

East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2040 – Preferred Options Reg. 18 Consultation Draft Plan – autumn 2022

Response from South Somerset District Council Planning Policy

Thank you for consulting South Somerset District Council on the East Devon Local Plan 2020 to 2040 – Preferred Options Reg. 18 Consultation Draft Plan. Comments are provided below and focus on matters relating to strategic cross-boundary issues.

Please note that on 1 April 2023 a new unitary Somerset Council will be formed, this will combine the five authorities of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, Somerset County.

Axminster

It is noted that the levels of development proposed for Axminster seem somewhat disproportionate to its scale when compared with the other towns, particularly Honiton. This could lead to additional traffic generation heading towards the employment areas at the western end of South Somerset, such as Chard.

The total housing delivery, including both “preferred” and “second choice” allocations and commitments is 1370 dwellings, compared with 910 at Honiton. Whilst it is noted that Axminster does have employment opportunities and a jobs density over 1, it does have high levels of out-commuting.

Growth at the level proposed is likely to require significant phosphate mitigation in the Axe catchment, competing with South Somerset development sites to the south of Chard and in the countryside areas bordering east Devon, which also lie in the Axe catchment.

It is noted that the previous proposals for an eastern relief road funded by development appear to have been abandoned, so this is no longer a driver for high levels of development in Axminster.

In general, concentration of development at the western end of East Devon will act to minimise impact on SSDC (and probably Somerset as a whole). So, the overall strategy is not objectionable.

Western service villages

There are three villages with reasonable commuting distance of Chard which have proposed development proposals for housing– Chardstock 30 dwellings, Hawkchurch 38 dwellings and Kilmington 52. Cumulatively these total 120 dwellings. Chardstock and Hawkchurch also have small employment allocations. It is suggested that it may be helpful if the relevant settlement sections of the Plan include a reference to the proximity to South Somerset and in particular Chard.

Biodiversity

Inclusion of Policy 86 supporting mitigation of phosphates within the River Axe SAC is welcomed. It may be useful for the Plan to reference the wide-ranging impact of this issue by including a reference to adjoining LPAs that are also impacted by the issue.

Policy 87 proposes to increase the BNG level to 20%. The justification for this percentage is set out in paragraph 13.43 and 13.44, this is noted with interest.

Planning Policy

05 January 2023