

# Neighbourhood Planning & the Local Plan Update



February 2022

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This update focuses on EDDC Councillors discussion on the early working draft of the new local plan, feeding back from the last Strategic Planning Committee discussion on 8<sup>th</sup> February and looking forward to the next meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. The notes of our last webinar on matters related to the Approach to Settlements are shared, together with the outcome of initial Councillor discussion on these same topics that will inform the work on the new Local Plan. Finally, headline information, with links for more detail, are also included on topics that may be of interest to our Neighbourhood Plan groups, including housing monitoring, self-build, and 'First Homes'. These are also all matters due to be discussed by Councillors at the 22<sup>nd</sup> February committee.

We hope this provides some useful content. Feedback on these newsletters is welcomed.

If you have any questions or requests for guidance on any neighbourhood planning topics please do get in touch with our Neighbourhood Planning Officer, Angela King, or a member of the Planning Policy Team.

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## Early Working Draft Local Plan Discussion – Looking Ahead

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The next meeting of Strategic Planning Committee to pick up the discussion on the Local Plan will be held next Tuesday (22<sup>nd</sup> February). The [papers](#) are now available. As always, the meeting can be viewed live, or at any time as a recording, via our [YouTube Channel](#). There is always an opportunity to [register to speak](#) in the allocated 15 minutes slot at the start of the meeting, which should you wish to do, must be requested at least 24 hours in advance.

The meeting agenda is very full and is set to cover a number of interesting topics which could be relevant to neighbourhood plan work going forward. The substantive Local Plan discussion is currently the last item on the agenda, although the order may be changed by the Chair to bring this item forward. It is expected that this will see discussions move on to consideration of proposed potential site allocations, for both housing and employment.

Under a separate item, a revised Local Plan timetable will be put forward, which, if agreed as proposed, would see initial public consultation on a draft plan moved back to the autumn. This makes allowance for the fact that the Committee is still working through the papers which were first taken in December. The paper also asks Members to consider building in time for more tailored engagement with communities/neighbourhood plan groups before we go to a wider public consultation.

In addition, Members will also be asked to consider if they wish to make time for further presentations of sites by landowners/prospective developers and their agents. This is because we had more interest (almost double) that which we could accommodate in the 2 days that were allocated to this activity back in January.

## Emerging Direction on Local Plan Strategy

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The [minutes of the last Strategic Planning Committee meeting](#), held on 8<sup>th</sup> February, are now also available. Members discussed the Plan vision and objectives, which were broadly supported, as well the spatial strategy for the distribution of future development. This included consideration of the topics of settlement hierarchy and settlement boundaries in some detail, as we debated with some of you at our webinar last year (see article below).

After much debate on the spatial distribution strategy, Members supported officers preferred option that proposed strategic policy will:

“set out an overarching picture of development in East Devon that will establish, over and above existing commitments:

- A concentration of new development on the western side of East Devon to include an additional new town (an further new town in addition to Cranbrook);
  - Major strategic developments close to the city of Exeter;
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- Moderate levels of development at the principal and main centres of East Devon (*tiers 1 and 2 in the settlement hierarchy*);
  - Modest growth at service and local centres (*tiers 3 and 4 in the settlement hierarchy*), and;
  - Limited development, under exceptional circumstances, in smaller villages, hamlets and the countryside.”

It was noted that the steer from Members on the spatial strategy for growth would help officers to begin discussions with neighbourhood planning groups about what they are looking to pursue, and potential alignment between emerging neighbourhood plans and the local plan. It was also noted regarding housing policy and neighbourhood plans in particular that “[Local Plan] Policy should set out the housing provision requirements for designated neighbourhood areas. Otherwise, the local plan’s Reasoned Justification will explain why the local plan is not setting out a housing requirement for Neighbourhood Plans.” I will be liaising with colleagues working on the housing requirement projections to unpick what this NPPF requirement may mean for all of our designated Neighbourhood plan Areas. Further information will be provided in due course.

As previously highlighted, it is worth bearing in mind that the potential allocations identified in the early working draft Local Plan to date, even with allowance for a new community, do not deliver sufficient housing to meet the requirement for East Devon, and in fact indicate a shortfall in the region of 1,000 homes. In relation to tackling this difficult issue, Members were asked to consider a range of possible options, and supported, “options C (Look to villages below tier 4 for growth), G (Search for extra sites) & I (Be less restrictive to development in the AONB’s)” for further investigation. Related to this, there was an inconclusive discussion around holding a further and more targeted ‘call for sites’. Officers will need time to consider the implications for the work ahead, and I will endeavour to keep you up to date, primarily via these newsletters.

## Post Webinar Update – Approach to Settlements

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The notes from the webinar, including links to the presentations made by officers are available [here](#) for your reference. The headlines from the webinar discussion were reported to Members at Strategic Planning Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> February.

On settlement hierarchy, similar to at the webinar, debate by Members focussed mainly on the composition of Tier 4 (‘service villages’). Members had agreed last October to the proposed Settlement Hierarchy, as presented at the webinar, to be used as a background evidence paper to inform the Local Plan. However, at this meeting Members have requested

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more work is done, with a view to potentially identifying additional villages to be included, and reconsidering the inclusion of some which have more limited facilities, such as Chardstock.

On settlement boundaries, again similar to views expressed at the webinar, Members could see pros and cons, but were overall broadly supportive of continuing the use of (fairly tightly drawn) settlement boundaries. They rejected the introduction of a policy for a more flexible approach which would have enabled certain types of/a limited level of development adjacent to boundaries. However, they strongly supported continuing to allow neighbourhood plans to propose development outside boundaries where this can be justified, and continuing support for rural exception schemes to deliver affordable housing beyond settlement boundaries. Officers will now need to consider the implications of the views expressed and what a methodology would potentially look like if we were to define and implement boundaries on that basis. More information will be shared when available. If you wish to hear the debate, which lasted for approx. 30 minutes, it starts at 5 hrs 59 minutes into the [recording of the 8<sup>th</sup> February meeting](#) available on our You Tube channel.

## Related Topics of Interest

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Other items that may be of interest to you, which also feature on the Strategic Planning Committee agenda for next week, include:

- **'First Homes' / Affordable Housing** - the Government's recently introduced and preferred model of 'discounted market homes' is a new type of affordable housing to be provided for. There will be implications to be considered for made and emerging neighbourhood plans as First Homes requirements now apply to both decision-making on applications and plan-making purposes. Neighbourhood Plans can seek to apply local criteria in addition to the national criteria for First Homes, but it is important to note that if a property is not sold within 3 months of marketing, any local criteria fall away. We have drafted an [Interim Guidance note of First Homes](#), which it is envisaged will become a Supplementary Planning Document. Some of this is fairly technical, and naturally, we are happy to give advice and guidance as required, and endeavour to answer any questions you may have. This newly published [Guide for parish councils on Affordable Housing](#) (including First Homes) by the Rural Housing Alliance may also be useful.
  - **Self-build** – our latest monitoring report shows we have been granting sufficient permissions to meet demand, and indicates the current level of demand as evidenced by interest captured on our Self Build Register. This highlights that the three most popular locations for self-building overall were Sidmouth, Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton (all of which have made NP's).
  - **Housing Monitoring report** – our latest report confirms East Devon can currently demonstrated that we have the necessary 5-year land supply.
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## Useful Links

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Information for neighbourhood plans work and status of all our plans: [Neighbourhood Plans being produced in East Devon - East Devon](#)

Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Papers: [Committee details - Strategic Planning Committee - East Devon](#)

Strategic Planning Committee Meetings Live-Stream and Recordings: [East Devon District Council - YouTube](#)

Emerging new Local plan information: [Emerging Local plan - East Devon](#)

Submitted Sites information (including interactive map): [Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment - East Devon](#)

[Database](#) of made Neighbourhood Plan Policies - **updated version, February 2022**

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