

Section 1 Appendix 2

North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Statement

Introduction

This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. Section 15(2). Part 5 of the Regulations sets out what a consultation statement should contain:

- Contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan
- Explains how they were consulted
- Summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted
- Describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.



Community engagement

The neighbourhood plan project group sought to engage with the community through consultations and listening to find out how residents of the area would like to see their community develop in the years ahead. The information received through community engagement would enable the project group to produce planning policies that would properly reflect the wishes of the town. The

component parts of this engagement included a questionnaire, call for sites, focused discussions, views of organisations and businesses within the town, influences outside the town – the local plan, the national planning policy framework and official agencies such as English Heritage, Devon Highways. Project group meetings were also made open to members of the public.

Meetings with local businesses, organisations, groups, developers and landowners

From 2012, when the decision was taken by North Tawton Town Council to embark on a Neighbourhood Plan project the Neighbourhood Plan project group engaged with key people and organisations within the town. These included North Tawton Town Council, Devon Heartlands Community Forum, North Tawton Primary School, young people in the park, town’s business community, Borough Ward member, local church leaders, West Devon Borough Council Officers – housing and planning, Devon County Highways, town hall committee, developers - Wainhomes, South West Water & Bell Cornwell, individual landowners.

The Roundabout, the local Parish magazine, was used as an essential tool for informing residents of progress of the Plan and consultation events in the town. Press releases to the local newspapers – Okehampton Times and The Crediton Courier were also used to publicise events.

Public meetings and consultation events have taken place within the town to inform and consult on each stage of the Plan’s development.

Main meetings and consultation events



On 17th February 2013 the terms of reference and the proposed designation of the plan area were agreed by North Tawton Town Council and submitted to West Devon Borough Council.

The launch of the Neighbourhood Development Plan was held at 2pm on 6th March 2013 at the Devon Heartlands Community Forum in the youth and community centre, Barton St, North Tawton. This event was publicised in the Roundabout where the vision for the future and the plan was set out – ‘Our aim is that in future years the town and parish of North Tawton will be a safe, friendly and vibrant place in which to live, work and play enabling good quality of life for all. It will provide a sustainable, viable environment for successive generations of people, benefiting from sufficient local housing, employment, transport, community health and recreational facilities, while preserving our historical market town identity.’

Residents, local organisations and businesses invited to this first meeting, were asked if they would like to become involved in the project to develop the plan and also to complete a short questionnaire with the following questions

- What do you regard as good about North Tawton as a place to live and which should be looked after or preserved for the future
- What is not so good and ought to be improved?
- Do you have a vision for the future of North Tawton



In the May 2013 Roundabout a map of the plan's designation area was published and comments on this were sought from residents. On June 25th 2013 the designation of the plan area was agreed by West Devon Borough Council.

Throughout the summer of 2013 the project group had a number of meetings with the town's business community, prospective developers such as Wainhomes, Wallingbrook Health Group who at that time ran the GP surgery in the town, the Primary School Head Teacher and Chair of Governors, local church leaders, West Devon Ward Councillor and strategic planning officers. Updates on the development of ideas were presented to the town council and residents at the annual town meeting and the Devon Heartlands community forum.

Responses from the launch event and the above meetings began the formulation of the vision, aims and objectives of the Plan. Some of the ideas highlighted were – support for

- a slow careful growth of the town over the coming years to provide a gradually increasing population that would serve to support the town's shops and services, and therefore the continuing life of the town
- a preference for any housing development to be small in scale and widely distributed across the town, having in mind difficulties relating to increased car use
- initiatives that encouraged tourism
- improved parking around the centre of the town
- preservation of the town's existing character

In early August 2013 members of the project team met in the park with around 25 young people to discuss their planning needs and ideas about the town's future. They were asked about what they liked and didn't like about living in North Tawton; about transport; how they found out about what is going on in the town; about how they saw their future; and how they would like to see North Tawton change over the next 20 years.



Most of the young people involved said they felt safe living in the town, enjoyed living near the countryside, liked the shops and the size of the town and felt valued and part of the community. The things that most didn't like was dog fouling, with about half indicating they didn't like the vandalism and pollution. In response to questions about transport, half of the young people were worried about the speed of vehicles. The majority were happy with the bus service and also said they would use a train service if one was available. Most of them found out what was going on in the town through the shops and school. In relation to the future, the majority would like to stay in North Tawton if they could afford a house, although felt they would have to leave the town to find a job.

In December 2014 a meeting was held with local groups and businesses – list of attendees in **Appendix 1** The following questions were presented – what is good and not so good about the parish today; what could be done to make the parish a better place for your business; what if any local issues are holding your business back, does your business have a need for different or better accommodation or more space; are there any other issues affecting your business that the neighbourhood plan could focus on.

A summary of responses to the above questions included – concern about parking and road access; lack of small business units in the town; improved transport links needed; need for better provision for teenagers; day centre provision for the elderly; concern about the uncertainty around GP provision; positive community spirit in the town; new houses will generate further trade for businesses; smaller developments around the town preferred; good mix of developments catering for different needs; development that raises the profile of the town encouraging people to visit from outside the area.

Development of aims, vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan

A public meeting was held in North Tawton town hall on 21st March 2015 where residents were asked their opinions on the aims, vision and objectives of the plan before the development group moved on to the next stage of the process and write the policies of the plan. Poster advertising the meeting **Appendix 2**

Results of the various consultation events and meetings continued to inform the development of the vision, aims, objectives and themes and policies within the Neighbourhood Plan from 2015 onwards.



Call for Sites

During this period a 'Call for Sites' process began. The 'call for sites' was an informal opportunity for individuals and organisations to propose sites within North Tawton, for development. The exercise would not in itself decide whether a site should be allocated for development, nor would it commit the proposer(s) to apply for planning consent, but it would enable the Plan project group to better understand the needs and wishes of the electors within its Parish area, in the context of land that may become available for development. The site suggestions received would be used to inform the preparation of the Land Availability section of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The May and June 2013 Roundabout asked landowners within the parish of North Tawton who were interested in obtaining planning permission in the near future to contact the neighbourhood plan project team so that their sites could be included in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. On July 13th a drop in session was held in the council office for members of the public to inspect the call for sites responses received and to vote on their preferences. Summary of votes in **Appendix 3** This first phase of the call for sites process was completed by the 31st July 2013. A site information pack with analysis of considered sites was produced by West Devon Borough Council in December 2014. See **Appendix 4**

A further opportunity was provided by West Devon Borough Council in 2016 for developers to come forward with potential sites for development. **Appendix 5 Site information pack** provides an updated list of sites presented and the analysis of these sites.

Although there were other sites identified through the 'Call for Sites' process, only two of these have been prioritised by the Neighbourhood Plan Group as meeting the criteria for development sites as identified from Questionnaire responses - brownfield, level, close to town amenities and suitable for a small development of low density housing or self-build.

Neighbourhood Development Plan Questionnaire

One of the most significant events was the distribution of a questionnaire to every household within North Tawton, results of which have provided significant evidence to underpin the Plan's development.

In February 2014, the town council distributed the questionnaire to all 800 homes in the parish of North Tawton. On 22nd February a publicity meeting was held in the town square with a town crier and vintage bus to encourage people to complete their questionnaires. 325 usable forms were returned (a healthy 39% return rate) and data input began using Survey Monkey. The results were fully analysed by the project group and a series of focussed meetings were held in the town council office – 28th June on services, facilities and communal life of the town; 7th July about housing issues; 10th July about environmental issues including the heritage of the town; 17th July about transport, employment and the economy of the town. At each of these meetings feedback from the questionnaire results was provided. At the same time West Devon Borough Council were developing their Local Plan so information was provided to explain how the Local Plan cohered with the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

See **Appendix 6** for a summary of the Questionnaire results and **Appendix 7** for power point summary presented to residents.

Below is a reminder of the scope of the survey and some of the key findings which have shaped the town's Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The first questions collected data on where in North Tawton the replies came from, age group, how long people had lived in North Tawton and if they were working or retired. It was pleasing to see a good cross section of post codes, age and length of time living in the town.

The next part of the survey asked for comments on the current housing and the style of new housing preferred. The clear message from these questions was please retain the style of North Tawton as a small rural town. With residents saying quite clearly to keep the additional numbers to a minimum, they should be traditional in style and built on brownfield sites. The gardens should be larger than those on recent new houses and three bedroom houses or bungalows were preferred.

The residents were then asked about their concerns. Parking was the major problem, with a lesser number of people raising litter and dog fouling. Perhaps partly because of the timing of the questionnaire (winter) some raised concerns about the state of the roads and pavements. In relation to the key concern of car parking there were two aspects to this issue – accessing and using the shops and parking for residents. Both problems have been addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan and considered by the Transport Working Group.

The next important area covered by the survey was renewable energy with a clear majority saying we should have “Green Energy” in the parish but schemes proposed to date have been too big and on agricultural land. The town seemed to be saying several smaller schemes on brownfield sites (or roof tops) was the way forward.

Several other topics were covered by the survey and all have been analysed and where relevant addressed within the Neighbourhood Plan. The results of the Questionnaire have made a significant contribution to the development of the themes and policies of the Plan and in providing evidence to support the policies.

North Tawton Town Design Statement

In 2004, a Village Design Statement was produced which described the visual character of the town and the surrounding countryside. This document has now been updated by a group of volunteers and town councillors incorporating and updating much of the historical Village Design Statement to form the North Tawton Town Design Statement 2017. The objectives of the Design Statement are to describe the distinctive character of the town and surrounding countryside as it is today, and to highlight the qualities that the residents value. It is from these qualities that design principles, based on the distinctive character of North Tawton, have been drawn up to guide future development and maintenance. The purpose of this Design Statement is to provide guidelines to ensure that future development of the town is in keeping with the fundamental character of the area.

This was presented to residents at the consultation event in December 2016 where it was positively received. This can be found in the appendix to the Neighbourhood Plan.



Consultation Event December 10th 2016 – Themes and policies

The Neighbourhood Plan group continued to work on developing the 6 themes of the plan – Conserving our Historic and Natural Environment, Community Life, Economy, Housing, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment.

Evidence had been gathered through the survey and questionnaires, consultation events and the Call for Sites process. With the help of a Consultant Policies were developed that form the core of the Neighbourhood Plan. These policies aim to address the key issues of housing development, transport, employment, sustainability of local businesses and economy, environmental concerns and retaining the heritage and green spaces within the town.

The next stage of the Neighbourhood Plan process was to consult with residents on the Draft Plan so far – the key elements of the plan – vision, aims, objectives, policies, evidence base, sites for development.

An event was held in North Tawton Town Hall on Saturday 10th December, 2016, from 10am -12 noon, to consult with residents on the above aspects of the Plan. The event was publicised in the November edition of Roundabout **Appendix 8**, a press release was issued to the Okehampton Times and the Crediton Courier **Appendix 9** and posters were displayed around the town **Appendix 10**.



The vision, aims, objectives and policies were displayed for residents to view and make comments on. Copies of the policies were available for people to take away for further consideration as well opportunities for comments at the event on a response sheet.

113 residents attended the event, 18 people requested policies to take away. 21 forms were either completed on the day or returned. Letters and forms were received from the Environmental Trust commenting on the use of the Depot at Devonshire Gardens for possible development. Specific feedback was also received from Emery consultants on behalf of Wainhomes on the emerging plan policies. People were also invited to make comments on 'post it' notes. The majority of comments related to Housing (46); 14 in relation to Infrastructure – parking, transport and the medical practice; 8 about Economy –retail and 7 about Employment.

Generally there was support for the direction that the Plan was going in. Comments reinforced the Plan's policies about the size and nature of developments required in the town and the numbers of houses needed. The policy on self-build housing was simplified following comments from residents.

There were concerns about the capacity of the GP Medical Practice in the town, however most of these were beyond the scope of the Plan. Policy IN1 does cover development and health provision within the town. Transport – concerns about parking and congestion, were raised which led to those aspects being

strengthened within the Plan with specific policies added. In response to concerns raised by the Environmental Trust support was emphasised in the Plan for space to be retained for allotments within any future development of the Depot area.

Although information was presented at this event in relation to important local green spaces (LGS) within the town, further consultation was required on the specific LGS including responses from landowners. See below for further information on this. More detailed information about the feedback to the consultation event can be found in **Appendix 11, 12, 13 and 14**

Designating Local Green Space

There were 3 specific questions in the Questionnaire that asked residents to identify specific areas within the Parish that should be protected from future development, why these areas were important and where open spaces could be created for specific purposes. From the responses to these questions a list of important green spaces was drawn up. These formed the basis of the list of open spaces to be considered under National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 76 as local green spaces.

In gathering further evidence to support Policy CH1 – Local Green Space Designation, a questionnaire was sent to sports groups and organisations within the town to gauge how well used green space and sports pitches are and their importance to residents. Letter & Form sent to groups – **Appendix 15** summary of results in **Appendix 16**.

Based on this evidence a list of green spaces was drawn up by the Neighbourhood Plan group. In order to conform to Neighbourhood Planning Guidance: Open Space, Sport and Recreation and Local Green Space Designation and West Devon Borough Council's strategies, consultation took place with residents, land owners and trustees of land. Where land was privately owned or managed by Trustees they were contacted by the Neighbourhood Plan Group and given opportunity to make representations or object to proposals for designation. A summary of their responses can be found in **Appendix 17**.

Consultation took place on March 25th 2017 in the Council Office where residents were asked to comment on nine areas identified as important local green spaces. They were asked whether they agreed with these green spaces being designated and what its value was to them. More than 50 residents attended, providing very useful feedback. A summary of the comments can be found in **Appendix 18**.

Following the consultation the list of local green spaces and the reasons for their designation was included within policy CH1.



Regulation 14 Consultation

The following is an extract from the Neighbourhood Plan regulations with regard to Pre-submission consultation and publicity.

- '14. Before submitting a plan proposal to the local planning authority, a qualifying body must—
- (a) Publicise, in a manner that is likely to bring it to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area—
 - (i) Details of the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan;
 - (ii) Details of where and when the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan may be inspected;
 - (iii) Details of how to make representations; and
 - (iv) The date by which those representations must be received, being not less than 6 weeks from the date on which the draft proposal is first publicised;
 - (b) Consult any consultation body referred to in paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 whose interests the qualifying body considers may be affected by the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan; and
 - (c) Send a copy of the proposals for a neighbourhood development plan to the local planning authority.'

Regulation 14 Consultation will take place from Monday 4th December 2017 until Monday 15th January 2018. The Neighbourhood Plan group have thoroughly prepared for this important milestone in the Neighbourhood Planning process ensuring that statutory consultees, local businesses and organisations, residents

and any other interested parties can have access to the plan and opportunity to make comments.

The Plan, and its appendices, is available on line on the North Tawton Town Council website with hard copies of the Plan made available in key venues around the town. The group considered those places where residents are more likely to have time to sit and read the plan – local cafes and takeaways, hairdressers, medical and dental centres, pubs, the local library and the council office. Forms will be available for residents to complete and return to the town council office.

Information has been sent out in the Roundabout, along with the form for returning comments. A press release has been sent to the local newspapers. Posters will be displayed in prominent places. A drop in event has been planned for January 6th 2018 to allow for residents and others to come along with questions and comments before they complete the form.

Following the consultation the Neighbourhood Plan development group will consider all the comments and amend the Plan as appropriate before formally submitting it to West Devon Borough Council.

Copies of the form, letter to consultees, press release, Roundabout article and list of consultees can be found in **Appendix 19, 20,21,22,23.**

This Consultation Statement will be updated to reflect the feedback and comments from the Regulation 14 consultation.

November 2017