

2. Village Design

2.2 Westward Ho! (The Present)

Westward Ho! is defined as a 'local centre' in terms of policy DVT1 of the local plan, wherein development is acceptable in principle but is to retain the **character of the settlement**, and to protect or improve the quality of life of the local people. The plan states that planning will pay special attention to urban design and the rural 'or coastal' setting, taking into account the nature and built form of proposals in relation to the surroundings, i.e. to strive for good design everywhere.

For Westward Ho! the plan seeks to protect the tourist role of the village and planning permission will only be granted for proposals that improve the attractiveness of the village for residents and visitors and will contribute to maintaining tourism. Within local centres the plan states categorically that two storey development would normally be the maximum allowed. Any large three storey development would be expected to include offices, shops etc. i.e. be a mixed use.

The policies put forward in the Plan were generally accepted by the local population at the time of issue (2003). They would have been expected to lead to.....

2.2.1. A more attractive village for tourists and for residents

2.2.2. To possibly provide more low cost housing for local people

2.2.3. To keep recreational areas.

This would logically have led to a spacious well – landscaped and attractive promenade, some high density, some low rise village style development and improved visitors' attractions.



The reality appears to be that the District Council does not have a coherent policy on the general development of the village, and is considering planning applications on a piecemeal basis and granting consents for, in many cases, developments which are inappropriate to the Plan.

Developments which do not provide tourist accommodation, are granted on sites identified for recreational use, and because of their very significant mass and position, do not add to the attractiveness of the village. They are also far too expensive for local first time buyers to purchase.



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2.2 Westward Ho! (The Future)

The excellent standards drawn up within the TDC Local Plan, we believe are not being observed when applications are considered. The general air of permissiveness to high rise developments is changing the environment for both residents and visitors, and not for the better.

2.2.4. Planning Guidelines

There did not appear to be, in the Plan, a statement on the way in which local people would like to see their village developed, and it was resolved to try to formulate some broad guidelines which it is hoped, Torridge will be willing to use in their consideration of future applications before the village is completely overwhelmed by 'Costa' style high rise apartments for absentee owners. To do this we have interpreted National policy PPG3 and Devon County Policy DVT11 which both seek to maintain or improve the local environment.

2.2.4.1. Multi Storey Developments

Consideration should be given to the need to separate buildings over two storeys with large open landscaped areas or low density development. In general the footprint of any building over two storeys should occupy no more than one third of the site area. This should ensure that streets do not become dark and sunless and that sea glimpses are not totally obscured.

In general, high rise development, if it is to be allowed should be restricted to the rear of the village against the hillside, and in general echo the natural contours of the landscape.

Developments which impinge on the skyline should not be permitted.



2.2.4.2. Recreational Development.

We would like TDC to discuss contributions from developers to offset the impact of a development with the Town Council. In particular we are concerned that visitor attractions are required in Westward Ho! and would like to see grants from this source being made available.

2.2.4.3. Affordable Housing

Recent applications do not include an element of affordable housing, and the end price of apartments currently being developed are, at £350000, too high by a factor of 4 !

There is a dire need for first time buyer homes.

We would dearly like to see a low rise high density village style development within the village, of a style similar to the development behind Marine Parade in Appledore. There should be a way of steering the financial contributions from developers towards this. It is recognised that in order to achieve this sites have to be found which offer a low initial cost of the land. Final selling price needs to be of the order of £80000.

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2.2.4.4. Commercial Development

Future planning for the area should include the availability of small workshops for artisans and small business premises close to the village centre.

2.2.5. Further Concerns

The working group believe that it would be in the interests of TDC, Northam TC and residents to encourage residents to take more interest in the development of their village before it occurs. We highlight the following concerns which are commonly brought to the TC.

2.2.5.1. Lack of local facilities

2.2.5.2 Lack of affordable homes and infrastructure

2.2.5.3. The proliferation of high rise building

2.2.5.4 Increasing pressure on the highway system as a result of the many new developments.

2.2.5.5. The lack of employment opportunities locally

2.2.5.6. The need for substantial tourist attractions e.g. themed hotel (golf, surfing, riding, walking)

2.2.5.7 The poor condition of some older properties which could be relieved by grants, eg for the replacement of attractive wrought iron balconies



2.2.5.8. The relatively poor display of gardens within the village.

2.2.6. Baker Consultants Report and WHORP

A number of the recommendations of the DAWN MCTI study and the Town Council's comments in the Village Design statement were taken up and added to by a group of enterprising local residents, creating the WHORP group. (Westward Ho! Regeneration Project). The proposals have been formalised by TDC and a grant application submitted for heritage funding. NTC has not been involved with this application but is largely supportive, and if necessary, could consider some pump priming funding.

