

Press release issued by Newton Abbot Town Council

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## Town Council task force to scrutinise 'Greater Exeter' plans

FEARS that Newton Abbot could become a 'suburb of Exeter' have prompted the Town Council to set up a special task force to investigate the threat.

The Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP) is a proposed development scheme that could add thousands of extra homes to those already planned for the town.

Until July 23 it was being coordinated by Exeter City, Mid Devon Teignbridge and East Devon District councils but the latter has now opted out to concentrate on its own Local Plan.

Teignbridge however remains committed and has agreed to collectively plan development across a large area with Exmouth to the south, Tiverton to the north and Teignbridge, with the exception of Dartmoor, to the west.

One spot considered for growth above that already in the Teignbridge Local Plan is Houghton Barton on the A383 Ashburton Road.

As many as 2,000 additional new homes could be built there and more land set aside for employment.

Teignbridge District Council has agreed to take part in a public consultation exercise due to start on September 21.

In response Newton Abbot Town Council has created a dedicated team of eight members ready to examine the plan as soon as it is published.

At a virtual meeting on July 22 Cllr Mike Hocking, who also sits on Teignbridge Council, told members about the prospect of GESP taking precedence over the Teignbridge Local Plan and the Newton Abbot Neighbourhood Plan

He said: 'Another 2,000 homes at Houghton Barton is far far too many for our town.

'If we didn't have Haldon Hill between us would we not just be a suburb of Exeter?'

East Devon District Council's decision to withdraw was based in part on concerns that too much growth was being planned when data suggested that Covid-19 and Brexit could shrink the economy.

Some members also suggested that Exeter was looking to neighbouring authorities to help meet its housing targets.

Mayor Cllr Richard Jenks said: 'It is critical residents understand that it is not Newton Abbot Town Council making any of these development proposals and that we will scrutinise them carefully, and challenge in the strongest terms if necessary, to ensure the best outcome for our town.

'I'd urge everyone to make themselves aware of what is in the pipeline and to make their voices heard come September.

'We'll post all the latest GESP news on our website, [www.newtobabbot-tc.gov.uk](http://www.newtobabbot-tc.gov.uk).'