

Preserving Our Historic and Natural Environment



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Introduction

North Tawton is a small market 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'.

The town is essentially rural and it is this setting that residents most value and enjoy about living in the Parish. The Devonshire Heartland way, a 43 mile trail running from Okehampton to the village of Stoke Canon, just north of Exeter, runs through the town. Also part of the Tarka Trail, a 180 mile route which follows in the footsteps of Tarka the otter, a character featured in Henry Williamson's famous novel, runs to the west close to the river. Other Public Rights of Way can be found in the town and surrounding countryside.

North Tawton has playing fields for Football and Rugby, a bowling green, and the Memorial Park which includes play equipment and picnic tables. The churchyard and Town Cemetery are also important green spaces within the town. There are some allotments behind Fore St and a site currently used by the Environmental Trust at the Depot at Devonshire Gardens where local residents can grow their own produce. Further allotments are proposed within the Batheway development.

Residents enjoy the rural, amenity views from several aspects around the town, with views towards Dartmoor to the south dominating. Land behind Bouchers Hill, above the allotments and towards Yeo Lane were areas that residents most wanted to see protected, as well as land west of the river.

There are a number of listed buildings and a Conservation Area covers part of the town. There are three scheduled ancient monuments within the town and a roman fort lies to the south of the town.

St Peter's Church, dating from the 13th Century, is the oldest existing building. There are also outlying manor houses and farms which date from the 15th 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.

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 to form the **North Tawton Design Statement 2016**. (Appendix xx) which has been prepared, following public consultation, in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan and has incorporated and updated much of the historical Village Design Statement.

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

Objectives

1. To maintain and enhance the physical appearance of the town in its rural surroundings and help to secure the surrounding countryside, as much as possible, in its present essentially rural state.
2. To ensure that the heritage assets of the parish of North Tawton are protected and preserved for the benefit of the community, as they contribute both character to the town, and significant value to the quality of life for this, and future, generations.

is to provide guidelines to ensure that future development of the town is in keeping with the fundamental character of the area.

The Policies within this theme seek to address the **Objectives 1 & 2**.

The following sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) underpin these policies with specific paragraphs listed before each policy:

- Requiring a good design
- Promoting Healthy Communities
- Protecting greenbelt land
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

A number of District policies and strategies also underpin the policies. These are listed before each policy.

Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Local Green Space

Open Space, Sport and Recreation facilities are important community resources. As well as formal sports and play facilities, open spaces, such as parks, nature reserves, woodland and allotments, can provide opportunities for exercise and help to improve health and wellbeing. It is important that such facilities are identified within this plan and the importance they have within the town for the community. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) gives communities the opportunity to protect green spaces through Local Green Space designation. Such areas could be designated as long as they are in close proximity to the community they serve and are considered by the residents to be particularly special with significant local character.

In gathering evidence to support **Policy P1** 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. The Neighbourhood Plan Group is also aware of other areas of green spaces in and around the town which the community (in the Questionnaire) has said they would like to protect from development. However much of this land is privately owned or managed by Trustees.

The Neighbourhood Plan Group are currently considering the process, set by West Devon Borough Council, for designating Local Green Space for specific areas within the town which will involve further consultation with relevant land owners and organisations, as well as residents.

Local & National Policies

- JLP (draft)
- Neighbourhood Planning Guidance: Open Space, Sport and Recreation and Local Green Space Designation
- 'West Devon Playing Pitch Strategy' Jan 2015
- 'West Devon Open Space, Sport, Recreation Study' June 2016
- 'West Devon Green Infrastructure Report' Feb 2015
- NPPF 76 & 77,81

Policy P1 - Local Green Space

Our locally valued green spaces (green infrastructure) are identified and are designated as Local Green Space. These LGS (and the reason(s) for their (proposed) designation) are:

To be finalised in Early 2017 following further consultation

Should these areas be designated as LGS then

These areas will be protected from loss for the reasons and uses set out. Development proposals on or likely to impact the site's use and reason for designation will only be supported where they:

- i) have no adverse impact on the landscape, habitats or biodiversity of the site or (where unavoidable) satisfactorily mitigate such impact;
- ii) maintain or enhance the existing use, access to and amenity value of the use of a site or satisfactorily mitigate loss.

Where replacement of an LGS used for recreation is proposed, such replacement will only be supported where:

- iii) it results in provision of equivalent or better provision in terms of quality and the area of space provided. Opportunities should be taken to enhance leisure and recreation provision over and above that provided on the replaced LGS;
- iv) it is provided in a location easily and safely accessible to the community that the replaced LGS served; and,
- v) community access to and management of the space and any facilities provided on the site is secured in perpetuity through legal agreement.

The replacement site for a LGS will be treated as designated LGS and will be defined in a supplementary document to this plan until its inclusion in a future review of this Plan.

Proposers of development should engage with the local community and Town Council at the earliest opportunity to help ensure that any proposals for replacement take into account both this plan's aims and objectives, the needs of users and the views of the local community.

Design, Heritage and the Built Environment

In the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire 59% of respondents valued or highly valued the historic town and its buildings. 71% responded that the heritage and history of North Tawton was important to them and that more should be done to promote and protect it. Residents suggested that local history information and heritage trails were ways in which the heritage and history of the town could be promoted.

The Conservation Area of North Tawton is identified on **Map X** along with other significant buildings within the town and surrounding areas which are identified on the National Heritage List for England in Appendix xx. **The Conservation Area Character Appraisal**, undertaken in 1996 by West Devon

Borough Council, highlighted what is in the area and worth keeping, visual and architectural features that needed safeguarding, and how to go about maintaining the character of the area. This appraisal went on to inform the development of the Village Design Statement of 2004.

The **Town Design Statement** found in Appendix xx describes the distinctive character of the town and surrounding countryside and highlights the qualities that residents value. The Statement includes the essential characteristics of the town including buildings – houses, public buildings and retail outlets; street furniture, lighting, and signs; boundaries – hedgerows, banks, trees and stone walls; signs and public utilities; and public rights of way. It 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 and is intended to encourage and stimulate the design process.

The 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. **Policy P2** sets out a clear direction to planners and designers the importance and significance of the character and heritage of the town to any future developments. Change and development that is well planned and thoughtfully designed is welcome, blending old history with new and keeping the town unique and a special place in which to live.

Related District & National Policies & Documents

- **Town Design Statement 2016**
- **Village Design statement 2004**
- **Conservation Area Character Appraisal**
- **National Heritage List for England**
- **NPPF 56-58, 60, 126**

Policy P2 - Design, Heritage and the Built Environment

To ensure that new development is sympathetic to the traditional and historic built character and landscape of the parish, and our heritage assets protected, development proposals will only be supported where they are of high quality design, enhance visual amenity of the setting and minimise any adverse visual impact on local character and neighbouring properties.

To be considered as high quality design, development proposals should meet the requirements set out in the North Tawton Design Statement. Particular attention should be paid to:

- i) ensuring that the size, height, density, scale and location of the development is appropriate to the form, scale and setting of the surrounding built environment, respecting key characteristics such as (but not limited to) [insert from VDS];
- ii) ensuring that materials and design of the development are in-keeping with the character of the surrounding built environment, with a focus on the use of local materials;
- iii) ensuring that it is of a design and scale which minimises adverse impact on the:
 - a) visual amenity of the surrounding landscape;
 - b) views of the proposed development; and,
 - c) natural environment;

and does not result in the loss of the local amenity views identified on map X (reproduced from the North Tawton Design Statement) or that any adverse impacts on them can satisfactorily be mitigated; and,

- iv) ensuring that it is of a design and layout which maximises opportunities for solar gain (for example, following 'passivhaus' principles); and,
- v) the use of traditional design in the North Tawton Conservation Area and protecting or enhancing the essential character of the Conservation Area.

Important Amenity Views

The rural setting of North Tawton is the aspect of the town that residents value the most according to the Questionnaire with 88% of respondents citing that this was something they highly valued and was what they most enjoyed about living in North Tawton. Important amenity views identified within the Questionnaire included views from the footpath on Bouchers Hill across the town to Dartmoor, area beside the river, and open views across agricultural fields. Photographs and maps of views important to residents are included in this section.

Policy P3 emphasises the significance of the countryside and rural views and how developers need to be mindful of their importance to the residents of North Tawton.

'West Devon Borough & Tamar Valley area of outstanding natural beauty landscape Character Assessment' 2008 sets out the essential characteristics of the area to help shape and guide landscape based plans, projects and schemes to be used by planners, developers and others.

Local & national Policies

- JLP
- 'West Devon Borough & Tamar Valley area of outstanding natural beauty landscape Character Assessment' 2008
- NPPF 58

Policy P3 Important Amenity Views

Development proposals will only be supported where they do not compromise the local landscape setting and special character of North Tawton.

Important views into and from the surrounding open countryside are valuable local assets that should be protected from inappropriate development. These views should remain uninterrupted and not obstructed in whole or in part. They are set out on Map X and are:

- i) From the footpath from Bouchers Hill across the town to Dartmoor**
- ii) Views from Yeo Lane**
- iii) Along the banks of the River Taw west of the town**

Any development proposals which compromise these views will be resisted.