



Welcome to the latest Our Plan newsletter

This issue will provide you with an update on the progress of Our Plan, some of the current challenges nationally and locally and the next steps.

Our Plan is the single strategic plan that sets out the vision, objectives and activities of the Council. It is the comprehensive story of what the Council wants to achieve.

Following widespread public consultation, the Council has adopted the following vision

*Supporting Thriving Towns
and Villages and enhancing
the quality of life for
individuals and communities*

The Council has many ways of supporting this vision and this newsletter will focus on how the Council can deliver this vision through its development plan work. The development plan is the part of Our Plan that deals directly with land use planning and sets out the planning policies and land allocations that will guide new development in years to come.

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Where are we now?



The regulation 19 publication version of Our Plan was published for formal consultation in February 2015. We received over 160 responses to the consultation. You can view all of the responses on-line at www.westdevon.gov.uk/ourplan. Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. Much of the plan was well received and there were many positive comments. However, as to be expected, there were a number of objections raised to parts of the plan. We have taken our time to consider the next steps to ensure we can properly address those issues raised. This has also coincided with a number of announcements from Government about further changes which we need to take into account.

We also need to make sure that we are talking and co-operating with our neighbouring authorities, particularly Plymouth, Dartmoor and South Hams, so that we understand what is going on in the wider area. People do not live their lives within one administrative area and through the planning process, we have a requirement (called the Duty to Co-operate) to make sure that we have co-operated on issues which arise across these boundaries which are then reflected in Our Plan. This includes, for example, roads, schools and housing numbers. Without this co-operation, the plan is likely to fail at an Examination in Public. This work has been happening throughout the Our Plan preparation but we need to consider issues which have arisen since we prepared the draft plan.

Along with South Hams, Plymouth City Council and Dartmoor National Park Authority, West Devon is exploring the possibility of working together on a Joint Local Planning process to address the strategic distribution of new homes and jobs. Details are yet to be agreed and we need to do further work with our neighbours to best understand the context in which any joint planning will take place. This will need to include the objectives and priorities, governance and working arrangements, timescales, evidence, infrastructure requirements and policies and allocations. We will also be looking at how we engage and consult with our communities.

If you wish to receive email notification of further consultation opportunities and progress on Our Plan, please email strategic.planning@westdevon.gov.uk



What is happening nationally?

Since the Parliamentary election in May, the government has made a number of announcements about further changes and reforms to the planning system. All of these have an impact on the preparation of Our Plan, particularly around the scope of individual policies. We therefore need to review the draft policies and ensure they appropriately reflect the latest national policies and guidance. The emerging Housing and Planning Bill, which was published in October 2015, and proposed amendments to National Planning Policy Framework, published in December, contain significant proposals including:

- **Starter homes** for first time buyers under the age of 40 able to purchase at a 20% discount of market value
- A requirement to maintain a register of those interested in **self/custom build** projects
- **Rent control** for Registered Providers
- **Brownfield land release** for housing, including maintaining a register of such land and automatic planning permission in principle.
- The requirement for Local Plans to be **in place by 2017**.
- **Right to Buy** for Registered Providers
- **Planning permission in principle** for certain types of land.

...and locally?

Work is continuing on the preparation of Our Plan. There will be more opportunities for you to engage in the plan making process in 2016 as we will carry out more consultation, both informal and formal, before we submit the plan for Examination. Members have recently considered a potential timescale which is set out below – and will be confirmed following further discussions.



As a result, we will also have to prepare an update to the Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Over the coming months we will be working closely with our neighbouring authorities to get a better understanding of the amount of development required across the Plymouth housing market area. This will help to clarify what is needed in each local authority area, including West Devon. We intend to undertake further informal consultation regarding future levels of development and how to accommodate this once the overall requirements are clearer. This may include workshops, further e-newsletters and events.

We recognise the importance of getting this work progressed quickly and efficiently, not only to ensure that Our Plan is robust, but to provide some certainty and guidance for the Neighbourhood Planning Groups in the Borough.

How can you be involved?

In addition to responding to consultation opportunities, there are other ways in which you can help shape the area in which you live.

Neighbourhood Planning

Many of our communities are already in the process of preparing Neighbourhood Plans. We have produced a new Neighbourhood Planning e-newsletter including information about the process, relationship with Our Plan, and the support available. Please visit www.westdevon.gov.uk/wdneighbourhoodplans to view this e-newsletter. There is also lots of information on this page to look at if your community has not yet decided on whether to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, but you wish to find out more. You will also need to speak to your Town/Parish Council as the body responsible for the preparation of any neighbourhood plan.

Land Availability – Call for sites

It has been two years since we commenced this exercise to help identify available land that could provide new homes and employment sites. We asked landowners and others to tell us what land may potentially be available for development.

These sites were assessed and the final results of the Land Availability Assessment were published in December 2014. You can view the report and site information in the Parish Information Packs by visiting www.westdevon.gov.uk/siteassessment.

We are still looking to identify further land to ensure we have enough land to meet identified development needs of our communities. So, if there are other sites which have not been previously identified to the Council, or further extensions to existing ones, which are now available for development, we'd like to know more! We are particularly interested in sites within or close to settlements or sites that are well related to public transport routes, footpaths, cycleways and local facilities. It is important that development takes place in the right places with minimal impact on our environment. Please complete the response form and send this, with an OS based map clearly identifying the site.

The deadline for submitting sites is
Monday 22 February 2016.

Please note, this is not an opportunity to re-submit or re-assess sites that were identified in the 2014 assessment.





Settlement Boundaries

Historically, we have always used settlement boundaries as a way of managing development. In the past, these have been lines on a map which have helped us to guide where development can and can't happen. They have been a useful tool for the decision makers, as well as town and parish councils and the local community.

The draft version of Our Plan proposed to remove settlement boundaries and instead move to a policy based approach to deciding where development is acceptable. This has led to some nervousness from local communities, in particular, who raised concern about how to be able to reasonably resist development when it becomes unsustainable.

We are therefore considering whether to reintroduce settlement boundaries. However, we do not propose simply to say that outside of these boundaries development will be refused.

What we are considering is that within these settlement boundaries, development will generally be approved. Outside, only development that can be demonstrated to be in a sustainable location (close to schools, shops, bus routes, footpaths, cycleways etc) will be approved. Such an approach will comply with the government's instruction that we should consider positively 'sustainable development', whilst giving local communities very clear guidance about what, in West Devon terms, can be considered to be 'sustainable'.

We will provide more information in future e-newsletters.



For more information

Follow us on Twitter and find us on Facebook to keep up to date with progress being made on Our Plan and to find out about events near you.



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