

3.4 Buckfastleigh (Local Centre)

[Introduction](#)

3.4.1

Buckfastleigh grew in the medieval period, at the place where the route skirting the south side of the moor crossed the route up the River Dart valley. The key to its development lay in the availability of water, which was used to power the machinery of the town's woollen mills. From its beginnings, Buckfastleigh was an industrial town.

[Population and housing](#)

3.4.2

The 1991 Census showed a resident population of 2,733 in that part of Buckfastleigh parish within the National Park. The 2001 Census showed a rise in the resident population to 3,039. During the period April 1995 - March 2002, 32 dwellings were completed, all of which were open market houses.

At March 2002, 34 houses were under construction and there was permission for the construction of a further 26. While there is some local concern about the volume of social housing in the town and imbalance in its socio-economic structure, in the light of recent housing development, current commitments and Structure Plan considerations, it is not proposed to allocate land for further open market housing during the period of this Plan.

[Local employment](#)

3.4.3

The industrial area at Mardle Way provides a wide range of employment and, in the absence of allocated employment land, there is scope for further commercial and industrial activity in this area, taking advantage of underused areas within existing premises.

3.4.4

The unemployment rate for Buckfastleigh ward has for many years been above the average National Park level, but more recently the difference has narrowed.

Maintaining and, where possible, pursuing a diverse and buoyant local economy would close this differential even further.



Buckfastleigh town centre © DNPA

3.4.5

Tourism plays a part in the local economy. The opening of the 'Valiant Soldier' – a pub in near original 1950s condition – has created a tourist attraction in the centre of town and, in association with the South Devon Railway, Butterfly Farm and Buckfast Abbey, is giving a boost to local tourism. The regeneration element of the Buckfastleigh Conservation Area Partnership Scheme has helped create a much more pleasant ambience in the centre of town and a much safer environment for pedestrians.

[Community services and facilities](#)

3.4.6

The town is well supplied with facilities, including primary school, public library and health centre. A new parish church has been built in Plymouth Road. For some years, a local regeneration initiative - 'Buckfastleigh 2000' - has been working to promote a range of community activities and improve the town's socio-economic well-being. This has led to the production of a community plan and the further development of this plan is now being considered.

[Traffic and transportation](#)

3.4.7

There are four car parks in the town, all of which are pay and display. While at present there is usually sufficient capacity in the car parks to satisfy the needs of the town centre, further possible development of community facilities in Victoria Park would lead to increased pressure on the Woodholme Car Park and, potentially, on the other car parks. An extension to the Mardle Way Car Park, with good pedestrian access to the town centre, would in itself benefit business and could include enhancement and promote greater enjoyment of the riverside area if it was provided through a riverside walk. This development will, however, have to take account of the archaeological interest of the area and must make provision for the retention of features which delineate the ancient 'burgage' plots.



*Building
St. Luke's Church, Buckfastleigh © DNPA*

Proposal BCK1

An area of land of 0.3 ha between the River Mardle and Fore Street is allocated as an extension to Mardle Way car park. A footway between the car park and Fore Street should be provided to facilitate access to the town centre.

3.4.8

The opening of the new access road from Buckfast to Mardle Way has improved traffic circulation and road access considerably. HGVs and other commercial traffic to the industrial area do not now need to use Fore Street. A one way system through the centre of town is now in operation.

[Conservation of the built environment](#)

3.4.9

The town plan of Buckfastleigh shows three discrete elements - the isolated 13th century church on the hill above the town, Higher Town to the west and Lower Town to the east, the last two forming the basis of the Conservation Area. Even as recently as the mid 19th century, Higher and Lower Town were separate settlements. Both are medieval in origin and there is evidence of plots extending back from the buildings along the street frontage that is pierced by alleyways leading to courts and associated buildings. A market square is still evident in Higher Town. An archaeological evaluation will be needed in connection with the consideration of any proposals in the Buckfastleigh Conservation Area where archaeological interests may be affected. (see policy AH5)

3.4.10

A Conservation Area Partnership Scheme was established in Buckfastleigh in 1998. Its aim was to contribute to the regeneration of the town centre by offering repair grants to the owners of historic buildings and by making contributions to improvements to the thoroughfare. In September 1999, an enhancement scheme covering Fore Street was formally opened. In addition to wider granite paving, the scheme has also provided locally distinctive street furniture, the design of which was inspired by Buckfastleigh's long association with the woollen industry.

