

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL AND TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL
JOINT LOCAL PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of JOINT LOCAL PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE held at Barum Room - Brynsworthy on Friday, 24th January, 2025 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors:

North Devon Council: Councillor Prowse (Chair)
Councillors Lane and Walker

Torrige District Council: Councillors Cottle-Hunkin, Hackett, Hames, Hicks (Vice-Chair) , Hodson, James and Leather.

Officers:

North Devon Council: Head of Place, Property and Regeneration (SM), Senior Planning Policy Officer (ED) and Planning Policy Officer (PM)

Torrige District Council: Planning Manager (HS), Planning Policy Team Leader (IR) and Graduate Planning Policy Officer (EG)

Also Present:

Councillors Pennington (Torrige District Council) and Smith (Torrige District Council)

40. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

AGREED Following a proposal by Cllr Hicks, the Committee voted unanimously to appoint Councillor Prowse as Chair.

41. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

AGREED Following a proposal by Cllr Prowse, the Committee voted unanimously to appoint Councillor Hicks as Vice-Chair.

42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bell, and from Cllr Lock (who appointed Cllr Leather as a substitute).

43. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20TH SEPTEMBER 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2024 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

44. ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY.

There were no items brought forward by the Chair for discussion.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest announced.

46. REVISED NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND OTHER CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

The Committee considered a report by the Senior Planning Policy Officer regarding the Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system (circulated previously).

The Planning Policy Team Leader (IR) presented the report to the Committee and confirmed that:

- The report highlighted the key changes to the revised NPPF published on 12th December 2024 focusing on the implications of plan making plus how it fitted with the wider on-going planning reform. This followed a consultation earlier in the summer (2024).
- The local housing need is an unconstrained assessment of the minimum number of houses that the government expects us to be looking to deliver for the area.
It gives us our starting point for how we have to consider how much housing we should be delivering to the area. It's not the end point and we can take into account local constraints (such as the natural landscape/flood risk areas).
- North Devon is in the unusual position where the district boundary is different to the local planning authority boundary because of Exmoor National Park and there was some discretion in the method used as data was only available at the district level.
- A summary of the changes, written by the Local Government Association, was included in appendix A.
- The government consulted on changes to the NPPF and, following a previous meeting of JPPC, officers sent a joint response to the government.
- The most significant change is to the local housing need for the plan area, through changes to the NPPF and the associated standard methodology which was set out in the guidance. It provided councils with a starting point for how many homes they should plan for through their local plan. The Local Housing Need was calculated using the standard methodology. Normal planning considerations had not been discarded.

- The government have confirmed the new standard methodology as discussed at the last JPPC, with a small adjustment to the affordability multiplier. This resulted in a joint housing need for the 2 districts (including the Exmoor National Park Area of North Devon) of 1,330 dwellings per annum, compared to the previous methodology which would give a figure of 714.
- One noted change, from the 2023 version of the NPPF, was that there was no option to use an alternative calculation for the Local Housing Need.
- Transitional arrangements were in place – particularly around new housing need.
- Appendix B provided a letter from the Deputy Prime Minister in which she required all local authorities to submit a revised Local Development Scheme to the government by 6th March 2025. The Committee would need to ratify the scheme at the end of February 2025.
- A consultation on the new policies was expected in Spring 2025, with levelling up taking place in Autumn 2025.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Planning Policy Team Leader advised that:

- Both Authorities had allocated funds within annual budgets towards consultancy costs.
- An update to the Landscape Character Assessment had been completed.
- Identifying locations for renewable energy development were discretionary – it was for the Authorities to consider their approach in the Local Plan.
- In previous years approximately 800 dwellings have been delivered each year. Rarely had a figure of 1,300 been attained so it was a stretched target for the area. It required the housing sector to reform in order to meet the targets.

RESOLVED that the report on Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system be noted.

47. FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY UPDATE

The Committee considered an update by the Planning Policy Team Leader regarding the Five Year Housing Land Supply.

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report to the Committee and confirmed that;

- The authorities were awaiting legal advice in respect of their five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) in context of the specific circumstances of the adopted Local Plan.
- Following on from the 12th of December, updates to the NPPF and to the standard method, changes had a consequence for the local planning authorities on the demonstration of a 5YHLS.
- The Change to Standard Method and wider NPPF meant a need to re-evaluate the 5YHLS.

Members would be reminded that we were in a position where we had a 5.18 year supply. This was based on the requirement of 861 dwellings per annum.

- The local housing need for North Devon and Torridge was previously less than the housing requirement, it was now 1,330 per year. There was quite a stark difference in the baseline of what need to be delivering over five years.
- Resulted in a move from previously demonstrating a 5.18 year supply to 4.86 years. This no longer demonstrated a five-year housing land supply.
- Not as dramatic an outcome as the change in housing need would suggest, due to a move from a 20% to 5% buffer and the fact that can disregard what was a significant backlog (due to this being incorporated into the local housing need figure); it was actually only 192 dwellings below a five-year supply.
- It was noted there were a number of large developments sites in progress across both districts. These would likely contribute to the 5YHLS when reappraised later this year.
- Have to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development when considering applications that effect the supply of housing.
- Could potentially re-establish five-year supply relatively swiftly given the amount of housing development consented and being built across the area – although no certainty of doing so.

In response to questions from the committee, the Planning Policy Team Leader advised:

- There could be a need potentially to find more than 192 if sites hadn't progressed as expected, although some of the other sites were likely to have moved on since previously assessed. There may be a greater level of supply because some of those sites that weren't previously delivering in, for example, years 1-3 could be considered in the future to be delivering in the years 2-5.
- Normally the assessment would be published annually but given the significant change in national policy, an update has had to be published as an interim position.
- An update would be issued again based on housing supply with a base date of 1st April 2025, following the normal programme. Although this may be expedited if considered likely that a land supply could be re-established.

The Committee discussed:

- The possibility of hostile applications.
- The high level of dwellings required each year under the new calculation.
- The control of the housing market by large developers, along with the financial pressures those developers are experiencing.
- Paragraph 11(d)(ii): the tilted-balance and the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Noted that there has been clarification on the tilted balance and reinforcement of issues that should be considered. It was important because it sent an intent to developers, and Planning Inspectorate, that it was actually about quality development coming forward and not about housing "at all costs", irrespective of what we hear. It stated, it was around granting permission "unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when they get assessed

against the policies in this framework, taken as a whole, having particular regards, to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes individually or in combination”.

The Planning Policy Officer (MA) advised that:

- Although smaller sites could be quicker to deliver, many of the smaller local sites that had previously been granted consent had been much slower to deliver than hoped.
- Recent non-allocated sites had often delivered 30% affordable housing.

RESOLVED that the Five Year Housing Land Supply update be noted.

48. FEEDBACK REPORT ON THE MEMBER GROWTH WORKSHOP OF NOVEMBER 2024

The Committee considered a report by the Graduate Planning Policy Officer regarding the Feedback on the Member Growth Workshop of November 2024 (circulated previously).

The Graduate Planning Policy Officer presented the report to the Committee and confirmed that:

- The workshop was well attended, and each group had a mix of Members from each Council.
- Scale of growth, and housing requirements were set out with examples given to help visualise what may be required and to confirm we are not starting from scratch as we have existing allocations and planning permissions.
- Planning for growth was recognised as not only focusing on housing but also the need to plan holistically with consideration given to a variety of other areas.
- Activity one focused on what made a successful place, and Members were invited to suggest examples of places that they thought were successful. These were not limited to the local area as it was just important to draw out common themes or distinguishing features believed to contribute to success, no matter where this may be. Examples were given from the local area, other places in the UK, and locations abroad.
- Members felt housing was key to successful places as this could be planned to meet local needs and made suitable for local communities, along with community, infrastructure and services.
- A few points were raised around employment, education and retail. Successful places were noted as those with good employment opportunities and good wages, with education providing people with the skills necessary to get the jobs they want. Members felt that town centres in successful places have high streets which are used and supported by locals.
- Activity two looked at options for growth and aimed to explore what Members thought would deliver the required growth and which options would be preferable.

- Activity three focused on the outcomes from a map-based activity exploring locations from growth.

Cllr Hackett of TDC declared an interest as a Field Officer for the British Horse Society.

Cllr Hackett advised the Committee of an incident involving a horse and a motor vehicle.

The Committee discussed cycling routes, and routes suitable for horse riders, as part of 'active travel'.

Cllr Hames suggested that comments on climate change resilience from tree planting and Green Infrastructure should be more clearly noted.

Cllr Cottle-Hunkin asked for her name to be added to the attendance list the Feedback for the Member Growth Workshop of November 2024 to make this correct.

RESOLVED that the report on the Feedback on the Member Growth Workshop of November 2024 be noted with the final report to include the extra Cllr comments mentioned above with a correction to the attendance list.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 11.20 am