

# Parish report from your District Councillors

## October 2024

### **Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system Consultation response from South Hams District Council, 24/09/2024.**

South Hams and West Devon Councils welcome the opportunity to work with government to create a planning system that can deliver the homes that we need, and to ensure that the development system creates equitable and climate resilient places. However, the key changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and Standard method being proposed by the government are not considered to be a suitable response to the key housing and climate challenges we are all trying to address. In the broadest terms, the aspirational annual figure for housing delivery is not based upon any objectively tested evidence, and disregards key performance indicators that would suggest a different set of policy interventions are required. In the last ten years the planning system has granted over 1 million planning permissions that have yet to be implemented. The current planning system has identified sufficient land to meet future housing needs for the near future, but without the ability to enforce implementation, the supply of housing will always fall short of need, as developers wait for optimum market conditions before they build out planning permissions - and optimum market conditions relies upon scarcity of product. The proposed housing figures for our specific area are considered to be inappropriate and undeliverable. Members of our Councils attended NPPF roadshows hosted by the Planning Advisory Service, where the proposed standard method was described as an 'unconstrained assessment of the minimum number of homes needed in an area'. If the government is going to rely upon such a crude methodology, the NPPF needs to include sufficient flexibility for local authorities to apply constraints and spatial context to their housing numbers. Our area for example benefits from some of the most well-known and visited landscapes in the country. We have a national park, two designated National Landscapes (formerly AONBs) and a World Heritage Site, as well as countless SSSIs and national and local nature reserves. The natural beauty of our area contributes to a thriving tourism economy, from which a significant proportion of our communities' benefit. However, for all that the tourism sector contributes to our local economy, it also creates broader issues that we are struggling to address. We have lost a significant proportion of our housing stock, particularly private rented housing, to tourism accommodation. The higher number of visitors we get each year exposes our housing stock to a larger number of potential buyers, most of which have higher disposable incomes than local people earning local wages. The tourism sector also

creates a reliance upon seasonal, lower-paid and less secure employment than other sectors. All of which leads to unaffordable homes and relatively low wages. Despite our spatial constraints and sensitive landscapes, we have continued to deliver a consistent supply of new homes that exceeds our projected change in household growth. It is therefore inexplicable that we should be expected to deliver a huge uplift in housing numbers that is predicated on a housing stock that comprises a large number of dwellings that are not even used as homes (second homes of 15% of the whole in some areas). It would also appear that our housing figures have been subject to further uplift due to the affordability challenges that we face. Without restricting who we are building new homes for, the only beneficiaries of delivering such a huge uplift in housing numbers will be inward migrants and volume housebuilders. If the government is minded to pursue the proposed standard method for

calculating housing need, it is recommended that the following changes to the wider planning and housing systems to ensure that new homes benefit those in housing need;

- Greater ability for local councils to acquire land and build their own homes
- Remove the right to buy for new affordable homes
- Require developers to deliver a significant proportion of discount open market homes that can only be owned and occupied by people with a demonstrable long-term connection to the local area
- Apply the ‘golden rule’ to all greenfield land (not just greenbelt) when considering viability matters, capping the land value in viability considerations to no more than three times the value of the previous land use.
- Greater financial incentives to unlock brownfield land
- Local authorities with both landscape and affordability constraints must have the flexibility to reduce their housing needs figures to reflect challenges of delivery
- Developers must be penalised for the non-implementation of planning permissions on sites allocated in local plans
- Capping the amount of tourism accommodation that can operate in areas of high demand, to ensure enough homes remain to meet the needs of local communities
- Freedom to apply primary residency restrictions where applicable by the LPA Finally, it is worth considering alternative options that can stimulate economic growth, not least if the existing housing stock can be better utilised to create the homes that we need, both in terms of meeting future housing needs and improving the health and wellbeing of the nation. An enhanced national programme of housing retrofit and incentives for ‘right-sizing’ would improve both the quality and efficiency of our housing stock and make better use of under-utilised space by better correlating household size and dwelling size. There are already three million more dwellings in England than households, and of these, 9 million homes have at least two permanently empty bedrooms. Household sizes continue to decrease as the average age increases. The government is strongly urged to reform the planning system to deliver qualitative, rather than quantitative outcomes.

In short, the planning system is not the problem. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are already identifying sufficient land and granting enough planning permissions to meet projected housing needs, but the homes are not being built.

## LCWIP consultation

Our public consultation on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is now live.

We're asking residents to tell us about cycling, wheeling and walking opportunities across the District.



The consultation launched on Wednesday and will run until 11 October.

Please encourage your residents to take part in the online consultation at: <https://activetravelshwd.commonplace.is/>

You can also [read our press release](#) on the website.

## Digital phone public drop-in sessions

As you will be aware, we have been told the copper phone network is being switched off and replaced with digital technology. This is because it is old and becoming harder and more expensive to maintain.



The phone network in the UK is owned by BT and will be retired by January 2027. This means other providers that use BT's network must follow the same timescale.

Other companies with their own networks such as Virgin Media plan to follow a similar timescale.

Over the coming months BT is targeting the SW region to help people switch over to digital phones. For many of us this will not be an issue, but it could cause anxiety for people with poor mobile signal and poor broadband.

BT are running a series of public drop in events this year [which are listed on their website](#). Please be aware that there will be other providers who will offer digital phone services which residents may also wish to explore.

Here are a selection of BT events being held across the county, including in the South Hams:

**Plymouth - 24<sup>th</sup> September, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m**

Central Library, 167-171 Armada Way, Plymouth, Devon, PL1 1HZ

**Exeter - 26<sup>th</sup> September, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m**

Mercure Rougemount Hotel, Queen Street, Exeter, EX4 3SP

**Kingsbridge - 30<sup>th</sup> October, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m**

Library, Ilbert Road, Kingsbridge, TQ7 1EB

**Tavistock 13<sup>th</sup> November, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m**

Tavistock Library, The Quay, Plymouth Road, Tavistock, PL19 8AB

**Ivybridge 19<sup>th</sup> November, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m**

Ivybridge Library, Erme Court, Leonards Way, Ivybridge, PL21 0SZ

Please help share this information about the events with your constituents and signpost them for more information at <https://www.bt.com/broadband/digital-voice>

## District Council Resolutions: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2024

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| <p>26<br/>September<br/>2024</p> | <p>Notice of<br/>Motions</p> | <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>That the Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. agrees, as a matter of principle, that it is the Council’s view that all the extra revenue raised by 200% Council Tax on Second Homes should be allocated to housing;</li> <li>2. lobbies Devon County Council and seeks assurances that, in line with the above principle, all the money raised within the South Hams for use to benefit those residents and businesses most affected by the impacts of those second homes; and</li> <li>3. asks all South Hams County Councillors, as well as those standing in the 2025 election, to vote against any budget that does not allocate second home tax money to housing.</li> </ol> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <p>This Council <b>RESOLVES</b> to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. condemn the proposal to remove the Winter Fuel Payment from pensioners who do not claim Pension Credit or are on other benefits, recognising the disproportionate impact this will have on our most vulnerable residents, particularly those in our rural communities; and</li> <li>2. commit to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ask for funding for a local advertising and outreach campaign to raise awareness about Pension Credit and other benefits, targeting pensioners who may be eligible but are not currently claiming.</li> </ol> |
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