A Landscape for Success

The 20 year Plan for Torbay

Consultation Draft

ASPIRATION, STRATEGIC DIRECTION & DELIVERY

June 2012

Torbay Council

Contents

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Engaging the community in Planning (Cllr. Alison Hernandez)

Planning for the future of Torbay – about this Plan
- Introduction
- Links with other plans
- Navigation
- Status
- How can I make my views known?
- Where can I find out more?

PART 1: USP, KEY ISSUES & ASPIRATION

1. **The Bay's unique selling points (USP)**
   - What we mean by USP
   - What makes the Bay special
   - The Torbay of 'yesterday'…
   - The Torbay of 'today'…
   - The Torbay of 'tomorrow'…

2. **Key issues facing Torbay**
   - The Bay's vital statistics
   - The case for change and growth
   - Plan, monitor, manage

3. **Our Aspirations**
   - Torbay's aspirations and aims
   - Community aspirations
   - The future for Torbay and the three towns

PART 2: STRATEGIC DIRECTION & DELIVERY

4. **Strategic Direction across Torba**y
   - Constrained Balanced Growth: the Preferred Option for Torbay
   - The Draft Spatial Strategy and Key Diagram
     - **Policy SD1** Growth and Change

   - **A better connected Torbay**
     - **Policy SD2** Infrastructure
   - **Economic recovery and success**
     - **Policy SD3** Marine opportunities
     - **Policy SD4** Employment space
     - **Policy SD5** Education, skills and local labour

    - **Policy SD6** Tourism, events and culture
- **Protect and enhance a superb environment**
    - **Policy SD7** Green Infrastructure
    - **Policy SD8** Countryside and rural economy
- **Make of the most of opportunities as a result of climate change**
    - **Policy SD9** Local Food Production
    - **Policy SD10** Low Energy Development & Local Energy Production
    - **Policy SD11** Waste and Minerals
- **More sustainable communities and better places**
    - **Policy SD12** Town Centres
    - **Policy SD13** Meeting housing needs
    - **Policy SD14** More sustainable, balanced communities
    - **Policy SD15** Ageing population
    - **Policy SD16** Child poverty

5. **Strategic Delivery and change across Torbay**
    - **Torquay**
        - **Policy SDT1** Torquay
        - **Policy SDT2** Torquay town centre and harbour cluster
        - **Policy SDT3** Babbacombe and St Marychurch Coastal Core
        - **Policy SDT4** Torquay Gateway cluster

    - **Paignton**
        - **Policy SDP1** Paignton
        - **Policy SDP2** Paignton town centre and seafront cluster
        - **Policy SDP3** Paignton west
        - **Policy SDP4** Clennon Valley leisure hub

    - **Brixham**
        - **Policy SDB1** Brixham
        - **Policy SDB2** Brixham town centre, harbour and waterside cluster
        - **Policy SDB3** Brixham urban fringe & Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

PART 3: POLICIES FOR MANAGING CHANGE *(to be considered in July 2012)*

Roles of local and national policies

Local Plan policy framework

Development management policies

PART 4: IMPLEMENTATION *(to be considered in July 2012)*

Delivery mechanisms

PART 5: APPENDICES *(to be considered in July 2012)*

Glossary of terms

National and local policy context

Community Infrastructure Levy

Research and evidence base

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: A summary of key issues, aspirations and actions

"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 USP, and helps unlock Torbay's potential for economic success."

Mayor, Gordon Oliver.

Planning for Success

To secure success for the Bay this Plan is ambitious and aspirational; encourages innovation and entrepreneurism; celebrates what's best about the Bay and tackles the worst of the Bay, turning problems into potential 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 communities 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.

Aspirations

This Plan has five headline aspirations:

- A better connected 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;

Necessary Change and Growth

Change and growth in Torbay must deliver these aspitations. 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

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greater socio-economic problems.

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. Smart 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.

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.

National Planning

The national planning policy framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012. It promotes sustainable development but, in the absence of an up to date Local Plan, this approach also supports new development. The NPPF makes it even more important to quickly produce a new local plan, which itself embraces localism.

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.

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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

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. For example, it promotes the use of local labour in construction.

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."

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.

Sustainable lifestyles

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

Energy: local renewable energy production and energy efficiency in new buildings.
Water: wise use of water in new developments; reducing flood risk.
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;

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support for South Devon College

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.

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.

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.

People 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 aging population means that the fall will probably be more dramatic. Projections indicate a fall

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to 1.96 persons by 2026. 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.

Balanced growth and change are essential

This Plan promotes growth and change that itself secures the best outcomes for the Bay. The Plan carefully balances growth / change against environmental issues, and seeks to deliver what people have told us they want to see in the Bay. We all want jobs and homes for our children, but also want to protect our valuable environment. Town centres and built up areas are the focus for change and growth, in all three towns. High quality development is at the top of the agenda. This plan has been subjected to rigorous testing to ensure the balance is right.

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.

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….

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

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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.

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 green field 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.

Investment in green, blue and grey infrastructure

Much of our infrastructure, such as roads, mains drains and cycle routes, are in need of massive investment, at a cost of around £180M. Torbay has a local transport plan, with clear commitment 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 is dependent 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.

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.

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,

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cycling, education, wildlife management, flood alleviation, local food production, energy production and value to Torbay's ecosystem.

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 with 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 annum and around 250 new homes per annum.

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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 and 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 else will you see over the first 5 years?

Sympathetic regeneration, such as mixed use schemes and public space improvements.

Boost to local employment and skills, such as support for expansion of South Devon College and employment space in town centres, Edginswell and west Paignton.

Cleaner, greener, healthier Bay, such as better access to the countryside, improved green infrastructure, continued protection for high quality environmental assets

A safer bay, people working together to ensure town centre improvements, new developments design to reduce opportunity for crime.

Value for Money, such as re-use of empty homes and support for energy efficiency measures.

Protection for vulnerable children and adults, such as affordable homes, improved community and education facilities, measures to help tackle fuel poverty, urban renewal in deprived wards, safe and affordable recreational facilities, reducing worklessness and increasing opportunities for skills development.

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