

**Report for: Planning, Environment and
Sustainability PDG**

Date of Meeting:	3 rd September 2024
Subject:	Summary report on Planning matters
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Steve Keable, Planning & Economic Regeneration
Responsible Officer:	Richard Marsh, Director of Place and Economy
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All wards
Enclosures:	N/A

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

This report provides a summary of activity undertaken in relation to planning matters and is the first such report since the production of a summary report was agreed at the first meeting of this PDG in July 2024.

Recommendation(s):

1. That members note the contents of the report.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

This report seeks to provide Members with updates across a range of matters relating to Planning and Building Control. The updates are in line with those previously agreed at the June meeting of the PDG. As this report is the first to be produced under these new arrangements, it is the first attempt at producing a useful summary report and so future iterations will be subject to refinement and development. Nonetheless, it is hoped that it will provide the PDG with a useful

summary of matters which have been dealt with/are due to be dealt with by the Planning/Growth teams.

2.0 Updates:

2.1 New National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

2.1.1 As most members will likely be aware; the Government has started a consultation on a revision to the NPPF and housing targets. The changes proposed are significant – not least in terms of proposals around increasing the number of homes required to be delivered in the UK; around changes to how certain planning applications are determined and around Planning application fees (householder applications) which could have a significant bearing upon the finances of the Council.

2.1.2 Perhaps most significantly, the new proposals around ‘a new standard method for assessing housing need’ would, if carried through, lead to a significant uplift in housing delivery targets for this Authority (from 393 homes per annum that is set in the current adopted local plan to 571 per annum under the new standard method.) This will present a significant challenge to the Authority (along with many other Local Planning Authorities) and will create significant amounts of additional work as we develop our new Local Plan. It should also be noted that this is likely to lead to further developer challenge in relation to our 5 year housing land supply which is likely to have a bearing in terms of planning applications and appeals within the district in the near term.

2.1.3 Further updates in relation to the new NPPF are being presented to Members at the PPAG (Planning Policy Advisory Group) on the 29th August and, although delegated Authority is given to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to submit a response to the consultation behalf of the Authority, it is expected that this will also be discussed at Cabinet on the 17th September 2024 ahead of the submission of the response ahead of the formal deadline of 24th September 2024.

2.2 New Local Plan: Plan Mid-Devon

2.2.1 In light of the above and the proposed changes to the NPPF/Standard methodology, the Forward Planning team are currently reflecting upon the proposed changes and the implications for the development of our new Local Plan. Clearly, the uplift in housing numbers will have a bearing in terms of the numbers and locations of new sites which need to be identified and allocation for new housing within the district. This and other matters will be discussed further with PPAG on the 29th August, as above.

2.3 Development Management Policies:

2.3.1 Two policy documents are currently progressing through stages of development. These are:

2.3.2 Willand Neighbourhood Plan: the Examiner's report for the Willand Neighbourhood Plan has now been received and this recommends that the plan progresses to a local referendum subject to modifications being made to it. Officers are currently waiting to receive the referendum version of the neighbourhood plan (including modifications) from Willand Parish Council and, once received, it is expected that a report will be presented to PPAG and then on to Cabinet in order to secure approval for the referendum.

Note that it has been decided that owing to the timing of this matter and how meetings fall, the Neighbourhood Plan will be considered via PPAG rather than this PDG in order to avoid significantly delaying the referendum and any subsequent adoption of the Plan. Members with an interest in this item are therefore asked to note this.

2.3.3 Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan review: Previously discussed at PPAG on the 27th July 2024 and approved for consultation, it is intended that a report will be taken to the October Cabinet to seek approval for a public consultation on the reviewed Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan for 2025 – 2030.

2.4 Development Management:

2.4.1 As due to be reported to Cabinet (27th August) through the Corporate Performance report, performance by Development Management continues to be strong with most key indicators well ahead of target. The only minor discrepancy is with major applications determined within 26 weeks, which is currently tracking at 98% versus a target of 100%. This does not present a risk to the Authority as any applications exceeding their target determination date will always benefit from an Extension of Time (EoT) agreement with the applicant.

2.5 Conservation:

2.5.1 GWC conservation area and management plan consultation – building on the public engagement undertaken in July, an extra consultation event has been scheduled for the late afternoon of the 5th September. This is designed to offer further opportunity for those keen to hear more about the proposed changes to the Conservation Area to speak to officers and support them in submitting their responses to the consultation event, which closes on the 16th September 2024.

2.6 Building Control:

2.6.1 Building Control (a shared function with North Devon Council) continues to perform well – continuing its recovery from a challenging period in the preceding 2 years which saw significant staffing challenges. The partnership is now running solely with employed/permanent staff who have attained the required certifications with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) and the partnership no longer has need for agency staff.

2.6.2 Performance by the partnership continues to be strong with 81% of the market share in Q1, slightly above target and ahead of the same period in 2023/24 where it was measured at 72%. However, income continues to be below target – which is considered to be reflective of the depressed housing and construction markets.

2.7 Planning Enforcement

2.7.1 Efforts have continued to recruit to the permanent senior planning enforcement officer role but unfortunately no suitable applicants have been identified for the role. As such, the services continues to utilise the services of a skilled agency worker, alongside the recently recruited enforcement officer. Efforts will continue to recruit permanent staff with further thought being given to ways to attract new applicants to the role.

2.7.2 Cases continue to be high, with 375 cases. Officers are continuing to address highest priority cases first but the complex nature of several of these does mean that wait times for less serious matters continued to be significant.

2.8 Urban and rural regeneration:

2.8.1 The Crediton Masterplan was approved by Cabinet at a meeting in Crediton on the 30th July 2024 and will go before Full Council on the 4th September 2024 for approval and adoption.

Financial Implications

Financial implications associated with this report are limited – but members are asked to note points relating to financial performance and other implications of matters.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from this information report.

Risk Assessment

There are no major risks associated with this report.

Impact on Climate Change

The scope of this PDG means it has a significant opportunity to progress positive work around climate, biodiversity and other environmental/sustainability matters. Officers will work to seek to support the PDG in maximising these opportunities.

Equalities Impact Assessment

No negative equalities impacts are expected.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The work of this PDG will supports a wide range of corporate objectives and the corporate plan as a whole.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 20th August 2024

Statutory Officer: Maria DeLeiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 20th August 2024

Chief Officer: Richard Marsh

Agreed by Corporate Director

Date: 20th August 2024

Performance and risk: Stephen Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 22 August 2024

Cabinet member notified: yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Richard Marsh, Director of Place and Economy

Email: rmarsh@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone:

Background papers: