

2.0 Updates:

2.1 New National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.1.1 Significant change is underway in relation to National Planning policy and members have received several briefings in relation to these – including via the Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG). The most significant matters continue to be around revised housing delivery targets, mechanisms and processes for planning application decision-making and the changes to Local Plan-making processes and timetables.

2.1.2 The Government recently sought views on the National Scheme of Delegation from Local Authorities and a response has been issued to the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This response was informed by discussions at a recent PPAG meeting. A key point stressed throughout this response was that removal of local decision making weakens local democracy and that the proposed approach around the national scheme of delegation is therefore not one which is currently supported by the LPA.

2.2 New Local Plan: Plan Mid-Devon

2.2.1 Work on Plan Mid Devon continues but, as updated at the last PDG meeting, it has become necessary to revise the timetable for the production of the new Local Plan to reflect the changing landscape of plan making policy and legislation. To this end, a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) is to have been presented to Cabinet on the 4th March. This report is seeking approval for a revised timetable for production of this plan and to progress plan making under the new plan-making regime. If approved by Cabinet, this would see submission of the new Local Plan to the Secretary of State in late 2027 with adoption forecast for June 2028.

2.2.2 It should be noted that achieving this timetable is reliant upon the Forward Planning team having adequate resources (staff) in place and work is therefore underway to consider how additional resources might be secured to augment the team and support in achieving the revised LDS timetable.

2.2.3 A new call for sites has also been issued which will run until 14 March 2025. This provides individuals and organisations with the opportunity to suggest sites that they think have the potential to be developed for housing, economic or other uses which can then be considered as part of the development of the new Local Plan.

2.3 Development Management Policies

2.3.1 Since the last update report, the Willand Neighbourhood plan has now progressed to the local referendum and the majority of eligible voters voted in

favour of the plan. A separate report is on this meeting's agenda and so this report does not go in to further detail to avoid duplication.

2.3.2 The Blackdown Hills National Landscape Management Plan consultation is now live (since 21st January) and will remain open for comments until 4th March 2025. The plan can be accessed [Here](#) and consultation responses can also be provided via this web page.

2.4 Development Management

2.4.1 Performance within Development Management remains strong with 99% of householder applications determined within 8 weeks and 0.3% of minor applications overturned at appeal (Q3 data).

2.4.2 However, Q3 income remained depressed meaning that the service is £122k (15.9%) down against budget. This continues to be reflective of the depressed and sluggish housing market. It is possible that Q4 income will see a 'bump' with increased applications and income as applicants seek to beat the new, higher fees which will become chargeable from 1st April 2025.

2.4.3 In addition, officers are continuing to identify opportunities to enter in to Pre-application discussions and Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) with developers and land promoters in order to generate additional incomes. This allows the Authority the opportunity to support the assessment of more complex cases earlier within the planning process and is intended to deliver better outcomes for all involved without any prejudice to the planning application/ determination process.

2.4.4 Members will be aware that the Planning Inspectorate have issued their decision on the Hartnoll Farm planning appeal and refused the appeal. This is the second time that this Council and its officers have successfully defended against this appeal. The cost to the Council of hosting and participating in the Inquiry was ~£65k.

2.4.5 Members will however also be aware that another planning appeal has been lodged in relation to the Tidcombe Hall site – again seeking to appeal against the Council's refusal for planning permission. The Inquiry will open on the 20th May 2025 and will be hosted within Phoenix House. Significant cost will again accrue to the Council in hosting and participating in the Inquiry with costs likely to be slightly higher than Hartnoll Farm.

2.5 S106

2.5.1 The 2023/2024 Infrastructure Funding Statement was published before the 31st December 2024 deadline and can be found in [here](#)

2.6 Conservation

- 2.6.1 A 'forward plan' of conservation areas to be reviewed has been requested by Members and whilst this continues to be developed and considered, it can be confirmed that officers expect that the next Conservation Area to be reviewed would be Bow.
- 2.6.2 Exact details and timings of these reviews have yet to be confirmed and this work will need to be balanced alongside other priorities – such as planning appeals and other Local Plan work. Members will be kept informed regarding timescales and workplans as they are developed.

2.7 Building Control

- 2.7.1 Building Control (a shared function with North Devon Council) continues to perform well, albeit with continuing resourcing challenges and pressures accruing through changes introduced through the Building Safety Act (2024).
- 2.7.2 The service re-secured its ISO 9000 certificate in February 2025. This is a significant achievement and it reflects the service's dedication to maintaining the highest levels of professionalism, efficiency, and compliance in supporting developers, homeowners, and businesses with their building projects.
- 2.7.3 Q3 data showed 100% approval of full applications within 2 months (versus 95% target and 100% achieved in Q2) and continuity of a strong market share (81% versus 75% target.) Market share of new housing completions has increased versus Q2 data (29% vs. 12%) but remains below target (40%).
- 2.7.4 Applications numbers, and therefore income, remain low/below target. Again – akin to Development Management - this is reflective of a depressed housing market and low confidence within the construction/development sector as a whole.

2.8 Planning Enforcement

- 2.8.1 The updated Enforcement Policy was approved and adopted by Cabinet in December 2024 following discussions via both PPAG and Scrutiny.
- 2.8.2 The Enforcement services continues with a high/active case load albeit there is churn/change in the live cases as new cases are presented as the officers close older cases.
- 2.8.3 The service continues to operate with two officers (a contractor and an assistant enforcement officer.) Multiple attempts have been made to recruit a senior enforcement officer, but few candidates have come forwards and it has not been possible to appoint in to the role. Approval was recently secured to

advertise the role again and an advert will be live imminently and will run in national trade-press. In addition to this, additional budget allowances (£72k) have also been made to continue to support enforcement resourcing including the continued use of agency staff, if required.

2.8.4 In addition to this, planning officers continue to support with the resolution of older live cases in order to seek to manage and reduce the case-load.

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 Officer
Date: 3 March 2025

Statutory Officer: Maria DeLeiburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 3 March 2025

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford
Agreed by Chief Executive
Date: 3 March 2025

Performance and risk: Stephen Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 03 March 2025

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: