

**CABINET  
28 JANUARY 2016**

**LANDSCAPE IMPLICATIONS OF SOLAR ENERGY PROPOSALS, DRAFT  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

**Cabinet Member** Cllr Richard Chesterton  
**Responsible Officer** Head of Planning and Regeneration

**Reason for Report:** To seek approval to publish the draft Landscape Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for public consultation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. That Cabinet submits the draft Landscape Implications of Solar Energy Proposals Supplementary Planning Document for public consultation.**
- 2. That delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to finalise consultation material.**

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** Adoption of the Landscape SPD will contribute to the key objective of protecting the environment.

**Financial Implications:** This consultation can be carried out at minimal cost to the authority.

**Legal Implications:** The consultation will comply with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. Adoption of the Landscape SPD will provide a sound basis to inform decision making.

**Risk Assessment:** Adoption of the Landscape SPD will reduce the risk of costs being awarded against the Council. However the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) which provides the baseline for the Landscape SPD in its current state can still be a material consideration in planning decisions.

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The Landscape Implications of Solar Energy Proposals SPD provides guidance on key landscape issues associated with solar photovoltaic (PV) developments. It gives guidance on the relative landscape sensitivities of different areas within Mid Devon to solar developments and provides advice with regard to the good siting and design of solar PV schemes including guidance on how potential impacts could be minimised.

1.2 This latest public consultation version of the draft SPD document follows on from previous extensive work undertaken with respect to landscape sensitivity. A Landscape Sensitivity Assessment was initially commissioned in response to a concern by members regarding the lack of consistent landscape related advice currently available to inform planning decisions. Previously consultants had been commissioned on a case-by-case basis to

advise on landscape sensitivity in a particular location. Land Use Consulting(LUC) was commissioned to prepare districtwide evidence to be based on Mid Devon’s own published Landscape Character Assessment. The methodology used by LUC drew on its extensive experience of preparing such studies, including one for Torridge District Council, and the study builds on the Devon Landscape Policy Group’s Advice Note 2 on accommodating solar PV developments in Devon’s landscape.

## 2.0 Consultation

- 2.1 A scoping consultation was undertaken in July 2014. The results of this consultation have informed the latest draft SPD. A total of 13 valid representations were received and have been considered when producing the draft landscape SPD. A summary of the main issues raised during the SPD Scoping Consultation and how they have been addressed is provided in Appendix 1 of the draft Landscape SPD.
- 2.2 In accordance with Policy SCI/14 of the Statement of Community Involvement, a second phase of consultation is now proposed to be undertaken. There has been a significant delay in reaching this stage in the process owing largely to changes in national planning policy which has resulted in this latest version of the SPD relating solely to solar energy rather than including other sources of renewable energy.

## 3.0 Planning Policy Advisory Group

- 3.1 The Planning Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) has considered the draft SPD at its meeting of 18 January 2016. The group recommended that Cabinet approve it for public consultation. The group also agreed to recommend to Cabinet that delegated authority be given to the Head of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration to finalise consultation material.

<b>Contact for any more information</b>	Forward Planning Team Leader Mr Adrian Welsh 01884 234 344 <a href="mailto:awelsh@middevon.gov.uk">awelsh@middevon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Background Papers</b>	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
<b>Circulation of the Report</b>	Cabinet Members Chair of Planning Committee