

TOTNES & DISTRICT SOCIETY

Draft Statement of Views on

THE FUTURE OF TOTNES

For consideration by Totnes Borough Council before it is more widely circulated or formally submitted to Devon County Council

April 1971

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2016 Note: Most of the maps referred to in the text are not currently available, but a 1972 map showing Totnes and Dartington as they were then is included on the last page. It also shows the projected route of the “Northern Bypass”.

INTRODUCTION

1. Shortly after its inception in January 1969, the Totnes and District Society became aware that the Devon County Council was proposing to prepare a Review of the Totnes Town Map, and also a Town Centre Plan for Totnes, for publication in mid-1971.

2. The Society accordingly set up a General Planning Sub-Committee whose job was to consider how the Society might seek to influence the above official plans. The Sub-Committee decided that its basic approach should be to seek to influence the County's thinking at the formative stage of the plans rather than after the plans had been prepared; and that this influence should, if possible, take the form of help towards the County's own work rather than the preparation of a rival plan, since the Society does not have the resources to prepare a comprehensive planning document.

3. The County Planning Office, when approached by the Society, readily accepted the Society's offer of help in the preparation of survey material. As a consequence, the Society has been able to prepare survey information for use by the County Council in relation to the following main matters:

- a. The historic growth of the town including detailed information on the history and significance of many individual buildings and archaeological sites. We are deeply indebted to members of the Totnes Museum Society for assistance with this survey.
- b. The environment of the town centre, including detailed notes on buildings, features and open spaces which should be protected and enhanced and on features which appear to require improvement or more radical action.
- c. A detailed survey of trees and woodlands in the town with implications for their protection, and of places where new tree-planting might valuably be undertaken.
- d. A survey of existing rights-of-way with their need for improvement; of possible routes for new rights-of-way; and of places where there was conflict between vehicles and pedestrians

4. This survey material has been supplied to the County Council and has formed part of the raw material which the Council is using in the preparation of the Town Map Review and Town Centre Plan. In return, the County Council has kindly supplied the Society with copies of some non-confidential elements of its own survey material - notably relating to the environment of the town centre; the conservation area and historic buildings; existing highways and car parks; and land-use within the central area.

5. These two sets of information, prepared by the Society and supplied by the County Council, have provided a factual basis for the preparation by the Society of a general statement of its views on the future planning of Totnes and its town centre. We would emphasise that this document is not a plan, in the sense that it does not purport to comprise a comprehensive and professional appraisal of all the factors which must be taken into account in the planning of the town, nor does it make firm or detailed recommendations. It is intended rather as a statement of the values which the Society believe to be at stake in Totnes, and of the principles which it hopes can be observed in the planning of the town; and as the basis for more detailed work by the Society and others.

CHAPTER 1 - The Function and Size of Totnes.

Population and Employment.

6. Though long-established as a Borough, Totnes has had no periods of very rapid growth and is now by British standards, quite a small town. Having grown from 3,937 in 1921 to 5,310 in 1947, its population has fluctuated since the latter date, with only modest overall growth. The population of Totnes Rural District has shown a rather similar pattern.

Year	Population of Totnes Borough	Totnes Rural District
1921	3,937	11,800
1931	4,503	12,240
1939	4,678	12,330
1947	5,310	13,320
1949	5,720	13,420
1961	5,528	13,228
1968	5,634	15,846

7. The Second Review of the County Development Plan forecasts that the population of Totnes will grow to 5,700 by 1981 i.e. that the modest overall rate of growth experienced since the war will continue. The Society welcomes this forecast of modest growth, and urges that all elements of official policy should reflect this estimate and this intention for the following reasons:

- a. Despite the rapid physical extension of the town during this century particularly in terms of residential and industrial areas, Totnes is still a fairly compact town, easily comprehended by the resident and the visitor, with fairly clear physical limits and contained within its own immediate bowl of surrounding hills. We set out in Chapter 3 our hopes for the retention of this physical compactness.
- b. The present built-up area of the town is bounded in most directions by land which is (by reason of its slope, aspect liability to flood or difficulties of access and servicing) unsuited to building. Again, we set out in Chapter 3 the limits which this appears to place upon physical enlargement of the town.
- c. The historic structure of Totnes has survived to an extent which is unique in Devon: this survival is in large part directly due to the modesty of the town's past growth in population. Any acceleration in the town's growth must increase the pressures for change of a type and scale which could damage the historic character of the town.
- d. The population of Totnes Rural District many of whose residents look to Totnes for shopping and other services, is now growing quite rapidly: the Second Review of the County Development Plan forecasts that it will grow to 15,500 by 1981. This pace of growth in the surrounding area will place pressure on the town's resources, which should not be further increased by rapid growth. of the town's own population.

8. We have not had access to any detailed figures on the age structure of the population of Totnes Borough or Rural District; on the type and place of Work of the working part of this population; nor on the pattern of jobs in Totnes itself. We believe that such information is vital to the making of sure judgements about the need if any for further employment in the town; and we urge the County and Borough Councils to obtain such information as the basis for employment policies within and beyond the Town Map Review. In the absence of this information, we accept the need for continued, though not dramatic growth in overall employment in the town - but we express below some reservations about the Borough Council's policy of encouraging a steady increase in the number of jobs in manufacturing industry.

The Function of the Town

9. Having been founded originally to serve a defensive and a trading role, Totnes has evolved over the years to serve a variety of functions. Its role is now a subtle mixture of the following functions:

- a. Agricultural market.
- b. Shopping Centre.
- c. Centre for other services.
- d. Port.
- e. Industry and commerce.
- f. Tourist Centre.
- g. Residential area and place for retirement.

10. We believe that all the above functions will, and should continue in the foreseeable future, although with changing emphasis between them; that they should all be reflected in the planning and evolution of the town; and that careful thought should be given to the effect which the different functions have on each other and upon the planning of the town. For example, the disproportionate or ill-controlled development of industry could have a damaging effect upon the strength of Totnes as a tourist centre: conversely, an excessive concern with tourist facilities, or with the residential environment, could put impediments in the way of industrial efficiency.

11 • Agricultural Centre

Totnes's cattle market; the bulk supply of products to Unigate Creamery and Harris's Bacon Factory; the presence of South Devon Farmers on the Broad Marsh industrial estate; and other agricultural services such as Harris's Ironmongers - these all show that the town has an important role in service to agriculture. We believe this role to be completely fitting for a town of Totnes's position and size; and to have significance not only in direct creation of employment but indirectly in encouraging farmers and others to use other services in the town. We will support efforts to sustain and strengthen the town's role as an agricultural trading centre. These efforts might include collaborative action by the Borough Council, County Council Young Farmers Club and Totnes Chamber of Trade to strengthen (and possibly to integrate) the two weekly market-days; and also measures to ease pedestrian movement between the cattle market and the town centre.

12. Shopping Centre.

Totnes is a main shopping centre for its own population and for much of the Rural District, say 12,500 people in all. It cannot compete with Plymouth, Paignton, Torquay and Newton Abbot as a regional shopping centre: but it has a number of specialist shops of wider than local significance, whose business is partly encouraged by the proximity of Dartington and by holidaymakers visiting Totnes.

This role as a local and specialist shopping centre is likely to continue with the amount of trade growing gradually over the years. But this does not necessarily mean that all of Totnes's shops will increase their trade. To remain competitive, Totnes shopkeepers clearly need to increase the intensity of use of floor space: already the town has three supermarkets. This trend towards extending floor space in some shops, and intensive use of that floor space, is concentrated on the main shopping streets. It is bound to have the effect of removing trade from shops on the edges of the central area and removing trade and storage functions from the upper floors of some shop premises, thus jeopardising the economic use and maintenance of the buildings concerned, many of which have historic and visual value.

In this situation, we believe that several related and positive policies are needed:

- a. to ensure a steady growth in the attraction of the town as a shopping centre by maintaining its historic character and charm, and by increasing its convenience (in terms of easy car parking near the shops) as compared with other towns;
- b. to encourage modernisation of shop premises in the main shopping streets, in ways which are consistent with the scale and character of the town and of the individual buildings;
- c. to encourage new shops and related uses which are suited to the character of the town and, where necessary, to the character of existing buildings - specialist shops, such as antiques, may be appropriate;
- d. to find positive ways to encourage new uses for buildings which appear to be no longer viable as shops; or for unused or under-used upper floors of shop-buildings - particularly where these buildings are of architectural or historic interest. These new uses could include houses, flats for college students and others, workshops and studios.

We consider later the implications which these policies might have for the town centre.

An important corollary to this shopping policy in Totnes will be the continued absence of out-of-town shopping centres within about 10 miles of the town. We recognise the high convenience which such centres can offer to the car-owning shopper: but we believe the damage they can cause, in drawing away trade from the established town centres, more than outweighs this convenience. We shall therefore press the County Council to continue their policy of opposition to such centres; and shall oppose the extension of trade by cash-and-carry stores which would virtually make such stores into out-of-town shopping centres. But we shall also welcome such changes within Totnes which can provide convenience similar to the out-of-town shopping centre consistent with the character of the town.

13. Centre for other services.

Totnes already has an array of schools, hospitals and other public buildings such as the Police and Fire Stations, County Library, Welfare Office: it is the centre of local government administration for the Borough and Rural District, a role which may become more important after local government reform; it has a large number of professional and commercial services such as solicitors, accountants, banks and surgeries: and it is the local town and railhead for the education and other activities at Dartington. Apart from the employment that they create these services have a significant spin-off of trade and activity for the town; and make an important contribution to its townscape. Thus many of the major services are in specialist buildings, such as those of the new Comprehensive School and are important features in the outer parts of the town; and others provide a use and sustain the fabric of historic buildings in the town centre - important examples being the old Grammar School, the Borough Council Office, the Guild Hall and Pomeroy House. For these reasons, we shall hope to see the town's function as a service centre sustained; and shall hope that any expansion of such activities can be creatively used to sustain the vitality of the town centre.

14. Port.

The Second Review of the County Development Plan records that "The principal river route of the county is the Dart between Dartmouth and Totnes. Only a small tonnage of goods (mainly timber) is carried, but pleasure steamers and smaller boats make suitable use of this stretch of the river". The port activity brings life to the river and economic benefit to the town. We wish to see this activity sustained; and we welcome in principle the proposed ship turning bay, which will permit larger ships to bring timber up the Dart. But we believe careful thought is needed about the impact of the port upon the town, and particularly upon traffic and the public use of the river-front. In particular, we regret the impediment to public access to the river-front which is caused by timber storage on the Town Quay, and the amount of timber and related traffic originating in or passing through The Plains. We therefore hope that any increase in timber storage and processing can be concentrated downstream of Town Quay; and that opportunities may be found to reduce the industrial use of the river frontage upstream of that point, so as to permit greater public use of that frontage. We believe that careful thought will be needed about the layout and facilities on the eastern bank of the Dart below the bridge, and have commented further on this in Chapter 5.

15. Industry and commerce

It is Borough Council policy to encourage a steady increase in the number of industrial jobs in the town. We understand this policy to spring from a concern about the lack of jobs for school-leavers; the number of people who live in Totnes and work elsewhere rather than within the town; and the level of local unemployment - and also from the desire to sustain a "balanced population", in the sense of an acceptable ratio between the working population and the number of retired people. While we accept that these are all in principle matters of concern, we are not convinced that any increase in employment could do much to moderate the outward flow of school-leavers, since many of them wish to leave their home areas anyway; we are not disturbed by the two-way flow of people who live but do not work, or work but do not live in Totnes; we are not aware of serious and persistent unemployment in the town; and we note that Totnes has no larger a proportion of retired people than other parts of South Devon. The County Development Plan Review states that

Totnes has over 26% of its present employment in manufacturing industry, a higher proportion than in most Devon towns. Finally, we note that industry already has a substantial impact upon the appearance of Totnes and in terms of noise and traffic.

For these reasons, we believe the real need for further industrial growth to be quite modest. In our view any increase in manufacturing or processing industry which is proved to be needed should be contained within the Broad Marsh Industrial Estate (we reckon that 30% of the land within this estate is at present unused, though it may be committed) or in other areas already industrial. Other types of industry or commerce - such as 'craft' industry industrial research units commercial offices or storage - might be placed in suitable buildings within the town centre, for example the disused works behind the 'Totnes Times' and along Bank Lane.

16. Tourist Centre.

At present Totnes serves three functions in connection with tourism - as a place for overnight stay which we believe might be encouraged to grow selectively; as a centre for day visits, a function which might be encouraged to increase; and as a "corridor" on the main route from Torbay to Plymouth, the South Hams and Dartmoor. This latter function is irrelevant and damaging to the town, and we have considered the implications of it in the Chapter on communications. Further comment on tourism and recreation is made in Chapter 5.

17. Residential area and place for retirement

Totnes must always have been an attractive place to live, with its agreeable climate, attractive site and ready access to the sea, the countryside and the hills. Until the 18th century, it was an extremely compact town and must have felt very secure and 'matey'. The expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries has meant that most Totnes residents now live in terraces, groups, or detached houses, at a much lower density than the town centre and in many cases over half-a-mile from any part of the town centre. Car ownership of course, encourages and permits this more spread-out pattern of housing; but we must remember that many Totnes families, in particular many housewives and others with families, do not have the regular use of a car.

For this, among other reasons we believe that Totnes should not grow outwards any further; that any new housing should be as near as possible to the town centre, where most of the town's shops and services lie; that housing within and immediately next to the town centre should be encouraged; and that convenient public transport routes and walking routes between the outlying housing areas and the town centre should be encouraged or created.

Totnes shares, with other parts of this region, a strong attraction to retired people: and for these people, compact and convenient housing relatively near the shops and other services and unencumbered with large gardens and other maintenance problems, is of particular importance.

CHAPTER 2 - Historic Growth.

18. The present appearance of Totnes is rooted in its history of growth as a town; and this history should be a major factor in determining its future. Map 1 shows the broad pattern of the town's growth over the last millenium - a pattern which is described below and which echoes through other parts of this report.

The Saxon Settlement.

19. The name Totnes is Saxon for "look-out point". It was the proximity of the mound on which the castle is now built, to the lowest ford over the river, which caused the walled settlement of Totnes to be created. The ford meant traffic and trade, and the wall security. The ridge running between the mound and the ford was in effect a peninsula because until late Mediaeval times the land to the north and south of it, nearly up to what is now the 50 foot contour was a tidal marsh. This, together with the wall and the steep mound, contributed greatly to the security of the town, which was a factor of importance at the time with the constant threat of raids from the Danes. The Saxon Settlement clustered round the base of the castle mound for protection and extended Eastward down the peninsula towards the ford.

The Mediaeval Town.

20. The Normans increased the height of the mound and crowned it with a stone-built Motte and Bailey. The town was then surrounded by a wall with three gates giving access to the country to the east, west and north. The wall, by restricting the available building land, led to the development of long narrow properties, with the minimum valuable frontage to the street. The town also developed outside the wall between the East Gate and the pack bridge (which had by then been built beside the ford), along what is now Fore Street; and another defensive wall was built on the line of the Grove. The Priory, which had extensive property, adjoined the Priory Church of St. Mary.

21. The only other significant development outside the Town Wall confines was St. Peter's Quay downstream of the Southerly tidal marsh. Although the track to it from the centre of the town, round the marsh via what is now Maudlin Road was inconvenient this quay must have been better navigationally than the old one by the bridge. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, a dam was thrown across the river end of the marsh called the Warland Dam: this provided power for a tidal mill at what is now called Snail Mill and also improved access across the dam, from the town to St. Peter's Quay.

The Elizabethan Town

22. Until the middle of the 16th. Century, the town developed in a way and at a speed that was normal for mediaeval towns. At this point in time, ships became an efficient means of transportation and this opened up the continent as a market. Wool was produced locally and made into cloth in the town, and metal was mined on the moors: these were exported overseas through the port of Totnes.

25. Totnes being well placed geographically captured most of the local trade and quite suddenly became one of the richest towns in England, second only to Exeter in the South-west. This prosperity lasted for one hundred years and then stopped almost as suddenly as it started when larger ships came into use, needing better facilities than the port could

provide and the woollen manufacturers failed to adopt the then up-to-date practices of their trade. Totnes then lost its pre-eminence as a trading and manufacturing town and resumed its role as a market town.

24. This hundred years of prosperity, because of its sudden start and finish, had a dramatic impact on the town. The new rich merchants wanted space to work in and grand houses to live in, all complete with servant's accommodation, stables and stores. The town was already circumscribed by its wall and largely contained geographically the land on either side of Fore Street being a marsh: so the result of this demand for space was to overlay and submerge the old mediaeval buildings with new Elizabethan ones. It is significant that, in spite of the population increase, the territorial one was small. Only those areas along two of the main track routes, Leechwell and Cistern Streets and along the Warland Dam at Ticklemore Street were built on. The population was housed by the taller Elizabethan buildings and by utilizing what must have been garden space for building, using the dense courtyard type of plan which is almost unique to Totnes. All that survived this flood of building were the Castle and the Church. The buildings were not beautiful in the sense that the mediaeval church was but they formed street elevations which were quaint and exciting with their gabled, jettied and colonnaded facades. Inside these houses, if they were not beautiful they were magnificent. Here it was that the merchants lived and so lavished all their riches on the decoration of their walls, ceilings and fireplaces in the Elizabethan style.

25. The only other development outside the town boundaries was the construction of Smith's Dam across the northerly, or Malt Mill tidal marsh: this dam was used to power the Town Mill beside the Bridge. Tidal Mills were however, inefficient because they could only be worked for a limited time each day, and the source of power for this mill was soon replaced by a dam across the Dart at Dartington Hall gates, from which a leat ran to the Mill parallel to the river.

26. From the middle of the seventeenth century, when it lost its great trading potential, the town grew relatively slowly. A more local and limited maritime trade continued down river from the Town Quay and St. Peter's Quay. The produce from these trades was for local consumption and the population of the town did not much change until the middle of the nineteenth century.

The 19th. Century Town.

27. The arrival of the railway in the 1840's opened Totnes up to the rest of the world; and had profound effect on the population of the town and their way of life. It caused a minor industrial revolution as the advent of the "iron horse" did in other towns throughout the country. It was from this time onward that light industry started in the town the products of which were transported via the railway to the rest of England. The town mill was converted into a bacon factory, cider was produced and bottled for export on the Plains, milk collected and processed by the station, and timber imported by river and redistributed locally. These trades, together with that associated by the cattle market and its by-products produced an increased demand for labour, and the population grew.

28. The growth in the town to accommodate increased trade and population took place around the railway station, and also outside the town along the old traditional roads to St. Peter's Quay, Kingsbridge, Plymouth, Ashburton and Torquay where the parish of Bridgetown grew up.

The 20th. Century Town.

29. The Second World War produced another shift of trade. Timber moved down-stream to the Baltic Wharf, the Broad Marsh which had been a racecourse was allocated to light industry and the Cattle market moved there from the old Rotherfold. But before this, indeed from the end of the First World War, the demand for housing was such that new development surrounded the old town. While the town centre retained its old mediaeval-Elizabethan character, it was only its magnificent siting, its walls and its castle, which saved it from being engulfed by this flood of development.

50. The growth of the Town to accommodate this increase in trade and population has so far been met by development down the traditional old roads, together with that achieved by building new estate roads. The main areas developed in this way lie along the old Plymouth road and south of the Torquay road in Bridgetown. The industrial developments down-stream from St. Peter's Quay on both sides of the river, and on the Broad Marsh, are further growths outside the earlier town.

31. It now seems that the outer limit of expansion has been reached, the boundaries of developable land being prescribed by the topography of the surrounding hills. Further expansion beyond this boundary would in our view, do irreparable damage to the townscape and its setting in the countryside: we consider the implications of this in the next chapter.

Historic Resources.

32. Totnes' swift and dramatic rise to pre-eminence, combined with its equally swift decline, resulted in little pressure to change and has left its centre essentially an Elizabethan town built on its mediaeval plan. Most contemporary development has taken place outside the town centre which has left it superficially unspoilt. For a town of its size, it has perhaps as great an abundance of historic resources as any other town in England: it was the only town in Devon to be included in the list of 51 British towns of high historic importance prepared by the Council of British Archaeology. Map 2 gives some indication of these historic resources.

35. The scheduled Ancient Monuments and archaeological sites in the town include the fine Motte and Bailey of the Norman Castle, the remains of the Town Walls and Gates, the Bridge, the 15th century Priory Church of St. Mary, the Priory, the Leechwell the Guildhall, the Museum and King Edward VI Grammar School. There are 270 buildings officially listed as of architectural and historic interest, most of them being clustered along the frontage of High Street, Fore Street and Bridgetown. These buildings - many of which were built as merchants' houses in Elizabethan times have been little altered since - form an essential part of the street elevations in the historic town. Behind their facades are many internal features of rich detail and historic interest; and their lanes and passages lead to intimate enclosed courtyards, often paved with cobbles and serving other buildings of later date, set on the long plots which lead back to the line of the old town walls.

34. The fact that Totnes is a unique town, and the ideal that it should be kept so are accepted. The larger elements in its townscape - the Castle, Church and Guildhall - are in safe hands and would seem to be in little danger. Most of the other buildings give cause for concern because of the continuous pressure to change them, almost always for the worse, and deterioration of their structures due simply to their age, the elements and

traffic. As long as the buildings are in economic use, the danger of deterioration may be lessened but the pressure of change increased: if the buildings are not in use, the reverse is the case. But either way the danger is present. The smaller elements in the town - for example the stone walls and pavings - are in the greatest danger because often they can be destroyed unnoticed and without the need of prior approval.

35. The awareness of the historic heritage of Totnes and of these dangers to it, have led to the recent designation of a large part of the old town as a Conservation Area - the first in Devon - under the Civic Amenities Act. We examine in Chapter 6 what this designation could and should mean in positive action to protect the historic resources and to restore Totnes to its pre-eminence as an Historic Town without equal.

CHAPTER 3. The Town Environment.

36. The modern environment of Totnes springs directly from this pattern of historic growth. Though it has sprawled to east and west, Totnes is still recognisably the compact defensive town and trading port, set in a bowl of hills at the lowest ford and bridging point of the tidal river, linked by a network of radial roads to the surrounding countryside and distant communities. This quality of compactness of comprehensibility when seen from outside, is a key attribute of the town, and should be given strong guidance to its future development. Map 3 shows the form which this guidance might take.

37. Seen from outside, say for the first time by the visitor approaching on road or river, the town is markedly dominated by the old ridge settlement, stretching from the castle keep at the western end to the river crossing nearly two hundred feet lower and less than half a mile to the east. This isolated lump of buildings is set in a bowl formed by the surrounding hills, a situation which provides arresting views of the town when seen from outside and which limits the horizon of views from within the town. These hills combine to produce the frame within which Totnes is first seen, concentrating the observer's eye on the old town: once he is within the town they call his eyes outward sending his gaze to the surrounding heights. This duality - of old ridge town, and surrounding green hills - is to us the key to the environment of Totnes. No irreparable damage has yet been done to either: both must be protected

38. Map 3 shows the extent of the green setting or landscape frame, which contains and cradles the town as seen from many viewpoints approaching and within Totnes. This landscape frame, running up to the first horizon a mile or so beyond the town in most directions, consists of farmland, woodlands, floodplain and river, wholly rural in character and in perfect contrast to the jewelled town. This setting cannot be "frozen": changes in forest and farm landscape are bound to occur. But we believe this setting must remain rural, and that any changes in it should be consciously controlled and designed to enhance rather than diminish the setting of the town and the views outwards from it.

39. The corollary of this is that the town must not grow outwards. Already the more recent growth of the town has bitten into the landscape frame in damaging fashion, notably in the southern part of Bridgetown: any further outward growth must do real harm to the compactness and setting of the town. We have already noted, and welcomed the fact, that the town's population is growing only modestly: we have spoken against any appreciable growth in its employment: we have emphasised that its historic heritage has survived because its growth over recent centuries has been slow. For all these reasons, we recommend that a clear 'stop line' be drawn around the town, beyond which the built-up area shall not extend.

40. Map 3 shows our proposal for this 'stop line'. We envisage that it would run closely round the perimeter of the town, with the single exception of the land between the old Plymouth road and the railway east of Follaton Gate . Although we have done no detailed calculation we believe the area within this "stop line can contain all the housing industry and other built development which the town will need over the next two decades or more - with the possible exception of development on the Long Marsh, on which we comment in Chapter 5.

41. The main 'elbow room' for new development inside the 'stop line' seems to be in three places. One is the land at Follaton mentioned above, which slopes north but at a gentle angle, does not form part of any major view of the town; appears to be capable of development with good layout, access and servicing; might, if developed, permit a more coherent pattern of access and servicing for the ribbon of development on the old Plymouth Road; and commands attractive views across to the slopes below Copland Lane, which we suggest in Chapter 5 might become a park.

42. The other two pieces of apparently developable land are the small area between Unigate Creamery and the river; and the area south of the town centre (bounded by The Grove, Victoria Street and Denys Road) at present used for rough grazing, horticulture and temporary car parking. We suggest in Chapter 6 that the latter site might be used for housing and related functions. A certain amount of new housing could also be created within the town centre, i.e. in the street blocks which front onto High Street and Fore Street. Such housing (which we examine further in Chapter 6) could help to make good use, and to justify the maintenance, of historic properties.

43. In view of the importance which new housing has to the vitality of the town, we regret the delay in the construction of the town's new sewage works and also the embargo on new house-building which we understand the Devon River Authority has proposed until these sewage works are completed. We hope this embargo will not be imposed; and that construction of the works can take place as soon as possible. This would have benefits also to the appearance and smell of the riverside.

44. Map 3 also shows our proposal for development and improvement within the industrial estate on the Broad Marsh; as we noted earlier, at least 30% of the land in this estate seems to be unused. We realise that legal commitments may impede the early full use of the estate, but we believe the Borough Council should make all possible efforts to ensure that this land is effectively used before any new land elsewhere is committed to industry. This estate, moreover is a marked eyesore in many views of the town, and should be the subject of a comprehensive programme of improvement - including the removal or repair of derelict and decrepit structures; extensive tree planting, particularly along the river and the other perimeters of the estate; the improvement of roads and footpaths within the site; higher standards of building design than have been achieved hitherto; and effective measures to abate the pollution of land air and water. In Chapters 4 and 5, we make proposals for a new link road and for riverside and streamside footpaths, through or alongside the estate, which should be taken into account in this improvement programme.

45. A rather different form of comprehensive improvement is needed in the post-war sections of Bridgetown. These attractive estates, which contain much excellent housing nevertheless detract severely from many views of and from Totnes. This visual detraction is in strong contrast to the attractive effect of the houses around Bridgetown Hill and Jubilee Road, which are so embowered in trees as to blend into the landscape - and incidentally to provide a most agreeable living environment. We believe that the modern parts of Bridgetown could be similarly enriched by tree-planting; and that the little valley which runs down through the middle could become an attractive open space, with many trees, play features for children and a footpath. The Society has already been able to plant trees elsewhere in the borough and will hope to play some part in a creative scheme for Bridgetown.

46. A key element in this 'external' view of the town is the great variety of routes by which it is approached and from which fine views are obtained. These approaches - by road, rail or river - need careful thought to enhance their setting and the views which they command.

47. These approach routes can be divided into two groups - those approaching along the valleys and those coming over the ridges. The valley routes are the Plymouth, Ashburton and Newton Abbot roads, British Rail, the Dart Valley Railway and the river Dart itself. From these approaches, the predominant effect of the town is of the sharply stated castle and church tower surmounting a tiered structure of roofs, not noticeably broken by street lines. Closer approach brings out the widely varied individual roof shapes and the contrasting colours of brick, stone and painted walls. This effect depends upon the elevation of the ridge above the bowl in which it is set; and demands not only conscious control of development in the old town to enhance this distant effect, but also care in any changes to the features in outer parts of the town which form the foreground of these valley views.

48. The ridge approaches give an entirely different view of the town. The Kingsbridge and Torbay roads, for example, bring the shape of the historic town clearly into view, with its ring of town walls, the transverse pattern of individual 13th and 14th century building plots, and the more recent surrounding roads. The Newton Abbot road, at the point above the Bourton Valley where it turns sharply south, brings the town into view for about a quarter of a mile of descent into the valley: nearer the town, it opens views onto the predominant feature of St. John's Church in Bridgetown and the terraces of houses forming Bridgetown itself. The open marshland intervening between the Newton Abbot road and this most attractive block of buildings is important primarily because of this view across it: we emphasise in Chapter 5 the importance of maintaining the open aspect of this marshland, and also of riverside tree-planting on the opposite bank to screen the Broad Marsh industrial estate.

49. An even more significant approach will in future be the projected Plymouth-Torbay road (Totnes Northerly By-pass) which will probably cross the Hems, the Dart and the two railways at a height almost thirty feet above the existing flood plain. It will affect the existing approaches and the views available from them; but it will also provide an entirely new series of viewpoints stretching for almost half-a-mile at an elevation which is at present best represented by the Chateau Bellevue. From this direction the older ridge settlement of Totnes is seen against the backcloth of the green Windmill Down, with scattered houses and farm buildings well settled in their background.

50. We have dealt so far entirely with the daylight approach to the town; but at dusk and after dark an entirely new factor intrudes and intrudes very seriously. This is the yellow sodium lighting system now standardised throughout the urban area. It seems worth questioning the wisdom of such a visually destructive service when less intrusive alternatives might be found. The economic argument for "the cheapest" needs close examination here as elsewhere in the future planning in the town. Another aspect oil lighting is the floodlighting of the Castle Keep the Bridge and the Church, which has been approved in principle and is held up only by the cost: its value would be very great if the Work were skilfully done. It may be that a specialist would advise about these two aspects of illumination together.

Environment within the town.

51. We move now from the external view of the town to the intimate environment within it. The variety of landform, aspect and historic background has given the town great variety of environment from the intricate courtyards in the old town to the modern housing estates and the large-scale building of industry and commerce. These variations need to be described, because - for good or ill - they make our town. The aim of planning should be to enhance and even accentuate their strengths, to disguise or redeem their weaknesses as places to live and work and play.

52. Map 4 shows a simple division of the town into 'environmental areas' (for want of a better phrase). This division follows the pattern of historic growth shown on Map 1 - but not exactly, since some historic areas (such as The Priory) have been submerged in later buildings, while others have been cut through by modern roads (as the old Plymouth road is by the by-pass). The numbers on Map 4 follow a somewhat arbitrary sequence, but start with the old town and the town centre (areas which are described in more detail in Chapter 6) and then run outwards to the areas of more recent growth.

53. The Saxon town. Area 1 is the Saxon town as described in Chapter 2. Bounded by the Castle and the line of the old town walls, centred on the spine of High Street, this is the core of the town densely built, compact, introvert, with few views out and limited open space. Its uses are mixed - shops houses industries, offices - as are its building styles. The strong historic 'bones' of its lay-out, and the 'flesh' of characterful building, provide strong guides for its future.

54. The Mediaeval town. Area 2 in the counterpart and direct extension of Area 1 centred on the spine of Fore Street, bounded more or less clearly to the south by The Grove and Victoria Street, to the north by the backs of the long Fore Street building plots. Rather less dense than the Saxon town, with a simpler street pattern, it yet has the same strength and intricacy of form, the same mixture of functions and building styles, the same clear guide for the future.

55. The fringes of the town centre. The areas which bound the central ridge to west, north and south are mainly residential, but with an interplay of other uses and a mixture of ages and styles of building which reflect their proximity and historic relation to the old town. Thus area 3 around the Rotherfold is Elizabethan in origin, with many attractive and historic buildings around the fork of streets within it. It has a mixture of uses - hotels, garages, shops, houses - and forms effectively an 'upper end' and access point to the town centre. Northward, it runs down into Collins Road, a residential enclave between Castle and by-pass.

56. Area 4 around the old Priory orchard, north of the old town, is mainly of 19th and 20th century origin. Its quiet cul-de-sacs and terraces show that housing near the town centre - and incidentally on a north facing slope - can be attractive and popular; and its lay-out and inter-mixture of trees make it a good modest foreground to views of the town centre from Station Road and further north.

57. Area 5 south of the old town, is centred on the South Marsh which we noted earlier as having been enclosed in the 13th century by the Warland dam. Despite this enclosure, development in this part of the town followed the higher ground around the marsh, served by The Grove, Maudlin Road and later Denys Road. Thus the centre of the area has

remained in agricultural and horticultural use over the years, a pleasant rural enclave within the town and one which will need careful thought if its development (now contemplated) is to form the key to a coherent townscape south of the central ridge.

58. The Plains area 6, is an area of key importance in the life and townscape of Totnes. Part mediaeval part Elizabethan in origin; lying between the Warland dam and the river; largely domestic in scale, but industrial in function; its townscape part gracious and part tatty; its open ground largely pre-empted by stored timber, parked cars or moving vehicles - this is an area both exhilarating and exasperating in environment, and one needing comprehensive improvement while retaining most of its present physical features. We examine this further in Chapter 6.

59. The old part of Bridgetown, area 7 between the Bridge and the Newton Abbot road junction, is rightly within the designated Conservation Area. It has an important part to play in framing the westbound visitor's first view of Fore Street, in addition to its intrinsic character which emerges on more leisurely inspection. Such inspection is at present completely prevented by traffic except in the light of early dawn in summer. The destructive effect of traffic in this area is more pronounced than elsewhere in Totnes and it is difficult to see what can be done until the through traffic is much reduced. If a reduction is possible (see Chapter 4), then the reversion of the lower part of Bridgetown to its village-like character, and the establishment of a strong link with the riverside both north and south of the bridge, can be contemplated. One or two far-sighted shopkeepers have set up here already; and the development of a shopping area here should be encouraged, both as an essential service for the large number of residents in Bridgetown and to serve the tourist function which is considered in Chapter 5.

60. The river is one of the features which distinguishes Totnes from other South Devon towns. It is glimpsed in all distant views and forms the foreground in others. But its main effect is felt at the smaller scale of the streets and alleys where it combines with other smaller bodies of water to provide many combinations of town and river-scape. Imaginative use of the river frontage and of the banks of the minor waterways could greatly increase the pleasure derived from walking through the town; and generally, the river can provide a 'line of force' and a calming contrast within the town environment.

61. South of the bridge, in area 8, the appearance of the river is rightly based on its function as a navigable waterway. With the industrial port concentrated on the west side, the pleasure users on the east. The industrial riverside south of St. Peter's Quay has an excellent scale and unity of appearance, but the same cannot be said of the mixed development on the east bank. This needs creative and comprehensive thinking, particularly in relation to tourist activity, which we consider further in Chapter 5.

62. North of the bridge in area 9, the river is quieter and more secluded, starting upon its inland life as a rural stream. But here it is bounded for half-a-mile, on its western bank, by the incoherent and tawdry appearance of the industrial estate. Here is needed a clear riverside strip, not less than 20 feet wide all the way, on which a footpath can run and trees planted to screen the estate. On the opposite side the marsh between the river and the Newton Abbot road must be kept open possibly with a recreational use which is considered in Chapter 5.

63. Turning to the outer parts of the town, we consider first the uncertain townscape of Station Road and Coronation Road, area 10 on the map. This road effectively bypasses

the town centre, but not in the clean-cut way of the Kingsbridge road by-pass - in that it has a mixed bag of frontage development along most of its length. With housing cheek-by-jowl with used car lots, garages, car parks and an electricity sub-station; and a municipal garden in the crook of the road which serves the industrial estate. If this road is to continue to serve a function as a main route for traffic to and through Totnes (as seems certain), steps should be taken to cut down the conflict between this function and the other uses in this area; and many other improvements to townscape are needed.

64. West of the Kingsbridge road, area 11, is the mile-long ribbon of housing along the old Plymouth road, widening out at Collapark and Broomborough into an appreciable estate. The shifting of much Plymouth traffic onto the road through Shinnars Bridge has somewhat reduced the dangers attendant on this kind of ribbon development; but this is still the least satisfactory main road approach to Totnes, a source of danger and a wearisome long walk from the town centre for people living in it. We see no ready way to reduce the conflicts or improve the environment here. But new development north of the road, between the present houses and the railway, might (if well handled) do much to improve the pattern of access and servicing in this area and make it feel like part of the town rather than an attenuated limb.

65. North-west of the railway lies the Barracks Hill/Redworth area, 12 on the map, a pleasant suburb with housing of mixed age, the police station, and the Comprehensive School. The latter's brand-new buildings form a handsome addition to the townscape here, but the failure to look after the attendant landscape has robbed the school grounds of some of the tree-girt charm which characterises the rest of this area.

66. The Broad Marsh industrial estate area 13, has already been described (see paragraph 44 above). The only additional comment we would make is that the Mill Leat, which runs along the western edge of the estate, should be cleaned up and landscaped as the basis for a walkway through this part of the town.

67. We have also commented, in paragraph 9, on the two main parts of Upper Bridgetown, Victorian and tree-girt (area 14), recent and exposed. The tree-planting and streamside open space proposed earlier need not interrupt the fine views of the old town, the valley and the hills which can be obtained from the houses of Bridgetown, and which help to make this a very agreeable place to live.

68. As a final comment on the general town environment, we would emphasise the importance of the wide variety of trees which grace every main part of the town. Members of the Society have carried out a detailed survey of all the mature trees visible from public streets and places within the town; and we shall be making proposals for the preservation of many existing trees and for the planting of many new ones.

CHAPTER 4 - Communications.

69. The part growth and present shape of Totnes have been much influenced by communications. The location of the ford and later the bridge; the navigable river; the ancient trackways running out from the walled town; the railway; and the modern road system - these have all been strong and positive influences in shaping the town. But the post-war growth in motor traffic has given communications a negative influence also - the damaging effect of streams of motor vehicles upon the town's environment.

70. The modern problem is thus two-fold - to maintain ease of communication and access, while reducing the conflict between motor traffic and the life and physical fabric of the town. In this chapter we deal with this problem at two scales:

- a. a regional communications.
- b. the system within the town.

The traffic problem of the town centre is considered in Chapter 6.

Regional communications.

71. The impact of through traffic is the most obvious traffic problem of Totnes at present, as it lies on the main road from Torbay to Plymouth Dartmoor and the South Hams. Already, in the summer, streams of holidaymakers drive inland from Torbay through the town, causing severe congestion. The amount of traffic mounts yearly, and the average peak figures are expected to double between 1967 and 1981.

72. The major problem of through traffic should be solved by the construction of Totnes Northerly By-pass, proposed by the County Surveyor to take the traffic from Torbay to Plymouth and Dartmoor. Map 5 shows the approximate provisional route of this much-needed new road, between True Street and Dun Cross. No definite date has been given for its construction and the bulk of it was omitted from the draft Review of the County Development Plan; in our view, its construction is urgent and ought to take place within the 1970's.

75. The construction of the northerly by-pass will still leave to be solved among other problems, that of traffic bound for the South Hams. The volume of such traffic is probably not sufficient to receive separate treatment but if it can be handled to some extent on the same roads as will connect Totnes itself to the regional road system, the economic significance of the South Hams traffic combined with the Totnes traffic may justify the early changes to the town road system which are urged below.

74. At best, a number of years will elapse before the northerly by-pass is constructed, and meantime the through traffic problem will get worse and at peak summer periods remain intolerable. Such relief as is practicable should be achieved at an early date by carrying out some of the ancillary works that will eventually be needed to serve the by-pass - notably the construction of a second river bridge and link road between the Newton Abbot road and Station Road, in order to relieve pressure on Bridgetown and the present bridge and to take industrial traffic from the Broad Marsh directly onto the main road system. This main proposal is considered further below. Related to this might be an interim scheme of traffic management designed to minimise the congestion and other impact of through traffic on the present road system.

Connections between Totnes and the regional road system.

75. The northerly by-pass scheme will require a feeder or feeders into Totnes and the South Hams. We understand that no decision in the choice of feeder roads has yet been made by the County Council. Map 5 shows the points at which the northerly by-pass crosses the Paignton, Newton Abbot, Buckfastleigh, Cott and lower Plymouth roads: any of these could have junctions with the by-pass and act as feeders to the town.

76. The chosen feeders would, of course, be used by traffic coming off the by-pass and bound not only for Totnes but also for the South Hams and other places. Since much of this will still be 'through traffic', it is well to choose only those feeder routes which are suited to through traffic. In our view, neither Bridgetown Hill nor Barracks Hill are so suited, since both are steep roads serving quiet residential areas. A new road altogether might be built, possibly linking the Northerly by-pass south of Cott to the Kingsbridge road via (roughly) the line of Copland Lane - but the cost and scenic damage of this appear to outweigh the benefits.

77. The choice of feeder thus narrows down to the Ashburton Road (with a junction at Puddavine) and the Newton Abbot road. We believe the Northerly by-pass should have a junction with both these roads, since to have a single feeder road would overload that road and would force much of the through traffic wishing to join the by-pass to wind its way through the town. But the essential corollary of this two feeder system would be the construction of the new bridge and link road between the Newton Abbot and Station roads, for which a possible route is shown on Map 5. The firm choice of long-term feeder roads should be made soon since it directly affects the towns internal road system and general planning: once the decision is made road improvements within the town (including the new bridge) can be carried out in advance of the by-pass construction,

78. We would stress, in passing, that the junction at Puddavine must be so designed as not to permit Torbay-Dartmoor traffic to leave the by-pass at this point and to pass through Shinnars Bridge. This traffic ought, in our view, to be sent round by Marley Head on the A.335 and A.33 roads.

79. In considering regional communications, the railway should be kept in as important position as possible and every encouragement given to the maintenance and improvement of the service.

Movement within the town.

80. The requirement of the road system within the town is the ready passage of local traffic from one part of the town to another without interference with the life and character of the town. The essential principle is that local 'through traffic' should be kept out of shopping centres, residential areas and the like unless it needs to be there.

81. Map 5 shows the five main 'town areas' - the town centre, the old Plymouth road, Redworth, Broad Marsh and Bridgetown - each of which is in some sense a 'precinct' and should be kept free of traffic which is not directly serving it. The map also shows the 'main town roads' which currently carry local 'through traffic'. Of these only the Kingsbridge by-pass is near the planning ideal - in that it runs between, not through, the 'town areas'; serves each flanking town area by a convenient junction; and has no premises with direct

(and thus potentially dangerous) access off it. Station Road has a similar route between town areas, but has many direct accesses onto it and a number of points of pedestrian conflict.

82. All the other main town roads run directly through town areas. Ashburton road is wide, with good visibility and only a few direct accesses onto it, while the two parts of the school severed by it have recently been linked by a footbridge: thus the conflict between road and local life are not serious. Bridgetown Hill, above the traffic lights, is also wide, with limited frontage access and few conflicts. Higher Plymouth road is less satisfactory, being narrow, and with direct access from many houses. But there is no obvious alternative route for the traffic on this road; and the long-term solution must be to cut down the number of direct access points, a process which could be related to the possible development of land north of the road proposed in Chapter 5.

83. The most serious problem is the traffic on the ancient 'spine' of the town - from the Bridgetown traffic lights, over the bridge and up Fore Street and High Street. Traffic on these narrow, historic roads, with their dense frontage development and activity ought to be kept to the minimum. To this end, we propose the new bridge and link road between the Newton Abbot and Station roads, which can provide direct relief (possibly with one-way working) to Bridgetown and Totnes Bridge; and, in Chapter 6, measures to restrict traffic on Fore and High Streets to that which really needs to be there.

84. A final aspect of the main system of town roads is the damaging effect which industrial and commercial traffic, primarily from Messrs. Reeves, has upon the environment of The Plains: as proposed in Chapter 5, this area needs comprehensive thought about traffic and other matters. Related to this is a conclusion which emerges clearly from Map 5, that no road should be constructed which would encourage local or other through traffic to pass through the area immediately south of the town centre. We comment further on this in Chapter 6.

85. As a complement to its road system, the town needs a system of footpaths to provide easy and safe access on foot between the residential areas and the town centre and places of work or recreation. We describe in Chapter 5 the form which such a system might take.

CHAPTER 5 - Tourism and recreation.

86. South West England receives each year over one-fifth of all British holidaymakers, say 6 million, and 23.7% of all foreign visitors to Britain, say 100,000. These figures are both growing - that for British holidaymakers modestly, that for foreign visitors very rapidly. This growth is due partly to the growing efforts within the region to attract more visitors; and partly to the dramatic increase in the region's accessibility, which will result from completion of the M4 and M5 motorways and the 'spine road' to Plymouth.

87. The post-war growth in visitors to the region has been accompanied by substantial changes in their demands, notably a great increase in the proportion of those seeking "self-catering" accommodation (holiday flats, cottages, chalets, caravans, and tents) and those using the car as their means of holiday transport. There has also been a marked growth in second holidays, which largely take place outside the main July/August season. The increased accessibility of the region by road is likely to further increase these trends of change and in particular to growth in demands for out-of-season holidays, Weekend visits, and for ownership of second-homes in the region.

83. Of the total holiday accommodation in the region, Devon has about half; and of the Devon total, almost half again is in the Torbay area, with a further 15,000 tourist beds falling within the South Hams. Thus Totnes is very near the large concentrations of tourist accommodation; and it is estimated that there are 590 tourist beds in Totnes and District plus, at the peak period of 1968 season, 162 caravans, 155 tents and 164 carets. Moreover, being within 6 miles of the A38 "spine road", Totnes is highly accessible to the expected growth of tourist traffic.

89. For these reasons, Totnes has forced on it a tourist function already; and its position on an attractive navigable river its castle and historic centre, its proximity to Dartington Hall and (most recently) the opening of the Dart Valley Railway all bring tourists directly to it, in addition to those who are forced to pass through it by the present road pattern. The town thus has to face the consequences of a present tourist function and can also consider the possibility of a substantial increase in that function.

90. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the town's function in tourism is of three kinds - a focus of tourist routes; hotel and other accommodation; and an attraction to day visitors. We consider these briefly in turn.

91. The radial roads leading to and through Totnes the navigable river, the main line and Dart Valley railways - these make the town into a focus of tourist routes. At present these routes are not fully related to each other notably in the lack of an easy public-transport link between the steamer quay and the two railway stations. The variety of tourist routes to the town could, with imagination be turned to good account - provided, of course, the tourist traffic not interested in the town can be cleared off the town's road system. We expressed earlier our strong concern about the impact which through-traffic, and notably touristic traffic between Torbay and other areas places upon Totnes; and urged the early construction of the Totnes Northerly By-pass and constructive thinking about traffic management and road works in the interim.

92. The tourist accommodation in the town takes the form mainly of hotels guest-houses and places offering bed & breakfast all of which are in permanent buildings and help to sustain the built fabric of the town.

Some of the hotels, notably the Royal Seven Stars and the Seymour, occupy critical positions in the townscape. Such built accommodation seems to us completely consistent with the character of the town. We would welcome action such as encouragement of off-season educational activity in the town, which served to sustain the economy of such establishments; and would like to see the range of the services they offer and in some cases the appearance of the premises improved. As trade grows we would welcome a modest growth in the amount of such accommodation in the town, particularly where it can be created by suitable conversion of historic buildings.

98. A different form of accommodation, namely caravans, is established near the steamer quay. We have reservations about the wisdom of increasing such accommodation further in the Borough in view of the necessarily seasonal nature of the use and its effect upon the townscape. The site near the steamer quay should not be exempt in our view, from the review of functions on the east side of the river which we mentioned earlier and discuss in more detail below.

94. The town already receives many day visitors. We believe that this activity closely related to the scenic and historic resources of the town, is to be welcomed; and could with care be substantially extended. This extension seems to us to require delicate planning, aimed primarily at linking together the existing features into a coherent set of attractions: and interlocking the facilities which are required, particularly car parks and other communications, with those which are required by the townspeople themselves.

95. The main existing touristic features of Totnes and its immediate environs are shown on Map 6. They include:

- a. The main approach roads, which bring the visitor to the town and which (as described in Chapter 3) give him splendid views of the historic town and its rural setting. Once relieved of through traffic, these roads will become elements of pleasure in themselves, leading the visitor into the town, enticing him to stay.
- b. The bus terminus at The Plains, a feature of visual incongruity but great convenience of which the future siting needs careful thought.
- c. The navigable river, with its steamer service and quay, its boating and other features.
- d. The main line railway with the passenger station which serves the South Hams as well as the Totnes area, set at a rather awkward distance from the town centre and the features round the bridge.
- e. The Dart Valley railway with its new station just north of the river, to which provisions for foot access are now being made, but which should also be linked by public transport to The Plains and the steamer quay.
- f. Most important of all the 'golden core' of the historic town centre, with its historic features, shops, restaurants and other attractions and its extension into the historic buildings and shops of Bridgetown.
- g. Other tourist features beside the river, including the Island, the Seymour and Royal Seven Stars hotels, the Steam Packet Inn, the Motor Museum, caravan site and boat-yard.
- h. Features further afield, including Dartington Hall and gardens, the shop and restaurant at Shinnars Bridge, the Cott Inn, the Chateau Bellevue.

96. These diverse features need to be linked together physically and in terms of information, to form a coherent set of attractions. This linkage should include a public-transport connection between the bridge area and the railway stations; improved car parking, footpaths information signs; and other features. But, above all it seems to us to need three major creative actions which could turn a rather pragmatic and fragmented approach to tourism into a serious well-managed asset of lasting benefit to the town. These actions are described below.

97. First, the creation of an attractive information and reception centre for visitors - a place where they can understand the town's history, learn what it has to offer, see its crafts and activities, and find basic services and possibly refreshments. A town of the quality of Totnes is - in a sense - a theatre, a shop, a museum, a restaurant, a show-piece all rolled into one. This reception centre should be its foyer, its shop-window its guide and interpreter - receiving the visitor enthusing informing and diverting him. It should be created somewhere near the bridge perhaps on The Plains, within reach of the steamer quay, and town centre, the bus station and a car park. It might be in a new building or - perhaps better - in an older one converted. It could be initiated by public or private enterprise or both. It would be the focus of the town's whole tourist effort.

98. Second, there should be a comprehensive new look at the riverside, particularly downstream of the bridge. The river, its banks, its buildings and walks and trees, could be an unsullied delight. Too much about it now is tawdry and uncertain, from the industrial buildings fronting on The Plains to the spatter of buildings and the dying trees of the east bank and the Long Marsh. We have emphasised earlier the need for comprehensive improvement of The Plains and the riverside below Bridgetown. This re-appraisal should extend right through from the southern end of the long Marsh - with very searching thought about the impact of the proposed marina before further action is taken on this feature - up past the bridge and round the Broad Marsh industrial estate to the railway bridge and the link across to the Dart Valley railway station. It might include a new use for the marsh and floodplain north of Bridgetown, consistent with keeping that land fully open, green and undeveloped.

99. Third, the interests of tourism sharply accentuate the need to protect, enhance and 'unfurl' the historic core of Totnes. We do not wish merely to protect the town, but rather to see it given always new life. Receiving and enthusing visitors is part of that new life. Those who plan the town and conserve the town centre should look for opportunities for creative use for tourism of the historic fabric. We examine this further in Chapter 6.

Recreation facilities within the town.

100. The above emphasis on tourism is not meant to imply that we regard the recreational needs of Totnes people themselves as secondary. They have the prior claim upon the riverside, the parks and other recreation facilities in the town. It is very important that the proposed tourist facilities should be seen as the means of creating, through tourist revenue, features of direct value to the people of the town; and as the core of the town's system of recreation.

101. Map 6 shows some of the main elements, existing or potential in this system. In addition to the tourist features already described, they include the Borough Park and a number of existing footpaths and minor open spaces. These could be complemented by four significant new open spaces to east and west of the town - the streamside strip

through the heart of Bridgetown; the field below the Castle; the grounds of Follaton House; and the meadows between Copland Lane and the railway, which are south-facing and have many lovely trees as well as the attractive brook of the Malt Mill Lake. This same brook runs through the town near Station Road, linking with the Mill Leat: both of these streams could be cleared up and graced with tree planting and footpaths to form delightful elements of the town's recreation system. Elsewhere, new footpath (and, in places, bridleway) links could be created, running through the town and outwards into the countryside beyond.

CHAPTER 6 - The Town Centre.

102. The town centre needs a chapter on its own - for the reason that its quality is very special, its activities are complex, its problems are difficult and pressing. Moreover it is the subject of a distinct official plan now being prepared in parallel to the Town Map Review; and its core is defined as a Conservation Area, with a special committee representative of the Borough Council, the Chamber of Trade and other interests including the Society.

103. For the present purpose, we have taken the town centre to include not only the historic core containing the main shopping streets, but also the surrounding area through which traffic must pass to reach that core or which are closely related in function and history to it. Thus the town centre is bounded by the Kingsbridge road by-pass, Station 3oad and Coronation Road to the north, the river to the east, and Maudlin Road to the south; and has a small "bud" on the east bank of the river, in the form of the old part of Bridgetown.

104. In this chapter, we briefly examine the whole of this area in relation to the main factors by which Totnes itself was considered earlier - namely history, functions, environment, traffic and tourism. We then summarise the policies which appear to emerge from this, and apply these policies to each of the eight environmental areas which were defined in Map 4 and Chapter 3 as lying within the town centre. Finally, we consider the broad implications for initiative and finance.

105. History. The history of Totnes described in Chapter 2 is essentially the history of the town centre. Little over a century ago, Totnes was what is now the town centre - a town built on the top and sides of a single ridge with an arm flung out to the south along Maudlin Road, and an easterly bud in Bridgetown. Almost everything of historic value in the town is within this area, and a magnificent heritage it makes. Magnificent but a daunting heritage, one which has to be lived in and lived up to adapted constantly to changing life and yet maintained and enhanced: a national treasure which is ours in trust, to use but not diminish. This challenge dominates our approach to the town centre - how to fit it to modern life while conserving the essence of its past.

106. Function. As the town centre was once the whole town, so it has had all the town's function in the past. It has been the agricultural centre: though the cattle market has moved out, some of this function remains. It contains, indeed is centred on, the shopping centre. It has a rich range of other services - schools, churches, municipal offices, banks, surgeries and many professional offices. It embraces the old port, and retains some of that function. No longer the main seat of the town's industry and commerce, it yet contains a good deal of such employment. As for tourism the centre is the chief magnet for visitors to the town, containing the historic attractions and most of the shops hotels and other services for the visitor. Finally, it is an important residential area, not only in the housing to north and south of the main ridge, but in houses and flats intermixed with the shops and offices of High Street and Fore Street and clustering round the Castle and the Narrows.

107. Here, more than anywhere in the town, clear thought is needed about these functions, the effect they have on the place and upon each other. To separate the functions artificially could sterilise the town; to force them on each other, also artificially, could lead to conflict and congestion. In simple terms, we see:

- a. the 'core' of the centre (i.e. the older parts from the Rotherfold to Bridgetown, via High Street and Fore Street) as having a combination of four main functions – shopping, services, tourism and housing - with such other elements (e.g. of light industry) as are compatible with these main functions and with the character of the 'core',
- b. the fringes of this 'core', to west, north and south (areas 3, 4, and 5 on Map 4) as being mainly residential,
- c. the Plains and the riverfront, now used for an uncertain mixture of functions, as having a dominant future use for recreation and tourism with industry, commerce and other uses in a secondary role.

108. Traffic. We stated in Chapter 4 that the whole town centre should be treated as a precinct and kept free of traffic which is not directly serving it. The three main conclusions from this are that:

- a. the pressure of through traffic on Bridgetown, the Bridge and the Plains should be cut down as much as possible, mainly by the early construction of a new bridge and link road between the Newton Abbot and Station roads,
- b. through traffic should be prevented from passing through the heart of the town centre along Fore Street/High Street. We suggest later how this might be achieved,
- c. no other route which might be used by through traffic (such as the southern relief road which has been much discussed) should be created within the central area.

109. There remains the major problem of handling the traffic which is directly serving the town centre. To thrive as a shopping centre, to provide viable housing to attract tourists - indeed to serve any modern function - the town centre must be accessible by vehicle. This is not to say that any vehicle should be able to get right up to every building in the town centre. But reasonable convenience in moving into the centre, parking, servicing business premises, or driving and garaging the car near to house or flat, can fairly be expected - and, with sound planning, should be fully compatible with the safety, amenity and structural well-being of the town. We suggest later the principles which might guide a solution to the traffic needs of the town centre.

110. Tourism and recreation. As emphasised in Chapter 5, the historic 'core' of the town is the crown jewel of tourism and recreation in Totnes - its promenade, its theatre, its store-room of delight. The historic heritage should not be a dead thing, displayed in a glass case, but rather a living asset, unfurled to stimulate the resident and the visitor. Historic features should be seen, not hidden; the river opened to view; the Plains redeemed as a 'town square'; the many facets of the town - trees, alleys, inns, gardens, towers and paving-stones - knitted together to give pleasure.

Policies for the town centre.

111. In summary we see the future of the town centre as being based on these principles:

- to maintain and enhance the historic heritage while adapting it to modern life
- to fulfil a range of functions - notably shopping, services, tourism and housing - without congestion or artificial separation between them,
- to keep through traffic out of the town centre

- to provide reasonable convenience of vehicular access to the town centre, consistent with safety, amenity and structural well-being
- to act as the centre-piece of recreation and tourism in the town.

What do these principles imply for the main parts of the town centre?

The Saxon Town.

112. The Saxon town (area 1 on Map 4) was briefly described in Chapters 2 and 3. Densely built, compact, introvert, it contains the upper of the two shopping centres which form the heart of Totnes; the main historic features - castle, church, guild-hall, butter-walk and many fine merchants' houses; and, in the long rows running back from the High Street, an intricate mixture of buildings and activities. In High Street itself, the scale and variety of building produces townscape of a high order, and most of the modern additions notably the Civic Hall and attendant shops, have enhanced this effect. Castle Street and the Narrows have a subtle modesty and complexity of width, slope and building shape which neatly complements the height and austerity of the castle and the openness of its grounds. It is on the line of the old town walls - South Street and North Street - that lapses in townscape occur. The building line on South Street is beginning to be breached, and a number of other buildings on it are decrepit. The building line on North Street has almost been obliterated and presents a sorry medley of use and disuse.

113. The main challenge in this area is to sustain and even recreate the bones of the historic structure, while meeting modern needs for access and the use of buildings. As far as access is concerned, we see no need to prevent vehicles of moderate size using the High Street and Castle Street east of the narrows; but the bulk of the car parking space for this area should be provided immediately outside it, e.g. off North Street and South Street or beyond the Rotherfold, as it is now. We suggest also that the very short stretch of High Street Narrows, between Castle Street and South Street junctions, might be closed to all but emergency (e.g. fire-engine) or immediate service traffic - not so much for the sake of pedestrians, though this is a very narrow street, but simply to provide the critical break in the through-traffic route which the High Street now provides. We believe this simple mechanism would achieve that major purpose with minimum pain.

114. The use of building in this oldest part of the town is an even trickier matter. Most of the High Street properties are apparently well-used and maintained as shops. But in fact, many of the upper floors on the street frontage are unused or under-used; many backyard buildings are difficult to use at all to modern standards; those who use them have to put up with much inconvenience; and the lack of maintenance which accompanies under-use presents a real threat to the historic fabric. Really creative thought is needed about how to fit these buildings to modern life and so justify their economic maintenance. This may involve conversion of upper floors into flats careful carving out of rear service courts and gardens, creation of new accesses, cutting through property boundaries and party Walls - in fact an exercise in fine-scale urban surgery to keep the historic body healthy. Such action needs to take a 'street block' at a time; and it may be that the first such scheme should apply to the block bounded by High Street, Castle Street, North Street and the church, where the problems are as severe and urgent as anywhere in the town centre.

The Mediaeval Town.

115. The mediaeval town (area 2 on Map 4) was described in Chapters 2 and 3. It is centred on the spine of Fore Street, and bounded to the south by the Grove and Victoria Street to the north by the backs of the long Fore Street building plots. It contains the lower of the two shopping centres; many public buildings and services; and a good deal of unobtrusive housing in the long courtyards and alleys behind. Though rather simpler in layout than the Saxon town, it has much the same strength of townscape, with an agreeable scale and liveliness. To the south its building plots are even longer than those off High Street in places well over 200 yards, with very different problems of access to the premises in them. To the north there is no clear back line to the plots, which merge into the development around Priory Avenue and Manor Way.

116. Thus the problems of access and use of buildings are almost more severe here than in High Street. Fore Street itself, and Station Road, can continue to be used for access and parking, but supplementary car parking is clearly needed behind the frontage to north and south. Sites might be found near the Conservative Club to the north and off the Grove to the south. As for use of buildings, the deep street block south of Fore Street appears to need comprehensive thought in the same way as that north of High Street (see paragraph 114 above), but perhaps with a greater volume of new development carefully inserted into the pattern of lengthy properties. This new development might include some high-density town housing and also the use for industry or other employment of such buildings as the disused Works behind the 'Totnes Times' and along Bank Lane. The present and potential value of this area for housing might mean that the Housing Act powers for improvement areas would be relevant here.

Fringes of the Town Centre.

117. The areas which bound the central ridge to west, north and south - areas 3, 4 and 5, as shown on Map 4 and as described in Chapter 3 - are mainly residential. They should be protected and developed as such.

118. Area 3, round the Rotherfold, forms the upper end and access point to the town centre. Having grown around a fork of radial tracks, its townscape is now moulded by these roads and not clearly focussed on a centre. With the removal of through traffic, however, this area could be given a new 'sense of place' - while still containing an access route to, and indeed a car park for the town centre. This sense of place could be focussed on the Rotherfold, which could have a new life as a small shopping centre and civic square. With an imaginative scheme for the Rotherfold (we suggest a design competition to secure such a scheme) and clear thinking about traffic, this part of the town should 'pick up' steadily as a residential area with a sprinkling of shops, services and tourist features such as the Kingsbridge Inn.

119. Area 4 round the old Priory orchard, is a pleasant quiet residential district, needing no improvement except perhaps, some planting of trees, removal of wirescape and creation of footpaths into the shopping centres and along the Malt Mill Lake. Car parks serving the shopping centres may have to be placed within the southern fringe of this area, but should be so located and served by road as not to impinge on the privacy and amenity of the housing areas.

120. Area 5 south of the old town, comprises an irregular ring of housing around what was the South Marsh and is now largely market gardens. Like its northern counterpart, this area needs little improvement, apart from the removal of all unnecessary traffic

(particularly from Maudlin Road and Moat Hill) and the creation of few new footpath links which were shown on Map 6. In particular, the temptation to push through here a 'southerly relief road' should be firmly resisted. Certainly this area has a function, on its northern edge, to provide car parks to serve the High Street and Fore Street shopping centres. But these car parks should be so placed and so managed as to minimise the needs for any new length of road additional to South Street, the Grove and Victoria Street. Short new pieces of road may in fact, be needed at the east end of Victoria Street and the linking Leechwell Street to South Street; but the resulting road systems should be treated, not as a continuous route, but rather as two cul-de-sacs leading from west and east to a car park or pair of car parks, through movement being impossible without using (and paying to use) the car park on the way.

121. In Chapter 3, we noted the nursery gardens of the south marsh as land potentially developable. We see no urgency in developing it: the gardens are attractive. When it is developed, it should be within a comprehensive scheme and for a fairly high-density use, in housing and/or non-industrial employment; and its road access should be a loop or cul-de-sac to discourage irrelevant traffic.

The Plains, Bridgetown and the river.

122. In Chapter 3, we described the Plains (area 6 on Map 4) as an area of key importance in the life and townscape of Totnes, and in need of comprehensive improvement. This used to be an attractive riverside square or open space, the main promenade of the town. It still has something of this function as a visit on Sunday morning will show; but the charm has been overlaid by industry traffic and incongruous building. The Plains need to be redeemed and revitalised with a main emphasis on recreation and tourism. Here might be the tourist reception and information centre proposed in Chapter 5; the river might be made more visible and accessible: the remaining historic buildings might be given suitable uses and a comprehensive face lift: the housing of Ticklemore Street and Warland might be made the subject of an Improvement Scheme. But the two major problems are industry and traffic: the County and Borough Councils are urged to enter into discussions with Messrs. Reeves to see whether any of the industrial uses can be moved out of the immediate Plains area, and whether the pressure of industrial traffic through the Plains can be reduced.

123. Proposals for improvement of the old part of Bridgetown, and of the river frontages were made in Chapters 3 and 5. This improvement is a direct complement of that needed on the Plains, with a strong emphasis on tourism and recreation. The buildings of Bridgetown within the Conservation Area, though generally in better condition than those in Fore Street and High Street, would be eligible in principle for treatment Within the Town Scheme proposed below.

Initiative and Finance.

124. Map 7 illustrates the main proposals for the town centre described above. These may be summarised as follows:

- a. Construction of the new river bridge and link road between the Newton Abbot and Station Roads, with consequent relief to Coronation Road, Bridgetown and the bridge.
- b. Reduction of industrial traffic through the Plains.

- c. A clarified system of access roads and car parks to serve the town centre, designed to discourage through traffic to provide adequate access and car parking and to avoid disruption of the primarily residential areas to west, north and south of the old town.
- d. The approximate boundary of the area which should have a combination of four main functions - shopping, services, tourism and housing.
- e. Areas needing comprehensive improvement schemes namely,
 - three street blocks north and south of High Street needing careful adaptation to modern use,
 - the large block south of Fore Street needing comprehensive improvement and infilling, possibly using Housing Act powers,
 - the Plains and neighbouring streets, which need radical renewal for tourism, recreation and housing with industry as a secondary use,
 - the Rotherfold area, which could become the centre for the revival of the neighbourhood west of the Narrows,
- f. The open area south of the old town, which (if developed) should be the subject of a comprehensive scheme for high-density in housing and/or non-industrial employment.
- g. The main proposals for new open spaces (on the field below the castle) and for riverside or streamside footpaths.

125. Not shown on the plan, but an essential corollary to the traffic measures proposed, is the need to restrict the size and weight of vehicles allowed to enter the streets serving the shopping centre. In 1970, the Society gave evidence to the Civic Trust of the impact upon the town centre by heavy lorries and other large vehicles - impact which includes frequent direct damage to buildings, blocking of traffic, impeding of pedestrians, noise, fumes and vibration. The national report on 'heavy lorries' produced by the Trust showed clearly that this type of impact is a major and widespread problem; and proposed, among other things, clear restrictions on size and weight of vehicles entering town centres. We believe, such restrictions are essential for Totnes. The recent construction of an N.C.L. depot at Newton Abbot, where goods can be trans-shipped from large long-distance lorries to local delivery vehicles shows that the commercial trade can adjust itself to meet such restrictions.

126. The main responsibility for initiating action on these and other improvements must clearly rest with the County and Borough Councils as planning, housing and highway authorities. But in a situation of such mixed uses, fragmented ownership and high public interest, it will be both essential and practicable to enlist the help and collaboration of other people - notably the property owners themselves and the Chamber of Trade. The Society will give all the help it can to such collaborative work. Already, a good working relationship is being established between the local authorities, the Chamber of Trade, the Totnes Museum Society, ourselves and others, with its most formal expression in the Conservation Area Committee; and it may be that this Committee could be strengthened and its brief extended as the pace of creative work increases.

127. The obvious example of collaboration, in a full financial sense is the improvement of town centre housing by private owners, with grants from the Borough Council. These grants can have a higher than normal level where historic buildings are concerned, and we hope the Borough will be able to take a generous view in this connection. The more extensive provisions for Improvement Areas not only within the houses, but also in infilling with new houses, creation of small urban open spaces, tree-planting, car-parking facilities

and so on. These powers might particularly apply to the Street block south of Fore Street and the Warlands-Ticklemore Street area.

128. But the powers and grants for housing improvement are not alone enough to solve the difficult problems of repair maintenance, structural improvement and (where suitable) conversion of the many historic buildings which form the heart of Totnes. In 1970, through the Totnes Conservation Area Committee, the Society made the proposal to the County and Borough Councils that Totnes should be the subject of a 'town scheme' under the auspices of the Historic Buildings Council. The object of such a scheme is to provide funds for the repair and upkeep of buildings, or groups of buildings, of outstanding historic or architectural interest within a designated area. The standards required for such building would be high, the fact that they were 'listed' would not be enough, the criteria would be that of national rather than local importance. It is thought that Totnes would contain many buildings, or groups of buildings, reaching this standard.

129. The 'town scheme' is a means of combining the grant powers of the Government (through the Historic Buildings Council) and the local authority, each contributing an equal amount towards the cost of approved structural repairs. The total cost is contributed as follows:

Government	25%
Local Authority (in this case Totnes Borough Council and/or Devon County Council)	25%
Owner	50%

Initiative for such a Scheme has to be made to the Government by the Local Authority and, if it is approved, operated by them. Each application for a grant must be approved by the Department of the Environment, their architect approving both the subject and scope of the work and issuing a clearance certificate before the grant money is paid.

130. From reactions received by the Society from the Civic Trust, Historic Buildings Council and the Devon County Council, it would seem that Totnes is an ideal subject for such a Scheme, furthermore, there is very little doubt that if it were possible to maintain the major historic buildings in the town in sound structural repair, they would be more likely to continue as viable working structures.

131. Associated with this scheme might be an Historic Buildings Trust, designed to encourage or initiate structural repair, preservation and effective use of historic buildings in Totnes (or possibly a wider area). This Trust might be able to initiate work such as that which saved any historic buildings in the Barbican area of Plymouth; or to follow the procedure of the Small Houses Improvement Fund (set up by the National Trust for Scotland and aided by the Pilgrim Trust), whereby historic buildings in poor condition are purchased, restored and either sold (subject to covenant) or leased, the money then 'revolving' to finance other work. The Trust might also assist property owners and the local authority by carrying out, on request, regular structural surveys of all historic buildings in the town. The Society will be ready to play a part in initiating such a Trust.

132. Less fundamental improvements to the town could also with great benefit, be initiated by collaboration effort - namely facelift schemes for the main shopping streets, the Plains and possibly other areas, on the lines of those initiated at Norwich and elsewhere by the Civic Trust. Totnes has already had one such scheme, and many of its premises are

already well-maintained and decorated; but other areas are tawdry and unkempt with a clutter of street furniture poor detailing in such things as ground surfaces and car parking provision, lack of trees and seats and other features. A series of facelift schemes - to include the placing underground, or out of sight of unsightly wires and other services - could do much to rejuvenate the town's appearance.

CONCLUSION

133. In conclusion, the Society wishes to re-emphasise that this document is not a plan; but is rather a statement of the values which the Society believes to be at stake in Totnes, and of the principles which it hopes can be observed in the planning of the town. The main initiative in planning must rest with the County and Borough Councils: The Society's purpose is not to usurp that initiative, but rather to assist the official planning effort by setting out principles and ideas. Such detailed suggestions as do appear here are given rather as illustrations than as definite solutions since it will be for the official bodies to judge their legal and financial feasibility.

134. We have, however, been mindful of finance. A few of our proposals - notably the second river bridge and link road across Broad Marsh - involve quite a large capital expenditure. Others - such as the improvement schemes around the High and Fore Streets - involve a good deal of 'thinking money', in the sense of detailed professional surveys. But we have confined our specific proposals to matters which seem essential to the town, and we believe that none of them is out-of-scale with the town and its resources.

135. In relation to capital expenditure, we would point out:

- a. that the expenditure involved in development and improvement of the kinds proposed could be spread over a period of twenty to thirty years - provided of course, that a start is soon made on the most urgent items,
- b. that local government reform can be expected soon to extend the local tax base upon which local government expenditure depends,
- c. that finance from central government will be available for certain items, notably major road expenditure and (through a 'town scheme') the structural repair of historic buildings,
- d. that sound planning and creative initiative by public bodies can encourage expenditure by property owners commercial and even voluntary interests in the town.

136. In these ways, the load of capital expenditure can be shared between various public and private interests. We shouldn't, however, disguise the fact that we believe a higher level of capital expenditure by local authorities (for example, in relation to housing improvement) may be needed and justified. On the income side, many of our proposals should have the effect of increasing rateable values within the town, and/or of encouraging the flow of money into the town and in particular into the maintenance of its buildings.

137. The Society will value discussion with the local authorities and others about the future of Totnes; and will welcome opportunities to assist sound development and planning, for example in relation to the reception centre for tourists. In particular, it intends to pursue in more detail a number of the proposals in this report, including the protection of existing and the planting of new trees; the improvement of rights of way, and creation of new links where possible; measures to encourage public interest in historic buildings.

Totnes and Dartington Outline Plan in 1972

