

# **SOUTH HAMS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

## **PUBLIC EXAMINATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**

### **SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL'S OPENING STATEMENT**

South Hams District Council has a long history of statutory plan making and embraced the Local Development Framework (LDF) system from the earliest opportunity. The Council has already adopted several LDF documents including the Core Strategy, Sherford New Community Area Action Plan and Affordable Housing Development Plan Document (DPD). Good progress is also being made with other key parts of the LDF portfolio, including five site allocation DPDs and the Plymouth Urban Fringe DPD as well as this Development Policies DPD.

This DPD is an important part of the LDF portfolio for the district and the Council aims to have it in place as expeditiously as possible. It has gone through a thorough preparation process including Issues and Options (Oct.2004), Preferred Options (July 2007) and the Publication Stage (May 2009). This has provided the opportunity for the district's communities and other stakeholders to be involved and help to shape the contents of the new development policy framework.

The South Hams Sustainable Community Strategy (2007-11) sets out four key themes:

- Affordable Homes;
- Competitive Local Economy;
- Community Vibrancy; and
- Quality Environment.

It also sets the two cross-cutting themes of Social Inclusion and Climate Change. These six themes are reflected in the Council's corporate priorities and integrated into the LDF documents. This DPD seeks to deliver them through the development policies.

The LDF Core Strategy was adopted in December 2006 and establishes the overall vision for the South Hams LDF. The first five aims of the vision are equally applicable to the Development Policies and therefore form the vision for this DPD. They are:

- Meeting communities' needs locally;
- Securing sustainable development;
- Promoting the regeneration of market towns and villages and rural diversification;
- Prioritising developments for affordable homes and new jobs; and
- Protecting and enhancing the area's precious environmental heritage.

The Core Strategy contains a limited number of key strategic policies for the district. The Council has been one of the pioneers of the LDF system, and the South Hams Core Strategy therefore reflects the high level strategic focus which was a keynote of the system when it was first introduced. More recent government guidance suggests that Core Strategies can deal with matters of greater detail. However, these do not generally feature in our Core Strategy and so, to help deliver the most suitable and sustainable development to meet the above themes and vision, the Council considers that more detailed policy guidance is required. These policies aim to enable an appropriate level of assessment to help ensure that development which takes place within the district is of a high quality and appropriate for the district – which is highly cherished by residents and visitors alike.

The Council wishes to have a clear and robust policy position in place in order to deliver on these aspirations. Together with its partners it has a task to be accomplished. All of us want to make faster progress. This DPD is an important part of the toolkit we all need and our principal concern at the end of this examination is that we have a sound basis upon which to proceed. Up-to-date, robust policies are required to take over from the South Hams Local Plan Pt.1 General Policies, which were adopted back in 1996.

We look forward to exploring the issues mapped out for the hearings over the next two days, but most importantly ask you to bear in mind that the most pressing concern of the Council, partners, stakeholders and the local communities of the South Hams, is to be able to make real progress. The need for a “sound” DPD is paramount, and the Council trusts that you will find this document to be so.

Graham Swiss  
March 2010  
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South Hams District Council