

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Strategic Planning Committee held at Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton on 25 November 2025

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.05 am and ended at 2.12 pm

28 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 September 2025 were confirmed as a true record.

29 Declarations of interest

Minute 33 East Devon Local Plan – Second stage of Regulation 19 Consultation
In accordance with the Code of Good Practice for Councillors and Officers dealing with planning matters as set out in the Constitution, Councillors B Bailey, O Davey, P Fernley, C Fitzgerald, and G Jung advised of lobbying in respect of this item.

30 Public speaking

Nigel Humphrey spoke in relation to the Regulation 19 process credibility and the Local Plan. He challenged why only statutory bodies comments from the February round of consultation had been considered, and why no responses had been provided to comments from the public. If such public comments were not taken into account, then why should the public comment again on this next round of consultation. He asked the Council to provide the evidence of comments made by the public on the consultation, and to also regularly inform the public about the consultation. He advised the committee that the Local Plan statements were ambiguous or unclarified. He asked that the wording relating to Exmo20 buffer zone should explicitly state that no development should take place, in order to protect and preserve the habitat of the area and that he had corresponded repeatedly on this issue.

John Hamill spoke about the work involved in revising the plan, and that he could see some adjustments in line with previous concerns raised, including for Exmo20 but also asked that for paragraph 9 relating to this buffer zone that the wording be amended to state that no development of any kind should take place in that zone.

Thomas Shillitoe advised the committee that the Water Cycle Study took no account of Sandy Bay Town, or the dumping of sewage in the sea. He asked the committee to reject the study as he considered it was flawed. He also spoke of the plan being non-compliant, which he had repeatedly warned the committee about, and asked that the committee used the headroom within the plan to make the necessary changes. He also spoke on Exmo20, which he felt should be removed from the plan, and called for a further consultation period on the plan as in its current form it had many issues to be resolved.

Iestyn John spoke on behalf of his clients Clinton Devon Estates in relation to Exmo 18 and spoke of the potential of the development of the business park, but of the added journey for users of the park with the access as planned. He asked for consideration to be given, as on previous occasions, to including access via Salterton Road to avoid the additional 1.4mile round trip.

Andrew Tyerman, representing Escape Exmouth, outlined a number of issues with the Water Cycle Study including gaps and mistakes. He felt that the poor performance of South West Water was not correctly reflected in the study, reminding the committee that the current network was not coping with demand. The storm overflow information views were not accurate, there was no mention of the OFWAT settlement, nor the high pollution rate, nor the increase in demand due to the build of Cranbrook. There were no national comparison trends, assumptions in the study were incorrect, and a reference to the completion of Exmouth works was not correct, as those would not be completed until 2030 at the earliest. He asked the committee to pause and consider further work on this information.

Peter Williams, representing the OVA, outlined the exceeding capacity of sewage works at both Feniton and Honiton, with waste discharge going into the River Otter, exceeding capacity by 40%; Honiton was in breach of phosphate limits in discharge too, as proved by the condition of the river. With the housing increase in Honiton and Feniton areas, there was a need for an increase in capacity of 73% just to maintain adequate levels for Honiton, and 25% for Feniton. He asked the committee to require South West Water to bring forward their plans for improvement works to rectify the current situation.

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Services responded, covering:

- Open and transparent reporting to the Committee, and public consultation;
- All comments considered and taken into consideration and acted on where appropriate as documented in previous reporting to the committee;
- Reminding the committee on the Exmo20 site and previous decision by the committee to retain it in the plan whereby no residential development was to be included within 400m of the Pebblebed Heaths in order to prevent wildlife predation by pets, which would not arise from employment development; and the further work needed for mitigation under the Habitat Regulations but that the impact on the Pebblebed Heaths had been identified at an early stage;
- Reminding the committee on site Exmo18 and the concern on the impact on the setting of the National Landscape, the significant level differences on site and the concern of the visual impact on the entrance to the town;
- Water Cycle Study focus to look at baseline now and look forward for the impact when planned development happens, and the recommendation in the report for further work in this area.

Cllr Roy Collins spoke on statistics relating to diminishing farmland, quoting 25% of farmland would be gone by 2050. He related a recent review he made of a planning application for solar panels, and spoke about world shortages of beef, rainforests being destroyed for the production of avocados, and weather patterns impacting food production worldwide.

31 **Matters of urgency**

There were no matters of urgency to discuss.

32 **Confidential/exempt item(s)**

There were no confidential or exempt items to discuss.

33 **East Devon Local Plan - Second Stage of Regulation 19 Consultation**

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Services presented a report that sought approval for the second stage of consultation on the East Devon Local Plan, under plan making Regulation 19. It was suggested that the consultation would run for 8 weeks starting on Friday, 28 November 2025 and ending at midday on Monday, 26 January 2026.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the redrafted Local Plan text showing tracked changes from the first consultation stage appended to the report noting that the consultation would invite comments on the revised plan and accompanying policies map.

The report also referenced new technical studies used to refine the plan and updates to the evidence base. It includes details on the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Statements of Common Ground, consultation arrangements and examination and adoption processes.

A revised Statement of Community Involvement was also presented to Committee for approval which outlined the policy for consulting the community on planning policy documents and planning applications in East Devon. In line with the Statement of Community Involvement it was proposed to run an online workshop for Town and Parish Council's to set out the proposed second Regulation 19 Consultation to help encourage people to respond in the most productive way possible.

The Committee acknowledged that the Local Plan was based on a large amount of supporting evidence and new evidence documents including:

- Technical reports in respect of Marlcombe
- Highway and transport assessment
- Pebblebed Heaths air quality reporting
- Water cycle study
- National Landscape paper
- The revised flood risk topic paper
- The self-build topic paper
- Archaeological assessments

Questions from the committee on the documentation planned for consultation, and responses from the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Services, included:

- Confirmation that sustainable travel options were also the ambition for employment sites;
- Policy CC06 confirmed as requiring justification for demolition;
- Further discussion could be had with South West Water (SWW) on the Water Cycle Study (WCS) 50% reduction in leakages being a realistic target;
- Confirmation that conservation designation has extensive guidance, and that due to the uniqueness of each case, a scoring mechanism as used for tree preservation was not practical;
- Mitigation measures for the Pebblebed Heath would be considered through the Habitat regulations in considering how to manage vehicles travelling through that area;
- The plan contained reference to rainwater harvesting under Policy AR02 to include measures for harvesting wherever possible;

- The local authority had no control over water company connection charges to developers; this was not covered by s106 agreements;
- Parking standards were clarified for both residential and commercial development.

Site Exm20

This site had been debated at a previous meeting of the committee on 2 September 2025 and a decision made to include in the settlement boundary but with no residential development within 400m of the Pebblebed Heaths. It was suggested that employment provision should also be excluded within the 400m zone but members were advised that the current wording while not precluding employment uses does prevent uses that would be harmful to the heaths and its biodiversity.

Discussion took place on the issues with that site, and if the decision previously made by the Committee at their September meeting should be revisited. On balance, with a reminder of the application process in place to assess any harm to the Heath, the committee did not revisit their previous decision to include the site in the plan.

Site Exmo18

Clarification was sought on the rationale for not permitting access from Salterton Road to the site. The committee were reminded of the location, being the entrance to the town, and the changing topography that would lead to extensive engineering works on the changing levels that could impact on the National Landscape designation in that area. The committee discussed the option of a secondary access with suitable mitigation, in order to alleviate the potential increase in distance to access the site from the business park, with an agreement reached as set out in resolution 7 below.

Water Cycle Study

The recommendation set out in the report sought agreement for further consideration by the Committee following the consultation period, and after further discussion with South West Water (SWW) on the independent findings. It was confirmed that there was no control on water usage for existing dwellings that fell under the power of the local authority. Members were invited to email any further local evidence of concerns on capacity to the team to include in discussions with SWW.

Discussion by the committee covered the need to further discuss the findings of the study, along with local evidence of capacity levels being well below what was required – for example in Honiton. If there were no plans by SWW for investment to resolve those capacity issues, then there were grounds for delaying development. The option of using Grampian conditions to prohibit a development from being occupied until suitable water and sewage infrastructure is put in place is one way of dealing with applications in the meantime.

The Leader reminded the committee of previous engagement with SWW as set out in the study document, and the previous motion from the Council of no confidence in SWW. He commended the work of officers in trying to secure information but considered that there may be a role for the Scrutiny Committee to take SWW to account.

RESOLVED that the Strategic Planning Committee:

1. Approved the revised local plan text and Policies Map for consultation, and agreed to the second round of Regulation 19 consultation starting on, or as soon as possible after, the 28th November 2025 and on this basis for consultation to conclude on the 26th January 2026;

2. Grants delegated authority to the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning, to make minor amendments to the local plan text and Policies Map to finalise formatting and to correct any factual errors and address inconsequential anomalies in order to finalise the plan ahead of the start of consultation;
3. Endorsed the draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan and approved it to form part of the overall material that supports, and is available at, the time the local plan consultation commences;
4. Noted the ongoing work on production of Statements of Common Ground and granted delegated authority to the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning, to finalise these statements and send them out to signatory partners seeking their comments/feedback and agreement;
5. Agreed to adopt the updated Statement of Community Involvement and agreed to its use forthwith;
6. Agreed that a further report on the Water Cycle Study be brought to the committee following consultation, to enable discussion of its implications with the benefit of responses from consultees and further engagement with South West Water.
7. Agreed to amend the wording in the revised local plan, in relation to site Exmo 18, to read as “to avoid adverse landscape and visual impacts on the National Landscape and its setting, primary vehicular access should be taken from the Liverton Business Park. Any secondary access from Salterton Road should be carefully designed and screened to minimise any impacts on the setting of the National Landscape”.

34 **Heritage Strategy 2024 - 2042**

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Services report sought members’ agreement for the Heritage Strategy for East Devon to go out for public consultation that would run alongside the second Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation.

The new strategy would retain the original format while offering an overview of East Devon’s historic environment, highlighting its significance and benefits. It also identifies key heritage issues and sets objectives supported by a detailed action plan.

The objectives were split into three themes:

- Theme A describes our historic environment and provides information on its designated and undesignated heritage assets and their significance;
- Theme B sets out current policies and programmes relating to development management, conservation areas and heritage assets at risk, including our statutory duties;
- Theme C looks at the value of our heritage as a part of sustainable development, and the social, economic and environmental benefits it provides for East Devon. The impact and influence of other policies are considered as well as how we work with our communities and partners

If agreed, the strategy would go out to public consultation alongside the Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation on the same timeframe.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Services confirmed that the strategy would also cover local lists of heritage value.

RESOLVED that the **Strategic Planning Committee** agreed the draft Heritage Strategy for public consultation to align with the second Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation.

35 **Housing Monitoring Update to Year Ending 31 March 2025**

The Assistant Director – Planning Strategy and Development Services presented the report outlining the latest monitoring figures on housing completions and the calculation of the five-year housing land supply, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework updated in December 2024.

Members noted that there were a total of 10,674 net dwelling completions, including 690 completed during the monitoring year. This figure falls short of the adopted Local Plan target of 950 dwellings per year.

Officers advised that the Council currently has a housing land supply of 3.50 years. As this falls short of the required five-year supply, appropriate weight must be given to this shortfall when determining planning applications, including both full and reserved matters. The Council would be able to demonstrate, through the formulation of the new Local Plan, that the required level of supply could be reached.

The committee discussed:

- The national picture impacting on housing delivery, including cost of materials, skilled trades and lack of surveyors;
- Demonstrating through local plan allocations such as Marlcombe and the Cranbrook extension that increasing the number of dwellings is happening in the District;
- There may be benefit in opening dialogue with developers to get a clearer picture on why existing sites are slow to process, and what options are open to the Council, working with partnership agencies, to help facilitate an increase in growth.

RESOLVED that the **Strategic Planning Committee**:

1. **Noted the residential dwellings completion data and future projections for the district, including comments on future supply risks detailed in section 5 of the Housing Monitoring Update report;**
2. **Noted the district Five Year Housing Land Supply position and impact on decision making as set out in the report;**
3. **Noted that the Housing Monitoring Update will be published on the Council's website.**

Attendance List

Councillors present:

B Bailey
K Blakey
O Davey
P Fernley
M Howe (Vice-Chair)
B Ingham
G Jung
D Ledger
Y Levine

T Olive (Chair)
H Parr
P Faithfull
C Fitzgerald

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Arnott
R Collins

Officers in attendance:

Matthew Dickins, Planning Policy Manager
Ed Freeman, Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Services
Damian Hunter, Planning Solicitor
Debbie Meakin, Democratic Services Officer

Councillor apologies:

J Bailey
P Hayward

Chair

Date: