



Draft Mid Devon Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

December 2022

1.0 Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Purpose, scope and content

- 1.1 The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD will set out the relationship between Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) planning policy and guidance whilst identifying its purpose as bridging the gap between high level policy aspirations and delivery on the ground. This is to ensure that the development achieves high quality design and sense of place in a coordinated manner.
- 1.2 The Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD is set out in 6 Chapters. A brief description of each part is provided below:

Introduction:	Sets out the role of the Masterplan, project process and engagement undertaken
Context:	Sets out the context of the town with a summary of issues and opportunities
Vision & Objectives:	Sets out emerging themes and objectives within a spatial framework
Masterplan:	Provides an overview with a review of specific topic areas
Heritage Strategy:	Sets out Cullompton's historic significance with a review of public realm improvements, governance and delivery
Delivery Guidance	Provides a review of the interdependencies, phasing and funding opportunities

Relationship with the National Planning Policy

- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019), in Chapter 7 'Ensuring the vitality of town centres' sets out that "Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation" (paragraph 85, NPPF). Policy S11, Cullompton of the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. It identifies Cullompton as a fast growing market town with a strategic role in the hierarchy of settlements in Mid Devon. Cullompton is identified as an area for growth, being well located and supported by infrastructure and facilities. Policy S11 is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework; outlining opportunities by existing or planned investment in infrastructure, the town's economic potential and the scope for net environmental gains. The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD will guide town centre development opportunities to ensure the community has sufficient access to services and employment opportunities as well as setting out clear expectations for the quality of development.

Relationship with the Mid Devon Local Plan

- 1.4 The Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 was adopted July 2020. It was examined by an Inspector appointed by the Planning Inspectorate and was subject to main modifications.
- 1.5 Applications for development must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise as required by section 38(6) of the Town

and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 1.6 Local Plan Policy S11, Cullompton, will provide the policy baseline for the more detailed guidance included in Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD:

Policy S11

Cullompton

Cullompton will develop as a fast growing market town with a strategic role in the hierarchy of settlements in Mid Devon. The town will become the strategic focus of new development reflecting its accessibility, economic potential and environmental capacity. This strategy will improve access to housing through urban extensions and expanded employment opportunities. There will be significant improvements to the town's infrastructure and connectivity, including the reopening of the railway station, and improved services for its population and nearby rural areas. Proposals will provide for approximately 3,930 dwellings, of which 1,100 will be affordable, and 73,500 gross square metres of commercial floor space over the plan period.

The Council will guide high quality development and other investment to:

- a) Make any necessary strategic mitigations to maintain highway capacity, safety, integrity, and sustainability including the M5 and local highway network in conjunction with current and relevant infrastructure plans;**
- b) Promote further public transport improvements within Cullompton and to other urban centres (particularly Tiverton and Exeter) and improved access to the rail network by the reopening of Cullompton Railway Station;**
- c) Continue measures to support the implementation of the Cullompton Air Quality Action Plan including the construction of new highway links to relieve the town centre and enhanced walking and cycling opportunities around the town;**
- d) Manage the town centre so that economic regeneration and heritage reinforce each other by promoting new homes, shops, leisure, offices and other key town centre uses which are well designed and contribute to vitality and viability;**
- e) Provide community infrastructure such as education and enhanced open space to support new development proposals;**
- f) Enhance the tourism and visitor role of the town and surrounding area; and**
- g) Support measures to reduce flood risk within Cullompton and make provision for green infrastructure.**

- 1.7 During the preparation of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan the Council has also applied the following policies from the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 in addition to policy S11:

- S1 - sustainable development priorities
- S2 - amount and distribution of development
- S6 employment
- S7 town centres
- S9 environment

- DM1 high quality design
- DM14 town centre development
- DM15 development outside town centres, and
- DM25 development affecting heritage assets.

1.8 The Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013 – 2033 has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which has incorporated a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The Local Plan Review has also been subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Status of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD

1.8 The Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD will be adopted by the Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. The SPD will not be part of the development plan and does not introduce new planning policies into the development plan. However, it will be capable of being a material consideration in determining planning applications.

2.0 SEA and SEA Screening

Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.1 The requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) arises from the European Directive 2001/42/EC “on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment” (hereafter referred to as the SEA Directive). This has been transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 as updated (referred to as the ‘SEA Regulations’). This legislation places an obligation on local authorities to undertake SEA on any plan or programme prepared for town and country planning or land use purposes and which sets the framework for future development consent of certain projects.

Screening

2.2 The 2008 Planning Act has removed the requirement to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for an SPD. However, this has not replaced the requirement to establish whether an SPD requires Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). SEA is required in some limited situations where a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) could have significant environmental effects.

2.3 In order to establish whether SEA is required the fundamental consideration is whether the document is likely to have ‘significant environmental effects’. This is done through a screening assessment. If the screening assessment indicates that there could be significant effects, an SEA is needed.

2.4 A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive was published by the Department of the Environment, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005). This sets out practical guidance on applying the SEA Directive on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. The practical guidance includes a flow chart (figure 2) which illustrates the process for screening a planning document to establish whether a full SEA is needed.

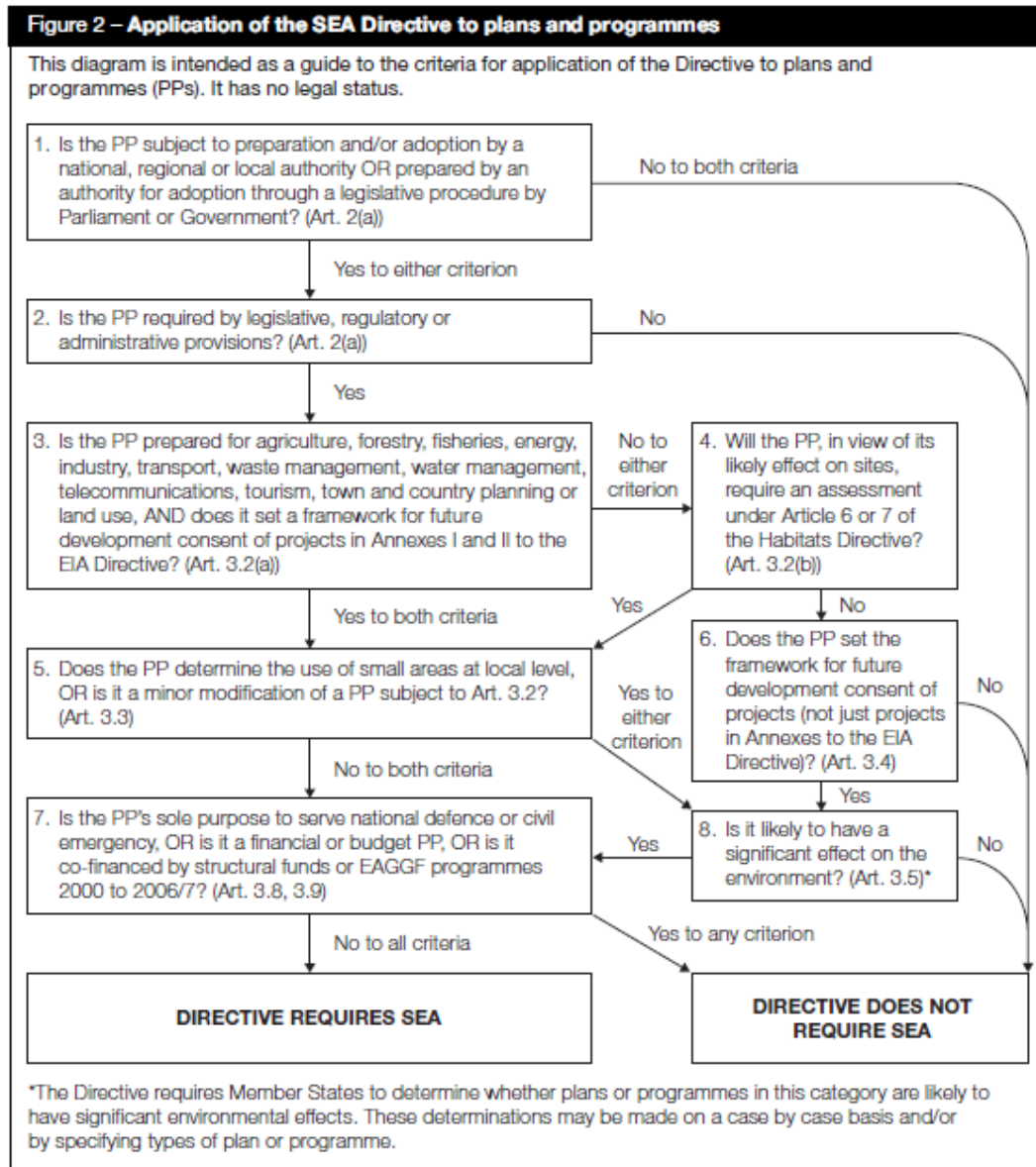


Diagram 1: Application of the SEA Direct to plans and programmes (Figure 2 extracted from ‘A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’)

- 2.5 Table 1 below sets out the Council’s response to the above questions in order to clearly assess whether there is a requirement for the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD to be subject a full SEA.
- 2.6 Table 2 provides the Council’s assessment of likely significant effects of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD on the environment, in accordance with the screening report process in Table 1.

Table 1: Screening of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the SPD subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art.2(a))	Y	The preparation and adoption of the SPD is allowed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The process in preparing the SPD is in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012. Go to STAGE 2
2. Is the SPD required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art.2(a))	Y	Although the SPD is not a requirement under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, if adopted it will add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan and will be a material consideration in planning decisions. It is therefore important that the screening process is precautionary and considers whether it is likely to have significant environment effects and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive. Go to STAGE 3.
3. Is the SPD prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art. 3.2(a))	Y	The SPD has been prepared for the purposes of town and country planning. It supplements policies in the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 by providing detailed guidance as to how these policies are interpreted. The area covered is more than 5 hectares and the masterplan will be used in the development of dwellings, employment and other major developments. Although the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan and Delivery Plan does not create new policy or identify specific sites for development. Go to STAGE 5
4. Will the SPD, in view of this likely effect on sites require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art.3.2(b))	Not Applicable The SPD has been subject to a separate Habitat Regulations Assessment screening which has concluded the SPD is not likely to have significant adverse effects on the integrity of Habitats sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects and further 'Appropriate Assessment' is not required.	
5. Does the SPD determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a	Y	'The SPD will be material consideration in planning applications for new developments. It

minor modification of a plan or programme subject to Art 3.2? (Art.3.3)		provides detailed guidance to adopted Local Plan policy (minor modification).' Go to STAGE 8
6. Does the SPD set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	Not applicable	
7. Is the SPD's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget plan or programme, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Art. 3.8, 3.9)	Not applicable	
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.4)	N	See Part 2, assessment of the likely significant effects on the environment. This concludes that the SPD is unlikely to have a significant effect on the Environment. DIRECTIVE DOES NOT REQUIRE SEA of the SPD

Table 2: Determining the likely significance of effects of the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD on the environment

Criteria specified schedule 1 SEA Regulations	Likely significant environmental effect (Y/N)	Reason
1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to -		
a) The degree to which the SPD sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	N	The SPD, if adopted will help implement Policy S11 Cullompton of the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 and contribute to the framework for future development consent. The Local Plan has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and therefore SEA.
b) The degree to which the SPD influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;	N	The SPD is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 policies. The SPD will not significantly influence other plans and programmes, it supplements the Local Plan which has been subject to SA and therefore SEA.
c) The relevance of the SPD for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with	N	The SPD will help the integration of environmental considerations with a view to promoting sustainable

a view to promoting sustainable development;		development as part of the development proposals. This includes enhancement of the Cullompton Community Association fields, retaining and enhancing existing habitats whilst strengthening links to the town centre and public rights of way beyond the town.
d) Environmental problems relevant to the SPD; and	N	The environmental problems are consistent with those typically found in Mid Devon, these include air quality, flood risk, noise and biodiversity. Planning policy in relation to these environmental problems is principally established through the National Planning Policy Framework and the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033. However, it is expected that the SPD will provide specific guidance on how net gains can be achieved through long term management and maintenance and the creation of new 'green spaces'.
e) The relevance of the SPD for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection)	N	The SPD is not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation including the Water Framework Directive.
2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to -		
a) The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	N	The SPD seeks to ensure development is of an appropriate scale, suitably designed with consideration of the impact on amenity, character of area and environmental impact. Therefore positive social and environmental impacts are predicted. Long-term significant adverse effects are not anticipated.
b) The cumulative nature of the effects;	N	The SPD is in conformity with the strategic policies of the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033. It is intended that the effects will have a positive cumulative effect in the area

		enhancing biodiversity, achieving ecological net gain and sense of well-being for future residents.
c) The transboundary nature of the effects	N	There are not expected to be any significant trans-boundary effects. The SPD seeks to provide good practice in ensuring Cullompton can realise its full potential as a sustainable commercial hub for an expanding town.
d) The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	N	The SPD is likely to have a positive impact on human health by encouraging high quality accommodation and development. There are no significant risks to human health.
e) The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	N	The SPD applies to the Cullompton Town Centre with the impacts likely to be felt by those residing in Cullompton and the rural hinterland of which the town centre serves.
f) The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to – (i) Special nature characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) Intensive land-use	N	Cullompton Town Centre has a number of heritage assets. These are covered by other policies in the Local Plan and specific legislation. The SPD seeks a positive approach to maintain, improve and enhance the distinctive historic buildings and landscape setting of these assets through careful consideration of landscape and settlement form. The SPD seeks to guide development in keeping with the principles of national, regional and local strategic policy and seek to prevent over intensive development.
g) The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised natural, Community or international protection status.	N	The SPD seeks to retain and enhance those areas of community and local priority importance.

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 This SEA screening has identified that the Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.
- 3.2 The SEA screening has also found that there is no requirement for the Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD to be subject to a full SEA.

4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 This screening opinion will be subject to consultation with the three designated consultation bodies – Historic England, Natural England, and the Environment Agency.
- 4.2 The screening opinion will be published alongside the Draft Cullompton Town Centre Masterplan SPD and will be subject to a stage 2 public consultation.