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**Report for: Cabinet**

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Date of Meeting: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025

**Subject: Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan**

Cabinet Member: Councillor Steve Keable, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

Responsible Officer: Richard Marsh, Director of Place

Exempt: None

Wards Affected: All Wards

Enclosures: Appendix 1 –Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan:

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment screening

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

The Government has published the 2023 Housing Delivery Test results. The Housing Delivery Test is an annual measurement of housing delivery (i.e. completions) against targets for each Local Authority. The result for Mid Devon is 86%. As delivery is below target and below 95% the Council is now required to prepare a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan to detail what it intends to do to address this under-delivery.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1. That Cabinet approves the Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (Appendix 1) and this is published on the Council's website and made publicly available.**

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **1.0 Introduction**

*What is the Housing Delivery Test?*

- 1.1** The Housing Delivery Test is an annual measurement of housing delivery in Mid Devon district. It is calculated using the Government's rule book and the results are published each year. The Housing Delivery Test is a percentage

measurement of the number or net homes delivered against the number of homes required (currently as set out in the adopted Mid Devon Local Plan), over a rolling 3 year period. If housing delivery falls below the housing requirement in a plan-making area, as indicated by the Housing Delivery Test, policies set out in the NPPF (Paragraph 79) will apply to that plan-making area with immediate effect. The policy consequences that are applied are:

- a) Where delivery falls below 95% of the requirement over the previous three years the authority should prepare an action plan to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years;
- b) Where delivery falls below 85% of the requirement over the previous three years the authority should include a buffer of 20% to their identified supply of specific deliverable sites as set out in paragraph 78 of this framework, in addition to the requirement to prepare an action plan;
- c) Where delivery falls below 75% of the requirement over the previous three years the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies, as set out in footnote 8 of this Framework, in addition to the requirements for an action plan and 20% buffer.

1.2 The most recent measurement (2023) for Mid Devon shows that the percentage achieved for the period 2020 to 2023 is 86%.

1.3 It should be noted that whilst delivery (completions) are at 86% versus the target, the actual number of planning permissions granted is 2,875 during the relevant delivery test years. Of these, 1,251 are unimplemented. Accepting that there may be a delay between consenting a scheme and the completion of that scheme, this does indicate that part of the reason for the under-delivery within Mid Devon relates to consented schemes not being built out in a timely manner. This is relevant in considering what the Council can do in order to address under delivery. This matter is discussed further within the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan.

1.4 The Council wishes to see timely delivery of new homes, especially affordable homes, in accessible and sustainable locations in order to meet local housing need and address social, economic and environmental issues associated with an undersupply of suitable housing.

**Table 1 Housing Delivery Test: 2023 measurement for Mid Devon**

ONS Code	Area Name	Number of homes required			Total number of homes required	Number of homes delivered			Total number of homes delivered	Housing Delivery Test: 2023 measurement	Housing Delivery Test: 2023 consequence
		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		2020-21	2021-22	2022-23			
E07000042	Mid Devon	244	365	358	967	337	238	253	828	86%	Action plan

- 1.5 Since the percentage achieved is less than 95% there is a requirement for the Council to prepare an Action Plan.

*What is the Action Plan?*

- 1.6 Planning Practice Guidance stipulates that action plans should 'identify the reasons for under-delivery, explore ways to reduce the risk of further under-delivery and set out measures the authority intends to take to improve levels of delivery. It sets out a range of actions that local planning authorities can consider as part of the action plan.

## **2.0 Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan**

*About the Action Plan*

- 2.1 The Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan details what are the barriers to the early commencement of housing developments in the district and provides an explanation for these. It also identifies 18 'actions' the Council will take to help improve the delivery of new homes. In summary these include:

Action 1 – Strategic Housing Pipeline for Devon and Torbay

Action 2 – Consider alternative models of affordable housing delivery

Action 3 – Use the S106 Affordable Housing Clearing Service

Action 4 – Encourage small sites applications in suitable locations

Action 5 – Provide pre-application advice and use Planning Performance Agreements

Action 6 – Support the implementation of adopted development plans

Action 7 – Prepare a new district wide Local Plan

Action 8 – Prepare site allocation masterplans

Action 9 – Continue support for Neighbourhood Plans

Action 10 – Prepare the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Action 11 – Complete a new Call for Sites

Action 12 – Review the Brownfield Sites Register

Action 13 – Review the Mid Devon Housing Strategy

Action 14 – Maintain the Housing Revenue Account

Action 15 – Continue Housing Enabling

Action 16 – Development Management

Action 17 – Continue support for infrastructure delivery

Action 18 - Engagement with the development industry

### **3.0 Monitoring and review**

- 3.1 The Council will continue to monitor the delivery of new homes in the district which will require that the necessary resources and capacity are available for this. This monitoring work is also needed for preparing statistical returns to the Government and also for calculating the 5 year supply of housing.
- 3.2 The Council will undertake the actions identified in Section 2.0 of this report, and the supporting Housing Delivery Test Action Plan, to help boost the delivery of new homes to meet the district's housing needs. The Developer round table will be used as a means to keep the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan under review through working with stakeholders in the development industry and for the Action Plan to be updated as necessary.

### **4.0 Groups Consulted**

- 4.1 The Planning Policy Advisory Group was consulted on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025 and has requested the inclusion of an additional reference to the use of modern methods of construction in relation to encouraging applications on small sites. This amendment has been made to the Action Plan. The Planning Policy Advisory Group has endorsed the actions set out in the draft Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (**Appendix 1**) and the recommendations in this report.
- 4.2 There is no requirement for the Council to consult on the Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan. However, the Council engages with the development industry through the call for sites process, in the determination of planning applications, and as part of reviewing and updating its calculations for the 5 year supply of housing, and this work has been used to help inform the preparation of the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan.

### **5.0 Next steps**

- 5.1 If approved, the Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (**Appendix 1**) will be published on the Council's website and made available to the public. The Planning Practice Guidance makes clear there is a need for the Council to publish the Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan within 6 months from the publication of the Housing Delivery Test measurement (by 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025).

### **Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications from approving the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan but there can be indirect financial implications arising from undertaking supporting work and associated with wider planning decision making (i.e. in defending against any planning appeals).

### **Legal Implications**

The Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan meets the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024.

### **Risk Assessment**

If the Council fails to produce a robust Housing Delivery Test Action Plan there is a risk that undesirable development proposals could be granted planning permission on appeal, in response to the Council's failure to explain how is working to improve the delivery of new homes in the district. The Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action is an important tool to help resist development on sites that are not allocated in the adopted local plan and in unsuitable locations where such development would not be in accordance with the policies of that local plan and in demonstrating that the Council is being proactive in seeking to support further timely delivery.

### **Impact on Climate Change**

The preparation and adoption of the Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan will not have any direct impact on climate change.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

The Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan has been subject to a screening exercise to determine whether its content is relevant to equalities, and if so, whether a full Equality Impact Assessment should be conducted. The screening exercise (see **Appendix 2**) has found the Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan will not in itself lead to any impacts on the equality strands protected under the Equality Act 2010 (the "protected characteristics"). Therefore there is no requirement to undertake a full Equality Impact Assessment.

### **Relationship to Corporate Plan**

The Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan will help meet the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 themes:

- Planning, Environment and Sustainability – to be a leader and pioneer of best practice, including through the production of a robust Housing Delivery Test Action Plan where this has become necessary.
- Homes – to help improve the delivery of new affordable and social homes annually as part of overall housing delivery in the district.

### **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agree by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 18.03.25

**Statutory Officer:** Maria De Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 18.03.25

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive

**Date:** 18.03.25

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 12 March 2025

**Cabinet member notified:** (yes/no)

**Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information.** (Yes/No)

**Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information.** (Yes/No)

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:**

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#### **Background Papers :**

Appendix 1 – Mid Devon Housing Delivery Test Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment screening

**Links:**

Housing Delivery Test measurement rule book

[Housing Delivery Test measurement rule book - GOV.UK](#)

Housing Delivery Test: 2023 measurement

[Housing Delivery Test: 2023 measurement - GOV.UK](#)

Planning Practice Guidance: housing supply and delivery

[Housing supply and delivery - GOV.UK](#)