

Council – 13 September 2007

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – TOTNES AND DARTINGTON
DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT – PREFERRED OPTIONS**

Report of the Head of Community Regeneration

Statutory Powers: Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Financial Implications: The Totnes and Dartington Development Plan Document (DPD) must be produced in accordance with the timescale shown in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) timetable to avoid the loss of Planning Delivery Grant.

Purpose: This report seeks approval to publish the Totnes and Dartington DPD (Preferred Options) for consultation. The report sets out the purpose and scope of the document and the key issues it needs to address.

Priorities: The Totnes and Dartington DPD will link to all Council Priorities and Commitments.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Members RESOLVE that the Totnes and Dartington Development Plan Document (Preferred Options) be published for consultation.

Background

1. The Totnes and Dartington Development Plan Document (DPD) is another priority document in the South Hams Local Development Framework (LDF) portfolio. It deals with the key spatial planning issues for the settlements of Totnes and Dartington. It does not, however, deal with the wider Totnes catchment area, which is dealt with in the Rural Areas DPD (Issues and Options stage published July 2007).

Purpose and Scope of Document

2. The Totnes and Dartington DPD covers the market town of Totnes, the nearby village of Dartington (Cott) and their surroundings. The two key reasons for progressing the document are the need to up-date the local planning strategy for the area (the South Hams Local Plan 1996) and to address the priority needs of the area, principally for affordable housing. In recognition of the severity of the need for affordable housing in the Totnes area, the Council has prioritised Totnes as the first of the district's market towns to have a DPD prepared under the new LDF system.
3. The Totnes and Dartington DPD will establish the planning framework for this part of the district up to 2016. It will identify specific sites to meet the needs for housing and employment development as established in the LDF Core Strategy (adopted December 2006). It will also set out the other local planning policies for Totnes, which is designated as an Area Centre in the Core Strategy (Policy CS1: Settlement Designation and Town/Village Centres) and Dartington.

4. The content of the document can be broken down into three key elements:

- a. Vision
- b. Strategic Objectives
- c. Development Proposals

These are broad headings only and each is interrelated. The document also shows that mixed use proposals – a mixture of housing and employment land – have a part to play in meeting the strategic allocations.

5. Emerging proposals will need to be consistent with the vision and strategic objectives set out in the LDF Core Strategy. Not only will preferred sites need to be identified but robust reasons will need to be set out in supporting evidence as to why other alternatives have been rejected. Development boundaries will also be identified in this document for the settlements of Totnes and Dartington (Cott) consistent with the Core Strategy (Policy CS1).
6. The document is at Preferred Options stage and is due to be published for consultation in October 2007. Members should note that a further stage called the Submission stage will follow, currently programmed for May 2008 followed by an Examination in November 2008 prior to adoption in June 2009.

Document Content

7. The most significant issues that the document must deal with relate primarily to housing and employment land. A site or sites must be proposed for about 400 new dwellings and about 5 hectares of new employment land.
8. A comprehensive approach to bringing forward new development sites will need to be taken to ensure the delivery of high quality, sustainable, mixed used development. Proposals should seek to contribute to the Vision set out in the document and to the delivery of appropriate infrastructure and community facilities. Although many new developments will be required to provide some facilities on-site, proposals will also need to relate to Totnes/Dartington as a whole in terms of higher order facilities and the functioning of the settlements.
9. In relation to Totnes and Dartington (Cott) the DPD will need to define development boundaries around the settlements and designate policy areas to safeguard areas of local importance. For example, open spaces may need protection in order to maintain the contribution they make to the amenity and visual character of the area. In Totnes a Town Centre Zone will be designated to provide a locational focus for a range of activities.
10. In broad terms, the DPD proposes a set of greenfield sites as preferred options for new housing and employment development and also identifies brownfield site opportunities for regeneration within the development boundary.

Current Progress

11. The Totnes/Dartington DPD document has been prepared for publication at Preferred Options stage. Throughout the process there has been a good deal of joint-working and internal and external consultation (on a confidential basis). Officers have also met with the local Members. The assessment of potential development sites has been an extensive process and has been based on an approach which has sustainability at its heart – Sustainability Threshold Assessment (STA). The STA matrix is appended to the DPD.
12. Officers are still carrying out work to ensure that the DPD and supporting documents are fit for purpose by the time of publication. Turnover of staff (and particularly the recent departure of the former Forward Planning Manager) and recruitment difficulties have compounded the challenges faced. Furthermore, the learning experience of the Core Strategy and Sherford AAP examinations has assisted but, at the same time, flagged up how very extensive is the work needed to secure a “sound” result at examination.

Next Steps

13. The Totnes/Dartington Preferred Options document is due to be published in October 2007 for a six week consultation period to provide communities and stakeholders with an opportunity to respond to the options proposed. It will be accompanied by a formal Sustainability Appraisal report which will consider the social, environmental and economic effects of the options proposed.
14. The current timetable for the document is as follows:
 - Preferred Options Stage – from October 2007
 - Submission and Formal Consultation – from May 2008
 - Examination – from November 2008
 - Adoption – June 2009.

Strategic Risk Assessment:

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to deliver the Totnes/Dartington DPD in line with the programme set out in the LDS will have consequences in relation to securing Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) for plan making.	Progress the Totnes/Dartington DPD in accord with the milestones set out in the approved LDS.
Delay in progression of Totnes/Dartington DPD will also delay progress in providing needed affordable housing in the area.	Progress the Totnes/Dartington DPD.
Delay in the Totnes/Dartington DPD is likely to increase pressure for development in the area (with the likelihood of appeals).	Progress the Totnes/Dartington DPD.
Failure to deliver the Totnes/Dartington DPD could result in ad hoc development that fails to secure, quality, sustainability and local distinctiveness or deliver affordable housing.	Press ahead with the DPD, including sustainability appraisal of robust proposals to help secure the Council's aspirations.

Rapid progression of the DPD without sufficient community involvement, sustainability appraisal or supporting evidence, leading to failure at examination.	Ensure that community involvement, sustainability appraisal and supporting evidence collection are properly carried out, which may impact on the rate of progress with the DPD.
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Conclusion

15. There is a clear need to make progress with the Totnes/Dartington document. This must be achieved without detriment to the Council's determination to secure quality and sustainability in all development and in particular to meet local needs for affordable homes. It is recommended that Members endorse publication of the Totnes/Dartington document in October 2007.

Graham Swiss
Forward Planning Manager

Council
 13 September 2007

Lee Bray
Head of Community Regeneration

Background Documents:

Submitted Local Development Scheme (April 2007)
 Devon Structure Plan to 2016 (October 2004)
 South Hams Local Plan (1996)
 South Hams Local Plan Review (January 2002)
 The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004
 Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)
 Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks (2004)
 Town and Village – Issues, Options and Preferred Options, October 2004.