EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL
Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee Meeting

Notes of the meeting Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee held at 5:00pm on Monday 30th September 2024 in the Committee Room, First Floor, Town Hall.

Present

Councillor Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Mark Williamson	MW	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Joe Whibley	JW	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Pauline Stott	PS	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Graham Deasy	GD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Tim Dumper	TD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor David Poor	DP	Exmouth Town Council
Angela King	AK	East Devon District Council
Lisa Bowman	LB	Exmouth Town Council
Mollie Carey	MC	Exmouth Town Council

Apologies

Roy Pryke	RP	ECA
Ian Cann	IA	ECS

1. Election of Chairman

Councillor TD was elected as Chairman, proposed by DP and seconded by JW.

2. Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence

Apologies were noted. Members introduced themselves and their ward representations as well as Chairmanship roles.

- TD is Deputy Chair of Planning and Chair of Exmouth Transport Partnership
- DP Chairs C.O.L.P
- MW Chairs Public Rights of Way WP.
- PS Chairs S106 & CIL and The Waterfront WP.
- JW is Chair of Planning and Chairman of the Council.
- Graham Chairs Flooding, Land Drainage and Water Quality WP.
- SG is the Deputy Chair of the Council.

LB informed AK that the ETC NP Continuity Committee is composed of the Chairs of various working parties. Each Committee/WP's terms of reference contribute to the overarching NP. The policies outlined in the NP necessitate that these Committees an WP'S address specific issues, which is why the committee's membership is structured as it is.

3. Update on Implementation Strategy and effectiveness of the Neighbourhood plan (Lisa Bowman and Deputy Chair of Planning).

LB provided an update on the implementation strategy and the effectiveness of the current neighbourhood plan, highlighting two key areas: policy and community actions.

There are over 30 policies in the plan, their effectiveness has been recorded through the Planning Committee. Some policies have worked as intended, while others have not. The Committee monitors the outcomes of planning applications, checking whether NP policies align with EDDC decisions. The data is recorded on an excel spreadsheet which has revealed that several policies have been ineffective. This tracking will inform a policy review during the five-year anniversary of the plan. A consultancy, Aecom, has been engaged to review 13 priority policies based on the evidence collected by the Committee's findings.

LB provided an update on community action linked to the neighbourhood plan, emphasising how the plan has informed spending priorities for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds. Due to having an adopted neighbourhood plan, ETC receives 25% of the CIL, which has amounted to around £1 million to date. This funding has supported various projects, such as £50,000 for the Liverton Road junction improvements, £50,000 for Phear Park Skate Park extension, £20,000 for floodlights, and £400,000 for the Dinan Way extension. Currently, £800,000 is earmarked for one of the five key infrastructure projects in the plan.

For community actions, LB discussed challenges in managing public expectations, as some aspirations outlined in the plan, like designating certain areas as conservation zones, are difficult to implement. Such as in the case of the Maer Valley Park, where land ownership issues have hindered delivery and are constrained by limitations outside the council's control. Members suggested continued use of an excel spreadsheet to track community aspirations and the need to communicate realistic outcomes to the public which will coincide with making policies clearer.

LB discussed the ongoing process of reviewing the neighbourhood plan in coordination with EDDC's emerging local plan. There have been workshops with Town and Parish Councils to address how to manage the review process effectively. The key challenge is ensuring that the neighbourhood plan remains relevant, especially as the new local plan may be adopted by 2025. Any conflicts between the neighbourhood and local plans would be resolved in favour of the most recently adopted one.

AK emphasised that while neighbourhood plans must align with current local plans, preparing for updates should wait until the new local plan passes examination. Members agreed, suggesting that gaps in the neighbourhood plan, particularly around climate change, might be filled with better policies in the new local plan.

The group also discussed the scope of neighbourhood plan policies, noting that they don't need to cover every issue if national or local policies already do so effectively. They acknowledged the Aecom policy review, agreeing with its findings and recommendations, but questioned whether some policies were truly needed.

MW raised the question of whether individual policies in the neighbourhood plan that aren't working can be changed without redoing the entire plan. LB confirmed that the focus is on adjusting specific underperforming policies, using the Aecom report to guide the review..

4. Update on Exmouth NP Policy Review and Housing Needs Assessment (Lisa Bowman and Angela King).

The Housing Needs Assessment had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.

Additionally, LB mentioned that funding had been secured to conduct the housing needs assessment for Exmouth, which was not initially included in the neighbourhood plan due to the five-year land supply available at the time.

Members discussed issues such as subjective policies on design and the need to strengthen policies on housing and economic land use, particularly for younger people. Strengthening policies on housing is crucial, as current policies are sometimes used inappropriately by developers like McCarthy Stone. The housing needs assessment provides evidence to clarify local housing requirements

The discussion focussed on housing policies, planning, and the implications of government planning frameworks and the conversation touched on several key points related to neighbourhood planning, local housing, and economic development:

Members addressed several issues, including:

- **Neighbourhood Planning:** discussed how new government planning policies might affect the neighbourhood plans and whether changes in these frameworks will impact local housing and development strategies. The discussion addressed how the local plan and Section 106 agreements are designed to reflect local needs, particularly in areas like affordable housing. The aim is to ensure that the local plan works for the benefit of the community while aligning with larger policies.

- **Housing Viability and Affordability:** There's a concern about developers using viability arguments to avoid building affordable housing. The current policy calls for 25% affordable housing, but this requirement is often undermined.

- **Social and Affordable Housing:** The conversation touched on the challenges of delivering social and affordable housing, the need for local involvement, and ensuring these homes are accessible to the community.

- **Excessive Retirement Housing:** There is a concern over the oversaturation of retirement homes, particularly McCarthy & Stone properties, which are struggling to sell. The issue is worsened by high management fees, discouraging buyers.

- **Future Policy Considerations**: The group discussed refining local policies, potentially halting the development of new retirement properties due to the large number of unoccupied homes and aligning their local plan with the emerging government frameworks.

- **Housing Needs Assessment:** There were questions about the methodology used in housing needs assessments. Some scepticism exists regarding how data is extrapolated from district-wide assessments and applied to local needs. The use of census data is deemed robust, but specific local factors, such as salaries and affordability, are critical to ensure accurate results.

- **Balancing Population Demographics:** There is concern over Exmouth's aging population. The group discussed how neighbourhood planning could help balance the population by attracting younger families and addressing the housing market to serve diverse age groups. The loss of younger demographics after the closure of a Rolle College was highlighted as an issue.

- **Second Homes and Airbnb:** Members discussed the issue of second homes and short-term rentals like Airbnb, which may affect the housing market. The government has introduced a Council tax premium for unoccupied second homes, and EDDC is working to understand how this affects ETC's precept.

- **Economic Development:** Strengthening the economy and employment opportunities are also of concern, particularly in addressing the age profile issue. Members noted that sectors like marine engineering, leisure, and creative industries offer potential for growth, but the local economic plan needs further development.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the complexity of local planning, housing, and economic issues, emphasising the need for evidence-based decision-making and a focus on balancing community needs.

LB will be exploring local funding resources/opportunities to appoint another NP officer to assist with the review of the 13 priority policies.

AK will discuss the issues raised with Officers at EDDC and will provide an update on the findings at the next meeting.

The next meeting date is to be confirmed.

The meeting finished at 6.05pm