

Cabinet

29 January 2026

East Devon Local Plan Consultation

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Bartlett, Planning and Emergency Planning

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

J Britton, Executive Director for Place Services

Report author and job title: Hilary Jordan, Service Manager for Spatial Planning

Email: hilary.jordan@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: **Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004**

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary

1. East Devon District Council has published a second full version of its local plan and has invited comments from Dorset Council as one of the adjoining local planning authorities. The deadline for responses is 12 noon on 26 January, so a provisional response has been sent, which now needs to be approved by Cabinet.
2. This is a second 'publication' or 'regulation 19' stage for the local plan. The first took place in February-March 2025, on the full draft plan, and this council sent a delegated response as there was not time to bring a report to Cabinet. That response is attached as Appendix 2 but the main points made were general support for the strategy of focusing development in the western part of East Devon district; noting that East Devon did not anticipate having unmet housing need that might have to be met elsewhere; and stating that in our view the plan should do more to recognise the role of Lyme Regis, in particular its town centre, as a closely adjoining settlement.
3. This second consultation is focused on a small number of changes, including to some of the site allocations in the original plan. There has been a reappraisal of the sites at Exmouth, Axminster, Honiton, Seaton, Feniton, Whimble and Darts Farm, following further work. As a result, an employment

site has been removed at Axminster, three sites at Honiton have been deleted from the plan, some changes have been made to the policy wording in relation to a site at Exmouth, and further work is still to be completed in relation to the housing allocations at Axminster, Seaton and Darts Farm.

4. East Devon District Council still anticipates being able to meet its housing needs within its area, and has not therefore made any request of this council to meet any of its development needs.
5. There is a policy in the plan requiring mitigation for the effects of development on nutrient levels in the River Axe catchment. East Devon District Council and Dorset Council are working jointly on the mitigation strategy, and East Devon District Council has received Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund grant from national government for its implementation. It is suggested that the plan should include more detail on this, including references in the relevant site-specific policies.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the response to East Devon District Council, set out in Appendix 1, be agreed.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 To ensure that this Council's views are taken into account in preparing the East Devon Local Plan, and maintain appropriate cooperation during the production of both councils' local plans.

3. The report

- 3.1 East Devon District Council is preparing a new local plan, likely to be adopted in 2027-2028 and with an anticipated end date of 2042. Initial consultations took place in 2023, 2022 and 2024. A first 'publication' or 'regulation 19' plan was published in February 2025. This has now been revised in response to feedback and further evidence work, and a second version of the plan has now been published, with responses invited by 26 January 2026. As this deadline is the day before the Cabinet meeting, a provisional response will be sent, with the final response confirmed after this meeting.
- 3.2 As the council had reached its 'regulation 19' stage by March 2025, the plan is being prepared under transitional arrangements that were set out in the 2024 revision of the National Planning Policy Framework. This means that it is only required to meet 80% of the new standard housing method targets.
- 3.3 The plan is based on this 80% target, of 950.4 homes per annum rather than the 1,188 derived from the new standard method. 950.4 per annum results in a target of 20,909 over the whole 22-year plan period, and the anticipated supply over that period set out in the plan is 22,943, including a surplus of 2,034 or 12.18% of the target figure. The plan also proposes a stepped housing target, of 850 per annum up until 2032 rising to 1,070 per annum after 2032.
- 3.4 Housing growth is distributed between the towns and larger villages in East Devon, with a particular focus on the western part of the district, closer to Exeter, referred to as the 'West End' of the plan area. This includes the existing new settlement of Cranbrook, and a further proposed new settlement of Marlcombe, east of Exeter.
- 3.5 The plan anticipates meeting its housing need within the plan area, and East Devon District Council has not therefore made any requests of adjoining councils to meet any unmet housing need. Work on the Dorset Council Local Plan is still at too early a stage to be able to confirm whether or not we will have unmet housing need: if that proves to be the case then a formal request will need to be sent at a later stage. East Devon District Council has published draft 'Statements of Common Ground' on its local plan website, but these are early drafts that officers of this council have not seen before, and we are not expected to agree them until discussion has taken place.
- 3.6 Dorset Council and East Devon District Council are working together to address the nutrient mitigation requirements for any new development in the River Axe catchment area. Neither council is likely to allocate a large amount of development within this area, but nonetheless this mitigation is important for enabling the delivery of some of the housing supply, and both councils stand to gain from constructive and close working to secure it. East Devon District Council is lead authority for this catchment area and has received a

Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund grant from central government towards the work. The approach in Strategic Policy PB04, i.e. a requirement for development to demonstrate nutrient neutrality within the catchment of the River Axe SAC, is consistent with Dorset Council's position on this matter. However the site-specific allocation policies do not reference this particular habitat mitigation issue, and there is no reference in the text of the plan to the investment of the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund grant to support the delivery of homes within the catchment. It is suggested that both the plan and the draft Statement of Common Ground should make more positive reference to the delivery of nutrient mitigation within the River Axe catchment.

4. Alternative options considered

- 4.1 Dorset Council is required by national legislation and policy to engage with its neighbours in the formation of Local Plans. As such, there is no option to consider other than responding to the consultation.

5. Legal considerations

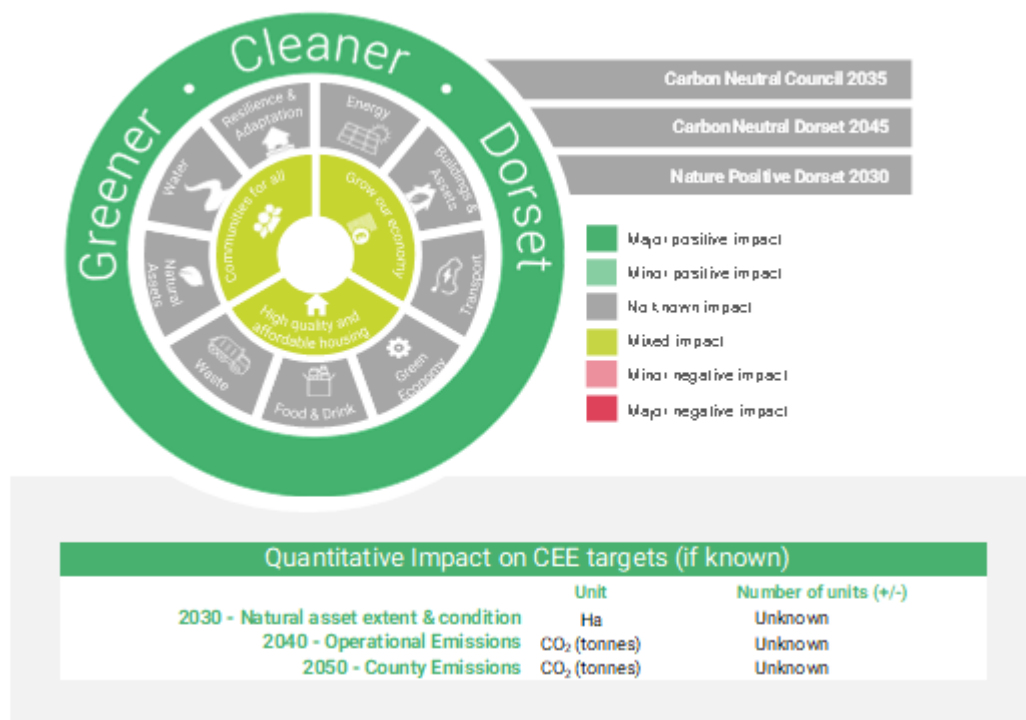
- 5.1 Although the legal Duty to Cooperate has been removed, there remains a need for councils to cooperate on the production of their local plans. If Dorset Council did not engage in this cooperation on strategic cross-boundary issues, it would be unlikely that the Dorset Council Local Plan would be found sound at the examination stage. A considered response to the consultation is therefore essential.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The response to the East Devon Local Plan consultation has been funded through existing budgets as business as usual. There are therefore no further financial implications arising from this report.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 7.1.1 This Cabinet report seeks endorsement of the response to the East Devon Local Plan consultation. As such, there are limited implications for the natural environment, climate and ecology for Dorset.



8. Well-being and health implications

- 8.1 The response to the consultation does not have any direct well-being and health implications for the Dorset Council area.

9. Other implications

- 9.1 None

10. Risk implications

- 10.1 If a response is not made to the East Devon District Council's draft Local Plan, there may be implications for the examination of the Dorset Council Local Plan, as it is important to demonstrate that the councils have cooperated during local plan preparation.

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

11. Equalities

- 11.1 East Devon District Council has undertaken an equalities impact assessment of their Local Plan as part of the plan-making process.

12. **Appendices**

12.1 Appendix 1: Response to the East Devon Local Plan second regulation 19 consultation

12.2 Appendix 2: previous response sent to the first regulation 19 plan

13. **Background papers**

13.1 Second Regulation 19 Local Plan Consultation, November 2025-January 2026, East Devon District Council, available at [Second Regulation 19 Local Plan Consultation \(Nov 2025 to Jan 2026\) - East Devon](#)

8 **Report sign-off**

11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)