



# BUCKFASTLEIGH: Devonia Site Design and Planning Options Study

April 2016

Final

Prepared for Buckfastleigh & Buckfast Neighbourhood  
Plan Steering Group by AECOM



My Community  locality

**AECOM**

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## 1. Introduction

Buckfastleigh is a small town situated in Devon, on the edge of the Dartmoor National Park. It forms part of Teignbridge District. It grew as a mill town and became famous for housing the Buckfast Abbey on top of Church Hill.

The Buckfastleigh and Buckfast Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was formed in 2014 to prepare a plan for the parish and a draft plan was compiled in May 2015. The plan's aim is to achieve:

*"A place which, over the next ten years, we want to see as sustainable, economically vibrant, environmentally beautiful and protected, culturally rich and as a socially friendly and caring place to live, work and visit."*

Through the Department for Communities and Local Government neighbourhood planning programme, AECOM has been commissioned to assist the Buckfastleigh and Buckfast Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to explore masterplanning issues relating to the planning and development of the town.

Following an inception site meeting with the group, the Devonian sheepskin tannery - much of it unused - was chosen as a pivotal site worthy of further investigation. The site was allocated for mixed use development in the Dartmoor National Park Authority's Adopted Local Plan (2013) and the Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

This document aims to bring together baseline research, previously collected data and the information from a site visit and community workshop by AECOM. This has informed a number of options for development of the Devonian site presented in this report.

The following steps were undertaken to produce this report:

- Initial meeting and site visit;
- Urban design analysis;
- Site visit and meeting with Devonian management representative;
- A public workshop event;
- Preparation of options for development of the site; and
- Preparation of this draft development brief/options report, revised with the neighbourhood planning steering group to reflect feedback.

## 1.1 Locational analysis

The Devonia site sits within a few minutes walking distance from Fore Street, the town's main street and home to most local shops and services.

There are a number of local facilities nearby, including the town hall and library, primary school and medical centre.

The River Mardle runs along the back of Fore Street and through the middle of the site. This brings character and amenity to the centre of town, although is liable to flood, with a significant event in 2012.

The north side of the town, adjacent to the site and potentially including it, is home to an employment cluster (Mardle Way). A number of independent food businesses are included in this.

Buckfastleigh is a pleasant town in a very attractive setting. Buckfast Abbey is a major visitor draw, although the town itself could perhaps benefit from higher visitor numbers.

The A38 passes to the south of the town. Providing easy access by motor vehicle but also noise and air pollution, this means this is a mixed blessing.





Figure 1.2 - Buckfastleigh swimming pool



Figure 1.3 - Fore Street



Figure 1.4 - Buckfastleigh primary school



Figure 1.5 - Corner between Plymouth Road and Chapel Street



Figure 1.6 - River Mardle

## 2. Background

This section reviews the baseline position with regard to local policy, landowner plans and physical context. It is included to ensure that all proposals are rooted in the opportunities that present themselves and respond to identified constraints.





## 2.1 Local Plan policy

The most relevant planning policy document for the study is the Dartmoor National Park Authority Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document (July 2013). The Draft Neighbourhood Plan Policy document is another starting point (although still with little planning weight), and the key policies from both documents are summarised below. Other documents, such as the Dartmoor NPA Core Strategy (2008), the Affordable Housing SPD (2014), the Buckfastleigh Local Housing Needs Report (2009) and the Exeter Housing Market Area Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA) (2015) are also relevant.

**The Dartmoor National Park Authority Development Management and Delivery Development Plan Document states:**

### Proposal BCK3:

An area of land 2.55 ha in extent at Devonian Products Mill is identified for redevelopment for mixed use.

Development in this area may include:

(a) new commercial uses comprising principally business use (B1), financial and professional services (A2), shops (A1), and restaurants and cafés (A3) as well as assembly and leisure uses (D2);

(b) community uses; and

(c) an element of housing, including a proportion of affordable housing subject to further assessment of viability.

Development of this site should:

(i) identify heritage significance, conserve and enhance the site's mill heritage, and the Buckfastleigh Conservation Area;

(ii) be supported by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment; and

(iii) be supported by evidence to inform an Appropriate Assessment in order to establish that development of this site will not impact upon the integrity of the South Hams Special Area of Conservation, with particular consideration given to light sensitive design, the conservation and enhancement of the River Mardle corridor, and mitigation, compensation or offsetting where appropriate, consistent with best practice.

Proposals at BCK3 should accord with a comprehensive design brief/masterplan for the entire site prepared in association with the local community, relevant stakeholders and the Authority. This study is an important step in that direction from a community perspective.

## 2.2 Draft Neighbourhood Plan policy

Mixed use development of the old Devonian Mill site is one of ten priority developments identified in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan envisages business, housing and retail uses, together with a centre for vocational training, and for the site to become more of a town centre focal point.

The site is covered in three separate draft policies:

### Policy BTE2 (Business, Tourism, Enterprise):

Development in this area may include:

(a) new commercial uses comprising principally business use (B1), financial and professional services (A2), shops (A1), and restaurants and cafés (A3) as well as assembly and leisure uses (D2);

(b) community uses;

(c) FE college campus.

Development of this site should:

(i) identify heritage significance, conserve and enhance the site's mill heritage, and the Buckfastleigh Conservation Area;

(ii) not impact upon the integrity of the South Hams Special Area of Conservation.

### Policy H3 (Housing):

Proposals for housing development on the Devonian Mill site will be supported particularly where it includes a proportion of affordable housing. It is recognised that the affordable housing provision would be subject to an assessment of viability. Open market housing, particularly for flats and possibly self build, is also supported to help create a mixed 'town centre' community.

### Policy ENV3 (Environment & Green Space):

Proposals which provide a landscaped town centre public park within the flood plain part of the Devonian site will be supported.

## 2.3 Approach to parking provision and housing mix

### Policy DMD4.1 - Off-street parking provision for new development: residential

Off-street car parking for residential development should be provided, either within the curtilage of the property or allocated elsewhere at the following levels:

- for detached and semi-detached dwellings: a minimum of two spaces per dwelling;
- for bedsits, flats, and terraced dwellings: a minimum of one and half spaces per dwelling or unit.

Car free development will be considered favourably where reasonable alternative parking provision exists. Off-street car parking space provided as part of development will be protected where there is evidence that loss of such space would exacerbate local traffic circulation problems.

### Buckfastleigh Housing Type, Size and Tenure

The Local Planning Authority is Dartmoor NPA; however Buckfastleigh is part of the Exeter Housing Market Area and the Local Housing Authority is Teignbridge District Council.

Dartmoor NPA planning policies therefore apply however affordable housing provision is the responsibility of Teignbridge District Council.

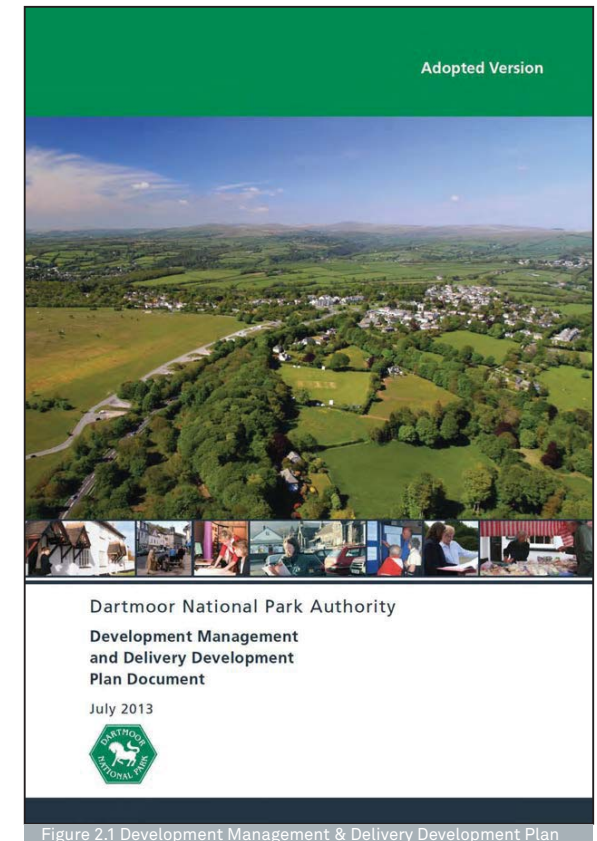


Figure 2.1 Development Management & Delivery Development Plan

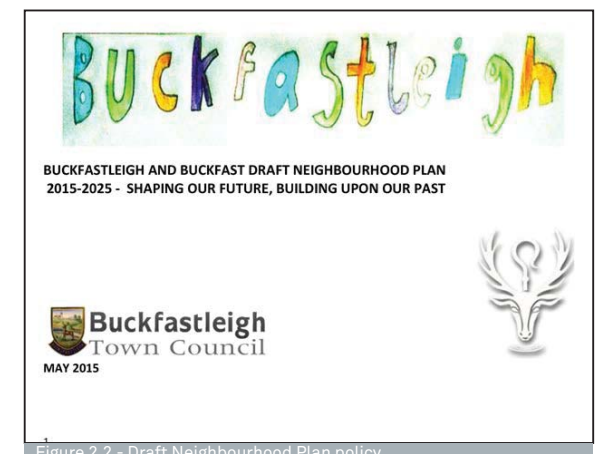


Figure 2.2 - Draft Neighbourhood Plan policy

**Dartmoor NPA Core Strategy (2008)**

**Policy COR15 (Housing and affordable housing):**

“Around 70% of (affordable housing) should be social rented housing provided by registered social landlords with the balance being intermediate housing, though the precise split will be determined on a site by site basis.”

Open market housing will only be supported in Local Centres (i.e. Buckfastleigh) and will be expected to be at least 50% affordable housing:

“The provision of open market housing will be restricted to sites within Local Centres [i.e. Buckfastleigh] in circumstances where its provision will facilitate affordable housing on previously developed land or where it will be provided through building conversion/sub-division or where such development will facilitate significant environmental or community benefits. The proportion of affordable housing in such developments will be not less than 50%. However, in exceptional circumstances, the proportion of affordable housing required may be varied where this is necessary to enable development of significant environmental or community benefit to proceed.”

**Dartmoor NPA Development Management and Delivery DPD (2013)**

There are two site allocations for housing in Buckfastleigh, BCK1 and BCK2:

**Proposal BCK1:**

“An area of land 0.8 ha in extent to the west of Barn Park, Buckfastleigh, is allocated for housing, not less than 50% of which should be affordable housing to meet identified local needs.”

**Proposal BCK2:**

“An area of land 1.7 ha in extent adjacent to Holne Road, Buckfastleigh, is allocated for housing, not less than 50% of which should be affordable housing to meet identified local needs. Proposals on this site should be supported by a development brief prepared in association with the local community and relevant stakeholders. Development of this site should include an area of recreational open space for community use. The proposal should be supported by evidence to inform an Appropriate Assessment in order to establish that development of this site will not impact upon the integrity of the South Hams Special Area of Conservation. In developments of more than five dwellings, the Authority will require that, subject to viability, 50% of the units are constructed to Lifetime Homes standards.”

**Policy DMD21: Residential development in Local Centres:**

“In all cases, except as where indicated in a specific settlement policy, the proportion of affordable housing to meet local need should not be less than 50% of the units provided, although this may be varied where a higher proportion of open market housing can be shown to be essential to secure the overall viability of development or the delivery of significant local infrastructure provision of clear benefit to the local community. Exceptionally, where the need for affordable housing cannot be met within the settlement boundary, and there is a specific local need identified for such housing, then permission will be granted for a development on suitable sites adjoining the settlement boundary. In such cases all the housing will be required to be affordable.”

**Policy DMD23: Residential development outside Local Centres and Rural Settlements:**

“Outside the Local Centres and Rural Settlements, planning permission for a dwelling will only be granted where:

- (a) it is required for an agricultural holding, a forestry enterprise or a rural-based business; or
- (b) the proposal comprises the conversion of an existing building to an affordable dwelling and the conversion is compliant with Policy DMD9; or
- (c) the proposal comprises low impact residential development and is compliant with Policy DMD30.”

N.B Policy DMD30 “Low impact residential development in the open countryside” is essentially a policy supporting in principle temporary residential development for “some traveling people, and others who wish to adopt a low environmental impact lifestyle, [living] in traditional benders or yurts”.

Unit Type	Indicative Unit Size (m <sup>2</sup> )	Potential discount rate
1 Bed (2 Person) Flat	48	20%
2 Bed (4 Person) House	62	20%
3 Bed (5 Person) House	85	20-30%
4 Bed (6 Person) House	95	30-40%

Figure 2.3 Indicative property sizes and discount rate

**Affordable Housing SPD (2014)**

Indicative intermediate housing sizes:

**Buckfastleigh Local Housing Needs Report (2009)**

The following three recommendations are from a ‘snapshot in time’ from a survey in 2009:

- 1) A provision of additional affordable houses is needed to meet local needs in the parish of Buckfastleigh;
- 2) The need is for 25 rented homes and 13 intermediate properties (shared ownership or sub market rented); and
- 3) Three of the homes should have 4 bedrooms; seven should have 3 bedrooms and the remainder 2 bedrooms.

**Exeter Housing Market Area SHMA (2015)**

Information is not presented for Dartmoor NPA; instead figures are presented for Teignbridge or the HMA as a whole.

“There is a need for a higher proportion of two bedroom units to create better housing offer and to address the increasing need for smaller properties due to demographic and household formation change. Broadly we recommend a property size target 60% one and two bedrooms and 40% three/ four bedroom split in the market sector to provide a better balanced housing stock.”

“Tenure mix is a key factor in site viability and a tenure mix balance of 75:25 between social rent and intermediate housing is recommended.”

N.B. This is broadly similar to the ‘around 70’:30 split in the Dartmoor Core Strategy (2008).

Intermediate housing for sale: “A property size target of 50% one, 40% two bedrooms and 10% for three bedroom properties could be set to meet the requirements of households in this sector.”

Social housing: “In view of the current stock balance, the scale of likely annual new provision and the requirement to address priority household need, a level of 80% / 85% of future delivery in the affordable sector should be one and two bedroom units... The larger family unit delivery target [3 and 4 bedroom] should be 15% / 20% to take account of the potential supply from under-occupied properties and the demographic change already reflected in the lower proportions of waiting list need for larger properties.”

	Bedroom Size (%)			
	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	4Bedrooms +
Exeter	50	30		20
Mid Devon	45	40		15
East Devon	50	40		10
Teignbridge	50	40		10

Figure 2.4 Social and affordable rented need by bedroom size

## 2.4 Existing land use

Buckfastleigh is widely recognised for its history of the tanning industry. The site was inherited through the Hamlyn family for years, until it was sold to the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1920. The tanning industry is still in place today and is used by Devonia Products Ltd to process sheepskin.

As with most industrial sites, the existing buildings underwent significant changes and additions. The site is today owned by Eastern Counties Leather, which acquired the land and business in 2013.

The plan on the right indicates the buildings standing at present and their existing use. This information was transcribed from a report commissioned from planning consultants Easthope Associates by the land owner in August 2015.

Building A - offices in relatively poor condition, planning application to reconstruct the building in its current location while not increasing its floor area, understood to have been submitted.

Buildings Cx and Cy consist of warehouse units and are not entirely used by Devonia and there are plans to let these units for storage to other independent businesses. One unit has been leased out, another is being prepared to be so.

Building D - semi-derelict stone building.

Building E - Old Co-op 1950s building which lies vacant and is an eyesore to the vista from Chapel Street.

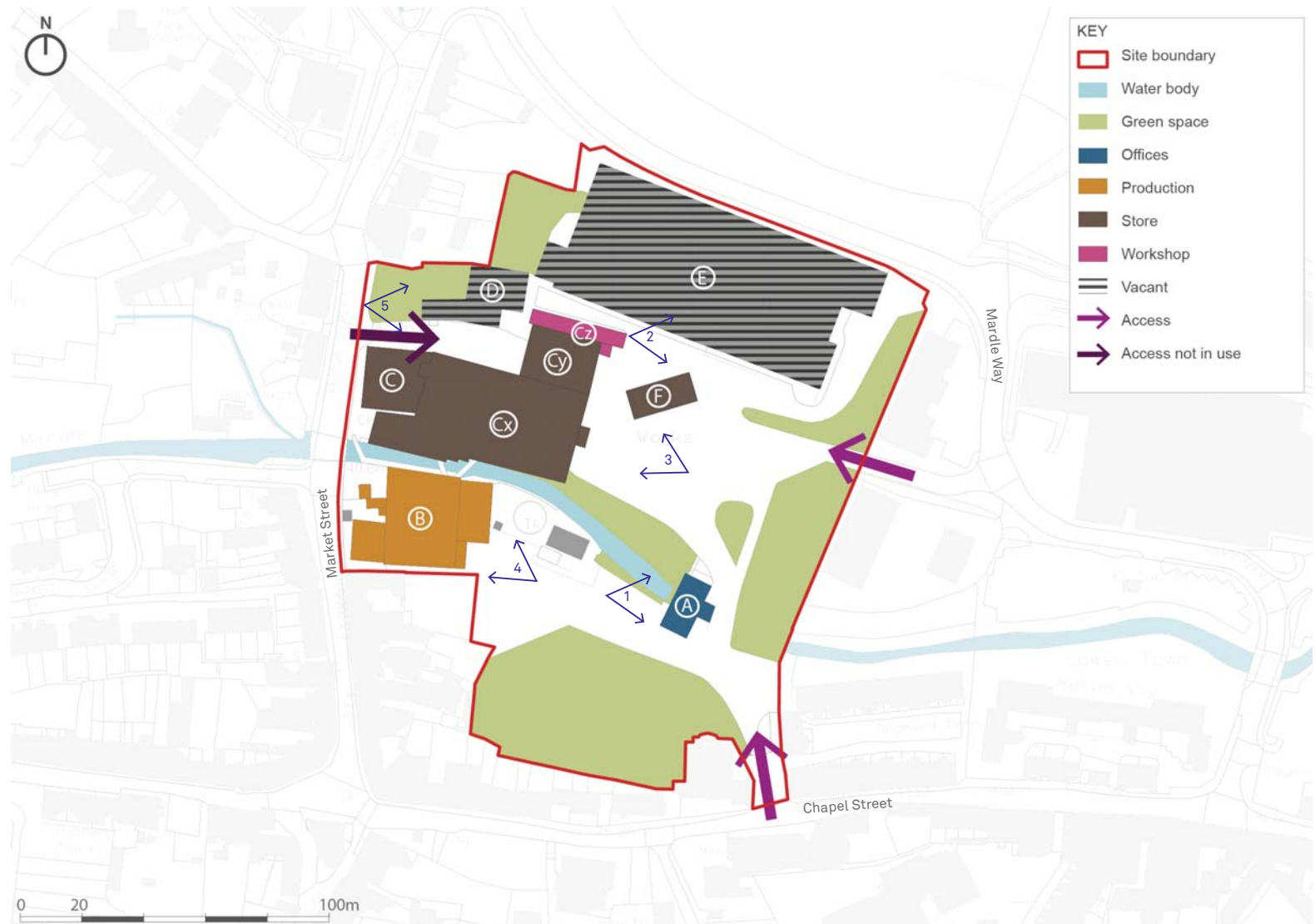


Figure 2.5 - Existing land uses plan



Figure 2.6 - Building A (View 1)



Figure 2.7 - Building E (View 2)



Figure 2.8 - Buildings Cx, Cy and F (View 3)



Figure 2.9 - Building B (View 4)



Figure 2.10 - Building D (View 5)

## 2.5 Short term landowner proposal

The same report puts forward some proposals for the use of the buildings within the study area. The plan on the right shows the interim proposal for the site for the next two years. The main aim of this proposal is to give a more viable use to the existing buildings within the site and thereby expanding the employment opportunities.

This plan however does not exclude the need for further investigation of each building to assess any refurbishing works.

No new buildings are being proposed.

Access points are left at their current location with the addition of the gate from Market Street.

With this proposal, the owner envisages the expansion and consolidation of the tannery business and to make good use of current vacant employment sites.

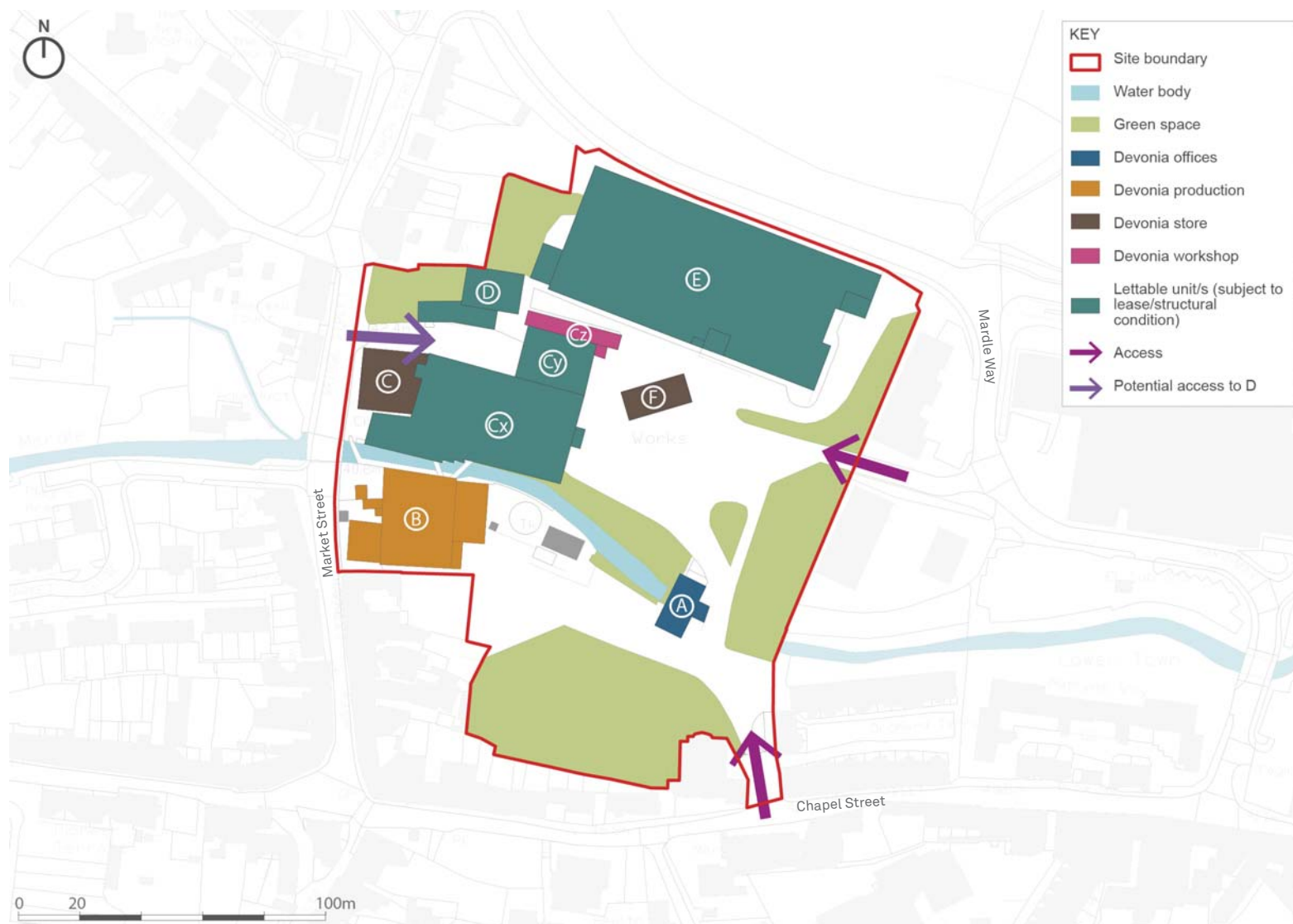


Figure 2.11 - Proposed short term uses

## 2.6 Site analysis

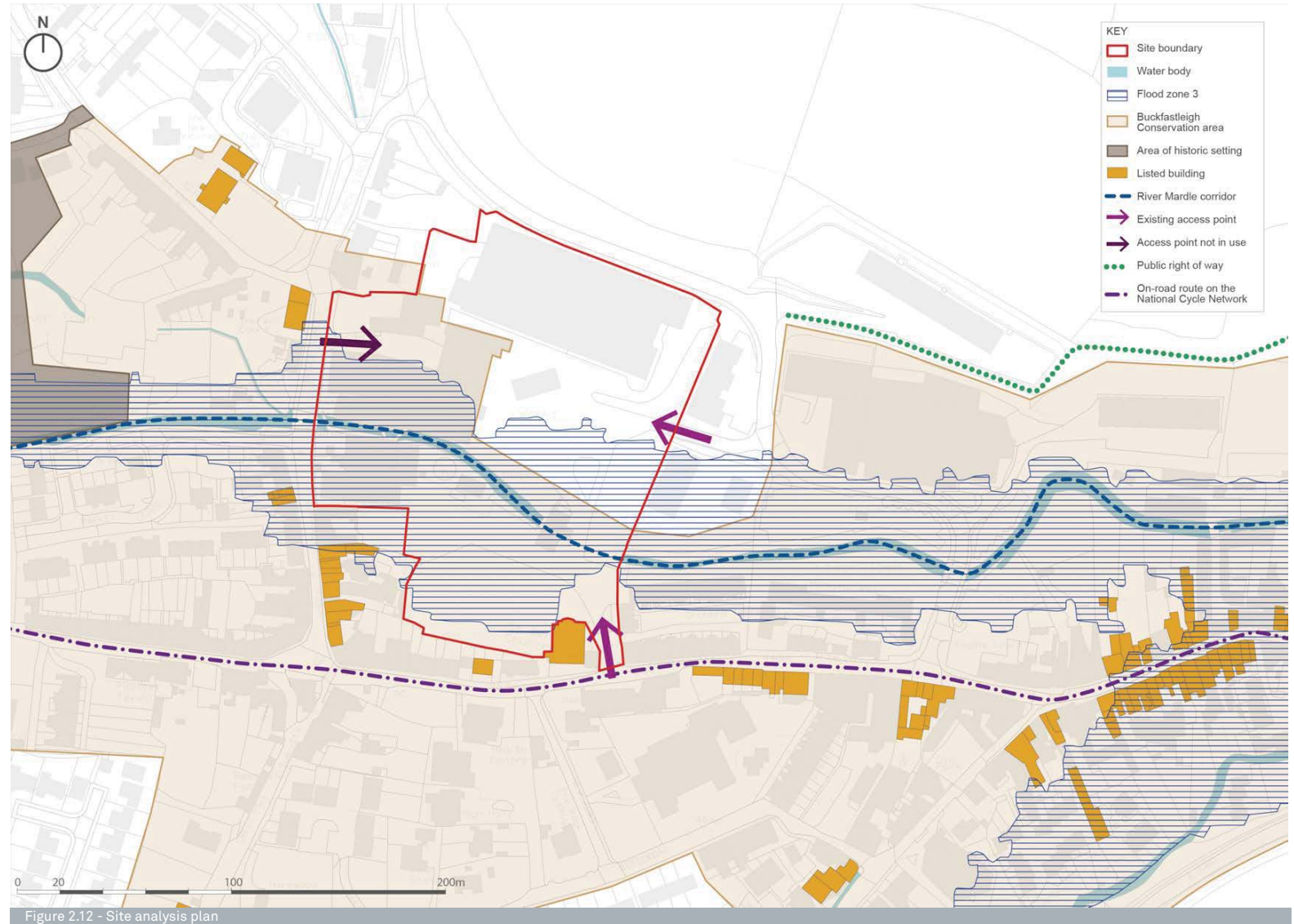
A more localised analysis of the area was conducted to highlight the issues which should be addressed at the urban design level.

Flooding is a notable constraint to development. A Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and a Sequential and Exception testing report, both commissioned by the Dartmoor National Park Authority concluded that:

*“On balance, the Authority considers that this is an appropriate allocation within the Plan in order to meet ... sustainability objectives and potentially improve the current flood risk position on site and elsewhere through improvements on this site”.*

Although there are no listed buildings within the site boundary, a considerable amount of the site lies within the town's conservation area. This will affect the design of the new development in terms of aesthetics and urban grain to be sensitive to vernacular architecture and consistent with the rest of the town centre with regards to height and massing.

It was also noted that the Devonia site is located within the South Hams special area of conservation and therefore future development must occur in line with guidelines provided by Natural England on this matter.







### 3. Workshop

This section reports on the activities, discussion and elements produced during the second site visit and workshop held on the 14th December 2015 at the Buckfastleigh town hall.

### 3.1 Introduction to the workshop

The workshop started by introducing the attendees to AECOM's work and outlining the scope for this project with the ultimate aim being to produce a community-led vision for the Devonian site. The 31 attendees, all residents of Buckfastleigh (with the exception of the Managing Director of Devonian Sheepskins and Tannery Ltd, who was present as an observer and helpfully answered questions), were encouraged to participate and discuss current issues and constraints. This helped AECOM get a deeper understanding of the situation and also help to develop and explore different development opportunities for the site.

Before heading on to the group exercises, AECOM presented the baseline analysis compiled to date and explained briefly the main points emerging for the relative local plan policy.

### 3.2 Devonian in 2030

During the following stage of the workshop, the attendees were given blank postcards of Buckfastleigh as if they were sent from the future, to describe the setting of the new development on the Devonian site. This helped AECOM to understand the general vision which Buckfastleigh's residents would like to achieve and how they envisage the site, and gave all participants the chance to engage in the workshop early on.

The majority of the responses were fairly positive as in the extracts below:

*"The site has great businesses that boost the economy of Buckfastleigh"*

*"The place is really buzzing!"*

*"A blend of the past with an eye for the future. It's on everyone's wishlist as a place to visit!"*

*"Small industrial and commercial units have brought jobs to town."*

*"I just returned from a yoga class at the beautiful fully equipped studio. My daughter's photography exhibition is up at the gallery."*

*"Vibrant and attractive focal point of the town. It has green open spaces and sitting areas and is recognised nationally as an exemplar of eco development with renewable energy sources."*

Among the land uses envisaged for the site, the most popular ones are listed below:

- Small businesses and outlet shops;
- Residential use;
- Devonian industry;
- Craft workshops;
- Community-owned facilities;
- Cafe;
- Car parking to relieve the town centre;
- Public open space; and
- On-site generation of renewable energy



Figure 3.1 - Postcard template



Figure 3.2 - Photos taken during the workshop

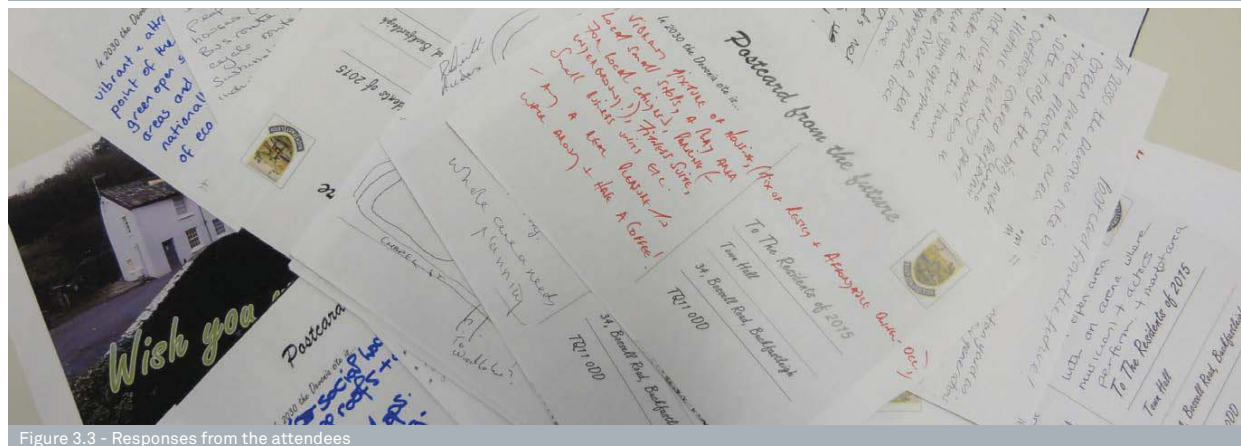


Figure 3.3 - Responses from the attendees

### 3.3 Possible uses and development principles

A list of development principles were extracted from the Local Plan (yellow), the draft Neighbourhood Plan (green) and the land owners report described in sections 2.4 and 2.5 of this report (blue). The attendees were given the principles on separate sheets of paper and, working in groups, categorised according to what they prioritise as a principles for the site.

The categories were:

1. Great idea, go for it!
2. Nice idea, worth considering
3. Bad idea, forget it!

The list of principles given are illustrated on the right.

The public was also given blank card to add their own principles.

After assessing the feedback from this exercise, the development principles were categorised in a summary as depicted in Figure 3.4 below.

Improves range of local shops and services for the community and the tourist economy	Conserve the town's distinctive heritage as a mill town	Develop the site in an exciting and architecturally sensitive manner	Attract more green enterprises
High quality housing development	Wide mix of uses	Redesign the large 1950s unused Co-op mill as a centre for small businesses and for a vocational training centre, including courses based around craft skills.	Further Education College outreach training centre for vocational courses
Demolition of buildings not used/needed by Devonian	New buildings designed in accordance with the local vernacular	Flats and apartments as a part of any new housing	Possibly some 'self-build' housing
Much of the green field to the left of the River Mardle and behind the Methodist church either protected or substituted elsewhere on the site as a landscaped public green space and community garden.	A proportion of any new housing to be 'affordable housing'	Design that integrates with the surrounding built environment	Do not risk the sheepskins and tannery operations
	Improve the run down appearance of the offices	Utilising the existing buildings and thereby expanding the employment opportunities on the site	
	Interim use of existing buildings, no new buildings, with little change for the next five years	Any other suggestions? General priorities or specific uses	

Buckfastleigh - Vision principles exercise					
1 - Always great	2- Generally good	3 - Middle	4 - Generally bad	5 - Always bad	Additional
Improves range of local shops & services for the community & the tourist economy.	Flats & apartments as a part of any new housing	Possibly some 'self-build' housing	Demolition of buildings not used/needed by Devonian	Improve the run down appearance of the offices	Office building must go
Develop the site in an exciting & architecturally sensitive manner.	Design that integrates with the surrounding built environment	Utilising the existing buildings & thereby expanding the employment opportunities on the site		Interim use of existing buildings, no new buildings, with little change for the next 5 years	Aim for 100% clean energy
Attract more green enterprises.	Conserve the town's distinctive heritage as a mill town	Further Education College outreach training centre for vocational courses		High quality housing development	3 space coach park
Wide mix of uses	Redesign the large 1950s unused Co-op mill as a centre for small businesses & for a vocational training centre, including courses based around craft skills.	A proportion of any new housing to be 'affordable housing'			Additional parking for towns folk
Do not risk the sheepskins & tannery operations	Much of the green field to the left of the River Mardle & behind the Methodist church either protected or substituted elsewhere on the site as a landscaped public green space & community garden.				Multi-level car park
	New buildings designed in accordance with the local vernacular				Sports & yoga centre & leisure & health
					Vocational training for youth
					A museum of wool (Neolithic to modern times)
					Coordinate with a vision/strategy for the rest of the town.
					Hotel with roof top garden and living walls
					A new town centre
					Affordable housing not an answer to BFL's child poverty.

Figure 3.4 - Responses from the development principles exercise



Figure 3.5 - Photos taken during the workshop



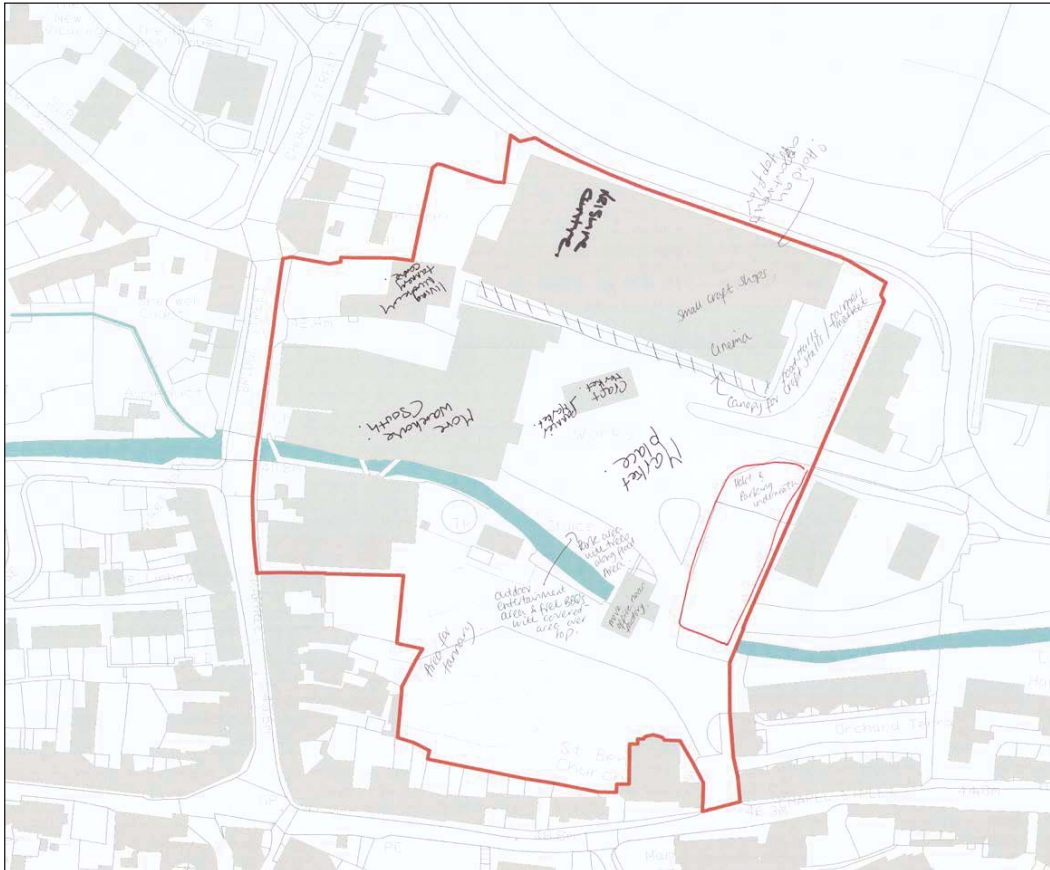


Figure 3.8 - Plan from Group 2

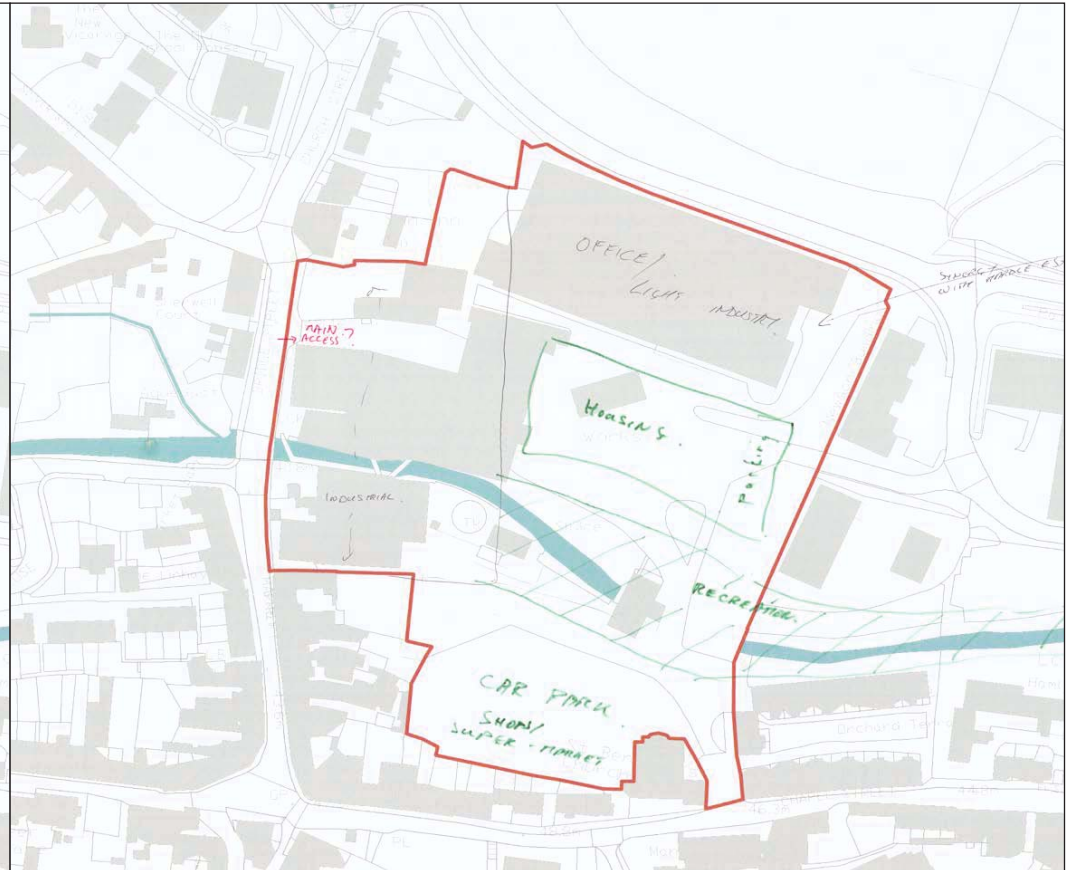


Figure 3.9 - Plan from Group 3

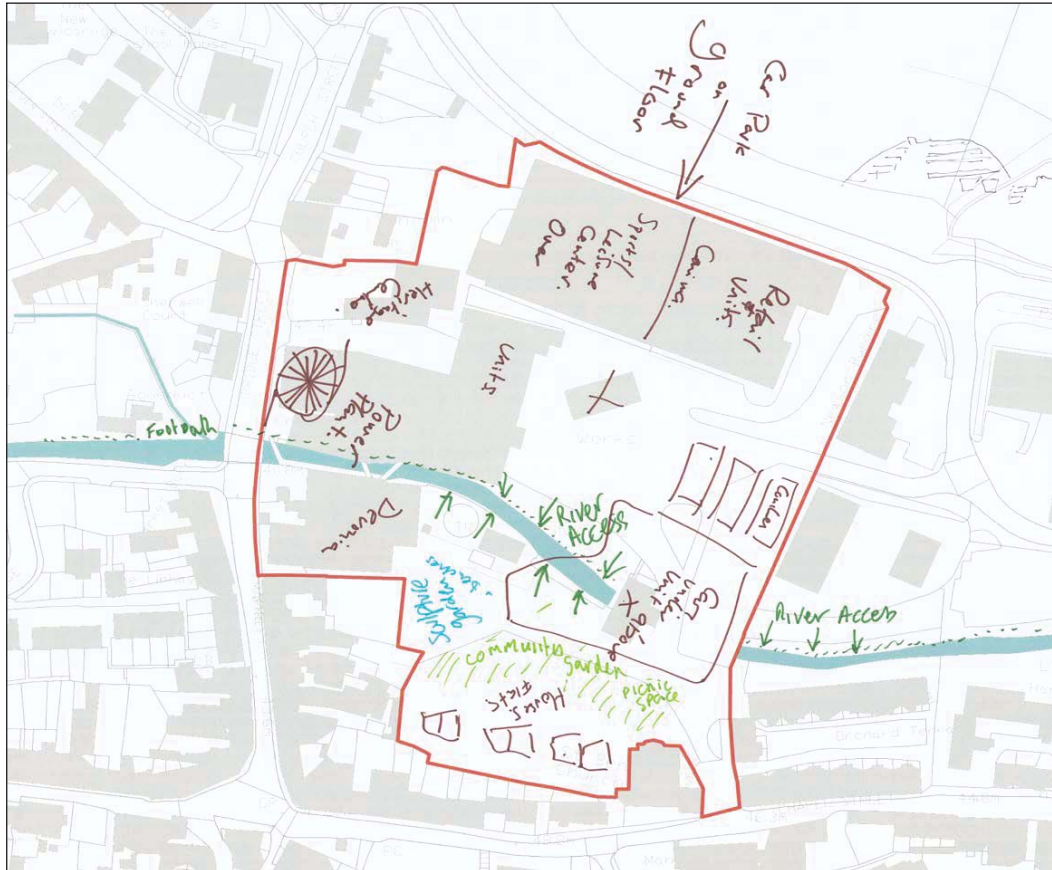


Figure 3.10 - Plan from Group 4

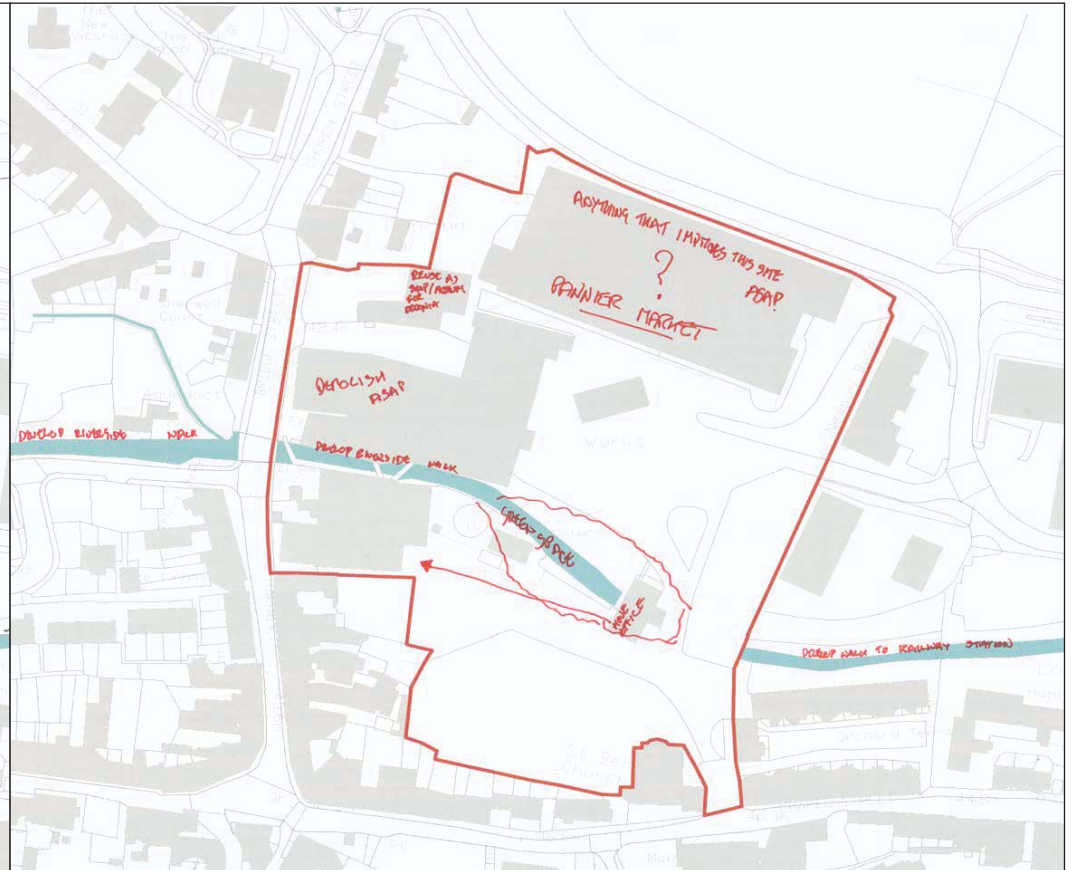


Figure 3.11 - Plan from Group 5

### 3.5 Conclusions from the workshop

After this highly productive workshop, AECOM was well informed about townspeople's hopes and aspirations for the site, as well as their enthusiasm to see it regenerated.

The different workshop stages helped to come up with different options for the potential development of the site, which AECOM subsequently worked up.

These options are described in section 4 of this report.





## 4. Vision

In order to illustrate how the site could be developed (based on the desktop analysis, site visits and the outcome of the workshop), we have set out below four potential ways in which development could take shape at the Devonia site.

Given that the site is privately owned, the designs shown are indicative only and subject to more detailed design, structural surveys of the existing buildings, and feasibility studies. The four scenarios are:

1. Tourism-led
2. Employment-led
3. Housing-led
4. Mixed-use

The four scenarios take into consideration that a planning application for the demolition and reconstruction in the same location of Devonia's office building is understood to be in the pipeline. Therefore, the buildings which are currently being used by the tannery were left in their existing place or, if removed, an alternative location is marked for the industry's expansion.

All the options also include the opening of the access from Market Street to improve access and permeability through the site. However, it is being assumed that heavy vehicles to service and deliver the tannery will come from Mardle Way.

Furthermore, considering that a considerable part of the site lies within Flood Zone 3, the design of new buildings or refurbishment of the existing ones, must include flood relief detailing.





## 4.1 Scenario 1 - Tourism-led option

This option retains all the core buildings of the site except for building E. The old Co-op building is partially demolished to accommodate space for car parking on its right side. This was done to remove the part of the building which is four storeys high and by doing so, releasing the view from Chapel Street towards Church Hill. Placing car parking in close proximity to the access point from Mardle Way, will also limit vehicle movement throughout the site.

In this option, the ground floor of building D is converted into a tannery museum and cafe to showcase the development of the sheepskin tannery production throughout the years. The upper two floors are converted into residential units. During our site visit, we did not have access inside this building and not knowing the internal floor layout, it is difficult to estimate the number of residential units which can be accommodated here. The area around it is cleared up to provide outside seating for the cafe and more greenery along Market Street.

Building E houses a Pannier type indoor market on its ground floor, and a hotel with indoor sports facilities on the upper two floors.

A small recreation and play area is also included at the left hand side of the building. This location was chosen as it is sheltered from any vehicles.

The servicing and delivery area in front of the industrial buildings (A, B, C, Cx, Cy, Cz) is being reduced and bounded by green open space to provide a more attractive walk from Chapel Street. This area can offer a more pleasant space which can include outside seating by the Mardle River.

The existing green space to the south of the site is turned into a car park to alleviate the town centre and the high street. Although removing an existing green space, a car park will not suffer any harmful damage in case of severe flooding.



## 4.2 Scenario 2 - Employment-led option

Option 2 attempts to provide more employment opportunities for the site. While most of the existing industrial buildings are retained (A, B, C, Cx, Cy), the structure at the north end of the core buildings is demolished (Cz) to offer more permeability through the site between Mardle Way and Market Street. This new connection is designed with a shared surface to prioritise pedestrian and cycling movement, and discourage vehicular access.

Building D is converted into small retail outlets which can be let to local craftsmanship on the ground floor while providing residential units on its top floors.

Building E is left at its current size however it is divided internally as four individual segments to house a range of community, employment, retail and residential uses in a more manageable space.

The servicing and delivery area in front of buildings Cx and Cy is reduced to a minimum to offer more green recreational space to the site.

The existing green space to the south of the site is retained as it is, but embellished with more formal landscaping.



Figure 4.2 - Proposed scenario 2

### 4.3 Scenario 3 - Residential-led with terraced and semi-detached housing

This scenario concentrates on the provision of traditional housing into the site. While building D is converted as a tannery museum with associated uses and residential units on the top floors as in the first scenario, building E is demolished and replaced by housing development.

A mixture of housing typology is used to offer variety in tenure and size. The semi-detached houses can accommodate two parking spaces on plot while the terraced houses can accommodate one car parking space. A private drive is introduced which can also have a shared surface treatment.

Buildings Cy and Cz are removed to provide a more comfortable road width to service the houses. The service and delivery space in front of the remaining industrial structure (Cx) is retained to a minimum and the existing green space north of Chapel Street is retained, as in the previous option.

This layout can accommodate 34 houses in total which can be divided as follows:

- 17 open market housing:**
- 7 two-bedroom houses
  - 5 three-bedroom houses
  - 5 four-bedroom houses
- 17 affordable housing:**
- 11 two-bedroom houses
  - 6 three-bedroom houses



### 4.5 Scenario 4 - Mixed use option

The last option delves around the possibility of removing most of the industrial buildings to the north of the river (C, Cx, Cy,) while providing the area to the southern end of the site for possible expansion of the sheepskin tannery.

By releasing this land for development a more mixed use scenario can be achieved. While building D is converted as in Options 1 and 2, building E has its back side partly demolished to accommodate surface car parking. The uses proposed for this building are a combination of what is proposed in options 1 (tourism-led) and 2 (employment-led) and other leisure uses. The top floor can accommodate 8 apartment units; 4 open-market and 4 set as affordable housing.

In contrast to the other options, this layout retains buildings Cz and F due to their characterful nature. The area in front of building F is left as a multi-functional open space which can be utilised for events, markets and also offer a spill-out area for the restaurant/cafe overlooking the river.

Freeing up this space while limiting vehicular movement only to the eastern side of the site results in a larger space dedicated to pedestrians only.

In addition, housing is also provided by means of 16 semi-detached and terraced houses with some frontage onto Market Street to provide a more active frontage and contributing to the character of the street.

- 8 open market housing:**
- 4 two-bedroom houses
  - 2 three-bedroom houses
  - 2 four-bedroom houses

- 8 affordable housing:**
- 6 two-bedroom houses
  - 2 three-bedroom houses

This option would also enable people to benefit from a river walk throughout the site.







## 5. Next steps

Built around a creative public workshop and the passion and ideas of the Buckfastleigh community, this document has presented four different scenarios to breathe life back into the Devonian site and allow it to once again 'give something back' to the town.

## 5.1 Integrating into the draft Neighbourhood Plan

All of the scenarios can be said to be in conformity with the strategic Local Plan policies and with the previous neighbourhood planning work. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group can now choose a preferred scenario for inclusion in the relevant policy or use the scenarios to illustrate the existing policies.

Our understanding is that scenario 4 is the most attractive to the Steering Group because of its truly mixed use nature and the contribution it has the potential to make to the wider vision for Buckfastleigh. The remainder of this section is written on the assumption that scenario 4 is indeed the preferred option.

As noted in section 2.2 above, the Devonian site is addressed by three draft policies. We would suggest that these are amended in the following ways to take account of the work in this report.

### Business, tourism and enterprise development policies

#### Devonia Mill

Both the Dartmoor National Park Authority and the Neighbourhood Plan have recognised that the Devonian Products Mill site in Buckfastleigh would provide an opportunity to improve the character and appearance of this part of the town, as well as providing an opportunity for sustainable development through increased local employment. This site could be used more efficiently as employment land whilst conserving the area's mill heritage and improving the setting of the River Mardle. Redevelopment of this site should provide for a mix of uses including development for employment purposes and potential community and leisure uses.

As part of the Department for Communities and Local Government neighbourhood planning programme, planners and designers at AECOM were commissioned to assist the Buckfastleigh and Buckfast Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to produce a community-led plan for the site. This was done by way of a workshop held in December 2015 and attended by 31 local people. The consultancy is documented in the report "Buckfastleigh: Devonian Site Design and Planning Options Study" (AECOM, April 2016) and produced plans for a number of development scenarios. The policy reflects the findings of the study.

#### BTE2: Devonian Mill site

Redevelopment of the Devonian site that includes a mix of the following uses will be supported:

- (a) new commercial uses comprising principally business use (B1), financial and professional services (A2), shops/indoor market (A1), and restaurants and cafés/bars (A3, A4);
- (b) assembly and leisure uses, such as a cinema, theatre or indoor sports (D2);
- (c) non-residential uses, such as museums and exhibition halls (D1);
- (d) light industrial or general industrial, including maintaining tannery activities (B1, B2);
- (e) Hotel (C1);
- (f) Housing (C3), especially affordable housing;
- (g) Community uses;

Development of this site should:

- i. Accommodate the existing businesses;
- ii. Re-use existing buildings wherever practical;
- iii. Include a significant public space at its heart;
- iv. Identify heritage significance, conserve and enhance the site's mill heritage, and the Buckfastleigh Conservation Area;
- v. Where in the flood zone, mitigate and lessen flood risk both on site and elsewhere;
- vi. Not impact upon the integrity of the South Hams Special Area of Conservation.

[We would recommend that the scenario 4 plan is shown to illustrate the policy and supporting text].

### Housing policies

The Devonian site is the key site for regeneration of Buckfastleigh. At present the majority of the site is either derelict or used for what appears to be temporary storage of woollen products. It was felt that mixed housing on the site, such as market value flats and houses could be mixed with affordable housing to help to create a vibrant economic hub. An element of self-build housing would also be welcome and indeed if this was in a similar style to that of the development in e.g. St Werburgh's, Bristol, with housing of varied style, budget and size, it could serve as a catalyst for further development and help to generate a thriving community in the centre of Buckfastleigh.

#### H3: Devonian Mill

Proposals for housing development on the Devonian Mill site will be supported as part of a wider mixed use regeneration scheme, as outlined in policy BTE2, particularly where it includes a proportion of affordable housing and self-build.

### Environment and green spaces policies

#### Devonia Mill

The Devonian site is the key site for regeneration of Buckfastleigh. At present the majority of the site is either derelict or used for what appears to be temporary storage of woollen products. The site also has the Mardle River passing through its centre. As such the site is in a flood plain which potentially restricts new development to higher ground. Accordingly it was felt that a community space such as a green, amphitheatre, riverside café area, or garden would enhance the site and help to create a focal point for the town and attract people to the site.

#### ENV3: Devonian Mill

Proposals which provide a landscaped public park within the flood plain part of the Devonian site will be supported.



## 5.2 Delivery

Attention should also turn to delivery. Between the Town Council, the planning authorities and the landowner - all of whom can benefit from the sensitive redevelopment of the site - a detailed masterplan and implementation strategy should be generated to include:

- A structural survey of the buildings to be retained or partially demolished;
- A flood mitigation and waste strategy;
- Renewable energy strategy;
- A landscaping and public realm plan;
- Viability and feasibility studies of different uses; and
- An exploration of the possibility for a Neighbourhood Development Order.



