

Meeting: Cabinet **Date:** 13th October 2022

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Torbay – Investment Zone expression of interest

When does the decision need to be implemented? 14th October 2022

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Director/Divisional Director Contact Details: Alan Denby, Divisional Director Economy, Environment & Infrastructure

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the submission of an expression of interest to Government for Investment Zone designation further to the recent Government call for submissions.
- 1.2 The Growth Plan 2022, announced by the Government on 23 September 2022, established Investment Zones in England. Investment Zones aimed to drive growth and open up opportunities for housing, with sites benefiting from tax incentives and wider support for the local economy. Investment Zones will be specific sites which have potential to accelerate growth and deliver housing through modified planning rules.
- 1.3 To become an Investment Zone, an Expression of Interest needs to be submitted by midday on the 14th October 2022 with confirmation that the Local Planning Authority supports any proposal for an Investment Zone.
- 1.4 Based on the indication from Government for Investment Zones to be located on sites that are included in masterplans, have planning consent or benefit from other strategic support, this means that there are several potential locations in Torbay which may be included. Given the extraordinarily tight timescale to submit an expression of interest details of these sites and their fit with the criteria are currently being established.
- 1.5 The Chair of the Planning Committee has confirmed agreement with the submission of the expression of interest along with the Divisional Director for Planning, Housing & Climate

Emergency providing the *Local Planning Authority* support that is required for the submission.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 To unleash Torbay's full potential by driving economic growth and ensuring the benefits of this are felt by the residents and businesses across Torbay.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the Chief Executive be instructed to submit an Expression of Interest for Investment Zone designation.

Appendices

None

Background Documents

HM Government Investment Zones in England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/investment-zones-in-england/investment-zones-in-england>

Torbay Economic Strategy

Transformation Strategy for Torbay's Town Centres

<https://www.torbay.gov.uk/council/policies/economic-regeneration/town-centres/>

Torquay Town Investment Plan

Paignton Future High Streets Fund bid

Supporting Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Torquay's Town Investment Plan set out that the Town Deal would enable a project to redevelop the Union Square shopping centre as the initial phase of the intended regeneration of the upper Union Street area of Torquay. This is an aspiration of the Town Board, explicitly referenced as a project in the Town Investment Plan approved by Government and is aligned to Torquay's Neighbourhood Plan helping address the overconcentration of retail activity in Torquay town centre.
- 1.2 The government envisages that Investment Zones will be one or more specific sites within a mayoral combined authority or upper tier local authority where a variety of tax, regulatory innovations and flexibilities, and planning simplifications will apply within those site's boundaries.
- 1.3 As authorities consider coming forward to express interest in pursuing Investment Zones with the government, they are requested to consider which sites will best drive a substantial contribution to the UK's economic growth and a significant acceleration of delivery of additional housing.
- 1.4 There is a strong expectation from Government that Investment Zones will bring forward additional development, and that they bring forward a mix of both commercial and residential development. Both of these will be considered in the EOI assessment process.
- 1.5 Government notes that sites may be aligned with existing local growth strategies and transport plans. Sites that already have a masterplan, development order or outline permission could be considered as a potential Investment Zone, as could sites where planning consents are not yet in place.
- 1.6 This aligns to the emerging Torbay Economic Growth Strategy priority of supporting entrepreneurs, innovators and business owners. The Investment Zones will incentivise investment into key sites that will enable the growth of some of Torbay's key sectors including electronics and photonics and fish processing.

2. Options under consideration

- 2.1 An alternative option would be to do nothing and not pursue the potential of becoming an Investment Zone. This option was discounted due to the economic benefits that being an Investment Zone would bring to Torbay.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 The financial offer for Investment Zones has not yet been confirmed but Government has indicated several potential benefits for the areas and for occupiers in the available guidance¹. It is likely that the cost of developing and implementing an Investment Zone will need to be met at the local level i.e. the costs of introducing simplified planning zones and on that basis areas will want to be cautious in not seeking a saturation of zones within their area. Further work will be required to model the potential impacts.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 No known legal implications of the recommendations.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.1 There has been engagement with partners including the Place Board along with key landowners, Brixham Town Council and the Chair of the Council's planning committee.

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 No direct implications.

7. Tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 The Council will act in alignment with its climate emergency approach in taking forward the proposed Investment Zones.

8. Associated Risks.

- 8.1 There are no significant risks directly arising from the recommendation. In the event that Torbay secures designation then there will be reputational risks if Torbay is not able to deliver the Investment Zones in a meaningful way. Financially the lack of confirmation of the precise incentives available for areas mean that it is difficult to accurately assess the risks at this time.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/investment-zones-in-england/investment-zones-in-england#time-limited-tax-incentives>

9. Equality Impacts – Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

	Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
Older or younger people			
People with caring Responsibilities			
People with a disability			
Women or men			
People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) (Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)			
Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			
People who are transgendered			
People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			
Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			
Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)	Expected to have a positive impact through levering in additional investment and creating new jobs.		
Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)	Improving the economic wellbeing and opportunities across Torbay will support public health improvements as economic success is a key determinant of health.		

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 None

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 None