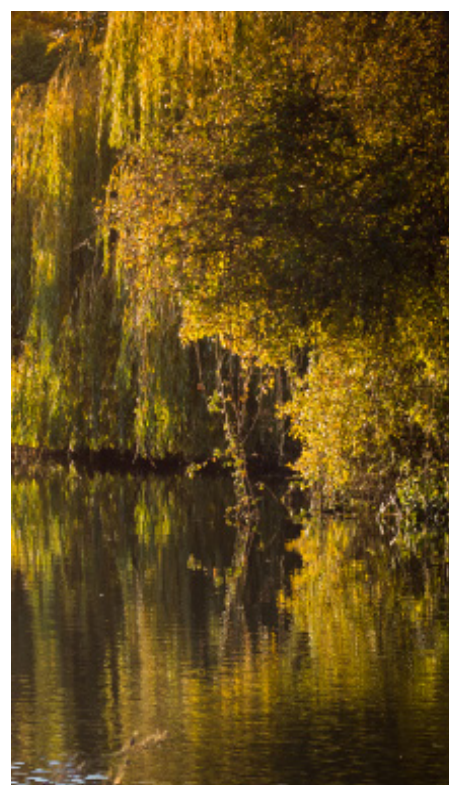
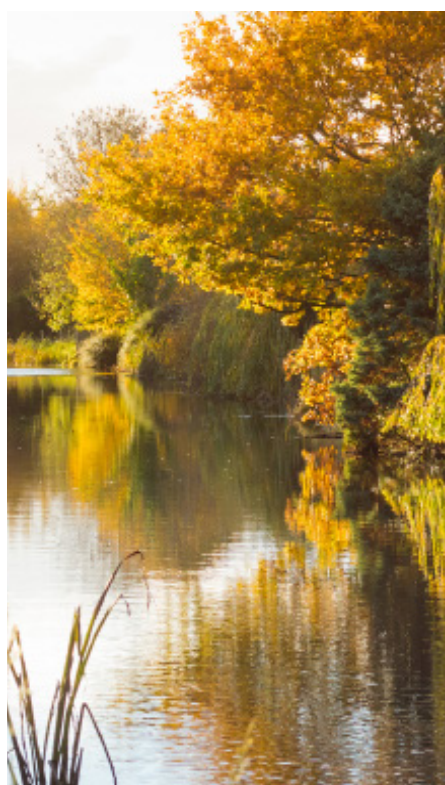
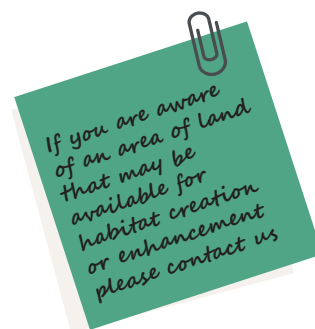


OUR NATURAL AND HISTORIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Landscape

9.1 Mid Devon's landscape is a valuable resource and one of our greatest assets. Protecting and enhancing the special character of the landscape that contributes towards local identity and distinctiveness is an important part of the planning process and our quality of life. Protected landscapes in Mid Devon include the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and part of the district at Cheriton Bishop that is within the Dartmoor National Park. The Exmoor National Park is situated to the east of Mid Devon. Other features contribute to Mid Devon's landscape and its sense of place, including the Grand Western Canal (which is a Country Park and a Local Nature Reserve (LNR)), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 2 nature reserves managed by Devon Wildlife Trust and areas designated as Local Green Space.



Grand Western Canal, Sampford Peverell



9.2 A Landscape Character Assessment for Mid Devon was published in 2011. This subdivides the district into 12 landscape character types and shows that Mid Devon has a diverse landscape, ranging from the intimate valleys and surrounds of the River Exe, to the Blackdown Hills with its unique geology, to the low lying flat agricultural area known locally as the Mid Devon Farming Belt. The Mid Devon Landscape Character Assessment has been used to inform the current Local Plan including policies for protecting landscapes and requirements for landscaping measures to be included where land has been identified for development. The current Local Plan seeks to ensure that major development proposals within or adjoining the AONB or National Parks are only permitted in exceptional cases. It is our intention to undertake a new Landscape Character Assessment, which will be used to inform the preparation of Plan Mid Devon.

Scan our QR code to access our online survey or visit middevon.gov.uk



If you require a printed version of our questions please call **01884 255255** or email us at planmiddevon@middevon.gov.uk

9.3 Plan Mid Devon will need to balance the protection of the landscape with measures to mitigate the effects of climate change and a move to net-zero, where the transition to a low carbon future can be achieved through the development of renewable technologies, which are often located in rural areas.

Local Green Space

9.4 Local green spaces are areas that are identified by communities as being of particular importance to them and which they feel should be protected. They are designated through either Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. For an area to be designated it needs to be in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; demonstrably special to a local community and hold a particular significance (e.g. because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife), and to be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

9.5 There are a number of local green spaces designated in the current Local Plan and in the Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan. Emerging Neighbourhood Plans for Crediton, Tiverton and Silverton also include proposals for local green spaces but these have yet to be designated.

| Local Plan Policy DM24 | Cullompton Neighbourhood Plan Policy EN03 | | |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Millennium Green, Bampton | Bilbie Close/Crow Bridge | Hayman's Close | Meadow Lane |
| Joan's Orchard, Bickleigh | Bockland Close | Hayman's Green | River Mead Play Area |
| Recreation Ground, Bickleigh | Clover Drive | Headweir Road 1 | Saxon Way/Windsor Close |
| Nick's Farm Field, Bradninch | Cross Parks | Headweir Road 2 | St Andrew's Hill |
| Millennium Green, Sandford | Culm Lea Play Area | Jubilee Gardens, Willand Road | Swallow Way |
| Millennium Green, Thorverton | Forcefield Road | Knightswood Play Park | Tufty Park |
| Sports Field, Witheridge | | | |





Question 28

Are there any other areas in Mid Devon that you think should be designated as a 'Local Green Space', and please tell us why?

Scan our QR code to access our online survey or visit middevon.gov.uk



If you require a printed version of our questions please call **01884 255255** or email us at planmiddevon@middevon.gov.uk

Biodiversity

9.6 The World Wildlife Fund describes 'biodiversity' as all the different kinds of life that you will find in one area, which includes the variety of plants and animals that make up our natural world. Biodiversity is in long-term decline, with habitats becoming increasingly fragmented and degraded as a result of changing land use and agricultural practices. Analysis by the Natural History Museum²¹ suggests the United Kingdom has just 53% of its biodiversity remaining as a result of human activity, and is one of the most depleted countries in the world in terms of biodiversity, whilst the State of Nature report (2019) asserts that within the last forty years, more than 1 in 7 wildlife species have either been threatened with extinction, or have become extinct. National policy seeks to reverse this trend, halting overall biodiversity loss and reintroducing well-functioning and coherent ecological networks. Healthy biodiverse ecosystems have multiple benefits. These include the breakdown and absorption of pollution and providing an essential, nature based part of the solution to climate change. They can also form a large part of our culture and local identity and can support our local farming and tourism economies in Mid Devon.

9.7 National planning policy includes an environmental objective, which states that local plans should protect and enhance the natural environment. Plans should help to improve biodiversity, minimise waste and pollution and use natural resources prudently, thus encouraging developments whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity. Additionally, local plans should contribute to minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. Developments which cause deterioration or loss of irreplaceable habitats should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons.

9.8 There are no designated European sites (which include Special Protection Areas 'SPAs', Special Areas of Conservation 'SACs', and Ramsar Sites) within Mid Devon. However, there are 11 within 10 km of the district, including the Culm Grasslands, Exe Estuary, Exmoor and Quantock Oakwoods East Devon Heaths, East Devon Pebbled Heaths, Exmoor Heaths, South Dartmoor Woods, Holme Moor and Clean Moor, Dartmoor SAC. Mid Devon is also within the transition zone of North Devon Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO site on the coast of North Devon. The transition zone stretches across Mid Devon's rivers and streams that extend to the North Coast of Devon.



9.9 The Culm Grasslands is a cluster of sites designated as a Special Area of Conservation ('SAC') and is the closest European site to Mid Devon District situated immediately adjacent to the north western boundary. A part of the Culm Grasslands is cut through by the North Devon Link Road. It is designated primarily for the protection of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly and represents the largest cluster of sites for this species in the south-west peninsula. Given its context, this site in particular could be affected by development within Mid Devon District through increased traffic on the North Devon Link Road which in turn may lead to increased nitrogen oxides that can impact the important habitat in this location for the Marsh Fritillary butterfly. For the current adopted Local Plan a Habitat Regulations Assessment was undertaken to ensure the Plan would have no likely significant effect from the proposals and policies (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the integrity of European sites including the Culm Grasslands SAC. Plan Mid Devon will be subject to further Habitat Regulations Assessment to find out whether significant effects from planned new proposals and policies are likely on the Culm Grasslands and other European sites.

9.10 The current Local Plan has policies that protect, enhance and conserve biodiversity. They support habitat creation, support opportunities which enhance species populations and link habitats. It also has policies that protect and encourage enhancement of international, European, national and local designated wildlife sites. Furthermore, policies discourage habitat fragmentation and developments which would cause significant harm to biodiversity and would thus have to implement compensation measures.

9.11 Plan Mid Devon provides an opportunity to set out policy to help deliver net gains in biodiversity. Biodiversity Net Gain is a concept that seeks to ensure development leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. Biodiversity Net Gain is already part of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) but this does not specify how much is required. A minimum mandatory national requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain is expected to become law in 2023 through the Environment Act, with the biodiversity measured through a clear standard metric. This 10% should not be viewed as a cap on the aspirations of developers who want voluntarily go further, and there is an opportunity for Plan Mid Devon to include a policy setting out where more than 10% may be required. Where possible biodiversity should be delivered on site. In order to reduce significant harm to existing biodiversity levels, it is likely that a mitigation hierarchy will be applied. This would first aim to avoid loss of biodiversity on site, then to mitigate if loss is necessary, next to ensure that any compensation for loss takes place on-site and finally only off site as a last option. Following the hierarchy would mean that genuine attempts must be made on site to reduce impacts on biodiversity as a result of development.

9.12 The Council has recently undertaken a 'call for sites' to find out where land is available across the district for potential strategic habitat creation or enhancement, such as part of Devon's Nature Recovery Network (explained in more detail later in this section) or for biodiversity net gain off-site habitat banking. Over the coming months, land that has been brought to our attention will be assessed to gauge its suitability.





Question 29

What do you think is the minimum level of Biodiversity Net Gain that the new Local Plan should set? (please select one)

- **Only the minimum mandatory national requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain**
- **More than 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. If so, what do you think this should be and why?**

Scan our QR code to access our online survey or visit middevon.gov.uk



If you require a printed version of our questions please call **01884 255255** or email us at planmiddevon@middevon.gov.uk

Habitats and climate change

9.13 Carbon sequestration in plants is the long-term storage of carbon within living biomass. Lakes and wetlands can lock up carbon within sediments and vegetation but high levels of nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, from neighbouring land can reverse this process²². Looking after and expanding areas of wildlife habitat is an effective way to capture and protect the carbon naturally sequestered in soils, semi-natural grasslands, scrub, trees, and the complex structure of a high biodiversity habitat such as woodland. Individual trees can capture large amounts of carbon, moreover trees that grow faster start absorbing carbon earlier but have a shorter lifespan. In contrast, slower growing, longer living trees (100-200 years), also sequester carbon for longer. The ability to capture carbon declines over time, but old woodlands are substantial and important carbon stores. Not all tree species will be adaptable enough to cope with climate change and non-native species and cultivars may be required. Where possible, ecological requirements of dependent species should be taken into consideration, and existing trees protected to help retain the carbon they have absorbed.

9.14 The Government's plan and recommendation is for the UK to plant around 30,000 hectares of new woodland every year until 2050 to help with carbon absorption. Approximately 10% of residual GHG emissions could be absorbed this way. Additionally, trees in urban areas, wetlands and riparian woodland provide filtration of excess nutrients and sediments, diffuse airborne particulates and reduce soil erosion, minimising water pollution. Trees can also moderate temperatures, acting as windbreaks and providing protection from the sun and rain. However, tree planting and afforestation alone are not enough to achieve 'net-zero', this needs to be combined with other measures.



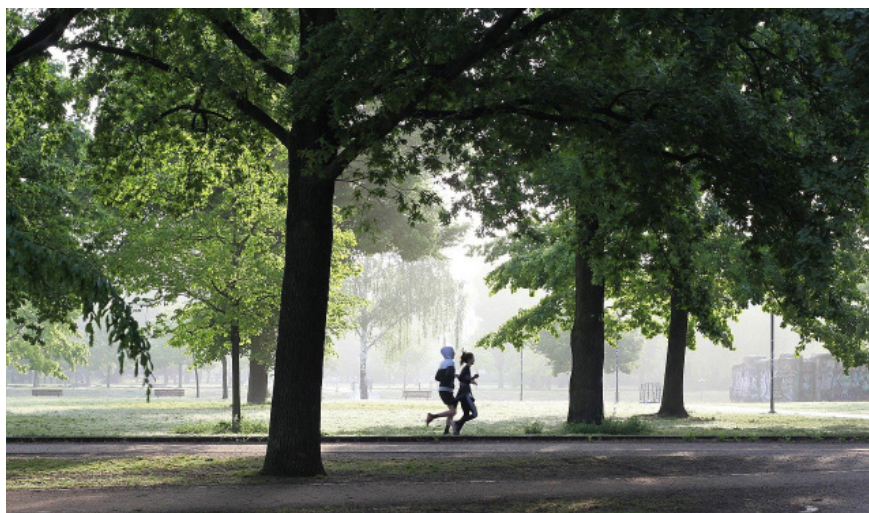
Trees

9.15 Tree and woodland planting is an effective and relatively simple method of helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. Trees provide wildlife corridors, shade and reduce flooding. Moreover, woodlands can help increase biodiversity, air filtration, carbon absorption and flood protection. The UK has only 13% of its land covered in woodland and the Government has set a target to extend UK's woodland cover to 17%, ideally 19% by 2050. In the move to achieve net-zero carbon emissions, the Government has committed to plant 11 million trees by 2022, and has published The England Trees Action Plan (May 2021) to further encourage tree planting. The Planning White Paper (Aug 2020) and 25 Year Environment Plan (2018) include proposals for tree-lined streets, better tree coverage and tree planting initiatives. National Planning Policy (July 2021) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined and that trees are incorporated elsewhere in developments (parks, etc.). Furthermore, the Woodland Trust's 'Emergency Tree Plan for the UK' (Jan 2020) recommends including a target of 30% tree cover for new development land and suggests planting at least 3 new trees for each tree that is cut down. However, it is essential that the principle of 'right tree, right place' is adopted to avoid harm to other habitats, archaeological sites, and underground services.

9.16 Current Local Plan policies give protection to ancient, veteran and mature trees and ensure that new development respects those important characteristics. The policies also encourage onsite and offsite tree-planting, and the protection of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). There are a number of TPOs in Mid Devon and new local plan will include policies to preserve these.

Trees and public health

9.17 Research has shown that something as simple as seeing trees on your street, improves mental health. Spending time in the natural environment helps with overall well-being, reduces respiratory-based diseases, helps to develop and maintain a healthy immune system and encourages physical activity. This can also reduce anxiety, stress, depression and can combat loneliness. The National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) makes clear that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments.



Trees can improve our health



Economic benefits of trees

9.18 Trees in towns and cities are of great value and can have an important role in making city and town streets liveable and pleasant, attracting greater levels of footfall. This can in turn help improve the economic viability of town centres. Trees can also help moderate temperatures, alleviate storm water runoff and stop harmful pollutants from roads and pavements reaching water courses. They sequester carbon and reduce particulates from car exhaust fumes from reaching the atmosphere. Trees also provide an important source of nectar and pollen for bees, bats and other pollinators. It is estimated that replacing natural pollination with artificial pollination would cost the nation £1.8bn²³ annually. Without trees the cost of mitigating the consequences of our way of living would be much higher.

Trees and biodiversity

9.19 The Woodland Trust supports planting of native species because they benefit local ecosystems, help insects and other animals to survive and provide a food source for wildlife. Native trees require little maintenance if they are planted in favourable conditions and subsequently require far less water. Planting a variety of tree species can support more diverse wildlife.

Ancient Woodland

9.20 Ancient woodland includes any area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD and is designated as irreplaceable habitat that is important for its wildlife, complex soils, and recreational, cultural, historical and landscape value. There are over 8 square kilometres of ancient woodland in Mid Devon and the ancient woodland inventory in the district is currently being reviewed by the Devon Wildlife Trust.

Planning and tree planting

9.21 The planning process can have an important role in securing the planting of new trees in planned new developments and in proposals where planning permission is required. This could include free standing specimens or where trees are planted as part of hedges, and can be as part of landscaping schemes and green infrastructure, and along streets, footpaths and cycleways. Plan Mid Devon could be supported by supplementary planning guidance about how tree planting may best be achieved, including preferred species, siting and arrangements for care, maintenance and replacement. The planning process can also have an important role in preventing the loss of trees and hedgerows, including on development sites, or where these may be protected by a preservation order or are in a conservation area.



www.visitmiddevon.co.uk

Fill out our survey online or request a paper copy. Make sure you let us know what you think!

Question 30

In addition to securing tree planting along new streets and walking / cycle paths and as part of green infrastructure, should Plan Mid Devon include a prescribed level of tree planting in new development?

(Yes / No - if yes please tell us what level you think this should be and why)

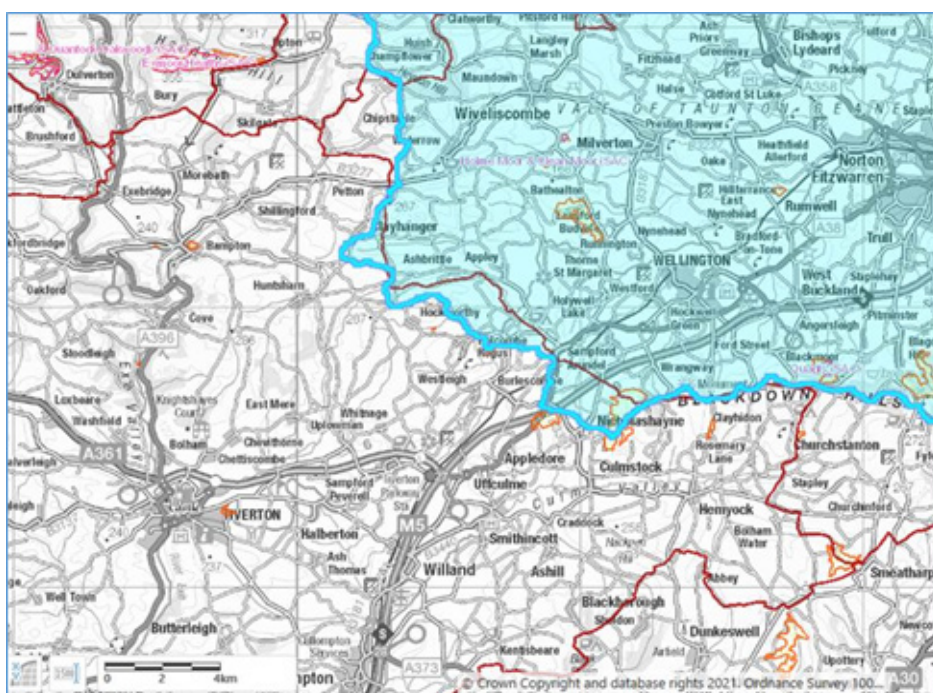
Scan our QR code to access our online survey or visit middevon.gov.uk



If you require a printed version of our questions please call **01884 255255** or email us at planmiddevon@middevon.gov.uk

Phosphates and the environment

9.22 Natural England has recently notified Councils that phosphate levels within the Somerset Levels catchment have rendered the protected Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site to be in an unsatisfactory condition. While the Levels and Moors are situated outside Mid Devon, part of the district (part parishes of Clayhanger, Hockworthy, Holcombe Rogus and Culmstock, and subject to clarification also Hemyock and Burlescombe) fall within an indicative catchment identified by Natural England.



9.23 In light of a court judgement (known as Dutch Nitrogen) before determining a planning application competent authorities should undertake a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). The types of development (which include agricultural development where there is agricultural water discharge) include:



- New residential units – including tourist accommodation, gypsy sites / pitches
- Commercial developments – where overnight accommodation is provided
- Agricultural development – additional barns, slurry stores, etc. where it is likely to lead to an increase in herd size
- Prior Notifications of agricultural development where, as a result of the development, the herd size may increase. Also, prior notifications for change of use of office to dwellings and agricultural buildings to dwellings
- Anaerobic digesters
- Potentially some tourism attractions

9.24 While the Council will need to liaise with Natural England and Somerset Local Planning Authorities about the process for calculating the new phosphate loading from development and approaches to mitigation, the notification from Natural England will have implications for the new Local Plan, where accommodation may be proposed in the indicative catchment area. Any proposed development which includes overnight accommodation will need to be assessed for 'nutrient neutrality'.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

9.25 National Planning Policy makes clear that plans should take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of green and blue infrastructure. This can include multi-functional green and blue spaces with recreational, visual and ecological value, which can bring a range of other environmental, social, economic and health and well-being benefits, including serving as 'sustainable drainage systems' ('SuDs'), cooling areas in hot weather, acting as a buffer against noise pollution, and in achieving well designed places. Green infrastructure can include natural and semi-natural green spaces, for example grassland, nature reserves and green corridors comprising hedgerows and verges. Public or private spaces like gardens, parks, village greens and allotments are also green infrastructure. Blue infrastructure can include watercourses, lakes, ponds, reed bed filtration systems and other bodies of water.

9.26 Given that Mid Devon is predominantly rural there is already a vast network of green and blue infrastructure assets – including 476 miles of Public Rights of Way and cycle routes linking hedgerows, nature reserves, open water bodies and rivers, grassland, woodland and wetlands. Current Local Plan policies protect green and blue infrastructure and require major new developments to incorporate green space, establish green corridors and avoid habitat fragmentation. In addition to protection, the new Local Plan could also provide opportunities for rewilding, where areas in new development are left for nature to take its course, returning to a natural state and creating more biodiverse habitats. Introduced within the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (2018), Nature Recovery Networks (NRN) offer chances to reverse habitat fragmentation and create wildlife corridors which connect across county borders. NRNs are founded on Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which the Environment Act requires all public authorities to take into regard. As well as tackling biodiversity decline,



NRNs are intended to address the challenges of climate change through nature-based solutions, and well-being by increasing public access to nature.

9.27 A new Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy can be prepared to help inform Plan Mid Devon, which can include a review of the green and blue infrastructure across the district and identify opportunities for enhancing and creating networks. This can be used to guide site allocations in the new Local Plan, site masterplan and planning applications submitted to the Council for determination.

Heritage Assets

9.28 Mid Devon has many heritage assets, including over 2,600 listed buildings and scheduled monuments, 51 conservation areas, and 3 registered parks. These assets are invaluable and irreplaceable, and give our landscapes, towns and villages their character, identity and sense of place. Unfortunately, there are currently 22 heritage assets in the district that are registered as being at risk.

9.29 Mid Devon's heritage assets include the Knightshayes historic park and garden, and Grand Western Canal – both are of particular significance to the future strategic planning of the district given their scale, location and wider setting.

9.30 Knightshayes is a Grade II* listed historical park and garden that is situated to the north of Tiverton. Within its borders are Knightshayes, a Grade 1 listed building, and several Grade II listed ancillary buildings. The property was initially built to overlook Tiverton (and the valley) because, in aesthetic terms, the town was seen as complementary to the estate. A historic landscape assessment undertaken for the National Trust (2007) identifies a substantial setting for Knightshayes park, which includes the whole of Tiverton and also open countryside to the west, south and east of the town.



9.31 The Grand Western Canal is a designated Conservation Area and also a designated County Wildlife Site. Originally it ran between Taunton in Somerset and Tiverton. Today, about 11 miles remain and this is important because of its countryside location and engineering features (built without locks, but with elevated sections and embankments, and cuttings).

9.32 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. In addition, heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. The current Local Plan includes policies for protecting the historic environment, requiring development proposals to consider the significance of assets, in order to protect them from harmful effects.

9.33 The conservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their settings is important as it adds significant value to the character of towns and villages as well as landscape. In return it encourages cultural activities, economic development, tourism and social life. Well cared for historic environment also encourages a sense of belonging and identity.

9.34 There is a need to make sure that where development is planned this does not harm our heritage assets. Conservation areas protect the special architectural and historic interest of a place. Only one third of Conservation Areas in Mid Devon have been subject to a Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) and even fewer have Management Plans (CAMP).

Conservation Area Appraisals (CAAs)

9.35 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Council to determine which areas of special architectural or historical interest should be designated as conservation areas, and from time to time to review those conservation areas. There is no prescribed timescale for a review and while every 5 years is ideal, this will vary according to the development pressures in the local area. The Cullompton Conservation Area is currently being re-appraised as part of the preparation of a Management Plan, as it is on the national at risk register (together with the conservation area at Bow). The Council has identified a need to undertake further Conservation Area Appraisals in the district, to help avoid damage to heritage assets and their settings.

51 Conservation Areas in Mid Devon

| | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Ashill | Chevithorne | Hockworthy | Sandford |
| Bampton | Coldridge | Holcombe Rogus | Silverton |
| Bickleigh | Colebrooke | Huntsham | Stockleigh English |
| Bickleigh Castle | Coleford | Kennerleigh | Stockleigh Pomeroy |
| Blundell's | Cove | Kentisbeare | Stoodleigh |
| Bolham | Cove Hill | Knowle | Thorverton |
| Bow | Craddock | Lapford | Tiverton |
| Bradninch | Crediton | Morchard Bishop | Uffculme |
| Cadeleigh | Cullompton | Newton St Cyres | Upton Hellions |
| Chawleigh | Culmstock | Oakford | Willand |
| Cheriton Bishop | Down St Mary | Oakfordbridge | Yeoford |
| Cheriton Fitzpaine | Grand Western Canal | Puddington | Zeal Monachorum |
| Chettiscombe | Halberton | Sampford Peverell | |

Grand Western Canal

9.36 Parts of the Grand Western Canal are under pressure through planned new development. The Eastern Urban Extension and other sites in Tiverton, as well as developments in Halberton and Sampford Peverell are in close proximity to the Canal's conservation area. A need has been identified to review the Grand Western Canal Conservation Area and this can provide an opportunity to undertake a canal sensitivity study. This could include consideration of a number of different objectives, including the planning of new development and mitigating its impacts on the character and setting of the Conservation Area. An up to date appraisal of the Conservation Area could help guide the future planning of development in the proximity of the canal, and be material in helping guide planning applications submitted to the Council for determination and decisions made on these.

Fill out our survey
online or request a
paper copy.
Make sure you let us
know what you think!

Scan our QR code
to access our
online survey
or visit
middevon.gov.uk



If you require a printed version of
our questions please call
01884 255255 or email us at
planmiddevon@middevon.gov.uk

Question 31

Are there any specific parts of the Grand Western Canal that should be given more protection and why?

