

Local Development Framework Briefing Paper Housing



Devon County Council's Advice to Local Planning Authorities

This is one of a series of briefing papers prepared by Devon County Council to assist the preparation of Local Development Documents.

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Local Planning Authorities are requested to take the following matters into account in preparing their Local Development Frameworks and other documents:

- 1 Meeting strategic housing needs - It will be important to ensure that LDF provision is consistent with established Structure Plan requirements and has regard to the emerging RSS proposals. Early discussion between the District and the County Council, in its role as both strategic authority and agent for the Regional Assembly in respect of conformity, would be necessary to resolve any issues of interpretation and ensure the soundness of LDFs.**
- 2 Housing Provision - While the RSS, and currently Structure Plan, set out strategic housing needs at District, sub regional, Housing Market Area and in some cases settlement level, there are a number of key issues where it will be important to ensure consistent policy interpretation and implementation, particularly in terms of :
 - a) Scale and distribution**
In addition to meeting overall strategic needs, the distribution of housing provision between strategic settlements, main towns and other settlements will be critically important in securing a pattern of distribution consistent with policy objectives, and also in promoting settlement self containment, reducing the need to travel and supporting sustainable travel modes.
 - b) Phasing and implementation**
There will be a need to co-ordinate the phasing of development between LDFs within each sub regional / housing market area in the light of the need to secure an overall framework for effective delivery over the period to 2016/26. Phasing must also recognise the timing of key supporting infrastructure e.g. transport and education.
 - c) Mix and type.**
*Outcomes of assessments undertaken at Housing Market Area level in terms of the mix and type of provision will need to inform the approach taken in each LDF area.***
- 3 Co-ordination of housing and other development / investment:**
 - a) Options assessment:** *Early consultation on the main options for housing development will enable the County Council to advise most effectively in terms of accessibility, education provision, social infrastructure etc*
 - b) Opportunities for housing development to act as a catalyst for regeneration, investment in transport networks, education and other community infrastructure should be explored in partnership with County Council officers.**

Also see separate Briefing Papers on 'Affordable Housing' and 'Public Realm'

1. Introduction

The delivery of housing provision at the right scale and in the right locations is one of the key strategic policy objectives within Devon. The County Council has taken the lead in advising the Regional Assembly of the most appropriate level of provision for Devon at District and sub regional level, and for the main strategic settlements. Structure Plan Guidance to 2016 remains effective until formally replaced by the RSS, but the adoption of the RSS is not now anticipated until 2008.

Housing development generates additional pressures on infrastructure and facilities but also offers the opportunity to improve services and act as a catalyst for new investment. The County Council is keen to ensure that it supports housing development (in terms of services, infrastructure and facilities) where it does take place, and works alongside District Councils in securing the benefits that can arise from housing development and associated population growth.

Housing provision is also complementary to the economic development of Devon and a failure to address housing needs could constrain the realisation of its full economic potential. Government policy has moved towards the concept of sustainable communities and the identification of Housing Market Areas as the most appropriate geographical basis for the assessment of housing needs and provision.

2. Meeting Strategic Housing Needs

Strategic housing needs to 2016 are currently set out in the adopted Devon Structure Plan and there are draft proposals emerging through the Regional Spatial Strategy. During the transitional period prior to RSS adoption, there is a need to ensure that LDFs can progress effectively rather than be delayed until full RSS adoption. The County Council will be advising the Regional Assembly on how this can best be achieved in terms of RS proposals but in the meantime the established framework offered by the adopted Structure Plan offers a firm basis for developing options and identifying Action Areas. The emerging RSS may in some cases indicate a change in emphasis over the period to 2026, but it should be seen as an adjustment to Structure Plan guidance rather than a change in the underlying philosophy.

3. Key Issues to Address

- How best to adjust the balance of housing provision between urban areas, main towns and other settlements while recognising local needs and the problems of affordable housing. Strategic objectives require a change in overall patterns of development from past experience – reducing the scale of provision in rural areas and smaller communities. This implies a need to consider the distribution of affordable housing to ensure that smaller communities are not disadvantaged, while reducing the scale of new open market housing provision.
- How to maximise self containment – by locating housing in those settlements best placed to meet community needs, and in locations accessible to employment, social facilities, shopping and other services. DCC is promoting the concept of accessibility planning and, through its most recent LTP submission, has developed measures and initiatives for improving accessibility, especially in identified priority areas.
- Locating housing provision where it can best be served by sustainable travel modes (walking / cycling) or support (be served by) viable public transport services. The location of new housing must recognise the need to maximise the availability of sustainable travel choices, and this cannot be achieved through a dispersed pattern of development. Certain settlements and locations will offer better opportunities for supporting sustainable travel modes.

- Securing a steady flow of housing supply across sub regional / HMA areas recognising both constraints to implementation and opportunities for early development. Phasing will also need to be linked to infrastructure investment programmes, and the capacity and viability of facilities and networks. In some housing market areas it will be appropriate to consider differential phasing between neighbouring authorities where there are specific constraints on early delivery or major thresholds to be overcome.
- Phasing regimes will need to need to take account of the ability of infrastructure providers, including DCC, to deliver necessary investment / capacity enhancement. In some cases this will dictate the timing of new development and require co-ordination between a number of development proposals.
- Within the context of overall needs for differing types of housing across a sub regional or Housing Market area, how to secure the appropriate contribution from each LDF area. LDFs will need to take account of the work currently being progressed within each of Devon's Housing Market Areas. This will include the provision of special needs housing /sheltered accommodation.
- Housing development options and site selection – how to optimise the potential for sustainable development in terms of access, availability of local provision of education facilities, access to social infrastructure. When developing options for assessment, the County Council will be able to provide specific advice in terms of site suitability and deliverability – and the implications for, and deliverability of, supporting infrastructure.
- Housing development can provide positive opportunities for addressing existing problems within settlements – as part of a wider package of measures arising from single or cumulative developer contributions. It can contribute directly to physical regeneration, help to secure the viability of new infrastructure investment, help to fund investment in schools and other facilities otherwise at the margins of viability. The County Council, as Education, Transport and Social Services Authority is able to identify and advise on such opportunities.

Also see separate Briefing Papers on 'Affordable Housing' and 'Public Realm'

4. The Preparation of Local Development Frameworks

In addressing the key issues outlined above, the County Council would welcome the opportunity to work with District Councils at all stages of LDF preparation – particularly when developing the core strategy and options documents. Working in partnership in this way will enable strategic policy advice to be taken into account in developing LDDs at an early stage, and ensure consistency between the distribution of housing provision and the related areas of concern where the County Council has direct responsibility.

There will also be a need to establish effective monitoring mechanisms to assess actual patterns of change at District, sub regional and HMA levels.