

What is a Town Plan?

A **Town Plan** is how the community sees itself developing over the coming years being sensitive to the character of the town and the style of existing properties.

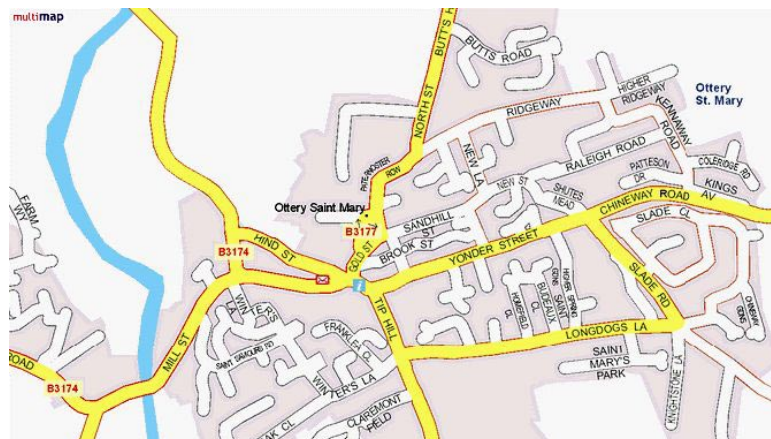
- It should reflect the views of all sections of the community.
- Identify which features and local characteristics people value.
- Identify local problems and opportunities.
- Indicate ways to improve what facilities we have.
- Spell out how residents want the community to develop in the future.
- Prepare a plan of action to achieve this vision

The Town Plan is...

- About managing change, not preventing it.
- Concerned with how future development is carried out, in harmony with its setting, contributing to the conservation and enhancement of the environment.
- A “Town” acknowledges the variety of building styles and materials over a considerable period of development and enables individual proposals to be considered on their particular merits.

Planning Guidelines

- Development should be sensitive to the towns “friendly” image so that its character remains.



Ottery St Mary Town Area Location

Ottery St Mary is one of the oldest and most historic towns in Devon. It lies in the green valley of the river Otter, twelve miles east of Exeter and six miles inland from the coastal resort of Sidmouth. The area of the Town covers some 125 hectares or some 300 acres.



At the beginning of the 19th Century Ottery was the largest town in East Devon and even the 1891 census indicates that it was the second largest apart from Exmouth having a slightly higher population than Sidmouth.

Compared with other towns it has not therefore expanded so rapidly this century, although much post 1945 development has occurred, mainly to the south and east of the historic centre. The decline of its textile industry, loss of rail communication and location away from existing main transport routes probably accounts for this.

According to the Census of 2001, Ottery St Mary Town had a population of 4366, of which 46% are male and 54% female. This can be further broken down into the following age groups. Under 16yrs / 18.6%, 16/19yrs 4.8%, 20/29yrs 8.9%, 30/59yrs 38.6%, 60/74yrs 16.8% and 75+ years 12.4%

Historic and Topographical Background

To every town of any antiquity there is a history; a small mirror of enduring humanity reflecting the manners and customs, joys and sorrows, charities and tyrannies, the loves and hates of each successive age.

The working men of Ottery once travelled the meandering lane from their fields to grind their corn in the town mill, and more than eight hundred years ago dammed the river at Head Weir and took its waters along the Mill Stream that we can stroll beside today.



Mill Stream

The earliest document in which the name “Otrei” appears is a Saxon Charter dated 1061 whereby the bounds of the Manor and Town were fixed by Edward the Confessor who granted this wealthy manor to the Chapter of the Cathedral Church of St Marie at Rouen in Normandy. This hindered the prosperity of the town, for much of the wealth produced by the inhabitants went to feed the monks at Rouen.

Parish Church



Bishop John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter, purchased it in 1334; and in 1337, he enlarged the small Norman church, closely modelling it on the splendid Cathedral Church of St Peter in Exeter and founded a College of Canons, with 40 members in all. The whole was suppressed by Henry VIII in 1545 and the fabric of the church and a small residue of the collegiate property, were transferred to a body of four governors, to whom Edward VI added eight assistants in 1552.

These are still the legal owners and guardians of the Parish Church and churchyard. Other property transferred was Grandisson’s School as this was refounded as “The Kings New Grammar School”.



Samuel Taylor Coleridge



Chanters House, Birthplace of Samuel Coleridge

John Coleridge (1719-81) was the Vicar of Ottery and Master of the Grammar School and his son Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), the famous Poet and Philosopher, received his early schooling here in Ottery. A Plaque on the churchyard wall commemorates him and has the words “*He prayeth best who loveth best*”. The town reputedly also has important association with Sir Walter Raleigh who lived in Ottery for a time, and it also became the headquarters of Fairfax for a month during the Civil War. Oliver Cromwell also met with Fairfax in the town to plan the next stage of their campaign. On the 21st November 1688, Prince William of Orange dined in the town collected a section of his troops already stationed in Ottery and made his way to Axminster where he reorganised his army before proceeding to London to claim the crown from James II.

Ottery St Mary is also the setting for a large part of W M Thackeray’s famous novel “Pendennis”. Larkbeare, a residence in the town of Ottery then occupied by his stepfather, is where Thackeray used to spend his holidays when at Charterhouse, and may be taken as the “Fairoaks” of the story. Escot, nearby is probably “Clavering Park” whilst “Clavering St Mary” is Ottery itself.

Landmarks and Special Features

The Ottery St Mary Conservation Area incorporates the historic market and ecclesiastical centre, most of the 19th Century suburbs, and a large area of historic landscape to the north and west of the town, including the small hamlet of Dunkirk in a wooded setting just to the northwest of the main urban area.

The present Conservation Area was first designated in 1973 with a large extension added in November 1983. Within the existing Conservation Area there are some 50 Listed Buildings as shown on East Devon District Council Map of the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area can be subdivided into separate areas, which help to understand the social and economic factors which have governed the development of the town. These are briefly described:

Town Centre- This sub-area consists of the commercial heart of the town centred on Broad Street where traffic flows converge. The landscape is somewhat disappointing with few buildings of distinction



Broad Street

Parish Church Setting By contrast this part of the town is of exceptional quality in terms of historic interest, townscape and spatial arrangement of buildings.



Parish Church from Silver Street

The Parish Church is understandably a building of national renown, however it is the group that consists also of The Chanter's House, Manor House, Warden's House, The Vicars' House, Town Hall and fine 18th Century town houses fronting Cornhill and Paternoster Row that endows this part of the town with such unique character.

Eastern Approaches - Yonder Street is an important entry point to the town from the East. It is unfortunate that it becomes very congested with traffic due mainly to parked vehicles in the street and the unloading of goods to retail shops. However, **Yonder Street** and **Jesu Street** have a pleasant quite intimate scale and with the continuously changing alignment of building groups provide considerable visual contrast, further enhanced by a range of building styles and materials.



Jesu Street

As in the town centre there has been fairly extensive loss of original frontages, a bad example being Sherman House, where a plaque records an original date of 1572 and a supposed restoration of 1972. This is a classic example of what damage can be done by insensitive alterations and planning disguising virtually all the historic fabric of the building.

Sandhill Street - running parallel with Yonder Street, is a quiet backwater with some plain and relatively unharmed mainly 19th Century short terraces of considerable quality and variety.

North Street and Paternoster Row This is another important entry point into the town with considerable variations in architectural style and aspect. Like the eastern approach traffic flow is considerable and it is again unfortunate that parked vehicles make the approach to Paternoster Row so congested. There are an important series of vistas into the town as the bend between North Street and Paternoster Row reveals an intriguing glimpse of the twin towers of the Parish Church which then come dramatically back into view when making a final left turn. With a combination of brick, pastel-painted render and the sections of exposed stonework this again is townscape at its best.

Mill Street and Former Mills A significant part of the town historically, since it reflects important phases of the town's industrial past.



Mill Street

Until recently it contained a major manufacturing enterprise which now lies derelict awaiting sympathetic development which will cater for the town's needs. In addition, in close proximity to the River Otter is the Mill Leat which forms much of the western boundary of the Conservation Area.

The area is further characterised by a striking pair of 1911 houses, some fairly plain 19th Century terraces, and two fine 18th Century town houses. There is also the striking former Wesleyan Chapel frontage dated 1829.

Hind Street to Dunkirk – This part of the town is dominated by public car parks in Hind Street and Canaan Way.

There is also a car park in Brook Street. Canaan Way is carefully landscaped and is a pleasant open space with footpaths and a children's play area. A footpath leads to the historic Tumbling Weir which is at the end of Mill Leat close to the historic Mill building.



Mill Leat

Dunkirk comprises a small group of houses and a lodge with interesting detail – brick, tile and tile hanging and an especially ornate pair of iron gates.

Butts Hill, Cadhay Bridge Farm and Landscape Between There is a large area of both open and wooded landscape of some historic importance mainly associated with Chanters House.

Business, Employment, Amenities, Facilities

Open Spaces and Recreation There are a number of valued open spaces together with “amenity” land in and around Ottery St Mary Town. Sites at Canaan Way Recreation area, Winters Lane Playing Fields and Tennis Courts, the Football ground off Butts Road, Ottery Cricket Club and the Bowls Club off Strawberry Lane, the Primary School Playing field and the King's School Playing field all provide excellent facilities. The Millennium Green near St Saviours Bridge offers beautiful views and walks beside the River Otter. Of these open areas only Canaan Way, Winters Lane and the Millennium Green are available for use by the general public. The Allotment Gardens and Town Cemetery are situated at Higher Ridgeway to the east of the town.



Allotment Gardens Higher Ridgeway

Clubs and Societies The town boasts a number of societies and organisations offering a diverse range of social, leisure and sporting pursuits for all ages. Ottery has a tourist information centre, post office, a local police office, library, three banks, two pharmacies, three local garages plus a filling station and the “RIO” (Recycling in Ottery) organisation. Ottery is well served with restaurants, take-away food outlets and four public Houses.

The Institute building has a well equipped hall and committee rooms for smaller meetings whilst facilities also exist at the Feoffee Room, Catholic Church Hall, Coleridge Play-School and the Old Boys School.

A wide variety of retail shops and services exist in the town together with a monthly Farmers Market offering local produce. The town has long flourished as a market and manufacturing centre, but like many others in Devon at the time, was swept by great fires in 1767 and 1866.



Farmers Market Hind Street Car park

Membership of the Ottery St Mary Chamber of Commerce is open to all businesses providing a valuable source of information and giving them a voice in local and regional affairs.

Churches and Schools – There are seven churches in Ottery Town which form an ecumenical grouping called Churches Together in Ottery.

They are:- The Parish Church of St Mary, United Reform Church, Wesleyan Chapel, Gospel Hall, St Anthony’s Roman Catholic Church, Salvation Army and Otter Vale Community Church. Two other independent churches also provide services within the town.

Ottery St Mary has greatly benefited from the various educational establishments in the town. **The Kings School** founded in 1545 and reconstructed in 1912 is now in modern buildings in its own grounds with a Sports Centre and ancillary facilities all within a half a mile of the town centre. The School became comprehensive in 1982. Other schools include Ottery St Mary Primary School, Ottery St Mary Playgroup and Busy Otters. To the south-west of the town the Old Station Building houses a local Youth Club.

Healthcare – The Coleridge Medical Centre situated in Canaan Way is a very modern, well equipped Medical Centre with a number of Doctors and specialist Nurses. There is also a modern NHS Hospital off Thorne Farm Way with male and female wards, a Physiotherapy Department and a Minor Injuries Unit. Minor

surgery can be carried out at the hospital. A private Dental surgery has modern well-equipped premises in Yonder Street.

Industry and Employment – Many parishioners commute for work within the region and some further afield due mainly to the closure of the Ottermill Switchgear Factory which was a major employer in the town.

However, Ottery is still a working town with many self-employed trades and professions meeting local needs. Otter Nurseries, local retail shops, small businesses and the Finnimore Trading Estate situated North West of the town cater for most employment within Ottery.

Figures taken from the 2001 Census giving Economic Status for the 16-74yrs age groups within the town

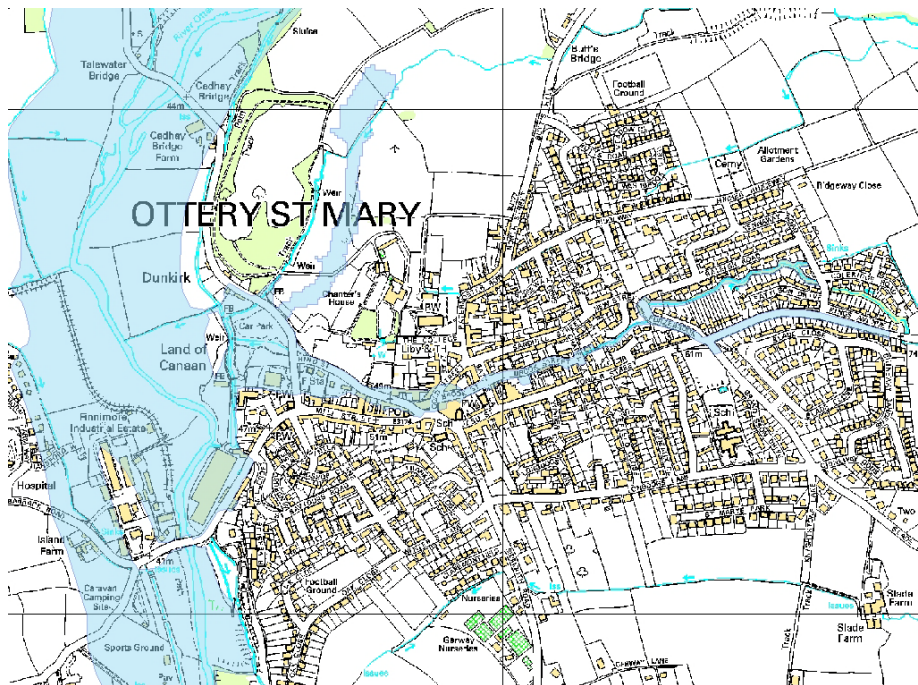
Population 16-74yrs	Employed	Unemployed	Economically Active Full time Students	Retired
3015	62.7%	2.09%	2.16%	18.47%
Economically inactive students	Looking after Home/Family	Permanently Sick or Disabled	Other Inactive	
3.05%	5.54%	4.18%	1.86%	

Highways and Traffic – There are five roads which all lead into the centre of the town often causing severe traffic congestion at Silver Street, Broad Street, Jesu Street and North Street. The B3177 comes into the town centre from Honiton and the main A30, often carrying heavy traffic to and from the popular Otter Nurseries. The B3174 comes into the town from Honiton, East Hill, Seaton, Beer and Lyme Regis which again causes congestion in Yonder Street and Jesu Street due to on road parking and unloading. There are three EDDC Pay and Display Car parks in the town at Canaan Way, Brook Street and Hind Street.



Land of Canaan Car Park

Flood Plain This shows the Flood Plain of the River Otter within the town boundary.



Hedges, Trees and Boundaries Landscape and Trees – the majority of green space is the large area of associated landscape to the north and west of the town. The Canaan Way Car park is both pleasantly landscaped and largely enclosed by mature trees, including a number of conifers, to the north and west. Within the close knit 19th Century and earlier development, where terrace houses front directly on to the street, there is little scope for prominent trees to form an integral part of the townscape. A few exceptions can be seen, most notably within the curtilage of the United Reformed Church and to the rear of the Bank in Gold Street.

The churchyard of the Parish Church contains several fine trees including some ornamental species. There are well established hedgerow trees close to the northern entry into the Conservation Area.



Churchyard of the Parish Church

Because much of the earlier part of the town lies in a small hollow it contains viewpoints that give glimpses out of the town towards the surrounding countryside. These often include a backdrop of trees just beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area whilst there are particularly important groups of trees on higher ground immediately to the south and southeast of the town centre.

Boundaries Hind Street is largely enclosed by brick walls at its eastern end.



Hind Street showing brick wall

Their condition is variable with loss of capping stones and breaches to allow development. This is unsightly especially as this area provides an important entrance into the Town centre and attractive views towards the Parish Church. Wooden boundary fencing in various parts of the town is often unsightly due to the varying styles and the multitude of preservative coverings in different colours.

Public concerns and Approvals

The Town Council determined that the backbone of the Town Plan would be the self completion Questionnaire distributed to all households in the town through the Ottery Gazette. It was then collected at a given date from strategic collecting points in the town. The response rate was good as over 160 completed surveys were collected and collated.

This form provided an opportunity for residents to express their concerns and approvals together with a “want” list of what they would like to see happen in Ottery St Mary in the coming years. These have been summarised below as follows:

In Summary

Ottery St Mary is a town of great character dominated by its massive and famous Parish Church and the significant group of buildings with medieval origins that

surround it to the north and west. At the beginning of the 19th century it was the largest town in East Devon and even the 1891 census indicates that it was the second largest apart from Exmouth (8,097), having a slightly larger population (3,758). Compared with other towns it has not therefore expanded so rapidly this century, although much post 1945 development has occurred, mainly to the south and east of the historic centre. The decline of its textile industry, loss of rail communication and location away from existing main transport routes probably partly accounts for this.



Aerial view Ottery St Mary

There is evidence of under-use, vacancy or dilapidation of historic buildings and there are also some boundary walls of considerable visual importance which may be under threat due to lack of maintenance or pressure to breach in order to provide vehicular access. In some parts of the town there is a pressing need for capital expenditure on historic buildings and environmental improvements. This should be able to be justified as a result of the town having considerable tourist potential. This would undoubtedly be further encouraged by a programme of suitable repair and enhancement and in discovering the best means of interpreting the town's important historic development and fine architectural quality.