

## Energy & Environment



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## Introduction

North Tawton's Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address the areas of Energy & the Environment with reference to new housing and renewable energy installations in North Tawton.

North Tawton has ambitions for housing built within the Neighbourhood Plan area to be constructed to high levels of energy efficiency and incorporate low carbon technologies. We have a responsibility to build low consumptive and high performing housing stock not only to reduce associated emissions and tackle climate change but to provide homes which cost less to heat and live in, in order to challenge and redress issues relating to fuel poverty within our community.

North Tawton has, over the years, seen the development of renewable energy installations grow in popularity, acceptability and economic viability. There are many domestic scale installations retrofitted on to existing properties and new developments incorporating technologies such as heat pumps. The community through public consultation has shown support to domestic scale renewable energy installations and those which would be incorporated onto existing business premises.

North Tawton has also been the prospective site for a number of large scale commercial renewable energy installations. Such projects have met with varying community opinion. It was felt that the Neighbourhood Plan should not only consider such installations being proposed in the future but to actively substantiate criterion by which they would be supported and a clear strategy for the provision of robust community benefit.

The Energy & the Environment Policies, sets out the North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan's position in relation to sustainable housing and renewable energy installations.

## Neighbourhood Plan Policies

### New Housing Development and Energy Provision

There is a need to develop only highly energy efficient homes, with low carbon emissions, reduced running costs and with the potential to generate their own heat and electricity. This is to tackle the societal issue of fuel poverty, the global issue of climate change and the security issue of the reliance on imported fuel.

### Objectives

14. To help the town move towards a more sustainable future, especially in relation to renewable energy and to help it play its part in National and Regional initiatives towards greater sustainability.

15. To provide the basis for tangible community benefits from energy projects within the parish.

16. To support a reduction in carbon emission which contributes to improvements in energy conservation, particularly in housing.

17. To aid the reduction of fuel poverty.

Community consultation, through the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, provided the stimulus for this policy with 67.4% of respondents thinking that all new housing developments should incorporate the latest environmentally friendly technologies to reduce their carbon footprint and running costs, and 37.8% believing that this should be achieved through the incorporation of rooftop solar technologies. 59.1% of the respondents felt there was a need for more Eco-friendly housing in North Tawton.

It was decided that the easiest way to incorporate this community desire for more efficient homes which incorporate renewable energy technologies into the Neighbourhood Plan was through what is generally referred to as a “Merton Rule”. A Merton style Rule is a percentage carbon reduction target, based on the breakthrough policy of the borough of London. A Merton style Rule will also act as an incentive for architects and engineers to begin designing more energy efficient buildings - with the core rationale that the more energy efficient the building, the less renewable energy capacity is required to meet a percentage target, therefore it serves the dual purpose of creating more energy efficient homes which will also incorporate low carbon technologies.

The 20% carbon saving equations and financial viability are based on the Standard Assessment Procedure assessment of the newest domestic dwellings built to current building regulation standards in North Tawton (construction in 2015/2016 by Wain Homes Ltd). The Plan wished to use a new dwelling built within the North Tawton locality as a basis to give the most realistic case study for the incorporation of low carbon technologies. These case study calculations found that the additional cost per property to achieve a 20% reduction through onsite generation would be in the order of £1,250 per property, from a 1kW PV array providing 471kg of carbon savings per annum. Please see Appendix xx for calculations and scenarios.

The construction of sustainable, low carbon housing, incorporating low carbon technologies for onsite generation is supported by the NPPF paragraphs 58, 95-96 and positively supports the delivery of our Neighbourhood Plan objectives 14, 16 and 17.

#### **Relevant National & Local Policies**

- JLP (draft)
- NPPF 58, 95, 96

#### **Policy EE1 – New Housing development and Energy**

**Housing development proposals should provide 20% of the home’s post construction energy requirement from onsite generation from low carbon technologies. This will be realised with a 20% reduction in carbon emissions from the dwellings based on Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) reporting through the installation of low carbon technologies. There is currently a preference from the community for this to be delivered by rooftop solar panels within new housing developments.**

## **Individual and Community Energy Schemes**

North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan wishes to support its Objective 15 of playing an active role in a sustainable energy future. The plan wishes to support both individual low carbon technology installations and those owned and operated by the community.

Although it wishes to support renewable energy installations it also recognises that North Tawton is located within a rural landscape with areas which require protection and preservation. This incorporates areas of high grade agricultural land and those of historical, archaeological and biodiversity importance. In the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, 14.3% of the respondents to the question on what kind of renewable energy schemes they favoured, and where they should be located, wanted the preservation of grade 1 & 2 agricultural land.

Within this plan there is a desire to support community owned renewable energy projects which provide wider benefits to the local community. These benefits include the retention of financial gain within local economies, reduction of carbon emissions, educational and investment opportunities. Community energy generating schemes are not denoted by scale but rather ownership and governance arrangements being owned by and producing energy for the benefit of the community; as opposed to a commercial development.

The Questionnaire found that 52.9% of respondents were in favour of renewable energy schemes. The favoured technologies were solar 28%, roof mounted solar 19.3%, biomass 12.6%, hydropower 5.9% and heat pumps 5%. The benefits of renewable energy generation resulting from these development types are clear. However, their potential adverse effects on the landscape are less easy to define and articulate. See landscape impact effects in the Devon Landscape Policy Group Advice Note No. 2: Accommodating Wind and Solar PV Developments in Devon's Landscape for a more detailed criteria and definition.

**Policy EE2** sets out the support for Individual and Community Energy Schemes.

### **National & Local Policies**

- **JLP**
- **NPPF 14, 97**
- **Devon Landscape Policy Group Advice Note No. 2: Accommodating Wind and Solar PV Developments in Devon's Landscape**

## **Policy EE2 – Individual and Community Energy Schemes**

**Proposals for individual and community energy schemes generating from hydro-electricity, solar photovoltaic panels, solar thermal, heat pumps, local biomass facilities (to supply heat for local housing, businesses and community facilities), anaerobic digestion and wood fuel products will be supported where they demonstrate, through a Planning Statement that:**

- i) the siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting and position in the wider landscape and takes into account the cumulative impact of any new installation on the landscape;**
- ii) the proposed development does not create an adverse impact on the local amenity of residents or it can demonstrate that any such impact can be satisfactorily mitigated;**
- iii) the proposed development does not have an adverse impact on land of natural, historical, archaeological or biodiversity importance or any such impact can be satisfactorily mitigated;**
- iv) the proposed site uses grade 3, 4 or 5 quality agricultural land in preference to grade 1 or 2 quality agricultural land.**
- v) that fuel for any said system is from sustainable sources**

## **Commercial Energy Installations**

North Tawton has been the prospective site for a number of large scale commercial renewable energy installations. Such projects have met with varying community opinion. It was felt that the Neighbourhood Plan should not only consider such installations being proposed in the future but to actively substantiate criterion by which they would be supported and a clear strategy for the provision of robust community benefit.

North Tawton hosts some large businesses, which are major employers in the town, with large industrial premises which are highly energy consumptive. Due to this, there is robust grid infrastructure, inclusive of transformers, sub-stations and other substructure elements in and around North Tawton. This makes North Tawton an attractive location for large renewable energy installations, along with potential local large energy users.

Within this plan commercial energy installations are defined as those beyond domestic scale installations and any scheme built for private profit not within community ownership, constructed for the sole purpose to generate heat and/or electricity.

To support objectives 14 & 15, the plan will support commercial energy installations where they are in accordance with the criteria of **Policy EE2** and provide tangible community benefits as set out in **Policy EE3**.

The Questionnaire found that 52.9% of respondents were in favour of renewable energy schemes. However in order to mitigate the adverse impacts on the community, clear and tangible benefits must be provided by the commercial developer. These benefits include making community amenity resources more sustainable, tackling fuel poverty and supporting local good causes.

The viability for a commercial energy installation developer to provide such benefits are evidenced through the provision of similar benefits at other schemes. See Appendix XX for the wind power protocol, Dorset County Council Solar Farm Community Benefit Presentation and briefing paper, BRE Planning Guidance of Large Scale Ground Mounted Solar Systems (page 18 Community Gains) and Den Brook Valley Local Energy Discount scheme.

Related National & Local Policies

- JLP
- NPPF 97 & 98

### **Policy EE3 – Commercial Energy Installations**

**Proposals for the development of commercial renewable energy generating installations will be supported where they contribute to the community in at least one of the following ways:**

- i) Contribution to a community benefit fund to be administered by the Town Council and used for real community benefit. This should be for a set amount per MW installed (at a minimum of £3,000 per MW for all technologies other than wind) per year for a twenty year payment period;**
- ii) The developer will (or provide funding to an independent agency/organisation that will) provide a fuel poverty mitigation scheme in North Tawton; providing practical energy efficiency measures, tariff switching services, fuel debt counselling and alleviation;**
- iii) Install small scale renewable energy technologies for local community buildings, groups or sectors of the community subject to fuel poverty;**
- iv) A reduced electricity tariff rate for local residents in North Tawton.**

**Community energy benefits are to remain as such in perpetuity regardless of the sale and purchase of the asset to another organisation and must form any condition of sale. Once the development reaches the end of its operational life it must be removed and the site remediated to its previous use.**

### **Sustainability and Housing**

Due to changes in planning legislation, North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan cannot enforce any building construction standard above building regulations for new housing in the plan area. North Tawton would like to see the highest standard of housing being constructed in order to provide in the long term for our housing needs. This includes dwellings which provide life-time homes, which have low running costs, in order to challenge and redress issues relating to fuel poverty within the community. They should have low associated emissions in order to not contribute to climate change and help North Tawton act locally while thinking globally. Although this plan is unable to stipulate a building construction standard for housing within the minimum plan requirement it wishes to support housing built beyond this MPR which are constructed to Passivhaus standards. see appendix xx for the definition of Passivhaus housing.

**Policy EE4** positively supports our objectives 14 & 16. The requirement for good design which lasts the longevity of the development is supported by NPPF paragraph 58 & 61 and buildings of high level of sustainability in paragraph 65 and low carbon buildings in paragraph 95 and 97.

Community consultation, through the Questionnaire, provided the stimulus for **Policy EE4** with 67.4% of respondents thinking that all new housing developments should incorporate the latest environmentally friendly technologies to reduce their carbon footprint and running costs. While 59.1% of the respondents felt there was a need for more Eco-friendly housing in North Tawton.

Related National & Local Policies

- JLP
- NPPF paragraphs 58, 61, 65, 95&97

#### **Policy EE 4 – Sustainability and Housing**

**New housing built beyond the minimum plan requirement of housing (137 dwellings) in North Tawton within the period up to and including 2034, will only be supported if they are constructed to Passivhaus standards.**