

Taunton: Connecting Our Garden Town

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DECEMBER 2017

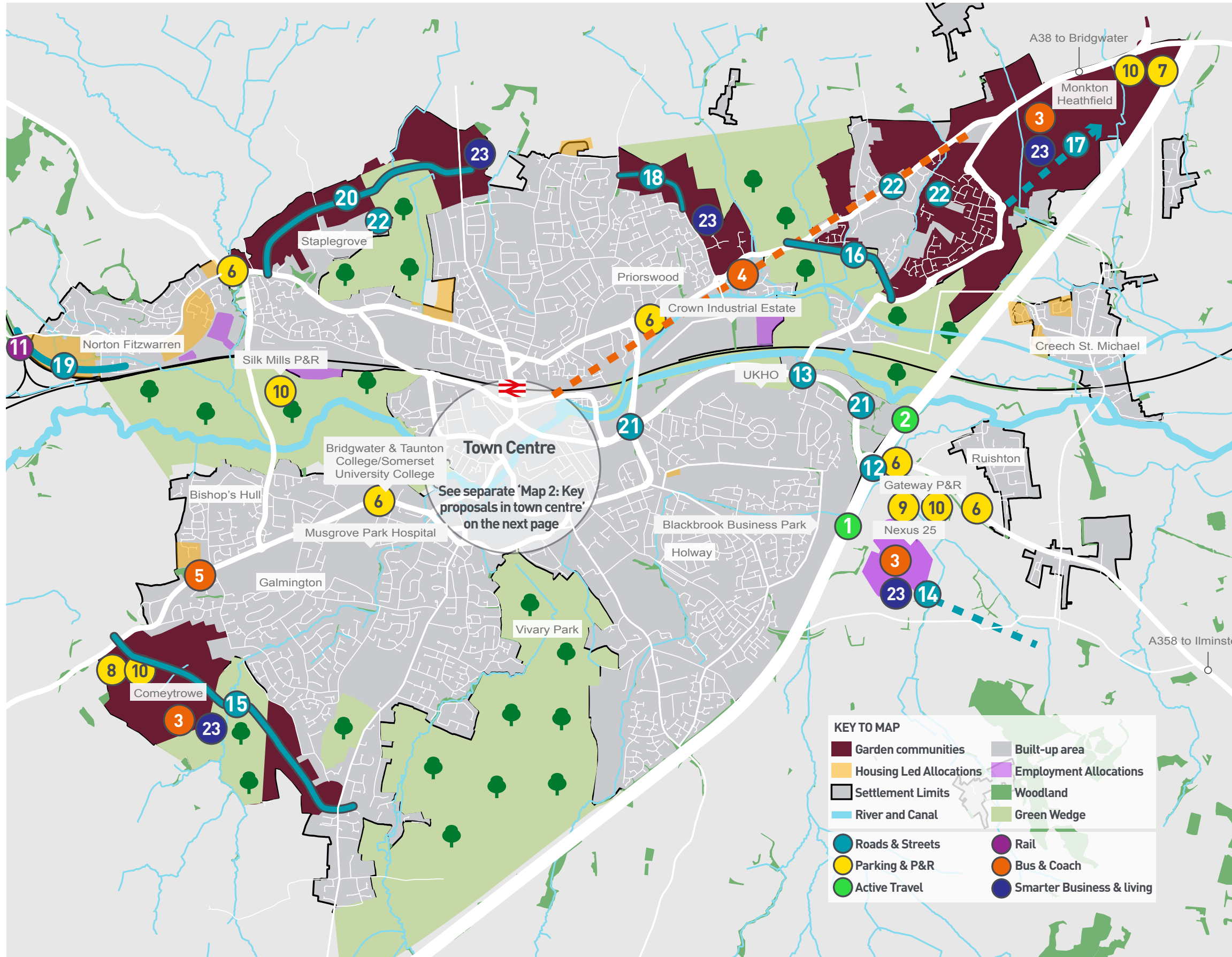


Table of Contents

	Maps.....	04
1	Summary.....	09
2	Taunton in 2037.....	10
3	Achievements.....	11
4	Context and Opportunities.....	12
5	Our Vision for Transport in Taunton.....	14
6	Our transport policies and proposals.....	16
	Roads and Streets.....	18
	Parking and Park and Ride.....	20
	Active Travel (walking and cycling).....	22
	Bus and coach.....	24
	Rail.....	26
	Smarter business and smarter living.....	28
Annex		
A	Who delivers the transport proposals and policies	
B	Funding for transport	

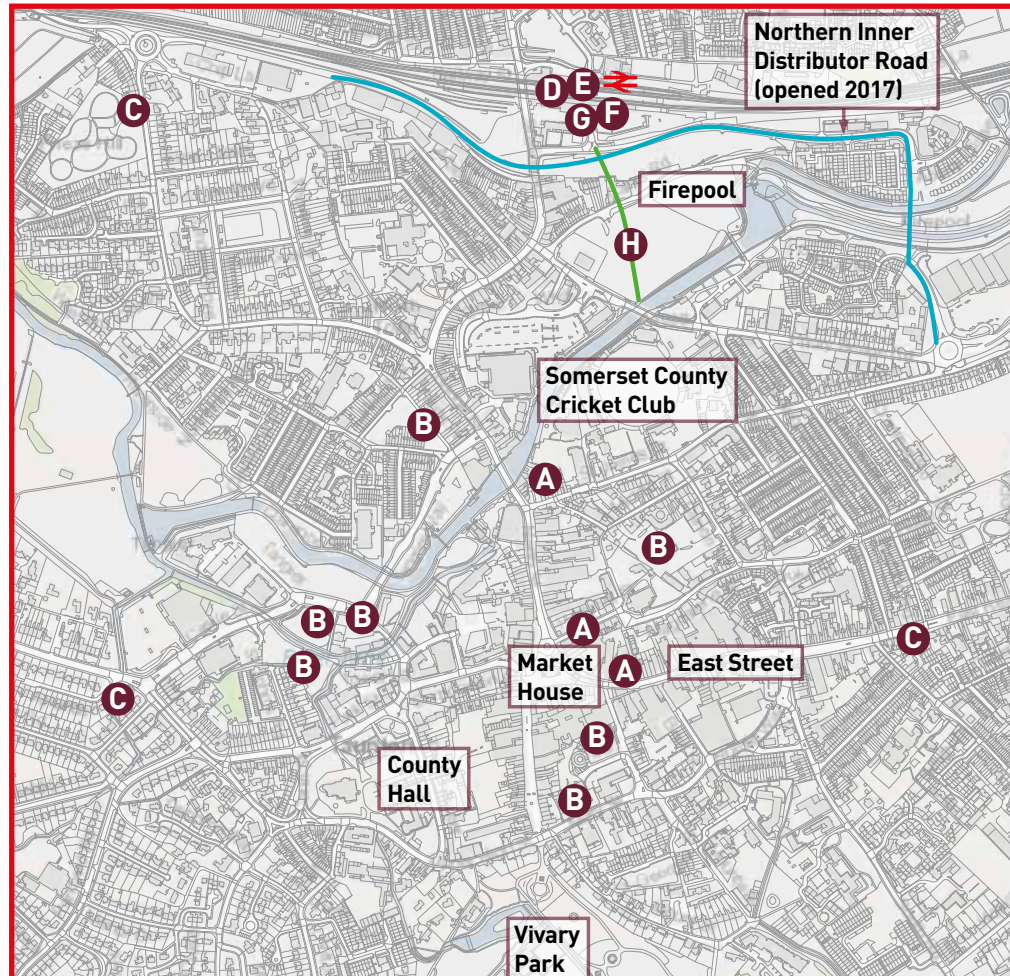


Map 1: Locations of key proposals



KEY TO PROPOSALS		
1	Active Travel	New cycle and pedestrian bridge over M5 to Nexus25 (longer-term aspiration)
2	Active Travel	Ruishton to Hankridge Farm cycle link
3	Bus & Coach	Connecting the garden communities and Nexus25 with high-quality bus services
4	Bus & Coach	Implement A3259 corridor strategy for bus, walking and cycling infrastructure to connect Monkton Heathfield garden community
5	Bus & Coach	Wellington Road corridor - Additional bus priority lanes or infrastructure to speed up bus services
6	Parking and P&R	Variable Message Signs
7		Monkton Heathfield - new park and ride
8		Comeytrove - new park and ride
9		Taunton Gateway P&R - Customer facilities and interchange hub (longer-term aspiration)
10		Cycle infrastructure connecting park and ride sites to town (longer-term aspiration)
11	Rail	West Somerset Railway - trial of rail services from National Rail network
12	Roads and Streets	M5 J25 capacity improvements, access to Nexus25 and improved links for active travel
13		Toneway Corridor Phase 1 (Crech Castle Junction) - Additional road capacity and active travel connections
14		A358 (M5 to Ilminster) dual carriageway scheme, including M5 J25a - route not yet confirmed
15		Trull to A38 link road (Comeytrove)
16		Monkton Heathfield Western Relief Road
17		Monkton Heathfield Phase 2 spine road (route to be determined)
18		Nerrols - highway link between Bossington Drive and Lyngford Lane/Cheddon Road
19		Norton Fitzwarren - completion of bypass
20		Staplegrove spine road
21		Toneway Corridor further phases - capacity for growth and journey reliability
22	Garden communities - traffic management and street redesign on existing roads	
23	Smarter Business & Living	Workplace and residential travel plans for occupiers of new developments

Map 2: Key proposals in town centre



KEY

- A** Town Centre Public Space Improvement Project
- B** Pay on foot payments systems in strategic car parks
- C** Variable Message Signs
- D** Taunton Rail Station Upgrade
- E** Taunton Rail Station enhanced cycle hub
- F** Taunton Rail Station multi-storey car park
- G** Taunton Rail Station South Side Approach public transport interchange
- H** Firepool high quality walking and cycling route from station to town centre

KEY TO MAP

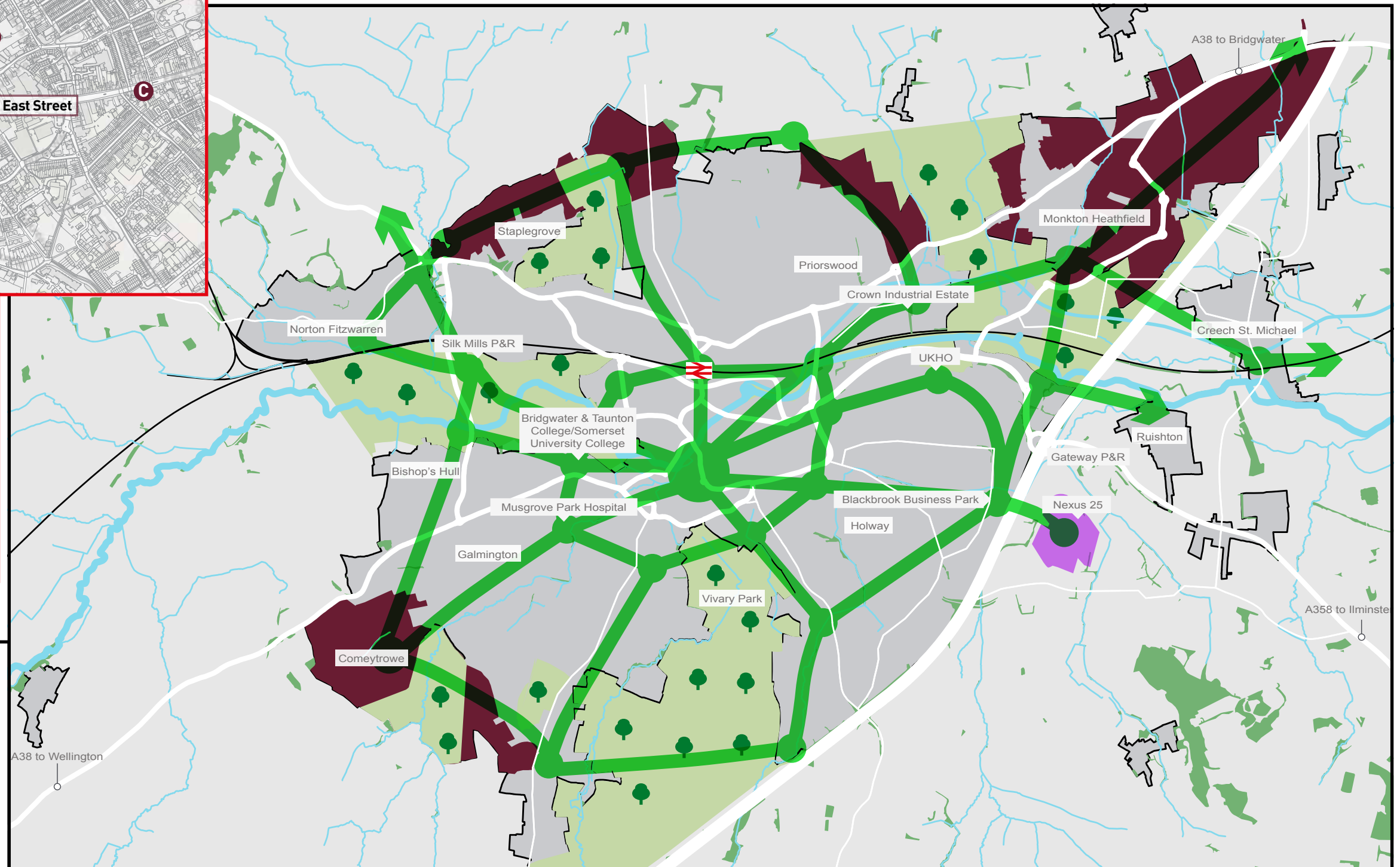
- Garden communities
- Built-up area
- Settlement Limits
- Woodland
- River and Canal
- Green Wedge
- Key active travel connections (indicative potential routes)
- Roads & Streets
- Rail
- Parking & P&R
- Bus & Coach
- Active Travel
- Smarter Business & living

Map 3: Town-wide active travel network

Routes to be determined through preparation of Local Walking & Cycling Infrastructure Plan

Some of the active travel proposals are town-wide but precise locations for investment have not yet been decided. They include:

- ➔ An ongoing programme of improvements to cycle networks and pedestrian facilities, starting with key corridors as a priority including routes to the town centre and rail station;
- ➔ A shorter-term commitment to develop and maintain a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, working collaboratively to identify key corridors for investment, and tackle barriers to cycling and walking. This will particularly concentrate on junctions, gyratory systems and crossing points.
- ➔ A longer-term ambition to implement the recommendations of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, to create a comprehensive network of direct routes for cycling, protected from traffic where appropriate and suitable for everyone. These routes will connect the whole town, including park and ride sites, garden communities and surrounding villages, maximising the use of green corridors for the routes. Indicative corridors are suggested on the map below.



Foreword

Taunton – Somerset’s County Town - has entered a period of unprecedented growth and opportunity. The next 20 years will see new garden communities integrated into the town as part of the Garden Town initiative, a rejuvenated town centre and Nexus25, the town’s new strategic employment site, coming to fruition. Europe’s largest construction site, Hinkley Point C Power Station, has already started in earnest 20 miles from the town. How we travel, and how we manage our transport networks, will be critical to ensuring Taunton can both capitalise on these opportunities and manage their impacts.

Transport, accessibility and connectivity are essential to our everyday lives and vital to the economic success of our town. Most activities are dependent in some way on transport – from transporting goods and deliveries, commuting to work or education or as part of our leisure time. Taunton’s strategic position on key transport routes makes it an attractive location for businesses and these good connections will continue to be an important part of the town’s success story, influencing people to live, work or visit the town. We want to capitalise on our location as a major communications hub and ensure our connections to the rest of the UK are future-ready. We also want movement within Taunton to be safe and efficient, especially on foot, by cycle and public transport.

Over the next few years technology and innovations will radically change our transport experience, from electric vehicles, to real-time updates and the emergence of connected and autonomous vehicles. However we also recognise that walking and cycling are fundamental to ensuring a healthy town with high quality of life.

Taunton’s streets and roads have other important functions, too – they are places in their own right, locations where people live, shop and socialise and where important events, such as the Remembrance Sunday Parade, take place. Transport investment can contribute to raising our quality of life and the quality of our environment.

We have produced this document for four main reasons:

- to describe the transport projects going on and already in the pipeline;
- to explain how we plan to deal with the extra demands which will be placed on the transport network from the new garden communities;
- to outline our longer-term transport aspirations; and
- to help secure funding for the initiatives set out in the strategy.

We are being creative with both funding and resources - including partnership working and seeking external funding wherever possible, to achieve our ambitious programme. We will work closely with a range of organisations, such as the education and business sectors, and the wider travelling public, to make these positive changes, particularly in terms of reducing peak time vehicle use.

Taunton: Connecting our Garden Town demonstrates our commitment to bring about a transport network to match the town’s ambitions. It makes a strong case to infrastructure funders, including central government, to invest in the outlined proposals to reinforce Taunton as a dynamic business centre and a series of connected garden communities ready for the future.

John Woodman

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport,
Somerset County Council



Councillor John Williams

Leader of Taunton Deane Borough Council



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Context

Taunton is committed to delivering a programme of transformational investment in transport to help the town thrive and prosper.

This update brings together investment plans and proposals from the County and Borough Councils, along with those of other organisations who are involved in, fund or provide transport services. The strategy is about moving around the town itself and the connections from the town to the wider region. It covers all transport modes and a range of supporting measures. It demonstrates our recent progress and showcases the breadth of achievable but ambitious proposals which we want to bring forward over the next 20 years. It acts as clear evidence of the direction Taunton wants to take in respect of transport, mobility and quality of life in the town as we look to the future.

The document has been prepared using a wide range of existing evidence and data, referred to through the document. No new studies have been undertaken at this stage.

It outlines a series of proposals and policies, large and small, to achieve the set of 12 objectives.

The proposals and policies are grouped into six strategy topics:

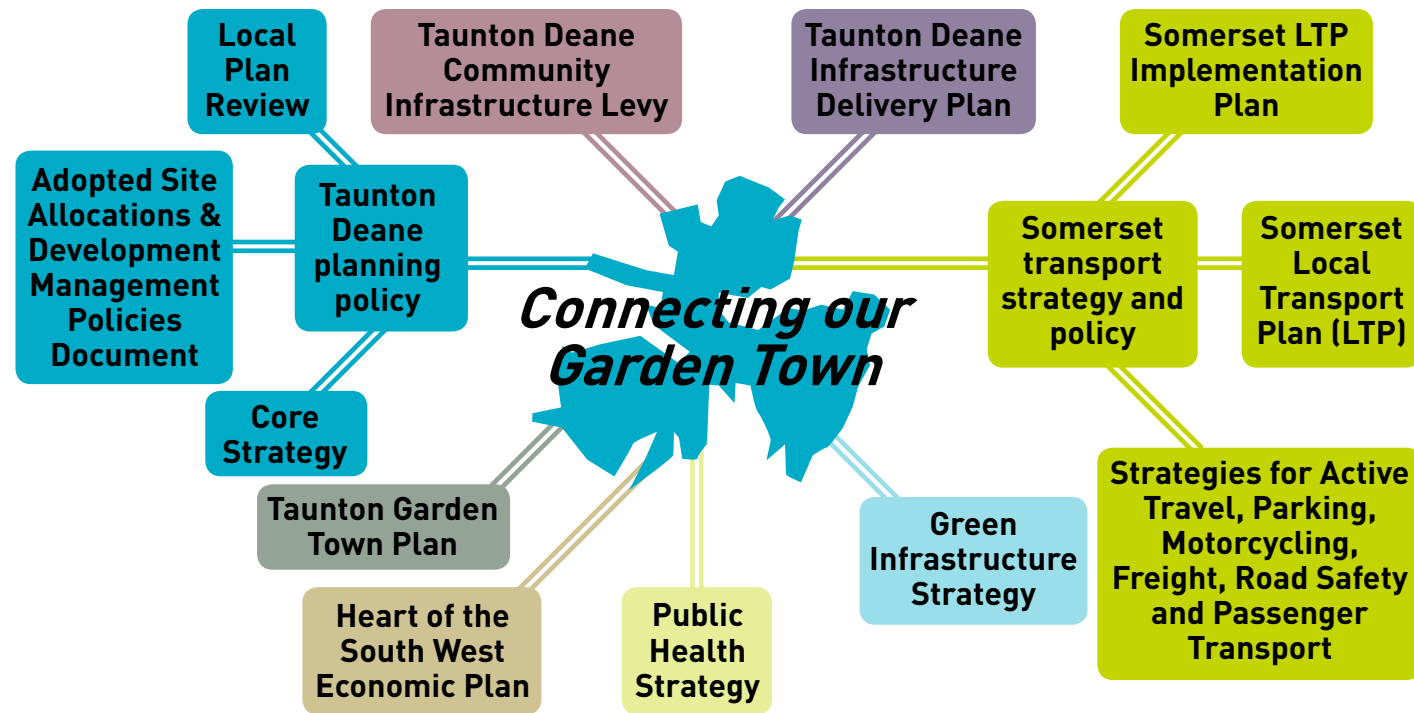
- **Roads and streets,**
- **Parking and park and ride,**
- **Active travel (walking and cycling),**
- **Bus and coach travel,**
- **Rail, and**
- **Smarter business and smarter living.**

Some proposals are already underway or are programmed to start, others are in preparation and will come on stream in future years. We have used three categories in the document - *shorter-term commitments* and *longer-term aspirations*, plus *ongoing policies and supporting proposals*. Beyond these categories we have not prioritised as we want to be ready to bring proposals forward as funding opportunities arise.

This document does not intend to describe in detail how the proposals will be delivered - separate documents such as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan and the Garden Town Plan will cover those aspects.

HOW WE HAVE DEVELOPED THIS DOCUMENT

This document does not sit in isolation and the diagram below shows how it links to other strategies and areas of work which the Councils are currently involved in. These have all informed the preparation of Connecting our Garden Town. We have also used a wide range of evidence about travel patterns and key transport issues. Data sources are referenced throughout the document with footnotes and these are listed in Annex C at the back of the document.



Many of the documents listed above contain detail about the proposals and policies for the town. One example is the traffic modelling assessment supporting the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Document, which lists the junctions that are likely to require an improvement scheme to accommodate planned level of growth.

FUNDING

Not all of the proposals in this strategy are currently funded and therefore this document aims to secure funding for them. Where information on timescales and funding is known, it is included in this document. However, this document does not intend to describe in detail how the proposals will be delivered - separate documents such as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Local Transport Plan Implementation Plan and the Garden Town Plan will cover those aspects.

CHAPTER 2

Taunton in 2037: predicting our transport future

What will the key transport trends be? We will be capitalising on anywhere, everywhere digital connectivity, with wifi and real-time information at our fingertips. There will be a switch to electric vehicles or other cleaner fuels and away from petrol and diesel. Transport, energy, data will influence each other more strongly. Re-imagined and liveable streets and public spaces will make walking and cycling more conducive and safer. Smarter mobility will make the transition between our everyday activities easier. More flexible, on-demand travel and shared mobility services, with new ways of paying for and using transport will emerge. Connected vehicle technology will become more ubiquitous, using data to assist drivers, and moves towards autonomous vehicles. A range of formats for urban living will strengthen our position as a vibrant town with high quality environment.

When so much is changing so rapidly it's hard to know where it might ultimately lead. However,

innovation and change is likely to still be shaped by today's familiar concerns – such as public health, congestion, economy, quality of life and safety. Startup companies will still respond to customer demands. Some transport aspects will change more rapidly than others and our investment and policy responses will need to be flexible to meet changing circumstances. Technology and innovation will help us get the best contribution from every transport mode, lead to emergence of new solutions to our mobility requirements and ensure they complement each other.

Over the next twenty years the town will continue to respond to the challenges and changes as they emerge, positioning itself as a keen advocate of new concepts, best practice and piloting emerging technology. No one solution will solve all problems, but a combination of proposals and policies will help to bring about a better connected and future ready Taunton.



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CHAPTER 3

Achievements

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS AND TRACK RECORD OF INVESTMENT

The last 20 years have seen major changes to transport provision in and around Taunton. Some of the key achievements are listed below.

- ✓ Tangier Way (sometimes known as the Third Way), taking traffic away from the town centre and opening up land for development;
- ✓ The opening of two park and ride sites – Silk Mills in 2005, and Taunton Gateway in 2010 next to M5 J25
- ✓ Working with bus operators to improve the quality and comfort of the bus fleet;
- ✓ The new public square at Castle Green, reclaiming a former car park as an events space;
- ✓ Transport infrastructure funded by developers, including Monkton Heathfield Eastern Relief Road and new roads and junctions serving sites at Norton Fitzwarren;
- ✓ Successful promotion and awareness campaigns, which have contributed to cycling-to-work rates more than double the national average^① and providing up-to-date travel information via the Travel Somerset website;
- ✓ Continuing to expand the network of walking and cycling routes and crossings;
- ✓ Modernising and upgrading a number of traffic signal controlled junctions such as East Street / East Reach;
- ✓ The Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR), to improve access to the station and take pressure off some of the town's most congested junctions; and
- ✓ Important work behind the scenes, such as:
 - £1.6m to upgrade the traffic control and information centre which monitors traffic flows and oversees all the traffic lights in Somerset
 - £4.6m from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Local Growth Fund for the future upgrade to Taunton Station
 - Up to £12.9m secured for M5 J25 improvements and up to £6.7m allocated for Creech Castle Junction Improvements from the Heart of the South West LEP's Local Growth Fund



Repaving completed in Bath Place



Residents' travel information pack, Monkton Heathfield



Somerfest on Castle Green

CHAPTER 4

Context and Opportunities

Taunton's hub location at the centre of the South West along with its connectivity is a key asset to the town and its economic prosperity. A survey of businesses in 2016^② found that good transport and communication links were the top reason why respondents felt the town was a good place for them to locate their business.

THE GOOD

- ✓ The town is well-positioned on the key road and rail corridor between Bristol and Exeter and at the western end of the A303/A358 strategic corridor;
- ✓ The town's rail station is the busiest in the county. It provides direct services to Reading and London, Bristol, Cardiff, Birmingham, the North of England and Scotland, and to Exeter and the South West;
- ✓ The M5, which forms part of the national strategic road network, serves the town and the borough via J25 & J26;
- ✓ There are already substantial sections of off-road cycle routes, which often follow the canal, river and green corridors into the town centre;
- ✓ The town is home to a range of employment, medical, education, leisure and retail destinations and public services, acting as an important hub for the wider area; and
- ✓ Strong track record of securing government funding.



...THE BAD AND THE UGLY

- ✗ Road and rail connections connecting the town to the rest of the UK are vulnerable to disruption, including by extreme weather;
- ✗ Most of the town relies upon a single road corridor (Toneway) to reach the M5 motorway at J25 and to access the A358/A303 corridor, limiting options when incidents occur;
- ✗ Whilst the bus network has reasonable daytime frequencies, there is a view that the growing town should have a better level of service, especially for evenings and weekends. In addition, new bus services initially funded by developers often reduce in frequency when the developer funding comes to an end. Bus-rail interchange in the town is poor;
- ✗ Congestion at key road junctions across the town, particularly during rush hours, impacting on road safety, noise, air quality, longer journey times, and leading to traffic re-routing away from main roads and onto residential or unsuitable roads;
- ✗ The river, canal, railway and motorway can act as barriers to movement between neighbourhoods, the town centre and employment areas;
- ✗ Connections by road and public transport to and from South and West Somerset could be better.
- ✗ The road network has a higher number of injuries to vulnerable users, particularly motorcyclists and pedal cyclists, than we would like.


KEY FACTS AT A GLANCE

In 2011 Taunton's workforce travelled to work as follows:

 **56%** drove a car or van

 **19%** walked—double the national average

 **9%** cycled—3 times the national average

 **6%** travelled as a car or van passenger

 **3%** travelled by bus, coach or train

 **7%** used other modes or worked from home

Of all the Taunton working residents who travel to work:

72% travel to locations in the town

7% travel to locations elsewhere in the borough


21% travel to work outside the borough

40% of trips to work in Taunton are less than 2km in length

A further **30%** are between **2km** & **5km** in length

Many of these journeys could be cycled by many people if the conditions were right

1 in 5 

 Taunton households has no access to a car or van

TAUNTON IS A MAJOR EMPLOYMENT CENTRE

19,700 EMPLOYEES commute in from elsewhere

8,300 RESIDENTS commute out

440 METRES



most new homes are within this distance of a principal bus corridor

77,000 vehicles per average weekday travel on the M5 north of Taunton

45,000 vehicles per average weekday travel on the Toneway east of Creech Castle

Rush Hour traffic reduces by **30-40%** on some key roads during school holidays – this shows the impact if everyone travelled by a different mode to the car one or two days a week

1 in 10 

vehicles on the M5 and A358 at Henlade is a heavy goods vehicle

4000 car parking spaces serving the town centre, with additional spaces proposed at Firepool



1.376 MILLION passengers used Taunton's rail station in 2015/16



The **65+** age group is growing the fastest and the **75+** age group will double by **2039**

£20bn per year estimated cost to UK economy of inactivity

5% of deaths in the borough are estimated to be caused by long-term exposure to man-made particulate air pollution

44% of the borough's carbon emissions are thought to come from transport sources

CHAPTER 5

Our Vision for Transport in Taunton

Taunton will have a high quality transport system that supports its ambitions for economic growth and excellent quality of life, as one of a new family of UK Garden Towns. Transport networks will have been improved to keep pace with new development. More sustainable forms of travel will be the first choice for an increasing proportion of the community. More town centre streets will have been transformed into vibrant and attractive public space. We will use advances in technology to improve access to travel information, our mobility and the ways we use vehicles, our use of roadspace, the ways we manage parking, access services and deliver goods.

Technology will have reduced the need to travel to work, and mobility solutions will be more flexible and shaped around user requirements. Vehicles will be increasingly connected and autonomous, providing safety benefits. The investment will make Taunton a healthier, more active place and will improve the quality of the environment. Taunton will be better connected into national highways and transport networks and will have strong transport connections within the town. A range of proposals and policies will connect our garden town and enable Taunton to be future ready.

OBJECTIVES:

We have identified a number of objectives that support our Vision and will enable us to monitor progress:

→ Provide a range of transport interventions that support economic growth, improved productivity and delivery of new garden communities

→ Pursue new technology solutions wherever possible

→ Improve health outcomes by enabling more walking and cycling (particularly capitalising on the town's green corridors), improving air quality and reducing road casualties

→ Create better streets and places for people

→ Ensure the needs of different groups are met such as older people, younger people and people with disabilities

→ Improve connectivity to and within the town and provide good access to services

→ Ensure existing highways and transport networks operate reliably and efficiently with minimal disruption

→ Ensure people are better informed about travel choices

→ Influence and manage demands on the transport system and on the highway network in particular, including reducing the need to travel by car

→ Increase the capacity of highways and transport networks

→ Minimise the adverse impacts of transport (such as noise and severance) on communities

→ Tackle causes and effects of climate change

KEY OUTCOMES

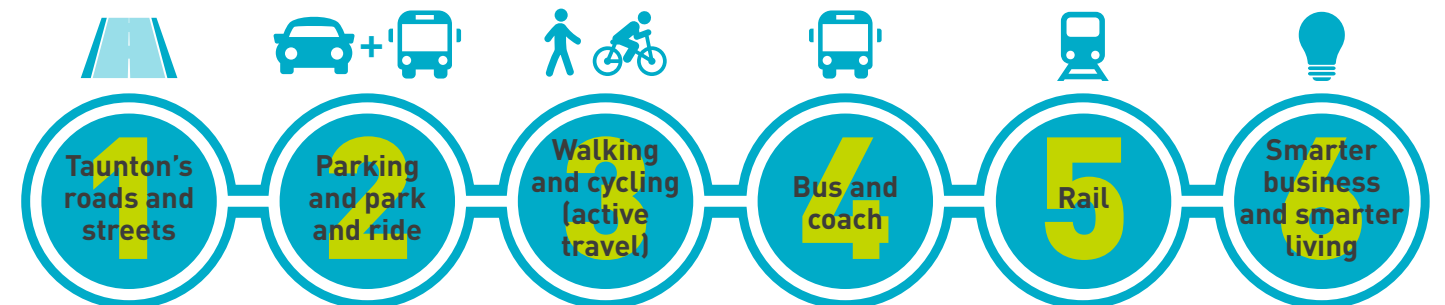
Through the policies and proposals in this strategy we want to see a thriving economy and great quality of life for residents. In particular we have identified a series of ambitious transport outcomes we want to achieve, which are set out in the boxes below. The outcomes may widen following consultation.

→ Safer roads	→ Good air quality for the whole town
→ Develop a special status as a walking and cycling town	→ Congestion held at today's levels at key problem junctions
→ Less car use per head of population	→ Less traffic in Taunton town centre
→ Enhanced rail connections to the rest of the UK and continued strong growth in rail use	→ All residents of our new garden communities to be within walking distance of main bus corridors and have easy access onto a core walking and cycling network serving the town
→ Levels of cycling journeys doubled	

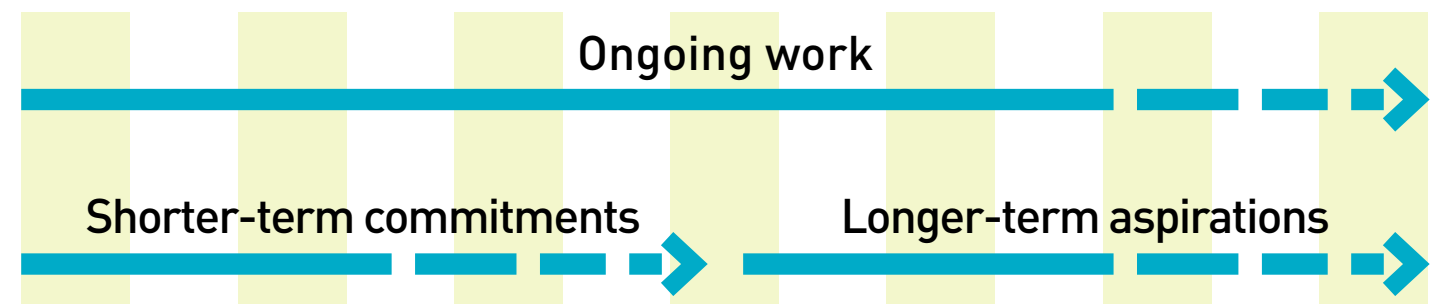
The transport challenge arising from the additional new homes over the next 20 years cannot be underestimated. If people continue to travel in the same ways as today, congestion, road safety and public health problems will worsen and the town's economic performance may suffer. Whilst there will be investment in a range of transport proposals, use of technology and innovative solutions, Taunton residents and businesses will need to help make a difference, too. A few extra journeys made on foot, by bike or public transport by a number of Tauntonians would add up to make a large difference in how well the transport network operates.

PROPOSALS AND POLICIES

The rest of this document outlines our proposals and the supporting policies we intend to use to achieve these objectives. We have grouped them into the following six strategy topics covering:



We have categorised the proposals and policies in the document in the following way:



CHAPTER 6

Our transport proposals and policies



PROPOSALS AND POLICIES FOR

Taunton's roads and streets

Our roads and streets have a complex and competing set of transport demands placed on them. They are variously used to transport freight and deliveries for businesses, provide routes for bus services, cars, motorcycles, and journeys on foot or by cycle. They also host town events, space for parking and loading, provide the setting for some of the town's key heritage assets. Roads can shape the first impression visitors and investors have of Taunton, whether walking from the rail station or driving in from the motorway.

The growth of the town will add pressure onto our road network. Whilst additional capacity can be provided in some places, especially around the garden communities, in many parts of the town, widening roads to overcome congestion is not practicable, feasible, desirable or cost-effective. We will need to make more efficient use of the roadspace we have. Technology will provide some solutions; however, many short distance journeys currently made by car could be made in other ways. Without that change, congestion could hamper the local economy and damage the town's reputation. Town streets are currently dominated by vehicles, compromising their attractiveness as places to visit, shop and spend leisure time walking and cycling less attractive.

Our vision is for our roads and streets to balance the competing demands from different road user groups and cater for them flexibly, according to the location and circumstances. We want the town's roads and streets to function well and be pleasant and attractive spaces too.

Connected vehicles (which communicate with their surroundings, such as via smartphones or

the internet) and autonomous vehicles (which use technology to require less driver input for some or all of the journey) could substantially transform the way our roads and streets are used and managed in the future. Their capabilities, benefits and design requirements will become clearer in the next five years. However, they do not offer a total transport solution, and we are not yet sure how they will impact on public transport or future uptake of walking and cycling. There will be an acceleration towards cleaner, less-polluting types of vehicle (including electric vehicles) during the next 20 years, aided by national government support and manufacturer innovation. We will need to facilitate this with the provision of electric vehicle charging points.

In particular through the proposals overleaf we want to see [safer roads and good air quality for the whole town, less traffic in the town centre and congestion held at today's levels at key problem junctions](#).

How about a Taunton ring road?

Many people have suggested that the Councils should seek funding for a ring road around parts of the town. Traffic surveys¹⁸ have found that 90% of inbound vehicles on the radial routes into Taunton at peak times have a destination in the town itself, rather than passing through to reach destinations beyond it. This suggests that bypass options would not address the needs of the majority of vehicle movements and is not considered to offer the best solution or value for money. However, each of the garden communities will be providing new road links to better connect parts of the town. Subject to funding priorities and a review of need in the light of new technology, other sections of ring road could be constructed in the future.

Ongoing proposals and supporting policies

Categorise streets according to their varying roles as (a) routes for movement and (b) places in their own right, and use this categorisation to guide investment priorities and street design

Ongoing programme of targeted street improvements across the town, based on best practice design to (i) create safer streets and (ii) enable efficient and reliable movement for different road users and (iii) implement cycle priority at appropriate locations / on appropriate routes

Integrate garden communities into the transport network with new road and street connections suitable for all road users

Work with operators to enhance taxi infrastructure tailored to requirements

Encourage, where appropriate, Mobility as a Service - flexible, on-demand forms of travel, new ways of paying and shared mobility services

Support ongoing training and education for drivers, bikers and cyclists to enhance and improve road skills

Implement further junction or corridor scheme improvements to provide road capacity for growth and improved journey reliability and road safety

Remove unnecessary street furniture as part of a clutter-free streets programme

Improve incident management and make better use of technology to inform drivers i.e. provision of Variable Message Signs

Review and revise delivery and HGV access routes to minimise disruption through the town

Ensure the infrastructure is in place to support transport technology solutions, including for connected and autonomous vehicles

Tackle non-local traffic in residential areas

Locate major industrial and warehousing development where it can be served by efficient, safe and sustainable freight transport

Shorter-term commitments

M5 J25 - Implement a scheme to add road capacity and reduce delays to prevent queuing onto the M5 motorway. Includes access to Nexus25 and improvements for active travel (£18.02m)

Toneway Corridor - Phase 1 (Creech Castle) - to provide road capacity for growth and improved journey reliability (£9.4m)

A358 (Taunton to Ilminster Southfields Roundabout dual carriageway scheme) - Highways England to find the most appropriate long-term option for this committed scheme and ensure it is constructed, in collaboration with partners

Promote the town as a research testbed for connected and autonomous vehicles

Introduce advanced traffic signal technology at key congested junctions to maximise efficient and reliable movement for road users

Provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the town, adopting cleaner vehicles for the Councils' fleets and continue to encourage charging infrastructure in new developments

Review and simplify direction signage, including to visitor destinations (brown signs) to ease navigation

Work with developers to minimise traffic impact of new developments to ensure timely delivery of:

- Trull to A38 link road (Comeytrowe)
- Completed bypass for Norton Fitzwarren
- Completion of Western Relief Road for Monkton Heathfield
- Staplegrove spine road from Kingston Road to connection onto A358
- new highway link between Bossington Drive and Lyngford Lane
- Highway infrastructure accessing phase 2 of development at Monkton Heathfield

Implement traffic management and street redesign techniques on existing roads as part of the delivery of garden communities (including A3259 / A38 through Monkton Heathfield and Corkscrew Lane / Manor Road at Staplegrove)

Introduce a rolling programme of schemes to upgrade the quality of our streets and public spaces

Identify the potential to redistribute / reuse roadspace and car parking for other purposes as a result of changes in mobility (e.g. uptake of connected and autonomous vehicles and higher levels of active travel)

Our longer-term aspirations

Access to the M5 - work with Highways England to assess the long-term need for an additional motorway junction to reduce reliance on J25, and, if appropriate, develop proposal

2

PROPOSALS AND POLICIES FOR

Parking and park and ride

Providing space for parking and loading are both important aspects of transport. A combination of off-street car parks and on-street parking and loading bays are available in the town. Two park and ride sites provide a total of 1,600 parking spaces with a dedicated weekday bus service running every 12 to 15 minutes through the day for shoppers, visitors and commuters from outside of Taunton.

Demand for parking spaces is at its highest in the late morning and weekday surveys in June 2017 found use of town centre car parks was uneven - some were full whilst some had spare capacity, even at peak times. A proportion of traffic in the town centre are drivers searching for a parking space. Balancing the demand for the finite number of spaces and accommodating different users' parking and loading needs is complex and can be controversial. In broad terms the Councils use their powers to encourage parking in certain locations and prohibit it in other places. Using land for parking or loading means it is not available for other uses (for

example wider footways, for traffic lanes, or to be redeveloped for other uses such as homes or business space). The cost and availability of parking can influence how people choose to travel, and may influence their choice of destination choice.

The Councils tend to use a combination of charging, regulations and enforcement to manage and influence parking demand, to reduce obstructions caused by inconsiderate parking, or to prioritise parking spaces for particular users (blue badge holders, parking for residents or shoppers, for example). A new parking strategy for the town is currently in development and will lead to a set of more focused and specific proposals and policies.

Future changes in mobility and travel patterns may radically change how and where parking is provided. The park and ride sites could eventually become locations where people change from traditional cars to autonomous vehicles for onward connections to the town centre.



Silk Mills Park and Ride from the air

Ongoing proposals and supporting policies

Provide appropriate parking, in terms of quantity and quality, to serve the town centre, potentially consolidating the number of parking locations and maximising the use of park & ride

Implement proposals from the new parking strategy and undertake periodic reviews

Visitor management plans for major events - work in partnership to provide parking, park and ride and travel solutions to serve major events such as with Somerset County Cricket Club

Review on-street loading and parking to ensure a balance between efficient movement and business / logistics needs

Review and ensure appropriate parking is provided in the right locations for specific user groups, including blue badge holders, users of powered two wheelers, electric vehicles and bicycle users

Install electric vehicle charging points, including in off-street car parks

Our longer-term aspirations

Enable drivers to reach parking spaces more efficiently, such as using technology solutions to match drivers to car parking spaces

Further reduce antisocial parking on residential streets, including considering potential requirements for new or revised residential or controlled parking zones

Use emerging technology to flexibly manage roadspace for parking and loading uses

Maximise the role of Taunton Gateway, with customer facilities and as an interchange hub served by intercity coach services, airport connections and interurban bus services

Enable, and make special provision for, cycling from park and ride sites into the town

Shorter-term commitments

Open new car parks at Comeytrove (Wellington Road) and Monkton Heathfield (Walford Cross) to be served by existing inter-urban bus services into Taunton town centre, as part of the development of the garden communities

Introduce pay on foot payment systems at strategic town centre car parks

Install digital signage (Variable Message Signs) to guide and inform drivers on available spaces in the core town centre car parks

Car park maintenance and upgrade programme to give a better welcome to, and experience of, the town (e.g. surfacing, signage, information, wayfinding and environmental improvements)

Dedicate each town centre car park for either short-stay or long-stay users, to give clarity to customers and ensure spaces are prioritised for short stay visits

Use technology to provide live information on availability of car park spaces on the Borough Council website or via an app

Introduce measures to encourage use of Orchard multi-storey and High Street car parks, such as an upgrade of their appearance or a special pricing tariff

Carry out survey of park and ride users and non-users to gain a full understanding of customer usage and their requirements, as well as why people choose not to use the services



PROPOSALS AND POLICIES FOR

Active travel (walking and cycling)

Incorporating more active travel into daily life – walking and cycling and including these as part of a journey by public transport – is an easy and affordable way for people to live healthier lives and combat obesity. Two ten-minute periods of brisk walking or cycling a day is enough to get the recommended level of physical activity to avoid the greatest health risks associated with inactivity⁽¹⁹⁾. More people travelling on foot or by cycle tackles road congestion, improves air quality, reduces noise pollution and gives reliable journey times. Investing in cycling usually offers very good value for money and provides substantial local economic benefits⁽²⁰⁾ to businesses – the levels of spending by people walking and cycling to the shops tends to be underestimated by retailers.

Taunton is well-suited for walking and cycling – much of the town is relatively flat and most destinations are within walking or cycling distances of people's homes. The network of green infrastructure – the town's attractive open spaces – along with the river and canal make many journeys attractive and pleasant.

However, currently many people choose not to walk or cycle for journeys around the town. Reasons range from concerns and perceptions about road safety and driver behaviour, the volume of traffic, poor quality routes and gaps in the cycle network to travel habits and cultural factors. A recent Taunton Area Cycling Campaign survey found more cycle friendly road design and more or better cycle paths were the two most popular factors which respondents felt would encourage them to cycle more. A quality active travel network needs to be designed for, and accessible to, everyone, including those with mobility impairments.

Our plan is to enable more people to choose to walk or cycle for more of their journeys, by improving the network and making the experience more pleasant. In particular the cycle network needs to be suitable for new and inexperienced cyclists, as well as existing riders, and also provide sufficient space for pedestrians. Through our proposals we want to see **levels of cycling journeys doubled** and to develop **a special status as a walking and cycling town**.



Segregated cycleway, London



Continuous footway across side street, Clapham



Ongoing proposals and supporting policies

Programme of improvements to cycle networks and pedestrian facilities, starting with key corridors as a priority including routes to the town centre and rail station

Build awareness of walking and cycling routes (such as by publishing updated maps) and communicate key strategy messages, such as sharing the space with other road users (courteous road behaviour) and changing perceptions

Encourage workplaces to enhance on-site facilities for cycle users

Embed new and innovative design techniques for walking and cycling infrastructure, including cycle priority low driving speeds, into local design guidance

Ensure the garden communities are designed with connected streets suitable for cycling and walking

Protect disused canal and railway routes for potential reuse as footpaths and cycleways

Link garden communities to existing active travel corridors in the green wedges, including along the canal and river

Shorter-term commitments

Develop and maintain a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, working collaboratively to (i) identify key corridors for investment, (ii) tackle barriers to cycling and walking particularly at junctions, gyratory systems and crossing points, (iii) and implement cycle priority at appropriate locations / on key routes.

Town centre public space improvements to achieve people-friendly streets and less traffic in the retail heart of the town

Implement appropriate and effective measures such as 20mph speed limits, traffic calming or changes to road layouts as appropriate to reduce noise and vehicle speeds and improve road safety

More high-quality cycle parking spaces provided at key destinations, including across the town centre, the rail station, hospital and shops and businesses. Locations to be identified in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Update and improve the wayfinding and information network to cover more parts of the town, ensuring it is simple and intuitive to use

Enhanced cycle hub facility at Taunton Station to include greater quantity of secure cycle parking, along with bike hire, maintenance and repair services

Our longer-term aspirations

Implement the recommendations of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, to create a comprehensive network of direct routes for cycling, protected from traffic where appropriate and suitable for everyone. These routes will connect the whole town, including park and ride sites, garden communities and surrounding villages, such as Bishop's Lydeard, maximising the use of green corridors for the routes

Increase walking journeys by improving the quality of key routes, including from the station

to the town's retail heart and Vivary Park, and alongside the River Tone

Enable more local business functions to take place by bike, such as local deliveries by cargo bike.

Provision of improved cycle connectivity across M5 – a new pedestrian and cycle bridge to connect Nexus25 to existing residential areas and town, plus cycle links from Ruishton to Hankridge Farm

4 PROPOSALS AND POLICIES FOR Bus and coach

Taunton's bus network provides for a wide range of everyday journeys enabling people to access education, jobs, training and healthcare. Coaches provide interurban travel connections to London, the Midlands, North of England and the South West as well as to London Heathrow and Bristol Airports.

Emerging innovations could challenge our view and experience of traditional road-based public transport over the next 10-20 years. Changes may include on-demand services, booking journeys using apps, sharing journeys in minibuses or smaller vehicles. Different solutions will be required on the busiest transport corridors, such as between Bridgwater and Taunton. Paying for travel using mobile phones, contactless bank cards or smartcards is likely to become standard in the next 5 years, making journeys easier and faster. The Councils will be monitoring developments in this sector closely to ensure the town can respond to fast-changing markets.

Regular weekday daytime bus services radiate out from the town centre, but evening and Sunday services only operate on a limited number of routes and at reduced frequencies. Bus punctuality remains a key issue with, traffic congestion, inconsiderate parking and roadworks contributing to one in every five buses monitored in the county running more than five minutes late⁽²¹⁾.

The majority of services are run on a commercial basis by bus companies who can respond to changes in customer demand by changing or withdrawing services at two months' notice. The County Council currently spends around £2m to enable 'socially necessary' bus services to run which would otherwise not be provided by bus companies. However, government regulations limit the scope of Councils to influence routes, frequencies, standards or ticketing arrangements of commercial services.

Our proposals for bus and coach travel are set out over the page.



On-street bus interchange, Bavaria

Ongoing proposals and supporting policies

Work with bus operators to:

- maintain an appropriate bus network based around customer needs;
- enhance the customer experience; and
- raise the quality of the bus fleet through measures such as smart ticketing, on-board wifi, leather seats, audio-visual announcements of next stop
- introduce technology to facilitate smartphone apps
- Move towards a cleaner fuel bus fleet, such as hybrid electric vehicles, by bidding with bus companies for funding from government

Introduce additional bus priority lanes or infrastructure to speed up bus services and prioritise their journeys over general traffic, including in connection with garden communities

Periodically review whether entering into formal partnerships with bus operators would offer useful ways to create a suitable bus network for the town in terms of routes, timetabling and other quality standards. Monitor emerging models of public transport provision and respond as appropriate

Ensuring garden communities have direct and safe walking routes to existing bus services

Shorter-term commitments

Implement A3259 Corridor Strategy for bus, walking and cycling infrastructure to connect Monkton Heathfield garden community

Ensure garden communities are designed in ways which allow new local bus services to route through them

Work with neighbouring authorities and stakeholders to develop the bus rapid transit route to link Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington

Explore options for future bus and scheduled coach passenger boarding and alighting arrangements in the town centre, taking account of key destinations and the planned public transport interchange at Taunton Rail Station

Provide real-time and other service information at bus stops and using digital technology (websites and apps)

Introduce quality waiting infrastructure – seating, shelters and step-free bus boarding – at bus stops across the town

Develop a strategy for visiting coaches and implement priority proposals

Work with developers and bus operators to connect the garden communities and Nexus25 with high-quality bus services

Our longer-term aspirations

Construct infrastructure for a rapid transit route connecting Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington and serving garden communities including a link from Comeytrowe

Work in partnership with operators to shape the bus network to meet passenger requirements, including removing the need for buses to terminate in the town centre and instead provide cross-town services (particularly covering a core area between Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton Station and extending to Nexus25)

A new high frequency dedicated public transport link from Comeytrowe to the town centre via Musgrove Park and Bridgwater & Taunton College

Use new models of public transport and emerging connected and autonomous vehicle technology to enhance accessibility in Taunton



Digital departure boards, Birmingham



Electric bus in service, Dorchester

5 PROPOSALS AND POLICIES FOR Rail

Taunton is strategically located on the rail network, which provides important connections to London, the South West and the wider UK, and encourages businesses to locate and stay in the town. Funding is already in place for the rail station upgrade which will create a much improved gateway to the town. From 2018 trains to and from London, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall will be upgraded, bringing a higher frequency of service, increasing capacity by 25% and decreasing journey times.

Network Rail's projections forecast that passenger traffic will increase by at least 47% between 2013 and 2023⁽²²⁾ and there is concern that existing rail industry plans are not sufficiently ambitious to address capacity

and connectivity issues in Somerset. There is substantial variation between long-distance and local train services in terms of train comfort and quality, journey times and the hours and frequency of their operation.

Somerset County Council is a member of the Peninsula Rail Task Force, a rail improvement campaign group of Councils and LEPs, and which published the 20-year plan entitled *Closing The Gap – The South West Strategic Rail Blueprint*, in 2016⁽²³⁾.

Through the proposals overleaf we are seeking to achieve **enhanced connections to the rest of the UK and the strong growth in rail use.**



Artist's impression of upgraded approach to Taunton Rail Station

Ongoing proposals and supporting policies

Close working with Network Rail, train operating companies and other partner organisations to develop and lobby for rail improvements

Engage in, and influence, the rail franchising process to ensure better outcomes for Taunton

Shorter-term commitments

Taunton Rail Station Upgrade – enhance facilities and provide a better welcome to the town and consolidate station parking into multi-storey car park/s to provide more spaces (£8.97m)

Upgraded trains between London - Somerset - Devon - Cornwall to provide 25% more capacity, hourly frequencies and shorter journey times

Taunton Rail Station South Side Approach - create improved public transport interchange, drop-off/pick-up and taxi waiting areas

New, direct, high-quality pedestrian and cycle route from station to town centre through Firepool

Develop business case for new station at Wellington

Lobby for flood protection and prevention works to the two rail lines across the Somerset Levels and at Exeter and Dawlish

Encourage the rail industry to trial rail services from the national rail network to West Somerset Railway's station at Bishop's Lydeard

Lobby DfT to require rail franchise winners to provide quality (continuous) wifi connectivity on rail services to meet customer demands and enable business productivity

Our longer-term aspirations

Lobby for improvements to local rail services for communities between Exeter, Taunton, Bridgwater and Bristol to be included in Network Rail's future rail strategies

Deliver new Wellington station, including interchange with other transport modes, to maximise its appeal and catchment

Support the rail industry in formulating a long-term plan for reintroduction of regular passenger train services from the national rail network at Taunton onto the West Somerset Railway to Minehead

Work with Peninsula Rail Task Force to secure government commitment to the electrification of the mainline to London and Bristol

Work collaboratively with Network Rail to plan and engineer schemes to increase linespeeds to reduce rail journey times, as set out in the 20 year rail plan

Liaise with rail organisations to lengthen crowded peak time train services

Increase frequency of long-distance express rail services to the North of England and the South West

Reduce interchange waiting times and enhance connections at key interchange stations (Castle Cary, Westbury, Exeter)





PROPOSALS AND POLICIES FOR

Smarter business and smarter living

Our strategy is not solely about getting people from A to B. We also want to put in place the conditions which enable people to live and work more flexibly, be better informed about their journeys and avoid the need for travel when it's not required. Technology will continue to emerge to fill these requirements and the Digital Taunton initiative seeks to stimulate developments in the field and ensure the town is a leader in emerging digital innovation.

However, digital connectivity is seen as a current weakness by Taunton businesses. For example, the speed of broadband connections are not uniform across the borough which can hamper economic growth and limit the usefulness of new technology. Conventional methods of conveying travel information also need to be maintained – one in ten adults surveyed neither have the internet nor intend installing it at home²⁴.

As Taunton rapidly grows, and with its garden town status, we have an opportunity to shape the design of the new garden communities. We can plan to ensure they are well-connected and well-served by facilities and provide attractive places for people to move around, and by active travel modes in particular. Similarly, we want to promote development in the town centre to



Attractive route through new mixed use development - Wapping Wharf, Bristol

make it vibrant and economically successful. Moving home, starting a new job or moving school tend to cause us to change our travel habits and we want to roll out a range of transport tools and proposals to ensure the town has the right connectivity and retains its high quality of life.

Through our proposals overleaf we intend for **all residents of our new garden communities to be within walking distance of main bus corridors and have easy access onto a core walking and cycling network serving the town and for less car use per head of population.**



Artist's impression of Firepool development

Ongoing proposals and supporting policies

Involve Taunton businesses and residents in identifying transport improvements. Examples include using data held by public bodies or collected by the public (crowdsourced) on problems, opportunities and finding solutions such as community development of transport applications

Continue the ongoing programme of robust and high achieving workplace and residential travel plans and initiatives for occupiers of new developments, including in garden communities

Continue to proactively identify and introduce technology solutions to the town's transport issues

Undertake targeted programmes of travel promotion and advice in new developments

Encourage the provision of infrastructure and spaces to enable people to be more productive on the move, e.g. wifi on public transport or at interchanges, and at new flexible forms of workplaces

Support further development of local hubs where online deliveries can be securely stored until collection by residents (e.g. at local shops)

Promote and enable home working and teleconferencing and ensure good quality broadband across the Borough

Continue to focus new development in locations which have, or can have, good accessibility, including by public transport, walking and cycling

Enable a greater proportion of transactions with the two Councils to be carried out digitally

Our longer-term aspirations

Be a town open to innovation and new technology to improve the travel experience, making it easier to get around and reducing the need to travel for work and education

Enhance mobile phone connections and speeds, such as through 4G and 5G

Shorter-term commitments

Provide superfast broadband to at least 95% of premises in the Borough

Work collaboratively to improve mobile phone coverage – and the quality of mobile broadband coverage in particular

Work with developers to revitalise the town centre with retail, leisure, community, sporting and cultural uses, so residents don't have to travel to other towns and cities to access these services and amenities along with new homes

Make key transport datasets available to enable apps and other technology solutions to be developed for the travelling public

Use the free town centre public wifi as a catalyst for sharing and making available travel information widely available

Undertake a comprehensive programme of travel promotion and advice (using personalised journey planning) and using new technology to better inform travellers. Work with those communities and people who are receptive to, or who can realistically change their travel patterns, including those whose are moving house, starting a new job or making journeys for the first time such as travelling for work or visiting the town (subject to securing suitable funding)

Collaboratively work with schools to identify and implement solutions to address issues including peak time congestion and road safety

Bristol Bugbears

Bristol City Council has been awarded funding to make small improvements to cycling and walking facilities around the city. Help us spend it well.

[View comment map](#)

[Learn more about the project](#)



Crowdsourcing ideas from the public on improving cycling - Bristol Bugbears website map

[View comment map](#)

Annex

ANNEX A

WHO DELIVERS THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY PROPOSALS AND POLICIES

Both Somerset County Council (SCC) and Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) both play key roles in enabling an effective transport network. They have the following responsibilities:

Somerset County Council is responsible for maintaining the adopted highway network, including footways, public rights of way and street lighting, preparing a countywide transport plan, bidding for funds for transport improvements, building new transport infrastructure and supervising transport improvements provided as part of new development, providing school and college transport, park and ride, non-emergency health transport, some subsidised public transport, on-street parking enforcement, traffic management, road safety and providing transport advice to TDBC on planning applications.

Other Organisations

Responsibility for other key aspects of transport provision, particularly public transport, rests with a range of organisations, some of which are private companies. These bodies include:

- Department for Transport, which provides funding for significant transport improvements and innovation, often allocated through funding competitions;
- Highways England, who maintain and operate the M5 motorway, the A303 and A36 in Somerset (and, when constructed, the new A358 route between the M5 and A303);
- Network Rail, responsible for infrastructure on the national rail network;
- Great Western Railway, operates the railway franchise awarded by government to operate local and long-distance rail services in the South West and to London and Bristol. They also manage Taunton station;
- CrossCountry is the current rail franchise holder of long-distance rail services to the South West, Midlands and Northern England;
- Bus and coach companies, including Buses of Somerset (FirstGroup), Berry's Coaches, Hatch Green Coaches, National Express and Stagecoach all provide services within Taunton and beyond; and
- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which prepares a Strategic Economic Plan and makes decisions on funding for major transport schemes allocated through a prioritisation process across the four authority areas.

Taunton Deane Borough Council prepares the local plan, is responsible for many off-street car parks and makes the decisions on planning applications, including collecting the Community Infrastructure Levy for strategic infrastructure and securing other funding for transport improvements from developers.

Whilst the Councils have freedoms over some aspects of their work, other areas are ultimately controlled by government, such as whether funds from Vehicle Excise Duty is devoted to transport investment, or national planning policy, which influences how planning applications are decided.

ANNEX B

FUNDING FOR TRANSPORT

It is our ambition, through collaborative working, to bring all of the proposals and policies to fruition during the lifetime of this strategy. However, not all of the elements of this strategy are currently funded and one of the purposes of this document is to help secure funding for the initiatives set out in the strategy. Funding for transport services and infrastructure is currently extremely complex.

Funding for infrastructure (such as new roads or cycleways) tends to come either from developers or capital grant funding from Government. Some of the Government funding is devolved to regional bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships to manage. Government favours allocating many grant funds through competitive bidding processes which can make future funding streams unpredictable, and funds usually needing to be spent in a relatively short period of time once a business case has been made for a particular project. The criteria for suitable projects also changes according to Government priorities.

Funding for ongoing services such as grass cutting or socially necessary local bus services comes from a continually reducing annual government grant, and from Council Tax (which also funds other crucial services such as adult social care or children's services); so difficult decisions continually need to be made about what can be funded.

Despite this challenging environment Taunton has been extremely successful in securing a range of funds to improve the highways and transport infrastructure. Having a clear plan is an important step in securing further funding.

The successful operation of the local transport network as a whole relies on a close working relationship between the Councils and a wide range of private sector organisations who control, provide and fund aspects of transport investment in Taunton. Consequently we alone will not be able to achieve all of the proposals and policies set out


in this strategy. Successful schemes usually rely on cooperation and funding contributions from several sources. The Councils are committed to working closely with these organisations to influence their investment decisions and ensure they support local projects rather than those elsewhere in the country.

Taunton's Garden Town status means that transport infrastructure to support the growing town will continue to be a key issue over the next 20 years. We share the frustration of local communities that the current funding arrangements often make it very difficult to ensure that the infrastructure needed to support new development is put in place before development commences. This means often some development needs to occur to generate the finance necessary for developers to fund infrastructure improvements. Government planning policy accepts that new development may cause more congestion.

In line with government regulations the Borough Council introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in 2014⁽²⁵⁾. CIL is a compulsory tariff which must be paid by developers of certain types of development to fund improvements, including strategic transport improvements associated with the growth of Taunton (and Wellington). Planning applicants are also required to provide, or fund, site-specific matters needed to make development acceptable in planning terms, such as access junctions (such as through section 106 or section 278 agreements). Whilst there are different ways of seeking funding from developers, government guidance emphasises that local authorities should ensure that the combined total impact of such funding requests does not threaten the financial viability of developing the sites. As CIL is compulsory, the ability to secure funding from developers through other means to support other categories of infrastructure can be limited.

Key funding sources and funding bodies are set out on the next page.

Funding source	Description
Local authority core funding, including Council Tax	Used to support the operation of the existing transport system, including County Council responsibilities such as highway maintenance, providing the concessionary travel scheme and supporting some bus services, and Borough Council responsibilities including car park maintenance and management. From 2020 the revenue from business rates will be retained locally but the core grant given from central government will end.
Local Growth Fund 	Budget given by central government and controlled by the Local Economic Partnership to fund major transport infrastructure investment in their areas
Large 'Local Majors' Fund 	This new fund for 'local major transport schemes' was announced in the Government's 2015 Spending Review. It is designed to help local areas 'pay for projects that are too expensive to fund by themselves'
Funds allocated by Department for Transport	Separate allocations are given to the County Council for 1) highway maintenance, including a specific pothole action fund, 2) smaller-scale capital schemes and one-off National Productivity Investment Fund for 2017/18
Funds managed by Department for Transport 	Local highway authorities can bid for money from various funds, including the Low Emission Bus Scheme, and National Productivity Investment fund (for 18/19 – 19/20), Local Highways Maintenance Challenge Fund
Funds managed by Department for Communities and Local Government 	Local authorities can bid for money from funds including the Housing Infrastructure Fund, to pay for infrastructure to unlock new homes in the areas of greatest demand. Government will either fund the final, missing element of infrastructure funding, or provide initial funding, to kick-start the process.
Developers (through Community Infrastructure Levy - CIL)	Payable by planning applicants towards the cost of providing or improving infrastructure across the borough required to support new development, and to operate or maintain it. 15% of money from CIL is passed directly to the town or parish councils within whose boundaries development takes place; communities with an adopted neighbourhood plan receive 25% of CIL revenue. Much of Taunton does not have a parish or town council so Taunton Deane Borough Council must ask the community how they wish the 15% of monies to be spent.
Developers through planning obligations (s106 agreements) and highway agreements (s278 agreements)	Used to secure transport infrastructure to enable a development to proceed (eg highway accesses) and limit the significant impacts of the development. Planning applicants can either give financial contributions or construct the physical infrastructure itself.
Highways England	Delivers DfT Road Investment Strategy projects, including for the A303/A358/A30 corridor and at M5 J23, or other programmes such as the queue protection system proposed between M5J22 and J25. Also manages 'Designated funds' to tackle specific issues including a Growth & Housing Fund (to part-fund schemes on the motorway or trunk road network which enable housing and employment sites to progress with a £4m allocation to M5 J25)  , A Walking and Cycling Fund, an Air Quality Fund, and Innovation Funds
Other sources	Includes funding by Network Rail, train operating companies and bus operators, for example. Some of the other sources require bids to be made

 **Competitive funding** - Funding not guaranteed; requires bid to be submitted.

Annex C: REFERENCES

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