



Ilfracombe Town Study

Core Strategy Evidence

October 2011



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Town Study brings together a wide range of existing information, evidence and statistics relevant to Ilfracombe in order to identify the issues and opportunities facing the town over the next 20 years. It will help to inform the vision, strategy and proposals for Ilfracombe that will be incorporated within the Joint North Devon and Torridge Core Strategy being prepared for the period up to 2031.
- 1.2 The document provides an overview of the key characteristics that contribute to the form and function of Ilfracombe. It analyses key issues, opportunities and constraints that could impact on the delivery of future sustainable growth for the town and creates an understanding of what needs further investigation. A thorough examination of such matters will enable informed decisions on how best to accommodate and deliver the town's future needs.
- 1.3 One purpose of this town study is to support community focused consultation to inform the Joint North Devon and Torridge Core Strategy, which will be an important document in guiding the location, form and scale of development required to achieve sustainable growth that meets the area's long term needs. It is essential that local aspirations are reflected through the Core Strategy's vision and objectives. Through undertaking additional town focused consultation it is anticipated that relevant and supported visions can be established for the towns of northern Devon.
- 1.4 For the purposes of this study, Ilfracombe is defined by the Town Council boundary, although the town's relationship to surrounding areas, including Mullacott Business Park in West Down parish, will also be assessed.

2. Overview

- 2.1 Ilfracombe is a coastal town and port situated along Devon's north coast. The town has grown up the hillsides around the harbour and town beaches and covers a natural amphitheatre facing the Bristol Channel. The town is located about 19 kilometres (12 miles) north of Barnstaple, accessed along the A361 through Braunton, and west of Combe Martin along the A399 or A3123.
- 2.2 Ilfracombe has a large number of historic buildings, especially around the harbour. The town expanded rapidly through the 19th century as tourism became a major economic sector and much of the town's heritage is Victorian. The South West Coast Path passes through the town and the North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty borders the town to the east and west.

2.3 Population – ‘increasing more slowly than other North Devon towns’

- 2.3.1 Ilfracombe has grown slowly over the last ten years. The parish population has increased by less than 3% over the period 2001 to 2010, providing an annualised increase of about 34 people per year. This followed a period of no net growth between 1991 and 2001.
- 2.3.2 From 2001 to 2010 the population of Ilfracombe increased by 308 people. The rate of population increase in the town was significantly lower than that experienced in other North Devon towns (Barnstaple, Braunton, South Molton, Fremington/Yelland) and across the County and district as a whole. The variance in population growth across the geographic areas is shown in Table 1.
- 2.3.3 The age distribution within the Ilfracombe population shows high levels of the population aged 0 to 19 years and 40 to 59 years (see Table 1) and the overall proportion of Ilfracombe’s population aged 0-59 years is generally higher than for the District and Devon, with a smaller proportion of the population aged over 60.
- 2.3.4 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the Northern Peninsula (2008) indicated net in-migration of 4,400 people to North Devon between 2001 and 2006, with the largest gains for the 45 to 64 years age bracket. Other large gains aged 25 to 44 years and 0 to 15 years are indicative of inward movement of families. Overall in-migration indicates equity-cushioned older pre-pensioner households and households with dependent children, especially from London, the South East and the West Midlands. In the reverse direction, there is a steady loss of younger and more independent households, the reasons for which remain largely speculative, but which will include a combination of movement for education, employment and access to affordable housing.
- 2.3.5 The increasing age of the area’s population is reflective of a national trend. In 2008, 16% of the population of England was estimated to be aged 65 and over, with the South West region estimated to have the highest percentage of older persons (19%). By 2033¹, over a quarter of the population of the South West is projected to be aged 65 and over, a level that is already being approached in Ilfracombe and across North Devon.

¹ Sub national Population Projections, ONS (May 2010): <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections>

Table 1: Population

Total Population	Ilfracombe	Other North Devon Towns	North Devon District ²	Devon (including Plymouth & Torbay)
2001	10,842	45,236	89,097	1,136,500
2010	11,150	47,647	92,894	1,179,354
Change	308	2,411	3,797	42,854
% change	2.8%	5.3%	4.3%	3.7%
Age Distribution in 2010				
0 -19	24.0%	23.1%	22.6%	21.5%
20-39	19.2%	21.1%	19.4%	23.9%
40-59	28.7%	26.5%	27.6%	27.2%
60-79	21.8%	22.7%	24.0%	21.4%
80+	6.3%	6.6%	6.4%	6.0%

Source: 2001 Census, 2010 ONS population estimates and Devon County Town Profiles³

2.4 Income – ‘lower than across the rest of North Devon’

2.4.1 Median household income in North Devon of £24,970 (2008) is the second lowest for any district in Devon (after Torridge district) and £1,142 (7.5%) below the Devon average. Ilfracombe central ward has the lowest average household income in North Devon (£20,587), whilst east and west Wards are also 3% below the district average figure (Table 2).

Table 2: Average Incomes

	Total households	Household income average (median)
North Devon	42,770	£24,970
Devon County (excluding Plymouth and Torbay)	331,804	£26,112
Ilfracombe central ward	2,329	£20,587
Ilfracombe east ward	1,160	£24,280
Ilfracombe west ward	2,078	£24,218

Source: CACI and Paycheck data provided by CACI (2008)

² Including the parts of North Devon within Exmoor National Park

³ Devon County Council Devon Facts and Figures: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/factsandfigures/>

2.5 Benefits – ‘a high level of dependency on benefits’

- 2.5.1 The types of benefits identified in Table 3 all indicate a higher proportion of claimants in Ilfracombe than for North Devon or Devon as a whole. Ilfracombe (2.8%) is below the national average (3.7%) only for the proportion of 16 – 64 year olds claiming job seekers allowance. Overall, the figures in Table 3 demonstrate a high level of dependency on benefits within the town.
- 2.5.2 Levels of income support claims for 16 – 59 year olds is 7.7%, significantly above figures for Devon (3.9%), North Devon (4.5%) and nationally (5.6%). Claimants of disability living allowance are also high in Ilfracombe (6.1%), compared to rates for Devon (4.2%), North Devon (4.3%) and nationally (5.2%). Rates for those 60 years and over claiming pension credits in Ilfracombe are 25.6%, well above the figure for Devon (15.3%).

Table 3: Benefits

	Ilfracombe	North Devon	Devon	National
16 – 59 year olds claiming income support	7.7%	4.5%	3.9%	5.6%
16 – 64 year olds claiming job seekers allowance	2.8%	2.1%	2.0%	3.7%
Total population claiming disability living allowance	6.1%	4.3%	4.2%	5.2%
65 and older claiming attendance allowance	19.1%	17.3%	17.3%	18.2%
60 and older claiming pension credit	25.6%	17.7%	15.3%	20.6%

Source: Devon Town Profiles 2010 – Department for Work & Pensions

2.6 Employment – ‘tourism and manufacturing are significant sectors’

- 2.6.1 A relatively large proportion of Ilfracombe’s work force is involved within the tourism industry in hotels and restaurants (14.7%) compared to North Devon (12.8%) and Devon (8.9%), which reflects the importance of tourism to the local economy. Also, a large percentage of the work force is involved in manufacturing (22.2%), above the equivalent figures for North Devon (13.9%) and Devon (9.6%). Ilfracombe has two major employers, Pall (Ilfracombe) and TDK Lambda, both industries specialising in high technology with both also focusing on Research and Development. TDK Lambda is currently looking to expand the business. Superfast broadband would help to support this sector.

2.6.2 In contrast, Ilfracombe has a much lower proportion of its workforce involved in real estate business (4.3%) and public administration (2.9%), which are well below the equivalent figures for North Devon, Devon and nationally as set out in Table 4.

Table 4: Employment Sectors

				National
Agriculture & forestry	0.0%	1.9%	2.2%	1.0%
Fishing	0.9%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Mining & quarrying	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Manufacturing	22.2%	13.9%	9.6%	10.2%
Gas & water	0.1%	0.3%	0.8%	0.4%
Construction	2.5%	4.6%	5.7%	4.8%
Wholesale & retail trade	14.8%	19.9%	18.2%	16.6%
Hotels & restaurants	14.7%	12.8%	8.9%	6.8%
Transport, storage & communication	4.6%	3.4%	6.0%	5.8%
Financial services	1.3%	0.9%	1.6%	4.0%
Real estate & business activities	4.3%	9.7%	12.4%	18.0%
Public administration & defence	2.9%	4.9%	6.4%	5.4%
Education	10.0%	9.9%	9.4%	9.3%
Health & social work	15.1%	13.7%	13.4%	12.3%
Other community services	6.8%	3.9%	5.0%	5.3%

Source: Devon Town Profiles 2010 – Office for National Statistics

2.7 Unemployment – ‘higher than elsewhere in North Devon’

2.7.1 In 2011, unemployment in Ilfracombe’s East and West wards is higher than the District and County averages (Table 5) and in the Central ward is substantially higher, at almost three times the unemployment rate of the District and County. Central ward has the highest rate in North Devon and is more than 50% higher than Barnstaple central ward ranked second.

2.7.2 The high unemployment level in the town will be affected by a relatively high dependency of seasonal employment within the tourism industry.

Table 5: Unemployment Claimants

							Devon		
	2001	2006	2011	2001	2006	2011	2001	2006	2011
Number unemployed	n/a	254	301	1,635	1,075	1,135	8,581	6,138	10,159
% of working age (16 – 64) population	n/a			3.1%	1.9%	2.4%	2%	1.4%	2.2%
Central		5.2%	6.4%						
East		2.2%	3.3%						
West		2.9%	2.8%						

Source: NOMIS: Official labour market statistics (February 2011)

2.8 House Prices – ‘lower than average across North Devon’

2.8.1 In 2008, all types of average house prices are substantially below those for North Devon and Devon, apart from semi-detached houses, which are above the district average (Table 6). The Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the Northern Peninsula⁴ identifies Ilfracombe within the Coastal: Low Value sub-market area, which has typically less accessible locations offering less expensive homes, some of which are characterised by the need for local regeneration. This is understandable given Ilfracombe’s coastal location and distance away from Barnstaple where there is more work, shopping and leisure opportunities.

Table 6: Average House Prices by House Type

			Devon
Overall	165,157	209,460	223,636
Detached	254,158	285,301	310,899
Semi-detached	193,400	187,493	197,547
Terrace	145,275	158,442	172,313
Flat / maisonette	117,764	164,651	160,202

Source: Devon Town Profiles 2010 – Land Registry

⁴http://www.northdevon.gov.uk/index/lgcl_environment/lgcl_planning/nonlgcl_planning_policy.htm

2.8.2 Average house prices in Ilfracombe (Table 7) increased at a rate between that experienced across Devon and nationally over the period 2001-2009. In 2009 the average property price in Ilfracombe was £201,560, which was below the North Devon average price (£214,125) by about 6%.

Table 7: Average House Prices by Year

Overall Average Prices (£)	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	% increase 2001 / 2009
Ilfracombe	108,878	149,332	203,889	217,571	201,560	85%
Devon	112,813	165,264	208,323	241,523	223,636	98%
England & Wales	92,183	129,632	157,880	179,905	157,033	70%

Source: Devon Town Profiles 2010 – Land Registry

2.8.3 Property prices across all areas have been subject to reduction from 2007 and current market conditions suggest this trend has continued. Despite falling house prices, average prices in Ilfracombe have increased significantly over the period from 2001 and, taking into account average household incomes (Table 2), housing will continue to be unaffordable to the majority of new market entrants.

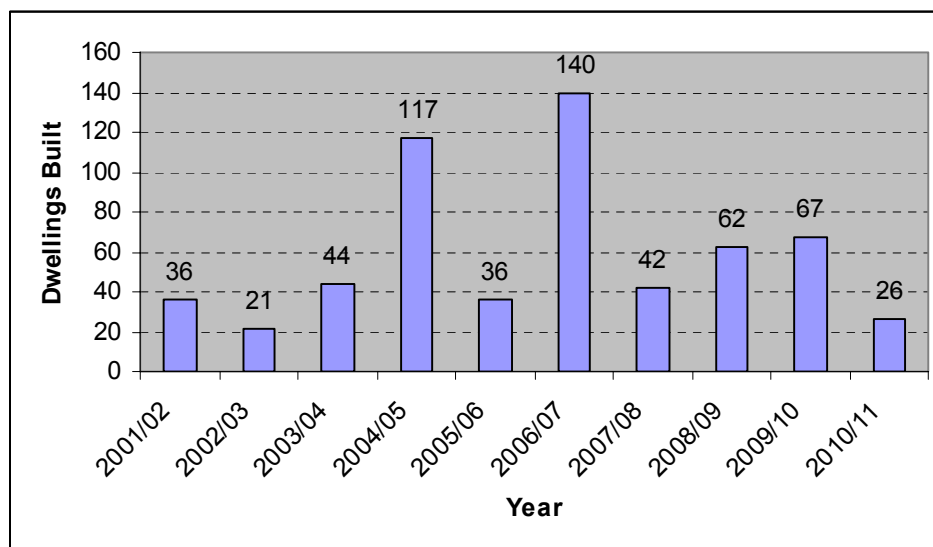
2.8.4 North Devon is one of the least affordable areas to buy housing in the South West. ‘Home Truths’ (2011) prepared by the National Housing Federation shows a ratio of mean house prices to median income⁵ of 14.8, the fourth highest for any District in the South West region. Whilst other districts have higher house prices, North Devon has one of the lowest average incomes in the country (see section 2.4). This affordability ratio exceeds those for the South West region (11.6) and England (11.2).

2.9 Housing Supply – ‘*substantial supply of housing land available*’

2.9.1 A total of 592 dwellings were completed for the period 2001 to 2011, and 858 for the period 1995 to 2011. Figure 1 shows spikes in housing completions in 2004/05 and 2006/07. This is explained by new homes from a number of conversions being completed at the same time rather than any changes in land availability. However, the fall in 2010/11 is a reflection of current housing market conditions.

⁵ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2010

Figure 1: Annual Housing Completions in Ilfracombe



Source: NDC Annual Housing Monitoring

2.9.2 Table 8 provides a summary of housing supply for Ilfracombe on 31st March 2011. The number of dwellings approved but not yet completed is relatively high (305). There are also a substantial number of allocated sites without planning permission (147), which may reflect the state of the local housing market.

Table 8: Housing Supply

	No. of Units
Units Under Construction	142
Units on Sites Subject to Implementation	10
Unimplemented Planning Permissions on Sites of 1 – 9 dwellings	65
Unimplemented Planning Permissions on Sites of 10+ dwellings	88
Sites approved subject to s106 agreement	9
Sites Allocated Without Consent	147
TOTAL	461

Source: NDC Annual Housing Monitoring

2.9.3 In 2001, the majority (approximately 85%) of existing dwellings in North Devon were houses or bungalows, with 14% flats (either purpose built or converted). Within Ilfracombe parish, there were approximately 67.0% houses and 32.9% flats, the remainder being mobile homes. The proportion of flats has increased over the last decade as a result of pressures to reuse existing building stock and to maximise density of new development. The 2009 House Condition Survey indicates a North Devon figure of 16.5% flats.

2.10 Deprivation – ‘above average deprivation for most measures’

2.10.1 North Devon is ranked 146th from 326 Local Authorities in the English Indices of Deprivation (2010). At a local level North Devon is the second most deprived district area in Devon, narrowly better than Exeter City. Deprivation issues in North Devon relate to the barriers to presence of skills and training and the quality of the living environment (immediate home surroundings). With these measures of deprivation⁶ the urban parts of the district generally experience higher than average levels of deprivation, whereas the rural areas score above average for most indicators. The exception is barriers to housing and services (physical and financial accessibility of housing and key local services) where urban areas score above average and rural areas generally score below average.

2.10.2 Indices of deprivation for Ilfracombe⁷ indicate relatively high levels of deprivation. Ilfracombe Central is ranked the most deprived ward in Devon County and is within the bottom quartile nationally for most indicators. Across Ilfracombe, there is above average deprivation in respect of: employment, the living environment, crime, health deprivation and disability and skills and training. Whereas most of North Devon is top quartile for crime scores according to recorded low crime rates, Ilfracombe Central ward ranks much lower and stands out as an exception to the wider district. Ilfracombe performs above average in respect of barriers to housing and services (physical and financial accessibility of housing and key local services), although parts of Ilfracombe West ward score (second quartile) better than the rest of the town.

2.11 Health – ‘lower incidence of long term illness reflects a younger age profile’

2.11.1 In 2001 89.3% of residents surveyed said they were in good or fairly good health, slightly below figures of 91.5% for the District and 91.4% for Devon (Ilfracombe Devon Town Baseline Profile May 2006, extracted from Census). Approximately 17.4% of residents surveyed in the 2001 census said they had a limiting long-term illness compared to 17.8% for the District and 19% for Devon.

2.11.2 Life expectancy in Ilfracombe is well below average for the district and is the lowest in Devon as a whole. In comparison, the highest life expectancy in Devon is at Ottery St. Mary (83.6 years), over 6 years longer than that in Ilfracombe. The town’s life expectancy in Ilfracombe is also far lower than the national average.

⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6871/1871208.pdf

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government>

Table 9: Life Expectancy (in Years)

Ilfracombe	79.5	75.1	77.3
North Devon	82.5	77.8	80.2
Devon	83.0	78.9	81.0
United Kingdom	82.0	77.9	80.0

Source: <http://www.infopoint.devonpct.nhs.uk> ONS & Devon County Council

2.12 Primary and Secondary Schools – ‘limited capacity for any future growth’

2.12.1 There are three schools in Ilfracombe, mostly at or close to capacity in 2010. In particular, the Infant and Junior schools will need to increase their capacity to accommodate potential growth within the town.

Table 10: School Numbers

		2009	2010	2011 Enrolled
Ilfracombe Infant and Nursery School, Marlborough Road	360	319	356	356
Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School, Princess Avenue	469	440	409	417
Ilfracombe Media Arts College, Worth Road	1339	1143	1105	Not Available

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables> & Devon County Council

2.13 Environment – ‘high quality natural environment around the town’

2.13.1 North Devon District forms part of the world class North Devon Biosphere Reserve designated by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), with Ilfracombe located in the Transition Zone. Ilfracombe has a Local Nature Reserve at Hillsborough to the east of the town and an informal Local Nature Reserve at the Cairn to the southwest of the town. Their combined area of approximately 40 hectares equates to 3.6 hectares /1000 population, which exceeds Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANGSt) Plus Standard of 1 hectare /1000 population.

2.13.2 There are a number of County Wildlife Sites around the town including land at the Torrs, Winsham Farm, Warmcombe Wood and Hillsborough. Much semi-natural habitat has survived in Ilfracombe, including unimproved neutral grassland and ancient woodland. The incised river valleys of Chambercombe and Wilder Brook contain substantial ecological interest and have a rich flora and fauna. The coastline is important for biodiversity with a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area along the north coast extending either side of the town. The coastline is also proposed as a Marine Conservation Zone.

2.13.3 The coastline and cliffs on either side of the town are included within the Marine Cliff and Slopes Strategic Nature Area as one of the best places in the South West for major habitat expansion for priority habitats.

2.14 Open Space – ‘deficiencies in most types of open space’

2.14.1 Ilfracombe has significant under-provision for all types of public open space (Table 11). However, residents and tourists have access to informal open spaces in the countryside surrounding the town including at Hillsborough, the Cairn, the Torrs, along the South West Coast Path and on numerous beaches.

Table 11: Open Space

	Number	Hectares	Deficiency
Informal Open Space	~	11.9	Yes
Equipped Play Areas	9	1.1	Yes
Sports Pitches	3	7.3	Yes
Allotments	6	1.22	Yes
Cemeteries / Churchyards	2	5.12	No
Community Parks	4	12.14	Yes
Total	24	38.78	Yes

Source: North Devon Open Space Strategy

2.15 Heritage – ‘high quality protected historic environment’

2.15.1 There are 124 listed buildings in Ilfracombe parish, of which 6 are Grade II* and 2 are Grade I listed. Most listed buildings are Georgian or Victorian including several grand terraces. The number of listed buildings would be substantially higher if individual properties within listed terraces were counted separately. Most of these buildings are located within the designated conservation area, which covers 79 hectares. The Grade I listed buildings are the Parish Church and St Nicholas’ Chapel on Lantern Hill overlooking the harbour. Hillsborough has an Iron Age hill fort protected as a scheduled ancient monument.

2.16 Landscape – ‘attractive coastal landscape’

2.16.1 Land abutting the east and west sides of the town forms part of the North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and North Devon Heritage Coast. Whilst Ilfracombe is an urban area, the special landscapes around the town contribute to the overall strategy in the Joint Landscape Character Assessment for North Devon & Torridge (2010) of protecting the special character, views and habitats. The landscapes applicable to the area are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: Landscape Character Types

	Commentary
4C Coastal Slopes and Combes with Settlements	<p>The distinctive coastal combes which carve through the landform on the way to the sea;</p> <p>Special qualities are linear settlements contained within the landscape, stone built harbours, lime kilns and Edwardian and Victorian seaside influence; &</p> <p>The overall strategy is to protect the distinctive linear and contained settlement pattern of the combes, enhancing traditional vernacular building styles and the setting of development within the landscape. The area’s popularity as a tourism destination is to be managed to both provide further sustainable recreational opportunities whilst ensuring landscape character is managed and strengthened.</p>
4H Cliffs	<p>Cliffs along the undeveloped coast within the North Devon Coast AONB;</p> <p>Special qualities are wild, exposed and dramatic landscape with expansive coastal views, spectacular geological formations and rugged coastal landforms, important archaeological features, with access and enjoyment of the cliff top via the South West Coast Path; &</p> <p>The overall strategy is to protect the wild, exposed and generally unsettled character of the coastal cliffs, ensuring that new development does not detract from these valued attributes.</p>
5C Downland	<p>The North Devon Downs, including the elevated ridges between Combe Martin, Berrynarbor and Ilfracombe;</p> <p>Special qualities are dramatic and far-reaching views, smooth rolling skylines, often only broken by protruding square church towers, valued wildlife habitat within the farmland and associated with the hedge network; &</p>

	The overall strategy is to protect the flowing skylines and open views provided from the Downs, preserving the landscape’s high levels of tranquility, and capitalising on the landscape’s close proximity to the coast with Green Infrastructure links created from expanding settlements and holiday resorts to take the pressure away from the coastal hotspots.
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Source: Joint Landscape Character Assessment for North Devon & Torridge (2010)

2.17 Community Facilities – ‘a wide range of community facilities’

2.17.1 Ilfracombe has a wide range of facilities commonly found in a market town / service centre (Table 13). There are a number of financial establishments, a good number of health services and several schools that cater for the area. The location of some of these community facilities is shown on Map 1.

Table 13: Community Facilities

Banks/Building Soc.	6
Places of Worship	7
Community College	1
Community Hall	3
Dental Surgery	2
Doctor Surgery	2
Hospital	1
Infant School	1
Junior School	1
Leisure Centre (swimming pool)	1
Library	1
Optician Practice	2
Pharmacy	3
Police Station	1
Post Office	2
Public House	21
Sport Pitch	3
Supermarket	3
Vet	1

Source: DCC, NDC & Ilfracombe Town Council (2011)

2.18 Transport – ‘good links to South West Coast Path and cycle network’

2.18.1 Ilfracombe is served by regular bus services to and from Barnstaple and Braunton and surrounding villages. Most operate relatively frequent services between Monday to Saturday, but offer fewer services in the evenings and on a Sunday. There is no train service to the area.

- 2.18.2 The nearest link to the national railway network is at Exeter, from Barnstaple along the Tarka Line through the Taw valley. Whilst this hourly service has recently experienced increased usage, Ilfracombe remains relatively remote from the strategic rail network, partly due to the very limited connectivity between Barnstaple bus station and the railway station. There is no regular links to Tiverton Parkway railway station from either Ilfracombe or Barnstaple other than by the private car.
- 2.18.3 National Cycle Route 27 (Devon Coast to Coast) starts at Ilfracombe and crosses Devon to Plymouth via Barnstaple and Bideford. The northern part of this route coincides with the Tarka Trail along the disused railway towards Barnstaple via Braunton, although the route is incomplete. The South West Coast Path also passes through Ilfracombe. There are a large number of walking trails and public rights of way especially to the west of the town.
- 2.18.4 The Devon and Torbay Local Transport Plan 3 (April 2011) identifies Ilfracombe as a Coastal Town. The strategy for these towns is to improve connectivity to the main urban areas, promote sustainable travel, improve the connectivity between different modes of transport and create opportunities for walking, cycling and outdoor leisure.

2.19 Tourism – ‘a significant part of the town’s economy’

- 2.19.1 Ilfracombe is an established tourism resort on the north coast where hotels and restaurants form a significant part of the town’s economic base. Table 14 provides a snap shot of available self-catering, bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation in the town and in close proximity to Ilfracombe.

Table 14: Tourist Accommodation (Bed Spaces)

	Flats and	Holiday Park	Touring
2,950	490	2,250	1,500

Source: Tourism Trends in Devon 2007 (Devon County Council)

2.20 Summary of Issues

Table 15: Summary of Issues

Population	Increasing but slower than other towns
Income	Below average
Benefits	Well above average rates compared to the District & Devon
Employment	Above average employment in manufacturing, hotels and restaurants
Unemployment	Higher unemployment levels than the District and Devon
Crime	Above average crime rates in Central ward compared to District and Devon
House Prices	Below average house prices
Housing Supply	Steady housing growth with substantial potential housing supply
Deprivation	Very deprived if compared to the District and Devon, and relatively deprived when compared to the rest of the country
Health	Residents are generally in good health, but below the District average
Schools	Schools appear to be at or near capacity
Community Facilities	Good range of facilities but GP surgeries are over capacity
Transport	Good links to Public Transport, Tarka Trail, South West Coast Path and National Cycle Network
Tourism	A significant part of the town's economy

3 Major Planning Applications

3.1 A summary of recently approved large-scale permissions is listed in Table 16 below.

Table 16: Major Planning Permissions

Reference			
2011	49891	Glendower Hotel, Wilder Road	Demolition of Hotel and Erection of 12 Flats
2011	50803	Collingwood Hotel, Wilder Road	Demolition of existing hotel & erection of new hotel with public house*
2010	50316	Bicclescombe Nursery, Doone Way	Demolition of existing buildings & erection of 15 dwellings & garages

2009 / 2006	48219 and 42458	Cliffe Hydro Hotel, Hillsborough Road	Redevelopment to form 42 sheltered apartments for the elderly, communal facilities & associated car parking
2008	39801	Former Colossus Night Club, Avenue Road	Demolition of existing nightclub & construction of 36 apartments*
2007	39405	Palm Court Hotel, Runnacleave Road	Conversion of part of hotel to form 14 apartments
2007	42969	Berkeley Hotel, Wilder Road	Conversion of hotel to form 11 flats*
2007	43135	Willow Court, Torrs Park	Conversion of nursing home to form 10 apartments
2004	31609	Cavendish Hotel, 9 Larkstone Terrace	Conversion of existing hotel to form 12 two- bedroomed apartments

*Currently negotiating with developer on delivering the site

4 Size, Land Use and Character

- 4.1 Ilfracombe is a large historic town that expanded significantly in the Victorian era and is characterised by relatively high-density development of terraces and town houses on the hillsides around the town centre and harbour. Many of these larger properties have been subdivided into smaller units, mainly flats. The town has spectacular views over the harbour, seafront and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on either side of Ilfracombe, which help to define the town's character and setting. The town centre is dominated by a large number of listed buildings.
- 4.2 Map 1 shows that Ilfracombe is well served by bus routes, walking and cycling routes, although opportunities for walking and cycling are limited by the town's topography. Residential and tourism uses are dominant in the town, with commercial fishing, tourism and leisure uses dominant within the harbour.

5 Constraints

5.1 Flooding

- 5.1.1 Areas at risk of flooding (Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 and 3) follow the East and West Wilder Brooks on the western side of town and Hele Stream in the east. Much of the town is well above these rivers. The seafront and harbour are also vulnerable to tidal flooding although flood defences are in place.

- 5.1.2 The Environment Agency's North Devon Catchment Flood Management Plan (2009) identifies Ilfracombe as an area of moderate to high flood risk where action to reduce flood risk will be taken. The current flood risk to Ilfracombe could increase significantly in the future with areas of high social vulnerability adjacent to the rivers.

5.2 Topography

- 5.2.1 The majority of the town has been built on hillsides rising up from the harbour and seafront. There are relatively few flat areas within the town, much of the past development has been built along existing contours. Shortage of flat land has represented a challenge in providing sports pitches within the town. The constraints of the coast to the north and the hills within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the east and west restrict growth options to the undeveloped rising land to the south of the town.

5.3 Landscape

- 5.3.1 As highlighted in section 2.16, land to the east and west of Ilfracombe forms part of North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is a landscape of national importance. The undeveloped coastline either side of the town is protected as North Devon Heritage Coast (see Map 2).

5.4 Biodiversity

- 5.4.1 Section 2.13 indicates that Ilfracombe has two Local Nature Reserves at Hillsborough and the Cairn as well as a number of County Wildlife Sites, where nature conservation needs to be maintained and enhanced.

6 Relationship to Other Centres

- 6.1 Ilfracombe has strong links with other towns and villages along the north coast (including Combe Martin, Berrynarbor, West Down, Morteohoe/Woolacombe and Lynton) and acts as a significant local service centre providing local shopping, education, healthcare, work, evening entertainment and community facilities. For higher order services including comparison shopping, higher education and alternative work opportunities, residents travel to Barnstaple, or beyond to Exeter. Bus services to Barnstaple are regular during normal working hours.
- 6.2 The A361 connects Ilfracombe to Barnstaple and Braunton, with the A399 connecting Ilfracombe to Combe Martin. Any proposed passenger ferry links between Ilfracombe and South Wales would provide a strategic sea link into and out of the region.

- 6.3 Figures from the 2001 Census show commuting rates between the main towns of North Devon and Torridge. Almost 65% of the working population from Ilfracombe work within the town, with a further 6% commuting to Mullacott and Woolacombe. Over 17% commute to Barnstaple (including Roundswell) and a further 4% commute to Braunton, Wrafton and Chivenor. Of the people working in Ilfracombe, the vast majority (87%) live within the town.

Table 17: Commuting Patterns

	Where people living in
Ilfracombe	64.7%
Barnstaple (including Fremington and Roundswell)	17.1%
Woolacombe and Mullacott	5.7%
Braunton (including Wrafton/Chivenor)	4.4%
South Molton	0.6%
Rural North Devon	3.1%
Outside North Devon	4.5%

Source: 2001 Census

7 Community

7.1 Ilfracombe Strategic Plan 2010-2020

This plan was adopted by Ilfracombe Town Council and provides a snapshot of key objectives identified by the local community, which is summarised in Table 18.

Table 18: Summary of the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan

Assume Management of our Town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and use powers of discretion; • Agree Strategy and Action Plans; • Insert our Strategy into Northern Devon draft Core Strategy being considered during the early part of 2010; • Agree Policies; • Engage with other public bodies; • Engage with important private bodies; • Carry out action and improvement plans.
In view of limited public finances, be prepared to either fund or source funds ourselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better utilise precept; • Borrow against business cases; • Partnerships with private funders; • Generate surpluses when operating

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	<p>commercial services;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise Business Improvement Districts (BID); • Encourage benefactors, legacies, sponsors; • Continue grant sourcing; • Utilise our network of young people.
Our main business is tourism, broaden its scope and take upmarket.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make marketing plan; • Bring tourist association with us; • Carry out PR; • Improve the public realm; • Target as quality tourist destination to specific groups (e.g. create motor home park and improve marina experience); • Promote quality tourist events e.g. national street art competition; • Market our history; • Promote the character of the historic and built environment.
Support our large manufacturing employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain contact with local major employers; • Identify their needs; • Agree action.
Promote the establishment of micro-businesses (probably creative/knowledge intensive/broadband dependent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify current micro-businesses; • Find out their experience – views; • Set out promotional plan; • Take part in exhibitions (e.g. property fairs promoting our town to other areas); • De-risk BT's high speed broadband plans.
Welcome and exploit renewable energy opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Ilfracombe as renewable energy friendly; • Encourage the creation of a renewable museum/activity area; • Support tidal / wave energy projects; • Support the Atlantic Array; • Promote upgrading of older buildings as product test laboratories for new energy conservation products that blend the aesthetics of the architecture; • Support energy conservation and efficiency.
Support Ilfracombe as an important port, passenger and car ferry gateway linking the West Country, South Wales and Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and influence the harbour board (e.g. seek representation on harbour board); • Develop Larkstone ferry and town centre shuttle services; • Ensure all Ilfracombe organisations have contact with Welsh equivalents.
Take our cultural offering up-market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain more influence over Landmark Theatre (e.g. seek representation on the Trust); • Ensure the theatre is utilised fully for community and tourism;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support aquarium, museum and Tunnel Beaches holiday attractions etc.; • Support and promote good quality retail experience; • Encourage other cultural attractions e.g. science museum.
Maintain and utilise to best advantage our superb natural & built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage quality initiatives that complement and enhance the built environment; • Allow developers to fulfil affordable home requirements under Section 106 obligations by refurbishing run-down properties within the town; • Balance protecting the landscape with needs for the wellbeing of the community; • Work with other statutory bodies to develop our vision; • Encourage other stakeholders controlling gateway routes beyond our parish to support our objectives (e.g. keep cycle ways clear and improve signage); • Support the delivery of sustainable communities; • Encourage the community to respect its environment; • Encourage and seek a sustainable future for the historic environment; • Support and encourage the delivery of new quality infrastructure and youth facilities; • Promote and support crime reduction initiatives (e.g. better by design).
Improve public transport and infrastructure within and to the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve A361 with by-pass at Braunton; • Improve A399 tourist route; • Park and Ride at Mullacott; • Direct coaches to Tiverton Parkway, Heathrow & Victoria; • Frequent, comfortable and convenient town services; • Better signage in and towards town.
Improve public places, particularly the High Street and Sea Front and promote connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divert “A” road from High Street; • Reduce length of High Street as shopping experience; • Convert some shops to residential; • Explore shared street principal e.g. Barcelona; • Re-organise the Sea Front (the way we want it); • Support and co-ordinate Fore Street and other quality landscape improvement works; • Ensure peripheral street works are consistent in

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	<p>quality reflecting our standards (e.g. utility and road repairs, street furniture);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good waste and recycling management.
Take over and operate buildings and services where they contribute to well being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where needed services are threatened with buildings failing in their remit; • Where identified as needed but currently no provision.
Raise our socio – economic profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support / influence the performance of Ilfracombe College (e.g. representation on governing board); • Support new community hospital; • Ensure quality new dwellings; • Promote advantage of the town to potential new residents; • Maintain public realm in good order; • Promote low crime rate and maintain good law and order; • Promote shared equity housing as a means of delivering affordable housing.
Reduce migration of young people from our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality employment opportunities; • Support for micro businesses; • Secondary or tertiary level education opportunities; • Promote vocational training; • Ensure Ilfracombe College integrates with the community; • Promote our excellent choice of sporting facilities; • Promote “curious” range of cultural activities; • Optimise access to whatever education facilities are locally available.
Better managed support for our socially dependent residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify institutions that impose social dependants on us and deflect; • Avoid designating houses for HMOs; • Ensure most vulnerable are aware and take up opportunities for personal development and advancement; • Ensure sufferers of disadvantaged/discrimination are offered support.
Maintain social cohesion and prevent social isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide trusted point of contact; • Be recognised by other agencies as an active and key participant in social provision; • Increase accessibility to services; • Maximise joint working opportunities; • Work with voluntary and community sector – information sharing, planning and co-ordination;

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with schools and youth services; • Encourage community to engage in democratic process; • Increase community resilience; • Support as appropriate works to protect our vulnerable areas from flooding.
Maintain and build on our local culture of good nature and friendliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record and analyse attitudes etc.; • Conduct surveys; • Citizenship audit; • Third sector organisations' survey; • Places survey; • Generate improvement plans where needed; • Incorporate into strategic plan.

Source: Ilfracombe Town Council – Adopted Strategic Plan

7.2 North Devon and Torridge Local Strategic Partnership – January 2010

7.2.1 The Local Strategic Partnership Federation Event engaged a wide range of community and economic stakeholders for each main town. Each group focused on the identification of existing infrastructure deficiencies and the opportunities and solutions for future delivery to support growth proposals in each main town.

Table 19: Summary of Local Strategic Partnership Event

Health	Safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of medical hub delivering flexible care integrating hospital and GP services • Skills gap to deliver social care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of police staffing / neighbourhood watch
	Pedestrian and cycle paths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision high quality multi-use pitches – optimise flat areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join up Tarka Trail to Braunton and improved maintenance
Education	Roads
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New College – Building Schools for Future* • Improve youth services, provide bigger venue and facilities for young people to develop • Create educational links for Ilfracombe with Petroc/Swansea • Skills gap to deliver social care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divert through-traffic from High Street to enable pedestrianisation • Strengthen community transport and car share • Resolve Braunton’s congestion which affects accessibility • Establish Ilfracombe transport forum (DCC, NDC, ITC, Ferry Co., AONB)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain bus route through High Street • Create Park and Ride at Mullacott 	

*Central Government have subsequently removed the funding for this project

8 Visions

8.1 It is necessary to establish a locally accepted vision for the town to guide the scale and direction of its future growth. Such a vision should be defined through the joint North Devon and Torridge Core Strategy. In order to assist the preparation of a new vision for Ilfracombe over the next 20 years, it is appropriate to consider visions proposed previously.

8.2 The Pre-Publication North Devon and Torridge Joint Core Strategy (January 2010) contained the following vision for Ilfracombe for the period to 2026.

“Ilfracombe will be regenerated through sustainable housing and employment growth, new ferry links serving the town and northern Devon, a revitalised tourism industry and improved access to key services and facilities. Design led regeneration of the town centre and enhancement of the harbour and sea front will capitalise on the town’s built heritage, cultural assets, high quality landscape and coastal setting whilst safeguarding the harbour and seafront from rising sea levels and facilitating its continued use as an operational port.”

8.3 Ilfracombe Town Council have their vision set out in the Ilfracombe Strategic Plan 2010 – 2020.

“To be the most prosperous, friendly, forward-looking and characterful seaside town in the South West; right-sized, sustainable and attractive to modern businesses of diverse type and size; to tourists and all residents.”

8.4 The vision for Ilfracombe Harbour Board (2009) is:

“By 2023 Ilfracombe Harbour Board will have:

- 1. Regenerated Ilfracombe Harbour to provide new opportunities for marine and tourism based business to establish Ilfracombe as a new ‘Maritime Gateway’ to the South West.*
- 2. Provide deep water moorings for cross channel ferries, cruise liners and renewable energy project support services.*
- 3. Exercised its statutory and regulatory responsibilities to achieve Department for Transport ‘Leading Light Status’”.*

8.5 The vision for the Market and Coastal Town Initiative prepared by Terence O'Rourke (2005) is:

“Ensure a vibrant, prosperous and accessible area providing for the needs of all its residents whatever their status, and ensuring a quality destination for tourists; a sustainable community that respects its past whilst creating a better future; and a community that makes the most of the talents and skills of its people, and the opportunities created by its geography and climate.”

9 Key Land Uses

9.1 Housing

9.1.1 The housing requirement in Table 20 was established from the now abolished Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West (RSS) based on an overall North Devon housing requirement of 10,900 from 2006 to 2026. Following consultation responses to the Pre-Publication North Devon and Torrridge Joint Core Strategy, together with the proposed abolition of the RSS, it has now been decided to review the proposed level of housing provision for Ilfracombe and for the district as a whole.

Table 20: Housing Requirements 2006 – 2026

Ilfracombe housing requirement	1,750
Completions 2006 – 2011	337
Commitments 31 March 2011 (including dwellings under construction, existing planning permissions and outstanding local plan allocations)	445
Additional provision required	968

Source: North Devon and Torrridge Joint pre-submission Core Strategy (January 2010) and NDC Annual Housing Monitoring

- 9.1.2 As of October 2010 there were 487 households on the housing register living in the Ilfracombe area, which equates to about 19% of the District's overall need based on the housing register. It is also recognised that not all households in housing need will be on the register. In Ilfracombe there are approximately 560 social houses, about 10% of the total housing stock in the area, which is in line with the overall proportion of social housing in North Devon in comparison with Devon (13%) and a national figure of around 20%. The District Council's Affordable Housing Delivery Plan identifies Ilfracombe as one of the top priority areas for the delivery of affordable housing within the district.
- 9.1.3 The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy (2008) estimated that 20% of homes in North Devon are private rented, with up to 29% of dwellings in hot spots such as Ilfracombe, compared to a national figure of just 11%. The strategy also found that 44.8% of vulnerable households live in non-decent dwellings, whereas in Ilfracombe 53.2% of vulnerable households live in non-decent dwellings. The Housing Stock Condition Survey (2009) estimated that 47.7% homes in Ilfracombe were non-decent, which represents a significant proportion of all households within the town due in part to the number of sub-divided large Victorian properties.
- 9.1.4 A 50-bed extra-care housing scheme is required within the town.

9.1.5 In 2010 there were 217 second homes or approximately 3.8% of housing stock.

9.2 Employment

9.2.1 According to the Joint Rural Devon Employment Land Review (2006), the District as a whole needs to provide 45 hectares of new employment land by 2026 assuming significant provision of B1(a) office space within town centres. Demand is expected to change from light manufacturing to offices over this time frame, and mixed schemes should be promoted rather than traditional employment land. Town centre regeneration opportunities should be brought forward to fulfil an economic role rather than simply supporting retail centre functions.

9.2.2 Table 21 provides a summary of employment land provision in Ilfracombe. There are 3.94 hectares of undeveloped land at Mullacott where there is no planning permission for further development apart from the original outline consent. This land is in several separate parcels up to a hectare in size.

Table 21: Ilfracombe Employment Land Provision

	Gross Floor Area		Gross Undeveloped Area (Hectare) Without	Gross Undeveloped Area (Hectare) With	Gross Area No Longer Available for
Mullacott Business Park	0	0	3.94	0	0

Source: North Devon Council (31st March 2010)

9.2.3 The Joint Rural Devon Employment Land Review (2006) recommended that Hele Business Park and the proposed workshop units at Killacleave be removed from the employment land portfolio on suitability grounds (physical assessment and marketability).

9.2.4 The Ilfracombe Workspace Strategy (2007) concluded that supply of small units and offices within Ilfracombe was inadequate to meet local demand. There was no identified provision for business start-ups, grow-on space, managed workspace, live/work premises nor arts and craft workshops. There were no facilities to support start-ups and innovative growth businesses and the recommended priority for intervention was to develop managed workspace provision with integrated business support to develop and nurture growth businesses. There was no scope to attract other major employers to the town.

9.3 Retail

9.3.1 Ilfracombe has a substantial amount of retail floor space compared to other Area Centres (Table 22) and includes retail floor space around the Harbour as well as the High Street. There is a diversity of uses within the primary and secondary shopping areas of the Town Centre including a relatively high proportion of pubs and hotels (920 sq. metres) reflecting the importance of the tourism industry within the town.

Table 22: Retail Floor Space & Units

		Total Number of Units
Braunton	4,384	100
Ilfracombe	8,952	162
South Molton	6,029	101

Source: North Devon Retail Study (Scott Wilson Primary Research 2004) (Table 3.12)

- 9.3.2 The North Devon Retail Study (2006) concludes that if trading continues at the 2005 rate then approximately 2,618 sq. metres (net) of new comparison retail floor space would be required in Ilfracombe by 2016, rising to 2,928 sq. metres (net) by 2021. The Retail Study also concluded that if trading continues at the 2005 rate then approximately 571 sq. metres (net) of new convenience retail floor space would be required in Ilfracombe by 2016, rising to 930 sq. metres (net) by 2021.
- 9.3.3 Since the North Devon Retail Study (2006), new retail stores have opened at Killacleave Farm (Tesco) and Palmerston Hotel, Wilder Road (originally Co-op, now Lidl) with an additional combined net sales area of 2,954 sq. metres. Consequently, a large majority of the identified retail floor space needed for Ilfracombe up to 2021 has already been met, although further retail needs may arise to reflect future population growth.
- 9.3.4 The town centre was assessed in December 2005 as being vital, viable and offering a diverse range of uses. Ilfracombe had a healthy range of independent retailers. Vacancy levels were below the national average but higher than elsewhere in North Devon. In November 2010 there was a 12% vacancy rate, and 9% within the primary shopping area, which remains higher than the rest of the District. However, this compares to the SW regional average of approximately 11%.

- 9.3.5 The Ilfracombe Economic Research report by CACI (July 2010) identifies that the retail mix and market position of Ilfracombe shows an over representation of Value retailers. More up-market retailers should be trading in the town considering the relative affluence of the visitor profiles and within the retail catchment area of the town, including the more affluent rural hinterland. If Ilfracombe is to benefit from higher visitor spend then it needs the supporting up-market retail and catering offer.

9.4 Community Facilities

- 9.4.1 The Infant and Junior schools are both at or close to capacity and an additional primary school and 'early years' provision will be required to accommodate any future growth in the town. Devon County's 'Narrowing the Gap' programme proactively supports the most vulnerable and underachieving children and young people in more deprived communities through a holistic approach to improved advice, services and opportunities to reduce inequalities of future expectations and achievements.
- 9.4.2 Waterside and Warwick Surgeries are under-sized for the current population and both struggle with temporary residents (tourists) over summer months. There is inadequate room to expand on their current site and new facilities will be required as the town grows over time. Ilfracombe Tyrrell Hospital is a community hospital with a minor injuries department, limited X-ray facilities and 14 in-patient beds within two wards.
- 9.4.3 There is already a shortage of sports pitches and there will be even greater pressure for further sport and recreation facilities as the town grows over time. The County Council have identified the need for enhancement to and expansion of the existing library from 300 sq. metres to 350 sq. metres to provide an enhanced range of services alongside any future growth in the town.
- 9.4.4 Land for future expansion of the town's cemetery is already identified to the south of the existing cemetery.

9.5 Physical Infrastructure

- 9.5.1 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2009) identifies that Ilfracombe lacks spare foul water sewer capacity for significant future developments. Surface water discharges will need to be strictly controlled and sustainable drainage systems, water storage and soakaways are needed to reduce increasing surface water flows in surface water sewers and the Wilder Brooks.

9.5.2 Access to superfast broadband is essential to homes and businesses in rural communities as much as in towns and cities. Funding has been secured from Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) for delivery of superfast broadband across Devon and Somerset over the next 5 years. Additional funding has been sought from the Rural Development Programme for England towards superfast broadband serving Ilfracombe and Mullacott.

9.6 Transport

9.6.1 Traffic management is required for Ilfracombe town centre to reduce congestion along the High Street and Harbour area. Any future development should also seek to enhance the green infrastructure network within the town to facilitate improved opportunities for walking and cycling around the town. Gaps in the former railway line and rural cycle network between Willingcott and Knowle should be filled to improve tourism and recreational opportunities for cycling to and from Ilfracombe whilst avoiding the worst of the town's topography.

9.6.2 Traffic management needs to be planned to:-

- co-ordinate the movement of people and vehicles around the town;
- deliver visitors to the Harbour and Town Centre;
- distribute visitors arriving by ferry to attractions in the town and elsewhere;
- redistribute through-traffic away from the High Street and Harbour without having an adverse impact on surrounding residential areas;
- manage the distribution of car parking around the town; and
- improve public transport routes.

9.6.3 Any future development and community hub on the hills to the south of the town needs to consider how it will link with existing facilities in the town centre. An improved public transport service could link the town centre to any new community hub including a new primary school, healthcare, employment and existing retail uses.

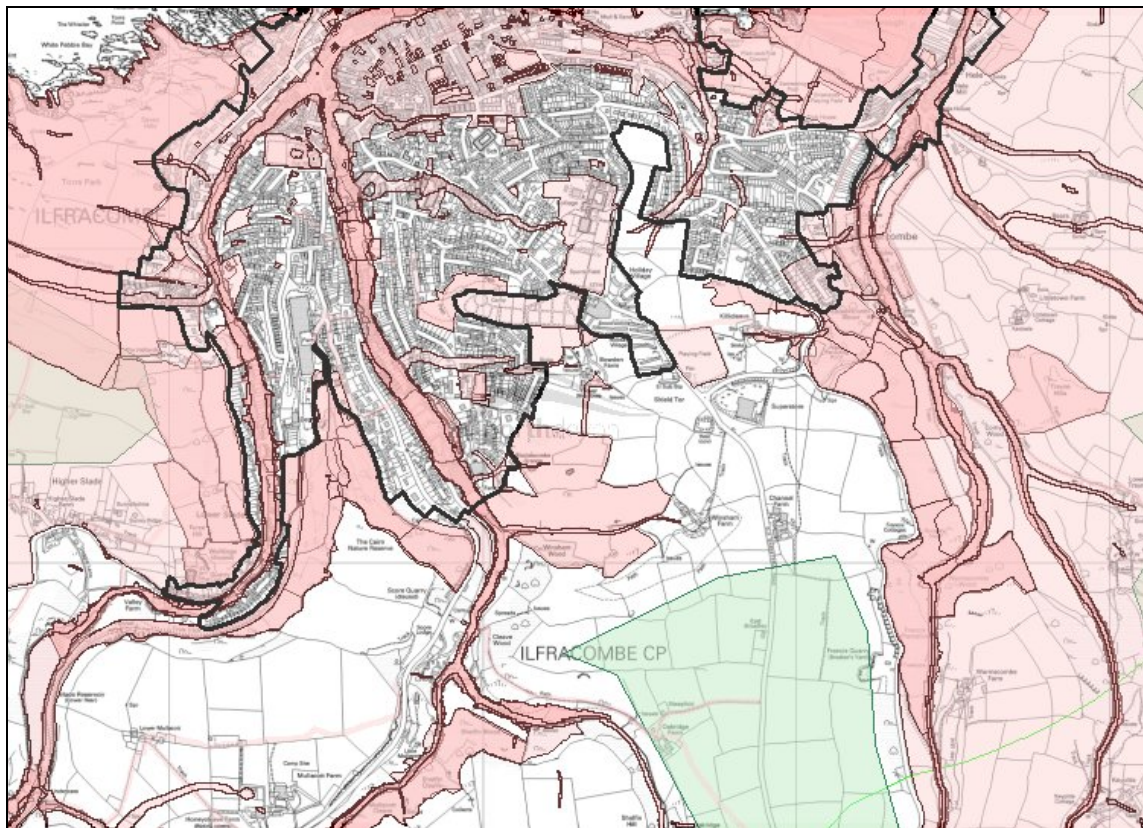
9.6.4 The longer-term opportunity for a passenger ferry from Ilfracombe to South Wales will provide a strategic sea link into and out of the region. Regular ferries from Ilfracombe and Bideford to Lundy provide the main access to the island. It is important to recognise the strategic importance of this ferry service and the road links to these ports.

10 Potential for Growth

10.1 Taking account of the Bristol Channel to the north of Ilfracombe and the North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and North Devon Heritage Coast abutting the east and west sides of the town, the least sensitive locations for potential strategic areas of growth are on rising land to the south of the town, avoiding the land identified for biodiversity interests.

10.2 The 'Environmental Capacity Study' for Ilfracombe mapped the distribution of environmental and heritage designations around the town, reflecting their relative significance (see Figure 2). The depth of colour indicates the individual or cumulative significance of these constraints. Hilltops and other elevated land (shown in green) are the only constraint not utilising an existing designation. This map helps to identify strategic areas with no or relatively few constraints that would be capable of supporting a degree of future development without significant impact upon these constraints.

Figure 2: Cumulative constraints around Ilfracombe



Source: Environmental Capacity Study for Ilfracombe (2011)

10.3 Areas with potential development capacity were also assessed to establish their strategic development capacity based on local environmental and infrastructure constraints. Those strategic areas with environmental and infrastructural capacity for potential growth outside or adjacent to the development boundary were identified (see Map 2). To facilitate the assessment of these potential growth areas, the unpublished North Devon & Torridge Core Strategy Strategic Site Assessments (November 2008) have been referenced.

10.4 Land East of Worth Road – Option 1

- 10.4.1 The steeply sloping site east of Worth Road is a green wedge of land penetrating the urban form of Ilfracombe and is considered to be well related to existing development and adjoining the Community College. Any development should incorporate green infrastructure to retain the site's contribution to the green setting of Ilfracombe and protect residential amenities of surrounding properties. Highway and junction improvements are required as well as new pedestrian links between Channel View and Worth Road. Land in this area has been submitted as a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) site on behalf of the landowner. This land has been assessed as being developable.
- 10.4.2 The land at Killacleave Farm, immediately north and east of Tesco, includes several key features in the biodiversity network to the north and east of the farm buildings. This land is also steeply sloping with a ridge crossing the site that is prominent from Hillsborough. Killacleave Farm is currently unavailable for development and its assessment through the SHLAA assessed this land as being not currently developable.
- 10.4.3 The site will need to accommodate sustainable drainage to reduce surface water runoff from the sloping land. This option could be considered in combination with Option 2 (land at Bowden Farm and South of Tesco) with a shared new neighbourhood hub providing business opportunities, community facilities and services.

10.5 Land at Bowden Farm and South of Tesco – Option 2

- 10.5.1 Land east and west of the Old Barnstaple Road is sloping and forms a large elevated site to the south of the town. Land at Channel Farm is flatter than most land around Ilfracombe and provides an opportunity for provision of new playing pitches. There are large county wildlife sites to the west of Winsham Farm and at Warmscombe Wood, east of New Barnstaple Road. Any development should incorporate green infrastructure to link these biodiversity sites so as to improve pedestrian links between New and Old Barnstaple Roads and further west to Bicclescombe Park. The site is distant from the town centre and new community facilities would need to be provided. Highway and junction improvements are required.
- 10.5.2 This option could be considered in combination with Option 1 (land east of Worth Road and Killacleave Farm) with a shared new neighbourhood hub providing business opportunities, community facilities and services. Land in this area has been submitted as a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) site on behalf of the landowners and has been assessed as being developable.

10.6 Land within the Town – Option 3

10.6.1 There are a number of key sites providing redevelopment opportunities within the town, including Chambercombe Bakery, the Bus Station site, the former Golden Coast Amusements site, the former Montebello Hotel site and Biclescombe Nursery. Redevelopment of these sites will help to enhance the town's appearance in the street scene, as well delivering required housing growth.

10.7 Other Options

10.7.1 Opportunities for additional growth will be considered in the event proposals come forward and in the context of having planning and regeneration objectives for Ilfracombe that include the relationship of the site with existing development, access, landscape, community facilities, services and infrastructure requirements.

11 Key Issues

11.1 Housing numbers in the Joint Pre-Submission Core Strategy (January 2010) are to be reviewed in response to the spatial issues affecting the town.

11.2 Regenerating the Town

11.2.1 The vision for the town is for regeneration through growth. Growth will support construction jobs and knock-on economic benefits, as well as providing a greater population catchment to support shops and services within the town centre. Redevelopment of key sites within the town, currently vacant or derelict, will also help to enhance the town's historic character and tourism potential. The regeneration strategy will build upon the progress already made by Transform as a Neighbourhood Management initiative and Ilfracombe Town Council through the Development Sites Group and the Ilfracombe Regeneration Board.

11.2.2 Growth will also facilitate provision of new and improved infrastructure and community facilities that are currently over-stretched or lacking within the town. Improved access to services including healthcare opportunities, improved housing stock and more varied job prospects will start to address the key indices of deprivation evident within the town.

11.2.3 The Harbour is the town's biggest single asset and has potential to deliver regeneration opportunities of sufficient scale to facilitate a step-change in the town's economy. It also acts as a hub for recreational activities. Appropriate redevelopment around the harbour will be supported where it conserves or enhances key environmental and heritage assets. The proposed passenger ferry to South Wales (and Ireland) has potential to help regenerate the town's economy and provide new strategic routes from outside the region. The town will provide an

important destination for passengers as well as a gateway to North Devon and the wider region.

11.3 Diversifying Employment Opportunities

- 11.3.1 The key sectors within Ilfracombe's economy (tourism, manufacturing and retailing) should be strengthened, as well as seeking to diversify the town's economic base. The town needs to broaden the scope and improve the quality of the town's tourism offer. Extending the tourism season will reduce the seasonality of employment and help to reduce dependence on benefits. An all-weather visitor attraction is needed to attract visitors and provide family activities for tourists in wet weather. There is also an opportunity to take better advantage of Ilfracombe's superb natural and built environment, heritage and landscape character.
- 11.3.2 Manufacturing is important to Ilfracombe' economy, but the workforce of the town's two largest employers is ageing and a young, skilled workforce needs to be trained or attracted to the town to support these businesses. The type of housing being built will also play an important role. As the closest port to the Atlantic Array, a proposed large offshore wind farm, there are opportunities for Ilfracombe to capitalise on servicing this renewable energy scheme and to facilitate research and development into renewable energy sectors.
- 11.3.3 There is a need for small units and offices for start-up businesses, and to enable existing businesses to expand into larger units. Managed workspace provision with integrated business support should be developed to nurture new businesses and enable businesses to grow within the town.
- 11.3.4 Traditional employment uses would be accommodated at Mullacott Business Park, although business (B1) uses should also be integrated with housing as part of proposed urban growth. This will be most effective if superfast broadband can be provided. While almost 4 hectares of undeveloped employment land is still available at Mullacott, there is capacity to provide additional employment land there if required over the Plan period.

11.4 Improving and Delivering Housing to Meet Diverse Needs

- 11.4.1 Recessional market conditions have resulted in recent low construction rates and there are a substantial number of unimplemented planning permissions, although the majority of these are for flats. Allocated housing sites without planning permission also provide a substantial contribution to future needs, offering more flexibility on housing types to be provided.

11.4.2 Ilfracombe has a high proportion of flats and a substantial number of non-decent dwellings. The recognition of a possible housing renewal area in the town centre could help to improve housing stock condition. Future growth could also facilitate provision of a broader variety of housing stock to attract a wider social mix for a more balanced community profile. More family housing is required. It would also deliver more affordable housing to meet identified needs.

11.5 Delivering New Infrastructure to Meet the Town's Needs

11.5.1 Ilfracombe's doctors' surgeries are currently operating over capacity and the town's infant and junior schools are both close to capacity and the town is severely lacking adequate social infrastructure. There is also a shortage of playing pitches and other types of open space. Future growth of the town will need to address these deficiencies. Sustainable drainage will be needed to mitigate surface water runoff as a result of development on the hillsides above the town.

11.5.2 Any future development should enhance the green infrastructure network to help link designated wildlife areas and facilitate improved opportunities for walking and cycling around the town. New habitat and pedestrian links to the south of the town should be part of any development in that area.

11.5.3 As a port, Ilfracombe provides important links to Lundy Island and South Wales as well as potential for increased future links to South Wales. Its role is expected to develop to include servicing of the Atlantic Array whilst also providing increased opportunities as a short-term destination for larger cruise liners, working with Destination South West. Highway links to the Harbour need to be improved to facilitate its future role. A passenger ferry is likely to require long-stay parking provision as well as public transport to distribute arriving passengers to attractions elsewhere in the town and the rest of the district and beyond.

11.5.4 A traffic management strategy is required to coordinate the movement of people and vehicles around the town, as well as investigating the need for a potential park and ride/change facility.

11.5.5 An extended public transport service should also link the town centre to any new community hub. The mix of uses within the community hub (school, healthcare, employment, retail etc) will help to sustain public transport usage throughout the day.

11.5.6 The gap in the former railway line between Willingcott and Knowle should be completed to improve tourism, increase visitor spending and provide increased utility and recreational opportunities for cycling to and from Braunton and other surrounding areas.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 This study has found that Ilfracombe has a high quality environment, heritage and landscape setting, but is in need of economic and social regeneration to overcome its dependency on benefits, high level of non-decent homes, low wage economy and other indices of deprivation. A strategy of regeneration through growth is proposed to raise the town's profile and extend its critical mass, and the local community is actively pursuing this strategy.
- 12.2 The town provides a range of vital services for local residents of both Ilfracombe and surrounding villages, as well as tourists who exert extra pressure on already over-stretched community facilities and services. New and improved infrastructure is required to meet existing deficiencies as well as to meet the needs of future growth within the town.
- 12.3 With the Bristol Channel to the north, the North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and North Devon Heritage Coast abutting the town to the east and west, potential strategic areas for growth are restricted to rising land to the south of the town, avoiding the land identified for biodiversity interests. Smaller development sites are situated within and on the edges of the town. Two strategic growth options have been identified.

13 What Happens Next?

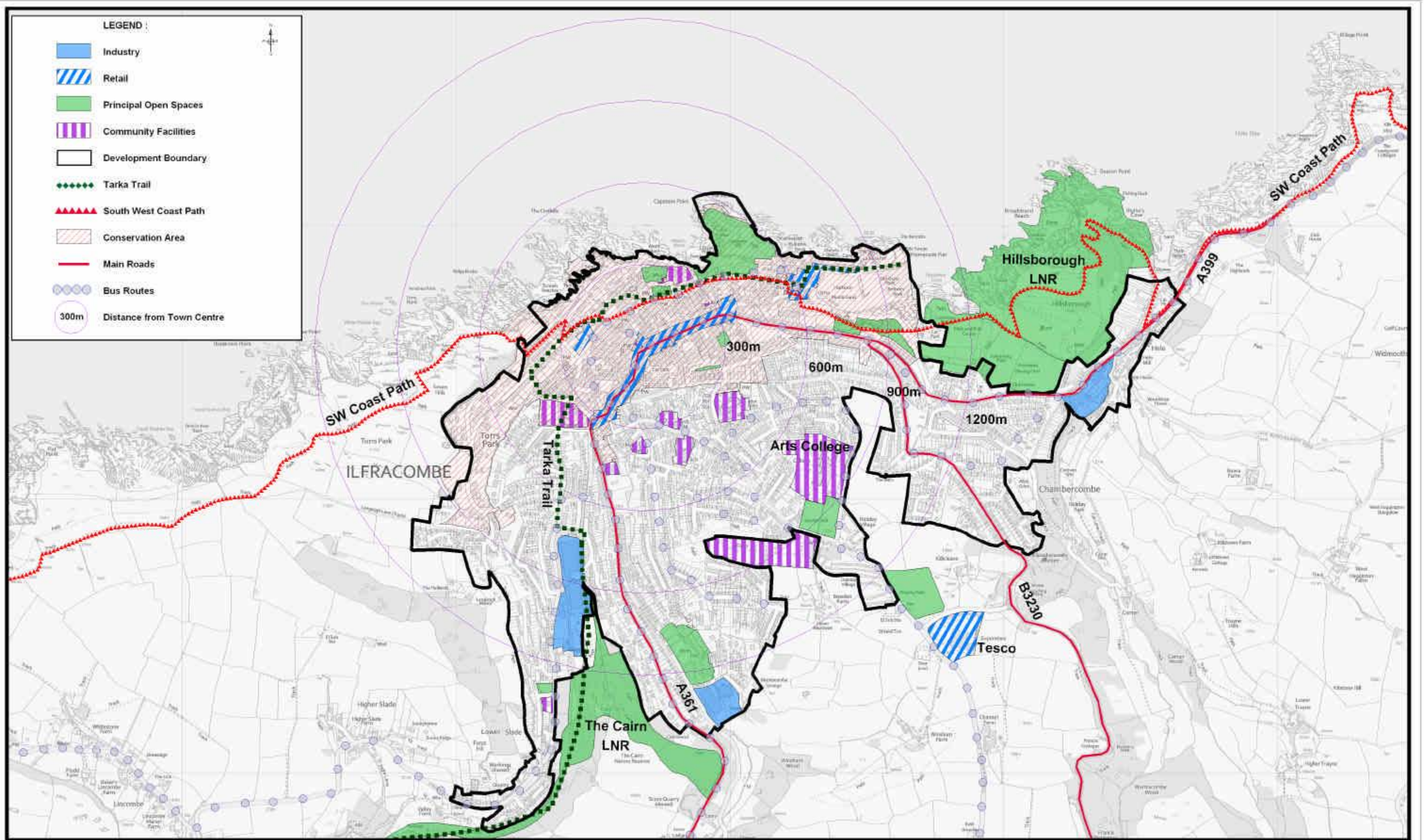
- 13.1 You are invited to comment on the issues raised in this document, including identifying any opportunities and/or issues raised by the potential growth options identified in section 10 (refer to Map 2).
- Land East of Worth Road – Option 1
 - Land at Bowden Farm and South of Tesco – Option 2
- 13.2 You need to use your knowledge of the area, taking account of surrounding sensitive landscapes, steep slopes, areas subject to flooding and the existing built up area, to help inform your decision.

(1) Are these sites the most appropriate locations to deliver sustainable growth within Ilfracombe to meet its future needs and priorities?

- 13.3 The Key Issues for the town are identified in section 11. These will need to be addressed by working together to help the town achieve sustainable growth and meet its community aspirations. The joint Core Strategy will help to deliver this.

(2) Have the most relevant Key Issues for the town been identified?

- 13.4 Feedback to this Town Study will be used to inform the vision, strategy and proposals for Ilfracombe to be included within a revised version of the joint Core Strategy to be published in early 2012.



Ilfracombe Town Profile
Map 1 : Existing Land Uses

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Scale: 1:13000
 Date: 21st July 2011

