom of housing numbers. He sought guidance from the Committee for a steer on any particular sites of concern so that a further report could be brought back addressing these concerns.
- Point of Information - Lymp_01, Whim_08a, Whim_11, Feni_08, Otry_20, Exmo_17 had received above average comments and Exmo_20 had received significantly above average comments.

The Chair moved the meeting into debate and a statement was read out on behalf of Councillor Matt Hall which addressed the public perception that Local Plans focus too much on housing targets at the expense of community needs. The statement also believed that although Local Plans were essential for managing development and meeting housing needs it was crucial to ensure they are developed in a way that respect and understands the community character and needs, while making sure that local people believe that they have a stake in and a proper role in this important decision-making process.

Further comments included:

- There is a need to look at the Local Plan as a district and not just individual sites. If site Exmo_20 is removed, those houses will need to be located elsewhere.
- Ward Member for Exmo_20 thanked the public speakers for attending the meeting and supported all their comments.
- Support was expressed for Councillor Hall’s comments about respecting community character and it was suggested that Exmouth did not need Exmo_20 and could instead provide houses in existing locations.
- There is a need to listen to the public speakers. Increase the density of existing sites.
- Further study of the CCMAs was needed
- Water quality still needs to be addressed with South West Water.
- Reference was made about the duty to co-operate with other councils and it was stated that this council’s performance was 13% compared to other councils of 6%.
- It was suggested to remove wind energy and to focus solely on solar energy.
- There was a need to consider the high level of objections received for Exmo_20 and a suggestion was made to review Exmo_20. In response the Chair stated that Exmouth had currently allocated 1,455 homes in the Local Plan which was a growth rate of 10% and if Exmo_20 (700 homes) was taken out Exmouth’s growth rate would fall to 5% which was less than every settlement in the settlement hierarchy. The Chair advised that it would not be a sound decision to only review Exmo_20 and there was a need to review the sites that had received a higher number of objections that was listed earlier in the meeting.
- A direct quote made by Angela Raynor was mentioned by Councillor Paul Hayward that ‘there will be no excuses not to deliver 1.5million new homes’.

Nobody wants to cover East Devon in houses, but we have no choice – they must be built somewhere!

Councillor Ledger proposed an amendment to the second recommendation, seconded by Councillor Brian Bailey to read as follows:

That Members noted the changes to the Planning Practice Guidance regarding two stage Regulation 19 consultations and identify any areas where they would like officer advice on potential changes to the plan that are not already being considered in the work programme set out in this report. These are to be addressed in a report to a future meeting prior to the second Regulation 19 consultation with materials being presented to the Committee. These areas are as follows:

- Water Cycle Study
- CCMA's
- Duty to Co-operate
- Wind energy areas
- Sites Lymp_01, Whim_08a, Whim_11, Feni_08, Otry_20, Exmo_17, Exmo_20 and any further sites that officers feel should be brought back

Councillor Ledger advised that due to government reorganisation this was going to be East Devon District Council's last Local Plan and that this Committee had a duty to get it right now as the next one could be done by people outside of East Devon.

Further comments included:

- There is a need to look at alternative sites if these sites are taken out of the Local Plan. The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager confirmed that the report would consider all the implications of removing a site allocation which included the housing numbers and alternative site provisions.
- The Council is in a difficult position as nobody wants to see this level of development, but we have no choice otherwise the government will end up doing this for us.
- There is a need to put some thought into providing higher density developments. In response, the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Manager addressed the difficulties in terms of the limited demand but acknowledged that this could be looked at for the second new community.
- There was a suggestion to reconsider villages and towns where communities wanted development, but permissions had been refused.

RESOLVED:

1. That Strategic Planning Committee endorse the proposed new local plan making timetable and work plan, including studies to be completed.
2. That Members noted the changes to the Planning Practice Guidance regarding two stage Regulation 19 consultations and identify any areas where they would like officer advice on potential changes to the plan that are not already being considered in the work programme set out in this report. These to be addressed in a report to a future meeting prior to the second Regulation 19 consultation materials being presented to the Committee.

These areas are as follows:

- Water Cycle Study
- CCMA's
- Duty to Co-operate
- Wind energy areas

- Sites Lymp_01, Whim_08a, Whim_11, Feni_08, Otry_20, Exmo_17, Exmo_20 and any further sites that officers feel should be brought back

7 East Devon Local Plan - Local Development Scheme

The report presented to the Committee set out the proposed revised Local Development Scheme in light of the proposed amendments to the Local Plan making timetable which now incorporated a second Regulation 19 consultation to address both the second new community and associated evidence.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

That Strategic Planning Committee recommend that Cabinet adopt the proposed new Local Development Scheme, at appendix 1.

8 Exmouth Rugby Club - Revised Project and Community Infrastructure Levy Bid

The Assistant Director – presented the minutes of an additional meeting of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Working Party held on 3 July 2025 and asked the Committee to consider the revised CIL project from Exmouth Rugby Club for a revised CIL bid that Strategic Planning Committee had previously considered.

The revised CIL bid of £100,000 was for the refurbishment of an existing building on the Rugby Club's site to provide the new changing rooms due to issues with ground works for the original proposed location.

RESOLVED:

That £100,000 be awarded in principle to Exmouth Rugby Club, with this sum to be reduced to £67,000 if it can be evidenced that the VAT on the project can be reclaimed by the Club.

Attendance List

Councillors present:

B Bailey
J Bailey
K Blakey
C Brown
O Davey
P Fernley
P Hayward
M Howe (Vice-Chair)
G Jung
D Ledger
Y Levine
T Olive (Chair)

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

A Bailey
I Barlow
C Burhop

R Collins
P Faithfull
N Hookway

Officers in attendance:

Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer
Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management
Damian Hunter, Planning Solicitor

Councillor apologies:

D Haggerty
B Ingham
H Parr

Chairman

Date: