



Plan Mid Devon

Sustainability
Appraisal Scoping
Report:
Non-Technical
Summary
January 2022

1. Local Plans set a vision and framework for the future development of an area. They are at the heart of our planning system with a requirement by law that planning decisions are taken in line with the Local Plan unless there are other overriding material considerations. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the objectives of a Local Plan¹ which includes a key objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.
2. Mid Devon is beginning the process of preparing a new Local Plan for the district, 'Plan Mid Devon'. The document will cover Mid Devon District, excluding part of the district within Dartmoor National Park and will set out the strategy and framework for the area. This will include the level and distribution of development for a 20 year period. Mid Devon covers an area of 353 square miles (914km²), has a population of 83,290² and is situated between Dartmoor National Park, Exmoor National Park and the Blackdown Hills. The document will consider a wide range of factors including climate change, the economy, the natural and built environment, health and well-being, the community and infrastructure. Once adopted, the Plan will replace the current Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033.
3. The Local Plan will not be a document developed in isolation. Its content will be influenced by a large number of factors including other relevant plans and programmes at an international, national, regional and local level. Understanding the relationship between the Local Plan and these policies is important as it will influence the options considered in the preparation of the plan. Information on these relationships will reveal where there are shared objectives or inconsistencies and constraints to be addressed. The reviewed plans, programmes and strategies considered in the SA have been grouped into the following themes. Many of the themes will cut across each other, however to allow analysis they have been collated under the following headings:
 - Climate Change,
 - Wealth and Prosperity,
 - Natural and Historic Built Environment and Respecting Environmental Limits,
 - Health and Well-Being,
 - Rural Areas,
 - Access to New Technologies and Digital Communications,
 - Homes,
 - Infrastructure and How We Travel,
 - How Places Look and are Used,
 - Town Centres
 - Communities and Neighbourhood.
4. The SA also considers the Baseline Information in Chapter 3 which sets out the current state of the environment and provides identification of existing environmental challenges which are relevant to the plan including any areas of particular environmental importance. The Baseline Information also follows the themes as set out in the paragraph above. Following the

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (2021) Chapter 3

² Nomis Mid-Year Population estimates (2020)

consideration of the Baseline Information and Relevant Plans Programmes and Strategies the likely changes without the implementation of an updated Local Plan is also considered in the SA.

5. It is worth noting that the Adopted Mid Devon Local Plan 2013-2033 is currently in place, and so in the medium term, there are a range of spatial planning policies to tackle some of the wider objectives and challenges identified in the relevant plans, programmes and strategies and baseline conditions. Indeed a range of policies from this adopted plan may remain in Plan Mid Devon if they are considered effective, robust and up-to-date. However there is a legal requirement to review Local Plan policies and spatial development strategies at least once every 5 years. As such, although the Adopted Local Plan extends to 2033 there is a probability that the Adopted Plan would be found out-of-date prior to 2033 where there is a change in circumstances and/or context. Where this may occur, development proposals would be considered on an ad hoc basis and will predominantly be guided by national planning policy and other legislation.
6. Establishing changes in the future is not always straightforward with a range of factors that can pull in different directions. There is also an element of the unknown, however based on what we know presently, the SA sets out a description of the key potential future changes in the absence of an update to the Local Plan grouped into themed areas as set out above. The SA identifies in the range of themed areas the change in context since the current adopted Local Plan, either in physical terms or policy direction including globally and nationally, and in the absence of an updated Local Plan the ability to respond to these changes would be limited. This includes the increased international awareness in Climate Change and the significant landmark events that have occurred in recent years such as the UK leaving the European Union and the Covid-19 pandemic.
7. The SA Scoping report identifies the wide range of relevant, plans, programmes and strategies that have a bearing on the development of Plan Mid Devon. It also identifies the baseline conditions of Mid Devon which identify any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan, and what would happen in the absence of an updated Local Plan. In undertaking these steps key issues and challenges are identified and a framework is proposed to assess sustainability. Within this framework nine sustainability objectives are identified as follows:
 - Protection of the natural environment
 - Protection and promotion of a quality built environment
 - Mitigating the effects of climate change
 - Safeguarding and minimising resource use
 - Promoting economic growth and employment
 - Supporting retail
 - Meeting housing needs
 - Ensuring community health and wellbeing
 - Delivering the necessary infrastructure
8. It is intended that these objectives within the framework proposed will provide a way of checking the environmental, social and economic characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected by Plan Mid Devon as it is developed. The use of a scoring system with a range from +3 to -3 will highlight the scale of any potential impact so that it is possible to differentiate between

a marginal or significant impact. The value and vulnerability of any existing designations including any recognised protection status of landscapes likely to be affected will also be considered and will influence the score. Pre and post mitigation scores will be provided where appropriate. Collectively, this will allow consideration of a policy's overall impact and permit comparison with other policies or proposals. Where negative impacts are highlighted, it will also permit proposals or policies to be modified and then rescored in order to determine whether their sustainability impacts have been made more positive. In addition to the scoring process, a brief description of the option considered will be provided which will identify the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects and a summary of information will be provided. The summary can also set out additional mitigation measures that may be considered, the nature of impacts, probability, duration, frequency and whether the effects are reversible. It will describe whether impacts are secondary, cumulative, synergistic, temporary, permanent, short, medium or long-term.