



POLICIES

3.0

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

3.0 Theme 1: Conserving Our Historic and Natural Environment

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 conserved 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.

Introduction

18.1 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 which 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. In addition, part of the Tarka Trail, a 180 mile route which follows the route 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.



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19.1 North Tawton has playing fields for Football and Rugby, a Bowling Green, and the Frank Henson Gibbings Memorial Park which includes play equipment, skate facilities, seating 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 Bathway development through a 106 agreement.

19.2 Residents enjoy the rural and amenity views from several aspects around the town, with views to the east and south towards Dartmoor dominating. Land behind Bouchers Hill, above the allotments and towards Yeo Lane are areas that residents most want to see protected, as well as land to the north and south of the River Taw along the Tarka Trail. 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. 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.

19.3 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 2017 – Appendix 5.3.1.1** 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.

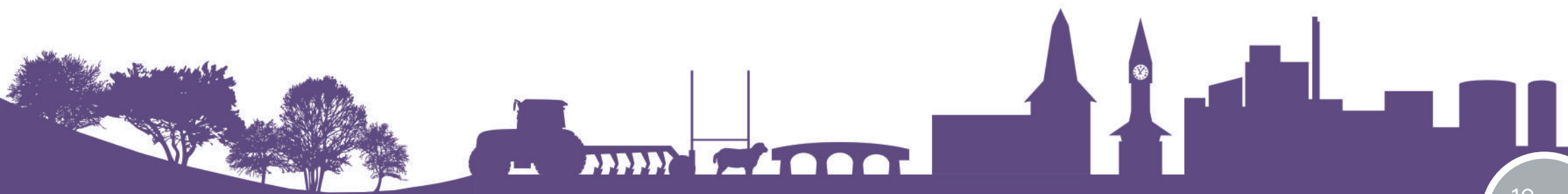
19.4 The objectives of the Design Statement are to describe the distinctive character of the town and surrounding countryside as it is today, and to highlight the qualities that the residents value. It is from these qualities that design principles, based on the distinctive character of North Tawton, have been drawn up to guide future development and maintenance. The purpose of this Design Statement is to provide guidelines to ensure that future development of the town is in keeping with the fundamental character of the area.

19.5 The Policies within this theme seek to address **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

19.6 Within the South West Devon Joint Local Plan (Draft) (JLP), Strategic Objective SO11 'Delivering high quality development' is committed to delivering development which is sustainable and of the right type and quality to contribute to and enhance the natural network, providing multiple benefits both to people and wildlife. A number of policies within the Draft JLP underpin the Objectives within this theme. These are listed before each policy.



3.0 Theme 1: Policy CH1 - Local Green Space Designation

Neighbourhood Plan Policies

Local Green Space

20.1 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 acknowledged. The National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 76, (NPPF) gives communities the opportunity to protect green spaces through Local Green Space designation. Such areas can 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 (NPPF paragraph 77). These areas may also be valued for their beauty, recreational value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife and historic significance.

20.2 Under the NPPF, Local Green Space is a green area identified for special protection, meaning that new development will not be permitted on it other than in special circumstances. The land has protection consistent with that of Green Belt. Consequently, an area of land has to meet much more stringent and more specific criteria to permit its designation as Local Green Space.

20.3 In the Draft JLP green open spaces and play spaces are seen as an integral part of sustainable communities. An important element of a sustainable community is the accessibility of green open spaces and play spaces due to their substantial health and well-being benefits. It goes on to state that in the Thriving Towns and Villages areas Local Green Spaces will be proposed for designation within neighbourhood plans.

20.4 In gathering evidence to support Policy CH1 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 regarded as 'an extensive tract of land', which although of significance and importance to the community cannot be designated under this process.

20.5 Where land is privately owned or managed by Trustees they have been contacted by the Neighbourhood Plan Group and given opportunity to make representations or object to proposals for designation. A summary of their responses can be found in **Appendix 5.3.1.2**.

20.6 Consultation took place on March 25th 2017 where residents were asked to comment on nine areas identified as important local green spaces. They were asked whether they agreed with these green spaces being designated and what its value was to them. More than 50 residents attended, providing very useful feedback. A summary of the comments can be found in **Appendix 5.3.1.3**. Assessment of each designated local green space was undertaken using NPPF and WDBC criteria to ensure there is robust evidence underpinning this policy. See **Appendix 5.3.1.5**.

Local & National Policies

- *Draft JLP: Policy DEV29*
- *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: Paragraphs 76 & 77,81*



3.0 Theme 1: Policy CH1 - Local Green Space Designation

Our locally valued green spaces (green infrastructure) are identified on **Map CH1** and are designated as Local Green Space (LGS). These LGS and the reason(s) for their (proposed) designation are:

Frank Henson Gibbings Memorial Park – Recreational Value

The Town Cemetery & Extension – Historic Significance, Tranquillity, Richness of its Wildlife

Bowling Green – Historical Significance, Recreational Value

Allotments, North West of Fore St - Historic Significance, Recreational Value, Richness of its Wildlife

The Wordens, Football Club - Recreational Value

Rugby Field & Practice Field - Recreational Value

The Butts Field – Historic Significance

The Churchyard - Historic Significance, Tranquillity, Richness of its Wildlife

The Depot dedicated allotment space (500sq.m) – Recreational Value, Richness of Wildlife

Should these areas be designated as LGS they 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) result in provision of equivalent or better in terms of quality and area of space provided.

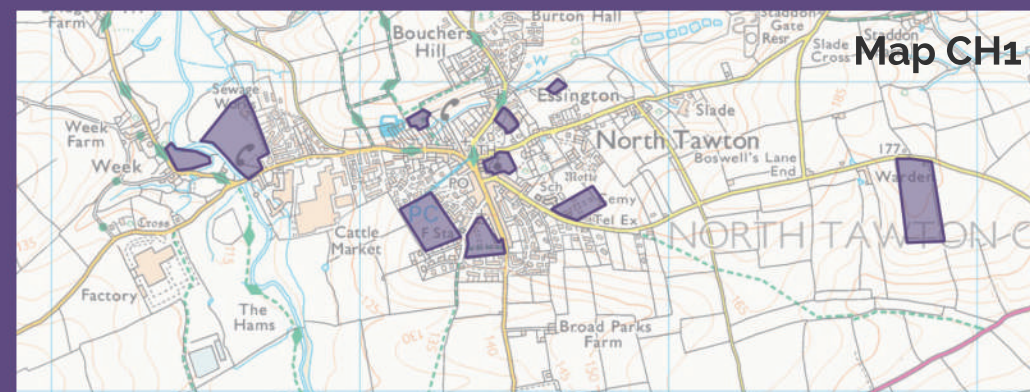
Opportunities should be taken to enhance leisure and recreation provision over and above that provided on the replaced LGS;

iv) are 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.



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3.0 Theme 1: Policy CH2 - Design, Heritage and the Built Environment

22.1 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.

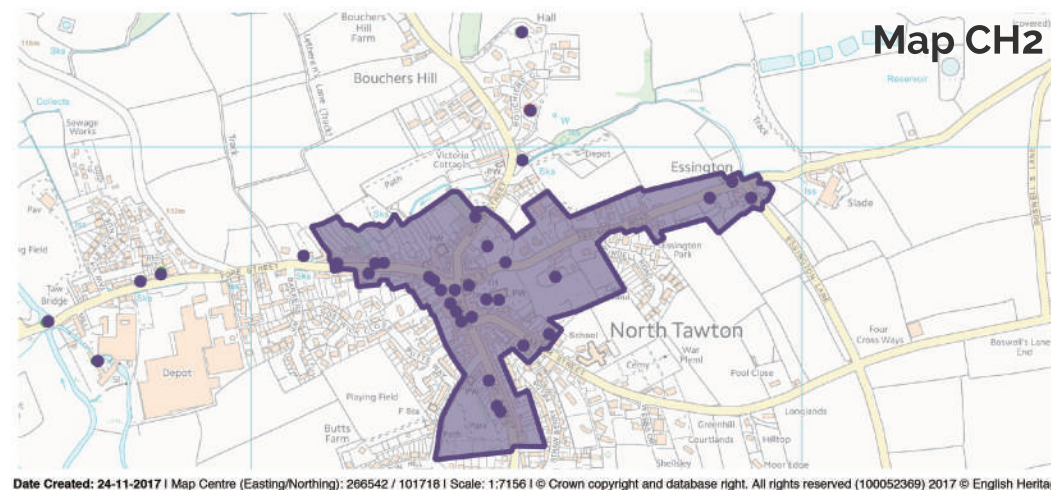
22.1 The Conservation Area of North Tawton is identified on **Map CH2** along with other significant buildings within the town and surrounding areas which are identified on the National Heritage List for England and listed in **Appendix 5.3.1.4 The Conservation Area Character Appraisal**, undertaken in 1996 by West Devon Borough Council, highlighted what is in the area and worth keeping, visual and architectural features that need 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, which will be reviewed and updated by the appropriate authority in the near future.

22.3 **The North Tawton Town Design Statement** 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.

22.4 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 CH2** sets out a clear direction to planners and designers and shows the importance and significance of the character and heritage

of the town for 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.

22.5 The JLP sets out policies which will ensure that development genuinely helps to shape high quality and locally distinct places, which celebrate and strengthen the unique quality and inherent value that historic assets and culture offer. The Draft JLP policies (listed below) and **Policy CH2** provide a positive strategy for the conservation, enjoyment and enhancement of the historic environment.



Related national and local Policies and documents

- *North Tawton Town Design Statement 2016*
- *Village Design statement 2004*
- *Conservation Area Character Appraisal*
- *National Heritage List for England*
- *Draft JLP: Policies DEV20, 21, 22, 24, 30*
- *NPPF: Paragraphs 56-58, 60, 126*

3.0 Theme 1: Policy CH2 - Design, Heritage and the Built Environment

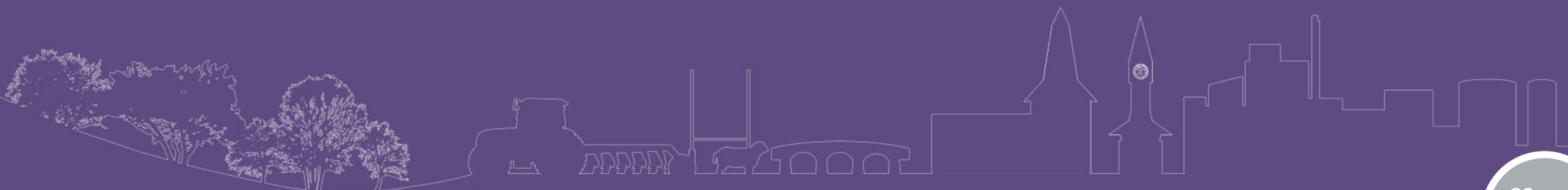
To ensure that new development is sympathetic to the traditional and historic built character and landscape of the parish, and our heritage assets protected, development proposals will only be supported where they are of high quality design, enhance visual amenity of the setting and minimise any adverse 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 Town 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;
- ii) ensuring that materials and design of the development are in keeping with the character of the surrounding built environment, with a preference for 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 CH2** or that any adverse impacts on them can satisfactorily be mitigated:

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

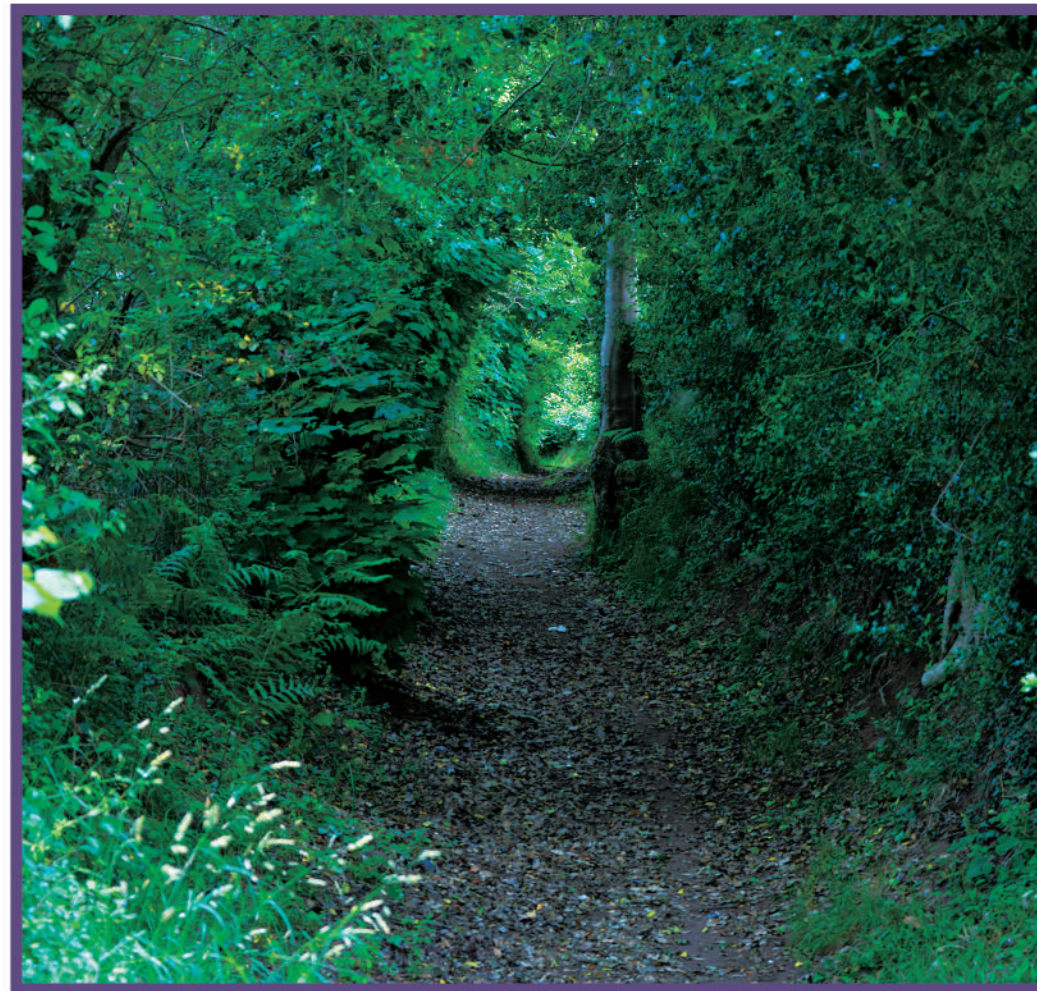


3.0 Theme 1: Policy CH3 - Important Amenity Views and Landscape Character

Important Amenity Views

24.1 According to the Questionnaire, the rural setting of North Tawton is the aspect of the town that residents value the most, with 88% of respondents citing this as something they highly valued and as 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, the area beside the river, and open views across agricultural fields. Photographs and maps of views important to residents are included in this section.

24.2 The surrounding countryside forms part of the 'High Taw Farmland Landscape Character Area', typified by undulating farmland laid largely to pasture. The special features of this area include its relatively remote rural character. The landscape strategy refers to protecting the existing settlement pattern and protecting the elements important to it. This includes the rights of way network, accessibility to the countryside and amenity views.



3.0 Policies - Theme 1: Policy CH3 - Important Amenity Views and Landscape Character

25.1 **Policy CH3** 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. Policy DEV24, Landscape character, in the Draft JLP states that development will conserve and enhance landscape and townscape character and scenic and visual quality, avoiding significant and adverse landscape or visual impacts. '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 and national Policies

- Draft JLP: Policy DEV24
- 'West Devon Borough & Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Character Assessment' 2008
- NPPF: Paragraph 58

Policy CH3 - Important Amenity Views and Landscape Character

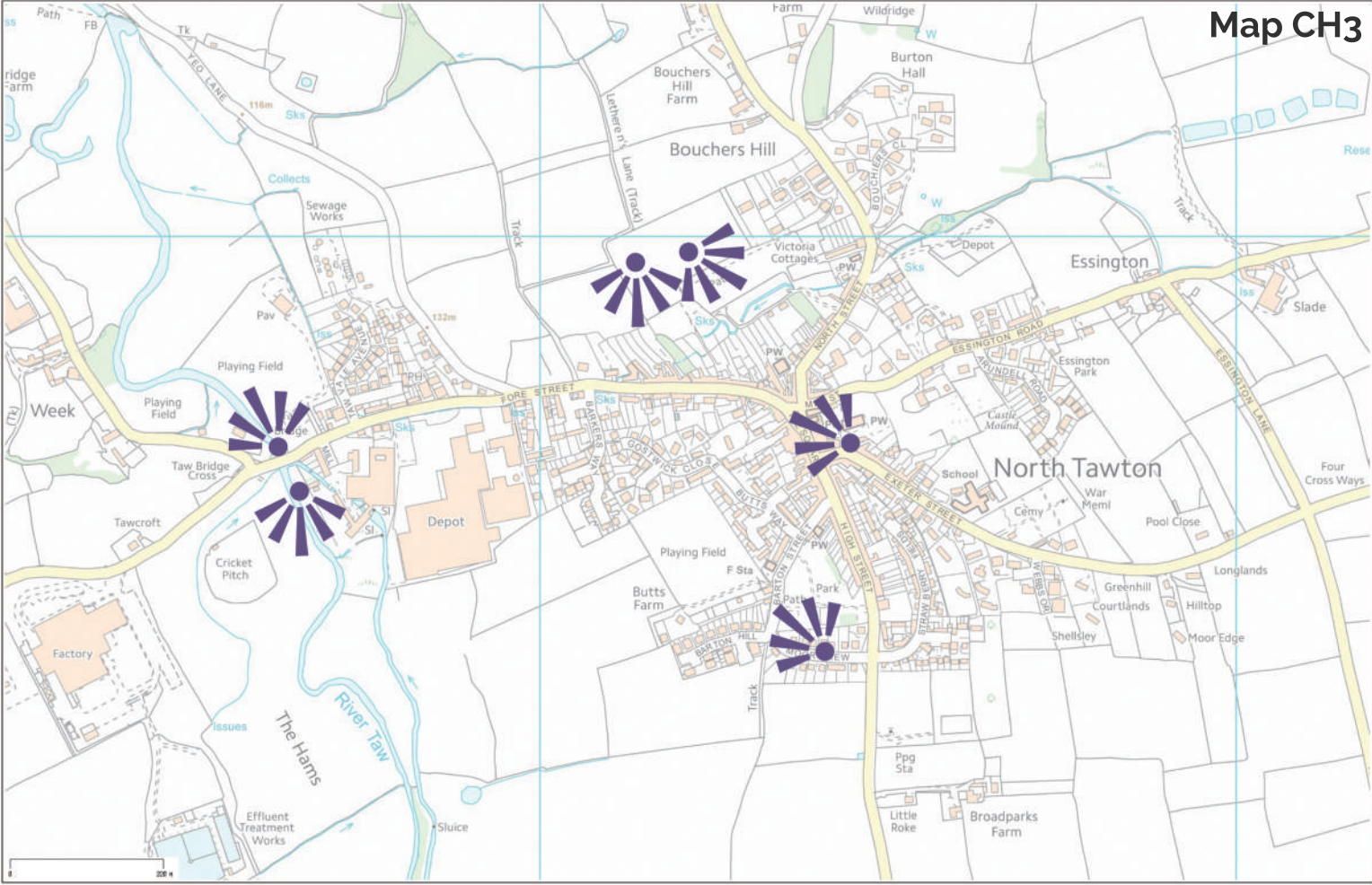
Development proposals will only be supported where they do not compromise the local landscape setting and special character of North Tawton. Development should conserve and enhance the landscape, townscape, scenic and visual quality.

Important views, both towards and from the settlement area, of the surrounding open countryside, are valuable local assets, and public visual amenities, that should be protected from development. These views should remain uninterrupted and not obstructed in whole or in part. They are set out on **Map CH3** and are:

- i) From Bouchers Hill across the town towards Dartmoor to the south east and south;
- ii) The view of steep farmland, laid to pasture and containing a network of footpaths, stretching from Yeo Lane to Bouchers Hill (north of Fore Street and northwest of North Street);
- iii) Along the banks of the River Taw following the Tarka Trail, from the Taw bridge, to the south, and to the northwest.

Any development proposals which compromise these views will be resisted.

3.0 Policies - Theme 1: Policy CH3 Important Amenity Views & Landscape Character



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