

LOCAL PLAN BACKGROUND PAPER

Natural Infrastructure & Growth Scrutiny Panel,
3rd December 2025



I. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP) is the current statutory development plan for the City. It was adopted by Plymouth City Council on 26 March 2019 and by South Hams District Council on 21 March 2019, and by West Devon Borough Council on 26 March 2019.
- 1.2. On 16 January 2025, the JLP Partnership Board agreed a public statement setting out the intentions of the three councils in relation to the next iteration of plan making in the area. This included the statement that: *'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. NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 2.1. The previous government launched a process on national planning reform, which included amongst other things the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 as well as proposals to introduce National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) and set in place a new system for preparing local plans.
- 2.2. The current government has continued the process of planning reform, most particularly through further revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the standard method for calculating local housing need, both published in December 2024, but also through an increased focus on strategic planning at wider-than-local level.
- 2.3. We are currently awaiting new Local Plan Regulations, further revisions to National Planning Policy Guidance, consultation on the NDMPs, guidance in relation to strategic planning and the proposed (sub) regional 'spatial development strategies', further changes to the NPPF, and the completion of the passage of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill through the Parliament.

3. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

- 3.1. In February 2025 the Council published its Local Development Scheme (LDS) and submitted it to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in line with the required government timetable. The LDS sets out a proposed 30 month timetable for producing a Local Plan, to comply with the anticipated statutory timetable to be introduced by the government (see below), and identifies a proposed high level scope of the new plan.

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

- 3.2. This timetable was always dependent on a number of factors coming into play, most particularly the publication of revised Local Plan Regulations without which we cannot commence a local plan under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act. Given that (at time of writing) these Regulations are still to be published, it is highly likely that the start of the process will need to be moved back. However, each of the stages of the process is likely to be structured as set out in the LDS given that the government has indicated its intention to continue with the proposed statutory 30 month timetable.

4. THE NEW LOCAL PLAN

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. While the national changes are awaited, the Chief Planner's Planning Newsletter (Aug 2025) has encouraged local planning authorities to undertake preparatory work. As part of the preparatory work in Plymouth, officers have undertaken early informal engagement with ward councillors (September 2025) and initiated a 'call for sites' process to enable those with interest in land in the city to can let us know of the land they wish to be considered for future development.
- 4.3. The LDS identifies a proposed high level scoping of the key issues to be considered in the Local Plan (set out in the Annex), and the Scrutiny Panel is invited to give its views about whether or not these are the right issues, including identifying any gaps. This will help officers continue their preparation in advance of the awaited national changes. Officers will provide a presentation at the meeting to provide more information on these themes (a copy is included in the Agenda Pack).

**ANNEX: DRAFT LOCAL PLAN SCOPE, FROM LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME
(FEBRUARY 2025)**

1. Respond to the new standard method for local housing need by identifying deliverable and developable sites for housing;
2. 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;
3. 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;
4. Support transformational change in Plymouth City Centre with a major step change of housing provision and regeneration;
5. 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;
6. Respond to the challenge of delivering a net zero and climate resilient city;
7. Plan for the infrastructure needed to deliver a sustainable city, according to forecast demographic changes linked to housing delivery and economic growth.