

Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Opinion

Tavistock Town Council

March 2024

Quality information

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1. Purpose of this SEA Screening Opinion

- 1.1 This SEA Screening Opinion has been prepared by AECOM in relation to the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Screening Opinion is to set out an opinion in relation to whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process is required to accompany the development of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan. The Screening Opinion has been provided to the statutory consultation bodies for SEA (Historic England, the Environment Agency, and Natural England) for their opinion. Given the partial overlap with Dartmoor National Park, the Screening Opinion has also been released to the Dartmoor National Park Authority for their comment.
- 1.3 SEA is a systematic process undertaken to evaluate the likely significant environmental effects of plans. The requirement for SEA in England was introduced in 2004 through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('The SEA Regulations')¹, which transposed the European SEA Directive (2001/42/EC).
- 1.4 One of the 'Basic Conditions' that a Neighbourhood Plan is tested against is whether the making of the Neighbourhood Plan is compatible with European Union obligations, including obligations under the SEA Directive². Neighbourhood Plans only require SEA where they are likely to lead to significant environmental effects. To decide whether a proposed Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, it should be screened against the criteria set out in Annex 2 of the SEA Directive.
- 1.5 Where it is determined that the Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require SEA), a statement of reasons for this determination should be prepared and published for consultation with the statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Historic England). Where a Neighbourhood Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment, an SEA process must be carried out.
- 1.6 This Screening Opinion therefore provides a view as to whether the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is likely to lead to significant environment effects, and as such requires an SEA process. In this context it presents the following:
 - Details and context of the Neighbourhood Plan, including its scope and likely content, its relationship with the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan, and the key environmental constraints in the vicinity of the neighbourhood area (**Chapter 2**).
 - A discussion of the potential significant environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan and their significance (**Chapter 3**); and

¹ Legislation.gov.uk (2004): [The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

² The UK left the EU on 31st January 2020. Under the UK-EU withdrawal agreement, a transition period ended on 31st December 2020, during which time all EU law continued to apply to the UK. During the transition period the UK needed to continue following domestic law that implements EU law, or directly applicable EU law that is given effect through the EUWA 2018. Beyond the transition period, the SEA Regulations, which previously implemented the requirements of the SEA Directive in England, will continue to apply as before unless and until new legislation is introduced.

- A summary of the screening opinion, including the overall conclusions as to whether an SEA is required or not (**Chapter 4**).

1.7 The statutory environmental bodies for SEA (and the Dartmoor National Park Authority) are subsequently invited to provide their comments.

Figure 1.1: The Tavistock neighbourhood area



2. Context for the Neighbourhood Plan and area

Key information relating to the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Key information relating to the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is presented in **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1: Key information relating to the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan

Name of qualifying body	Tavistock Town Council
Title of the Neighbourhood Plan	Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan
Area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan	The neighbourhood area covers the civil parish of Tavistock. Whilst the neighbourhood area largely sits within the West Devon Borough Council local authority area, a small area is also within the Dartmoor National Park Authority area (towards the north eastern boundary). The boundary of the neighbourhood area, which aligns with the civil parish of Tavistock, is presented in Figure 1.1 .
Timescale	The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period 2022 to 2034. This is aligned with the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan.
Purpose, aims and objectives	<p>The vision for the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is as follows:</p> <p><i>“In 2034 Tavistock is a sustainable, thriving market town that benefits from and safeguards its natural and built historic environment, riverside setting, green spaces, and surrounding moorland landscape and has responded positively to the challenges posed by our changing climate.</i></p> <p><i>“Tavistock retains its renowned town centre and markets which showcase a diverse range of sustainable businesses to serve the community and maintains high-quality community facilities and infrastructure that promote the health and well-being of residents.</i></p> <p><i>“Tavistock has a variety of sustainable and accessible homes designed to meet the needs of a balanced community, developed with respect for the character and heritage of the town.</i></p> <p><i>“Travel within and around the town is convenient by healthy and sustainable means accessible to all and the town is well-connected to Plymouth and other nearby communities by public transport.</i></p> <p><i>Parks, allotments, and other green spaces in Tavistock are protected and maintained to promote active outdoor pursuits, mitigate the effects of climate change and increase biodiversity.”</i></p> <p>To help implement this vision, twelve aims and associated objectives have been identified. The twelve aims are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New development takes place in appropriate locations, is well-designed, provides social benefit, and responds positively to the challenges of climate change. 2. New housing meets the identified needs of the community, is well-designed, provides social benefit, delivers homes that are affordable to local people and response positively to the challenges of climate change.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Tavistock's Town Centre remains the commercial and social heart of Tavistock and sustainable neighbourhood retail sites that meet local needs are supported. 4. Development that is sustainable and recognises the importance of Tavistock's unique market town heritage and place within a working rural community is promoted. 5. Community facilities across the parish are maintained and enhanced and new community facilities are supported where they increase the quality of life in the parish and encourage positive economic activity. 6. Planning decisions enhance and do not adversely impact community facilities. 7. Development in Tavistock enhances biodiversity and protects the environment, green space, and the landscape attractiveness of the town. 8. Buildings, structures, and streetscapes that contribute to the heritage and history of the parish are safeguarded for the future and protected from harm. 9. The character of the heritage and history environment in the two Conservation Areas is enhanced for the benefit of the present and future generations. 10. Getting around Tavistock on foot, by bicycle or using mobility aids / vehicles is an attractive and convenient option. 11. Tavistock has good facilities for public and shared transport connecting to nearby villages and towns; and 12. Negative impacts of transport, including traffic congestion and pollution, are minimized.
Neighbourhood Plan contact	Ursula Mann, Tavistock Town Councillor ursula.mann@tavistock.gov.uk

Further context for the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan and area, including environmental constraints

2.2 Further context for the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan, including the key environmental constraints in the neighbourhood area, is presented below.

Local plan context for the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan

2.3 The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in the context of the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014 – 2034 (hereafter referred to as “the JLP”)³. Within Strategic Objective SO1: Delivering the spatial strategy, Tavistock is identified as a “main town” within the “Thriving Towns and Villages Policy Area”. This is due to the settlement’s role as a sustainable service centre, providing a range of facilities and services which help meet the needs of local residents and wider rural communities.

2.4 With respect to housing and employment growth within the neighbourhood area, policies TTV16: Callington Road, Tavistock; TTV17: Plymouth Road, Tavistock; and TTV19: Other site allocations in Tavistock provide for 1,203 new homes across the JLP period. Since the adoption of the JLP, 470 new homes have been completed, with a further 104 homes currently under construction. Additionally, 687 homes have been granted planning permission and are awaiting construction. In light of this, a total of 1,261 homes have been completed or have permission within the neighbourhood area, meeting (and slightly exceeding) local needs. Reflecting this, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating any sites for additional housing.

2.5 In addition, it is noted that the JLP also provides for 18,600sqm employment land in Tavistock through policies TTV16: Callington Road, Tavistock; TTV17: Plymouth Road, Tavistock; TTV18: Pixon Lane Employment Area, Tavistock; and TTV19: Other site allocations in Tavistock. The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan supports proposals to enhance the economic vitality of the neighbourhood area but does not allocate any specific sites for employment uses beyond those which are included in the JLP.

Key components of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan

2.6 The vision and objectives of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan are presented in **Table 2.1** above.

2.7 In terms of key land use policies which should be considered for their potential for significant environmental effects, the Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for housing or employment uses. This is due to the housing need having been met through JLP allocations.

2.8 The Neighbourhood Plan is also unlikely to lead to any significant changes of land use in the parish. This is due to the number of significant environmental constraints within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area – including (but not limited to): Dartmoor National Park, Tamar Valley National Landscape (previously Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB), European biodiversity

³ Plymouth.gov.uk (2019): [Adopted Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan](#)

designations, national biodiversity designations, and historic conservation areas and heritage assets.

2.9 The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan instead seeks to shape development which may come forward during the plan period by supporting development which meets a series of criteria. This includes relating to housing type and tenure, and in terms of design (supported by a separate design codes and guidelines document), the protection and enhancement of important community facilities and services, supporting economic vitality and opportunities for town centre regeneration, the designation of green spaces, protecting the natural and built environment of the neighbourhood area, and improving accessibility and connectivity.

2.10 In this respect the Neighbourhood Plan is strongly design led. Policy provisions focus on informing and influencing the design of new development areas coming forward in the neighbourhood area. This includes any allocations within the JLP or any speculative applications which may come forward during the plan period.

Environmental constraints present within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area

2.11 A key determinant of whether effects are likely to be significant is the sensitivity of the asset affected. In this context, the more environmentally sensitive a location, the more likely it is that potential environmental effects from a plan will be significant.

2.12 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)⁴ provides guidance on this topic through providing a list of sites and areas which should be deemed as 'sensitive areas' for the purposes of environmental assessment⁵. These comprise:

- European sites.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- National Parks.
- National Landscapes.
- World Heritage Sites (WHS); and
- Scheduled Monuments.

2.13 In the context of the PPG, there are 15 sensitive areas within or adjacent to the neighbourhood area.

2.14 The European sites and the SSSIs are as follows:

- The Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 3km south-west of the neighbourhood area. In total, the designation is approximately 6,387 hectares in size. It is characterised by marine areas and sea inlets (50% of the designated area); tidal rivers, estuaries, mud flats, sand flats and lagoons (including saltwork basins) (40% of the designated area); salt marshes, salt pastures and salt steppes (5% of the designated area); coastal sand dunes, sand beaches and machair (2%

⁴ DLUHC & MHCLG (2023): [Planning practice guidance](#)

⁵ i.e., [those sites and areas that should be considered 'sensitive'](#) for the purposes of screening projects for Environmental Impact Assessment

of the designated area); and shingle, sea cliffs and islets (3% of the designated area)⁶.

- The South Dartmoor Woods SAC is approximately 4.2km east of the neighbourhood area boundary. The designated area covers approximately 2,159 hectares in total. The designation is characterised by inland water bodies (standing water and running water) (2% of designated area); bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens (2% of the designated area); heath, scrub, maquis and garrigue and phygrana (17% of the designated area); dry grassland and steppes (9% of the designated area); broad-leaved deciduous woodland (67% of designated area); and coniferous woodland (3% of designated area)⁷.
- The Dartmoor SAC is positioned approximately 6.2km north-east of the neighbourhood area. The area included under this designation totals approximately 23,159 hectares. It is characterised by inland water bodies (standing water and running water) (1% of the designated area); bogs, marshes, water fringed vegetation and fens (42% of the designated area); heath, scrub, maquis and garrigue and phygrana (40% of the designated area); humid grassland and mesophile grassland (12% of the designated area); improved grassland (2% of the designated area); broad-leaved deciduous woodland (1% of the designated area); and inland rocks, screes, sands, and permanent snow and ice (2% of the designated area)⁸.
- The Tamar Estuaries Complex Special Protection Area (SPA) is located approximately 7.1km south of the neighbourhood area. It comprises several estuaries bordering Devon and Cornwall on the south coast of England – and is formed of tidal rivers, mud flats, sand flats and lagoons (including saltwork basins) (80% of the designated area); salt marshes, salt pastures and salt steppes (15% of the designated area); and bogs, marshes, water fringes vegetation and fens (5% of the designated area). These habitats support wintering and passage waterfowl^{9,10}.
- The Pitt's Cleeve Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is within the neighbourhood area, located in the north-eastern extent. According to the most recent condition survey, 100% of the designation is in favourable condition¹¹.
- The Whitchurch Down SSSI is located approximately 900m east of the neighbourhood area. The most recent condition survey indicates that 100% of the designation is in favourable condition¹².
- The Grenofen Wood and West Down SSSI is approximately 1.5km south of the neighbourhood area. According to the most recent condition survey, 100% of the designation is in favourable condition¹³.

⁶ JNCC (2015): [Plymouth Sound and Estuaries Designated Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\)](#)

⁷ JNCC (2015): [South Dartmoor Woods Designated Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\)](#)

⁸ JNCC (2015): [Dartmoor Designated Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\)](#)

⁹ Natural England (2014): [European Site Conservation Objectives for Tamar Estuaries Complex SPA \(UK9010141\)](#)

¹⁰ JNCC (2015): [Natura 2000 Standard Data Form for the Tamar Estuaries Complex Special Protection Area \(SPA\)](#)

¹¹ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Pitt's Cleeve SSSI](#)

¹² Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Whitchurch Down SSSI](#)

¹³ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Grenofen Wood and West Down SSSI](#)

- The Merrivale SSSI is approximately 1.8km east of the neighbourhood area. According to the most recent condition survey, 100% of the site is within favourable condition¹⁴.
- The Tamar – Tavy Estuary SSSI is located approximately 2.8km south-west of the neighbourhood area. The latest condition survey undertaken for the designation indicates the majority of the designation (approximately 97%) is within favourable condition; the remaining approximate 3% is in unfavourable – recovering condition¹⁵.
- The Devon United Mine SSSI is located outside of the neighbourhood area, approximately 3km to the north-east. The latest condition survey undertaken for the site is not favourable – indicating approximately 9.2% of the site has been partially destroyed, and the remaining approximate 90.8% of the site is in unfavourable – declining condition¹⁶.
- The Brent Tow SSSI is located outside of the neighbourhood area, approximately 3.1km to the north. According to the most recent condition survey, 100% of the neighbourhood area is in favourable condition¹⁷.
- South Brentor Quarry SSSI is outside of the neighbourhood area, located approximately 3.3km from the neighbourhood area boundary in a northern direction. 100% of the designation is in favourable condition according to the latest condition survey¹⁸.
- The Devon Great Consols SSSI is located approximately 3.5km from the neighbourhood area boundary to the east. It is in 100% favourable condition based on the latest condition survey¹⁹.
- The Cholwell Brook SSSI is located approximately 3.6km north-east of the neighbourhood area. According to the latest condition assessment, the site is in 100% favourable condition²⁰.
- The Sampford Spiney SSSI is located approximately 4.4km east of the neighbourhood area. According to the latest condition assessment, approximately 89.6% of the site is in favourable condition. The remaining approximate 10.4% is in unfavourable – recovering condition²¹.

2.15 Dartmoor National Park was designated in 1951 and has a variety of special qualities, including (but not limited to): upland moors, sheltered valleys, enclosed farmland, a varied geology and traditional farming practices. This landscape is threatened by many forces of change, including the effects of new development, climate change and biodiversity decline. Dartmoor National Park is partially within the north eastern section of the neighbourhood area and extends outside of the boundary (to the north and to the east).

2.16 The southern extent of the neighbourhood area partially sits within the Tamar Valley National Landscape. Designated in 1995, the Tamar Valley National Landscape is nationally important for its rare valley and water landscape, the

¹⁴ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Merrivale SSSI](#)

¹⁵ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Tamar - Tavy Estuary SSSI](#)

¹⁶ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Devon United Mine SSSI](#)

¹⁷ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Brent Tor SSSI](#)

¹⁸ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [South Brentor Quarry SSSI](#)

¹⁹ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Devon Great Consols SSSI](#)

²⁰ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Cholwell Brook SSSI](#)

²¹ Natural England Designated Sites Viewer (2024): [Sampford Spiney SSSI](#)

high landscape quality which is of artistic and public appeal, the unique wildlife resource, and the heritage features present²².

2.17 The Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape WHS is split into ten distinct areas – the section that overlaps with the neighbourhood area is the Tamar Valley Mining District With Tavistock. The WHS is designated for its cultural significance – much of the landscape of Cornwall and West Devon was transformed during the 18th and 19th centuries as a result of copper and tin mining. The remains of the mining industry are a testimony to the contribution Cornwall and West Devon made to the Industrial Revolution in the United Kingdom, and the influence the area had on mining practices across the world²³.

2.18 There are three scheduled monuments within the neighbourhood area: Inscribed stones in vicarage garden (Historic England List Entry number: 1003871)²⁴, Tavistock Abbey (Historic England List Entry number: 1020401)²⁵, and Trendle earthwork NE of Kelly College (Historic England List Entry number: 1002598)²⁶. It is noted that the Inscribed stones in vicarage garden, and Tavistock Abbey scheduled monuments are on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register 2023 for South West England²⁷.

2.19 There are an additional two scheduled monuments within proximity to the neighbourhood area. Specifically, Green Lane Cross: a wayside cross at the north west end of Whitchurch Down (Historic England List Entry number: 1008925)²⁸ is approximately 20m east of the neighbourhood area, and Pixies’ Cross: a wayside cross and associated earthwork enclosure on Whitchurch Down (Historic England List Entry number: 1008926)²⁹ is approximately 590m east of the neighbourhood area.

2.20 Other key environmental assets (i.e., those which are not defined as ‘sensitive areas’ by the PPG), within the neighbourhood area include:

- 176 listed buildings: five Grade I listed, four Grade II* listed, and 167 Grade II listed. The Former Guildhall, Police Station, attached railings and boundary walls (Historic England List Entry number: 1309358)³⁰ is on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register 2023 for South West England.
- Three conservation areas: Tavistock (designated in 2010)³¹, Tavistock to Bere Alston Railway (designated in 1991)³², and Whitchurch (designated in 1993)³³.
- Areas of priority habitats contributing to local ecological networks, including lowland meadows, ancient woodland, and deciduous woodland.
- Local designations, including the Tavistock Railway County Geological Site (CGS), the St John’s Avenue Carpark CGS, Wallbrook County Wildlife Site

²² National Landscapes Association (2023): [Tamar Valley National Landscape](#)

²³ Historic England (2010): [Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site](#)

²⁴ Historic England (2024): [Inscribed stones in vicarage garden](#)

²⁵ Historic England (2024): [Tavistock Abbey](#)

²⁶ Historic England (2024): [Trendle earthwork NE of Kelly College](#)

²⁷ Historic England (2023): [Heritage at Risk South West Register 2023](#)

²⁸ Historic England (2024): [Green Lane Cross: a wayside cross at the north west of Whitchurch Down](#)

²⁹ Historic England (2024): [Pixies’ Cross: a wayside cross and associated earthwork enclosure on Whitchurch Down](#)

³⁰ Historic England (2024): [Former Guildhall, Police Station, attached railings and boundary walls](#)

³¹ West Devon Borough Council (2024): [Tavistock Conservation Area](#)

³² West Devon Borough Council (2024): [Tavistock to Bere Alston Railway Conservation Area](#)

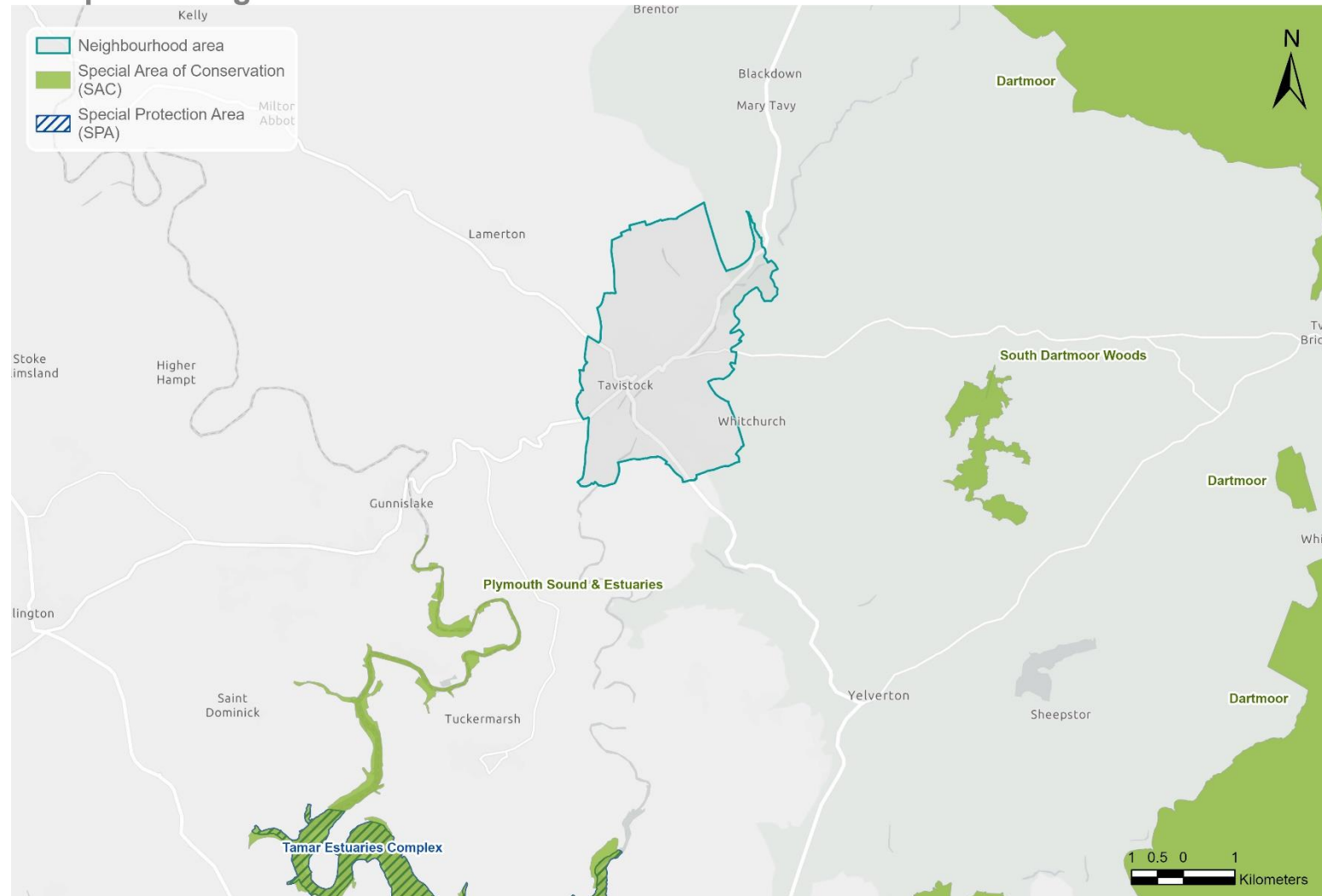
³³ West Devon Borough Council (2024): [Whitchurch Conservation Area](#)

(CWS), Brook Hill Marsh CWS, the Tavistock Viaduct Walk Local Nature Reserve (LNR), and tree preservation orders (TPOs).

2.21 The locations of these sensitivities are shown in **Figure 2.1** to **Figure 2.7**.

Figure 2.1: SACs and SPAs in proximity to the neighbourhood area

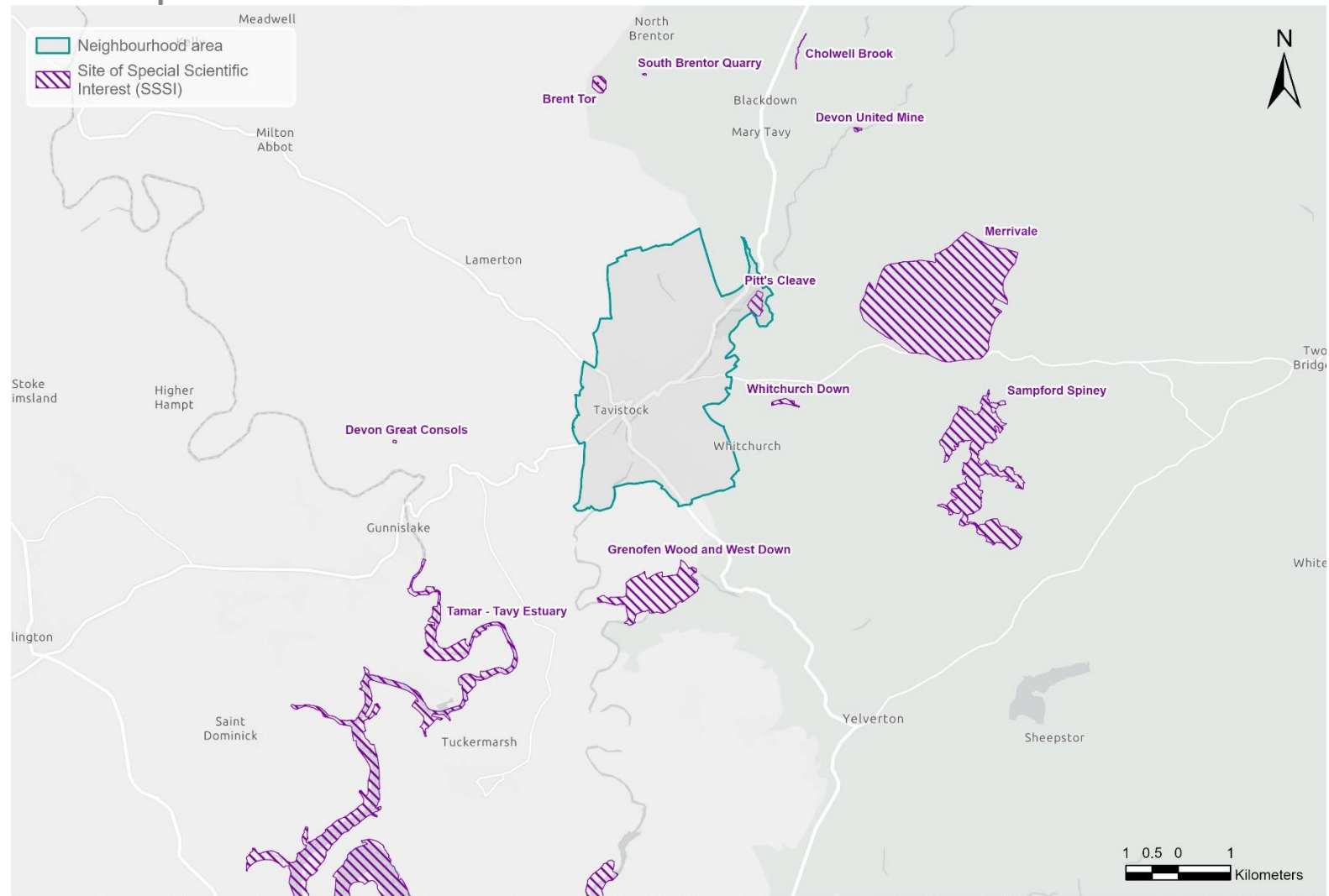
European designated sites



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Figure 2.2: SSSIs within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area

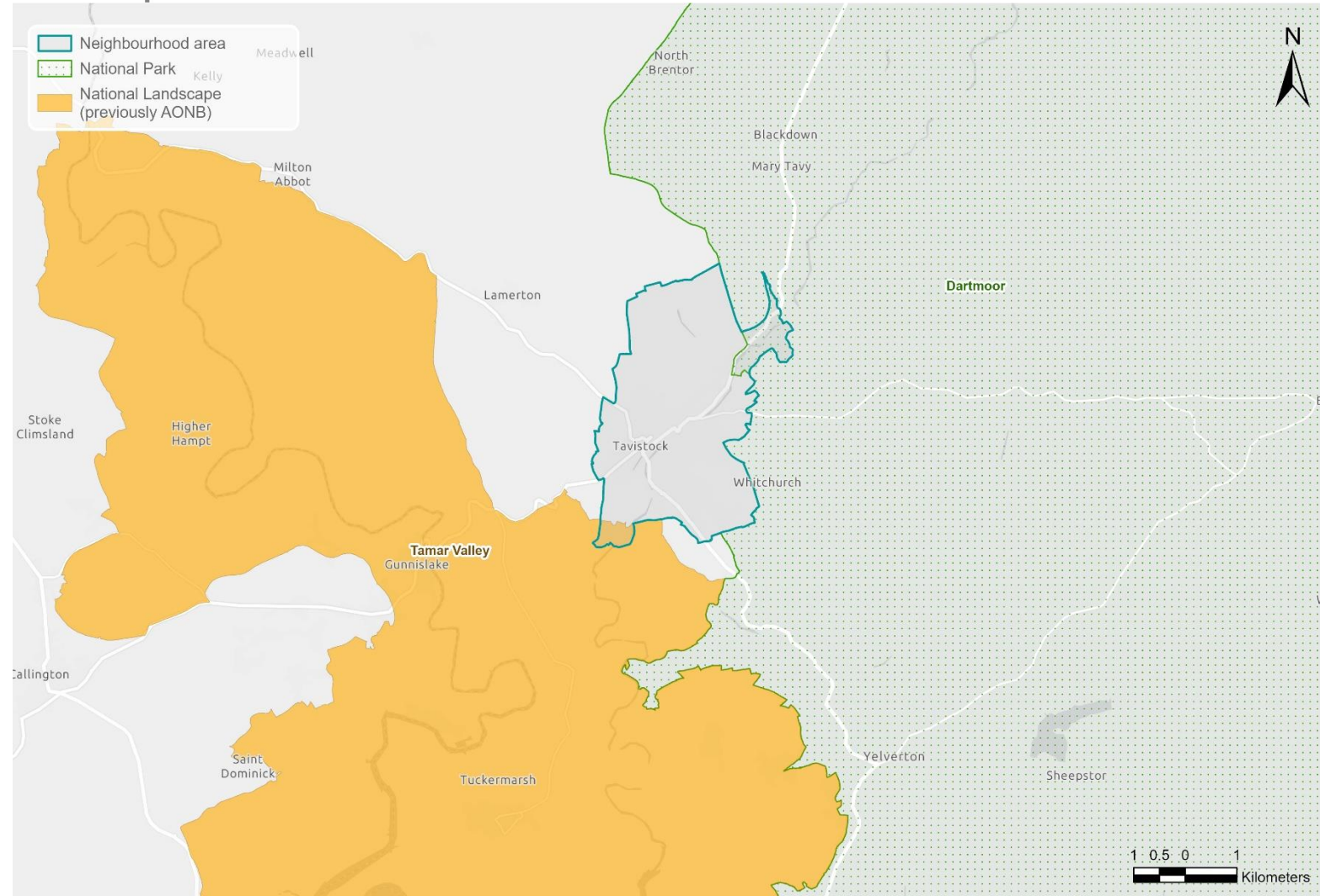
Sites of Special Scientific Interest



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Figure 2.3: Landscape designations within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area

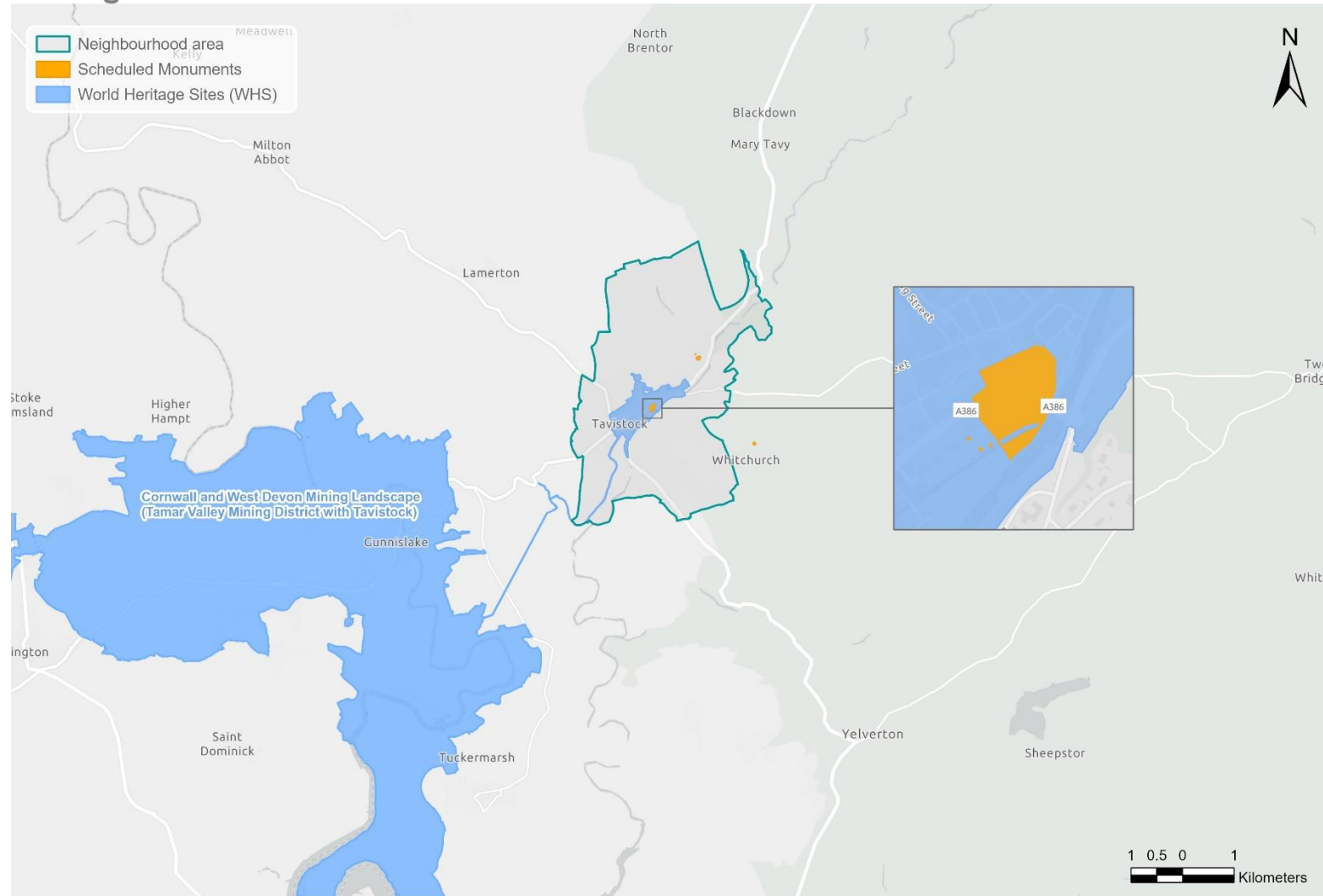
Landscape



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Figure 2.4: WHS and Scheduled monuments within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area

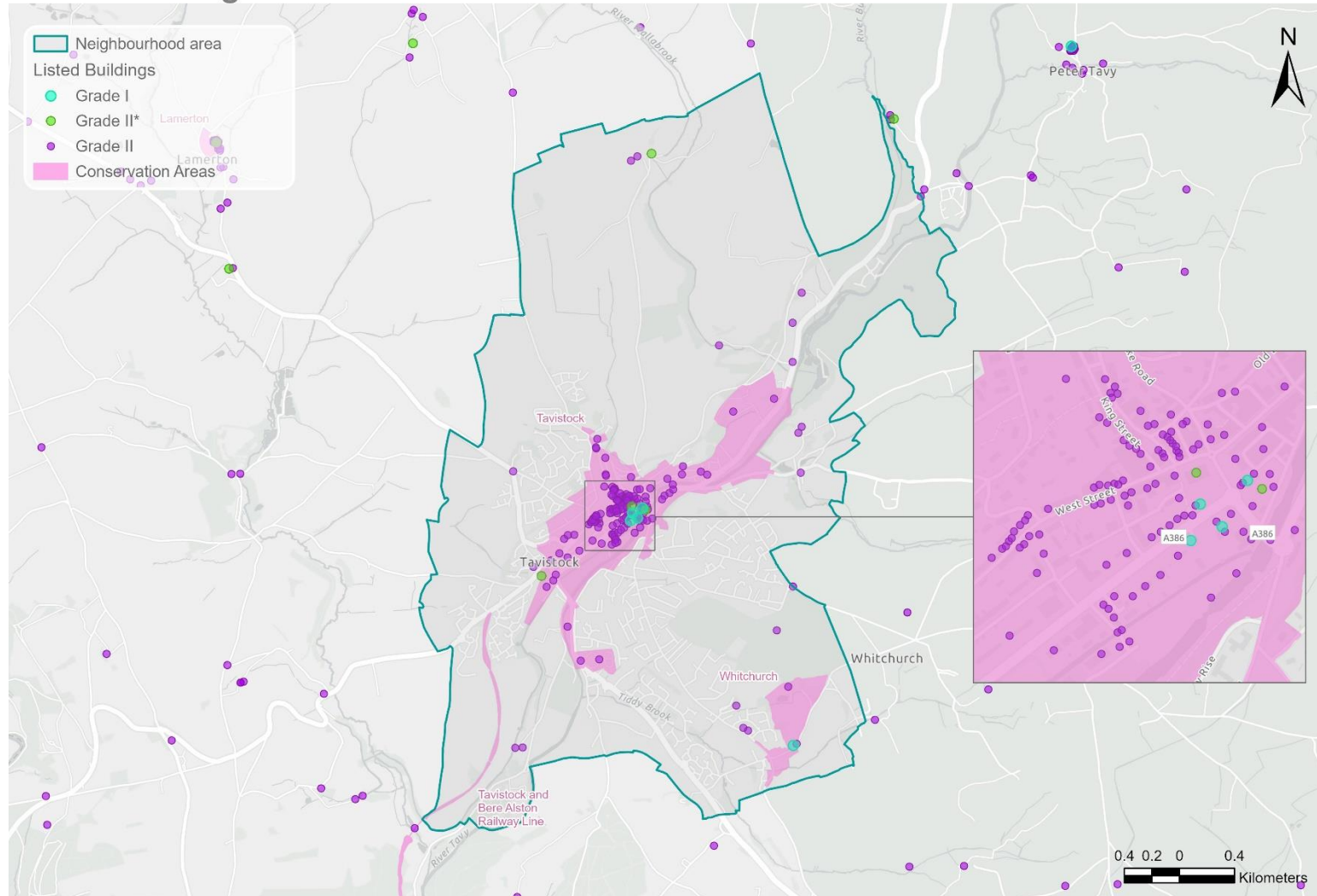
Heritage



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Figure 2.5: Listed buildings and conservation areas within the neighbourhood area

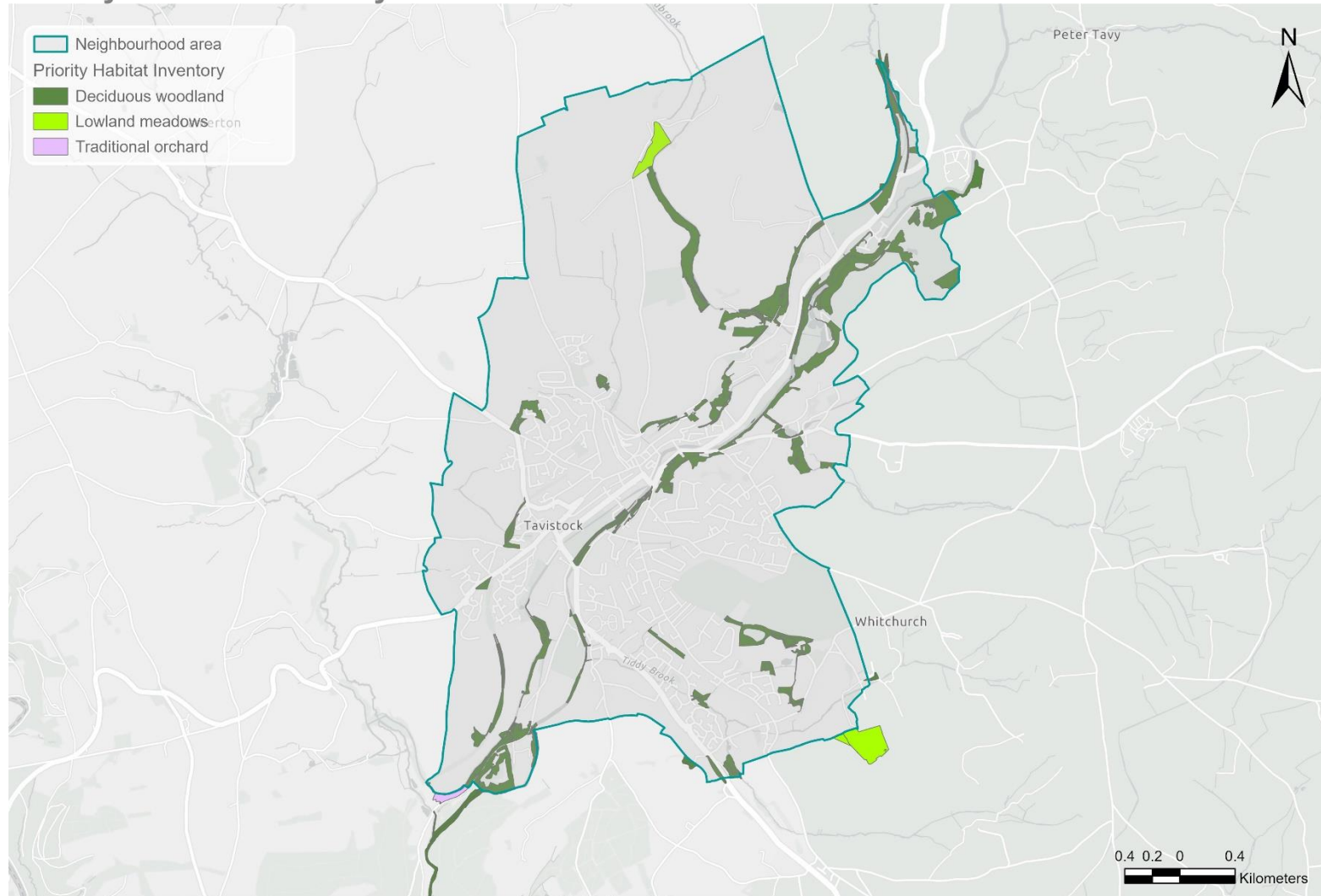
Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas



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Figure 2.6: Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat within the neighbourhood area

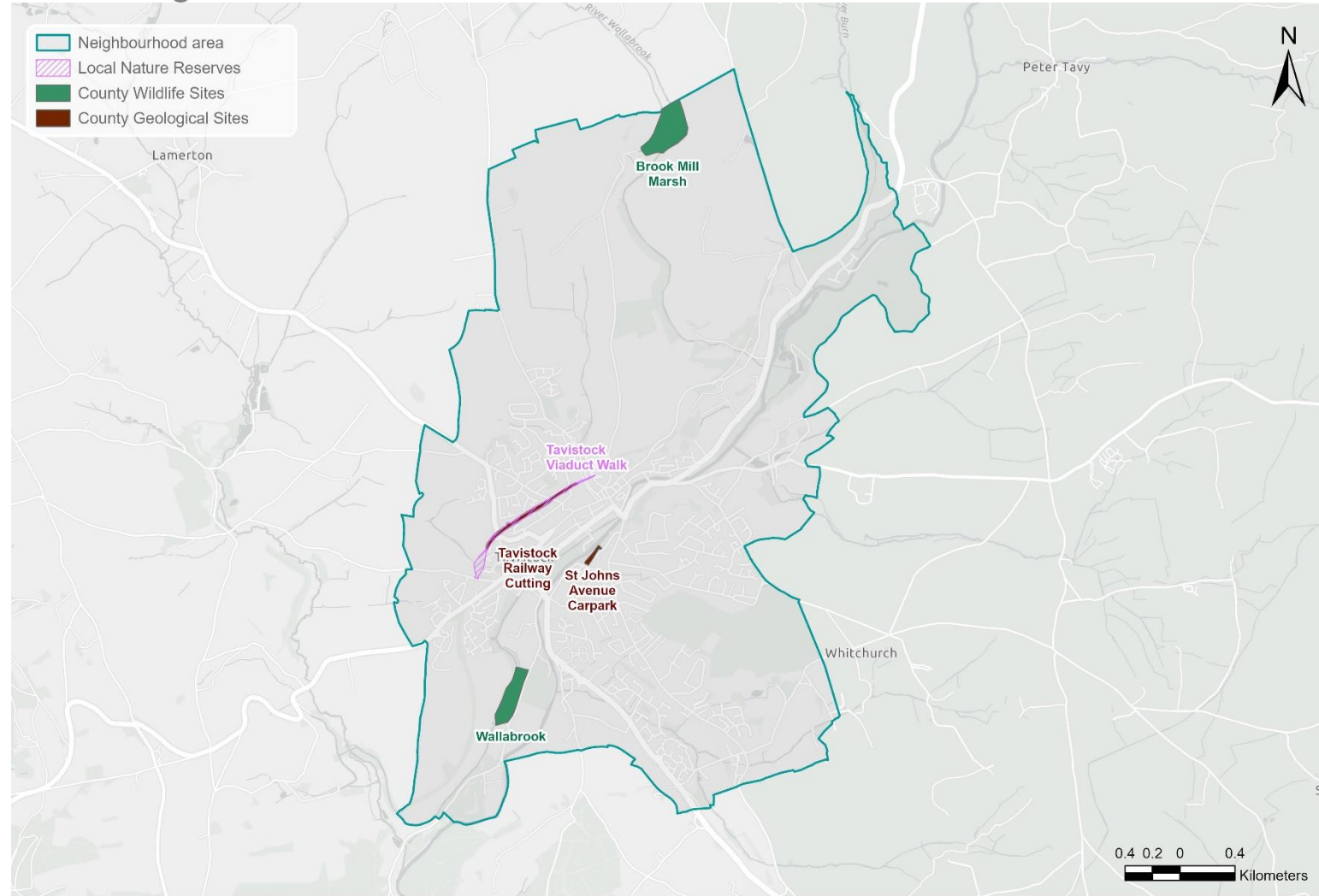
Priority Habitat Inventory



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Figure 2.7: Local designations within in the neighbourhood area

Local Designations



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3. Screening assessment

3.1 **Table 3.1** to **Table 3.9** discuss the significance of potential environmental effects of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan.

Table 3.1: Biodiversity, flora, and fauna

Table 3.1: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on biodiversity, flora, and fauna

Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?
<p>European designated sites within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area include the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC, the South Dartmoor Woods SAC, the Dartmoor SAC, and the Tamar Estuaries Complex SPA. Additionally, there are eleven SSSIs within or in proximity to the neighbourhood area, as well as local designations – including an LNR, two CGS and two CWS. Priority habitats in the neighbourhood area include lowland meadows, ancient woodland, and deciduous woodland. Despite the proximity of these designations, the neighbourhood area does not overlap with their associated SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) thresholds for residential or employment development.</p> <p>The designations within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area have a range of sensitivities that will need to be carefully considered through new development that comes forward. However, given the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate sites for housing or employment development, the policies and proposals in the Plan are not likely to have significant effects to the integrity of designated sites for biodiversity within and within proximity to the neighbourhood area.</p> <p>As development in Tavistock is coming forward through the JLP, biodiversity considerations have been included at the strategic scale – for example, through policy DEV26: Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity conservation, and policy DEV28: Trees, woodland, and hedgerows. However, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan policies do include provision for biodiversity – through ensuring key features and habitats are protected and enhanced (Policy ENV3: Protecting and Enhancing Habitats and Biodiversity), new development areas deliver net gains, and ecological networks are strengthened where appropriate (including via the designation of local green spaces (ENV1: Local Green Space)). These policies work to protect and enhance elements that contribute to the green infrastructure network in the neighbourhood area. This will help limit the potential impacts on biodiversity through boosting overall connectivity and safeguarding important areas.</p> <p>In light of the above, and as the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for housing or employment land, effects on biodiversity, flora, and fauna through the adoption of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan are <u>unlikely to be significant</u> with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>	<p>No</p>

Table 3.2: Population and human health

Table 3.2: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on population and human health

Discussion of potential effects and their significance

Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?

Within the JLP, Tavistock is identified as a “main town” due to it being a sustainable service centre that provides a range of facilities for residents and wider rural communities. With respect to housing provision, given that 1,261 homes have been completed or have permission through the JLP within the neighbourhood area, the local need has been met (and slightly exceeded). As such, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for additional new housing development to those within the JLP.

No

Tavistock town centre is mostly comprised of a mix of businesses – including high-street vendors and independent businesses providing a mix of services, retail opportunities, hospitality, and health and beauty facilities. Additionally, there is a Co-operative shop which provides for daily needs, a post office, and there is also a Lidl and a Tesco Superstore outside the town centre but within the neighbourhood area (to the south-east). In this respect, a key aim of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is to protect locally valued community facilities (Policy CF1: Protecting Locally Valued Community Facilities (including Recreation, Sports and Play Facilities) from loss). Further to this, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy to ensure individual facilities are retained – through ensuring the vitality of the town centre environment is retained and businesses and employment spaces are not lost through housing conversions (HOU2: Residential Development in the Town Centre). In this context, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan supports proposals to enhance the economic vitality of the neighbourhood area but does not allocate any specific sites for employment uses beyond those which are included in the JLP.

The health and wellbeing of the community is also a key consideration of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan. This is demonstrated through the inclusion of policies linked to green infrastructure (Policy ENV1: Local Green Space; ENV2: Extending Access into the Countryside), which promotes health and wellbeing by providing access for safe exercise and community gatherings. This benefits both physical and mental health and promotes community cohesion. Additionally, the Neighbourhood Plan indicates development proposals that deliver or contribute to the delivery of new community social infrastructure will be supported (Policy CF2: Community Infrastructure Projects), and development proposals for new, replacement or improved community and health facilities and amenities will be supported (Policy CF3: Enhancing Community Facilities (including Recreation, Sports and Play Facilities) through New and Improved Provision). Again, this demonstrates a focus on the health and wellbeing of the community by promoting new infrastructure to further promote physical and mental wellbeing.

The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan has a strong emphasis on ensuring high quality design is delivered through the allocations under the JLP. This includes ensuring new residential development proposals meet affordable housing provisions and contribute to a range of housing tenures, types, and sizes (Policy HOU3: Responding to Local Housing Needs (Tenure, Type, Size and Mix)). It also includes stipulations around the accessibility of new

development, including street design and road layouts (Policy TC1: Accessible Development), delivering improvements / new routes to the existing active travel network (Policy TC2: Protecting and Improving the Local Walking and Cycling Network), and safeguarding public transport (Policy TC5: Protecting and Enhancing Public Transport Infrastructure). These policies ensure new development reflects the needs of the community, and connectivity is maintained and enhanced to allow for continued / improved access to services and facilities across the neighbourhood area and further afield.

Overall, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is likely to bring forward a range of positive effects for the residents of the neighbourhood area. However, as the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or employment land, any potential effects are considered **unlikely to be significant** with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.

Table 3.3: Soil

Table 3.3: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on soil

Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?
<p>Agricultural land classification assessments have not been undertaken in the neighbourhood area. Based on the provisional agricultural land classification (ALC), provided by Natural England, the majority of the undeveloped land in the neighbourhood area is Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' ALC, with Grade 4 'Poor' along the banks of River Wallabrook³⁴. Currently it is not possible to differentiate between Grade 3a and Grade 3b ALC, where Grade 3a is best and most versatile and Grade 3b is not. The Predictive Best and Most Versatile Land (BMV) assessment indicates the majority of the undeveloped land in Tavistock has a 'low' likelihood (<20%) of being BMV land, with a strip of 'moderate' likelihood (20-60%) between the River Tavy and River Lumburn in the south-eastern extent of the neighbourhood area³⁵.</p> <p>Given the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate land for housing or employment land, the Neighbourhood Plan policies are not likely to lead to the loss of significant areas of productive agricultural land in the neighbourhood area. As development coming forward in the neighbourhood area is linked to the JLP, impacts on soil resources and quality will have been considered at the strategic scale.</p> <p>As such, the effect on soil resources are considered <u>unlikely to be significant</u> with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>	<p>No</p>

³⁴ Natural England (2011): [ALC map South West](#)

³⁵ Natural England (2017): [Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile \(BMV\) Agricultural Land - Strategic scale map South West Region](#)

Table 3.4: Water

Table 3.4: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on water

Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?
<p>The main waterbody within the neighbourhood area is the River Tavy; the neighbourhood area sits within the Lower River Tavy waterbody catchment area. As of 2019 this watercourse had a moderate ecological status and a failed chemical status³⁶ – though this is due to a change in assessment which resulted in all waterbodies in England to fail the chemical assessment.</p> <p>The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating sites for development; as such, it is considered unlikely that the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan will result in impacts to water in the neighbourhood area. Furthermore, development proposals influenced by the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan policies are unlikely to lead to a major increase in water demand in the neighbourhood area. If an increase in water demand and use did occur, it is anticipated this would be planned for by South West Water, who will also manage water quality and resourcing³⁷.</p> <p>Whilst the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate sites for development, Policy SD1: High Quality Sustainable Development aims to avoid water run-off into the sewer network and watercourses in the neighbourhood area – which will reduce the likelihood of pollutants entering the water system. Alongside the provisions of the Tavistock Design Code, which have a strong emphasis on delivering sustainable design and natural features within new development areas, the provision of this policy will protect the integrity and quality of watercourses in the neighbourhood area.</p> <p>Overall, the effect of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan on water resources, quality and management are considered <u>unlikely to be significant</u> with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>	No

³⁶ Environment Agency (2023): [Catchment Data Explorer - Lower River Tavy Water Body](#)

³⁷ South West Water (2019): [Water Resources Management Plan 2019](#)

Table 3.5: Air quality

Table 3.5: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on air quality

Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?
<p>Whilst there are no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) within the neighbourhood area, Area 4 – Gunnislake of the Cornwall County Council AQMA is located approximately 3.6km to the west.³⁸ This AQMA was declared in 2014 for exceedances in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) targets, both for annual and hourly intervals.</p> <p>Despite the proximity of the AQMA to the neighbourhood area, the proposals within the Neighbourhood Plan are not likely to significantly impact air quality. This is due to the Neighbourhood Plan not allocating sites for development – therefore not contributing to an increase in traffic and potential congestion beyond levels which are expected from JLP allocations (where air quality impacts have already been assessed).</p> <p>Nonetheless, Neighbourhood Plan policies linked to transport, encouraging an uptake in electric vehicle usage (Policy TC11: Provision of Electric Charge Points) and walking / cycling (Policy ENV2: Extending Access into the Countryside; Policy TC2: Protecting and Improving the Local Walking and Cycling Network). These policies will also contribute to air quality improvements by encouraging a reduction in pollutants linked to vehicle emissions.</p> <p>The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan also includes policies that have a strong focus on safeguarding important habitats and features. Policy ENV1: Local Green Space protects a number of local green spaces that are designated for their local environmental value; and Policy ENV3: Protecting and Enhancing Habitats and Biodiversity safeguards key habitat areas and biodiversity corridors that connect them. Additionally, Policy ENV3 sets the requirement for net gains in biodiversity where development would have an adverse impact on habitats and biodiversity on site. This is reiterated in the Tavistock Design Code, and in JLP Policy DEV28: Trees, woodlands and hedgerows – which require biodiversity net gains to be considered in line with the Environment Act 2021. Through including these policies, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is encouraging indirect benefits for air quality – by safeguarding and increasing natural features which contribute to pollutant absorption.</p> <p>Overall, effects on air quality as a result of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan are unlikely to be significant with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>	<p>No</p>

³⁸ DEFRA (2020): [UK AIR: Air Information Resource - AQMAs interactive map](#)

Table 3.6: Climatic factors

Table 3.6: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on climatic factors

Discussion of potential effects and their significance

Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?

In terms of climate change mitigation, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for development. As a result, the Neighbourhood Plan will not lead to increases in greenhouse gas emissions originating in the neighbourhood area, as the Neighbourhood Plan itself will not be increasing the built footprint of Tavistock. Nonetheless, the Neighbourhood Plan contains several provisions which seek to tackle and respond to the climate crisis.

No

With respect to climate change mitigation, the Neighbourhood Plan has a focus on limiting travel by private vehicles and supporting a modal shift towards sustainable and active travel. Key policies in this regard include TC1: Accessible Development; TC2: Protecting and Improving the Local Walking and Cycling Network; TC3: Facilitating Pedestrian Access; TC5: Protecting and Enhancing Public Transport Infrastructure; TC8: Parking Provision for Bicycle, E-scooters and Mobility; and TC11: Provision of Electric Charge Points. These policies focus on improving connectivity (Policy TC1; Policy TC2; Policy TC5; and Policy TC8), supporting improved access to public rights of way (Policy TC1; and Policy TC2); and providing electric vehicle charging points (Policy TC11). This will help to encourage a shift in transport use to more sustainable and active modes of travel, contributing to a reduction in emissions.

With respect to adapting to the effects of climate change, it is recognised that the town centre environment is particularly at risk from fluvial flooding due to its proximity to the Tavistock Canal and the River Tavy. Surface water flood risk is largely associated with areas that drain into these waterbodies, including (but not limited to) areas along Pixon Lane, Down Road, and Abbey Place. Crucially, the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or employment land which will not increase flood risks. With respect to the JLP allocations which will come forward during the plan period, it is considered that the statutory requirements (including the requirements of the NPPF) will help ensure that flood risk is addressed through new development proposals. Flood management policies within the JLP are also expected to be applied within the neighbourhood area for the JLP allocations.

Furthermore, it is recognised that the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan includes policies around protecting local green spaces and biodiversity features (Policy ENV1: Local Green Space; and Policy ENV3: Protecting and Enhancing Habitats and Biodiversity). This is likely to indirectly contribute to flood risk management through water storage and interception. Drainage is also considered through the Tavistock Design Code – which highlights provisions for metal drainage channels, and sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS). The Design Code also includes a net zero focus under Design Code 04 (Architecture and materials) and Design Code 05 (Sustainability). This demonstrates a clear design focus to reduce the effects of climate change associated with new development and within the wider neighbourhood area.

Overall, effects on climate change as a result of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan are **unlikely to be significant** with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.

Table 3.7: Material assets

Table 3.7: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on material assets

Discussion of potential effects and their significance	Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?
<p>Given the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is not allocating sites for housing or employment land, it is unlikely to lead to significant increases in the waste originating in the neighbourhood area. Any effects that do come forward (i.e., via speculative applications or associated with JLP allocations) are likely to be reduced by waste management policies and provisions included in the Devon Waste Plan³⁹ and the Waste Management and Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)⁴⁰.</p> <p>With respect to minerals resources, there is a mineral safeguarding area and mineral consultation area within the neighbourhood area – designated for building stone and chalk. There is an additional mineral safeguarding area and mineral consultation area in proximity to the neighbourhood area to the west, which is also designated for building stone and chalk. However, these are not expected to be impacted by the policies and proposals within the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, it is expected policies and plans within the Devon Minerals Plan⁴¹ and Mineral Safeguarding SPD⁴² will mitigate any potential effects on these resources.</p> <p>Overall, effects on material assets as a result of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan are <u>unlikely to be significant</u> with regards to the SEA Regulations and their requirements.</p>	No

³⁹ Devon County Council (2014): [Devon Waste Plan](#)

⁴⁰ Devon County Council (2015): [Waste Management and Infrastructure SPD](#)

⁴¹ Devon County Council (2017): [Devon Minerals Plan](#)

⁴² Devon County Council (2018): [Mineral Safeguarding SPD](#)

Table 3.8: Cultural heritage

Table 3.8: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on cultural heritage

Discussion of potential effects and their significance

Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?

The neighbourhood area has a rich cultural heritage. Part of Section 10 of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape WHS is within the neighbourhood area - the Tamar Valley Mining District with Tavistock. The WHS describes Tavistock as *“unlike any other town within the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site”* – remodelled in the mid-19th century using the profit from the mines in the area.

No

In addition to the WHS, there are three distinct conservation areas within the Tavistock neighbourhood area – Tavistock, Whitchurch, and Tavistock and Bere Alston Railway Line. There are also three scheduled monuments within the neighbourhood area, a further two scheduled monuments within proximity to the neighbourhood area boundary, and 176 listed buildings – as well as locally important, non-designated heritage assets. It is noted three features within the neighbourhood area are included within the Heritage at Risk Register 2023 for the South West and could benefit from works to protect and enhance their historical importance and interpretation.

The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate sites for housing or employment development. As such, the Plan is not likely to significantly impact heritage designations in the neighbourhood area – including with respect to their settings or the wider historic setting. With regards to new development coming forward in the neighbourhood area through the JLP, it is anticipated strategic level policies will work to protect and enhance the heritage of Tavistock and its setting. However, a key focus of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is to inform the design of new development areas which will come forward through plan period (i.e., via speculative applications and JLP allocations). This is reflected within the Tavistock Design Code, which includes criteria under Design Code 05: Sustainability for heritage.

Additionally, there is a strong focus through the plan’s policies and objectives on protecting its rich heritage. For example, Policy HER1: Protecting Local Heritage Assets offers protection to local heritage assets and their settings, especially those in the conservation areas, to ensure the wider historic environment is safeguarded and no harm is caused through new development. Additionally, Policy HER2: Priority Projects in the Historic Environment indicates proposals will be supported where they deliver, contribute towards, or support the delivery of improvements to the Tavistock Abbey scheduled monument and the Betsy Grimbals Tower. This demonstrates the plan’s focus on safeguarding and improving the rich historic environment of Tavistock.

It is recognised that the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to positively impact the heritage assets and areas within the town, with its focus on ensuring that high quality design is delivered within new development areas which come forward through the JLP. However, as the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for new housing or employment land, any effects that come forward linked to the Neighbourhood Plan are **unlikely to be significant** in the context of the SEA Regulations and their consequences.

Table 3.9: Landscape

Table 3.9: The potential environmental effects of the Neighbourhood Plan on landscape

Discussion of potential effects and their significance

Is there the potential for a significant effect (Yes / No)?

The neighbourhood area is particularly sensitive from a landscape perspective, given its partial location within the Dartmoor National Park (to the west) and the Tamar Valley National Landscape (to the east). The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate sites for housing development or employment development. This is due to the housing need already being met through policies and site allocations included in the JLP. As such, landscape effects at the strategic scale have been considered through the JLP and associated documents – through policy DEV23: Landscape character, and policy DEV25: Nationally protected landscapes. Nonetheless, in light of the significant landscape sensitivities within the neighbourhood area, a key objective of the Plan is to protect and enhance landscape and townscape character through new development areas which come forward during the plan period.

A key policy in this respect is Policy SD1: High Quality Sustainable Design, which seeks to ensure development proposals compliment the area, enhance the visual amenity of Tavistock, and compliment and avoid impacts to the landscape. This policy works alongside the Tavistock Design Code to ensure that landscape and townscape character is safeguarded and enhanced.

More broadly, policies within the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan have a strong focus of preserving local distinctiveness and sense of place. For example, Policy SD2: Small Scale Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Proposals indicates small scale schemes will be supported where they have no adverse impact on the quality of Tavistock's landscape; and Policy B2: Town Centre Development and Protecting Character stipulates development proposals within the primary shopping area and centre boundary will need to demonstrate they will cause no significant impacts on the built character of the streetscape or impact on valued views. These policies demonstrate how the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan seeks to guide proposals to consider the landscape and character of the natural and built environment within the neighbourhood area. Additionally, Policy ENV4: Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Character, Views and Vistas safeguards important views identified in the Neighbourhood Plan – which helps to reduce the potential impacts to these views.

It is recognised that the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan has the potential to positively impact landscape and townscape character, with its focus on ensuring that high quality design is delivered within new development areas which is appropriate to its location and respects the sensitivities of the surrounding areas. However, as the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate any sites for new housing or employment land, any effects are **unlikely to be significant** in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.

No

4. Summary of screening opinion

- 4.1 This screening opinion has considered whether the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is likely to lead to significant environmental effects in conjunction with the SEA Regulations.
- 4.2 The screening opinion has considered a number of potential environmental effects that may arise as a result of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst some limited environmental effects have the potential to take place as a result of the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered that these are unlikely to be significant in the context of the SEA Regulations and their requirements.
- 4.3 The SEA topics where effects have the most potential to be significant relates to biodiversity, flora, and fauna; cultural heritage; and landscape. This is linked to the significant designations associated with these themes that are present within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area – including European sites, SSSIs, Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape WHS, scheduled monuments, conservation areas, listed buildings, Dartmoor National Park, and the Tamar Valley National Landscape. However, as the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is not seeking to allocate sites for housing or employment land (beyond the allocations included in the JLP), the Neighbourhood Plan proposals are unlikely to have significant effects on the fabric and / or setting and significance of these features, or comprise their integrity and special qualities.
- 4.4 The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is being brought forward within the wider strategic context provided by the adopted JLP, which has already been subjected to Integrated Assessment incorporating SA / SEA, a Habitat Regulation Assessment, an Equality Impact Assessment, and a Health Impact Assessment⁴³. The Integrated Assessment will have considered the strategic level impacts of new development in the neighbourhood area associated with JLP allocations. As the Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate land for housing or employment land (as needs have been met, and slightly exceeded) the impacts of specific development sites (i.e., JLP allocations or speculative applications during the plan period) can only be made through the development control process as applications come forward. It should also be noted that the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with the provisions of the JLP.
- 4.5 The Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan has a key focus on bringing forward high-quality design that does not detract from the surrounding environment and special features – which will include the various designations and their settings within and in proximity to the neighbourhood area. This is particularly evident within the provisions of the Tavistock Design Code and Guidance document which accompanies the Neighbourhood Plan and is also reflected within Policy SD1: High Quality Sustainable Design. Furthermore, the Neighbourhood Plan includes a number of policies that seek to maintain and enhance the integrity of important heritage, landscape, and biodiversity areas / features. In this way, the Neighbourhood Plan policies work to shape potential development coming forward during the plan period without allocating sites. This includes protecting key community facilities, allocating green spaces, protecting heritage features, protecting habitats and biodiversity features, and improving connectivity and

⁴³ Plymouth.gov.uk (2017): [Evidence base and examination documents - Submissions Documents \(SUB\)](#)

accessibility within the neighbourhood area. Whilst these provisions have the potential to deliver positive effects within the neighbourhood area, impacts are not considered to be significant in the absence of any specific allocations within the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 4.6 For these reasons, it is considered that the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan is not subject to the requirements of the SEA Regulations. As such, a full SEA process meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations is not deemed to be required to accompany the development of the Tavistock Neighbourhood Plan.**

