



## **North Devon Council & Torrige District Council**

Report Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Topic: Draft North Devon and Torrige Statement of Community Involvement

Report by: Senior Planning Policy Officer (TDC)

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1. This report seeks this Committee's approval to publish a draft North Devon and Torrige Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for public consultation. The SCI sets out how and when the Councils will engage and undertake consultation in plan making and in the determination of planning applications.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1. This Committee endorses the draft North Devon and Torrige SCI, as provided in appendix A, for public consultation over a six-week period.

2.2. This Committee delegates to the Torrige Planning Manager and the North Devon Head of Place, Property and Regeneration, in consultation with the Chairperson of this Committee approval of any minor amendments and corrections to the draft SCI prior to the commencement of the consultation period referred to in recommendation 2.1

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1. To ensure the Councils are compliant with relevant legislation and regulations on public consultation and engagement when preparing planning policy documents and in the process of determining planning applications.

### **4. REPORT**

4.1. This report presents a draft SCI for North Devon and Torrige that will replace the previous single authority documents adopted by Torrige in 2014 and North Devon in 2015. The draft document is attached to this report as appendix A.

4.2. Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning Act 2008, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017) requires that local planning authorities prepare a SCI, and



the Town and Country Planning Regulations (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 requires that the SCI should be subject to review every 5 years from adoption.

- 4.3. The purpose of the SCI is to explain to local communities and stakeholders how they will be involved in the preparation, alteration and review of local plans and also in the determination of planning applications. Local planning authorities are also required to set out in the SCI their policies for giving advice or assistance to neighbourhood planning groups.
- 4.4. The SCI helps to ensure that local communities have greater ownership over local planning decisions and are better able to shape the places where they live and work. The SCI defines the standards to be met by the Councils in terms of community involvement and stakeholder engagement.
- 4.5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the role of community engagement in the planning system, setting out that “Plans should be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development... be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees.” (Paragraph 16 NPPF). Furthermore, the NPPF states “plans should be accessible through the use of digital tools to assist public involvement and policy presentation” (Paragraph 16 NPPF). In respect of decision making, the NPPF further emphasises that “early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties” (Paragraph 39 NPPF).
- 4.6. The SCI outlines the different stages of consultation for Local Development Document preparation and identifies the methods that will be adopted to encourage and enable wide ranging participation by our communities and stakeholders. The SCI also sets out the Councils’ commitment to advise and assist neighbourhood planning groups in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- 4.7. Additionally, the SCI identifies out how the community and stakeholders will be involved in the process of submitting and determining planning applications, including how they are publicised and consulted upon. It also provides guidance on how comments can be made on planning applications, the arrangements for the respective Plans Committees and the decision making and appeal process.



4.8. Although the SCI is not required to be subject to an independent assessment it is considered best practice that it be subject to a period of public consultation prior to formal adoption. It is therefore recommended that the draft SCI as set out in Appendix A be subject to a period of 6 weeks public consultation. The draft document will be published on the Councils' websites, consultees will be directly notified of the consultation and a public notice will be placed in the local press and social media will be used to raise awareness of the consultation. Following the conclusion of the consultation, responses will be analysed and presented to this Committee, which may include proposed amendments with a recommendation to adopt a new SCI.

## 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The preparation and publication of the draft SCI forms part of the planning policy teams existing work programme. Any costs resulting from the consultation can be met within existing budgets and will be shared across the Councils.

## 6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. No impact identified.

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

7.1. No environmental implications result from the recommendations of this report.

## 8. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

8.1. Schedule 2, paragraph 1.1.1-1.1.3 of the North Devon Council and Torrige District Council Joint Planning Policy Agreement.

## 9. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004



- National Planning Policy Framework 2021
- Town and Country Planning Regulations (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- North Devon Council Statement of Community Involvement 2015
- Torrige District Council Statement of Community Involvement 2014

(The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

## 11. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The North Devon Council and Torrige District Council Corporate Priorities have been considered in the drafting of the report.

## 12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers:

Cllr P. Watson (TDC) Lead member for Planning and Development.

Cllr M Prowse (NDC) Lead Member for Economic Development and Strategic Planning Policy

Shaun Harrington (TDC) Planning Manager

Sarah-Jane Mackenzie Shapland (NDC) Head of Place, Property and Regeneration