

10 - Town Centre, Heritage and Culture

Protect and enhance our historic built environment whilst broadening the appeal of the town and its cultural activity

Introduction

10.1 Our Neighbourhood Plan policies are intended to facilitate a continuous process of improvement to the historic core of the town of Cullompton to ensure it continues to serve as the centre of community life by meeting ever changing needs and demands whilst protecting and enhancing its special character and the heritage that it represents. We wish to ensure the historic buildings and spaces, some of which are currently 'at risk'¹, continue to play a worthwhile role in the life of the town.

Aims and Objectives

10.2 The following aims and objectives relating to Cullompton town centre and the area's rich heritage and culture have emerged following a programme of community consultation. They have been used to help formulate the neighbourhood plan policies and inform a programme of other community actions.

Heritage Assets

10.3 We want to ensure that our heritage is recognised and respected. 91% of respondents to the Community Survey 2014 told us we must protect old buildings and heritage. Our heritage assets are important to us for historical, cultural, urban design and 'sense of place' reasons. They help define what Cullompton, a proper Devon town, is all about. We would like to ensure they can continue to play a significant role in the life of the town. We want to ensure that uses are commensurate with the building's heritage.

10.4 The NPPF (para. 185) says "plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.". Local Plan Policy S1 recognises the need to conserve and enhance the historic environment through the identification and protection of both designated and non-designated heritage assets. Local Plan

Policy DM25 sets out more detailed policy in the interest of protecting the heritage assets.

10.5 Policy TC01 emphasises the importance with which local heritage assets are regarded, by recognising the Mid Devon Register of Heritage Assets.

10.6 Mid Devon District Council has established a local Register of Heritage Assets², which includes several locations, buildings and structure in the Cullompton area that were identified in the Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal³. These include areas such as Queen Square and Higher Bull Ring and features such as pillar boxes, red telephone boxes and the seat and lean-to shelter at Trots Alms-houses.

10.7 The Town Council may, from time to time, propose additional heritage features in the parish area for inclusion on the Register. We expect any development in the vicinity of a locally registered heritage asset to have a positive impact on the asset and local heritage

Policy TC01 Heritage Assets

Development will be supported that maintains or enhances the character and setting of a heritage asset.

Development proposals that affect a building or structure on the Register of Heritage Assets must demonstrate how they protect or enhance the heritage asset. Any renovations or alterations of buildings or structures identified on the Register of Heritage Assets requiring planning permission should be designed sensitively, and with careful regard to the heritage asset's historical and architectural interest and setting.

¹ According to Devon County Council in its Reg.14 Consultation response, these "include The Manor House Hotel, the Roman forts on St Andrews Hill and also the Cullompton Conservation Area"

² Register of Heritage Assets: Local List East, Mid Devon District Council, Jan 15 <https://new.mid-devon.gov.uk/media/.../east-area-heritage-assets-part-1.pdf>

³ Conservation Area Appraisal, Mid Devon District Council, 2009 https://new.middevon.gov.uk/media/114976/cullompton_conservation_appraisal_revised_2009.pdf

and adhere to Local Plan Policy DM25, which requires applicants to provide a description of the significance of the heritage asset and/or its setting. We would expect a Heritage Impact Assessment to be presented in situations where development could directly affect a registered local heritage asset.



Character of the Built Environment

10.8 We want Cullompton to remain an attractive market town. We want to retain the essential character and appearance of Cullompton’s built environment, which is epitomised by the variety of styles and forms on show. Adding new development to this mix is a design challenge that should not be taken lightly. We want development to complement and enhance its setting. Yet, as Cullompton Community Centre and our new Library, ‘the Hayridge’, have shown, there is ‘room’ for new forms of architecture and building. However, we do expect new buildings to fit in; to make use of local materials; and contribute positively to the character of the built environment.

10.9 The NPPF (para. 125) says that neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development. The NPPF (para. 130) places great emphasis on the significance of good design and goes as far as saying “permission should

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Planning Aims	Planning Objectives
Protect and enhance our historical environment and heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restore and enhance High St/Fore St buildings Facilitate the proper use of heritage buildings Restore Cullompton cinema for community use
Make the town centre more pedestrian friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce traffic in town centre Improve and control parking in town centre
Increase connectivity between areas of the town and beyond via network of footpaths and cycle routes	Improve walking, cycling and mobility scooter routes in and around town centre
Improve the quality and appeal of the public realm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide shared surfaces in suitable locations town centre Define and enhance town squares Install creative public art installations
Support a co-ordinated arts/culture agenda	Develop Cullompton as a cultural hub
Encourage arts projects	Develop an open art house bistro/gallery in the town
Protect the town centre’s retail function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support new retail business in the town centre Seek other activities that could be enhance the town centre and attract footfall
Develop the town centre’s evening economy and facilities, to cater for all ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage diversity of evening entertainment provision to attract all groups Explore the potential for a multi-use entertainment complex Encourage businesses to take a flexible approach to opening hours

be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.”

10.10 The NPPF (para. 127) want us to ensure developments “are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment”. Local Plan Policy H1 calls for design that respects local character, heritage, surroundings and materials. Local Plan Policies DM12 and DM14 acknowledge the need for new development proposals to take into account physical context, local character, density and land use mix and, in the town centre, retain or enhance the town centre’s historic character and appearance, vitality and viability. The Conservation Area Management Plan recognises that the town has a historic core which contains “a number of high grade listed buildings, several traditional pubs, cafes, a variety of small independent shops as well a monthly farmers’ market and a weekly indoor market. There have been several small-scale enhancement schemes in the central area... Despite this the town centre generally lacks vitality and is not an attractive environment.” The purpose of the Management Plan is to set development and design standards and stimulate better design within the Conservation Area.

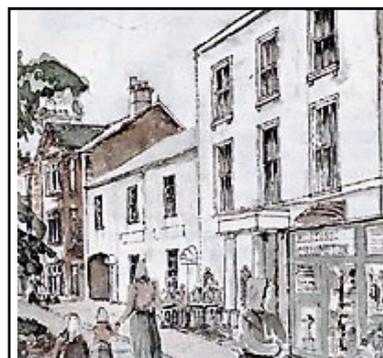
10.11 Policy TC02 is our opportunity to endorse the Conservation Area Management Plan and put in place a locally relevant policy that reflects how local people have regard for the variety of types and styles that co-exist in Cullompton. A sensitive, yet imaginative, design approach to new development is required, especially in the town centre, that will produce a contemporary, high-quality development of merit, whilst adding to and complementing the variety and diversity that makes up the unique character of the built environment of Cullompton.

10.12 Within the Conservation Area this means “new buildings including those of contemporary design should reflect the scale, massing, height, spacing, materials and colour palette of the conservation area. Extensions and alterations to existing buildings should follow the scale, proportions, detailing and materials characteristic of the property type. Works of maintenance, repair or replacement in the public realm should comply with an agreed palette of materials, colours and textures”⁴.

10.13 Outside the Conservation Area it means, for major development schemes, ensuring that design policies reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation



4 Conservation Area Management Plan for Cullompton, Mid Devon District Council, 2009 <https://new.middevon.gov.uk/media/114972/cullompton-conservation-area-management-plan-combined.pdf>



of the area's defining characteristics. The NPPF (para. 125) says "design policies should be developed with local communities". The Town Council will be happy to facilitate community engagement with the local planning authority and design experts to develop appropriate design guidance that will achieve: a harmony of design to ensure development fits in with the overall form and layout of its surroundings; an enhancement of the local character; promotes high levels of sustainability; and helps raise the standard of design more generally in an area, whilst not preventing diversity nor stifling innovation. Development proposals in or within the setting of the Conservation Area should demonstrate how they have taken the Cullompton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan into account.

Pedestrian Priority in the Town Centre

10.14 The congestion and nuisance from traffic traversing the town centre is substantial. It is made even worse whenever the M5 is blocked and/or closed. We want to reduce the congestion in Cullompton town centre. We should improve the town centre for pedestrians. The community has told us that no longer should the town centre be dominated by the motor vehicle, not least because of the effect it has on air quality. We want to improve air quality⁵. We have to reduce the volume of traffic using the town centre.

10.15 The Town Council aspires to see Fore Street become one-way from the Manor Hotel to the Library (the Hayridge), with short-term parking on one side of the road. Any measures that can help bring this about, which get the support of the community, will be welcomed. 80% of respondents to the consultation survey in the winter of 2016 supported the proposal to further pedestrian priority in the town centre.

10.16 The NPPF (para. 106) says in town centres we should "promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists". Local Plan Policy S7 supports positive measures in the town centre including traffic management. Local Plan Policy S11 guides high quality development and other investment to support the implementation of the Cullompton Air Quality Action Plan including the construction of new highway links to relieve the town centre and enhanced walking and cycling opportunities around the town. Policy TC03 is aimed at facilitating a pedestrian-friendly town centre and supports measures that deter through traffic.

Policy TC02 Character of the Built Environment

Development should contribute positively to the character of the built environment in its locality by:

- i. demonstrating an understanding of the diverse qualities that contribute to this character; and
- ii. reinforcing local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place.

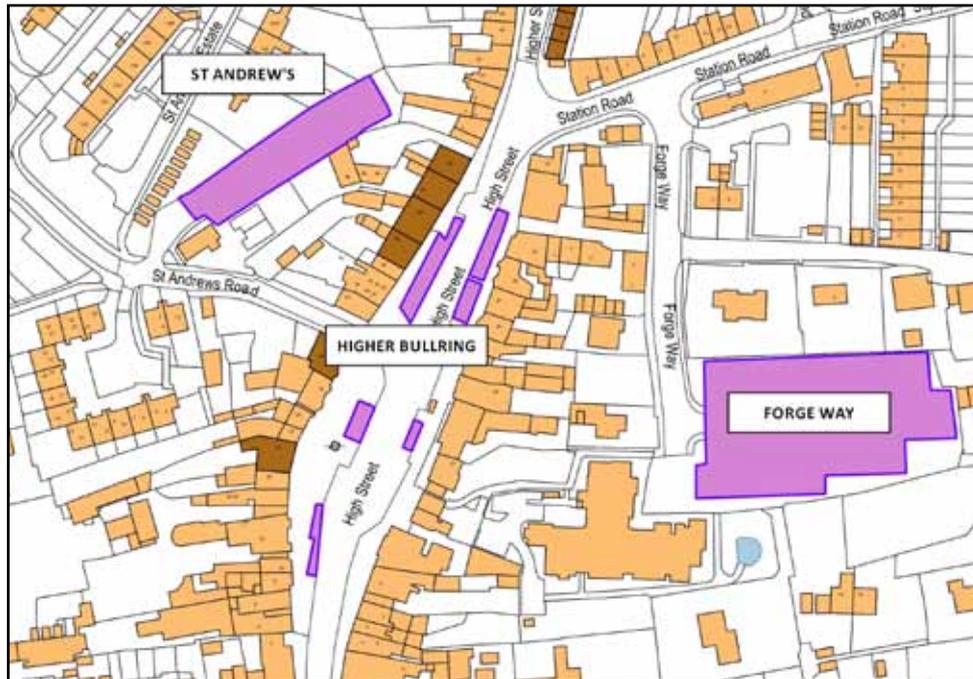


Policy TC03 Pedestrian Priority in the Town Centre

Design and highways proposals intended to reduce through traffic on Fore Street and High Street and make the town centre more pedestrian-friendly will be supported.

⁵ Cullompton has been subject of an Air Quality Management Area Order since December 2006 <https://new.middevon.gov.uk/media/103608/cullompton-air-quality-action-plan-2009.pdf>

Map 6: Parking Areas referred to in Policy TC04



Service Arrangements in the Town Centre

10.17 94% of respondents to the Community Survey 2014 told us we need a town centre with a strong retail function. In the interests of ensuring the town centre can continue to function as a retail centre, the Town Council would like to improve and simplify planning for retail businesses within the core of the town. It has long been recognised that servicing arrangements for town centre businesses needs improvement. The lack of specific servicing arrangements to most town centre businesses is a significant contributor to the traffic congestion we suffer from.

10.18 The NPPF (para. 85) requires us to “support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation”. We want to see servicing made easier and not detrimental to the businesses in the town centre. The issue was highlighted with the closure of the Tiverton Road junction in 2015 due to repair work being carried out at the Manor House Hotel. During this period, restricted hours for loading and unloading was introduced along the length of Fore Street until the Tiverton Road junction was reopened. These temporary restrictions showed how much better Fore Street functions when servicing is

controlled.

10.19 The current use of land in front of the Hayridge as a public car park has also demonstrated the value of additional car parking space in and around the town centre. 95% of respondents to the consultation survey in the winter of 2016 supported the proposal to safeguard existing town centre car parks. The NPPF (para. 106) states “In town centres, local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure”.

10.20 Policy TC04 is supportive of development proposals that would result in the provision of better servicing and customer parking arrangements in the interests of relieving congestion and obstruction on roads in and around the town centre. To that end, we have also cited the three areas of public parking that are owned by public authorities. These areas we recognise as important community assets that are used by town centre users and help keep parked cars off the road.



Policy TC04 Service Arrangements in the Town Centre

Development proposals to improve servicing arrangements and/or increase customer parking to business premises in the town centre and thereby reduce congestion on nearby roads will be supported.

The St Andrews, Forge Way and Higher Bull Ring car parking areas (as defined on map 6) are important assets to the local community and are essential to the functionality of the town centre. Their use for car parking will be safeguarded and their capacity maintained unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer needed or suitable alternative provision is made.



development and recognises the value of visually attractive places and the components that contribute toward this.

10.24 We want to encourage and accommodate innovative public art and design whether temporary or permanent, wherever appropriate throughout the town. In this way, we hope to stimulate a greater interest in community arts and culture, increase 'community pride' in the town and enhance the overall impression left on visitors. 80% of respondents to the Community Survey 2014 felt we needed to develop the town's tourism appeal.

10.25 Policy TC05 makes the quality of the public realm the subject of the policy and recognises how we can reinforce the character and vitality of the public realm and spaces through the introduction of innovative design and high-quality public art features.

Policy TC05 Art in the Public Realm

Proposals to introduce innovative public art which enliven and add positively to the character of the public realm and which facilitate or encourage greater community.

Cultural and Leisure Facilities in the Town Centre

10.26 We want to strengthen and broaden the role of the town centre. The Town Council would like to attract new businesses and new shops and promote tourism/leisure. We want to encourage town centre-based arts and cultural activity. We want to make better use of buildings and spaces in the town centre for community purposes. We want to bring redundant buildings back in to use.

Art in the Public Realm

10.21 Cullompton needs a more positive image that engenders local pride and helps attracts inward investment. To these ends, further town centre environmental improvements would be welcomed. The NPPF (para. 127) says "planning policies and decisions should ensure developments establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit". In support of the positive impact that innovation in design can have it also states (para. 131) "great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which help raise the standard of design more generally in the area".

10.22 Along with restoring and improving buildings and making the town centre more pedestrian-friendlier, we want to make visiting the town centre a more appealing and stimulating experience. We want to improve the quality of the public realm and welcome public art that has relevance and reinforces the character and individuality of public areas. Public art is art in any media that has been planned and executed with the intention of being staged in the public domain, usually outside and accessible to all. We have seen what can be achieved by recent installations such as the cemetery gates, designed by local students; the sheep noticeboards; and the mural at Station Road.

10.23 Local Plan Policy DM1 applies to new

91% of respondents to the consultation survey in the winter of 2016 supported the proposal to improve and increase the cultural and leisure facilities in Cullompton town centre. A cinema and swimming pool were high on the 'wish-list' of new facilities that were wanted by the pupils of Cullompton Community College when they were surveyed in 2014.

10.27 The NPPF (para. 92) says we should "plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities". Local Plan Policy DM14 promotes the sustainable growth and regeneration of Cullompton through the support of development proposals for retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development where they retain or enhance the town centre's historic character and appearance, vitality and viability. Local Plan Policy DM23 supports proposals for the redevelopment of existing community facilities that enables them to modernise, remain viable and continue to be retained for the benefit of the community will be supported.

10.28 Policy TC06 encourages the conversion of redundant buildings and spaces in the town centre specifically for leisure and cultural purposes.

Policy TC06 Cultural and Leisure Facilities in the Town Centre

Proposals that increase the provision of cultural and leisure facilities in the town centre through the conversion and/or better use of redundant.

Former Cullompton Cinema

10.29 The town lacks breadth in social/leisure facilities and opportunities. The town centre has an important role to play in community life and we also want to develop the town's tourism appeal and offer.

10.30 Local Plan Policy S7 is supportive of positive measures of enhancement and regeneration. Local Plan Policy DM14 promotes the sustainable growth and regeneration of Cullompton and states that within the town

centre, development proposals for retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development will be supported where they retain or enhance the town centre's historic character and appearance, vitality and viability. Local Plan Policy DM22 supports proposals for new or expanded tourism, visitor or leisure facilities will be supported within the town centre.

10.31 It has been suggested at several local consultation events that the former Cullompton cinema building could still play a role in community life. The building situated at No.4 High Street, Cullompton is still remembered fondly for the role it used to play in community life. 86% of respondents to the consultation survey in the winter of 2016 supported the proposal to bring the former cinema back into community use. We would welcome proposals coming forward that could bring its use for community activity about once again; particularly if it helps encourage local arts and cultural activity and improves local leisure facilities and opportunities. Such a development would increase use and the appeal of the town centre.

10.32 Policy TC07 applies specifically to a former community asset that many believe still can play a part in community life if the opportunity arises.

Policy TC07 Former Cullompton Cinema

Proposals that enable the re-use of the former Cullompton Cinema building for community leisure and or cultural purposes would be supported.

Extending the Attraction of the Town Centre

10.33 The town centre is very important to us. We want to support the town centre economy and we want to strengthen the role of the town centre in community life and make it more appealing to visitors. We want to enable a wider range of community and social activity so as to extend the hours, particularly into the evening, when the town centre is a focus for community activity and events. The evening economy of the town centre should be broader and more family-

oriented. In doing this, there is also significant tourism potential that could be exploited. 98% of respondents to the consultation survey in the winter of 2016 supported proposals to provide more and better evening leisure and social facilities.

10.34 The NPPF (para. 85) says “planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation... and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries”. Local Plan Policy S7 seeks to promote positive measures of enhancement and regeneration to the town centre with new homes, shops, leisure, offices and other key town centre uses which are well designed and development of various forms of small start-up business units within the town area (as defined on map 2, page 14) as long they do not cause nuisance and conform to other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. contribute to vitality and viability. Local Plan Policy S11 guides high quality development and other investment in Cullompton to promote new homes, shops, leisure, offices and other key town centre uses which are well designed and contribute to vitality and viability. Local Plan Policy DM14 promotes the sustainable growth and regeneration of Cullompton through the support of development proposals for retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development where they retain or enhance the town centre’s historic character and appearance, vitality and viability.

10.35 Policy TC08 is made in the interests of encouraging more family leisure uses and developing the evening economy of the town centre in the interests of the whole community.

10.36 Cullompton Town Council is very concerned about the future of the High Street and town centre areas. The council feels that the town centre should remain the heart and pulse of the town and that new development should recognise this. Developers of major housing developments should

ensure their plans include easy and safe links to the town centre and its services and amenities.

Policy TC08

Extending the Attraction of the Town Centre

Proposals that help promote the development of a visitor and evening economy in the town centre are supported.

Improving the Town Centre Offer

10.37 We want to support the town centre economy and we want to strengthen the retail role of the town centre and make it more appealing to visitors. 80% of respondents to the Community Survey 2014 told us we need to develop the town’s tourism appeal. Retailing is part of that appeal and the role and attraction of the town centre would be increased by a broader range of retail outlets. Making use of the ‘side courts’ and introducing new forms of retailing would also provide opportunities for new retailers and other micro-businesses to get started, or just have a go. 85% of respondents to the consultation survey in the winter of 2016 supported the idea of making use of these by-ways to enliven the town centre and increase its commercial appeal.

10.38 The NPPF (para. 85) encourages us, in town centres, to “retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones”. This is echoed in Local Plan Policy S7 which advocates “positive measures



of enhancement and regeneration". Local Plan policy DM14 promotes the sustainable growth and regeneration of Cullompton through the support of development proposals for retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development where they retain or enhance the town centre's historic character and appearance, vitality and viability.

10.39 Policy TC09 seeks to take advantage of some of the 'character spaces' that exist in the town centre, e.g. the side courts, of which there are many. We seek to encourage additional and alternative types of services and facilities in appropriate locations that will contribute to its variety and enliven the town centre to help more users and visitors.

Policy TC09 **Improving the Town Centre Offer**

Proposals to provide small-scale retail units or stalls, tourist facilities, street cafes and visitor attractions in the side courts and other suitable spaces in Cullompton town centre will be supported provided they:

- are of an appropriate design and scale;
- are temporary in nature;
- do not restrict pedestrian or cycle passage;
- provide free passage for those with mobility impairment; and
- do not cause nuisance to neighbouring uses and nearby residential areas.