



Mid Devon Crediton Town Centre Masterplan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report

July 2024

1.0 Crediton Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Purpose, scope and content

- 1.1 The Crediton 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 Crediton 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
Crediton Today:	Sets out the context of the town with a summary of issues and opportunities
Policy Context	Sets out a summary of the existing policy position
Vision & Objectives:	Sets out emerging themes and objectives within a spatial framework
Masterplan:	This part sets out opportunities and proposals under the following headings: Circulation and Movement Strategy Land Use and Development Strategy Green and Blue Strategy Community Infrastructure Strategy Sustainability and Climate Resilience Strategy Improving Wayfinding and Legibility
Delivery Strategy	Provides an overview of the delivery and broad assessment of likely costings

Relationship with the National Planning Policy

- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2023), 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 S12, Crediton of the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. It identifies Crediton as a small and vibrant market town, serving a rural hinterland in the western part of the district. The strategy aims to improve access to housing within the town, expand employment opportunities and improve the quantity and quality of the existing retail provision. Policy S12 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 Crediton Town Centre Masterplan 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 S12, Crediton, will provide the policy baseline for the more detailed guidance included in Crediton Town Centre Masterplan SPD:

Policy S12

Crediton

Crediton will continue to develop in its role as a small and vibrant market town, serving a rural hinterland in the western part of the district. The strategy aims to improve access to housing within the town, expand employment opportunities and improve the quantity and quality of the existing retail provision. Proposals will provide for approximately 786 dwellings, of which 220 will be affordable, and 14,700 gross square metres of commercial floorspace over the plan period.

The following development will be supported over the plan period:

- a) Proposals which support the economic regeneration of the town centre, including the provision of new homes, commercial development, cultural facilities and other key town centre uses which support the town centre's viability and vitality. Particular support will be given for proposals which improve the quantity and quality of existing retail provision within the town centre. All proposals within the town centre will need to play a positive role in sustaining and enhancing the significance of the area's heritage;**
- b) Proposals which respect the setting provided by the open areas of hillside and the adjoining historic parklands of Creedy Park, Shobrooke Park and Downes;**
- c) Continuation of measures to support the implementation of the Crediton Air Quality Action Plan, including enhanced walking and cycling opportunities around the town;**
- d) Enhance the tourism facilities and visitor role of the town and surrounding area; and**
- e) Community and education facilities and other infrastructure to support the development proposed, including green infrastructure.**

- 1.7 During the preparation of the Crediton Town Centre Masterplan the Council has also applied the following policies from the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 in addition to policy S12:

- 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 Crediton Town Centre Masterplan SPD

1.8 The Crediton 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.

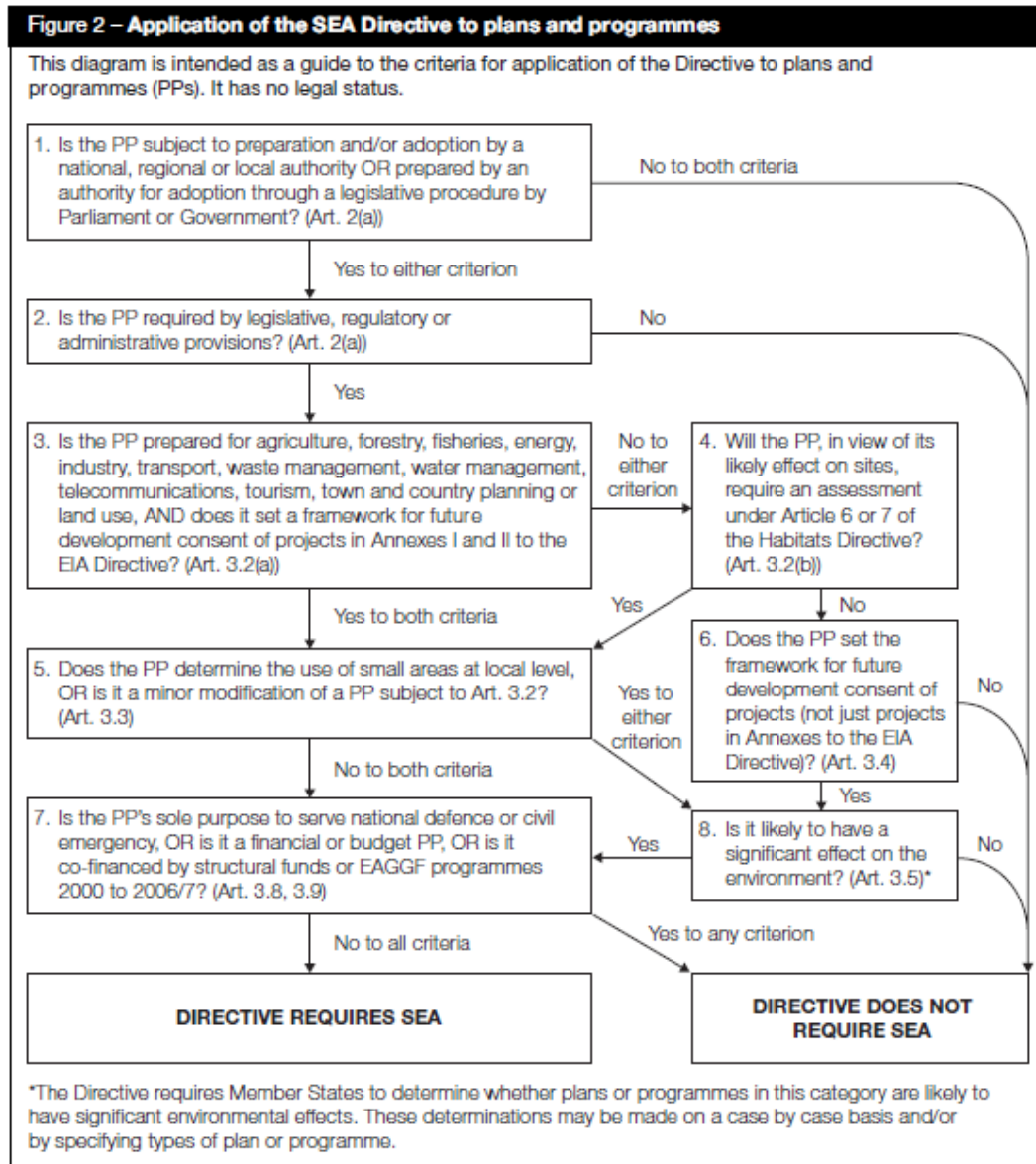


Diagram 1: Application of the SEA Direct to plans and programmes (Figure 2 extracted from ‘A practical guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive’)

- 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 Crediton 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 Crediton Town Centre Masterplan SPD on the environment, in accordance with the screening report process in Table 1.

Table 1: Screening of the Crediton 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 Crediton 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 a 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 Crediton 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 S12 Crediton 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 Newcombes Meadow area, 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 Crediton 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 public realm enhancements, improving pedestrian and cycling safety and delivering air quality measures. 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 Crediton Town Centre with the impacts likely to be felt by those residing in Crediton 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	Crediton 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 Crediton Town Centre Masterplan SPD is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment. This screening opinion has been subject to consultation with the three designated consultation bodies – Historic England, Natural

England, and the Environment Agency, none of whom have identified any significant adverse effect on the environment.

- 3.2 The SEA screening has also found that there is no requirement for the Crediton Town Centre Masterplan SPD to be subject to a full SEA.