



**Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan  
Opening Statement by Councillor Patrick Nicholson  
30<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

Good Morning. My name is Councillor Patrick Nicholson. I am Deputy Leader of Plymouth City Council and have specific responsibility for Strategic Transport, Housing and Planning.

I am here in my capacity as Chair of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan Member Steering Group which comprises senior councillors from the 3 Local Planning Authorities of South Hams District Council, West Devon Borough Council and Plymouth City Council and 1 Councillor representative from Devon County Council.

On behalf of all 3 councils I am very pleased to be able to welcome to Plymouth the Planning Inspectors conducting this Public Examination into the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan. I would also like to welcome all the participants taking part.

These Hearings mark the culmination of 2 years of hard work by officers and Members to pull together this Joint Local Plan. In fact, the work that has contributed to the JLP has its roots in the Plymouth Plan, and the West Devon and South Hams "Our Plans", which the Local Planning Authorities were producing before deciding to bring those 3 plans together into a single integrated strategy for the sub region.

Getting the JLP to this point has been a huge effort and a great achievement for the JLP Councils and is a demonstration of our commitment to proactively deliver sustainable development.

The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan is the first time that Plymouth City, West Devon Borough and South Hams District Councils have collaborated fully on the production of a Joint Local Plan. We are absolutely committed to the concept of proactive positive planning and translating the policies in this plan into delivery for the benefit of our communities. Indeed, the 3 authorities have already made commitments to ensure we have the future governance, monitoring and delivery arrangements in place to make this happen.

Although we have worked closely in the past on projects such as the Sherford new community and the Tavistock Rail Link, this Joint Local Plan is a landmark in that from now on the 3 Local Planning Authorities will be delivering a single planning framework for our area - simply, seamlessly and efficiently. Once adopted it will be only the **13<sup>th</sup>** Joint Local Plan in England.

The Joint Local Plan delivers an aspirational, yet realistic, vision for the growth and development of the plan area, which carries forward Plymouth's growth agenda while nurturing the main towns of South Hams and West Devon as the hearts of extensive rural communities. It makes provision for a minimum of **26,700** new homes, including **6,600** affordable homes, meeting the needs of our local communities in full. We are not asking any neighbouring area to meet the needs of our own Housing Market Area. According to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government that will make this plan one of only **40%** that will be meeting its Objectively Assessed Need in full. The plan has therefore risen to the challenges of planning sustainably for the future needs of the whole area.

The JLP contains policies enabling the creation of at least **13,200** new jobs in a range of business premises and locations. Based on a detailed and clear evidence-base, it provides a clear framework for infrastructure planning and a programme of associated infrastructure delivery linked to a proactive approach to securing funding from a range of sources to deliver the new schools, better transport systems and other infrastructure needed to accommodate the growth that is being planned.

It safeguards the unique infrastructure of Plymouth Airport, enabling aviation uses to be reinstated in the future. It places sustainable development at the heart of the plan, and has put in place policies that not only recognise the sensitivity of international designations such as the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation and the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site, but also protects 2 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and cherished local green spaces that are important to our communities. The JLP presents a comprehensive, long term strategy and planning framework which will set the agenda for South West Devon for at least the next 20 years.

Not only are we creating a ground-breaking plan, we are also responding to and anticipating the Government's agenda set out in the Housing White Paper and emphasised in the recent consultation "Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places." It is clear that the Government wants to encourage cooperation by local authorities on Joint Local Plans. These plans are viewed as a key component of the Government's ambition to accelerate the delivery of new homes, and the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan fully plays its part in delivering this objective. We believe that the Joint Local Plan showcases many of the principles the Government has recently set out, explaining how joint plans should address challenges at the sub regional level.

Because of the focus on delivery, the plan has been designed to work in a particular way.

First we set out the **VISION** for the plan. Our Vision is not new - but it has been renewed in the context of having a Joint Local Plan. It sets an agenda that the communities of Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon have been working towards for over a decade, as reflected in their previous planning strategies.

For Plymouth, this is an exciting growth vision with the city aspiring to be one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities. For South Hams and West Devon, it is for thriving rural communities.

For the entire Plan Area, the JLP vision emphasises the synergy between these aspirations – that together they will make this a highly successful sub region for all of its people, its businesses and the environment.

We then explain what this Vision will look like through **12 STRATEGIC OUTCOMES**, each of which introduces a **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**, and a series of policies that make up our overall strategy for moving towards this Vision.

The **SPATIAL STRATEGY** is the first of these. Here we introduce the two **POLICY AREAS** around which the spatial distribution strategy is organised. But within each of these **POLICY AREAS** there is then a finer grained spatial framework.

For the **PLYMOUTH POLICY AREA** there are 3 Growth Areas. For the **THRIVING TOWNS AND VILLAGES POLICY AREA**, there is a spatial hierarchy of settlements.

The plan includes three main types of policy:

1. **Strategic Policies** – which are designed to set the key principles for the Plan Area and for each of the Policy Areas, and also identify the needs that the plan seeks to meet.
2. **Site Specific Policies** – which include site allocation policies as well as policies for the management of change, for environmental purposes, and for safeguarding.
3. **Development Policies** – which are general policies for development management purposes, usually covering the entire Plan Area.

We intend that the plan, like the National Planning Policy Framework, should be read as a whole, with the more detailed policies fleshing out the strategic policies to aid decision-making on future planning applications.

We believe that by incorporating in our plan both the overall spatial strategy and site allocations, we can demonstrate an ability to deliver what we are setting out to achieve.

We have an excellent track record of turning our plans into delivery on the ground. For example, Plymouth's award-winning "**Plan for Homes**" committed the city to a range of innovative planning and housing initiatives to accelerate housing delivery to achieve **5,000 homes in 5 years**.

This included releasing over **55 hectares** of public land on **33 sites** which contributed to substantially increasing average completions in recent years, with around 1,200 dwellings expected in 2017/2018. We have taken a proactive approach to securing funding for infrastructure from a variety of Growth Deal, National Productivity, Housing and Growth, Housing Infrastructure, City Deal and other funding regimes. Furthermore, we are currently delivering an unprecedented transport programme of over **£212 Million**. The City Council has already begun to align its own capital programme to the commitments in this plan.

The plan describes the area of South Hams and West Devon as being one of “Thriving Towns and Villages”. Previous development plans set out and led to the delivery of a variety of residential and mixed use developments across the plan area with this aim: essentially seeking to improve the self-sufficiency of communities. The JLP refocuses these allocations in the context of a broader strategic approach, but retaining these same objectives. The majority of development is allocated and will come forward in the 6 main towns, where services and infrastructure are better; with the second tier settlements allocated a smaller and proportionate level of growth. The plan establishes a robust framework for communities to guide development in the smaller communities through Neighbourhood Plans.

The process of preparing this plan has been complex and challenging, but we believe that we have risen to that challenge and have brought before you a plan that is not only sound but which is also a very good plan for our communities and sub region. It is a plan that has responded to earlier stages of community consultation and engagement and received strong support.

The Plan has been **POSITIVELY PREPARED**. We have planned to meet the future housing, retail and employment needs within the sub-region and there are no unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities. The plan is therefore set within a framework of sustainable development.

The plan is **JUSTIFIED**. The strategy of the plan is supported by a proportionate evidence base as being the most appropriate one to deliver our vision and strategic objectives.

The Plan is **EFFECTIVE**. This is because of our joint working arrangements and commitments to delivery.

The plan is **CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY** as we have sought to align our plan with the National Planning Policy Framework, without undue repetition of its provisions.

As with all plans we do not suggest that it is perfect. There is always room for improvement and as Members we recognise this and look forward to your help as Inspectors in that regard. For this reason, we have been open to the possibility of modifications where these support and do not deviate from what we are seeking to achieve for our communities. You will have seen this from our submitted schedules of potential modifications.

We confirm too that we are open to the possibility of “main modifications” should you consider these necessary. Our officers have been given sufficient authority to consider these, and Members of the Joint Local Plan Member Steering Group will be easily accessible to officers during the hearing sessions if required. Any significant changes to the plan would ultimately need to be ratified by our respective Full Councils for further consultation as you will appreciate.

I wish to end by saying something about the philosophy of how we have prepared this plan. We believe Government shares the view of the 3 Local Planning Authorities in wanting to see local plans with vision and ambition: plans that don't just regurgitate national policies but which, following meaningful consultation, reflect the views of local people whilst properly responding to the challenges facing the local area.

We will show you during the course of the examination that we have the leadership, drive, commitment and creativity to deliver what this plan says - continuing our long-standing focus of turning strategic plans into delivery on the ground. As you consider the matters to be examined you will hear for yourselves some of the details of our excellent track record of delivery and the proactive and positive approach to planning we take. I hope that will give you the assurances you need to find this plan sound.

In conclusion, may I wish you well in your deliberations, to again warmly welcome you to Plymouth, and in your later sessions to South Hams and West Devon; and lastly to assure you that you will have the full support of our planning teams as you conduct this important public examination into our plans which will shape the future of Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon for a generation to come.

Thank You.

Cllr Ian Bowyer – Plymouth City Council  
Cllr Patrick Nicholson – Plymouth City Council  
Cllr Hicks – South Hams District Council  
Cllr Pearce – South Hams District Council  
Cllr Baldwin – West Devon Borough Council  
Cllr Parker – West Devon Borough Council