



Candidate Questionnaire

Please complete by typing your responses in to the appropriate boxes or by typing an 'X' in the relevant tick-box where appropriate, then save the file as 'Your_Name.pdf' and email it back to southhamsociety@gmail.com.

Your name:

Political allegiance:

Ward in which standing:

Housing

According to the *Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan: The Housing Market Area and Updating the Objectively Assessed Need*, in the 20 years between 2014 and 2034 a further 3,924 homes would have to be built to meet the objectively assessed housing requirement, or an average of 196 new dwellings each year.

However, in the seven years between 2014 and 2021, no fewer than 2,957* of those dwellings were actually delivered, at an average of more than 420 a year. Then, in 2021/22, an additional 454 were added to the total.

Nor are we due to stop building any time soon. The Council's Draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals for 2023/24 is assuming that the number of properties is to increase by 500 per annum from 2023/24 onwards, while the Authorities Monitoring Report 2020-21 tells us there are 6,869 homes secured by planning permission that have yet to start construction.

In other words, we are building many more houses than were required.

Do you believe that we should continue building at the rate 500 new homes each year for the foreseeable future?

Yes: No: Other:

* Plymouth, South Hams & West Devon Local Planning Authorities' 2021, 5 Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement November 2021



Housing/continued

Taking the number of dwellings that have already been built and the number of homes secured by planning permission that have yet to start construction, we are going to be able to construct 2.5 times more homes than the JLP said were required.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, do you believe we should give consent for any more, other than possibly homes for social rent, before the next Joint Local Plan is approved?

Yes: No: Other:

(If you wish to give an explanation or your reasoning please type in the box below)

At a density of just over eight dwellings per acre, using the Bloor Homes land At Sx 651 560 development at Filham as an example, accommodating 500 new homes each year will require a further 60 acres of land to be found. That will be the equivalent of imposing another settlement the size of Marlborough on the landscape every year.

Where do you suggest that land can be found?



Social Housing

Figures from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities suggest that in the ten years until March 2022 no more than 24 social homes were built in the South Hams. Over the same period 107 social homes were sold. In other words 83 social homes have been lost while, in March 2022, there were no fewer than 1,795 people in the South Hams on the local authority waiting list for social housing.

Do you believe South Hams District Council should build homes for social rent?

Yes: No: Other:

Please add any further thoughts you might have below and say what other steps you think the District Council could take to resolve this problem.



Wind Turbines

The Government is proposing changes to the existing National Planning Policy Framework to enable many more wind turbines to be installed through Local Development Orders, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders, 'providing it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been appropriately addressed and the proposal has community support.'

Do you believe that the 'affected local community' should be defined as

- a) those living in the South Hams?
- b) those living within audible distance and/or one mile of the proposed turbines?
- c) Other

Do you believe the decision to grant approval should be taken by officers and members:

- a) after the application has been advertised?
- b) only after the 'affected local community' has voted in a referendum?
- c) Other

If you select 'Other' to either of the above, please explain why below.



Solar Farms

Do you believe the climate emergency requires us to give up more of our agricultural land in order to accommodate solar panels?

Yes: No: Other:

If Yes, do you believe that should apply as much to land inside the AONB as without? If Other, please explain why below.

Yes: No: Other:

If No, please say where else can solar panels be accommodated other than on agricultural land? If Other, please explain why

Planning Enforcement

To quote Ian Tant, President, Royal Town Planning Institute 2019: ‘Successful planning relies on three essential areas of work by our local authorities: visionary plan-making which sets out the policies and proposals for the area; efficient and effective development management, which applies those local and national policies in the determination of planning applications; and well-resourced and effective enforcement. These three aspects go hand-in-hand.’

Unfortunately effective enforcement costs money, and there are many who believe that the LPA has been less than proactive in ensuring that developers and others comply with the conditions imposed by their consents.

Do you believe that the LPA has been sufficiently proactive in ensuring that developers and others comply with the conditions imposed by their consents?

Yes: No:

If No, please answer the first question on the next page.



Planning Enforcement/continued

If you have answered **No** to the last question on the previous page, what would you suggest?

An expanded team of Enforcement officers is needed at SHDC. The current overload is leading to many unauthorised developments and unauthorised tree felling and damage to other protected wildlife habitats such as hedgerows and built heritage are not being subjected to enforcement investigations and compliance then demanded.

There needs to be a new policy at SHDC to enable Enforcement Officers to prescribe an in the spot fine for many of the offences that need urgent action, e.g. while the illegal act is taking place as this would not only mean the damage can be minimised as the offender would be stopped in their act, but also provide a strong deterrent to would be offenders. The present system of having to pursue a legal case is very time consuming for the Enforcement team and can incur expensive legal costs; these legal procedures could be implemented for the more serious cases (as they currently are). A 2 tier enforcement system could make the Enforcement team far more effective in the field and could provide better valuable protection to natural and built heritage.

The lack of enforcement and compliance staff is also leading to inadequate monitoring of new developments that are failing to comply with the planning permission are New developments need to be monitored independently under the auspices of the Local Authority and paid for by the developer. This would include:

1. On the spot fines for unauthorised removal of hedgerows, mature trees and protected wildlife habitats, plus legal processes implemented for serious wildlife crimes
2. Checks during the development (to avoid what happened at Baltic Wharf in Totnes - unsafe structures), pre-occupation energy efficiency checks (including 'passiv haus' checks),
3. Wildlife and habitat monitoring during the construction of developments and afterwards for at least 10 years to see whether the protective measures, mitigations and biodiversity gains agreed under planning have actually taken place,
4. Drainage and flood monitoring; with appropriate action taken, including fines where problems or pollution takes place
5. A set of scaled fines commensurate on the costs to the LPA need to be agreed and imposed where appropriate.



Environmental Impacts

Do you believe pollution is adversely impacting our rivers or rias or beaches?

Yes:

No:

If **Yes**, how can the problem(s) best be addressed?

There is currently a major problem with toxic effluents being 'permitted' to be discharged into waterways, rivers and the sea. This is simply unacceptable and puts public health and recreation at risk. These problems are likely to become worse as:

1. Climate change causes global warming, leading to more extreme weather events; this is unlikely to improve until carbon emissions dramatically reduce towards net zero.
2. Water companies are permitted to legally dump overloads of sewage effluent and other drainage into rivers and the coast
3. Farming practices lead to enriched nitrogen and phosphorus effluents leaching into streams and rivers and onto beaches.
4. Unscrupulous industrial and commercial operations allow toxic effluents to leach into waterways
5. Litter pollution that ends up in waterways and into the sea ultimately finds its way (through water currents and trade winds) to the massive gyres of mainly plastic waste in the Pacific ocean. This plastic waste is killing many seabirds and marine wildlife who mistake this material for food which they eat and feed to their young.
6. Other heavier waste such as metal cans and glass ends up on riverbeds and in the benthos of the seabed. These pollutants are a serious hazard both chemically and physically to all wildlife and humans entering these polluted waters and prevent the normal riverbed and marine processes, including the ability of benthic feeders to thrive and the use of our waterways for safe bathing.

We need to:

1. Stop all such discharges of pollutants into waterways by preventative legislation and impose stiff fines for all non-compliance
2. Monitor all year around the water quality of rivers and streams where outfalls occur and ensure that information is a) publicly available as it is recorded and b) acted on immediately if there is pollution found to have occurred and c) appropriate fines imposed on the polluter.
3. Fundamentally change the way that sewage and agricultural effluents are treated. This is a valuable resource that should be piped to anaerobic digestors that would provide renewable energy (electricity and district heating) and carbon rich material that can be returned to the (much depleted) land.
4. Clean litter from streams and rivers to prevent it entering the sea. Where the polluter can be identified, they should be fined.
5. Public information services could play a role in making pollution culturally unacceptable and environmental care a social responsibility that is 'cool'. More separated / recycling waste bins on the streets, bus stops etc could help promote this cultural shift.
6. Make South West Water a formal stakeholder in planning application processes so that they can give a view on the impact of new developments on their infrastructure. Currently they simply have to accept whatever is connected to their systems.
7. Re-nationalise water and sewage companies to redirect all the monies that currently are creamed off by shareholders, back into proper investment in the infrastructure.
8. Ensure the South Devon Catchment Partnership is adequately funded as they are doing a lot of good work networking across the system and supporting projects that can make a difference.



Environmental Impacts/continued

Do you believe there are air quality problems that need addressing in the South Hams?

Yes:

No:

If **Yes**, how can the problem(s) best be addressed?

The Dartington & Staverton Ward I've represented as a District Councillor has an AQMA on the A385 as it runs through from the top of Bridgetown in Totnes to Shinnars Bridge in Dartington. As I'm also the County Councillor for Totnes and Dartington (and a Town Councillor for Totnes), I'm very concerned about the failure of any significant measures to address the traffic and its associated emissions.

The A385 arterial route that passes through Totnes is at the heart of the South Hams Air Quality Management Area that was declared for Totnes over a decade ago by South Hams District Council (SHDC). This was "due to poor levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2) in breach of the national objective levels of 40ug/m3." SHDC accepts that the main cause of the elevated levels is road transport, i.e. excessive traffic. According to SHDC "Once an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is declared, the Council is under a legal duty to work with other organisations such as Devon County Council (DCC) to devise an air quality action plan with the aim of alleviating the cause of the poor air quality in as short a period of time as possible." SHDC and DCC have made an Action Plan to address this pollution, but nothing has been done that has made any difference to this toxic air.

A new report that has been published this week by Imperial College London, confirms the danger of traffic emissions and sets out a series of health impacts caused by exposure to these harmful pollutants. Their research team carried out a detailed study of evidence covering over 35,000 studies over a 10-year period.

The report, commissioned by the Greater London Authority has shown that "air pollution causes harm at all stages of life". Their findings show that "exposure to certain particle could lead to low birth weight and miscarriages, cause low sperm count and stunt children's lung growth, cause asthma and affect blood pressure, cognitive abilities and mental health. Later in adulthood it could also cause chronic illnesses, cancer and strokes.

The researchers lay the blame for these health risks on particulate matter (known as PM2.5) and nitrous dioxide (NO2), as being particularly harmful toxins. In particular, they confirmed previous reports issued by the World Health Organisation a couple of years ago, that there is no safe level of particulate matter PM2.5. PM2.5 comes from vehicle tyres as well as exhausts and is known to be particularly high along roads frequented by large diesel vehicles and lorries.

This new report shows just how serious this is and it's about time the powers that be acknowledged their legal responsibilities and took heed of this important research and took real and urgent action to clean up the air we breathe and protect the health of our residents. Yet new housing developments that adjoin this stretch of the A385 continue to be approved by SHDC and DCC as apparently safe and not making any adverse difference.

We need to urgently:

- 1 Implement a moratorium along the A385 AQMA on all further development that requires private cars
- 2 Implement detailed air quality measuring and monitoring for NO2 and PM2.5 emissions along the AQMA, including pavements that people walk so that the true level of exposure can be assessed and understood. This dual monitoring should also be measures at Shinnars Bridge and in Totnes High Street.
- 3 Use the findings of this Imperial College report to evaluate the impacts on public health on the people who live in close proximity to the A385 AQMA and design measures to reduce their exposure both as pedestrians and residents.
4. SHDC & DCC to work together to raise finance and implement measures to dramatically reduce traffic. Some simple measures could dramatically reduce these dangerous emissions:
5. Support local proposals to implement the 20's Plenty where people live and work speed campaign could make streets safer to walk and cycle, enabling people to drive less; (Cornwall is rolling this out across the county, while Devon is accepting applications at a rate of about four small areas a year).
6. Increase traffic calming to reduce speeds throughout residential areas
7. Urgently devise Active Travel networks including the creation of safer pedestrian routes by installing more pedestrian crossings to link up footpaths and create new off road footpaths and cycleways to help residents avoid the dangerously narrow pavements and associated emissions (for example along Ashburton Road at Puddaven Terrace and at the Plymouth Road junction with Western By-pass).
- 8 Lobby government to renationalize and reinstate a wide network of public transport services, ideally using electric buses to give people a choice to leave the car at home.
9. Lobby Government to initiate legislation requiring freight to be transferred from road to rail.
10. Initiate a local congestion charge along the A385 AQMA

Link to Imperial College report: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-65296752>



Trees

The loss of many of our mature trees as a consequence of unauthorised felling, often as a precursor to a planning application being submitted, has long been a problem in the South Hams. Yet we have only the one tree officer, who we also have to share with West Devon. Consequently the combined area for which he is responsible totals 2,047.6 square kilometres. By comparison, East Devon has three tree officers to cover 814.3 square kilometres, or a far more manageable individual average of 271.4 square kilometres.

Would you be in favour of resourcing the tree protection function on a similar basis to East Devon?

Yes:

No:



Other Issues

There may also be other issues affecting the natural and built environment of the South Hams that you think the District Council, in addition to those identified above, can and should be addressing.

Please detail those here:

A. In 2019 SHDC declared a Climate and Biodiversity emergency. Despite this, there is in my view a significant failure to protect wildlife and biodiversity, in particular protected wildlife and their habitats in South Hams. The reliance on the developer's own ecology reports and proposals for mitigation and biodiversity net gain, fail to follow up and check on the success or otherwise of the mitigation and also fail to take into account the cumulative effect of a number of developments that all impact on the same wildlife corridor or linked wildlife habitats. They also fail to take into account the impact of widespread clearance and then replanting that can take up to 30 years to replace what has been destroyed. There is no acknowledgement of how the wildlife impacted by this loss of habitat are supposed to survive during these long periods of time.

The evidence is clear about the impact of all the development and the failure to protect our wildlife - the UK has lost over 60% of its wildlife in the last 60 years.

We need:

- 1 Greater scrutiny of developer's ecology reports and initial screening and HRA (many of which say no impact and that is simply let through),
- 2 Independent monitoring and reporting back to SHDC of wildlife mitigation and biodiversity net gain measures approved as part of planning (funded by the developer),
- 3 the ability to say no to additional development when it is clear that this will cause irrevocable damage to protected wildlife or their habitats,
4. Require larger gardens for new housing to enable domestic gardens to form wildlife refuges and corridors (and they are good for people too),
- 5 Support wildlife areas on verges and in public spaces to support biodiversity needs.

B. Energy Standards in Housing – the old Sustainability code that was due to implement high standards in 2016 was scrapped. The Government / SHDC need to re-instate this simple type of eco-assessment scoring to enable clearer understanding of the eco-efficiency of buildings being proposed and thereby seek high scores.

C. Insulation programmes for existing housing stock. Urgently needed to help people on low incomes and also as some kind of incentivised requirement for those who can afford high bills but are affecting others through their high carbon footprint.

D. Place a moratorium on SHDC investment in the South Devon Freeport and carry out a public consultation on the whole programme. In the event that the public do not agree with this investment on their behalf, Cancel SHDC involvement and instead get active on investment in Social Housing. Community consultation on high expenditure matters such as this should always be carried out prior to going forward on potentially controversial projects.

E. Aim for much higher targets in waste recycling – 54% is simply not good enough. SHDC should be able to raise more enterprise through outlets that can utilise more of the waste they collect, including community composting.

Date completed:

19th April 2023