



people and place
Planning for our future together



NORTH DEVON AND TORRIDGE DRAFT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

February 2025

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If you have any queries or questions relating to this document, please get in touch using the details shown below:

North Devon Council
Lynton House
Commercial Road
Barnstaple
EX31 1DG

peopleandplace@northdevon.gov.uk

01271 388317

Torrige District Council
Riverbank House
Bideford
EX39 2QG

peopleandplace@torridge.gov.uk

01237 428700

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to identify the strategic priorities for the development and use of land for their area and then set out policies to address those in their development plan documents (taken as a whole)¹ – otherwise known as their local plan.**
- 1.2 They are required to prepare and maintain a timetable and programme for the preparation of these documents by publishing a Local Development Scheme (LDS)², with the preparation of the development plan documents then required to be carried out in accordance with it³.**
- 1.2 The Local Development Scheme is required to set out:
- 1.1 what development plan documents are intended to be prepared;**
 - the subject matter of the documents;**
 - the geographical area to which they are intended to relate;**
 - the timetable for the preparation or revision of these documents; and**
 - whether they are intended to be prepared with one or more other local planning authorities.**
- 1.3 In doing so, the Local Development Scheme must also explain the scope of any arrangements for a formal joint committee relating to plan making activity.
- 1.4 This Local Development Scheme supersedes and replaces any versions previously published for North Devon Council and Torrridge District Council.

2 Context

- 2.1 The North Devon and Torrridge Local Plan 2011-2031 (the ‘local plan’) was formally adopted by both Councils on 29th October 2018. It covers the geographic area contingent with the extent of the local planning authority boundaries for North Devon Council and Torrridge District Council. This extends to the extent of the districts of North Devon and Torrridge, excluding that part of North Devon district within Exmoor National Park. The plan area is herein referred to as “northern Devon”.
- 2.2 It forms a comprehensive local plan, containing a full suite of strategic policies developed to deliver the plan’s spatial vision, along with a comprehensive portfolio of site allocations to fully meet identified development needs and a range of development management policies to facilitate effective decision-making.
- 2.3 Relatively soon after its adoption, the two Councils resolved to embark on a process of reviewing and updating the local plan, recognising that the elected Members of both Councils had ambitions for the future of the area that did not

¹ [Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 \(as amended\)](#)

² [Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 \(as amended\)](#)

³ [Section 19\(1\) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 \(as amended\)](#)

fully align with the provisions of the adopted local plan. Progression of this was adversely impacted by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, although it culminated in the publication of a Local Development Scheme in March 2022 and the commencement of work under the auspices of the ‘people and place’ project.

- 2.4 Local circumstances and significant ongoing changes to the national context for planning and plan-making since the publication of the previous Local Development Scheme, mean that it no longer provides a realistic programme for plan preparation.
- 2.5 The local plan was formally reviewed prior to the five-year anniversary of its adoption in accordance with statutory requirements that require local planning authorities to complete a review and consider whether it needs to be updated within this timeframe⁴. This review was completed and published in October 2023. Whilst the review concluded that the provisions contained within the plan remained up-to-date, it concluded that the plan should be updated, given Members ambitions and that the plan was silent on a number of matters.
- 2.6 Concurrent to the Councils establishing their appetite to update the local plan, the Conservative Government published their ambitions for the significant reform of the plan-making process, with a series of proposals and consultations issued over recent years. This will result in the fundamental reform of the plan-making process and the prescribed stages that a local planning authority must go through in order to prepare a plan. It also advocated a prescribed 30-month time limit to complete the substantive work of preparing, examining and adopting a local plan.
- 2.7 Whilst the framework for the revised plan-making system was put in place through the introduction of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, the associated detailed regulations that enable have yet to be published and brought into force. The Labour Government have indicated their commitment to continuing to reform the plan-making system, stating an intent to continue with the broad principles established by the previous Government.
- 2.8 Allied to the plan-making reforms, there was also significant uncertainty as to the scale of housing that local planning authorities were going to be required to plan for through their local plans – with a commitment to reform the Standard Method upon which the calculation of local housing need is based. This hiatus was resolved with the publication of a revised Standard Method and a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework in December 2024.
- 2.9 The series of proposed and actual reforms, along with the associated state of flux have created an extremely challenging context within which to progress the preparation of a local plan. This has had a direct bearing on the ongoing work of preparing a new joint local plan and the ability to establish a realistic work programme.
- 2.10 The proposed transitional arrangements and, in particular the stated deadline for the submission of local plans to be examined under the existing plan-making

⁴ Section 17 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Regulation 10A of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

system, have resulted in a position whereby the Councils have not been able to commit to achieving the submission under the existing system. Rather, the Councils have had to commit to preparing any new local plan under the emergent plan-making system.

3 Programme

3.1 The Councils' formal work programme for plan-making extends to the preparation of a single joint development plan document – a replacement for the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan (adopted 2018).

Joint Local Plan

- 3.2 North Devon Council and Torridge District Council have resolved to prepare a new joint local plan and have embarked on the early stages of its preparation.
- 3.3 Given the Government's stated transitional arrangements to a new plan-making regime and the associated timeframes for the submission of any development plan documents to be considered under the existing plan making process, the Councils do not consider it possible to achieve submission of a draft local plan for examination by the prescribed deadline of December 2026.
- 3.4 Accordingly, the Councils plan-making programme for the joint local plan is predicated on its progression through the emergent plan-making process, with the milestones set out below established to accord with the stages and timings previously prescribed by the Government.
- 3.5 Announcements from Government have stated that the formal introduction of the new plan-making regime is anticipated in Summer or Autumn 2025. Applying a precautionary approach, the programme for the new joint local plan has been predicated on the plan-making system coming into force as of October 2025.
- 3.6 **Geographical scope** - the extent of the geographical area of the local planning authorities of North Devon Council and Torridge District Council – northern Devon. It excludes the part of North Devon District within Exmoor National Park.
- 3.7 **Joint working** – to be prepared on a joint basis by North Devon Council and Torridge District Council.
- 3.8 **Plan Period** – to look forward a minimum of fifteen years from adoption, with the ambition to provide a vision and associated strategies for northern Devon for an extended twenty year period.
- 3.9 **Subject matter** - a comprehensive local plan addressing the full range of local plan requirements as specified through legislation and national planning policy⁵.
- 3.10 To include strategic policies that sets out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places and making sufficient provision for:
- **homes, employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;**

⁵ In particular the provisions of Chapter 3 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

- **infrastructure;**
- **community facilities; and**
- **the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment⁶.**

- 3.11 To identify land to facilitate the delivery of development, including that required to deliver a supply of housing for a minimum of ten years, or fifteen years where possible.
- 3.12 To contain non-strategic policies as deemed appropriate and necessary to facilitate the delivery of the overall strategy, with the scope, nature and range to be determined as plan preparation progresses and having regard to any emergent national development management policies.
- 3.13 For the avoidance of doubt, minerals and waste matters will be out of scope of the joint local plan as these are aspects that reside under the responsibility of the Minerals and Waste Local Planning Authority, which in this instance is Devon County Council.
- 3.14 **Timetable** – having regard to the Government’s previously stated intentions around the introduction of the reformed plan-making process and the expected requirements and timeframes, the following milestones are identified for the preparation of the local plan:

Table 1: Programme for joint local plan preparation

Milestone	Timeframe
Scoping and early participation	Up to and beyond March 2025
Formal notice of start of plan-making	October 2025
Gateway 1 (Advisory)	February 2026
Plan visioning and strategy development	February 2026 to December 2027
Evidence Gathering and drafting the plan, including Gateway 2 (Advisory)	
Engagement, proposing changes and submission	
Gateway 3 (Stop/Go)	January 2028
Examination	January 2028 to June 2028
Finalisation and adoption of digital plan	July 2028
Ongoing Monitoring	August 2028 and beyond

- 3.15 There is a significant element of uncertainty attached to the above programme for the preparation of the new local plan arising from the current lack of detail on the final shape of the reformed plan-making system and when it may be introduced. As such, the programme is indicative and may be subject to change based upon

⁶ As per Paragraph 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

the final provisions contained within legislation, national policy and associated guidance and the timing of their introduction.

4 Review and Update

- 4.1 The timetable and programme set out in this Local Development Scheme (LDS) will be kept under review and updated as necessary to take account of any change in circumstances.**
- 4.2 This is particularly important given the aforementioned uncertainty around the timing of the introduction of the new plan-making regime, its shape and nature and the bringing into force of any associated legislation, policy and guidance upon which the timetable for the local plan is predicated.

5 Joint Plan Making Arrangements

- 5.1 North Devon Council and Torridge District Council are committed to working together to holistically plan together for northern Devon. The two Councils have reaffirmed their position to joint plan-making and have resolved to prepare a new joint local plan to cover the extent of the local planning authorities of North Devon and Torridge.**
- 5.2 To facilitate effective and efficient joint working, the Councils have established a formal joint committee – the Joint Planning Policy Committee (JPPC). The Committee has delegated authority imparted to it by both Councils to discharge the full range of plan-making powers instilled to local planning authorities, with the exception of the final adoption which resides with the respective Full Councils.
- 5.3 The joint committee is established through the Councils’ respective Constitutions with its practical operation further constructed through a formal written agreement between North Devon Council and Torridge District Council. The committee exercises the two local planning authorities’ powers provided to them under sections 101(5) and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 and sections 19 and 20 of the Local Government Act 2000, along with all other relevant enabling powers. It does not however constitute a joint committee under the provisions of section 29 the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).



Torrington District Council
Riverbank House
Bideford
EX39 2QG
peopleandplace@torridge.gov.uk
01237 428700



North Devon Council
Lynton House
Commercial Road
Barnstaple
EX31 1DG
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