

## North Tawton Design Statement 2016

### Introduction

This document is the North Tawton Design Statement. It has been prepared following public consultation in respect of the North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan. The Design Statement has incorporated and updated much of the previous Village Design Statement which was produced in 2004.

**The purpose** of this Design Statement is 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, reflecting the distinctive character of North Tawton, that design principles, have been drawn up to guide future development and maintenance.

The Design Statement, together with the North Tawton Conservation Area Character Appraisal, provides guidelines that will ensure future development of the town is in keeping with the fundamental character of the area in which we live, and which we call home.

### Who is the Design Statement for?

Group	Individuals	Purpose
Residents	Homeowners, Tenants	Guidance in alteration, maintenance work and new build.
Developers	Architects, Designers, Engineers.	Describes the visual qualities and character of the town. Incorporate the views of the residents regarding the design of new development.
Local Government and Statutory Consultees	Devon County Council, West Devon Borough Council, North Tawton Town Council	Used as guidance in considering the design of new developments. Can strengthen the local authority's position when negotiating on design, and at appeal stage.
Local Businesses	Retailers, Employers, Services	Understand local needs and facilities.
Community Groups	Charities, Recreation ,Social	Appreciate facilities available and future requirements of community.

### How is the Design Statement to be used?

The Design Statement should be consulted when preparing designs for new developments, renovations, extensions or alterations to existing buildings in the parish of North Tawton, regardless of scale.

The Design Statement is intended to encourage and stimulate the following design process:

1. A survey of the relationship between the site and its surroundings, working with and respecting what is already there.
2. The identification of design opportunities presented by existing views, landscaping, built forms, materials and details.
3. The provision of evidence in design proposals that an analysis of the site details and wider contextual setting has been carried out.

The North Tawton Design Statement does not aim to provide design solutions. Its purpose is to illustrate the distinctive characteristics and elements of the town that should be considered by developers when designing new buildings or altering existing buildings.

## **History**

North Tawton is a small town located at the heart of Devon, within easy reach of Dartmoor National Park. The River Taw, flowing to the west of the town, gives North Tawton its name and is Celtic for 'silent river'.

Although various artefacts have been found confirming the presence of Stone and Bronze Age inhabitants, and we know that the Romans set up camp here in about AD50, staying for approximately 350 years, it is in the Domesday Book—in 1086—that the first written evidence of our town appears.

St Peter's Church, dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is our oldest existing building and we can also lay claim to outlying manor houses and farms which date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1374, North Tawton was granted a market charter which enabled the Lord of the Manor to exact tolls for all market and fair days. However, this charter lapsed in 1730.

Early businesses in North Tawton centred on the woollen industry and agriculture, with milling and tanning also taking important roles. Today, North Tawton is still identified by West Devon Borough Council as a Local Centre and, although a relatively small community, it remains home to important businesses such as Gregory Distribution, Taw Valley Creamery and Vital Pet Products Ltd.

The character and identity of North Tawton is seen as depending heavily on the visible remains of its history. However, we need to remember that we are constantly adding to the story of North Tawton and, with this in mind, welcome change and development that is well planned and thoughtfully designed, blending old history with new, and keeping our town unique and a special place in which to live.

## **1: Essential Characteristics**

Looking down on the town of North Tawton it is evident that it has evolved as a jumble of different styles throughout time. There are small areas of back land development, a terrace of houses here, a cottage tucked away there, a detached property in isolation, all constructed in a myriad of designs and colours.

The Square is the hub of our town and contains the retail outlets and other local facilities. Ribbon development borders the roads radiating from The Square. These roads also lead to the Primary School, medical centre and other local services.

Most of the town is within the Conservation Area and the houses here are predominantly terraced cottages. Most of these dwellings face the street and their front doors open directly onto the pavement. They have no front gardens or garages and their occupants park their cars in the road outside.

Fore Street and High Street are both lined by terraced housing, but in North Street the frontage is more irregular.

North Tawton has a mix of building materials, reflecting the local geology, 19<sup>th</sup> century transport, and traditional building methods used over centuries. Cob and stone are the dominant materials, with brick scarcely used except as dressings to windows and doors. Many of these older dwellings have colour washed render over the cob and stone, with the traditional black tar band at the base.

Apart from a few thatched buildings within the continuously built-up frontages and in Essington, almost all roofs are of slate or slate substitutes. There are examples of Cornish slate and Welsh slate.

Interspersed with the original cob and stone buildings are newer houses and small housing estates with open plan front gardens, garages and parking spaces. These comprise a fairly equal mix of bungalows and two storey houses which, architecturally, are a complete contrast to the older buildings but add to the variety of the townscape.

There are some excellent examples of metal railings in the town. These are both decorative and functional, forming a boundary between pavement and property where front space is minimal.

Long lengths of stonewalling line the streets, particularly by the Church, Exeter Street Cemetery, Barton Street, Essington and North Street. Some of this drystone walling is at least 200 years old.

Cobbled paths and courtyards are said to have been laid by French prisoners captured during the Napoleonic War circa 1809.

North Tawton nestles in a fold in the rolling Devon countryside which has been shaped by several thousand years of cultivation by mankind.

Traditional mixed farming is still practised in the area and its legacy of small fields, bordered by hedgerows and mature trees, makes a vital contribution to the town's surrounding landscape.

Many residents are able to enjoy views of the countryside around them, along with the splendour of Dartmoor National Park to the south of the town.

These building styles, features and settlement patterns echo the history of our town and provide its unique character, which must be preserved for future generations.

### **Guidelines:**

- 1.1 Modern developments have not always integrated with the Town. Planning applications should provide an analysis of the site and its wider context, either in the form of a short written statement, and/or through the use of photographs of the site and its surroundings.
- 1.2 Within the Conservation Area, alterations and/or extensions to properties should be in keeping with the original design and scale.
- 1.3 Existing open spaces and gaps between buildings should be preserved.
- 1.4 Open spaces and important views, including important sight lines within the town, should be preserved as they contribute to the setting and character of the settlement.
- 1.5 Views of the Town from the approaches generally give a positive first impression. Any new building should respect these approaches, be of sympathetic design, and sit comfortably within its surroundings.

## **2: New Development**

In light of Central Government's demand for an increase in housing, it is inevitable that new development will take place in North Tawton. The town wishes to face this challenge with a positive and co-operative approach which focusses on the ways in which such growth can benefit and enhance both the historic town and its close community. We would expect developers to achieve this with minimal disturbance to existing residents.

Housing policies within the North Tawton Neighbourhood Development Plan reflect the views of the residents of the town in relation to housing development. This design statement aims to give more detailed guidelines regarding the quality and design of new development.

The Owner or Developer of sites with 5 or more dwellings will be required to establish a Management Committee for the purpose of managing and maintaining:

- Open Space Land
- SUD Schemes
- Unadopted roadways and footpaths
- Landscaping
- Boundaries
- Additional Parking spaces
- Play Areas where provided

## **Design Guidelines**

**These guidelines apply to all development including custom build and self-build.**

2.1 The scale, design and materials of any new development must be appropriate to the area in which it is located.

2.2 The treatment of space between buildings is of considerable importance to the town design and should be considered at the initial design stages.

2.3 Wall cladding is not a traditional feature of the town and will be discouraged.

2.4 Windows and doors made of modern materials will be acceptable provided that the door and window designs reflect those of established properties in the immediate vicinity.

2.5 New or replacement ground floor windows which protrude into the space above a pavement when opened should be avoided.

2.6 The design of new houses should be varied by use of features such as stone facing, hanging slates, thatched roofing, brick detail, porches and others.

2.7 Chimney pots and stacks, along with varied roof lines, staggered frontages and porches will be encouraged to alleviate “boxy” designs.

2.8 Any new development within the Conservation Area should be sympathetic to the Area.

2.9 New developments should avoid featureless and windowless walls on buildings, providing it does not adversely affect the amenity of adjoining residents.

2.10 New developments should contain a mix of dwelling types including bungalows. Dwellings should be one or two storeys.

2.11 Houses of innovative/contemporary design can add to the visual narrative of the town and would be considered on individual plots, providing that they are sympathetic to their surroundings.

2.12 All new developments will consider dwelling orientation for solar gain, both passive and for the utilisation of roof spaces for solar technologies. If a development does not

include solar panels (either thermal or photovoltaic) within its design, developers must show due consideration for the correct orientation for retrofitting of such technologies at a later date by residents. Developers will evidence that 60% or more of the dwellings are correctly orientated for solar gains, with the appropriate roof areas for a domestic scale installation or unobstructed roofs with little to no shading issues.

2.13 Adequate space should be provided for storing refuse and recycling bins.

2.14 All new developments, in particular those on the edge of the town, should be encouraged to incorporate footpaths and cycle ways giving access to both the countryside and the Town centre, provided that they form safe routes for public use.

2.15 All proposals for new developments will be expected to include off-street parking provision commensurate with local car ownership rates in order to avoid an increase in on-street parking in the vicinity of the site, which would detract from highway safety and residential amenity. Garages should be extra to this provision.

2.16 Garages, where provided, should be at least large enough to accommodate a family car.

2.17 New developments will be expected to provide additional parking spaces for visitors and commercial vehicles. Please refer to Pol. HO7 of North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan.

2.18 Employment units on mixed use sites should be constructed in such a way that they blend in with other buildings in the vicinity, and cause little or no interference to residents living nearby.

2.19 The largest feasible area of open green space should be incorporated in new developments. The design of open spaces should reflect a rural, rather than suburban, character and every opportunity should be taken to enhance their ecological potential. Tree planting is to be included.

2.20 Developers of more than 12 dwellings should allow for the provision of serviced allotments.

2.21 Where a developer has been required to provide allotments, the developer is to hand over allotment space, in good order, to North Tawton Town Council within 6 months of commencing work on the site. Thereafter the Council will manage and allocate the allotments to registered applicants.

2.22 Developers of 12 or more dwellings should provide an equipped play area unless North Tawton Town Council agrees to remove this obligation

2.23 Screening i.e. trees and shrubs, should be provided between existing homes and new developments.

2.24 Native hedgerows should be planted, to provide wildlife corridors, in developments of 5 or more dwellings

### **3: Boundaries**

Native species hedgerows and traditional Devon hedge banks are important landscape features and wildlife habitats. They are often of historic value, marking ancient field boundaries.

Development should conserve and enhance the hedgerow network, retaining and enhancing existing features wherever possible.

3.1 Traditional boundaries such as hedgerows, Devon banks and stone walls should be preserved. New developments should aim to retain existing boundaries, and replace or repair any loss or damage to them sustained during construction.

3.2 Developers are required to properly maintain boundary hedgerows and banks during construction so that the public access and use of existing pavements, roads and paths is not affected by the ongoing works.

3.3 The planting of native hedging and the creation of new Devon Banks is to be encouraged within and around new developments as a form of boundary treatment to properties and screening.

3.4 Where hedging is planted, repaired or replaced, it should be with native species that are common within the area and, if possible, of local stock.

3.5 The style, height and materials of new boundaries should be in keeping with the property itself and its immediate neighbours, i.e. designed to harmonise with its surroundings, rather than stand out as a landmark.

3.6 Trees should be planted, for screening, where a development borders a road.

### **4: Trees**

Trees, hedgerows and Devon Banks are an essential part of the Central Devon landscape surrounding North Tawton, which contains small fields divided by these features. They are vital to support the wonderful variety of wildlife species endemic to the area, and assist greatly in slowing down runoff from heavy rainfall and preventing flooding. They absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, contributing to climate change mitigation.

Oak and Ash are the predominant tree species but there are several magnificent beeches on the southern approach to the town. Most mature trees, within the town, are in private gardens or the churchyard, where there is a double row of lime trees bordering the pathway from the lychgate.

Trees and hedgerows can soften architecture and create a link between the town and the surrounding countryside. They provide wildlife corridors, encouraging creatures to utilise gardens, which can be a valuable resource for the creatures and a pleasure to residents.

4.1 Existing trees and shrubs should be retained where possible and integrated into new developments.

4.2 Appropriate maintenance of existing trees, shrubs and hedges within the town should be encouraged.

4.3 Mature trees and hedgerows should be preserved or replaced within the town boundaries, along all access roads to North Tawton and in the immediate surrounding countryside.

### **Recommended Trees and hedgerow shrubs**

The most common hedgerow species found around North Tawton are oak, ash, hazel, hawthorn, holly, bramble and honeysuckle. Also occurring are field maple, blackthorn, holm oak, sycamore and willow.

#### **These native species are recommended:**

Hawthorn	Elder	Wayfaring Tree
Blackthorn	Dog Rose	Gorse
Hazel	Spindle	Honeysuckle
Holly	Dogwood	Travellers Joy
Beech	Guelder Rose	

**Standard trees:** English/Sessile Oak, Ash, Field Maple, Wild Cherry, Crab Apple, Rowan, Small-leaved Lime, Beech, Silver Birch.

### **5: Street Furniture**

Street furniture adds character and illustrates the history of a settlement. The Square is furnished with black Victorian style lights, black litter bins and a black finger post, all giving a sense of the past and complimenting the Clock Tower at the centre. Care should be taken to preserve and enhance the rural nature of the town. Street furniture should be carefully located, of good quality and design and in keeping with the character of North Tawton.

5.1 The ER letter boxes, which are currently situated at the Station, The Barton, Nichols Nymet, The Copper Key, Arundell Road and The Square, and the GR letter box at Bouchers Hill, add character and emphasise the history of the settlement and should be retained.

5.2 Public seats should continue to be provided where a suitable site can be identified.



5.3 Existing railings on older properties should be retained and new railings are encouraged where they will enhance a suitable building and add to the townscape.

5.4 Parish boundary stones should be maintained and protected.

5.5 Satellite dishes are visually intrusive and should be sited as inconspicuously as possible. Special rules apply to the Conservation Area.

5.6 The installation of telecommunication masts and wind turbines within the settlement area would be opposed.

5.7 Lighting – some residents have expressed concern about light pollution from street lighting. Street lighting is controlled by Devon County Council whose primary concern is for safety.

5.8 To minimise the effects of light pollution, softer yellow lighting is preferred where this does not compromise personal safety.

5.9 Any lighting proposed must be of a design which does not cause visual intrusion nor cause adverse effects due to light pollution.

5.10 Should the Victorian style street lights in The Square need replacing, North Tawton Town Council would wish to be consulted regarding options for reinstatement or replacement.

5.11 When installing external lights on properties, care should be taken to ensure that they do not cause a nuisance to neighbouring properties.

5.12 Signs - Examples of both traditional and modern road signs can be seen in North Tawton. The use of modern sheet metal road signage with broad painted borders can detract from the rural character of the town. Plain black and white signage without a border, but made with modern reflective material, is preferable.

5.13 All signage should be kept to a minimum. Redundant signs should be removed and every effort made to avoid duplicate signage.

5.14 Where they remain legal, older traditional signs ought to be preserved and should not be replaced with modern equivalents. Where this is not possible, replacement or new signs should be of traditional design and as similar to the original as possible.

5.15 Mounting signs on walls or buildings avoids clutter at street level and allows for the safe passage of pedestrians, particularly those using mobility aids or those pushing prams.

5.16 Advertising signs should be unobtrusive and generally fixed flat to the appropriate building.

5.17 Advertising signs which are internally illuminated and neon signs should be avoided.

## **6: Public utilities**

Public utility companies should be made aware of their duty to respect the heritage of the town.

6.2 Where any work is carried out, the site should be re-instated to its original design, appearance and finish using the appropriate materials for the site.

6.3 The “New Roads and Street Works Act- 1991”, along with associated regulations and codes of practice introduced new standards for the reinstatement of road and footway surfaces with utility companies being fully responsible for reinstatement following their street works, whereby:

“both interim and permanent reinstatements must conform to the statutory specification, and undertakers executing road works must comply with prescribed material specifications and standards of workmanship when reinstating a road or footway and to guarantee the performance of the reinstatement for a minimum period of two years”

## **7: Public Rights of Way**

There are over ten miles of public footpaths and bridle paths within the parish of North Tawton, established over the centuries as a means of access from farm to church.

These footpaths are now mainly used for recreation. They can be linked together to provide pleasant walks of varying length to suit nearly all abilities. However, many are inaccessible to people with restricted mobility.

7.1 Footpaths and bridleways should be kept open, in good repair and free from obstruction.

7.2 Wherever possible, public rights of way should be retained along existing routes.

7.3 Where new footpaths and cycle ways are created, provision should be made for people with restricted mobility.

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