

Torbay Local Plan

Housing Update: Growth Options Consultation: Summary

Regulation 18.

January 2022

This document can be made available in other languages and formats.
For more information please contact Future.Planning@torbay.gov.uk

Background

The Local Plan, along with Neighbourhood Plans, are legal starting point for determining planning applications. The Local Plan sets out where new homes, employment, community facilities etc. should be built. The Local Plan also sets a strategic framework for Neighbourhood Plans.

Following a review of the Local Plan in November 2020, the process to update the plan begun. This consultation is the next stage of that process and is key to choosing how Torbay could meet future housing needs. Our preferred approach is to update the current Local Plan, which looks forward to 2030, but we welcome views about whether a longer timeframe is needed.

The Government sets the minimum number of homes that each area must try to provide through a formula based on past trends and housing affordability. This is known as the "standard method". In Torbay, this figure is between 560 and 600 dwellings a year.

This target is above what is currently allocated in the Local Plan and therefore we would need to allocate additional housing sites if we are to meet the Government's housing requirement.

Several potential growth options (based on the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment which was carried out in 2021) have been developed. The HELAA is available online at [Torbay Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment - Torbay Council](#)

This document sets out five options which will each impact on different areas of life in Torbay.

Consultation Options

We are consulting on several potential growth options based on the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment¹.

The chosen Local Plan housing growth scenario will affect poverty, inequalities, and the provision of affordable housing. Broadly speaking, a high growth scenario which seeks to meet housing need will provide the most affordable housing and economic prosperity; but will come at the cost of its environmental impact. Conversely, lower growth options will conserve the environment but are likely to worsen social inequalities and make housing less affordable for local young people.

The options and their advantages and disadvantages are set out below with further detail provided in the main consultation document.

No decision has been made by the Council on these options - they are published for consultation.

¹ Known as the "HELAA" This is an evidence based document and does not represent Council policy.

Option 1: No further greenfield allocation beyond already allocated or approved sites

Brownfield town centre regeneration sites would still be promoted. This option is estimated to provide between 190-250 dwellings a year. These sites are shown in purple on the attached options map.

This option would minimise the impact on the environment and on Torbay's infrastructure such as drainage capacity, the highway network, schools, surgeries, and hospitals.

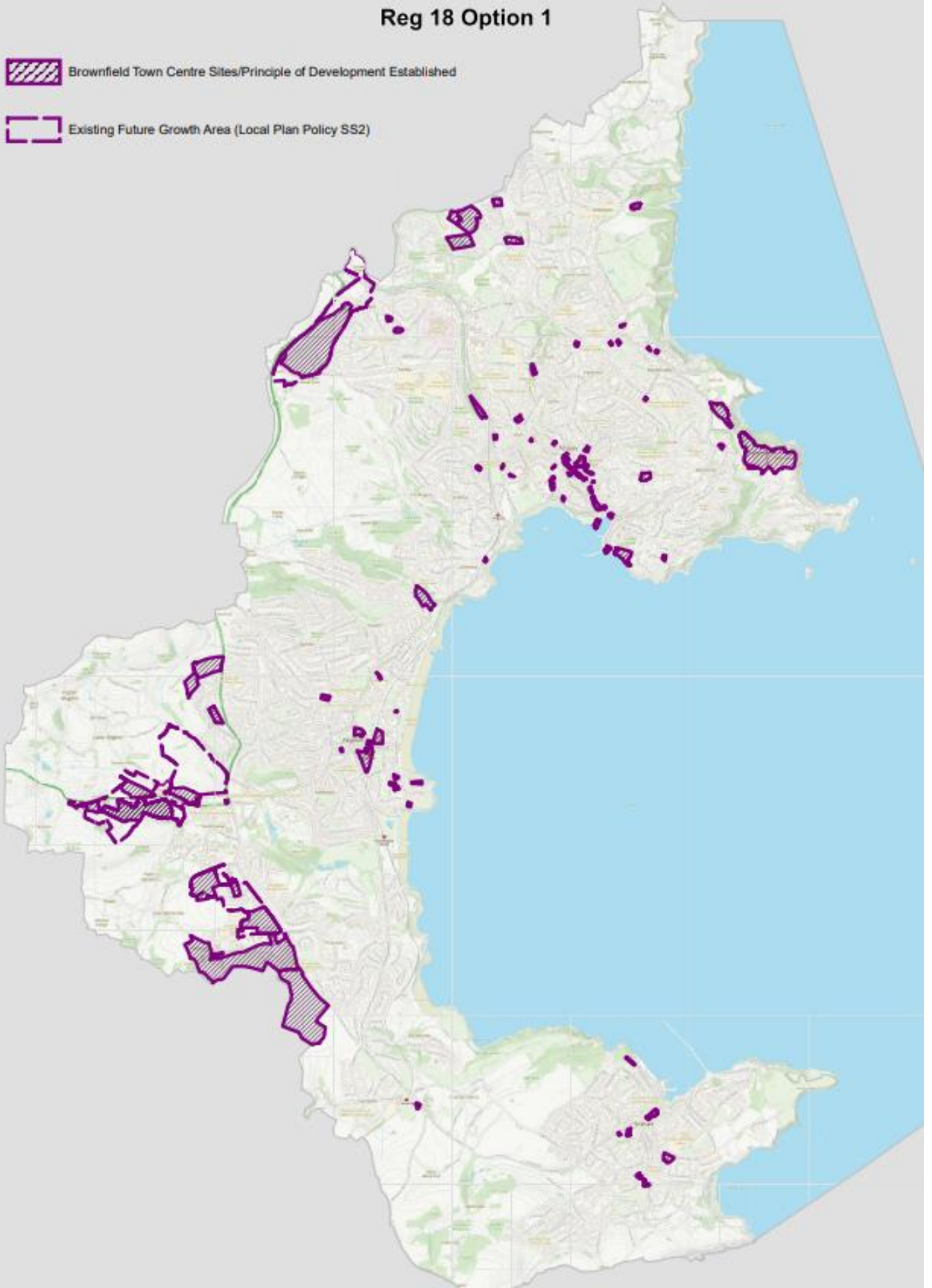
Development is likely to be in the urban areas and therefore is likely to be apartments rather than family homes. There could be an impact on town centre heritage assets such as Conservation Areas and listed buildings.

However, our housing supply will be significantly below the need in the area. It could lead to house prices rising and there would be very limited opportunity for affordable housing. There would be very limited new opportunities for employment development. This could increase social inequality.

Reg 18 Option 1

 Brownfield Town Centre Sites/Principle of Development Established

 Existing Future Growth Area (Local Plan Policy SS2)



Option 2: Limited further greenfield development

As per option 1 plus a limited number of greenfield sites assessed to have relatively minor constraints. This option is estimated to provide between 250-300 dwellings a year.

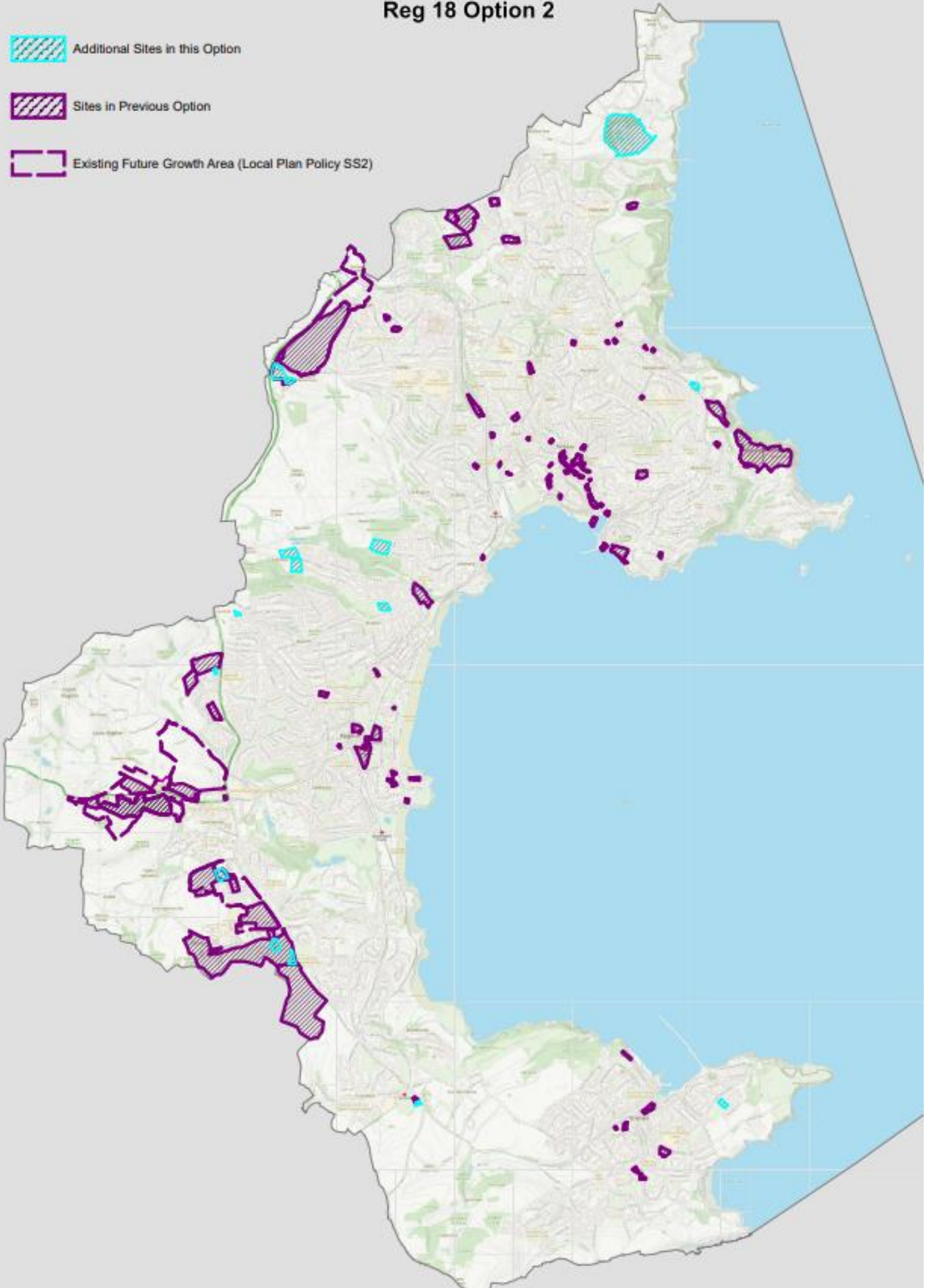
This option would provide a modest amount of greenfield land which could provide some affordable housing, retaining the significant emphasis on urban and brownfield sites. The impact on Torbay's infrastructure is still relatively minimised.

As with Option 1, this option would see housing supply remain significantly below need and there would be an over-reliance on apartments, in urban areas with the same risks around the impact on Conservation Areas and listed buildings.

There would be limited opportunities for new employment development.

Reg 18 Option 2

-  Additional Sites in this Option
-  Sites in Previous Option
-  Existing Future Growth Area (Local Plan Policy SS2)



Option 3: One or two further urban extensions.

As per option 2 plus one or two limited urban extensions. Several possible “sub-options” for the location of the potential urban extension exist. However, further expansion at the west of Paignton appears to be the most likely area. This option is estimated to provide between 320-380 dwellings a year. Some (but not all) of the sites shown amber on the map, denoting that they have significant constraints, would be needed.

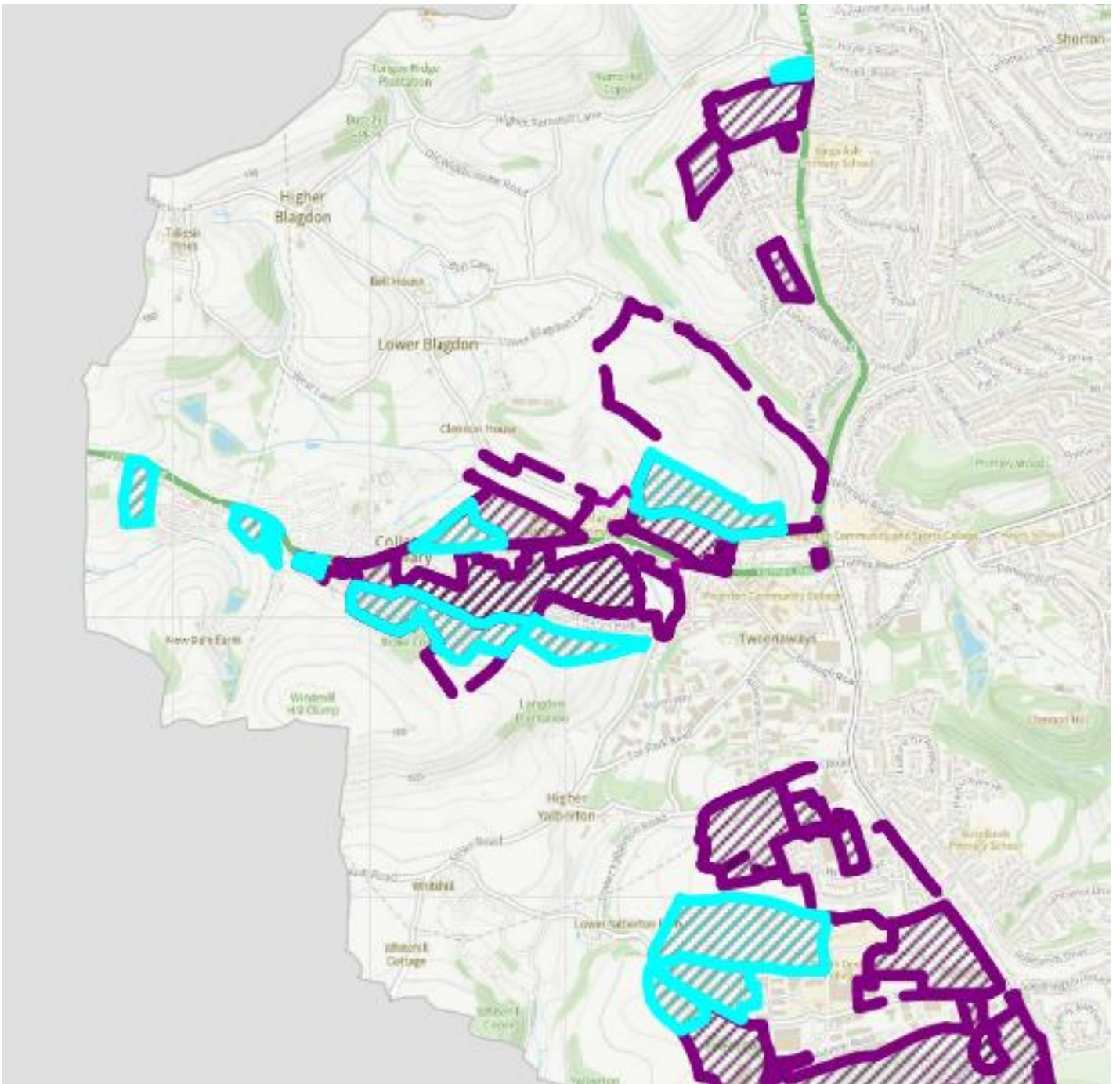
This option allows more greenfield development, but it could avoid the most sensitive areas, minimising the impact on the Special Area of Conservation, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Scheduled Monuments.

It could provide affordable housing and some sites for employment development, and provides the opportunity to focus infrastructure in a relatively concentrated area. There would need to be significant infrastructure improvements, to ensure that existing residents do not feel they are shouldering the burden.

Housing supply would remain below the level of need and there would still be a reliance on apartments and impacts on town centre heritage.

There would be at least some landscape and ecological harm.

Option 3: West of Paignton Inset: Potential sites (Note that other Option 3 areas are possible)



Option 4: All sites that have not been ruled out in principle

This includes all the sites in options 1 and 2 plus all of the sites which have significant environmental constraints (shown in amber), but not sites rejected as unsuitable (coloured red on the map). This option could provide between 470-500 dwellings a year. Under this option, all the amber sites shown on the map would have to be built on, which would have a significant environmental impact.

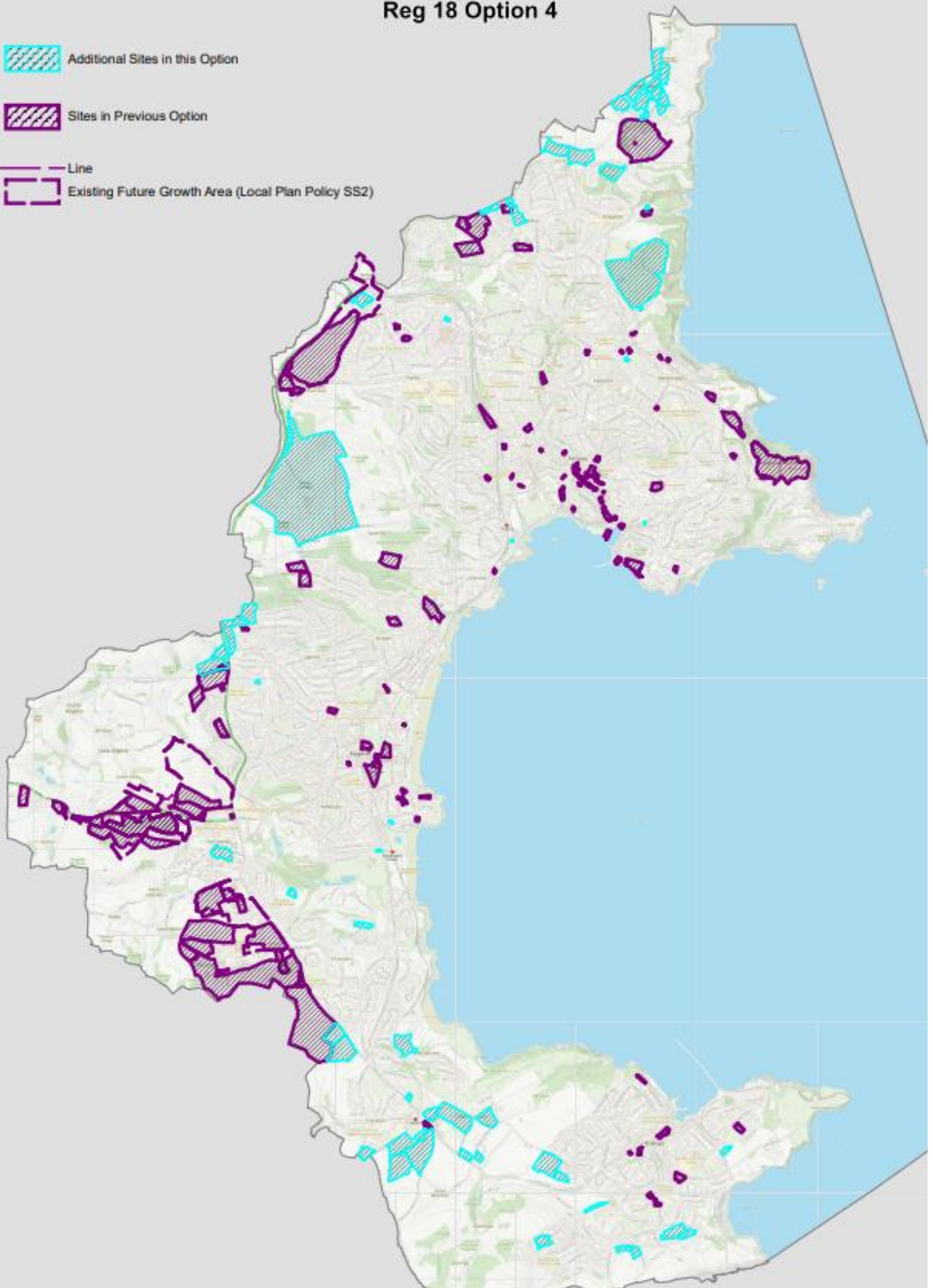
This option gets closer to meeting Torbay's housing need and would provide significant opportunities for affordable housing and employment. It is likely to have less impact on Conservation Areas. The option assumes that town centre regeneration sites will still be developed. However, in practice there would probably be less incentive to regenerate town centres of tackle difficult brownfield sites.

Planning for infrastructure would be difficult as development would not be within an overall spatial strategy.

There would be serious landscape and ecological harm including to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and potentially on scheduled monuments. There would be a serious impact on tourism due to further urbanisation.

Reg 18 Option 4

-  Additional Sites in this Option
-  Sites in Previous Option
-  Line
-  Existing Future Growth Area (Local Plan Policy SS2)



Option 5: Meeting full needs (as required by Government)


To achieve a growth rate of around 600 dwellings per year, all sites including many rejected within the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment as unsuitable for development would need to be allocated. These unsuitable sites are shown red on the map, but any greenfield site is likely to be vulnerable to development.

In theory this option meets Torbay's housing need and there would significant opportunities to provide additional employment land.

However, in practice, this level of development is unlikely to be deliverable and the environmental harm would be significant.


There would be significant harm to tourism due to further urbanisation.


Reg 18 Option 5

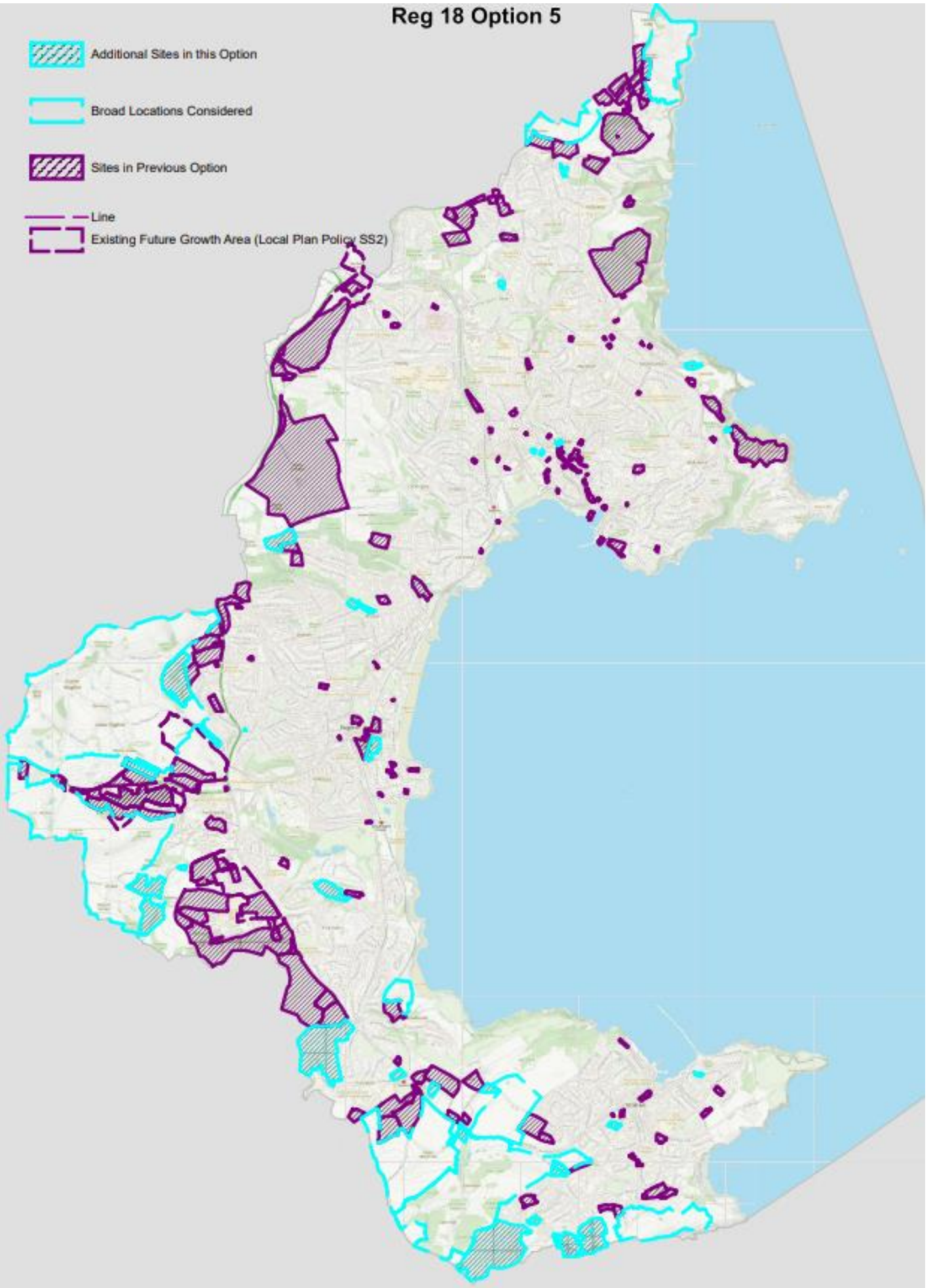
 Additional Sites in this Option

 Broad Locations Considered

 Sites in Previous Option

 Line

 Existing Future Growth Area (Local Plan Policy SS2)



Hybrid Option

A hybrid option would be for the Local Plan to contain a split target, with a lower minimum requirement, but a more ambitious target specifically for urban regeneration sites. This would be an unusual approach and we are interested in hearing views on how such a “brownfield first” approach could be effective.

Options Maps

More detailed lists of sites shown on this options map are included within the full consultation document. The Map below seeks to summarise the sites being considered in this consultation. More detailed options maps, which can be viewed at a larger scale are available at [Local Plan Update - Torbay Council](#)

Further information

What about brownfield sites?

All of the options will continue to promote urban regeneration and the redevelopment of brownfield land, and make allowances for "windfall sites" (i.e., those sites which are not allocated in the Local Plan). It may be possible to boost numbers in the built-up area if the Local Plan adopts a clear policy supporting tall buildings, the redevelopment of town centres or holiday accommodation. However, such schemes may take several years to deliver.

Whilst Torbay has above average numbers of long term (6 months or longer) empty homes, the majority of them are lower value apartments. Bringing vacant dwellings back into use will be valuable to regenerate urban areas, but is unlikely to significantly boost numbers.

Can you deliver?

The Council will be tested on how many homes are actually built, through the Government's Housing Delivery Test. Therefore, any option must have a realistic prospect of being delivered. This applies to high growth options where there is no willing landowner. It also applies to options that just seek to build town centre apartments for which there is limited demand and take time to deliver, for example due to complex land ownerships.

Can we assume people won't move to Torbay?

We know that Torbay's population rise is due to people moving into the area from elsewhere in the country. The predominant pattern is that young people leave, and older people move in. We can't stop inwards migration, and it is an element of housing need. The option chosen will however affect the affordability of homes for people moving into the area as well as those already resident.

Where will people work?

The Local Plan Update focusses on housing options. Larger sites will be required to provide part of the land for employment purposes. The growth options have implications for the amount of employment land that can be provided. Options 1 and 2 would provide the least option for employment land, and may increase pressure to convert or redevelop existing employment land. Conversely Options 4 and 5 present more opportunity to allocate land for employment, although the shortage of flat sites may hamper the viability of such land for employment uses.

What about the Infrastructure?

We would welcome your views on infrastructure needs. In particular, whether there are any particular gaps that would allow more growth if they could be filled. This includes physical infrastructure (e.g., roads, flood defences, water and utilities etc.), social infrastructure (e.g., healthcare facilities, police capacity, affordable housing etc.), and environmental infrastructure (e.g., green corridors, open space etc).

As well as drawing on infrastructure (such as highway capacity, doctors' surgeries etc.) development can also help generate investment and keep facilities such as schools and shops viable.

Other Assessments

This consultation is part of a range of evidence and studies that will inform the update to the Local Plan. In particular, the Plan is subject to a Sustainability Appraisal, and Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment.

Next Steps

The Council has made no decision on these options. We want to hear your views.

We know that we are not faced with an easy choice, and we want to take as many views into account before reaching decisions on broad options or sites.

Our preferred method of response is through an online consultation questionnaire which will enable you to provide your views and help us to understand the key points.

You may also wish to submit written representations. These can be sent via email to future.planning@torbay.gov.uk or by post to:

Local Plan Consultation

Spatial Planning

2nd Floor North

Tor Hill House

Union St

Torquay

TQ2 5QW

The closing date for all consultation responses is 12 Noon on Monday 28th February 2022.

We will carefully consider feedback and use the comments received to help us decide on the next stage of the Plan. This will be a “Preferred Option” which will set out a draft of the proposed updated policies, site allocations and headline growth rates. We intend to publish this in Spring 2022. The Preferred Option will be subject to further public consultation, and will then be submitted to the Secretary of State who will appoint a planning inspector to examine the Plan.