

Sustainable Tourism Guidance

Purpose

The Local Plan requires the provision of a Sustainable Tourism Statement for all applications involving the development of accommodation, visitor facilities and attractions. The level of detail required in the statement should be commensurate with the scale and complexity of the proposal.

The statement should include details of research to ascertain customer demand carried out prior to the submission of the application and how the proposed application conforms to the definition of high-quality tourism product, defined below. The statement should also include details of any sustainable tourism practices and detail how the applicant is committed to reducing carbon emissions in the future. It also needs to outline practices around accessibility and how the business will seek to improve this in the future, making it possible for greater numbers of people with both physical and non-physical disabilities to access the property or attraction.

Conducting a Sustainable Tourism Statement of the site will assist applicants in satisfying the requirements of the relevant Local Plan policies. It should be recognised that this is part of a sequential approach, and all other criteria within relevant policies to the proposal will be considered in the determination of the application.

Criteria on what will be considered an adequate Sustainable Tourism Statement is set out below:

Customer Demand

A stated aim of the Council's Tourism Strategy, adopted on 7 September 2022, is to distribute tourism across all areas of East Devon. A Sustainable Tourism Statement will need to provide robust evidence of market research highlighting a gap or opportunity in the current tourism provision that the development is seeking to exploit. Market research could include visitor age and profile data, an audit or review of similar local provision indicating where there is a gap in provision, any evidence of current facilities being unable to meet the current demand for several years or qualitative consumer research such as significant customer feedback. The Council will be procuring annual tourism impact research available [Here](#) (insert link) to help local business owners understand the current tourism market and visitor numbers and expenditure trends.

High-Quality Tourism Assets

A high-quality tourism product is one where the organisation employs a holistic approach to quality management; ensuring that the quality of its services, goods and processes all meet or exceed visitor or tourist expectations. As part of the Sustainable Tourism Statement, the applicant will need to detail how it intends to deliver and maintain its services, goods and experience to a high standard. Specific areas of reference could include cleanliness, maintenance of physical assets,

customer service metrics, customer feedback data such as online or offline reviews, food sourcing standards where appropriate, staff training and retention and health and safety standards beyond legislative requirements. Applicants can include any third-party quality standard accreditations or associations as part of this evidence base.

Commitment to Net Zero

The Council's vision is "to become a carbon neutral council working within a low carbon economy and lifestyle, reflected in our travel, homes, businesses, visitor experiences and communities." The adopted tourism strategy and local plan support this goal and therefore require applicants to illustrate how they are committed to net zero i.e. show how they are committed to reducing their carbon emissions to the lowest amount.

There are five key steps to achieving net zero:

- 1) Understanding your current emissions
- 2) Set clear net zero goals, with achievable milestones to measure progress
- 3) Engage with key stakeholders (internal and external contacts) to gain buy-in
- 4) Collaborate with suppliers and employees to help you achieve your goals
- 5) Partner with your visitors/customers

Within the Sustainable Tourism Statement, the applicant will need to outline their current position on achieving net zero. For existing commercial operations this should include any data on their current emissions and indicate their plan for a continued reduction in carbon emissions. There are numerous agencies and online tools to help companies understand their existing carbon emissions. Free online resources include: Carbon Trust – resources and a SME carbon calculator: <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/sme-carbon-footprint-calculator>

Visit England - extensive advice and support on creating a more sustainable tourism business: <https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-sustainable>.

Commitment to Improving Accessibility

Accessibility means putting measures or changes in place to ensure those with a disability can do what they need to do in a similar amount of time and effort as someone that does not have a disability. Physical and non-physical impairments affect where visitors choose to stay or visit. Improving the accessibility of a tourism businesses can make things easier for a wide range of visitors, including those coping with dementia, physical disabilities, autism, hearing or sight loss. Visit Britain have a wide range of resources available to help tourism businesses improve their accessibility provision available at <https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible>.

For existing commercial operations, the Sustainable Tourism Statement will need to outline current business practice, highlighting measures such as existing accessibility guides, signage, lifts, hearing loops etc. For both new and existing operations, the Statement will also need to document future measures that the applicant plans to implement to improve accessibility provision to make it easier for tourists with an impairment to experience the venue/attraction, stay at the accommodation, etc. The Visit Britain website above has detailed guidance on different measures relating to accommodation providers, pubs, events and music events.

Summary

In summary, the Sustainable Tourism Statement should include all evidence and plans, at a level of detail commensurate with the scale and complexity of the proposal, relating to:

- a) The market research undertaken to identify the gap or opportunity in the market that the application is aimed at resolving
- b) How the proposed application relates to a high-quality product, that will satisfy or exceed visitor or customer demand
- c) The current business commitment to net zero including any work already undertaken to identify current carbon emissions and detail how the business plans to reduce its carbon footprint in the future
- d) The current measures already implemented to provide visitor accessibility and how it plans to im