

## North Tawton Draft Neighbourhood Plan

Consultation Event 10<sup>th</sup> December 2016

### Consultation feedback – comments received on forms

#### Housing

Policy HO1 New Dwellings, Land East of Devonshire Gardens (WD-13-05-08/13) SW Water

7 responses - comments listed below

Plus 6 letters supporting Environmental Trust in relation to above site – see scanned copy of letter below

1. The North Tawton Environmental Trust is a necessity in North Tawton. The growing facilities in the Poly tunnels are giving families a place to work together and encourage the children to grow their own food. It is a proven fact that what children grow they will learn to cook and enjoy eating. Why take this opportunity away from caring parents. Time and space for families to work and socialise together is very much needed in this busy world. We have clubs for individual interests, why not keep the only one that can help families to grow and enjoy time together.

Please do not do away with this valuable oasis for wildlife and family fun.

2. The Environmental Trust site has been used by me and my family for seven years. It is an important community asset and also harbours wildlife. It is an oasis for the bats and snakes. Please support our use of it.  
There are also issues with extra cars using North St.
3. It is vital to do all we can to protect the natural environment for ourselves and future generations – building on this land would be a very retrograde step.  
It seems to me that the site adjacent to the Env. Trust would be more suitable for some new housing, if access was still enabled to the field at the top which is a pleasant open space in the town. But wherever new houses are built in that area, there is the problem of access for lorries/construction vehicles through the square and up North St which is very narrow.
4. I was more than surprised to learn of the possibility there may be a planning application to allow houses to be built on the land owned by SW water and at present occupied by the NT environmental trust and the benefit of all people living in the town.  
The Council surely would throw out such an application in view of the strain on the *intersection* ? of the town parking is inadequate. I am a blue badge holder and I can rarely have a space available to park in the square.

5. Local children are always interested, and show great enthusiasm for growing products or flowers themselves. We must maintain the site for all those who wish to do this, both now and in future years.
  
6. I wish to register my opposition to development of the SWW depot site for yet more housing. The following are reasons it should not be use:
  - I. The traffic generated during and after such development will exceed the limited capacity of North St and Devonshire Gardens., and its passage into and through the Square/High St/Fore St, would further increase congestion.
  - II. The site has sections regarding the lower parts being on a flood plain, plus there being contaminated 'made up' ground from past occupants activities.
  - III. North Tawton Environmental Trust (NTET), the present occupiers, have not, do not, and will not generate vehicle movements in volume or at early/late hours that a housing development would inevitably cause.
  - IV. I am aware that uncultivated areas on the site are identified as important wildlife habitat. These areas are likely to be degraded or destroyed by any developments, but will be conserved by NTET.
  - V. With the existing and other possible developments bringing more young families to the town, NTET is likely to prove an increasingly valuable organisation, providing ecological, educational, environmental and healthy outdoor activities at this site. NTET has already earned recognition for its work, and for the site to be a community asset.

The increasing size of the community will therefore increase the value and importance of retaining the sites present use, rather than destroying it for the building of a few badly placed houses.

7. The above site (Land east of Devonshire Gardens) is a valuable wildlife resource, some brownfield sites are actually far better for wildlife than monoculture farmland is. It is a vital part of North Tawton Environmental trust's work in the community.  
 There are also serious traffic issues on North St and its junction with the Square. When Chris Dunsford was the forward Planning Officer at west Devon Borough Council he promised the residents of North St that if development was allowed on the front of Moor View (which has happened) we would not have and more housing in North St or Essington, and would urge the Neighbourhood Plan Group to stick to this policy.

January 2017

Dear Neighbourhood Planning Group,

I am writing today to ask the North Tawton Neighbourhood Planning Group to support the North Tawton Environmental Trust and protect its site from development.

The Trust plays a crucial role in the community, supporting local residents and helping to maintain the local wildlife and natural habitats which are so important to our rural environment.

The Trust have use of the site by Devonshire Gardens and North Street which is registered as an Asset of Community Value. This space is used regularly for members to gather to enjoy a natural wildlife sanctuary, socialise and grow organic vegetables for their families.

This special area is home to many native species and a great place to spot local wildlife such as nesting grass snakes, foraging dormice and watch bats hunt overhead. In addition to the wildlife habitats, we are able to get together in the polytunnels, share ideas, tips and crops to help everyone learn more about growing including the many children who use the site.

Continued use of this site will allow the trust to thrive, educate the next generation, feed our community and crucially support and enhance our natural wildlife. Please find attached my additional comments regarding my personal use of the site on the Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Form.

Despite this area being registered as an Asset of Community Value, if this site is designated for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan, it will inflate the value beyond the means of the North Tawton Environmental Trust.

I therefore request that the Neighbourhood Plan does not designate this site as suitable for housing.

Yours faithfully,

## **Strategic overview**

This is a section that was not included with the documents that would have been helpful, if not forming part of the Plan itself. It could have let us know the objectives of the Plan, the constraints that the Plan must work within and methods used to prepare the draft. We assume those constraints must be adhered to in order for it to be adopted by West Devon as an advisory document to be taken into account by anyone making proposals within the remit of the Plan.

The Strategy could include aspirations for North Tawton, notwithstanding those constraints / outside influences / limitations / pressures. For example we'd like to see a policy for housing that accommodates a range of households, not just the conventional family with 2.4 children. If there was such a policy it would be clear that talking about no more than two storeys or 30 per hectare are really quite irrelevant and might attract developers who would bring a new vibrancy to the table.

How the Plan will be kept up to date, take account of changes that would affect aspects of the Plan etc would also be relevant.

Community responses are quoted throughout and I assume this is to confirm that consultation has taken place and responses duly noted. Unfortunately there doesn't seem to have been any "moderation" of such responses; they are quoted as if we must accept those views and that they are relevant for the life of the Plan. Some interpretation by experts in e.g. Market Research might be instructive

## **1 Preserving our historic and natural environment**

Terminology: The Plan refers to the National Planning Policy Framework that uses the term "conserving", not "preserving". Whatever the difference we suggest the Plan needs to use the same terminology.

We have been able to download the 2004 Village Design Statement but not the 2016 update. The 2004 version looks very thorough and in our opinion reflects the character of North Tawton rather well and says "it has evolved as a jumble of different styles throughout time". Now we are in the 21st century it would be nice if innovative design could thrive as well as the "traditional" that the respondents to the consultation apparently would prefer.

"Local Green Space": The "dog walking field" accessed from Devonshire Gardens is a really valuable open space, but privately owned and we believe subject to a recent application for "self-build" development. Could at least part of that space be reserved for public use and suitably maintained and included in the early 2017 version of the Plan?

"Design, Heritage and the Built Environment": This is always going to be controversial and we believe the design of new projects is too important to leave it to the Planners and Developers. We'd like to see all proposals scrutinised by an independent panel such as Local Design Review, using the Devon and Somerset Design Review Panel which is multi-

disciplinary, unbiased and generally welcomed by Planning Authorities, including lay members.

Important amenity views: We are sure there are many views that residents cherish and aren't included in the list in Policy P3 and we'd like to see views to and from demonstrated as part of any application so all can see the impact. A case in point is the current Wain Homes project at Batheway Fields where there was an opportunity to enhance the view of North Tawton on arrival from de Bathe Cross. They never demonstrated that view in the public consultation and the result is disappointing to say the least and does nothing to enhance the approach to our town.

Other views we would include are from the west, across the cheese factory and from the south west, along the A3072 where the road has left the railway bridge behind on approach to the town.

## **2 Community life**

Curiously, the Plan does not address the importance of farming to the town and its potential in terms of interactions with schools and other groups for information, education, general awareness, careers, business opportunities, etc. Some local farmers contribute enormously in looking after hedges and footpaths; that should be acknowledged but not taken for granted as footpaths / tracks around the town are extremely well used.

GP surgery: The ambitious plan for a new surgery on part of the Batheway Fields site has foundered, for the time being at least. Who knows what the future may hold, e.g. a section 106 contribution to facilitate a new surgery on the allocated site, or some other community facility in the meantime, like a temporary car park? We really do think the allocated site should be reserved for some kind of community use.

Provision for dog walkers needs to be considered as a valuable amenity and is quite a big issue in terms of management and avoiding conflict with other uses.

## **3 The economy: Employment and Business**

We agree that "North Tawton is one of West Devon's more important settlements" and we were therefore very surprised that it's not mentioned in the recent consultation for the new Local Plan for Dartmoor. Since living here we have become aware that settlements on the north side of the moor do not seem to engage as much as those on the other sides. It is a fantastic amenity and there are clear implications for business and employment that I don't think the Plan is addressing.

We have to accept the retail environment is changing and it's good to see the pharmacy and post office staying in the town. It's a shame the new post office isn't quite what it used to be and we hope it will develop in sustainable ways.

Regarding the question of businesses needing new premises this may be a case of grasping the nettle and allocating land so that developers can do what they do and encourage existing and new businesses to take up new premises that the developers have provided.

With regard to Policy E1 we don't understand why or how restrictions like those in paragraph 1 are helpful or included in the Plan rather than in West Devon Planning Guidelines.

Live Work units: We think such developments should remain for a lot longer than three years to avoid exploitation of the regulations simply for profit.

New businesses to attract would include a decent restaurant and somehow preventing escalating rents would help.

Policy E4: 12 months seems far too short a timescale to determine whether a shop can be allowed to change use, given the importance of retail to the town.

Preserving the option/s associated with re-opening the railway are essential, and improvement of foot / cycle / push chair paths would be very welcome in that direction anyway.

#### **4 Housing**

Quite a lot of our earlier comments also apply here, but a few notes:

Land east of Devonshire Gardens: Restriction of development by height is unnecessary / over-restrictive and not sympathetic to the organic nature of North Tawton (as expressed in the Village Design Statement). Access to the "dog walking field" should be retained.

Land behind Bouchers Hill: Local support for self-build should not be allowed to despoil green field sites with relatively low density development.

"Good design": Yes please but see earlier notes about Design Review.

Policy H01: Traditional, 3 bedroom, 2 storey, etc etc seems to reflect current opinion without looking forward to what is likely to be in demand in the life of this Plan to accommodate changing demography, changing family structure, changing employment practices (e.g. home working) etc etc. We think the Plan needs to look forward.

A density of 30 dwellings per hectare is perhaps a luxury we can't afford and a model that is no longer particularly relevant. Again we think the Plan should be looking forward and have an aspiration to embrace the future, not repeat old patterns of development.

The numbers of people expressing a housing need doesn't seem to match the statement "these units will adequately meet the needs of the local community".

Policy H05, Private rear amenity space (Gardens): If dwellings are encouraged to suit different needs, ages, family structures, accessibility etc etc, well designed / maintained community space would be more appropriate than rear gardens. Policy H05 seems to be a case of finding a solution to the wrong problem, or at least a self-inflicted problem.

Could proposals for residential care / supported housing be encouraged for the vacant GP Surgery site at Batheway Fields?

Policy H07, Parking in residential development: “easy two-way vehicular access” is in direct contradiction of a concern about speed of vehicles. Housing areas should be designed to prevent fast driving while providing good vehicle access.

Second homes: Is there any way the Plan could address this issue?

Can the Plan address the maintenance of properties, including within the Conservation Area, as quite a lot are looking rather sad.

Design: The Housing section appears to duplicate what should be in the Design Statement.

## **5 Infrastructure**

The objectives only deal with Health provision, Education, Car Parking and Transport Issues and most of the issues raised seem to be outside the scope of the Plan.

If infrastructure is within the remit of the Plan perhaps it should include the River Taw, water supply, telecoms, gas, electricity, drainage as any development will have an impact on or be influenced by these in terms of amenity, capacity, usage, etc.

## **6 Energy and environment**

Unfortunately the existing building stock is more of a problem than new and as the Plan says, it can't require a higher standard than current Building Regulations.

It would be good if the Plan could encourage ways of improving existing buildings, energy supplies, waste management, etc.

Policy EE4 could become a disincentive in future, should North Tawton wish to encourage more dwellings (of a range of types more varied than currently anticipated / prescribed) than allocated in the minimum plan requirement up to 2034, for example in order to accommodate a surge in demand.

### **Email feedback**

Concerns over size of site (Batheway)

62 being built at the moment, plus 100 planning in, 28 going to appeal plus on the open evening 12 on medical centre land makes 202 houses that in relation to the town having 876 houses on the latest info I could find, this one development will increase the size of our town by at least 20 percent with no allowance being made for infrastructure,

So in comparison the Millwood site known as strawberry fields built 60 something houses but they provided a car park and a council office,

If this 100 get permission that will push our mpr very close to 300 houses which is over double what we are expected to hit by the middle of 2017 never mind 2034,

Can we set a maximum?

#### Quick calculation

If Wainhomes build these 202 houses at an average of £250 thousand pounds each,

202 homes would account to £50 million pound,

Looking for info, all the info I have found say that when you build a house ,you allow a 3rd of the final price is for using the purchase of the land, 3rd for building and a 3rd is profit so on that info these 202 houses would equate to £ 16.5 million pounds profit, I actually think that this is way out I think it's a lot more profit because as we know the existing site they are building 11 houses per acres Which would make 11 house times by £80 thousand a third of the cost which would account to £880 thousand per acre,

So if Wainhomes used only 5 percent of their PROFIT back in infrastructure that would equate to £ there still making £15.7 million,

#### Employment

A local company wanted to grow, can't go on business land at Batheway, can't go down at the old mill so then got planning on another field over the bridge looking at the info on the Wainhomes evening thing ,they now have the rights on that field and on their big drawing it has houses built on it, so this local company has taken up premises in Okehampton,

The fire station has been approached to sell half of their training yard for access into butts, I believe the fire fighters are concerned as Devon county council are looking to save money which could lead to the loss of the fire station and a dozen or so jobs,

#### General concerns

Residents of Batheway have said they don't feel part of the town (not connected )they feel they aren't being listened too, thought it was a select development of 63 houses with nice views one even said all we need is a shop out here and we wouldn't need to go into the town ,

Concerns of build quality

Concerns on waiting for appointment at the doctors and having to drive to bow

Concerns on the school

Concerns if this 100 get granted how long before another application comes in as there road network will allow for it,

People nearest have had 3 years of dust and noise how much longer will this go on,

Develop the brown field site they have the rights on which permission has been granted

Then allow the town to settle for 5 years to see how it all works

Unable to check this one point as unable to open the report on the portal

The big badger set which runs in the hedge in the middle of the site,

Make sure The slow worms have a 3 metre strip of land to live in,

The view of the town coming in from de bathe cross and from Dartmoor as it will go beyond the

existing houses,

The sewerage system , ie no rainwater harvesting,

Can't open the parking info on the portal, visitors parking and commercial vehicle parking? Will this development help the parking problems in North Tawton,

No consultation with the town ,opening evening after the application went in,

Hope this helps

### **Completed form**

Housing, Infrastructure, Economy, Retail Community

I am sure I echo most people in saying NO MORE HOUSING except small sites of genuinely affordable, environmentally sustainable )(as far as poss) houses. No more shops should be converted to dwellings – we need more shops, not fewer. A great pity that the council decided against a local produce market once a month – most other towns and villages have them and they are a good community focus. How about an occasional pop up shop selling for eg local produce and crafts, good quality bric a brac and second hand books. Profit if any to charity chosen by towns people.

I am involved in the local folk scene and it would be good to have a monthly session in one of the many pubs – I have been talking to Claire at the White Hart.

I really like the environmentally sustainable focus of many of the proposals. Could more be made of the NT Environmental Trust?

I would be happy to be involved in any of the above areas.

### **Completed form**

Infrastructure

Your Objective 11 quotes 'To support a sustainable health provision within the town which enhances healthy living for individuals and families...'

Expecting people with no transport of their own, elderly people and young mums with small children and babies, to get on a bus and get to Bow, is not the way to run a 'Health service'. People who are ill, sick with a Nora virus or worse getting on a bus filled with passengers on their way to work is not acceptable!

Road congestion in the town with regards to traffic and parking is a total disaster. Building a lot more houses will add to the problem.

Would a road built on the south side of town linking up near the bridge, possible creating a one-way system, thus helping the traffic flow better? More parking – less houses.

It's a real balance to achieve protection of the historic environment and rural nature with the need for housing, community resources and employment.

NT is a working town and not quintessentially Devon pretty. We have a large haulier and a factory both necessitating a battering of the road network and access to town via the Taw Bridge.

Much of the info today supports initiatives for affordable housing, sustainability, community resources, employment however I'd like to know specifics.

There is mention of B1, B2, and B8 employment. The field opposite Arla near Taw Bridge has been graded PP the land floods!

My question – is any further land between Arla and the bridge under consideration for B1/B2 or B8? It would noise (already and issue) pollution and detract from the entrance to the town.

Why only 1 consultation on Dec 10<sup>th</sup>, 2 weeks pre Xmas! Not the best day/time?

**Scanned Completed Form - below**

The Policy/Policies you wish to comment on

Economy..

Energy.....

.Preserving historic and natural environment.....

Housing.

Your comment/query:

Economy

North Tawton already has significant industrial facilities which although clearly vital for employment impact on the tranquillity of the town.

Need for smaller start up facilities, office space, artisan workshops.

Important to reduce heavy vehicles which have implications on safety, roads, noise and deter tourism. There have been issues with noise pollution from ARLA previously.

Suggest that ARLA/GREGORY'S consider funding provision of a footbridge over the River Taw adjacent to the ancient bridge. Also suggest traffic lights. The historic nature of the bridge is already compromised by HGV use and strengthening. It's an accident waiting to happen.

I support the suggestion of re-opening the Okehampton - Exeter railway line to facilitate better transport links.

Please preserve the fields west of the bridge alongside the River Taw as it is a pretty outlook entering the town and acts as a buffer between ARLA and Gregory's. Also well used footpaths and

otters etc in the river.

**Energy**

Fully agree with roof mounted solar but why none on development at Batheway fields!!

Stipulation should be made in next planning application round.

Fully agree with solar on business facilities.

Completely disagree with ground mounted solar on any type of land. Already cumulative effect on landscape of Denbrook which I feel meets the renewable responsibilities of North Tawton.

Cumulative effect of Denbrook, ARLA, Gregory's already has impact on the preservation of the historic and natural environment. Any community benefits from renewables must be balanced by the loss of visual amenity. Lets be clear, renewables ie solar and wind are not efficient.

**Preserving historic and natural environment**

Objective as stated; to maintain and enhance the physical appearance of the town.

North Tawton is top heavy with industrial sites and Denbrook can be seen from areas of the town.

I fully agree with promoting the historic and rural nature of our environment however North Tawton is not a quintessentially pretty Devon town and great sensitivity needs to be taken to preserve what we still have. Land to the west of the river Taw should not be considered as the industrial zone. I hope this is nothing more than a rumour.

**Housing**

I hear Wain homes in their recent consultation intend to apply for 100 more houses at Batheway fields, and houses at Butts way and opposite ARLA with industrial units adjacent to the cheese factory. NO, NO NO! The heart of North Tawton will be excised.

## **Completed Forms**

### **Infrastructure**

North Tawton Medical Practice? Really a misnomer. All of us have to go to Bow for differing appointments. Fine if you are a car driver but what about young families with babies and young children. Also the practice at Bow seem to consider patients a great inconvenience.

### **Energy/Environment**

It is obvious of benefit to make new build houses as energy efficient as possible. However wind farms are now being seen as a detriment to the environment. Birds and bats are being killed in many numbers. Also their overall efficiency has been exaggerated.

### **Housing**

The infrastructure in North Tawton will not be able to support too many extra housing developments. GP care is already very poor. Residents in North Tawton have to go to Bow by 10am if they wish to see a GP. Apart from school, shop, sanitary facilities. Please be aware of this.

### **Housing**

We believe that whilst the young people of our town require affordable housing it should primary be for local residents and not for people outside the area. The housing should be of good quality unlike stories we are hearing about the houses being built at Batheway Fields!

## **Transcribed from handwritten response**

### **Policy IN1**

NT area is too small to support a Medical Practice on its own. 10-20,000 patients is now deemed the lowest to be cost effective. Developers will seize on this proposal to forward large housing sites, but with a clause to get off without providing a medical site, which NTTC fell hook line & sinker for. Coplestone some way?

### **Policy EE1**

By far the most energy is used for providing hot water which is 365 days a year heating is only for a few months. Polyvoltic is not the answer, too obtrusive, large area needed, efficiency dwindles with age. All new houses should have solar hot water panels (VAT zero). This, over 12 months would attain a greater than 20% carbon reduction. By not building false chimneys, serving no useful purpose, cost go towards solar hot water.

### **Policy CO3**

Swimming Pool – no way! To build & maintain would treble the Parish precept. Both Oke & Tavistock struggle to keep a pool going. Pie in the sky!

### **Policy E1 (v)**

The Wool Mill – as employment land, this place is history, OK in the world of horse & cart – but not with today's juggernauts! The Plan already recognises the problem with lorries through the Town –

why make it worse, also more strain on an ancient bridge, we do not need employment land within the Town. Other side of river (Cheese Factory) or nearer to A30 South of Town. The Barton, John Shields, Old Railway Yard, all would keep large transport away from N.T. The Mill could be residential, a School for apprentices (money earner), Warden controlled senior citizens housing, or Nursing home, keeping OAP in Town instead of upheaval of moving away.

## Policy HO8

Why so many restrictions on Self-build? And not on sites by developers?

(iii) 2 years is crazy – if genuine self build how many w/ends is that.

(iv) Who is going to police this & how – more important Why? Someone buying a dwelling in S/Filed or Bathway could sell tomorrow.

If N.T. is to grow as developers want ie. 400+ houses (25 years ago there were only 500 in the whole of the Town) we have to think about a new N.T. Instead of Developers adding bits here and there all on the same road, which in turn creates its own problems.

Move the hub (centre) to a new site, shops with parking (Co-op at Bow) keep money in the Town. Developers should be made to build roads on a grid system, as in USA or Australia, with more than one way in or out, avoiding the present chaos on Thursdays when theres 3 waste removal trucks moving around the Town, holding traffic up for 2 or 3 movements. Employment should come before houses are built, not the other way around. Building for the sake of it is detrimental to a local community.

MPR is being exploited by developers – there should be a maximum planning requirement, a minimum is meaningless.

With all these houses & no extra employment those who wish to work will have to travel to Exeter, Plymouth etc. putting a strain on a poor road system. It wasn't long ago you could travel to Exeter in 35-40 minutes – now its at least an hour, 1 ¼ to Hospital. With stations at Pinhoe & Cranbrook, the answer is the Railway, top priority. N.T. once had 34 retail outlets, including 4 garages, what happened? More houses more prosperity is what developers would have us believe, well it hasn't happened here or anywhere else.

## **Emailed Feedback**

### **Housing**

- 1) Unless I have missed it, you don't appear to have included any estimate of how you expect the town to grow over the life of the plan. It is true of course that you have what looks like a robust account of the maximum size of future developments. This is not quite the same though as a sense of the expected size of the town in 15-20 years time since, as I'm sure you will agree, there could be very many applications for small sites made over that kind of period which could accumulate to make a real difference to the nature of the community. We were advised by our Strategic Planning adviser at WDBC that identifying an upper limit to overall housing development was a crucial part of any neighbourhood plan, and not least to satisfy the inspector that the plan was a coherent response to the residents' wishes. Accordingly we spent a good deal of time determining such a limit, and a rationale for it. The question of a limit was after all one of the questions asked of the town in the questionnaire. I am attaching a few of the documents produced at the time in relation to this issue and would be happy to discuss it with you if you like. If the present Project Team

think that an overall ceiling on development is not desirable, I think you may find that in order for the plan to cohere with the questionnaire, some explanation may need to be given.

2) I am not entirely clear how you are handling the results of the Call for Sites, in the sense that some of the requests for development which arose through it appear not to be included in your plan. Your colleagues will know that West Devon advised that this was important (copy of our explanatory leaflet attached) and of course there was a public meeting and voting on its results. There should be ample evidence of this part of the process within the Council's records. Again, if for whatever reason you are not going to be led by the Call for Sites, I think the public, and especially the proposed developers, will be looking for a rationale for your changed approach.

3) As we discussed at the exhibition, the number of houses appearing in the long term plan of one proposed developer, appears to be incorrect by the order of some two hundred houses. I am sure I don't need to emphasise how important it is for the information within and accompanying a Town Council Development Plan to be as accurate as possible. Perhaps you simply did not have time to add a rider to your earlier information sheet, if there had been last minute changes. Apart from the principle of veracity of any the plan put before residents in a referendum it is obviously crucial for voters to be able to understand what will be the situation if there were not to be a Neighbourhood plan for North Tawton.

Feedback from Emery Planning on behalf of Wainhomes – see separate document

**February 9<sup>th</sup> 2017**