

Georgeham Parish (Crydda Community) Neighbourhood Plan

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 About Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning, introduced through the Localism Act 2011, enables communities to play a much stronger role in developing a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shaping the area in which they live and work.

Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been approved and agreed by a community referendum, it will become part of the development plan for the area, prepared by the local planning authority. Future decisions on new development proposals and planning applications are made using both the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.1.2 Process

In October 2015, Georgeham Parish Council decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish. The council applied to North Devon Council for permission to progress the Plan. North Devon Council agreed, and Georgeham Parish Council became the registered lead body for the Plan.

Initially, a sub-committee of six was set up, but it was agreed to involve as many people as possible from the community, especially younger representatives, in the process. This group met at intervals throughout the process. Many more joined, offering help to deliver questionnaires and, most importantly, spreading information about the Plan.

To avoid confusion about the extent of Georgeham Parish – which includes the village of Croyde as well as Georgeham – it was decided to refer to the parish as The Crydda Community, named after the stream which runs through the parish.

1.1.3 Community involvement

Much thought was given to promoting the project and involving as many people as possible. A website and a Facebook page were set up. An announcement and questionnaire were published in *The Crydda* parish magazine in April 2016, which is delivered to all residents. *The Crydda* questionnaire elicited 42 responses and Facebook 32.

In June 2016, a repeat questionnaire was delivered to all homes and known second homes. Two public meetings were held: in Croyde Village Hall on 7 June and Georgeham Village Hall on 15 June, which generated further responses.

Two further drop-in meetings were held in October 2016. The first, in Croyde on 6 October, focused mainly on housing. Graham Townsend, Lead Planning Delivery Officer from North Devon Council, was guest speaker.

The second, in Georgeham, was directed at local business, leisure and tourism. David Edgcombe, Projects Officer from North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, was guest speaker. More than 20 people attended each meeting but it was decided to hold a second meeting for businesses, on 26 October. Letters were also sent to all local businesses inviting input which elicited a few replies. In all, 20 responses were received from businesses, mostly from within the parish.



In November 2016, Croyde Area Residents' Association (CARA) conducted its own survey, because its members felt that Croyde had issues requiring specific solutions. Responses echoed those of the parish council questionnaires. A summary of the CARA's survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4.5, page 30, and the results of a Croyde property survey, also conducted by the residents' association, in Appendix 4.6, page 31.

On 31 January 2017, a meeting was held involving Graham Townsend and members of the original group, as well as members of CARA, to review our proposed Plan and its recommendations, prior to submission to North Devon Council for independent review to ensure that proper legal process has been followed and that the plan conforms with strategic local policy.

Throughout 2017 and 2018, further review meetings were held and work has continued to consult stakeholders, collect information and create a document suitable for submission. However, the completed plan could not be submitted until the Local Plan was adopted.

1.1.4 Responses received

Overall, about 100 written responses were gathered, plus additional verbal input. The responses were collated by Parish Councillor Mrs Verlie Meek and checked by Mrs Sam Hood and Mrs Jo Fitzgerald.

Responses indicate that most people are happy with the area, its amenities and community spirit. Concerns centred around fears that tourist numbers could increase too much, that too many houses were empty in the winter due to the large number of second homes/holiday lets and that house prices were high compared to local wages. There were also concerns about roads and traffic.

Other suggestions received, which were outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, have been directed to the Parish Council or local groups.

A summary of the responses can be found in the Appendices 4.1 and 4.2 (pages 24/25).

1.2 Georgeham Parish

1.2.1 Location

Georgeham Parish is located within coastal downland to the north-west of Braunton. Its principal settlements are the two very different villages of Croyde and Georgeham which are about 1.5 miles apart within the Crydda valley.

The hamlets of Forda and Cross, and the two farms of Hole, lie between the villages. Other hamlets are Pickwell on the high ground to the north, Putsborough on the road to Putsborough beach, North Buckland to the east and Darracott to the south on the old road leading to Braunton.

1.2.2 Population

Georgeham previously had an agriculture-based economy, but farming practices have changed. The remaining farms have diversified and are not major employers. Many agricultural workers have moved away, others have found alternative employment in service industries – mostly tourism based.

According to the latest available Office for National Statistics records, there were 1053

dwellings in the parish in 2011. Of these, 620 (59%) had at least one permanent resident and 433 (41%) had no usual residents. Social rented housing accounted for 30 dwellings.

Many retired people now live in the villages. Early retirees have also moved here, supplementing their income from the tourist trade. More recently, younger families have been drawn to the area and its amenities, taking advantage of developments in IT to work mostly from home. Other residents find employment outside the parish in neighbouring towns or further afield.

The current population is therefore a mix of long-term families and newcomers. They comprise a community which values the area, the community life and the chance to enjoy the rural and coastal amenities.

There is a need to retain and attract younger families to maintain a sustainable, year-round community.

1.3 Natural and historic environment

1.3.1 Landscape

Most of the parish lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The coastline is part of the Heritage Coast and a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area. We have a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) between Saunton Down and Baggy Point. The South West Coast Path runs the length of our coastline.

The North Devon Coastal Downs Landscape Character Assessment identifies six landscape types for the area:

- Steep open slopes, such as the north slope of Saunton Down
- Coastal slopes and combes with settlements, such as the Crydda valley
- Extensive intertidal sands, such as Croyde and Putsborough beaches
- Dunes, such as Croyde Burrows County Wildlife Site
- Cliffs, such as north and south faces of Baggy Point
- Downland, such as the tops of Saunton Down and Baggy.

The distinctive characters recognised are headlands, small catchments with spring-fed streams, historic field patterns with hedges (some stone faced), ecological mosaics, active dune systems and traditional buildings.

The assessment lists threats to the landscape including the following with examples likely within Georgeham Parish:

- Excessive tourism facilities, such as empty second homes, increased holiday park accommodation
- Traffic, such as speedy or congesting vehicle movements visible from viewpoints in the landscape
- Telecoms masts, including additions to those already in place
- Trampling, causing erosion of the dunes and downland footpaths on thin soils
- Abandonment of land, such as scrubbing up of a large proportion of the slopes of Saunton Down

- Intensification of agriculture, involving the removal of hedgerows to form larger fields and construction of conspicuous unsightly large barns
- Climate change and coastal erosion
- Renewables installations, unlikely to be permitted within an AONB but requiring vigilance
- Invasive species, such as ragwort, Japanese knotweed and non-native escapes from gardens into the landscape.

1.3.2 The built environment

Large parts of Croyde and Georgeham are designated Conservation Areas, as is the hamlet of Putsborough (see maps). In these areas buildings are mostly of cob or stone. The older parts of the villages and the hamlets are hidden among the surrounding hills.

It is easy for the landscape to be degraded piecemeal – an extra house with a fine view, a series of extensions resulting in a solid wall of buildings, a hedge replaced with a fence, a bank removed to widen an entrance. It adds up.

Some development is permitted by legislation and is therefore outside the local planning authority's control. Where development requires permission, the underlying objective should be to ensure that it is not detrimental to the valued landscape of the area which is so fundamental to its character within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is particularly important therefore that any new structures are assessed for the impact they will have on the wider setting, rather than being viewed in isolation.

1.3.3 Biodiversity

The Georgeham Parish Biodiversity Audit commissioned by Devon County Council in 2010 recorded a number of important UK Biodiversity Action Plan and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan priority species, including otter and brown hare, brown long-eared bat, rock sea-lavender, reed bunting, linnets, small heath, wall brown, dingy skipper, grizzled skipper, grass snake and adder.

Most of our roads outside the villages have high banks and hedges, remnants of woodland, with primroses, bluebells and violets in the spring. These banks are a valued characteristic of the area.

Further information on local wildlife can be found in Dr Williams' landscape assessment (Appendix 4.7, page 32).

1.4 Amenities

1.4.1 Services and facilities

Services and facilities are concentrated in the two main villages. Each has a village hall, a bus service, post office/store and public houses. Croyde also has several shops focused mainly on the tourist trade.

The parish church and school are both in Georgeham. Croyde also has a small church and a Baptist chapel. The parish shares recreational facilities: two play parks, beach volleyball courts, football pitch and a Multi Use Games Area.

The area is famous for the superb surfing beaches at Croyde and Putsborough. There is a network of paths and tracks, including a beautiful section of the South West Coast Path, recognised for its wildlife and geological interest, and Footpath 1 from Georgeham to the centre of Putsborough beach. Route 27 of the National Cycle network, also known as the Devon Coast to Coast, crosses the parish. Saunton Golf Club, featuring two championship courses, is just outside the southern boundary.

1.4.2 Education

Georgeham Primary School is vitally important to the community. It attracts families with young children and creates life-long links through the age groups. But its size and fluctuating numbers can cause problems. The school has submitted its own report – see Appendix 4.3, page 26.

1.4.3 Sewerage

The two main settlements are connected to a main sewer. The treatment works, on the coast at Croyde, is prone to problems due mainly to the large increase in population at peak holiday times. The hamlets are not connected to this system.

In addition, the larger camp sites have their own septic tanks which require emptying at peak holiday times. This means that tankers travel through Croyde village, adding to traffic congestion.

1.4.4 Broadband

Superfast broadband is available in some parts of the parish, but there are areas too far from BT's fibre-enabled boxes where it is not currently available.

1.5 Transport

1.5.1 Roads

The roads throughout the parish are mostly single carriageway with passing places at intervals, except for the B3231 south of Croyde which is double track. Most roads have no footpaths and are shared by trucks, cars, farm vehicles, cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians, including children, often in push chairs.

The main road through the parish – from St Mary's Road, Croyde, through Cross and Forda to Georgeham – is mostly single carriageway and can be extremely busy in the summer, carrying holidaymakers as well as local traffic.

The road provides the scenic alternative route to the A361 from Braunton to Mullacott Cross. It is an essential link for commercial deliveries between Croyde, Woolacombe and Ilfracombe, and is the bus route serving Croyde and Georgeham. In summer congestion on the road can cause considerable delays.

There is a 30 mph speed limit in the two villages (20 mph in Georgeham), but elsewhere the road is derestricted. Speeding through and between the two villages is common. This, and the level of traffic at peak times, can be dangerous.

1.5.2 Public transport

There is an hourly bus service from Georgeham to Croyde, to Saunton, Braunton and

Barnstaple. In the summer there is a half-hourly service from Croyde to Barnstaple.

The Tarka Line railway runs between Barnstaple and Exeter, linking with London Paddington and London Waterloo services.

1.5.3 Public rights of way and cycle routes

There are a number of rights of way comprising footpaths and bridleways used mainly for recreational purposes. There are, however, some gaps in the network – for instance from Georgeham to the coast, except via Pickwell, which still involves walking along the road.

The South West Coastal Path bounds the parish.

National Cycle Network routes 27 and 27B pass through the parish on public roads. There are no dedicated cycle ways, although Route 27B does connect to Marine Drive at Putsborough.

1.5.4 Road safety

Traffic congestion, parking provision and road safety are clearly significant concerns for many residents. We need to enhance road safety for all users, discourage speeding and, where practicable, improve and extend provision for pedestrians and cyclists to encourage these as alternative means of transport to the car.

Although issues such as speed reduction measures are outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, we will work with Devon County Council as the Local Highway Authority to develop proposals and ensure new developments contribute to these aims.

1.6 Economy

1.6.1 Tourism

Tourism dominates the parish economy. Tourism and the community are inextricably dependent on each other. The relationship is symbiotic.

Relatively few residents are totally dependent on tourism, but all benefit. The money generated by tourism allows many people to live here, creates full and part time employment and sustains the school, shops, pubs and businesses throughout the year. Other income derives from holiday letting and bed and breakfast accommodation.

Tourism generates money directly for local trades – electricians, plumbers, builders, house and garden maintenance firms – as well as indirectly because these businesses also serve the resident population. It has allowed farmers to diversify and supplement their income, without which they would probably struggle. In return visitors are able to enjoy an established, relaxed community.

The essential basis of the attraction of the area, for residents and tourists alike, is its beautiful rural setting by the sea, the headlands and the surrounding hills and the attractiveness of the old buildings, to say nothing of the South West Coast Path. The area is peaceful and safe.

Residents like the facilities for surfing, walking and other outdoor activities as much as the tourists. They also appreciate the amenities of shops, church, pubs, school and buses. However, not all residents and visitors like peace and quiet. A large proportion is more

attracted by the water sports for which the area is famous. Many are young, active and fun-loving. The needs of the two groups are sometimes in conflict and it can be difficult to maintain the balance.

The last 20 years have seen a real change in the needs of tourists. The season used to be short, focused on July and August, with a huge influx of tourists staying for one or two weeks. Now, walkers, cyclists and surfers have extended the season from Easter to October. Improved wetsuit technology has made surfing a year-round sport.

There is also a growing tendency for people to come for long weekends. The internet makes it easy to check weather and surf, book accommodation online and come at short notice. This means that the off season is much shorter, and there is less pressure on the summer holiday weeks.

Another factor is that many surfers are young, active and fun loving, leading to an increase in pop-up festivals and late night parties – a potential nuisance to those who prefer peace, relaxation and a change from noisy urban living.

The upside is that amenities dependent on tourism can offer better and more stable employment. The downside is a risk of alienating those who come for peace and quiet. Equally important is the need for the tourist economy to thrive, but this has to be done carefully, as much of our tourism rests on the attractiveness of the area and its location within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

1.6.2 Holiday accommodation

Visitors have a good choice of places to stay. There are two main holiday complexes, several camp sites, a wide range of bed and breakfast accommodation and a variety of houses and cottages available as holiday lets. Increasingly, holiday accommodation is promoted through online marketplaces such as Airbnb.

There is a growing concern that in the last few years self-catering accommodation is offering increasingly enlarged properties, filling each with up to 14 people. This is obviously profitable to owners, but it adds to problems with housing. Small units are bought, converted, and a small family house becomes a large accommodation unit, often for multi-occupation, often with a hot tub and limited parking.

This can distort house prices, cause noise nuisance to neighbours and result in narrow roads being used increasingly as parking space. A balanced holiday accommodation offer needs to be promoted.

1.6.3 Local businesses

Local businesses are largely focused on supporting and servicing the holiday industry. We need to encourage more diverse local businesses within the community.

The absence of fast broadband in some areas of the parish needs addressing. People working from home have suggested the creation of a hub in an area with fast broadband, which they can use as necessary.

Other trades people who work in the parish have requested a place to store their tools. If a suitable structure became available, it should be possible to access grants and form a group to progress it.

1.6.4 Agriculture

Agriculture has been central to the local community for thousands of years. In modern times, with the decline in traditional family farming and the growth in tourism, agricultural land has been converted into caravan sites and fields for seasonal camping.

Although agriculture is no longer central to the local economy, it is still the major land use in the parish, and farmers continue to shape and maintain our landscape, protect biodiversity and preserve our status within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Farming is fundamental to the sustainable future of the parish, the countryside, and the area's attractiveness as a rural holiday destination.

1.7 Housing

1.7.1 Market forces

The number of houses in the villages has been increasing for many years as the population has changed and grown. The last 15 years, in particular, have seen increased demand for holiday accommodation and for homes for people moving to the area. This, coupled with general house price inflation, has increased property values. Consequently, the local property market commands a premium. There is little on the market for sale under £300,000.

Local wages are low and many local people cannot afford to buy or rent in the parish. In September 2018, the average wage for the Barnstaple area was £20,585 a year, according to the compensation research organisation PayScale (www.payscale.com).

Sites for possible development are rare. New houses are often bought as holiday lets or by those seeking second homes. Many existing houses are sold to the same market. According to the property survey conducted by Croyde Area Residents' Association in 2017, 57% of homes in Croyde do not have a permanent occupant, and there are streets in the village with only one resident in the winter. In Georgeham an estimated 30% of properties are holiday homes.

The pressure on the housing market and the desirability of the area mean that developers are constantly seeking new sites and permission to build on them. However, the unlimited provision of houses risks reducing the visual attractiveness of the area (on which the economy largely depends) and putting greater strain on struggling infrastructure.

The Parish Council responded to the Local Plan's goal to build more than 50 new houses by 2031, and we have agreed on the sites. It is important that these sites should provide sufficient social rented houses and shared ownership houses to meet demand. Beyond that however, we seek to discourage the development of other, less suitable sites.

We believe that development should be genuinely plan-led. We need homes to encourage more permanent residents, but there is a risk that most new houses and also older houses will sell as second homes, or for holiday letting. While this is good for tourism we fear that pressure to attract it and fulfil its requirements will become too dominant.

1.7.2 Sustainable housing

As we are in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, neither wind farms nor solar farms

are likely. If further housing is proposed, eco-building (including solar panels, advanced insulation, heat pumps, etc.) should be seriously considered.

Where further one-off houses are proposed, they should also be encouraged to be energy neutral. Small developments, ideally employing local builders and trades people, should be encouraged to follow sustainable housing principles, such as those used in the Pentre Solar 'ecohamlet', a new development in the Welsh village of Glanrhyd.

1.8 Summary of key policy drivers

We wish to maintain as much of the existing landscape and do as little harm to the environment as possible. In particular, we wish to keep the rising ground, headlands, hills and horseshoe shape of Croyde free from further development.

We want to improve existing amenities. The sewerage system is barely adequate and has trouble with large variations in user numbers. High speed broadband should be available throughout the parish.

Traffic congestion, parking provision and road safety are clearly significant concerns for many residents. We need to discourage speeding. Whilst we acknowledge that speeding and road status matters are outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, being matters for Devon County Council as the highway authority, we believe it would be reasonable to ask County Highways to reinstate the status of the road through Georgeham to the Woolacombe – Mullacott road as a continuation of the B3231.

We should encourage tourism, on which much of the economy depends, without numbers overwhelming the community or degrading the area. This requires a sensitive approach. Our pressing concern is to balance the needs of tourism against the need for a strong resident community. We don't want a situation where we exist only for tourists. We want the area to be a place which residents and holidaymakers alike can enjoy all year round.

2 Vision and objectives

2.1 Our vision

Our vision is to progress as a sustainable community, striking a balance between meeting the needs of the current and future population and maintaining a steady growth in the local economy, particularly tourism, without destroying the area's beauty and attractiveness.

2.2 Our objectives

2.2.1 Community and heritage

To strengthen and protect the parish as home to a varied cultural mix of residents and visitors, whilst preserving this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and to preserve and build on our sense of community by enhancing existing facilities and to provide access to these for visitors.

2.2.2 Local economic development

To facilitate a resilient local economy, with a thriving entrepreneurial culture that actively supports healthy, sustainable living and which will offer a diversity of employment; and to support the enjoyment of sports and leisure activities, all without detriment to the environment.

2.2.3 Housing and the built environment

To support the provision of affordable and principal residence housing so that the area continues to be a place where people of all ages can live and work.

2.2.4 Open and green spaces

To protect, promote and enhance sensitive landscapes, habitats and open spaces, so that open and green spaces (including beaches), within and between settlements, are safeguarded from any future unsuitable development.

2.2.5 Well-being, sports and leisure

To continue to provide facilities and amenities to meet the needs of the resident population and the seasonal influx of visitors, so that all may pursue healthy and safe living.

2.2.6 Transport

To support and promote sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling, and to encourage the continuation of a regular bus service between Georgeham and Barnstaple.

2.2.7 The built environment

To understand, enhance and positively manage the built environment of the parish to ensure the preservation of its character, and achieve future sustainable and sensitive design.

3 Proposed policies

3.1 General development policy

3.1.1 Objectives

- a) To specify the general criteria that development proposals will be expected to meet, in order to achieve a consistent high standard throughout the area.
- b) To ensure that developments are of a scale and use appropriate to the area, and are located so as to minimise visual impact within the landscape or built environment.

3.1.2 Justification

Consideration of development principles in a general policy eliminates repetition of the criteria in other policies. The siting of new development should respect the qualities of the natural and built environment that provide local character and distinctiveness. The integration of development with its surroundings, in both rural and settlement areas, is a significant factor in limiting its impact in both the immediate locality and the wider landscape.

3.1.3 General development principles underpinning our policies

Proposals will be supported where they meet relevant planning policies contained within this Plan (and overarching national and local planning policies) providing they meet the following developmental principles:

- a) The size, scale and use of any proposed development (whether new build, extension or conversion) is sensitive to its surroundings. In particular, development should demonstrate that it minimises adverse impacts on neighbouring residences and reflects the housing and built environment policy proposals (Section 3.4, page 15);
- b) There is no significant adverse impact (visual or otherwise) on the area's landscape in line with our open space policy proposals (Section 3.5, page 19). Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have minimised landscape impact on the open countryside and coastline, from both the seaward and landward aspects;
- c) Where possible, sites are screened by landform and locally appropriate features, such as trees, hedges, banks and stone walls in the traditional manner of the area;
- d) On the outer fringes of the built-up settlement areas, proposals incorporate appropriate boundary treatments;
- e) Access to the site is provided or improved to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority, and in keeping with the surrounding rural landscape, with particular attention to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists;
- f) Proposals have a positive contribution towards open spaces, respecting the amenity, recreational and wider environment value of existing spaces and contributing to their enhancement;
- g) Development design in settlement centres is reflective of or complementary to the existing structures;
- h) Development proposals should take account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment. This includes minimising the impact of noise, protecting tranquil areas prized for their amenity value and limiting the impact of artificial light pollution on local amenities, intrinsically dark landscapes and wildlife.

3.2 Community and heritage

3.2.1 Objectives

To protect and enhance buildings and spaces of heritage, and community value, ensuring the area remains a culturally rich place to live and visit, within its context of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

3.2.2 Justification

During consultations, the community identified public places, spaces and buildings that they would like to see protected and retained.

These include the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the existing conservation areas, the churches, the fields behind the beach in Croyde Bay and at Downend, and the sand dunes (see photographs, Appendix 4.8, pages 38 to 43).

3.2.3 Proposed policies for community and heritage

CH1: Community assets

Proposals for development which would have an impact on community assets should be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the asset and the impact of the proposal upon its significance. In considering the acceptability of such proposals, special regard will be given to the desirability of preserving the spaces, buildings or their settings, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Development proposals involving retention of key listed and unlisted heritage assets (either in public or private use) and their re-use as community facilities or for small scale economic purposes will be supported.

Proposals for redevelopment of key listed and unlisted heritage assets will only be supported where reasonable and sustained attempts have been made to secure their continued community and/or economic use as demonstrated through the submission of an assessment of the viability of the existing use.

CH 2: Panoramas, vistas and views

Due to the coastal position and farming landscape of the area, there are important panoramas, vistas and views which contribute to the quality and character of the coast, countryside and townscapes within the parish. Development should not compromise the special panoramas, vistas and views, such as those shown in the photographs in Appendix 4.8, pages 38 to 43.

CH3: Education

This Plan recognises the central importance of the school to the long term character and viability of the community as a whole. Proposals for the development and/or expansion of Georgeham Primary School will be supported subject to meeting relevant policies relating to the built environment.

3.3 Local economic development

3.3.1 Objectives

- a) To provide support for small businesses that will contribute to a resilient local economy;
- b) To encourage a diverse range of retail and service businesses that meet the needs of residents and visitors and increase rural employment;
- c) To support agriculture within the area, in order to enhance economic diversity, productive capacity and rural employment;
- d) To ensure that development related to the tourism industry has economic, social and environmental benefits for the surrounding area.

3.3.2 Justification

As part of a long-term strategy, the area needs a range of shops and businesses. In order to promote a diverse and resilient local economy, opportunities for small and medium sized businesses will be supported.

Providing space for small and micro-businesses will also contribute to opportunities for higher skilled employment and self-employment in the area. Micro-level businesses (employing fewer than 10 people) will be encouraged.

Social, economic and environmental benefits can be wrought from sustainable rural and coastal enterprises. Appropriate development in rural and coastal areas can also make an important contribution to the local economy and should be supported. Employment in agriculture and other traditional activities has declined, but remains an important part of the area's economy.

In addition, development pressures from the settlements on agricultural land need to be balanced with the need to protect this non-renewable resource. Supporting its continued productive use is an important part of this balance.

The impact of any development on the character of the countryside will be reduced if existing farm buildings are re-used but, where new buildings are necessary, they should be closely integrated with those already there and be energy efficient, incorporating renewable energy sources as much as possible.

Tourism is currently the prime economic driver in the area, but it is placing pressure on local residents, and in particular the village of Croyde. It is important to strike a balance between social, economic and environmental requirements.

The future of tourism is highly dependent on its basic resource – the landscape, beaches, wildlife and character of the area – and developments within the industry need to nurture and protect this resource.

3.3.3 Proposed policies for local economic development

LED 1: Open workspace

Proposals for small open workspace development and employment will be supported. Open workspaces allow small and micro businesses to share space and resources

on a flexible basis. They are suitable for the needs of micro and growing businesses, providing business support and a collaborative environment.

At their best, open workspaces support economic growth and the regeneration of neighbourhoods, help address disadvantage, and offer a lifeline to the area's creative sector. They are key to maintaining the dynamism and inclusivity of the local economy and cultural life.

LED 2: Agricultural development

Proposals for agricultural development requiring planning permission (i.e. outside of permitted development rights) essential to agricultural or a farm diversification project will be supported provided that:

- a)** They are sited, where practical, in or adjacent to an existing complex (the immediate boundary of the existing buildings) and, where practicable, utilise existing buildings;
- b)** Where the proposals will generate a significant demand for travel, they can be served by public transport, walking and cycling.
- c)** They make a continuing contribution to the economic viability of an existing farm unit.

Where the exercise of permitted development rights requires prior approval then this should reflect the above principles in so far as they relate to siting, design and materials.

LED 3: Camping and caravan sites

Development of new sites or the extension or intensification of existing sites for caravans and tents, including static or other year-round stationed units, where these require permission, will be supported only where there would be no harm to the character of the countryside, and the site is capable of being effectively screened by landform, trees or planting.

The layout of such units will be required to avoid a rigid pattern which would not be in keeping with the surroundings. Ancillary facilities to serve visitors staying on the site should seek to blend sympathetically with the landscape and surroundings.

On touring sites, a seasonal restriction will be sought if identifiable harm to the character or amenity of the countryside would arise from year-round occupation.

The type of unit will be limited where the approach roads cannot accommodate safely the full range of touring units.

3.4 Housing and the built environment

3.4.1 Objectives

- a) To safeguard the sustainability of the settlements in the parish, whose communities risk being eroded by the number of properties that are not permanently occupied, and to limit the provision of large multi-occupant holiday lets in the guise of private housing.
- b) To make significant contribution towards meeting the local demand for affordable housing.
- c) To encourage the creation of mixed developments which are balanced in terms of housing type and tenure, and are socially inclusive.
- d) To ensure the proper management of any development following the commitment of all allocated sites, and to ensure that any such development makes the maximum possible contribution to redressing the balance between permanent residency and holiday accommodation.
- e) To recognise and maintain the superior quality and particularly distinctive character of the built environment, and the historic cores of the settlements and hamlets (see Conservation Area maps, Appendix 4.8, pages 36 and 37).
- f) To recognise the importance of individual components of character and distinctiveness seen throughout the historic environment, and conserve and enhance these.

3.4.2 Justification

These objectives are designed to meet the housing needs of local people, to bring greater balance to the local housing market, to create new opportunities for people to live and work in the area, and to strengthen the community and local economy.

The plan aims to support full-time principal residence housing. Without a healthy proportion of permanent residents our main communities risk becoming ghost villages.

To keep a balance of population permanently resident in the area, more smaller housing units are needed, and more socially rented housing is required. As of October 2018 there were 25 applicants on the Housing Needs register.

The community highlighted the lack of suitable housing for young people who had grown up in the area and who wished to remain, older people who wished to downsize and remain in the area, and single people who work in the area and work unsocial hours.

Some of the problems are exacerbated by the poor provision of public transport and limited car park facilities.

The community values its school, churches, and local amenities. The post offices, shops, pubs and cafes remain viable because of the resident population who sustain these businesses through the winter months.

The balance of permanent residents to holiday makers in Croyde village has changed dramatically in the last 10 years; holiday accommodation now exceeds homes for permanent residents. The trend towards holiday home purchase in the area has also led to the over-development of individual properties, and exacerbated parking problems in some streets and lanes.

Some areas of Croyde – and now parts of Georgeham – are increasingly at risk of becoming overpopulated with visitors, as properties are enlarged and reconfigured internally to accommodate more people. These properties are often registered as large family homes, but an internet check reveals that this is not their actual or intended use.

Therefore, occupiers of homes with a principal residence condition should be required to keep proof that they are meeting the condition, and to provide this proof should the District Council request it. Proof of principal residence is, for example, being on the local electoral register or being registered for and attending local services such as healthcare.

All undeveloped land adjoining the existing built-up areas is agricultural land, and is in beneficial agricultural use. If any of these areas are to be given over for development, the community should receive the maximum benefit from them in terms of strengthening the balance of permanent residents to holiday makers, and in terms of contributing towards meeting the need for affordable housing.

The North Devon and Torridge Local Plan requires the provision of a minimum of 54 dwellings in the settlements of Georgeham and Croyde. The parish has met this requirement through the allocation of new housing sites in the Local Plan and other housing completions; therefore any further applications to build more dwellings should contribute to creating a resilient and thriving community.

Within all character areas, the use of modern materials is not ruled out as long as they can be justified in relation to the context and characteristics (specifically the appearance) of traditional construction methods and materials. The positive contribution of modern design is welcomed provided that the modern elements do not dominate within areas of traditional construction and appearance.

3.4.3 Proposed policies for housing and the built environment

H1: The built environment and character areas

New developments and renovations must respect the volume, height, street-lines and roof-lines (including chimneys) of the nearby streetscapes, and use appropriate materials to preserve and enhance distinctive streetscapes in the character areas.

Applications for development outside development boundaries should demonstrate that they need to be located in open countryside. They should show that impact on the landscape has been analysed and minimised and that any proposed development will preserve or enhance the unspoilt nature of the landscape.

General rural development on the fringes of existing settlements should contribute positively to the appearance of the settlement when viewed from the surrounding countryside.

Where a proposal affects the setting of a listed building or is within or adjoining a Conservation Area, it will be expected to demonstrate how it contributes positively to the quality of the historic environment.

Proposals for new shop fronts will be permitted provided that they relate to the scale and proportion of the building and frontage in which they are to be situated.

H2: Design principles

All new development should reflect good design principles. Proposals should:

- Respect the scale and character of the existing built environment
- Follow established building lines and boundary treatments, unless special justification can be demonstrated for departing from them
- Use good quality materials that will complement the best existing buildings and contribute positively to the character of the surrounding area
- Adopt the principles of sustainable drainage, by storing or re-using surface water at source, decreasing flow rates to watercourses and infiltration techniques to avoid downstream flooding and deterioration of river water quality
- Provide adequate off-road parking to avoid contributing towards traffic congestion
- Provide enclosed rubbish and recycling storage to discourage bins from being stored on roads
- Provide secure cycle storage to discourage private car use for short journeys
- Incorporate low carbon solutions into designs wherever practicable and achieve as high a *Building for Life 12* rating (the industry standard endorsed by government for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods) as possible.

In addition, applications for house extensions to create additional bedrooms should include off-road parking provision proportionate to the number of people housed.

H3: Housing developments

Proposals for housing and mixed-use developments that result in a net increase of six or more dwellings will be subjected to the following criteria:

- a) Affordable housing should be provided on the same site as any open market housing
- b) The dwellings should be occupied by local people whose housing need meets the local authority's standard definition and housing policy.

H4: Principal residence requirement

New open market housing will only be supported where there is a restriction to ensure its occupancy as a principal residence. Sufficient guarantees should be provided of such occupancy restriction through the imposition of a planning condition or legal agreement.

Principal residences are defined as those occupied as residents' sole or main residence, where residents spend the majority of their time when not working away from home. The condition or obligation will require that they are occupied only as the primary residence of those entitled to occupy them.

H5: Development of Rural Exception Sites

Our development boundaries (see maps, Appendix 4.8, page 35) should always be respected to avoid any further encroachment on the hillsides or the green spaces in and around our main communities.

Development of Rural Exception Sites outside these boundaries may be considered only

if the site forms a logical extension to the existing settlement area and is not an isolated development in the countryside.

The purpose of such development should be primarily to redress the balance of housing stock in the area in terms of the size of units and affordable social rented housing demand. Therefore the number, type, size and tenure of dwellings should reflect needs identified through the local housing register.

H6: Extensions and additions to existing housing stock

Applications for extensions and additions to existing properties will be considered in the context of the housing and built environment objectives. In addition, where practical and space allows, it will be a requirement that all such extensions and additions should demonstrate that the property has adequate off-street parking, suitable for the number of people who could occupy the property. Where space does not permit the provision of adequate parking, this requirement shall be weighed against the wider economic and any other benefits of the proposed extension or addition.

Development proposals that would result in the loss of off-street car parking will not be permitted. All refuse bins and recycling containers should be stored securely on the premises, and covered or lidded.

H7: Multi-occupation holiday units

We will discourage the conversion of unsuitable small or standard houses into large multi-occupation holiday accommodation units. Applications to convert or extend properties to be potentially suitable for use as a multi-occupancy lets should only be approved on condition that appropriate change-of-use, licensing, health and safety and fire risk regulations are met before they can operate as holiday accommodation, as is the case for guest houses, etc.

3.5 Open spaces and the natural environment

3.5.1 Objectives

- a) To safeguard the environmental resources of the coast and countryside in the parish, so the special character and quality may be available for the enjoyment, appreciation and recreational use of the resident community and visitors for this and future generations.
- b) To protect those aspects of the natural environment that provide habitats for local flora and fauna, and to ensure that the value of the natural environment is given due weight when applications for development are considered
- c) To safeguard trees, woodland, hedgerows and Devon banks which make a significant contribution to the environment and character of the area
- d) To protect development sites and areas around them from pollution, therefore considering health and wellbeing of permanent and temporary inhabitants, as well as adhering to the National Planning Policy Framework's desire to achieve sustainable development whilst protecting the natural and built environment without compromising the needs of future generations.
- e) To ensure that no development has significant adverse effect on the landscape setting of the settlements in the parish, and does not result in the merging of settlements.
- f) To retain and improve open areas within settlements that have amenity, environmental or other value. This includes green fingers, corridors or wedges which enable the countryside to penetrate the built-up area and help maintain a rural character and appearance.
- g) To protect and, where practicable, extend the rights of way network, which is particularly important in facilitating access to the countryside and providing links between settlements, green spaces and the coast.

3.5.2 Justification

Our landscape and environment are of outstanding value in attracting visitors and new residents. The landscape of the area reflects the inter-relationship between the physical and climatic elements, and human activities from ancient times to the present day.

The role of farming and agricultural stewardship of the land are key factors which have helped to shape and preserve the landscape, as well as contributing to the local economy.

Our natural environment is also important to the wildlife of the area, with the continuity and integrity of natural features providing valuable habitat and interconnected corridors for many species.

The character and special identity of the coast and countryside are cherished by residents and visitors alike, and make a valuable contribution to the identity of the parish. Their special significance is recognised by statutory, national and countrywide designations, including the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The settlements within the parish have distinctive characteristics. The undeveloped tracts of countryside surrounding or on the edge of the hamlets provide attractive settings for the built-up areas, which is important to the character of the area. Such areas are

frequently significant in helping to preserve the most typical views of a town or village and providing the best views of the surrounding countryside from within the settlement.

The parish has many footpaths, the most notable being the South West Coastal Path. They provide an invaluable link to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and great landscape and coastal character, as well as opportunities for recreation, walking, horse riding and cycling.

Furthermore, they allow people to move about without always having to use narrow country lanes which frequently do not have pavements and are often heavily congested with traffic.

A large part of the area comes under AONB status. Land outside these areas is agricultural land which is a non-renewable resource and may be needed for future food production so must be protected for future generations.

These areas also contribute to the special identity of the area in terms of ecological, amenity, recreational or agricultural value. Respondents in consultations felt strongly that views around the parish, which make it such a special place to live, should be protected.

3.5.3 Proposed policies for open and green spaces

OGS 1: Landscape spaces and open spaces

Development proposals will be supported if they present a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment demonstrating that there would be no significant adverse landscape impact, or that the benefits outweigh any impact and that harm is mitigated. Supporting photographs should be taken at normal eye level.

Development will be supported if it does not significantly harm the landscape character, amenity, nature conservation, historic, archaeological or geological values of the coast, shoreline, beaches, adjacent coastal waters and countryside. Recognition should be given to the value of the moving dune system – practically, visually and as a habitat for wildlife.

Development will be supported if there would be no adverse environmental impact in terms of the number of trips generated, or over-reliance on cars.

Development will be supported if the site is capable of being integrated effectively into the surrounding landscape through landform and appropriate planting.

OGS 2: Flora and fauna

Development proposals which have no adverse effect on the integrity or continuity of landscape features and habitats of local and national importance for wild flora and fauna may be supported. Proposals which incorporate conservation and/or appropriate habitat enhancement to improve biodiversity may be supported.

OGS 3: Trees, woodland, hedgerows and Devon banks

Development should retain and incorporate trees, woodland, hedgerows, and Devon banks which make a significant contribution to the character of the landscape,

settlements, nature conservation, local amenity or environmental character of their surroundings.

OGS 4: Disturbance and pollution

Developments which are likely to generate disturbance by noise, light, fumes, or dust will be permitted only where they are compatible with surrounding uses.

OGS 5: Settlements and edge of settlements

Proposals for development on the edge of settlements should not have significant adverse effect on the landscape, and should not result in the merging of settlements.

OGS 6: Open areas within settlements

Development which would result in the loss of any open space in the settlements which contribute to the character, local amenity or environmental quality of their surroundings should be avoided.

OGS 7: Rights of way

Development which would directly or indirectly affect the existing rights of way shown on the map in Appendix 4.8 (page 35) should not result in their use being less safe, convenient or attractive. Consideration should also be given to the provision of new rights of way or permissive routes, for example by creating walking and/or cycle paths on the field side of road banks and hedges.

OGS 8: Agricultural land

Development which would result in the irreversible loss of agricultural land graded 2, 3, and 3a under the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs classification, will only be permitted if there is no practicable alternative.

3.6 Well-being, sports and leisure

3.6.1 Objectives

- a) To protect community facilities and public spaces, and to promote activities which bring people together for sporting, recreational and leisure purposes.
- b) To facilitate, where appropriate, the use of the countryside for informal recreational activities and enjoyment.

3.6.2 Justification

The area is a holiday destination. Many thousands of visitors come every year to walk, enjoy the beaches, and appreciate the open spaces and the opportunities for sporting and recreational activities in the area. The residents also appreciate living in the beautiful environment of fields, dunes and village centres.

3.6.3 Proposed policies for well-being, sports and leisure

WSL 1: Walking, cycling and riding

When any new development is proposed, priority should be given to providing enhanced facilities for walking, cycling and riding, as appropriate and where practicable, to encourage access between the development and local amenities by non-motorised means, as well as for recreational purposes.

WSL 2: Loss of facilities

Development that results in the loss of community facilities and public spaces currently used for sports or recreation (including areas where ownership is currently not defined), or that results in any harm to their character, setting, accessibility, appearance, general quality and amenity value, will only be permitted if they are replaced by community facilities of equal or higher quality, and can be provided on the same site or another equally (or more) suitable and accessible within the area.

WSL 3: Recreational proposals

Proposals that involve the use of land in the countryside and on the coast to facilitate and enhance informal recreational activities and access related to the enjoyment of the countryside will be supported where they promote the use of public rights of way and do not adversely affect other land uses in the vicinity.

WSL 4: Ancillary buildings and stables

Ancillary facilities supporting recreational provision should, where practicable, be accommodated in existing buildings that are of a form, bulk and general design in keeping with their surroundings. Where a new building is a functional requirement of the proposal it should be in or adjacent to a settlement or an existing complex. The lighting of outdoor facilities in open countryside is considered detrimental to the environment.

Proposals for stables will be permitted provided they are located in or adjacent to an existing complex or they utilise existing buildings that are in keeping with their surroundings.

3.7 Implementation and monitoring

3.7.1 Implementation

Implementation will be by submission for examination. If the plan passes examination it will go forward to a referendum of the plan area's residents.

3.7.2 Monitoring

The Neighbourhood Plan will be a public document displayed on the Georgeham Parish Council website and North Devon District Council planning portal. As a reference document, it will serve as the justification for all Parish Council planning decisions.

4 Appendices

4.1 Summary of responses to the questionnaire in *The Crydda* magazine and at public meetings on 7 and 15 June 2016

The survey results reveal a high level of satisfaction and pleasure in living here. Location, scenery, peacefulness, community and amenities all scored very highly.

On the downside, most negative comments concerned second homes, especially those left mostly empty. The area is felt to be overcrowded in the summer, when traffic and parking is a problem. New modern house design is not generally appreciated, nor are open air festivals, which risk becoming a nuisance and alienating some tourists.

Respondents expressed concerns about overdevelopment and inadequate infrastructure, including narrow roads, traffic congestion and the ability of the sewage system to cope with more houses.

There were many comments on what our community needs:

- Growth at the school to secure its presence
- Small, really affordable and social rented housing, to match the often low incomes
- Speed limits to be enforced
- More support for local businesses
- Greater protection for the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas
- Better facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and horses who all have to compete with motorised traffic in the lanes
- Bans on dogs on the beaches were disliked by some, but so too was the presence of dogs in Georgeham Playing Field.

There was strong support for the need to keep a balance between tourism and residency, with Croyde community members feeling particularly endangered.

Inadequate fast internet access is a real problem in some areas. Small businesses remarked that a hub/shared office could help solve this if located in an area with good broadband access.

4.2 Summary of responses from local businesses to letters and at meetings on 13 and 26 October 2016 (14 people present)

Most responses and most of those present at the meetings were sole traders who mainly rely on residents for work.

One employer of 300 people also replied. He only employs one person in the parish. However, another employer working mostly in tourism responded that he would like to expand so that he could employ people all year, but was conscious that expansion had to be done with care to avoid spoiling the character of the area on which so much depends.

Other responses were:

1. Things that would help:

- Local support for businesses
- More full-time residents are needed
- Therefore, fewer holiday homes and more affordable housing
- Extension of the holiday season.

2. Things that hinder development:

- North Devon relatively unknown elsewhere
- Post-Brexit uncertainty.

3. There were three responses about more tourist facilities:

- There should be no more facilities
- More seasonal parking
- Accommodation for seasonal staff. Employees cannot do late shifts, when lots are needed, because there is no transport.

4. It was generally felt that:

- Infrastructure, especially roads, would not support higher numbers of visitors in high season
- There should be fewer festivals as they risk alienating many visitors
- There is overdevelopment of second homes
- A business hub and office would be encouraging
- A register of local trades people should be put on the website.

4.3 Georgeham Primary School submission

Georgeham Primary School is an Ofsted 'Outstanding' primary school of about 105 pupils located on the Putsborough Road close to the centre of Georgeham. Its catchment includes Georgeham, Croyde and outlying hamlets.

It accepts children from age 5 to 11 and comprises Reception and Years 1 to 6 in 4 classes. There is also an Early Years Unit, *Stepping Stones*, within the school grounds but this is currently a separate entity.

The school is valued by the parish and is normally first choice for parents sending their children to primary school. Without it the parish would be a much less attractive place for families with young children to live.

The long-term viability of the school is therefore of great importance and significance to the character and life of the community as a whole.

The majority of pupils live within the parish.

School numbers and viability

School numbers is an ongoing challenge with two important but conflicting factors to balance:

1. The school has a Planned Admission Number (PAN) of 15, meaning it can accept an intake of up to 15 children into any one year group and up to 105 total for the seven year groups. With basically two-year groups per class, this means nominal class sizes of 30 which the school regards as the maximum desirable number in order to continue to provide an outstanding educational experience to pupils and manage staff workloads.

In practice numbers of pupils inevitably fluctuate. When demand for places has exceeded 15, the school has sometimes taken the difficult decision not to accept applications in order to keep class sizes below 30, which has led to the school sometimes being seen as over-subscribed. (This can happen even if total numbers in the school are less than 105 due to other classes being less than 30). This was particularly evident in 2015, when Devon County Council considered holding a consultation exercise to reduce the school catchment.

2. On the other hand, the school budget is directly related to numbers of pupils on a given census day in October, so it is important to have sufficient numbers to keep the school budget in balance and viable.

The school has always been able to produce a balanced budget, but a drop in new pupils starting this year to 12 (three below the PAN of 15) has made this more of a challenge. Consequently it is facing difficult decisions about budgets and class sizes.

Looking to the future, income in real terms is falling, making it more difficult to produce a balanced budget and even more important to maintain pupil numbers. The school strongly resisted the approach by Devon County Council to reduce the school catchment. That threat has for now gone away, but in response to the situation, the school has carried out a feasibility study into building a new classroom on the grassed area next to the school house and has a fully costed scheme that has the pre-application support of North Devon Planning Department.

Neighbourhood Plan

The above shows how important it is for the parish as a whole to be family friendly – a place where families choose to live because of the environment and facilities it offers, and where they can afford to live. The following issues are also relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan:

- **The school site**

The draft Local Plan currently refers to the school under paragraph 13.547 'Community Facilities', which acknowledges the importance of the school and supports the provision of additional capacity or improved pedestrian links. The school would like to see this paragraph strengthened and, if possible, made into a policy that protects the school's future and options to expand.

- **Road infrastructure**

Regarding pedestrian links, the school plans to carry out a review of the School Travel Plan which was formulated in May 2008.

Central to the Travel Plan are ways of encouraging non-motorised methods of accessing the school which include both walking and cycling.

The school would ask the steering group to consider how the parish can be made more non-motorised-user friendly, especially for vulnerable road users such as children and the elderly, with particular emphasis on the centre of Georgeham, the road past the school, and the road between Croyde and Georgeham.

- **Housing**

The school would ask the steering group to carefully investigate, and if possible formulate, policies that will require at least a proportion of new homes to be for people who plan to live in them as their main residence; and that will require a significant proportion of new homes to be genuinely affordable in relation to an appropriate locally assessed level of income.

- **Other issues**

More broadly, the school would welcome policies that support the wider community facilities that make the parish an attractive place to live, for example, the post offices and village shops in Georgeham and Croyde.

Consideration is being given to renaming the school 'Georgeham and Croyde Primary School' to emphasise that it is for the whole parish. As Croyde is better known than Georgeham this might make the school more appealing to people outside the parish.

The same reasoning could be applied to the parish as a whole. The school would ask the steering group to consider such a name change in the interest of enhancing community unity and making it a more attractive place for people to live as well as visit.

4.4 Croyde Area Residents' Association (CARA) submission

Overview

Croyde is a traditional small Devon seaside village surrounded by beautiful countryside and open farmland. It boasts one of the most famous surfing beaches in the country, and is extremely popular with families.

It is located in a conservation area in the Parish of Georgeham and has a mixture of traditional Devon thatched cottages, quaint shops, tea rooms and pubs together with small developments built in the 1960s and 1990s, as well as recent modern housing. The housing stock has changed in recent years; properties have been extended and a number of individually-designed properties have been built, some with spectacular views.

Croyde is popular with surfers, walkers and for family camping. It is accessed by country lanes which run through the centre of the village. Croyde has good communication access and some parts have high speed fibre optic broadband.

History

Croyde had a strong farming community with second and third generation families working the land, although there are only four working farms left. Croyde became popular through the rise of family holidays after the Second World War and has a large holiday camp for families near the beach and three large sites for caravans and camping.

Over the last 30 years Croyde has become extremely popular with surfers. The change in holiday trends has seen the holiday season extend throughout the year. The population in the summer expands from under 1000 to over 10,000 causing congestion on the roads and strain on Croyde's utilities.

Demographics

Croyde has many long-established families running to two or more generations. People from all over the UK have also settled in Croyde and the population therefore represents a mixed demographic group. However, second homes and holiday homes now account for over 50% of the housing stock (see Appendix 4.6, page 31: CARA property survey).

The ages of residents range from the very young through to the very old. Many families live in Croyde, but earn their living outside the area. Employment is mainly through the tourism industry.

Concerns

Although Croyde is part of the Parish of Georgeham, some residents believe it has a number of unique problems which bring with them a need to look for specific solutions. CARA asked for their views in a questionnaire and the survey results were consistent (see Appendix 4.5, page 30).

They asked, in so far as it is possible, that the parish council and local planning authority address the following issues:

- Preserve and protect the beach
- Preserve and protect the surrounding countryside
- Preserve our mix of cafes, shops, pubs and restaurants, by, for example, interrogating any change of use applications that may arise

- Maintain coastal paths and walks
- Protect surrounding fields and farms by restricting further housing development
- Protect the village centre by allowing only sympathetic materials and proportionate changes to existing buildings
- Maintain and grow the community by providing housing opportunities for young families through a mixture of houses for rent and affordable co-ownership housing.

Croyde residents ask the relevant authorities to be mindful of the volume of traffic movement during the holiday periods, when considering any application for further development in the village.



- Congestion in Moor Lane, Croyde.

Objectives

The survey found that residents have the following ambitions for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan for the whole parish:

- Provide more permanent housing, especially for rent; there are presently only 12 houses available for long-term rent
- Restrict future development to permanent affordable homes for locals and young families
- Restrict the size of new-build properties to three bedrooms.
- Refuse over-development of individual properties where there is inadequate parking for occupants
- Apply a 20 mph speed restriction through the village
- Keep Croyde's village status
- Provide more public parking.

4.5 Summary of responses to Croyde Area Residents' Association (CARA) questionnaire

Q: What do you appreciate about living in Croyde?

A: Beach, friendly community, unspoilt green pastures, coast walks, great views.

Q: What makes Croyde thrive as a holiday destination?

A: Beaches, surf, watersports, countryside, cafes, shops, pubs, restaurants, friendly village life.

Q: Why are permanent residents important to the village?

A: Create community, keep Croyde alive all year round.

Q: Should we aim to encourage more permanent residents. How?

A: Yes, limit/restrict second homes.

Q: What are your views on housing growth in the village?

A: Restrict house size, build only for permanent residents.

Q: How can we best preserve the character and beauty of Croyde?

A: Ensure developments are in keeping.

Q: What special areas should be protected?

A: Fields, village, beach

Q: How can the Neighbourhood Plan support businesses?

A: Enough free/cheap parking, more permanent residents.

Q: How do temporary pop-up businesses contribute to village life?

A: They take business but pay no rates and create litter.

Q: What services and amenities are important to you as a resident?

A: Need a general store, more frequent buses, current shops and pubs are good.

Q: What can be done to help local businesses thrive?

A: Keep a balance, keep Croyde as a village.

Q: What are your views on roads, parking and pavements?

A: Establish a 20 mph limit, add/improve pavements, need a parking warden, address problem with holiday homes and parking.

Q: Could visitor numbers increase?

A: No, not in summer, could increase at other times.

Q: What could be done to address the effects of possible climate change?

A: Dredge stream regularly, clean drains.

Q: What would improve your quality of life as a resident?

A: Have general store and chemist, build smaller houses, restrict festivals.

4.6 Croyde Area Residents' Association (CARA) 2017 Property Survey

CARA was regenerated in late 2016 principally because many residents were becoming concerned about the increase in the number of holiday homes being built or developed in Croyde.

It was felt that the character of the village was under threat, and the community dwindling as more residents sold up and moved out, either to escape the summer influx or to capitalise on rising property prices, caused partly by second-home or holiday-home owners. The number of people registered as residing in Croyde has dropped by 25% in the past eight years, from 800 to 600.

Our survey was to collect information to ascertain the ratio of holiday homes/holiday lets to permanent residences. Over the last few months the data has been collated and verified (by cross checking with Google Earth, the electoral register, and also local knowledge) and we are reasonably confident that the results present a true reflection of numbers, that it is reliable, and can be substantiated.

The survey covers the Croyde area from Downend to Baggy Point and up to Cross, and for ease of counting and cross-checking, was divided into zones.

The results show that the ratio of holiday homes to permanent residences in Croyde is 57.4 to 42.6, in other words, 354 holiday homes out of 617 properties overall.

This is a conservative figure as, where a property is lived in but also partially let as holiday accommodation, it has only been counted as a residence. In addition, these figures do not include hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfast rooms, etc.

To show the true picture of Croyde in the summer we also need to add in the two main holiday centres, Ruda and Unison Croyde Bay.

It is interesting to note that Ruda already has a total of 596 letting units, not including the camping pitches (three fields) at Surfers Paradise, which would mean in the busy summer period when Ruda is almost fully booked, it is larger than the total of all properties in Croyde put together.

Including just these two sites makes the ratio of holiday accommodation to permanent homes 80.4 to 19.6.

In addition there are another nine campsites of varying sizes in and around Croyde which are all busy during the peak periods.

However, it is also worth noting that holiday units and holiday lets are increasingly being promoted for year-round occupation so this is no longer just of significance for a few weeks in the summer.

- A chart showing a breakdown of the survey results by street is available on the CARA website at cara-northdevon.co.uk.

4.7 Landscape assessment by Dr Eirene Williams, CEnv, FCIEEM (retired)

Georgeham Parish is central to the North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the UNESCO Northern Devon Biosphere Reserve. As such it is supposed to be an exemplar for sustainable living.

Ecosystem services

Ecosystem services are the benefits that people freely gain from the natural environment and from properly-functioning ecosystems. They are increasingly important in making development or land use change decisions and include:

- Provisioning services such as food, water, timber, energy
- Supporting services such as soil formation, nutrient recycling, biodiversity
- Regulating services such as flood prevention, pollution control, water purity, carbon sequestration, climate change and sea level rise resilience
- Cultural services such as landscape and wildlife beauty, recreational experiences including ecotourism and spiritual welfare.

North Devon Coastal Downs Landscape Character Assessment

The North Devon Coastal Downs Landscape Character Assessment (NDCDLCA) identifies six landscape types in the area:

- Steep open slopes, such as the north slope of Saunton Down
- Coastal slopes and combes with settlements, such as the Crydda valley
- Extensive intertidal sands, such as Croyde and Putsborough beaches
- Dunes, such as Croyde Burrows County Wildlife Site
- Cliffs, such as north and south faces of Baggy Point
- Downland, such as the tops of Saunton Down and Baggy.

Distinctive characteristics of the area are headlands, small catchments with spring-fed streams, historic field patterns with hedges (some stone faced), ecological mosaics, active dune systems and traditional buildings.

The evaluation uses the words magnificent, tranquil, and dramatic. Mention is made of the two SSSIs in Croyde, the County Wildlife Sites, the Conservation Area, the role of the National Trust and the South West Coast Path.

Threats envisaged include the following with examples likely within Georgeham Parish:

- Excessive tourism facilities, such as empty second homes, increased holiday park accommodation
- Traffic, such as speeding or congesting vehicle movements visible from viewpoints in the landscape
- Telecoms masts, such as additions to those already visible
- Trampling, such as causing erosion of the dunes and on footpaths on thin soils on the downland
- Abandonment of land, such as scrubbing up of a large proportion of the slopes of Saunton Down

- Intensification of agriculture, such as removal of hedgerows to form larger fields and construction of conspicuous unsightly large barns
- Climate change and coastal erosion
- Renewables installations, unlikely to be permitted within an AONB but requiring vigilance
- Invasive species, such as ragwort, Japanese knotweed and garden escapes into the landscape.

The NDCDLCA recommends:

- Protecting the open character and historic features of the landscape, the seascapes and smooth downland profiles, the lanes and traditional buildings.
- Managing and enhancing the range of coastal habitats, their biodiversity, and their resilience to climate change and visitor pressure, in accordance with the AONB's statutory duties and the guidelines of the Biosphere Reserve.
- Sustaining agricultural use of the land, and features such as hedgerows and hedgebanks.
- Reducing the visual impact of tourist facilities such as caravan parks.

2010 Parish Biodiversity Audit

The coast between Saunton and Croyde is one of the most important localities for showing the key features of the coastal geomorphological and Pleistocene stratigraphy of south West England.

The bank of the lane leading to Croydehoe Farm supported a number of maritime plants, including a number of Devon notables. A total of 128 vascular plants were recorded within this site during the 2008 survey.

The Devon notable plants that have been recorded within this CWS include hairy bird's-foot-trefoil, autumn squill, Portland spurge (these also being nationally scarce), tree mallow and sand sedge. Wall brown and small heath butterflies, and otter have been recorded nearby.

In the Croyde Field County Wildlife Site which can be seen from the nearby public footpath there are ponds and reed beds with some small areas of species-rich damp plant communities that included southern marsh orchid, brookweed (a Devon notable), carnation sedge, square-stalked St John's wort, greater bird's-foot trefoil and ragged Robin.

Other areas of grassland included sweet vernal grass, Yorkshire fog, selfheal, cat's-ear, ribwort plantain, silverweed, common knapweed and common fleabane. There were also some areas of improved species-poor grassland.

The site is important for amphibians, being a migration route and breeding location for over a thousand common toads. It is also a good habitat for butterflies, dragonflies and birds. Clouded yellow, small skipper, large skipper, ringlet, speckled wood, common blue and meadow brown butterflies, together with bluetailed damselfly, emperor dragonfly, and broad-bodied chaser were seen during the 2006 survey. Birds recorded here included mallard, linnet, sedge warbler and reed bunting.

Policy recommendations

The Neighbourhood Plan needs precise policies to ensure recognition of the NDCDLCA over and above the existing policies and designations.

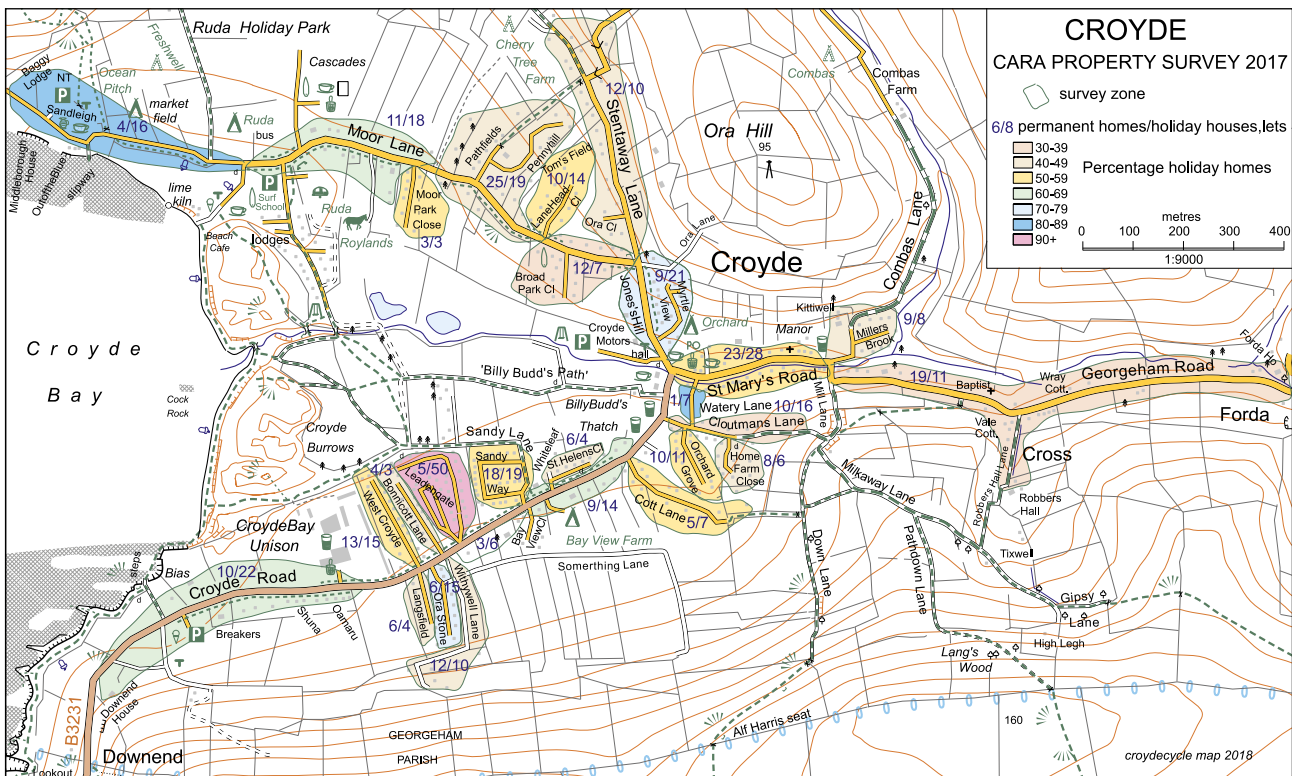
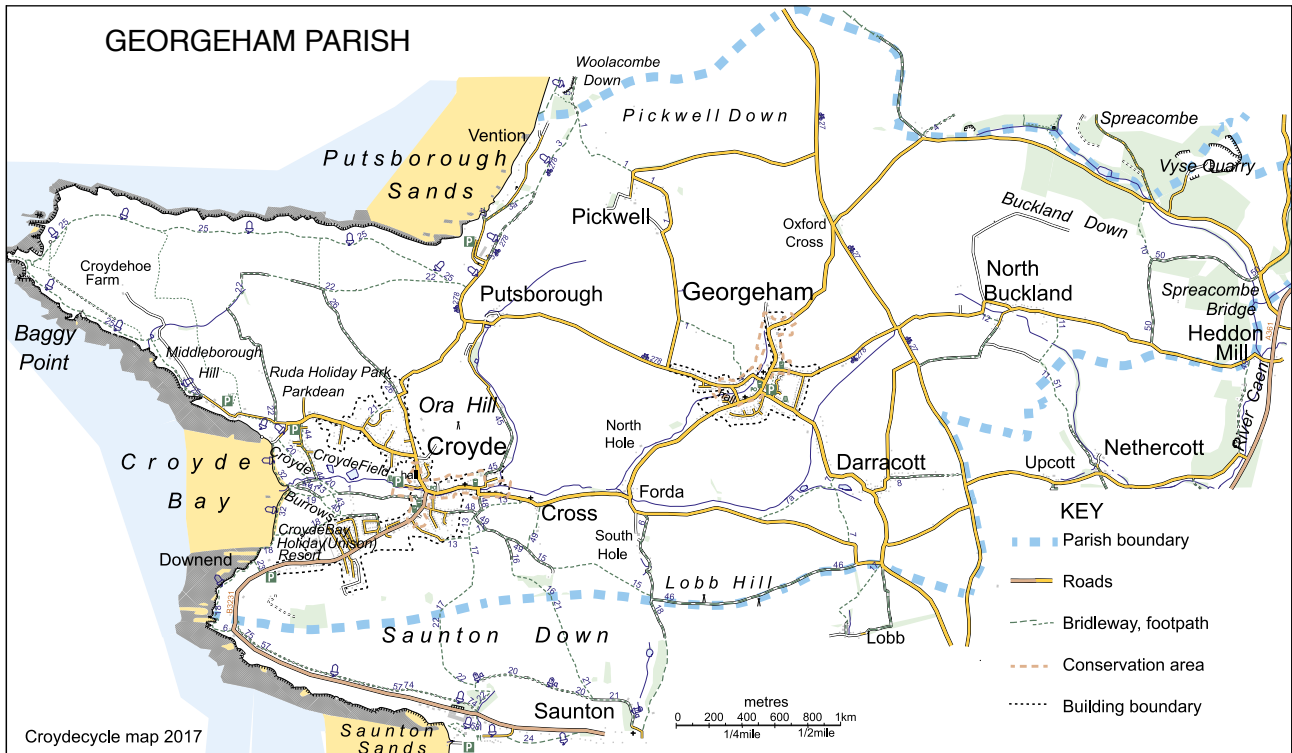
As a matter of principle on landscape grounds the parish should recommend refusal for all applications and/or the Neighbourhood Plan should require the District Council to refuse all applications such as the following two:

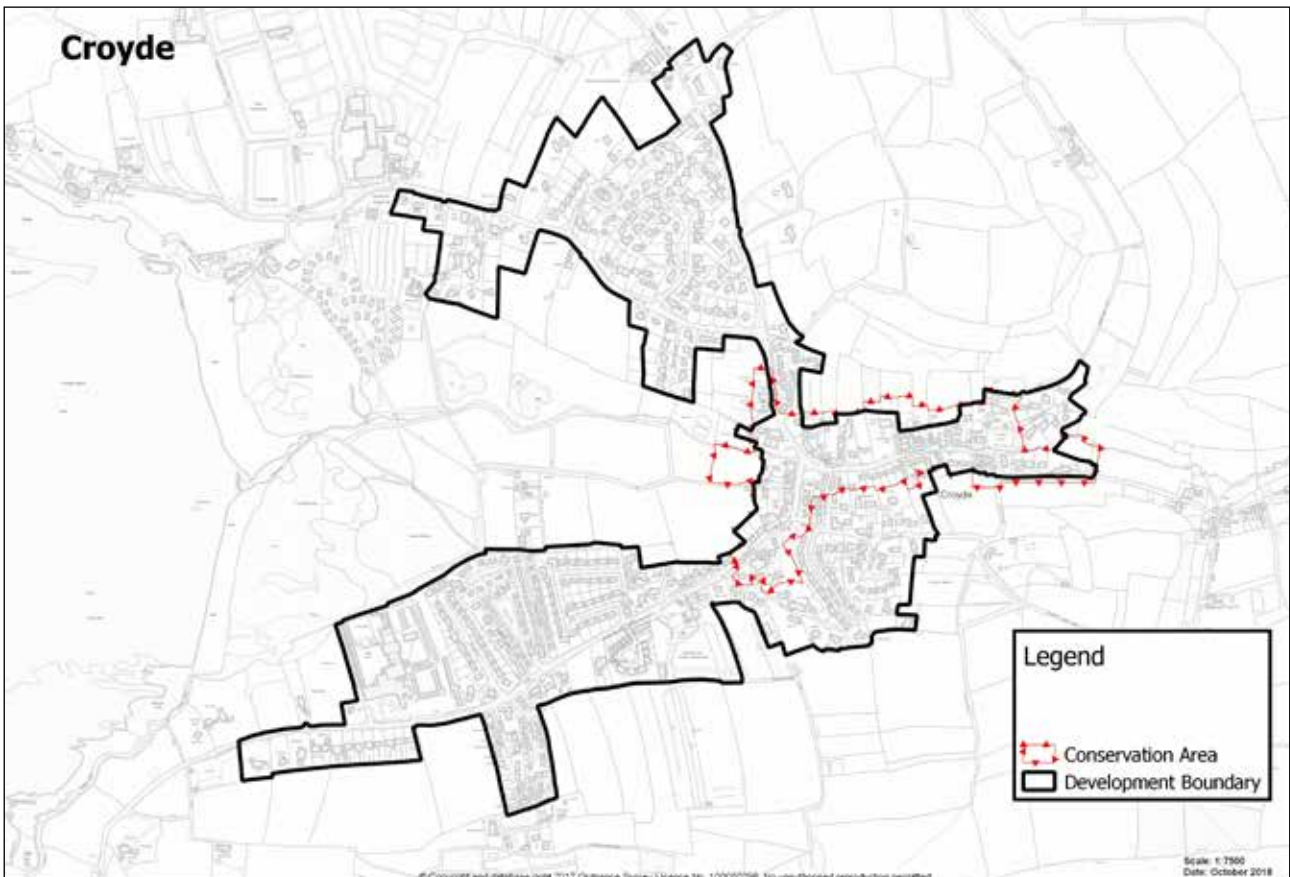
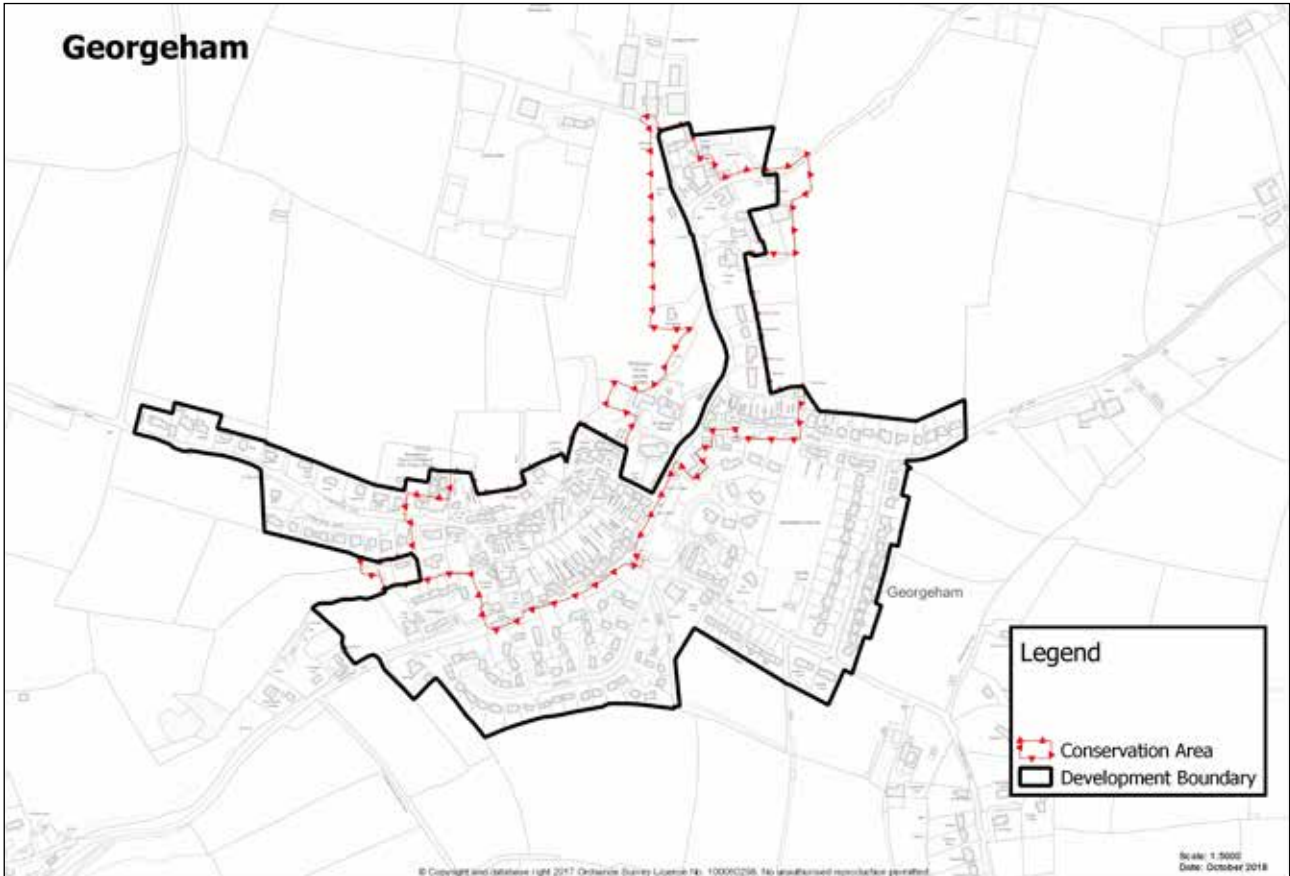
- All applications where the applicant has undertaken earthmoving, landscaping, tree felling, hedge removal or other works which change the landscape and environment of the site immediately prior to applying for planning permission.
- All retrospective applications where the applicant has erected a new detached structure other than that permitted under Permitted Development Rights and especially outside the development boundary.

In addition:

- All proposals for developments to be submitted with aerial and terrestrial photographs from a range of viewpoints marked up to show the insertion of the new structures including any high opaque walls etc into the landscape in three dimensions.
- All conditions attached to planning permissions and all enforcement notices to be pursued actively by NDC until executed within the set time periods. Specifically:
 - All conditions attached to planning permissions such as bank creation, hedgerow and/or tree planting for landscaping, screening of developments or run-off mitigation to be rigorously enforced during development, and then monitored for subsequent management such as weeding and replacement of shrubs, as failure to follow up will result in loss of landscape value for the parish
 - Enforcement notices issued on unauthorised developments within the parish to be actively pursued with court proceedings if necessary, as failure to do so results in deterioration of the landscape value of the parish and encourages others to undertake unauthorised development.
- All Wildlife Trigger lists, Ecological or Arboricultural Appraisals submitted with an application should be professionally scrutinised to establish that adverse effects on the landscape and environment are not ignored, including the presence of notifiable weeds.
- All applications in the parish should be scrutinised for sustainability and environmental impact. This could also include the compatibility of the architecture with the surroundings. Attention should be focused on details of the plans of any proposed development for use of energy and water, BREEAM ratings and insulation, carbon dioxide emissions, likely traffic movements, waste and sewage generation, run-off and erosion potential, destruction or planting of vegetation especially hedgerows. In fact for any aspect of the ecosystem services the proposed development would provide or of which it would make use.

4.8 Maps and photographs









- Footpath 1, before it joins the coastal path, overlooking Putsborough Sands.



- Georgeham, from Incedon Hill, showing the importance of the unspoilt skyline.



- Croyde, from above Middleborough Hill, with the distinctive horseshoe shape of Croyde Bay.



- Croyde, looking north, showing the green fields between Moor Lane and the Crydda.



- The Look-Out field at Downend, Croyde, is a popular wedding, party and festival venue.



- Croyde Sewage Treatment Works, with Freshwell campsite and the Ruda Holiday Park beyond.



- Croyde's active dune system supports a wide variety of wildlife and plant species.



- Traffic congestion is a concern for many in the parish.



- The Crydda stream flows alongside St Mary's Road, Croyde, towards the sea.



- Georgeham village, looking north towards Oxford Cross and an uninterrupted skyline.



- Distinctive streetscapes like this one in Georgeham village should be preserved.



- A new building breaks the skyline at Downend in Croyde.