

An aerial photograph of the village of North Tawton, showing a mix of residential buildings, green fields, and a central road network. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue-green filter.

Pre Submission Draft Version November 2017

# **NORTH TAWTON**

# **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

2016 to 2034

“North Tawton, embracing the past, planning the future”

## FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Neighbourhood Development Plans ensure that communities are closely involved in the decisions which affect them. The North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan has been developed to establish a vision for the town and surrounding areas and to help deliver the local community's aspirations and meet its needs for the period of the plan: 2016-2034. The Plan is a statutory document that will be incorporated into the local planning framework and must be used by West Devon Borough Council to determine the outcome of planning applications.

Our Plan has been produced by members of North Tawton Town Council and local residents, with the support of a planning consultant, and using the views of the residents of North Tawton. The Plan Development Group has consulted and listened to the community and local organisations on a wide range of issues that will influence the wellbeing, sustainability and long term conservation of our rural community. Every effort has been made to ensure the views and policies contained in this document reflect those of the majority of North Tawton residents.

**An electronic copy of this Plan, together with the Appendices, can be found online at [www.northtawtontowncouncil.co.uk](http://www.northtawtontowncouncil.co.uk)**

**Steve Whiteley**  
Chairman  
North Tawton Town Council

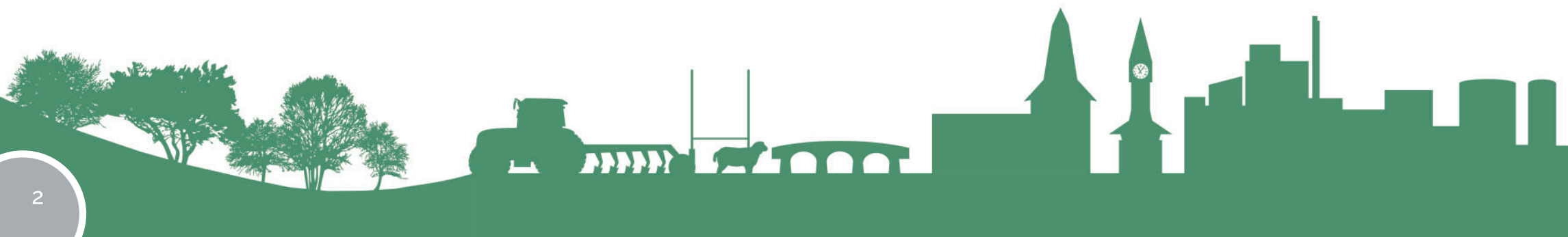
A Neighbourhood Plan has many benefits. The North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan has been developed to:

- protect the town from uncontrolled, large scale or poorly placed development
- spread development around the town and across small sites
- ensure that development is sympathetic to, and improves, the look and feel of the town
- minimise the loss of greenfield sites, where possible by using previously developed sites
- value and protect important green spaces and amenity views
- support and enhance the local economy, infrastructure and community facilities
- give the town the potential to access Section 106 and/or Community Infrastructure Levy funding to improve the town's facilities
- help the town move towards a more sustainable future in relation to energy and the environment
- identify additional actions to improve North Tawton's facilities, services and local environment and to enable issues beyond the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan to be addressed.

North Tawton Town Council would like to thank all the members who have been involved with the Neighbourhood Plan Development Group and pay tribute to their work since 2012.

The Town Council is also grateful for the help and engagement of many others in the town without which it would not have been possible to produce this Neighbourhood Plan.

**Jean Trew hitt**  
Chair  
Neighbourhood Plan Development Group





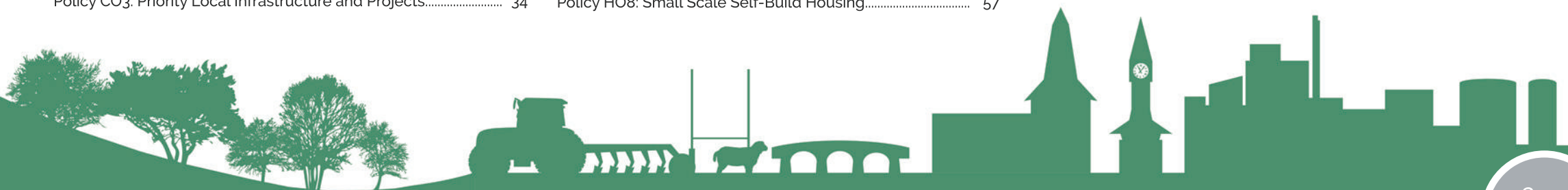
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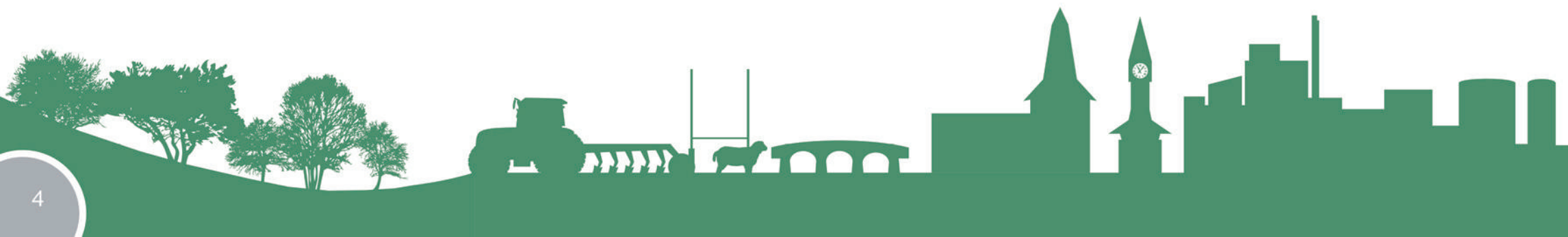
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## NORTH TAWTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN









# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0

“North Tawton, embracing the past, planning the future”



## 1.0 Introduction and Background

### What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Localism Act of 2011 introduced Neighbourhood Planning into the hierarchy of spatial planning in England, giving communities the right to shape their own future development at a local level. A Neighbourhood Plan is a planning strategy with legal weight giving the community of North Tawton an opportunity to set local planning policies which will be taken into account when planning applications are considered by West Devon Borough Council, the local planning authority.

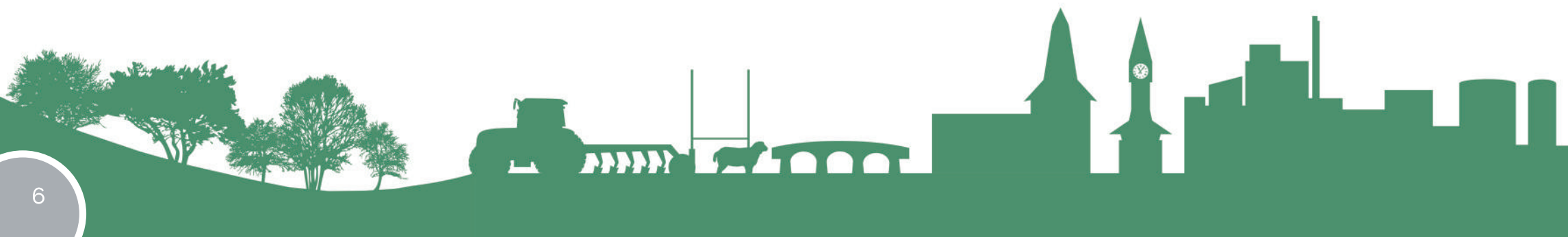
Neighbourhood Plans must be in accordance with higher planning policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) West Devon Core Strategy 2011, and the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan (Draft). The NPPF retains the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' embracing the three critical roles for sustainable development: an economic role, contributing to a strong, responsive, competitive economy; a social role, supporting vibrant and healthy communities; and an environmental role, protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

### Why produce a Neighbourhood Plan?

In 2012, North Tawton Town Council took the decision to develop a Neighbourhood Plan in order to give those who live in the Parish of North Tawton more say in how their community evolves over time. Without a Plan in place, the Town Council can make recommendations to West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) but input is just that a recommendation on how they should act. With an approved Neighbourhood Plan in place, WDBC is obliged to give material weight to the policies in the Plan when making decisions about where any new housing might be built or where other development might, or might not, take place. The Plan also serves to set out some aspirations for future improvements within the town and therefore provides a basis on which to campaign and lobby for such improvements, even if not all of these are within the Local Authority's remit to provide.

In February 2013, North Tawton Town Council applied to WDBC to nominate the land area of the Parish as a Neighbourhood Planning boundary. This was approved in June 2013 and the process of drawing up the Neighbourhood Plan began. **Designation Statement Appendix 1**

The North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan is designed to embrace the principles of the NPPF and of sustainable development. These are set out in the Objectives and Policies which have been developed over a period of time with the community of North Tawton.



## 1.2 How the Neighbourhood Plan was developed

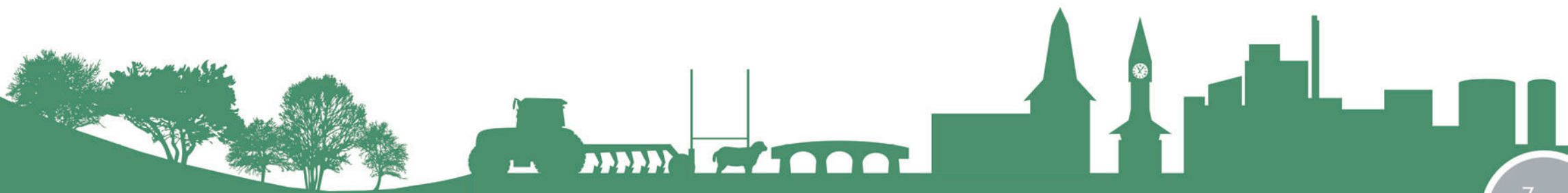
This Neighbourhood Plan is the community's Plan. It represents the community's vision and priorities for how it would like to see the local area develop in the coming years and in doing so it sets out some local planning policies.

The Plan's objectives have been developed from local consultation and analysis of other evidence. The primary focus of the Plan is to develop planning policies to respond to issues of development. However, it was clear from evidence gathered that there were other issues outside the planning arena that were of concern to residents. During consultation with the community we ensured that discussion remained open so that many of the important issues identified were not excluded from consideration. There are a number of objectives which cannot be delivered through planning policies. Community Actions will be identified for the Town Council and others within the town to address as, and if, appropriate to respond to these issues. These include issues such as transport and parking which are clearly of concern for residents but sit outside this Plan.

The Plan is therefore not a plan which can address every issue identified as being important to the community: it has (and must have, by law) a focus on the appropriate use of land and on responding to proposals for development. But it puts us as a community in the driving seat where planning permission is required and allows us a say in what, how and where development should take place where it requires planning permission.

### The Neighbourhood Plan Period

The Plan covers the period between 2016 and 2034, and is therefore in sync with the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (Draft) (JLP) that is produced jointly with South Hams District Council and Plymouth City Council by the Borough Council as the local planning authority. Since our Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the Draft JLP's strategic policies, it is logical for it to be aligned this way.





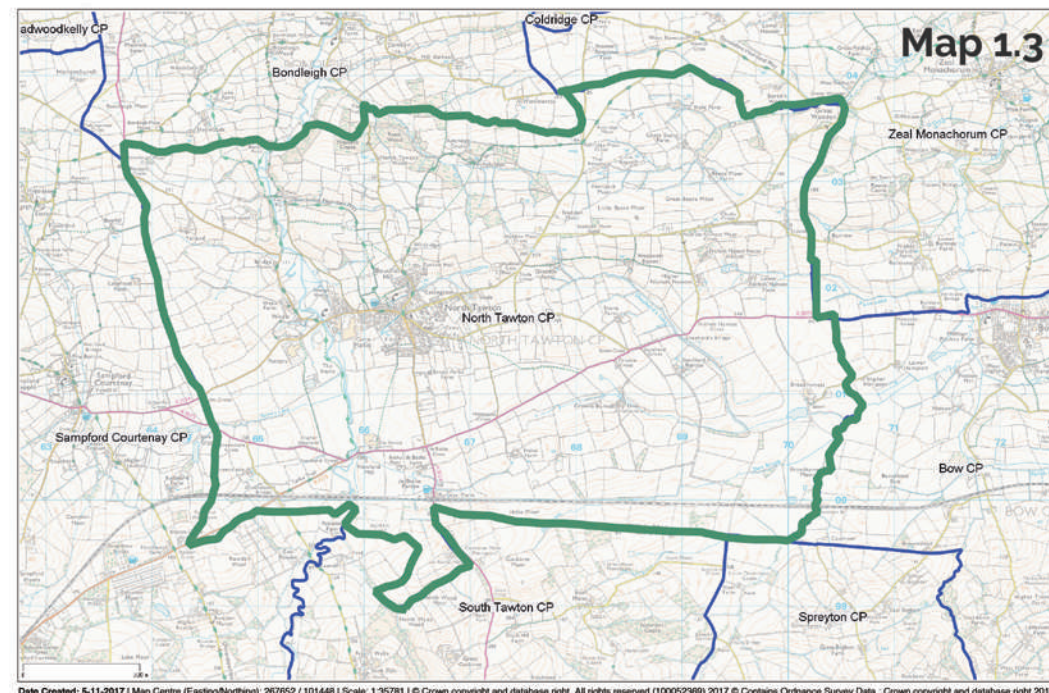
## 1.3 About North Tawton and the Plan Area

The area that the Plan covers is the whole parish of North Tawton shown in **Map 1.3**. North Tawton is a largely rural parish with a population of just over 2000 (Devon JSNA Community Profile 2016), situated amid beautiful West Devon countryside and close to Dartmoor National Park. North Tawton is one of West Devon's more important settlements, providing local services and facilities for the surrounding rural parishes. The Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan (Draft) (JLP) recognises the significance of the smaller towns and key villages, of which North Tawton is one, and is committed to maintaining their vitality and viability. The location of the town and its easy access to the A30 means it also has good links with Exeter and nearby Okehampton.

The main settlement is the small ancient market town of North Tawton, situated on the east side of the Taw valley and on the western side of the parish which encompasses some 2,400 hectares (5,930 acres) of land. The form and character of the traditional town centre makes the town distinctive locally. Safeguarding the elements of the town that contribute to its nature and character could help influence the planning of future development.

The Parish of North Tawton lies within the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which has the aim of promoting and demonstrating a balanced relationship between people and nature. These reserves aim to create and maintain sustainable communities where people can live and work in an area of high environmental quality.

The Parish has areas of designated Ancient Woodland in the north of the parish at Western Copse, Rook Wood and Woodland Copse and a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Staddon Moor. The River Taw runs south-north through the western side of the parish and close to the western edge of the town, with a number of streams and tributaries feeding the river through the parish.



Two streams, broadly running west-east, feed the River Yeo in the south-east and north-east corners of the parish, with part of the south-eastern boundary of the parish being formed by the river. There are some areas at risk from flooding which broadly follow the line of the rivers and their tributaries. Agricultural land in the parish is a range of quality grades of 2 (very good), 3 (good to moderate) and 4 (poor). There are over a dozen historic scheduled monuments, most notably at, and adjacent to, the Mill and The Barton to the north and south of the A3072, as well as numerous listed buildings, many of which are in the town.



## 1.3 About North Tawton and the Plan Area

Amongst North Tawton's services and amenities are shops, businesses and community facilities. These include a good range of small shops and businesses supported by free town centre parking and public toilets. There are four public houses and dining establishments, a café and two fast food outlets. The town has a GP practice, a pharmacy, a post office, two dental surgeries, a park, a town hall, and three churches. There is a youth and community centre and a community primary school. There is a regular bus service to Exeter, Hatherleigh, Barnstaple and Okehampton. The Tarka Trail, which is around 180 miles long, passes through North Tawton and there are several public rights of way.

The nearest settlements to the parish include Bow village two miles to the east, Sampford Courtenay village a mile to the west, and the larger settlements of Okehampton town, seven miles to the south-west and Crediton town which is twelve miles from the parish.

Culturally and historically, North Tawton can trace its origins to Roman times, and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. One of its notable sons is William Budd who was born in the town in 1811. A physician and epidemiologist, he was the first to recognise the contagious nature of infectious diseases. More recently, the town was home to Ted Hughes, poet laureate 1984-98, who lived here from the 1960s; until his death in 1998. North Tawton also found fame as the setting for the BBC TV programme "Jam and Jerusalem" which was filmed in the town and on nearby Dartmoor between 2006 and 2008.

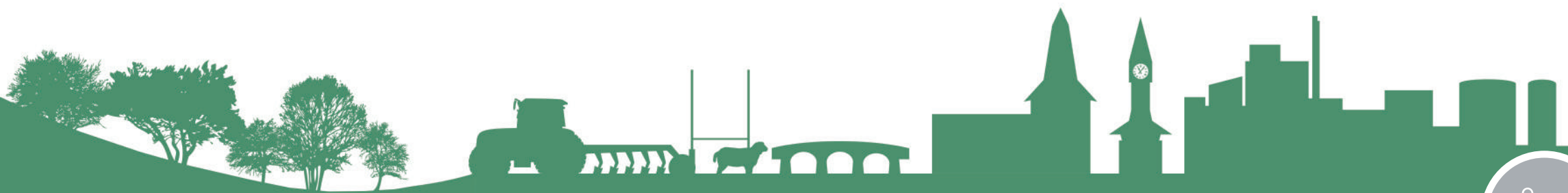
## 1.4 Background and Evidence Base

A Neighbourhood Plan is not compulsory and has been produced by volunteers. In order to produce the Plan, its development has been driven by a steering group, comprised of residents, Town Councillors and assistance from the clerk to the Town Council.

### The aim of the steering group has been to

- Ensure that any expansion of the town is carried out on a scale and in a manner that is as closely as possible supported by the majority of residents.
- Encourage the provision of opportunities for an improved range of employment and the continuation of business within the town and parish.
- Help retain and enhance the existing visual and social characteristics of North Tawton as a small country town.
- Maintain as far as possible, local services and amenities and support a variety of community recreational facilities.
- Safeguard, promote and make accessible, wherever and whenever possible, the historical assets of the town and parish.
- Enable the town to play its part in the appropriate development of sustainable environmentally friendly ways of living.

It was recognised at an early stage that for the Plan to be truly the community's plan, and to genuinely reflect the planning issues of relevance in the town we would need to engage fully with those who live and work in the town. We also recognised that the Plan could not be properly developed without the input of organisations and agencies with a borough, county, sub-regional or national remit.





## 1.4 Background and Evidence Base

The process and types of consultation and discussion that we have gone through is documented in detail in our Consultation Statement Appendix 2 which accompanies this Plan. However, the key methods we have used include:

- Public exhibitions, meetings and events
- A community questionnaire sent to all households
- Focus groups
- Discussion with local businesses
- Evidence gathering from community groups and organisations
- Directly contacting wider-than-local organisations and Agencies (strategic stakeholders) which have an interest in planning issues in the town
- Consultation events during which comments have been invited on draft documents.

Our development of the Plan was based on a desire to be open and to encourage comments and contributions from all quarters, with the aim of achieving consensus, but we were also willing to have debates about issues where the community was divided in its views.

Having developed the Plan through this iterative approach, this pre submission draft of the Plan is being shared with the community and other stakeholders and, it is anticipated, will be revised to reflect comments before progressing through the regulatory framework. The regulatory process will include, formal submission to the local authority and public examination of the Plan before an independent Inspector. Following that, assuming that it passes the Examination stage successfully, the Plan will be subject to a public referendum where residents on the electoral register will be asked if they support the final Plan. If the referendum answer is a "yes" from a majority of voters turning out on the day, the Plan will be "made" (or adopted) by the local authority.

### The Evidence Base

To inform the content of the Plan, we have developed our evidence base so that our policies are underpinned by clear reasoning and justification. We have done this in two ways. Firstly, we have undertaken local consultation (documented in our Consultation Statement which will be submitted alongside this Plan for Examination) and secondly we have collated the written evidence that already exists into a summary report. We have used these two approaches to help identify our Plan's Objectives, Vision and Policies.

### 1.5 Sustainability Appraisal

The Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to West Devon Borough Council for them to consider whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) Screening Report was required. The Plan was sent to Historic England, Natural England and The Environment Agency for their assessment and comments. No significant concerns were raised by any of these agencies.

West Devon Borough Council therefore determined, under regulation 9(1) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, that the plan was unlikely to have significant environmental effects and that a full Strategic Environmental Assessment was not required. The screening report also concluded that there would be no significant impacts on any European sites and that therefore a full Habitats Regulation Assessment was not required.

**See Appendix 3 'The Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening Report' (27.6.17)**



## 1.6 The Plan's Status and Relationship with Other Planning Documents – local and national

This Plan, once approved, will be part of the statutory development plan. That means that its policies will have significant weight (or 'real teeth') when it is used by the local authority to help determine proposals for development submitted through planning applications. It will form the local tier of planning policy in our parish. It sits alongside the West Devon Core Strategy 2011, Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan (Draft) (JLP) (also part of the statutory development plan) and underneath the umbrella of national planning policy in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), as the main planning policy documents relevant to our area. Other important planning documents which govern specific issues are the Minerals and Waste Plans produced at the county-wide level. The relationship between our Neighbourhood Plan and other key planning policy documents is shown below:

### National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework and  
National Planning Practice Guidance

### Borough-wide Planning Policy

West Devon Core Strategy 2011  
Plymouth & South West Devon Joint  
Local Plan (Draft) 2017

### County-wide Planning Policy

Highways  
Education  
Minerals and Waste

### Locally Specific Planning Policy

North Tawton  
Neighbourhood Plan

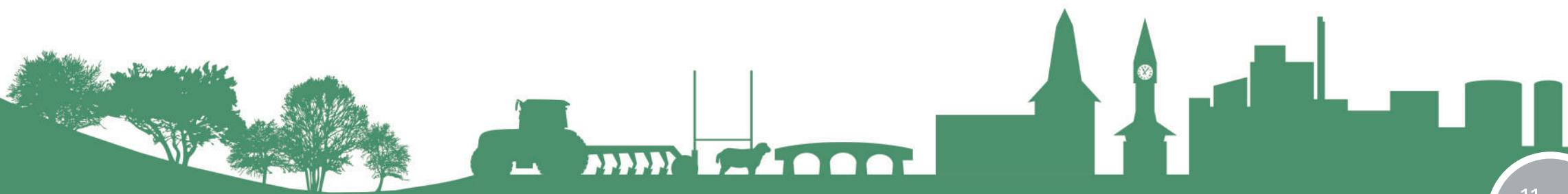
When this Plan is adopted, its policies will need to be used by the local planning authority when considering and deciding upon development proposals submitted through the planning system.

The Neighbourhood Plan's policies, however, cannot guarantee that a proposal will be refused or be granted permission, but the policies will carry significant weight, alongside the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Policy Guidance and the Joint Local Plan when weighing up the appropriateness of the proposal in question.

### Sustainable Development

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) set out the Government's planning policy to which all plans and proposals for development should comply. The NPPF includes, at its heart, a "presumption in favour of sustainable development". It is important to understand what that means for our Plan as it sets the parameters within which we can make proposals and set policies.

When taking decisions on proposals for development this means that proposals should be approved without delay where they accord with the development plan.; Where the development plan is absent, silent or where relevant policies are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the development when assessed against the policies in the NPPF, or when specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.





## 1.6 The Plan's Status and Relationship with Other Planning Documents – local and national

Translating this to what it means for our Neighbourhood Plan, it states that neighbourhood plans should "...support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development..." and "...plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan". The NPPF goes on to say that "The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan."

We are also advised that neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan nor undermine its strategic policies. Outside of strategic policies, we are encouraged to shape and direct sustainable development in our area through our Plan.

### Local Plan Policy Context for North Tawton

In the Plymouth & South West Joint Local Plan (Draft) (JLP), North Tawton is identified as one of the Thriving Towns and Villages of West Devon where the Vision is that they will be thriving when the following outcomes have been met

- Residents are empowered to create strong communities
- Places are created for enterprise to thrive and business to grow
- Homes have been built to meet local needs
- The services and facilities which meet the needs of our communities have been secured
- The built and natural environment has been protected, conserved and enhanced
- The past is celebrated and our heritage for the future is protected

The strategic objective for the smaller towns and villages is maintaining vitality and viability by promoting the provision of homes, jobs, services and community infrastructure sufficient to enable the small towns and villages to continue to play their important role as local service centres for their surrounding areas.

The vision, objectives and policies in the North Tawton Neighbourhood Plan reflect similar sentiments to those expressed in the Draft JLP for the residents of the town and its surrounding area. The Draft JLP states that in order for the smaller towns, of which North Tawton is one, to maintain their function as key local centres, a proportionate amount of new growth is appropriate to ensure that services and facilities are not lost, but can be maintained and enhanced. Policy TTV29 in the Draft JLP sets out for North Tawton that 61 new homes and 1,300 sq.m of employment floor space is considered to be appropriate scale of growth to support the future sustainability of the town. In order to focus sustainable development into those settlements that have facilities to support and accommodate them, settlement boundaries will be identified for those in the top three levels of settlement hierarchy and will be kept under regular review through supplementary planning documents. West Devon Borough Council settlement boundary is set out in map 1.6a, and the amended settlement boundary proposed by North Tawton Town Council is set out in map 1.6b.

