

Report to: **Strategic Planning Committee**



Date of Meeting 3 March 2026

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release Not applicable

Update on work on production of the East Devon Local Plan

Report summary:

This report provides a summary of ongoing work on local plan production. leading to plan submission, under current timetables, in late May/early June 2026. The report highlights:

- a) The 2nd stage of Regulation 19 consultation concluded on 26 January 2026 with around 3,200 separate comments raised/logged from around 750 respondents.
- b) Whilst some comments made related to changes to the plan many were reiterating concerns raised at the 1st stage of Regulation 19 consultation.
- c) There is technical work ongoing on respect of key work areas to include travel and transport considerations and impacts on the strategic road network and also on air quality matters and potential for adverse impacts and mitigation arising from traffic on roads crossing the Pebblebed Heaths.

Subject to having made sufficient ground on addressing any outstanding concerns the intent is that a report, with supporting documents, will come back to Strategic Planning Committee in May 2026 with a recommendation for Submission for Examination. Council will need to approve submission and on this basis submission will be in late May/early Junes 2026.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Strategic Planning Committee endorse the proposed programme of work going forward and note the contents of this report.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure committee are kept informed of local plan making progress.

Officer: Ed Freeman – Assistant Director Planning Strategy and Development Management, Tel: 01395 517519; e-mail – ed.freeman@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Assets and Economy
- Communications and Democracy
- Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

- Environment - Nature and Climate
- Environment - Operational
- Finance
- Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information Links to background documents are contained in the body of the report.

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- A supported and engaged community
 - Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - Resilient economy that supports local business
 - Financially secure and improving quality of services
-

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Strategic Planning Committee will be aware of the lengthy and sometimes challenging local plan work that has been undertaken to date. This led to the 2nd round of Regulation 19 consultation that started on Friday 28 November 2025 and ran through to a conclusion on Monday 26 January 2026.
- 1.2 Based on conclusion of consultation, early analysis of responses received and ongoing work in support of the plan we are now looking towards submission of the local plan for Examination in late May or early June 2026. Plan Examination starts at the point at which the plan and supporting papers are sent to and registered by the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and local Government).

2 Responses to the 2nd round of Regulation 19 consultation

- 2.1 Early assessment and analysis has started on comments received at the 2nd stage of Regulation 19 consultation.
- 2.2 For the 2nd round of consultation the Council continued to make use of the corporate consultation software – Commonplace. Many of those making comments on the plan did so by submitting comments directly on to the software. However, there were also significant numbers of people and organisations that submitted emails, including with attachments.
- 2.3 All comments that were not made through the Common place software have now been added to it and sit alongside those made directly. In the coming months any loose ends and anomalies in and on the logged comments will be tidied up and through application and help

of Artificial Intelligence assistance the intent is that a feedback report of comments received will be generated. This will be of a similar form, format and structure to that received for the first round of consultation – see: [reg-19-stage-1-feedback-report-post-committee.pdf](#) All comments on the plan, as now logged n Commonplace can be viewed at: [Community Forum - East Devon Local Plan 2020–2042: Second Regulation 19 Consultation - Commonplace](#)

- 2.4 The intent is that the consultation feedback report will be reported to Strategic Planning Committee in May 2026 (the next scheduled committee currently being for the 5 May 2026). From early analysis we can, however, report on a number of headline conclusion and early observations:
- a) There are around 3,200 separate comments logged on the Commonplace portal submitted from around 750 respondents.
 - b) Whilst the consultation was geared around changes to the plan from the 1st to this 2nd round of consultation most comments logged do not specifically relate to changes, rather they are objections to overarching policies.
 - c) Most policies commented on are those in Chapter 5 of the plan ‘Development in the Towns and Villages’ that allocate sites for development with specifically higher numbers (approximate figures noted, final counts may be slightly higher) for sites in Exmouth - specifically Exmo_20 – 1,500 response, Site Otry_21 in Ottery St Mary - 30 responses and Sidm_06a & Sidm_06b – 20 responses.
 - d) Whilst the town and village chapter received the bulk of comments made all other chapters also have comments logged against them as does the plans sustainability appraisal (this specifically has 134 comments logged).
 - e) The spatial strategy chapter, with 246 comments, and the development at the West End chapter, with 166 comments logged, were the second and third most highly commented on chapters.
 - f) The West End chapter allocates the new community site of Marlcombe and it is relevant to note the comparatively low comment numbers received. Though some that were are lengthy and raise some challenging matters.
 - g) The overwhelming majority of comments received were from private individuals – there were 58 from organisations, including public bodies and agencies, companies, community/interest groups and agents representing clients.
- 2.5 Part of the officer work that will feed into the feedback work to the May 2026 Strategic Planning Committee will be a detailed review of comments made with a critique of a response to any additional technical work that was seen as needed to support plan submission. We are aware of some of this work, which is ongoing and is highlighted further on in this report, but review of comments will highlight any additional work that is seen as needed.

3 On going technical work to support plan Submission

- 3.1 There is further work on going on technical assessments that will need to reach conclusions at the point of and in support of plan Submission. That which we are specifically involved in and is of greater significance is highlighted below.

- a) **West End focussed transport assessment** – given the scale of growth proposed in the West End of the district there has been a long standing recognition for the need to address traffic congestion matters, especially on the strategic road network – specifically the M5 and its junctions and the A30 and junctions - but this also extends to the A3052 and links to the wider road network including links and connections in to Exeter. Technical work is ongoing along side designing and costing mitigation options, to include both some road improvements as well as (and in many ways more importantly) initiative to promote better provision for and opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport.
- b) **Air quality impacts at the Pebblebed Heaths** – earlier assessment work has indicated that with extra development there will be more (petrol and diesel) vehicles on roads crossing the Pebblebeds Heaths which is designated in the highest tier of wildlife sites in England. Extra vehicles (the emissions from) in the absence of mitigation, will lead to unacceptable biodiversity impacts. Ongoing work is rerunning modelling and assessment of impacts with mitigation options now built in. The new modelling applies higher assumed levels of electric vehicle use in the future (and corresponding lower levels of petrol/diesel vehicles) as well as options to further encourage/support electric vehicle uptake amongst road users, at large, and occupants of new build houses. Going forward we may also need to review potential for land management interventions at the designated site or other mitigation options. Technical air quality assessment work that has already been completed can be seen at: [ED21793_Mitigation of AQ impacts East Devon Pebblebed Heaths_Technical report](#) and [Ricardo report template](#) and related (and most recent) habitat Regulation Assessment work at: eastdevon.gov.uk/media/ya3hdlaq/csd-006-se-devon-local-plan-hra-reg-19-300125.pdf

3.2 In addition to the above there are other, mostly less significance work streams and areas that are seeking attention, specifically including matters arising from the Water Cycle Study and comments on it that are subject to a separate report to this committee.

3.3 For plan Submission we will aim to have all supporting work complete and finalised. But there will invariably be some work elements that can be reviewed and further assessed and refined. The plan making system effectively has such an outcome baked-in' as through the Examination process the plan inspector/s will ask questions that can be expected to generate the need for further assessment work and its frequently the case that inspector/s will ask a planning authority to undertake further work around issues/considerations they identify.

4 The plan making timetable

4.1 The latest Local Development Scheme, which sets out the plan making timetable, is set out at: [east-devon-lds-october-2025.pdf](#) at paragraph 4.2 its sets out the following plan making timetable:

- Issues Consultation – completed in January 2021.
- Draft plan – the first consultation was completed in January 2023 and there was further consultation in summer 2024.
- Publication – Regulation 19 consultation:
 - Main – was concluded in March 2025.
 - Further – projected to start in Autumn 2025.
- Submission – Spring 2026.
- Examination, including Inspector's Hearings – 2026.
- Adoption – 2027.

- 4.2 This timetable remains in place, specifically Submission in Spring 2026. Though it may be that the plan Examination proves to be lengthy, it is a plan with a lot of complex matters, specifically including the new community of Marlcombe, and which has generated considerable public interest. As a consequence adoption may be after 2027.

5 Conclusions and next steps

- 5.1 On the basis of matters set out in this report we envisage that in May 2026 (scheduled meeting date is 5 May 2026) a report will be presented to Strategic Planning Committee recommending that the local plan is submitted for Examination. This recommendation will need to go to a meeting of full Council for approval. It maybe that a special council meeting is required in late May at which approval will be sought. Looking at possible timelines a Submission date in late May 2026 would be aimed for, though it may be into early June 2026. Submission is, however, subject to delays not coming into play, unknowns having an impact, satisfactory resolution of any technical/evidence matters and member/Council endorsement.
- 5.2 At this stage we would not envisage seeking any further changes to the plan. However, at Submission there is the option for the Council to identify a series of suggested main modifications to the plan. It would not be the Council changing the plan, rather it would be the Council recommending to the appointed inspector/s that merit is seen in making selected changes and asking that the inspector/s recommend back to the Council that the listed changes are made. Any main modifications recommended are, however, the choice of the inspector/s and regardless of what the council may identify/suggest the very probable expectation is that the inspector will identify main modifications that are seen as necessary to secure a sound plan. Main modifications, at a point in the Examination process, will need to be consulted on.
- 5.3 In reporting to committee in May 2026 it will be identified if any further changes are considered necessary or desirable.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications identified within the report. (AB-17/02/2026)

Legal implications:

There are no direct legal implications identified within the report. (DH/002533-19/02/2026)