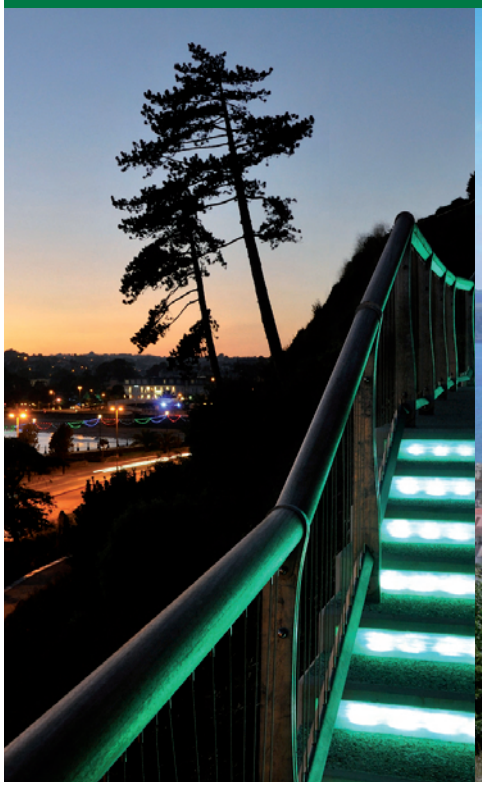
A landscape for success

The Plan for Torbay to 2032 and beyond



Executive Summary

Local Plan
Consultation Draft

September 2012

Mayor, Gordon Oliver:

"We live in an extraordinary place, during extraordinary times.Although it's difficult to predict the long term future with accuracy, we need a plan that gives us direction towards the outcomes we all want for Torbay. This Plan focuses on those outcomes and, specifically, what we need to do over the next five years. It celebrates and protects Torbay's Unique Selling Points, and helps unlock Torbay's potential for economic success."

National Planning

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. It promotes sustainable development in accordance with local plans. But, without an up to date local plan, any site could be considered suitable for development. The NPPF makes it even more important to quickly produce a new local plan for Torbay. The intention is to submit a final draft Local Plan to Government by April 2013.

Planning for success

To secure success for the Bay this Plan is ambitious and aspirational; it encourages innovation and entrepreneurism; celebrates what's best about the Bay and tackles the worst of the Bay, turning problems into opportunity and productivity.This Plan embraces localism, linking over-arching principles with people, and place. It supports people and helps make places that the Bay can be proud of.

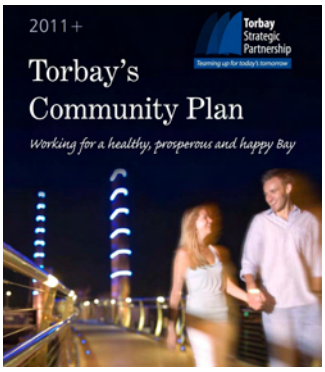
We mean business...

The Local Plan is a business plan – a spatial business plan – with economic recovery at its heart.The Plan focuses on the next 5 years, but within a 20 year+ timeframe.The Plan includes mechanisms to ensure local areas benefit from local growth, to secure balanced, sustainable communities.

It promotes mixed use development, with a mix of employment and residential space; it supports investment in local business improvement areas, with funding from other developments.Residential development in deprived wards will contribute to renewal, refurbishment, helping to deal with our poor quality housing stock.

Local Plan links to other plans

This Plan complements other strategies in the Bay, including the Community Plan for 2011+ and Neighbourhood Plans. You'll see lots of cross references about prosperity, job prospects, climate change, disadvantaged people amongst many other issues.



Neighbourhood Planning

Torbay is producing three Neighbourhood Plans and a Local Plan.These Plans will complement each other, cover the whole Bay and provide a statutory framework for guiding development.No other Unitary Authority is being this ambitious. This Local Plan sets out a positive framework for the future of the Bay, informed by past engagement, evidence and what you've said in Neighbourhood Planning. Neighbourhood Plans, produced by the community, will add detail and value to the Local Plan.

What puts the Bay on the map - Torbay's USP

A combination of 'lifestyle' factors make Torbay the place to be for many people and businesses. The Bay's strengths include its natural and historic environment; its distinct communities; the sea; tourism; its quality of life; it's attractiveness to small businesses. These strengths sit alongside challenges such as poverty and poor health.This Plan seeks to maximise the Bay's strengths and minimise its weaknesses.

What you've told us; what we've done

This Plan has been informed by previous consultation and by SWOT assessments undertaken as part of Neighbourhood Planning work.For example, businesses have said they want the South Devon Link Road, improvements to the Western Corridor, access to high quality premises, broadband and town centre regeneration.All those can be found in this Plan.

"Tell us and we forget; show us and we remember; involve us and we understand."

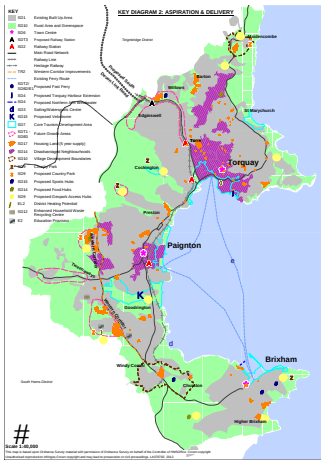
Necessary change and growth

Change and growth in Torbay must deliver these aspirations. In the past there have been annual fluctuations in job numbers, housing provision and population projections.The next 20 years will be similar.The Plan is flexible in allowing for such variations within a sustainable bandwidth of change and growth.

Exceeding the bandwidth could result in unacceptable environmental impacts. Dropping below the bandwidth will result in greater socio-economic problems.

Balanced growth and change are essential

This Plan promotes growth and change that itself secures high quality outcomes for the Bay. The Plan carefully balances growth / change against environmental capacity, but also seeks to secure new jobs, homes, retail provision etc in the right sequence and balance when they are needed, as informed by annual monitoring.It's critical to maintain a 5 year supply of housing land, but also to ensure new jobs are provided – as a priority - in the Bay. This Plan has been subjected to rigorous testing to ensure the balance between growth and environmental protection is right.



A reality check

Change and growth in the Bay will be lead by its economic performance, which itself is closely related to its environmental quality. Torbay's economy has under-performed over a number of years; the UK is in a period of economic downturn; there are many people out of work and/or looking for a job; Torbay's town centres are suffering; Torbay's infrastructure needs improving.

All these things mean that, whilst we need to plan for success, there is likely to be a gradual recovery in Torbay, supported by delivery of the South Devon Link Road in 2015.This Plan reflects that recovery towards full health, with less growth in the first 5 years than later in the Plan period.Annual monitoring will ensure we stay within the bandwidth and respond to market conditions.

The risks of under-planning

However, this Plan will change little unless residents and businesses in the Bay actively support change and development that delivers high quality outcomes for the Bay. Failure to plan for success will leave the door open for developers to promote development that is less likely to deliver those outcomes. So, not having a plan or under-planning for success, are not sensible, sustainable options.Planning that positively supports and develops the Bay's USP is sustainable.

Where will most new growth be?

This Plan looks to enhance the best of Torbay's natural environment.Historically Torbay has been good at re-using brownfield land. That trend will continue. Around 60 – 70% of new development will be on brownfield land and the emphasis will be on using this first.Every opportunity will be taken to use existing sites and buildings. However, brownfield sites do not release funding for much needed infrastructure.

What about the 30-40% of new development on greenfield sites?

Some development on greenfield sites is inevitable.We don't have enough brownfield sites and one side of Torbay is sea.Only the least sensitive greenfield sites will be used, with community support and where they make a substantial contribution to economic recovery in the Bay.

Aspirations

This Plan has five headline aspirations:

- **A better connected, accessible Torbay**
- **Economic recovery and success;**
- **Protect and enhance a superb environment;**
- **Make of the most of opportunities as a result of climate change;**
- **More sustainable communities and better places**

South Devon Link Road - a game changer...

'The Road', which is due to be completed by end 2015, will change the game for Torbay. For every £1 invested in the £108M road, we expect £9 to be invested in Torbay. The road opens up opportunities for new and expanding businesses, new jobs, for better connectivity to national and international markets. This Plan helps make opportunities a reality.

Economic recovery - the priority

Over the next 5 years the priority is economic recovery. This includes town centre regeneration and ensuring the right land, buildings and infrastructure are in place to support Torbay's businesses and investment. We need to encourage growth in and retention of businesses, especially small and medium sized business in the Bay. Job creation will then lead to housing demand, which itself will help pay for infrastructure.

Turning the tide on our economic fortunes...

Torbay's glamorous setting isn't reflected – YET – in its economic performance.It has a low wage economy, with poor job prospects, high levels of unemployment and relies on a small number of important sectors such as tourism and the public service.But, we're planning for that to change, by supporting small business growth, improved productivity and a more diverse economy.This Plan sets out an ambition for an

average of 750 jobs per annum over the next 20 years, putting in place the infrastructure and space over the next 5 years to further encourage growth. This Plan requires 1.5 jobs for every home.

Much more than bucket and spade

The Bay is hugely reliant on tourism for its success.This Plan supports improvements in the quality and quantity of accommodation, the quality of the Bay's tourism offer (beaches, attractions, themed events etc), protecting the Bay's natural environment, history and unique Urban Geopark status, and increasing spend in our town centres.

Town Centres

Our town centres need to modernise and 'move on'.They need to become multi-functional centres offering leisure, retail, living and work opportunities. All three have dropped in retail destination rankings in the last 3 years; the number of vacant shops has risen and large food retailers are looking for out of town locations. E-retail has changed, and will continue to change, the nature of shopping dramatically.

This Plan recognises the importance of successful town centres to the Bay.It promotes some radical ideas to give town centres new life and more vibrancy, including spatially more focused town centres that utilise each town's USP – harbour, waterside, sunshine, lifestyle….

Marine opportunities

The sea is part of Torbay's culture. Our marine environment provides fantastic opportunities for employment, tourism, recreation and vibrant coastal towns.This Plan supports a range of projects and initiatives, such as the 3rd Harbour in Torquay, Northern Arm Breakwater in Brixham and rejuvenation of Paignton Harbour.

Torbay's environment

Torbay has a spectacular natural environment, with a superb Bay and nationally or internationally important landscapes. There is rare wildlife, important rock and coral formations. Torbay's environment supports much of the Bay's economic activity and investment. It's vital that's not undermined. Indeed, this Plan promotes significant environmental enhancement, for example through new green infrastructure.

Investment in green, blue and grey infrastructure

Much of our infrastructure such as roads, drains and cycle routes, are in need of huge investment at a cost of around £180M. Torbay has a Local Transport Plan, which commits to transport improvements to support economic growth, improve travel experience to and through Torbay, provide low carbon transport choices and improve the public transport network. The Council has also committed funding to education over the next 5 years. Prosperity depends on funding for costly projects such the South Devon Link Road, Western Corridor, flood defences and green infrastructure. Our new Community Infrastructure Levy will help secure major infrastructure improvements.

Green Infrastructure

There is much support for an improved green infrastructure network, made

up of interconnected open spaces that provide environmental, social and economic benefits. These spaces connect the urban landscape with the wider countryside; they provide a range of functions, from walking, cycling, education, wildlife management, flood alleviation, local food production, energy production and value to Torbay's ecosystem.

Sustainable lifestyles

Climate change and global economic changes present challenges and opportunities for the Bay. This Plan supports:

Energy: local energy production and energy efficiency in new buildings.

Water & Waste: wise use of water in new developments; reducing flood risk and waste generation, wise use of minerals.

Food: protection of land to support local food production and consumption.

Shelter: everyone has access to a decent home

Work: Well paid work, skills development, green collar jobs and eco-tourism.

Leisure: Better access to sport, recreational facilities and the countryside.

Health: increased opportunity for cycling and walking.

Education: investment in existing and new schools; support for South Devon College

People and place matters

This Plan seeks better outcomes for people and places in the Bay. Simply following population trends and predictions will not achieve those outcomes. Whilst the latest population projections show a 9,000 increase in the number of people living in the Bay up to 2031, the figures also show a fall (by 5000) in the number of working age people, only a small increase in young people and a large increase in the +75 year old population, with potential impacts on health care costs and care provision. So, simply following the 'trend' does not fit with Torbay's ambitions for job creation or more family housing for example.

Household size

Falling household size has a big impact on housing. In the South West, average household sizes were projected to fall from 2.23 in 2013 to 2.11 in 2033. Torbay's ageing population means that the fall will probably be more dramatic. Our 'planning for success' approach suggests a need to plan for more houses per annum in the second half of the Plan period than in the first half and to encourage family housing to help deal with the negative impacts of decreasing household size.

New homes

Based on a number of factors, including the need to deliver new infrastructure and the impact of a 'slow' market, this Plan provides for an average of 400 (+/- 25%) new homes per annum over the first 5 years of the plan, with a longer term ambition for delivery of 8,000 – 10,000 homes over the Plan period. This is in line with Torbay's position historically and ensures we protect our valued environmental assets. Existing planning permissions, allocations and 'known' sites provide land supply for the first five years.

Making the most of empty, redundant and poor quality property

There are around 1300 empty homes, and more empty commercial

properties, in the Bay. Recently more than 300 long term empty homes have been brought back into use. This Plan promotes the re-use of 150 empty properties/homes a year. Rethinking our town centres provides an opportunity to bring back into viable, productive use many run-down properties around the fringes of our town centres, supporting wider regeneration efforts by bringing families and, businesses back to our towns.

Local food and food shopping

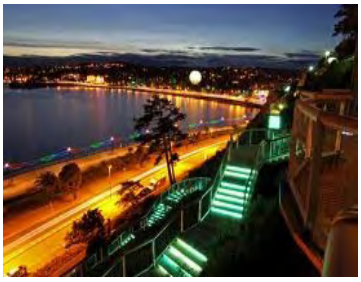
This Plan ensures people can meet their food shopping needs locally and supports local food production, such as the pioneering crop production at Paignton Zoo. It promotes food retail provision in town centres; supports the enhancement of existing local centres and development of new local centres, such as at White Rock. Locally produced food outlets and other services will be encouraged in local centres, helping local job creation. The Plan resists out-of-centre food retailing, if it would harm the viability and vitality town or local centres.

Affordable housing

Affordability of housing is a factor of income and house prices. Economic recovery in the Bay will help promote higher wages. Nonetheless there is a pressing need for affordable housing in the Bay. This Plan requires 30% affordable housing, but will offer significant discounts / incentives – particularly in the next 3 - 5 years – to support mixed, balanced communities. This Plan also promotes a higher level of shared equity homes than has been the case in the past.

Torquay: The major commercial centre

Torquay will be the main commercial centre of Torbay. The Harbour will be the focus of new leisure, lifestyle and high quality retail opportunities, with major redevelopment projects coming forward in the next 5 years. There will be comprehensive renewal in more deprived and under-used areas. The tourism and retail roles of Babbacombe and St Marychurch will be enhanced. 'Torquay Gateway' will provide employment, new housing and recreation opportunities. Sensitive new development in / around Torquay, over the next 5 years, could draw in around £7M in funding for infrastructure, in excess of 400 new jobs per annum and 150 - 200 new homes per annum.



Paignton: the Family Resort

Paignton will be a vibrant, distinct place of wide appeal with a reinvigorated Town Centre and waterfront. Its traditional seaside experience will be complemented by a focus on education, learning and provision of leisure facilities for all ages. This Plan promotes, over the next 5 years, the redevelopment of Crossways, rejuvenation of the Harbour and substantial training / employment opportunities around South Devon College. Over the next 5 years, it is expected that Paignton will draw in around £7.5M funding, more than 300 new jobs per and around 250 new homes per annum.

Brixham Peninsula

This Plan promotes development of Brixham as a resilient maritime town with high levels of employment, new holiday and retail provision and a vibrant harbourside. Mixed use regeneration is supported in Brixham Town Centre, harbour and waterfront areas, to provide a range of retail, employment, leisure and residential facilities. This will sustain its role as a vibrant maritime resort, support and develop traditional industries, diversify its economic base and make the most of its AONB setting. Over the next 5 years, Brixham will draw in around £0.5M funding, create a minimum of 20 jobs per annum and an average of 30 new homes per annum.

Delivery mechanisms

Proposals put forward in this Plan will be delivered with assistance from:

Neighbourhood Planning – will add detail to the Local Plan, with community support, delivering community aspirations.

Local Enterprise Areas – to help bring forward employment space.

Local Development Orders – to promote the sort of development the Bay needs in / around town centres and employment areas.

Funding – Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus used to bring forward new and improved infrastructure.

Planning Applications – the private sector, predominantly, will bring forward development proposals. The Council will assess those proposals against this Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.

First 5 years: Infrastructure

During the first 5 years key infrastructure projects will include:

- South Devon Link Road
- Super fast broadband
- Western Corridor improvements
- Renewable energy
- Climate change resilience

What big projects might you see over the next 5 years?

If we're positive about change, seize the opportunities that best respond to the Bay's USP, we could also see:

- A Watersports Centre of Excellence at Broadsands;
- A velodrome at Clennon
- An energy centre at White Rock
- Projects and events to revitalise our town and local centres
- A new frequent ferry service and workhubs in Brixham and Torquay
- Improved education facilities, including South Devon College
- Investment in our environment – new parks, food hubs, access to countryside
- Growth in business sectors such as medical and healthcare, advanced electronics
- Poverty and disadvantage being tackled via affordable homes, new community facilities, improved housing stock, increased skills and employment

Get involved

If you want to know more, or comment on the Plan, please see:

the online consultation link
www.torbay.gov.uk/newlocalplan

www.twitter.com/torbay_council

www.facebook.com/torbaycouncil

Or write to:
strategic.planning@torbay.gov.uk
or Strategic Planning, Torbay Council, Floor 2, Roebuck House, Abbey Rd, Torquay, TQ2 5TF

We want to hear from you, whether you support or have concerns about the Plan.