

Future Planning

From: Avril McNamara <avril.mcnamara@southdevon-nl.org.uk>
Sent: 02 February 2026 14:03
To: Future Planning
Cc: Brooks, Tracy; Roger English
Subject: SDNL consultation response, Draft Torbay Local Plan
Attachments: South Devon National Landscape submission.pdf; South Devon National Landscape submission.docx

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Dear Sir/Madam

Apologies for submitting our consultation response by email, but the registration system for logging representations does not appear to be working at the moment. I have also saved the same SDNL response as set out below as a Word document and PDF file attached.

Thank you for consulting us on the Draft Plan.

Proposals Map

Please can the National Landscape be made clearer, as it is difficult to see the outline (indicated with a green dashed line currently). Perhaps the designated area could be blocked in.

Chapter 2

Strategic Policy SS1

Comment

Within this policy, there is the opportunity to celebrate the contribution that the National Landscape makes to the quality of life for local residents.

Strategic Policy SDB1: Brixham

Support

Strategic Policy SDBCG3 Rural villages south of Windy Corner – Landscape, ecology and settlement gap protection zone

Do not support

Further details are required to justify the allocation at Monksbridge. The base: Potential Future Growth Areas, Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Stephenson Halliday, June 2025 does not provide support for this allocation, noting that the Copythorne Road area given its flat area, has less visual impact than the area to the south and south east (which would include Monksbridge). Concerns regarding future development of the site have been provided by SDNL. To summarise this included the following issues:

The proposed allocation will represent an unacceptable loss of agricultural land to built development in a strategically important location for maintaining the open and rural character of the National Landscape.

The proposed allocation, given its scale, location and type will be incompatible with its surroundings. The site contributes to the natural beauty of the National Landscape, as it is undeveloped, natural and retains the historical linear field pattern. There are few examples of this field pattern near to Brixham and so it has a valuable historical context. Historic England makes clear that historic environment is fundamental to the distinctive character, sense of place and natural beauty of each National Landscape.

The proposed allocation would erode the special qualities and features of the area of the National Landscape. Notably, *deeply rural rolling patchwork agricultural landscape; Deeply incised landscape that is intimate, hidden and secretive away from the plateau tops. Iconic wide, unspoilt and expansive panoramic views; A landscape with a rich time depth and a wealth of historic features and cultural associations; A breadth and depth of significant habitats, species and associated natural events. An ancient and intricate network of*

winding lanes, paths and recreational routes. Areas of high tranquillity, natural nightscapes, distinctive natural soundscapes and visible movement. In terms of the deeply rural rolling agricultural landscape, the appeal site is undulating with the highest part fronting Mathill Road, with mature hedgerows forming the boundaries of the whole site and importantly, retaining a patchwork of medieval linear fields, thereby reflecting its historic character.

The introduction of a residential scheme in this location, cannot be regarded as landscape led, as it erodes the rural character of the area. Given the elevated position of the southern part of the site, as well as the location of the development being on land sloping upwards, the proposed development will be visually prominent. The introduction of suburban development in this location will interrupt views of the wider landscape.

The site also has foraging features for wildlife, including the Greater Horseshoe bat, ground nesting birds and cirl bunting; given the extent of development proposed in the site allocation, it is inevitable that much of the vegetation which supports existing habitats will be lost.

As such there is an intrinsic conflict between the National Landscape Management Plan aspiration to conserve and enhance the SDNL to protect its intrinsic landscape and biodiversity value.

Chapter 3: Housing and Regeneration Policies

Strategic Policy HS

Support the council's presumption in favour of sustainable development to previously developed land within the built up area.

H3BCG.3

Do not support

The site was rejected in Feb 2025 Torbay Housing and Economic land Availability Assessment due to Greater Horseshoe bat sustenance zone; medieval field pattern and being within National Landscape. There is an absence of justification for the release of this land for development. There is an absence of criteria to determine the type and form of development that will be acceptable in this sensitive location. At the very least, it is expected that the allocation is assessed in relation to paragraphs 189 and 190 the NPPF 2025 and the subject of site specific landscape and visual impact assessments as well as an assessment against all relevant AONB Management Plan objectives. Given the fact that the site is in the open countryside, the requirement to provide only 35% affordable housing is not compatible with the rural exception site policy of providing 100% affordable housing.

Draft Torbay Local Plan Strategic Policy SC1 identifies the link between the natural environment and public health and wellbeing. There is a large residential hinterland which overlooks this undeveloped land, and will no doubt be a factor which contributes to their enjoyment of local walks. To fill the space with built development will therefore reduce the visual access to the countryside for many residents.

Chapter 4: Building a prosperous and inclusive Torbay – Unlocking opportunity for all

Strategic Policy ES: Torbay employment and innovation strategy

Support the use of conditions or S106 obligation to ensure that the space is retained for employment purposes.

E1B.2 (employment allocation) Monksbridge 130

Do not support

The site was rejected in Feb 2025 Torbay Housing and Economic land Availability Assessment due to Greater Horseshoe bat sustenance zone; medieval field pattern and being within National Landscape. There is an absence of justification for the release of this land for employment development. There is an absence of criteria to determine the type and form of development that will be acceptable in this sensitive location.

Chapter 5: Thriving Communities – Wellbeing, safety and belonging

Strategic Policy SCS

Comment

In relation to the natural environment, support development which will facilitate access to nature and participation in physical activity in outdoor settings.

It would be relevant to refer to the fact that a healthy natural environment is of vital importance to people's health and wellbeing.

Policy SC2: Sport, leisure and recreation for healthy living

Comment

The policy states that “Any proposal that may lead to likely significant effects on sites protected under European legislation will only be permitted where no adverse effect on the integrity of the site can be shown”. In this regard, it is considered that the policy should be more specific about impact of floodlighting on the wider area, in particular in relation to the National Landscape and regarding the bat pathways through and near to the sports facilities.

Policy SC4: Sustainable food production and land protection

Comment

The protection of best and most versatile agricultural land is welcomed. In addition, the provision of sustainable food production within residential schemes is also welcomed. However a clear criterion based policy is required regarding relevant landscape considerations in relation to the appropriateness of sites and layouts for the provision of new food production features such as allotments.

Chapter 7: Building for the future – Resilient and smart infrastructure and developer contributions

Strategic Policy INS: Sustainable Infrastructure

Support

New infrastructure should be provided in the most environmentally friendly way possible, consistent with meeting communities' needs, safety and amenity. Infrastructure should encourage healthier lifestyles and provide recreational opportunities by providing for walking, cycling and other recreational opportunities.

Policy IN2: High Quality communications and digital communications

Support the need to utilise existing masts or structures; development to not have an unacceptable impact, including cumulative impact, onlandscape character or wildlife; also for underground facilities and ducts to be sited and laid to minimise harm to tree roots or areas of archaeological importance.

Chapter 8: Climate Change – Our Sustainable and resilient future

Policy CER4 Renewable and low carbon energy generation

Support

Chapter 9: Our Natural Places – Protecting and enhancing Torbay’s countryside, landscape and natural environment

Any paragraphs which celebrate the beauty of the NL would be welcomed.

Para 9.1

Support/comment para 9.1 which states..”*protecting the South Devon National Landscape, is a central consideration in approving or refusing permission for new development.*”

The Plan could also describe the landscape character and also refer to the relevant Landscape Character profiles as well as the NL Management Plan and other Landscape assessments carried out by the Council. Refer to the fact that the NL Management Plan is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Strategic Policy LS: Landscape Strategy

Comment

Policy needs rewording.

Should update *landscape and scenic beauty* to reflect the Government stance as set out in Section 85 of the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling -up and Regeneration Act 2023) and the draft NPPF 2025 which refers to the natural beauty of the National Landscape. This is more appropriate as it encompasses all aspects of what is regarded as important qualities, such as landscape quality, scenic quality, relative wildness, relative tranquillity, natural heritage features and cultural heritage.

Should also refer to Policy L2 when discussing Major development, to make clear there is a distinction and effectively greater protection for land designated within the National Landscape (and its setting) and outside the designation.

Strategic Policy L1 Protecting our countryside and rural economy

Policy needs rewording to reflect Section 85 of the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling -up and Regeneration Act 2023)

Equestrian activities can have a harmful effect on the landscape given the paraphernalia associated with this activity as well as pollution run off and so on. The Local Plan Strategic Policy L1 could include reference to equestrian uses in the supporting paragraphs, could be a more general worded paragraph in relation to outdoor sport and recreation. The preference is for existing buildings to be reused, and where new buildings are required, for these to be sited near to existing buildings. The activity must satisfy the standards required in terms of facilities, space and parking, to ensure that there is no overspill into the surrounding countryside and that the land can be managed to retain biodiversity value. Furthermore, any ancillary development must be compatible with the landscape character and not result in harm to the natural beauty of the landscape.

Policy L2 National Landscape

Policy needs rewording

Great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the South Devon National Landscape (previous Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).

Major development in a designated National Landscape will be refused except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that it is in the public interest. Proposals within the setting of a National Landscape should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

Consideration of such applications will assess:

- the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
- the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
- any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated taking account of the relevant South Devon National Landscape (AONB) Management Plan and the special qualities alongside the Torbay Landscape Character Assessment.

Development which is permitted in the National Landscape should

conserve and enhance its landscape and scenic beauty, having particular regard to the impacts on its character components, as set out in the South Devon AONB Management Plan. complement the scale, massing, footprint and spacing characteristic of the area. It should also adhere to guidance *and objectives* in the South Devon National Landscape (AONB) Management Plan, particularly in relation to ***the need for development to be landscape led*** building form and design. (Mitigation measures may include planning contributions towards delivery of projects set out in the Management Plan) is that last sentence acceptable? Shouldn't the stance be to avoid harm, where mitigation is required, this should be provided on site. ***Italics – my suggested changes.***

Government is seeking for non-duplication of content in Local Plans with the NPPF. In order to provide more detailed guidance for developers contemplating development within the NL, it would be helpful to include a criterion based policy so that all elements that contribute to the natural beauty of the NL are identified, so special qualities and distinctive characteristics or valued attributes; impact on tranquillity and dark landscapes, including reference to impacts from light pollution; nature conservation/biodiversity; physiographical features; distinctive historic and cultural heritage features; improve agricultural and woodland management; improve public access within the NL; and Avoid, mitigate, and as a last resort compensate, for any residual adverse effects.

It appears that throughout the Reg 18 document, there is an absence of identifying important characteristics of the local area and instead provides more generic planning policies. More needs to be done to draw out what is important to the character of Torbay with clearer guidance for developers on factors that will need to be addressed in future proposals.

Please refer to the National Landscape Plan policy in the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan, Policy DEV25 which clearly reflects the definition of natural beauty and provides clear guidance on what is appropriate with the National Landscape and complements the policies of the relevant Management Plans and cross references the Management Plans in the supporting paragraphs.

Should update *landscape and scenic beauty* to reflect the Government stance as set out in Section 85 of the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 (as amended by the Levelling -up and Regeneration Act 2023) and the

draft NPPF 2025 which refers to the natural beauty of the National Landscape. This is more appropriate as it encompasses all aspects of what is regarded as important qualities, such as landscape quality, scenic quality, relative wildness, relative tranquillity, natural heritage features and cultural heritage.

Policy L4 Valued Landscapes

Policy needs rewording

Support the principle of this policy. There is however an absence of guidance for developers to explain what will be important in terms of assessing development which protects and enhances the locally valued landscape.

Strategic Policy THS: Trees and Hedgerows

Comment

Further explanation is required regarding the situations that would be classed as wholly exceptional circumstances, with regards to the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland, ancient hedgerows or ancient and veteran trees.

Policy TH1; Trees, hedgerows and natural landscape features

Support.

This policy recognises the contribution that these features have in relation to the landscape, historic and nature conservation, biodiversity and climate resilience.

Strategic Policy NCS1: Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Network

Support. Welcome the approach for conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

Policy NC4; Light Pollution

Support this policy as it sets out clear requirements for development, particularly in regards to protecting dark night sky and ecological impacts.

Kind regards

Avril McNamara



**South Devon
National
Landscape**

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