

policy review

Dawlish from the breakwater



3.1 Introduction

This section of the report examines the **policy context** for the regeneration of Dawlish town centre. A full list of the sources consulted is contained in Annex 2.

This review covers statutory and non-statutory policy documents and strategies at a range of spatial scales from local to regional. The analysis in this section has been structured around **6 key themes**:

- community
- regional planning and economic development
- local planning
- public service delivery
- transport, and
- culture

3.2 Community

The local community has, under the auspices of the Dawlish Community Trust, undertaken extensive research and analysis, culminating in the production of a strategy for the future of Dawlish. The **Community Strategic Plan** (2005) provides the springboard for the current study, although its scope is town-wide, while the master plan focuses on the town centre. The Strategic Plan proposes a range of



regeneration projects for the town's regeneration, based on the following **themes**:

- quality of life for residents and visitors
- business and skills development
- local heritage
- transport, traffic and parking, and
- tourism.

Although the **projects** relating to business, heritage and transport are of particular relevance to the town centre master plan, those relating to quality of life and the LDF also touch upon the town centre. Individual proposals relevant to the master plan include:

- improving the range of shopping in the town centre
- encouraging a leading supermarket to come to the town
- enhancing the Strand
- managing traffic in the town
- improving the Lawn and replacing the bandstand
- improving Manor Gardens and other public parks and open spaces
- creating a multi-storey car park
- improving signage
- developing a heritage trail
- creating a heritage centre
- developing better cycling and walking routes

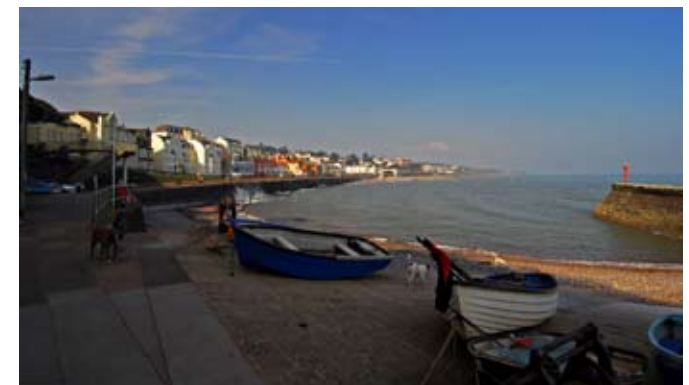


above: The Strand
below: The Lawn and the Strand below right: Boat Cove



- developing and implementing a townscape conservation scheme
- restoring the water wheel and leat
- refurbishing the railway station and surrounding area
- extending use of the Shaftesbury Theatre
- promoting the museum
- provide more new and more affordable housing
- developing a learning business centre
- building a new youth centre and skate park
- developing a new centre for community use.

Many of these ideas are reflected in the proposals set out in the following pages. We have used them as a reference point throughout the study although we have not attempted to pick up all of these leads.



3.3 Regional planning and economic development

At the regional and county level, *Regional Planning Guidance* for South West England and the *Devon Structure Plan* will be superseded by a single document, the *Regional Spatial Strategy*, which is scheduled to be approved in 2008.

Regional Planning Guidance

Regional Planning Guidance 10 (RPG 10) for the South West was approved in September 2001, and covers the period to 2016. To achieve sustainable development in the South West, *RPG10* proposes:

- making the best use of previously developed land
- minimising the need to travel
- integrating urban and rural policies
- concentrating development in principal urban areas (in Devon, Plymouth, Torbay and Exeter) and other designated centres for growth
- appropriate development in market towns and key villages
- conserving and enhancing important environmental assets
- providing around 4,300 new homes a year in Devon.



above: Dawlish Water and Brunswick Place
below: Dawlish Water and Piermont Place



Devon Structure Plan

The current Devon Structure Plan, *Devon to 2016*, was adopted in 2004 and covers the period up to 2016. Policy aims include:

- sustainable development
- conservation and enhancement of the Devon environment
- community self-sufficiency: enhancing the roles of settlements as service centres, and of town centres as focal points of communities
- meeting the need for housing
- a dynamic and healthy economy
- sustainable transport network.

The Structure Plan identifies Exeter as one of three Principal Urban Areas which will be the primary focus for strategic development in Devon, sharing the bulk of new housing and economic investment. The scale of growth envisaged for Exeter is reflected in the allocation of 10,350 dwellings and 150 ha of employment land for the period 2001-2016.

The Structure Plan also identifies a number of area centres. These towns will cater for local housing and employment opportunities and the provision of local services. Dawlish meets the criteria for an area centre and is also identified



as a priority for economic and social regeneration because of its declining economic vitality and viability. The Structure Plan seeks to support the tourism role of coastal resorts, including Dawlish, and to avoid developments which would detract from their character and tourist function (Policy TO1 and paragraph 6.27).

Regional Spatial Strategy

The *Regional Spatial Strategy* will supersede RPG10 and the Structure Plan as the statutory planning policy document for Devon and South West England. It has a longer horizon than either of these documents, to 2026. The draft *Regional Spatial Strategy* was published by the South West Regional Assembly in 2006 and is currently the subject of a Public Examination by central government. It should be approved in 2008.

The *Regional Spatial Strategy* rolls forward the strategy contained in *RPG10*, albeit with greater emphasis on the potential of Exeter as an engine for economic growth. The draft identifies Exeter as a target for strategic economic development and states that the city should realise its full potential for further economic and commercial investment, particularly in services, knowledge based industries and activities related to the University, airport and the proposed rail freight interchange.

The strategy aims to focus new development in and around Exeter rather than in surrounding towns and villages such as Dawlish. However, if Exeter grows as rapidly as envisaged (an additional 28,500 new jobs and 925 new houses per annum to 2026) Dawlish's proximity to Exeter will create economic opportunities as well as housing demand. The town centre master plan needs to provide a framework to make the most of these opportunities.

Regional Economic Strategy

The *Regional Economic Strategy for South West England 2006-2015* is produced by the South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA). The preamble to the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) highlights the role of the region's small towns and the opportunity for them to become "more viable communities with a critical mass of businesses and services which can sustain those settlements in the future". The strategy places a strong emphasis on the region's "unique environmental and cultural assets" as a source of competitive advantage.

RES Strategic Objective 2 seeks to develop strong and cohesive communities. Regional Priority 2C is to plan sustainable and successful communities. The RES highlights the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative (MCTI) as a key achievement to date.

RES Strategic Objective 3 seeks to create an effective and confident region. Regional Priority 3B is to promote and enhance what is best about the region, and the RES emphasises the need to celebrate the features – environment, culture and creativity – that make the region distinctive.

A report issued by SWRDA in 2006 focuses on the *Market and Coastal Towns in South West England*. The report challenges the idea that the region's smaller towns should be treated as dormitories for larger towns and cities, and argues that small towns must continue to support vibrant communities and valuable jobs. SWRDA also highlights the vital role of the people who live and work in small towns in "redrawing the economic map at a local level": the community's needs "must be articulated, understood by bodies such as the South West RDA and acted upon". The report presents some examples of the work and achievements of the MCTI since it was set up in 2000, and sets the scene for future activity:

"Will fewer towns be perceived as "in decline"? Will young people feel able to live, work and fulfil their ambitions in such rural communities, rather than be drawn away by opportunity elsewhere? Can an enticing and cherished environment support well paid jobs and all round sustainable living?"

“Public and private partners will want to find increasingly innovative ways to ensure the answer is “yes” to these questions. The issue of the future of public services, for example, will need to attract particular energy and attention if vibrant and healthy schools, healthcare services, policing, and other services are all to be maintained and flourish. The future of shops and other high street services is increasingly tied to the ability not only to serve the population’s day-to-day needs but to anticipate and respond to the demand for a “specialised” offer. Good public space, buildings and other infrastructure will remain in high demand but be inspired and provided through increasingly sophisticated and locally-based community partnerships”.



above: Tourist Information Centre on the Lawn
below: The Strand



3.4 Local planning

Core Strategy: overview

Teignbridge District Council’s *Teignbridge Local Plan (1989-2001)* was adopted in 1996. However, the age of this adopted Local Plan means that it is now of limited relevance. In future the key local planning document will be the *Local Development Framework Core Strategy*.

A consultation draft version of this document was submitted to government in November 2006. TDC has since been advised to withdraw the Core Strategy for review and

resubmission, but the draft document remains relevant and it contains a useful checklist of issues facing Teignbridge District, including:

- a growing but ageing population, losing young people
- an estimated requirement for 3,000 new houses in the district between 2006 and 2016
- severe pressure in the housing market resulting in the limited availability of smaller dwellings, a growing gap between average household earnings and housing costs, and house price inflation
- the local economy is buoyant, and that of Exeter is strengthening and becoming a sub-regional powerhouse
- low unemployment and an increasing number of economically active people
- low pay, skill shortages, a high proportion of people on incapacity benefit and isolated pockets of deprivation (including in Dawlish)
- high leakage of retail spend from Dawlish to Exeter, particularly for convenience goods (a detailed breakdown is contained in the *Teignbridge Retail Study 2006*).
- quality of design of recent developments and quality of “place” generally (including Dawlish town centre).



Core Strategy: settlement strategy

In response to these challenges, the *Core Strategy* aims to make the larger settlements (Newton Abbot, Dawlish and Teignmouth) more self-contained. Newton Abbot is identified as the principal centre for the District, with complementary roles for Dawlish and Teignmouth. The vision sees the town centres becoming economically stronger and more attractive, better serving local needs and achieving a “modest clawback” of expenditure outflow. The towns should offer access to high quality greenspaces, with diverse economies enabling sustainable production and consumption.

The *Core Strategy* describes the roles of Dawlish and Teignmouth as being to “provide a strategic focus for provision of local housing and employment opportunities, education and other local services to meet the local needs and those of their rural hinterland. These coastal towns are priority areas for regeneration.”

The strategy aims to promote higher density development, better quality design, town centre intensification, higher quality urban living and better accessibility. Objectives for town centres include a broader range of activities, improved safety and security and increased attractiveness. This can be achieved by developing town centre management plans,

Old Town Street



policies and action plans, management partnerships and community trusts. Town centres should continue to be enhanced through improvements to the street scene and the public realm, and by enhancing the environment around centres. Development should respect the character of the centres, including any special architectural and historic interest, and assist in maintaining and strengthening their existing retail functions.

This indicates that the *Core Strategy* is very supportive of the concept of town centre regeneration, and that the process of town centre masterplanning being followed by Dawlish Community Trust matches the District Council’s aspirations. The strategy also gives a flavour of the types of actions which the District Council is likely to support – useful intelligence for the masterplanning process.

The *Teignbridge Employment Land Review*, part of the evidence base for the *Core Strategy*, suggests that there is a need to increase employment opportunities if the goal of making Dawlish a more self-contained settlement is to be achieved. It concludes that the supply of employment land in Dawlish is constrained, and recommends an extension to Dawlish Business Park. If the policy objective of creating further employment opportunities in Dawlish is realised, this should help to reduce out-commuting and provide an opportunity for town centre retailers to capture a greater proportion of residents’ expenditure.

The draft Strategy promotes a sustainable and thriving economy in Teignbridge, and identifies a complementary role for the District on the back of the burgeoning economic growth of Exeter, possibly as an attractive lower cost alternative business location. The policy identifies areas of opportunity including:

- developing sustainable tourism
- raising standards of accommodation, attractions and the environment
- retaining and supporting the health and care economy
- nurturing creative industries and the cultural economy
- developing a Marine Sector Association
- supporting agriculture and promoting quality local produce
- developing the environmental economy
- supporting new types of manufacturing
- supporting the local supply chain
- expanding and widening the appeal of the evening and night time economy
- developing the social economy in areas experiencing employment, skills/training, and income deprivation.

Core Strategy: Dawlish

Core Strategy Policy CS14 sets out the Council’s vision of “urban rejuvenation” for Dawlish:



Dawlish from the station



- a quality tourism destination, with a wider range of accommodation and improved facilities and customer care, flourishing as an all-year-round centre for culture, sport, leisure and relaxation
- tourism strongly linked to coast and countryside; a specialist tourist destination, a centre for health, fitness and outdoor land and water based activities
- a distinctive, quality place for retail and leisure, clawing back residents’ expenditure from other centres, increasing choice, and meeting residents’ needs locally
- better open spaces and built heritage
- better access to local employment, training, services and housing to create a more self-contained community
- long term maintenance of flood defences
- a more accessible and connected town.

The *Core Strategy* states that TDC “has had full regard for the Community Trust’s vision and emerging Strategic Action Plan for Dawlish in developing the vision, objectives and strategic framework set out in Policy CS14.” The work of the Trust over the past few years has played a key role in setting the agenda for Dawlish.

Policy CS15 proposes a new 2,000m² supermarket (comprising 1,500m² convenience floorspace and 500m² “highstreet” comparison goods floorspace) as well as a



further 800m² of “high street” comparison goods floorspace and 400m² of additional comparison floorspace in local shops. These recommendations reflect the findings of the *Teignbridge Retail Study 2006*.

There is an unresolved tension between the *Core Strategy’s* aspirations for a 2,000m² supermarket in Dawlish and the stated policy preference for directing new retail development to town centres. The *Retail Study* suggests that the only available site in the town centre is at Barton Hill, which would not be capable of accommodating a supermarket of that size without having a negative impact on town centre traffic and parking. In preparing this report we have been aware of interest among supermarket operators in opening a store in Dawlish and (without taking a view on the desirability of such a decision, which would be beyond our terms of reference) we have assumed that a new store would have to be on a site outside the town centre¹. The implications are discussed in more detail in Section 5.

Finally, Policy CS15 allocates 910 new homes in Dawlish to 2016, some of which are already being built. The resulting increase in population will help provide bigger markets for Dawlish based businesses and should contribute to the *Core Strategy’s* objective of a more self-contained town centre.

However, recent history shows that population increase does not in itself guarantee benefits for local businesses. That will only happen if local traders can raise their game and provide goods and services that are attractive to local people and the residents of the wider catchment area.

3.5 Public service delivery *Devon Community Strategy*

The *Devon Community Strategy* has seven goals:

- homes for all: building for the future
- improving the life chances of children and young people
- protecting and improving our outstanding environment
- sustainable wealth creation
- making Devon an even safer place to live
- a county for everyone
- promoting a healthy and caring Devon.

There are no specific references to Dawlish or indeed any other settlements but the *Strategy* – and its forthcoming revision – is an important indicator of the themes that the town centre master plan and the Community Trust’s other projects need to target if they are to attract the support of the County Council.

Teignbridge Corporate Strategy

The District Council’s corporate strategy, as contained in the *Community Strategy* and *Corporate Plan*, outlines a vision for Teignbridge District which encompasses:

- access to housing, public services and public facilities
- meeting the needs of the local community
- fostering self-help for citizens and communities
- supporting existing and new businesses
- creating safe and secure environments
- caring for the environment.

To garner support and investment from the District Council and its partners, it is important that town centre regeneration proposals reflect these priorities.

3.6 Transport

The *Devon Local Transport Plan 2006-11* has a number of strategic objectives, which correspond closely with the objectives of the *Core Strategy*:

- tackling traffic congestion
- delivering accessibility
- making roads safer and reducing accidents
- improving air quality for the benefit of our communities

¹ Recent consultation exercises have been held in Dawlish by Tesco and Sainsbury’s, both predicated on the development of a store with a sales area of around 2,000m².

beach huts at Early's Wall



and centres.

- improving recreation, leisure and tourism
- promoting health and well-being
- improving public spaces.

Although transport is primarily a County Council responsibility, the District Council has prepared the *Teignbridge Car Parking Strategy 2005-11* in partnership with the County Council. With car parking already an issue in Dawlish town centre, the master plan will need to reflect the aspirations of the *Strategy*. The parking strategy covers:

- parking control on strategic routes
- creation of parking zones in town centres
- residents' parking areas
- disabled parking
- deliveries, lorry, motor home and coach parking
- park and ride/ park and walk
- development control
- enforcement and decriminalisation.

3.7 Culture

The District Council's *Teignbridge Cultural Strategy 2003-08* recognises the importance of culture, and also the changing context for Teignbridge – particularly the changing nature of the population, greater ethnic diversity and the increasing importance of Exeter and Plymouth.



The *Cultural Strategy* notes that these changes are giving rise to a number of challenges – such as conserving what is good and responding to increased demand for diversity and quality. The policy response includes an objective of developing the cultural economy by establishing “Cultural Zones” in town centres; although Teignmouth is cited as having obvious potential, the *Cultural Strategy* does recommend that the creation of cultural quarters in towns like Dawlish should be investigated too.

3.8 Conclusions

This review has identified a number of key messages for the town centre master plan:

- The master plan should reflect the wider aspirations of the *Community Strategic Plan* as far as possible.
- The approach taken by the Community Trust in the *Community Strategic Plan* fits very well with the strategic policy context for land-use planning, economic development, tourism, culture and public service delivery. Indeed, the District Council’s draft *Core Strategy* references the work of the Trust.
- Exeter is expected to be the focus of significant growth over the coming twenty years. Dawlish’s accessibility to Exeter and its physical assets mean that it should position itself to benefit from that economic growth,

and develop a distinctive role within the sub-regional economy.

- The development proposals outlined for Dawlish in the draft *Core Strategy* propose a substantial number of new houses, which will create opportunities for town centre businesses.
- There is an unresolved tension between the *Core Strategy*’s aspirations of developing a 2,000m² supermarket in Dawlish and directing new retail development to the town centre.
- Dawlish experiences high levels of retail expenditure leakage to Exeter and Newton Abbot. Dawlish retains only low levels of convenience shopping. The master plan needs to consider how more shoppers can be encouraged to shop in Dawlish town centre, especially if a new supermarket is established in an out

of town location.

- The town centre master plan will need to reflect the framework for parking proposed in the *Teignbridge Car Parking Strategy*.

