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TORBAY STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE STUDY

REVIEW OF VALUED LANDSCAPES

Final report
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Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.2	Background and context to this paper	1
2	Review of existing and current accepted landscape criteria	3
3	A potential approach to identifying and designating valued landscapes in torbay	6
4	Application to Torbay – identification of potential landscapes of higher value	8

Appendices

Appendix 1 Figure 4.1 – Torbay Strategic Landscape Study Character Assessment

Figures

Figure 3.1 An approach to valued landscape identification

Tables

Table 2.1 Landscape value criteria applied in the Torbay Strategic Landscape Study Vol.2

Table 4.1 Valued landscape attributes of the LCTs in Torbay; towards a potential identification of valued landscapes

Document history

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This short paper was produced by Stephenson Halliday (an RSK Group Company), alongside the Strategic Landscape Study¹ that they have developed for Torbay Council as part of the evidence base for the emerging *Torbay Local Plan Update: A Landscape to Thrive*.
- 1.1.2 It is intended to be read as a companion volume to the documents that make up the Strategic Landscape Study. It provides initial guidance on criteria-based approaches to identification and designation of valued landscapes in Torbay. Furthermore, the paper reinforces the integrated approach to landscape and spatial planning put forward in the Strategic Landscape Study, and the role of the Study as a suite of dynamic documents, which will have live application in shaping the landscapes of the Torbay local authority area during the Local Plan period and for future generations.
- 1.1.3 The paper takes account, where relevant, of recent and widely accepted industry standard guidance on landscape value outside of designated landscape interests, notably guidance by the Landscape Institute² and NatureScot³.
- 1.1.4 The Review of Valued Landscapes paper is an independent consultant's report, with the aim of providing expert knowledge and analysis to assist policy making. Torbay Council is not obligated to follow any specific recommendations.

1.2 Background and context to this paper

- 1.2.1 Torbay comprises a peri-urban landscape with a unique sense of place, surrounded by and encompassing truly outstanding, cherished landscapes valued at the national level. The southern part of Torbay is fringed by (and falls partly within) the South Devon National Landscape as well as forming parts of its visual and functional setting and demonstrating a number of its Special Qualities. Torbay's eastern boundary forms the 'English Riviera' coastline, which is of notable scenic quality and distinctiveness and also recognised through the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation (Local Plan Policy C2). The outstanding geological interest and diversity of Torbay is also recognised through its inscription as the English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark. At the local level, various aspects of Torbay's landscape are protected through local landscape designations including in urban and peri-urban areas (Urban Landscape Protection Areas or ULPA and Local Green Spaces or LGS) and through heritage designations with a strong relationship to character and sense of place such as the conservation areas. ULPA and Local Green Spaces are the subject of a

¹ The Strategic Landscape Study comprises four related studies the updated *Landscape Character Assessment of Torbay*, the *Landscape Sensitivity Assessment* in relation to residential/commercial development and renewable energy – wind and solar development, the *Open Space Review* and the *Policy Approach Recommendations* paper.

² Landscape Institute 2021, Technical Guidance Note (TGN) 02-21: Assessing landscape value outside national designations

³ NatureScot, 2020, Guidance on designating local landscape areas

separate review and assessment as part of the Strategic Landscape Study and as such are not discussed further here.

- 1.2.2 Yet, at the same, Torbay is a constrained authority area with need and aspiration to meet spatial planning, growth and development targets, not least in terms of its Housing Land Supply and in responding to macro level policy drivers such as climate resilience and nature recovery. Landscape and place are the setting for every aspect of our lives and form the spatial framework for the wide array of goods and services on which our lives depend. All of these factors reinforce the need for a landscape led approach to planning for change and growth, in a way that responds positively to the sense of place and landscape characteristics and sensitivities. This aligns with Paragraph 187 of the NPPF, which states that: *“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes”*⁴.
- 1.2.3 This need also responds to high level policy drivers and instruments such as the European Landscape Convention (ELC), 2000, to which the UK became a signatory in 2007. Core tenets of the ELC are that all landscapes matter and are of value to someone, irrespective of their designated status or perceived quality. The ELC also seeks to embed landscape considerations in all stages of the planning, plan-making and development processes, protecting the most valued characteristics of our landscapes and managing and planning for change in ways which have appropriate regard to the character and qualities of landscapes. As the ELC was made by the Council of Europe rather than the European Union (EU), the status of the ELC in UK planning is unaffected by the UK’s departure from the European Union in 2016.
- 1.2.4 Given the above, a calibrated and nuanced approach is needed to the identification of valued landscape in Torbay – a proportionate and balanced approach, which is also pragmatic, recognising that much of the landscape is already protected through landscape designation and other designated interests.

Structure of this paper

- 1.2.5 The remainder of this paper is structured as follows:
- **Section 2:** Review of existing/current widely accepted landscape value criteria.
 - **Section 3:** A potential decision tree approach to identifying and designating valued landscapes in Torbay.
 - **Section 4:** Application to Torbay – identification of valued landscape attributes.

⁴ NPPF 2024, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

2 REVIEW OF EXISTING AND CURRENT ACCEPTED LANDSCAPE CRITERIA

2.1.1 Discussion of approaches to landscape value has evolved considerably since the publication of the last edition of the national guidance on Landscape Character Assessment in 2014⁵. Most notably the Landscape Institute publication LI TGN 02-21⁶ identified a suite of comprehensive potential indicators for landscapes of value. The indicators presented in TGN 02-21 have directly informed the landscape value criteria used in the Torbay Strategic Landscape Study Volume 2: Landscape Sensitivity Assessments. These criteria are reproduced in Table 2.1 and are discussed in detail in Volume 2 of the Strategic Landscape Study.

Table 2.1 Landscape value criteria applied in the Torbay Strategic Landscape Study Vol.2

Criterion	Factors indicating higher value	Factors indicating lower value
<i>Landscape attributes</i>		
Designated scenic quality ⁷	Landscape within a national landscape designation such as the South Devon National Landscape, where the CRoW Act (2000) duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty applies. Areas within the setting of a national landscape designation with a strong representation of the special qualities of the designation.	No specific designation.
Natural Heritage	High presence of ecological or geological / geomorphological interest. Strong nature pathways and network.	Low presence of ecological or geological / geomorphological interest. Weak or no nature pathways and network.
Cultural Heritage	High presence of archaeology or historical interests, as well as strong sense of time depth.	Low presence of archaeology or historical interests; weak to no time depth.
Landscape condition	Landscape fully intact in good condition with few or no incongruous elements.	Landscape in a poor state of repair with many incongruous elements.

⁵ Tudor, C, Natural England, 2014, An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, NE579

⁶ Landscape Institute, 2021, Op Cit

⁷ Note that local landscape designations are likely to be an indicator of at least medium landscape value

Criterion	Factors indicating higher value	Factors indicating lower value
Cultural associations	Strong cultural associations with notable people, events or the arts, which contribute to perceptions of natural beauty.	No strong associations with notable people, events or the arts.
Distinctiveness	Presence of rare elements or features or rarity of the landscape itself. Landscape with a distinctive and clearly expressed character and/or with an important relationship to a settlement.	Commonplace elements and features, or the landscape itself. Lacking distinctive and strongly expressed character and with no important relationship to a settlement.
Amenity and recreation	Well used for recreation where experience of the landscape is important, or forms part of a view that is important to a recreational experience. May contain National Trails or other promoted routes.	Limited amenity/recreational function where experience of the landscape is important.
Perceptual (scenic)	Landscape with strong appeal to the senses, particularly visual appeal.	Landscape with no particular scenic / visual appeal.
Perceptual (other)	Remote, tranquil, peaceful or with a sense of wildness. Dark skies.	Busy with evidence of human activity, little or no tranquillity. Well-lit.
Function	Landscape with important blue/green infrastructure function or strong relationship that is important to a national landscape designation. Good provision of ecosystem services and high natural capital value and/or potential.	No important blue/green infrastructure function or important relationship with national landscape designation. Poor provision of ecosystem services and low natural capital value and/or potential.
<i>Visual attributes</i>		
Iconic views	Highly valued views of national or international importance which are important in relation to the special qualities of a designated landscape, the cultural associations of which are widely recognised in art, literature or other media. Views of very high scenic quality including those which are known historically for their picturesque and landscape beauty and are widely held in high regard.	Views of limited value or importance. Views which are not iconic and do not have scenic quality.
Views related to designated landscapes and landscape related features	Views from tourist routes, national trails, and other recognised visitor destinations or attractions. Views which are important in relation to the special qualities of a	Views that are not important to special qualities of the South Devon National Landscape, are not within the designated landscape or in its setting. Views

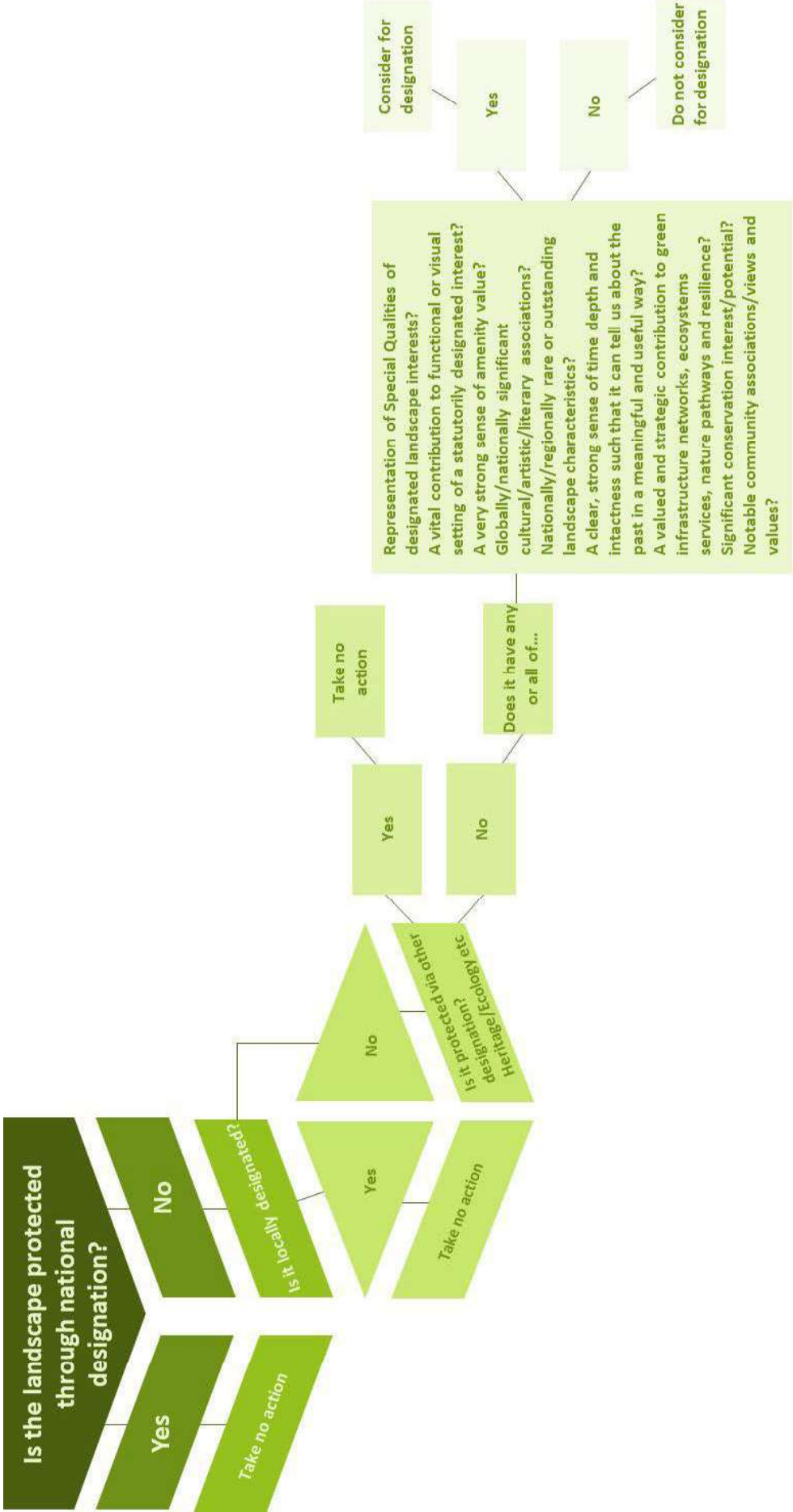
Criterion	Factors indicating higher value	Factors indicating lower value
	designated landscape including South Devon National Landscape or which are identified in specific studies of views. Views to, from and within the setting of designated landscapes (including Dartmoor National Park), historic and cultural sites and views recorded as important in relation to heritage assets (as recorded in the relevant citations accompanying the designation and taking account of Historic England's guidance on the setting of heritage assets.	which are not from tourist routes/attractions or national trails; nor to, from or within the setting of designated landscapes (including Dartmoor National Park), historic and cultural sites.
Regionally / locally valued views	Views which are identified in the local plan and/ or of regional or particular local importance including views from regionally and locally promoted trails. Views which appear on an Ordnance Survey, tourist map or within guidebooks.	Views that are not identified in the local plan or are of regional or local importance.
Views valued by the community	Views from locations where there is provision of facilities for their enjoyment, such as parking and interpretation. Views which are locally well known, well-frequented and/ or promoted as a beauty spot / visitor destination and may have significant cultural associations.	Views where there is no provision for facilities for their enjoyment; and are not locally well-known.

3 A POTENTIAL APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING AND DESIGNATING VALUED LANDSCAPES IN TORBAY

- 3.1.1 Figure 3.1 overleaf sets out a potential criteria-based approach to identification of new areas of valued landscape in Torbay. It is a decision tree approach, enabling consideration of whether a landscape is already designated or wholly protected through another non-landscape (i.e. heritage, ecology/nature conservation etc) means of valuation, significance and designation such that it enjoys similar protection to those landscapes so designated. These ‘top tier’ landscapes would be removed from consideration as they are all already designated at a national or otherwise alternatively high level. Such designations are underpinned by robust evidence-based rationales including documentation and analysis of Special Qualities or other similar forms of significance which elucidate their reasons for designation.
- 3.1.2 The focus in the diagram at Figure 3.1 is on the next tier –undesignated landscapes which could be worthy of consideration as valued landscapes, based on the valued landscape attributes which stem from their Key Landscape Characteristics as articulated in Volume 1 of the Strategic Landscape Study (Landscape Character Assessment of Torbay). The suggested criteria in the flow diagram overleaf are drawn from those in the Strategic Landscape Study which in turn are informed by recommendations in LI TGN 02-21. They should also be cross referenced where relevant with the information in Table 2.1 above.
- 3.1.3 As identified in NatureScot guidance⁸ which also forms part of the widely accepted industry standard guidance on valued landscapes, further work will be needed in relation to potential future valued landscapes. This will include inter alia, capturing of community and local views as to valued landscape areas. Such an exercise will help ensure that any future valued landscapes are supported by the communities who live within them.

⁸ NatureScot, 2020, Guidance on Designating Local Landscape Areas

Figure 3.1 An approach to valued landscape identification⁹



⁹ Cross-reference to landscape value criteria in Table 2.1

4 APPLICATION TO TORBAY – IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL LANDSCAPES OF HIGHER VALUE

- 4.1.1 Table 4.1 overleaf identifies the Landscape Character Types (LCTs) in Torbay and their valued landscape attributes which are summarised from Volume 1 of the Strategic Landscape Study. The table also notes areas that are already subject to designation or equivalent protection, recognising their landscape value. It also identifies particular features and attributes that could be considered for additional or further protection. This could be achieved through creation of a local designation or through application of the findings of the landscape evaluation contained within the Landscape Character Assessment.
- 4.1.2 The Council should encourage developers to use the Landscape Character Assessment as a baseline for informing place-based design of developments and sensitive siting of the same. The impact of development on key landscape features and characteristics and valued attributes should be assessed as part of an iterative approach to development design. Where impacts are found to occur, scheme design modification is preferably required to create a better scheme, removing adverse impacts or, as a last resort, mitigation to reduce potential adverse impacts.
- 4.1.3 The Council and developers should give priority to protecting the valued attributes of Torbay's landscape. Opportunities to introduce new features should be identified to compensate for loss or degradation elsewhere, where these are in line with the key landscape characteristics and Local Nature Recovery (LNR) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) targets. Character appropriate opportunities for landscape enhancement or restoration/to create greater environmental resilience should also be given full consideration as part of this process.
- 4.1.4 It is recommended that the Council considers developing a User Guide / Toolkit to guide planning officers, developers and other stakeholders in effectively applying the findings of the Landscape Character Assessment in both assessing and informing the design of future development. This would guide users through simple steps and signpost them to relevant information with the Landscape Character Assessment.
- 4.1.5 Any identification of new valued landscape areas would necessarily be subject to further finer grain landscape analysis, stakeholder engagement and wider considerations in the spatial planning balance.

Table 4.1 Valued landscape attributes of the LCTs in Torbay; towards a potential identification of valued landscapes

Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Summary of valued landscape attributes within Torbay LCTs	Existing designation within Torbay	Considerations for protection within Torbay
LCT 1B: Open Coastal Plateaux	Exposed, expansive landscape. Valuable limestone grassland and heathland habitats. Landmark features (e.g. exposed rock faces/geology and structures such as lighthouses). Network of footpaths facilitating access to remote coastal landscapes. Pockets of tranquillity. Iconic wide, unspoilt panoramic coastal views and out to sea. Expansive, elemental seascapes and big skies.	Within both the South Devon National Landscape and the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation.	N/A due to national and local landscape designation.
LCT 3A: Upper Farmed and Wooded Valley Slopes	Distinctive, elevated rolling landform and prominent hilltops. Clear views out to sea from landmarks. Areas of intimate spatial scale and enclosed character, associated with irregular medieval enclosures. Intricate historic field boundaries bounded by species rich hedgerows, often with mature hedgerow trees. Isolated rural and tranquil designed landscapes, open parklands and connecting woodlands. Strong rural character and sense of tranquillity away from nearby urban areas.	The LCT within Torbay around Collaton St Mary forms part of the setting of the National Landscape. Areas of the LCT outside of Torbay are washed over by the South Devon National Landscape.	Long views out to sea from landmarks such as at Gallows Gate are important and recognised as of intrinsic value locally. Nationally rare landscape features and finite landscape resources such as irregular medieval enclosures/anciently enclosed farmland and designed parklands are fundamental to the spirit of the place in this LCT.

Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Summary of valued landscape attributes within Torbay LCTs	Existing designation within Torbay	Considerations for protection within Torbay
LCT 3B: Lower Rolling Farmed and Settled Valley Slopes	Wooded, gently sloping landform forming the backdrop to settlement and creating a green break between areas of settlement. Rolling, sloping landform allied to varied land uses creates a patchwork rural landscape. Historic settlement vernacular and village cores imparts a sense of time-depth, as do parklands, remaining strip fields, orchards and the steam railway. A well vegetated landscape with a network of woodland including ancient replanted woodland, hedgerows, hedgebanks and orchards, contributing to local enclosure, seclusion and habitat connectivity.	Areas of the LCT within and outside of Torbay are washed over by the South Devon National Landscape. The LCT within the southern part of Torbay forms part of the setting of the National Landscape. Part of the LCT within Torbay also falls within the Undeveloped Coast designation.	Vernacular settlement, associated time-depth, survivals of nationally rare features such as medieval strip fields and hedgebanks/scattered historic rural lanes that also contribute to nature pathways and connectivity.
LCT 3E: Lowland Plains	Distinctive remnant historic features such as local stone walls, vegetated former lanes and railway lines. Woodland edges and hedgerow network providing links to wider green infrastructure connectivity. Handful of narrow, rural lanes.	Within both the South Devon National Landscape and the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation.	N/A due to national and local designation.
LCT 3F: Settled Valley Floors	Very small/discrete part in Torbay near Edginswell – part of a wider Devon Landscape Character Type. The small part of the settled valley floors LCT within Torbay is dominated by the A380 South Devon Expressway and its junction with Riviera Way / Hamelin Way.	No designation.	Hedgebanks contribute to nature pathways and connectivity.

Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Summary of valued landscape attributes within Torbay LCTs	Existing designation within Torbay	Considerations for protection within Torbay
LCT 3G: River Valley Slopes and Combes	Narrow, historic lanes with species-rich hedgerows and hedgebanks. Very small/discrete part in Galmpton and an area in Torbay on the Dart Estuary – part of a wider Devon Landscape Character Type.	Within both the South Devon National Landscape and the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation.	N/A due to national and local designation.
LCT 3H: Secluded Valleys	Peaceful, tranquil qualities and sense of complete detachment from urban areas. Valued woodland, historic parkland and riparian habitats contribute to wider variety of ecological features. Trees and woodlands are distinctive, as are historic features such as parkland, remaining traditional orchards and occasional medieval field patterns.	The secluded valley in the area north of Churston Ferrers is within both the South Devon National Landscape and the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation. Part of the secluded valley at Galmpton is within both the South Devon National Landscape and the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation. Other occurrences of this LCT within Torbay are undesignated.	The intrinsic value of the valleys and the sense of separation and detachment they provide in otherwise settled areas. Component features such as historic parkland, remnant medieval field systems and traditional orchards are highly valued landscape elements.
LCT 4C: Coastal Slopes and Combes with Settlement	Generally strong sense of separation from urban settlement. Wide, extensive views over the distinctive, folded, sparsely settled rural landscape.	The area of the small/localised occurrence of this LCT within Torbay to the east of the A380 is within the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation. Remainder is undesignated.	Rural character and sense of separation from the urban settlement.

Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Summary of valued landscape attributes within Torbay LCTs	Existing designation within Torbay	Considerations for protection within Torbay
LCT 4D: Coastal Slopes and Combes	Tranquil, remote and intimate qualities associated with complexity of landform and vegetation patterns and historic land and settlement patterns. Mature, dense woodlands. Expansive coastal views that appear and disappear with variation in landform and woodland cover. Extensive path network valued for recreation and sense of escapism, including promoted, formal and informal footpaths.	Within the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation.	N/A due to local landscape designation
LCT 4G: Low Lying Coast and Beach	Cultural/historic connections and features contributing to varied character and distinct charm of coastal tourist hotspots on the English Riviera. Aesthetic qualities created by the visual and physical relationship with the sea, sense of dynamic movement and nuances in light and colour. Woodland edges and parkland trees in greenspaces which form the backdrop, allied to more exotic and formal seafront plantings.	The parts of this LCT outside of the settlement boundaries are within the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation. A very small part of Broadsands beach lies within the South Devon National Landscape.	The visual and historic/associative qualities of the English Riviera are prevalent. This is particularly relevant to shoreline/coast management and climate resilient plantings.
LCT 4H: Cliffs	Distinctive, striking rock forms, creating prominent and widely visible local landmarks and skyline elements. Contrast of smooth and weathered geology, varied rock colours and the play of light, colour and dynamic movement created by the action of the sea. Diversity of geological and ecological features. Largely unspoilt and naturalistic characteristics.	The parts of this LCT outside of the settlement boundaries are within the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation. To the east and south of Brixham, occurrences of this LCT lie within the South Devon National Landscape.	Distinctive geology within the English Riviera and the associated striking features this creates.

Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Summary of valued landscape attributes within Torbay LCTs	Existing designation within Torbay	Considerations for protection within Torbay
LCT 4J: Harbours, Ports and Marinas	Rich historic character and sense of time-depth, vernacular and materiality. Aesthetic qualities created by visual and physical relationships with the sea and associated myriad reflections, nuances in colour and light, and sense of dynamic movement. Bustling, colourful character of harbours and fishing boats. Sylvan setting and backdrop created by wooded rocky headlands with stuccoed white villas and occasional terraces, along with lush exotic vegetation.	Parts of this LCT include or overlap with ULPA or LGS designation ¹⁰ .	Sense of time depth and historic townscape continuity created by the surviving vernacular architecture.
LCT 6: Offshore Islands	Distinctive, striking and prominent limestone rock forms, creating landmarks, orientation points and skyline elements. Contrasts created by juxtaposition of smooth and weathered limestone and the play of light, colour and dynamic movement created by the action of the sea.	With the exception of East Shag Rock, the offshore islands in Torbay are within the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation.	Distinctive geology within the English Riviera and the associated striking features this creates.

¹⁰ Cross reference with separate Torbay Open Space Study Part 1: Urban Landscape Protection Areas and Part 2: Local Green Spaces

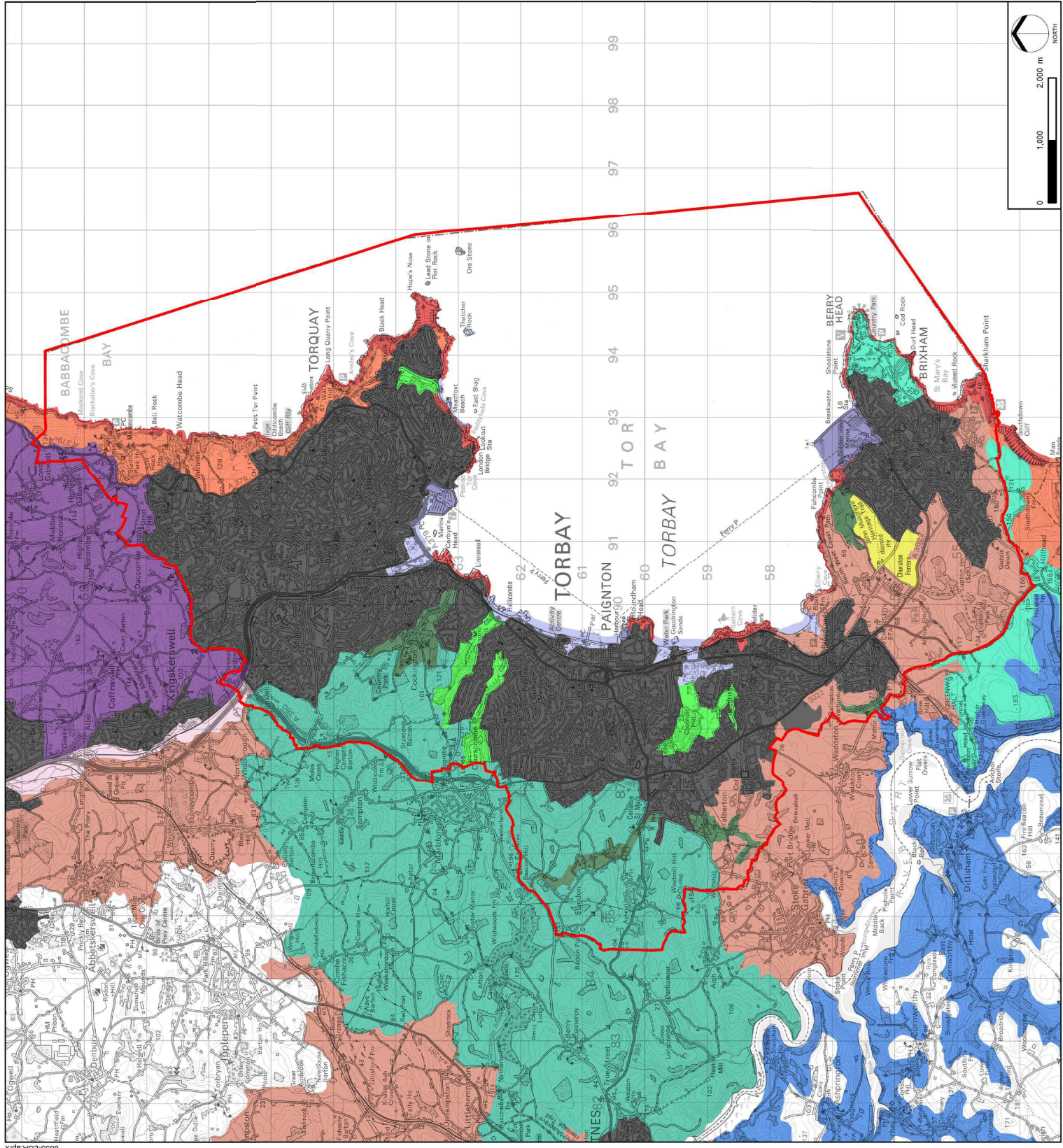
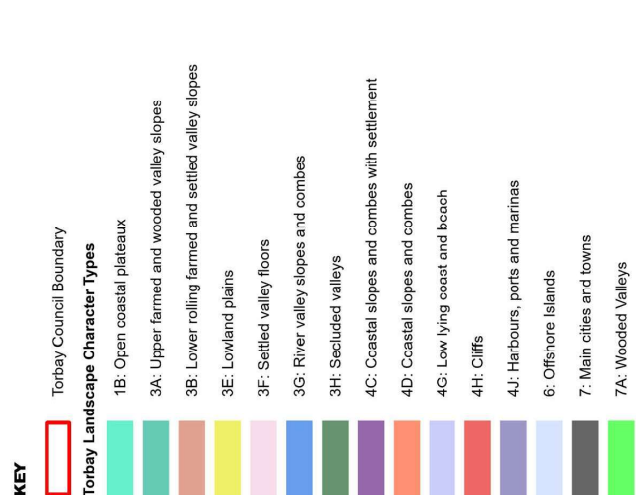
Landscape Character Type (LCT)	Summary of valued landscape attributes within Torbay LCTs	Existing designation within Torbay	Considerations for protection within Torbay
LCT7A: Wooded Valleys	Unspoilt, peaceful and naturalistic landscape with sense of isolation and contrast to surrounding urban areas. Valued accessible greenspace created by network of formal and informal paths winding through woodlands and connecting recreational spaces. Wooded backdrop provided by the steep valley sides to adjoining settlement areas in views inland from the sea.	Very small and localised parts of this LCT are covered by the edges of the Undeveloped Coast local policy designation.	The intact, vegetated greenspace network and associated sense of detachment this provides from urban areas.

APPENDIX 1: FIGURE 4.1 – TORBAY STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE STUDY CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

TORBAY STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE STUDY
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

FIGURE 4.1

Torbay Landscape Character Types



Projected Coordinate System: British National Grid