

**Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of
Sidmouth Town Council's Planning Working Group
held at the Council Chamber, Woolcombe House, Sidmouth,
on Thursday 5 September 2024**

Councillors present: Kelvin Dent (Chair)
Chris Lockyear

Also Present: Cllr Ian Barlow
Cllr Hilary Nelson
District Cllr Marianne Rixson
Cllr Kevin Walker
Cllr Edward Willis-Fleming

Apologies: Cllr Bernie Davis
Cllr John Loudoun
Cllr John Nicholson

The meeting started at 10.00am and finished at 11.20am

105 Declarations of Interest

None received

106 District Council Members

It was formally noted that the participation of those Councillors who are also members of the East Devon District Council in both the debate and subsequent vote is on the basis that the views expressed are preliminary views taking account of the information presently made available to the Town Council. The District Councillors reserve their final views until they are in full possession of all the relevant arguments for and against.

107 East Devon Local Plan, Housing Allocations:

Report by Local Planning Authority (LPA) Planning Policy Officer

The Committee considered a report by East Devon District Council's Planning Policy Manager regarding the proposed new East Devon Local Plan prior to its consideration by the EDDC Strategic Planning Committee on the 11 September.

Members expressed their gratitude to the Officers and Councillors for their hard work in developing this proposed new Local Plan. They fully appreciated the challenges involved in allocating the housing needs of the District in accordance with the Government's requirements.

108 Sites which the LPA Planning Policy Officer did not recommend for inclusion

The following sites were not recommended for inclusion in the new Local Plan:

Sidm_17, Sidm_12, Sidm_13, Sidm_14, Sidm_30, Sidm_02, Sidm_04, Sidm_06b, Sidm_19, Sidm_20, Sidm_22, Sidm_28, Sidm_32b, Sidm_35, Sidm_34b

(Members noted that the owner of Sidm_13 strongly maintained that his site had been misdescribed.)

RESOLVED: to support the Planning Policy Manager's recommendation not to allocate the above-mentioned sites.

109 Sites which the Planning Policy Manager recommended for inclusion.

The Committee considered a number of sites which were recommended for inclusion:

RESOLVED: that in relation to all the following housing sites, Members recommended that, should they be allocated, housing should be restricted in the Local Plan to principal dwellings and, in accordance with Policies 12 and 13 of the Neighbourhood Plan, as exception sites, a proportion of the new dwellings should be affordable and/or social housing and priority given to people with local connections.

a) Site Sidm_29 (aka 24) Land at Two Bridges, Sidford, adjacent to the Sewage Treatment Works – recommended for allocation as employment land

Members strongly objected to this site being designated as employment land for several reasons: The site immediately to the south has already been allocated as employment land, but it remains undeveloped. This indicates there is no need for further employment land in Sidford.

They were deeply concerned about the impact of development on the green wedge between Sidford and Sidbury, an important natural buffer that prevents the coalescence of these two communities.

The site lies within a Nation Landscape area and any development here would negatively affect the character of this protected area.

There are existing issues with flooding in this area, and further development could exacerbate these problems. The additional hard surfaces and infrastructure could increase surface water runoff, worsening the flooding risks for surrounding properties.

The A375 Two Bridges road is unsuitable for additional heavy traffic

Members wanted to remind the District Council that if the employment land to the South of this site were to be repurposed for housing, South West Water has previously raised concerns regarding its proximity to the Sidford Sewage Treatment Works.

RESOLVED: to strongly object to the allocation of Sidm_29 as employment land

b) Site Sidm_06a Land West of Two Bridges Road, Sidford

Building here would encroach upon the green wedge between Sidford and Sidbury, undermining a key objective of the Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan, which aims to maintain the separation between these settlements.

In addition, this site is part of the National Landscape, and allowing development here would set a precedent for future building in this sensitive area. Moreover, the land is prone to flooding, rendering it unsuitable for housing development.

RESOLVED: to strongly object to the allocation of Sidm_06a for housing

c) Site Sidm_31 Land West of Corefields, Sidford

Whilst Members remained concerned about the proposal to build on National Landscape land, they acknowledge the challenges in finding sufficient sites in the area, given that Sidmouth was surrounded by National Landscape and the sea. After careful consideration, Members concluded that the net benefit to the community would be positive.

RESOLVED: To support the allocation of Sidm_31 for housing despite concerns and subject to the proviso referred to above.

d) Site Sidm_32a Land west of Woolbrook Road, Sidmouth

Members noted that a "Park and Change" provision had long been mooted for this land which would offer a sustainable transport option for the community and help reduce traffic congestion.

A letter had been received from The Sidmouth Cycling Campaign suggesting that the boundary of the site be extended to include the former railway line in order that any future planning permission could designate the line as public open space and incorporate it as a footway/cycleway.

RESOLVED: to support the allocation of Sidm_32a for housing subject to the proviso referred to above and the inclusion of a "Park and Change" provision on this land.

e) Site Sidm_34a Land between Furzehill and Hillside, Sidbury

The site lies within a National Landscape area and would impinge on the green wedge between Sidford and Sidbury which is vital to preserve the distinct identities of these settlements.

Moreover, Sidbury Primary School is already at capacity, and additional housing would place further strain on local education infrastructure. Access to the site is also problematic. Development would affect the setting of Furzehill Farm which is a listed building.

RESOLVED: To strongly object to the allocation of Sidm_34a for housing.

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CHAIR OF THE PLANNING WORKING GROUP