

## **North Devon & Torridge District Council**

Report Date: 29 September 2022

Topic: **People & Place Project**

Report to: Joint Planning Policy Committee

Report by: Nina Lake, Head of Programme Management & Performance

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This highlight report sets out progress to date on the People and Place project, initiated to deliver a comprehensive review of the Joint Local Plan. The reporting period is from July to September 2022.

### 2. CHANGE CONTROL

2.1 The Planning Policy Team have been tasked with assessing our current Joint Local Plan through the Planning Advisory Service<sup>1</sup>'s (PAS) Self-Assessment Toolkit to establish the soundness and legal compliance of the plan. The outcome of this review may determine that a comprehensive review is still the correct approach or it may determine that elements of the plan remain sound allowing a more targeted approach, resulting in saving revenue on commissioning evidence, staff resources and recovering some of the time lost to date.

2.2 Senior Officers reached out to PAS to determine if they were able to provide some support with this review. PAS then discussed our project with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and they have approved support for this project to sense check the overall strategy and associated timetable / project plan. PAS are now engaging with DAC Planning (Professional Planning Consultancy Services) who provide dedicated support to local authorities and local communities in planning for a sustainable future.

2.2 Nothing being de-scoped from this project.

### 3. MATTERS FOR ESCALATION

3.1 Risks to note for this reporting period

Risks in terms of slippage and resources that have been realised are now set out in the Issues section of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> PAS exists to support local planning authorities in providing effective and efficient planning services, to drive improvement in those services and to support the implementation of changed in the planning system.

### 3.2 Issues to note for this reporting period

Issue Opportunity: as noted in Section 2 that we may be able consider a lighter review, subject to scrutiny from PAS and DAC Planning.

Issue Resources: We have lost several members of the original project team from TDC and NDC leaving resources and knowledge gaps. Both council's developed a job description for a Joint People and Place Project Manager and this opportunity is being pushed through multiple channels with the hope of attracting a Senior Planning Policy Officer to drive this project forward, bridge that technical knowledge gap and ensure that resources are allocated to deliver the outputs on time, to cost and quality.

Issue Project Slippage: With the loss of key staff, competing priorities and some levels of ill-health the project timeline has slipped. This slippage is what promoted us to reach out to PAS to assist with determining the required scope of this project and to work with our stakeholders.

Issue unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply: As part of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and our 'Call for Sites', whilst both authorities continue to work through the new sites, contacting land owners, plotting sites and carrying out sites visits there are two risks: (1) That the work won't be delivered by November 2022; and (2) that even if the work is delivered the 5YHLS might not be re-established. We have to have confidence that the supply will exist on the adoption of the plan.

## 4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 That the Joint Planning Policy Committee note all of the current issues and support the external support being sought to mitigate those.

## 5. REPORT

5.1 Noted below are the key products that have been delivered during this reporting period and those scheduled for the next quarter.

### 5.2 Consultation & Engagement Plan with associated Branding

- Representation at the various shows – TDC and NDC
- North Devon Homes' Summer Fayre

### Next reporting period

- Soft Launch with Town and Parish Councils

### 5.3 Sustainability Requirements

#### Delivered

- Collation of feedback on the Sustainability Scoping document.

#### To be delivered

- Commissioning of Land Use Consultants (LUC) to carry out the sustainability appraisals.

### 5.4 Policies Map

This element of work is now live and being up-dated as information becomes available.

#### To be delivered

- Feedback and thanks to those who completed the community engagement

### 5.5 Local Development Scheme (LDS) & Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

#### Delivered

- SCI approved at the last JPPC and published on websites.
- LDS approved and published

#### To be delivered

- The LDS will need to be updated and republished

### 5.7 Duty to Cooperate (D-t-C) & Statements of Common Ground

Additional resources will be required as this work stream was allocated to SH & MB

#### Delivered

- All engagement to date by everyone on the project team is being documented on a shared file repository hosted by TDC. This evidence is fundamental to the success of the project and ultimate adoption.

#### Planned for the next 6 months

- Triggering of Regulation 18 in November. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012 requires that various bodies and stakeholders be notified that the council is preparing a plan. It invites them to comment about what that plan ought to contain.

### 5.8 Vision, Aims and Objectives

#### Planned for this reporting period

- Collation of Stakeholder feedback
- Finalise draft vision, aims and objective

## 5.9 Collating, Development or Commissioning of 'Proportionate' Evidence

Delivered for this reporting period

The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) work is ongoing. The proposed HELAA Panel was supported by an informal Joint Planning Policy Committee.

The following briefs have been prepared and published on our procurement portals, we await responses from potential suppliers on the following topics:

- Housing & Economic Development Needs Assessment
- Gypsy and Traveller Brief
- Retail & Leisure Study
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Brief drafted but not live

We are not committed to commissioning these works

Planned for the next reporting period

- Strategic Viability Assessment

## 5.10 Monitoring and Review Framework

This element of work is dependent on the topic work stream.

## 5.11 Issues, Preferred Options and Approaches

Significant slippage on this element whilst the proportionate evidence base is being commissioned and understood.

## 5.12 Place-based Strategy Development

Appointment of external consultant required for this element of work.

## 5.13 Strategic Viability Assessment

Delivered

- Focus group of officers identified to progress this work package with first meeting held.

## 6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Limited spend to date. Briefs are now being prepared to commission professionals to provide proportionate evidence on various topic areas.

6.2 Staff resources noted in section 3 of this report.

## 7.0 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

7.1 There are no equalities implications anticipated as a result of this report. An Equality Impact Assessment will be developed as part of this project.

## 8. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are not any environmental implications anticipated as a result of this report, as the purpose of this report is to present an update on the People and Place project. The review will of course address environmental issues.

## 9. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

9.1 The People & Place Project contributes to both Torridge and North Devon District Council's Corporate Plan and the priorities contained within.

## 10. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

10.1 Schedule 2, paragraph 1.1.3 of the North Devon District Council and Torridge District Council Agreement for a Joint Planning Policy Committee.

## 11. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

11.1 This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

## 12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

## 13. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that this draft is being sent to members of the project team including CExs for comment.

Nina Lake, Head of Programme Management & Performance