

2nd February 2026

Mr D Pickhaver,
Torbay Council,
Strategy and Project Delivery Team,
Spatial Planning,
Tor Hill House (2nd Floor),
Union Street,
Torquay. TQ2 5QW

Sent by e-mail only: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear Mr Pickhaver,

Representations by South Devon College to the Torbay Local Plan 2025 – 2045 Consultation (Regulation 18)

On behalf of South Devon College (SDC), we write in response to the current Regulation 18 consultation on the Torbay Local Plan.

South Devon College

South Devon College has been educating and supporting the local community since 1931. As South Devon's leading Further Education College, its mission is to 'inspire our community through learning', delivering a huge range of courses and qualifications for students of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, from entry-level short courses and apprenticeships through to full honours degrees at its TEF Gold-rated University Centre in Paignton.

With nearly 700 teaching and support staff across the main Vantage Point campus in Paignton, as well as its outlying facilities in Torquay, Newton Abbot, and its Marine Academy in Kingswear, SDC is Torbay's third largest employer. As a major institution in South Devon, SDC is proud to play a key role in the provision of high-quality education across South Devon and to partner with Torbay Council to drive regional skills, economic growth, and net-zero goals through initiatives like the Torbay Sector Pathways Programme (2024 – 2026).

SDC's Estate Strategy Review

In recent years, SDC's campus estates have benefitted from significant investment, including its Hi Tech and Digital Centre which focuses on digital skills, cyber security and advanced

engineering, its Clean Energy Centre, a regional centre of excellence for clean energy technologies and training, and its Sports Centre, comprising an all-weather 3G pitch, a Multi-Use Games Area pitch and indoor court facilities. South Devon College stewards its estate by focusing on sustainable, efficient, and modern infrastructure, ensuring its resources are used effectively to maintain and protect campus locations. To that end, SDC is continually reviewing and updating its Estate Strategy; SDC has identified two parcels of land at its main Vantage Point campus in Paignton which are surplus to requirements, as shown on the aerial image below and accompanying this letter.

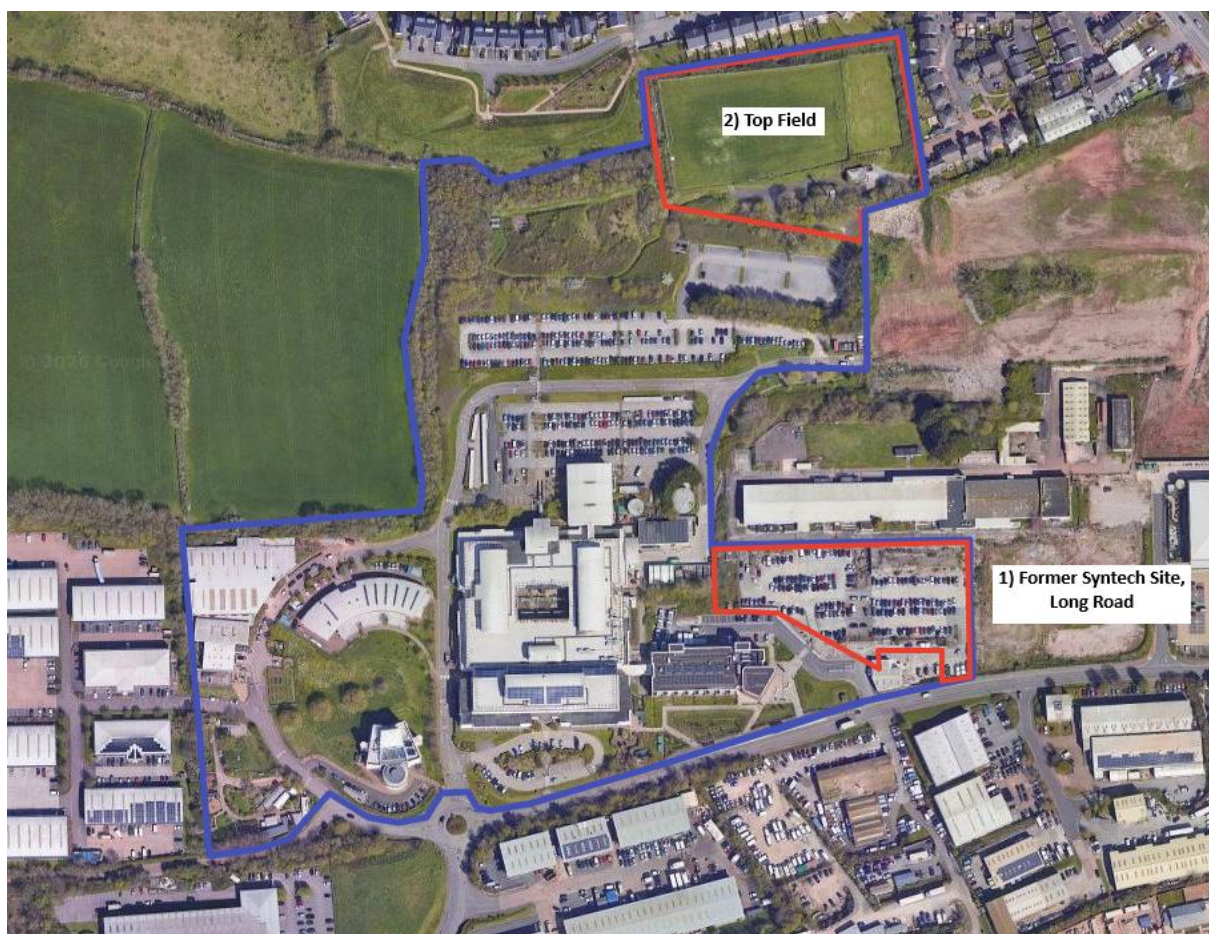


Figure 1: Aerial image of South Devon College's main Vantage Point campus, Long Road, Paignton, with the Former Syntech site and the Top Field identified in red.

1) *The former Syntech site* – Land fronting Long Road adjacent to the Devonshire Park development. This land is currently used as at-grade parking. SDC intend to consolidate its parking provision within the existing campus and dispose of this land parcel. For the reasons outlined below, given the existing varied land uses along Long Road and this land's location within a planned Future Growth Area, it is considered that this land could be redeveloped for a range of residential or employment/commercial uses (including retail use).

2) *The Top Field* – This site comprises a playing field which is no longer in use. The field is not open to the public, nor is it flood lit. In 2017 Reserved Matters Approval P/2016/0188 was

granted (following planning permission P/2011/0197) for the delivery of a new Sports Centre, including an all-weather 3G pitch and indoor court facilities just to the south of the main Vantage Point campus. This now comprises the focal point of sports provision at SDC's main campus. One of the main reasons for the need for the new sports facilities was that the Top Field could not be used intensively as it can become waterlogged. SDC intend to dispose of this land parcel. Subject to resolution of an appropriate drainage strategy, it is considered that this land is appropriate for residential development.

The land fronting Long Road and the majority of the Top Field already form part of an area identified as a Strategic Delivery Area within the adopted Torbay Local Plan 2012 - 2030 (adopted December 2015), planned to accommodate mixed use developments to provide a range of housing, especially family housing, employment, local recreation and local retail facilities (Strategic Delivery Areas SS1, SS5 and SS12 and Policy SDP3 Paignton North and Western Area). However, while the rest of the land within this allocation is subject to planning permission (reference P/2014/0752)/pending planning application for redevelopment (reference P/2025/0782), neither land parcel identified above has been subject to applications for redevelopment.

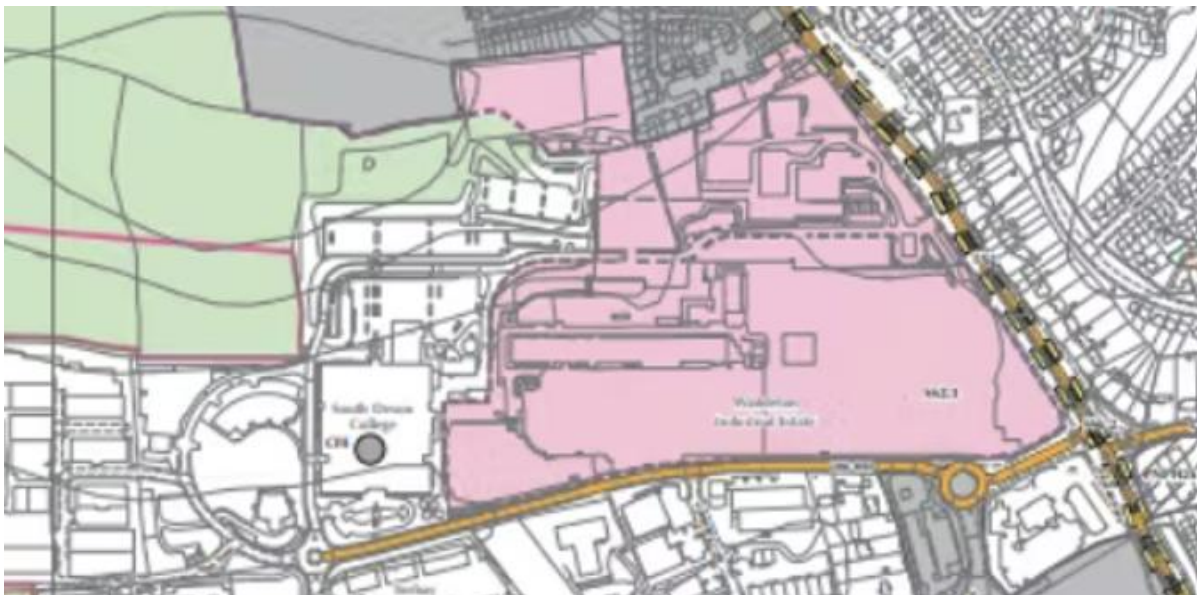


Figure 2: Screenshot from the Torbay Local Plan 2012 - 2030 (adopted December 2015) - The pink shading indicates a 'Future Growth Area for housing and related development'

Draft Torbay Local Plan 2025-45

Taking the above context into account, SDC wishes to make representations to the emerging Local Plan, in particular in relation to the following:

Local Plan Key Objectives

SDC notes and supports Torbay Council's **Strategic Priority 5: Build Better Communities with the Homes, Spaces and Opportunities that People Deserve**. The draft Local Plan sets out that this will be achieved through meeting a series of objectives including:

"To support the expansion and improvement of existing educational establishments, especially South Devon College, and plan positively for new education and lifelong learning, and links to employment, especially in the knowledge based economy" (page 26).

SDC recognises and appreciates Torbay Council's express support for SDC's continued success in the draft Local Plan, however, we request that this objective is amended to acknowledge opportunities for SDC to also consolidate assets and make effective use of land, enabling SDC to generate revenue to reinvest in its campus facilities.

The important role South Devon College plays in providing education and support to advance skills in the hi-tech sector, knowledge-based economy, education and healthcare is also noted within the draft Local Plan (at pages 106 and 108). Further, **Strategic Policy SC3: Education infrastructure and inclusive learning strategy** makes clear that the ongoing needs of South Devon College will be supported. As with the reference to the key objective discussed above, this policy relates principally to the expansion of schools. There should be express acknowledgment of opportunities to dispose of surplus assets and make effective use of land, to generate revenue to reinvest in campus facilities.

Spatial Strategy and Area Policies

Strategic Policy SS1: Torbay Growth Strategy relies heavily on the regeneration of brownfield sites and other urban areas to maximise development opportunities, particularly within the larger towns of Torquay and Paignton. The policy targets at least 8,000 new dwellings over the Plan period of 2025-2045, equal to an average of around 400 dwellings a year over a 20-year Plan period. This is below the government's Local Housing Needs target (of 950 dwellings a year). The supporting text to Policy SS1 sets out that the housing target within the plan seeks to maximise the delivery of homes within Torbay's significant environmental and infrastructure limits, and a high level of constraint. Policy SS1 also sets out a target of at least 80,000 sq. m of Class E(g)/B2/B8 net employment space over the Plan period, equal to at least 20ha.

As set out above, the housing target proposed within the emerging Local Plan is significantly lower (more than 50%) than the government's Local Housing Needs target. This will no doubt

be subject to considerable interrogation through the Examination in Public of the Local Plan. Notwithstanding this, given the clear and pressing housing need, severe and deteriorating housing affordability and a serious shortfall in the provision of affordable homes within South Devon and nationally, this only emphasises the importance of maximising opportunities to develop land appropriate for development within Torquay and Paignton, as the identified main growth areas. In this context, the Top Field and the former Syntech site (and their associated capacity for housing and employment development) should be factored into the proposals for the planned development to the west of Paignton.

Strategic Policy SDP5: Long Road, Yalberton allocates land to the west of South Devon College and south of Berry Acres as a Future Growth Area delivering a mix of new homes and employment land and proposes to designate Devonshire Park retail centre as a District Centre. The broad location of this Future Growth Area is shown on the Key Diagram and Policies Map (refer to **Figure 3** below). However, it is considered that the Key Diagram and Policies Map are far from clear in identifying the proposed allocation for the Future Growth Area and a clearer plan should be prepared in the next stage of the plan-making process.

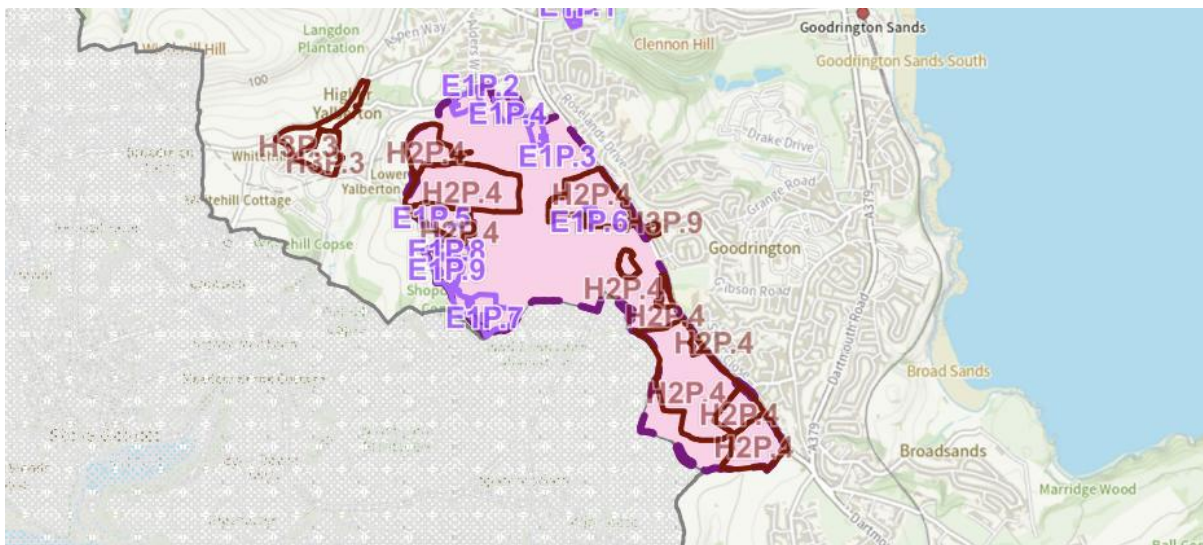


Figure 3: Screenshot from a map of the proposed housing and employment sites proposed within the Torbay Local Plan 2025 – 2045 – The pink shading indicates Future Growth Areas.

Immediately to the east of SDC’s Vantage Point campus is the location of the planned retail store (M&S) (reference P/2025/0782) and existing retail provision at Devonshire Park (The Range, Pets at Home). To the north east, east, and south east, major residential development has recently been constructed or is under development. To the immediate south of Long Road is a mix of commercial businesses and the SDC Sports Centre. To the immediate west of SDC is Westfield Business Park, with the land beyond forming part of the Future Growth Area to accommodate residential and employment development.

SDC supports the identification of land to the west of Paignton as a Future Growth Area and the identification of Devonshire Park as a District Centre. This reflects the recent and

continued development in the vicinity of the Vantage Point campus, with the mixed and varied land uses surrounding the campus. In this context, it is considered that the redevelopment of the former Syntech site identified above should be expressly included within the anticipated development outlined within Strategic Policy SDP5. This land is currently underutilised as at-grade parking. Given the existing varied land uses along Long Road and the site's location within a planned Future Growth Area, it is considered that this land could appropriately be redeveloped for a range of residential or commercial uses (including retail use).

Similarly, the Top Field should be expressly included within the planned development detailed within Strategic Policy SDP5. While the site comprises a playing field, it is no longer in use. The field is not open to the public and is not flood lit. In 2017 Reserved Matters Approval P/2016/0188 was granted (following planning permission P/2011/0197) for the delivery of a new Sports Centre, including an all-weather 3G pitch and indoor court facilities just to the south of the main Vantage Point campus. This now comprises the focal point of sports provision at SDC. The Top Field is now surplus to requirements. The supporting text to Strategic Policy SDP5 sets out that detailed proposals for the area will come forward through a new Masterplan for the area. It is considered that as part of the masterplanning process, re-provision of the open space/pitch provision could be identified in a less constrained location further to the west as part of the planned wider development. Subject to resolution of an appropriate drainage strategy and a masterplan addressing green infrastructure, open space provision and protected species, the Top Field is considered appropriate for residential development.

Moving Torbay – Sustainable travel and inclusive access

With respect to **Policy TA1: Reducing the impact of transport and promoting sustainable travel** and **Policy TA2: Effective and inclusive transport system**, whilst we support further residential development to the west of the Vantage Point campus which is carefully planned and appropriate, we must raise significant concerns regarding the adequacy of existing transport and highway infrastructure serving the College and the wider Long Road corridor. Current congestion already impacts safe and efficient access for students, staff, and visitors, especially at peak times, and these issues are anticipated to intensify with further residential development to the west of the campus being brought forward.

SDC strongly recommends that the Local Plan includes clear commitments to deliver sustainable transport improvements, including direct links to the SDC campus(es) from the new developments which should include:

- Enhanced public transport provision with increased bus service frequency and improved integration with rail services especially to Paignton.
- Investment in active travel infrastructure with segregated cycle lanes, safe pedestrian routes, and secure cycle facilities.

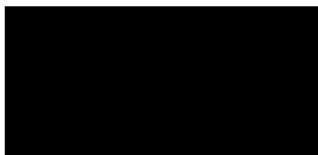
- Targeted highway improvements such as junction upgrades and measures to manage traffic flow and improve capacity.
- Additional sustainable travel measures such as park-and-ride facilities, electric vehicle charging points, and support for car-sharing schemes.
- Developer contributions to fund transport upgrades linked to planned growth, especially noting the 'green field' nature of the sites proposed for development.

Without such interventions, the cumulative impact of planned development will compromise accessibility, safety, and the ability to promote sustainable travel choices, contrary to the objectives of the Local Plan and national planning policy.

Summary

In conclusion, South Devon College supports Torbay Council's efforts to ensure an up-to-date Local Plan is in place to guide development across Torbay. As a major institution within the region, we wish to continue to work with Torbay Council in the preparation of the plan and would welcome ongoing dialogue in respect of the contents of this representation hereby submitted.

Yours sincerely,

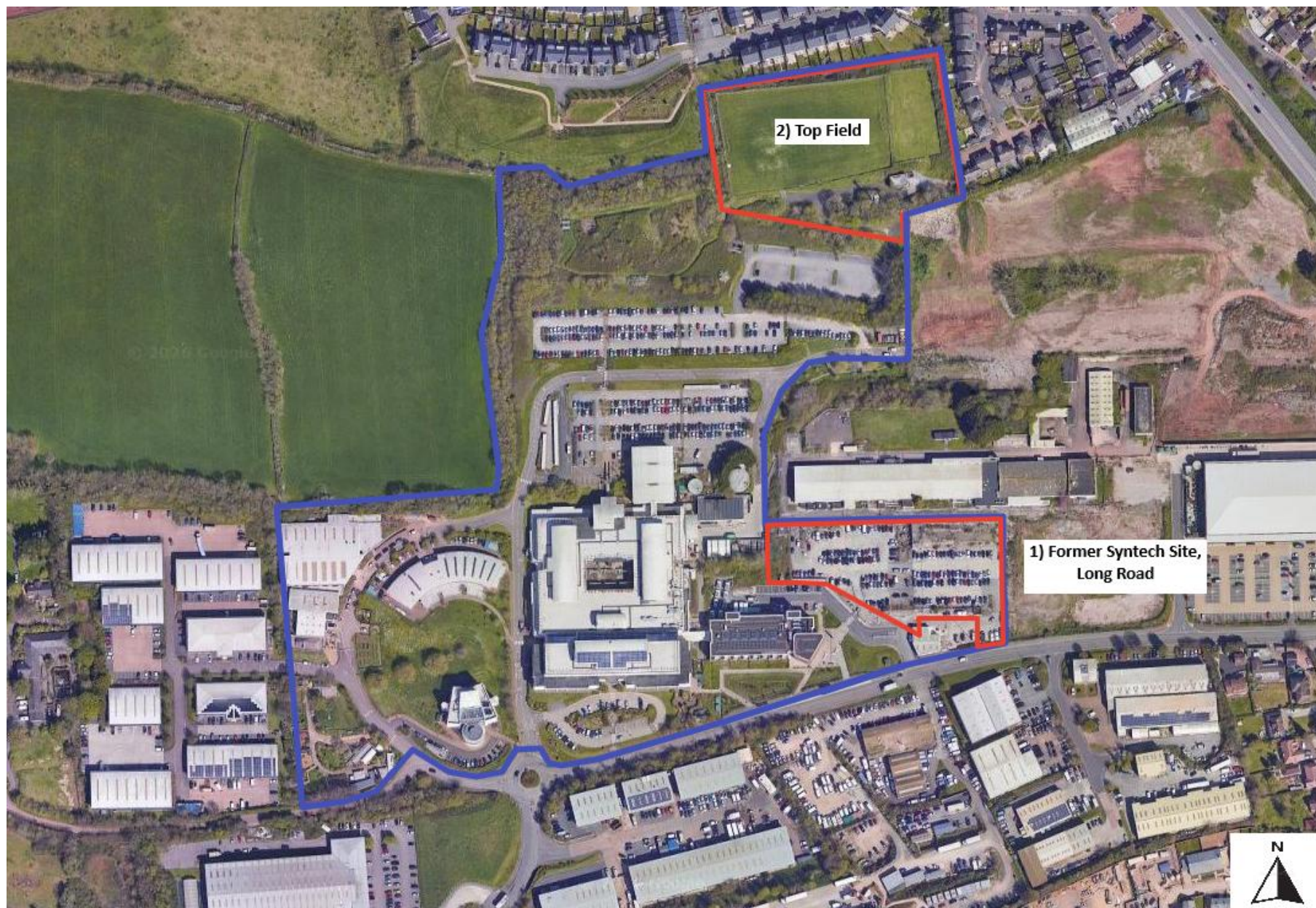


Sally Davis
Director



For and on behalf of Avison Young (UK) Limited

South Devon College: Vantage Point Campus, Long Road, Paignton



Aerial image of South Devon College's main Vantage Point campus, Long Road, Paignton, with the Former Syntech site and the Top Field identified in red and the remainder of the Vantage Point campus outlined in blue.