

‘Torquay – a destination in transition’

Vision: To be best in the West: a major, quality, all year round tourist destination based on coast, countryside, culture and cuisine

Torquay’s Tourism sector is acknowledged as requiring transition to a higher value, higher quality year round offering to improve the sustainability of the sector and provide one foundation of a secure and prosperous economy for Torquay. The following policies underpin this transition.

For clarity the term Council is deemed to mean Torbay Council, its Officers, the Torbay Development Agency, contractors and any Business Investment District.

Increase in the quality and sustainability of the accommodation sector

The foundation for the transition of Torquay to the ‘Best in the West’

- Council will conduct a thorough and on-going bed audit and research key accommodation data to support a managed rebalancing of the quantity and quality of bed spaces in each accommodation sector based on a professionally assessed market evaluation and predicted future (20 year) trends. Council will provide advice and guidance to Tourism businesses on the implications of the Audit
- The Transition will be managed through the delivery of the Local and Neighbourhood Plans within the framework of the Planning process whereby the bed audit and market evaluation will provide evidence for:
 - a reduction in areas of over supply or low quality or low spend value by a presumption in favour of a change of use to other high quality accommodation, or
 - an increase in those areas that support the Vision for our resort.
- Investment priorities must be concentrated in the Core Tourism Development Areas (see below)
- The Council will support and promote the investment in and development of quality, accessible and green tourism businesses
- There will be no HMO’s allowed in established Tourism areas
- The Council will persuade or use their power to serve Section 215 notices on landlords and owners of properties to improve maintenance and visual appearance in established Tourism areas
- The Planning process must protect the green open spaces within Torquay’s environment by restricting new holiday accommodation and tourism sites to existing or brownfield sites.

POLICY T1 There will be a presumption against any proposed development of tourism accommodation or new visitor attractions on a green field site unless it can be demonstrated that there are no alternative brown field sites suitable for purpose.

- Council policies will encourage tourism businesses to improve quality, trade all year round and provide quality jobs
- The Council will support the creation of an international hotel school to underpin the change to a high quality Tourism Sector.
- The Council will support good quality sustainable conference facilities to underpin with all year round tourism
- Key tourism and retail areas outside the CTIA’s and town centre will be well signposted

Concentrate tourism investment within Core Tourism Investment Areas (CTIA’s) to develop a vibrant, quality visitor experience

General

- Two CTIA's are created within the Local Plan:
 - the coastal strip from Livermead Cliff Hotel to the Imperial Hotel including the areas around Torre Abbey/ RICC, lower Belgrave Road and harbour, and
 - Babbacombe cliff and coastal strip.
- The first 10 years of this Plan is when most investment is required to transition the Tourism industry in Torquay. To achieve this, the Neighbourhood Plan requires the enhanced viability and sustainability of CTIA's

POLICY T2

The change of use for tourism properties outside the CTIA's will have a presumption in favour, provided:

- The business can be demonstrated to be unsustainable through evidence based on a viability assessment of the business and market sector operating environment in the foreseeable future, and
- Torbay Council cannot demonstrate a market sector demand based on the professional audit of the quality and quantity of all bed spaces in Torbay and an assessment of current and future market demand, and
- the new use supports an increase in the overall quality and value of the site and provides quality accommodation fit for purpose.

POLICY T3

To pursue a high quality offering, there must be no change of use within a CTIA to HMO, student or hostel type accommodation

Livermead to the Harbour

The primary CTIA for Torquay, and the main focus for investment to create and retain high quality, high value tourism based accommodation, cafes and restaurants to underpin the transition to a higher spending visitor base.

- The harbour area to have a focus on cafes, bars and restaurants creating a safe Mediterranean al fresco experience in the summer months with good quality public space all year round.
- Although in general key serviced accommodation businesses should be retained where possible it will be more important in the first 10 years of this Plan to improve the ambiance of the area by change of use to high quality, serviced apartments/unserved accommodation or other accommodation with a design sensitive to the heritage value of the area. This policy will be extended to the redevelopment of any redundant sites to improve visual appearance

POLICY T4

If it can be demonstrated that the current business is unviable within the operating environment, subject to Policy T2, then change of use to non-tourism accommodation will have a presumption in favour for the period to 2025.

- Beach and harbour side environment to be a key investment area for refurbishment and maintenance to provide a high quality visitor experience while retaining its heritage, scale and resort ambiance
- Provide e-information platform for visitors to access all information on Torquay at key points as technology improves
- Investment to improve maintenance of roads, pavements and the street scene from public and private sector investments.
- Move fairground activities to Paignton Green to allow Torre Abbey to become a green space for summer festivals and music events
- Develop national standard, good quality conference facilities to support all year round tourism and quality hotels
 - Ensure the current RICC facility is of high quality, fit for purpose and sustainable
 - Promote hotel accommodation to support delegate requirements
 - Redevelop RICC site to incorporate a top quality integrated conference centre and hotel

Babbacombe

A satellite resort and secondary CTIA with two distinct areas, the beach side and the green downs area with its Victorian buildings.

- The primary investment in new facilities will be encouraged on the beach front Cary Arms area and Oddicombe Beach areas where high quality strictly tourism based development should be allowed sympathetic to the areas
- Council policies will support the retention of a high quality protected green downs area with vibrant mix of quality Tourism businesses, restaurants and cafes located within the existing facades
- Although some hotel businesses will thrive, in general the tourism based accommodation offering to be allowed to shrink outside the front line cliff top properties by change of use where lack of business viability is demonstrated subject to Policies T2, T3 and T4.
- Any new development should be of a design sensitive to the heritage characteristics of the area.
- Due to level access to St Marychurch shops and services and regular public transport, the area could be a focus for retirement based accommodation

Integrate sports and water based activities into the tourism offer

The Council will develop improved harbour and beach side facilities to support a quality tourism area and develop regional and national standard sports facilities and water sports provision as an integral part of the broader Tourism offer and support the recently approved Cultural Strategy.

- access to the water easier for all users
- easier to store and launch small craft from beaches, harbours and piers
- maintain beaches and ensure investments in infrastructure support Blue Flag/Quality awards for all beaches and provide good quality fit for purpose beach fronts
- provide quality public toilets with extended opening and availability all year
- Redevelop Meadfoot west beach area in to high quality beach units and a quality restaurant

Develop Torquay as the cultural centre of the West with a broadened range of tourism infrastructure to diversify the visitor appeal

- Develop a range of quality all year round festivals based on coast and countryside, culture and cuisine linking to the objectives of the recently adopted Cultural Strategy and those submitted by Torbay Action for Art
- Develop Heritage, Literary, Geology and Arts Trails
- Develop walking and tour guides and bring to visitors' attention the 'hidden jewels' of Torbay.
- Establish a suitable site for a Torbay open air theatre
- Establish a Torbay Culture/Arts Centre on a suitable site
- Support investment in all year round, quality indoor attractions and a major national attraction of the calibre of the Eden Project
- Help businesses create packaged themed breaks and a resort tourist pass
- Create a dedicated Agatha Christie centre housed in a key building such as the Pavilion where her life and works are also celebrated with history and live performances
- Develop a festival/music/large event location on Torre Abbey green space
- Support the development of a quality retail offering through town centre regeneration as an integral part of Tourism offer by initiatives that bring together the Tourism and Retail sectors

Transition night-time economy to provide a quality harbour area to attract high spenders and visitors who use quality accommodation

- Support positive management of night time economy by retaining Purple Flag award
- Establish zero tolerance policing of antisocial behaviour/drunkenness
- Create a quality café/restaurant/bar/accommodation area around harbour with alfresco facilities
- Encourage relocation of clubs to distributed locations away from residential areas but integrated with the main tourism accommodation area
- Promote a dedicated entertainment complex with cinema/pubs/clubs/casino/retail integrated with the main tourism area
- Encourage continued investment in quality food & drink providers to encourage higher spend
- Introduce 20 mph speed limit and pedestrian friendly areas around the harbour to provide a safer environment

Create a coastal, transport gateway hub at Torquay train station for trains, coaches, buses, bikes, taxis and land train

- Train station, coach drop off/collection facilities, bus stop to link with main routes (and land train), taxi rank and cycle hire with link to wider cycle/foot path routes
- Sheddon Hill car park as coach park
- Ensure all routes are accessible
- Encourage development of existing railway buildings in to related uses
- Route in to hub via Rathmore/Falkland Road from Avenue Road (reverse current one way routes for this and Kings Drive for traffic out of town)
- Improve direct rail links working with the TDA & HOSWLEP to ensure continued investment
- Controlled crossings for pedestrian access
- Incorporate a mass transportation system linking key areas within Torquay and the rest of Torbay
- Encourage the linking of harbours along the South West coast with a coastal ferry service