

## Honiton Future Prosperity

This plan is about extending & strengthening the influence of Honiton people on Local Planning and Infrastructures supporting community living in the Honiton area up to 2040.

Honiton is a good town to invest in – not just money, but effort & commitment. It offers special opportunities because of its strategic position.

Surrounded by beautiful countryside, Honiton is the pre-eminent gateway to the South West. It's the most central town in East Devon, at the junction of four A-roads, with a mainline station in town and an international airport a few miles away. The World Heritage Coast and the South West Coast Path are within easy reach. It's renowned for its twice-weekly street market and abundant antique shops. It also has many thriving local Digital businesses locally and within 15 miles

Capitalising on strategic position, we believe investment in the social, economic and transport infrastructure of the Honiton area would unlock significant opportunities for progress & benefit to the overall market town area and well beyond.

The Honiton Parish covers 1,264 hectares. It has experienced rapid growth in the past 35 years, up from 5,000 people in 1971 to approximately 12,000 in 2008 and 15,500 in 2020

The Honiton town covers the Wards of St. Michael's and St.Pauls's but the market area it supports extends beyond the town to 16 other parishes, some being the least easily accessible areas in East Devon. Most are in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Honiton truly is a key town in the countryside, but easily accessible.

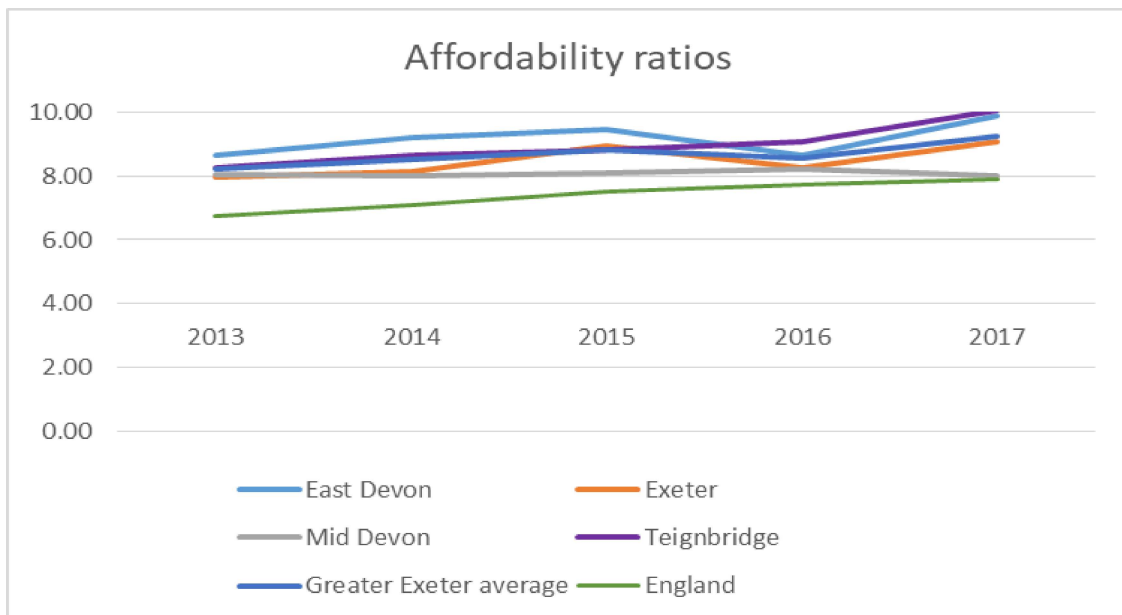
Since the 1970s the town's population has grown at a much greater rate than other East Devon towns; but services & facilities haven't grown to match. Most new community facilities are funded from 'planning gain' – resources negotiated from building developers (especially housing). So, not having the services and facilities to support much more new housing, or the space left to accommodate it, it's more difficult to access resources to enable the town to catch up. The original policy of refusing to expand to the West or the East needs reviewing as part of the Local Plan review by East Devon District Council

### Where do we work and where do we come from?

Of the many people who are in paid employment in Honiton and East Devon, the vast majority are born here or move here from other parts of the Southwest with others moving here mainly from the Southeast

Origin	Destination (% of moves to another local authority)				
	East Devon	Exeter	Mid Devon	Teignbridge	Total in Exeter HMA
East Devon	59%	7%	6%	3%	75%
Exeter	8%	50%	7%	6%	71%
Mid Devon	4%	3%	50%	2%	59%
Teignbridge	3%	4%	3%	53%	63%

However a steady rise in house prices and a relatively low local average income has seen the house-price balance shift adversely to between 10 and 11 times earnings



The result is that young people who want to live in Honiton must either find work elsewhere or must occupy social housing if they wish to leave home. This accounts for the expansion of the area from which people commute to Exeter as far as Axminster. This situation has also been affected by the development of the Science Park and other industrial areas close to Exeter airport

**Table 2: Commuting relationships between the GESP authority areas, 2011**

Origins	Destinations (% of work trips)				
	East Devon	Exeter	Mid Devon	Teignbridge	Total in Exeter HMA
East Devon	59.35	25.63	2.08	1.71	88.77
Exeter	8.59	77.70	3.09	3.86	93.24
Mid Devon	6.36	23.80	51.73	1.58	83.47
Teignbridge	3.23	20.39	0.89	53.77	78.28

### The links between Economics and Social life

It is essential that we expand a thriving economic environment in Honiton without which the town will just become a dormitory for Exeter and not be sustainable without extensive commuting. This runs counter to both the aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars, and the concerns people have to avoid close-packed commuting via trains and buses.

So this proposal looks at the rising and falling of business sectors locally in the adjoining County areas and takes account of the effects of the Exeter and East Devon Growth point including Science Park, Sky Park and Cranbrook developments as well as developments in

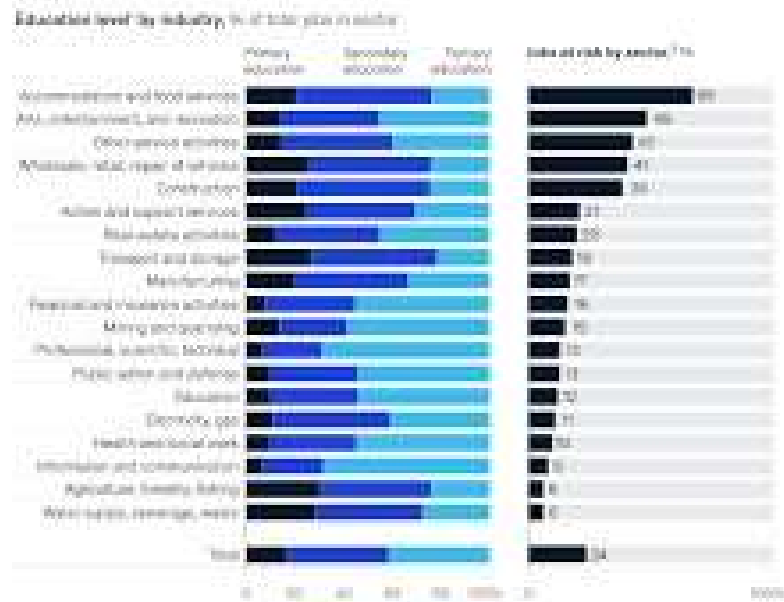
Axminster, Sidmouth and other local towns. It looks at growth in Yeovil and Taunton as other opportunities for our working population

### Jobs and homes of the future

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact upon the county, its businesses and its residents, with strong indications that the next 24 months may be amongst the most challenging economically in living memory for many areas.

Initial data for the Devon area suggests that around 60% of all businesses have been closed during the current lockdown phase, and around 55% of all those in work (both employed and self-employed) have been furloughed. Additionally, unemployment has increased by 180% in the three months to June 2020, with sharp increases in youth unemployment.

The most affected sectors tend to have a significantly lower share of employees with tertiary education.



Some 1 in 3 jobs are at risk with unemployment having risen to 5% and projected to reach 10% in 2021

Business confidence in the UK hit an all-time low in May 2020, outpacing concerns during World Wars and the 2008 Great recession. East Devon became one of the top 20 areas most hit with 31% of businesses at risk of failing

The picture of the emerging impact across Devon is however complex, changing from sector to sector and place to place. 92% of Devon businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector for example were disrupted by the crisis between March and June 2020, but only 5% of business in the digital sector faced the same level of disruption. The demise of Flybe and impact on air travel is reducing and already a new route between Exeter airport and Belfast has been established. The excellent Flybe training facilities have been acquired by Exeter College for a new technological skills training facility. £70 millions + of Government funding have been given to East Devon businesses and also to people in problems with housing and food

The CBI, speaking for the major Businesses in the UK recently said that Virtually every job in the UK will change in the next decade, some incrementally and some radically, with nine in ten workers set to need some form of reskilling by 2030. This is an issue that touches every business, sector and part of the country. One in 6 workers will experience radical job changes with the need for re-skilling. Since 80% of workers in 2030 are already in the workforce today, this puts adult learning at-work at the centre of the reskilling challenge

Significant numbers of jobs are projected to be displaced in each sector due to automation\*, including transport and storage (32%); manufacturing (28%); construction (25%) and financial services (22%); and the most pressing gaps will be in basic digital skills,

management skills, critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, and Science Technology English and Maths.

it is anticipated that the local impact of this economic downturn will vary greatly, from a 2-year dip and recovery period in Exeter, through to a 10% reduction and 5-year recovery journey for areas such as Mid Devon and Torridge. For some sectors, such as tourism and hospitality, the journey back to levels of income and employment experienced in 2019 may be the work of the next decade. The predicted impacts of leaving the EU at the end of the year on World Trade Organisation terms would further reduce our performance by 2% and added complexities for our economy

***The Key sectors of highest employment value and greatest potential around Honiton in East Devon***

***East Devon Employment numbers 44,000 in total:***

1. ***Public sector 10,500***
2. ***Wholesale/retail/transport, storage 11,500***
3. ***Accommodation and food 6,000***
4. ***Professional, scientific, I T 3,750***
5. ***Construction 3,500***
6. ***Business administration and Finance 3,200***
7. ***Manufacturing and quarrying 2,910***
8. ***Arts and entertainment 2,750***

**A study by Oxford Economics for HOTSWS showing the most productive sectors were:**

1. ***Public sector £60,000***
2. ***I T £60,000***
3. ***Business administration and Finance £58,000***
4. ***Manufacturing and quarrying £46,000***
5. ***Wholesale/retail/transport, storage £40,000***
6. ***Construction £40,000***
7. ***Professional, Scientific £35,000***
8. ***Accommodation and food £22,700***
9. ***Arts and entertainment £17.196***

Note this shows the Gross value added per employee per year

The plans put forward by Business leaders through Heart of the Southwest LEP and Devon County Council focus upon securing support and delivering relief in four core areas:

- **Our Places** – Ensuring that no place or community is left behind through the current crisis, whether our rural and coastal communities which provide the backbone of our visitor and agricultural economy, or our core city and market towns which underpin our manufacturing, health and digital expertise.
- **Our People** – Ensuring that our workforce and our residents are supported through the current downturn and provided with the support they need to access good quality work and learning, reinforcing both their prosperity and that of the wider economy.
- **Our Businesses** – Supporting our business community through the current crisis, and enabling it to emerge stronger, more diverse and more resilient than on entry. In

particular, seeking to reinforce our hardest hit sectors, such as Tourism and Retail, whilst still maximizing the impact of new growth opportunities for Devon.

- **Our Opportunities** – Ensuring that the County maximises the impact of emerging opportunities to drive recovery and set a renewed economic direction for the future, whether for our people, communities, business or whole economy.

In bringing forward this programme, partners within Devon are also mindful that recovery is likely to be an inconsistent journey, with a need for differing actions as the economic situation progresses and business and individuals needs change. As such, this plan splits its action into three core timeframes, which are:

- **Restart** – Focusing NOW on activity which can immediately seek to address the worst impacts of the COVID 19 crisis and support our economy as it emerges from lockdown, whether around reopening and reorienting business; supporting displaced employees; or providing initial assistance for places to reopen.
- **Regrow** – Seeking to bring forward actions which will allow business and communities to return to the status quo, addressing both economic challenges and supporting wider efforts to close the gap between Devon's economy and the wider UK. This includes efforts to modernise and diversify our business community, our workforce and our approach to our environment; improve our places and quality of life offer; and set the foundation for future growth.
- **Reset** – Actions to change and enhance the trajectory of Devon's economy, seeking to build on Devon's sector and business capabilities, workforce capacity and environmental strength to return economically bigger, better and bolder than when the crisis began.

### **But will there be a second wave in time for Brexit?**

Now that we know that those infected by Covid-19 do not necessarily show symptoms but are infecting others, it is pretty sure that there will be repeated waves of the virus until we have over 80% of the population vaccinated and/or immune. Added to this we have normal flu and cold infections during winter months masking the more serious Covid-19 symptoms. Therefore we can presume that for some time the social and economic effects of the pandemic will continue through the period that Brexit actually finalises.

***So we can be certain that massive changes will occur around us and affect our locality therefore we need all the actions discussed here to be considered***

## What are the jobs of the future?

Technological Engineering is creating the future:

Sensors and Imaging	Microsystems
Nanotechnology	Photonics, Imaging, Displays
Wireless technology	Energy and Data storage
New materials	Artificial Intelligence, Modelling and Simulation
Smart technologies	Power electronics
Advanced control	Superconductivity

These advances are leading to  
New Fabrics / Materials  
Green energy and climate change products and services  
Robotics  
Automation  
Time-saving devices and services  
Increasing personalisation for each individual's wishes  
Energy storage to drive electronic vehicles and home facilities  
Increased Safety and accuracy  
Miniaturisation  
High inter-group Communication

*And in turn this all needs to changes in education and the skills people need at work*

### **Economic land and workspace**

It seems so long ago but in 2006 the Atkins Employment Land Review (ELR) estimated that there was 600,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment floor space in the East Devon District, with 62,000m<sup>2</sup> in Honiton. This indicates that Honiton accounts for nearly 11% of the districts employment floor space.

However, this has now gone backwards. The Ottery Moor Industrial Estate had a total employment land supply of 7.01 hectares which is being lost to housing. The Heathpark Industrial Estate of 25.38 hectares needs to expand Westward between the railway and A303.

The Atkins Employment Land Review confirmed that small businesses dominate the East Devon economy, with micro (1 -10 employers) and small business (11 – 49 employees) accounting for 64.4% of total employment. Total numbers of economically active people in Honiton are high. Before Covid, only 5 individuals were unemployed for more than 12 months, but there is considerable travel to work into and out of Honiton. Even allowing for a fall in the UK economy in the short term, the real need in Honiton is for higher paid jobs and for this suitable office and commercial space is needed at this location.

These policies have been informed by a consumer surveys, submissions to the EDDC Local Plan, The Market Towns initiative and "making it local" research plus an analysis of retail trends in the town centre health of the District's key town centers. In preparation for the Local Plan in 2014 a town survey indicated half of respondents wanted only 'small-scale' commercial developments, like new business parks on greenfield sites, with 36 per cent "favouring significant employment development attracting major inward investment".

Review of our Local Plan is now due and the National Planning guidance requires local planning authorities to undertake an Employment Land Review (ELR) and a Retail Assessment in order to establish the need for employment land and main town centre uses locally.

This has always been particularly relevant to Honiton since retail expansion on the Heathfield site and the developments around Turks Head junction altered the retail offering of the town.

The proposed developments of industrial Land to the West of Honiton have been stalled by the Marker Estate negotiations since the last Local Plan was created. The Covid pandemic has altered our willingness to use public transport and the Climate Change emergency means that more of us need to walk or cycle to work or take short journeys in electric cars

There has been a trend of increased home delivery leading to larger shops and warehouses being favoured over smaller ones with a corresponding loss of market share for the smaller shops in the District. This trend is re-enforced by the growing number of people who want to work from home

### **So what is our aim for Honiton**

Is our aim to

- Maintain Honiton's distinctiveness - a thriving market town and rural economy environment able to attract and retain visitors, consumers and high quality sustainable businesses.
- Develop Honiton as a key retail resource for the surrounding parishes
- Increase average wage rate by developing competitive, high performance small companies and an economy which is diverse, adaptable and resource efficient.
- This need for higher incomes particularly relates to inward investment of High Technology and Knowledge-based business, plus high technology manufacturing.
- The need to promote energy-descent i.e. move towards a carbon neutral local economy while ensuring that suitable 3-phase and High Speed Broadband is available to our businesses and homes.
- Harness growth in leisure spending

### **High Street**

This all points to the need for mixed uses within retail areas in our High Street. To draw shoppers to centres, coffee shops, quality restaurants, bars and leisure opportunities are increasingly important but they need more space and more outside space .

Our Tourism accommodation and retailers need not only local shoppers but also first time visitors. And we need ways of keeping them in town or the area longer and to encourage return trips.

Therefore ease of parking and traffic movements become essential. We deplore moves to make this more difficult in Honiton Town centre. The primary shopping area consists of a number of convenience goods (frequently purchased goods including food) and comparison goods (expensive and less frequently purchased goods) stores. In recent times Marks and Spencer, Simply Food and Woolworths closed down. While LIDL and ALDI have been built near Turk's Head along with a new Hotel.

So we will require an impact assessment to be applied for all retail developments outside the town centre and for schemes above 2,500 sq m gross floorspace. We need flexibility of use

of the high street shops but we need them healthy .We ask that Planners require this as part of any development application. Development proposals, either alone or combined with other recent and outstanding planning permissions, must only be of a scale appropriate to the size and function of the town centre and should help to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the High Street. They must not seriously affect the viability of the town centre.

Where no significant adverse impacts have been identified, planning applications should be determined by taking account of the positive and negative impacts of the proposal on the townscape and economy viability, but also the social viability of the town. Along with any other material considerations and the likely cumulative effect of recent permissions, any further developments under consideration must be sustainable in our new world.

### **Parking Policy**

Parking must be considered so that it will serve the Town Centre as a whole and the wider problems within Honiton. Net parking reductions will be considered detrimental to the Town Centre viability. A total of 487 parking bays are available for local shoppers, but most spaces are full especially when the short-term street parking is occupied by the Market 3 times per week.

Parking provision should be design-led and based upon site characteristics, location and accessibility. Parking standards should be consistent with the County Council standards and encourage more sustainable travel choices with space for bicycles and electric charging.

### **Protection of Retail Frontages**

Development proposals resulting in the change of use from retail (class A1 of the use classes order) to non retail on ground floors within the defined primary shopping frontages should be permitted, except where the number or coalescence of such uses would undermine the dominant retail function. Government has now allowed conversion of unused commercial/industrial space to housing The use of this space for Professional or office premises will be acceptable under these conditions but there is danger in too much becoming domestic dwellings

Conversion from such premises to domiciliary is permitted when the premises have been strongly marketed for 12 months for commercial uses to the satisfaction of the Economic Development Officers of EDDC.

In order to guide decisions relating to actual numbers and/or coalescence and the impact resulting the following criteria will be taken into account:

- The location and prominence of the premises within the shopping frontage;
- The floorspace and length of frontage of the premises;
- The number, distribution and proximity to other non A1 use class premises (or with consent for such use) within the frontage in question and throughout the town centre;
- The character and nature of the use proposed, including the level of pedestrian activity associated with it;
- The level of vacancies in the High Street; and
- Whether the proposed use would give rise to noise, smell or other environmental problem.

### **Employment Land**

The Local Plan allocates 11 hectares of employment land in Honiton. We believe that this is the minimum needed now that Taylor Wimpey is redeveloping one of our industrial estates



for housing. The settlement visions of EDDC suggest focused locations for the growth of both employment and residential development, with specific sites identified.

Depending on the circumstances, bringing employment land forward through mixed-use schemes may be supported but we expect specific zoned areas for use classes to avoid “retail creep” on Heathfield estate. The Development Management process and monitoring should ensure sufficient land comes forward to halve the 10km+ TTWA figures currently in Honiton’s ONS travel statistics

The industrial economy of Honiton is vibrant and successful, as evidenced by the choice of the Heathpark Industrial Estate for the East Devon Business Centre and the high level of demand from businesses looking to move to the town, relocate within the town or expand existing sites, all of which could help provide more jobs and greater work opportunities for Honiton residents. The straightforward option for new employment development is to extend Heathpark westwards between the A30 and the Railway line.

### **Offices**

Offices are as one main town centre use. Office uses encompass both B1a office units and A2 financial and professional service units. Office buildings tend to be used more intensively than any other forms of employment use (in terms of numbers of workers per given area of floorspace), therefore as key generators of movement, to help reduce the need to travel by private car, it is important to locate offices where there is good access by public transport.

We deplore planning permissions and Local Plan allocations that support the development of offices outside the town and industrial estates. Allocating office space outside the central area of Honiton will displace office workers to less central locations and increase retail demand outside the High Street. In the future we should seek a rigorous sequential process which places town centre developments first. The only exceptions would be if they are stand-alone new build offices which could not be located near the high street

We stress the importance of locating new office developments in Honiton town centre or edge of centre locations. In addition to reducing the need to travel, locating office development in the town centre promotes vitality and viability.

In Industrial Estate developments it is crucial to maintain a local balance across Honiton BUAB between housing and employment in accordance with the Local Plan. It must also be remembered that any loss of sites/premises to retail or housing should necessitate an equivalent increase in the amount of new floor-space required over the Local Plan period, which could include Greenfield land. On this basis, it is crucially important to safeguard those existing sites that remain fit for purpose and be willing to adapt them for office use, or retain them for industrial use.

Any proposal to redevelop an existing employment site for non-employment uses must provide robust and credible evidence of viability and marketing, to support the argument that the site is no longer fit for purpose as an employment site. All applications that would result in the loss of office or industrial floorspace must demonstrate that sound marketing effort over 12 months has been made to retain the site or buildings in employment use.

A document should be submitted to Development Control summarising the following:

- A marketing strategy illustrating a realistic price for the land/premises;
  - Evidence to demonstrate that the property has been actively marketed for a minimum of 12 months;
  - A record of all enquiries and inspections, along with reasons for lack of progress;
- and
- A marketing statement explaining how the guidelines have been met and

summarising the outcomes of the marketing exercise

Food retailing obviously provides valuable jobs for many, but this should be in town centre locations wherever possible and given that employment land is being lost across Honiton, the provision of jobs in retailing should not be at the expense of traditional employment sectors, especially if we are seeking to provide a range and mix of sites to support economic diversification.

Sites and premises which:

- No longer meet the needs of businesses;
- Are poorly located for economic development purposes; or
- Create conflicts of use with neighbouring users.

Should be considered for development of alternative uses in the following sequence:

- Non B use-class employment generating uses (e.g. retailing or leisure uses such as day care nurseries or gymnasiums);
- Community use;
- Mixed-use redevelopment including residential work-home premises
- Residential.

Proposals that would result in a significant or total loss of site and/or premises currently or last used for a local shop, post office, public house, community facility or other service that contributes towards the sustainability of Honiton should not be permitted except where the applicant demonstrates that:

- alternative provision is available of equivalent or better quality,
- that the alternative is accessible to that local community within the town or
- there is no reasonable prospect of retention of the existing use as it is unviable as demonstrated by a viability assessment.
- all reasonable efforts to secure suitable alternative business or community re-use or social enterprise have been made for at least the previous 12 months (as set out in Local Plan Policy "Safeguarding Employment Land").

### **Rural Economy bordering Honiton**

The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing "Living, Working Countryside" (2008) reported that all types of business and enterprise can be appropriate for rural areas, subject to assessment of their impact based on local circumstances and conditions. The House of Lords recent publication "Countryside at the Crossroads" 2018 shows how little regard for the rural surroundings of urban areas has been taken into account by policies.

We recommend that in rural settlements within the open countryside, small-scale employment opportunities should be supported although they may not be readily accessible by public transport, as long as the development is commensurate with the scale and nature of that settlement. Such developments can be supported by short journeys by car or van to Honiton. This approach recognises the need to diversify the economy, to develop sectors in the rural area that are not necessarily land based, such as creative industries, but which help to diversify the local economy as a whole, as long as they are of suitable size and type.

Live/work units are dwellings with provision for on-site employment use as well as residential occupation. We recommend that new build live/work units in the countryside should be supported by EDDC where the accommodation is essential to enable the enterprise to operate. The primary purpose of the live/work unit should be economic and not residential.

Proposals for the expansion of existing businesses in the countryside should be

permitted where:

- The business has been operating successfully for a minimum of 3 years, and is a viable business;
- It is demonstrated that the proposal is needed in this location;
- The proposal is of a scale appropriate in this location and appropriate to the existing development;
- The proposed development ensures that the expected nature and volume of traffic generated by the development would not have a detrimental impact on the character or amenity of the area and would not compromise the safety and/or function of the road network on the entrance roads to Honiton, especially Dowell Street in terms of both volume and type of traffic generated.

### Tourism

Planning for economic growth covers many issues associated with tourism and leisure applications in rural areas in or near Honiton, local policies are required to reflect the District's development strategy and clarify advice for Major New Tourism applications outside Honiton.

### We recommend a positive approach:

- Where the proposal would help to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of Honiton and rural areas nearby and are not significantly to its detriment
- The proposals ensure tourism developments are accessible by public transport, cycle and pedestrian networks where practically achievable; and
- The proposals do not harm Honiton's environmental, cultural or heritage assets.
- Are enhancing the overall quality of the tourism offer in the area;
- Are developing new tourism markets;
- Are helping to extend the tourism season;
- Are contributing significantly to the District's economy;
- The proposals significantly increase local employment

### Sites favoured for further development

1. Cattle Market
2. Lace Walk
3. King Street
4. Halse Yard
5. Fire Station area
6. Heathfield Industrial Estate
7. Land North of railway and west of Hayne Lane
8. Land bordering north of old A30
9. Land to east between A30 and A35

### The alternative is to plan nothing

