

JULY 2019

# TAUNTON

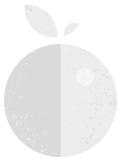
## THE VISION FOR OUR GARDEN TOWN

Somerset West  
and Taunton



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# Taunton – The Vision for Our Garden Town

## Foreword

Garden Town status for Taunton represents a once in a generation opportunity to improve the lives of our community.

The Council has recently declared a climate emergency and we are passionate about making Somerset West and Taunton carbon neutral by 2030. This aim underpins the vision and themes in this document, and will influence projects and initiatives as these are developed and rolled out.

Our plan is about much more than just accommodating new housing in the Town. We want to up the quality of new development, strengthen the connections between town and country through a network of green spaces, deliver a more prosperous Taunton and improve connectivity.

New Garden Communities at Monkton Heathfield, Nerrols Farm, Staplegrove and Comeytrove/Trull will accommodate much of the Town's planned expansion but we also wish to see a regenerated town centre with a greater emphasis on town centre living and its role as the cultural 'heart' to provide an improved experience for residents, businesses, and visitors.

We aren't working to any prescribed guidelines from Government, so we are free to shape a Garden Town based on our own priorities, local circumstances and characteristics. The consultation draft of this document received strong support and this gives us confidence that the aims are widely shared. We believe the Garden Town's enduring legacy will be a higher quality natural and built environment, supporting healthier and happier places.

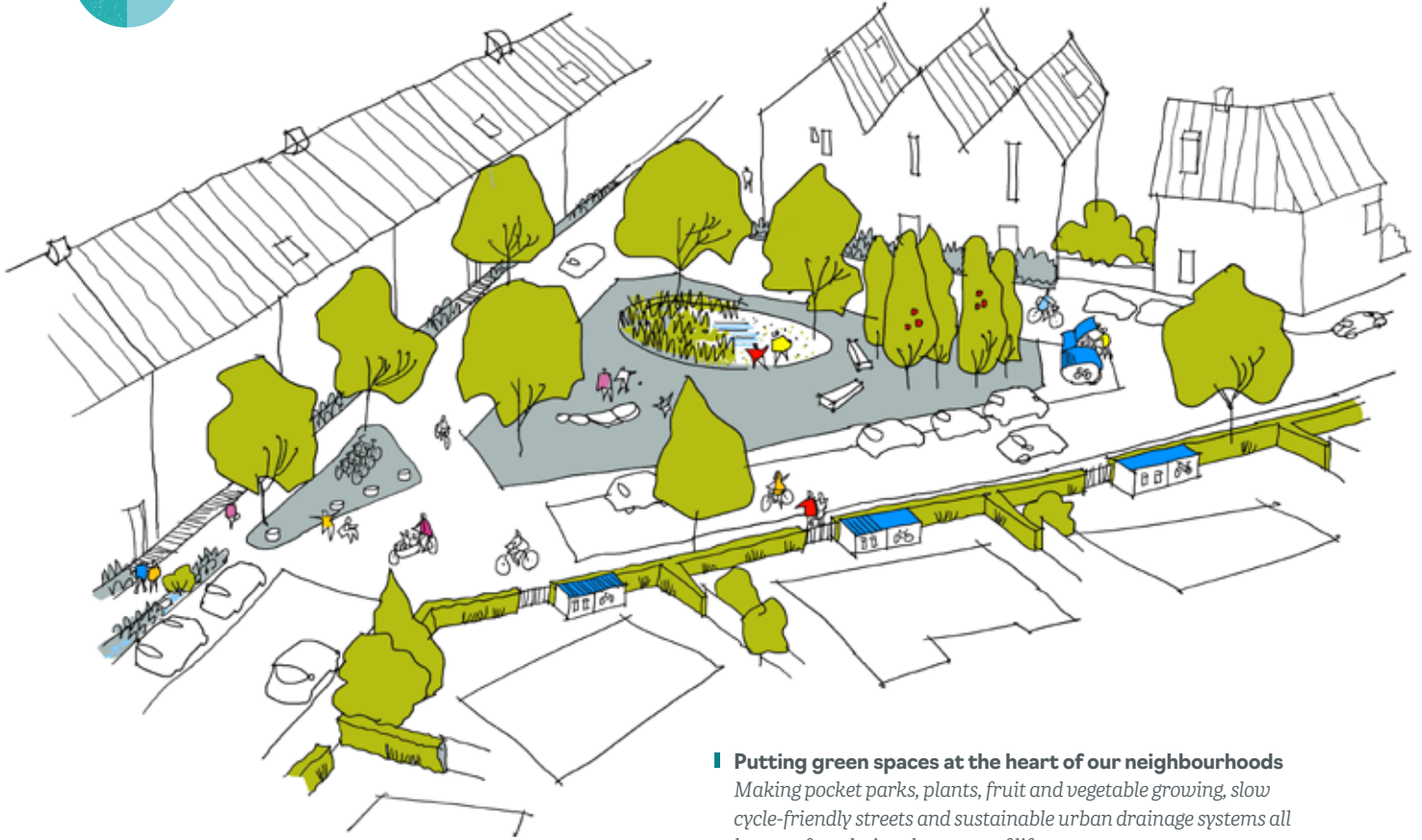
Turning the long term vision and ideas set out in this document into reality will require on-going engagement with our partners and the wider community and their buy-in and support in delivering projects and activities. We will prepare a Delivery Plan to set out in more detail how we will make this happen.



**Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts**  
*July 2019*



# Introduction



## Putting green spaces at the heart of our neighbourhoods

*Making pocket parks, plants, fruit and vegetable growing, slow cycle-friendly streets and sustainable urban drainage systems all become foundational our way of life.*

Taunton was designated as a Garden Town in early 2017 following a submission to Government. This submission reflected the Council's commitment to deliver significant new housing growth focused on a number of new garden communities as well as a regenerated town centre. We recognised the need to deliver a step change in the quality of new development and to ensure it was accompanied by essential infrastructure.

Since the designation we have completed a number of important pieces of work including a new Green Infrastructure Strategy, Retail Leisure and Employment Strategy and have prepared bids for Government funding to provide some of the essential infrastructure required to unlock development. A Local Development Order for our new Strategic Employment Site Nexus 25 has been adopted and important projects such as Norton Hillfort and the Monkton Heathfield Country Park have also got underway.

Following on from this Vision document is a Delivery Plan, which will help explain how we deliver on our strategic ambitions. It will set out the necessary

governance, partners, funding, and a programme of projects and initiatives to implement the ideas set out within this Vision. It will also establish the mechanisms by which the progress and success of the Garden Town can be measured. Some examples of measures are suggested in this document (for example air quality, tree coverage, trips made by walking & cycling) - these will be further developed and refined with partners then used to monitor the tangible improvements that we expect will enhance the quality of life for the whole of Taunton.

The Delivery Plan will be a platform where you can find out more about the range of projects that we are committed to delivering, we will look to present this information in an open, accessible way, using the latest technology.

## Over-arching Measures of Success

- Taunton will be carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030.
- The community agrees that Taunton is a fantastic place to live.





## Our Vision

**“Taunton, the County Town of Somerset will be flourishing, distinctive, and healthy – and the country’s benchmark Garden Town. We will be proud to live and work in a place where the outstanding natural environment, diverse and thriving economy and inspiring cultural offer, contribute to an exceptional quality of life and well-being”.**

Our Themes are the seeds for making this Vision happen. They will provide improved opportunity and enhanced quality of life for everyone:



***Grow our town greener – transforming our open spaces and streets***

Quality of our Environment: give our town a green makeover, joining up our green spaces, waterways, parks and play spaces, planting more street trees and woodlands and managing our water more imaginatively with wetlands and rain gardens to improve it for recreation, tourism and wildlife.



***Branching out – moving cleaner, moving smarter***

Quality of our Movement: we will integrate our transport network so that it serves Taunton with much improved bus and appropriate vehicle links to our main destinations and make much better prioritised provision for walkers and cyclists encouraging healthier and more sustainable journey choices as attractive alternatives to travelling by car.



***Growing quality places to live – town centre, new and existing neighbourhoods***

Quality of our places and neighbourhoods: we will deliver an outstanding built environment focused on places and spaces with high quality neighbourhoods, green streets and public spaces and with homes and buildings that are distinctly local in appearance. Our houses, offices, employment areas, public services and road infrastructure will embrace innovation, will be energy efficient and will exploit the latest sustainable technologies.



***New shoots and blossom – a dynamic and prosperous community founded on knowledge, culture and business***

Quality of opportunity: we will responsibly nourish partnership, prosperity and growth in social value, through our strengths in knowledge, education, culture and business. We will germinate and grow sustainable arts and cultural venues as hubs that foster excellence in the region. We will pursue low carbon and digital infrastructure to make a town that connects businesses and markets well, drawing on our University Centre and growth industries in digital, land, marine informatics, health and nuclear.



# Understanding Our Roots

If we want to grow the Garden Town from the roots and character of Taunton, then we need to know its story. Taunton has an enviable human scale, with a direct relationship to its waterways and its landscape setting. It is a town of definable neighbourhoods and a vibrant town centre with a rich heritage and distinctive skyline; all aspects providing clues to guide decisions which will define the character of our Garden Town into the future.”

## 1. Saxon Origins

- Town founded on slightly higher ground within river valley.
- Site was the centre of the Bishop of Winchester’s manor.
- The location was a convenient river crossing point.
- A ditch, bank and fort defended the settlement.
- Market place set at the junction of routes into the town.

## 2. Medieval Planning

- Bridge built and water mill with its mill stream established.
- The castle is enlarged: it constrains growth to the west.
- Regular ‘burgage plots’ for merchants are laid out around the market place and streets.
- Augustinian Priory NE of the town walls, constraining growth.
- Bishop establishes a fishery (Vivarium), south of High Street.
- Suburbs grow beyond the gates, along routes to the east and north.

## 3. Georgian Improvements

- Taunton grows new areas, following the earlier closure of the Priory and loss of the walls.
- Hammet Street and Church Square frame St Mary’s tower and link to the Parade.
- Imposing Market House becomes focus of the Parade.
- Castle is remodelled and many older buildings are re-fronted in the Georgian style.
- Elegant Crescent built, facing out beyond the former western boundary.
- Large houses built outside the town for wealthy landowners.

## 4. Victorian Expansion

- Canal and (later) railway greatly increase trading links.
- Industries line the river, (sawmills, tannery, breweries, gasworks, cattle market).
- Shirt and collar manufacture become main industries.
- Terraced housing for workers spring up to the E and N.
- Middle class villas / terraces located to the W, away from industries.
- Infrastructure of the County Town established, (Shire Hall and Courts, Hospital, Workhouse, three public schools, Cricket Ground, Vivary Park, police station, the garrison at Jellalabad Barracks and military prison).



SAXON ORIGINS



MEDIEVAL PLANNING



GEORGIAN IMPROVEMENTS



VICTORIAN EXPANSION

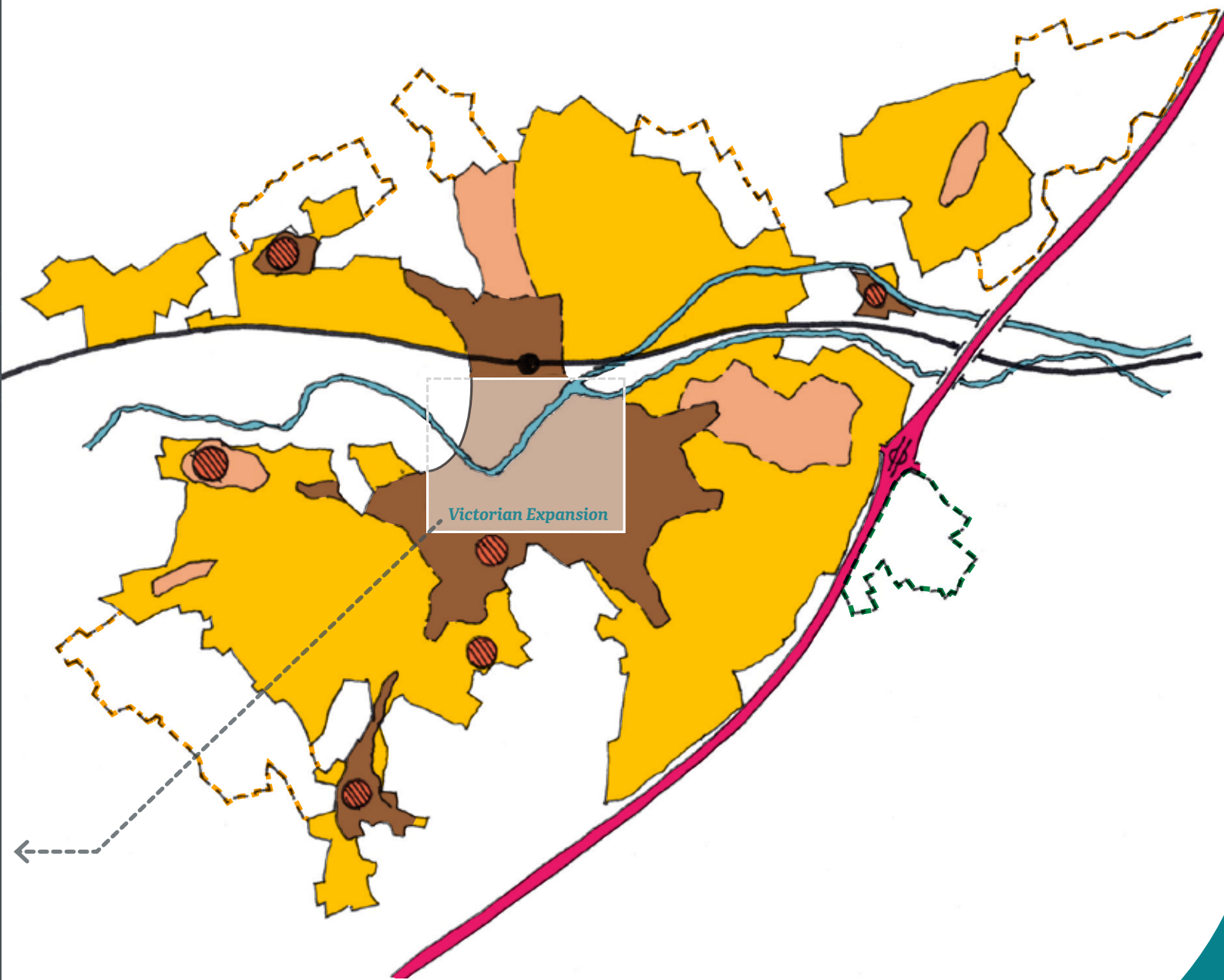


### 5. Taunton Now

The County Town has today become an attractive place to live, work and visit due to its pleasant setting, its market town scale, culture and lifestyle, good schools and colleges, ease of access, and employment opportunities in modern, mainly service-based industries. Residential areas added in the late 20th century are suburban in character and overwhelmingly low to medium density, of two to three storeys and based on accessibility by car. Similarly, employment areas, other than local government, are mainly located in zones beyond the centre, in spacious and low-rise development. The towers and spires of the churches, the river and canal and the historic core of the centre and villages contribute to Taunton's distinctiveness and sense of continuity.

### Key

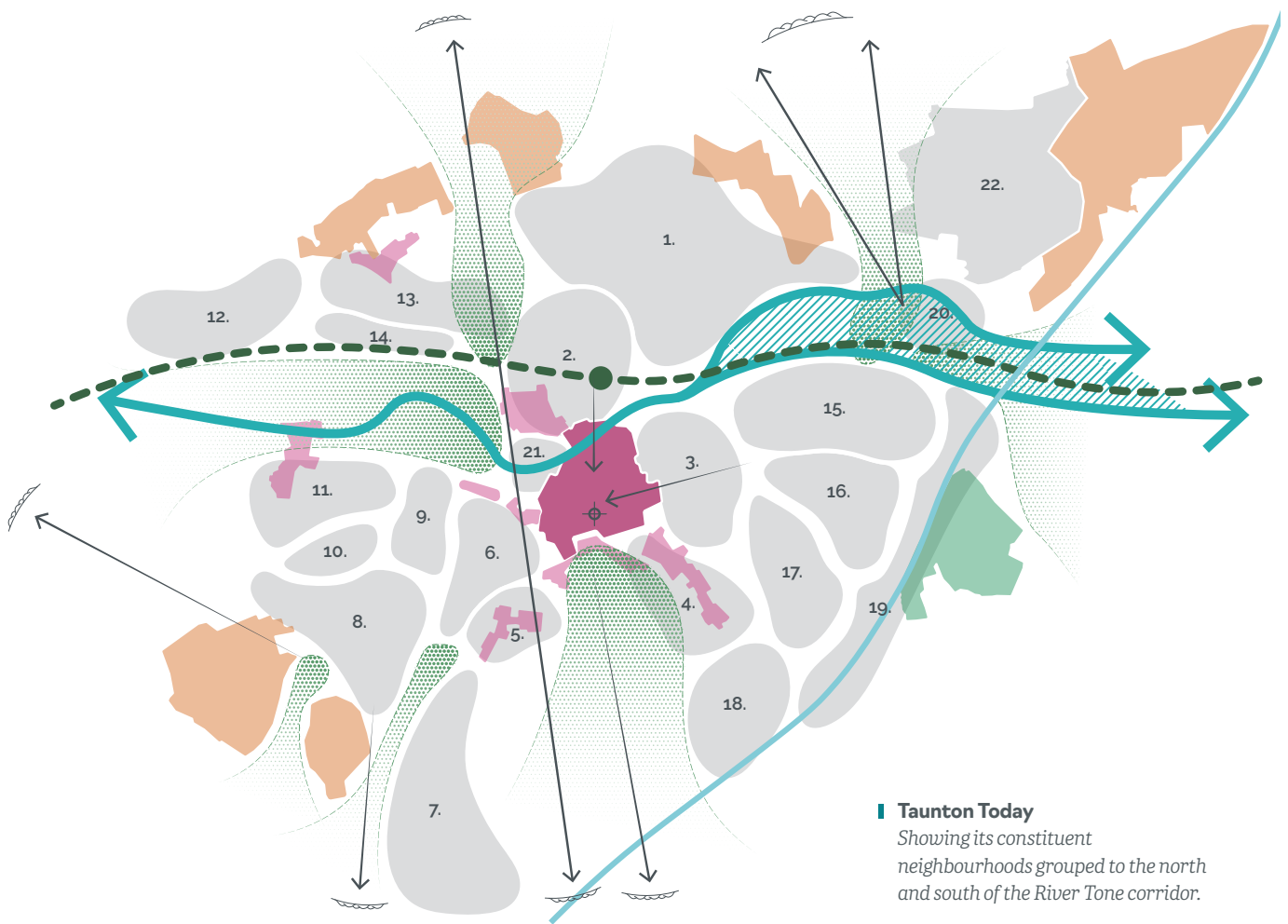
- 1. Area covered by 'Victorian Expansion' Map
- 2. Historic core of settlements absorbed by the expansion of Taunton
- 3. Victorian expansion beyond the town centre
- 4. Inter-war expansion
- 5. Post-war expansion
- 6. Planned residential areas
- 7. Planned strategic employment site





# Taunton; A Town of Neighbourhoods

The health and vitality of a settlement is determined by the strength of its component parts – a successful town is made from successful neighbourhoods, positively related by the movement network that exists between them – whilst, elsewhere, the development pattern may be broken apart by green wedges that bring the country into the heart of the place.



**Taunton Today**  
Showing its constituent neighbourhoods grouped to the north and south of the River Tone corridor.

## Key

- |   |  |                                    |                                      |
|---|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Priorswood   | 10. Galmington commercial core (temporary title) | 19. Town edge (Blackbrook Ind Est) | Conservation Areas                   |
| 2. Rowbarton  | 11. Bishops Hull/Silk Mills Road                 | 20. Bathpool                       | Strategic Employment Site (Nexus 25) |
| 3. Lambrook – eastern Victorian/Edwardian expansion of core | 12. Norton Fitzwarren                            | 21. French Weir                    | → Views to town landmarks            |
| 4. South Road   | 13. Staplegrove / Staplegrove Road               | 22. Monkton Heathfield             | → Views to surrounding hills         |
| 5. Haines Hill (Victorian Villas)                           | 14. Bindon Road commercial core                  | → River / Canal                    | ⊕ Landmark (St Mary's)               |
| 6. Wilton   | 15. Deane Gate                                   | Waterway Corridor                  | --- Railway                          |
| 7. Trull Road (Ridgeway)                                    | 16. Blackbrook                                   | Green Valleys / Fingers            | ● Railway Station                    |
| 8. Galmington   | 17. Holway                                       | New Neighbourhoods                 | — M5                                 |
| 9. Musgrove Hospital  | 18. Mountfields                                  | Town Centre                        |                                      |



## Taunton, a town...

**...of quiet waterways, urban & rural, with well-used bankside footpaths.**



■ *Movement and water are natural partners, promoting active travel and recreational exercise.*

**...where the surrounding hills make their presence felt through many a vista.**



■ *Glimpsed reminders of the landscape setting are never far away, and available in the very heart of the town centre.*

**...of intimate footpaths and spaces.**



■ *The scale and arrangement of places can promote social interaction and arcades provide sheltered 'micro-climates.'*

**...which is legible, thanks to familiar landmarks.**



■ *Taunton's church towers are a memorable feature, also providing dramatic contrast of scale within the townscape.*

**...of characterful, distinctive areas.**



■ *Coherent historic layouts create and frame urban views, whilst elegant buildings preside confidently over the space that surround them.*

**...of distinctive housing areas and terraces.**



■ *Architectural elegance and finesse draws upon order and proportion and formal arrangements of buildings create a strong urban presence.*

**...with a palette of distinctive local materials.**



■ *Mellow tones and hues successfully combine in careful compositions, whilst strong material contrast also works when handled with delicacy.*

■ *Locally sourced materials include soft-textured stone and brick, whilst standard paving types, when used to good effect, also become a local feature.*



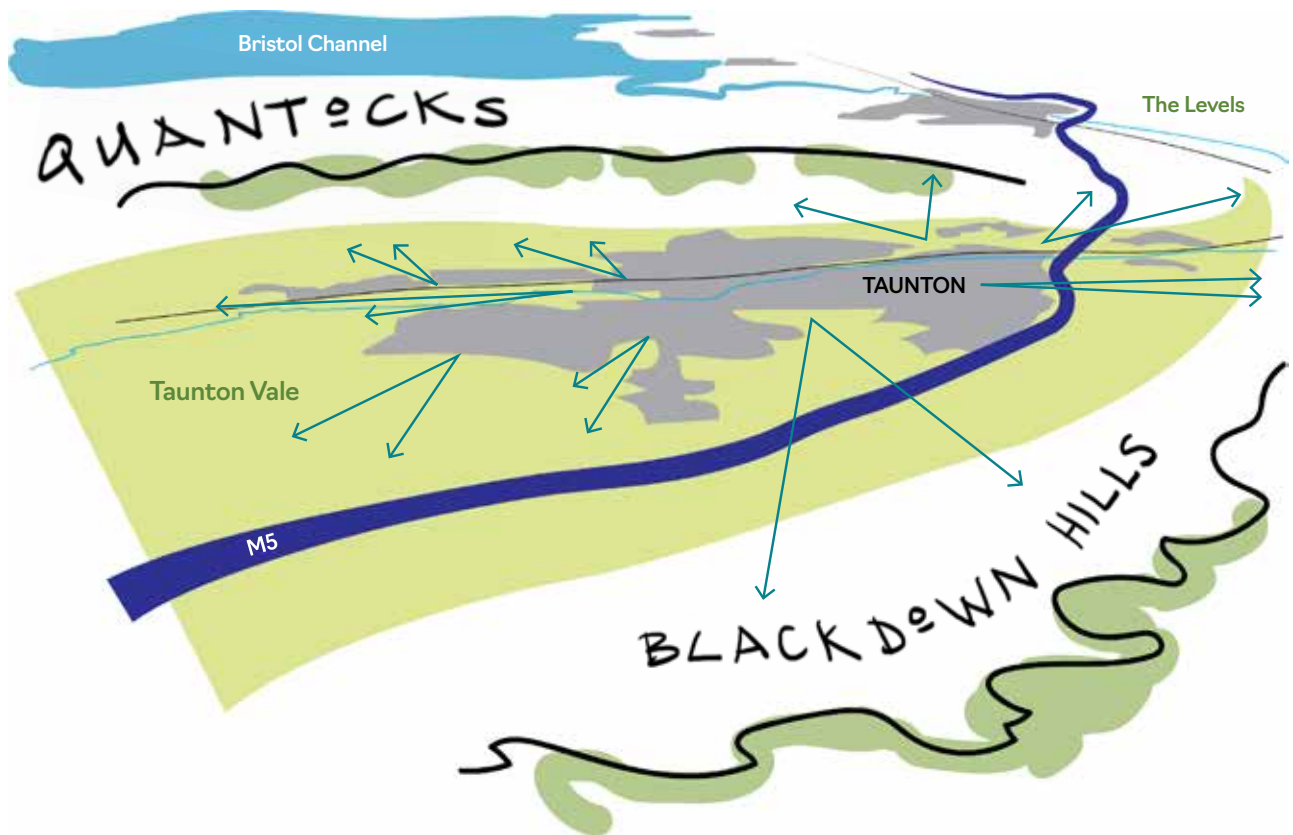
# Our Landscape Roots

## **Drawing on our unique landscape setting**

Our town enjoys the enormous privilege of straddling the River Tone as it passes through the Vale between the Quantocks and the Blackdown Hills on its way to the Somerset Levels and moors. The gentle topography, the network of streams and wetlands, the rich agricultural hinterland of pastures and orchards, wetlands and woods and our legacy of landscape features around the town such as our canal connecting to Bridgewater, Norton Hillfort, Hestercombe House and Poundisford deer park, all contribute to our unique character. Within the town the rivers and streams, church towers, remnant farms, castle, barracks, large houses and parks such as Vivary Park, all contribute trees, boundaries, local materials and architectural features that we take for granted but which makes our town Taunton and nowhere else.

## **Landscape within every strategy**

As we grapple with climate change, flood waters and more sustainable living and transport, we will ensure the agronomic and waterside character of our town is maintained and enhanced. We will develop our green infrastructure for greening and growing, our development for homes, business and culture, and our movement routes for walking and cycling out of this appreciation. Views to our countryside, access to our streams and river and green space, resilience of our urban areas to flood and water runoff, opening up our streams and vegetating of our streets and public spaces for shade, amenity and wildlife, will all be at the root of our strategies.



### **Our landscape setting**

*The root of our local identity is in our landscape, appreciated by our forebears and since developed and sometimes abused. As we grow our Garden Town, we will maintain and enhance our connections to this rich and fertile landscape of orchards, leazes and wetlands.*









# Growing Our Town Greener

## A Green Makeover

### Current Issues, Challenges & Opportunities

- Few street trees /planting – lack of integration between built and natural environment.
- Air quality needs to be improved, biodiversity promoted and climate resilience strengthened
- Poor connectivity to waterways / river.
- Limited access to local greenspace and food-growing opportunities.
- Need to reduce our environmental and climate impacts - becoming Planet Positive
- Our green infrastructure will include connected green spaces, absorbing stormwater and making space for nature.

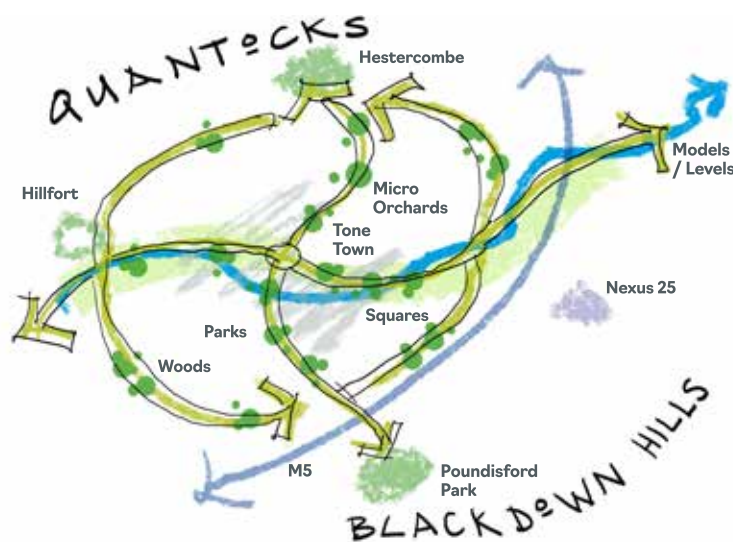
#### **Link up our watersides**

We will re-establish connections to our landscape by making the most of our rivers, canal, streams and watercourses and their landscapes. Our town was established where it is because of the Tone and its tributaries and together with our canal connects us to our surrounding countryside. We will celebrate our streams and rivers in new communities and where we regenerate existing places. We will create and recreate the rich riparian landscapes they naturally encourage, whether wetlands, withy beds, wildflower meadows and marshes, affirming them as the backbone of our town's landscape.

#### **Connect Our Key Destinations**

Wildlife and people thrive where green spaces and natural habitats are well connected. Our strategy will ensure

new development, regeneration, traffic improvements and other works, will no longer sever our green corridors and walking and cycling paths, but will link them together so that they form a joined-up network, easy and convenient to use, a pleasure to look at and rich in wildlife. Our town has excellent existing destinations that lie both within the town like Vivary Park and Longrun Meadow or the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. Around our town we have great places like Hestercombe, Norton Hillfort and Poundisford Park, and the Quantock and Blackdown Hills. Our town will gain new ones as the town grows too, like the new employment centre at Nexus 25 with its generous green spaces. We will ensure our movement and green infrastructure policies all work together so that they provide simultaneous benefits.

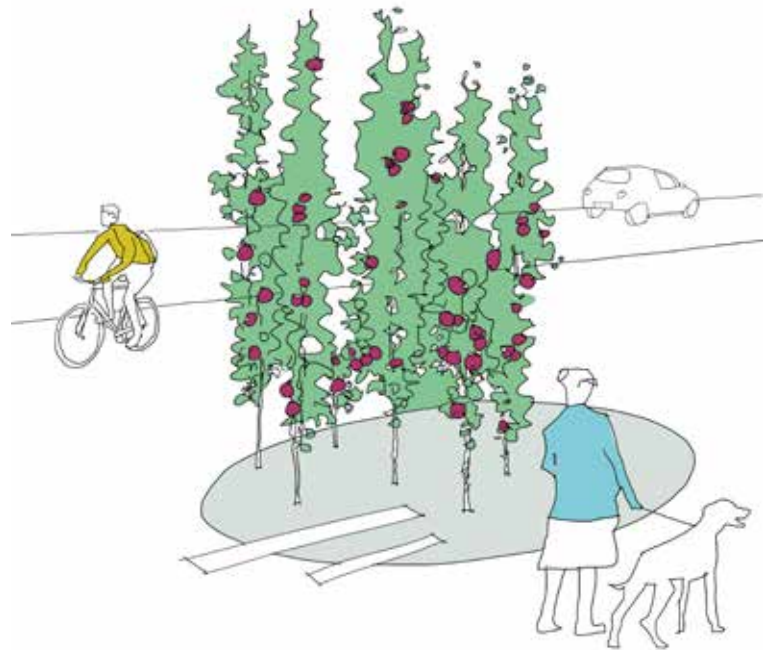


#### **Our green infrastructure strategy - with strategic links**

We will connect our green spaces and walks along corridors that reflect the watercourses, public rights of way, historic landscape destinations and proposed developments. A hub and spoke pattern will provide a rich and diverse landscape experience and linked wildlife corridors.



# Our green infrastructure will include the themes of connected greening, rain gardens, wetlands and orchards



### Grow a garden grid

The Garden Grid is the network of natural and green spaces, rivers and streets that intersperse and connect our communities. Ours will connect the town's parks and open spaces with the Tone riverside and the wider Somerset countryside, using green corridors to provide safe and attractive walking and cycling networks. Green spaces and vegetation provide multiple benefits including passive cooling of our urban spaces, improving mental health, making an area attractive to investors and adding value to homes.

### Seeding 'Country Parks'

New major parks, and other linear greenspace will provide quality open spaces exemplifying the beauty of Taunton's diverse landscapes, and support the town's recreational and wildlife programmes, with an outdoor events' calendar and recreational facilities, woodlands, wetlands and walking routes.

### Sow active landscapes

The design of Taunton's streets, public spaces, parks, open spaces and waterscapes should include opportunities to promote physical activity, play and socialising, to foster healthy and communal lifestyles.

### Germinate a rich network of green spaces

We will endow the town with a rich set of green spaces and greener streets. Using planting of street trees, establishing mini-orchards and rain gardens, we will diversify our townscape, enrich our landscape and re-connect our urban life to our meadows, streams, orchards, woods and vale.

### Cultivate Productive landscapes

Somerset's iconic identity as a 'County of Orchards' should be reflected in the planning of the town's green network. Opportunities will be considered across the Garden Grid to support local community ambitions to grow all kinds of food locally.

### Cultivate productive and edible landscapes

Using new opportunities and heritage local varieties for micro orchards in public spaces. Connect people to wildlife, pollinators and local produce



### Distinctives of Taunton's landscapes

We will encourage and promote the rich diversity of local landscape back into our Garden Town



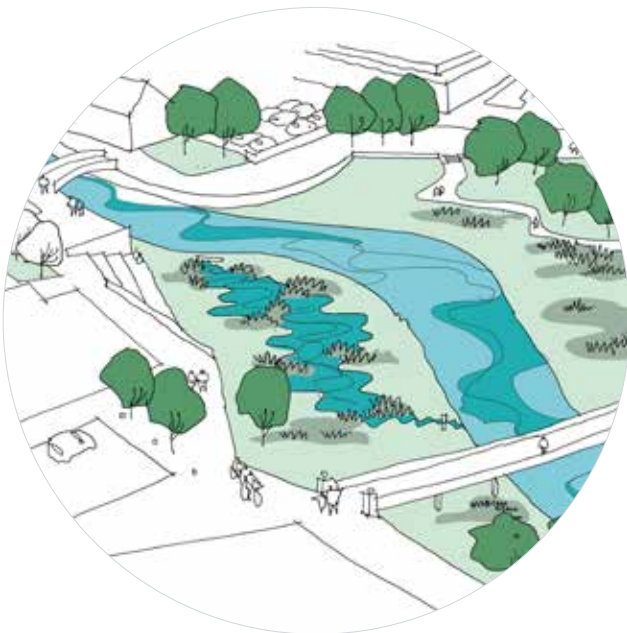
***Locate 'Pocket Parks' on your doorstep***

A design framework for local parks will promote opportunities for the local community to socialise, play, grow food, and support the localised management of stormwater and local ecosystems.



***Punctuating routes with green features***

We will add to these green links both small street side events like copses of street trees or rain gardens, and new green facilities like pocket parks or 'wassail' gardens with clumps of Somerset apple trees, where new neighbourhoods are formed. We will look for opportunities to enhance existing spaces and watersides along the linking corridors with new habitats and planting so that a variety of landscapes emerge along them.



***Make more of managing our water***

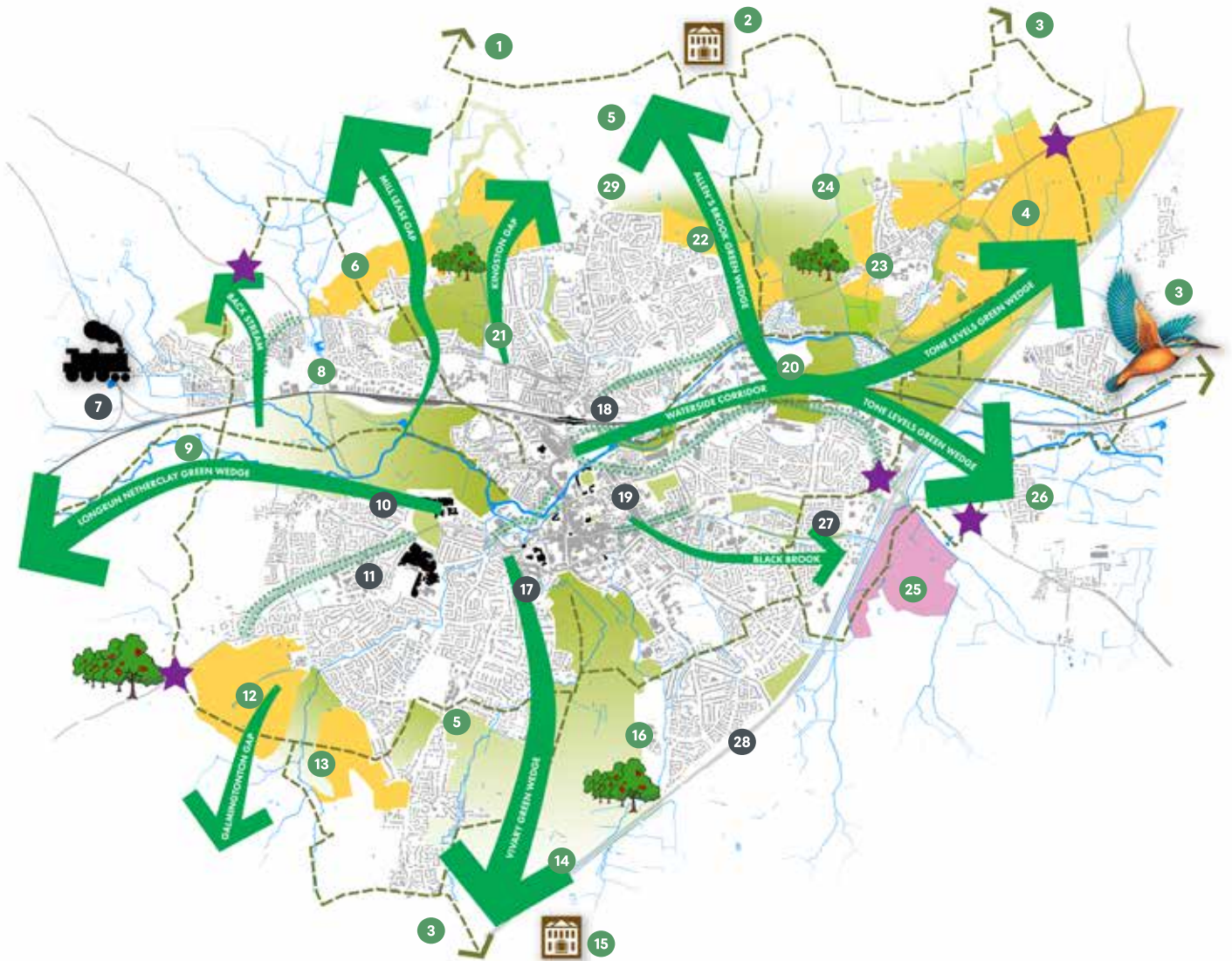
The design of each new neighbourhood, its streets, parks and buildings should consider how water can be managed intelligently to minimise flooding, facilitate irrigation, and promote habitats resilient to flooding and climate change.

**We will diversify our townscape, enrich our landscape and re-connect our urban life to our meadows, streams, orchards, woods and vale.**



**Our Green Infrastructure strategy will be upgraded to support our Garden Town Vision:**

The strategy will strengthen our green corridors and our Green Wedges; develop our waterways as part of our natural green and blue asset network; enhance our connections for quick and quiet walking and cycling routes within and around our town. We will enhance our existing landscapes for wildlife and water management.



**Key**

- |                            |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. West Deane Way          | 15. Poundisford Park             | 29. Kingston Gap                  |
| 2. Hestercombe House       | 16. Vivary Park                  | Development Opportunities         |
| 3. East Deane Way          | 17. Shire Hall                   | Urban Areas                       |
| 4. Monkton Heathfield      | 18. Railway Station              | Green Wedges and Corridors        |
| 5. Tone Trail              | 19. Somerset County Cricket Club | Avenue Project                    |
| 6. Staplegrove             | 20. Waterside                    | Traffic Controlled Trail Crossing |
| 7. West Somerset Railway   | 21. Mill Lease Gap               | Green Wedge Links                 |
| 8. Back Stream             | 22. Nerrols                      | Trails                            |
| 9. French Weir Green Wedge | 23. Maidenbrook Country Park     |                                   |
| 10. University Centre      | 24. Allen's Brook Green Wedge    |                                   |
| 11. Musgrove Park Hospital | 25. Nexus 25                     |                                   |
| 12. Comeytrowe             | 26. Tone Levels Green Wedge      |                                   |
| 13. Galmington Wedge       | 27. Black Brook                  |                                   |
| 14. Vivary Green Wedge     | 28. M5                           |                                   |



# Theme 1: Growing our Town Greener

## A Green Makeover

### Key Ideas

- Promote a scheme to residents to plant apple trees in every garden.
  - Promote and encourage individuals, communities and partner organisations to collaborate broadly, empowering them to take initiatives and share in the long-term stewardship of green assets.
  - Connect up our green corridors through our parks, along our watersides, across our streets and public spaces with planting, paths and good crossings.
  - Co-create wetlands, rain gardens and withy beds in our green spaces to improve our water management.
  - Restore and enhance neglected green spaces – improve access and biodiversity
- .....

### Existing & New Policy

- Taunton Deane Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2009
  - Taunton Deane Green Infrastructure Opportunities Update, 2017
  - Taunton Deane Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Somerset County Council, 2011
  - Taunton Surface Water Management Plan, Somerset County Council, 2013
  - Project Sponge 2020, Somerset County Council, Somerset Rivers Authority, West Country Rivers Trust et al, (EU Interreg 2 Seas project), 2019
  - Designing rain Gardens 'Taunton Living Landscape', Somerset Wildlife Trust leaflet, 2018
  - Taunton Waterways Strategy and Action Plan - in preparation
- .....

### Measures of success

- Improved access to high quality green spaces and waterways
- Increased tree cover
- Our biodiversity is protected and enhanced to high standards











# Branching Out

## Moving Cleaner, Moving Smarter

### Today's Issues, Challenges & Opportunities

- Through traffic is too dominant the Town Centre.
- Poor quality 'gateways' on arrival from major roads and railway.
- Public transport under-utilised, walking and cycling need to be promoted and barriers deterring 'modal shift' to these lower carbon options removed.
- Highway infrastructure and road network needs to keep pace with development.
- By becoming early-adopters and supporters of new technology we need to de-carbonise transport, proliferate electric vehicles and enable smarter, cleaner movement.

#### **Make more of our strategic connections**

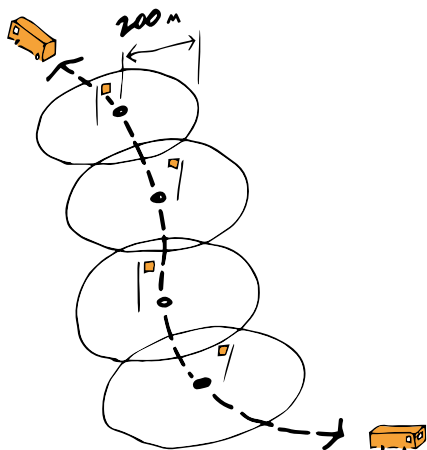
We will enhance the connectivity, capacity and frequency of Taunton's rail, bus, cycle and road connections and ensure that the Firepool site is developed to full potential as a key sustainable neighbourhood in a strategic location – embracing a highly effective and convenient transport hub alongside.

#### **Make our streets work harder for us**

Taunton's streets and roads will provide a network of safe, inclusive and comfortable green streets and public spaces, integrating landscape, parking and water sensitive design to provide attractive and functional places for public life.

#### **Orient development with transit hubs and corridors**

Promoting more intensive living along key public transport routes and close to stops, and clustering uses and facilities within local centres reducing the need to drive.



**Seize development opportunities to increase residential populations living within easy walking distance of bus stops**

#### **Our green walking and cycling branches**

Priority will be given to the early delivery, integrated design and sustainable maintenance of Taunton's walking and cycling networks to ensure they provide door to door connectivity, reducing the need to travel by car and improving everybody's health and well-being.

#### **Upgrading accessibility & mobility for all**

The existing bus system will be upgraded to ensure that it provides a high quality, frequent, affordable, viable and rapid public transport system that is low carbon and within a 5 minute walk of every neighbourhood.

#### **Moving Taunton Ahead**

Extend the availability of real-time data information for all public transport services and routes. Adoption of 'smart' traffic-signalling to improve flows. Enable and promote greater sharing of transport by support for car clubs, bike and car-sharing schemes. Make ticketing and payment simple and swift and explore use of a prepayment 'Oyster' card system that might also allow for credits – with rewards for those providing lifts for others, for example. Provide ample electric vehicle charging points in public places.



Existing situation



Future potential

Public transport can be supported and made more efficient if land-use planning directs more intensive use along route corridors and in close proximity of stops – increasing population catchments within easy walking distance of services



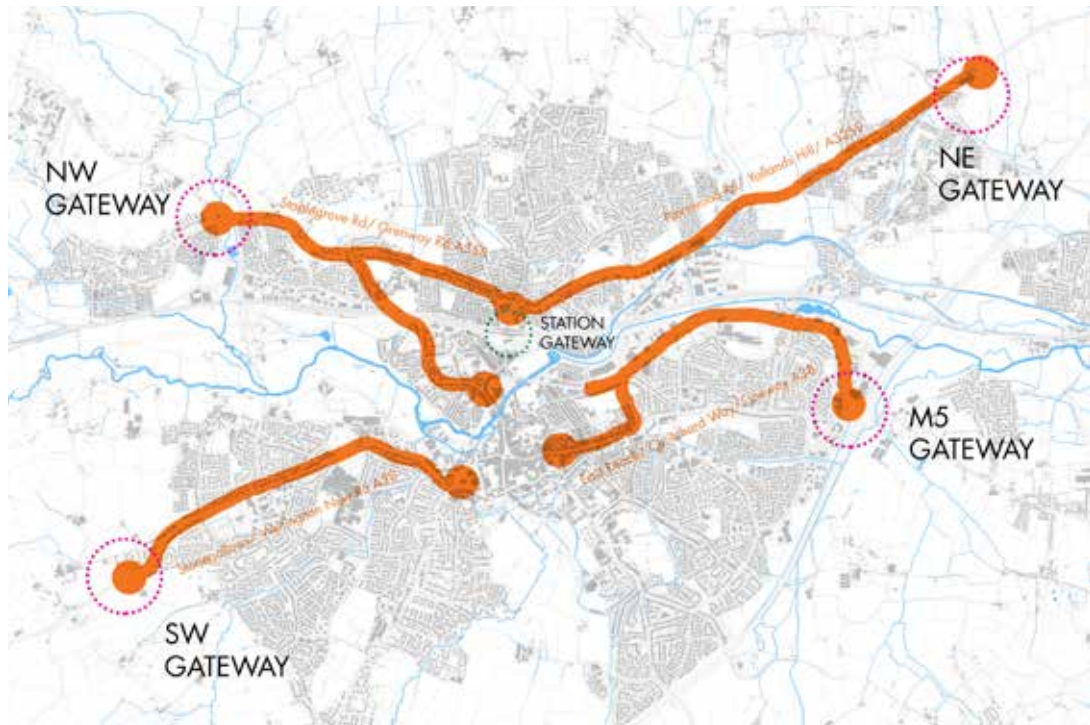
## Easier to Walk, Easier to Cycle.

The Town Centre ought to be the most accessible and inclusive area to travel around on foot or by cycle and 'active travel' here will be strongly promoted. A full study of the barriers to movement needs to build on existing evidence.

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. West Deane Footpath to Wiveliscombe</li> <li>2. Longrun Meadow</li> <li>3. University Centre</li> <li>4. Church</li> <li>5. Castle &amp; Museum of Somerset</li> <li>6. Shire Hall</li> <li>7. Station</li> <li>8. Vivary Park</li> <li>9. East Deane Footpath to Blackdown Hills</li> <li>10. Cycle Link to Blackbrook</li> <li>11. Victoria Park</li> <li>12. East Deane Footpath to Burrowbridge</li> <li>13. Gyratory difficult to walk across</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Poor connection above bridge</li> <li>15. Poorly overlooked route to University Centre</li> <li>16. Poorly overlooked path</li> <li>17. Quarter dominated by poor public realm &amp; surface parking</li> <li>18. Route cuts off Station Road shops</li> <li>19. SCCC County Ground entrance poor quality</li> <li>20. Bleak pedestrian environment</li> <li>21. New crossing makes pedestrians second class</li> <li>22. Vehicle dominated frontage - ped/cycle navigability unclear</li> <li>23. Leaving station north side difficult to read directions to town</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24. Inhospitable street beneath bridges</li> </ol> |
|---|--|---|

- Parks and green spaces
- Urban Areas
- Roads
- Trails
- Railway
- East Deane and West Deane footpaths
- Poor crossing conflicts
- Node
- 'Hot-spots' – barriers to Cycling

## Garden Town Gateways



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■ Improving the environments of gateways and approaches to the town centre

### **First impressions**

The arrival experience in Taunton Garden Town ought to be a positive one. Recognising that the major gateways at the M5 junction and railway station, and the secondary ones serving the approach by A roads have not been properly considered in terms of their identity and impact, we propose that each location is creatively explored to understand how its appearance and function might be improved through the use of landscape design, art, lighting, signage, etc.

### **Making Taunton more legible**

Major routes and junctions/nodes within the town should be given a distinctive character. Information about travel and way-finding needs to be coordinated, concise and clear – improving the passenger and visitor experience, especially for pedestrians arriving at the railway and bus stations.



■ Re-designed junction spaces in residential neighbourhoods can suggest equal priority for all users and explore opportunities to introduce landscape and social space.



Enlightened highway design will prioritise pedestrians and cyclists, and raise quality by...

**...making streets into places and integrating parking elegantly.**



**...incorporating sustainable drainage features.**



**...enriching the groundscape and including avenue tree-planting.**



**...and providing edge streets that positively relate buildings and landscape and promoting activity and healthy exercise around the periphery.**



Image credit: Andrew Cameron Associates



# Theme 2: Branching Out

## Moving Cleaner, Moving Smarter

### Key Ideas

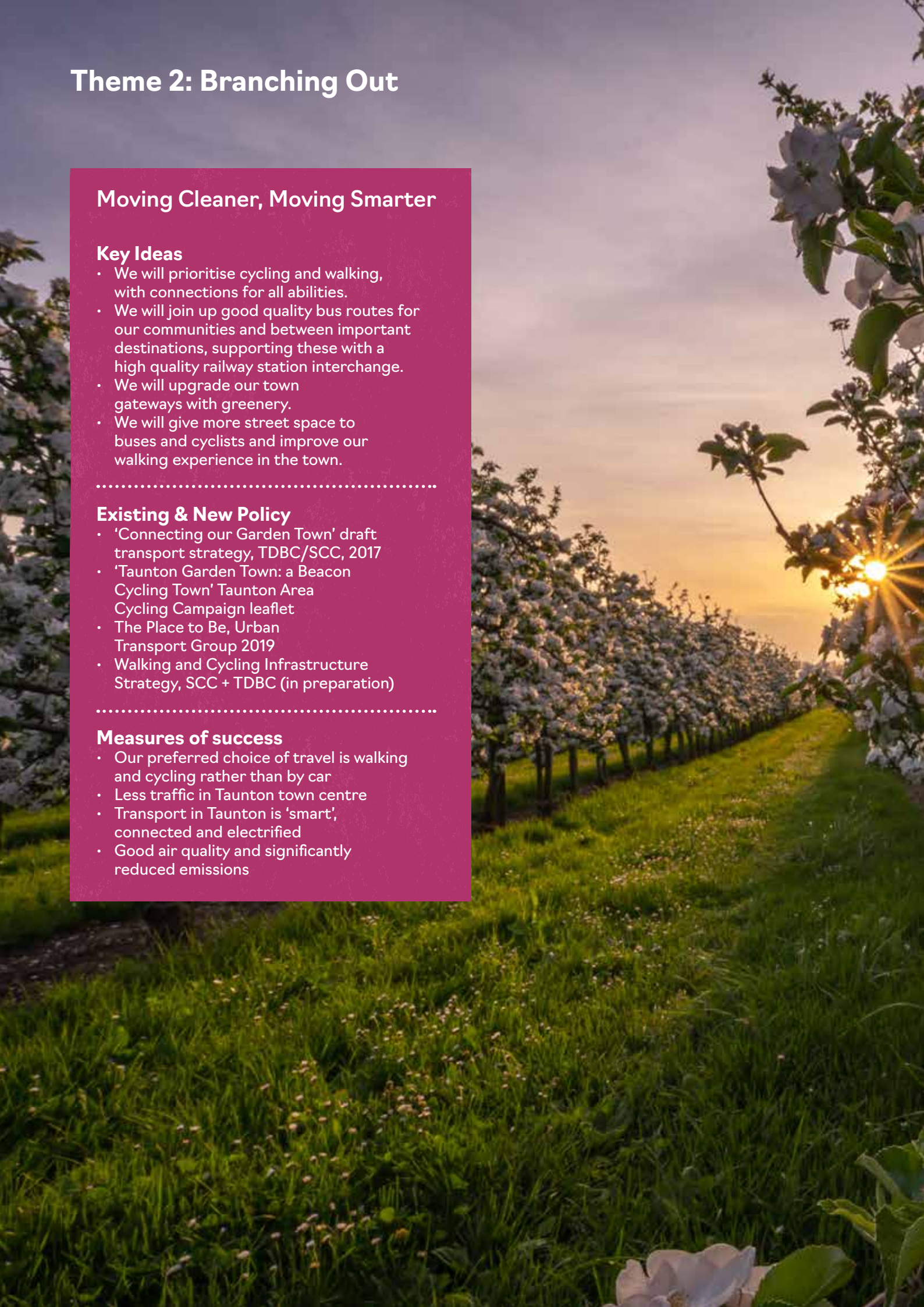
- We will prioritise cycling and walking, with connections for all abilities.
  - We will join up good quality bus routes for our communities and between important destinations, supporting these with a high quality railway station interchange.
  - We will upgrade our town gateways with greenery.
  - We will give more street space to buses and cyclists and improve our walking experience in the town.
- .....

### Existing & New Policy

- 'Connecting our Garden Town' draft transport strategy, TDBC/SCC, 2017
  - 'Taunton Garden Town: a Beacon Cycling Town' Taunton Area Cycling Campaign leaflet
  - The Place to Be, Urban Transport Group 2019
  - Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Strategy, SCC + TDBC (in preparation)
- .....

### Measures of success

- Our preferred choice of travel is walking and cycling rather than by car
- Less traffic in Taunton town centre
- Transport in Taunton is 'smart', connected and electrified
- Good air quality and significantly reduced emissions









# Growing Quality Places

## Our Future Town Centre

### Today's Issues, Challenges & Opportunities

- Make the most of regeneration opportunities to deliver an outstanding environment.
- Seize opportunities to improve public realm and maintain vitality in town centre.
- New Garden Neighbourhoods need to be high quality, sustainable design.
- Ensure effective community-led rejuvenation of existing neighbourhoods.

#### ***Diversifying and intensifying our town centre***

We will increase the vitality of our town centre. We will encourage more living in the town centre (as this reduces need to travel, improves safety and security and provides increase in footfall for shops and businesses) by promoting residences above our shops, opening up new sites with denser and greener buildings and introducing non-retail uses in the right places. We will encourage the clustering of our shopping activity more centrally around the Market House. This will open up further residential space as well as provide opportunity for alternative workspaces. We will bolster an evening economy with cultural, leisure and arts facilities that many people ask for, to make the town more welcoming for ourselves, our visitors and newcomers investing in our town. We will use the sites we have now at Firepool and at Coal Orchard to achieve some of these objectives and demonstrate how we want other developers to do it. Our built environment will step up to the challenge of climate change. Each proposal will contribute positively to creating a sense of place, reducing carbon emissions and respecting local distinctiveness through design, access and use of materials. There is potential for leisure, residential and innovative workspaces as well as arts and cultural facilities centred on The Brewhouse Theatre.

#### ***Improving quality and greening public spaces***

A series of public realm projects will strengthen the appeal of the town centre environment by reducing negative impacts from vehicles by putting people first. We will introduce well-designed spaces and places with better landscape design and planting, public art, lighting and elegant street furniture and signage. These street redesigns will be clean, comfortable and convenient family-friendly places, no longer dominated by cars.

#### ***Putting the river at the heart of the town***

We will strengthen the connections to and across our river and canal and make more of our network of waterside paths. We will enhance the way we interact with our river, its green spaces and its wildlife and use softer engineering in managing flood and stormwater.





Improving public space



Diversifying the cultural offer of the town centre



Create a more resilient retail core



Put our river at the heart of the town



Re-develop key regeneration sites

## Our Future Town Centre



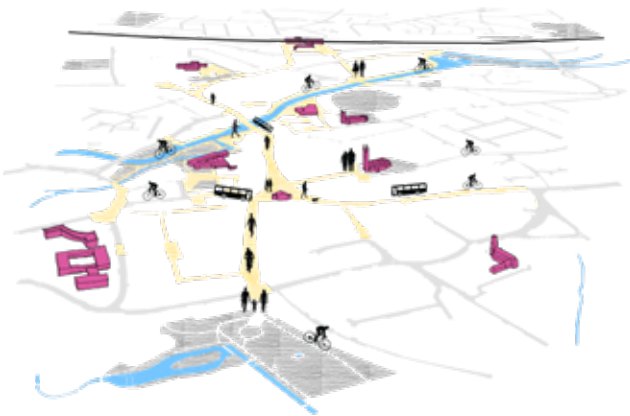
### Our garden town lounge

Quality, active and diverse spaces, cultural and leisure facilities, for all ages all day and all year round.



### A heart of gardens

Greening our streets and spaces with avenues, mini orchards and rain gardens and enliven our public spaces and create a mosaic of woodland, wetland and withies.

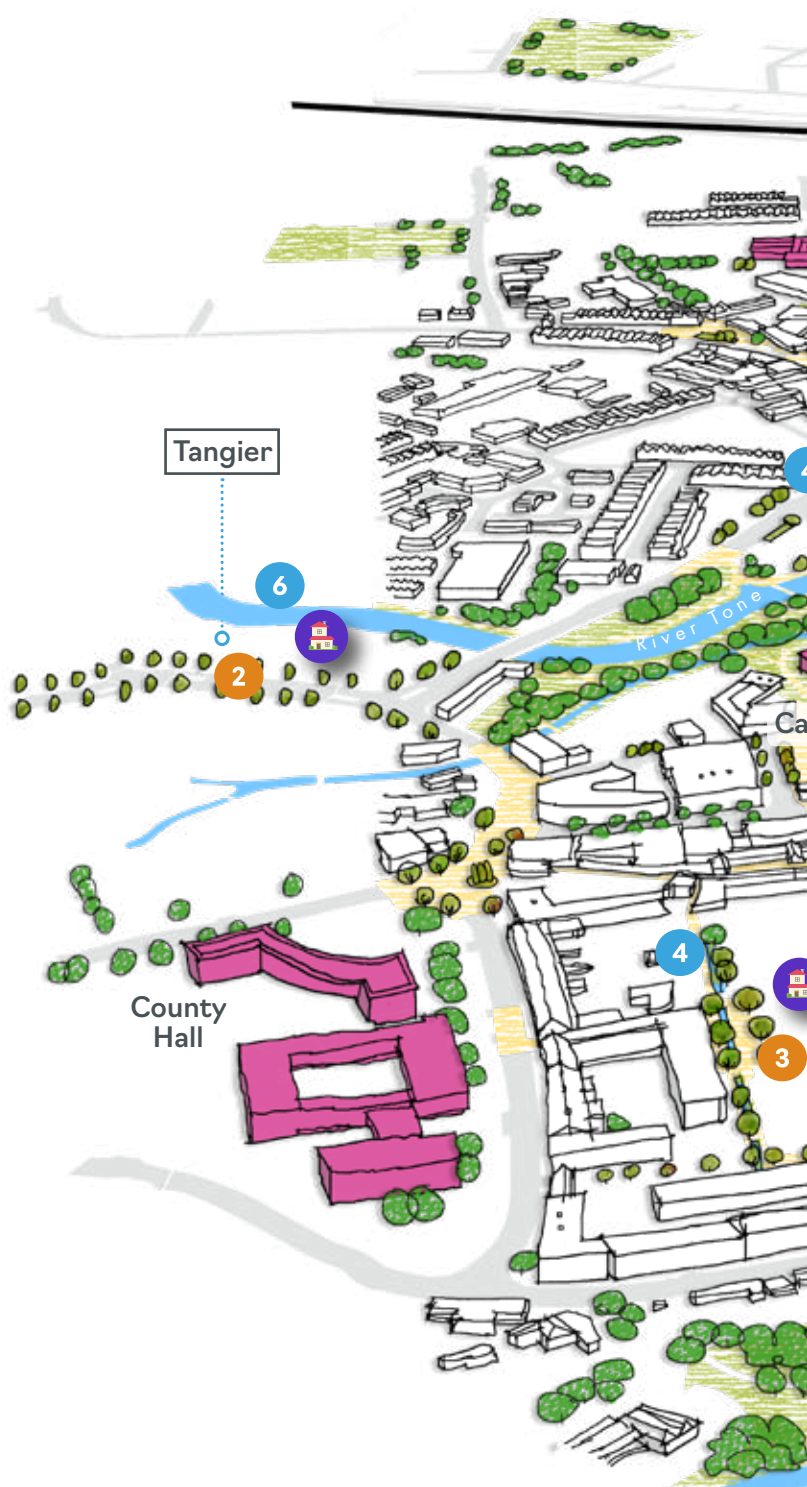


### A gentler town: people before cars

Enhance walkability and cycling making it easier to get around, and improve bus access and quality of service to encourage modal shift.





## A people-centred, vibrant, green heart to our community

**The Heart of our Garden town:** Our Garden Town centre strategy will improve public spaces, town centre liveability, movement for walking and those on bicycles and bring more trees and landscape into the town. It is informed by and will inform our other strategies including our existing Area Action Plan and developing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, our Public Space Improvement Strategy and our new Local Plan when it is reviewed.





## Diversifying and intensifying our town centre

-  Town living development opportunity area
-  Theatre/gallery space potential area
-  Performance and hotel space potential
-  Geovation Centre and studio space

**Tangier** Key Regeneration Sites

## Improving quality and greening public spaces

- 1** Improved and new connected public space with walking, cycling and public transport priority, using common materials and furniture
- 2** Avenue tree planting in streets, waterside and car parks with large trees to enclose skylines
- 3** Mini orchards to provide pollinating and fruiting trees that connect to our cider-making heritage and benefit our wildlife

## Putting the river at the heart of the town

- 4** Rain gardens to capture run off and provide diverse green habitats in the our public spaces
- 5** Wetlands formed around river and canal to slow run off and provide enriched wildlife habitats
- 6** Riverside – Improve waterside walkways and create positive urban frontages addressing the water



## New Garden Neighbourhoods

### **Clear identity**

A distinctive local identity as a new garden community, including at its heart an attractive and functioning centre and public realm. Landmarks, key groupings and character areas are an important element of identity and legibility.

### **Well-designed places**

With vibrant mixed-use communities that support a range of local employment types and premises, retail opportunities, recreational and community facilities – within ‘walkable neighbourhoods’ that follow good urban design principles and include greater greenspaces and trees.

### **Great homes**

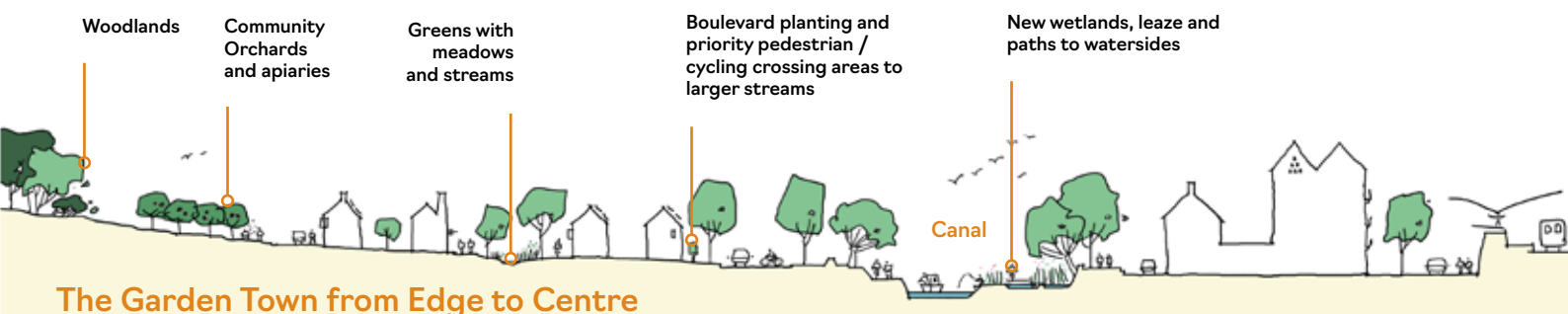
Offering a wide range of high quality, distinctive homes. This includes affordable housing and a mix of tenures for all stages of life. Legacy and stewardship arrangements: should be in place for the care of community assets, infrastructure and public realm, for the benefit of the whole community.

### **Future proofed**

Designed to be resilient places that allow for changing demographics, future growth, and the impacts of climate change including flood risk and water availability, with durable landscape and building design planned for generations to come. This should include anticipation of the opportunities presented by technological change such as driverless cars and renewable energy measures.

### **Greater and more effective use of national ‘design quality’ benchmarks & processes**

Design criteria and standards such as ‘Building for Life 12’ and ‘Lifetime Homes’ should be systematically encouraged and pursued through planning policy and development management processes for all new development. National Guidance for highways design in the form of ‘Manual for Streets 1 + 2’ should be comprehensively applied and implemented. Design Review should be used for all new developments including masterplans, design codes and reserved matters applications.



The Garden Town from Edge to Centre

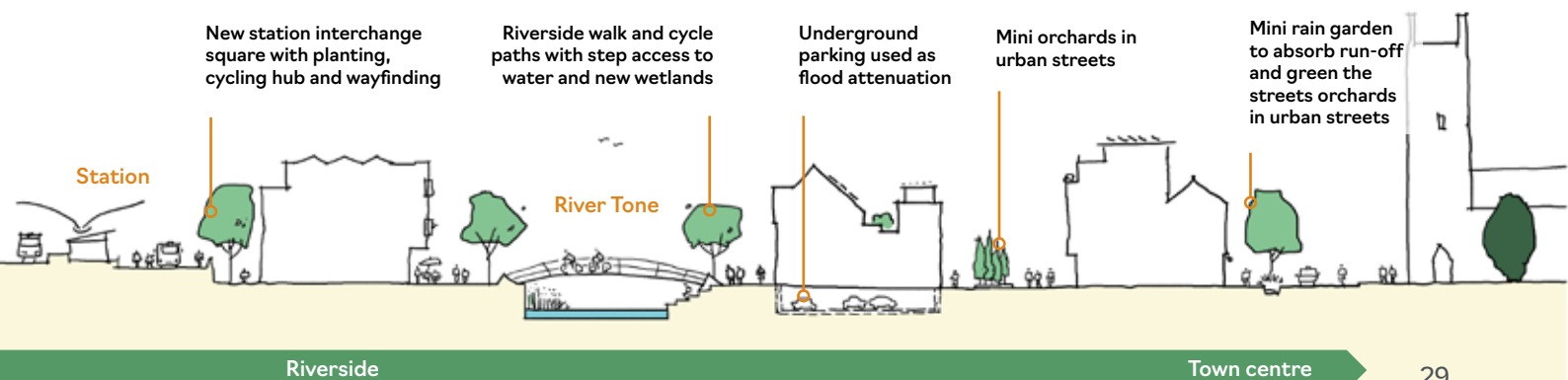


The Design Charter and Checklist will provide more detail on the standards of design and sustainability aimed for within the Garden Town area. It will be applicable to development in all forms of neighbourhood, but will be particularly important within those places that are being newly-created. The Council will encourage all of its development partners to sign up to the principles of the Charter and to follow the guidance in the Checklist. It is envisaged that those exemplary developments that are then delivered will be conferred with a local 'Garden Town Quality-Mark' award – allowing projects to demonstrate a commitment to the Garden Town initiative and celebrate their achievement to potential purchasers and other key audiences.

The topics in the Checklist extend from this Vision document and also link to a Council-wide Design Guide that is being produced, to be available in the Autumn of 2019, which illustrates the aims and requirements regarding the general quality of design expected across the whole of the new combined area. It is intended that the Design Guide will be a Supplementary Planning Document. In the interim, the Checklist and associated Charter will provide a concise summary of both the Vision and Design Guide. The topics and requirements should prove useful as an agenda for discussion between applicants and planning officers and will form the basis for assessment of emerging proposals.



■ Taunton Garden Town Design Charter and Checklist



## New Garden Neighbourhoods

New residential areas will be designed as sociable neighbourhoods, where local facilities and public transport will be within easy walking distance of homes. A variety of housing will be available; detached, semi-detached, single storey patio houses, terraces. Apartments will be clustered nearest to the centre, which will include the community hub, school, shops and market place.

Homes will be fitted with photovoltaic panels and insulated to the highest standards.

Car parking will be in bays on the streets, between trees, in courts, or in some cases on house plots, all accessible to charging points.

As a garden neighbourhood within a garden town, a green environment and diverse habitat will permeate the area. In addition to private gardens, street trees (many of them fruiting), will line the routes and enclose spaces. Hedges, providing soft boundaries, also absorb CO2. They, with verges, 'rain gardens' and drainage swales absorb rainwater. Opportunities will exist to grow your own food, in micro allotments, and community orchards. Smallholders will be able to establish intensive farm plots and fresh local produce can be sold in the market place.



1. Community Hub. Typically includes:- nursery/creche, meeting spaces, resource centre, surgery, housing association office.
2. School, primary or similar.
3. Market Place; includes some shops, stalls, bus stop, event space.
4. Existing residential area, connected to the new neighbourhood.
5. Community Orchard.
6. Existing hedgerows and drainage ditches retained and incorporated into the green spaces.
7. Mini farm (approx. 0.3ha plots).
8. Private gardens.
9. 'Rain gardens.'
10. Street trees, including fruit trees.
11. Local playspace.
12. Micro allotments.
13. Swale drainage system.
14. Local clubhouse/communal store.
15. Corner shop/local business/facility.
16. Photovoltaic panels integrated into roof design.
17. Green (sedum) roofs.
18. Recycling bin storage integrated.
19. Bicycle storage.
20. Charging points for electric cars.





**I** Indicative sketch illustrating the key features of the design and layout of a new Garden Neighbourhood.  
*Existing neighbourhoods would be adapted to accommodate as many of these features as feasible.*



## Rejuvenated Neighbourhoods

### **More efficient use of land**

We will use good design and place-making techniques to make more efficient use of brownfield land – providing more housing and creating better streets and spaces.

### **Low carbon dwellings**

Existing buildings that are retained will be significantly enhanced in terms of their energy performance and heating systems – so that less carbon is generated and household bills are lower.

### **New open space**

Opportunities to provide local green spaces for public use will be seized in order to introduce ‘pocket parks’ - so that everyone is within easy walking distance of a local green space. These will provide other benefits such as contributing to sustainable urban drainage and encouraging wildlife within the neighbourhood.

### **Good range of dwelling types**

We will encourage neighbourhoods that provide homes for all types of household - promoting a mix of residents from different demographic/economic backgrounds and age-groups and fostering vibrant, resilient communities and inter-generational interactions.

### **Improved legibility**

We will make it easier and more attractive to move around within neighbourhoods by pursuing good urban design. It ought to be obvious which are the more important streets that lead to the shops or take you on to the next neighbourhood. It ought to be clear where the public realm ends and private space begins within the streetscape.

### **Enlightened Parking Strategy**

We will encourage parking strategies that successfully integrate vehicles into the street scene – so that cars do not dominate the experience of the public realm and walking and cycling within streets might be made more attractive.

### **Street trees**

When neighbourhoods are rejuvenated, opportunities will be seized to introduce trees and other planting – providing cleaner air, greater biodiversity, visual interest and all the other benefits of living in a ‘leafy suburb’.

### **Engagement / participation of residents**

Thorough and effective involvement with the people that live in a neighbourhood undergoing change is essential if they are to be empowered to become co-creators of their rejuvenated place.



The Woolaway Homes project in Priorswood, North Taunton (see case study opposite) has been carefully negotiated with existing residents. It exhibits many of the general principles that would be adopted in a ‘Garden Town’ approach.



# I Woolaway Homes Project, Priorswood

Rejuvenating a neighbourhood with new homes and landscapes

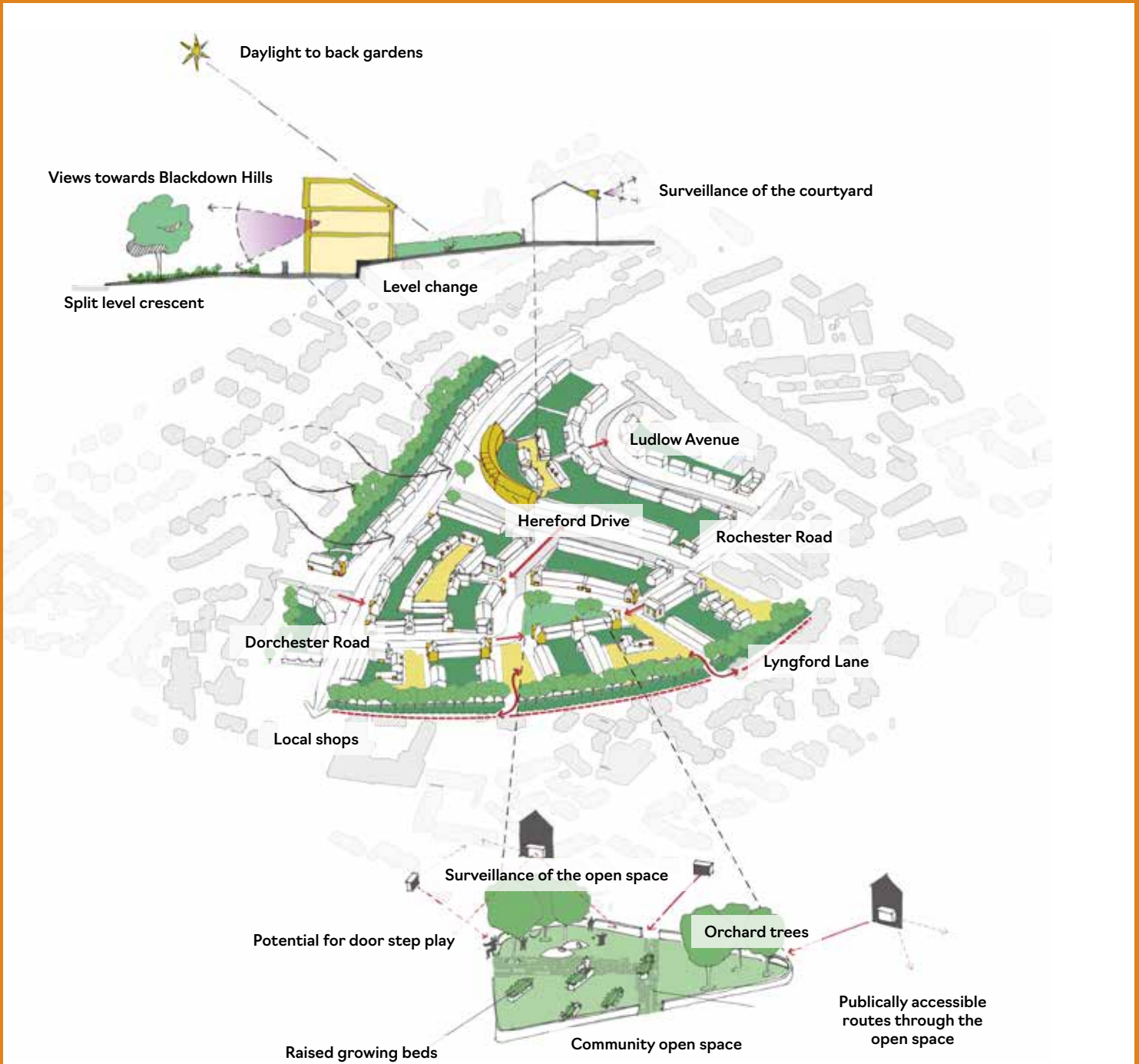


Image credits: Nash Partnership



# Theme 3: Growing Quality Places

## Our Future Town Centre

### Key Ideas

- Prioritise access for only those vehicles that must enter the town centre for essential needs, aiming for a less-noisy, safer environment with improved air quality.
- Enact the Taunton Town Centre Public Spaces Improvement Project giving greater space for people and activity within the streets.
- Ensure that the development of major regeneration sites mutually support the existing town centre uses and also build strong links to adjacent neighbourhoods.
- Encourage a greater mix of uses reinforcing a lively and stimulating heart for the town with a vibrant evening economy.
- Establish a Garden Room – a public venue for collaboration and debate between residents, developers, educational, business and arts communities and local groups. A venue for meetings, deliberations, promotions and exhibitions of the Garden Town and its projects.

### Existing & New Policy

- Taunton Town Centre Public Spaces Improvement Project, WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2017
- Creating a new gateway into Taunton, Taunton Station Regeneration Area, LHC, 2012
- Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan, Taunton Deane Borough Council, 2008
- Taunton Town Centre Design Code Supplementary Planning Document, Taunton Deane Borough Council, 2008
- A New Way to Build, Somerset Wildlife Trust, 2018 Shaping Neighbourhoods

### Measures of success

- A high quality and vibrant town centre
- New building complies with the TGT Charter & Checklist and Design Guide

## New Garden Neighbourhoods

### Key Ideas

- We will design new neighbourhoods around places and green spaces.
- We will use local materials and design features for new buildings and infrastructure to respect local context and ensure new developments complements and enhances existing character.
- We will establish a bespoke 'quality mark' for new development within the Garden Town Area so that high quality design and place-making can be recognised and rewarded. This will also serve to identify the high standards expected in future projects.

### Measures of success

- New neighbourhoods are nationally recognised as exemplar
- New building complies with the TGT Charter & Checklist and Design Guide



## Rejuvenated Neighbourhoods

### Key Ideas

- When opportunities arise to rejuvenate an existing neighbourhood then we will work with the existing residents to explore how best to apply Garden Town principles.
- We will strive to improve the quality of environment for all of Taunton's neighbourhoods as resources and opportunities permit.
- The Garden Town approach will support and promote local initiatives taken by community and special interest groups where these command popular support and align with the aims of the wider project.

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### Measures of success

- Existing neighbourhoods are rejuvenated and resilient to climate change
- New building complies with the TGT Charter & Checklist and Design Guide





## New Shoots and Blossom

### A new dynamism and prosperity – knowledge, culture and business

#### Today's Issues, Challenges & Opportunities

- Provide better visitor experiences through a broader range of cultural offers and a strengthened evening economy.
- Attract entrepreneurs to support greater numbers of start-ups, innovation and collaboration amongst the business and cultural community.
- Enable our creative sector to influence and shape our built environment and public realm.
- Support our creative, arts and heritage sectors to provide the best possible cultural experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds
- Enhance Taunton's visibility as a creative, productive, knowledge economy
- Provide a range of employment premises including incubation, innovation and 'grow on space' as well as a programme of business support services
- Attract investment to enhance digital connectivity whilst also encouraging the use of the town centre for more business networking and social interaction
- Provide opportunities to nurture talent and skills, retain students and knowledge workers and providing opportunities for re-training and up-skilling.

#### ***A differentiated, sustainable future***

Fostering opportunities for collaboration, innovation, enterprise and employment, in the creative, cultural and digital economy and other high productivity economic sectors. Opportunities include the development and implementation of a range of technologies in response to urgent sustainability challenges, including:

- Environmental solutions, e.g. to manage air, water, waste and natural resources
- Reduced carbon initiatives, e.g. sustainable buildings, smart cities, low carbon vehicles
- Energy efficiency activities, e.g. renewables, smart meters, smart-grids, storage

#### ***Town centre vitality***

Responding to changing consumer trends and new economic opportunities, we will work with businesses to attract in new ideas and investment and support a reinvigorated and thriving town centre.

Creating a stronger 'sense of place' and brand for our Garden Town, with curated markets, trade fairs and regular cultural events and make the very most of our flagship venues: the Brewhouse Theatre; the Museum of Somerset; and Somerset County Cricket Club. Opportunities will be explored to provide a multi-purpose events/conference centre at Firepool with studio space for artists, designers, makers and performance studios.

#### ***A connected and networked community***

Supporting the ambitions of Taunton's growing digital community to be one of the leading digital hubs in the South West, providing new business opportunities in ICT, software and Big Data that have provide new applications in the financial services, media, environmental and creative industries sectors.





### ***A knowledge sharing environment***

Providing the environment for Taunton to develop links between its businesses, students and cultural sector and the University Centre, Colleges, the Institute of Technology and other Universities and Research Institutes. This will grow our talent pool and encourage greater levels of investment in emerging creative and innovative ideas. Greater levels of business-led training and educational opportunities can be expected - potentially leading to a University for Somerset. For example, the UK Hydrographic Office, a global leader in marine geospatial information and hydrography, provides new opportunities for the current Digital Taunton cluster in the commercialisation of Big Data to be linked to marine exploration and associated industries. The intention is to establish an 'Geovation' centre and collaborative 'move on space' based at Firepool.

### ***Business and innovation support***

Working with partners to create and promote a range of attractive and flexible work-spaces which will encourage greater informal networking, sharing of ideas, prototyping and special interest events. New work environments will range from hot-desking, such as the recent opening of 'Company' and the 'Creative Innovation Centre' in the town centre, to incubation and future innovation centres, flexible workspaces and studios and maker-spaces around Firepool and at other employment sites. We will also progress the development of other key strategic employment sites within the Taunton Garden Town, such as Nexus

25 – a new 25 hectare strategic employment site situated at J25 adjacent to the M5, generating over 3000 jobs on a high quality green campus, well connected to Taunton by dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes.

### ***Engage artists and other creative practitioners***

Drawing upon the imagination and skills of those in the cultural sector to reinterpret and discover fresh expressions of what makes Taunton distinct as a place of new quality. We will encourage and promote art and cultural festivals and flexible venues that support the Garden Town and our core message as a green and thriving town with a city outlook. Work with Taunton Arts and our University Centre and expand a community programme from 'Art for Life' at Musgrove Park Hospital with our Garden Town as the umbrella for health, identity, well-being and culture.

### ***Arts and culture***

We want Taunton to be a town where people of all ages and backgrounds can experience culture on their doorstep - to be entertained, inspired and challenged, to learn new skills, socialise or play, to feel fulfilled and breathe fresh air. A strategy is being prepared and, by investing in its cultural infrastructure (built, green and blue), Taunton will be able to provide easy access to a range of activities that will support the health and well-being of people of all ages and backgrounds. Most importantly, it will encourage and inspire our young people.



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## Theme 4: New Shoots and Blossom

### A new dynamism and prosperity – knowledge, culture and business

#### Key Ideas

- Enact cultural and economic development strategies
  - Arts and creative industries programme to help business evolve, innovate and foster new ways of seeing.
- 

#### Existing & New Policy

- Cultural Strategy - in preparation.
  - Economic development strategy - in preparation.
- 

#### Measures of success

- Taunton is the most prosperous and innovative town in the South West.
- Taunton is widely recognised as a major regional centre for its education, culture, leisure and sport.











# Implementation

## Next Steps

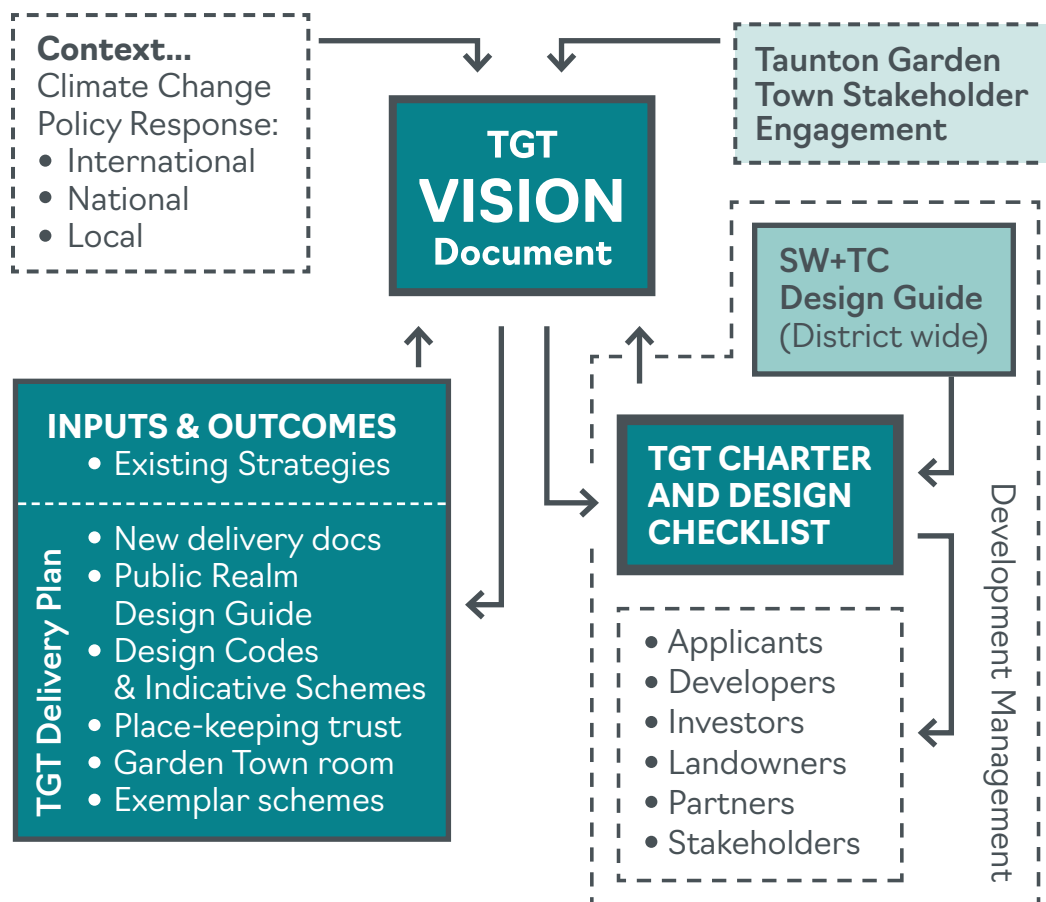
This Vision is just the start of work on Taunton Garden Town. It will be supported by a Delivery Plan to be prepared over the coming months which will provide detail to the individual strategies, projects and activities which will deliver the Vision. Importantly, this Delivery Plan will not be a fixed document which will date but over time will develop into an online platform providing up-to-date information about strategies, projects and activities.

The Vision is also an important tool in informing some specific pieces of work for the Council. It will influence work on the emerging Local Plan as well as more detailed design guidance.

This Vision framework will therefore influence all plan-making and development management decisions.

Supporting strategies and plans will be needed in some areas to bring to life some of the concepts and ideas expressed in this document. These will include the Taunton Waterways Action Plan and Taunton Cultural Strategy.

Most importantly of all, the Council is committed to giving its communities and stakeholders an active role in realising the vision from project identification through to delivery. Somerset West and Taunton will work to establish new governance arrangements for the Garden Town which will incorporate new and innovative ways to encourage community participation.



### TGT Vision Document links

Diagram showing the vision document and its associated policies and measures within the overall context and engagement background.



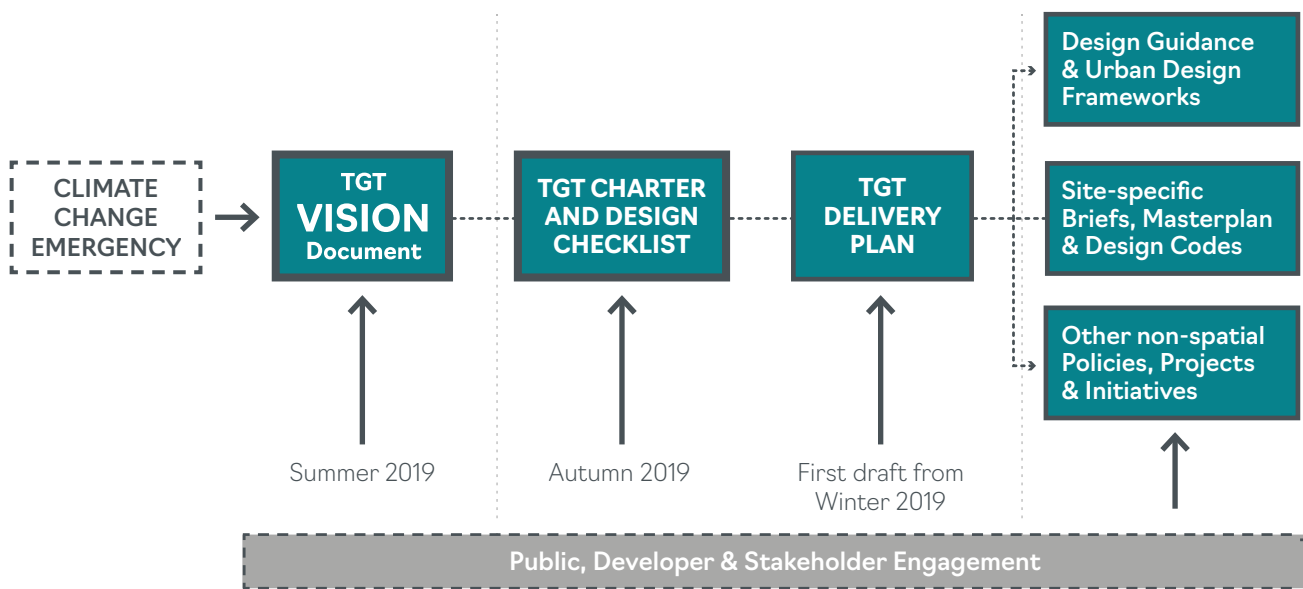
## Programme, Delivery and Monitoring

Following the adoption of this Vision then the next priority is to confirm the detail of the TGT Charter & Design Checklist. This will provide an agenda for discussions with developers, landowners and their agents about how they can support Taunton's Garden Town ambitions - on sites that are already within the planning system.

The influence of the Vision will, in this way, commence almost immediately. Once the more detailed TGT Delivery Plan is produced then it will act as the main mechanism for co-ordinating the implementation of the Garden Town as a whole.

Progress will be reviewed regularly against its more detailed programmes and expected outcomes for individual projects and initiatives.

It is vital that we monitor progress as Garden Town momentum builds, and we have indicated some broad 'measures of success' for each theme within this document. The TGT Delivery Plan will develop these further and confirm that the final measures used are both appropriate, effective and capable of transparent and objective assessment.



Outline Garden Town Delivery Programme



For more information and future updates, please visit:  
<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/garden-town/>



With:  
Richard Guise, David Orr, James Webb



**Taunton**  
The South West's first Garden Town

