

Neighbourhood Planning & the Local Plan Update



October/November 2021

This update focuses on the relationship between Neighbourhood Planning and the work on the emerging new Local Plan, and includes an update on the latest work on the local plan, useful links for more information, and a reminder about our forthcoming webinar on 11th November.

We hope this provides some useful content. Feedback welcome!

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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Emerging Local Plan – Progress and Next Steps

'Topic papers' continue to be taken to our monthly Strategic Planning Committee meetings (see articles below). The Planning Policy team is proceeding to collate and commission evidence and develop potential strategy and policy approaches and options across a variety of themes, taking account of the discussions with members.

An initial early working draft of the new Local Plan will be taken to Strategic Planning Committee on **14th December 2021**. This will seek to set out an indicative preferred strategy and approach to key aspects, including indication of preferred sites for development, with the aim of securing a steer from Members for the work ahead. This document will be worked up over the first quarter of 2022. We will seek to engage with you and other community leaders in the new year, as far as possible in the current timetable, in the lead up to the first draft for public consultation in Spring 2022.

Strategic Planning Committee Meetings

The last meeting, held 5th October, considered topic [papers](#) relating to the new Local Plan on:

- The role and function of settlements – updated evidence paper to inform the new Local Plan on settlement hierarchy, proposing a 4 tier approach;
- Settlement boundaries – looking at the pros and cons and options for the approach to using settlement boundaries (termed Built-up Area Boundaries in the current Local Plan or BUABs) going forward;
- The importance of health in the new Local Plan as an overarching theme;
- Approach to sport and recreation – evidence gathering and policy options.

Key points from the Committee for NP groups to note include:

- **Role and Function Study** – this item presented updated evidence following earlier consideration of same in June, following a fact-check exercise with parishes regarding community facilities and services in their areas. It now included those reported amendments to provision as well as adding sports pitches to the facilities taken into account in the study. The evidence had been reviewed and the status of some settlements reappraised but ultimately no change to the earlier proposed hierarchy was considered necessary. The evidence and methodology was scrutinised closely by Members and was ultimately agreed as recommended. This now goes forward to the draft Local Plan as evidence to inform draft strategy and policy, including the following settlement hierarchy:
 - **Tier 1** - Principal Centre: Exmouth only (reflecting its size and nature);
 - **Tier 2** – Main Centre: Axminster, Cranbrook, Honiton, Ottery St Mary, Seaton and Sidmouth;
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- **Tier 3** – Local Centre: Broadclyst, Budleigh, Colyton, Lymptone and Woodbury
 - **Tier 4** - Service Villages: Beer, Branscombe, Broadhembury, Chardstock, Clyst St Mary, Dunkeswell, East Budleigh, Exton, Feniton, Hawkchurch, Kilmington, Musbury, Newton Poppleford, Otterton, Payhembury, Plymtree, Sidbury, Stoke Canon, Tipton St John, Uplyme, West Clyst, West Hill, Whimble, Woodbury Salterton.
- It is important to note that this is not a policy, and subject to change as new evidence emerges and following consultation on the draft Local Plan. However, it does imply that that these settlements are the more sustainable locations in theory for growth, albeit there are many other factors, including development constraints, that will need to be taken into account. Similarly, IF the approach in the adopted Local Plan is carried through to the new plan, it would be these settlements that would be expected to have defined built-up area/settlement boundaries, within which development would be acceptable in principle, and where exception schemes to deliver affordable housing could be brought forward beyond the boundary.
 - **Principle of Settlement Boundaries** – Members expressed varying views with reference to their experience of different settlements in terms of how successful or otherwise they felt the use of boundaries had been to date in directing development to suitable locations, and limiting it in the more unsustainable areas. There was much support for enabling some level of growth at the smaller, more rural communities and generally for flexibility to allow more pragmatism in decision making in the area adjacent to boundary lines. There was support expressed for the use of a ‘hybrid approach’ to achieving controlled flexibility through the use of both boundaries and criteria-based policy. There was support for the continued role of neighbourhood plans to plan for small scale growth to meet local needs. As a result of the discussion, Officers were tasked with working up draft criteria-based policy for development adjacent to settlement boundaries for consideration.
 - **Health** – the wide ranging and crossing-cutting nature of health and wellbeing and its importance in the Local Plan was widely acknowledged, welcomed and endorsed. Members highlighted various areas for support including provision of allotments, promoting of active travel and healthy lifestyles, addressing environmental nuisance such as air quality and noise, including in relation to mental health,
 - **Sport and Recreation** – Members noted the on-going work on the updated Playing Pitch Strategy and the call by Sport England for addition of a Built Facilities Strategy, which is being commissioned.

Full detailed [minutes](#) are now available.

The [next meeting of Strategic Planning Committee](#) will take place from 2pm Tuesday 9th November. Key matters to be considered with respect to the new Local Plan are:

1. The proposed approach for those promoting sites for development to present to Strategic Planning Committee in a fair and transparent manner to inform options
2. Evidence and policy approaches to coastal change
3. Thinking on approaches to responding to the climate change emergency

For neighbourhood plan work, of particular interest is likely to be item 3, with items 1 and 2 being of more interest to parishes in areas of greater development pressures and/or along our coastline respectively.

Forthcoming Webinar – Approach to Settlements 11th November

You should all have received an invite to the above webinar discussion due to take place via Zoom next Thursday evening at 7pm. The aim of the session is to explain and test out the rationale, options and implications of the evidence and thinking so far about the hierarchy of settlements in the District, and the use of settlement boundaries. The discussion will be used to feed into papers going before Members at Strategic Planning Committee in December. We have received an excellent response and have a good spread of parishes, including those engaged in neighbourhood planning, planning to attend. The presentations and notes from the event will be shared here in due course. However, if you would still like to register for the event, please email planningpolicy@eastdevon.gov.uk asap. Please note to ensure the event is manageable in the time and facilitates a 2-way dialogue, places may be limited.

Useful Links

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
