

PLYMOUTH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (JANUARY 2025)

1. PURPOSE OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

- 1.1. A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is required under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). It specifies the following things:
- The development plan documents which, when prepared, will comprise part of the development plan for the area.
 - The subject matter and geographical area to which each is to relate.
 - The timetable for the preparation or revision of the development plan documents.
- 1.2 Although Plymouth City Council has an adopted Joint Local Plan with South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council, the three councils will not be preparing a new Joint Local Plan and so this LDS relates purely to Plymouth.

2. CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND OTHER PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS FOR PLYMOUTH

The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014-2034.

- 2.1. The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP) was adopted by South Hams District Council on 21 March 2019, and by West Devon Borough Council and Plymouth City Council on 26 March 2019. As of the 26 March 2019, the JLP comprises the most significant element of the development plan covering the three local authorities.
- 2.2 It should be noted that parts of the administrative areas of South Hams and West Devon are covered by Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA). DNPA operates as a separate local planning authority with a separate Local Plan.
- 2.3 The policies of the JLP are supported by the Plymouth and South West Devon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This was adopted by West Devon Borough Council on 9 June 2020, Plymouth City Council on 22 June 2020, and South Hams District Council on 16 July 2020. SPDs do not have the legal status of development plan, but they are local development documents which set out guidance relating to the implementation of policies set out in the development plan.
- 2.4 Given the legal requirement¹ for a local planning authority (LPA) to complete a review of its local plan every five years, the JLP councils published a JLP Five

¹ Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

Year Review Report (5YRR) in March 2024. The report was approved by West Devon Borough Council on 5 March 2024, South Hams District Council on 7 March 2024 and Plymouth City Council on 11 March 2024.

- 2.5 The 5YRR demonstrated that the JLP continued to provide an effective strategy for the management of growth and development across the whole plan area. It concluded that the JLP taken as a whole remains an up-to-date sound plan that is still fit for purpose and should continue to be used in decision making.
- 2.6 Since the 5YRR was approved by the councils, further changes have occurred in relation to the national planning context, most particularly through revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the standard method for calculating local housing need, both published in December 2024. Whilst most of the policies of the JLP remain up-to-date and consistent with the NPPF, the level of housing provision for the JLP area identified in Policy SPT3 is now significantly less than the figure of local housing need derived from the standard method. This aspect of the JLP is therefore out-of-date and will need to be addressed in the next local plan.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.7 The Localism Act 2011 introduced powers to enable local communities to produce neighbourhood plans. Neighbourhood plans enable communities to take control of planning matters in their areas, setting out policies to bring forward sites for new development and to be used by the planning authority to determine planning applications. Once 'made', a neighbourhood plan becomes a part of the development plan.
- 2.8 At the time of this LDS coming into the force, only one neighbourhood plan has been 'made' in Plymouth:
- Plympton St Mary Neighbourhood Plan (May 2019).
- 2.9 Additionally, the Hoe Neighbourhood Forum is currently preparing a neighbourhood plan for the Hoe. The Forum consulted on a draft Hoe Neighbourhood Plan, under Regulation 14, Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, between 18 November 2024 and 13 January 2025.

Interim Planning Statements

- 2.7 LPAs may also from time to time prepare informal planning documents that have the potential to be material considerations in relation to planning decisions. These are not statutory documents in the way that a formal development plan document or SPD would be, but if subject to public consultation and formal approval of the LPA, may carry reasonable weight in the determination of planning applications.

- 2.8 Interim Planning Statements (IPs) are such a document and can be used as a tool to set out new policy considerations ahead of the production of a new local plan.
- 2.9 At the time of this LDS coming into the force, there is one Interim Planning Statement in place, which relates to the JLP area:
- Climate Emergency Planning Statement (November 2022).

3. NEW LOCAL PLAN FOR PLYMOUTH

- 3.1. On 16 January 2024, the JLP Partnership Board agreed a public statement on the intentions of the three councils in relation to the next iteration of plan making in the area. This statement is shown in full in the Appendix to this LDS and includes the following key proposals:
- That the next iteration of local plan making for the JLP area will not be as a joint local plan covering Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon. Instead, Plymouth City Council will work on a new local plan based on the city's administrative boundaries;
 - That these next iterations are likely to formally commenced in early 2026, once the government has published its new local plan regulations (currently proposed to happen in autumn 2025);
 - That the three councils will continue to collaborate on strategic spatial planning for the wider area, including through continuing to monitor and implement the current Joint Local Plan until such a time as it is replaced by new plans, and also in working together on cross boundary issues and other strategic matters of shared interest to ensure a joined up approach;
 - Within the context of the wider devolution agenda, that the three councils will seek wider strategic conversations in Devon and Cornwall to consider how best to collectively plan at a strategic level for the significant amount of housing delivery and growth that is required.
- 3.2 Plymouth's new local plan will, when adopted, be the primary development plan document for the city. It will cover the administrative area of Plymouth and set a clear vision and planning strategy for the city moving forward. In particular, it will:
- Respond to the new standard method for local housing need by identifying deliverable and developable sites for housing;
 - Align the planning strategy for the city with its economic strategy and growth plan, recognising the key economic and growth drivers and needs, and delivering strong strategic connectivity;
 - Recognise Plymouth's strategic role as a regional city within a mainly rural area, surrounded by high quality landscapes and environments and providing a service centre for a significant hinterland;
 - Support transformational change in Plymouth City Centre with a major step change of housing provision and regeneration;
 - Deliver policies and proposals for a well-connected and accessible city, with thriving well-designed communities and protection of the city's richness of environment, both marine and land;
 - Respond to the challenge of delivering a net zero and climate resilient city;

- Plan for the infrastructure needed to deliver a sustainable city, according to forecast demographic changes linked to housing delivery and economic growth.
- Cover the period 2026 – 2050, with detailed site allocations for at least a 15 year period to 2041.

3.3 The timetable for preparing this new local plan, and potentially its scope, is dependent on a number of factors including the timing of the government’s publication of revised Local Plan Regulations (the government has indicated that this will be by autumn 2025²), whether the standard timetable for new local plans under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act remains as consulted upon by the previous government³ and the outcomes of the government’s proposals for devolution and local plan reorganisation following publication of the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024. However, subject to these caveats, the following timetable is proposed:

Stage of process	Target	Dates
Scoping	4 months	January 2026 – April 2026
Plan visioning and strategy development	23 months	May 2026 – December 2026
Evidence gathering and drafting the plan		January 2027 – November 2027
Engagement / proposing changes, submission		December 2027 – March 2028
Examination	6 months	April 2028 – September 2028
Finalisation and adoption of digital plan	1 month	October 2028

3.4 In advance of formal commencement of the local plan, the City Council will undertake preparatory work to help inform the scoping and delivering of the plan. This will include, for example:

- Review of the Statement of Community Involvement;
- Engagement of communities on local planning issues;
- Urban capacity assessments to establish scope for urban intensification in city centre and other areas as appropriate;
- Site investigations to help identify potential development opportunities;
- Early evidence base work;
- Conversations with regional stakeholders on issues of shared interest.

² As set out in MHCLG Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system, 2 August 2024

³ [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: consultation on implementation of plan-making reforms - GOV.UK](#)

APPENDIX:
STATEMENT OF PLYMOUTH AND SOUTH WEST DEVON JOINT LOCAL
PLAN PARTNERSHIP BOARD, 16 JANUARY 2025

Since January 2024, the Joint Local Plan Partnership Board has been considering the implications of the national planning reforms for its next steps in the local plan. As is well documented, there has been an unprecedented period of uncertainty surrounding these reforms, dating at least as far back as the Planning White Paper of 2020.

The election of a new government in July 2024 has seen a continuation of change, with a commitment to planning reform to build 1.5 million new homes as a central plank of its mission to 'kickstart economic growth'. Within the last few weeks, we have seen the publication of a new National Planning Policy Framework, with a stronger focus on housing delivery, a new standard method for calculating local housing need which radically increases the housing requirement for our areas, and a Devolution White Paper which speaks of significant local government reorganisation and a new framework of strategic planning.

When the three councils agreed to work together on a Joint Local Plan in 2016 the context was entirely different. So, notwithstanding that the Joint Local Plan is widely regarded as an exemplar of joint strategic planning, delivering a sound planning framework for Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon, we felt we needed time to reflect on these changes before committing to a new Joint Local Plan. The structure of local planning is such an important and sensitive matter, and it is only right and proper that each council consider what is in the best interests of the communities they serve in determining the best approach for moving forward.

The three councils have now had the chance to do this reflection, and the following way forward is now proposed.

1. That the next iteration of local plan making for the JLP area will not be as a joint local plan covering Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon. Instead, Plymouth City Council will work on a new local plan based on the city's administrative boundaries;
2. That these next iterations are likely to formally commence in early 2026, once the government has published its new local plan regulations (currently proposed to happen in autumn 2025);
3. That the three councils will continue to collaborate on strategic spatial planning for the wider area, including through continuing to monitor and implement the current Joint Local Plan until such a time as it is replaced by new plans, and also in working together on cross boundary issues and other strategic matters of shared interest to ensure a joined up approach;
4. Within the context of the wider devolution agenda, that the three councils will seek wider strategic conversations in Devon and Cornwall to consider how best to collectively plan at a strategic level for the significant amount of housing delivery and growth that is required.

Given the scale of this agenda, the Joint Local Plan Partnership Board will continue to meet to provide the governance needed for implementing and monitoring the existing Joint Local Plan, and a basis for strategic conversations around the future planning of each of the three areas, including opportunities for continued collaborative working. All three councils agree that the significant benefits of joint working over the last 9 years are too valuable to be lost, and this approach will help ensure that productive joint working continues in our area for at least the next plan period.