
Report for: Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	12 th December 2023
Subject:	Joint Strategy
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Steven Keable, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Richard Marsh, Director of Place
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – Joint Strategy Appendix 2 – Consultation Responses

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To approve the Joint Strategy for East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet approves the Joint Strategy (Appendix 1) subject to this being agreed by the partner authorities, with delegated authority given to the Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to make any amendments arising from the resolution of the other authorities provided these do not materially alter the content of the document.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 *About the Joint the Strategy*

- 1.1 Consultants LDA Design have prepared a non-statutory Joint Strategy, called 'Our Shared Coordinates', following instruction from Exeter City, East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge district Councils and which has been supported by Devon County Council. This has followed decisions taken by each Councils' respective committee(s) in the summer / autumn of 2021, which gave approval for the preparation of a Joint Strategy for the planning administrative areas of the four authorities. Mid Devon District Council

approved the preparation of the Joint Strategy at its meeting on 1st July 2021 (minute 20) following a recommendation from the Cabinet meeting held on 8th June 2021 (minute 21).

- 1.2 The Joint Strategy reflects the ambitions and proposals of existing and emerging Local Plans. It sets out shared ambitions across a range of strategic planning matters across the four local authority planning areas, together with a high-level list of infrastructure matters that have cross-boundary significance for supporting the delivery of planned new homes, jobs, services, transport and other development.
- 1.3 Approval of the Joint Strategy will demonstrate the commitment to ongoing joint working across the area on strategic matters. This will help to show the Council's compliance with the duty to cooperate, which is a requirement of preparing planning policy. Preparing the joint strategy will therefore support the preparation of Plan Mid Devon, which will be the new local plan for the district.
- 1.4 Exeter City Council, East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils are taking equivalent reports through their committee processes in late 2023.

2.0 *The purpose and content of the Joint Strategy*

- 2.1 The purpose of the Joint Strategy is to:
 - Demonstrate the joined-up strategy and policy approach the Councils have taken across the functional area.
 - Articulate the clear benefits of working together as a cohesive area to address strategic opportunities and challenges.
 - Serve as the starting point for identifying key strategic infrastructure and funding challenges.
 - Provide a framework for more wider collaboration with key stakeholders who are central to the spatial place-making agenda in the area
- 2.2 The Joint Strategy will benefit the four Councils through helping to establish a recognisable 'brand' and serve as a prospectus for the area, which may assist when making bids for Government (or other) infrastructure and delivery funding.
- 2.3 The Joint Strategy is a prospectus-style document, which includes a 'Vision', a 'spatial strategy' and an ambition to position the area as one of the best places to live and work in the UK. In order to achieve this ambition, the Joint Strategy identifies six 'shared coordinates' for delivering sustainable growth which responds to the area's strategic challenges and opportunities:
 - Net Zero

- Quality Places
- Jobs and Prosperity
- Nature
- Homes
- Connectivity

2.4 Each of the six shared coordinates are explained in their respective chapters, together with references to initiatives for each that are supported through existing and emerging Local Plans. The Joint Strategy is not a development plan document, and as such does not set policies for the development and use of land and buildings, or include site allocations for development. It will not be used as a decision making tool for planning applications. This will be the role of Local Plans prepared by the four authorities and neighbourhood plans prepared by local communities.

2.5 The importance of investment in infrastructure (such as transport, green infrastructure, utilities and health care) to support growth is a cross cutting theme throughout the document. To this end the Joint Strategy includes a high level list of strategic infrastructure matters that have cross boundary significance, where the four authorities will continue to work in partnership and with Government agencies, transport and utilities providers to secure funding and investment. These infrastructure themes are:

- SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space) and nature recovery network provision.
- Strategic waste water and water supply improvements.
- Strategic energy grid improvements for import, export and distribution.
- District heating investments and renewable energy projects.
- Education improvements - primary, secondary, further, higher and special educational needs.
- Strategic healthcare provision.
- New railway stations and line improvements.
- Strategic active travel routes and trails.
- Improvements to the Strategic Road Network
- Multi-modal Exeter transport package.

More detail about infrastructure matters can be included in each authority's Infrastructure Funding Statements and Infrastructure Delivery Plans.

- 2.6 The Joint Strategy will be capable of being updated overtime, including its high-level list of infrastructure matters.

3.0 *Stakeholder engagement*

- 3.1 The Joint Strategy has been subject to a focused consultation with identified key stakeholders. The focused consultation with key stakeholders has served to raise awareness of the Joint Strategy and its intended purpose. Key stakeholders have included:

- Natural England
- Historic England
- Environment Agency
- National Health Service
- South West Water
- National Grid
- Western Power (now National Grid Electricity Distribution)
- Network Rail
- National Highways
- Active Travel England
- Devon County Council (as Local Education Authority, Local Transport Authority, and Minerals and Waste Planning Authority)
- Devon Housing Commission
- Heart of South West Local Enterprise Partnership
- Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership (now Blackdown Hills National Landscape)
- East Devon AONB Partnership (now East Devon National Landscape)

- 3.2 Comments have been received from 12 of the key stakeholders consulted. These comments are detailed in **Appendix 2**, together with responses to these and changes made to the Joint Strategy where it has been agreed these are necessary.

- 3.3 The Joint Strategy has not been subject to a public consultation since it is a non-statutory document and it does not introduce new policy or alter the content of existing and emerging Local Plans, which have themselves already been subject to public consultations at key stages in their preparation and also, in some cases, independent examinations.
- 3.4 The Council's Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) has considered the Joint Strategy at its meeting on 20th November 2023 and has endorsed the recommendation in this report.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the approval of the Joint Strategy. The preparation of the Joint Strategy has been funded from the financial contributions previously made from East Devon, Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge District Councils for the purpose of collaborative working on planning documents, technical evidence and studies. The resourcing was approved by the Cabinet on 8th June 2021 (minute 21).

Legal Implications

The need for the Council to work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities on strategic planning matters is enshrined in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, paragraphs 24-27 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 and the Planning Practice Guidance. These set out that local authorities have a legal duty to cooperate with each other and other organisations to seek to address strategic planning matters that are likely to have an impact beyond the immediate district. In particular Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that to maximise effective working on strategic matters throughout the preparation of plans, authorities have a duty to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis. The Joint Strategy helps to demonstrate compliance with this legislation. It should be noted however that the Joint Strategy itself is a non-statutory, informal document. It does not include policies or site allocations and will have no weight in making planning decisions.

The Joint Strategy includes illustrative, schematic diagrams and maps showing the spatial strategy for the area and the locations of major growth. These maps do not show specific allocations. The recommendation to approve the Joint Strategy should not be interpreted to suggest, that the Council supports specific allocations or proposed allocations which may be included in the local plans of neighbouring authorities.

Risk Assessment

The Joint Strategy has been jointly prepared by four authorities, with support from Devon County Council. This means that Committee decisions will be required from the four authorities at similar times to enable the Joint Strategy to be adopted across the Exeter, East Devon Mid Devon and Teignbridge area. There is a risk that one or

more of the authorities does not approve the Joint Strategy. To help avoid this eventuality, officers have been working with their relevant Cabinet Members / Portfolio Holders to discuss the Joint Strategy's content and intended purpose and the decision making pathway for its adoption.

A risk of not adopting the Joint Strategy is that the Council will be without a jointly agreed document with other Councils that will be capable of being used to demonstrate continued collaborative working and shared ambitions across a range of strategic priorities and for the delivery of infrastructure. This may be to detriment of seeking to secure funding for infrastructure projects from Government and other potential sources.

Impact on Climate Change

The Joint Strategy includes shared ambitions to help mitigate the effects of and adapt to climate change and move towards a net zero carbon future.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation should form a key part of joint planning work. By its nature, climate change cannot be addressed by one authority working in isolation. Measures to tackle climate change also need to acknowledge cross-boundary transport movements and other strategic matters. The Joint Strategy supports the Devon Carbon Plan and considers the carbon emissions and climate change impacts of development and transport over a wider area than just Mid Devon. Because of this, the Joint Strategy can be more beneficial to climate change policy compared with seeking to achieve carbon neutrality in just one district.

Equalities Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act (2010) Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

In order to comply with the general duty the Council must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the Council from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community. In making decisions the Council must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

The Joint Strategy reflects the salient policies of the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan, which has been subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment in 2017 and Addendum in 2019 in relation to main modifications made to the Local Plan through its independent examination.

The Joint Strategy has been subject to a screening exercise to determine whether its content is relevant to equalities, and if so, whether a full Equality Impact Assessment should be conducted. The screening exercise has found the Joint Strategy will not likely have any negative equalities impacts on protected characteristics and there will be likely positive equalities impacts in terms of age, disability and race through support for accessible homes and housing to meet special needs, support for special educational needs, and support for new Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. The screening exercise has concluded the Joint Strategy is not recommended for a full Equalities Impact Assessment.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The Joint Strategy provides a coordinated response to the sub-region's strategic economic, climate, housing, environmental and infrastructure issues and help to secure central government investment. The recommended decision to adopt the Joint Strategy will therefore help meet the Corporate Plan priorities: 'Homes', 'Environment', 'Community' and 'Economy'.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 28/11/2023

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 04/12/2023

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 28/11/2023

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 23/11/2023

Cabinet member notified: (yes/no)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Tristan Peat, Forward Planning Team Leader
Email: tpeat@middevon.gov.uk
Telephone: 01884 234344

Background papers:

Council meeting 1st July 2021 (see item. / minute 21)

[Agenda for Council on Thursday, 1st July, 2021, 6.00 pm - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)

Cabinet Report 8th June 2021 (see item / minute 21)

[Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 8th June, 2021, 10.00 am - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)