

ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE
SOUTH WEST REGION

AWARDS FOR PLANNING EXCELLENCE

2017

(Sponsored by WYG and Stride Treglown)

JUDGING PANEL REPORT

May 2017

RTPI SW AWARDS FOR PLANNING EXCELLENCE 2017

REPORT OF JUDGING PANEL May 2017

1. INTRODUCTION In 2017 seventeen submissions for the RTPI National Awards for Planning Excellence were forwarded to RTPI SW for regional judging, by some margin the largest number in the 25 year history of the RTPI SW Awards. At an initial Panel meeting on 27th January, all but two of these submissions were shortlisted as potential recipients of Awards and Commendations. Following a series of site visits to, and meetings with, representatives of these shortlisted submissions, the judging process was completed at a meeting of the Panel on 28th April. The Judging Panel comprised the following:

David Lowin Consultant, Lowin Associates and RTPI SW Chair 2017

Philip Bisatt Senior Planning Policy Officer Taunton Deane B.C and West Somerset D.C. and RTPI SW Chair 2016

Mike Oakley retired former Avon County Planning Officer and RTPI SW Hon. Secretary 2017 (Panel Secretary)

Janthia Algate retired former Major Projects Manager, East Devon District Council

Trevor Pilbeam retired former Planning Consultant

Patrick Power retired former Planning Director, Castlemore Securities

Marcel Venn Planning Consultant

Geoff Walker retired former Principal Lecturer in Planning, UWE

Also involved in the judging were Simon Metcalf (WYG) and Graham Stephens (Stride Treglown) as representatives of the two consultancies sponsoring the 2017 RTPI SW Awards.

2. AIMS OF THE AWARDS The 2017 guidance for entrants to the National Awards stated that: *“The RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence aim to:*

**demonstrate the positive and critical role planning and planners play in placemaking*

**promote the art and science of planning for the benefit of the public*

**demonstrate the positive impact planning has on our quality of life*

**celebrate professional expertise*

**disseminate new models and examples of best practice”*

3. CATEGORIES Submissions for the 2017 National Awards were invited relating to the following categories:

- a) Excellence in Planning for Heritage
- b) Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment
- c) Excellence in Planning for Well-being
- d) Excellence in Planning to Create Economically Successful Places
- e) Excellence in Planning to Deliver Housing
- g) Excellence in Planning for the Innovative Delivery of Infrastructure
- h) Excellence in Plan Making Practice
- i) International Award for Excellence in Planning

In relation to each of these categories, the Guidance for Entrants set out details of the kind of project that would be appropriate.

The Guidance also set out a series of Judging Criteria stating *“You will need to critically evaluate the work carried out and must demonstrate the strengths of your project, the role planning has played and highlight any difficulties and constraints you have overcome. Your entry must clearly show how it meets the relevant category criteria and the following judging criteria. It is crucial you demonstrate throughout the submission the planning value the project has.*

*Planning content and skills

*Sustainable development

*Community involvement

*Inclusive planning

*Outcomes

*Good practice

Again in relation to these, the Guidance set out a number of questions to which a response would be relevant.

In assessing the submissions relating to the South West, the RTPI SW Judging Panel assesses the quality of the submission document, in particular the responses to the above national judging criteria.

4. THE SOUTH WEST SUBMISSIONS 2017

Following assessments at both the initial and final meetings of the Judging Panel, the shortlisted submissions were judged in three RTPI SW 2017 categories as follows:

- A) **‘Excellence in Planning Delivery** ie. completed or virtually completed schemes on the ground
- B) **‘Excellence in Spatial Planning** ie. plan-making, masterplans, strategies etc.
- C) **‘Excellence in Planning Decision Making ’** ie community initiatives, Development Management, innovative decision making initiatives etc

‘Excellence in Planning Delivery’

Old Railway Quarter, Swindon submitted by Swindon B.C./Thomas Homes Ltd

Salcombe Gin Distillery submitted by Adams + Collingwood Architects

Stafford Close Housing, Christow, Devon submitted by Dartmoor National Park Authority

‘Excellence in Spatial Planning’

Chaddlewood, Plympton, Plymouth submitted by Barratt/David Wilson Homes/Plymouth City Council

Stroud District Local Plan submitted by Stroud D.C.

Tadpole GardenVillage, Blunsdon, Swindon submitted by Crest Nicholson Strategic Projects/Swindon B.C.

Temple Quarter Spatial Framework, Bristol submitted by Bristol City Council – City Design Group

Torpoint Vision submitted by Jillings Heynes Planning

Victory Oak, St Leonards, Ringwood submitted by Sovereign Housing Association

Water Space Project, Bath submitted by Bath and NE Somerset Council on behalf of the Waterspace Partnership

‘Excellence in Decision Making in Planning’

Army Basing Programme/Creating Sustainable Communities on Salisbury Plain submitted by Defence Infrastructure Organisation/WYG

Collaborating with Industry to Sustain Economic Growth submitted by DPAS Ltd

Plymouth Strategic Landscape and Seascape Character and Sensitivity Study submitted by Plymouth City Council

Using Landscape Character Assessments in Neighbourhood Planning submitted by Fiona Fyfe Associates

The following SW submissions were not shortlisted as potential recipients of an Award or Commendation:

Landsdowne Bear Pit Transformation: Micro Regeneration Scheme submitted by Bournemouth B.C. and **Perrybrook: A new community for Brockworth** submitted by Hunter Page Planning Ltd

5. GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE SOUTH WEST SUBMISSIONS

The overall standard of the South West submissions was excellent and the Judging Panel was faced with taking very difficult decisions. The submissions clearly indicated that good, varied planning work was being undertaken in the Region. The judges were pleased that the majority of the submissions responded well to the national judging criteria.

The site visits and presentations to Panel representatives were generally very comprehensive and informative. The RTPi SW Judging Panel regards these as being crucial in assessing submissions; once again this year they were a significant factor in the Panel's final decisions. **Overall the key issue for the judges was whether the submission could be regarded as an example of 'Planning Excellence in the South West'.**

6. PANEL COMMENTS AND DECISIONS ON THE SUBMISSIONS

In the following section of the report the text headed 'The Submission' is based on information set in the submission entry form and document. The 'Judging Panel comments' reflect the views of the Panel following examination of the submission documents and attendance by Panel representatives at the series of very informative site visits and meetings.

Category: 'Excellence in Planning Delivery'

Old Railway Quarter, Swindon (*Submitted by Swindon B.C./ Thomas Homes Ltd*)

The Submission

The scheme comprises a virtually completed 201 home development encompassing the restoration of a Grade II* listed building in the Swindon Railway Works Conservation Area. The scheme also incorporates the restoration for public display of key heritage assets on the site. The submission states that the development is an example of an enlightened housebuilder and a proactive local planning authority working in collaboration and that this collaboration has enabled Thomas Homes to deliver a development of the highest quality that enhances the qualities of the renowned and

historic Swindon Railway Works area.

Judging Panel Comments

The submission document sets out well written text which includes responses to all the judging criteria. It would have benefitted however from the incorporation of the limited number of separately attached images alongside the text and the addition of a selection of the plans shown to the visiting Panel members during the very informative presentation and site visit attended by representatives of Swindon B.C. and Thomas Homes. Indeed the document did not do justice to the excellence of this scheme revealed during the tour of the site whose renovation had defeated a series of earlier schemes. The visiting Panel members were particularly impressed with the quality of the work undertaken in the renovation and conversion of a large section of the Grade II* listed Chain Test House into 56 dwelling units, this being undertaken by Thomas Homes, a firm specialising in the renovation of individual historic buildings. Other features of the site, the last major land parcel to be regenerated in the Railway Works Conservation Area, included new build housing development by Thomas Homes of a design appropriate to its historic context and the retention/restoration of a number of railway structures including the former 'traversor'.

The submission stresses that the redevelopment has been in accord with the Council's planning policies as set out in the Central Area Action Plan which indicate that any development scheme must be of the 'highest design quality'. This aim has, in the view of the Panel, been fulfilled by an on-going close collaboration between the developer and officers of the Borough Council, in particular the Conservation Officer and Planning Case Officer; also important have been consultations with the South West Design Review Panel and Historic England, as a result of which, modifications were made to the draft schemes. Evidence is also given in the submission of consultation with the local stakeholders group, the Churchward Occupiers Group, including the Steam Museum whose access requirements influenced the scheme layout. Also included are details of a Travel Plan commissioned by Thomas Homes aiming to encourage and allow movement through and around the scheme's buildings and across the whole former Railway Works complex; this Plan includes 201 cycle spaces.

The overall result is a high density (102 dwellings per hectare) scheme making very effective use of a site, part of which is heavily contaminated, incorporating the excellent restoration and renovation of a historic listed building previously on the 'Buildings at Risk register. In summary this submission is a good example of heritage-led regeneration achieved by an effective partnership between the local planning authority and a sympathetic specialist housebuilder, a model for other similar historic sites in the South West and nationwide.

DECISION: Joint Winner in the category 'Excellence in Planning Delivery'

Salcombe Gin Distillery (*Submitted by Adams + Collingwood, Architects, London*)

The Submission

This completed project combines two new buildings designed as a new headquarters

for the Salcombe Gin Distillery. A critical factor in the design of the building was the need to take account of the site's potential flood risk from high tides in the estuary. The uses include a bar, art gallery, gin distillery and gin school.

Judging Panel Comments

A very good well presented submission document incorporates a succinct specific response to all the judging criteria. The two new buildings, constructed largely of local materials by a local farm building specialist, are of an appropriate design for this key waterside site in the Salcombe conservation area, a site that in recent years had become increasingly derelict. A particular feature of the scheme is its design responding to the flood risk of the site from the high tides involving in particular the concentration of public uses at first floor level above 'flood compatible' uses on the ground floor of both buildings including boat storage. In the submission document, and particularly during the very informative site visit, the importance of the development in providing opportunities for full time employment was stressed as well as the creation of a new visitor attraction. The support of the local community, claimed in the submission document, was confirmed by Salcombe's Town Mayor who was present, and contributed significantly, during the site visit. The founders of the Distillery, both locally based, were clearly very keen to implement a scheme that would contribute to the economy and attractions of the town but also would be a significant contribution both to the waterside frontage and the eclectic collection of buildings in Island Street in one of the oldest parts of Salcombe. It is clear to the Panel that the planning and the successful implementation of this project is the result of a good working partnership between the developers, the architect, the Environment Agency and the Local Planning Authority (South Hams D.C.).

The submission document notes that the development of a scheme in an historic area of flood risk that is not related to water related activities was a 'sensible choice in a community where the traditional industry of boat building and marine services is contracting'. It goes on to note that there are many coastal towns in the UK with similar issues and that the development of the Gin Distillery is a model for tackling such issues. The Panel endorses these views, the significant feature being the effective partnership working.

DECISION: Commended in the category 'Excellence in Planning Delivery'

Stafford Close Housing Scheme, Christow (*submitted by Dartmoor National Park Authority*)

The Submission

A completed development of eighteen energy efficient 'Passivhaus' dwellings in a nationally protected landscape setting, claimed to be the first of its kind in a UK National Park. Fourteen dwellings provide affordable rented housing for local people. The remaining four dwellings are being sold to local people at a reduced market value. Features of the scheme include the roles of the Christow Community Land Trust, the Parish Council and Teign Housing.

Judging Panel Comments

Based both on a well presented submission document which responds to the judging criteria clearly and concisely and a very informative site visit, the Panel considers this to be an excellent project. Its principal feature is that it succeeds in delivering urgently needed affordable housing for the local residents in a mix of tenures, 14 affordable rent and 4 discounted market. These housing units have high sustainability and energy 'Passivhaus' credentials, the latter readily apparent to those panel members inspecting them during the site visit. Judged in the context of the varied house types within the existing Christow village and the Dartmoor Park landscape setting, the Panel considers that there are no significant design concerns regarding the new housing.

Clearly the collaborative and partnership working throughout the planning and implementation of this scheme has been key. Important features include the giving of the land at no cost by the District Council, the involvement of a locally based Housing Association (Teign Housing), positive input by the Dartmoor Park Planning Authority and the Christow Community Land Trust which acted as a vital link between all the parties involved, being set up, as described in the submission document 'to pursue the aims of the project, manage its tenants and reap the long-term benefits to the wider community'. The vital role of the Trust, in particular in its relationship with the Dartmoor National Park as planning authority, is illustrated in another section of text 'From the outset DNPA Planners were challenged to look at normally restrictive policies towards housing in the countryside in a flexible way. Long inception meetings explaining policy background, potential legal pitfalls, site analysis and design strategies didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the Trust members to see this to fruition' The widespread interest in this scheme was illustrated by the large representation of all parties at the site visit. There are clearly a number of features in this submission, in particular the key involvement of the Christow Community Land Trust, that indicate lessons for the provision of affordable housing in rural areas not only in the South West but throughout the country.

DECISION: Joint Winner in the category 'Excellence in Planning Delivery'

Category: 'Excellence in Spatial Planning'

***Chaddlewood, Plympton, Plymouth (Submitted by Barratt/David Wilson Homes/
Plymouth City Council)***

The Submission

Barratt David Wilson Homes and Plymouth City Council are working in partnership to deliver 190 homes in Chaddlewood, Plymouth. The partnership between the Council and national housebuilder began when Plymouth City Council published a Planning Statement for their land in August 2014. Originally owned by Plymouth City Council and surrounded by existing housing, the site is on the eastern edge of the Plymouth urban area in the Chaddlewood area of Plympton. Over the years the site has been allocated for various uses in a series of planning documents including a school and public park; currently it is unallocated, its principal recent use being for informal recreation (eg. dog walking) being much appreciated by the local residents.

Having won a competitive tender with the Council, Barratt/David Wilson Homes secured an interest in the site and worked closely with the local community and Council to respond to the Planning Statement and bring forward proposals. The Scheme received full planning permission in June 2016. Both parties are continuing to work together to develop the site in the best possible way for the community while meeting the rising housing need in the local area.

Judging Panel Comments

This submission is significant, and of particular interest to the Panel, in being an early major site in Plymouth being delivered in the context of the 'Plan for Homes', the winner of the RTPI SW Awards 2016 and the national RTPI Silver Jubilee Cup 2016. The very good submission document includes a clear succinct description of the project, a comprehensive response to the judging criteria and a section setting out reasons why this submission should win an award, a national RTPI competition requirement in previous years but not in 2017. Illustrations are incorporated of the proposed housing units of which 30% are intended to be 'affordable'. An excellent presentation to representatives from the Judging Panel was attended by Barratt/David Wilson Homes staff, Plymouth City Council officers and, very helpfully, the local City Councillor for Chaddlewood.

The presentation, having described the site and its relationship with the 'Plan for Homes', referred to the August 2014 Planning Statement which established the principle of the site's development with a mix of market and affordable housing units in the eastern section and a public park in the west. Neither the submission document nor the presentation included significant references to the detailed design of the layout or of the housing units. It was stressed that, although the site provided a good opportunity for the provision of much needed housing in this part of the city, there were considerable constraints including its 'land locked' nature, very restricted opportunities for vehicle access and, not least, opposition from the surrounding residents who for many years had expected a school or a large park on the site and who currently greatly valued it for informal recreation.

Much of the presentation concentrated on initiatives taken to engage more positively with the local community, it being conceded that the measures taken in the early stages when the site was being marketed by the City Council and when the development principles were being established in the Planning Statement were inadequate. The situation changed significantly after Barratt/David Wilson Homes purchased the site and commenced, in conjunction with the planning arm of the City Council, a much enhanced programme of community engagement. This included not only the normal initiatives such as a public exhibition and public meetings (to which 2400 invites were sent out) but also over 50 one to one meetings with local residents. Also undertaken were a series of pre-application meetings with stakeholders and education/health providers. Particularly striking for Panel members was the extensive use of online media facilities such as Facebook which was much used by the community. On a number of occasions during the presentation the local councillor stated that this enhanced consultation by the developers was appreciated by the community and, although there are continuing concerns, they are now significantly reduced. He hoped that this level of community engagement would continue during the construction phase which had commenced on the 15th January 2017.

The Panel was also impressed at the level of community engagement during the detailed design of the housing layout, including the orientation of the new housing units in relation to existing nearby units and the location of pedestrian routes taking into account the presence of rear gates of existing properties. The developer sought the advice of the Creating Excellence South West Design Review Panel on a number of issues. The community was also consulted on the layout and content of the Park at the west end of the site. The Panel was told that the scheme was awarded an outstanding accreditation in the 'Building for Life' scheme. The presentation set out a number of lessons learnt during the preparation of the scheme; these included: collaborative working expedites the planning processes; the need for trust between a developer, the Local Planning Authority officers and members and local residents and the fact that successful developments can be achieved on even the most difficult site by working throughout with all parties. It was claimed at the conclusion of the presentation that Chaddlewood is an exemplar of how a developer, the Local Planning Authority and the community can work together. The Judging Panel endorses this claim; it is a good example of a comprehensive communication and stakeholder engagement strategy in the preparation of a spatial plan.

DECISION: Highly Commended in the category 'Excellence in Spatial Planning'

Stroud District Local Plan (*Submitted by Stroud D.C.*)

The Submission

This relates to the development and adoption of a Local Plan for Stroud District incorporating a Vision, Strategy and planning policies for the future growth and management of the area. The work involved identifying clear and effective solutions to the spatial issues in the very varied District. Key features include: a development strategy; what are claimed to be innovative approaches to options testing and the generation of 'mini-visions' for local areas as a springboard for neighbourhood planning. The submission states that the Local Plan is intended to be user friendly for local communities as well as decision makers, incorporating a number of design features to make it clear, legible and readable.

Judging Panel Comments

The submission document incorporates a detailed account of the preparation and content of the Local Plan. Page 1 setting out the 'Key Milestones' and what are considered as the 'Key Achievements' and the 'Challenges Addressed' provides a good example of an effective introduction of a planning policy document.. A particular feature is the section relating to the entry of this submission into the national category 'Excellence in Plan Making Practice'; this sets out what are considered to be the "elements of our Local Plan which are truly innovative and which can be identified as good practice for other practitioners". Although not all the Judging Criteria are responded to in specific sections (eg Sustainable Development), there is a response to all of them expressed within the submission document text. The Local Plan itself, entered as a supporting document, is excellent, incorporating well expressed text, good plans and illustrations and helpful colour code links, overall an example to other authorities aiming to prepare a Plan 'accessible' to their communities.

The documents and the very informative presentation to representatives from the Panel indicated that a particular issue to be faced in devising a Local Plan for the whole Stroud District is its very diverse character ranging from the urban areas of Stroud, Nailsworth, Stonehouse and Sharpness to the environmental issues along the Severn Estuary and to the east in the Cotswolds. A further significant issue is the pressure for new housing from the Gloucester area along the northern fringe of the District. The Panel is impressed with the adoption of an approach based on the identification of 'parish clusters', within which there is a similarity of issues and challenges, followed by the adoption of 'mini visions' for each prepared following consultation with the communities within the clusters. Place Making is a key principle and this is well expressed in the section of the Local Plan 'Making Places – Shaping the future of Stroud District'; this section includes a good series of sub-sections of text and diagrams relating to each of the Parish Clusters (eg. The Stroud Valleys) that state 'Where are we now?', 'Where do we want to be?', 'What does the Strategy look like?', 'How are we going to get there?', together with Site Allocations. Although such an approach is not unique in Local Plan preparation, the Panel considers that it has been applied particularly well in Stroud District.

The preparation and adoption of the mini visions is within an overall Strategy described as one of 'Dispersed Concentrated Growth'. The Panel is impressed with the appraisal of seven overall spatial options, in particular using what is termed the 'carbon footprinting' technique which assesses how the various options perform from the point of view of CO2 emissions and contribution to the renewable energy potential of Stroud District. Questioned at the presentation regarding the length of time taken in the preparation and adoption of the Local Plan, reasons given included the abandonment of the SW Regional Spatial Strategy, the ever changing national planning policy context including the launch of the NPPF, the amendments to the document required by the Inspector to increase housing numbers and employment floorspace allocations during the Local Plan Examination and the extensive public consultation undertaken across all the 'parish clusters' including engagement with 'hard to reach groups' and young people and subsequent feed-back sessions. The importance of the adopted Local Plan in providing a context for on-going work in the District was stressed. This includes the Rodborough Common Recreation Mitigation Strategy, the Heritage Strategy and the Brownfield Register. Work has now started on the Local Plan Review. Also stressed was that the Plan was 'making a difference' with two of its strategic sites at the delivery stage, the Stroud Valley and Sharpness regeneration sites progressing and work in hand with the HCA on brownfield regeneration and canal infrastructure. At the conclusion of the presentation Panel representatives were impressed with a demonstration of the online interactive mapping tool relating to the Local Plan Policies map the preparation of which had been undertaken in-house.

An important feature of this submission, in the context of Planning Awards, is the very clear role, enthusiasm and extensive work of the Strategy team at Stroud District Council in devising the Local Plan including the gathering of the robust evidence base and the testing of policies and engagement with the community, stakeholders and developers particularly over the design and delivery of major sites. In summary, the submission document is well presented with good use of text, graphics and images; it relates to the Local Plan itself the preparation and presentation of which has a number

of features providing lessons for rural Local Plan Authorities, particularly those with very varied communities and topography. The presentation was of critical importance in highlighting the special features in the preparation of this local plan.

DECISION: Highly Commended in the category 'Excellence in Spatial Planning'

Tadpole Garden Village, Blunsdon, Swindon (submitted by Crest Nicholson Strategic Projects and Swindon B.C.)

The Submission

The site was granted outline planning permission in 2012 for the development, now known as Tadpole Garden Village, on a 179 hectare site, in one ownership, on the northern edge of Swindon. For some years the site has been identified for housing development and is now allocated formally in the Swindon Local Plan (adopted March 2015). Work started on site in October 2013, following the grant of outline planning permission in 2012 with the first house occupied by Christmas 2014. By Autumn 2016 there were approximately 267 occupied units and 1,100 housing units either approved or at the planning stage. The submission states that Crest Nicholson and Swindon Borough Council have collaborated throughout the process to achieve a successful and sustainable development.

Judging Panel Comments

The submission document is very good incorporating comprehensive responses to the judging criteria, informative plans and illustrations and a series of testimonials supporting the approach taken in planning the development. Representatives from the Panel received an excellent presentation, held in the recently opened primary school which also acts as a part time 'community hub'; this was followed by a short walk around a section of the completed housing. A number of the features of the scheme are impressive including:

- The detailed Design Code, agreed by Crest and Swindon Borough Council following community consultation after the grant of outline permission; the Code relates to the individual housing units in a series of identified 'Character Areas' designed 'to create opportunities for differential residential products' (eg. High Street, Arts and Crafts-Traditional and Contemporary). Adherence to this Code is written into the contracts between Crest and the housebuilding firms involved at Tadpole and also in the assessment of reserved matter planning applications by the Borough Council.
- The establishment of a Community Interest Company (CIC) with the aim of developing a long term strategy for the maintenance of the Tadpole Village assets in the short and long term. Contributing to the financing of the CIC, all residents are subject to a management charge from day one of occupation, as are other community uses when implemented. The benefits of the CIC are seen to include: ensuring that the open spaces and other community assets are maintained to a high standard thus enhancing the environment; the creation of a long term income to finance this maintenance and for Crest in demonstrating their commitment to be a leader in the delivery of large scale sustainable communities.

- The provision of a wide range of housing units including 30% affordable and a number of allocated sites for 'custom build', executive housing and elderly persons homes, the last close to the retail and community uses.
- The high proportion of the overall development devoted to green open spaces and community uses with the presentation claiming that 65% of the site has been allocated as communal areas, including a Nature Park to be managed by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.
- The early provision of key infrastructure ahead of S.106 requirements, in particular the primary school and a key section of highway linking the development into north Swindon, both being undertaken with the full cooperation of the Borough Council. Another example is the early introduction of a new direct bus service from Tadpole Village to Swindon town centre aiming to encourage the use of public transport at the outset in the Village. These are clear examples of the commitment of Crest Nicholson and Swindon B.C. to work together to implement a sustainable large scale sustainable development of a standard not hitherto achieved in Swindon
- The adoption of an on-going Communication Strategy designed to ensure the developing community is fully informed and engaged with future development of Tadpole Village.

Overall this submission relates to the preparation and adoption of a comprehensive sustainable strategy for this major urban extension, a strategy which is being implemented as seen by the Panel on site and in the presentation. Of particular interest and importance is the evidence of close working between Crest Nicholson and the Borough Council and the past and on-going engagement with the existing and new community. There are clearly lessons here for developers and local authorities aiming to take on board in the emerging concept of Garden Villages.

DECISION: Highly Commended in the category 'Excellence in Spatial Planning'

Bristol Temple Quarter Spatial Framework, Bristol (*Submitted by Bristol City Council - City Design Group*)

The Submission

The submission states that the Temple Quarter Spatial Framework (TQSF) provides a tool to guide and shape the physical layout of development, the land use mix and the public realm in the Temple Quarter area of Bristol showing how people will move about the area in the future and how the area might look. It is claimed that the Framework promotes an integrated place making approach that puts sustainable urban design at its core.

Work on the TQSF began in 2012 when the Temple Quarter area was designated by Central Government as an Enterprise Zone (The 70 hectare Enterprise Zone lies on the eastern edge of Bristol's City Centre with a core area around Bristol Temple Meads station). Since 2012 it has been used to underpin a broad and diverse range of work streams including inward investment, transport planning, site acquisitions, community visioning, business rate capture modelling, funding applications and infrastructure delivery.

In October 2016 the TQSF was adopted by the City Council as a non-statutory planning document for use in determining planning applications in the Temple Quarter area fulfilling the original aspiration for the TQSF and representing an important milestone for this body of work

Judging Panel Comments

The submission document, in the view of the Panel, fails to do full justice to the quality of the TQSF. Comprehensive text responses to the judging criteria followed by four pages of large scale plans and artists' impressions filling the 15 page size limit have resulted in the exclusion of some important features of the Framework that were well illustrated in the very good presentation to Panel representatives by City Council officers. These included a series of very informative plans relating to the whole area covered by the Framework (Development Form-density/heights; land uses; environmental features; current and proposed enhanced public spaces; pedestrian/cycling routes; public transport facilities) and also 'Place Plans' for four specific areas: Temple Meads City Gateway; Temple Quay; Silverthorne Lane and Avon Riverside setting out existing and proposed land uses and a number of illustrated development scenarios. Examples of the overall and specific area plans would have enhanced the submission document. Also included in the Presentation were details of completed, on-going and future initiatives. The walk around the core area covered by the Framework and the discussions at the 'Enginshed' were very informative on the role of the document.

The submission identified four key challenges for the Temple Quarter area: out dated, cramped and congested transport interchange facilities (ie, Temple Meads station); a very poor current entry point into the area (former Post Office sorting office); a lack of pedestrian/cycle route connectivity due to roads, waterway and railway barriers; a limited mix of land uses and an undeveloped evening economy. Key opportunities identified included; the future introduction of the enhanced rail services to London; the current successful and growing cluster in the area of creative industries and digital technology and potentially attractive water spaces. Reference was made in the presentation to the role of early work on the Spatial Framework in the designation of the Enterprise Zone; also stressed was the importance of the Framework being now set within the wider context of the adopted Bristol Core Strategy and Central Area Local Plan. The current key roles of the TQSP in the City's planning operations are seen to be setting the context for the preparation of more detailed Masterplans for specific sections of Temple Quarter, the determination of planning applications and the establishment of place quality. The corporate support for the TQSP was illustrated by its significant role in seeking investment in this key section of central Bristol. In this context Panel members queried the reduction in the allocations for employment uses in the Temple Quarter which had been replaced by housing allocations in line with the policies of the recent new administration. Assurances were given that these changes would not conflict with the employment generating objectives of the Enterprise Zone. Questioned further on what was seen as the principal role of the TQSF, the City Council officers stressed that it is not seen as a regulation document but rather one for engaging with the development industry, stakeholders and the community; it in no way acts as a Design Code such a code being considered inappropriate in an area of such diverse current and potential future uses.

Finally in the submission document's response to the judging criteria 'Good Practice' two areas of good practice are cited:

- a) The use of an in-house design and planning team to prepare the TQSP rather than commissioning external consultants – the advantages of this are seen to include the availability of good local knowledge and understanding of the area; the integration with a range of other work streams both detailed within the area and in other areas of the city and the flexibility to continually update the document, the Framework being a 'living and evolving tool supporting planning work'.
- b) The use of a 3D digital model for scenario testing; also seen to be very helpful in promotion and inward investment initiatives, as a Development Management tool and in the design of the public realm and associated infrastructure.

The conclusion of the Panel is that the Temple Quarter Spatial Framework is a good tool for guiding the layout of development, land use mix and public realm in this key area of central Bristol; as such its format and preparation methods have lessons for major redevelopment areas. The suggested benefits from the use of a 3D digital model are endorsed but it was not obvious to the Panel why the use of in house design and planning teams was inherently to be preferred and was accordingly good practice.

DECISION: Commended in the category 'Excellence in Spatial Planning'

Torpoint Vision, Torpoint, Cornwall (Submitted by Jillings Heynes Planning)

The Submission

This states that the Vision was prepared at the request of the Town Council in order to set out a physical vision for how the town could change for the better in the short and long term. The result is a strategy and series of 50 ideas that point to how it could be improved. The Vision will now underpin the town Neighbourhood Plan providing a physical vision to inform planning policy – giving quality design a high profile in the process of regeneration.

Judging Panel Comments

The submission document itself and the supporting 'Torpoint Vision' and 'Torpoint and Rame Peninsula Economic Plan' documents set out a good comprehensive account of the preparation process that led to the 'Torpoint Vision' stressing the challenges and opportunities.. A particular feature of the Vision document is the inclusion of a series of costed 'Vision Projects' (*50 ideas for creating a better place through a range of actions on environmental, economic and social initiatives*) set out in a realistic phased delivery programme, a feature often absent from 'Visions' and 'Strategies'. Another feature of the text in the Vision, set out in the submission document, is the section 'A Vision for Torpoint' which seeks to describe the town in the year 2030 when it has become "a great place to visit and an even more sought after place to live". The document contains a number of helpful graphics providing an appropriate balance between images and text. In contrast to these positive features of the submission, the Panel was concerned that the submission document, although concluding with the section 'Assessment against judging criteria', does not respond specifically to the six 'Judging Criteria'.

The information in the documents was supplemented greatly during an informative mini bus tour of Torpoint and presentation attended by five representatives of the Panel who, during these, were able to discuss a range of issues with representatives of the consultants, the Town Council and the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group. The documents and these discussions clearly confirmed that the initiative for preparing the Vision came from the Town Council responding to the view of the community that action was urgently needed to guide the way forward for the town. They also showed that the community had been very involved in the preparation of the Vision, particularly illustrated in the high response rates to the consultation exercises including the return of 1,500 questionnaires out of 3,500 distributed, responses at the Town Carnival and Public Exhibition and the preparation of a video at the local primary school shown to the visiting Panel.

It is clear that the work on the Vision was assisted significantly from the outset in being given a simple brief to seek and collate ideas generated locally by Torpoint's community. This preparation of the Vision, with comprehensive and on-going engagement of the local community, enabled the clear establishment of the basic principles for the future development of the town, principles that can now be reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan, the first draft of which has been prepared. This process of establishing principles with the community in advance of detailed work commencing on the Plan is one that could, with benefit, be considered by groups in the context of current examples of Neighbourhood Plan work being hampered by on-going disputes within the local community on basic policy principles. The Panel concludes that the Vision has established a realistic way forward, with good community support, for Torpoint which for many years has sought to overcome its image as a dormitory town for Plymouth through which vehicles pass without stopping on route to the Cornish resorts.

DECISION: Highly Commended in the category 'Excellence in Spatial Planning'

Victory Oak Housing, St Leonards, Ringwood (*submitted by Sovereign Housing Association Ltd*)

The Submission

Planning permission was granted in December 2015 for the redevelopment of the Victory Oak site, a former military hospital, in a manner, the submission claims, that respects its green belt location and incurs no major biodiversity loss. The site lies amid a network of protected ecological sites. The scheme aims to be a balance between providing essential new housing and maintaining/enhancing the natural environment. The solution to tackling planning issues posed in such a complex site was implemented through a partnership of public and private organisations.

Judging Panel Comments

A very good submission document opens with a comprehensive summary of what are considered to be the achievements of the Victory Oak scheme. This is followed by a good review of the key features of the site and surrounding area influencing the form and content of future development and an assessment of what are considered to be the

'key planning issues associated with the site'. These include the Green Belt, its ecological value, its proximity to internationally designated sites and the presence of asbestos on the redundant remaining buildings. The remainder of the document sets out good comprehensive responses to the judging criteria, including a detailed response to the 'Sustainable Development' criteria covering environmental, social and economic issues.

The submission stresses that the preparation of the scheme, on which development had very recently commenced, has involved a high degree of partnership working, a feature that was very apparent in the presentation to the Panel attended by representatives from the Sovereign/Spectrum Housing Association, Johns Associates Ltd (Biodiversity consultants), Tetlow King Planning Ltd, Dorset Wildlife Trust and East Dorset District Council (Natural England was also involved but was unable to be represented at the presentation). All these bodies, despite their varied specific interests, appeared to share a common vision for this site which, in recent years, had become increasingly derelict and for which a series of proposed developments had failed even when planning permission had been obtained. An early and crucial unusual feature of the scheme was the disposal of the site by the Homes and Community Agency to a Housing Association, a key factor in the proposed delivery of 40% affordable house units.

A further feature, apparent to the Panel during the presentation and appreciated by others in the partnership, was the positive stance of the local planning authority in resolving a number of the key planning issues, in particular its location within the Green Belt, appropriate policies and allocations being included in the Christchurch and East Dorset Joint Local Plan (adopted April 2014) and the site's Planning Brief (July 2014) leading to planning permission being granted in December 2015. The submission document and the presentation illustrated a range of actions taken by the development team responding to what was described as 'quite a challenge'; the majority related to biodiversity issues included extensive surveys, translocation of habitats, restoration and retention of heathland grassland and habitat and the establishment of a 'Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' (SANG) on adjoining Forestry Commission land within the adjacent Hurn Forest. The aim of the last, which includes recreation facilities, is to absorb recreation and access pressures that would otherwise be exerted on designated and protected local conservation areas. The role of the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP), including the Steering Group, was important to ensure consistency and continuity in the delivery of mitigation initiatives.

An important feature in the view of the Panel was that in parallel with the preparation of the scheme, a programme of community involvement was undertaken including two major public consultation events and on-going phone and email updates with key stakeholders. Much of this was undertaken early in the process which, it is claimed in the submission, enabled comments to be taken on board during the detailed design process. A number of these related to traffic issues; various options were tested leading to the establishment of the major access to the proposed housing development being from the road along the northern boundary (Boundary Lane) rather than from the A31 which was the access to the Military Hospital.

In summary, this well presented and comprehensive submission sets out details of a

very effective partnership that is delivering a sustainable development, incorporating both major biodiversity gain and social infrastructure in the form of a significant level (40%) of affordable housing, on a challenging site in need of urgent action. It provides a good example for other difficult sites where a careful balance is essential between ecology/environmental issues and viable development meeting the needs of the local community.

DECISION: Highly Commended in the Category 'Excellence in Spatial Planning'

Water Space Project, Bath (*submitted by Water Space Partnership/Bath & NE Somerset Council*)

The Submission

The Water Space Project was established in 2015 to develop and deliver projects which would enhance Bath and North East Somerset's waterways and develop a clear evidence-based strategy for joint projects and investment on, and alongside, 16 miles of waterway of the River Avon and Kennet & Avon Canal. During 2016 the Water Space Partnership prepared the Water Space Study focussing on five themes: assets, moorings/boating, environmental enhancement, regeneration/development and leisure.

Judging Panel Comments

The extent and nature of this Partnership formed in 2015 is well demonstrated in the submission document and was emphasised during the presentation and site visit attended by representatives from the Panel and officers from Bath and NE Somerset, the Canal and River Trust and the Environment Agency. At the presentation, letters of support for the Project, and in particular the partnership working, were circulated from Natural England, the Julian Trust (working on behalf of the boating community) and Wessex Water. The importance of the corporate member/officer and cross party support of Bath and NE Somerset was stressed by all parties in tackling the years of unfortunate neglect of the Bath waterways during which the city 'turned its back on the river'.

The submission document, which incorporated clear good responses to the judging criteria, and an excellent presentation indicated the extensive range of co-operation between all parties in the Partnership in gathering evidence on environmental, economic and social (community) issues to support the planning and implementation of projects along the 16 miles of the River Avon and Kennet and Avon Canal corridor within Bath and NE Somerset from Dundas to Hanham, including the Bath Riverside Enterprise Zone. Such information included land ownership, sources of funding for projects (including from S.106 agreements), the potential pooling of these funds and the extensive range of wildlife (eg, Bat Habitats). It was stressed that this information was not only vital for the delivery of the Water Space Project but would also be a key input into the impending review of the Bath and NE Somerset Core Strategy and as evidence in assessing planning applications for sites along this river/canal corridor and at Planning Enquiries. An extensive consultation and community engagement programme included a Boater Survey which aimed to gather information concerning the current and potential use of the full length of the waterway. A further activity was

active participation in the 2016 Bath to Bristol Festival of Nature. The importance of volunteer involvement at all stages in the project was stressed. The submission document and presentation also included a review of current progress on the identification and planning of 35 projects along the River and Canal including 20 that were fully costed. During the presentation a copy of the draft March 2017 Waterspace Study was circulated to Panel members. This document, not a formal part of the submission, illustrated the wide range of work undertaken thus far on the Project.

Following the presentation, a site visit was made to one of the key projects where work has recently started, the Bath North Quays Waterside development just to the west of Churchill Bridge in the city centre. This involves the redevelopment for commercial and residential uses of the Avon Street car park, the closure of the section of road between the car park and the river, a new river crossing for cyclists and pedestrians and a landing stage for a river taxi. An important feature is the inclusion of works to enhance flood protection along this section of the river, a key requirement of one of the partners, the Environment Agency. In summary it is an excellent submission that links the delivery of projects to environmental, economic and recreation/tourism benefits; quoting the view of Wessex Water expressed in its letter supporting the Waterspace Project, it relates to “an exemplar in partnership working”.

DECISION: OVERALL WINNER and winner in the Category ‘Excellence in Spatial Planning’

Category: Excellence in Planning Decision Making

Army Basing Programme/Creating Sustainable Communities on Salisbury Plain (submitted by Defence Infrastructure Organisation/WYG)

The Submission

This states that the £1.2 bn Army Basing Programme (ABP) is unique, including the optimisation of the defence estate with greater concentration of the Army on the Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA). The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) liaised closely with Wiltshire Council on preparing and implementing a plan for the resettlement of Army personnel to the SPTA. The DIO commissioned WYG and GVA to produce a Masterplan and a suite of major planning applications across Salisbury Plain. The ABP focused investment in Wiltshire and created the opportunity to integrate existing civilian and military personnel and their families returning from Germany. The submission claims that the scale and nature of the infrastructure and new housing development is helping to create truly sustainable communities across Wiltshire.

Judging Panel Comments

The Masterplan for the Army Basing Programme, noted above, was Highly Commended in the 2015 RTPI SW Awards category ‘Other Planning Work’. This 2017 submission sets out the Programme for the delivery of this major project including details of the processes, in particular those relating to the coordination and cooperation of the parties involved. (*This focus on the delivery decision making processes led to the final decision of the Panel to judge this submission in the category ‘Excellence in Planning Decision Making’ superseding its initial decision to judge it in the category ‘Excellence in Spatial Planning’.*)

The submission document is well presented, incorporating a series of site plans and illustrations; comprehensive responses are set out relating to the judging criteria. The presentation by the Senior Town Planner in the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the Head of Planning at WYG, in addition to highlighting some of the key issues in the submission document, emphasised the importance of the processes and arrangements in place that had prepared the Masterplan and now were key to its implementation over a very tight timescale. In summary the Programme involves the delivery of facilities on Salisbury Plain for about 4300 additional troops returning from Germany by 2020. This involves, at a cost of some £1.2bn, 1200 Service Family Accommodation (SFA) new dwellings external to the camps sited at five existing settlements on the Plain, Single Living Accommodation (SLA) within the camps and a number of new community facilities including schools, health and leisure facilities serving both the military families and existing residents. This last is seen as a key feature in fulfilling an aim of the project to improve the integration of the military and civilian communities on Salisbury Plain. Significant levels of building refurbishment and demolition are also involved in the delivery which is seen as comprising two linked project delivery streams: 'Behind the Wire Development' and 'New Service Accommodation'.

The presentation included images of recently completed development and examples of site plans that had been given planning permission; it was emphasised that the approval of the Masterplan and the series of successful planning applications had been facilitated by the existence of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy which includes policies for the enhancement of the military estate on Salisbury Plain. Both the submission document and the presentation stressed the sustainable features of this major project: Economic benefits for the local communities; Environmental protection of the Plain (in particular archaeological features); Transport, ensuring that living accommodation is close to the relevant work stations and Social in the provision of education, health and social care facilities. Also emphasised was the involvement of the local community which was important in developing the Masterplan and of equal importance now in the delivery stages; the early engagement was seen as vital in gaining the trust and confidence of the existing communities. The Panel notes that the community involvement on this project has been cited by the Local Government Association as 'an exemplar in public consultation and engagement'. The submission document and presentation included clear evidence of the key role of chartered planners in the core team that prepared the Masterplan and now much involved as delivery commences. The interaction between public and private sector planners is a welcome feature as is the commitment of Wiltshire Council across a wide spectrum of its responsibilities as a unitary authority, in particular for planning, transport and education. The key role of the Army Basing Strategy Group, led by the Council, is a major feature.

In summary, this submission relates to an impressive project which demonstrates what can be achieved when there is a clear defined aim, committed participants and a local authority prepared to be positive across its responsibilities. The view of the Panel is that the outstanding feature of this submission is the excellent working relationships established early on at the Masterplan stage and now continuing in crucial decision making, coordinated crucially by the Army Basing Strategy Group. This is an exemplar

from which developers and Local Authorities can draw lessons when involved with major projects across the South West and nationally.

DECISION: Winner in the category 'Excellence in Decision Making in Planning'

Collaborating with Industry to Sustain Economic Growth (Submitted by DPAS Ltd)

The Submission

DPAS and its associates specialise in helping companies streamline their project and business processes to secure planning approval more quickly and therefore with reduced costs. The submission notes that all too often projects are delayed or investment lost because of a lack of understanding between applicant, regulator and community and in this context DPAS Ltd specialises in working with business, the community and local government to secure solutions and not engage in an adversarial battles.

By acting as facilitator, the submission also claims that DPAS can add value to an existing team, be that in-house, consultancy or community organisation, by acting as an advocate in presenting the business case for planning proposals. DPAS claims that building trust between all those involved in the development process reduces delays and costs can be reduced for all.

DPAS Ltd was approached by Business West and Swindon Borough Council to assist Honda UK Manufacturing (HUM Ltd) in integrating planning issues into the early stages of project development. This followed on from earlier liaison work between Honda and the Borough Council. The project is on-going and is in effect a collaboration between the Council and HUM Ltd with DPAS working as a 'lynch pin' between Honda and the Council.

Judging Panel Comments

The succinct submission document, incorporating brief responses to all the judging criteria, sets out as an example of the approach, the principal features of an on-going working relationship between Honda and the Local Planning Authority (Swindon B.C.) in preparing and agreeing a revised Local Development Order (LDO) for the site owned by Honda. This provides an interesting example of how a Local Planning Authority and major developer can work together and gain a mutual understanding of each other's priorities and views on key issues. No details of the issues/problems/successes in this example are set out in the submission. There is no doubt in the Panel's view that this example of close working together, particular in the context of the great financial pressures on a major car manufacturer, is good practice but it must be borne in mind that it has arisen in this case because of the availability of a partly retired senior planning officer from Swindon B.C. to advise Honda in its dealings on planning issues with that Authority. The submission claims that the kind of early advice that can be given in these circumstances can be crucial for major developers stating that 'to date it is estimated that twice the direct cost to Honda has been saved because of the saved planning fees, reduced project costs and saved staff time'.

The Panel's conclusion is that, although the submission set out details of a good liaison between a major developer and the local planning authority, there were specific one off

reasons for this and it could not be, on balance, be judged as an example of 'Planning Excellence in the South West' and as such an exemplar. The Panel's view is that giving such advice is normally part of the day to day work of planners, usually by consultants being engaged to prepare specific planning applications for development and that the claimed 'added value' provided by DPAS in this case had not been fully demonstrated in the submission.

DECISION: No Award or Commendation

Plymouth Strategic Landscape and Seascape Character and Sensitivity Study (submitted by Plymouth City Council)

The Submission

The marine and estuarine habitats surrounding Plymouth are highly protected for nature conservation whilst nationally protected landscapes surround the city. The submission emphasises that these interacting factors result in unique planning challenges for Plymouth which this bespoke assessment seeks to address. Understanding of landscape and seascape character can inform decisions regarding growth and change so that the area continues to be an attractive place to live and work and to help the city achieve long-term economic sustainability. The study area covers land both within the City Council boundary and in South Hams District and West Devon Borough. The study results will form an input into the South West Devon Joint Local Plan being prepared jointly by the three local authorities.

Judging Panel Comments

The submission relates to a series of assessments of the landscape and seascape features of Plymouth and parts of the surrounding areas in South Hams and West Devon Districts. These assessments are designed to assemble up to date evidence informing spatial planning policies, site allocations and decisions on planning applications. In summary the aim is to provide evidence to ensure that in landscape and seascape terms 'development is guided to the right place' The importance of the study area extending well beyond the city boundary was stressed in the submission document and at the presentation with the landscape features bearing no relation to the city boundary; also stressed was the assessment of the seascape features so important in the setting of Plymouth. Four outputs were sought from the project:

1. A comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for Plymouth and its urban fringe
2. A Seascape Character Assessment (SCA) for the estuaries and Plymouth Sound
3. A Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) for housing and commercial development within Plymouth and its surrounding urban fringe
4. A Strategic Assessment of key views and visual settings

Although work started on the project prior to the commencement of work on the Joint Local Plan for Plymouth, South Hams and West Devon, the Panel was informed that output has been an important element in the Plan's preparation. A first draft of the Plan was available for inspection at the presentation with the Study listed as an input document.

The submission document, although comprehensive in its description of the studies undertaken, incorporated inadequate responses to the Judging Criteria. The presentation to five members of the Judging Panel, given by representatives of the City Council and Land Use Consultants, was however very good in setting out details of the range of work undertaken to tackle what was described in the submission document as 'unique planning challenges for Plymouth'. The Panel was impressed with a number of features of the study including:

* A detailed character profile for 21 landscape and 9 seascape areas (single areas of landscape/seascape character each with its own unique character and identity) based on national guidance relating to Landscape and Seascape Character Assessments published by Natural England and also reflecting landscape/seascape types identified right across Devon. This profile includes, for each area, a summary of valued landscape/seascape attributes/sensitive features and guidance for managing change.

* Spatial mapping information including inter-visibility analysis to show potential visual relationships between places and important viewpoints or landmarks at both a city-wide and local scale.

The submission claims that these provide 'a robust evidence base to inform plan making and decision making by the relevant planning authorities'.

The presentation concluded that the submission related to a project that is:

- * Innovative, being one comprehensive study spanning rural, urban and marine environments- the first of its kind in the South West.
- * Inclusive, being a shared resource spanning the landscape and planning professions.
- * A pro-active planning tool, encouraging sustainable development guided to the right places capitalising on the landscape's natural capital.
- * Celebrating a sense of Place – Plymouth's unique rural and seascape setting and its rich cultural associations as 'Britain's Ocean City'.

The Panel endorses these conclusions and considers that the detailed assessments of the landscape and seascape features in this project clearly have the potential to guide development in and around the Plymouth area, an output of good cross boundary working. The result is a significant tool for use in planning operations, in this case prepared by landscape specialists in collaboration with planning professionals.

DECISION: Commendation in the category 'Excellence in Planning Decision Making

Using Landscape Character Assessments in Neighbourhood Planning (*submitted by Fiona Fyfe Associates Ltd*)

The Submission

Many of Devon's Planning Authorities have already published Neighbourhood Planning Guidance but none of these provide specific or in-depth content relating to Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and landscape designations. Given the complexity of LCA, the submission states that a simple guidance note is required that includes signposts to sources of more detailed information. The brief required the consultant to prepare and

design, a guide to LCAs for use in the Neighbourhood Planning process in Devon. The Advice Note is not a plan in its own right but the submission claims it to be a tool to deliver excellence in neighbourhood plan making and ensure that landscape is a key component of neighbourhood planning.

Judging Panel Comments

The submission document includes comprehensive good responses to the judging criteria. A very informative presentation was given to representatives of the Panel by the landscape architect who made the submission and the Devon C.C. Landscape Officer who chairs the Devon Landscape Officers Group which commissioned the Advice Note. Together the document and the presentation indicated to the Panel that the Advice Note is already, and will continue be, of practical use to Parish Councils and other bodies preparing Neighbourhood Plans, such groups often lacking professional knowledge of landscape issues. This well written, simple to understand, Note is a welcome positive tool in assisting the understanding of this important aspect of plan making. Although generally very happy with the document, it was however felt by some Panel members that it would be beneficial if the Advice Note incorporated a limited number of examples of instances where landscape character issues had been decisive in the formulation of adopted Neighbourhood Plans and how this had been achieved. It was noted that this Note relating to Devon had led to the commissioning of a similar document for the Cranborne Chase AONB and also that the national CPRE has now issued its own national guidance on how to integrate landscape issues in Neighbourhood Plans, this being at the design stage and expected to be published shortly.

Landscape Assessments are increasingly being prepared by landscape professionals to inform spatial strategies and this is a welcome tool in relation to Neighbourhood Planning decision making. The submission document, and the attached Guidance Note to which it refers, are well written and presented in a form accessible to non-professionals, many of whom are involved with the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

DECISION: Commendation in the category 'Excellence in Planning Decision Making'