

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Scrutiny Committee – 15th January 2019

Monkton Heathfield Urban Extension: Policy Update

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor / Cabinet Member Richard Parrish, Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder

Report Authors: Tim Burton, Assistant Director Planning and Environment and Andrew Penna, Monkton Heathfield Project Team Leader

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report (All headings to be in Arial 12 Bold)

- 1.1 The purpose of this Report is to identify for Members the factual changes to Policy SS1 and other material considerations since the Core Strategy was adopted and, to seek Members approval for an approach to the delivery of employment land that is not strictly in accordance with Policy SS1 with regards to employment land delivery at Monkton Heathfield.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are recommended to note the content of this Report and to support, in principle, the release of a part of the employment land south of Langaller Lane as set out above.

3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
No changes are proposed to adopted Policy therefore the risk is negligible	2	8	10
No mitigations are necessary	2	8	10

Risk Scoring Matrix

Likelihood	5	Almost Certain	Low (5)	Medium (10)	High (15)	Very High (20)	Very High (25)
	4	Likely	Low (4)	Medium (8)	Medium (12)	High (16)	Very High (20)

	3	Possible	Low (3)	Low (6)	Medium (9)	Medium (12)	High (15)
	2	Unlikely	Low (2)	Low (4)	Low (6)	Medium (8)	Medium (10)
	1	Rare	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)	Low (5)
			1	2	3	4	5
			Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
Impact							

Likelihood of risk occurring	Indicator	Description (chance of occurrence)
1. Very Unlikely	May occur in exceptional circumstances	< 10%
2. Slight	Is unlikely to, but could occur at some time	10 – 25%
3. Feasible	Fairly likely to occur at same time	25 – 50%
4. Likely	Likely to occur within the next 1-2 years, or occurs occasionally	50 – 75%
5. Very Likely	Regular occurrence (daily / weekly / monthly)	> 75%

4 Background and Full details of the Report

Introduction

- 4.1 The Core Strategy was adopted in 2012. Policy SS1 identified land at Monkton Heathfield, Taunton, to deliver a new sustainable neighbourhood. The Policy identified 20 criteria to ensure the delivery of a coordinated comprehensive approach to the development.
- 4.2 Since the Adoption of the Core Strategy there have been significant material changes in Government planning policy and guidance, together with changes in local policy and circumstances which has resulted in some aspects of the adopted SS1 Policy appearing to be out of date or overtaken by events on the ground.
- 4.3 The purpose of this Report is to identify for Members the factual changes to Policy SS1 and other material considerations since the Core Strategy was adopted and, to seek Members approval for an approach to the delivery of employment land that is not strictly in accordance with Policy SS1 with regards to employment land delivery at Monkton Heathfield.

- 4.4 This Report will be used to guide discussions with prospective developers, inform the preparation of a Masterplan for the Monkton Heathfield Policy area and, provide a factual update for Stakeholders, Consultees and members of the public.

Status of this document

- 4.5 This Report captures in a single format a series of Policy updates which will be material considerations in the determination of planning applications and masterplanning for the remaining phases of the Monkton Heathfield Policy Area.
- 4.6 It is not intended to be formal Supplementary Planning Guidance, instead it provides information to inform Masterplanning of the next phases of the project and information for developers in particular.

National Policy Changes

- 4.7 As Members will be aware the NPPF was first published in 2014 and recently revised in July 2018. National policy is focused on housing delivery through the Plan led identification of housing land.
- 4.8 There is a commitment to 'significantly boost' housing delivery and, Development Plans should treat housing allocation figures as the minimum to be delivered.
- 4.9 Recent policy changes have brought greater clarity to the calculation of 5 year housing land supply and, more detailed guidance on assessing development viability.
- 4.10 The NPPF removed minimum density figures for housing sites in favour of a more general requirement to deliver efficient use of land. Maximum parking standards were also removed in recognition of the need to take a more strategic approach to delivering reductions in CO2.
- 4.11 The NPPF specifically requires Councils to reassess employment land and sites and consider whether they could be more appropriately used to deliver other uses, including housing.
- 4.12 In recent years there has been increased recognition that the impact of CIL and S106 on major sites in particular, can lead to viability problems, even on green field sites. As a result the Government have introduced the HIF fund to assist in the delivery of infrastructure. This is seen as a key tool in ensuring the delivery of housing.
- 4.13 Locally the Garden Town proposals post-date the Core Strategy, together with the strategic Nexus employment site.
- 4.14 Cheddon Fitzpaine and West Monkton Parish Councils have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan sets out a series of key policies which will be implemented through new planning applications within the Monkton Heathfield Policy area. The Neighbourhood Plan requires provision of bungalows as part of new housing proposals.

- 4.15 Creech St Michael's Neighbourhood Plan is currently at Examination. The majority of the second phase of the main Monkton Heathfield site lies within Creech St Michael Parish.
- 4.16 Areas with adopted Neighbourhood Plans benefit from a proportion of the CIL monies paid by developers to fund infrastructure delivery.

Current Position

- 4.17 Policy SS1 and its accompanying text is set out at Appendix A to this Report. The Policy area is shown on the Plan at Appendix B. A very high level indicative concept plan was part of the Core Strategy, Appendix C.
- 4.18 To date the Phase 1 area at Monkton Heathfield, east of the former A38 has been largely completed. Further development has taken place at Aginhills Farm and development will commence shortly on the Hartnells Farm site north of the A3259. The first phase of the Eastern Relief Road has been delivered together with a bus gate at the southern entrance to the area, allowing for the former A38 through Monkton Heathfield to be downgraded. The Western Relief Road remains to be completed.
- 4.19 Set out below, under a series a series of subheadings which correspond to the policy criteria set out in SS1, is an update on the key 'heads' of the policy, where these have changed since the policy was adopted .

Site Capacity

- 4.20 Policy SS1 identified the need for the delivery of around 4500 new homes within the Monkton Heathfield Policy Area.
- 4.21 Latest monitoring indicates that the overall Monkton Heathfield policy area will not deliver this number of new homes. This is largely as a result of lower density development than was anticipated when the policy was adopted, at a time when national minimum density standards were in place.
- 4.22 In addition it is now proposed to deliver a through school 'within' the second phase of the main Monkton Heathfield development site, east of the current A38, rather than north of the A38 shown on the concept plan at Appendix B. (See Education below).
- 4.23 In order to address this likely shortfall in housing delivery at Monkton Heathfield it is proposed to release some of the Employment land, south of Langaller Lane for residential use.
- 4.24 Such an approach is in accordance with the resolution of the Executive Committee which recently considered the Employment Land Report commissioned by the Council. (see Employment below).

Affordable Housing

- 4.25 To date the policy has successfully delivered around 25% affordable housing across the Monkton Heathfield policy area, and this remains a central commitment of future development, subject to viability considerations.

District Centre

- 4.26 Construction is currently underway on part of the local centre which forms part of the Phase 1 Monkton Heathfield site.
- 4.27 Development of these local centre facilities has been significantly delayed and, there is some uncertainty as to whether the whole of the phase 1 local centre will be built out.
- 4.28 At the same time there is an opportunity with the relocation of the through school to within the main development area of phase 2 to deliver a more commercially viable district/local centre which can form the focal point between the two phases of the new Monkton community, east of the former A38.
- 4.29 The floorspace figures quoted within the policy are likely to be subject to review and commercial advice to ensure that a successful and commercially viable centre can be developed as part of the local/district centre as part of phase 2. Other local community facilities have been successfully delivered in the phase 1 area including the BACH community facility.
- 4.30 To date there has been little accommodation provided specifically for elderly persons within the policy area. There is an increased National focus on the needs of an aging population and there remains an opportunity to deliver specialist accommodation for the elderly within the policy area.

Employment Land

- 4.31 As noted above the recent Executive Committee endorsed the findings of the Peter Brett Associates Employment Land Report that there is a surplus of employment land identified within the Borough as a whole.
- 4.32 At Monkton Heathfield nearly 20 ha of land is committed or reserved south of Langaller Lane, east of the phase 1 completed development area.
- 4.33 There is an opportunity to address the shortfall in housing numbers in Policy SS1 through the release of some of the land south of Langaller Lane for housing. The exact quantum of land to be released and the scale of opportunity to deliver further residential development will be the subject of further specific master planning work.
- 4.34 There remains a commitment to identify the strategic reserve of employment land, of up to 10 ha, south of Walford cross, as part of the second phase of the Monkton Heathfield development site.

- 4.35 Members should note that the release of employment land at Monkton Heathfield is recommended to address a specific policy issue. The findings of the PBA Report will continue to be assessed with regards to other employment land in the Borough.

Education

- 4.36 The concept plan, Appendix B, indicated the provision of three new primary schools and a secondary school within the Policy area.
- 4.37 As set out above it is now propose to deliver a through school as part of The second phase the Monkton Heathfield proposals of located 'within' the housing development area, rather than north of the A38 as indicated on the plan at Appendix 2. The County Council are considering the proposal to provide a further primary school within the site west of Greenway.
- 4.38 There is a pressing need to deliver a new secondary facilities within Taunton as a whole and, a HIF bid is being prepared with the County Council to secure funding to deliver secondary education facilities in the town associated with the new residential developments.

Country Park

- 4.39 As members will be aware two fields east of Maidenbrook Lane were purchased be in the autumn to deliver the first 10 ha of the country Park. The development sites in and adjoining the Policy area offer the opportunity to deliver further land for the Country Park. The future of the landfill site, identified for open space in the Core Strategy and SS1 needs to be considered as part of masterplanning work for the next phases of the Monkton Heathfield area.

Energy Efficiency

- 4.40 National policy remains committed to energy efficiency, but with a focus on changes to Building Regulations and securing greater energy efficiency as part of the fabric of new homes.
- 4.41 The experience of other Local Authorities suggests that the provision of energy centres or so called District Heating may not deliver the carbon reductions anticipated when the Core Strategy was adopted.
- 4.42 It will be for developers to demonstrate that such provision within the Policy area is not viable and, to ensure carbon emissions can be reduced in line with National Guidance as an alternative.

Transport

- 4.43 There remains a commitment to deliver a bus-and-ride facility at Walford Cross to provide not only an opportunity for commuters and shoppers entering the town from the Bridgwater area to use the bus, but also to increase the level of bus facilities and services available for existing and new residents of the Monkton Heathfield area.

- 4.44 The size of the facility will need to be carefully considered having regard to viability issues.
- 4.45 It is expected that funding issues related to the delivery of the Western Relief Road will shortly be resolved. As noted above there will be ongoing highways works as developments are implemented along the A3259 road corridor. Work on the first phase of the Hartnells Farm site is likely to commence shortly. The development of the land west of Greenway is linked to the implementation of the WRR.
- 4.46 The transformation of the former A38, following the implementation of the first phase of the eastern relief road has been undertaken through the implementation of the bus gate at Bathpool and traffic calming measures.
- 4.47 Masterplanning work for the remainder of the Policy area offers the opportunity to transform the remaining section of the A38 once the second phase of the Eastern Relief Road has been delivered. The relocation of the through school which will part front the A38 makes transformation of the corridor an essential part of phase 2 development proposals.

Green Infrastructure

- 4.48 The Policy has successfully delivered part of the so-called 'green necklace' around development areas as well as buffer woodland planting and offset woodland habitat in accordance with habitat regulations.
- 4.49 Members will be aware that the West Monkton Cricket Club has not been relocated.
- 4.50 Further offset planting will be delivered as part of the implementation of the remaining areas and, there remain there is an opportunity to deliver a significant area of open space between the next phase of the eastern relief road and the M5 motorway.
- 4.51 The treatment of this 'corridor' will need to be a carefully addressed to have regards to noise and air quality issues and the fact that part of this area lies within the designated floodplain.
- 4.52 Elsewhere, there has been recent national changes to the Habitat Regulations Assessment process which will need to be carefully considered as part of future applications in the Policy area.
- 4.53 Updated Guidance for the Hestercombe SAC was published in 2016.

Next Stages

- 4.54 Policy SS1 anticipated the preparation of Masterplans to further guide development, together with Design Codes to ensure a coordinated delivery of the policy proposals.
- 4.55 Urban Design Consultants have been instructed to prepare a Masterplan for the next phases of the developments in the Policy area, working closely with developers, consultees and other stakeholders. The work is to commence shortly.

- 4.56 It is anticipated that draft Masterplanning work will be subject to public consultation in coming months.
- 4.57 Officers continue to work closely with the developers to ensure the delivery of the remaining strategic housing land within the Policy area. It is likely that an application for the main phase 2 area will be submitted in the coming months.

Recommendation

- 4.58 Members are recommended to note the content of this Report and to support, in principle, the release of a part of the employment land south of Langaller Lane as set out above.

5 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities

- 5.1 The Report provides a Policy update in relation to the delivery of housing and employment in the Borough and highlights ongoing work to ensure coordinated delivery of housing and green infrastructure in line with the Garden Town objectives.

6 Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 None

7 Legal Implications (if any)

- 7.1 None as no changes are proposed to Policy.

8 Environmental Impact Implications (if any)

- 8.1 Officers continue to work closely with Developers and the local community to assess the environmental implications of the SS1 proposals. Applications are Screened and Scoped for environmental impact under the EIA Regulations.

9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)

- 9.1 None

10 Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)

- 10.1 The Report has been prepared having regard to equality and diversity implications. The SS1 proposals seek to deliver an inclusive community and ensure a positive relationship between new housing and existing communities.

11 Social Value Implications (if any)

- 11.1 None as no change is proposed to existing policy.

12 Partnership Implications (if any)

- 12.1 A programme of joint working with developers, Parish Councils, Consultees and Stakeholders is in place. Regular meetings are held to ensure the coordinated and comprehensive delivery of the Monkton Heathfield development proposals.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)

13.1 The adopted SS1 proposals seek to deliver an inclusive community and ensure a positive relationship between new housing and existing communities. The adopted Policy seeks to deliver new green infrastructure and encourage walking and cycling through the use of Travel Plans etc.

14 Asset Management Implications (if any)

14.1 None.

15 Data Protection Implications (if any)

15.1 None

16 Consultation Implications (if any)

16.1 A programme of joint working with developers, Parish Councils, Consultees and Stakeholders is in place. Regular meetings are held to ensure the coordinated and comprehensive delivery of the Monkton Heathfield development proposals.

16.2 Further consultation with key groups will be undertaken as the masterplanning work develops.

List of Appendices

Appendix A	Adopted Core Strategy policy SS1
Appendix B	Monkton Heathfield Policy Area from Core Strategy
Appendix C	Monkton Heathfield Concept Plan from Core Strategy

Contact Officers

Name	Tim Burton	Name	Andrew Penna
Direct Dial	01823 217561	Direct Dial	01823 219511
Email	t.burton@tauntondeane.gov.uk	Email	a.penna@tauntondeane.gov.uk