Broadsands

Village Design Statement

An integral part of the Brixham Peninsula Neighbourhood Plan

Contents

1 The aims of this Village Design Statement

1.0.1 The primary aims of this Village Design Statement are to:

- understand and record the important and distinct features of the Broadsands area which combine to create its unique character
- encourage developers and householders to design new developments so that they are in keeping with existing local character – and to avoid those that are not by illustrating some that represent poor examples, as well as some good examples.

1.0.2 This document confines itself in scope to the *design* of new development and does not detail what type of development should take place in Broadsands.

2 Approach taken

2.0.1 This document has been researched and written entirely by residents of Broadsands with input being sought from the relevant and immediately neighbouring communities by way of consultation and liaison with the Broadsands and Elberry Residents Association (BERA) and Churston Galmpton and Broadsands Community Partnership (CGBCP).

2.0.2 BERA was established in 1958 and has been operating now for the last 55 years; it played a key role in the formation of the CGBCP and has been a participant of the Brixham Peninsular Neighbourhood Forum (BPNF). BERA has an area of membership covering approximately 480 households.

2.0.3 The consultation process has consisted of a detailed public consultation and survey conducted in February 2012 together with regular public meetings held from 2012 to 2016, which have been advertised in the local News Gazette and on public noticeboards. All comments have been noted and considered and emerging draft documentation has been freely available on the internet.

2.0.4 The draft document will be circulated to organisations having a key interest in planning matters, including:

- Torbay Borough Council
- The Environment Agency
- The Council for the Protection of Rural England
- Natural England
- Devon Wildlife Trust
- Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust
- RSPB.

2.0.5 A record of any comments and proposed amendments will be kept.

3 A brief description of Broadsands

3.0.1 Broadsands is a mixed residential/rural/coastal recreation neighbourhood forming part of the southern crescent of Torbay, and lying between the main road (A379) linking Paignton (Goodrington) to Churston and Brixham, bordered to the north by Goodrington, to the south by Churston and to the east by the sea. The total land area is c 5.0 sq km.

Figure 1: The Broadsands Village Design Statement area.

3.0.2 The resident population of the defined area is c 1500 people.

3.0.3 The rolling landscape of South Devon falls away 60–80 m to the sea through Broadsands, down three or more valleys – the principal valley leading to the sandy expanse of Broadsands beach. In between are field and heath covered slopes and low cliffs giving on to rocky coves and other, smaller, sand and shingle beaches. A full Landscape Character Assessment by agents for Torbay Council dated May 2010 can be found at http://www.torbay.gov.uk/torbaylca1.pdf.

Figure 2: Broadsands Beach.

3.0.4 A coastal strip of agricultural land and woodland has largely been preserved, forming an important backdrop both to the beaches and to the South West Coast Path, as well as to the other heritage footpaths which stretch along this section of coast. This strip is also traversed by the Dartmouth and Paignton Steam Railway, dating from 1861, which likes to boast of some of the most scenic railway vistas in Britain and contributes two landmark Brunel designed viaducts.

Figure 3: Brunel viaduct at Broadsands.

3.0.5 A short parade of shops and the adjacent small library at the junction of the main road and the road leading down to Broadsands beach serves as a community hub and amenity, as well as an important facility for visitors and tourists alike.

Figure 4: Parade of shops at Windy Corner.

4 Historical development

4.0.1 Above the beach at Broadsands, the gently sloping fields formed part of Lord Churston's estate and have been farmed for hundreds of years. The land around Elberry was part of the manorial estate of Churston Court until it was acquired by the local authority in 1946. The tithe map of 1839 shows that fields were rented by different individuals, who probably travelled from Galmpton and Churston to tend them.

4.0.2 A substantial farm is situated close to Elberry Cove. In the 1850s and 1860s the first Lord Churston had the farm and its outbuildings re-built and improved. No expense was spared, and the finest and most hard-wearing materials were used. It was described in a local directory at the time as a "model farm" and stands today as an example of the best Victorian building skills. Its status as a working farm underscores the rural nature of the Broadsands coastal strip.

4.0.3 Broadsands was rural until the mid-1930s when it was an undeveloped coast between Paignton and Brixham. A handful of fairly substantial houses had been built on prime elevated sites with sea views in the 1920s and early 1930s. It still retains an important and substantial green strip of undeveloped coastal land.

4.0.4 In 1932, Lord Churston sold a substantial portion of the Broadsands and Elberry area to Staverton Builders Ltd., a subsidiary company of the Dartington Hall Trust. In his book *The Churston Ferrers Housing Scheme*, Daniel Jon Metcalfe[1] explains, "The 188 acre segment of land cost £58100 and included a cove and beach, wooded slopes, farmland and a 100 ft high stone viaduct built by Brunel to carry the G.W.R. Brixham line. With limited building for miles in any direction the site was picturesque and those involved with its acquisition pointed out that it was worthy of something special."

Figure 5: Lescaze House in Rock Close.

[1] Daniel Metcalfe, *The Churston Ferrers Housing Scheme, Torbay, Devon: a dissertation charting the history of the Modern Speculative Housing at Churston Ferrers with reference to the English Suburban Estate* (2002).

4.0.5 The Elmhirsts of Dartington had great ideas to build a vibrant community with buildings of architectural significance. The original design included a hotel, country club, teahouse, beach facilities and around 500 houses. The Elmhirsts had been working with two architects on the Dartington Estate – Louis De Soissons from Montreal, who had worked in the office of Edwin Lutyens and had already won the Tite prize for his designs, and William Lescaze, a Swiss–American architect from Geneva. Lescaze had just designed High Cross House for the Elmhirsts, and they were greatly impressed by his Modernist style. They considered both architects for the Churston project and finally decided to go with Lescaze's asymmetrical, flat-roofed houses. The first houses were completed in Rock Close in early 1935. They had large gardens, and designer Beatrix Farrand was asked to provide a planting scheme for these and went with a scheme of open views and rural hedgerows. It was decided to postpone the hotel scheme until some of the houses had sold, so as to generate more capital.

4.0.6 The houses were tiered and arrayed with height restrictions specifically with seaward views in mind for every resident.

4.0.7 However, the house buyers of south Devon were not ready for these cutting-edge houses, which were so different from the bay-fronted semis that were being built everywhere else, and the houses did not sell. Another issue was the price. One smaller house was built on North Rocks Road as it was felt this may be easier to sell. When just ten houses had been completed and sales were very slow, Lescaze was told that his contract had come to an end and, in 1936, Louis De Soissons was called in to rescue the scheme. He immediately reverted to traditional designs with pitched roofs and they were an instant success.

4.0.8 De Soissons designed both houses and bungalows for North Rocks Road and Broadsands Road. Building continued until the outbreak of war, when it had to stop. After the war 45 new houses were built, designed in part by De Soissons using traditional styles.

4.0.9 Later after World War II, housing pressure from Paignton and national demand for seaside retirement homes saw the development in the 1960s and 1970s of two substantial pockets of modest primarily single-storey bungalow dwellings, together with the small parade of shops and library adjacent to the Windy Corner junction.

4.0.10 No new material construction has taken place since those decades. Sites are virtually non-existent owing to the fact that most of the viable sites have been built on over the last 50 years, and the protected status of the vast majority of green space adjacent to the coast.

4.0.11 The housing stock is relatively young, so extension and refurbishment are the main development opportunity and activity, with the occasional demolition and replacement of existing buildings.

5 Built environment

5.0.1 With the exception of the green strip of undeveloped coastal land separating all of Broadsands from the sea, Broadsands is almost exclusively given over to residential development.

5.0.2 There are four primary types of property grouped in defined pockets.

5.1 Extensive single-storey collections of bungalow style properties dating from the 1960s and 1970s

5.1.1 These are primarily situated in the areas of Broadsands Park Road and Brunel Road.

5.1.2 The majority of these dwellings are fully detached, detached with shared garage or semi-detached, and comprise originally two to three bedrooms. Most stand on modest plots at a density of about six to nine per acre. Many are built in tiers on slopes and rely on consistently low roof heights to preserve views. Many have dormer rooms or dormer extensions. All have off-road parking for at least one or two vehicles.

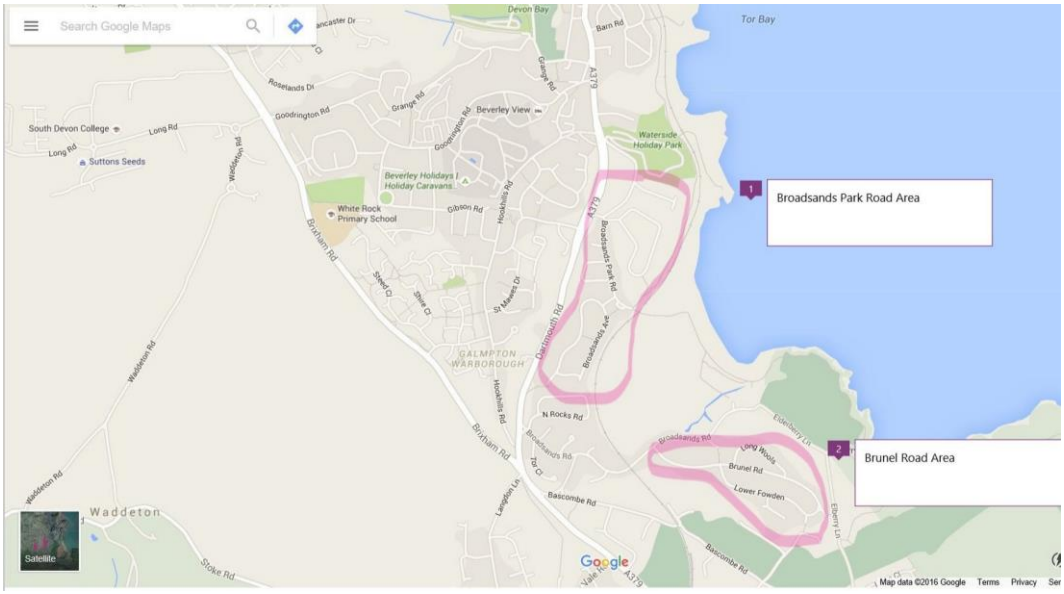

Figure 6: 1960s and 1970s residential developments.

5.1.3 The roads in these developments are relatively narrow with pavements on either side. There was no original tree planting despite this being a feature of earlier developments (cf Broadsands Road), and none has subsequently taken place. Such planting would have softened the visual impact of these extensive estates of dwellings and echoed the wooded nature of much of the surrounding area. No hedging or verges were retained or created, leading to low visual and natural diversity. Many units benefit from distant views and glimpses of the sea, woodland or fields which have been designed into the estate layout. The single-storey developments stepping up the slope and spacing around the dwellings both contribute to the maximisation of views for residents.

Figure 7: Brunel Road area.

5.1.4 The views and vistas in this area are shared by all the properties and pedestrians, and can justifiably be called "public" views – see Figure 8.

Figure 8: View from Brunel Road Estate.

5.1.5 Construction and finish vary with age, with a mix of rendered and brick finishes, slate and tiled (concrete or composite) roofs, and a variety of window styles and sizes. There are many styles and configuration of bungalow with certain types being reproduced originally in modest quantities – enough to give some visual variation.

5.1.6 Thus, from a design point of view, while there are no notable common architectural features, it is very important to maintain *proportionality* within these developments, especially in respect of:

- **Roof design.** There should be visual conformity in roof design both in terms of pitch and materials.

- **Roof height.** There is a need to respect the tradition of preserving neighbours' views.

- **Building footprint.** Many extensions and some redevelopments have taken up substantially the whole plot or the majority of the area, resulting in a disproportionately large footprint out of character with neighbouring properties.

5.2 Pre-and post-war houses by Louis de Soissons and others

5.2.1 The houses constructed in the wake of the withdrawal of William Lescaze from the modernist development in Broadsands were laid out according to a scheme designed by Louis de Soissons and executed by a number of architects. They are situated at the lower end of Broadsands Road and the first section of Brunel road, as well as the higher situated North Rocks Road, and they have been emulated at a later date in Tor Close.

Figure 9: Areas laid out by Louis de Soissons.

5.2.2 These houses are much more conventional but nod to modernity, being detached, two storey, rendered white with plain facades, large windows and plain gabled Delabole (Cornwall) slate roofs.

Figure 10: de Soissons layout and style.

5.2.3 They are on moderately large individual plots (about four to five per acre) with garage and driveway.

5.2.4 Many are situated on the tree-lined and grass-verged Broadsands Road and front the road with a hedgerow, giving a spacious impression embellished with rural touches. They are a testament to the importance of trees and hedges to the streetscape. Regrettably, many hedges have been uprooted and replaced with panel fencing fronting the pavement resulting in a significantly less attractive streetscape (see Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11: Hedges and trees – 2011.

Figure 12: No hedge – 2016.

5.2.5 The genesis of the developments by William Lescaze and Louis de Soissons explains the absence of attached and terraced housing from this area as well as developments of flats or other larger or higher buildings.

5.2.6 Many of the spaces between these houses were filled at about the same time or shortly afterwards by bungalows on individual plots at about the same density as the houses.

5.2.7 This has resulted in a distinctive character to the area of well-spaced modest villas and bungalows set in leafy pleasant surroundings.

5.2.8 Any new development by builders or individuals in this area should maintain or echo similar qualities by ensuring the maintenance of:

- **Proportionality.** Roof height (one or two storey only so as not impact adversely the views of neighbours which are a feature of the area), footprint on plot (retaining an air of spaciousness within the plot), low massing of development (individual dwellings, not multiple unit buildings).

5.2.9 An example of where this principle was recently ignored was in the granting of permission for a development of flats in the face of substantial local opposition at the "Broadhaven" development at 5 Broadsands Road, where both the height and mass of the development are inappropriate.

Figure 13: Proposed Broadhaven development.

5.3 Guidelines

5.3.1 *Appropriate materials.* The use of render under slate roofs should be extended to extensions and additions for buildings in this area which do not set out to emulate the nearby modernist flat roof designs.

5.3.2 *Trees and hedges.* These should be maintained or added to in order to preserve and enhance this characteristic of the area.

5.4 1930s modernist houses by William Lescaze

5.4.1 These houses (six of which are situated in Rock Close and three nearby) represent a significant asset in the slim portfolio of buildings having architectural merit in greater Torbay. They have attracted the attentions of architects worldwide, as well as having been the subject of at least one academic thesis. They recently attracted the attention of English Heritage.

5.4.2 Although few in number the houses have a dominant architectural impact sitting adjacent to so many conventional dwellings of low architectural value.

5.4.3 As such, every effort should be made to preserve and enhance them appropriately, as well as the landscape in which they sit.

Figure 14: Site of Lescaze Houses.

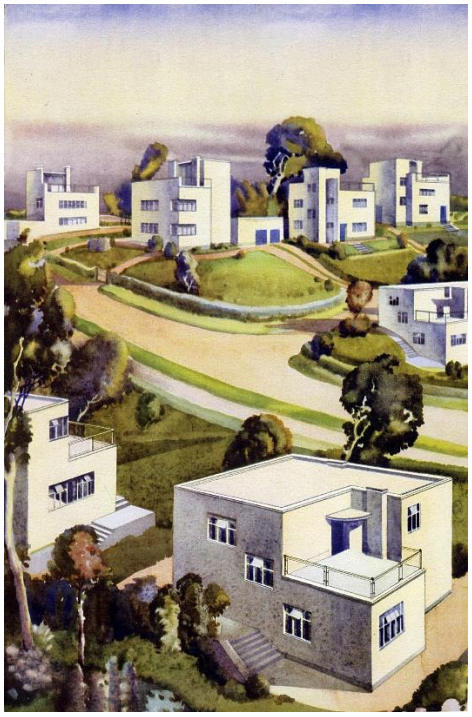

Figure 15: Sales Brochure for Lescaze Houses at Rock Close.

5.4.4 The roof lines and heights of these houses are of particular importance. Great weight was given to the creation and maintenance of views for each dwelling and any alteration in the roof lines would adversely affect this quality.

5.4.5 The houses also benefit greatly from the carefully judged open space between them contributing to the once ground breaking "open plan" nature of Rock Close in particular. Clearly, any infill development of the generous plots would adversely affect this important feature.

5.4.6 Once more, *proportionality* is key in designing any modifications to these and nearby properties.

5.5 Occasional substantial detached houses from the 1920s

5.5.1 These are too few in number to apply any generic guidelines except to say that any overmassing of development on the generous plots of these properties would seriously detract from the spacious feel of the neighbourhood.

6 Landscape and natural environment

6.0.1 Key to the character of the area is the substantial expanse of green and wooded space backing on to a section of unspoilt coast forming part of the Torbay Global Geopark – part of the Global Network of only 90 Geoparks designed to protect geodiversity of which only nine are situated in the UK.

6.0.2 Saltern Cove, situated in the Broadsands coastal section, is the only Underwater Local Nature Reserve in England.

6.0.3 On this stretch of coast, holidaymakers share the beach with black-necked grebes and cirl buntings as well as little egrets, herons, and many resident and visiting seabirds. Buzzards and owls live in the woods behind, foxes and badgers saunter through the gardens of houses by Tor Rocks and seals regularly patrol near the shore. Across the headland of Elberry Common, with its superb views and woodland walk, lies Elberry Cove. Here the beach is bleached shingle and large areas of the sea bed are covered with seagrass. This is an important habitat and breeding ground for many species, notably native seahorses. Pipefish, spider crabs, sea hares, swimming crabs, sea slugs, shelled molluscs and sea worms are also found in the seagrass beds.

6.0.4 There are several landmarks within the area setting it apart from a mere collection of dwellings.

6.1 The Neolithic Tomb

6.1.1 This tomb is situated behind Broadsands beach, and was discovered in 1956 by Guy Belleville, a local archaeologist. He also found evidence that people had lived in the valley leading from Warborough Common to Broadsands during the late Palaeolithic and Bronze Age. About half a mile from the tomb he unearthed numbers of worked flints, arrowheads and fragments of polished flint axes. The tomb was a significant discovery because at that time there were no other certain examples of a Passage Tomb in the south-west of England and they are comparatively rare in Britain.

6.2 The Warrener's House

6.2.1 Perched in the middle of Elberry Common was Warren House. It is a ruin today, but it was the home of Lord Churston's warrener.

Figure 16: Warrener's House.

Figure 17: Lord Churston's Bathing House.

6.3 Lord Churston's Bath House

6.3.1 Elberry Cove was used as a private bathing beach by Lord Churston and his family, and they rode down to it in their carriage across what is now the golf course. The building at the far end of the beach had probably been a smoke house for pilchards in previous centuries, but Lord Churston converted it into a bath house in the early 1800s, when sea bathing was extremely fashionable and many private estates were being equipped with bath houses.

6.4 The Great Western Railway

6.4.1 One of the most magical sights in Broadsands is the steam train, chugging and whistling above the sands and the beach huts. Extending the railway from Paignton to Churston was not without its problems as the landowners extracted large sums in compensation from the Dartmouth and Torbay Railway Company for having the line run through their property, and Goodrington proved to be a nightmare of marshy bogs which needed much filling and shoring up. But the two towering viaducts – Broadsands and Hookhills – were completed in 1861 and the railway reached Churston. The viaducts were built of Devonian limestone, and Lord Churston opened Brokenbury Quarry for the purpose as the stone there was of such good quality.

Figure 18: GWR.

6.4.2 Views and vistas play a vital part in the character of the area.

6.4.3 This encompasses both views downslope and out to sea and upslope across unspoilt rural and woodland stretches to the fringes of habitation.

6.4.4 It is particularly important that the habitation creeps no closer nor intrudes upon this undeveloped strip, and that the low-profile skyline is preserved so as not to intrude any further on the views enjoyed by holidaymakers, walkers, sailors and all those enjoying the amenity.

6.4.5 There are existing examples of the impact of inappropriate design by way of high rooflines, overmassing or general development too close to the coastal strip.

Figure 19: Skyline from Broadsands Avenue with overmassed building.

7 Transport

7.0.1 The neighbourhood is bounded on the landward upslope side by the A379 – for the most part a busy single-carriageway primary transit route/public transport route which has no cycle lane provision (an omission, as it is the only level road in the Village Design Statement area) and a speed limit of 30 mph.

7.0.2 The absence of a dedicated cycle route needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The map in Figure 20 shows the almost total absence of cycle route provision in the area. A solution lies in using the underutilised footway on the A379, and appropriate signage.

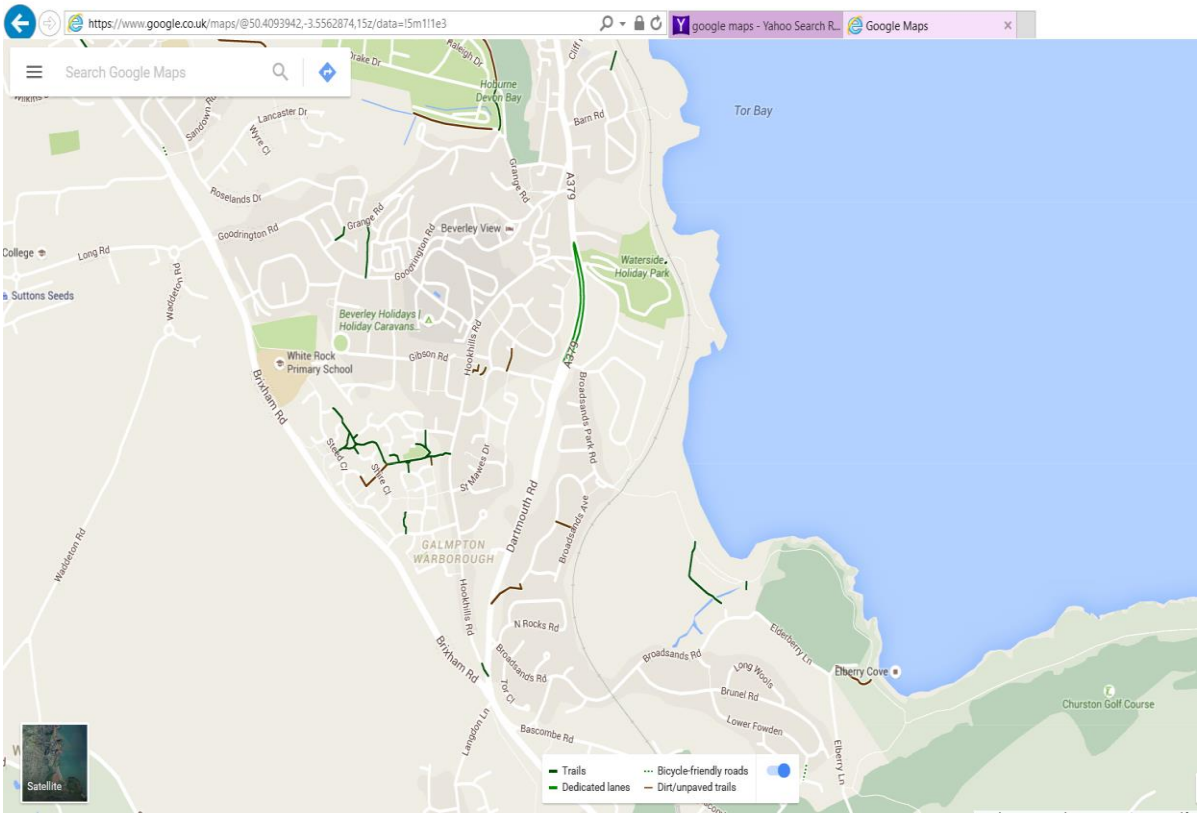

Figure 20: Cycle routes.

7.0.3 All other roads are minor in varying degrees, and the majority of them residential. The majority of these roads offer no through way or links with adjacent habitation owing to the topography. With restricted vehicle standing in most dwellings, multiple car ownership means vehicles are frequently parked on the highway.

7.0.4 There is a strong case for traffic calming on all these minor roads, as all trips will be for residence access or beach car park access purposes only. Such measures would represent both an environmental benefit and a safer road environment in built-up residential areas.

7.0.5 The area is key to several important footpaths, chief of which is the South West Coast Path, together with very popular walking routes around Elberry Cove and towards Galmpton and the River Dart. These paths are used heavily by residents, holidaymakers and serious ramblers alike. It is therefore vital to maintain their integrity and beauty by respecting not only their physical status, but also the views and vistas they enjoy. Some terrible mistakes have been made historically in this respect – see for example the proximity of caravans to the South West Coast Path at Waterside Caravan Park in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Caravans next to the South West Coast Path.

7.1 Broadsands Beach visitor and recreational facilities redevelopment

7.1.1 The survey of residents in 2012 produced overwhelming support for the redevelopment of the very dilapidated and poorly designed buildings currently sited to the rear of the promenade at Broadsands beach (see Figure 2 earlier).

7.1.2 Any redevelopment of this site should have regard for the sensitive nature of the site not only owing to the setting between the beach and open farmland, but also to the proximity to sensitive wildlife habitats – notably the cirl bunting colony in the fields and hedgerows situated to the rear.

7.1.3 From a design perspective, any development should make extensive use of natural materials and low-level elevations to make minimal impact on views and vistas. The design should also seek to achieve architectural merit fitting for the very high profile status of the site in tourist amenity terms – in other words avoiding the significantly inappropriate crude and obtrusive design of the present building.

7.1.4 Inspiration might be taken, for example from the award winning innovative design café built at East Beach, Littlehampton.

Figure 22: East Beach Café, Littlehampton.

7.1.5 Another worthy example is the more conservative contemporary design of Fifteen Cornwall at Watergate Bay in Cornwall.

Figure 23: Fifteen Cornwall.

7.1.6 Torbay planners should consider holding an open design competition for the site to attract the interest of architectural practices in a landmark project.

8 Conclusion – Design guidelines

8.1 Good design

8.1.1 Good design in this area is typified by the pre- and post-Dartington inspired architectural styles described above, as well as some older landmarks and buildings using local materials. In their time these buildings and their landscaping represented outstanding and innovative design which set new standards for the area. This is a goal which is key to current national planning guidelines.

8.1.2 These design standards were not maintained through the two areas developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

8.1.3 New developments should henceforth deliver high design standards achieving or improving on those on display in the Dartington inspired sections. They should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping, and not discouraged from appropriate innovation.

Figure 24: Appropriate high design standard in the new construction at Waterside.

Figure 25: High design standard in bungalow remodelling.

8.2 General guidelines

8.2.1 The massing, density and footprint of any new development should not be excessive for the site or out of proportion to that of the area of the village in which it sits.

8.2.2 New extensions and additions should be sympathetic in scale to the existing building using materials and designs characteristic of the fabric. They should also respect the setting of the village while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

8.2.3 To retain character, the size of new dwellings should be in proportion to those prevalent in the immediate area of the village, as should their relationship to, and within, the road.

8.2.4 Proposed development should strengthen the local landscape character by providing boundary lines of suitable material, for example trees along lanes in communal spaces. Trees planted should be of native varieties (for example, beech) rather than decorative or non-indigenous species.

8.2.5 The typical use of low hedging enhances an open feel and often allows glimpses of the surrounding countryside. Front garden boundaries should preferably be of low hedging or shrubbery to add to green interval space.

8.3 Guidelines for specific village areas

8.3.1 *1960s and 1970s bungalow developments*

- The tiered and single-storey nature of these buildings should be extended to any new development – new or replacement building or extension – in order to adhere to the historical maintenance of views and vistas for all residents afforded by the topography of the village.
- Roof heights should conform to those of surrounding properties for the same reason.

8.3.2 *Pre-and post-war houses by de Soissons and others*

- The extensive soft landscaping around these properties should be maintained and enhanced where any new development is proposed.
- The low massing of development should be maintained in these areas.
- Any new development should retain a sense of space within an individual plot which reflects that typical of the area.
- New developments should not exceed the two-storey height typical of these properties.

8.3.3 *The "Lescaze" modernist properties*

- The architectural merit and design qualities of these properties should be reflected in any proposals to extend or redevelop any of them.
- Any extension or development should respect the design principles of clean lines and rendered finish materials used in the originals in order to provide visual integrity.
- The intention of the architect to afford views to each tier of the properties should be maintained by retaining their current height and flat roof design.

8.3.4 *Occasional older detached houses*

- Proportionality of the building to the often generous sized plot is a particular feature of these buildings, and so any development should maintain this proportionality.

- These buildings often have substantial mature soft landscaping and this should be maintained or enhanced as part of any new development.

8.3.5 *On open spaces and vistas*

- New developments should respect the sense of openness and seek to protect important views.

- New developments should not intrude on skylines, particularly in respect of upslope views from the coast.

Figure 26: Unspoiled panoramic skyline from the South West Coast Path at Broadsands.

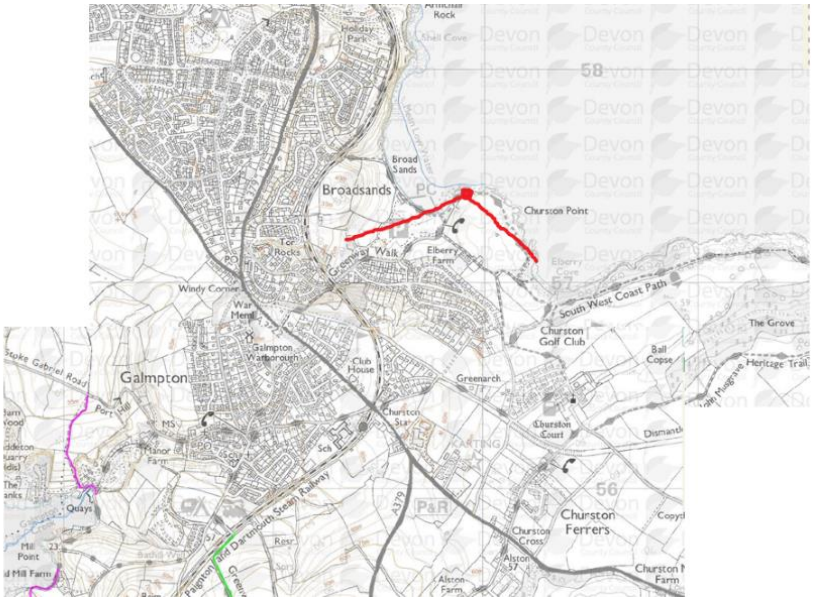

Figure 27: Viewpoint for panorama above.

8.3.6 *On roads and footpaths*

- The present network of footpaths should be maintained and where possible expanded.
- The kerbs of pavements should reflect existing styles with a modest height.
- Road signs and markings should be kept to a minimum.

8.3.7 *On-street lighting*

- Street lighting in any new development should be minimised if possible to help maintain the existing low level of lighting. However, where street lighting is a requirement, it should be sympathetic to the locality.

8.3.8 *General*

- The rural unspoilt transition between the sea and the countryside is an important characteristic of the area – in fact the most important characteristic highlighted in the initial public consultation. The design of any new development, property alterations or amenity/infrastructure alteration or enhancement, wherever situated in the village, should respect this unspoilt margin by sensitive consideration of its potential impact upon it.
- Front gardens/areas. Any development should not result in frontages being dominated by hard surfacing and parked cars. The conversion of front gardens to hard surfaced areas should be avoided wherever possible. The area of hard landscaping should be minimised to enable soft landscaping to dominate and reduce potential flooding from water run-off.
- New development should have a quality landscape scheme, which incorporates new tree planting and retains as many of the natural landscape features as possible. The hard and soft landscape design should successfully integrate the development into the local environment.

- Developers are strongly encouraged to discuss their proposals at the earliest opportunity with the villagers and show how the details of their proposals reflect these points.

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