

CHAPTER 1

Purpose and Context

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is the Adopted Version of the North Devon Local Plan. It sets out the policies and proposals to guide development and the use of land within North Devon District for the period up to the year 2011. This Plan was formally adopted on July 20th 2006 and replaces the current North Devon Local Plan which was adopted in December 2000.

1.2 The North Devon Local Plan covers the whole of the district outside the Exmoor National Park boundary. The National Park has its own planning powers and a park-wide Plan similar in scope to this document. The extent of the area covered by the North Devon Local Plan is shown on the Proposals Map. Where the term '*North Devon*' is mentioned, it refers to the District covered by this Local Plan unless otherwise stated.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF NORTH DEVON

1.3 Much of the District is protected for the quality of its natural landscape, wildlife and historic environment. Landscape designations include Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Coastal Preservation Areas, Heritage Coast and Areas of Great Landscape Value. Wildlife designations include Sites of Special Scientific Interest, including one of international importance at Braunton Burrows, and County Wildlife sites. The historic assets of North Devon include 39 Conservation Areas, 77 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and over 3,000 listed buildings.

1.4 The resident population of North Devon is approximately 87,500, excluding those within Exmoor National Park. Population projections indicate that the bulk of population growth until 2011 will be from an increasing elderly population (over 60's) which will rise from 25% to over 30% during the Plan period.

1.5 Across the District, average earnings and income per capita are significantly lower than the regional and national averages. These earnings reflect the dominance of the low wage employment sectors of tourism and agriculture and the peripheral and rural nature of North Devon. Coastal parishes are particularly reliant on tourism employment, and there is a higher than average proportion of small businesses and self-employment.

1.6 The whole of the District has been designated as a European Union Objective 2 area. The Objective 2 programme runs from January 2000 to December 2006. Apart from Barnstaple and the surrounding parishes, the District is also a Rural Development Area.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN SYSTEM

1.7 The Development Plan comprises both the Structure Plan and the Local Plan together with the Minerals and Waste Local Plans. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires decisions on planning applications to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Devon Structure Plan

1.8 The Devon Structure Plan First Review sets out the strategic policies and proposals in the County to the year 2011. It is prepared by the Strategic Planning Authorities in Devon which comprise the County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council and Dartmoor National Park Authority.

The Local Plan

1.9 The policies in the Local Plan conform with the corresponding policies in the Devon Structure Plan. The two Plans are therefore complementary.

1.10 The primary purposes of the Local Plan are:-

- ◆ *To develop the strategic policies of the Devon Structure Plan First Review in more detail to reflect local circumstances;*
- ◆ *To provide a firm basis for rational and consistent decisions on all planning applications;*
- ◆ *To provide greater certainty as to the location of future development for developers, the local community and key service providers enabling them to invest in new facilities and infrastructure in a planned and logical manner;*
- ◆ *To provide a positive lead for regeneration initiatives and help to secure external funding for such projects; and*
- ◆ *To co-ordinate land use issues with other corporate strategies and objectives.*

Other Plans Making up the Development Plan

1.11 The Minerals and Waste Local Plans prepared by Devon County Council contain more detailed policies on these subjects. Now adopted both these Plans, together with the Structure and District Local Plans, comprise the complete Development Plan for the District outside Exmoor National Park.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE

1.12 In preparing the Local Plan, account has been taken of relevant Government policies primarily set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Circulars.

1.13 Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10) was published by the Secretary of State in 2001. This guidance provided the framework for the Devon Structure Plan and covers the period up to the year 2016.

Plans Prepared by Other Local Authorities and Organisations

1.14 In addition to National and Regional guidance, the North Devon Local Plan must be seen in the context of other Local Plans prepared by the adjoining local authorities of Exmoor National Park, Torridge, Mid Devon and West Somerset District Councils. One of the four Areas of Economic Activity identified by the Devon Structure Plan is the Barnstaple/Bideford area. Consequently, the distribution of development within the District needs to be considered in the context of economic activity in the Bideford/Northam area within Torridge District. Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires a management plan to be prepared and published for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty across Northern Devon (in both North Devon and Torridge Districts). The Local Plan will be complemented by the detailed proposals contained in the AONB Management Plan.

1.15 The Local Plan has also been prepared in conjunction with the '*Local Transport Plan*' prepared by Devon County Council in partnership with the District Council. The Local Plan complements the integrated transport strategy set out in this document, including the promotion of more sustainable travel choices.

CORPORATE PLANS AND STRATEGIES

1.17 The Local Plan deals with land use matters only. It does not form the strategy for all activities undertaken by the Council or other organisations active in North Devon. The Local Plan is therefore complemented by the North Devon Community Strategy, which sets out a broad vision and actions for the area to achieve long term social, economic and environmental wellbeing. Particular attention has been given to achieving co-ordination between the Local Plan and the strategies relating to Culture, Economic Development, Housing, Crime Reduction, Social Inclusion/Neighbourhood Renewal, Youth Strategy, Local Agenda 21 and Sport and Recreation. Both the Performance Plan and Corporate Strategy set out the Council's vision, objectives, targets and performance indicators and have provided a foundation for the Local Plan.

1.18 Other documents that have influenced the contents of this Plan include the Taw Torridge Estuary Management Plan, North Devon Biodiversity and Habitat Action Plans, the Air Quality Management Plan, Barnstaple Town Centre Management Plan and the Health Improvement and Rural Action Plans for North Devon.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

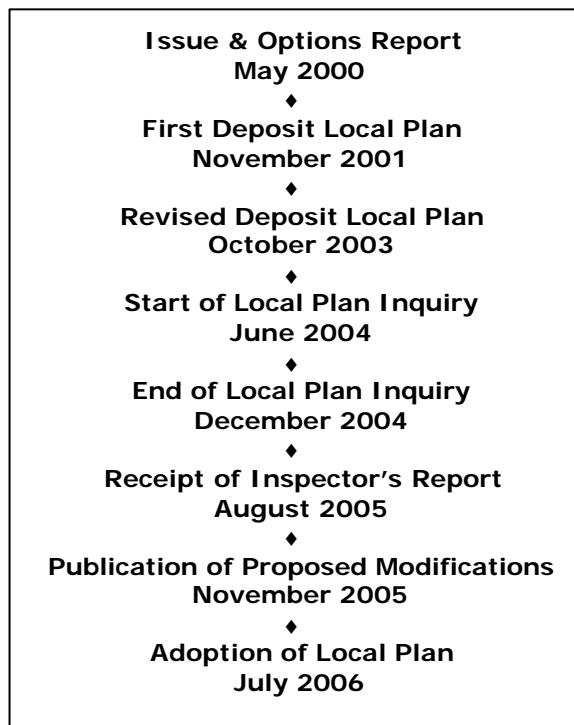
1.19 The Local Plan has been prepared in the context of a range of supporting documents which are all available to the public:-

- ◆ **Sustainability Appraisal** – which assesses the sustainability implications of the policies and proposals contained in the Plan to ensure that these considerations have been taken into account;
- ◆ **Urban Capacity Study** – which assesses the extent to which development can be accommodated on previously developed land and buildings within the main settlements of the District;
- ◆ **Retail Study** – which assesses the capacity for additional retailing in North Devon with a particular focus on Barnstaple, Braunton, Ilfracombe and South Molton;
- ◆ **Open Space Strategy** – which assesses the open space requirements of North Devon and establishes local standards of provision;
- ◆ **Housing Needs Assessment** – which assesses the housing needs of the District;
- ◆ **Local Nature Conservation Sites and Biodiversity Networks** – an extensive survey carried out by Devon Wildlife Trust using objective criteria to identify local nature conservation sites and Biodiversity networks focusing on the settlements of Barnstaple, Braunton, Fremington, Ilfracombe and South Molton.

STAGES IN THE PREPARATION OF THE LOCAL PLAN

1.20 This Adopted Local Plan was preceded by the publication of an Issues and Options Report, a First Deposit Version and a Revised Deposit Version all involving extensive public consultation. After analysing the consultation responses arising from the First and Revised Deposit periods, formal changes were made to these Plans to overcome objections. A Public Inquiry was held between June and December 2004 to resolve all outstanding objections. Following receipt of the Inspector's Report into the Public Inquiry in August 2005, Proposed Modifications to the Local Plan were published in November 2005 for further consultation. Objections to these modifications were dealt with prior to the final adoption of the Plan.

1.21 The basic stages of the Plan can be summarised as follows:-



FORMAT OF THE LOCAL PLAN

1.22 The Plan comprises four sections. The first section sets out the overall strategy and general policies of the Plan and relates to the District as a whole. Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Plan set out detailed policies and proposals for each town and main village. These sections are based on the broad strategic areas identified within the development strategy of the Devon Structure Plan as follows:-

- ◆ *The Area of Economic Activity (Section 2);*
- ◆ *The Priority Area for Rural Regeneration (Section 3);*
- ◆ *The Area of Strategic Landscape and Development Constraint (Section 4).*

1.23 The Plan also contains various appendices, including a glossary of technical terms used in the Plan.

1.24 The policies and proposals in the Plan are printed in **BOLD CAPITALS** to distinguish them from the accompanying reasoned justification. The reasoned justification explains, interprets and justifies the policies and proposals. Policies provide tests to assess development and are not site specific. Conversely, proposals are usually site specific and identify a particular type of development for that location. Other forms of development on such sites will not be considered to accord with the proposal. Where a proposal requires the provision of specific elements, development will only be permitted where those matters have been provided. In addition, the general policies of the Plan will also apply to the site specific proposals that are relevant to a particular development. Where appropriate, certain key policies relating to a site specific proposal have been identified as part of the reasoned justification.

1.25 The Proposals Map covers the whole District at a scale of 1:50,000 and illustrates those policies and proposals of the Plan which affect specific areas of land. In addition to the Proposals Map, there are larger scale Inset Maps for each town and main village illustrating the main policies and proposals affecting these settlements.

READING THE PLAN AS A WHOLE

1.26 To obtain the full planning policy context for any site, it is necessary to refer to all the relevant general policies of Section 1 and, where appropriate, the specific section for the town or village in question.

1.27 The policies contained in the Plan are inter-related and should not be read in isolation because one policy will rarely provide the whole planning story. A development proposal is likely to be affected by more than one policy. **THE PLAN SHOULD BE READ AS A WHOLE.**

1.28 Detailed policies to protect the environment and achieve good standards in new development are contained in separate chapters most notably the Development Standards, the Environment, Travel, Transport and Communications and Recreation. To avoid repetition and duplication, these policies and their criteria are not generally reiterated in those chapters providing specific guidance on particular forms of development such as housing, employment, retailing and community facilities. Some policies, however, do contain a specific criterion that refers to a particular policy or planning issue that is set out in more detail elsewhere in the Plan, but only where its inclusion is considered to provide assistance and clarity. Similarly, this Plan has avoided repeating the policies and proposals contained in the Devon Structure Plan and the Minerals and Waste Local Plans.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

1.29 The Council has prepared a range of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on a variety of topics and sites to complement the policies and proposals contained in the Development Plan. Existing SPG includes site specific development briefs, as well as advisory notes on agricultural workers dwellings, house extensions, listed buildings and conservation areas, landscaping and tree planting.

1.30 In order to complement the policies and proposals contained in this Plan, further SPG will be produced. This SPG will contain more detailed information and guidance on how certain policies and proposals should be implemented. Where additional SPG is required or in the process of being prepared, this is generally referred to in the reasoned justification accompanying a particular policy or proposal.