Online Consultation Guide for the Draft Local Plan

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to assist you in making comments online via the consultation portal.

The draft Local Plan 2011-2031 has been jointly prepared by North Devon and Torridge District Councils; it provides the vision, policies and proposals to guide future development and the use of land within North Devon (excluding Exmoor National Park) and Torridge. It will give a degree of certainty to both developers and members of the public as to where development is likely to take place and guide decision makers on the most appropriate forms of development over the Plan period to 2031. North Devon and Torridge District Councils are now inviting comments on their draft Local Plan.

As it is a place-shaping document, everyone can be affected so everyone should contribute – it is therefore important to engage in the preparation of the Local Plan. The Councils are committed to letting people have their say and to get involved with the preparation process. One of the ways that people can get involved is by using the online consultation portal where you can submit comments.

The following provides a guide as to how comments can be easily made in response to any part of the draft Local Plan, the first step towards which is to access the document through the Council’s consultation portal at: http://consult.torridge.gov.uk/

The webpage snap shots provided through this guide will enable you to comment on the Local Plan.

![Consultation Portal Image]

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For the draft Local Plan, we will be using Torridge District Council’s consultation portal.

Making use of the consultation portal provides many benefits to both you and the Council. These include the opportunity to:

- reduce the amount of printed material
- receive email notifications of upcoming consultations;
- view, download or print copies of consultation documents;
- draft and submit your views online;
- review submissions by yourself and others along with any Council responses;
- keep your contact details up-to-date; and
- use the same account to submit comments to over 200 Councils across the UK.

The consultation portal offers the most sustainable way of having your say. It offers a paper free alternative to the traditional way of consulting and providing your views. In doing so it provides an opportunity to reduce both the physical impact of the consultation exercise and to minimise the costs to both yourself and the Council.

Registration

To make use of the consultation portal you will need to register, which is a simple two-stage process.

If you have a username and password for another Council that makes use of Objective (previously referred to as Limehouse) Software or one that you have used previously if you made representations to the draft Core Strategy in 2010, then you can login using those details and follow the on-screen prompts to register your existing account for use on the portal. If not, then click on ‘Register Now’ and follow the instructions below.

You can register as either a consultee or an agent depending on which option best suits your requirements:

a. **Consultee** – The majority of users will wish to register as a consultee. Select this option if you wish to respond directly as an individual or on behalf of a group or organisation.

b. **Agent** – Select this option if you are wishing to respond on behalf of other individuals or third-party organisations that you represent.

Note: The remaining instructions relate to the registration process for a consultee. The registration process for an agent follows a similar process and support is available on request.

Representatives of Town and Parish Councils should generally register as consultees. Those who represent more than one Town or Parish Council may however wish to register as an Agent.
Register as a Consultee

Stage 1 – Enter Your Details

1. Navigate to the portal and open the registration page:
   
   a. Open an internet browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera, etc.)
   b. Navigate to: http://consult.torridge.gov.uk/
   c. Click ‘Login / Register’ and select >Register Now

2. Click on ‘Consultee’ to begin the registration process.
3. Enter the requested basic information into the form and select ‘OK’ to create your account.

   Tip: To make it easier to remember you can use your email address as your username.

4. You will be directed to a ‘Thank You’ page to complete the first stage of your registration.
Stage 2 – Activate your account and finalise your details

Upon completing Stage 1 you will have been sent an email to the address you provided during the registration process. For security reasons you will need to follow a link in this email to complete your registration.

1. Open the registration email titled ‘Torridge District Council: Consult Registration’ and click on the activation link.

You should be directed to a ‘Thank You’ page on the consultation portal confirming that your account is activated.
2. Login to your account using the details you provided during registration.
3. Enter the requested contact and preference information into the form and select ‘OK’ to complete your registration.

4. Your registration is now complete and you will be able to benefit from the advantages of using the Consultation Portal.
Viewing Consultations and Having Your Say

Once you are registered on the portal you can access the consultation events as they become available. Depending upon your preferences you may also be notified when new consultation events become available.

The way to respond may vary depending upon the way that the consultation has been set up (consultation on document, questionnaire, poll, etc.). The draft Local Plan is a consultation document where you can provide your views on any part of the document.

You can access all of the available consultation events from the ‘Homepage’ of the consultation portal at http://consult.torridge.gov.uk.

The consultation events are listed in a table at the bottom of the page and the ‘status’ column shows which ones are available to comment on.

You can find out a little more about individual consultation events by clicking on the next to the name of the consultation.

View a Consultation Document

1. If you have not already done so, login to the consultation portal by clicking on Login / Register and entering your username and password and clicking on ‘Login >’.

2. Select the consultation event of interest by clicking on the title in the table.
A new page will open showing general information about the consultation event. This may include an introduction to the event and details such as a contact name, whether you need to login to contribute and whether your name, town and comments will remain private or be visible to the public if you choose to have your say.

3. Access the consultation document by clicking on 'Read and comment on document >'. The consultation document will be displayed with an interactive table of contents shown on the left. This allows you to navigate through the document by clicking on the appropriate section to view the content.

You may also use the 'Next Page >' and '< Previous Page' links to move through the document on a section-by-section basis.

Tip: You may also be able to download a PDF copy of individual sections or the whole document by clicking on the 'Download Document' link.
Have Your Say - Comment on a Consultation Document

The portal provides you with the opportunity to have your say on the consultation document by adding comments to specific parts of the document. These parts (consultation points) are determined by the Council and include paragraphs, policies, chapters, maps, etc.

To ensure that your contribution is effective it is important to structure comments to relate to specific parts of the document rather than providing a single submission relating to the entire document. It is better to submit a number of shorter specific comments rather than a single more general response. This approach will also assist the Council in managing the consultation process and ensuring your comments are represented accurately.

When you choose to make a comment, a representation form will be displayed to enable you to have your say. The content of the form may vary from event to event and may be a simple comment box or a series of specific questions. There may also be an opportunity to upload supporting files.

To make a comment on a document:

1. Navigate to the part of the document on which you wish to have your say;
2. Click on the appropriate ‘Add Comments’ link above the section of the document on which you wish to have your say.
3. A comment form will be displayed. Fill out the form by answering the appropriate questions or by providing your comments.
4. Select the appropriate button at the bottom of the form to:
   a. submit your views to the Council straight away by clicking on ‘Submit’;
   b. save your response as a draft to edit or come back to at a later date by clicking ‘Save as Draft’; or
   c. remove your comments if you change your mind or have made an error by clicking ‘Cancel’.

Tip: If you save a draft of your comments do not forget to submit them prior to the end of the consultation, or else the Council will not consider them.

You will receive a confirmation email to notify you that your comments have been submitted successfully.
Contact Us

The consultation portal includes comprehensive online help that can be accessed by clicking on the help button at the top right of the portal.

If you have any questions relating to the consultation portal, require assistance to register on the consultation portal or need help to make comments using the facility please do not hesitate to get in touch using the details shown below:

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