

**TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT & LICENSING COMMITTEE  
MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2026**

**BRIEFING NOTE**

**PLANNING POLICY – CO-OPERATION, INTERPRETATION & LAWFULNESS**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This matter coincides with attempts to bring the two authorities (Town & Borough) together collaboratively to better understand, inter alia, if, and how any review of the Town's Neighbourhood Development Plan (which forms part of the Local Development Framework), might (or not) contribute to curing/mitigating the deficiencies arising in the statutory Development Plan for the area. That follows the impact of recent Government changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on the validity of certain elements of the statutory Local Plan, with particular regard to housing supply calculations and some associated policies.
- 1.2 Furthermore, the Town Council is the statutory 'Qualifying Body' for the purpose of making a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has various duties and obligations to support stages of the plan making process, alongside the normal mutual collaborative and partnership working as between the tiers of local government in the interests of the communities they both serve.

**2. CURRENT POSITION**

- 2.1 The Committee and Council are aware of the material concerns expressed at the Meeting of this Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026 regarding the possibility that there might be an unaddressed gap in the current policies of the Local Plan.
- 2.2 In view of the current/anticipated implications for major development in the Town, potentially on inappropriate sites, the Committee instructed that a letter be sent to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) seeking urgent clarification and various email communications have also been exchanged. Accordingly the Town Council has sought clarification on the interpretation, application and validity of a critical Local Plan policy from the LPA (Appendix 1 refers). The concern being that, if the interpretation considered in the letter were to be considered

correct, and go un-mitigated, there could be substantial adverse impact not only in Tavistock - but settlements across the whole of West Devon and South Hams (which are served by a shared planning service operating to a consolidated Joint Local Plan).

- 2.3 The matter was considered by Council on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 when significant disappointment and concern were expressed across the Chamber at the lack of information and accompanying risks. Both for the reasons listed above, and the potential cost of delay (avoidable inappropriate and/or unsustainable major development(s) detrimentally impacting the community) should the point not be clarified as a matter of urgency so that, if/where possible/necessary, any prospective mitigations could be identified and addressed collaboratively.
- 2.4 Whilst for procedural reasons this Council could not progress matters further at that time there was a clear consensus. Namely, that if the LPA was not in a position to clarify how it interpreted and/or applied its planning policy, and/or the consideration that had been given to the validity or otherwise of the concerns of the Town Council, then in the interests of the community that both Councils serve further action was required.
- 2.5 Bringing matters up to date and following the recent intervention of the Portfolio Holder of the LPA your officers are pleased to report it has offered to:
  - a) Attend at an informal meeting prior to the next Meeting of Council to outline the current position, discuss related matters and take questions;
  - b) Provide a planning policy response to the matters raised in correspondence by the Town Council as soon as possible.The appreciation of your Officers is extended to the Portfolio Holder for their progression of this matter of mutual significance to both authorities, and to the communities they serve.

### **3. RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Committee and Council:
  - a) Welcome and accept the offer of both a Meeting, and a response to the points raised in prior correspondence, from the Local Planning Authority;
  - b) Note and review the suggestion made informally previously regarding whether to recommend that Tavistock Town Council seek independent advice from a specialist in this arena, pending the outcome of the offer(s) listed at para (a) above.

3.2 The instructions of the Committee and Council are sought.

**CARL HEARN  
TOWN CLERK  
TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL  
MARCH, 2026**