



TOTNES

Conservation Area Management Plan

Adopted February 2007



South Hams
District Council

TOTNES CONSERVATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN.

This Management Plan forms a complementary document to the Totnes Conservation Area Character Appraisal. While the latter defines and evaluates the special interest of the conservation area, the Management Plan identifies the issues for its future development and enhancement. The overarching planning policies for the area are included in the adopted South Hams Local Plan (1996), the deposit draft Local Plan Review and the draft Local Development Framework documents. The plan also takes account of the wider global, national and regional picture. It also draws on local work carried out in the preparation of the Totnes Community Plan, and by ***Bridgetown Alive!*** and ***Design Our Space***; these initiatives have been community driven, and are notable for their inclusive vision.

Using the Totnes Conservation Area Character Appraisal as a basis, the Management Plan identifies those areas or features which could benefit from enhancement, where development is expected to take place, where special policies may be required, or where enforcement is appropriate. The table at the back sets out a programme for action.

TOTNES CONSERVATION AREA: SWOT ANALYSIS.

As part of the preparation of this document and through the public consultation process, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been identified for the Totnes conservation area. These have been used as guidance for the Management Plan.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationally important historic town with intact medieval form. • Diverse community • Wealth of historic buildings • Large variety of diverse shops and small businesses • River Dart; Vire Island; landscape setting. • Repairs and enhancements already carried out under CAP scheme. • Busy , well-attended markets • Range of active, constituted community organisations 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict between traffic and pedestrians • Poor maintenance of buildings • Lack of businesses in Bridgetown • Narrow pavements • Retail and tourist signage • Poor quality of public spaces at the Market Square, Civic Hall ad Rotherfold • Bottleneck on A385 leading to rat-running through town
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve pedestrian access • Signage guide for Listed buildings and conservation area • Raise profile of conservation area in the media and at schools etc • Reduce the vehicular/pedestrian conflict. • Rationalisation of signage and public realm. • More litter bins 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of investment in properties • Traffic Congestion • Lack of finance • Anti-social behaviour • Litter • Imbalance between service and retail outlets. • Size of lorries delivering to Fore Street and High Street.

2. AREAS WITH SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Totnes is a well-conserved town and no obvious eyesores in the conservation area seriously detract from its character. Yet, there are areas which would benefit from enhancement, preservation or redevelopment.

- **Traffic Management and Public Realm.**

The most obvious problem throughout the Totnes conservation area is the conflict between traffic and pedestrians. Closely linked to this is the mediocre quality of the public realm. Furthermore, it is related to the problem of congestion on the A385, which leads to rat-running through the town. The adopted Local Plan (policy TP4) and the Local Plan Review propose a pedestrian priority scheme in Fore Street and High Street. This proposal has been the subject of several initiatives. In 2002 an exhibition and consultation were held for traffic management and enhancement proposals in Totnes town centre. This identified the main issues in the area – conflict between vehicles and pedestrians; illegal parking; rat running; vehicle damage to historic buildings and inadequate or non-existent footways. A majority of the public expressed support for the proposal and work started on the first phase of the approved scheme at the beginning of 2007.

Bridgetown also has a serious conflict between traffic and its residential use, as well as a down-at-heel public realm.

The community action group ***Bridgetown Alive!*** was set up in 2002 and has already initiated some public realm improvements. The briefing report Vision for Bridgetown prepared in late 2004 identifies a number of problems in this area of the town and makes proposals to alleviate traffic problems and enhance the public realm. The report includes a framework for bringing its proposals forward.

All the issues identified in the consultation mentioned above have major implications for the amenity, historic fabric and economic success of the town. Although there have been many recent initiatives identifying solutions to these problems, lack of funding is the major impediment to their realisation. There should continue to be a partnership approach with local strategy groups, the Town, District and County Councils and CABE in bringing forward this issue and identifying sources of funding.

- **Market Square and The Rotherfold**

The Civic Hall is now nearing 50 years old and is in need of major investment and a reconsideration of its future. The area behind the Civic Hall, crossing South Street to the large car park south of it has a somewhat unresolved feel to it. Historically, the Market tavern stood on the north side of South Street on the site of the small car park immediately south of the Civic Hall; otherwise, none of this area was developed. There have been various informal redesign proposals for the Market Square; some

on a small scale, others involving major redevelopment. Given that this is the centre of Totnes, community involvement in developing a strategy should continue and be extended to include a wider partnership approach.

There has been considerable discussion about the future of the Rotherfold at the top end of High Street including the 'Rotherfold Design Day' in 2003. The almshouses that occupied the south side of the square were demolished in the 1960s and the area now comprises informal seating and trees. Yet, with its current arrangement the square continues to feel unresolved. Although proposals to redevelop the site were rejected, the process of deciding how to use the area should continue.

Work should continue to develop a unified strategy for the Market Square and the Rotherfold in order that these crucial areas can be regenerated.

- **The Lamb**

This historic area is currently defined by car parks on the south side and is dominated by traffic, which bisects Leechwell Street. As The Lamb forms part of the link road and is a vital link to town centre car parks, the chances of reducing the traffic flow may be remote; however, the proposed Southern Area housing development has been designed with a view to improving the environment and public realm in this area.

- **Collins Road Warehouses**

The area surrounding these buildings at risk has become scruffy and untended. They have planning permission for conversion to dwellings and employment use and a start is expected in 2007.

3. NEW DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

Given the high density of protected historic buildings in the conservation area and the lack of open spaces available for development, opportunities for new infill development present themselves only rarely and these can only be considered for development where they comply with planning policies and would not be detrimental to the historic environment. Where this is the case, the design and quality of construction will always need to be of the very highest order in accordance with central Government guidance and the SHDC publication **New Work in Conservation Areas**. This requirement should equally apply within the 50m buffer zone and prominent sites where views into or out of the conservation area are affected. The appropriateness of new development will always need to be looked at in detail, taking into account the history of the site, the character of surrounding buildings and its contribution to the townscape. These issues are best explored as and when proposals for development arise rather than providing detailed information in this document.

A large area to the south of Totnes town centre is currently subject to a package of proposals for its development and enhancement put together by the ***Design our Space*** Community Group. The Council has an important role to play as landowner and planning authority. This area falls partly within the conservation area and its buffer zone. The designs approved for this area have arisen as a result of extensive public involvement from the start through the organisation *Design Our Space*. As well as ensuring that the people of the town have played an important part in the development, this provides an outstandingly useful model of public involvement for future projects.

4. BUILDINGS AT RISK

Because of the antiquity, complexity and outstanding historic importance of the greater part of the conservation area, it is difficult to assess fully the level of risk its buildings are exposed to. The last survey in the town was carried out over ten years ago and identified four *Buildings at Risk*: 20, 25 and 39 High Street and the Warehouses north of Alpha Terrace. Since that time, there has been a Conservation Area Partnership (CAP) scheme in Totnes where funding was offered toward the repair of historic fabric of a number of buildings in the town and 20 High Street was repaired comprehensively through that scheme. The warehouses have had planning permission for conversion to residential use since 1994 but continue to be vacant. 39 High Street (Grade II*) with its nationally important, ornate 16th century plaster

ceilings continues to be empty, though deterioration has not been as pronounced as was feared; subject to resource availability, the Council will continue to do all in its power to ensure the building's preservation. The Council is currently carrying out a review of the Buildings at Risk Survey.

5. ENFORCEMENT

The buildings of the town centre have suffered to some extent from inappropriate alterations, carried out without the required planning consent. This is especially true of shop signs. In some cases the works have gained immunity due to the length of time they have been there; otherwise, enforcement action can be taken to undo them.

6. SIGNAGE

The amount, size and design of all kinds of signs can seriously affect the character of a conservation area. Although most commercial signage is covered by existing planning controls, other signs such as road and parking directions are not. The Council is contributing to the Comprehensive signage and interpretation scheme being led by Totnes Town Council

Through the planning control system, the Council will ensure that commercial signage is appropriate to the historic character of Totnes. A partnership approach will be followed with Devon County Council to ensure that road signage is kept to a minimum and as sympathetic as possible in design.

7. ARTICLE 4(2) DIRECTION

Only a small additional range of works is brought under planning control within a conservation area compared with an undesignated area. These do not include the replacement of doors and windows or roofing materials, which remains permitted development on unlisted buildings in single residential use. Many historic settlements have been significantly altered by the replacement of these using inappropriate styles and materials and this cumulative erosion of typical and historic features is usually the greatest threat to the character of a conservation area.

Article 4(2) Directions enable the local planning authority to remove certain permitted development rights in order to protect all or part of the conservation area from unsympathetic change. This would mean, for example, that the replacement of windows and doors on all residential buildings in the conservation area would require planning permission (though no fee would be payable).

The character of the conservation area of Totnes has partly been immune to the kind of erosion described above due to the fact that most buildings in the conservation area are either listed, in commercial use, in multiple occupancy or have had permitted development rights removed already. In all these cases, nearly all alterations fall under planning control. However, because of the enormous architectural and historic

importance of the town, there would be a benefit in extending that control over the remaining, unlisted residential buildings. As there would be workload implications for the Planning Department with no financial benefit from fees, the Council will carry out a value for money assessment before considering imposing an Article 4.2 Direction.

8. PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

Despite the high profile of the historic environment in Totnes, there continues to be a lack of awareness amongst owners and users of its buildings. Both the District and Town Councils are determined to improve this situation.

In order to raise awareness among businesses, residents and owners, an information pack, explaining the implications of a building being listed and/or in a conservation area, is being prepared as a joint initiative between the Town and District Councils. These will be supplied to estate agents for presentation on sale or lease of properties affected.

9. CHANGES TO THE CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY

The boundary of the existing conservation area was drawn fairly tightly around the historic core, and mainly corresponds to the extent of the town at the time the railway arrived in the mid-19th century. Following a review of the boundaries, it is proposed that, in addition to minor changes, the following

significant areas be added to the conservation area (see plan 1):

1. Triangular area of marshland bounded by Rowsells Lane in the south, the river Dart in west and the A385 in the north east. This is an important area of natural green space on the edge of the town.
2. Mount View Terrace, buildings on south side of South Street, Heath's Nursery car park, The Nursery car park and then Little Garden. This area is very prominent yet very close to the historic core of the town. It also comprises part of the southern area proposed for housing development.
3. Western Terrace. An attractive group of Victorian houses forming part of the setting of Totnes Castle.
4. 9-11 North Street and car park. Historically interesting area likely to have lain within the boundary of the Saxon Burh.
5. Conservative Club, converted outbuilding and pine tree at Station Road. An important tree, prominent and

attractive buildings at one of the gateways to town centre.

10. SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CONSERVATION AREA

In many ways, the town of Totnes provides a model of a sustainable settlement with a thriving mix of uses that can minimise long-distance traffic movements. Being a progressive community, it can continue to be a role model in the district for sustainable development.

Although sometimes there is perceived to be a conflict between historic and environmental conservation (for example, the difficulty of achieving adequate insulation standards in historic buildings), it is usually possible to find a solution where the two fields can be reconciled. The Council's Conservation team will always be happy to provide advice on this.

11. ACTION PROGRAMME

Strategic Objective	Expected Outcomes	Actions	Accountable Officer	Resources	Start date	Target date	Links to other strategies
CP3 Maintain the district's distinctive environment whilst enabling access and sensitive development	Carry out public consultation for Conservation Area Appraisal	Adverts in press Exhibition at Guildhall and SHDC Offices	NW	Conservation service staff time.	February 2006	Complete	
		Prepare final draft based on comments	NW		June 2006	Dec 2006	
	Adopt Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	Take final draft to full Council meeting.	NW	Conservation service staff time.	March 07	March 07	
	Provision of Conservation Area Guidance	Prepare guidance leaflet and distribute to all owners and users of buildings in conservation area in partnership with TTC	TTC	TTC funded	May 06	March 07	
	Up-date Buildings at risk register	Re-visit all buildings on B.A.R. register in Totnes conservation area.	NW	Conservation service staff time.	Jan 06	Complete	

		Adopt any changes and notify affected owners	NW	Conservation service staff time.	Dec 06	June 07	
	Public Space Strategy	District wide draft Public Space Strategy under preparation	RK	Staff time	Nov 2006	June 07	
	Pedestrian signage Strategy	Make contribution to initial audit of signage in the conservation area being led by Totnes Town Council	RK	Staff time; partnership funding from Life into Landscapes		March 07	
		Comprehensive signage and interpretation scheme being led by Totnes Town Council	RK	Staff time		Dec 2006	
	Rotherfold	Staff input in the case of major redevelopment proposal,			On-going		
	Civic Square	Provide advice to working group established by Totnes Town Council	RK	Staff time	On-going		
		Contribute funding towards minor amenity improvements	RK	Staff time; existing budgets	March 07	June 07	

	Strategy for traffic management and enhancement (Fore Street-High Street)	Investigate and identify potential further sources of funding to continue improvements in conjunction with relevant stakeholders or agencies	GH	Staff time		Dependent on findings of working groups	
	Strategy for traffic management and enhancement (Bridgetown)	Investigate and identify potential sources of funding to carry out works in conjunction with relevant stakeholders or agencies	GH	Staff time		Dependent on findings of working groups	
	Article 4.2 Direction	Internal discussions about its implications and strategy for serving it.	SM	Staff time	March 2007	September 2007	
	Enforcement	Continued vigilance of unauthorised works in the conservation area		Staff time	Ongoing		