

## **Thurlestone Community Housing sites**

*Development Management Senior Officer Report  
Dated January 2020, addendum May 2020*

Officers have been asked to comment on the suitability of sites within the Parish of Thurlestone with regards to accommodating community housing; no formal pre-application has been submitted and comments were initially reported back verbally. This document sets out the key issues and recommendations in respect of sites identified by SHDC and the Parish. These comments are based on a desk top assessment and a site visit by a planning officer and the Council's landscape specialist.

### **Planning Policy**

In considering the suitability of a site for housing the most relevant JLP planning policies are as follows:

#### **Policy SPT1**

##### **Delivering sustainable development**

The LPAs will support growth and change that delivers a more sustainable future for Plymouth and South West Devon. Development and change will be planned for and managed in accordance with the following principles of sustainable development:

1. A sustainable economy where:

- i. Opportunities for business growth are both encouraged and supported.
- ii. Environmentally conscious business development takes place.
- iii. Strategically important economic assets are protected for the purpose of economic activity.
- iv. A low carbon economy is promoted.

2. A sustainable society where:

Neighbourhoods and communities have a mix of local services and community assets, and accessible greenspace, that meet the needs of local people.

- ii. Sustainable and health promoting transport options are available to access local education, services and jobs.
- iii. Important cultural and heritage assets are protected for the benefit of current and future generations.
- iv. Resilient communities and developments are delivered, which are able to accommodate the impacts of climate change and do not cause detrimental impacts to other communities and developments, for example through increasing flood risk.
- v. Demand for energy is reduced and opportunities for the use of renewable energy increased.
- vi. Equality of opportunities, freedom from discrimination and fair access to facilities and services are provided for all.

### 3. A sustainable environment where:

- i. The effective use of land is made for development through optimising reuse of previously developed sites, therefore reducing the need for greenfield development, protecting natural assets and creating opportunities for viable low carbon energy schemes.
- ii. Overall gains in biodiversity are achieved by protecting and enhancing species, habitats and geological sites.
- iii. Pollution and adverse environmental impacts of development are minimised and effectively mitigated where unavoidable.
- iv. The best and most versatile agricultural land is protected for agricultural use.
- v. Local distinctiveness and sense of place is respected, maintained and strengthened through high standards of design.

## Policy SPT2

### **Sustainable linked neighbourhoods and sustainable rural communities**

The LPAs will apply the following principles of sustainable linked neighbourhoods and sustainable rural communities to guide how development and growth takes place in the Plan Area. Development should support the overall spatial strategy through the creation of neighbourhoods and communities which:

1. Have reasonable access to a vibrant mixed use centre, which meets daily community needs for local services such as neighbourhood shops, health and wellbeing services and community facilities, and includes where appropriate dual uses of facilities in community hubs.
2. Provide for higher density living appropriate to the local area in the areas that are best connected to sustainable transport, services and amenities, as well as appropriate opportunities for home working, reducing the need to travel.
3. Have high levels of digital connectivity, supporting local communities and businesses and enabling data to be open, shared and used to better understand the area.
4. Have a good balance of housing types and tenures to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes to meet identified housing needs.
5. Promote resilience to future change by ensuring a well-balanced demographic profile with equal access to housing and services.
6. Are well served by public transport, walking and cycling opportunities.

8. Have a safe, accessible, healthy and wildlife-rich local environment, with well-designed public and natural spaces that are family friendly and welcoming to all.
9. Have services and facilities that promote equality and inclusion and that provide for all sectors of the local population.
10. Have the appropriate level of facilities to meet the identified needs of the local community, including provision of education and training opportunities, employment uses, health care, arts, culture, community facilities, open space, sport and recreation, and places of worship.
11. Provide a positive sense of place and identity, including through the recognition of good quality design, unique character, the role of culture, and the protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment.
12. Explore opportunities for the use of renewable energy, including community energy schemes where appropriate, and reduce the use of energy through design and energy efficiency.
13. Provide positive outcomes in relation to the characteristics, aspirations and measurable standards set out through any supplementary planning document linked to this plan.

## Policy TTV1

### **Prioritising growth through a hierarchy of sustainable settlements**

The LPAs will distribute growth and development delivering homes and jobs in accordance with the following hierarchy of settlements, enabling each town and village to play its role within the rural area:

1. The Main Towns - which will be prioritised for growth to enable them to continue to thrive, achieve strong levels of self-containment, and provide a broad range of services for the wider area.
2. Smaller Towns and Key Villages - which will receive support for growth commensurate with their roles in supporting the small villages and hamlets.
3. Sustainable Villages - where development to meet locally identified needs and to sustain limited services and amenities will be supported.
4. Smaller villages, Hamlets and the Countryside - where development will be permitted only if it can be demonstrated to support the principles of sustainable development and sustainable communities

(Policies SPT1 and 2) including as provided for in Policies TTV26 and TTV27.

## Policy TTV26

### Development in the countryside

The LPAs will protect the special characteristics and role of the countryside. The following provisions will apply to the consideration of development proposals:

1. Isolated development in the countryside will be avoided and only permitted in exceptional circumstances, such as where it would:
  - I. Meet an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside and maintain that role for the development in perpetuity; or
  - II. Secure the long term future and viable use of a significant heritage asset; or
  - III. Secure the re-use of redundant or disused buildings and brownfield sites for an appropriate use; or
  - IV. Secure a development of truly outstanding or innovative sustainability and design, which helps to raise standards of design more generally
  - V. in the rural area, significantly enhances its immediate setting, and is sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area; or
  - VI. Protect or enhance the character of historic assets and their settings.
2. Development proposals should, where appropriate:
  - I. Protect and improve public rights of way and bridleways.
  - II. Re-use traditional buildings that are structurally sound enough for renovation without significant enhancement or alteration.
  - III. Be complementary to and not prejudice any viable agricultural operations on a farm and other existing viable uses.
  - IV. Respond to a proven agricultural, forestry and other occupational need that requires a countryside location.
  - V. Avoid the use of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.
  - VI. Help enhance the immediate setting of the site and include a management plan and exit strategy that demonstrates how long term degradation of the landscape and natural environment will be avoided

## **Policy TTV27**

### **Meeting local housing needs in rural areas**

Proposals for residential development on sites adjoining or very near to an existing settlement which would not otherwise be released for this purpose may be permitted provided that it can be demonstrated that:

1. It meets a proven need for affordable housing for local people
2. It includes a mix of affordable and market housing products where necessary to be financially viable. This includes open market housing, providing it does not represent more than 40% of the homes or 40% of the land take excluding infrastructure and services.
3. Management of the scheme will ensure that the dwellings continue to meet the identified need in perpetuity.
4. The proposal meets the requirement of all other relevant policies of the Plan.

## **Policy DEV24**

### **Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast**

Development which would have a detrimental effect on the undeveloped and unspoilt character, appearance or tranquillity of the Undeveloped Coast, estuaries, and the Heritage Coast will not be permitted except under exceptional circumstances. Development will only be permitted in the Undeveloped Coast where the development:

1. Can demonstrate that it requires a coastal location.
2. It cannot reasonably be located outside the Undeveloped Coast.
3. Protects, maintains and enhances the unique landscape and seascape character and special qualities of the area.
4. Is consistent with policy statements for the local policy unit in the current Shoreline Management Plan.
5. Is consistent with the relevant Heritage Coast objectives, as contained within the relevant AONB Management Plan.

Development for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, public access and enjoyment of the coast and estuaries, or community facilities that meet the objectively assessed needs of the local community, will be supported if it meets the above tests.

## **Policy DEV25**

### **Nationally protected landscapes**

The highest degree of protection will be given to the protected landscapes of the South Devon AONB, Tamar Valley AONB and Dartmoor National Park. The LPAs will protect the AONBs and National Park from potentially damaging or inappropriate development located either within the protected landscapes or their settings. In considering development proposals the LPAs will:

1. Refuse permission for major developments within a protected landscapes, except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest.
2. Give great weight to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the protected landscapes.
3. Give substantial weight to other natural beauty criteria, including the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage in the AONBs and great weight to the conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage in Dartmoor National Park.
4. Assess their direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on natural beauty.
5. Encourage small-scale proposals that are sustainably and appropriately located and designed to conserve, enhance and restore the protected landscapes.
6. Seek opportunities to enhance and restore protected landscapes by addressing areas of visually poor quality or inconsistent with character, securing through the development visual and other enhancements to restore local distinctiveness, guided by the protected landscape's special qualities and distinctive characteristics or valued attributes.
7. Support proposals which are appropriate to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area or desirable for the understanding and enjoyment of the area.
8. Require development proposals located within or within the setting of a protected landscape to:
  - i. Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the protected landscape with particular reference to their special qualities and distinctive characteristics or valued attributes.
  - ii. Be designed to prevent the addition of incongruous features, and where appropriate take the opportunity to remove or ameliorate existing incongruous features.
  - iii. Be located and designed to respect scenic quality and maintain an area's distinctive sense of place, or reinforce local distinctiveness.
  - iv. Be designed to prevent impacts of light pollution from artificial light on intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation interests.
  - v. Be located and designed to prevent the erosion of relative tranquillity and, where possible use opportunities to enhance areas in which tranquillity has been eroded.
  - vi. Be located and designed to conserve and enhance flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features, in particular those which contribute to the distinctive sense of place, relative wildness or tranquillity, or to other aspects of landscape and scenic quality.

- vii. Retain links, where appropriate, with the distinctive historic and cultural heritage features of the protected landscape.
- viii. Further the delivery of the relevant protected landscape management plan, having regard to its supporting guidance documents.
- ix. Avoid, mitigate, and as a last resort compensate, for any residual adverse effects.

The most relevant policies from the Thurlestone Neighbourhood Plan are as follows:

### **POLICY TP3 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Proposals for affordable housing will be supported, subject to viability, as either infill (including reuse of previously developed land) or as a rural exception site, including a village housing initiative or community-led housing, provided the proposal meets the requirements of Policy TP1 and the following criteria:

1. can demonstrate that it will meet clearly identified local housing needs;
2. comprises a small-scale scheme of up to 10 dwellings with an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes, reflecting the identified needs;
3. is located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of a village community and the parish as a whole;
4. occupied only by people with a Local Connection or who comply with a main residence Devon Covenant (or similar mechanism to be agreed by the Council) or who meet the Council's community-led housing eligibility criteria; and
5. in the case of a village housing initiative, the open market dwellings used to cross-subsidise the development are subject to a main residence Devon Covenant (or similar mechanism to be agreed by the Council) or a principal residence requirement (in accordance with Policy TP6).

'Identified local housing needs' means in accordance with the findings of the Council's Housing Needs Survey Report of June 2016 (and any revisions thereof). 'Local Connection' means people who live or work in the parish or have close links such as relatives or are wishing to move back to the parish, as defined in the South Hams Local Allocation Policy, September 2015 (and any amendments thereto). In the event that there are no local applicants, the properties will be made available on a cascade basis to applicants from adjoining parishes, namely, South Milton, Churchstow and Aveton Gifford.

## **Site Assessments**

### **Bantham – land opposite the village store**

This site is an agricultural field located immediately south and east of the identified settlement boundary of Bantham. It is directly opposite the village shop and café and adjoins existing dwellings to the west. The site sits at a slightly higher level than the road, sloping upwards to the east. The boundary with the road is currently defined with a Devon hedgebank; this part of the road is relatively straight and therefore it seems likely adequate visibility splays for a new vehicular access could be achieved. This should be confirmed however with the Highway Authority.

The site is located within the South Devon AONB, the Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast. The site is within approx. 250m of a terrace of Grade II listed dwellings which are sited to the west of the site.

Located within the Undeveloped Coast and outside of the settlement boundary this field is not a site where development would normally be supported (JLP Policy DEV24); however the principal of development of the site for community (affordable) housing can be supported by Policy TTV27 of the JLP and Policy TP3 of the Thurlestone Neighbourhood Plan, subject to all the relevant criteria being met and subject to all other material planning considerations.

Officers consider this site to be well related to the village and whilst parts of the site are prominent in the landscape, well designed and appropriately located development could read as a natural extension to the village; the presence of existing dwellings to the east and north of the site will help new development to sit comfortably in the landscape.

The topography of the site does present some constraint to development and the higher, eastern part of the site may be more challenging to develop, it may be that development here should either be avoided or limited to 1 or 1.5 stories. To sit comfortably in the landscape development footprints should not extend significantly further south than the rear building line of the adjoining houses to the west.

Notwithstanding the above a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment would be necessary to confirm the extent of landscape impact. The development of the site for up to 10 houses would be considered major development in the AONB and it will be necessary to demonstrate that public benefit outweighs any harm to the AONB.

Bantham is characterised by dwellings that sit close to the road with either no or very limited frontages. Many modern developments seek to avoid loss of hedgerow by creating single access points into a cul-de-sac type development but this type of development is not characteristic of the area. Careful consideration should be given to how the site frontage should be managed to achieve a development that is in keeping with the character of the area.

The village shop opposite appears to have limited parking, this development could be an opportunity to provide additional parking for the shop, helping to maintain its viability in the interests of the community.



Whilst Bantham has no school this site will provide housing in easy walking distance of the village shop and café and the pub as well as being in walking distance of the beachside activities, development would help to support these local facilities to the benefit of the local economy and will be sited within an existing community providing social benefits to new and existing residents.

Due to the sensitive location of this site, siting, design and scale will need careful and considered design, however the principle of development for community housing is likely to gain officer support subject to meeting the criteria of JLP Policy TTV27 and TNP Policy TP3.

Of the sites assessed in this report Officers consider the Bantham site is clearly the preferred site for the delivery of community affordable housing.

### **Thurlestone Community Housing sites (Additional Sites Review)**

#### **Addendum – summary of landscape issues following meeting dated 30<sup>th</sup> January**

Officers have been asked to comment on the suitability of some additional sites within the Parish of Thurlestone for community housing. The sites have been briefly discussed with representatives of the Parish Council, with a request for assessment in the context of Planning Policy, and in particular the landscape context. We now understand that there is a single site within West Buckland which requires formal comment. The policy considerations are set out in the initial report. Subject to housing numbers, they are likely to be recognised as major development within the AONB.

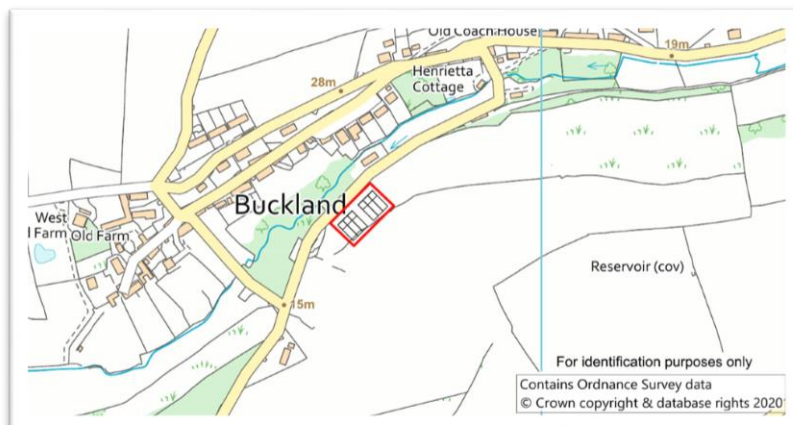
#### *Designations:*

South Devon AONB  
Cirl Bunting buffer zone  
Heritage and Undeveloped Coast (non-statutory)

#### *Landscape Character Assessments:*

Devon Character Area – *Bigbury Bay Coastal Plateau*  
Landscape Character Type - *3G. River valley slopes and combes*

Site reference:



### **Site 1 (Red line – 6 dwellings)**

The site would occupy a field on the lower sections of the north-west facing valley slope above Buckland Stream, and adjacent to Grove Cottages. West Buckland is approximately 150m to the north, with the centre of Thurlestone village about 850m to the south, over the ridge. The site lies within - the South Devon AONB; the Heritage and Undeveloped Coast; the Cirl bunting buffer zone.

The north facing valley side slopes down from the ridgeline across varying degrees of steepness. A mixed species hedgerow and trees form the lower boundary with the adjacent rural highway. The site is separate from the main settlement, along a narrow, sparsely settled lane following the course of the Buckland stream; it is well treed.

The landscape is locally characterised by rounded hills (ridgeline) and steep undulating slopes above a branching narrow valley system which flows into Avon estuary. It is a pastoral landscape with rough grazing. The historic settlements have a clustered pattern of housing, which are often small and nucleated (West and East Buckland). The landscape condition of the LCT is intact, and this is reflected within the context of the site. In particular this results from the relatively sparse number and scale of settlements, lack of main road access and limited built development within the enclosed river valleys.

Development on of the site would result in adverse harm, effecting the special qualities and natural beauty recognised within the protected landscape designation and character assessments given its intimate, unspoilt nature and tranquillity. This is with consideration to the necessary improvements to the access, on-site excavations and changes to the landform, removal of Devon hedgebanks and introducing new built development into countryside. Pedestrian access is poor, and whilst acknowledging the NP settlement boundary, the site (treated as an *exception*) is within countryside; it appears separate to the village and would be contrary to its current form of housing layout which has an elongated pattern which is principally located on the south facing slope. It would appear to fall outside of the scope of TTV27 and fails to meet the development criteria as set out within the NP (including 2, 3 and 5). On this basis this site cannot be supported where development would fail to accord with DEV23, DEV24 and DEV25.

**Alex Whish – Senior Specialist, Place Making**

**22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020**