

Housing



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Introduction

The current housing stock in North Tawton provides a good cross section of types of property. Over the past 10 years there have been a number of new developments adding a range of new dwellings to the town. These include Strawberry Fields to the south, Barkers Way, providing much needed social and affordable housing to the west, Shiptons site providing smaller dwellings and flats and most recently Batheway Fields where in the first phase of this plan 61 dwellings will be built.

The Minimum Planning Requirement (MPR) is the minimum amount of housing development required within an area in order to meet housing targets. West Devon has a MPR of 3,608 dwellings for the period 2016-2034. In order to achieve this target it is necessary for West Devon to identify where and how this development can take place. The MPR will be delivered on allocated sites identified within West Devon's draft Joint Local Plan (JLP) within a future Allocations Development Plan and/or Neighbourhood Plans.

The MPR for North Tawton is **137** dwellings. This comprises **within years 1- 5** of the plan **87** dwellings including existing commitments - that is: sites with Planning Permission, dwellings under construction, and existing allocation at Batheway Fields.

In years 6-10 **30** dwellings need to be constructed, and beyond that **20** dwellings, to achieve the MPR.

The residents of North Tawton made it very clear in the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire responses that there is a preference for small scale rather than large developments in the town. 69% of respondents said they preferred the use of Brownfield sites for any new development, which should be a mix of small developments (70% of respondents) rather than one new estate. The public response to the 'Call for Sites' exercise undertaken in 2014, also indicated that smaller sites were preferred.

At the time of writing it is known that Wainhomes are considering the next phase of their long term plan to develop 400 homes within the North Tawton area, on Greenfield sites. This kind of large scale development would not only take North Tawton well beyond the MPR of 137 dwellings but is not in keeping with the views and wishes of residents. This scale of development would put significant pressure on the infrastructure of North Tawton.

Objectives

7. To support as closely as possible the views expressed by the town's residents through the social engagement process.
8. To support housing development that sustains the population of the town at a level that helps maintains shops, jobs and services sufficient to enable North Tawton to thrive as a place in which to live.
9. To ensure the provision of a sufficient number, type, range and tenure of housing of a good standard that meets the needs of different groups of people. To wherever possible promote independent living for people of all ages and conditions.
10. To ensure that the design of any new development reflects and respects the distinctive character of the town and its surroundings.

Priority sites for North Tawton identified in the Joint Local Plan (JLP)

The JLP (H10) 01990/2011 highlights the **Woollen Mill** as a Mixed use Site and **Batheway Fields** 01037/2013 for Housing. There is planning approval for 63 dwellings at the Woollen Mill with Wainhomes having an option on this site, and 61 dwellings at Batheway Fields under construction. Currently (2016) Wainhomes have submitted a Planning application for a further 28 dwellings to be built on land identified for employment use at the Batheway Site which they have presented as a 'swap' for a similar number of dwellings at the Woollen Mill. A decision is awaited on this application.

There were other sites identified through the 'Call for Sites' process in 2014 & 2016 with 2 of these prioritised by the Neighbourhood Plan Group listed below.

Land East of Devonshire Gardens (WD_13_05_08/13) SW Water

It is recognised that the Land East of Devonshire Gardens and North St, owned by SW Water, has been registered by North Tawton Environmental Trust as an Asset of Community Value. This allows them a right to bid for this site if offered on the open market and to continue its current activities onsite. North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan supports the Environmental Trust in its right to bid for this designated site.

However, should the Environmental Trust be unsuccessful in its bid for the site, the Neighbourhood Plan would like to designate this site for a specific type of development. The site has been identified as being in accordance with many of the desired requirements for developments from the community consultation, e.g. brownfield, level, close to town amenities and suitable for a small development of low density housing. Therefore, should the bid by North Tawton Environmental Trust be unsuccessful the Neighbourhood Plan would support a small development with no dwelling exceeding two storeys, with good sized gardens, adequate parking, dedicated allotment space and the possibility of assisted living type accommodation.

Land behind Bouchers Hill (3043/15/OPA) Davies

This land is currently (2016) subject to an outline planning application for 9 self-build dwellings. There is also a barn on the same site with permitted development permission. Although this site is on Greenfield land there is support within the town for this self-build development. This planning application was approved by North Tawton Town Council and is under consideration by West Devon Borough Council at time of writing. Should this self-build scheme gain approval it is important that any development on this site adheres to **Policy HO8** and the '**Town Design Statement**'.

For both these sites there are identified access and traffic issues in relation to North Street, and robust evidence that such issues can be mitigated will need to be provided for planning to be accepted, and any recommendations from independent traffic reports are carried out as part of the development.

The 8 Neighbourhood Plan Housing Policies identified below seek to meet the Objectives set out in this Housing theme. The following sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underpin these policies with specific paragraphs listed before each policy:

- Delivering a wide choice of quality homes
- Requiring a good design
- Promoting Healthy Communities
- Protecting greenbelt land
- Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding.

Neighbourhood Plan Policies

New Dwellings

Policy HO1 has been informed by the expressed views of residents of North Tawton through the responses to a number of relevant questions within the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire.

The current housing stock in North Tawton provides a good cross section of types of property, but the future increase in house numbers should be kept to a minimum with traditional style housing on Brownfield sites preferred. There was a clear preference from respondents for 3 bedroom properties, some bungalows and larger gardens than those provided in the last development at Strawberry Fields.

The Questionnaire revealed that 65% of respondents would not want to see any more than 100 new houses built within the town over the next 20 years. Only 27% of respondents thought between 76 and 100 was acceptable, with 38% preferring less than 76. 21% of respondents did feel that more than a 100 new houses would be acceptable.

An analysis, undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan, of the density of new developments built over the past 10 years within North Tawton, informs the preferred density of dwellings per hectare in **Policy HO1**.

69% of respondents expressed a preference for the use of Brownfield sites for any new development, which should be a mix of small developments (70% of respondents) rather than one new estate. 54% expressed this as their least preference with only 19% preferring one large development. A mix of open market/affordable/social housing was preferred by 63% of respondents.

In relation to the type of new housing, 53% of respondents preferred 2 storey dwellings with the same number expressing 3 storey houses as their least preference. 63% expressed a preference for more traditional style dwellings.

In response to whether residents would welcome dwellings to use environmentally friendly technologies to reduce carbon foot print and running costs, 67% respondents expressed agreement.

The Questionnaire also revealed that 72% of respondents identified Parking as a very serious issue for the town, with a further 16% viewing it as a concern. Car parking provision for residents was seen as a major concern for 59% of respondents, with provision of car parking for visitors a serious concern for 49%.

Related district & national policies

- JLP – currently draft
- NPPF 17, 29-30,47,50,56,58,61,69,75, 94-95,99-100.

Policy HO1 - New Dwellings

Proposals for development on sites of 12 or more new dwellings will only be supported where they:

- i) provide, on average, a density of 30 dwellings per hectare;**
- ii) provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes commensurate with local needs of local households in North Tawton, with the majority being 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings;**
- iii) utilise rainwater harvesting and/or grey water recycling within dwellings to reduce water disposal from sites;**
- iv) do not contribute to increased flood risk and use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to mitigate this risk. Where SuDS are put in place, developers should consider positive solutions for landscape incorporation and biodiversity improvements as part of the schemes;**
- v) provide adequate off road car parking facilities through provision of a garage and/or driveway which should be held in perpetuity only for parking provision ;**
- vi) provide safe, convenient and pleasant cycle and pedestrian routes to the town centre and to principal facilities including schools; safe and convenient crossings of roads, where the location of the proposal suggests a need for such routes;**

Developers are encouraged to:

- vii) utilise small plot sizes of approximately 12 dwellings in-keeping with the traditional form, character and plot sizes associated with North Tawton; and,**
- viii) consider the use of previously developed land (brownfield) sites before greenfield sites.**

Affordable Housing

In the 2013 Strategic Housing Market Needs Assessment undertaken for North Tawton by West Devon Borough Council, 67 affordable homes a year were identified as being required within the town. In October 2014 a Housing Needs survey was undertaken. The questions asked within the survey were intended to provide a headline figure to advise what housing provision may be needed within the town over the next 5 years.

In the Housing Needs Survey, 34 respondents confirmed that they were in housing need. There were a significant number of people who wished to downsize as they confirmed that their homes were too large. Others stated that they were renting but would like to buy. A 100% affordable housing scheme at Barkers Way was delivered in 2013 by Devon Home Choice, addressing an earlier identified need for affordable housing. Within the Batheway Field development of 61 dwellings there is provision for 40% affordable accommodation, this equates to 24 affordable homes comprising 19 social rented units and 5 discount market sale. The affordable element of these homes, once built, will be available for people who meet the local connection criteria for North Tawton.

The number of new homes needed to meet local needs is currently zero, largely due to the development at Bathway Fields. This takes into account the number of homes which are currently in the planning process and the provision of the 11 units at Barkers Way which was completed recently. These units will adequately meet the needs of the local community.

In light of the new development and the availability of affordable dwellings there will be a need to revisit this survey by 2020.

Related district & national Policies

- **JLP – draft plan**
- **West Devon Borough Council Affordable Housing Policy**
- **NPPF 47,50,54**

Policy HO2 – Affordable Housing

Proposals for housing development will be required to satisfy requirements for affordable housing set out in The Joint Local Plan, and should demonstrate how they address local housing needs identified in the most up-to-date housing needs survey.

In addition, all proposals for affordable housing should:

- i) demonstrate how they meet relevant requirements set out in the North Tawton Design Statement; and,**
- ii) demonstrate how they meet local needs for dwelling sizes (bedrooms) and type (for example, bungalows, semi-detached, terraced, maisonettes, apartments / flats, detached).**

Occupancy of Affordable Housing

Affordability will continue to be an issue for people looking to buy or rent in North Tawton.

All of the applicants who completed the Housing Needs Survey lived within North Tawton and many had relatives in the area. Therefore all applicants responding met West Devon Borough Council's Local Allocation Policy and would meet the Local connection criteria set out for the area.

Policy HO3 sets out clear guidelines for all future occupancy of affordable housing within the town.

Related district & national policies

- **JLP (draft)**
- **West Devon Borough Council Local allocation policy**
- **NPPF 47,50 &54**

Policy HO3 - Occupancy of Affordable Housing

Initial and subsequent occupancy of the affordable housing will be restricted to a person(s) with a local connection who:

- a) Do not have access to open market housing;
- b) Is a resident of North Tawton, or has a local connection with the town because of family ties or a need to be near their workplace.

In the event that an occupier who fulfils both (or either) of criterion (a) or (b) cannot be found within a reasonable period of time, then (b) will be widened:

- i) firstly to a person(s) with a local connection to neighbouring parishes because of family ties or a need to be near their workplace;
- ii) secondly to a person(s) with a connection to Okehampton because of family ties or a need to be near their workplace;
- iii) and thirdly to a person(s) with a connection to the wider West Devon Borough.

Retaining Affordable Housing for the Local Community

Policy HO4 seeks to ensure that a mechanism exists for developing housing schemes which will remain affordable. In the light of changing Government Policy in relation to 'Right to Buy' this policy will require regular monitoring.

Related local & national policies

- JLP (draft)
- NPPF 53

Policy HO4 – Retaining Affordable Housing for the Local Community

Affordable housing should be provided in perpetuity, where feasible, for example, through a Community Land Trust or other community housing scheme / mechanism which retains stock for the benefit of the local community at an accessible cost. Community housing schemes will be supported.

Private Rear Amenity Space (Gardens)

In the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire 56% of respondents expressed a strong preference, and 23% a preference, for any new developments to have larger rear gardens than those provided in the last development at Strawberry Fields (average being 48 Square metres). An analysis of rear garden size within recent developments within North Tawton, undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan, revealed an average size of 60 square metres. This analysis therefore informs the minimum size for a rear garden within **Policy HO5**.

Related local & national policies

- **JLP (Draft)**
- **NPPF 47,50,54**

Policy HO5 - Private Rear Amenity Space (Gardens)

New residential development proposals should demonstrate, through a design and access statement or planning statement, that adequate well-located private amenity space is provided of an appropriate size and type for reasons of good quality design, amenity of residents, accessibility, privacy, enabling adequate light (sunshine) and the provision of healthy living environments. This should normally be provided as rear garden space.

New dwellings should have a minimum of 60m² of useable private garden (amenity) space, where feasible.

Amenity spaces should be well-designed and fit for purpose and therefore:

- be practically shaped (preferably rectangular), having a useable area and be accessible and well planned in relation to the dwelling's living spaces;**
- provide a private 'sitting out area' not overlooked by a window of a neighbouring property;**
- be secure; and,**
- receive direct sunlight for part of the space for at least part of the day.**

Residential, Supported Care and Sheltered Homes

In 2014 18.5% of the total population (2067) of North Tawton were aged 65 - 84 (382 people) and 2.6% were aged 85 and over (54 people). (source: Devon JSNA Community Profile 2016). Although within the average for the South West, this is above the England average.

In the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire 36% of respondents expressed a strong preference for sheltered housing for elderly, infirm or disabled people to be provided within the town, with a further 35% of respondents expressing some preference. Also 30% expressed a strong preference for Care/Nursing provision within the town.

Further evidence from the local GP Practice indicated that provision for elderly care within the communities served by the Practice is limited. A number of patients have had to move to reside in Okehampton, Crediton, Hatherleigh and Holsworthy to access suitable provision to meet their needs. A facility within the local area, providing social care accommodation for the wider community, would be warmly welcomed by the GP Practice.

Related local and National Policies

- **JLP (draft)**
- **NPPF 39**

Policy HO6 - Residential, Supported Care and Sheltered Homes

To help ensure provision for our ageing population, proposals for development of residential care and sheltered accommodation for the elderly will be supported.

Parking in Residential Development

Policy HO7 seeks to reduce on street parking, improve road safety and to mitigate problems being experienced within the town in relation to car parking and congestion issues.

The Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire revealed that 72% of respondents identified Parking as a very serious issue for the town, with a further 16% viewing it as a concern. Car parking provision for residents was seen as a major concern for 59% of respondents, with provision of car parking for visitors a serious concern for 49%.

The Questionnaire also revealed that 80% of respondents had up to 2 cars per household with 11.5% having 3 or more cars per household.

Identifying additional sites for car parking within the town for both residents and visitors produced 112 responses in the Questionnaire, including the suggestion of more off road parking within any new housing developments as referenced above in **HO1(v)**. As a number of residents have commercial vehicles it is important that there is provision made within any new development for parking such vehicles to avoid further congestion in residential areas.

Related district and national policies.

- **JLP (draft)**
- **NPPF 50**

Policy HO7 - Parking in Residential Development

New residential development should provide adequate off-road parking for residents and visitors with roads being of sufficient width and an appropriate layout to ensure easy two-way vehicular access, without compromising the safety of pedestrians or cyclists.

Proposals for development will be supported where they demonstrate, through a Transport Impact Assessment or Planning Statement, how they comply with standards set out by the Highways Authority in its most up-to-date standing advice.

Proposals are encouraged to exceed this standard where viable:

- i) to help ensure that existing parking problems in North Tawton are not exacerbated;**
- ii) to provide the opportunity to maintain good and safe accessibility on local roads;**
- iii) to take realistic account of vehicle ownership (and use of commercial / business vehicles) per household in the town; and,**
- iv) ensuring that their layout provides easy access for residents and their visitors, to service vehicles (for example refuse vehicles) and to emergency service vehicles.**

Small Scale Self-build Housing

Self-build housing, which includes 'custom build housing', is defined by the Government (in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 2014) as a dwelling built by (or commissioned by) someone to be occupied by them as their sole or main residence for at least 3 years.

Self-build can offer a lower cost solution to local residents as well as supporting the local economy by providing work for local builders, architects and trades people. It can also help to "free-up" the availability of market housing (private rent and owned) as a self-builder will usually be resident in the parish already and will vacate their home when their self-build home is complete.

There is growing support for this method of delivering housing, with the Government having introduced the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act in 2015. This is borne out by the response in the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire where 42% of respondents expressed a strong interest in custom built/self-build housing, and 25% expressing interest in this form of development within the town. Also 42% of respondents expressed a strong interest in affordable community self-build developments.

A requirement of the Housing Act is for Local Authorities to maintain a register of people interested in finding or developing a self-build plot. By applying the points listed within **Policy HO8** self-build or custom built housing must address the issues of occupancy, local connections, affordability and nature and type of building. The 'Town Design Statement', Appendix .. should also inform the design of the houses, gardens and surrounding area.

At time of writing there are 2 outline planning applications within North Tawton to develop sites for self-build dwellings which have received support from North Tawton Town Council.

Related district and national policies

- JLP (draft)
- NPPF 47,50
- Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 2014
- Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act in 2015

Policy HO8 - Small Scale Self-build Housing

To help achieve localised organic housing growth which supports our rural community and help meet the Government's objective of encouraging self-build, proposals for innovative single self-build dwellings for local people who are constrained by the availability and market cost of properties, and who would not normally qualify for affordable or shared equity housing, but who wish to remain in the parish, will be supported where they:

- i) are proposed by applicants on the West Devon Borough Council self-build and custom housebuilding register;
- ii) are developed for occupancy by self-builders already resident within the parish or those with a strong local connection (through family or work);
- iii) are completed within 2 years of permission being granted;
- iv) are occupied by the self-builder for a minimum period of 3 years after completion as their main and sole residence;
- vi) demonstrate that there is a need for the proposed house type and size;
- vii) are preferably located within the defined North Tawton built-up area or adjacent to it where the site "rounds off" the built extent of the town;
- ix) demonstrate that there are no adverse impacts on landscape character, or where unavoidable, such impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated;
- x) do not increase or exacerbate fluvial or surface water flood risk on-site or off-site and utilise Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to minimise and mitigate risk; and,
- xi) demonstrate that there will be satisfactory access into the plot / site.

Criteria ii) and iii) will be secured through legal condition placed on planning consent. Legal agreements should also consider opportunities to retain the property for purchase by local residents or local community trust (before marketing on the open market) if the owner wishes to leave or sell the property or, if prior to 3 years of occupation, ownership changes as a result of Lasting Power of Attorney (Property and Financial Affairs) or execution of a Last Will and Testament.

For the purposes of this policy a strong "local connection" is defined as meaning one or more of the following connections in priority order:

- a) persons who have been permanently resident therein for a continuous period of three years out of the last five years immediately prior to a self-build planning application being registered; or,
- b) being formerly permanently resident therein for a continuous period of five years at some time in the past; or,
- c) having his or her place of permanent work (normally regarded as 16 hours or more a week and not including seasonal employment) therein for a continuous period of at least twelve (12) months immediately prior to a self-build planning application being registered; or,
- d) persons who can demonstrate a close family connection to the parish in that the person's mother, father, son, daughter or sibling has been permanently resident therein for a continuous period of five years immediately prior to a self-build planning application being registered and where there is independent evidence of a caring dependency relationship.