

CHAPTER 3

The Plan Strategy

INTRODUCTION

3.1 The strategy of the Plan has been developed in the context of the vision, aims and objectives set out in the previous Chapter.

THE STRUCTURE PLAN STRATEGY

Main Strategic Areas

3.2 North Devon has been split into three main strategic areas, on which the Plan strategy is based. These three strategic areas are :-

1. The **Area of Economic Activity (AEA)** which focuses around Barnstaple and extends towards Bideford;
2. The **Priority Area for Rural Regeneration (PARR)** which covers an extensive inland area in the more southerly half of the District; and
3. The **Area of Strategic Landscape and Development Constraint (ASLDC)** which is based around the North Devon Coast and the fringes of the Exmoor National Park.

The three main strategic areas as they relate to North Devon are illustrated in Diagram 1.

Settlement Hierarchy

3.3 In addition to the broad strategic areas, the Plan also establishes a hierarchy of settlements based on their scale and function.

Sub Regional Centre

3.4 Barnstaple is defined as a Sub Regional Centre to reflect its role as the main commercial, service and economic centre for the northern part of Devon. To reflect its Sub Regional status and its location within an area of economic activity as recognised in the Structure Plan and the Regional Planning Guidance, most new development for North Devon during the Plan period will be located in Barnstaple. The detailed strategy for the town is set out in the Barnstaple Action Plan (see Chapter 12).

POLICY STY1 (SUB REGIONAL CENTRE)

BARNSTAPLE IS DEFINED AS A SUB REGIONAL CENTRE. IT WILL BE THE MAIN LOCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN NORTH DEVON FOR THE PLAN PERIOD AND INCLUDE PROVISION FOR ABOUT 1375 NEW DWELLINGS AND ABOUT 25 HECTARES OF NEW EMPLOYMENT LAND

Area Centres

3.5 Area Centres are defined as the next level in the settlement hierarchy. These provide a range of services, local employment opportunities and act as a focal point for the rural areas. Braunton, Ilfracombe and South Molton meet the definition of an Area Centre as contained in the Devon Structure Plan. To reflect its position within the ASLDC and its relatively small catchment area, the strategy for Braunton as contained in its Action Plan (see Chapter 26), is to confine development within its existing urban fabric with an emphasis on meeting the economic and social needs of the local community. In contrast, the strategies of growth for both South Molton and Ilfracombe (see Chapters 16 and 25 respectively), are in recognition of the wider catchment areas of these Area Centres and in response to their priorities for regeneration.

POLICY STY2 (AREA CENTRES)

BRAUNTON, ILFRACOMBE AND SOUTH MOLTON ARE DEFINED AS AREA CENTRES. EACH AREA CENTRE SHOULD MEET THE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS FOR THE SETTLEMENT AND SURROUNDING AREA FOR THE PLAN PERIOD AND SPECIFICALLY INCLUDE:-

- ♦ **IN BRAUNTON PROVISION FOR ABOUT 185 NEW DWELLINGS AND 5 HECTARES OF NEW EMPLOYMENT LAND;**
- ♦ **IN ILFRACOMBE PROVISION FOR ABOUT 420 NEW DWELLINGS AND 10 HECTARES OF NEW EMPLOYMENT LAND;**
- ♦ **IN SOUTH MOLTON PROVISION FOR ABOUT 540 NEW DWELLINGS AND 25 HECTARES OF NEW EMPLOYMENT LAND.**

Local Centres

3.6 Local Centres are defined by the Devon Structure Plan as those smaller towns and larger villages which are well placed to provide more localised services and facilities and to act as a focal point for the rural communities. Chulmleigh, Combe Martin, Fremington, Witheridge and Woolacombe are considered to function at this level of the settlement hierarchy. The strategies for each of these local centres has been influenced by their situation within the main strategic areas. Chulmleigh and Witheridge (see Chapters 17 and 18 respectively) are the focus for most of the new development in the local centres to reflect their location within the PARR. As Combe Martin and Woolacombe (see Chapters 27 and 28 respectively) lie within the ASLDC, a restrictive approach to new development is generally applied to these villages with the emphasis on meeting the needs of the local community and improving their self sufficiency. Although Fremington is within the AEA, the strategy for the village is restrictive with the aim of meeting the social and economic needs of the local community as opportunities for growth are constrained by a range of environmental factors.

POLICY STY3 (LOCAL CENTRES)

CHULMLEIGH, COMBE MARTIN, FREMINGTON, WITHERIDGE AND WOOLACOMBE ARE DEFINED AS LOCAL CENTRES WHERE NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD SUPPORT OR IMPROVE THEIR ROLE AS A FOCUS FOR LOCAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

Development In The Countryside

3.7 In accordance with Policies contained in the Devon Structure Plan, the Local Plan aims to minimise the loss of greenfield sites and retain strict control over development within the open countryside. In carrying forward this approach, regard has been given to the realism of utilising land within existing built up areas taking into account the development needs of North Devon's communities and the objective of diversifying the rural economy.

Settlement Self Sufficiency And Infrastructure

3.8 In accordance with the Devon Structure Plan, the Local Plan seeks to maintain and enhance the range of local services and facilities within settlements to promote their self-sufficiency and ensure that new development provides adequate infrastructure.

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY

3.9 In applying the principles established in the Devon Structure Plan to local objectives and circumstances, the strategy of this Local Plan is based on two main elements:-

1. **The distribution of development** that establishes the broad growth and spatial strategies for the District. This distribution is based on the main strategic areas and settlement hierarchy contained in the Devon Structure Plan and which is illustrated in Diagram 1.
2. **The guiding principles of development** which are based on the Devon Structure Plan objectives of promoting settlement self sufficiency, reducing the loss of greenfield sites, strengthening local centres, reducing the need for travel and maintaining and enhancing the range of local services and facilities.

1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The Spatial Strategy

3.10 The overall spatial strategy for the distribution of development is summarised as follows:-

- ◆ *Concentrating new growth in the Barnstaple area in accordance with Policy STY1 to take account of the town's sub regional status, its location within the Area of Economic Activity and the range of community services that are either existing or can be realistically made available to support new development. The Western Bypass is a key element in the implementation of the growth strategy for the Barnstaple area and has been a major factor in guiding the location of new development;*
- ◆ *Supporting the development and regeneration of the Area Centres of Ilfracombe and South Molton in order to meet the principles of settlement self sufficiency and to promote the economic and social wellbeing of North Devon's coastal and rural communities;*
- ◆ *Directing a modest scale of development to the larger villages within the Rural Area Requiring Economic Diversification with a particular focus on the Local Centres to consolidate their service and employment roles;*
- ◆ *Restricting development opportunities in the Area of Strategic Landscape and Development Constraint including the Area Centre of Braunton and the Local Centres of Combe Martin, Fremington and Woolacombe with the emphasis on encouraging affordable homes for local people; and*
- ◆ *Providing limited development opportunities in smaller villages and rural settlements, particularly within the Priority Area for Rural Regeneration, with the aim of meeting the needs of the local community and helping to retain and enhance key services and facilities.*

3.11 The principles of distributing growth are based on a combination of the settlement hierarchy and development strategy contained in the Devon Structure Plan and more localised factors including the following:-

- ◆ *The size and physical form of the settlement including the availability of previously developed sites for redevelopment and buildings suitable for conversion;*
- ◆ *The degree to which a community is self sufficient or has the ability to become more self contained in terms of its employment opportunities and the capacity of existing and potential physical and social infrastructure (such as schools, shops and healthcare facilities) to support additional growth;*
- ◆ *Any environmental or physical constraints including the risk of flooding;*
- ◆ *The availability, accessibility and frequency of public transport and the potential for improving such provision;*
- ◆ *The role of the settlement in relation to the surrounding area; and*
- ◆ *The amount of growth in recent years and the ability of a settlement to assimilate more development.*

3.12 The key characteristics for each of the main rural settlements identified in the Plan is set out in Table 2, pages 22 and 23, and has guided the distribution of development across the District.

The Main Strategic Areas

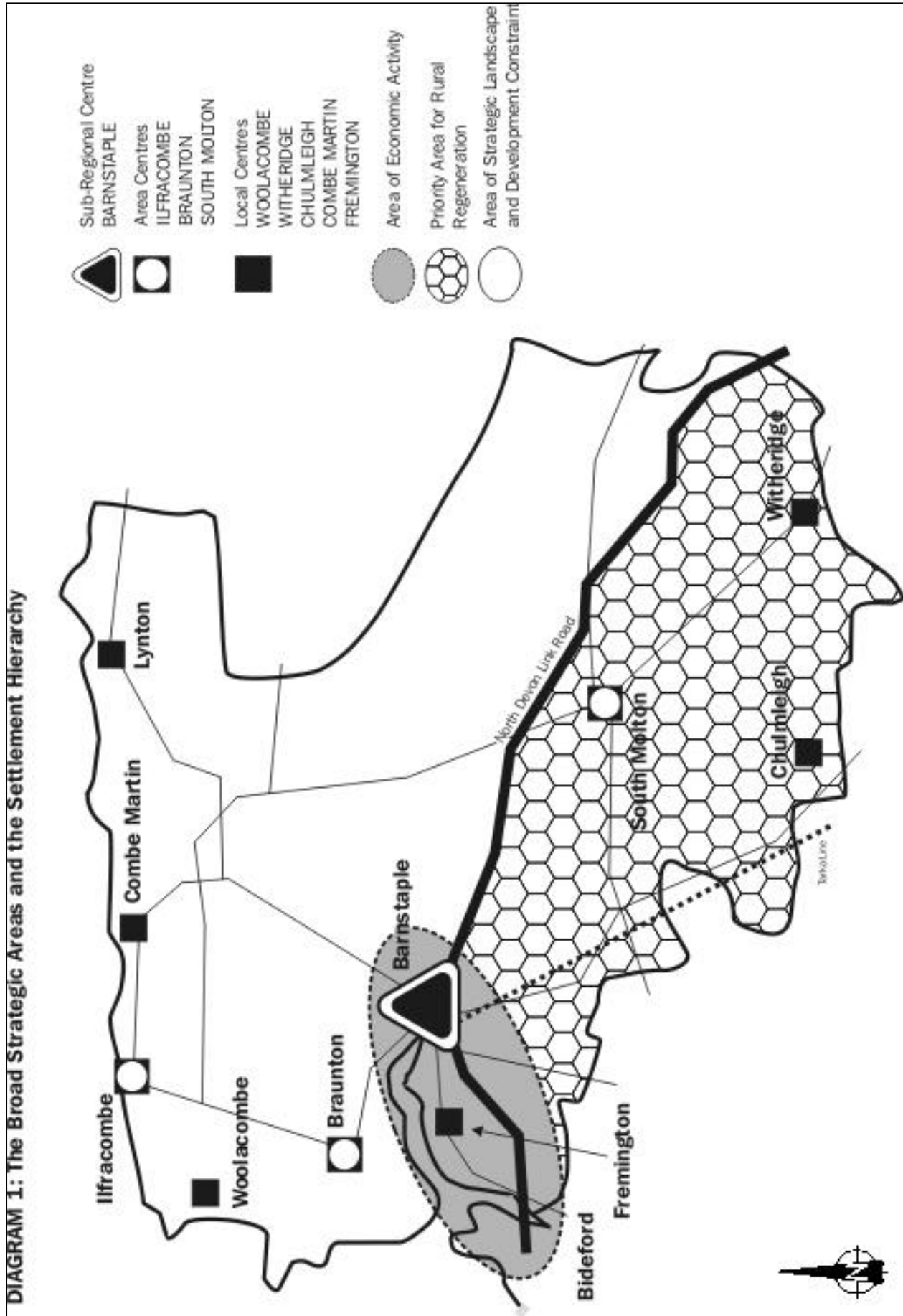
3.13 This sub section outlines the broad growth strategy for each of the three main strategic areas outlined in the Plan plus a general guideline for development in the countryside.

AREA OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Barnstaple

3.14 In preparing this Local Plan, growth options were tested in Barnstaple and westward toward Fremington having regard to the strategic requirement to concentrate growth in the Sub Regional Centre and Area of Economic Activity.

3.15 A detailed evaluation of previously developed land has been carried out in order to maximise development in the existing built up area of Barnstaple. Due to the amount and range of development and uses required in the area, it has not been possible to accommodate all development within the existing urban framework of the town. Inevitably, some greenfield land has been identified for development particularly to meet the employment requirements of the town and Northern Devon in general.



Fremington and Yelland

3.16 The villages of Fremington and Yelland are within the Area of Economic Activity and are reasonably self sufficient. Together they function as a Local Centre with access to a wide range of employment opportunities and facilities in view of their location west of Barnstaple. Despite these strengths, the growth opportunities are constrained by the visual quality and wildlife value of the Taw Estuary, localised flooding from the Fremington Stream and the need to retain their character and local distinctiveness. For these reasons, further development will be generally restricted and aimed at meeting the social or economic needs of the local community.

PRIORITY AREA FOR RURAL REGENERATION

3.17 Much of central and northern Devon is rural in character but is not subject to any significant landscape designations. These areas are generally subject to less development pressures, particularly in the remoter parts of North Devon, and have greater scope for economic diversification without harming the landscape.

South Molton

3.18 South Molton is an Area Centre situated in the Priority Area for Rural Regeneration (PARR). It contains a range of services and acts as a focal point for a wide rural area. In order to develop and support its role as an Area Centre and to take advantage of its economic prospects resulting from its proximity to the North Devon Link Road, the majority of growth outside Barnstaple is directed to South Molton in accordance with Policy STY2.

Large Villages

3.19 In addition to the Local Centres of **Chulmleigh** and **Witheridge**, for the purposes of this Plan the 'large villages' within the PARR are identified as follows:-

Bishops Tawton, Bishops Nympton, Burrington, Landkey and Swimbridge

3.20 The above large villages are reasonably self sufficient and are all situated outside any nationally designated landscape area. The emphasis on these large villages is to maintain rates of development in order to help sustain the viability of these communities and promote greater self sufficiency. Any development should be appropriate to the needs of the community and the character of the settlement and surrounding area.

3.21 A moderate level of growth in these settlements may prevent local services such as schools and shops from becoming unviable and help create more mixed and balanced communities. Particular support will be given to proposals in the form of a development package to facilitate the provision of a facility required for the local community and to improve the self sufficiency of the settlement. All these large villages are subject to a development boundary in order to control and regulate their growth. Particular policies applying to these villages include Housing Policy HSG2, Economic Policy ECN3 and Policy COM4 which deals with community facilities.

Small Villages

3.22 The PARR contains a number of smaller villages that have a geographic location, historic significance and a basic level of services and facilities that make them a recognised focus for the immediate and surrounding community. For the purposes of this Plan, 'small villages' within the PARR are identified as follows:-

Atherington, Chittlehampton*, George Nympton, Goodleigh*, Kings Nympton and Rackenford

* It is recognised that Chittlehampton is of a size and contains a range of facilities that make it a 'large village'. However, given its development constraints, including topography, the growth strategy applying to 'small villages' is considered more appropriate for Chittlehampton.

* Goodleigh is situated outside the PARR. However, the strategy applying to small villages in the PARR is considered appropriate as only the northern part of Goodleigh is situated within an AGLV and to reflect its size and the availability of services.

3.23 The 'small villages' identified above cannot support or justify significant levels of new development due to their size and, in most cases, limited range of facilities, employment opportunities and transport options. However, allowing a limited amount of new growth in the small villages will help sustain and support rural community life and in particular maintain or enhance the level of existing services and facilities. The scale of new development should be compatible with the size, character and function of the settlement and surrounding area. Specific policies applying to these villages include Housing Policy HSG3, Economic Policy ECN3 and Policy COM4 which deals with community facilities.

AREA OF STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE AND DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINT

3.24 Much of North Devon is characterised by a landscape that is both special and vulnerable. The Area of Strategic Landscape and Development Constraint (ASLDC) includes the coastal area and the fringes of Exmoor National Park. In some of these areas, notably along the coastline, there are strong pressures for development which threaten to diminish their character and quality. Generally, there is a need to reduce rates of development in these areas compared to past experience.

Ilfracombe

3.25 The only town within the ASLDC in North Devon is Ilfracombe, which functions as an important Area Centre and serves those communities along the coast. To develop its role as an Area Centre and regenerate both its economy and the environmental quality of its urban fabric, largely in response to the challenges facing this tourist resort, most new growth in the area will be focused on Ilfracombe. Indeed, after Barnstaple and South Molton, most of the development in the District is concentrated in Ilfracombe in accordance with Policy STY2.

Braunton

3.26 Braunton is also situated within the ASLDC and functions as an Area Centre, albeit on a smaller scale than Ilfracombe. In view of its surrounding environmental quality and the need to retain its character and local distinctiveness, the emphasis in Braunton is to confine development within the existing urban fabric. The emphasis will be on meeting the economic and social needs of the local community in accordance with Policy STY2.

Villages

3.27 In addition to the Local Centres of **Combe Martin** and **Woolacombe**, for the purpose of this Plan the 'villages' within the ASLDC are identified as follows:-

Berrynarbor, Bratton Fleming, Croyde, Georgeham, Instow*, Knowle, Morteohoe, North Molton and West Down.

**Instow is within the Area of Economic Activity. However, as the village is within the Coastal Preservation Area a restrictive approach to new development will be applied in accordance with the strategy for the ASLDC.*

3.28 The strategy contained in the Plan establishes a restrictive approach to new development in the ASLDC. However, this restrictive approach should be balanced against the development needs of the local community, including the objective of improving the self sufficiency of individual settlements. In order to achieve this balance, some growth will be directed to the Local Centres of Combe Martin and Woolacombe, in accordance with Policy STY3, and the village of North Molton. Within the remaining villages, development will be generally limited to meeting the social and economic needs of the local community. With the exception of Bratton Fleming all villages within the ASLDC are subject to a development boundary in order to control and regulate their growth. The Action Plan for Bratton Fleming sets out a specific policy to guide new development in the village (see Policy BRF1A). Particular policies applying to all these villages include Housing Policy HSG2, Economic Policy ECN3 and Policy COM4 which deals with community facilities.

THE RURAL SETTLEMENTS

3.29 In addition to the larger settlements identified above, North Devon contains a considerable number of smaller settlements, some of which act as a focal point, albeit for a more immediate local community. Some of these settlements function collectively as a network by sharing their community facilities. Providing limited growth in selected rural settlements will help support services that are vulnerable to closure and meet the needs of the local population ensuring their communities remain vibrant and healthy. For the purposes of this Plan, the *'rural settlements'* are identified as follows:-

Alswear, Brayford, Chittlehamholt, East Anstey, East Worlington, Filleigh, Kentisbury Ford, Knowstone, Lower Lovacott, Meshaw, Molland, Muddiford/Milltown, Newton Tracey, Shirwell, Stoke Rivers, Tawstock, Umberleigh, West Buckland and Westleigh.

3.30 The identification of the above rural settlements have been selected on the following basis :-

- *They contain or are accessible to a basic level of services and facilities including a school and shop either individually or collectively as a network of settlements; and*
- *They are all located outside a nationally designated landscape area with many situated in the less constrained PARR. Particular policies applying to the rural settlements include Housing Policy HSG4, Economic Policy ECN3 and Policy COM4 which deals with community facilities.*

OTHER SETTLEMENTS

3.31 North Devon contains numerous other rural settlements that have not been specifically identified in this Chapter. These *'unidentified'* settlements do not generally have the services, scope or need to develop further. However, limited new development may be acceptable in these unidentified rural settlements, provided it meets a justified economic or social need. The occupancy of any dwellings will be restricted to meeting the needs of the local community in accordance with the occupancy restrictions set out in paragraph 7.23 of the Plan. These settlements will be treated as falling within the countryside where, for example, Policies ENV1, HSG9, HSG9A, ECN4 and ECN5 apply.

The Countryside

3.32 For the purposes of this Plan, countryside is defined as all areas outside the main built up parts of those settlements specifically identified in this Chapter. New development in the countryside will generally be discouraged. However, new development may be acceptable in the countryside where it is required to meet the economic and social needs of the area subject to environmental considerations. Such development might be in connection with agricultural, forestry, horticulture, tourism, recreation or to improve the infrastructure of North Devon. Specific policies relating to development in the countryside include Policies ENV1, HSG9, ECN4 and ECN5.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT

3.33 The Guiding Principles for Development set out the general planning guidelines that will be used to control all forms of development in North Devon.

Development Boundaries

3.34 Development boundaries have been defined around the Sub Regional Centre of Barnstaple, the Area Centres, the large villages in the PARR and all the villages, with the exception of Bratton Fleming, in the ASLDC. The purpose of a development boundary is to control and regulate the growth of a settlement. Within such a boundary, development is generally acceptable providing it complies with the range of policies and proposals contained in the Plan.

3.35 Development boundaries are based on a careful assessment of the character, setting and capacity of each town and village. Their definition is influenced by a variety of factors, including the self sufficiency of a settlement and any environmental or infrastructural constraints. They encompass the main built up areas together with any peripheral sites that are either proposed or committed for new development. Generally, development boundaries have been applied more restrictively to those villages in the ASLDC to reflect their location within high quality landscapes.

3.36 Both Bratton Fleming, the smaller villages in the PARR RARED and the rural settlements are not subject to development boundaries. Applying the criteria contained in specific policies relating to these settlements including BAR1, BRF1A, HSG3 and HSG4, together with those contained in the Development Standards and Environment Chapters for example, can adequately control development in an acceptable manner. This approach also means that the development needs of these rural communities can be met in a more flexible and opportunistic manner to help sustain their viability.

Reusing Previously Developed Land And Buildings

3.37 The Plan aims to maximise the reuse of previously developed sites and the existing building stock in order to promote urban regeneration and minimise the loss of countryside. Generally, all forms of development will be encouraged to make use of previously developed land and buildings where appropriate and practical to their circumstances in preference to using greenfield sites. Although the amount of greenfield land identified for development has been minimised, the Plan has made proper and adequate provision for all land uses including those with large space requirements which cannot be accommodated within urban areas. Inevitably, therefore, some greenfield land has been allocated to meet the specific development needs of the District.

3.38 Where greenfield sites have been identified, their selection is based on their accessibility to a range of travel modes, physical and environmental constraints and the capacity of existing and potential infrastructure. All the greenfield sites that have been specifically selected extend the urban form of a settlement in a logical manner.

3.39 New housing on greenfield sites, particularly in Barnstaple, Ilfracombe and South Molton, will be phased. Phasing will ensure a balanced approach between the release of previously developed sites and buildings and greenfield land. These issues are expanded upon in the Housing Chapter with specific advice contained in paragraphs 7.10 to 7.12.

Strengthening the Vitality and Viability of Town and Village Centres

3.40 A sequential approach will be applied to retail, commercial, food and drink and leisure proposals in order to focus development within town, village and neighbourhood centres. This approach will help strengthen the vitality and viability of existing centres. It will also ensure that such uses are directed to those locations which are accessible to a range of transport modes to reduce reliance on the motor car. This issue is expanded upon in Chapters 9 and 10 of the Plan.

Making the Best use of Land and Buildings

3.41 Land and buildings should be used efficiently in order to minimise the loss of countryside and achieve more sustainable patterns of development. To make the best use of land and buildings, planning guidelines, including the Policies on design (DVS1), parking (TRA7 and TRA8) and density (HSG5) have been formulated so that they can be applied flexibly to reflect the type of development and the location and characteristics of the site and surrounding area. Particular emphasis is given to encouraging:-

- *The increase of both the density and scale of development appropriate to the location and characteristics of the site and surrounding area. For example, net residential densities should be no lower than 30 dwellings to the hectare with plot ratios increased in the case of commercial developments;*
- *The reduction of on site car parking having regard to the type of development, its potential users and its location in terms of accessibility to a range of travel modes and the availability of alternative parking arrangements;*
- *Designs and layouts which use a site or building effectively and prioritise the needs of pedestrians rather than the movement and parking of vehicles.*

Mixed Use Developments

3.42 Promoting a mix of uses either on land or within buildings, enables homes and places of work and play to be located in closer proximity, ensuring more journeys can be undertaken on foot. Mixed use developments can also increase new life in town centres outside normal commercial hours which improves vitality, viability and security.

3.43 The Plan identifies proposals for mixed use development particularly in Barnstaple, South Molton and Ilfracombe. Most of these proposals incorporate an element of housing which will help make them more economically viable. In order to ensure that the less profitable elements of the development such as community facilities or employment uses are secured, the Council make seek to phase the provision of the various components. This requirement could also apply to any 'windfall' developments where a mix of uses is being promoted.

Reducing The Need To Travel

3.44 Promoting a phased and sequential approach to the selection of sites and encouraging a greater mix of uses in development will facilitate a greater integration between housing, jobs and local services. This integration will help to reduce the need to travel by car and enable more journeys by foot, bike or public transport.

3.45 Development that is likely to generate a significant amount of travel should be located where it is, or has the potential to become, easily accessible to a range of transport modes. Where footpaths, cycleways or improvements to a public transport service are required for a development to proceed, this will be secured through the use of conditions or a planning obligation. These issues are expanded upon in the Travel, Transport and Communications Chapter.

The Provision Of Social and Physical Infrastructure

3.46 Development should only proceed where there will be an appropriate level of physical and social infrastructure capable of supporting its use. Such infrastructure may include water supply, drainage, sewage and other utilities, education, sport and recreation, public transport, community and healthcare facilities. Key service providers have responsibility to ensure that there is an appropriate level of social and physical infrastructure to support the needs of the District. In meeting this responsibility, it is reasonable to expect developers to provide or contribute to any social or physical infrastructure where it is necessary to support and facilitate the development and is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposal. Indeed, an objective of the Plan is to secure the provision of such infrastructure in association with new development to help promote settlement self sufficiency and reduce social exclusion. Any direct benefits to the local community arising from a scheme such as, for example, affordable housing, may influence the level of provision for other social and physical infrastructure expected from a development.

3.47 The need for developers to provide or contribute towards the provision of infrastructure is recognised in the Devon Structure Plan. To complement the Structure Plan, the Plan contains a range of policies that deal with specific infrastructural items including travel and transport, affordable housing, public open space and nature conservation. These general policies will apply to both '*allocated*' and '*windfall*' developments that justify either on site provision or contributions towards new social and physical infrastructure. Where appropriate, key items of infrastructure which developers will need to either provide or contribute towards are also set out in the site specific proposals.

3.48 In order to provide greater certainty and consistency in the infrastructure and service requirements likely to be required as part of a development proposal, a series of '*Codes of Practice*' are being produced. Each '*Code of Practice*' will cover a range of physical and social infrastructure and services including affordable housing, education, public open space and sport and recreation. These Codes will provide the necessary guidance on what items of social and physical infrastructure will be assessed and sought. Each Code of Practice will be adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

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