



## **NORTH DEVON COUNCIL AND TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL JOINT PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE (JPPC)**

**REPORT DATE: 24th January 2025**

**TOPIC: Joint Local Plan Growth Workshop Feedback Report**

**AUTHOR: Graduate Planning Policy Officer (Torrige District Council)**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Officers have prepared a report (Appendix 1) that summarises the findings from a joint Member workshop held on the 8th of November 2024 at Caddsdow Business Support Centre in Bideford. This was an opportunity for Members to explore their views on growth within the context of creating a new Local Plan. A total of 37 Members attended with representation from both North Devon Council and Torrige District Council.
- 1.2 The main objectives of the workshop were to consider what makes a successful place, explore options for growth and explore locations for growth. Members were guided that it was important to focus on northern Devon rather than looking at each local planning authority area separately and in isolation.
- 1.3 It should be recognised that this report is still in draft form and is subject to subsequent finalisation by Officers. The substance of the report will however remain the same.
- 1.4 The main results identified in this feedback report can be accepted as a reference which will help inform future decision making related to the new Local Plan as work continues. The results from the workshop activities should be considered as valuable contributions from Members and the communities they represent.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note the findings of the Joint Member Workshop as set out in the draft Joint Local Plan Growth Workshop report (Appendix 1).

### **3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To provide Members with a summary from the Joint Member Workshop to help build on suggestions about growth in future work.

## 4 REPORT

- 4.1 In November 2024 an in-person event took place at Caddsdon Business Support Centre, Bideford with 37 Members and 12 facilitators present. The event was in the morning and ran from 09:30 to 12:00.
- 4.2 The views of Members are from the perspective of their own local knowledge, as well as being representative of communities in northern Devon.
- 4.3 Members from both Councils being involved in plan-making is important as they represent communities across northern Devon and come with a significant body of local knowledge. Members were split into five groups with two facilitators in each and a mixture of North Devon and Torridge Members to focus discussions on northern Devon as a whole.
- 4.4 At the workshop event Members took part in three substantive activities. Activity one allowed Members to consider successful places with examples. Activities two and three then explored options and locations for growth across northern Devon. Members had time to discuss their ideas for each activity with facilitators recording the outcomes.

### **A. Activity One:**

#### ***What Makes a Successful Place?***

- 4.5 This activity provided an opportunity for Members to suggest examples of successful places and to explain why they felt that these places are a success.
- 4.6 Common themes resulting from activity one were housing, community, transport, infrastructure, employment, and education. Examples of successful places were given, with examples coming from the local area, as well as several from further away in the UK and in other countries as well. The points below highlight common themes found within a successful place.
- 4.7 Housing in a successful place was felt to be about high quality homes designed to meet local needs with enough affordable housing. The importance of the right homes built in the right places and that benefit communities was also highlighted. The creation of homes which reduce carbon emissions was encouraged. Planning for the future was considered, with housing located to allow expansion and to sustain future growth.
- 4.8 Members felt that community in a successful place means a sense of belonging with strong cohesive community connections. There is provision of spaces for people to

meet and all generations are recognised as needing their own spaces. People are not being isolated, and they are able to walk to key facilities to promote healthy lifestyles. Encouraging people to stay in the area is seen as a positive to build strong communities.

- 4.9 It was felt that transport and infrastructure in a successful place should support a place and provide reliable connections. The transport connections would be good, especially in rural locations, and a successful place has excellent bus, cycle, and pedestrian links. Facilities cater to a range of age groups and support communities by providing sufficient medical and dental services as well as good schools. Green infrastructure is considered and well placed so that it is accessible and benefits the people using the space. Areas with good mobile and internet connections are successful as they provide more opportunities for residents.
- 4.10 Members stated that employment, education, and retail in a successful place allow people a good work life balance and create happier communities. Good education supports the building of skills while good employment opportunities and good wages allow them to stay locally if they choose to do so.

## **B. Activity Two:**

### ***Options for Growth***

- 4.11 Activity two aimed to explore what Members thought would deliver the required growth and provided several options to consider. Many topics were discussed across the four groups with several different views and opinions voiced.
- 4.12 The options discussed across all five groups were:
- New Towns;
  - New Villages;
  - Growing Towns;
  - Growing Villages; and
  - Dispersed Growth.
- 4.13 Facilitators recorded the Member discussion for each option and aimed to relate Member's perspectives back to future work on the Local Plan by thinking about how the amount of housing may impact where and how we allocate sites.
- 4.14 Opinions across the groups were varied although most recognised that it is inevitable we will need to see more growth in the future. Although the most favourable option was not consistent across the groups, the list of opportunities and challenges is useful

to consider. Some Members felt they would like further context added when discussing growth to make it clear that each option may not fit all examples of a place. For example, growing villages was a commonly supported option however this may not be right for all villages and should only be proportional.

### **C. Activity Three:**

#### ***Exploring Locations for Growth***

- 4.15 For activity three Members were given maps covering North Devon and Torridge and were invited to share their views on where new housing or employment could be located. This activity was focused around locations for growth and gave an opportunity to discuss which areas may provide the best opportunities. Examples were given to provide more context around the scale of growth needed to meet the required housing numbers so that Members could rationalise the extent of the requirements; for example, the equivalent of 3.2x more areas the size of Bideford or 7.7x more areas the size of South Molton. Figures at the time of the event suggested that a minimum additional supply of around 12,000 dwellings would need to be planned for beyond existing supply, so it was important to explore a range of options.
- 4.16 Each group had their own ideas for the activity and therefore the results have been grouped into three main categories which emerged from the discussion. The first suggestion was for the use of smaller sites focusing around existing settlements and considering proportional growth in such places. The second suggestion was for larger levels of growth to be focused around existing settlements if these had the appropriate connections and infrastructure. The third suggestion was for growth to be directed to locations where a larger settlement such as a new town or village could be created.
- 4.17 The ideas from individual groups were combined onto a map which aims to provide an overview based on all of the discussions had across all five groups.

## **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The feedback report on the Joint Member Workshop forms part of the body of work on the wider People and Place Project, whereby it will feed into the preparation of a new Local Plan, along with informing strategies and policy directions. Member engagement is an integral part of the Local Plan review and forms part of the planning policy teams' existing work programme. Any costs resulting from the process can be met within existing budgets and will be shared across the Councils.



## **6 EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 No impact identified. The Councils seek to engage with a broad range of stakeholders and representatives as part of the preparation of the Local Plan to ensure that the views of all sectors of northern Devon's communities are considered and reflected appropriately.

## **7 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 No direct environmental implications result from the recommendations of this report. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or successors, will be completed for the wider people and place project.

## **8 CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

- 8.1 The North Devon Council and Torridge District Council Corporate Priorities have been considered in the drafting of the report.

## **9 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT**

- 9.1 Schedule 2, paragraph 1.1.1-1.1.3 of the North Devon Council and Torridge District Council Joint Planning Policy Agreement.

## **10 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

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

## **11 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1 None.

## **12 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE**

- 12.1 The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate
- 12.2 Councillors and Officers:
- (i) Helen Smith, Planning Manager (TDC)
  - (ii) Sarah Jane Mackenzie-Shapland, Head of Place, Property and Regeneration (NDC)

## **13 APPENDICES**

- 13.1 This report is supported by the following appendices:



Appendix 1 – Draft Joint Local Plan Growth Workshop.