



**HARDISTY JONES
ASSOCIATES**

URBAN RENEWAL IN DEVON TOWNS

Great Torrington Regeneration Strategy

Revised November 2025



Contents

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- 1 Introduction.....1
- 2 Unique Selling Points and Opportunities.....3
- 3 Challenges and Barriers to Growth.....8
- 4 Vision and objectives.....12
- 5 Projects for Urban Renewal.....13
- Appendix 1. Context.....20

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Devon County Council, working with Torridge District Council and Hardisty Jones Associates (HJA) are delivering an Urban Renewal programme in Devon's towns, including Great Torrington.

Background

- 1.2 Previous work on market and coastal towns in Devon comprised an initial review of the challenges and opportunities faced by towns, identified the highest priority towns for support, and set out proposals for their regeneration and structural change in response to both long-standing issues and the more recent challenges caused by issues such as Covid-19 and Brexit. Devon County Council's objectives for the future of Devon's Towns include:
- A clear and locally owned vision and action plan for each town
 - Attractive places to live, work and play
 - Learning, training, and employment opportunities
 - Digitally and physically accessible
 - Good quality high streets and town centres
 - Supporting remote working for those employed elsewhere
 - Employment space for businesses at all stages of life
 - Provision of affordable housing
 - Environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive growth
 - Giving investors and funders the confidence to invest in towns
- 1.3 This project is about developing practical and pragmatic plans and business cases to deliver economic regeneration in Devon's towns, including Great Torrington.
- 1.4 The approach to the urban renewal programme includes:
- Establishing a strategic regeneration board, in this case working with Torridge District Council and local stakeholders
 - Preparing a Regeneration Strategy (this document)
 - Preparing a Business Case for a priority project
 - Implementing quick win projects

Regeneration Board

- 1.5 The Great Torrington Regeneration Board has an advisory, not statutory role. It will shape and guide the future regeneration of the town, setting out the objectives and direction for the future of the town, with a view to increasing inward investment. It will advise the District and County Councils along with other investors and funders about the town's challenges and opportunities, to inform their local activity and investment.
- 1.6 The Board represents the town, including its residents, Great Torrington Town Council, businesses, and local organisations and institutions. It also includes the stakeholders who will help deliver support for future economic growth (i.e. the District and County Councils).



Funding Opportunities

- 1.7 The primary role of the Board is to identify the needs and potential projects for strategic regeneration in Great Torrington. However, the Board should maintain an overview of funding opportunities and should continue to liaise with Torrington District Council and Devon County Council on potential sources of funding for projects.

Regeneration Strategy

- 1.8 This document is the regeneration strategy for Great Torrington.
- 1.9 The regeneration strategy sets out the objectives for the future growth of Great Torrington. Projects have been identified by the Regeneration Board that align with these strategic objectives and are prioritised, based on how well they contribute to achieving the objectives, their affordability, and deliverability. Based on these criteria, quick win projects have been identified, and a Business Case prepared for a more significant project.
- 1.10 Analysis of the socio-economic and policy evidence base which identifies the strengths, opportunities, challenges, and barriers for economic regeneration in Great Torrington is included in Appendix 1.



2 Unique Selling Points and Opportunities

- 2.1 This chapter sets out an overview of the unique selling points of Great Torrington and opportunities for its future growth.

High Quality of Life

- 2.2 Great Torrington is an attractive place to live, with a distinct town centre set in a high-quality green landscape. It is an historic market town and service centre to a rural hinterland, offering a variety of independent retailers and cafes. Despite its rural location, there are some good quality jobs available to residents at local manufacturing and engineering companies. A recently established work-hub is well utilised by tourists and residents from surrounding villages, but not particularly well by Great Torrington residents. Great Torrington was recognised for its high quality of life when it was awarded the Healthiest Place to Live in 2020.
- 2.3 Great Torrington School offers good secondary education to local children, and although a long journey, it is possible to attend Petroc College and Exeter College whilst continuing to reside in the town. Petroc College has aspirations to offer a wider range of higher education courses, particular in areas tailored to local employment needs and opportunities.

Arts, Culture and Heritage

- 2.4 Great Torrington is the main provider of an independent arts and culture offer to a considerable population in northern Devon. Great Torrington has a rich history and a range of heritage assets and sites which are celebrated via a range of heritage trails popular with tourists, residents and school educators. Torrington Heritage Museum, Tarka Valley Railway, Rolle Canal and the Town Hall provide venues for public use and cultural services locally, all of which are operated by volunteers. The Plough Arts Centre is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, designated for the first time in 2023. Dig the Castle, the town's volunteer community archaeology project involving 200+ local residents which won Community Project of the Year 2024 (Council of British Archaeology).
- 2.5 Great Torrington is home to a nationally-significant multi-period castle. It is also recognised as the site of the last major battle of the English Civil Wars – a fact that is highly valued by the community which preserves and promotes local history, led by the museum, Great Torrington Cavaliers and Great Torrington Futures Group. The Great Torrington Cavaliers hold high profile bonfires every few years, which attract significant attendance and attention. Dig the Castle runs regular events such as exhibitions, public engagement activities for schools, residents and tourists, and the high-profile archaeological excavations in the town centre.
- 2.6 The town benefits from a creative hub of artists, artisans and independent artists and crafters. The Pannier Market offers an accessible and popular venue for hosting artists and independent makers. The Castle Hill Creatives are based at the Community Centre and hold vibrant art shows through the year. RHS Rosemoor and Dartington Crystal are high-profile successful organisations that are recognised on the national level.
- 2.7 The landscape, including its historic features, are a notable feature of Great Torrington. The scenic beauty alone is noteworthy. However, the historic landscape is a unique and valuable asset for the town. This includes leper fields, walled hermit nun enclosure, an ancient chapel, medieval bridges, ancient mills on the river Torridge, Waterloo Obelisk, and nearby Iron

Hillforts and Bronze Age cemetery. The Commons is a unique surviving Medieval landscape, gifted to the people of Great Torrington in 1194, confirmed by Parliamentary Act in 1889. In literature, Great Torrington is referred to as “England’s Jerusalem” for its unique hilltop location and beauty. Great Torrington and the River Torridge have inspired poets across the centuries. Likewise, centuries of artists have been drawn to the landscape including famed local artist Alfred ‘Humpy’ Gay. Tarka the Otter, a perennial children’s favourite set in the Torridge Valley, is celebrated with the new children’s trail across the Commons..

Source: Photo © Roger A Smith (cc-by-sa/2.0)

Figure 2:1 The Plough Arts Centre, and The Mayflower replica on Great Torrington Common



Strong Community

- 2.8 There is a strong sense of community in Great Torrington, being home to many societies, community groups and volunteering groups. Whilst many of these groups are aligned in their overarching ambition to bring positive social, economic and environmental change to Great Torrington, it has been suggested that suggested that greater cohesion and a coordinated approach may be more effective in driving local ambitions.
- 2.9 The Community Centre is home to a volunteer-run library that runs educational programmes and outreach year-round including a “repair-café” which offers repairs on domestic goods. The Torrington in Bloom volunteer group provide floral displays in public spaces across the town. The Men’s Shed group provide mental health services. Torri Youth provide cultural and public engagement services to young people in the town including arts, cooking and sports activities. Several sports teams provide venues for extracurricular activities including football, rugby, running, golf, and bowling. The Bowling Club is one of the oldest in England, founded in 1645.

Summary

- 2.10 Residents have pride in these pillars of Great Torrington. It is what attracts people to move to the area and is the reason they remain. Together, the offering of a high quality of life, arts, culture and heritage and a strong community is the USP of Great Torrington and promotion of this USP is central to the town’s future vitality.

Opportunities

The Globe Hotel

- 2.11 Although development of the Globe Hotel is considered a challenge in this strategy, it also represents a significant opportunity for the town. Significant work has been undertaken already on plans for the redevelopment of the Globe Hotel, to create a new eleven bedroom mid to high range accommodation hotel offer, restaurant/pub, and co-working office space which together doubles as a training facility for the local catering and hospitality sector. Unfortunately, attempts to purchase the Globe have so far been unsuccessful.
- 2.12 The redevelopment of the Globe Hotel is a strong strategic fit for harnessing opportunities that a thriving town centre could provide. In particular, the provision of mid-range accommodation will help to elongate visitor stays, increase spend, support local youth training, and contribute to a vibrant town centre alongside other town centre assets such as the Plough Arts Centre, Town Hall and Heritage Museum.
- 2.13 A £500,000 grant, part of a regeneration fund for the region, was awarded to the Globe Hotel initiative which was thereafter supplemented by the successful purchase of the hotel through community shares in 2025.

Drawing visitors into a vibrant town centre

- 2.14 Local attractions such as RHS Rosemoor and the Tarka Trail draw many visitors to the wider Great Torrington area, but few town centre retailers and cafes benefit from these visitors due to their peripheral locations. The redevelopment of the Globe Hotel is a crucial step to boosting town centre vitality, through serving as a focal hub for the local community and drawing visitors from peripheral attractions to the town centre.
- 2.15 The Pannier Market and Town Hall are important town centre assets which greatly contribute to the character of Great Torrington town centre and have received investment for refurbishments and improvements in recent years. The Town Hall could be utilised more frequently by local community groups, societies and clubs which would help drive footfall and support a thriving town centre. Improved online promotion and marketing of these spaces is a potential solution to this.
- 2.16 Occasional temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street and Fore Street has been suggested as an intervention which could support the expansion of town centre cafes, restaurants and pubs, and help the emergence of a hospitality culture in Great Torrington. Crucially, pedestrianisation of key town centre streets would support town centre footfall, and in turn generate more spend in local hospitality and retailers.
- 2.17 The Tarka Trail does not pass directly through Great Torrington, so to reach the town centre cyclists must journey up a steep hill. This tends to result in tourists, particularly families and elderly people, not visiting the town centre. Improvements were recently made to a cycle path between the Tarka Trail and the Former Creamery site on the outskirts of town. Although this path brings visitors closer, there now exists a challenge around extending this connection to the town centre. The main barrier to this lies in gaining permission from the landowners, The Conservators and South West Water, to extend the path.

The idea has been mooted for a cable car to carry visitors from the Tarka Trail to Great Torrington town centre. This could start at RHS Rosemoor Gardens and carry visitors from the Gardens up to the town centre. Barriers to constructing this include planning and funding constraints.

Figure 2:2 The Pannier Market and RHS Rosemoor Gardens



The Former Creamery site

- 2.18 The Former Creamery Site represents a significant opportunity for regeneration in Great Torrington. Delivery of a mixed-use scheme on the site would bring increased spend from a larger residential population and could unlock land for employment uses, ultimately supporting employment growth in the town. The site is due to be demolished and cleared in 2024, which will unlock the site for further development. As a major derelict site in Great Torrington, it will be important for the community to remain engaged with the development throughout the planning process.

Hatchmoor Industrial Estate

- 2.19 The Hatchmoor Industrial Estate on the outskirts of Great Torrington provides the core space for the principle higher-level employment in the area. Successful businesses such as CMTG and Simons Plastics provide skilled, well-salaried roles and have distinctively local approaches whilst operating on a far wider and more impactful basis. However, there are opportunities to also develop additional employment land in the vicinity of the existing estate, which could not only provide additional units but also attract larger entities connected to the wider advances in Floating Offshore Wind and green hydrogen, which would provide a massive attraction to the town overall. Building out that additional space could also support the existing estate to reduce known issues around power supply, adopting a holistic approach to employment growth in the town.

Former Meat Factory

- 2.20 There is a development opportunity for mixed employment and housing at the former Meat Factory site to the north of the town.



Celtic Sea FLOW and green hydrogen opportunities

- 2.21 The development of floating offshore wind (FLOW) projects in the Celtic Sea is underway, and once completed, it will be the largest FLOW project in the world, producing enough electricity to power three million homes. With national grid connections for the Celtic Sea FLOW proposed at Alverdiscott substation, the area is set to benefit from major investment and employment opportunities in the operations of these facilities. These renewable energy connections mean that there are also possibilities arising in Green Hydrogen, which is the term used for hydrogen produced through renewable energy. Together, Celtic Sea FLOW and green hydrogen opportunities could generate vast amounts of good quality jobs in the Great Torrington area in the near to medium term. However, it is worth noting that recruiters will require workers with technician and engineering skills/qualifications.

Levelling Up

- 2.22 Torrington District Council was recently awarded Levelling Up Partnership status, and there may be potential for Great Torrington to benefit from this.



3 Challenges and Barriers to Growth

- 3.1 This chapter sets out an overview of the challenges faced by Great Torrington and barriers to its future growth.

Employment

- 3.2 Employment in Great Torrington has fallen in recent years, largely driven by a decline in the local manufacturing sector which is a significant employer in the town. The vast majority of manufacturing businesses, as well as other industrial businesses, are located on Hatchmoor Industrial Estate at the eastern entrance to the town. Sites are well occupied at this estate, but it is claimed there are insufficient sites for larger operations and medium-sized grow-on units. This has resulted in few property options for businesses to grow and remain in the local area, and increasingly, growing firms are looking elsewhere, including Barnstaple, for more suitable sites.
- 3.3 New housing developments and a new nursing home adjacent to the estate have meant that some business operations have had to cease, e.g. night working. Although a further site bordering Hatchmoor Industrial Estate is allocated for employment uses and could be developed in the near future, there are limits to the industrial activities that could take place here due to the aforementioned housing developments. In general, there are very few sites which could be developed for employment in Great Torrington due to geographical features which physically constrain expansion of the town. One of these constraints is the Commons, an area of land spanning 132 hectares which encircles the town on all sides but the east. Limitations to business growth and activity is likely to reduce future employment opportunities in Great Torrington.
- 3.4 Limited electricity grid capacity across the town is said to affect the operations of some businesses in Great Torrington, including those at the Hatchmoor Industrial Estate. Infrastructure constraints such as this are another contributing factor in local businesses looking elsewhere for suitable employment sites.

Vacant/derelict sites

- 3.5 Although there are few vacant units and derelict sites in Great Torrington, those which are require significant intervention to be developed. The Former Creamery site, previously a powdered milk factory on the south western edge of the town, has been a major derelict site for decades. However, recent administrative changes mean that demolition and site clearance are due to be undertaken in 2024, enabling development to progress.
- 3.6 The Globe Hotel is another underutilised site, which if developed could generate major benefits to the local economy. Previously, extensive plans were prepared for the development of the building into a hotel, bar, restaurant, and co-working space, which would also serve as a training facility for young people looking to enter the hospitality sector. This project is now progressing following the successful purchase of the hotel through community shares in 2025.
- 3.7 Both of these sites are seen as potential significant opportunities for urban renewal in Great Torrington, but substantial barriers need to be overcome to ensure their delivery.

Figure 3:1 Former Creamery Site, Taddiport



Source: Photo © Noel Jenkins (cc-by-sa/2.0)

Future socio-economic sustainability of Great Torrington

- 3.8 As set out in Appendix 1, the population aged 65+ in Great Torrington is growing at a faster rate than other towns in Devon and England as a whole. Alongside this, there is a strong pattern of net outward commuting, particularly to Bideford and Barnstaple. The geographical isolation of Great Torrington is a factor in this trend, although this is a characteristic of the town which cannot be changed. Together these trends could pose a threat to the future economic vitality of Great Torrington, as fewer working aged people living in the town results in difficulties recruiting employees, and ultimately restricts business growth.
- 3.9 The growth in the nearby towns of Bideford and Barnstaple has been noted previously as a potential threat to the future economic vitality of Great Torrington. However, the growth of these towns could also be a sign of wider regeneration and growth in northern Devon which could bring benefits in other forms.

Tourism offer

- 3.10 Although Great Torrington is not a high-profile tourist destination, its heritage, historic sites and attractions such as RHS Rosemoor, Dartington Crystal, The Plough Arts Centre, Great Torrington Heritage Museum, the Heritage Trail, Tarka Valley Railway, the Rolle Canal and the Tarka Trail, Dig the Castle archaeological excavations and events such as the regular large bonfires draw in many visitors. Together, these attractions could form a multiple-day visitor offer, but a lack of accommodation stands as a barrier to elongating visitor dwell time and capturing greater spend within the town. Currently, overnight visitors for both leisure and business trips stay in accommodation in the wider rural area. In the future, the Globe Hotel

initiative may partially resolve this issue. However, further accommodation options are required, to suit variable budgets and preferences, in order to meet broad demographic needs. Private rentals options exist but are extremely limited and serve narrow demographics. The Landmark Trust property, known as Cawsey House, is currently available for private rental and open twice a year on heritage open days. It is large and central, and while accessible for rent, it is otherwise inaccessible and materially intangible to the local residents. It is one of the most outstanding examples of early 18th century townhouses in England. While there are many fine eateries in Great Torrington, many offer their services in restricted hours with few offering evening services. There are often visitors attending events at The Plough in the evenings but a lack of good quality restaurants covering these hours is thought to restrict visitor spend in Great Torrington. Tourists travelling without private cars cannot readily access Great Torrington. The nearest railway station is at Umberleigh, 20 minutes' drive away with no bus connection. There is a bus connection to the Barnstaple but this service is limited. The lack of public transport directly results in limited access to restricted tourism demographics, largely campervan travellers, or short-visit families and retirees coming inland from their main holiday destinations on the coast. Sports and leisure holiday-makers also pass through Great Torrington, but it is not their primary holiday destination. The lack of public transport results in fewer younger visitors.

- 3.11 The dispersed locations of some attractions mean that a limited number of visitors make the journey into the town centre, so shops, cafes and pubs see limited benefits from visitors.

Figure 3:2 High Street, Great Torrington



Source: Torrridge District Council



Limited opportunities for young

- 3.12 Aside from local sports clubs, there are few leisure activities for young people in Great Torrington. There has been no dedicated facility or space for young people since the closure of the local youth centre. There are also constraints on youth mentoring and training due to the costs of recruiting and difficulty retaining youth workers. Together, these cause young people to seek leisure and training opportunities elsewhere.
- 3.13 Few young people are aware of local good quality employment opportunities. Increasing awareness amongst local students of employment opportunities in Great Torrington could help counter outward commuting trends and the area's ageing population. Providing training specific to local business needs (for example, in manufacturing, engineering, and hospitality) could also help young people access local employment opportunities.

4 Vision and objectives

- 4.1 This chapter considers the vision for future growth in Great Torrington and the objectives for achieving this.

Vision

- 4.2 The vision for Great Torrington by 2031 is set out below. This was first established in the Great Torrington Neighbourhood Plan which was prepared through extensive consultation with the local community. As this strategy is primarily focused on the economic regeneration of Great Torrington, the vision has been adapted to reflect an economic regeneration led future:

A friendly, welcoming town that serves the local population, rural surroundings and visitors. A thriving neighbourhood where - regardless of age, health or status - people have access to suitable housing, employment and community facilities. The stability and cohesion that are central to the character of the town have been maintained by making it attractive and safe for all ages. Innovative approaches to the challenges of the 21st century are encouraged where they enhance the highly valued natural setting. Appropriate development is supported where it is matched by the provision of relevant infrastructure.

The economic strength of the town continues to derive from its role as an important local centre. Employment opportunities are diverse and plentiful.

Great Torrington will be a sustainable settlement in which to live, with sufficient and appropriate housing to meet local needs.

Transport and Infrastructure. Strong and flexible connections between the town centre and its residential surroundings are established, achieving a high level of social and economic integration. Great Torrington will be an environmentally-friendly neighbourhood.

The value of community is reflected in the availability of facilities for people of all ages, including sport and recreational facilities and opportunities for artistic and creative engagement.

Objectives

- 4.3 The following objectives for urban renewal in Great Torrington have been derived from the above vision, with a focus on local economic challenges and opportunities identified by the regeneration board.
1. Provide support to employers to retain businesses and enable their growth, and encourage greater engagement of the business community with common goals.
 2. Redevelopment of derelict and under-used sites, including the Globe Hotel.
 3. Create a vibrant town centre which attracts both residents and visitors.
 4. Support youth training and leisure activities to increase youth retention in the town.
 5. Develop a more coordinated approach to branding and online marketing of Great Torrington, bringing together various community groups in the process.

5 Projects for Urban Renewal

5.1 This chapter sets out projects which have the potential to deliver opportunities and help tackle local challenges identified by the regeneration board.

Criteria for project selection

- The project should help achieve the agreed objectives for Great Torrington.
- A lead stakeholder should be identified to develop and deliver the project. They should have the resources, skills, experience, and ability needed to do this.
- The potential benefits of the project should be clearly identified, but do not need to be quantified at this selection stage.
- Potential sources of capital or revenue funding should be identified (both private and public funds).
- The approximate financial scale of the project should be identified, but detailed costs are not needed at the selection stage.
- The approximate timescale for delivering the project should be identified, but a detailed timetable is not needed at the selection stage.

Projects summary

This section of the Regeneration Strategy has been updated to reflect progress as at September 2025.

	Project Description	Progress as at September 2025	Next Steps	Lead stakeholder	Timescale
2	Supporting the redevelopment of the Globe Hotel, for accommodation, restaurant/pub and catering training facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levelling Up funding for remedial works • GT Regen Board allocation to community ownership project, consultancy fee (Real Ideas Organisation) & assistance with project management costs • Share offer reached required level for purchase of building 	Grant funding bids for capital works Draw down Levelling Up funds		
5	Pedestrianisation of High Street and Fore Street between 1pm Saturday - 6pm Sunday, together with the organisation of more street events/markets to encourage more town centre footfall. This could include creating a diverse food hall in the Pannier Market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Torrington and Holsworthy footfall counter 	This will be reviewed once there is progress on key projects (eg. Globe) or a specific event		
6	Develop and enrich cultural, heritage and nature trails as part of a distinctive tourism offer for the town				

	Project Description	Progress as at September 2025	Next Steps	Lead stakeholder	Timescale
6a	Explore avenues to link the Tarka Trail to Great Torrington. Potential options include nature trails, extended cycle paths and a highly ambitious project around a cable car.		Conversations with SWW and Town Council		
6b	Tarka the Otter initiative: book and trail with sculptures to serve as visual landmarks, enhancing the interactive experience and storytelling aspect of the trail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission granted by Henry Williamson Society • Wooden sculptures commissioned – funded by the Regen Board 			
6c	Heritage trail enrichment, including more interpretation, accessible translation and digital enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Continue discussions on boards and interpretation panels and other ways of diversifying the experience for visitors and locals eg. through QR codes		
7a	Raise awareness of local business support amongst key town centre assets to promote better use of town centre spaces (e.g. Town Hall). Explore opportunities to utilise the undercroft part of the Town Hall, perhaps by introducing a food service to ensure daily use.	Not started			
7b	Town Support Officer/ Pannier Market Event Manager				

	Project Description	Progress as at September 2025	Next Steps	Lead stakeholder	Timescale
8	Foster a more modern image of Great Torrington through a coordinated town wide approach to online marketing, including a stronger online presence, curation of a joint marketing scheme for key attractions, upgraded signage at main entry points to the town and interactive information boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand Workshop March 2024 • Branding & visual identity guide approved by the board as part of Great Torrington Branding & Marketing Plan • One Great Torrington website updated • Dig the Castle interpretation panel 			
9	Encourage greater engagement between various community and heritage groups, trusts and charities which share the common goal of bringing positive change to Great Torrington. The regeneration board is a potential vehicle to bring together these groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for wide representation on Regen Board including invitation to fill role of chair (April 2025) 	Explore scope for a heritage sub-group and make links with DCC for information on sources of funding for local heritage groups		
10	Establish and support a business led forum to increase business to business engagement, help achieve common ambitions, and drive town centre projects forward. Project could include intermittent pedestrianisation of the High Street and Fore Street, wider marketing and branding of Great Torrington and encouraging local retailers to coordinate opening times	Not started			

	Project Description	Progress as at September 2025	Next Steps	Lead stakeholder	Timescale
11	Hold more career events for local businesses at GTS, Petroc and other local educational institutions. Encourage greater engagement between local businesses and GTS students, for example, school assemblies with businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaison with Careers Hub 			
12	Provision of a youth shelter at the main Calf Street Play area/skatepark.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding secured Transfer of funds in hand 			
13	Explore and consult with young people to understand the type of long term space/activities required in the town. Produce a business case to help raise funding to provide these requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions with Torri Youth 			
14	Recruit/train local youth workers to provide training in Great Torrington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Torri Youth received continuation funding from D&C Police (safer communities) Plans to extend existing post to 10 hours 	Watching brief for Regen Board		
15	Provision of relevant short courses to improve employability, particularly amongst 18 – 25-year-olds. These could be digital skills, heritage skills first aid, interview techniques, CV writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not started 	Watching brief for Regen Board		



	Project Description	Progress as at September 2025	Next Steps	Lead stakeholder	Timescale
16	Develop creative placemaking activities for Torrington that make the most of its unique culture and heritage, including murals, temporary creative displays and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">	Discuss legal and planning issues for town-centre murals		



CLOSED PROJECTS

	Project Description	Progress	Reason for closure		
1	Lobbying for improved energy infrastructure, particularly at employment sites	Not started	Not within remit of Regeneration Strategy		
3	Support the development of the Former Creamery site	Phased demolition			
4	Support the development of the vacant Meat Factory site for mixed residential and employment uses.	Approval for new homes			

Appendix 1. Context

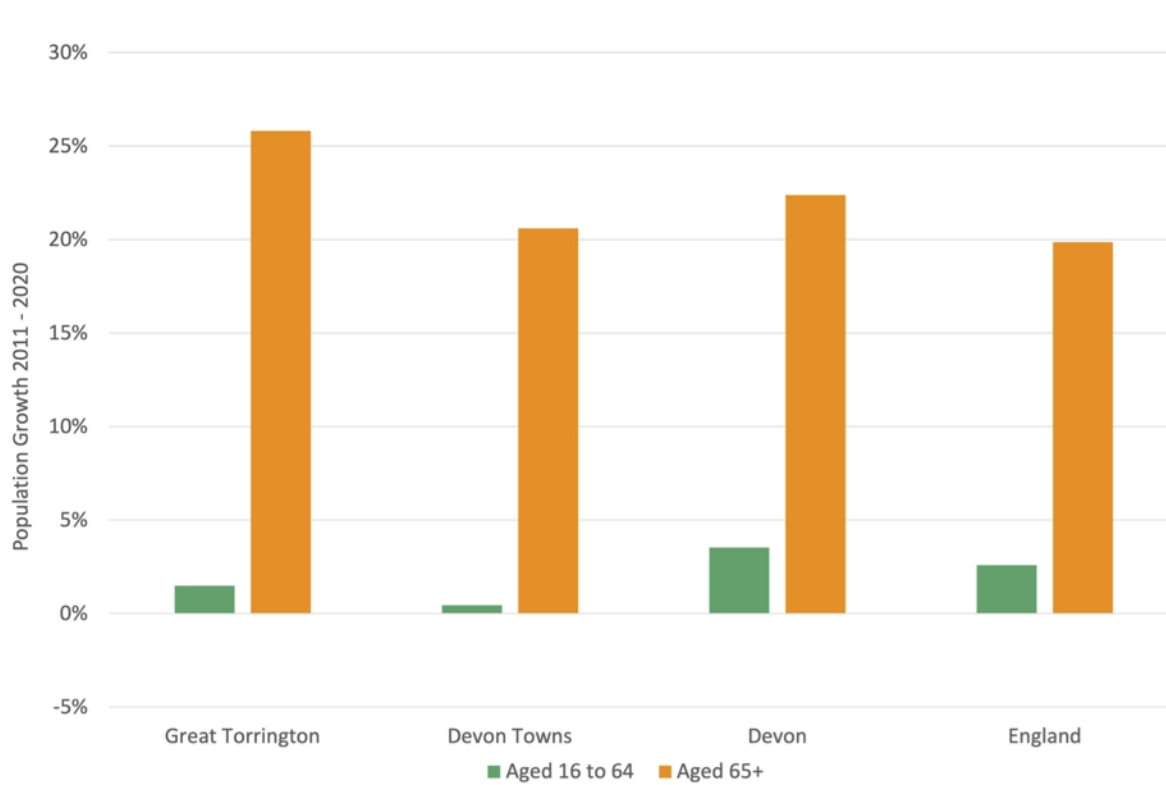
A1.1 This appendix sets out the most up-to-date socio-economic data and policy available for Great Torrington to help build an understanding of the potential drivers of future economic growth in the area as well as identify challenges to the local economy.

Labour Market

A1.2 In 2020 the estimated population for the Built-Up Urban Area (BUA) of Great Torrington was approximately 6,000¹, making it the fourth smallest town in Devon. Its population has increased by 6% between 2011 and 2020. This rate of growth is in line with the average population growth rate for 25 towns in Devon² and the national average³.

A1.3 Between 2011 and 2020, the population of Great Torrington aged 65 and above grew by 26%, whilst the working aged population (those aged 16 to 64) grew by 1%, meaning that the population of Great Torrington is growing older. Whilst changes in the working aged population of Great Torrington align with the Devon Towns benchmark, the population aged 65 and above has grown at a faster rate than the Devon Towns benchmark.

Figure 0:1 Population growth in Great Torrington and comparators, 2011- 2020



Source: ONS Population estimates

A1.4 The old age dependency ratio measures the proportion of those aged over 65 to the working aged population. The old age dependency ratio in Great Torrington is 423, meaning that for

¹ ONS (2019). Population estimates – small area based on single year of age – England and Wales.

² These are all towns in Devon with an estimated population greater than 5,000 in 2020. Cranbrook has been excluded as a comparator area as a new town will see significant growth above what will be seen in established towns.

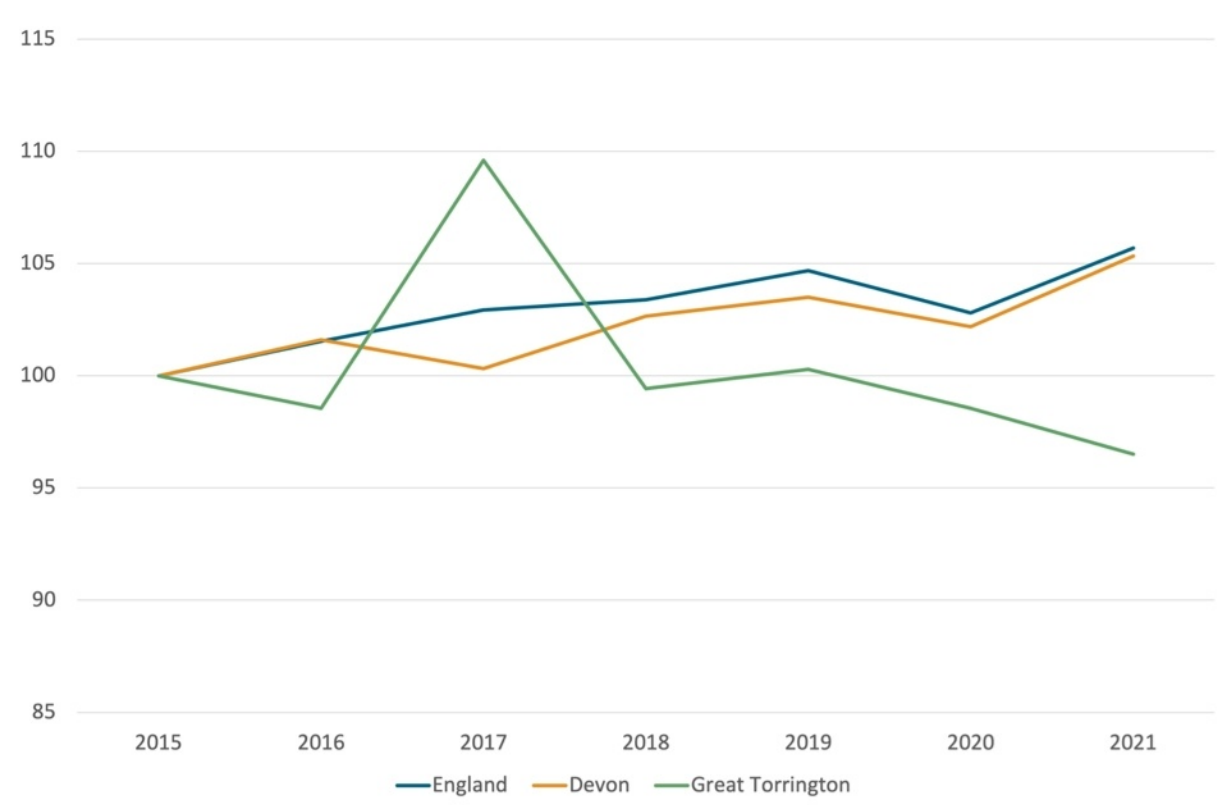
³ ONS (2021). Population estimates – local authority based on single year of age. – England and Wales.

every 1,000 working aged people there are 423 people aged 65 and over. The Devon Towns average old age dependency ratio is 478.

Economic activity

A1.5 There were 1,600 people in employment in Great Torrington in 2021⁴. The largest employers are in the Manufacturing, Wholesale & Retail Trade, Human Health & Social Work, and Education sectors. Figure 1.2 shows how employment within Great Torrington has changed since 2015, compared with Devon and England.

Figure 0:2 Indexed employment change in Great Torrington and comparators, 2015 – 2021 (100=2015)



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, (2023).

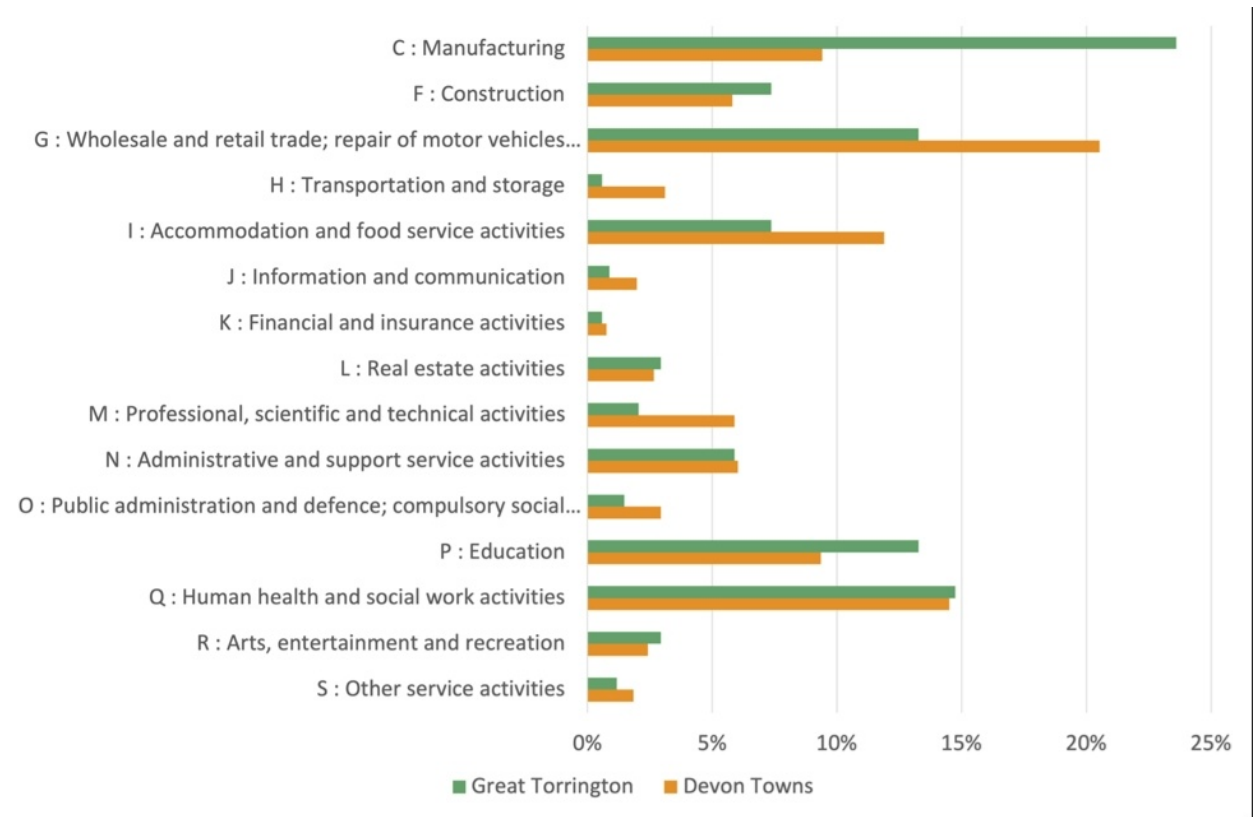
A1.6 Employment in Great Torrington has fallen overall since 2015, having experienced year on year decline since 2019. By comparison, employment in England and Devon has increased since 2015, albeit with a slight decrease during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Employment in Great Torrington peaked in 2017, largely driven by increased employment in the Manufacturing sector which subsequently fell again in 2018.

A1.7 Figure 1.3 shows the sectoral composition of employment in Great Torrington and the Devon Towns benchmark in 2020. Great Torrington has a significantly higher than average employment in Manufacturing and relatively high employment in Construction and Education. This is likely apportioned to Simon Plastics, the Dartington Crystal factory and other firms located at the Hatchmoor Industrial Estate. There is lower than average employment in

⁴ BRES (2023).

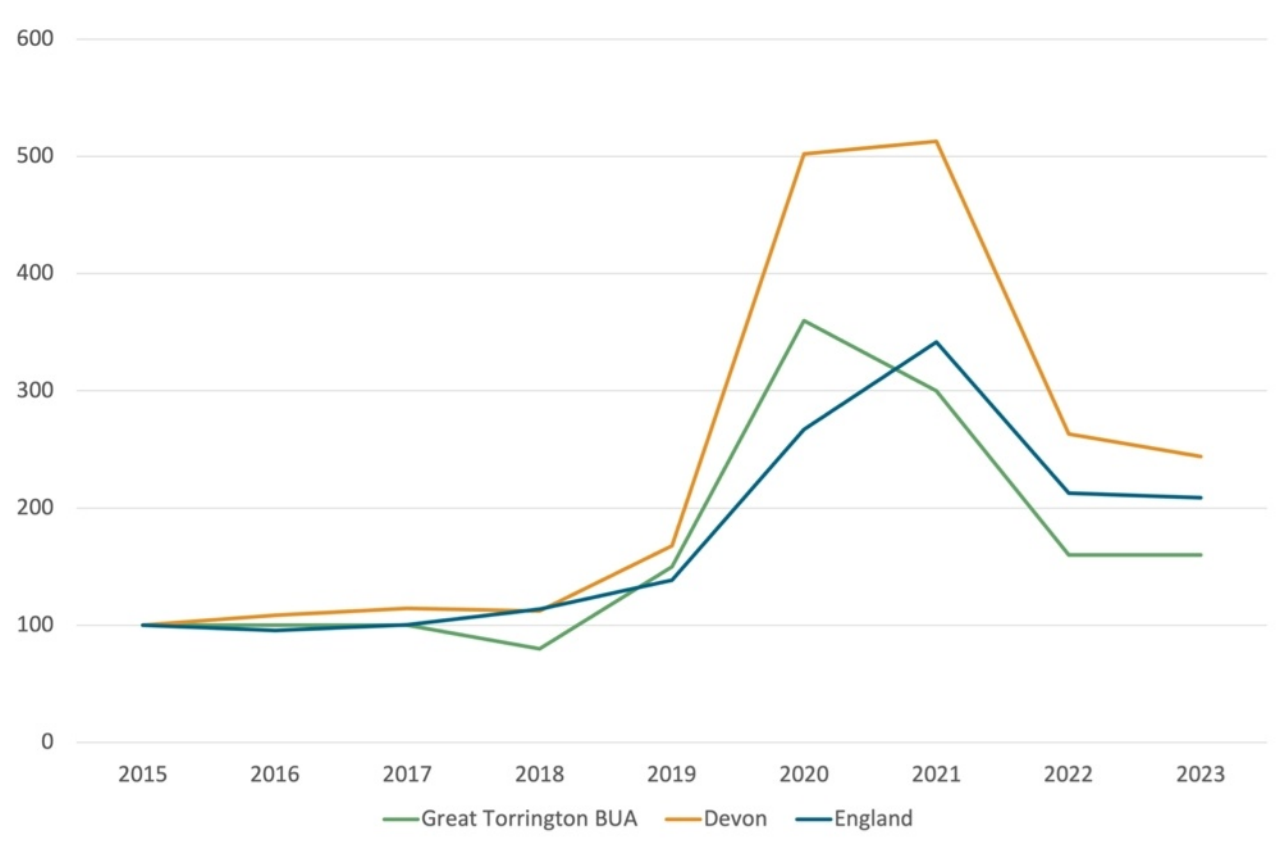
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Accommodation & Food Service activities, and Professional, Scientific and technical activities.

Figure 0:3 Composition of employment in Great Torrington and Devon Towns, 2020



Source: Business register and Employment Survey, (2023)

A1.8 The claimant count is a measure of the number people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed. In April 2023, there were approximately 80 claimants residing in Great Torrington. The claimant count for Great Torrington has broadly followed a similar trend to that of England between April 2015 and April 2023, with large increases in claimants during the Covid-19 pandemic. The claimant count in Great Torrington recovered faster from the Covid-19 pandemic than Devon and England benchmarks. Although, the number of claimants in Great Torrington remained higher in April 2023 compared with pre- pandemic levels.

Figure 0:4 Indexed claimant count, April 2015 - April 2023. (2015=100).

Source: ONS Claimant Count, 2023

A1.9 Commuting data from Census 2011⁵ reveals that Great Torrington is a net out commuting town, with 1,700 people commuting into the town for work and 2,200 people commuting out. Out commuting is largely directed to Bideford and Barnstaple.

Deprivation and vulnerability to decline

A1.10 The English Indices of Deprivation ranks each Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in the country by seven domains of deprivation, including:

- Income – the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income
- Employment – the proportion of the working age population in an area involuntarily excluded from the labour market, such as those who would like to work but are unable to do so due to unemployment, sickness, disability or caring responsibilities.
- Education, Skills and Training – the lack of attainment of skills in the local population
- Health, Deprivation and Disability – the risk of premature death and impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health.
- Crime – the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level
- Barriers to Housing and Services – the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services, including both geographical and affordability barriers.

⁵ Census (2011). WF01BEW - Location of usual residence and place of work (OA level). Please note the

- Living Environment –the quality of the local environment using measures such as the quality of housing, air quality and road traffic accidents.

A1.11 There are four LSOAs which comprise Great Torrington, as shown below.

Figure 0:5 Map of LSOAs comprising Great Torrington



Source: QGIS - HJA analysis

A1.12 For each domain of deprivation, LSOAs are scored by decile where a decile of 1 places the LSOA in the 10% most deprived in England. Figure 0:6 sets out the deciles that the LSOAs in Great Torrington are scored for each domain of deprivation.

Figure 0:6 Deprivation in Great Torrington

Deprivation Domain	Decile of Torridge 006A	Decile of Torridge 006B	Decile of Torridge 006C	Decile of Torridge 006D
Income	5	4	8	3
Employment	6	4	6	3
Education, Skills and Training	4	4	5	3

Deprivation Domain	Decile of Torrridge 006A	Decile of Torrridge 006B	Decile of Torrridge 006C	Decile of Torrridge 006D
Health, Deprivation and Disability	6	5	7	4
Crime	8	7	10	9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6	10	6	6
Living Environment	7	3	10	6

Source: English Indices of Deprivation (2019)

- A1.13 Great Torrington has higher than average deprivation levels in the domains of Income, Employment, and Education, Skills and Training, but has low deprivation levels in Crime and Living Environment domains.
- A1.14 Together these seven domains of deprivation form the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). According to the IMD, Great Torrington was the 12th most deprived of 25 towns in Devon in 2019⁶.
- A1.15 The net annual income (after housing costs) of the four LSOAs that comprise Great Torrington was £26,800 in 2020⁷. However, in surrounding areas, net annual income after housing is generally higher, particularly in rural areas south of the town where average income after housing was £30,000 in 2020. By comparison, net annual income after housing costs is £30,600 in the South West region. This below average income is likely a reflection of the relative quality of jobs available in the Great Torrington area.
- A1.16 In November 2021, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, the retail vacancy rate in Great Torrington was 5.7% which is low compared with many other towns in Devon and compared to the Great Britain average of 14.5%.
- A1.17 The Great Torrington South Ward (Well Street and Castle Hill area) is ranked the highest in Great Torrington in the Devon County Council Vulnerability Index from May 2021, and is ranked the 36th highest Ward in Devon. This means it was particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of Covid-19 and other large economic shocks.
- A1.18 Great Torrington secondary school was rated “good” at the last OFSTED inspection in July 2022.

⁶ English Indices of Deprivation (2019).

⁷ ONS (2023). Income estimates for small areas, England & Wales, financial year ending 2020

Policy Review

North Devon and Torrridge Local Plan 2011 – 2031

5.2 The North Devon and Torrridge Local Plan⁸ outlines the following plan for Great Torrington:

Great Torrington will become increasingly self contained, seeking to maintain its role as an important local service and employment centre. It is proposed that this will be achieved by modest and balanced housing and employment growth focused on meeting the needs of Great Torrington residents.

A1.19 Any future population and housing growth is anticipated to be modest, due to geographical constraints limiting potential development sites in the area.

A1.20 Additional employment land is allocated to the east of Hatchmoor Industrial Estate and there is a commitment to the pursuit of regeneration opportunities at underutilised sites, including the Former Creamery. Given the complexities around achieving a viable plan for the Former Creamery site, the Local Plan commits to a flexible approach to ensuring its development.

A1.21 The overall strategy for Great Torrington is to affirm the settlement's role as a local service centre by sustaining economic growth and promoting tourism and leisure development within the town.

A1.22 In 2023, Torrridge District Council published a Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement⁹ which set out the need for a greater supply of houses delivered across the district than that established in the Local Plan. As a result of this statement, the number of houses delivered in Great Torrington across the Plan period is likely to be considerably higher than the 632 dwellings set out in the Local Plan. The exact number of additional dwellings required is yet to be published.

Great Torrington Neighbourhood Plan 2018 -2031

A1.23 The Neighbourhood Plan¹⁰, which was formally adopted in 2021, sets out the following vision for Great Torrington in 2031:

A friendly, welcoming town that serves the local population, rural surroundings and visitors. A thriving neighbourhood where - regardless of age, health or status - people have access to suitable housing, employment and community facilities. The stability and cohesion that are central to the character of the town have been maintained by making it attractive and safe for all ages. Innovative approaches to the challenges of the 21st century are encouraged where they enhance the highly valued natural setting. Appropriate development is supported where it is matched by the provision of relevant infrastructure.

The natural environment is managed for the benefit of residents and visitors; creating a town that is known for its natural beauty and accessible open spaces for all to enjoy.

Great Torrington will be a sustainable settlement in which to live, with sufficient and appropriate housing to meet local needs.

⁸ North Devon District Council & Torrridge District Council (2018). North Devon and Torrridge Local Plan 2011-2031.

⁹ North Devon District Council & Torrridge District Council (2023). Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement.

¹⁰ Great Torrington Town Council (2021). Great Torrington Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2031.

Transport and Infrastructure. Strong and flexible connections between the town centre and its residential surroundings are established, achieving a high level of social and economic integration. Traffic management ensures minimal congestion and adequate parking, and pedestrian infrastructure ensures accessibility for all users. Great Torrington will be an environmentally-friendly neighbourhood.

The value of community is reflected in the availability of facilities for people of all ages, including sport and recreational facilities and opportunities for artistic and creative engagement.

The economic strength of the town continues to derive from its role as an important local centre. Employment opportunities are diverse and plentiful.

A1.24 The following Neighbourhood Plan policies contribute to urban renewal in Great Torrington:

- Policy EM1 for employment development is supportive of proposals for development on brownfield land , particularly of realistic proposals for the Former Creamery.
- Policy ENV5 supports proposals which incorporate renewable energy generation
- Policy T2 for pedestrians and cyclists is supportive of proposals for a designated cycle route linking the Tarka Trail to the town centre
- Policy CF1 for community facilities is supportive of proposals providing new or enhanced sport and recreational facilities

A1.25 The plan sets out the following objectives for employment in Great Torrington:

- existing employment sites kept in employment use;
- the vitality of Great Torrington's town centre is protected;
- sustainable green tourism activities are encouraged; and
- new employers are attracted, increasing local jobs.

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