Welcome to the latest edition of Our Plan Latest News. This edition tells you about the recent consultation, how many responses we received and what changes we have made as a result.

**When was the consultation?**
The first consultation on Our Plan was available for 6 weeks between the 9th May and 20th June 2014. We asked you to tell us whether we had identified the right topics and challenges that Our Plan should cover.

This consultation met the requirements of Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012).

**How did we tell people about the consultation?**
We wrote to:
- Statutory consultees (such as Natural England, English Heritage and Devon County Council)
- Local residents
- Local groups and organisations
- Town and Parish Councils
- Neighbouring authorities (Plymouth City Council, Cornwall Council, Teignbridge District Council, Torbay Council and Dartmoor National Park)
- Town and Parish Councils in our neighbouring areas
- Developers, agents and planning consultants

We published articles in local papers, including the Dartmouth Chronicle, Kingsbridge & Salcombe Gazette, Ivybridge & South Brent Gazette, Totnes Times and the South Devon & Plymouth Times between the 16th and 21st May.

We came to talk to you at a number of events:
- Town and Parish Council workshop – Friday 2nd May
- Business Voice Workshop – Wednesday 14th May 2014
- Cluster Meetings
- Developer Forum – 6th June 2014
- Voluntary Voice – Tuesday 20th May
- Agents Forum – 23rd May 2014

We advertised the consultation on our website and through our Facebook and Twitter accounts.

**Who responded to the consultation?**
We received 76 responses in total from a range of individuals and organisations.

We made paper copies available at our reception at Follaton House in Totnes.

**What did the responses say?**
We had some really good suggestions about what we could improve or change so thank you to all of you who have taken the time to respond to the consultation. You can view all of the responses in full on our website using the following link - www.southhams.gov.uk/ourplan

In this newsletter we have picked out the key issues you told us about and have provided some comments about how we are planning to address them. We hope you feel that you have been listened to, but if there’s anything you think we’ve missed out, or have missed the point, please do let us know.
Some of your comments were around very specific policy requirements, issues or areas of the District and we thank you for taking the time to provide us with this information. However, if they do not relate directly to the scope of the plan which we consulted on or are very detailed in their content, we may not have included them in the summary of issues set out below. Please be reassured that these comments will not be lost, and we will take your views into account as we start to work on the more detailed parts of the plan. Remember – you can view all of the comments in full on our website.

General Comments

You said...
We’ve missed some important topics including:
- Biodiversity
- Water resources and quality
- Digital/communications infrastructure
- Transport and road infrastructure
- Energy infrastructure
- Resource management
- Working with our partners
- Fuel poverty

We say...
We agree with the suggestions made and have amended our topics diagram to include them - see below. These topic areas may change slightly as Our Plan evolves to make sure that we look at everything we need to cover.

You said...
You are concerned that there is very little consultation undertaken when the plan is written.

We say...
We have produced an Engagement Plan which sets out the consultation we intend to do in connection with Our Plan. There are lots of ways for the community to share with us their thoughts and ideas. The Council is balancing the need to share ideas with the community against the need to use resources efficiently and effectively. We feel the proposed Engagement Plan provides that opportunity and we hope as many people as possible do get involved in the Our Plan process.
You said...
You were unsure about the relationship between the two Our Plans being prepared for West Devon and South Hams.

We say...
We apologise that this was not clear in the original consultation document.

Both Councils are preparing new plans for their areas. As many of you will know, the Council’s work together and have had a shared service approach for a number of years. This has allowed both Councils to make significant savings.

We are therefore trying to build on this approach and make the process of preparing the plans as efficient as possible. The timetable for preparing the Plans will be identical and will use the Our Plan approach for both areas. However, individual plans will prepared for West Devon and South Hams.

The topics and challenges identified in the consultation documents were identical for both areas. This is because the authorities do face similar challenges for the future although the way in which we respond to the challenges may be different in each area. We won’t know the detail for specific policies at this stage and will be working with our communities, partner organisations and neighbouring authorities during the next few months to develop our ideas.

You said...
Our Plan needs to explain who is involved in implementing different objectives, and what roles and responsibilities different organisations have.

We say...
We agree, and we will use the new ‘Our Partners’ topic to provide this kind of detail.

You said...
We need to be clearer on the geographical scope of Our Plan so as not to cause confusion for residents of the Dartmoor National Park.

We say...
We acknowledge that this can be confusing and will do everything we can to make sure that we show the areas which the different parts of Our Plan relate to. For clarification:

- The planning policies in Our Plan relate only to the area of South Hams outside of the National Park
- The non-planning policies in Our Plan relate to all of South Hams including the area in the National Park

You said...
Our Plan should have a land-use strategy rather than a development strategy.

We say...
National policy requires us to set out a development strategy for the district which looks at how new employment and housing growth will be planned for and how this will be supported by infrastructure and other local services. Alongside this, we need to ensure that we recognise the special qualities of South Hams and make the best use of land in the district. Our Plan will aim to provide appropriate policies which manage how land will be used and protected.

The planning system deals with change of land use, and this means that our policies apply to all land within the South Hams where a change of use is proposed. There are other factors that influence how land is used, including other regulatory systems and economic factors that fall outside the scope of Our Plan.

You said...
The plan seems to have assumed a continual reduction in available funding, why not plan for an increase in public funding that can be used for public benefit?

We say...
We already know with a certain degree of accuracy what our budget will look like in the next 5 years, from messages from central government and from our own revenue streams. We have a duty to use our available budgets to serve our communities in the most efficient and effective way possible, and it is only prudent to align our services to the projected figures that we have. It is better to plan realistically within the financial limitations that we know about, than write a plan that hopes for extra revenue in the future and find we are unable to deliver the things that we have promised. There will be opportunities to review the plan as it is implemented, and if the financial conditions for the council improve we will be able to reflect that in the planned review cycle for Our Plan.

You said...
You would like to know more about the working relationship between planning authorities, and how cross-boundary issues are addressed, such as the impact of new development in Torbay on the A385 through Totnes.

We say...
We have a Duty to Cooperate with neighbouring authorities and a wide range of other organisations and agencies to make sure that we address our cross-boundary issues, such as the impacts of development in adjoining areas on roads within the South Hams. We regularly talk to these authorities, organisations and agencies to make sure that these issues are considered and addressed.
Our Vision

You said...
Our Vision should reflect that there will be change, but it seems to assume that there will be growth, why is that?

We say...
The Government would like us to build more houses within Britain and have set out a planning framework which is aimed at providing new homes and jobs for people living here. South Hams has to respond to this by writing a plan which sets out how we hope to deliver the right level of new homes and jobs in the future. Our Vision for South Hams has to carefully respond to the existing challenges and the future needs of South Hams. We are working to ensure that Our Plan carefully balances our future requirements against the need to ensure that the special qualities of the South Hams are looked after.

You said...
The Vision should recognise that retired people will always want to move here and that young people will always want to move away, and we shouldn’t try to provide everything for everyone.

We say...
Our Vision needs to look at the challenges we face and try our best to respond to these. The South Hams is a very attractive environment and we accept that people will want to move here from other areas to live. We also know that some of our young people would like to move away for work and further education, but we also know that there are some close knit families and young people who would like to stay in South Hams. We think it is important to consider our whole community when we are thinking about what kind of place we would like South Hams to be. We can’t provide everything for everyone but we can respond as best we can to our challenges now and in the future.

You said...
The Vision should be a Vision for all ages – it is particularly difficult to get young and working age people to engage in these consultations because they have so little time to do so. We need to ensure that the needs of these large sections of the community are effectively considered.

We say...
We agree that our vision does need to respond to the needs of all of our community. We are trying new ways of consulting with the community to provide opportunities for young people and working age people to get involved.

You said...
At its core Our Plan should commit to the values of equity, ethics and justice.

We say...
Our Plan hopes to ensure that the future needs of all our communities are identified and where possible that these challenges are addressed. The Council respects the needs of individuals and communities and seeks where possible to ensure that the policies and proposals in the plan will be balanced and respond to the hopes and concerns of those who live in South Hams. We are hoping that as many people as possible will share their thoughts about Our Plan and respond to the document, the process of preparing a plan ensures that everyone has an opportunity to comment on its content. We are committed to representing the needs of all members of our communities, and this should be reflected in the objectives that underpin Our Plan.
Our Homes

You said...
There is little reference to addressing housing need and there should be greater emphasis on how housing will be delivered. You felt that issues around second homes and high house prices needed to be addressed as they have an impact on housing demand. You also said there is a need to provide different types of housing for older people and younger people and opportunities for self-build, live-work units etc.

We say...
We absolutely agree. There are lots of challenges facing our housing market not least the impact of an increasingly elderly population and the issues of affordability. We need to look at a range of different options to meet the many different housing needs in our District. We’ll be talking to you over the next few months about how many homes we need to plan for, where they might be provided and the different ways that we can deliver them.

You said...
We need to make sure Our Plan is in conformity with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other regulations. Many of the responses from the development industry emphasised the need for the Council to identify and meet in full its objectively assessed need for housing.

We say...
We fully understand that we will need to make sure that Our Plan is in line with what we are required to do by national policy and other regulations otherwise we are likely to be found ‘unsound’ at examination.

We will be using our Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment (SHMNA), Land Availability Assessment and evidence provided by our economic growth potential strategy to understand how many homes need to be provided and how these can be accommodated. We are working with our elected Councillors to agree our ‘objectively assessed need’ for housing and will be asking you for your comments on this over the summer.

You said...
You wanted to be consulted on where new development should go. Some of you raised concern that we’ve previously just focused development on large sites in our town main towns and that opportunities for development in our smaller towns and villages will help to support existing services and facilities and allow these communities to thrive.

We say...
You would have liked to have seen an estimate of our housing need in the consultation document.

You said...
This consultation was about the topics and challenges the plan should cover. Now that we have completed this first stage, we will be starting to think about the detail around how many new homes we need to plan for and where they will go. We will be talking to you more about this through our e-newsletters over the next few months.

You said...
You already have allocations in place in your current DPDs, what will happen to these?

We say...
We are currently looking at all of our allocations to make sure that they are still available, suitable and achievable for development.
You said...
You want to see a suitable strategy for supporting older people and to look at opportunities for suitable homes for these people.

We say...
We agree. Meeting the housing needs of older people in the community is important and we can look at writing specific policies or strategies in Our Plan to encourage the development of this type of housing.

We also think that Neighbourhood Plans have a potential role in establishing positive strategies for meeting the housing needs of older people in their areas.

You said...
You want to see houses that are fit for purpose in terms of design and space and with appropriate car parking provision. You also said you wanted housing that makes provision for a changing population.

We say...
Our Plan will include housing policies which are up-to-date and reflect local needs and aspirations. Seeking high quality, locally distinctive design will be part of this. Local standards can be introduced where appropriate, whilst acknowledging that this cannot be done to the exclusion of national policies and guidelines. Our policies and strategies will also need to reflect the current and future needs of our residents and the high and increasing percentages of the population in the older age groups will be a key consideration.

You said...
You want to see a permissive approach when it comes to the provision of new housing, and don’t want to see design requirements that would restrict growth.

We say...
The Council will be taking a positive approach towards the delivery of housing, consistent with the NPPF. Whilst looking especially to meet local needs for housing, the Council also wishes to see development which is of a high design and build standard appropriate to its location. It is acknowledged that the viability of development is a key consideration, but good development is not necessarily more expensive to deliver. We hope to build on the good working relationships that we have with both our communities and the development sector to enable the best quality development that meets the aspirations of our communities.

You said...
You want to see new houses that are innovative and positive in their design and how they function.

You said...
You want to see a specific policy for allowing market and affordable housing outside built up area boundaries.

We say...
The Council will take the opportunity of producing a new plan to see what innovative ways can be developed in policy terms to help the delivery of housing. From 2016 the performance of new housing will be dealt with through the building regulations, but Our Plan can still establish a policy framework that makes strong design and efficient performance priority areas.

You said...
We need more affordable homes, with ‘affordable’ being clearly defined. There was also a range of suggested affordable housing provision ranging from 25% of all new homes to 66%, and also some suggestion that new housing should only be provided through a Trust model for local people.

We say...
We agree and our evidence clearly shows that we need to provide more affordable housing in the district. We will be looking at our affordable housing policies as part of Our Plan to make sure that we provide opportunities for a range of people in affordable housing need.

For clarification, national policy defines affordable housing as “social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market”.

You said...
You want to see new houses that are innovative and positive in their design and how they function.

We say...
The Council will take the opportunity of producing a new plan to see what innovative ways can be developed in policy terms to help the delivery of housing. From 2016 the performance of new housing will be dealt with through the building regulations, but Our Plan can still establish a policy framework that makes strong design and efficient performance priority areas.

You said...
You want to see a specific policy for allowing market and affordable housing outside built up area boundaries.

We say...
At the moment we use development boundaries to define where development can and cannot take place. Over the next few months we’ll be doing more consultation to find out whether this is still the best way to manage development outside of built-up areas or whether we could assess proposals for development in a different way.
You said...
It is unclear why we have referred to a mix of market and local needs as they are not independent nor does it reflect national policy or an appropriate aspiration for the area. The NPPF talks about the requirement to “boost significantly” the supply of housing to meet the full objectively assessed needs, and this distinguishes between market and affordable housing, rather than local housing.

We say...
We agree that national policy talks about ‘market and affordable needs’ rather than ‘market and local needs’ and will make sure that further work on Our Plan refers to the different types of housing in this way.

You said...
We should identify meeting our full objectively assessed needs under the “place” challenges.

We say...
We agree that meeting our objectively assessed needs is a key challenge and will ensure that this is addressed in Our Plan.

You said...
We should include “Sourcing and use of local material” under Our Homes.

We say...
The sourcing and use of local building materials can have an important role in helping to deliver locally distinctive development. The Council will consider ways to bring this about but may not be able to require it through planning policies. This element, including the availability and cost of local materials is just one aspect of delivering quality, viable development appropriate for the end users and its locality.

You said...
There needs to be a policy restricting second home ownership.

We say...
The Council acknowledges the significance of this issue in many of our communities. It will explore all possible approaches through the planning process but this is likely to be applicable only to new-build dwellings. Without the introduction of new legislation or national guidance the council is limited to how much we can intervene within the housing market at the local level.

You said...
We should focus more development on brownfield sites, existing and empty buildings.

We say...
The Council’s current plans place significant emphasis on brownfield development and we are likely to continue to do so in Our Plan. The development potential of many brownfield sites has already been recognised. However, the district has a relatively small resource of brownfield opportunities and these can often be more complex and expensive to deliver. Whilst we endeavour to maximise their potential for helping to meet the needs of our communities, it is unlikely that brownfield sites alone will be able to provide for the majority of the overall development needs of South Hams.

You said...
Our Plan should support the conversion of redundant buildings and recognise the contribution that redundant rural buildings can make to meeting housing need.

We say...
The Council has a long-established policy basis supporting the conversion of appropriate buildings. The role that rural buildings can play, considered alongside sustainability criteria, is likely to remain significant in the rural areas. The Council’s approach on this issue will be reconsidered as Our Plan is prepared and will need to take account of national guidance as well as local circumstances and needs.

You said...
Our Plan should support the conversion of redundant buildings and recognise the contribution that redundant rural buildings can make to meeting housing need.

We say...
We agree that there are numerous ways in which to provide new housing, and the reuse of redundant buildings does have a role in this. We need to be mindful that many rural buildings will be in isolated locations, and as such we would need to be satisfied that the conversion of such buildings would constitute a sustainable development, and not result in a house in an isolated location within the countryside.
Our Economy

You said...
We should make sure the challenges set out in Our Plan reflect the ‘people’ priorities in the Local Enterprise Partnership’s (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).

We say...
We will ensure that we reflect the priorities of the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership wherever possible.

You said...
It isn’t realistic to enhance the role of town centres given the level of existing infrastructure. You suggest that there is a role and place for bringing in out of town shopping.

We say...
We need to achieve a balance between keeping our town centres vibrant and viable whilst also making sure that opportunities for new shops and facilities are not restricted by a lack of space or infrastructure. As part of the evidence to support Our Plan, we will be using retail studies that assess the opportunities and limitations of our main town centres, and this will help to inform what could happen in the future.

We also need to bear in mind that the national policy takes a “town centre first” approach and we will be looking to reinforce this and continue to support our town centres through Our Plan.

You said...
We should look at what has happened in and around Cambridge to understand how to create and attract higher quality jobs, not just ‘more’ jobs. Strong and bold leadership is required to achieve a ‘more profitable future’.

We say...
We have commissioned research to identify sectors with growth potential and will be considering further whether we should single out specific sectors like tourism or adopt a sector blind approach allowing for diversity and prosperity across all sectors.

You said...
‘Our Economy’ should include reference to supporting tourism and related businesses.

We say...
As stated above we have commissioned research to identify sectors with growth potential and will be considering further whether we should single out specific sectors like tourism or adopt a sector blind approach allowing for diversity and prosperity across all sectors.

You said...
You want to encourage more training and education in order to support our existing businesses and create new jobs.

We say...
We agree training and skills are a key component of employment growth. We will be working with strategic partners to identify funding streams and projects to facilitate this.

You said...
You want to understand how the Council intends to support local businesses.

We say...
We will listen to business needs and where possible identify funding sources and user friendly policies to help deliver local business growth.

You said...
You want to have more flexible employment policies than a simple target (expressed in hectares) of new employment space.

We say...
Where possible we will be looking at employment densities appropriate to the type of employment space. This will make sure that we apply targets relevant to the type of jobs rather than simply the number of hectares allocated.
Our Heritage

You said...
It is important that we talk to businesses in South Hams about their aspirations to 2031.

We say...
Absolutely, we very much value the opinion of local businesses. We will be running our business survey again this year. We will also be working with partners to see how we can help businesses realise their aspirations through funding opportunities and policies.

You said...
We need to make sure our economic policies are consistent with the ‘prosper’ element of the Dartmoor National Park Management Plan 2014.

We say...
We pride ourselves in working very closely with the Dartmoor National Park Authority and where practicable will ensure our economic policies align.

You said...
You wish to see a positive strategy for the conservation of our historic environment.

We say...
We agree. We will include a policy for the historic environment which builds on the role and importance of the historic environment as set out in national policy. This will recognise that historic assets are irreplaceable and seek to conserve them on the basis of their significance. Our policy will enable us look at viable uses to support the conservation of our heritage assets and help ensure the historic environment makes a valuable and long term contribution to the economy our area.

You said...
You want us to promote local heritage.

We say...
We agree that the historic environment should contribute to the character of our area and our policy will support the economic and other benefits that can be attributed to our local heritage. We will also consider how new development should respect and enhance our local heritage.

We also think that Neighbourhood Plans have a potential role in establishing positive strategies for the local heritage in their areas.

Our Communities

You said...
What evidence is there of the movement of employment traffic into and out of the South Hams? How can this help us understand the sort of jobs that we should be trying to provide?

We say...
The Office of National Statistics provides information on commuting patterns. The data shows a strong flow of residents travelling to Plymouth and to a lesser extent Torbay and Exeter for employment. We also know that workplace earnings in South Hams are lower than resident based earnings which suggest residents are commuting out of the area to higher paid jobs. Our challenge therefore is to increase the number of well-paid jobs in the South Hams.

You said...
We need to make sure that the plan can be delivered. Some of you have concerns that the topics and challenges are simply aspirational and won’t actually happen. Some of you were also concerned that the financial viability of addressing the topics and challenges needs to be considered from the outset.

We say...
Having a plan that is deliverable is really important and we could be found ‘unsound’ at an examination if it isn’t. We will be looking to plan for realistic rates of development, will be testing the viability of relevant policies (e.g. our policies which require affordable housing, sustainable design and construction and renewable energy to be provided) and managing expectations in the community about what new infrastructure we’re likely to be able to fund. However, we also want Our Plan to secure the best possible future for our communities and we want to strive to achieve good quality, well planned and sustainable development.
You said...
We need to have sustainable employment that is delivered alongside new housing developments so that new homes are not built without new jobs or employment opportunities being provided.

We say...
We agree. The number of new homes should be considered alongside opportunities for employment. This does not have to be on the same site. In general, new development will be planned for taking into account what we think we can realistically expect to achieve in terms of job growth across the District. However, we also need to be mindful that housing needs exist for some people who are already have jobs in the area or those who are not seeking work (such as retired people).

You said...
One of our main challenges is to make sure that we have enough opportunities to support our communities whilst at the same time retaining what makes the area special.

We say...
We agree. There is always a balance to be made between meeting our development needs and protecting our very special and valued environments. Over the next few months we will be planning to meet our future development needs and, wherever possible, ensuring that this is done sensitively and with due consideration to protecting and conserving our environment.

You said...
You were unsure how local groups and organisations can be involved in helping to shape the elements of Our Plan which are not covered by the planning elements.

We say...
We have an Engagement Plan which sets out when and how you can get involved in all aspects of Our Plan. Remember that you can contact a member of the Strategic Planning Team at any time to have a chat about Our Plan. Please see the contact details on the last page of this newsletter.

Over the next few months, we will also be working on preparing an annual delivery plan which will look at any non-planning elements of Our Plan in more detail. We will ask for your views on this over the autumn. Because the non-planning elements do not need to be examined by an independent inspector, we can progress this slightly later than the planning elements of Our Plan.

You said...
You are concerned that Our Plan is not meeting the core planning principles of the NPPF.

We say...
The planning elements of Our Plan will have to address and meet the core planning principles of the NPPF in order to be found ‘sound’ at an examination. The initial consultation has just looked at the broad scope of topics and challenges we need to cover and our next steps are to look in more detail at the specific requirements of the NPPF and demonstrate how we are addressing them.

You said...
You want Our Plan to encourage communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans.

We say...
All communities have the opportunity to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. One of the challenges we identified in the consultation was to encourage “community planning and ownership”. Neighbourhood Plans are a great example of communities taking ownership of decisions about planning and development in their areas.

You said...
You want us to make sure that Our Plan plays appropriate regard to market signals.

We say...
Over the next few months we’ll be looking in detail at how many new homes we need to provide to meet our ‘objectively assessed needs’. In doing so, we will need have full regard to market signals as required by the National Planning Practice Guidance (such as house and rental prices, affordability, historic rates of development and land prices).

You said...
You want us to recognise that sustainability is not just about environmental issues. You also said that Our Plan should embrace the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’.

We say...
We agree. The term ‘sustainability’ covers a whole range of issues from community resilience and access to services to conservation of the environment and conservation of resources. The presumption in favour of sustainable development will sit at the heart of Our Plan.
You said...
You want Our Plan to recognise the communities where there is already a strong community spirit and consider the effects of new development on this.

We say...
We agree that a strong community spirit is something to be valued, and we will work with all communities to ensure that new development is well integrated and appropriate to its setting. New development will offer opportunities to enhance community spirit and resilience, as well as supporting existing services and facilities. Working together to enhance local communities and build on strong relationships and encourage further community spirit is at the heart of Our Plan.

You said...
You want Our Plan to recognise the communities where there is already a strong community spirit and consider the effects of new development on this.

We say...
We agree. A strategy for protecting and enhancing the environment and designated landscapes will be included within the Our Environment section of the plan.

It is worth pointing out that national policy gives significant weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB and Dartmoor National Park designations.

You said...
Clearer provision needs to be made for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and how they will influence the location and type of new development.

We say...
European, international and local designations are of great importance and we will carefully consider the impact on these designations when looking at the location and type of new development.

You said...
We should add 'soil preservation' to the list of topics.

We say...
We agree that the protection of soil is an important issue and that to be successful this needs input across the range of agencies, land managers and communities. While little statutory protection exists specifically for soils, they are protected indirectly through a range of legislation related for example to pollution and contamination, construction and land use planning. Given that soil protection spans a range of disciplines, it is acknowledged that the Our Environment area of the plan should give due weight to this issue.

You said...
There needs to be a clear expression of how coastal change will be managed, including the importance of Marine Conservation Zones.

We say...
We agree. Our Plan will include a policy identifying “Coastal Change Management Areas” that will address impacts of climate change on the coast. Policies will also recognise, and protect, Marine Conservation Zones.

You said...
We should add ‘preservation of landscape character’ to the list of topics.

We say...
Landscape Character is an important issue – but what needs to be recognised is that much of the beauty and character is a result of human activity and change. There needs to be an understanding that appropriate further change that conserves the character has to be allowed for and managed through Our Plan. “Conservation” – which allows for careful and managed change – is a more appropriate term than “preservation” – which can imply no change at all.
You said...
You feel there are things missing under “Our Nature” (now Our Environment) such as policies for wildlife and specific species, waterways, views and quiet places.

We say...
We agree that these are important issues that should be considered in Our Plan. Biodiversity, water resources and quality have been included in the Our Environment area of the plan, and will be considered in more detail as the plan develops and the policies are shaped.

You said...
We should identify natural resources, such as local minerals, quarries and woodland, under Our Environment.

We say...
Geodiversity, Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure are issues that will be considered within the Our Environment area of the Plan and reflected as policies are shaped. Devon County Council is the Mineral and Waste authority and is preparing the ‘Devon Minerals Plan’ for 2011 to 2031, which will form part of the evidence base for the Our Plan process.

You said...
We should include protected and rare flora and fauna, protected species, designated habitats and other areas of habitat value under Our Environment.

We say...
Protected and notable habitats and species are all recognised as key parts of South Ham’s rich biodiversity, and will be reflected within the Our Environment area of the plan, and be reflected as policies are shaped.

You said...
We need to think about the extent to which policies in Our Nature will also cover undesignated areas, with the potential for a range of features worthy of consideration and protection through the planning system.

We say...
In addition to protected habitats and species, it is acknowledged that these form only a small part of the biodiversity within South Hams. Green infrastructure, ecosystem and landscape scale approaches to conserving and enhancing biodiversity will be reflected in the Our Environment area of the plan.

You said...
We should have a specific policy which covers any development which may impact on the Dartmoor National Park and the special qualities of the area.

We say...
Our current plans have policies which already do this and we will be required to include similar policies in Our Plan.

You said...
Our Plan should explain the potential impacts of climate change/changing weather patterns and how this could affect the accessibility of some communities and the locations for new development.

We say...
We agree, and Our Plan will identify the future challenges that we think we need to address, and include the areas most vulnerable to change over the next 15-20 years.

Our Resources

You said...
We should promote locally sourced renewable energy and community owned renewable energy schemes.

We say...
We agree, and Our Plan will include specific reference to community renewable energy schemes. More information will be available to comment on when we release the renewable energy eNewsletter in the coming weeks.

You said...
Our Plan should explain the potential impacts of climate change/changing weather patterns and how this could affect the accessibility of some communities and the locations for new development.

We say...
We agree, and Our Plan will identify the future challenges that we think we need to address, and include the areas most vulnerable to change over the next 15-20 years.
You said...
You would like us to have consistent guidance on renewable energy development.

We say...
We agree. Our Plan will be examined by an independent inspector to ensure that all policies are consistent with national policy and guidelines. We will work closely with our communities and interested parties before we finalise all aspects of Our Plan, and this will include an assessment of how consistently and effectively our policies can be applied.

You said...
You would like to see a positive statement in Our Plan that the area will be protected from developments which significantly change the landscape character, such as wind turbines and solar farms.

We say...
Our Plan will be positive in regard to renewable energy. There is likely to be clear criteria that guide how we want to bring forward renewable energy schemes, and this will include the range of information that we will require to assess the various benefits and impacts of each proposal. Our most sensitive landscapes are already designated as national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty, and these designations come with the highest level of protection. There is of course a significant amount of countryside that is not with the national park or AONBs, and we will work with developers, communities and all interested parties to ensure that proposals for all development, not just renewable energy, respond appropriately to the landscape.

You said...
You are disappointed that the water environment is not held in higher regard and note that the consultation document did not specifically mention water (resources or quality). This could come under ‘Our Nature’ now ‘Our Environment’ or ‘Our Resources’.

We say...
We agree. Water is a key issue that needs to be recognised. Our Plan will consider the need for high quality water – both for human consumption and a healthy environment – alongside measures to address drainage and flooding.

You said...
‘Flood risk’ should form part of a wider ‘water management’ policy area.

We say...
We agree that water management is a key component of managing our resources, and that is about more than just managing flood risk. Tidal flooding and flooding from inland watercourses are an important consideration. New development will need to avoid areas susceptible to flooding and measures will need to be considered to manage flooding. Because of the specific requirements around how we understand and manage flood risk, this will remain as a separate heading, but we will expand the wider theme of water management in Our Plan as well.

You said...
You have said that you would like to see greater emphasis given to food and energy security, and recognising the opportunities and resources that we have in the South Hams.

We say...
We agree, and Our Plan will recognise these challenges as being key to enabling community resilience in the future.

You said...
You should have an Our Assets theme that recognises that the assets of the South Hams should benefit everyone and not just the privileged few.

We say...
We agree that the many assets of the South Hams should be enjoyed and experienced by all members of our community, and feel that this can be adequately reflected as part of Our Resources rather than create another topic within the plan.
You said...
You would like to know how we are going to ‘positively respond to climate change’?

We say...
The many challenges of climate change will also bring opportunities for us. Our Plan will include a positive expression of how we aim to reduce carbon emissions across all areas of council activity. We will be positive in how we seek to bring forward renewable energy schemes, and how we improve energy efficiency across all sectors.

You said...
We should explore the opportunities of using former mining sites in the west of the District for all forms of new development.

We say...
The principle of using former mining sites for new development is well established across the UK, and we agree that there could be development opportunities on such sites within the South Hams, subject to locally specific constraints that may restrict the type of development that is appropriate in a particular location.

Our Wellbeing

You said...
We should make sure Our Plan and policies design out crime and create safe and accessible communities.

We say...
Designing out crime and creating safe and accessible communities is really important when it comes to planning for all types of new development. We will have policies in Our Plan to make sure this can be achieved.

You said...
You are concerned at the lack of up to date evidence for sport and recreation.

We say...
We are considering what evidence will be required. A South Hams Playing Pitch Strategy has been commissioned and is underway. This will form part of the evidence base for the Our Plan process and we will consider whether other evidence is needed for other types of sport and recreation.

You said...
You would like us to be clearer on what we mean by “well-being”. You suggested that this could mean having a sense of satisfaction with life.

We say...
There are many recognised indicators of wellbeing, and we need to be comfortable that we can measure the impacts that Our Plan has on health and wellbeing across the District. We will work with our partners and communities on how we feel this can best be expressed over the coming months.

You said...
You want Our Plan to recognise that our rural communities must have access to essential services to retain quality of life and sustainable living.

We say...
We agree, and Our Plan will address the numerous challenges that are faced by communities living in isolated communities. This is not only a challenge for our rural communities, and we will work with our partners and communities to understand what services are most valued and how we can work most effectively to maintain and improve access to these.
You said...
We should guard against unnecessary loss of valued facilities.

We say...
We agree, and understand that many community facilities play a vital role in supporting the social and physical health of our communities. The retention of facilities is supported in national policy, where facilities are under threat there is also provision made through the Localism Act that empowers local communities to bid for and run the facilities themselves.

You said...
Our Plan should acknowledge the often hidden problem of poverty/fuel poverty, so that we can explore the most effective ways of intervention.

We say...
We agree, and we are aware of these areas of concern, and this is likely to be reflected in the strategic objectives of Our Plan. There will also be planning policies in place that will promote the importance of energy efficiency and building performance for new housing.

You said...
You want us to acknowledge non-sport recreation, recreation for over 60’s, lifelong learning opportunities, culture, the arts and youth provision under “Our Wellbeing”.

We say...
We agree, and Our Plan will reflect the many different aspects of wellbeing that combine to maintain and improve the quality of life for all ages and across a range of interest groups.

You said...
You want us to encourage voluntary activity and recognise the role of voluntary activity in implementing the plan.

We say...
We agree, and this will be reflected in the new ‘Our Partners’ theme described below. There are many different roles and responsibilities in implementing Our Plan, and it is acknowledged that the voluntary sector will play a key role in achieving some of the strategic objectives.

You said...
We should include “personal social responsibilities” under Our Wellbeing.

We say...
We agree. Recent events have highlighted how important infrastructure is to our communities and appreciate there has been some frustration that past developments have not been supported by appropriate infrastructure. Given its importance we think it is appropriate to identify a new topic area called ‘Our Infrastructure’. This section will be supported by a new Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Our Infrastructure

You said...
Infrastructure is a big issue and we need to make sure that we plan for this properly.

We say...
We understand how important infrastructure is to our communities and appreciate there has been some frustration that past developments have not been supported by appropriate infrastructure. Given its importance we think it is appropriate to identify a new topic area called ‘Our Infrastructure’. This section will be supported by a new Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which we will prepare with local service providers to ensure that any new development proposed in Our Plan is supported by appropriate infrastructure.

Wherever possible, we aim to make sure that we avoid putting development in places that do not have the infrastructure to support it or where it might be difficult to fund improvements.

You said...
You need to understand what the vulnerability of the mainline train service through Dawlish means for the District, and the impacts if this were to be lost.

We say...
We agree. Recent events have highlighted where the mainline train service is most vulnerable, and the potential impacts of further damage to this infrastructure will not only be felt within the South Hams, but across Devon and Cornwall. Feasibility studies of alternative routes are ongoing at a national government level, and we will work with all of our neighbouring authorities, train providers and Network Rail as appropriate to identify the most effective courses of action in the short and long term.
You said...
You want the Council to consider the role that a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will play in the delivery of required infrastructure.

We say...
We are continuing to investigate whether it is appropriate to introduce a CIL in South Hams.

You said...
You want us to consider having mechanisms in place to deliver major infrastructure improvements.

We say...
We use legal agreements (called Section 106 agreements) to ensure that developments provide on-site infrastructure improvements or make financial contributions towards off-site financial contributions. We will continue to use these as the main mechanisms for delivering infrastructure improvements. If we introduce a CIL (see above) then this will also be a mechanism for delivering infrastructure.

You said...
Can we realistically expect to deliver sustainable development in some of our most rurally isolated settlements?

We say...
We recognise that some of our smallest settlements have very few facilities and because of that, any development is likely to lead to an increase in the use of the private car and could potentially create issues of social isolation. However, some development could help to improve or support the provision of local services. We will need to think carefully about where development will have a positive impact on a settlement and where it might have a negative impact and plan for development appropriately.

You said...
You want us to consider “improving transport links” to “improving transport links”.

We say...
We agree. Encouraging greater use of sustainable transport is a key challenge and will ensure that this is addressed in Our Plan.

You said...
There is a seasonal strain on our infrastructure in the summer, how can this be avoided or improved?

We say...
We recognise that our visitor numbers increase greatly over the summer months, and this does of course have an impact on facilities and infrastructure. All new development is assessed to ensure that there is sufficient infrastructure to support it, and that applies across the whole of the District. We understand that some services and facilities come under pressure during a few weeks of the summer, but it is unfeasible and unrealistic to design our infrastructure and services to meet an isolated peak of just a few weeks, when for much of the year they are under capacity. If you feel that there are particular areas of concern then these can be investigated by working with specific companies or organisations.

Plenty of opportunity still to have your say
Remember – this is just the first stage in the process of preparing Our Plan and simply focuses on the topics the plan should cover and the challenges that need to be addressed. Over the next few months we’ll be looking in more detail at how we can develop policies and proposals to help us meet the challenges that we’ve identified. We’ll be continuing to publish e-newsletters about a range of different topics and we’ll also be attending various local events over the summer where you will be able to talk to us about your ideas and concerns.

Topics coming up in future e-newsletters....
- Renewable energy
- Development strategy
- Neighbourhood Planning

Come and see us!
6th September – all day
Kingsbridge Show

For more information
Follow us on Twitter and find us on Facebook to keep up to date with progress being made on Our Plan and to find out about events near you.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OurPlanSH
Twitter: @OurPlanSH

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