

## SWT Full Council

Tuesday, 7th December, 2021,  
6.15 pm

The logo for Somerset West and Taunton, featuring the text "Somerset West and Taunton" in white on a teal background with a white swoosh at the bottom right.

The John Meikle Room - The Deane  
House

[SWT MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

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**Members:** Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair), Richard Lees (Vice-Chair), Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Paul Bolton, Sue Buller, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Tom Deakin, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, Andrew Hadley, Barrie Hall, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Marcus Kravis, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Andy Milne, Chris Morgan, Simon Nicholls, Craig Palmer, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Andrew Sully, Nick Thwaites, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Ray Tully, Terry Venner, Sarah Wakefield, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

### Agenda

**1. Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee.

(Pages 7 - 26)

**3. Declarations of Interest**

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial or personal interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The personal interests of Councillors and Clerks of Somerset County Council, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the

minutes.)

#### **4. Public Participation**

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

#### **Temporary measures during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

Due to the temporary legislation (within the Coronavirus Act 2020, which allowed for use of virtual meetings) coming to an end on 6 May 2021, the council's committee meetings will now take place in the office buildings within the John Meikle Meeting Room at the Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton. Unfortunately due to capacity requirements, the Chamber at West Somerset House is not able to be used at this current moment.

Following the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), the council meeting rooms will have very limited capacity. With this in mind, we will only be allowing those members of the public who have registered to speak to attend the meetings in person in the office buildings, if they wish (we will still be offering to those members of the public that are not comfortable in attending, for their statements to be read out by a Governance and Democracy Case Manager). Please can we urge all members of the public who are only interested in listening to the debate to view our live webcasts from the safety of their own home to help prevent the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

#### **5. To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

#### **6. To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

#### **7. To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

#### **8. Meeting Dates for the 2022-23 Municipal Year**

Full Council is asked to ratify the upcoming meeting dates for the Municipal Year 2022-23.

(Pages 27 - 28)

#### **9. Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23**

This matter is the responsibility of the Executive

(Pages 29 - 50)

Councillor for Corporate Resources, Councillor Ross Henley.

The purpose of the report is to advise and update members on the current Council Tax Support scheme.

**10. Review of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants** (Pages 51 - 70)

This matter is the responsibility of the Executive Councillor for Community, Councillor Chris Booth.

The purpose of the report is to report on the results of the Member's Working Group regarding the Annual Review for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants and make future spending proposal.

**11. Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide – Review of Public Consultation and Adoption as Supplementary Planning Document** (Pages 71 - 194)

This matter is the responsibility of the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transportation, Councillor Mike Rigby.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide for formal adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

**12. Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Review of Public Consultation and Adoption as Supplementary Planning Document** (Pages 195 - 280)

This matter is the responsibility of the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transportation, Councillor Mike Rigby.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town for formal adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document.

**13. Local Government Reorganisation: Joint Scrutiny Committee** (Pages 281 - 296)

This matter is the responsibility of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts.

**14. Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public - appendices 3 and 6 only**

During discussion of the following item (appendices 3 and 6 only) it may be necessary to pass the following resolution to exclude the press and public having reflected on Article 13 13.02(e) (a presumption in favour of openness) of the Constitution. This decision may be required because consideration of this matter in public may disclose

information falling within one of the descriptions of exempt information in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. Council will need to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption, outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Recommend that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (appendices 3 and 6 only) on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**15. North Taunton Woolaway Project - Authorisation to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in relation to the North Taunton Woolaway Project**

(Pages 297 - 366)

This matter is the responsibility of the Executive Councillor for Housing, Councillor Francesca Smith.

**16. Re-admittance of the Press and Public**

**17. To consider reports from Executive Councillors**

(Pages 367 - 418)

Part I – To deal with written questions to the Executive.

Part II – To receive reports from the following Members of the Executive:-

- a) Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts – Leader of the Council
- b) Councillor Derek Perry – Deputy Leader & Parks, Sports and Leisure
- c) Councillor Christopher Booth – Community
- d) Councillor Ross Henley – Corporate Resources
- e) Councillor Marcus Kravis – Asset Management and Economic Development
- f) Councillor Caroline Ellis – Culture
- g) Councillor Dixie Darch – Climate Change
- h) Councillor Mike Rigby – Planning and Transportation
- i) Councillor Francesca Smith - Housing
- j) Councillor Andy Sully – Environmental Services

An Executive Councillor shall submit a report to an Ordinary Meeting of the Council as to current and future business of their portfolio for the information of and comment from the Council. Such reports are for discussion and comment only and no motion shall be put to the meeting as to any such item other than those closure motions described in Standing Order 5.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Pritchard', with a horizontal line underneath.

**ANDREW PRITCHARD**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected during the recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's policy. Therefore unless you are advised otherwise, by taking part in the Council Meeting during Public Participation you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of the sound recording for access via the website or for training purposes. If you have any queries regarding this please contact the officer as detailed above.

Following Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will be live webcasting our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting website](#).

If you would like to ask a question or speak at a meeting, you will need to submit your request to a member of the Governance Team in advance of the meeting. You can request to speak at a Council meeting by emailing your full name, the agenda item and your question to the Governance Team using [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

Any requests need to be received by 4pm on the day that provides 2 clear working days before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting itself). For example, if the meeting is due to take place on a Tuesday, requests need to be received by 4pm on the Thursday prior to the meeting.

The Governance and Democracy Case Manager will take the details of your question or speech and will distribute them to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chair will then invite you to speak at the beginning of the meeting under the agenda item Public Question Time, but speaking is limited to three minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes and you can only speak to the Committee once. If there are a group of people attending to speak about a particular item then a representative should be chosen to speak on behalf of the group.

Please see below for Temporary Measures during Coronavirus Pandemic and the changes we are making to public participation:-

Due to the temporary legislation (within the Coronavirus Act 2020, which allowed for use of virtual meetings) coming to an end on 6 May 2021, the council's committee meetings will now take place in the office buildings within the John Meikle Meeting Room at the Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton. Unfortunately due to capacity requirements, the Chamber at West Somerset House is not able to be used at this current moment.

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Full Council, Executive, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: [www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please email: [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

**SWT Full Council - 5 October 2021**

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Ian Aldridge, Benet Allen, Lee Baker, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Hugh Davies, Dave Durdan, Kelly Durdan, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Steve Griffiths, Barrie Hall, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, Dawn Johnson, Marcus Kravis, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Andy Milne, Simon Nicholls, Martin Peters, Andy Pritchard, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Ray Tully, Sarah Wakefield, Brenda Weston, Keith Wheatley, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: Alison Blom-Cooper, Chris Brown, Paul Browning, Jo Comer, Lesley Dolan, Martin Evans (Shape Legal Partnership), Paul Fitzgerald, Simon Fox, Chris Hall, James Hassett, Mark Leeman, Simon Lewis, Jo O'Hara, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Amy Tregellas, Joe Wharton and Charlotte Winmill

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

**30. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors S Buller, D Darch, R Habgood, A Hadley, J Hunt, C Palmer, D Perry, A Sully, N Thwaites, A Trollope-Bellew and T Venner.

**31. Minutes of the previous meeting of Full Council**

(Minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 7 September 2021 circulated with the agenda)

**Resolved** that the minutes of Full Council held on 7 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

**32. Declarations of Interest**

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr M Blaker	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr N Cavill	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Davies	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC & Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Milne	All Items	Porlock	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Peters	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Councillors further declared the following interests:-

Agenda Item 12 – Personal Interests – Councillors N Cavill, A Pritchard and V Stock-Williams as they were Trustees of the Taunton Heritage Trust. Councillors H Davies and M Hill as they were Members of the Somerset Building

Preservation Trust. Councillor D Durdan as he owned land in the area being discussed.

Agenda Item 14 – Personal Interest – Councillor M Kravis, as his partner was a member of the RSA Team.

Agenda Item 15 – Prejudicial Interest – Councillors S Wakefield and K Wheatley as they were directors of Wellington Mills Community Interest Company.

33. **Public Participation**

Mr Alan Debenham made the following submission:-

Any serious challenge to combat Climate Emergency, in which this Council has many action proposals, must fundamentally include serious change in general lifestyle and serious change in our current monetary and financial system, globally and nationally, which I suggest - and also my Green Party - a transformation to democratic (government) created Positive Money to replace the present banks debt (loans) creation set-up.

Please see my clear example of the new ethos and operation of the new finance system. What is your opinion of how and when this new system can be implemented and what can SWT do to hurry it along its transformation path?

34. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

A minute's silence was observed on behalf of Adrian Dyer, the former Chief Executive of West Somerset Council.

The Chair of the Council advised councillors that she had received a lovely thank you letter from Musgrove Park Hospital for all the money raised by the Chair of Council and the Mayor of Taunton.

35. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council advised councillors that the Chief Executive of Somerset West and Taunton Council had resigned and that he would leave at the end of October 2021. She thanked him for all his work over the past few years and wished him well for the future.

36. **To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

No questions were received in relation to Procedure Rule 13.

37. **Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2022/23**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors highlighted that the payments of universal credit were due to be reduced and queried whether that would impact on council tax and rent payments being received by the Council.  
*The Section 151 Officer advised that he would monitor the income levels throughout the year to see if there was any impact, however, any noticeable trends might not be recorded until next year. He further advised that there was a contingency amount in the budget for this year.*
- Councillors queried what would happen going forward with the budget and the asset transfers under the One Somerset Business Case.  
*The Section 151 Officer advised that all 5 Councils assets and liabilities would be transferred to the New Council.*

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

- 2.1 Noted that the Executive approved the Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2022/23 in July 2021.
- 2.2 Approved the revisions to the Budget and planned reserve transfers in 2021/22 as set out in Table 1 and Appendix A.
- 2.3 Approved the reallocation of £869k of HRA earmarked reserves to HRA general reserve to support and underwrite HRA Revenue Budget pressures.

38. **Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel on the Member's Allowances Scheme**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- John Thomson gave some background information on the review and thanked the councillors for their participation.
- Councillors queried why the Planning Committee Vice Chair had been allocated an allowance.  
*Officers had looked at the range of roles and decided that the Planning Committee Vice Chair had a significant role compared to the other Vice Chairs.*
- Councillors thanked officers and the Panel for their work.

**Resolved** that Full Council endorsed the recommendations of the JIRP (in section 6.4 of Appendix A), which were:

- 2.1 The Basic Allowance (BA) for all Councillors remained at the current comparative level
- 2.2 All existing Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) remained in place at current multiples
- 2.3 The previous SRA for the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was extended to both Chairs of the two new committees that replaced it (Corporate Scrutiny Committee and Community Scrutiny Committee).
- 2.4 The previous SRA for the Chair of Audit, Governance and Standards Committee was extended to both Chairs of the two new committees that replaced it (Audit & Governance Committee and Standards Committee)
- 2.5 No permanent SRA was made available to the Deputy Leader but the current temporary additional provision was retained and kept at the mid-point between the Leader SRA and the cabinet member SRA on a pro rata basis.

- 2.6 No SRA was made available to the four vice chairs of Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Community Scrutiny Committee, Licensing Committee and Audit & Governance Committee.
- 2.7 A new SRA was made available to the Vice Chair of the Planning Committee set at 0.46 x BA
- 2.8 The BA (and by application of multipliers, all SRA) was inflated for 2021/22 & 2022/23 by Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers Housing costs (CPIH)
- 2.9 Whilst the Panel felt there was an argument for looking at travel and subsistence rates in the SWT Scheme of Allowances for Members in any fundamental review that may be triggered, for this 2021/22 and 2022/23 travel allowances to be adjusted in accordance with rates set by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) from time to time and subsistence allowances to remain linked to increases (or decreases) in staff subsistence rate.

39. **Monkton Heathfield: SS1 Policy Area and MH2 Concept Plan and Design Principles**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Agenda items 10 and 11 were debated together.
- Councillors advised that the local Parish Councils were supportive of the recommendations, as they had been given opportunity to give their feedback on the proposals.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation thanked councillors for their comments and always urged Parish Councils to ensure their comments were submitted for each planning application so that local feedback was part of the decision-making process.*
- Councillors were pleased that officers were checking proposals prior to adoption, especially due to the upcoming national planning reforms proposed by Central Government.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation agreed and suggested that there would be changes made to the planning reforms by Central Government.*
- Councillors wanted to ensure that the Local Plan was protected from the Government changes.
- Councillors thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for their work.

**Resolved** that Full Council recommended that:-

Having taken into account the comments received to the consultation and in the light of national guidance, that the Council did not proceed to adopt the SS1 Policy area Framework Plan, the draft MH2 Concept Plan and the draft MH2 Design Guidance as a material planning consideration in the determination of planning proposals.

40. **Monkton Heathfield: Land South of Manor Farm, Langaller – Masterplan and Development Guide**

**Resolved** that Full Council recommended that:-



Having reassessed the situation and taken into account the comments received to the consultation and in the light of national guidance, that the Council did not proceed to formally approve the Masterplan and Development Guide to inform pre-application discussions.

41. **Somerset Levels and Moors Phosphate Mitigation: Somerset West and Taunton - proposed programme of interim measures**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors advised that they should be lobbying Government to get the water companies to do the necessary work to remove the phosphates.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation agreed and advised that there was a 5-year plan to eliminate phosphates but that was too long a time frame and urgent action was needed now.*
- Councillors agreed that action was needed now and that both the water companies and agriculture sector needed to take emergency action at the root causes.
- Councillors queried whether the Sub-Committee would be open to non-Planning Committee members.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that the Sub-Committee would be comprised of Planning Committee members but that other councillors could attend to give advice where needed.*
- Councillors wanted to ensure that the decisions made by the Sub-Committee would not be open to legal challenge.
- Councillors suggested other mitigation measures to be included in the specification, such as tree planting and alternative farming practices.
- Councillors queried whether the local MPs were aware of the severity of the situation.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that the MPs had been made aware.*
- Councillors queried what regulation was Government introducing to deal with the phosphate issue.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation had not received any indication that Government was due to introduce any legislation on the matter.*
- Concern was raised on the delay caused in the planning process which had impacted on the building supply chain and caused a delay in producing housing in the local area.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation advised that extra resource had been taken on to help move the process forward.*
- Councillors were happy to support the recommendations to alleviate the impact on local developers and residents.

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

- a) Confirmed that the Council would, until such time as the responsibility fell to others, adopt interim measures to secure in perpetuity development which was phosphate neutral in the River Tone catchment.
- b) Confirmed that the interim measures would include monitoring with annual reporting, to take an evidence led approach to ensure that phosphate

offsets arising from the measures secured kept pace with permissions granted.

- c) Approved a Supplementary Capital Budget of £2m for Phosphates Mitigation Interim Measures, to be included in the General Fund Capital Programme for 2021/22 and 2022/23 (profile to be agreed by S151 Officer), to be initially funded by borrowing. and agreed that associated debt financing costs were included in the MTFP.
- d) Agreed in principle that income received in respect of phosphates credits, for example through S106 contributions, be set aside first to repay borrowing and interest costs and then contributed to ongoing revenue costs associated with the interim measures implemented.
- e) Noted the financial risks and potential market and asset valuation fluctuations, supported the creation of an appropriate contingency within earmarked reserves, to be assessed and recommended by the S151 Officer as part of the annual budget report.
- f) Delegated authority to progress the purchasing of land and the creation of phosphate credits within the approved budget, and subject to a viable business case, to the Assistant Director Strategic Place and Planning in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Executive Councillor Member for Planning and Transportation.
- g) Delegated authority to progress the Appropriate Assessment of the interim programme of measures and its sign off by Natural England to the Assistant Director Strategic Place and Planning in consultation with the Executive Councillor Member for Planning and Transportation.
- h) Agreed the governance and delegated authority arrangements for managing and setting up the subcommittee of planning to manage the interim strategy and the purchasing of phosphate mitigation credits to meet the needs of affected development (enclosed as Appendix A).
- i) Supported where it was expedient to do so, in line with legislation and where there was a compelling case in the public interest, the use of legal powers (e.g. Compulsory Purchase Orders) to deliver cost-effective phosphate solutions.
- j) Required all new residential development to include water efficiency measures (110 litres per person per day) in line with SWT sustainability and climate change objectives, and that this would be a material planning consideration in the determination of affected proposals.
- k) With regard to determining planning applications, delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Strategic Place and Planning, the Lead Officer for Development Management and the Planning Policy Manager where appropriate to enter into Section 39 Agreements with landowners/farmers providing the mitigation project on their land.
- l) Delegated authority to the Assistant Director Strategic Place and Planning in consultation with the Executive Councillor Member for Planning and Transportation and the Phosphate Working Group to publish interim guidance clarifying the Council's position (as Local Planning Authority) on accepting Phosphate Credits purchased via third party trading platforms.

42. **Access to Information - Exclusion to the Press and Public (appendix 2 on agenda item 14 and the entirety of agenda item 15)**

**Resolved** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (appendix 2 on agenda item 14 and the entirety of agenda item 15) on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

43. **Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy & Delivery Plan**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The Chair of Community Scrutiny gave feedback from the debate held by the Committee and wanted to ensure that their comments would be taken into consideration.  
*The Portfolio Holder for Housing gave feedback and explained why extra focus had been given on the single homelessness element of the Strategy.*
- Councillors were keen to see action being taken to end rough sleeping.
- Councillors thanked officers for their work on the Strategy.

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

- a) Adopted the Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy (SHRSAS) (Appendix 1) and associated Delivery Plan (Confidential Appendix 2).
- b) Approved the virement of £1.17m and a supplementary General Fund capital budget of £0.38m to support the capital investment of £1.55m as set out in section 6 and Confidential appendix 2.
- c) Delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer to make the final funding decision for any capital budgets used in the General Fund or HRA, including any reallocation of part of the capital budget (b) from the General Fund to the HRA.
- d) Noted the predicted increase in revenue costs 2022-2025, and to delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to agree the revenue funding allocations 2022-2025 through a combination of homelessness earmarked reserves, future successful bids for government grant, and Better Care Fund grant (subject to Health and Wellbeing Board approval on 22nd November 2021).

44. **Levelling up Bid**

**Resolved** that Full Council approved the recommendations within the confidential report.

45. **Re-admittance of the Press and Public**

46. **To consider reports from Executive Councillors**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillors queried what was happening with the Bus Station in Taunton and highlighted that Somerset County Council had sent out consultation documents regarding bus station provisions.  
*Officers advised that a member briefing would be arranged to answer the many queries regarding the topic.*
- Councillors queried what progress had been made on the Innovation District Hub.  
*Officers advised that a report was being taken to Corporate Scrutiny for debate.*
- Councillors requested an update on the Local Plan.
- Councillors mentioned a conference for Parish Councils, to advise them of how services would be delivered under the Unitary Authority. Concern was raised that there had been rumours that Somerset County Council would become the continuing authority and how would the District Councils feed into that.  
*Officers advised that all 5 Council were working collaboratively on the structure for the Joint Committees and further detailed information would be given once the Structural Change Order was received.*

(The Meeting ended at 8.55 pm)



## SWT Special Full Council - 19 October 2021

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Ian Aldridge, Lee Baker, Marcus Barr, Mark Blaker, Chris Booth, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Hugh Davies, Tom Deakin, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Andrew Govier, Steve Griffiths, Roger Habgood, John Hassall, Ross Henley, Marcia Hill, John Hunt, Dawn Johnson, Marcus Kravis, Sue Lees, Libby Lisgo, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd, Dave Mansell, Andy Milne, Derek Perry, Steven Pugsley, Mike Rigby, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Nick Thwaites, Anthony Trollope-Bellew, Sarah Wakefield, Danny Wedderkopp, Brenda Weston, Loretta Whetlor and Gwil Wren

Officers: Paul Fitzgerald, Alison North, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell, Jo Comer and Kevin Williams

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 47. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors P Bolton, S Buller, N Cavill, A Hadley, B Hall, C Morgan, C Palmer, M Peters, A Pritchard, F Smith, F Smith-Roberts, A Sully, R Tully, T Venner and K Wheatley.

### 48. Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Barr	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Blaker	All Items	Wiveliscombe	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Davies	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Govier	All Items	SCC &	Personal	Spoke and Voted

		Wellington		
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC & Bishop's Hull	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Lloyd	All Items	Wellington & Sampford Arundel	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Milne	All Items	Porlock	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke
Cllr N Thwaites	All Items	Dulverton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr G Wren	All Items	Clerk to Milverton PC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

49. **Public Participation - To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions, statements or petitions from the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 14,15 and 16**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

50. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

Special Council observed a minute's silence on behalf of the late MP, Sir David Amess.



51. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

No announcements were made by the Leader of the Council.

52. **To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13**

No questions were received in relation to Procedure Rule 13.

53. **Community Governance Review for the Unparished Area of Taunton**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Councillor Lisgo presented the report as Chair of the Working Group. She highlighted the following:-
  - The Group had worked hard to investigate many different options.
  - The work had been a challenge as not many Authorities had gone through the same process before.
  - There was one clear driver from the Group and that was, no action would be the worst option.
  - Option 2a was the most popular option of the Group, however, it had not received unanimous support. Most of the Group agreed that option 2a was the most pragmatic of all the options and would likely achieve the establishment of a Town Council to help the area through into the Unitary Authority.
  - Some support was given to a wider review being carried out, which would include the surrounding parishes.
  - Not much support had been shown for the latter options detailed in the report, this was due to concern being raised that it would lead to no action being taken.
- Councillor Lisgo proposed option 2a within the recommendations (which was endorsed by the members of the Working Group), which was duly seconded by Councillor Weston.
- Councillors requested clarification on the procedure to follow on which option was being debated first.
- Councillors were advised that option 2a was being debated first unless any amendments were received.
- Councillor Rigby proposed an amendment to option 2b:-
  - To commence a Community Governance Review of the Unparished Area of Taunton and the adjoining Parish areas with the intention to implement a town council for all or part of that area.
- Concern was raised that councillors did not want the review to 'drift' and they wanted to ensure that action was taken to create a Town Council for Taunton and its residents.
- Councillors requested clarification on which option was being debated.

*The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that an indicative vote could be taken to see which option, 2a or 2b, would be preferable. If option 2a was carried, the report could be brought back to Full Council at a later date, to request a wider review.*

- Councillor Wakefield proposed that option 2b was debated first, which was duly seconded by Councillor Booth.
- Concern was raised that the option proposed by the Working Group was not being debated first.
- Councillors again requested clarification on which option was being debated first.
- The Chair of Council advised that option 2b would be debated first because the work carried out under option 2b, would cover option 2a as well.
- Councillors agreed that they wanted to ensure the best option was carried out for the residents of the town.
- Councillor Stock-Williams joined the meeting at 7pm, so would not be able to take part in the vote.
- Councillors agreed that they wanted the review carried out properly in time for the creation of a Unitary Authority in 2023.
- Some councillors did not want a wider review to be lost in the work to create a Unitary Authority.
- Concern was raised on the impact the Unitary Authority timetable would have on the work to carry out the Community Governance Review (CGR). *The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the amendment proposed for option 2b was not proper and was essentially option 3 from the report. The Deputy Monitoring Officer gave information on the timescales of the CGR and the creation of a Unitary Authority.*
- Councillor Lithgow left the meeting at 7.10pm. *The Deputy Monitoring Officer gave information on the CGR process.*
- The Chair queried whether the amendment to option 2b could be allowed.
- The meeting was paused at 7.20pm.
- The meeting resumed at 7.40pm. *The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised on what the current position was with the debate and further advised that there would be a motion put forward which would become option 2c.*
- Councillor Rigby proposed option 2c, which was duly seconded by Councillor Hunt:-
  - To commence a Community Governance Review of the Unparished Area of Taunton and the adjoining Parish areas with the intention to implement a town council for all or part of that area.
- Councillors thanked the Working Group for all their hard work investigating all the options for the CGR.
- Councillors agreed that action needed to be taken to form a Town Council and that they wanted what was best for the residents of Taunton.
- Concern was raised on the way the debate had been carried out.
- Some councillors expressed some concern on option 2a not being debated first, as it was the option the Working Group had proposed.
- Members of the Working Group highlighted that their task had been to focus on the unparished area of Taunton.

- Concern was raised on the areas covered by option 2c and councillors further queried whether paragraphs a-g would be included in option 2c as per option 2b.  
*The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that paragraphs a-g were included in option 2b to guide what would be covered in the Review and requested that the proposer and seconder advise on what details, would be included in option 2c and that they needed to name the parishes to be included in option 2c.*
- Councillor Rigby would draft the paragraphs and discuss the detail later in the debate.
- Councillors expressed their disappointment that Taunton had not had a Town Council before and that the residents had not had proper representation on many important issues.
- Councillors highlighted the importance of the work of a Town Council for when the Unitary Authority had been established.
- Some councillors agreed that the CGR should be carried out on the unparished area first and then a wider review could be carried out once a Town Council had been established. Whereas some councillors believed that if a wider review was not carried out now, then it would be severely delayed in the work to create the Unitary Authority.
- Concern was raised that option 2c was too similar to option 3 and that the work would get lost in a boundary review and then the CGR would be halted.  
*The Deputy Monitoring Officer compared options 2c and 3 and gave information on the differences. He further explained the implications on the May 2022 elections if the consultation was not completed by mid-January 2022.*
- The proposer and seconder closed the debate and explained why they supported a wider review be carried out, which included giving the surrounding parishes an option to be part of a Town Council and to give the local residents a better representation.
- Councillor Rigby detailed the paragraphs to be included in option 2c.
- Councillor Lisgo proposed a recorded vote be taken and recorded in the minutes, which was duly seconded by Councillor Habgood.

The recommendations, which are detailed below, were put and were **CARRIED** with twenty Councillors in favour, eighteen against and one abstaining:-

**Resolved** that Special Full Council approved:-

2c: To commence a Community Governance Review of the Unparished Area of Taunton and the adjoining Parish areas with the intention to implement a town council for all or part of that area.

- a) A community governance review be undertaken of the unparished area of Taunton and surrounding parishes (Trull, Bishop's Hull, Comeytrove, Norton Fitzwarren, Staplegrove, Kingston St. Mary, Cheddon Fitzpaine, West Monkton) with a view to the creation of a parish or parishes and council(s) to serve all or part of that area.
- b) The Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review be delegated to be approved by the Chief Executive Officer and Monitoring

- Officer or Deputy, after consultation with the Community Governance Review Working Group and the Leader of the Council for later publication.
- c) The first round of consultation wording be delegated to be approved by the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer for use as the basis for the first round of communications in respect of the Community Governance Review with authority delegated to the Specialist in Governance and Democracy to make minor amendments to the text if required, after consultation with the Community Governance Review Working Group and the Leader of the Council.
  - d) The Communications and Consultation Plan set out at Appendix 10 to this report be approved, with authority delegated to the Specialist in Governance and Democracy to make minor amendments to the text if required, after consultation with the Community Governance Review Working Group.
  - e) To authorise a general delegation to the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer, after consultation with the Community Governance Review Working Group to take such action as necessary to progress the community governance review and amend the timetable in accordance with legislation and the statutory guidance.

Those voting **FOR** the **MOTION**: Councillors I Aldridge, L Baker, C Booth, S Coles, D Darch, T Deakin, C Ellis, H Farbahi, E Firmin, S Griffiths, J Hassall, R Henley, J Hunt, D Johnson, M Kravis, S Nicholls, D Perry, M Rigby, S Wakefield and D Wedderkopp.

Those voting **AGAINST** the **MOTION**: Councillors M Barr, M Blaker, H Davies, A Govier, R Habgood, M Hill, R Lees, S Lees, L Lisgo, J Lloyd, D Mansell, A Milne, H Prior-Sankey, S Pugsley, N Thwaites, A Trollope-Bellew, B Weston and L Whetlor.

Those **ABSTAINING** from the vote: Councillor G Wren.

(The Meeting ended at 8.55 pm)

## SWT Full Council - 16 November 2021

Present: Councillor Hazel Prior-Sankey (Chair)

Councillors Richard Lees, Ian Aldridge, Lee Baker, Chris Booth, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Tom Deakin, Caroline Ellis, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, Steve Griffiths, Barrie Hall, John Hassall, Marcia Hill, Dawn Johnson, Marcus Kravis, Mark Lithgow, Simon Nicholls, Derek Perry, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith, Federica Smith-Roberts, Vivienne Stock-Williams, Ray Tully, Terry Venner, Sarah Wakefield, Danny Wedderkopp and Loretta Whetlor

Officers: Lesley Dolan, Paul Fitzgerald, Andrew Pritchard, Jo Comer, Marcus Prouse, Clare Rendell and Nicky Rendell

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

### 54. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors B Allen, M Blaker, S Buller, N Cavill, H Davies, A Govier, R Habgood, A Hadley, R Henley, J Hunt, S Lees, L Lisgo, J Lloyd, D Mansell, A Milne, C Palmer, M Peters, S Pugsley, A Pritchard, A Sully, N Thwaites, A Trollope-Bellew, B Weston, K Wheatley and G Wren.

### 55. Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Deakin	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Johnson	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	Taunton Charter	Personal	Spoke and Voted

		Trustee		
Cllr M Lithgow	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Nicholls	All Items	Comeytrove	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr V Stock-Williams	All Items	Wellington	Personal	Spoke
Cllr R Tully	All Items	West Monkton	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr T Venner	All Items	Minehead	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

56. **Public Participation - To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions, statements or petitions from the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 14,15 and 16**

No members of the public had requested to speak on any item on the agenda.

57. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Chair of the Council**

The Chair of the Council made the following announcements:-

- She advised councillors that item 8 on the agenda had been withdrawn.
- Councillors were reminded that there was a member briefing starting straight after the meeting.
- She thanked everyone for their participation in all the Remembrance Day events that took place across the District.
- Councillors were advised of a couple of events taking place over the next couple of weeks, which included Winterfest on Sunday 21 November 2021 and Carols in Vivary Park on Monday 13 December 2021.

58. **To receive any communications or announcements from the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council had no announcements to give.

59. **To receive only in relation to the business for which the Extraordinary Meeting has been called any questions from Councillors in accordance**

**with Council Procedure Rule 13**

No questions were received in regard to Procedure Rule 13.

**60. Appointment of the Head of Paid Service and Chief Executive**

**Resolved** that Full Council:-

- 2.1 Confirmed the appointment of Andrew Pritchard as, Chief Executive (including Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer) and Head of Paid Service for Somerset West and Taunton Council with effect from 17th November 2021
- 2.2 Recommended a spot salary for the post of £118,000 and Returning Officer Fees to be effective from 17th November 2021.

(The Meeting ended at 6.25 pm)

Draft





SWT Meeting Dates for Municipal Year 2022-23

**Community Scrutiny**

Wednesday 25 May 2022  
Wednesday 29 June 2022  
Wednesday 27 July 2022  
Wednesday 31 August 2022  
Wednesday 28 September 2022  
Wednesday 26 October 2022  
Wednesday 30 November 2022  
December 2022?  
Wednesday 25 January 2023  
Budget - Date TBC  
Wednesday 22 February 2023  
Wednesday 29 March 2023  
Wednesday 26 April 2023

**Corporate Scrutiny**

Wednesday 4 May 2022  
Wednesday 1 June 2022  
Wednesday 6 July 2022  
Wednesday 3 August 2022  
Wednesday 7 September 2022  
Wednesday 5 October 2022  
Wednesday 2 November 2022  
Wednesday 7 December 2022  
Wednesday 4 January 2023  
Budget - Date TBC  
Wednesday 1 February 2023  
Wednesday 1 March 2023  
Wednesday 5 April 2023

**Executive**

Wednesday 18 May 2022  
Wednesday 15 June 2022  
Wednesday 20 July 2022  
Wednesday 17 August 2022  
Wednesday 21 September 2022  
Wednesday 19 October 2022  
Wednesday 16 November 2022  
Wednesday 21 December 2022  
Wednesday 18 January 2023  
Budget - Date TBC  
Wednesday 15 February 2023  
Wednesday 15 March 2023  
Wednesday 19 April 2023

**Full Council**

Tuesday 10 May 2022 - AGM  
Tuesday 5 July 2022  
Tuesday 6 September 2022  
Tuesday 6 December 2022  
Tuesday 7 February 2023  
Budget - Date TBC  
Tuesday 28 March 2023  
Tuesday 9 May 2023 - AGM

**Audit and Governance**

Monday 13 June 2022  
Monday 12 September 2022  
Special for Accounts in September 2022  
Monday 12 December 2022  
Monday 13 March 2023

**Licensing Committee**

Monday 20 June 2022  
Monday 19 September 2022  
Monday 19 December 2022  
Monday 20 March 2023

**Planning Committee**

Thursday 19 May 2022  
Thursday 9 June 2022  
Thursday 30 June 2022  
Thursday 21 July 2022  
Thursday 11 August 2022  
Thursday 1 September 2022  
Thursday 22 September 2022  
Thursday 13 October 2022  
Thursday 3 November 2022  
Thursday 24 November 2022  
Thursday 15 December 2022  
Thursday 12 January 2023  
Thursday 2 February 2023  
Thursday 23 February 2023  
Thursday 16 March 2023  
Thursday 6 April 2023  
Thursday 27 April 2023



# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Full Council – 7 December 2021

### Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Ross Henley, Corporate Resources

Report Author: Mark Antonelli, (Benefits Specialist)

#### 1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To advise and update members on the current Council Tax Support scheme. To propose no changes to the Council Tax Support scheme for working age customers for 2022/23 other than to ensure continued alignment and uprating with national allowances and regulations for pensioners.
- 1.2 The Council Tax Support scheme is an income-related local discount scheme that helps people on low incomes to pay their Council Tax.
- 1.3 The rules for pension age people are set in regulations prescribed by the Government (the 'prescribed regulations'). The Council is responsible for designing a Council Tax Support scheme for working age people.
- 1.4 The prescribed regulations are updated each year by Government to take into account changes to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Housing Benefit regulations and wider policy measures. Apart from including the amended prescribed regulations each year, there is **no statutory obligation** for a billing authority to revise or replace its local Council Tax Support scheme.
- 1.5 The regulations do however require that the Council formally considers whether it wants to review or revise its scheme for each new financial year.
- 1.6 It was our intention, as stated in the report that went to Full Council in December 2020, to undertake a review of our Council Tax Support scheme for working aged people in 2021, and to potentially implement a different scheme for the 2022/23 financial year. Any such review is a significant piece of work requiring detailed public consultation and robust modelling. In view of the move to implement a single unitary Council in 2023 we have postponed the review of the scheme until 2022. In deciding to postpone the review we have considered the following factors.
  - Our current Council Tax Support scheme for working age customers is robust
  - Any new scheme we implement as a result of a review this year would probably only operate for one year (2022/23), as the move to a single unitary will require a further review to agree a scheme for the unitary council.
  - There was no appetite from other districts to collaborate on a combined review this year

- We have recently maximised a level of automation based on the current Council Tax Support scheme to create efficiencies within the team

1.7 Consequently, as no changes are proposed (or feasible at this stage in the year) we are bringing this recommendation directly to Full Council.

1.8 A new county wide Council Tax Support scheme will need to be agreed in 2022 in conjunction with the other Somerset districts.

1.9 The current estimated cost of the scheme based on the caseload data as at 7 October 2021 is £9.35m per year. This will vary as demand and level of discount entitlement changes. The final estimated costs for 2022/23 will be determined in December 2021 using actual caseload data as at 30 November 2021.

## 2 Recommendation

2.1 To formally agree that the current Council Tax Support scheme for working age customers be retained for 2022/23.

## 3 Background and full details of the report

3.1 The Council has an obligation, under paragraph 5 of Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as inserted by Schedule 4 to the Local Government Finance Act 2012 to **consider** whether to revise or replace its scheme. The same scheme (except for any changes to the prescribed regulations) could therefore remain in place for multiple years, if the authority considers each year whether to revise or replace it.

3.2 A summary of the key elements of our Council Tax Support schemes since 2013/14 can be found in Appendix 1.

3.3 Appendix 2 provides a summary of the current Council Tax Support scheme in operation for 2021/22.

3.4 Appendix 3 provides comparative data for each year since the introduction of Council Tax Support on 1 April 2013. The table provides information on caseloads and expenditure.

3.5 As at 7 October 2021, 10,995 customers were in receipt of reduced Council Tax charges through discounts.

Claimant type	Caseload	% of total caseload	CTS costs	% of total spend
Working age	6,747	61.36%	£4,632,632	49.56%
Pension age	4,248	38.64%	£4,731,845	50.44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,995</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£9,346,477</b>	<b>100%</b>

3.5 The actual Council Tax Base for 2022/23 is due to be approved in December 2021 and will be based upon updated caseload data on 30 November 2021.

3.6 As of 7 October 2021, our expenditure for 2021/22 is £9,346,477, which is £147,501 above the budget estimate included within the tax base for this year. While our Council Tax Support caseload has reduced from 11,318 on 22 October 2020 to 10,995 on 7 October 2021, we have seen a decrease in the level of Council Tax

Support costs, mainly attributed to the increase in Council Tax charges in 2021/22. We are slowly seeing a reduction in Council Tax Support claims as we start to recover from the pandemic and customers move back into full time work. Given these conditions, there is a risk that the final costs for the year will exceed the current estimate. As the costs are expected to exceed the budget estimate, this is likely to result in a deficit in the Collection Fund in 2021/22, which will need to be reflected in the 2022/23 budget. SWTC will be liable for 11.3% of any such deficit.

#### **4 Links to Corporate Strategy**

- 4.1 The provision of a Council Tax Support scheme is a statutory duty and helps the Council meet its objectives for the strategic themes of ‘a transparent and customer-focused Council’ and ‘homes and communities’.

#### **5 Finance / Resource Implications**

- 5.1 The costs of the Council Tax Support scheme are shared between Council Tax precepting authorities through the Tax Base calculation. Council Tax income is credited to the Collection Fund which is then distributed to local authorities based on their approved precept. Any surplus or deficit on the Collection Fund – if tax collected is higher or lower than the precepts paid for the year – is paid to or recovered from local authorities in subsequent years. Town and parish councils are not liable for any surplus or deficit in the Collection Fund, with their share of risk borne instead by SWTC as billing authority.

- 5.2 The table below summarises the relative share of collection fund total income for 2021/22. This shows that most of the costs and risks for Council Tax Support are applicable to the other major preceptors.

Preceptor	2021/22 share of Collection Fund
Somerset West and Taunton Council	8.93%
Parishes	2.38%
Somerset County Council	71.25%
Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset	12.70%
Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority	4.74%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 5.3 Demand for local council tax support understandably increased during last financial year and this trend have continued in 2021/22. As part of the local government finance settlement the Government provided an additional one-off “LCTS Grant” to help mitigate the rising cost of council tax support and its impact on total Council Tax due to be collected. This was £225k for Somerset West and Taunton Council in 2021/22. There is no indication currently that similar grant support will be provided in 2022/23 therefore, it is prudent to assume that the full cost of LCTS will be funded by SWTC and the other council tax preceptors next year. Any additional government grant (if any) is likely to be confirmed with the Provisional Settlement in late December which will be after the Council Tax Base for 2022/23 is approved.

#### **6 Legal Implications**

- 6.1 Paragraph 5 of Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as inserted by Schedule 4 to the Local Government Finance Act 2012, requires the authority to consider whether, for each financial year, the Council Tax Support scheme is to be

revised or replaced.

## **7 Climate and Sustainability Implications**

7.1 There are no direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

## **8 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications**

8.1 There are no safeguarding or community safety implications arising from the recommendations.

## **9 Equality and Diversity Implications**

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out in 2018/19 when we updated and consulted on the Council Tax Support scheme and an action plan was produced and formed part of the report to full council last year on the Council Tax Support scheme for 2021/22. With the recommendation to continue with the current scheme for 2022/23, this EIA is still valid.

9.2 Within the original EIA it was highlighted that care leavers would receive additional support to meet their Council Tax shortfall. Within the Revenues team we have now addressed this to provide a full exemption for care leavers.

9.3 Overall, the public are satisfied with the Council Tax Support scheme, and we have received very few complaints or criticisms of the scheme.

## **10 Social Value Implications**

10.1 There are no social value implications arising from the recommendations.

## **11 Partnership Implications**

11.1 Following the decision to create a single unitary authority from the 2023/24 tax year work will need to be undertaken during 2022/23 to develop a Council Tax Support scheme for the unitary authority.

## **12 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

12.1 Council Tax Support is to help provide financial support for people on low incomes, which has a knock-on benefit for health and wellbeing.

## **13 Asset Management Implications**

13.1 There are no asset management implications arising from the recommendations.

## **14 Data Protection Implications**

14.1 There are no data protection issues arising from the recommendations.

## **15 Consultation Implications**

15.1 If the Council wishes to revise or replace its current scheme, it must consult with precepting authorities (Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Police, and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority), publish a draft scheme and then consult with such persons as are likely to have an interest in the operation of that scheme prior to



determining the scheme. If any proposed revision is to reduce or remove a reduction to which a class of person was entitled, the revision must include such transitional provision as the Council sees fit.

15.2 Case law has confirmed that consultation must

- be undertaken when proposals are at a formative stage.
- include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response.
- give consultees sufficient time to make a response; and
- be conscientiously considered when the ultimate decision is taken.

15.3 We last carried out a public consultation between 16 July 2018 and 10 September 2018 before the adoption of the current Council Tax Support scheme. As well as the public, we sought views from the major preceptors, welfare support agencies and advisory groups.

15.4 No significant changes are proposed to our existing scheme and consequently no formal consultation is required.

## 16 Scrutiny/Executive Comments/Recommendations

### Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Committees – No**
- **Executive – No**
- **Full Council – Yes**

Reporting Frequency:  Annually

### List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)

Appendix 1	The evolution of the Council Tax Support scheme since 1 April 2013
Appendix 2	The 2022/23 Council Tax Support income band scheme for working age customers
Appendix 3	Comparative data on caseload and expenditure
Appendix 4	Equalities Impact Assessment 2018/19

### Contact Officer

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## **Appendix 1 – The evolution of the Council Tax Support scheme since 1 April 2013**

From 1 April 2013, the Council Tax Support scheme for people of working age included the following key elements:

- Maximum support reduced to 80% (TDBC) or 85% (WSC) of Council Tax – everyone of working age had to pay something
- Increased non-dependant deductions
- No second adult rebate
- Increased earned income disregards to provide an additional work incentive

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, the Council Tax Support schemes for both TDBC and WSC for working age people were amended by:

- Removing entitlement to customers with capital or savings over £6,000
- Applying a minimum income for self-employed applicants
- Paying Council Tax Support at a level that would be no more than for a Band D property for Taunton Deane residents and no more than for a Band C for West Somerset residents
- Disregarding maintenance received for children
- Reducing the maximum backdating of a Council Tax Support award from 6 months to 1 month
- Removing the family premium in the applicable amount for new applicants, or existing recipients who would otherwise have a new entitlement to the premium
- Removing the Work-Related Activity component in the applicable amount for new claimants of Employment and Support Allowance
- Removing the child allowance in the applicable amount for third and any subsequent children born after 1 April 2017 (some customers were protected)
- Reducing the allowable period of temporary absence outside Great Britain from 13 weeks to 4 weeks

In 2018/19, both TDBC and WSC decided to change their scheme for working age customers by removing applicable amounts and instead awarding Council Tax Support in the form of a discount based on 'income bands'. The scheme recognised the additional needs of multi-person households and families. The scheme also allowed for:

- a flat rate deduction of £5 a week for each non-dependant
- disregarding carers' allowance from the income used to work out Council Tax Support
- providing extra assistance for single young people who had left local authority care

The new 'income bands' scheme also mitigated the challenges presented from being within an area that saw the roll out of full-service Universal Credit (UC). In particular:

- UC claimants not making a prompt claim for Council Tax Support, leading to loss of financial assistance
- The number of changes to UC awards received through the DWP's data hub requiring a change to Council Tax Support awards. Approximately 40% of UC customers have between 8 and 12 changes to their award each year. These changes result in changes to Council Tax liability, the re-calculation of instalments, delays and the demonstrable loss in collection

Both these issues would have increased the costs of administration. The income bands are wide enough to ensure small changes to UC awards do not result in changes to Council Tax Support awards and subsequent changes to Council Tax liabilities and the issuing of new bills.

## Appendix 2 – The current income band Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23

Further changes to the income band scheme were made for 2019/20, namely:

- Disregarding the Housing Element of UC in working out income
- Additional income disregards for families with more than 2 children and those customers with a disability
- Reducing the maximum award of Council Tax Support to 80% for those falling in the lowest income band

		Household composition						
Band		Single person	Couple with no children	Couple with one child	Lone parent with one child	Couple with two or more children	Lone parent with two or more children	Discount (%)
1	Assessed weekly income	£0 to £74.99	£0 to £114.99	£0 to £164.99	£0 to £124.99	£0 to £214.99	£0 to 174.99	80
2		£75.00 to £124.99	£115.00 to £164.99	£165.00 to £214.99	£125.00 to £174.99	£215.00 to £264.99	£175.00 to £224.99	70
3		£125.00 to £174.99	£165.00 to £214.99	£215.00 to £264.99	£175.00 to £224.99	£265.00 to £314.99	£225.00 to £274.99	55
4		£175.00 to £224.99	£215.00 to £264.99	£265.00 to £314.99	£225.00 to £274.99	£315.00 to £364.99	£275.00 to £324.99	40
5		£225.00 to £274.99	£265.00 to £314.99	£315.00 to £364.99	£275.00 to £324.99	£365.00 to £414.99	£325.00 to £374.99	25
6		£275.00 to £324.99	£315.00 to £364.99	£365.00 to £414.99	£325.00 to £374.99	£415.00 to £464.99	£375.00 to £424.99	10



## Appendix 3 – Comparative data

### Caseload and expenditure

Year	Caseload	Working age caseload	Pensioner caseload	Total expenditure	Discretionary support
2012/13 *	11,455	-	-	£10,001,604	-
2013/14	11,540	5,739	5,801	£8,759,233	£38,174
2014/15	11,000	5,494	5,506	£8,360,408	£50,156
2015/16	10,468	5,147	5,321	£8,101,902	£36,300
2016/17	9,974	4,938	5,036	£7,917,814	£54,723
2017/18	9,698	4,760	4,938	£7,854,233	£56,107
2018/19	10,751	6,026	4,725	£7,872,789	£62,384
2019/20 ^	10,799	6,199	4,600	£8,647,764	£25,792
2020/21**	11,318	6,855	4,463	£9,289,428	£32,251
2021/22***	10,995	6,747	4,248	£9,346,477	£23,482

\*final year of Council Tax Benefit

^year to date figures

\*\* As at 21 October 2020

\*\*\* As at 7 October 2021





## Appendix 4 - Equality Impact Assessment Form and Action Plan

Officer completing EIA Form	Job Title	Team/Service	
Heather Tiso	Revenues & Benefits Manager	Revenues & Benefits Service	
Why are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment? Please ✓ as appropriate			
Proposed new policy or service	Change to policy or service	New or change to budget	Service review
	✓		
1 Description of policy, service or decision being impact assessed:			
<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>From 2013/14 district councils have operated localised Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes to provide assistance to people on low income. CTS replaced the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme that was administered by the council on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Councils are responsible for the design and implementation of these schemes and need to consider if they are to be revised or replaced on an annual basis. The subsidy reimbursement for CTS reduced nationally by 10% in 2013/14 with councils having the option of funding the shortfall or designing a CTS scheme that is cost neutral. The Government state any CTS scheme must protect pensioners at the existing level of support. That decision means the burden falls disproportionately upon those of Working Age.</p> <p>From 1 April 2014, funding for localised CTS is incorporated in Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) and not separately identified. The SFA has reduced by 4.7% in cash terms since 2013/14. In applying this methodology, the funding available for Localised CTS has reduced by £2,792,307 to £3,317,773. In 2016/17, we paid CTS of £5,377,970, meaning that if there is no change to the existing CTS scheme, we estimate we will have a funding shortfall of £2,060,197, with our share of that shortfall being £197,985. The financing risk of the scheme is shared with other precepting Authorities through the tax base calculation. Taunton Deane's share of the collection fund in 2017/18 is 9.61%.</p> <p>Historically, the administration of our localised CTS scheme was administratively efficient as many claims were assessed using information supplied by claimants for a Housing Benefit claim or directly from the Department for Work and Pensions. However, CTS administration has become increasingly difficult since the roll out of the "full service for Universal Credit (UC), with the number of customers claiming UC significantly increasing. We receive information from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) on any variations to the customer's income and for many customers, such changes occur every month. Our previous CTS scheme did not contain any "de-minimus" for income variances, we need to reassess the amount of CTS entitlement leading to multiple bills, direct debit changes and increased administration.</p> <p>For the reasons outlined above, the cost and administration of the previous CTS scheme could have become progressively financially burdensome, as well as being increasingly complex for customers. Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council therefore implemented a banded income CTS scheme for 2018/19.</p> <p><b>2018/19 Council Tax Support Schemes</b></p>			

The banded income scheme removed Applicable Amounts in calculating CTS and instead awarded entitlement based on Income Bands. To recognise the additional needs of multi-person households and families the table on the following page shows the income limits for each band in 2018/19.

CTS Band		Single people	Couple no Children	Couple with one child	Lone Parent with one child	Couple with two or more children	Lone Parent with two or more children
85%	1	£75.00	£115.00	£165.00	£125.00	£215.00	£175.00
75%	2	£125.00	£165.00	£215.00	£175.00	£265.00	£225.00
60%	3	£175.00	£215.00	£265.00	£225.00	£315.00	£275.00
45%	4	£225.00	£265.00	£315.00	£275.00	£365.00	£325.00
30%	5	£275.00	£315.00	£365.00	£325.00	£415.00	£375.00
15%	6	£325.00	£365.00	£415.00	£375.00	£465.00	£425.00

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In addition to these changes, TDBC and WSC also decided to:

- apply a flat rate deduction of £5 a week for each non-dependant;
- disregard carers' allowance from the income used to work out CTS
- provide extra assistance for young people who had left local authority care by increasing maximum support to 100% of the Council Tax liability for single applicants up to the age of 25 where their weekly income falls within Band 1.

The banded income scheme has been largely successful. We have listened to feedback from customers, identified best practice and considered the impact of the scheme to identify areas that could be changed. In light of this it is proposed to amend the scheme to ensure fairness, encourage work, protects our vulnerable customers, and is affordable.

## 2 People who could be affected, with particular regard to the legally defined protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>:

Our localised CTS scheme affects all claimants who are of working age (and those of working age currently not in receipt of CTS but who may apply in the future). Limited equality data is held within the CTS computer system (as the collection of such information has not been necessary for administering CTS) given the caseload can come from all sections of the community it is likely there will be claimants (and their household members) that contain the full range of protected characteristics 1 as defined within the Equalities Act 2010 and include:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation

The Government expect local authorities to establish schemes that minimise the impact on vulnerable groups. The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) Regulations 2012 include provisions for those of working age but none of those prescribed requirements set out the level of support to be given.

## 3 People and Service Area who are delivering the policy/service/decision:

Council Staff

## 4 Evidence used to assess impact: Please attached documents where appropriate.

We have obtained data relating to people affected from our Council Tax Support processing system. The data available has allowed us to analyse impact on people according to their age, disability, family circumstances and level of income. We have modelled options on scenarios with “live” data based on actual entitlements and CTS recipients at that point in time. We asked general diversity questions as part of the consultation exercise.

The impact of implementing any changes to our local Council Tax Support Scheme in 2019/20 for each of the protected groups, is considered below and on the following pages.

## Equality Impact Assessment (by protected characteristic)

<sup>1</sup> For protected characteristics, please visit:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/private-and-public-sector-guidance/guidance-all/protected-characteristics>

## Age

Pensioners are still entitled to claim up to 100% of their Council Tax liability through CTS. The Council's general equality duty is lessened to an extent with regard to older people as Government has prescribed that pensioners are not affected by CTS. However, we have a responsibility to foster good relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. There is a risk of harming the relationship between pensioners and working age claimants of CTS as pension age claimants are not affected and working age claimants have a greater reduction to their CTS to cover the shortfall in funding.

At 31 March 2018, just 136 (3%) CTS recipients of pension age had Council Tax arrears contrasting with 1,841 (34%) for those of working age - see Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

	Number of cases	Cases with debt	% of cases with debt	Average debt for those in arrears	Total arrears
Pension Age	4,755	136	3%	£103.75	£14,110.16
Working Age	5,354	1,841	34%	£235.72	£433,968.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,109</b>	<b>1,977</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>£226.65</b>	<b>£448,078.56</b>

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conducting consultation for our CTS scheme

For all options to change our scheme, we would continue to disregard Child Benefit in income calculations meaning that the added income this provides will not reduce the CTS that an applicant receives.

To mitigate any of the effects in changing our CTS scheme in 2019/20, officers could apply a discretionary reduction in Council Tax liability through exceptional hardship as appropriate and in accordance with our policy.

## Disability

Disabled people have a limited ability to work and are likely to have higher level disability related living expenses. This group in particular find it difficult to access and sustain employment and therefore improve on their current financial situation. This group of people is less resilient to the impact of recession and unemployment and are often living in poverty. These further impacts on the individual's mental health.

Paragraph 2.1 (e) of this report will increase the support provided to this particular protected characteristic by applying a disregard of £50 from the income used to work out CTS where the qualifying conditions for the disability premium is met.

**Gender**

There are a greater number of female recipients of CTS within our caseload (either single, lone parents or part of a couple) than male recipients. Consequently, more females will be impacted by changes made to our CTS scheme than males. This is not deliberate but is simply a product of the makeup of our caseload. However, gender will not be a direct factor in any part of the assessment of CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires greater assistance when assessing support.

The majority of lone parents in receipt of CTS are female.

**Gender Reassignment**

We hold no data on our Council Tax system to identifying the names or numbers of current CTS applicants who share this protected characteristic. Gender reassignment is not a factor in any part of the assessment of CTS and it is not considered to be a characteristic which requires that requires greater assistance when assessing support. In common with other working age CTS applicants, transgendered people may receive less CTS under the proposals for change in 2019/20. However, these are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on transgendered people as a specific group.

**Marriage and Civil Partnership**

Marital or civil partnership status is not currently a factor in determining CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires greater assistance when assessing support. Options for changing our CTS scheme for 2019/20 do not introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on their marriage or civil partnership status.

**Religion and Belief**

We do not gather data on religion or belief as part of the CTS application process; we do not hold full data specific to religion or belief within our caseload. Religion and belief is not a factor in any part of the assessment of Council Tax Support as it is not considered to be a characteristic which requires greater assistance when assessing support. Some working age CTS applicants, people of all or no religion or belief, may receive less CTS under the proposals for change in 2019/20. However, these are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on their religion or belief status.

**Race**

Race is not a factor in the assessment of CTS and it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires greater assistance when assessing support. Some people of all races, may receive less CTS under the proposals for change in 2019/20. However, these are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on their race status.

**Pregnancy and Maternity**

Pregnancy alone is not a factor in the current assessment of CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires a higher level of support. Providing that the child (or children) forms part of the mother's household composition once it is born, the application for CTS will then include the child (or children) as

part of the household and the CTS available will increase which, once other income changes have been taken into account may provide for a more generous assessment of CTS and reduced Council Tax payments.

The CTS scheme would retain the current disregard of Child Benefit in income calculations for all the options in changing our scheme for 2019/20. This will mean the income that Child Benefit provides will not reduce the amount of CTS that a recipient receives as a result of having a baby.

### **Sexual Orientation**

Sexual orientation is not a factor in any part of the assessment of CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic which requires a higher level of support when assessing CTS. Some working age CTS applicants may receive less CTS under the proposals for change in 2019/20. However, these are not such as to introduce disproportionately adverse effects on people based on their sexual orientation.

### **Children and duties under the 2010 Child Poverty Act**

The minimum age for receiving CTS is 18 and so people under the age of 18 will not be impacted directly by the CTS scheme. Indirect impact has been considered as people under the age of 18 are included as part of a claimant's household and the Council has a duty to prevent child poverty as outlined in the Child Poverty Act 2010.

Paragraph 2.1 (d) of this report will increase the support provided to this particular protected characteristic by applying an additional £50 disregard from the income used to work out CTS for each child where there are more than two children in the household.

### **Other Groups (non-statutory)**

#### **Employment**

For people of working age that are not in employment, the benefit cap restricts the amount in certain benefits that a household can receive. Any household receiving more than the cap will have their Housing Benefit reduced to bring them back within the limit. The Benefit Cap is £20,000 for households living in the Taunton Deane area. This reduction in income may mean Council Tax is more difficult to collect from those households.

#### **Armed Forces**

Veteran Benefits will continue to be fully disregarded in the means test for Council Tax Support. Our scheme does not appear to have a differential impact but we are aware some ex veterans experience mental health issues and have physical disabilities.

**5 Conclusions on impact of proposed decision or new policy/service change:**

In considering options to change our CTS scheme we have tried hard to balance the reality of a significant cut in Central Government funding to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community as far as practicable. The proposed options acknowledge that recipients of CTS need to contribute more to meet the funding shortfall but also looks to protect people with protected characteristics as much as possible.

In mitigating any disproportionate effect through implementing any of the proposed options to change our CTS scheme, officers could apply a reduction in Council Tax liability through exceptional hardship as appropriate and in accordance with our discretionary policy.

**6 Recommendation based on findings. These need to be outlined in the attached action plan.**

Adjust the policy/decision/service.

Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan					
Group Affected	Action required	Expected outcome of action	Person to undertake action	Service Plan - for monitoring	Expected Completion date
Age	Young people leaving care may who fall outside income band 1 may need additional support to help with Council Tax costs. Liaison is to be established with Somerset County Council to identify care leavers <b>aged</b> up to 25 to ensure they receive extra support.	Flagging affected individuals as “vulnerable” with Revenue IT systems to ensure collection of debt is appropriately managed	Case Manager / Specialist	Customer	On-going
Disability	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Pregnancy and Maternity	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Race	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Gender Re-assignment	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Religion and Belief	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Sex	There are a greater number of female CTS recipients within our caseload (either single, lone parents or part of a couple) than male recipients. Consequently, more females will be	Provide short-term help for instances of hardship.	Case Manager / Specialist	Customer	On-going



	impacted by changes made to our scheme However, gender is not a direct factor in any part of the assessment of CTS as it is not considered to be a characteristic that requires a higher applicable amount when assessing support.					
Sexual Orientation	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.		No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Rurality	No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.		No issues identified that would result in a disproportionate effect through proposed changes.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
Author's Signature:		Report Title	Review of CTS scheme for 2019/20	Date		EIA Version
Contact Details:	Tel:		Email:			



# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Full Council – 7 December 2021

### Review of Voluntary and Community Sector Grants

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Cllr Booth

Report Author: Scott Weetch, Community Resilience Manager

#### 1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

To report on the results of the Member's Working Group regarding the Annual Review for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants and make future spending proposal.

#### 2. Recommendations

2.1 To agree schedule of grants set out within the table 'Proposed Voluntary and Community Sector Grants 2022/23' in section 6.2 below

#### 3. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

3.1 There is a risk of misuse of awarded funds by a third-party organisation or intended initiatives proposed not being successful or hitting issues during delivery. This is mitigated by existing monitoring arrangements.

#### 4. Background and Full details of the Report

4.1 A cross-party Members Working Group was established following a recommendation approved at Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021. The remit of the group was to work with officers to ensure that clear funding criteria are in place for future work with the Voluntary and Community Sector beyond March 2022. This report and the findings of the Working Group fulfil the obligation created at Full Council.

4.2 The Members' Working Group met from late July until mid-September 2021. Details of the Terms of Reference and the Working Group Scoping Document are in the Appendices to this report.

4.3 The members of the Working Group were Cllr Booth (chair); Cllr Lisgo; Cllr Stock-Williams; Cllr Sue Lees; Cllr Wakefield; Cllr Johnson; Cllr Whetlor; and Cllr Blaker

4.4 The agreed aims of the group are set out in the Scoping Document which is appended but reproduced here:

- Seek to review current funding arrangements (i.e. understand what is currently funded and why)
- Set out objectives in new funding arrangements (i.e. set parameters for how the budget of £213,542 is to be used e.g. money and debt advice; geographic split

- Consider parity across geographic areas, not just monetarily but for example equal provision.

- 4.5 The Working Group was taken through the existing funding and recipient organisations. These are set out under the second table at 6.2 titled 'Voluntary and Community Sector Grants awarded 2021/22'.
- 4.6 The Group felt it would be beneficial to further understand the work of the recipient organisations and a number were invited to present to the Group to outline their work and the resultant benefits to the Council and wider community.
- 4.7 In addition, the Grants Case Manager provided information and overview of the organisations in receipt of funds, purpose of the funding, which of the Corporate Priorities were met, the award amount and the geographic area covered.
- 4.8 Existing grant agreements were outlined to Members including agreed end dates.
- 4.9 The Working Group further sought to understand the effects of short-term provision on funded groups and the need for longevity on funding where possible. In particular, it was felt the move to a Unitary authority could have a detrimental effect on funding if agreements were not in place to secure the future.
- 4.10 The Group concluded that although radical change was possible, in general, those in receipt of funding and the agreed outcomes were in line with both budget and community need, in particular around debt and benefit advice (Citizen's Advice Bureaux), support for ensuring the continued use of volunteers (the work of Spark) and wider community support.
- 4.11 Changes to the current levels of funding for many of the organisations that rely upon this support could have long lasting detrimental effects for the groups and the communities that they support.
- 4.12 Therefore the following options were considered:
- 1: Discontinue small grants scheme:** As there is already a small grants scheme available via Somerset West Lottery, the VCS small grants scheme could be discontinued saving £20,000.000.
- 2: Return Somerset West Lottery community fund to in-house management:** the Somerset West Lottery community fund could be brought back to be managed in-house by the Grants Case Manager saving £2,000.00 (at 2021/22 figures).
- 3: Return Partnership grants fund to in-house management:** This arrangement along with all the above were a three-year pilot from 2017 and are already out of contract so could be brought back in house to be managed by the Grants Case Manager saving £1,560.00.

For both options 2 and 3, the Grants Case Manager has expressed that there is a duplication of work in sending the work to Somerset Community Foundation and the same verification is being carried out on both sides of the coin. Often, it is the Council's prompt that is ensuring adequate action is taken and therefore this work will be more efficient if returned to the Council.

In summary the Council could opt to save either a total of **£20,000** by discontinuing the small grants scheme, save a total of **£22,000** by also managing the SWL community fund or save a total of **£23,560.00** by opting for all 1, 2 & 3 options in this summary.

4.13 In addition, it was noted that £2,700 of the funding given to the Community Council for Somerset was to cover work relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy. It was understood that this work was now returning to an officer of the Council and therefore, this amount could produce a saving.

4.14 The Working Group agreed and recommended that

- all three options outlined at 4.11 be agreed – total £23,560
- additional work paid to Community Council for CIL be ceased – total £2,700
- following governance checks with grant recipients, any irregularities be further investigated, and an opportunity given to regularise the position. If, following this, concerns remained, then funds would no longer be allocated to any non-compliant scheme and consideration given to allocation elsewhere.

4.15 The net effect of the agreed changes was to increase the budget from £213,542 to £217,102. This is because the £20,000 small grants fund and £2,700 to Community Council for Somerset were already allocated within the £213,542. The additional £3,560 was raised from returning some administrative function carried out by Somerset Community Foundation in house as described.

4.16 Funds that now needed to be reallocated amounted to £26,260.

Recommended action	Rationale	Net effect on budget
Removal of £20,000 small grants scheme	There is provision within the Somerset West Lottery scheme for players to allocate their ticket price to local community schemes. In 20/21, this totalled in excess of £20,000.	£20,000 to be reallocated
Removal of £2,700 from grant to Community Council for Somerset	This funding was to cover Community Infrastructure Levy work. This will be brought back in house	£2,700 to be reallocated
Return Somerset West Lottery community fund to in-house management	Work carried out by Somerset Community Foundation but often duplicated and can be managed within existing resources.	£2,000 to be reallocated
Return Partnership grants fund to in-house management	As above	£1,560 to be reallocated
<b>Total</b>		<b>£26,260</b>

4.17 Proposals for reallocation were considered by the group and agreed that:

- An additional £4,000 be allocated to Homestart to take their total to £5,000
- An additional £4,000 be allocated to CLOWMS to take their total to £5,000

- The remaining £18,260 be allocated equally to Citizens Advice Bureau Taunton and West Somerset

Recommended action	Rationale	Net effect on budget
Additional £4,000 to Homestart West Somerset	Honours previous commitment that had been unable to be met in previous spending rounds	£4,000 allocated
Additional £4,000 to CLOWNS	As above	£4,000 allocated
Additional £9,130 to Citizens Advice Taunton	Support ongoing work for those with most complex needs.  Request from CAB for additional funds in line with last year's additional agreed amount (£22,500 each Bureau) was supported by Members if it could be agreed within budget. See 4.18 below.	£9,130 allocated
Additional £9,130 to Citizens Advice West Somerset	As above	£9,130 allocated
<b>Total</b>		<b>£26,260</b>

4.18 Members of the Working Group felt strongly that if any funds were freed as a result of continued due diligence work or if underspends were identified that could be allocated in this area, then they had a strong preference for allocating them to the two Advice Bureaus in the first instance.

## 5. Links to Corporate Strategy

5.1 Homes and Communities - Engage with the voluntary sector in their mission to help support our communities.

## 6. Finance / Resource Implications

6.1 Existing funding arrangements and agreements are in place until March 2023 unless varied by either party.

6.2 The table below describes the outcome of the Members' Working Group discussions and agreement as outlined in section 4. The budget will be subject to ongoing checks to ensure compliance within agreed parameters.

### Proposed Voluntary and Community Sector Grants 2022/23

Project	Amount
Citizen's Advice Taunton	£84,562
West Somerset Advice Bureau	£39,730
Wiveliscombe Area Partnership	£28,710
Spark	£23,500

Village Agents	£20,000
CLOWNS	£5,000
Homestart	£5,000
Community Council for Somerset	£2,700
Compass Disability Services	£2,700
North Taunton Partnership	£2,000
Taunton East Development Trust	£2,000
Fuse	£1,200
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£217,102</b>

6.3 The Table below describes the funding agreed by Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 for the 2021/22 financial year.

### Voluntary and Community Sector Grants awarded 2021/22

Project	General Fund
Citizen's Advice Taunton	£75,432
CLOWNS (WS)	£1,000
Community Council for Somerset	£5,400
Compass Disability Services	£2,700
Spark (TD)	£22,500
Spark (WS)	£1,000
Fuse	£1,200
Homestart (WS)	£1,000
North Taunton Partnership	£2,000
Taunton East Development Trust	£2,000
West Somerset Advice Bureau	£30,600
Wiveliscombe Area Partnership	£28,710
Village Agents	£20,000
VCS Small Grants Fund (SCF)	£20,000
Citizen's Advice Taunton and West Somerset (one off funding, 50/50 split)	£45,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£258,542</b>

6.4 The Table below describes the administration charges paid to Somerset Community Foundation in 2021/22 financial year. It is proposed to return the first two lines of administration in house to save £3,560 and reallocate to organisations as described in section 4 and table at 6.2.

### Administration and Monitoring Costs 2021/22

Project	Total Awarded
SCF administration of SLAs	£1,560
SCF administration of small grants	£2,000
Somerset West lottery admin fees*	£2,400
Licensing fees Gambling Commission	£350
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£6,310</b>

\*Does not impact on Council budgets as taken from Lottery ticket sales

## 6.5 Section 151 Officer Comments

The outcome of this work delivers on the scope of the working group, which was not targeted with delivering financial savings. The group and officers have clearly given good consideration to value for money in delivering the grants scheme and made good recommendations in terms of options for cost efficiency.

The Executive has been reminded that whilst the recommendations of the Working Group is to consider options for reinvesting identified savings within the VCS grants scheme it is important that Members consider the Council's Financial Strategy and significant underlying budget gap as identified within the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 and beyond. The early draft budget estimates (see Financial Strategy report to Executive 21 July 2021) rely on planned use of one-off funds to balance the budget in 2022/23 (including £1m from General Reserves and £2.7m from Earmarked Reserves), which is not financially sustainable. There is also a risk the previously reported budget gap will grow for example with fees and charges income remaining below budget and therefore increasing financial pressures in 2022/23 and later years. The Executive may want to consider the opportunity through the budget process to use identified savings in this report as a sustainable contribution towards the significant budget gap next year.

### 7. Legal Implications (if any)

- 7.1 There are no legal implications if current funding is maintained. If funding levels are changed or removed, there are notice periods to be served on existing agreements. Notice will be served on those organisations who have a variation to their funding.
- 7.2 Existing funding agreements with individual parties are monitored and reported on a regular basis to ensure agreed standards are met.

### 8. Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)

- 8.1 No anticipated impacts

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

- 9.1 None

### 10. Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)

- 10.1 A full EIA is not required because the recommendation is to maintain existing levels of service provision.
- 10.2 The support provided to the VCS by this funding helps to promote equality and diversity and increases social cohesion through the maintenance of social capital – i.e. it helps the community to grow together by connecting and improving existing links.

### 11. Social Value Implications (if any)

- 11.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act came into force on 31 January 2013. It requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits.



11.2 Clearly, the continued funding of the VCS Grants scheme will ensure that greater social value is gained through the nature, breadth and scope of the work that they are undertaking and the communities and individuals that they support.

**12. Partnership Implications (if any)**

12.1 None

**13. Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)**

13.1 The VCS Grants scheme has far reaching consequences for health and wellbeing. This includes individual and families' ability to sustain tenancies; support for mental health; debt and benefit advice; employment and careers advice. The inability of an individual or family to secure and maintain work or a home will have impacts on their immediate health and wellbeing as well as the potential for a knock on into other areas of care and support such as GP surgeries, housing and homelessness if not addressed.

**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 If the Council does not agree with the recommendations outlined, there will need to be a period of consultation and engagement with the beneficiaries of grants in line with contractual agreements, which states that a minimum of 3 months' notice of a termination of contract shall be given.

**17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)**

17.1 Community Scrutiny met on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The meeting were widely in agreement with the work and conclusions of the Members' Working Group. They particularly wished to highlight their concern for the future funding arrangements of these organisations as the authority move towards unitary status.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – Yes**
- **Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

**Reporting Frequency: Ad-hoc**

**Contact Officers**

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## SWT Member Working Group Protocol Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review

The following is adapted from the SWT Member Working group Protocol available from the Governance team [governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

It is intended to be used to guide the work of the Members' group formed as a result of the Full Council decision on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 to review the scope of voluntary and community sector grants. The full scope of the review is included in the Scoping Document circulated with this Protocol.

### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 There is no legal definition of a Member Working Group. SWT defines a Working Group as consisting 'of a small group of members (but with officers in attendance at meetings to provide support and advice) with the remit to consider policies and specific matters. They have a particular role in relation to projects which need to be completed within a specified time period'.

1.2 A Working Group conducts its business on a less formal basis than that of a committee. It does not have any decision-making powers and can only make recommendations to:

- The body from which it was formed (parent body);
- Such other body as the parent body decides; or
- An officer.

1.3 The term "Working Groups" refers to all informal bodies appointed by the Council, Executive, Scrutiny Committee and Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.

1.4 The purpose of this Protocol is to give guidance in relation to the operation of Working Groups.

### 2.0 Convening of, and appointment to Working Groups

2.1 The Council, Executive, Scrutiny Committee, Audit, Governance and Standards Committee and the Chief Executive may establish a Working Group or amend the Terms of Reference of existing Working Groups.

2.2 In establishing Working Groups, the appointing body or person will determine the precise Terms of Reference of the Working Group (having regard to the Terms of Reference of any other Working Groups) and (if appropriate) duration of the Working Group.

2.3 Where a report is taken through the democratic process to set up a Member Working Group, the Terms of Reference shall be drafted as part of the Committee Report. Where the resolution to set up a Member Working Group arises from a motion to Full Council, the Terms of Reference shall be drafted

by the relevant officer(s) and discussed and approved at the first meeting of the Working Group.

2.4 In exercising the powers under paragraph 2.1 above the appointing body or individual shall seek to ensure that member and officer time and the financial resources of the Council are used in such way as he/she/it considers to be in the best interest of the Council and local people.

#### 2.5 Council Working Group

2.5.1 Where Council resolves to set up a Working Group, this will consist of the eight Members and be politically balanced.

2.5.2 Group Leaders will provide details of the Councillors to be on the Working Group.

2.5.3 The first item of business of the Working Group will be to nominate a Chair for the duration of the Working Group

2.5.4 The Working Group is not a decision-making body and recommendations will be made back to Council for consideration.

#### 3.0 Agendas, Reports and Minutes

3.1 The agendas for Working Groups will be circulated 3 days before the meeting is scheduled to take place, along with any accompanying papers. The Governance Team will assist in the preparation and despatch of agendas and accompanying papers – and this will be available for Members on the Working Group through the private section of mod.gov.

3.2 Support for working parties will be provided by the appropriate professional officer(s) and the Governance Team.

3.3 Where possible, draft minutes of the meetings will be circulated within five working days of the meeting. They will be issued to the Chair for review before being circulated to the Working Group Members.

#### 4.0 Working Group Meetings

##### 4.1 Order of business for the first meeting of the Working Group

4.1.1 At the first meeting of the Working Group, the Order of Business shall be as follows:

- a) To elect the Chair of the Working Group (if appropriate)
- b) To appoint the Vice-Chair of the Working Group
- c) To receive any apologies for absence
- d) To review the Terms of Reference for the Working Group
- e) To complete the Working Group scoping document (Annex 1)
- f) To consider any other business set out in the agenda
- g) To determine the frequency of meetings (taking into account the workload of officers and Committees – which take precedence)
- h) To determine the date of next meeting

##### 4.2 Order of business for meetings of the Working Group

4.2.1 At the meetings of the Working Group, the Order of Business shall be as follows:

- a) To receive any apologies for absence
- b) To approve the minutes of the last meeting;
- c) To receive an update on any action points arising from previous meetings
- d) To consider any other business set out in the agenda
- e) To determine the date of next meeting

## 5.0 Conclusion of the Working Groups

5.1 Once the work of the Working Group is drawing to a close, the appropriate officer(s) will draft the Working Group report. This will be taken through the officer process of consultation with, and comments from the relevant officer(s) where appropriate.

5.2 The draft report will first be discussed with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Working Group before being added to the agenda of the next available Working Group meeting.

5.3 The draft report and any recommendations, and the decision to agree to move the report along the appropriate democratic pathway, shall be decided by a simple majority of those Members present at the meeting.

5.4 Once the Working Group have agreed the draft report, it will then continue along the appropriate democratic pathway:

- Council Working Group – Report to Full Council

## 6.0 Quorum

6.1 For Council and Executive Working Groups with eight Councillors, the quorum will be a minimum of five Members. In the event of the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair, a temporary Chair will be selected for the duration of the meeting only.

## 7.0 Location of Meetings

7.1 Meetings of all SWT Working Groups shall take place virtually.

## 8.0 Access to meetings by the Press and Public

8.1 As Working Groups are not public meetings the Press and the Public will not be able to attend.



SWT Member Working Group  
Scoping Document  
Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review

July to September 2021

**NAME OF WORKING GROUP:** Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review

**CHAIR:** Councillor Booth

**MEMBERS:**

The members of the Working Group were Cllr Booth (chair); Cllr Lisgo; Cllr Stock-Williams; Cllr Sue Lees; Cllr Wakefield; Cllr Johnson; Cllr Whetlor; and Cllr Blaker

**LEAD OFFICERS:**

Scott Weetch, Community Resilience Manager

Christine Gale, Case Manager, Grants

Tracey Meadows, Case Manager, Governance & Democracy

**SUBJECT TO BE REVIEWED:** Voluntary and Community Sector Grants

**REASON(S) FOR THE REVIEW:** Recommended and agreed by Full Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021. Essential to keep grants under review, particularly understanding the effect of COVID on the Voluntary and Community Sector.

**IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE CORPORATE AIMS:**

Homes and Communities - Engage with the voluntary sector in their mission to help support our communities.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE:** Circulated with this document.

This Working Group will:

- Seek to review current funding arrangements (i.e. understand what is currently funded and why)

- Set out objectives in new funding arrangements (i.e. set parameters for how the budget of £215k is to be used e.g. money and debt advice; geographic split
- Consider parity between TD & WS, not just monetarily but for example equal provision.

SCOPE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF REVIEW: (Remember to consider what is NOT to be included in the review)

□ Purpose:

To ensure the most effective spend of budget and ensure that it aligns with Council priorities and objectives;

To ensure that it enables and prioritises COVID recovery work;

To agree EITHER a method for receiving and scoring of grants and to ensure that each application is considered on its own merits; OR a commissioning process and criteria; N.B. There is already a scoring process for partner grants which has been provided to SCF by SWTC and is used for this purpose.

To consider the merits of a geographic split of funding to ensure some equity in grant distribution or prioritisation of universal access services.

METHOD(S) OF REVIEW (HOW WILL THE REVIEW BE CONDUCTED?) :

A recap of how grant funding currently works, who benefits, the value of grants, etc to be undertaken as part of first meeting.

To review lessons learned from other grant schemes SWT run e.g. community chest

To discuss and agree principles of spend (e.g. financial help and advice services, mental health services, local public transport schemes)

To discuss and agree maximum and minimum levels of grants (granularity) and ability to resource those adequately.

To hear directly from beneficiaries of previous grants.

To discuss and revise any principles arising from presentation of previous beneficiaries.

Discuss whether to continue out-sourcing certain grant funds.

Draft report and conclusions

Final report and conclusions

BENEFITS TO THE COUNCIL AND LOCAL COMMUNITY:

Clarity over funding levels and principles applied.



Wider understanding of grant process, criteria and assessment

Partnership agreements almost at end of term; good opportunity to review what services belong in this funding stream.

#### KEY ISSUES AND RISKS:

Limited timescale for discussion.

Limited funding pot to meet aspirations of councillors and organisations.

COVID may be masking other issues/causing further problems as yet unidentified.

#### IMPLICATIONS:

(Financial and Legal implications particularly will need to be considered and signed off by the relevant officer)

Funding to be confirmed is in the region of £215,000 p.a.

Legal agreements are sent out as part of grants agreement process.

#### DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE:

E.g. Is there any National or local guidance or research into this subject? Is there any best practice guidance available?)

There is no national best practice in this area but there is a great deal of information available from other councils. Nationally, the government support offer for the VCSE sector is set out here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-support-for-voluntary-community-and-social-enterprise-vcse-organisations-to-respond-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

#### RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS OF REVIEW:

E.g. implications on officer resource or impact on the Council's budget.

Officer time plus the continued budget of £215k

#### EXTERNAL ADVISORS:

Does the Working Group wish to invite any involvement from external advisors?

It would be prudent to invite some current beneficiaries to a later meeting to understand what the funding allows them to do and any consequences arising from COVID and a lack of funding. E.g. Spark, CAB, Wiveliscombe Area Partnership

TIMESCALES: Completed by September 10<sup>th</sup> to meet with Committee cycles.

#### ESTIMATED REVISED

(include reasons) Meetings continued until 20<sup>th</sup> September to allow full discussion and presentations from appropriate organisations to inform decision-making.

#### ACTUAL

First meeting of Working Group – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Milestone 1: Meeting agrees Terms of Reference and Scoping Document

Milestone 2: Meeting agrees outline parameters for funding scope.

Milestone 3: Meeting hears from current beneficiaries and ratifies parameters.

Draft Report: End August

Report: Completed by September 24<sup>th</sup> 2021

#### PROJECT OUTCOMES

The Working Group received documentation and evidence of organisations supported, objectives and outcomes as well as funding agreements.

The Working Group heard representations from a cross section of organisations who outlined their work and were able to answer Members' queries.

The following options were considered:

**1: Discontinue small grants scheme:** As there is already a small grants scheme available via Somerset West Lottery, the VCS small grants scheme could be discontinued saving £20,000.000.

**2: Return Somerset West Lottery community fund to in-house management:** the Somerset West Lottery community fund could be brought back to be managed in-house by the Grants Case Manager saving £2,000.00 (at 2021/22 figures).

**3: Return Partnership grants fund to in-house management:** This arrangement along with all the above were a three-year pilot from 2017 and are already out of contract so could be brought back in house to be managed by the Grants Case Manager saving £1,560.00.

For both options 2 and 3, the Grants Case Manager has expressed that there is a duplication of work in sending the work to Somerset Community Foundation and the same verification is being carried out on both sides of the coin. Often, it is the Council's prompt that is ensuring adequate action is taken and therefore this work will be more efficient if returned to the Council.

In summary the Council could opt to save either a total of **£20,000** by discontinuing the small grants scheme, save a total of **£22,000** by also managing the SWL community fund or save a total of **£23,560.00** by opting for all 1, 2 & 3 options in this summary.

In addition, it was noted that £2,700 of the funding given to the Community Council for Somerset was to cover work relating to the Community Infrastructure Levy. It was understood that this work was now returning to an officer of the Council and therefore, this amount could produce a saving.

Working Group agreed and recommended that

- all three options outlined above be agreed – total £23,560
- additional work paid to Community Council for CIL be ceased – total £2,700
- following governance checks with grant recipients, any irregularities be further investigated, and an opportunity given to regularise the position. If, following this, concerns remained, then funds would no longer be allocated to any non-compliant scheme and consideration given to allocation elsewhere.

The net effect of the agreed changes was to increase the budget from £213,542 to £217,102. This is because the £20,000 small grants fund and £2,700 to Community Council for Somerset were already allocated within the £213,542. The additional £3,560 was raised from returning some administrative function carried out by Somerset Community Foundation in house as described.

Funds that now needed to be reallocated amounted to £26,260.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

The Group concluded that although radical change was possible, in general, those in receipt of funding and the agreed outcomes were in line with both budget and community need, in particular around debt and benefit advice (Citizen's Advice

Bureaux), support for ensuring the continued use of volunteers (the work of Spark) and wider community support.

Changes to the current levels of funding for many of the organisations that rely upon this support could have long lasting detrimental effects for the groups and the communities that they support.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Recommended action	Rationale	Net effect on budget
Removal of £20,000 small grants scheme	There is provision within the Somerset West Lottery scheme for players to allocate their ticket price to local community schemes. In 20/21, this totalled in excess of £20,000.	£20,000 to be reallocated
Removal of £2,700 from grant to Community Council for Somerset	This funding was to cover Community Infrastructure Levy work. This will be brought back in house	£2,700 to be reallocated
Return Somerset West Lottery community fund to in-house management	Work carried out by Somerset Community Foundation but often duplicated and can be managed within existing resources.	£2,000 to be reallocated
Return Partnership grants fund to in-house management	As above	£1,560 to be reallocated
<b>Total</b>		<b>£26,260</b>

Proposals for reallocation were considered by the group and agreed that:

- An additional £4,000 be allocated to Homestart to take their total to £5,000
- An additional £4,000 be allocated to CLOWNS to take their total to £5,000

- The remaining £18,260 be allocated equally to Citizens Advice Bureau Taunton and West Somerset

Recommended action	Rationale	Net effect on budget
Additional £4,000 to Homestart West Somerset	Honours previous commitment that had been unable to be met in previous spending rounds	£4,000 allocated
Additional £4,000 to CLOWNS	As above	£4,000 allocated
Additional £9,130 to Citizens Advice Taunton	Support ongoing work for those with most complex needs.  Request from CAB for additional funds in line with last year's additional agreed amount (£22,500 each Bureau) was supported by Members if it could be agreed within budget. See 4.18 below.	£9,130 allocated
Additional £9,130 to Citizens Advice West Somerset	As above	£9,130 allocated
Total		£26,260

Members of the Working Group felt strongly that if any funds were freed as a result of continued due diligence work or if underspends were identified that could be allocated in this area, then they had a strong preference for allocating them to the two Advice Bureaus in the first instance.

EXECUTIVE CONSIDERED: To be discussed at Executive on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021  
as part of Report on VCS Grants

OUTCOME:

FOLLOW UP:

REVIEW OF PROCESS/COMMENTS:

SIGNED OFF BY CHAIR:

DATE:

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Full Council – 7 December 2021

### Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide – Review of Public Consultation and Adoption as Supplementary Planning Document

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Mike Rigby

Report Author: Fiona Webb - Placemaking Specialist

#### Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide for formal adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (“SPD”). The SPD has been produced to provide additional guidance to support policies DM4 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, D7 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, and NH13 of the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032 on how these and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan should be responded to in relation to securing high quality design.
- 1.2 The draft Design Guide was originally subject to consultation from 3 February to 30 March 2020. Due to the covid pandemic, a number of consultations were significantly delayed including Somerset County Council (SCC). Following representations from SCC Highways, detailed discussions took place between Somerset West and Taunton and SCC as the Highway Authority. As a result, a second formal consultation was carried out for the expanded section on Streets, Parking and Placemaking from 11 December to 5 February 2021. Following SWT’s approval of its Climate Positive Planning guidance, it was considered the Council were not going far enough in its response on climate change. As a result, the Design Guide was further updated to provide a greater focus on the climate emergency and to provide *aspirational* guidance on how development proposals *could* go beyond policy requirements. This also coincided with the release by government of the National Design Guide 2021 and the National Model Design Code which also led to changes to be incorporated. For this reason, and in order to ensure that the Design Guide could be adopted as SPD, it was considered appropriate to carry out a third consultation which took place between 5 July and 16 August 2021.
- 1.3. Following the comments received on the draft design guide amendments are now proposed to the draft Design Guide SPD and it is now ready for adoption as an SPD and for endorsement as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the District.

#### Recommendations

- 2.1. Recommendations are that Full Council resolve to:

- 1) Approve the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document and for endorsement as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within the District.
- 2) Note the outcomes of the public consultations on the draft Somerset West and Taunton Design Guide, undertaken 3 February to 30 March 2020, 11 December to 5 February 2021 and 5 July to Monday 16 August 2021 as set out in the consultation statement in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 3) Agree that the Director of Development and Place, in consultation with the Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder be authorised to approve and make minor amendments, prior to the final publication of the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide.
- 4) Agree the creation and launch of a Districtwide 'Quality of Place' award scheme. This would be linked to the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, the Taunton Garden Town Vision, and the Taunton Garden Town Design Charter and Checklist.

## Risk Assessment

- 3.1 The SPD provides clear policy guidance for the local planning authority and developers which will support the delivery of sustainable development. The SPD will assist on the deliverability of development proposals, since it clearly sets out for developers' further guidance on the requirements of the Local Planning Authority. Similarly, the SPD clearly sets out Local Planning Authority's requirements for good design which will assist in officers making a balanced judgement against other policy and Council objectives, for example, affordable housing, infrastructure and achieving more energy efficient, climate resilient housing.
- 3.2 The Districtwide Design Guide SPD must be read in conjunction with the development plan as a whole. The planning system must balance multiple factors including the delivery of housing to meet the national housing crisis and the provision of infrastructure such as roads, schools and open space to meet the demands of new housing, together with the need to meet policy requirements and ensure that development remains viable. In this context it can be difficult to ensure that design issues are prioritised. However, high quality, sustainable design should not be seen as an obstacle to the achievement of these other aims, rather an improvement on the way that they are achieved. The Districtwide Design Guide addresses this by providing additional guidance to support the implementation of existing adopted design policies. It does not conflict with existing adopted policy or place new burdens on the viability of development as the requirement for high quality design is already enshrined in adopted policy. Higher quality design does not always have to mean higher development costs, though clearly sometimes it will lead to this. Where viability is a properly justified concern, the Council will need to consider the various policy requirements of the development plan, taken as a whole, to determine whether and how development can be brought forward in a viable way and still contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. A nuanced and case-specific consideration will be required to understand what the correct balance of requirements should be to result in sustainable development.
- 3.3 The Corporate Risk Register contains a risk associated with failure to have an up-to-date Local Plan or to demonstrate that the district has a five-year land supply or sufficient



Housing Delivery Test score. Failure of the above points could lead to housing policies of the district's local plans being considered out of date and application of / fall back on the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This would lead to unplanned development and likely less sustainable patterns of development. Therefore, careful consideration will be required in relation to these particular risks when implementing the SPD and determining planning applications, particularly where viability has been properly demonstrated as a justified concern. The weight to be given to a viability assessment at application stage is a matter for the decision maker, having regard to all the circumstances in the case.

- 3.4 Similarly, such costs associated with infrastructure and policy requirements must also be borne by our own developments. There will be a public expectation that we 'practice as we preach' with regards to issues like design, with a particular focus on developments in Taunton due to its Garden Town Status. That being the case, the Council must be cognisant of this, whilst also recognising that the risk is probably reasonably low as our own schemes are already aiming to be exemplars, particularly regarding environmental standards and sustainability.

#### Background and Full Report

- 4.1 The purpose of the Districtwide Design Guide is to seek a step change in the quality of new development in the district in support of adopted local plan policies. It aims to ensure that the significant level of housing growth needed in the district to meet future need is designed to create healthy, inclusive, sustainable places to live for everyone promoting a common approach to the main principles which underpin the various adopted Local Plans that are used for assessing planning applications. If adopted, the Design Guide will be a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and a material consideration in determining relevant planning proposals and applications.
- 4.2 This means that the SPD will be afforded weight in the decision-making process.

#### Policy Context

- 4.3 National planning and design policy underline the need for local authorities to ensure that the quality of the design of new development is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of local areas and to incorporate the principles of placemaking, to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods. The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF), the National Design Guide 2021 and the National Model Design Code all advocate that local authorities produce design guides and design codes as a means to achieve a higher quality of development which addresses the aims above. The NPPF recommends Design Guides should be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) in order they are given as much weight as possible in the decision-making process,
- 4.4 Section 12 of the NPPF – Achieving Well Designed Places sets out the government's agenda for good design. Paragraph 126 states that 'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this'.

- 4.5 It should be noted that the NPPF was updated in July 2021. This now places the additional requirement for development to be 'beautiful' as well as high quality and sustainable. This update also emphasises the importance of guidance contained in the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. In addition, there is new guidance for the requirement of street trees in Paragraph 131 which states 'Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.'
- 4.6 The emerging Districtwide Design Guide SPD (see Appendix 2) has been produced to support policies DM4 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, D7 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, and NH13 of the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032, which aim to promote high quality design in the district. From adoption, the SPD will provide additional guidance on how these and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan should be responded to.
- 4.7 The diagram 1.0c in the draft Districtwide Design Guide illustrates the relationship between national policies involving design, related national guidance, County Council standards (particularly regarding highways) and the local design policies and guidance in both the draft Districtwide Design Guide and the suite of documents regarding Taunton Garden Town.
- 4.8 Regarding public art, existing adopted planning policies in the former Taunton Deane area set out requirements for public art in policies D13 and D7 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP), policies ED1 and ED2 of the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) and DM4 of the Core Strategy. The policies all either refer to the Public Art and Design Policy adopted by the Council in 2007, the Public Art Code adopted in 2010, or otherwise refer to public art being provided at 1% of development costs either via commissioning and integrating public art into the design of buildings and the public realm, or by a commuted sum. Additionally, in the case of Taunton, they refer to the Town Centre Design Code SPD which includes specific codes relating to public art and which identifies specific art and design sites relating to the public realm areas. The Districtwide and Public Realm Design Guides refer to this existing policy context and recommend that public art is primarily integrated into the design of buildings and the public realm and is part of what constitutes good design.

## Consultation

- 4.9 A draft Districtwide Design Guide was considered by Members at their Executive meeting on 28 January 2020 and approved for public consultation. Public consultation originally took place on the draft Design Guide between Monday 3 February to Monday 30 March 2020. Due to the covid pandemic, several consultations were significantly delayed including that with Somerset County Council (SCC).
- 4.10 Following representations from SCC Highways to the original draft Design Guide, detailed discussions took place in a series of workshop sessions between Somerset West and Taunton and SCC as the Highway Authority. The concerns from SCC Highways were based on conventional highway practice for the provision of generous engineered highway solutions, rather than current good practice for reducing speeds in residential areas (20m/hr) through tighter street design, tighter road junctions and reduced visibility splays. As a result, a second formal consultation was carried out for

the expanded section on Streets, Parking and Placemaking from 11 December to 5 February 2021.

- 4.11 As a result of SWT approving the final version of Climate Positive Planning, there were a number of responses to this consultation that considered that the Council was not going further in its response on climate change. As a result, the Design Guide was updated to provide a greater focus on the climate emergency and to provide *aspirational* guidance on how development proposals *could* go beyond policy requirements. This also coincided with the release by government of the National Design Guide 2021 and the National Model Design Code which also required an update of the draft Design Guide. For this reason, and in order to ensure that the Design Guide could be adopted as SPD, it was considered appropriate to carry out a third consultation which took place 5 July to Monday 16 August 2021.
- 4.12 During the three consultations carried out, the majority of the consultees welcomed the draft Design Guide SPD and were impressed with its attractive layout, illustrative material, and its ambition to improve the standard of design. It was particularly welcomed as some consultees considered that the standard of design in the district was generally mediocre and lacked local distinctiveness.
- 4.13 A total of 36 representations were received during the first consultation on the draft Districtwide Design Guide SPD, 7 during the second consultation and 31 during the third consultation. These consultation responses were from Councillors, members of the public, amenity bodies, parish councils, developers, and internal staff. A table showing all representations received is set out in the table in Appendix 1 of this report together with SWT's responses.
- 4.14 Consideration of representations received during the three public consultations on the Design Guide has resulted in the following proposed changes within the Design Guide, as summarised below:
- 4.15 First and Second Consultations (3 February to 30 March 2020 and 11 December to 5 February 2021)

Substantial Revisions and Additions:

- Section 4.4 – Streets, Parking and Placemaking were amended following a series of workshops resulting in the preparation of an expanded section based on more progressive approaches to street design as advocated in the original section of the Design Guide. SCC Highways were more willing to engage as their own 1991 'Red Book' standards were at that time being revised.
- Section 5.9 - Residential Alterations and Extensions was revised and expanded on both in text and illustrations to clarify the distinction between permitted development and those alterations which required planning permission.
- Section 5.10 on Shop front Design was expanded to include a response to the changing high street in terms of the conversion of retail premises to alternative uses.
- A new section under Part 5.0 Design Topics addressed the development of smaller sites. This showed how the principles of placemaking should be applied even at the scale of small developments (under 10 units).
- Section 4.3 on House Typologies was revised and expanded upon to clarify the recommendations and to improve the illustrations.

Other Changes:

- The Introduction clarified the role of illustrations within the design guide and the fact that these are indicative only, not implying a preference for a particular architectural style.
- Section 3.1 on Context and Distinctiveness was revised to show the importance of promoting a design approach which is responsive to local distinctiveness without resorting to superficial stylistic treatments. This was also in response to a number of representations, both within this consultation period and other Garden Town events, where participants encouraged the Local Authority to ensure that all developments should reflect local distinctiveness.
- Additional clarification was applied throughout the text to reinforce the aims of the design guide that it should be relevant to considerations regarding:
  - a) the incorporation of modern methods of construction,
  - b) the inclusion of renewable energy sources,
  - c) the importance of landscape for tackling climate change and encouraging biodiversity and aiding a sense of wellbeing, and
  - d) the inclusion of active travel within developments.
- Updated policy and guidance e.g. change from Building for Life 12 to Building for a Healthy Life
- Expanded section 7.2 - References section included recent documents

4.16 Of the 36 respondents to the first consultation and 7 respondents to the second consultation, 4 were from volume house builders already developing major sites in Taunton. The detailed comments from the volume house builders (which often overlap) and SWT's responses to them are show in detail in the summary of consultations in Appendix 1. These can broadly be summarised under the following headings – a) Viability; b) Level of Prescription; c) Local Distinctiveness; and d) Relationship with SCC Highways and parking.

- a) Viability – the house builders considered that the Design Guide should recognise the relationship between what is recommended and required against the financial viability of housing development. In response, the value of having Design Guides and Codes is that they provide a level playing field for developers to understand the costs which are likely to be incurred and to take this into account in their land valuations. The main thrust of the design guide is to make efficient use of sites and plots to ensure optimum utilisation of land; this is particularly so in advocating the reduction of land-take for highways. Moreover, all the planned footprints of the indicative schemes show very simple and therefore cost-efficient plan shapes. Additionally, the government commitments to early carbon neutrality and the climate emergency are creating significant challenges for the development industry and these are reflected in SWT's policies and consequently the Design Guide as SPD.
- b) Level of Prescription – the house builders felt that the Design Guide should avoid being over prescriptive in terms of design and style. The challenge for any Design Guide is to strike a balance between seen to be vague in its requirements and on the other hand to be interpreted as being over prescriptive. The approach taken by the Design Guide is in all cases to show indicative illustrations which demonstrate how objectives might be encapsulated in built form. But at the outset of the Design Guide it stresses that alternative contemporary solutions would be valid if they demonstrate that the design process advocated has been thoroughly undertaken. Furthermore, the illustrations depict relatively style neutral built form in order to explain layouts/concepts.

- c) Local Distinctiveness – the house builders recommended that the advocacy of local distinctiveness should recognise interwar suburban forms of housing as a locally distinctive feature of Taunton. The advocacy of creating locally distinctive built environments has been a constant theme of planning legislation in the post war era and is reiterated in the NPPF and the National Design Guide. It is further reinforced in numerous places in the Local Plan. The Design Guide identifies aspects of local distinctiveness relevant in the SWT area. It avoids identifying styles and forms found in any urban location in the country as by definition these are not locally distinctive. Furthermore, in the case of interwar suburban development, this tends to be road dominated and low density and militates against active travel and the efficient use of land. The challenge for both the Design Guide and the developer is to identify aspects of topography, layout, and materials which are both relevant for good placemaking and which respond to but not mimic solutions to local contexts.
- d) Relationship with SCC Highways and parking – The developers raised the issue of the relationship of the Highway Authority and those of Planning and Placemaking. As part of preparing the Design Guide it has been recognised that there is a tension between the conventional highway prescriptions based on the 1991 Highway Authority Standards and those now advocated in Manual for Streets and the publications emanating from CIHT. As this latter approach is now advocated by the National Design Guide and is recognised by SCC in their proposed draft new highway standards, these differences should be minimised. Indeed, the Design Guide Team and a working party of SCC Highway officers embarked on a series of workshops to agree a common approach and design principles based on recently developed best practice. In regard to parking the developers urged that parking spaces should be located close to front doors; this is agreed, and the advocacy of parking streets and squares should ensure that parking spaces are close to and easily observed from nearby houses. The Highway Authority also advocates contextually based parking standards related to the varied location of developments within the district and the relative accessibility to facilities by active travel and public transport. This approach is endorsed by the Design Guide and should give developers appropriate flexibility.

#### 4.17 Third consultation - 5 July to Monday 16 August 2021

##### Substantial Revisions and Additions:

- The Design Guide has been updated to take into account of the new NPPF guidance on achieving 'Beauty' in new development as well as high quality and sustainability. Section 6.5 – Quality Review has been amended to clearly set out the Local Planning Authorities criteria for schemes where Design Review will be strongly encouraged as part of the authority's consideration of a development proposal. A bespoke Quality Review Panel is currently being set up for SWT district area and it is hoped that this will assist in making judgements on whether a scheme achieves high quality, beauty, and sustainability.
- Throughout the Design Guide, references and photographs have been expanded on to encourage the use of contemporary design solutions as well as traditional. The Design Guide emphasises that the guidance should be treated as a springboard for good design rather than a straitjacket for development.
- Design guidance for flood resilience has been expanded on in relation to the need for sustainable urban drainage, this is particularly in relation to recent guidance from the Construction Industry Research and Information Association. This publication is also included in the References section.



- An amended and revised section has been included on House Types to show the range and type of house types which are necessary as components to make successful streets and places (Section 4.3).
- A new Design Topic on Public Art has been included in the guidance. This subject was considered too light touch in the previous consultation drafts. This guidance corresponds to that contained in the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town. It emphasises that public art should not just be thought of as individual pieces of art but should also be integral to building design. It also emphasises the importance of achieving beauty in the built environment.
- The design guidance for achieving the urban block in a layout has also been expanded upon to reflect the density requirements and variations shown in the National Model Design Code.

#### Other Changes:

- The context and local distinctiveness of the architectural character of Taunton has been expanded upon to better reflect the predominant vernacular house types in the settlement.
- The guidance for shopfronts has been expanded upon particularly to include more guidance for signage and advertisements.
- Guidance on Taller Buildings has been expanded upon particularly to include SWT's requirements for assessing such proposals. The indicative drawing showing a taller building has also been amended to better reflect the height of proposed building anticipated within the larger settlements in the district.
- Greater guidance has been provided for agricultural buildings with their landscape setting, particularly regarding topography and the land profile of a site.
- Greater reference has been made to security and safety within layouts and the need to consult the Police Crime Prevention Officer.
- Guidance has been expanded on for the preparation of Heritage Statements in accordance with comments from Historic England.

4.18 Of the 31 respondents to the third consultation, 8 received were from volume house builders. A number of the comments were broadly similar to those expressed in the previous consultations, particularly on issues of the level of prescription and local distinctiveness. The comments from the volume house builders and SWT's responses to them are shown in the summary of consultations in Appendix 1. These can broadly be summarised under the following headings – a) Over Prescriptive, Stifling Innovation and Document Too Lengthy; b) Local Distinctiveness; c) Requirements of SCC Highways and EV Charging; d) Zero Carbon and Future Homes Standards; and d) Design Review.

- a) Over Prescriptive, Stifling Innovation and Document Too Lengthy – The house builders consider that the draft Design Guide is too prescriptive, will stifle innovative contemporary design and that the document is too lengthy. The issue of prescription was raised in the previous consultations. - In response, it is important for a design guide to strike a balance between policy requirements and to demonstrate through examples how these can be achieved in practise. The nature of the design process means that not everything can be clearly explained unambiguously in words, therefore diagrammatic illustrations of layouts and forms are required. These diagrams are illustrative, and it is made clear in the guidance that if an applicant can demonstrate that other solutions would achieve the stated requirements, then other such solutions could be a valid approach. The draft Design Guide clearly states (section 1.7) that the guidance should not be taken as a straitjacket but should act as a springboard for good design, and it sets

out the minimum standards from which good design is expected. It is accepted that the document is comprehensive given the ever-expanding agenda from government on design and the need to address all aspects of design relating to climate and ecological emergency both at the local and national level. However, the draft Design Guide is a manual requiring applicants to consider the relevant sections of the document to their application, i.e., the character area within their site is located, the design process, and the relevant design topic(s).

- b) Local Distinctiveness – this was mentioned by a minority of the developers as being an issue and was also raised in the previous consultations. The house builder's concerns relate to interwar suburban development not being recognised within the design guide as locally distinctive, that the distinctiveness of Taunton's vernacular is not sufficiently defined and that the section on distinctiveness over emphasises traditional built forms. – In response, interwar suburban development is universal throughout the whole country due to the standardisation of house types, layouts, road standards and density. These factors have resulted in uniform 'anywhere' character which is often at odds with the townscape and landscape of existing traditional settlements within the district. Furthermore, there is a need to make settlements walkable and to raise densities in areas which are most sustainable and nearest to facilities; this means that suburban low-density development is far less applicable than two generations ago. In regard to the Taunton's vernacular not being sufficiently defined, much of Taunton built form is 19 Century development with many characteristics that are common with building forms in other towns. There is however a palette of materials and a limited number of building details which are common to Taunton. On this point the house builders do not appear to appreciate that the guidance sets out pointers for applicants to make their own character appraisal of their site and its context. Regarding traditional building forms, the guidance is not suggesting that an applicant slavishly copies historic buildings found in the district. The Design Guide advocates that traditional buildings provide a sense of place and identity, through establishing a scale, form, layout, and palette of materials which should be recognised and used as a springboard for design interpretation in new development.
- c) Relationship with SCC Highways Guidance – The house builders raise the issue of the relationship of the Highway Authority and those of Planning and Placemaking. – In response, a series of workshop meetings have been held with SCC Highways to attempt to resolve differing approaches to streetmaking. Substantial progress has been made as is reflected in section 4.4. At the time of writing this report officers were still finalising the design guide to take account of SCC Highways comments. SWT officers are working to best practise contained in the NPPF, Manual for Streets, National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.
- d) Working Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction – Several of the house builders raise the question of the degree to which the guidance on Towards Zero Carbon Construction (section 5.2) is mandatory. In addition, some house builders raise the question of the design guide's relationship to the Future Homes Standard. In response, the design topic 'Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction' sets out a design process to help move development towards delivering zero carbon buildings. Tackling carbon emissions and climate impact via such a design process is integral to good design and aligns with existing planning policies. The topic clearly differentiates between what is policy requirement and what is aspirational/illustrative as the document does throughout. Additional text is proposed to clarify the relationship with the Government's proposed interim update to Building Regulations Part L (due December 2021) and the Future Homes Standard (due 2025). However, it remains valid and reasonable to illustrate how new development could and should be looking to push ambition in this

regard in advance of and beyond these standards in order to deliver on the adopted target of working towards carbon neutrality by 2030. Regarding the Future Homes Standard, this was a government consultation and no additional regulations have currently been issued. However, the aspirations set out in Working Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction (section 5.2) appear to be fully in line with the proposals. In response to the house builder's concerns at how to mitigate the effects of overheating in residential buildings, an additional illustrative diagram has been provided in the design guide.

- e) Design Review – Several of the house builders expressed concern at the status and need for Design Review (to be renamed Quality Review) – In response, Design Review Panels are a well-established feature of the planning process, and their use is advocated in the NPPF and Policy D7 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. They offer independent critical friend advice to both applicants and the local planning authority on the quality of a scheme and are best employed at the earliest stages of any proposals. The criteria for triggering the need for design review relates to the significance of a proposal as well as its size. The number of likely applications received per year, triggering the need for design review, will be small in comparison to the total number of applications received.

#### Adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

- 4.19 In order to be legally compliant, an SPD must be prepared, consulted upon, and adopted by resolution of Full Council in line with certain regulations as set out in the Town and County Planning (Local Plans) (England) Regulations 2012. A draft Adoption Statement (Appendix 4) and Consultation Statement (Appendix 3). Together, these documents set out how the SPD is legally compliant and comply with key regulations.

#### Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/ Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

- 4.20 Under the European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations), an SEA is required for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment. In addition to this, under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 an HRA is required when it is deemed that the implementation of the plan is likely to cause significant negative effects upon protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites).
- 4.21 An SEA/HRA Screening Assessment has been undertaken to ascertain whether or not significant effects are considered likely to arise as a result of the District-wide Design Guide SPD, requiring full SEA/HRA. A draft Screening Assessment was consulted on with the statutory consultees, and the final report (see Appendix 5) takes account of comments received. The conclusion of the assessment is that the SPD does not require full SEA or HRA to be conducted.

#### 5. Links to Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 Theme 1 – objectives towards the District **Carbon neutral by 2030**; clear vision and delivery plan for the Taunton Garden Town; 'Provide and maintain green open spaces and parks, enhanced public spaces, as well as additional opportunities to safely walk or cycle in order to encourage active and healthy lifestyles'. Theme 3 – objectives to 'Increase the number of affordable and social homes in our urban towns, rural and



coastal communities; Facilitate the development of the residential blocks at Firepool, Taunton, in order to deliver new homes and public open spaces'; and 'Seek additional funding for new strategic infrastructure and regeneration projects from developers, investors, Government and other funders, which support or enable existing or new communities within our district

## 6. Finance / Resource Implications

6.1 The cost of preparing the Districtwide Design Guide has been funded from the Local Plan budget. The cost of public consultation on the guide has also been funded by Local Plan budget.

## 7. Legal Implications

7.1 The preparation of the draft Districtwide Design Guide and the period of public consultation is in compliance with relevant legislation and guidance regarding supplementary planning documents including the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 and the government's Planning Practice Guidance. A draft Adoption Statement (Appendix 4) and Consultation Statement (Appendix 3). Together, these documents set out how the SPD is legally compliant and comply with key regulations. If approved the SPD will be adopted by resolution by Full Council following which the Adoption Statement (Appendix 4) will be published.

The final draft Districtwide Design Guide has been prepared in line with the relevant planning regulations. The draft District-wide Design Guide SPD (see Appendix 2) is clearly identified as having been produced pursuant to policies DM4 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, D7 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, and NH13 of the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032, which aim to promote high quality design in the district.

The final draft Districtwide Design Guide SPD has been subject to consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Following consultation and adoption, the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of all relevant planning applications. However, the SPD will be without any prejudice to any decisions that the Council may take as Local Planning Authority in respect of individual site/s and any future planning applications.

## 8. Climate and Sustainability Implications

8.1 Completion, adoption and implementation of the Districtwide Design Guide and Public Realm Design Guide are identified in the Council's Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan as key actions. The Design Guide recognises that sustainable, energy efficient and climate resilient design is integral to what constitutes good design. It is considered that the Design Guide will have positive implications in terms of sustainability through guidance including the integration of placemaking and sustainability principles. This includes the following:

- Green Streets – requires streets to be designed to be greener which could include more street trees, swales, and planting/hedgerows for garden boundaries.
- Water – requires that priority is given to sustainable drainage processes and that a drainage strategy should help to shape the design of the open space, landscape and streets.

- Biodiversity – identifies how development can provide a net gain in biodiversity by including design features at the scales of neighbourhood, street and individual house.
- Air Quality – the issue of air quality is addressed throughout the document through requiring that developments: - Prioritise active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport. - Incorporate street trees, planting, open spaces and landscape. - Include EV charging points for vehicles.
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions - The draft guide should help to reduce greenhouse gas emission impacts through prioritising active travel and public transport over the car, making developments greener with more trees and landscape, requiring the provision of electric vehicle charging points and encouraging better energy efficiency in homes.

## 9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 9.1 A priority of the Districtwide Design Guide is to create safe communities. They have been prepared in accordance with ‘Secure By Design’ principles and includes guidance on making inclusive places for people with safe streets and spaces and secure properties. The draft design guide and masterplan frameworks adhere to the principles relevant to crime prevention – natural surveillance (spaces around buildings open to public view from adjoining properties, front entrances clearly visible from the street, well used illuminated routes); access and movement (direct routes, choice of routes, clear routes, permeability); activity (levels of activity provide natural surveillance together with a mix of uses); sense of ownership (clear definition of public/private space, activity in public spaces, sociable places, perception of space); defensible space (buffer zones, spill out spaces, restricting access to private areas); physical protection (boundaries sensitive to context, building materials and security features); management and maintenance (allocated resources, design quality and detail, community management).

## 10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is appended to the report at Appendix 6. Additionally extensive public consultation has taken place in accordance with the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement. No representations were received from the community or from groups representing people with Protected Characteristics suggesting or requesting changes be made to the design guide.

## 11. Social Value Implications

- 11.1 The Districtwide Design Guide is intended to have a positive influence on the quality of life, resulting in economic, social value and environmental benefits for the community.

## 12. Partnership Implications

- 12.1 As part of the Duty to Cooperate requirement (Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012), we will be expected to work with other public bodies, particularly neighbouring planning authorities and the County Council on any cross boundary issues. Close working has particularly taken place with SCC Highways through a number of workshop meetings.

13. Health and Wellbeing Implications
  - 13.1 The Districtwide Design Guide is intended to have a positive influence on the quality of life, resulting in economic, social value and environmental benefits for the community.
14. Asset Management Implications
  - 14.1 None at this stage, however the Council will consider opportunities for use of its assets to contribute to the delivery and promotion of high quality and sustainable built environments.
15. Data Protection Implications
  - 15.1 None at this stage.
16. Consultation Implications
  - 16.1 The consultations on this document have been in line with the SWT's Statement of Community Involvement and the Council's legal obligations. Following the consultation exercises, this report considers what modifications need to be made to the Districtwide Design Guide.
17. Executive Recommendation(s)
  - 17.1 The Executive unanimously supported the recommendations of this report.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

**Reporting Frequency: X Once only**

**List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)**

Appendix 1	Schedule of Responses to Consultations
Appendix 2	Districtwide Design Guide - <a href="http://somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk">Appendix 2 - Districtwide Design Guide.pdf (somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)</a>
Appendix 3	Consultation Statement
Appendix 4	Adoption Statement SPD
Appendix 5	Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment
Appendix 6	Equality Impact Assessment

**Contact Officers**

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	DISTRICT-WIDE DESIGN GUIDE CONSULTATION COMMENTS	3 FEBRUARY – 30 MARCH 2020	
Consultee	General Agreement/Disagreement	Detailed Comment Received	SW&TC Response
COMMUNITY & BUSINESS			
1. Creating Excellence - Southwest Design Review Panel	Agree that SW&TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<p>‘This all looks excellent – what a great initiative’.</p> <p>Include design review as part of the consultation process.</p> <p>P.17 might want to consider early DRP to establish design parameters at appraisal of site stage.</p> <p>P.115 need to mention site visits.</p> <p>P.115 the role of the panel manager is to maintain the panel’s independence.</p> <p>Glossary – add the Design Companion and Councillors Companion</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted</p>
2. South West Heritage Trust	Agree that SW&TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<p>‘SWHT warmly welcomes this Design Guide and its capture of current best practice. The illustrations are attractive and particularly helpful in conveying the advice’.</p> <p>P.15 diagram – setting could be considerably wider</p> <p>P.16 clarification of text on setting.</p> <p>P.17 wording to tally with NPPF and include areas of archaeological potential</p> <p>Change text from CA Character Statements to Appraisal Reference need to HER, Somerset Local Studies Library and Know Your Place Somerset</p> <p>Emphasis the use of local stone</p> <p>Guidance on taller buildings should reference key church towers and views from the hills.</p> <p>Make reference to Taunton Shop Fronts design guide</p> <p>Undesignated heritage assets not undesignated</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>

		<p>P.97 listing term needs clarification</p> <p>P.98 Reference needed to local list</p> <p>P.99 Modify and relocate topic of reversibility</p> <p>104 All building recording to be in line with Somerset Archaeological Handbook and deposits recorded with Somerset Heritage Centre</p> <p>P.112 When further archaeological information is needed that advise be sought from SWHT's Archaeological officer</p> <p>P.120 References – reference to be given for Somerset HER</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>
<p>3. Langford Budville Parish Council</p> <p>Page 86</p>	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Strongly agree that local distinctiveness is important 'to keep harmony and keep the character of the local areas'</p> <p>Strongly agree that character areas are important and that their features need to be addressed in design and layout.</p> <p>Strongly agree that joint principles of placemaking and sustainability should influence design of development.</p> <p>Strongly agree on parking approach in the design guide.</p> <p>Strongly agree that neighbourhoods should be based on active travel.</p> <p>Glossary should include reference to Garden Town.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p>
<p>4. Individual Submission</p>	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Strongly agrees with the broad aims of the design guide.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that new developments need to reflect the local distinctive character of the area reason: 'Much development within the Quantock Hills area has been of a rather poor standard of design over the last 40-50 years with little reference to local character, scale and materials. Kingston St Mary has suffered from lack of cohesion over this period. The design guide should help to improve that'.</p> <p>Local distinctiveness is important however 'There should be room for exceptional contemporary design,</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>but this needs control to avoid a repeat of mediocrity'.  Town centres could benefit much more from a very strong sense of local form than is currently seen.  Shopfront signage could be better controlled'.  Character areas – 'It's a useful guide to help applicants focus on key aspects of local design and layout. Will it be adopted by the volume house builder who tends to trot out their standard portfolio?'  Much more use should be made of under building parking particularly on sloping sites.  There needs to be more specific guidance on residential extensions and alterations.  Boundaries and street scene is such an important area an so often overlooked; it would be good to see this area strengthened.  Would like the requirements for planning applications to be detailed and adhered to by applicants.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>
Individual Submission	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Strongly agrees that applicants should follow the design process.  Strongly agrees that new developments should reflect the local distinctive character of an area and considers local distinctiveness is highly important.  Strongly agree that joint principles of placemaking and sustainability should influence design of development.  Strongly disagrees that there should be a mixed approach to parking (no comments offered)</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
6. Individual Submission	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to</p>	<p>The key diagram on p.8 needs to place more emphasis on sustainability, particularly SUD's, rain gardens and little car dominance.  Doesn't consider that the status of the design guide is clear or its links to the garden town or how the document should be used. 'The concept of the Garden</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>

	<p>incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Town Vision and the link to the design guide is tenuous. The concept of why garden towns were created is not explained and is ignored. It is not just designers that should use this guide but general public who wish to develop their space thus making this document limited and unwelcoming to non-designers, talking down to them’.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that applicants should follow the design process.</p> <p>‘A theme that runs through the whole document is the lack of landscape character that relates to development’.</p> <p>‘Landscape – this has been totally ignored and all the local distinctiveness is detailed in depth in national character areas, district and local landscape types as well as AONB design guides’.</p> <p>‘There is a strong over emphasis on the use and design around the car, whereby in the future car usage will change and up to date reports state this. Place making is not just about street scene but how the community will use the space’.</p> <p>Section 5 – blatant lack of reference to landscape. Needs thought into future proofing and progressive design ideas.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>
7. Individual Submission	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of</p>	<p>New developments must have foot/cycle ways that easily and directly link into existing communities to encourage integration. New homes should be built with Lifetime homes in mind and be easily altered to meet occupiers changing needs.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that applicants should follow the design process. ‘A standard process must be used so all</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>



	<p>placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>developers know what is expected from them during the planning process’.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that new developments should reflect the local distinctive character of an area and considers local distinctiveness is highly important. ‘New developments should blend in with the existing built and natural landscape’. ‘Local communities and new development must be distinctive to their own area and not appear to come from a national catalogue of ideas’.</p> <p>Strongly agree that character areas are important and that their features need to be addressed in design and layout.</p> <p>Strongly agree that joint principles of placemaking and sustainability should influence design of development.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that buildings should make good streetscapes.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that streets are designed for all users and are designed considering how vehicles and streets/junctions to determine their size.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that the design guide should be more specific on parking standards in the district.</p> <p>Disagrees that all parking bays should have kerbside electric charging points.</p> <p>‘These idea are good for development in an urban area but if applied to a rural village will detract from the uniqueness of the village. Many villages have narrow roads and cannot accommodate tow way traffic movement. If electric cars are to be encouraged then charging points must be available’.</p> <p>A portion of new homes must be Lifetime Homes.</p> <p>Properties should be built to be flood resilient.</p> <p>Glossary covers most points.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
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8. Individual Submission	Agree that SW&TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<p>Considers that houses should be 'Homes for Life' and capable of adaption.</p> <p>When developers consult with local residents, this should be meaningful and take on board local views. Outline planning applications do not give sufficient detail for the consideration of the design of a development proposal and can be misleading. West Somerset had two consultants looking at characterisation, why is this information not being used?</p> <p>Concerns that proposals for the former Watchet paper mill site include high rise development.</p> <p>Hedges are important landscape consideration which should be respected in development proposals. Coastal characterisation needs to be considered Visitor parking is lacking in new developments Life time homes should be available not just in the Taunton Garden Town</p> <p>The design quality shown in outline applications is followed through which what is delivered on the ground. Design details are important. Glossary section is useful</p>	<p>Noted and already covered in design guide</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted, however we are unable to request more information at outline since this is establishing the principle of development. This information is incorporated into the new districtwide Design Guide.</p> <p>These proposals are yet to come forward; however pre-application has proposed no more than small town scale.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Parking guidance has been developed in association with SCC Highways</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
9. West Somerset Community Land Trust	Agree that SW&TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<p>WSCLT is concerned that the draft design guide relates mainly to Taunton and the Garden Town Vision.</p> <p>The degree to which the design standards can be enforced is unclear. The availability of Design Review at an early stage is very helpful.</p>	<p>Noted but not agreed. The West Somerset area is fully analysed in the character section and principles of placemaking are applicable throughout the Ditsrict. It is stressed in the design process section the importance of relating proposals to the context and the site.</p> <p>Noted. The status of the document will be further clarified once adopted as SPD.</p>

		<p>Strongly agree that applicants explain how their proposals follows the design process.</p> <p>Most potential development land in West Somerset already has outline permission so will not be affected by the design guide. Impact is limited unless sizeable rural exception sites become available.</p> <p>Design fashions change - some designs built 50 years ago are now considered acceptable. It is a question of good design.</p> <p>Local distinctiveness is important as long as sustainability and affordability are not compromised.</p> <p>Use of local materials is very significant.</p> <p>Strongly agrees in bringing together the principles of placemaking and sustainability for influencing the layout of new neighbourhoods and street making.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that active travel is important however this is difficult in rural areas when the availability of public transport is often lacking. Provision of cycle and footpaths with existing roads should create an integrated network.</p> <p>WSCLT is committed to flexible designs and life time homes to ensure that residents can live in their homes for as much of their lives as possible.</p> <p>Storage is very important especially for recycling</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
10. House Builder (Cherwyn Developments)	Agree that SW&TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of	<p>Agrees in the LPA's commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment.</p> <p>Considers that the status of the design guide is clear and how it should be used.</p> <p>Agrees that applicants should follow the design process.</p> <p>SCC currently will not accept the in formalisation of roads, verges, footpaths and parking. They need to</p>	<p>Noted</p>

	<p>placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>change to allow the principles of the design guide to be delivered. I would question the ability to deliver electric charging points to all parking spaces. Do we think this is going to be the only form of energy to power cars? There will be alternatives. Design Topics – Whilst the design guide endeavours to promote good placemaking and the ideas are positive, SCC from my experience will not allow informal road layouts, shared space, green verges etc. Until they change we will not be able to accommodate some of the good ideas the design guide is promoting.</p>	<p>Noted and amended</p> <p>Noted</p>
<p>11. Individual Submission</p> <p>Page 92</p>	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Agrees in the LPA’s commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment. Considers that the status of the design guide is clear and how it should be used. Strongly agrees that applicants should follow the design process. Strongly agrees that local distinctiveness is important. Strongly agrees in bringing together the principles of placemaking and sustainability for influencing the layout of new neighbourhoods and street making. Strongly agrees that active travel is important. Strongly disagrees that all parking bays should have electric charging points. Considers that good walking and cycling infrastructure is key.</p>	<p>All noted</p>
<p>12. Individual Submission</p>	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to</p>	<p>Agrees in the LPA’s commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment. Considers that the status of the design guide is clear and how it should be used. Agrees that applicants should follow the design process. Agrees that local distinctiveness is important.</p>	

	incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	Agrees in bringing together the principles of placemaking and sustainability for influencing the layout of new neighbourhoods and street making. Strongly agrees that active travel is important. Considers that provision should be made for parking bays for car club vehicles.	All noted
13. Cycle Somerset		No responses given	
14. SW&T Affordable Housing Group	Agree that SW&TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agrees in the LPA's commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment.</li> <li>• Considers that the status of the design guide is clear and how it should be used.</li> <li>• Considers that clarity is required on how the design guide will be applied to smaller schemes as it appears to be aimed at large scaled developments.</li> <li>• Questions whether there is adequate resource within SW&amp;T Planning Dept to embed the design aspirations and engage in the proposed early consultations?</li> <li>• Questions whether this will result in more detailed pre-application advice which offers value for money and whose comments are respected through the planning determination process.</li> <li>• Questions whether there is capacity for the Design Review process to assess all these schemes and what size of scheme should be critiqued in this way.</li> <li>• Considers that time taken at pre-app and Design Review will put pressure on viability.</li> <li>• Agrees that applicants should follow the design process.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Staff training already carried out for DM officers and further planned</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted see section on Design Review</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considers that for the majority of the time that new developments should complement the existing built environment in a creative and innovative way, however that there will be times when a unique scheme may be required that may not directly correlate to the existing built form.</li> <li>• Disagrees that all parking bays should have electric charging points.</li> <li>• Flexibility to car parking layouts is welcomed, considers that the design guide should encourage car share opportunities.</li> <li>• Considers that SCC highway standards need to be aligned to ensure a clear a consistent approach, particularly on shared space.</li> <li>• Consideration should be given to other green car technologies not just electric charging points.</li> <li>• The main concern is the potential additional costs that these considerations will add to schemes and this may effect viability.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. Design guide is a springboard for good design and not a straightjacket. It gives the agenda for good design.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>The LPA has been in active negotiations with SCC on parking and changing points etc.</p> <p>Noted however there is a surplus in the grid with a proportion of new homes with PV's feeding back into the local power grid. Noted, however when applicants know what is required upfront from the design guide, they can reflect this in the purchase price of land. The vast majority of requirements follow the requirements set out in the NPPF and MfS. In most cases a slight increase in density would be acceptable in sustainability terms and would help off-set the costs/unit. In general the design guide is advocating simple building shapes and forms, with simple construction and footprint; we are not advocating fancy finishes. We are also advocating that less space is taken up by highway layouts.</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst we welcome higher quality design, the potential increase in costs in an already financially challenging market must be considered. This is a real risk that potentially could prevent the delivery of affordable housing.</li> <li>• Adoption of open spaces and service charges is an issue. Clarity is required on who will pay for the on-going maintenance of the open spaces in new developments. Will SCC adopt street trees?</li> <li>• There is a risk of high unaffordable service charges for management and maintenance to cover estate management.</li> </ul>	<p>The LPA have been in active negotiations with SCC on parking, commuted sums and changing points.</p>
<p>5. Individual submission</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agrees in the LPA's commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment.</li> <li>• Considers that the status of the design guide is clear and how it should be used.</li> <li>• Comments that 'It's refreshing to see the introduction of a SPD, employed by other forward thinking authorities, to create a biodiverse and sustainable development, finally created for Taunton Deane after years of lost development opportunities'.</li> <li>• Strongly agrees that applicants should follow the design process.</li> <li>• Strongly agrees that local distinctiveness is important. Comments that 'What makes our part of the world unique and special is its distinctive character and preserving and enhancing this is vital'.</li> </ul>	<p>All Noted</p>

- Strongly agrees in bringing together the principles of placemaking and sustainability for influencing the layout of new neighbourhoods and street making.
- Strongly agree that character areas are important and that their features need to be addressed in design and layout.
- Strongly agree that joint principles of placemaking and sustainability should influence design of development.
- Strongly agrees that buildings should make good streetscapes.
- Strongly agrees that streets are designed for all users and are designed considering how vehicles and streets/junctions to determine their size.
- Strongly agree that neighbourhoods should be based on active travel. Comments that building capacity for cycling and walking and public transport is essential if we are to reduce the rate of global warming.
- Comments that 'This is a unique opportunity for the Council to create a watershed moment in the design of new building stock in Taunton and West Somerset'.
- Comments that 'Local people have tried to influence planning policy with little success – a SPD will make all the difference and allow greater jurisdiction over those developers who have seemingly been allowed by previous council's to fling houses down with little regard for the legacy they leave behind'.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comments that 'It's been disheartening to see bland and lifeless developments spreading across the area with little thought given to early wins for biodiversity, wildlife and ultimately human well-being'.</li> </ul>	
16. Individual Submission		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agrees in the LPA's commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment. Diagram could mention cyclists.</li> <li>Considers that the status of the design guide is clear and how it should be used.</li> <li>Strongly agrees that applicants should follow the design process. Comments that the agenda for improved housing should include i) more sustainable requirements and adaptability to life styles.</li> <li>Strongly agrees that local distinctiveness is important. Comments that 'Harmony between built environments and their settings is deeply satisfying it improves the quality of life for those who live there and retains the distinctive character that areas need, to continue being attractive tourist destinations. This doesn't mean slavishly copying existing building design in an area, but it does mean making use of traditional shapes, heights, materials, and colours in formulating new designs.'</li> <li>Strongly agrees in bringing together the principles of placemaking and sustainability for influencing the layout of new neighbourhoods and street making.</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly agree that character areas are important and that their features need to be addressed in design and layout.</li> <li>• Strongly agree that joint principles of placemaking and sustainability should influence design of development.</li> <li>• Strongly agrees that example sketches to show placemaking and sustainable principles should be used.</li> <li>• Strongly agrees that buildings should make good streetscapes.</li> <li>• Strongly agrees that streets are designed for all users and are designed considering how vehicles and streets/junctions to determine their size. Comments that cyclist safety is vital.</li> <li>• Comments that space standards are minimal in new development and that trees should be incorporated into new developments.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agree</p>
17. Councillor Nicholas Sloan, Stoke St Gregory Parish Council	Agree that SW&TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agrees in the LPA's commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment.</li> <li>• Not clear about the status of the design guide and how to use the document.</li> <li>• Comments that 'Generally an excellent well considered document, but how this translates into well designed buildings and environments will depend on the imagination with which it is interpreted. Judgement will need to be exercised between conflicting demands to achieve the better good'. Officer training should be provided in making nuanced judgements on design matters rather than</li> </ul>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. Has been amended</p> <p>Agreed and DM staff and Member training will address these points.</p>

		<p>following formula in order to balance subjective and objective criteria’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agrees that applicants should follow the design process.</li> <li>• Comments that ‘The design guide encourages respect for vernacular forms of building design and groupings, but the current Local Plan in its concentration on development boundaries discourages natural infill, even in areas that have traditionally been developed organically within loosely built rural areas. Provided that applications are sympathetic and well-designed we feel that the use of natural infill, particularly of back land plots which share existing highway entry points should be actively encouraged in rural contexts where it is an appropriate response to the local vernacular evolution.’</li> <li>• Comments that ‘There is a passing reference to the acceptability of good contemporary design, but a heavy emphasis of blending with the local vernacular. A major issue with contemporary design is making a judgement on good or bad; a distinction in the recognition of which planning officers have not had a particularly good track record. We feel that an element of high quality modern architecture does enhance the area, but that the planning department should retain architectural consultants to advise them on the merits of contemporary projects. The implication is that larger developments at least will be assessed by Design Review Panels. It is to be hoped that creative architects will be well represented on such panels, but it is also to be</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed and has been amended.</p> <p>Agreed and staff design training has been undertaken and more is planned.</p>
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		<p>hoped that they will be called in to assess smaller developments where appropriate’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly agrees in bringing together the principles of placemaking and sustainability for influencing the layout of new neighbourhoods and street making.</li> <li>• Disagrees that design guide should be more specific on parking standards</li> <li>• Comments that section 5 point 12 could include innovative flood resilient design solutions</li> <li>• Improve navigation between section in section 5 and the document overall</li> </ul>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed. Contextual guidance on parking has been provided in association with SCC Highways</p> <p>Noted and will consider</p>
8. Individual Submission	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Strongly agree that joint principles of placemaking and sustainability should influence design of development. Strongly agree that neighbourhoods should be based on active travel.</p> <p>‘All new housing developments should be carbon neutral and fit for a more sustainable future’</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p>
19. Forum 21 Community Group	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Reservations that design guide relates mainly to Taunton and the garden town, while Forum 21 remit is to achieve a zero carbon economy in West Somerset.</p> <p>‘The rural nature of that area presents different problems especially connectivity’.</p> <p>Unclear how the design guide is to be used. Unclear about enforceability of the aims of the design guide. In view of climate emergency these must be non-negotiable. Is this the case?</p>	<p>Agreed and small scale developments has been included as a specific topic</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Will be a SPD and a material consideration</p>

		<p>Strongly agrees that applicants should follow the design process.</p> <p>'It is not clear if this process (the design process) can be applied to the many development which have been approved, but not yet developed. In addition will the actual construction be sufficiently monitored to ensure that the aims are actually achieved with the benefits this will bring in the future. The current self-certificating building regulation system and lack of local government resources appear to be failing in this regard'.</p> <p>'The issue of materials; which should be as low carbon and non-fossil fuel based as possible, appear to be towards the end of the process'.</p> <p>'Modern designs should not be excluded. It is a question of good design rather than replicating older inefficient homes which make up about 60% of the stock in West Somerset'.</p> <p>Agree that local distinctiveness is important 'as long as sustainability and affordability are not compromised. Some flexibility to enable the use of non-fossil fuel materials should be allowed and local distinctiveness could be achieved with cladding'.</p> <p>Strongly agree that joint principles of placemaking and sustainability should influence design of development.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that buildings should make good streetscapes</p> <p>Strongly agree that neighbourhoods should be based on active travel.</p> <p>Strongly agree that all parking bays should have access to kerb side changing points.</p> <p>'Some developments could be made car free if public transport and safe walking and cycling is available'.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
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		<p>Section 5 – agree that secure recycling and bike storage would encourage better use.          ‘There is no mention of energy efficiency standards and methods, including heat exchange systems and retro insulation of hard to heat homes. All these are needed in view of severely reduced national government standards and lack of enforcement of the current ones’.          The TGT Charter &amp; Checklist mentions this but not as a requirement.          Section 6 – little mention of renewables.</p>	<p>Agreed although solar and PV’s is already advocated but has been expended to include heat exchange</p>
<p>20. Resident (Ian Bright)</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 102</p>	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>The design guide has too many broad aims which may not be deliverable.          The design guide could be simpler for the general reader.          Doubts whether modern buildings are reflecting local character.          Strongly agree that local distinctiveness is important.          Height of buildings in Taunton should be restricted to 3 storeys.          Strongly agree that joint principles of placemaking and sustainability should influence design of development.          Strongly agrees that streets are designed for all users and are designed considering how vehicles and streets/junctions          Disagrees with a mixed approach to parking.          Strongly agree that neighbourhoods should be based on active travel.          ‘In line with the Council’s objectives regarding climate change and sustainable transport, far more needs to be done to discourage private car use. Far better infrastructure needs to be put in place in new developments to make walking and cycling for everyday</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p>

		<p>activities...It is also very important that the paths and cycle ways are linked...This can only be achieved by more balanced funding for walking and cycling locally. Planners must be fully on board for this to happen’.</p> <p>Doubts whether tall buildings can be incorporated into the existing fabric of Taunton without adverse impacts on neighbouring buildings.</p> <p>Glossary – useful for reference</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
21. Magna Housing Association	<p>Agree that SW&amp;TC needs a Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Doesn’t agree that the relationship of the design guide to the Garden Town guidance is clear</p> <p>Strongly agrees that applicants should explain how their proposal follows the design process</p> <p>‘Please review the planning pre-application process in light of this (the design process) so that it adds value, especially if there will continue to be a charge. It would be helpful to discuss financial viability issue in broad terms at this stage to assist feasibility studies’.</p> <p>Neutral as to whether local distinctiveness is important and that development should reflect local character.</p> <p>Disagrees that character areas are important.</p> <p>Regarding highways and transport ‘Somerset Highways need to be an integral part of this discussion both in policy and operation terms. The theory is laudable but a long way from the current practice. Consideration also needs to be given to the transport infrastructure, especially in rural areas where use of the car is current unavoidable for many journeys. Also it is not reasonable to expect developers to pay for the electric car charging infrastructure’.</p> <p>We support the principles and approach on the Design Topics with the following comments:</p>	<p>Noted however there are clear links to Garden Town Guidance</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should modern methods of construction be mentioned; could this be incorporated in a pattern book approach to housing typology</li> <li>• Agree with statement on minimum space standards</li> <li>• Management of communal spaces must be considered, especially when LA's unwilling to adopt amenities and facilities e.g. service charge costs</li> <li>• Include other items for external storage e.g. pushchairs</li> <li>• More flexibility needed on backland site planning especially by SCC Highways</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed detailed discussions have been undertaken with SCC Highways</p>
<p>2. Volume House Builder (Redrow)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The designer should assess the client's budget and manage the development proposal cost accordingly.</li> <li>• Achieving design quality invariably requires an increased development cost.</li> <li>• The design guide should acknowledge economic viability as a key component of sustainable development</li> <li>• Increased development value can be created through careful design. The design guide should aim to encourage developers to assess which design interventions can be afforded and have the greatest impact.</li> <li>• There is no evidence to support the claim that from public opinion people want the design of new development to be locally distinctive</li> <li>• 'We agree that the design guide should reflect the desires of people likely to live in the new homes'.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. However numerous respondents have raised this and with previous consultations carried out for the Garden Town.</p> <p>Noted</p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redrow market research shows that people buying a new home want spacious, practical homes designed for modern life styles with parking close to the front door. They prefer traditional styles of architecture, particularly Arts &amp; Crafts and detached homes.</li> <li>• Nation Design Guide statement that new development should be based on an understanding of the existing situation, including 'the architecture prevalent in the area, including the local vernacular', the respondent claims therefore that new development should respond to the architecture existing in the immediate locality, rather than seek to introduce vernacular styles which may be some distance from the site.</li> <li>• 'We agree that outdated approaches to highway design based on the needs for private cars have led to standardised streets. We support the creation of streets and spaces designed around the needs of pedestrians and cyclists'.</li> <li>• Response to local distinctiveness must be proportionate and appropriate to each place and be balanced with the tastes, needs and aspirations of new communities. If a development is adjacent to a conservation area, comprising a locally distinctive palette of materials it would be appropriate to reflect those in new design. If locally distinctive architecture is some distance from the site it is</li> </ul>	<p>It is agreed that in designing for urban/suburban contexts that the promotion of rural traditional vernacular would be inappropriate. However in these cases standard suburban status quo rarely achieves the objectives of good sustainable place making and efficient site planning. The effect is usually standard 'anywhere' housing and highway layouts. In these cases Manual for Streets and good placemaking should be essential. Architectural styles are secondary to these objectives.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Local distinctiveness is not merely the application of copying local styles, it is about response to setting, topography and the creation of good streetmaking.</p>
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		<p>not appropriate to replicate that except in limited individual cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural architecture vernacular precedent is inappropriate in Taunton urban settings.</li> <li>• Responses include references to the NPPF guidance encouraging design to fit in to the existing built environment</li> <li>• No evidence from the community that new development should have regard to and reflect positive aspects of the character of the area</li> <li>• The proposed house types are claimed to reflect the needs, tastes and lifestyles of the potential house buyers</li> <li>• The design guide omits a typical housing typology of the interwar suburban areas and therefore a part of the character of Taunton</li> <li>• Comments regarding car parking and street standards should be compliant with the requirements of SCC Highways</li> <li>• House typologies should include detached units</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. Taunton urban character comprises a number of distinct character areas ranging from higher density town centre to smaller settlements that have been absorbed in to the settlement boundary. Proper character appraisals need to identify this.</p> <p>Noted. Although the requirement is to have regard to the character and local distinctive of that architecture.</p> <p>The comment quoted refers to the extensive public consultation programme undertaken prior to the suite of design guidance which highlighted the need for new development to be locally distinctive.</p> <p>Noted. Studies show that house buyers also value distinctive building forms.</p> <p>Noted. The areas to which the respondent refers whilst having a faint reference to garden city architecture and layouts are not particularly distinctive to Taunton and are found many peripheral housing estates in towns through the country. We would welcome innovative thinking about garden city planning and design.</p> <p>Noted. We have had detailed discussion and agreement on this matter with SCC Highways.</p> <p>Agreed, see addition of 'villa' type.</p>
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<p>23. Volume House Builder (South West Taunton Comeytrowe Consortium)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disagrees with key diagram which reflects the LPA's commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment. Not convinced it represents a Garden neighbourhood and that the zero low carbon aspirations are too specific and neglect scheme viability</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. This diagram represents the broad aims of sustainable residential development over the next 10 year period. It is presenting an agenda not totally specific to a Garden neighbourhood or particular house types.</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The status of the design guide and its relationship to the Garden Town Vision, Charter &amp; Checklist is unclear</li> <li>Design Guide is geared towards outline planning applications for green field sites, it gives little advice on the process to be carried out on reserved matters</li> <li>The Taunton character area section could be expanded to include other house typologies</li> <li>Many examples of what the LPA wants without the rationale for these. Can lead to DM officers misunderstanding the principles behind the illustrations.</li> <li>The viability of installing PV panels and charging points is not addressed</li> <li>Placemaking guidance should be extended towards lower density development</li> <li>Few references to innovation</li> <li>The case study showing the design process would be better located at the end of this chapter.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. However the key diagram and the introduction do mention this.</p> <p>Guidance on making applications has been included.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. DM staff have undergone significant training on this and more is planned.</p> <p>Noted. These will be increasingly required over the design guide life period. It also good practise.</p> <p>Noted. This point could be given more emphasis although the principles of placemaking are applicable to all densities. Note. The introduction makes it clear that the guidance should be seen as a springboard for good design, not a straightjacket.</p> <p>Agreed. There is a slight change needed in the page ordering.</p> <p>Noted. Wide front types are appropriate in many situations but not all.</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocating wide frontage typologies could be seen as the only solution</li> <li>• Illustration showing countryside edge treatments, could be seen as specific for every scheme</li>   <li>• Section 3.2, key principles should be stated in relation to the examples shown</li> <li>• Local paving materials are useful but difficult to deliver</li>   <li>• Vernacular building materials, should these be referred to in specific character areas?</li> <li>• Nothing on Taunton vernacular other than on three storey buildings</li> <li>• The consortium consider that the following proposals are too specific , untested and can effect viability:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 90% of house have PV panels on roofs</li> <li>b) Bat, swallow and owl nesting encouraged in the design of some houses</li> <li>c) Use of sedum planting on flat roofs and green walls</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Placemaking principles lack clarity regarding principles, instead there is a list of requirements and an indicative scheme</li> <li>• The indicative scheme shows development forms which would be difficult to implement in developments such as Comeytrow. Particularly</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. The indicative illustration shows 4-5 edge conditions as examples. This is an indicative diagram.</p> <p>Noted. The identification of local paving materials is intended to show i) they are important components of local distinctiveness, and ii) that they should be retained where ever they exist, and iii) sourcing of these materials is possible although limited. Each character area has a heading relating to materials.</p> <p>Amended</p> <p>These are all aspects of good practice which are already incorporated in some schemes. Given the climate emergency and the increasing emphasis on sustainable housing, these features will become significantly more common place over the life span of the design guide.</p> <p>Noted. We will improve the statements on the emphasis on the principles.</p> <p>This is an indicative scheme to show how places making principles could be achieved. The drawings show a mixture of individual</p>
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		<p>the types of perimeter block, predominantly terrace housing and extensive use of parking streets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking streets are shown as an alternative to on-plot and rear parking courts solutions. As not all developments can have on-plot parking, parking street are a more effective and user friendly than rear parking courts.</li> <li>• Would agree that housing typologies shown would achieve good streetscapes, although would not necessarily support all details.</li> <li>• Do not support the blanket inclusion of on-street charging points without understanding viability etc</li> <li>• Illustration on p.75 shows very car dominated environment with little planting.</li> <li>• Lifetime homes – unclear as to the principles to be followed. Street section very prescriptive, recommend that guidance on street sections and hierarchy be provided.</li> <li>• Bike and recycling storage – they support the objectives but would like flexibility to devise their own solutions</li> <li>• Boundaries – generally support the objectives and suggest there are more contemporary solutions</li> <li>• 6.1 – missing text</li> <li>• Confusion about the difference between a design guide and a design code</li> </ul>	<p>houses, semi-detached, short terraces and apartments. The principles are similar at whatever scale and density that is likely to be proposed.</p> <p>Parking streets are shown as an alternative to low density on plot parking solutions and are more effectively than rear parking courts which are often under used.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. We are exploring this issue.</p> <p>Disagree.</p> <p>Noted. We will consider these points.</p> <p>Noted. We would welcome innovative solutions. The diagrams are intended to stimulate good integrated design.</p> <p>Noted. We would welcome innovative solutions. The diagrams are intended to stimulate good integrated design. This will be provided.</p> <p>Noted. However the districtwide design guide is clear about the definition of a design guide and design codes.</p>
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<p>24. Volume House Builder (Redrow Planning)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disagrees with key diagram which reflects the LPA’s commitment to a healthy, distinctive and sustainable built environment. The respondent agrees with the objectives but questions the depiction of the built form shown.</li> <li>• There is no evidence to support the claim that from public opinion people want the design of new development to be locally distinctive</li> <li>• National Design Guide statement that new development should be based on an understanding of the existing situation, including ‘the architecture prevalent in the area, including the local vernacular’, the respondent claims therefore that new development should respond to the architecture existing in the immediate locality, rather than seek to introduce vernacular styles which may be some distance from the site.</li> <li>• The degree to which new development reflects local character depends on varying aspects such as the degree of local distinctiveness of the immediate context and the appropriateness of replicating certain individual features at a much larger scale of units</li> <li>• New developments should respect the aspirations, lifestyles and tastes of people likely to live in them</li> <li>• The design guide should draw lessons from much loved places and this should provide a framework for housing aimed at modern</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. This illustration is diagrammatic only. It would be counterproductive to show every types of development in what is a stylised diagram</p> <p>Noted. However this is based on responses to the design guide consultation and Garden Town workshops.</p> <p>It is agreed that in designing for urban/suburban contexts that the promotion of rural traditional vernacular would be inappropriate. However in these cases standard suburban status quo rarely achieves the objectives of good sustainable place making and efficient site planning. The effect is usually standard ‘anywhere’ housing and highway layouts. In these cases Manual for Streets and good placemaking should be essential. Architectural styles are secondary to these objectives.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed but this needs to be balanced with the wider objectives of planning policy including good placemaking, sustainability and wellbeing.</p>
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		<p>lifestyles and should not be subject to a design guide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘We agree that outdated approaches to highway design based on meeting the needs of private cars have led to streets that area standardised and we support the creation of streets and spaces designed around the needs of pedestrians and cyclists’.</li> <li>• Distinctiveness should be measured in a number of ways (see previous Redrow response above)</li> <li>• The character of Taunton area is over simplified and focused on a narrow set of house typologies</li> <li>• The design guide omits the interwar suburban housing type which is attractive and popular</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst agreeing with the principles of good placemaking the guide underplays lower density housing typologies and street making.</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed. The design guide does not specify detailed house design. Individual lifestyle aspirations have to be balanced with the wider objectives of planning policy including good placemaking, sustainability and wellbeing. Noted. Agreed.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>There are few areas of suburban Taunton of the interwar period that can be distinguished from those in any other town and city. In particular garden city layouts and distinctive Arts &amp; Crafts houses are extremely limited. We would welcome innovative 21 Century thinking regarding garden city type layouts which are responsive to the local context. The placemaking principles shown are applicable at a range of densities. Very low densities are rarely conducive to active travel and the delivery of public transport. In deed a recent report has shown that most new garden city developments are highly car</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The design guide should encourage the use of house types that meet the tastes, aspirations and requirements of potential customers</li> </ul>	<p>dependent. This raises the question whether the original garden city principles can be adapted to sustainable placemaking. Perhaps a workshop between the developers and the LPA might explore this theme?</p> <p>The purpose of design guides is to recognise these factors whilst promoting national and local policies on placemaking, sustainability and wellbeing.</p>
<p>25. Volume House Builder (Persimmon Homes)</p> <p>Page 112</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear about relationship of the documents in the design guidance suite and their relatively weight and relationship to the emerging Local Plan. Concerned that the design guides are creating more bureaucracy in a highly bureaucratic system leading to delay.</li> <li>The design guide advocates certain housing types but there is little transparency as to the rationale for these. Interwar and post war housing has been discounted and thus heritage is emphasised over sustainability and modern design.</li> <li>Modern design should be promoted and can be more important than local distinctiveness.</li> </ul>	<p>The relationship of the design guides is shown in the diagram in policy context section. The role of the design guide will be SPD relating to the local plan. Central government advice in the NPPF and the National Design Guide both advocating producing design guides at the local level. Design guides have been a familiar planning tool since 1973 and are intended to coordinate design based policies with the authority.</p> <p>Noted. The rationale for the advocacy of housing types to create good streetscapes is we feel fairly clear. It is agreed that slightly lower density types could be included. We disagree that there is an emphasis on heritage over sustainable progressive modern design and argue that interwar and post war housing is neither substantially sustainable nor progressive. The guide emphasis that it is a springboard for good design, not a straightjacket.</p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly disagrees that the design guide should be more specific on parking standards in the district.</li> <li>• Concerns that indicative drawings on parking could be used to force developers into specific 'unsaleable' solutions. Home owners prefer parking spaces near their homes. Many issues related to kerbside electrical charging points. On plot charging is preferred.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. The guide welcomes innovative approaches to the sensitive response to context and sustainability. Response to site and local conditions is an essential ingredient of local distinctiveness. We would welcome innovative thinking in this respect. Noted and guidance provided on context related parking, see emerging SCC Highways guidance.</p> <p>The indicative parking diagrams show how cars can be parked very close to the fronts of houses where on-plot parking may not be achievable at medium to higher densities. This does not preclude other innovative solutions which can be demonstrated as achieving the same objectives. The LPA have been in extensive discussions with SCC Highways on parking and changing points etc.</p>
<p>25. Community Organisation (Arts Taunton)</p>	<p>Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include easy access to arts and sport, regarding being connected</li> <li>• Emphasise how private sector house builders should use the design guide</li> <li>• Strongly agree that applicants should use the design process</li> <li>• Strongly agree that new development should reflect locally distinctive character. Use local design cues of distinctiveness including building materials and landscape features and unique features at the local level.</li> <li>• Strongly agree that local distinctiveness is important. The less dramatic and undesignated</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. We will consider as being part of the wellbeing agenda</p> <p>Noted. Although developers have not made this point.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p>

		<p>landscape is in many ways as important as AONB's.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly agree that character areas should be used to influence design.</li> <li>• Excellent knowledge of the area but could be illustrated better in some photographs</li> <li>• Strongly agrees with the principles of placemaking integrated with sustainability and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Strongly agrees with the approach of the integrated and inclusive street design</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>
<p>27. SCC Highways</p> <p>Page 114</p>		<p>SCC Highways submitted a letter rather than completing the online survey (24/04/2020). Whilst SCC supports the broad purpose of the document in taking a strong lead in placeshaping to promote sustainability, quality and behavioural change, SCC has strong concerns on a number of matters of details. These are based on the clash that it sees between conventional highway engineering as exemplified in the 'Red Book' and the 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges' and the type of street making solutions more akin to Manual for Streets and other current good practice advocated by the Chartered Institute of Highways &amp; Transportation. Specifically SCC consider that the road hierarchy and the split of responsibilities between district and county should be clarified.</p> <p>They raise a number of detailed points regarding safety and design and wish to clarify where SCC is a key consultee.</p> <p>Other matters concern detailed of road design and adoption.</p>	<p>Noted. Following consultation period LPA officers and their consultants have had an extensive period of negotiations with SCC Highways, especially as SCC are in the process of radically revision their 1991 standards. An enlarged section has been produced and key principles.</p>

28. SCC Ecology		SCC Ecology submitted a letter rather than completing the online survey (1/05/2020). Generally SCC considers that biodiversity is not well represented in the design guide and that more specific guidance should flow through many of the sections. This could also permeate the character area analysis section. SCC suggest that biodiversity should be specifically mentioned as a design topic due to its benefits and that consideration should be given to including a biodiversity checklist.	Noted.
29. Internal Staff	Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	Request for guidance on the design principles for change of use from commercial retail to residential.	Agreed and a new section has been provided.
30. Internal Staff	Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	Request that the current infill guidance is expanded to take into account tandem infill on suburban and rural plots. Also guidance could be given on the parameters used for determining where an existing open plot should remain undeveloped.	Agreed and appropriate amendments made.
31. Internal Staff	Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	Request that the existing guidance (Section 5.9 – Residential Alterations & Extensions) is considerably expanded to reflect the former West Somerset guidance on this subject.	Agreed and changes carried out.

32. Internal Staff	Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<p>Request for the following changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household extensions needs to be expanded</li> <li>• Guidance required on the assessment of contemporary designs</li> <li>• Guidance required on the design of agricultural buildings</li> <li>• There is an apparent antipathy towards flat roofs in the design guide</li> </ul>	<p>See comments above. Agreed and wording clarifies this point.</p> <p>Noted and guidance carried out</p> <p>Noted. There are some instances where flat roofs are appropriate, e.g. on large span buildings. If flat roofs are used in more domestic circumstances it is not unreasonable to expect them to be 'green', i.e. to be sedum roofs, or to take the form of roof terraces. Roofs with a variety of pitches are efficient in water run-off, the integration of PV panels, increased insulation and the provision of storage space.</p>
33. Internal Staff	Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<p>Section 1 – request for clarification in why the guide is necessary and how it should be used.</p> <p>Section 2.3.2 – add Scheduled Monuments and mention hedgerows and boundaries</p> <p>Section 2.4 – add more details about requirements</p> <p>Section 2.4 – emphasis the need to convert existing buildings rather than demolish</p> <p>Section 3 – a number of detailed observations</p> <p>Section 3 – more landscape consideration needed</p> <p>Section 4.2 – emphasise connectivity</p> <p>Request for guidance on conversion of buildings</p> <p>Request for guidance on lighting and signage of historic shop fronts</p> <p>Greater consideration needed on impact of development with the setting of conservation areas, including green corridors and hedgerows</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted and agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted although guidance does exist</p>

		<p>More guidance needed on pavements and treatment of new boundaries</p> <p>Emphasise the desirability of integrating renewables on roofs of retail developments and historic buildings</p>	Noted
34. Internal Staff	<p>Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify text on Garden Town designation and aims</li> <li>• Diagram showing sequence of design appraisal needs to consider landscape character, settlement development pattern and position in the landscape</li> <li>• Appraisal of context and setting – refer to minor comments in the text</li> <li>• Minor comments on scheme in design process</li> <li>• Confusion over character areas and character types</li> <li>• Map of character areas in the district needs to mention that this is only a summary and that more detail for both protected and unprotected landscapes can be referred to in districtwide landscape characterisation.</li> <li>• Clarity needed on vernacular stone distribution</li> <li>• Manage expectations of views to the sea against need for strong structural landscape treatment that may hinder views</li> <li>• Instead of Central West Somerset refer to this area as Doniford Valley</li> <li>• Central West Somerset landscape character area needs to mention that this landscape is visually vulnerable and need to protect views.</li> <li>• The Quantocks landscape character area – refer to minor comments in text. Refer to light pollution.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Agree Has been clarified</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Will consider</p> <p>Will consider</p> <p>Will include points in text</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taunton landscape character area – refer to varied geology within the town and how this defines character areas.</li> <li>• Streets and placemaking – sufficient room required for tree planting in and around parking spaces</li> <li>• Taller buildings - rephrase to emphasise impact of building on wider landscape context</li> </ul>	<p>Noted, amendments carried out.</p> <p>Agree</p> <p>Agree</p>
35. Internal Staff		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘I think it is a great document and I really like the character area approach for the landscape and building materials. I was also pleased to see that sustainability and green infrastructure play a major role. I’m a keen advocate of GI and think it is an important tool in helping to layout masterplans.’</li> </ul>	Noted
36. Internal Staff	Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<p>The design guide seems to be emphasising the need to fit in with the local context and traditional built form, perhaps ignoring contemporary solutions.</p> <p>Design process (section 2.1) and the design process at a glance should include more on sustainable and low carbon master planning and reconsider the example to include less car based solutions and higher density. General comments on the best use of open space and site capacity for higher densities. Active design principles need more emphasis. Refer to Somerset Waste Partnership’s developer guidance on waste and recycling</p>	<p>The importance of respecting character and local distinctiveness is a primary planning aim. The illustrative design process indicates that any design solution could be appropriate if it demonstrates that key contextual considerations have driven the design solution. The indicative drawings show generic forms and are for guidance only.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed</p>

		<p>Electric vehicle charging strategy is due in July-September 2020, please include in guidance. In 'fabric first', design concepts are missing</p> <p>Make it unequivocal that good design requires considerations of climate impact and resilience are critical.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted and amendments carried out.</p> <p>Agree and has been emphasised.</p>
STREETS, PLACES & PARKING SECTION CONSULTATION COMMENTS		11 DECEMBER – 5 FEBRUARY 2021	
Consultee	General Agreement/Disagreement	Detailed Comment Received	SW&TC Response
<p>Page 119</p> <p>1. Taunton Design Circle</p>	Districtwide Design Guide to help raise the quality of design of new developments is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of a local area and to incorporate the principles of placemaking to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods.	<p>Welcome the approach for foregrounding street making and public realm.</p> <p>Masterplanning and design process explored in a very fluent manner.</p> <p>Excellent presentation.</p> <p>Very good didactic document.</p> <p>Good to have agreed an approach with SCC Highways to achieve a more joined up approach to street and place designed highways.</p> <p>Suggest new projects/applications be evaluated in short term to monitor how they have addressed the guidance.</p> <p>Suggest training to update officers and Members on latest highway thinking.</p> <p>Street parking and parking squares should provide for car club vehicles and some electric vehicles.</p> <p>Suggest some design criteria for car free areas in town centres.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>We will consider this.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreed.</p> <p>We will consider this.</p>

		Careful thought should be given to the location and type of shrubs in the public footway in terms of person safety.	Noted.
2. Carhampton Parish Council		<p>Street building standards and parking standards should differentiate between, neighbourhood, village and countryside only if planning enforcement is sufficiently staffed to pick up where the design matches the actual building.</p> <p>Compliance with 20mph designed speed of the street is impossible to achieve</p> <p>Designers and builders will have different perspectives regarding the proposal to create street hierarchy</p> <p>The section over focuses on parking for private cars, rather than public transport.</p> <p>Electric vehicle charging is difficult other than on-plot.</p> <p>Whilst the guidance proposes that street design takes into the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, few residents walk very far and cycling is not well used</p> <p>Regarding the inclusion of street trees, rain gardens, verges and SUDS, the question remains who is going to maintain these and how is the maintenance to be enforced?</p> <p>Questions whether designers and builders will be forced to use the proposed palette of materials and to replace those not in accordance</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted however street design is more likely to achieve lower speeds than purely signage</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. Agree that public transport provision should be increased but in most parts of the district reliance will be on private cars.</p> <p>Noted, however improvements in provision for on-street charging are being made all the time and technology moves on.</p> <p>Noted however active travel can be increased by improvements in provision</p> <p>This can be achieved through commuted sums, adoption and planning conditions</p> <p>Noted this can be conditioned and the usual enforcement procedures applied</p>
3. Active Travel Specialist		<p>Strongly agrees that streets in residential areas should be designed for 20mph</p> <p>Strongly agrees that the guidance proposes a street hierarchy</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>



		<p>Pleased to see the focus on a street hierarchy based on creating place character, especially as this prevents car users having the illusion of priority</p> <p>Welcomes the inclusion of tight junctions and constrained site lines and raised platforms at intersections.</p> <p>Concerned that cycles might be permitted anywhere there is a footway, causing conflict/confusion. Suggests providing segregated cycle ways in new developments.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that tracking should be a major determinant in street design.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that street design takes into account the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in the choice of lighting, signs and street furniture.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that street design should be as green as possible.</p> <p>Questions whether no priority junctions are safe for cyclists.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Agree that in all but minor routes segregation is desirable.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted we will consider this point.</p>
4. Taunton Area Cycling Campaign		<p>Strongly agrees that streets in residential areas should be designed for 20mph</p> <p>Strongly agrees that street design takes into account the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in the choice of lighting, signs and street furniture.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that street design should be as green as possible.</p> <p>Supports 20mph in residential areas and the proposed design criteria. Likes the idea that intersections are places. Adds certain technical specifications</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
5. Arts Taunton		<p>Strongly agrees that street building standards and parking standards should differentiate between town, neighbourhood, village and countryside</p>	<p>Noted</p>

		<p>Strongly agrees that the guidance proposes a street hierarchy</p> <p>Strongly agrees with the proposal for a range of parking solutions and that these should be integrated into street design</p> <p>Strongly agrees that street design takes into account the needs of pedestrians and cyclists in the choice of lighting, signs and street furniture.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that street design should be as green as possible.</p> <p>I concerned that the guidance could be avoided, compromised or abandoned by developers owing to lack of robust implementation.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Agreed. However SCC Highways guidance will need to coordinated in this matter.</p>
6. Somerset Waste Partnership		<p>Whether streets are designed for different contexts, it is important that parking does not impede access to bin stores and waste collection as this can be very disruptive.</p> <p>Whenever a street hierarchy is proposed, it is important that parking does not impede access to bin stores and waste collection as this can be very disruptive.</p> <p>Agrees that road design should use tracking however this should not impede access to bin stores and waste collection as this can be very disruptive.</p> <p>Agrees that a range of parking solutions is important however this should not impede access to bin stores and waste collection as this can be very disruptive.</p> <p>Strongly agrees that street design should be as green as possible.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

7. SCC Highways		<p>P.75 – diagram could be clarified</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Red Book should be included in references as current guidance</li> <li>- Under scope, SCC Highways should be consulted with LPA and as early on in the design process</li> <li>- Questions optimum corner radii and raises questions of visibility at junctions</li> <li>- Suggests that tactile paving could be used at uncontrolled crossings</li> <li>- Note that DFT requests a pause for shared space design</li> <li>-Consideration should be given to The Equality Act 2010 regarding duties for LPA and LHA</li> <li>-Regarding hierarchy distributor road design this should be carried out in consultation with LHA and LPA from the outset to ensure it functions as intended</li> <li>-Secondary Street – courtesy crossings are not liked by Disabled Persons Advisory Committee and therefore are not accepted by the LHA. Any reference to courtesy crossings should be removed.</li> <li>- Peripheral Lane – corner radii should be 4m instead of 3m and visibility should not be obscured</li> <li>- Home Zones – request removal of reference to home zones as LHA currently does not have any in Somerset.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. This sketch will be finalised.</p> <p>Noted. We recognise that the existing Red Book (1991) will be used in the short term until the new highway standards are adopted.</p> <p>Noted. Will add reference to early consultation with Highways Authority in this section</p> <p>3m radii are all standard stock items (not specials). Visibility at junctions will be provided in accordance with Manual For Streets.</p> <p>Accepted. This is a standard detail. Will include reference to DETR guidance.</p> <p>Noted. However this comment is based on a partial quotation of the government advice which refers mainly to non-residential shared spaces.</p> <p>Agreed. The Design Guide allows for inclusivity.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. We will replace reference from courtesy crossings to informal crossings in accordance with Manual For Streets (Fig 6.3.9)</p> <p>Noted. 3m radii are all standard stock items (not specials).</p> <p>Noted. Home Zones are a long established street design principle. Home Zones are the same as the Shared Surface Street as shown</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entry Places – whilst principle is accepted, roundabouts do have a place in certain contexts</li> <li>- Courtesy crossing references should be removed. Raised crossing definitions should be clarified. If pedestrians are to have a right of way over traffic, then the intersection should be built as a vehicle crossover</li> <li>- Private drives – LHA requires amendments to state that private drives be set back 25m from junction with main highway</li> <li>- On street parking should be setback from private drive access</li> <li>- Parking spaces cannot be allocated on the public highway</li> <li>- Electric vehicle charging provision is welcomed by the LHA</li> <li>- With on-street and on-plot parking courtesy crossings should be replaced with uncontrolled crossings</li> <li>- Granite setts on ramps may not be appropriate as they cannot be painted with road marking requirements</li> </ul>	<p>on pages 19/20 on SCC’s new emerging guidance Noted</p> <p>Noted. We will replace reference from courtesy crossings to informal crossings in accordance with Manual For Streets (Fig 6.3.9)</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. We will replace reference from courtesy crossings to informal crossings in accordance with Manual For Streets (Fig 6.3.9) In 20 mph zones no road marking are required therefore granite is acceptable in these areas. The Design Guide is based on 20 mph speed limits in residential areas.</p>
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	DISTRICT-WIDE DESIGN GUIDE CONSULTATION COMMENTS	5 JULY 2021 – 16 AUGUST 2021	
Consultee	General Agreement/Disagreement	Detailed Comment Received	SW&TC Response
Councillors			
1. Cllr Dave Mansell (Wiveliscombe)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It should also be clarified that the Council has declared climate and ecological emergencies and adopted the Climate Positive Planning guidance.</li> <li>- The Towards Zero Carbon Design &amp; Construction topic is not clear enough, although, until a new Local Plan is adopted, it may be necessary to show both the policy requirement and aspiration. I would like to see it made clear that the Council encourages developers to adopt a full zero carbon approach or as close to this as possible. It should be stated that it is essential we all do what we can to move towards carbon neutrality as soon as possible and why (to reduce and avoid worsening impacts of global heating and climate change).</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. The declaration on climate and ecological emergencies will be reflected more accurately in the Design Guide.</p> <p>Noted. However, the SWT Climate Positive Planning guidance is not policy or SPD but at present reflects the Council's aspirations in this direction. Control regarding zero carbon requirements is exercised through the Building Regulations. It is hoped that this situation will change over the life of the Design Guide.</p>
2. Cllr Caroline Ellis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-There is no reference to public art and its relationship to the Cultural Strategy or the Taunton Deane Public Art Code.</li> <li>- Suggestions are made regarding the definitions and guidance on public art.</li> <li>- It is suggested that the Design Guide refers to public art guidelines as in <a href="http://PublicArtOnline.org.uk">PublicArtOnline.org.uk</a></li> <li>- A design topic on public art is also suggested</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. This will be included in both the SWT Design Guide and the Taunton Public Realm Design Guide. It will also cross reference with the NPPF requirement to consider beauty as part of the design process. It is also suggested that this may be a criterion for consideration by the Quality Review Panel.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Consideration will be given</p>
Town & Parish Council's			

3. Stogursey Parish Council		Stogursey Parish Council resolved at their August meeting, to support the draft Districtwide Design Guide	Noted
Amenity Bodies			
4. Canal & Rivers Trust		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commented that canals and waterways are historic, natural and cultural assets forming part of the strategic and local green-blue infrastructure network. They contribute to well-being through active travel.</li> <li>- New development alongside the waterway should treat the canal as part of the development and address the waterspace.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted and agree</p> <p>Noted and agree</p>
Statutory Consultees			
5. Highways England		-Welcomes the council's intension to deliver sustainable development across the district by encouraging the development of sustainable transport opportunities, thereby the reducing the reliance on the private car.	Noted
6. Wessex Water		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Welcomes the promotion of early consideration of site appraisal where sustainable drainage measures are to be located.</li> <li>-Wessex Water supports the uses of sustainable drainage systems to manage flood risk, sewer flooding and the improvement of water quality and biodiversity.</li> </ul>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
7. Avon and Somerset Police		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stresses the need for security to be embedded in the design process.</li> <li>- Draws attention to the role of secure by design and crime prevention design advisors and their expertise.</li> <li>- Points out that government has placed obligations on police and local government to work together for dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour and that local planning policy, codes and legislation influence and address the need to design and crime and deliver safe and secure communities.</li> </ul>	Noted. The need for making places secure is addressed in the general design objectives, in the sustainable placemaking section and in Design Topic 5.6 – Privacy and Sociability. However, we will make reference to Secure By Design and the need to liaise with Crime Prevention Design Advisors.

8. Sport England		<p>- Suggests that the concept of active design be referenced as this relates closely to active travel and sustainable placemaking.</p> <p>- Suggest a number of references to support which could be consulted.</p>	<p>Noted. This closely relates to the objectives of active and healthy travel as advocated in a number of sections in the Design Guide, especially sustainable placemaking. Cross reference will be made to the Sport England Design criteria and the references will be included in the document.</p>
9. Office for Nuclear Regulation		<p>-Points out that ONR's land use planning processes may apply to some developments within the district and that development within a ONR consultation zone need to comply to requirements regarding hazards to the site and emergency planning.</p>	<p>Noted. This point will be incorporated under site appraisal.</p>
10. Environment Agency	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 127</p>	<p>- Welcomes the flood resilience and sustainable urban drainage plus blue and green infrastructure recommendations in the Design Guide.</p> <p>- Makes specific recommendations regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location of development</li> <li>• Flood risk assessments</li> <li>• Maintenance of water quality</li> <li>• Green and blue infrastructure detailing</li> <li>• Zero carbon design should include requirement to build at least to Level 4 in the Code for Sustainable Homes</li> </ul> <p>-Reference should be made to the CIRIA guidance on water sensitive urban design.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted all these points and will add and amend to the guidance as necessary</p> <p>Noted all these points and will add and amend to the guidance as necessary</p>
11. Historic England		<p>-Welcomes the preparation of the Guide as it is timely given the new NPPF etc. They commend its comprehensiveness and the design process and that it is clearly laid out, attractive to look at with many useful illustrations and signposts to useful information.</p> <p>-Some detailed comments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 4 – could expand on how to design places where heritage assets are present</li> </ul>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted and additional points and amendments have been made</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 5 - some topics could include advice on historic environment aspects, e.g. in 5.2, 5.10 and 5.12.</li> <li>• Section 5.16 - Heritage Statements is welcomed, however there are numerous detailed comments regarding guidance</li> <li>• Section 6.4 – additional links are suggested</li> </ul>	
12. Natural England		We have no specific comments to make on the design guides. Natural England concurs with your findings that the design guides do not require SEA or Appropriate Assessment.	Noted
13. Somerset County Council		<p>On behalf of Somerset County Council, I have no further comments or suggestions towards the design plan for Somerset West and Taunton.</p> <p>We are in fact very much in support of this plan.</p>	Noted
14. Somerset County Council (Highways Authority)		<p>- Make a number of detailed technical points concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference needs to be made to the need to consult with the Highway Authority</li> <li>• Corner radii</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Agreement has been reached about the interpretation about minimum dimensions regarding widths of narrow streets and corner radii for speed reduction purposes. A limited range of dimensions has been agreed and these would be interpreted on a case by case basis. The Design Guide advocated that corners should be determined by tracking and context rather than being unnecessarily prescriptive.</p>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Width of street</li>   <li>• Street trees should not generally be located within the adopted highway limits</li>   <li>• Reference to Home Zones should be omitted and the term 'Shared Surface Streets' should be used instead</li>   <li>• SCC had some concerns regarding the design of entry places and had requested clarification on the approach to these spaces</li>   <li>• SCC had some concerns regarding the length of platform intersections shown since they felt this was too narrow</li> </ul>	<p>Rather than including a prescriptive text we suggest a range 3.5m – 3.9m depending on context is included.</p> <p>Amendments have been made to the document to reflect concerns over maintenance. This involves the designation of tree pits to be separately managed by management companies etc, so not included as part of the public highway. SCC have agreed that if no other option could be found, then street trees might be adopted subject to commuted sums covering the lifetime management costs.</p> <p>SCC highways have requested deletion of all reference to Homezones (despite this term being widely used by DfT, including in the latest cycle design guidance LTN 1/20). Reference to Home Zones have been reduced and where they are mentioned, they have been explained and put with the SCC Highways terminology 'Shared surface Street'. The term Home Zone is a nationally recognised term.</p> <p>Dimensions shown are compliant with Manual for Streets. A range of dimensions have been agreed with SCC Highways and the principle was established that radius would be determined by context and considered on a case by case basis.</p> <p>The document has been amended because of discussions with SCC Highways</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCC had some concerns regarding the distance shown for private drives from main roads</li> <li>• SCC wanted assurance that parking on a main road would not obscure the entrance to private drives or visibility splays</li> <li>• SCC wished to have the term ‘courtesy crossing’ replaced with ‘informal crossing’</li> </ul>	<p>It has been made clear in the document that the maximum distance would be 25m. Agreed and drawings have been amended to exclude parking overlapping with a visibility splay.</p> <p>The document has been amended as suggested.</p>
Developers			
15. Vistry Group		<p>-Design Guide is too long and could benefit from being more succinct, clear and accessible and in its current form could hinder the audiences understanding of good design. The document is repetitive as National Design Guide defines the principles of good design.</p> <p>-There are a number of detailed points regarding Section 5.2 on zero carbon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the overall vision of the document, but questions whether all the principles of zero carbon can be implemented in the immediate short term</li> <li>• Vistry is committed to the recent changes in Part L of the Building Regulations and that the development industry is on the start of the journey to zero carbon and urges SWT to work with them flexibly</li> <li>• Doubt is expressed regarding the differentiation between policy and aspiration</li> <li>• Suggests updating of certain targets in relation to Building Regulation updates</li> <li>• P.100 is too prescriptive and detailed and should be consistent with Future Homes Standard</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. Given the ever-widening agenda for design and the requirements of NPPF and National Design Guide that LPA’s should produce their own Design Guide’s, it is considered that the scope and content of this Guide is appropriate.</p> <p>The “Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction” topic sets out a design process to help move development towards delivering zero carbon buildings. Tackling carbon emissions and climate impact via such a design process is integral to good design and aligns with existing planning policies. The topic clearly differentiates between what is policy requirement and what is aspirational/illustrative as the document does throughout.</p> <p>Additional text is proposed to clarify the relationship with the Government’s proposed interim update to Building Regulations Part L (due December 2021) and the Future Homes Standard (due 2025). However, it remains valid and reasonable to illustrate how new development could and</p>

		<p>-Section 4.4.4 – Vistry do not consider that all new residential building plots should have electric vehicle cabling and charge points, but do support cabling route provision to housing groups with more than 10 units</p> <p>-Section 4.4.5 – the section is too prescriptive and should not request the size, colour or materials of roadway surfaces</p>	<p>should be looking to push ambition in this regard in advance of and beyond these standards in order to deliver on the adopted target of working towards carbon neutrality by 2030.</p> <p>Given government targets for electric vehicles and charging provision, it is reasonable that the Design Guide encourages the widespread use of charging points for the vast majority of homes. These materials have been agreed with the Highway Authority as a reasonable standard.</p>
<p>16. Redrow Homes Ltd</p> <p>Page 131</p>		<p>-Appraisal of the setting of the site – Redrow consider that postwar housing estates are desirable and sustainable and that locally distinctive materials can be used to relate such scheme to the locality. The Design Guide should draw lessons from these much-loved places and should provide this in a framework for the delivery of house types designed for modern living.</p> <p>-Redrow claim that volume housebuilder house types are an essential reality of commercial house building and that bespoke designs for each site is unrealistic.</p>	<p>Postwar housing estates by their nature (nationally standardised house types with uniform density layouts and standard road layouts) are not considered locally distinctive as they are widely seen in the UK. However, there are cases where Garden City design principles have been adapted to the topography of sites and have used references to local architectural features which are used more successfully. House types which are developed to make successful streets and places (as in Section 4.3) can help in this process. It is noted that Redrow would be willing to consider this approach in collaboration with SWT. Section 4.3 indicates that house types should be developed which create successful streets and can be used to create individual groupings and can be used in a wide variety of settings. Too often standard house types</p>

		<p>-Under character areas, Redrow suggest that references should be made to the best post WWII housing developments.</p> <p>-Points are made regarding on-plot electric car charging</p> <p>-Redrow consider that the Design Guide shows a bias towards higher density housing which does not reflect the 30dph figure suggested elsewhere in the guide.</p> <p>-Redrow consider that the Design Guide must be revised to include more references to detached homes</p>	<p>do not perform the range of townscape functions necessary to create successful streets and places. They often are unable to effectively turn corners or create key groups due to their lack of flexibility.</p> <p>Whilst some reference can be made to the best of these areas, improved highway standards (Manual for Streets), best practice in urban design and the need to create walkable neighbourhoods means that the car based developments from the 1950's are not going to meet modern requirements. Standard low-density suburbia is no longer appropriate except in the minority of cases. Access to EV charging should be available for all on-plot parking spaces in order to meet zero carbon targets.</p> <p>Given the need to develop land economically and to encourage active travel, densities would need to be in a range from 30dph upwards. The diagrams show this range of densities even in a single block. The house typology shows both individual houses and how houses can be linked. (4.3.8 and 4.4.3d and 4.4.3g show a number of options for the grouping of individual or semidetached housing). Traditional streetmaking is not solely about detached house types since all too often traditional places have continuous frontages to enclose spaces and higher densities to make efficient use of land. Linked houses can be very attractive and desirable.</p>
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		<p>--Towards zero carbon and design construction, Redrow generally supports this ambition. However, it suggests that the Future Homes Delivery Plan should be included.</p> <p>- Sections 5.8 and 6.2, Redrow assert that design codes are not necessary given the Design Guide and masterplans for large development sites.</p> <p>-Section 6.1, Redrow welcomes the guidance on making a planning application</p> <p>-Section 6.5 Design Review, Redrow agrees that this is helpful at an early stage in the design process, however it would be helpful if the guidance could provide additional clarity in regarding what circumstances the panel is to be used.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Design codes are strongly advocated by government in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code. Moreover, codes can coordinate house types and plot layouts with street design to ensure cohesion especially when a number of developers are involved in a scheme.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted and the types of scheme required to undertake design review is clearly shown in the document</p>
17. Taylor Wimpey		<p>-Strongly supports and welcomes the production of the Design Guide SPD and supports the Forward by Cllr Rigby as 'entirely laudable objectives which would assist in delivering good design outcomes'.</p> <p>-Acknowledges the extensive work which has been undertaken in the preparation of the design guide and the complexities of producing guidance for different types of areas within the district. Welcomes the statement that it is not a straight jacket and that the drawings are indicative but not exhaustive and hopes that the design guide is implied in this way.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>-Section 2 – supports the design process stages. Section 2.6 on consultation and engagement, however the nature of the consultation needs to be tailored to particular circumstances especially for larger scale developments.</p> <p>-Section 3 – acknowledges that local distinctiveness is a crucial element in the design process. They point out that additionally the fenestration of standard house types to reflect local vernacular is appropriate. In the issues part of each character area description, they point out that there may be limitations of the availability of local building materials and traditional paving materials.</p> <p>-Section 4 – they wholeheartedly support the design principles set out in this section, particularly those in section 4.1 (integrating placemaking with sustainability).</p> <p>-The bullet points on p.70 concerning sustainable principles within an indicative scheme, are fully supported. However, the suggested requirements for PV panels and air sourced heat pumps should be extended to other technologies in larger schemes where the critical mass can justify these (as endorsed by the NPPF para 72).</p> <p>-Suggests the introduction of a parallel sustainability framework process alongside that in Section 2. The following headings are suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define a sustainability framework that is bespoke to the site</li> <li>• Determine what ‘sustainable looks like’ within this sustainability framework</li> <li>• Develop solutions which achieve these objectives</li> </ul>	<p>Noted. This principle is accepted in the document and should be appropriate to the scale of the development (see 2.6.2).</p> <p>Noted. However, where local traditional building and paving materials can be sourced, they should be used in key parts of the development. It is stressed that where traditional paving materials exist, they should be protected in any development.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted and the document has been amended to reflect this.</p> <p>Noted. It is considered that this is already addressed in the document and that sustainability is shown as a key principle throughout the design process.</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the application proposals on the basis of these outputs</li> <li>• Review and report on the application proposals in support of the planning application</li> </ul> <p>-Section 4.4.1- Seeks clarification that the inclusion of each of the measures shown for speed reduction have been discussed with the local Highway Authority and their inclusion in any scheme would not prohibit the adoption of streets.</p> <p>-Suggest that in low density areas the parking standards should recognise that car clubs and demand responsive transport could provide the opportunity to reduce the demand for second and third car ownership.</p> <p>-Section 4.4.5 – preference for footway surfaces outlined in the guide are noted and would seek clarification regarding the adoptability of these materials. Clarity is also sought regarding the commuted sums that would be payable for such surfaces, tree grilles and low planters.</p> <p>-Clarification is sought regarding on-street electric vehicle charging points regarding adoption, commuted sums, and future management.</p> <p>-Section 5 – generally agreed on design topics but need clarification on the status of 5.2 – Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction.</p> <p>-Section 6.5 on Design Review – generally supports design review but suggests that the importance of ‘the local voice’ can be different to that of a panel of professional experts and whether this can be managed in the context of the community engagement guidance set out in the National Model Design Code. Clarification</p>	<p>Noted. These measures are the outcome of a series of workshops with the Highway Authority who agreed these principles, which are in line with Manual for Streets.</p> <p>Noted and this is advocated in the guidance</p> <p>The materials have been agreed with the Highway Authority. Agreement on tree grilles and planters would need to be discussed on a case by case basis.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The guidance in the document when adopted will be a material planning consideration. The weight to be attached is for the decision maker.</p> <p>Noted. The design review panel is a different component of the engagement process which has to be weighed up alongside community engagement outcomes. Design Review taking place throughout the lifetime of the project and at</p>
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		is sought as to whether schemes over 50 homes would be informed by design review at both outline and reserved matter application stages.	an early stage is to be encouraged. Design Review Panels are keen to understand the results of community engagement as part of their evaluation of projects.
18. Hallam Land Management		<p>-Commends the draft Design Guide for being ambitious in scope and clearly communicating best practice for the design process.</p> <p>-Pleased to see the advocacy of increased density, encouraging a mix of uses and active travel.</p> <p>-Carbon neutrality – this principle is supported. However, SWT guidance and policy should progress in step and aligned with government guidance.</p> <p>-Electric vehicle infrastructure – supports the investment in electric vehicle infrastructure but the true costs are only just being understood and SWT should consider viability in terms of requirements.</p> <p>-National space standards – whilst supportive of the national space standards, SWT must adhere to footnote 49 of the NPPF requiring LPA’s to evidence need, viability and timing to support their implementation.</p> <p>-Design review – the flexible wording in relation to the requirement for design review – ‘the council will generally expect schemes of more than 50 homes or 5,000sqm of other floor space’, is considered too low to be effective. The design guide will not provide sufficient guidance to adequately inform a scheme at that scale. Suggests where used that design reviews should relate to large scale strategic sites of 500 – 1000 plus dwellings.</p> <p>Section 5.2 – Towards Zero Carbon Design &amp; Construction – supports SWT for its ambition to encourage a collective move towards zero carbon in</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. However, from 6/4/21 National prescribed space standards are now requirements under the GPDO.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. It is recognised that this section can only be advisory at this stage.</p> <p>Noted</p>



		design and construction and its pragmatic approach to set standards at a higher level than current building regulations. However, these aims should be in step with the scope of the Future Homes Standard.	
19. Burrington Estates		<p>-Supports the aim and objectives of the design guide, which if approached correctly should be a valuable and helpful tool to raise design and sustainability standards in the district. The challenge of producing a design guide for the full range of development types across a large geographical area and for both lay and professional applicants is fully recognised.</p> <p>-It should be recognised that the SPD does not seek to make and implement new planning policy of its own e.g. delivery of renewable energy solutions.</p> <p>-Concerned that the SPD is overly lengthy and appears too prescriptive which could stifle creative design. However, it is recognised that para 1.7 advocates the intention to be a 'springboard to good design, sensitive to context, not a straight jacket'. This is a crucial point and the design guide should never be dogmatic.</p> <p>-Concern that the design guide tends to reference very traditional forms and vernacular design examples, precluding innovative thinking and modern design solutions.</p> <p>-Suggests the replacement of the good/bad tool with further examples of more contemporary design solutions.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. The guidance is advocating best practice.</p> <p>Noted. Given the scope and ever-increasing agenda for good design in all contexts, the length of the document is considered appropriate.</p> <p>Noted. The design guide uses vernacular forms as a reference point to indicate the scale and context for development. The guidance drawings are illustrative and in the introduction it is stated that contemporary solutions are welcomed as long as they have regard to the design process and a proper understanding of site and context.</p> <p>Noted. The terms good/bad are not used in the design guide, but inappropriate solutions are included to encourage a more sympathetic approach to design.</p>

		<p>-The design guide should recognise technical feasibility and viability might override a preferred design solution, e.g. cost and availability of materials</p> <p>-To be deliverable, the design guide should have regard to the adoption requirements of the highway authority or water companies, especially regarding road materials, street trees and SUD's.</p> <p>- The draft design guide is very lengthy and wordy in trying to cover all bases, it has become prescriptive and unwieldy. Suggests a more focused user-friendly format as in the draft Taunton garden Town public Realm Design Guide.</p> <p>-Section 2 – generally supportive of the overall Design Process although questions how accessible this is given length and wordiness. Section 2.6 should recognise that consultation should be tailored to particular circumstances appropriate to site and location. This is especially the case where tailored stage engagement will be effective in larger developments.</p> <p>- Section 3 – repeats the concern about traditional vernacular examples which could stifle contemporary design.</p>	<p>Noted. A good solution in terms of layout, scale and form can be achieved with a variety of appropriate materials.</p> <p>Noted. The design guide has had regard to the requirements of the Highway Authority.</p> <p>Noted. Given the scope and ever-increasing agenda for good design in all contexts, , the length of the document is considered appropriate. It is hoped that the Key Requirements summary sheets, the use of bullet points as necessary and the frequent use of subheadings and indicative diagrams will help to give greater legibility of the document.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. The design guide uses vernacular forms as a reference point to indicate the scale and context for development. The guidance drawings are illustrative and in the introduction it is stated that contemporary solutions are welcomed as long as they have regard to the design process and a proper understanding of site and context.</p>
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		<p>-Concern that the cost and availability of local materials to apply to standard house types need to be recognised.</p> <p>-Section 4 Sustainable Placemaking- this holistic approach is considered positive and figure 4.1.1 is helpful in demonstrating this.</p> <p>- The bullet points on p.70 should not be seen as exhaustive, as alternative measures to address renewables are increasingly available.</p> <p>-Subsections 4.4.1 (20mph zones) and 4.4.5 (materials for footways, tree grilles and planters, on-street EV charging), these need to be agreed with the Highway Authority in order to avoid objections, refusal of adoption or incurring unreasonable costs.</p> <p>-Section 5 Design Topics – Section 5.2 – concern expressed about the relationship of the aspiration goals and adopted Local Plan policies and how decisions would be made in view of this.</p> <p>Section 6 Supplementary Information – The design review process and its importance are recognised. However, it would be helpful if the SPD could confirm the weight given to the panel’s comments where they conflict with local feedback or the views of the officer. Clarification is sought as to whether schemes over 50 homes would be informed by design review at both outline and reserved matter application stages.</p>	<p>Noted. There is an ever-increasing drive from government to reinforce identity and local distinctiveness and the recent requirement to have regard to beauty in design solutions. We however recognised that this needs to be balanced with viability. Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The materials have been agreed with the Highway Authority. Agreement on tree grilles and planters would need to be discussed on a case by case basis.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. The recommendations of a design review panel will be a material planning consideration in the determination of proposals. Design Review taking place throughout the lifetime of the project and at an early stage is to be encouraged</p>
<p>20. Bourne Leisure Ltd (holiday site operator, including Butlins)</p>		<p>-Acknowledges the importance of the design guide, however the scope of the draft SPD, which is predominantly residential, needs to clarify that not all the requirements will be relevant to non-residential</p>	<p>Noted. However, the design process in section 2, is applicable to all types of development and will be expected to be</p>

		<p>development. Otherwise this could result in unduly onerous requirements if applied to all new developments.</p> <p>-Concern that as the design guide is being prepared in advance of the emerging Local Plan that it must not create new policy.</p> <p>-Concern that the electric vehicle charging strategy final report, referenced on p.91 has not been fully consulted upon. Until this occurs this may affect any requirements in relation to the new Local Plan.</p> <p>-Questions the policy relationship for the SWT area, for example is Policy DM5 (TDBC) relevant to the former West Somerset area, and vice versa.</p> <p>-Acknowledges the importance of public consultation during the development process but states this is not mandatory in legislation.</p> <p>-The design guide should recognise that the character areas are not homogenous and the site context important. As drafted, it reads that certain types and scale of development are restricted to certain character areas. This could lead to overly restricted guidance and prevent future delivery of proposals.</p> <p>-We consider that the provision of electric car charging points should be clarified in relation to particular types of development, in particular to infrastructure. It suggests that the paragraph on p.91 should be amended as follows:          'With the declaration of a climate emergency by the Council...it will be expected that all developments SHOULD either provide charging points on plot or in convenient density in on street parking bays.'</p>	<p>adhered to especially in applications and Design and Access Statements.</p> <p>Noted. The policy context is clearly set out in the Introduction of the document.</p> <p>Noted. The Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy final report has been produced by the Highway Authority.</p> <p>Noted. Currently the policies relate solely to the former Local Plan areas and are not integrated. This will be revised in a future Unitary Local Plan.</p> <p>Public consultation is mandatory in the preparation of Development Plan Documents, SPD's and planning applications</p> <p>Noted. The sensitivity and scale of certain character areas might make some forms of development difficult or inappropriate to deliver. The design guide stresses that all proposals are context driven.</p> <p>Noted. We have clarified this point.</p>
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		<p>-Design Topic 5.2 Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction – endorses this approach.</p> <p>-P.120 Non-Residential Redevelopment – whilst endorsing the principles in this section, it notes that the draft SPD does not provide specific guidance on holiday parks and as such proposals should not be required to comply with the SPD.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. However, this general guidance, which of necessity cannot cover in detail every type of development, sets out broad principles that apply to all developments proposals and the design process that they will be expected to follow.</p>
<p>21. Abbey Manor Group</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 141</p>		<p>- The Introduction does not make it clear how this document should be used, the document reads as an instruction book on how to design a development. There is no room within this guide for contemporary or innovative design, all the examples quoted are of historic buildings.</p> <p>- what is unclear is whether the Design Process is a set format that must be followed. The document gives no flexibility or room for innovative design or creativity.</p> <p>- Whilst it is a consideration to reflect local distinctiveness, the word 'reflect' has been lost in this document.</p> <p>-Agrees with the broad principles of sustainable placemaking but considers that the draft design guide goes into unnecessary detail about how the principles should be implemented.</p>	<p>Section 1.7 – How Should It Be Used? Indicates the ways in which the design guide should be used and specifically states that this should be a springboard for good design and that quality contemporary design solutions are to be welcomed.</p> <p>Noted. Section 2.1 - The Recommended Design Process, indicated the stages of consideration in the development for any design scheme. These stages are recognised as best practice and they do not preclude innovative design (merely set a process not a specific outcome).</p> <p>Section 3 has been compiled to illustrate the salient aspects of character in the various parts of the district. It exists to inform designers of those characteristics which should be taken into account in context sensitive design responses.</p> <p>Noted. The principles and how they are implemented follows those set out in the National Design Guide, NPPF and general good urban design practice. The examples</p>

		<p>- The National Government has consulted upon and is bringing into legislation, improved Building Regulations and the Future Homes Standard. LPA's are not encouraged to adopt their own policies which are in excess of national standards. There is no reference to these National Standards in this guide and it appears that the LPA is seeking to adopt a higher standard than National policies</p> <p>- The document reads as very prescriptive and leaves no room for innovation or creative design but does leave the applicant and the Council open to challenge of non-compliance with the Design Guide if an application dared to stray outside of its strict parameters.</p>	<p>are used to illustrate the points and are indicative.</p> <p>Noted. This section sets out the Council's aspirations in regard to zero carbon design and construction.</p> <p>Noted. As already stated, in section 1.7, contemporary design solutions are welcomed as long as they can be justified in terms of addressing all the aspects set out in the design process (section 2).</p>
22. South West Taunton Comeytrove Consortium		<p>-The Consortium continues to support the design guide as SPD in that it responds to the requirements of the NPPF. Also supports the overall objective that design should be locally distinctive, be conscious of deliver a Garden neighbourhood and have a positive approach to placemaking and sustainability.</p> <p>-The Design Guide is mainly geared towards outline planning applications for greenfield sites as indicated in Section 2 – Recommended Design Process. It gives limited advice at the level of Reserved Matter applications.</p> <p>-There are too many specific examples and illustrations of what the LPA want but often not clearly setting out the guiding principles underpinning them. This leaves officers to pick the specific illustration they want, rather than allowing an interpretation of a guiding principle, e.g. the village edge drawing.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>The approach taken to the design process is valid at outline stage which underpins the basic approach and character of a scheme, but its heading and subsequent guidance is applicable to all stages.</p> <p>The illustrations are all supported by captions which indicate the salient points and principles to be considered. Illustrations throughout the document, as pointed out in the Introduction, are indicative to help explain principles to a wide audience ranging</p>

		<p>-Pre-application discussions have centred on interpreting a Taunton vernacular but there is little in the Taunton Character Area section that sets out an architectural style, details or house typologies other than 3/3.5 storey terraced housing.</p> <p>-No reference to the consideration of viability in meeting design expectations, especially around net zero.</p>	<p>from lay public to members, developer's and architects etc.</p> <p>The text on the Taunton character area identifies a wide variety of housing types, the 3-storey terraced type illustrated is part of a typology which is wide spread in the town in different styles. There is an illustration of a tree-lined street with Victorian villas and the analysis of a unique piece of townscape, i.e. Bath Place, in another part of the Design Guide. Additional information regarding the character of Taunton can be seen in the Garden Town Vision document, which highlights the essential character of Taunton townscape. It should be noted that there are many typologies that are found in most established town, such as by-law terraced streets, the distinctiveness of these is to be seen in the use of materials and details. These pointers to character of each area are indicative and should be used as a springboard for applicant's own appraisals.</p> <p>In connection with 5.2 Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction, these are aspirations set out by the LPA in response to its declaration of a climate emergency and the national and international move towards zero carbon development. In that the Building Regulations are at present the main form of control; these measures have to be</p>
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		<p>-The Placemaking part of the Guide is more directed towards urban and higher density solutions with little guidance for consented Garden Neighbourhoods such as Comeytrowe where average densities are much lower.</p> <p>-Section 4.3 - Designing house types that make streets and places – agree with the conditions to achieve good streetscapes but not necessarily all of the sections of characteristics and illustrations. The limited number of illustrations means that officers will always point to those solutions when there are other ways of achieving the condition.</p> <p>-Section 4.4 – Streets, Places and Parking – encouraged to see this section has been developed with SCC Highways. There are also a set of clear ideas on how to control speed, many of which we would support.</p> <p>-Section 4.4.3 – Elements of the Hierarchy – supports the use of the hierarchy of streets, although would recommend flexibility in interpretation.</p>	<p>taken into account in project financial planning.</p> <p>The Sustainable Placemaking section outlines objectives for sustainable placemaking and indicates these in diagrams showing housing ranging from low to relatively high density, depending on distance from existing or proposed neighbourhood centres. This is advocated in the National Model Design Guide.</p> <p>Noted. Further illustrations of each condition and house types will be considered.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted and agreed.</p>
Social Housing Providers			
23. Magna Housing		<p>Agrees in general with the design process but questions whether the many advantages of Modern Methods of Construction in housing development have been taken into account. In particular, discussion about material and finishes need to be brought forward in the design process.</p>	<p>Noted. The design process is applicable to all methods of construction and the layout of residential blocks can easily accept this form of construction. For instance, the guidance on 4.2.1 specifically mentions the appropriateness of the solution to block</p>



		<p>-Whilst local character and distinctiveness is an important consideration, it cannot be the 'be all and end all'. The advantages of Modern Methods of Construction in delivery and quality should be recognised and whilst sympathetic finishes can be applied, 'bespoke' solutions to each site are not possible.</p> <p>- The Sustainable Placemaking section fails to address the sustainability benefits of Modern Methods of Construction, mainly in terms of production and delivery</p> <p>-The Zero Carbon design topic is welcome, but largely ignores the significant role of Modern Methods of Construction in delivering sustainable design and construction. The SPD should champion the role of MMC in this regard, but rather makes a limited reference in section 5.2. We would cite the following as important benefits of MMC housing in terms of carbon reduction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency of build-quality</li> </ul>	<p>layout to Modern Methods of Construction. Considerations of site layout, form and scale should predominate over details of materials and finishes. The design decision making 'triangle' on p.16 is a logical sequence of considerations.</p> <p>Noted. It is recognised that construction considerations are important, however the relationship of a scheme to its surroundings is equally important, especially in its acceptability or not to local communities. The challenge for Modern Methods of Construction is that the products should make successful streets and places and relate to topography without compromising site constraints.</p> <p>Noted. The section is applicable to all forms of construction in that it stresses the need for individual dwellings or other units to be grouped to create successful streets and places and to address matters such as the use of renewables, SUD's, green infrastructure etc, which are not mentioned in the respondents comments.</p> <p>Noted. Section 5.2 advocates design approaches to achieve zero carbon whether by traditional construction, hybrid or MMC. Indeed on p.101 it mentions that MMC can play a significant part in achieving these general aims. Passive design, the use of renewables, fabric first and efficient building services can all be incorporated in improved MMC housing units. However as stressed</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling a “fabric first” approach to sustainability</li> <li>• Truly sustainable housebuilding</li> <li>• Reduced impact of construction on local residents</li> </ul>	above, MMC should have regard to context and site constraints and opportunities.
24. Somerset West and Taunton Council - Affordable Housing Development Partnership		<p>-Agrees with the general aims and objectives of the draft Design Guide. However, the guide should not preclude innovation which may not entirely reflect local existing built form.</p> <p>-Whilst accepting the desirability of street trees, questions are raised regarding ownership, location and management.</p> <p>-Generally, agrees with the aims of Zero Carbon Design and Construction however, SWT policies would need to be supported by Somerset County Council to ensure a clear and consistent approach to highways /parking requirement, particularly in relation to use of shared spaces. Argues that electric vehicle charging provision must take account of infrastructure capability and that other measures can achieve zero carbon transport.</p>	<p>Noted. There will always be limited exceptions to the general guidance, but adherence to sound urban design principles as in the NPPF and National Design Guide and the SWT Design Guide should be followed. The guide welcomes contemporary design solutions as long as the stages in the design process are followed.</p> <p>Noted. Amendments have been made to the document to reflect concerns over maintenance. This involves the designation of tree pits to be separately managed by management companies etc, so not included as part of the public highway. SCC have agreed that if no other option could be found, then street trees might be adopted subject to commuted sums covering the lifetime management costs.</p> <p>Noted. SWT has engaged with SCC Highways regarding electric vehicle charging infrastructure and SCC is in general agreement.</p>

		<p>-Concern expressed about viability of the design requirements in terms of increased costs. There is a real risk this will prevent the delivery of affordable housing irrespective of scheme size.</p> <p>-Concern is expressed regarding the adoption of open spaces, maintenance charges and adoption of street trees. There is a risk of exceptionally high, unaffordable service charges for management and maintenance to cover Estate Management for all residents.</p> <p>-Questions whether the LPA has adequate staff resource in planning to cope with negotiations regarding design quality and the additional early consultations in the planning process.</p>	<p>Noted. The advantage of a design guide giving clear and coordinated quality expectations on the expanding agenda on design as required by government through NPPF, National Design Guide etc, these aspects need to be taken into account in the cost of land acquisition etc. To some degree the advocated increase in density could offset some costs in development. Additionally, Modern Methods of Construction can help in this respect on condition that good placemaking principles are adhered to.</p> <p>Noted. However, adoption of open space and maintenance charges are outside the remit of this design guide</p> <p>Noted. Ongoing training and advice will be provided to all Development Management staff on the contents and use of the design guide. The setting up the bespoke SWT Quality Review Panel will provide critical friend support on more significant schemes.</p>
Residents			
25. Individual Submission		<p>- Not all locally distinctive characteristics should be encouraged. The design guide should encourage improvement whilst reflecting positive local characteristics.</p> <p>- 5.2c illustrative key performance indicators seems to suggest that the base standard is illustrative of policy</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>Section 5.2 incorporates current best practice based on national guidance.</p>

		<p>compliance. Base standard is barely better than Building Regulations. It falls massively short of a zero or low carbon standard which I understood is central to both the garden vision and government policy.</p> <p>To accept anything less in respect of developments expected to have a useful working life comfortably in excess of 50 years represents a failure to embrace these fundamental aspirations.</p> <p>-Agrees with the content and scope of the design guide although section 5.2 could be strengthened. Questions whether there ought to be guidance on the weighting of various design aspects. Concerned that the vocal wishes of local communities can be overridden by planning officers in weighing up the planning balance of an application.</p>	<p>Compliance at this stage can only be through carried out through the Building Regulations.</p> <p>Noted and see small scale decisions. Response above regarding section 5.2. Weighting would be difficult to apply universally as each site and development has to be considered on its merits. However, the Decision 'Triangle' on p.16 indicates the order in which recommendations and decisions should be taken from strategic to small scale.</p>
26. Individual Submission		<p>-There are many anomalies and lack of references that would assist in using the design guide such as defraMAGIC.gov.uk and <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles</a> for character areas which offer a better detail than that shown in doc</p> <p>It is a guide yet isn't as it suggests the solution but not all sites respond in that way and its wrong to suggest what is right and wrong design; that becomes more than a guide but a diktat on what should be designed to get permission.</p>	<p>Noted. Comment regarding the many anomalies does not include examples and is therefore difficult to respond to. There are many references used throughout the design guide and these are summarised in Section 7.2. Acknowledged that the reference suggested is not included and this will be considered.</p> <p>Noted. The guide indeed suggests solutions as well as setting out general guidelines. However these 'solutions' are indicative and illustrative in no way excluding others as long as the design process considerations are fully taken into account.</p>

		<p>section 6.5.3 of design review is good but fails on the last paragraph where by the rest of the chapter say its independent then 6.5.3 clearly is not independent and suggests that unless you use LA panel then it won't be accepted which goes against all government guidelines &amp; policies , invites cronyism and flies in face of competition laws thus illegal</p> <p>-The importance of landscape appraisal and ecological appraisals are not emphasised enough as the professions are trained in recognising landscape character and appraisal. Its clear up to offering suggestions such as in 2.5.4 and 2.7.2 that offer solutions.</p> <p>-It is a guide yet isn't as it suggests the solution but not all sites respond in that way and its wrong to suggest what is right and wrong design; that becomes more than a guide but a diktat on what should be designed to get permission.</p> <p>- Sometimes a new development can create a positive unique character and does not follow the pastiche potentially dangerous design of copying what's around rather than really examining high quality design for that space</p> <p>National Character Area should be referred to, the documents exist for a reason and the summary of them in section 3 is not complete.</p>	<p>The Quality Review Panel has been set up and will be managed independently. Whilst applicants might seek to use other panels, they will be strongly encouraged to use the bespoke panel for SWT, since officers are keen to have a consistent approach.</p> <p>Noted. Landscape appraisal is both advocated and the landscape of SWT is analysed in adequate detail for a design guide. Additional landscape appraisal is referred to in 7.2 Taunton Deane Landscape Character Assessment 2011. The last sentence is unclear.</p> <p>Noted. The guide indeed suggests solutions as well as setting out general guidelines. However these 'solutions' are indicative and illustrative in no way excluding others as long as the design process considerations are fully taken into account.</p> <p>Agreed. There will be cases based on a perceptive appraisal of context and site which can differ from the existing built form. The guide does not advocate the use of superficial pastiche solutions.</p> <p>Noted. A reference to this document has been included in Section 7.2. However the design guide landscape characterisation is more closely focused at the more local level as required by the NPPF.</p>
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		<p>- Agrees generally with the objective to achieve tree lined streets but urges that SCC Highways need to be in agreement management and adoption of street trees. This also applies to raingardens within the highway.</p> <p>-Regarding zero carbon design and construction, there needs to be an emphasis on using and buying local materials or workforce</p> <p>- The third public consultation on the draft SWT Districtwide Design Guide has not been well advertised</p>	<p>Amendments have been made to the document to reflect concerns over maintenance. This involves the designation of tree pits to be separately managed by management companies etc, so not included as part of the public highway. SCC have agreed that if no other option could be found, then street trees might be adopted subject to commuted sums covering the lifetime management costs.</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>Noted. The consultation has been carried out following the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. We have received comments from members of the public, statutory consultees, Councillors, amenity groups, developers etc.</p>
27. Individual Submission		<p>-Agrees that the promotion of local distinctiveness is an important aspect of design guides. However this should be applied flexibly as strict adherence may preclude innovative solutions which are nevertheless responsive to context.</p> <p>-Support the aims in Section 5.2 Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction and considers it is 'absolutely crucial'</p> <p>- Overall, I was much impressed by the draft. It is refreshing to see a well thought out and logical document - very different from what much of Government produces these days.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>-My only general comment is that it is very important that planning officers are not didactic, that they view each submission on its merits within the context of what is attempting to be achieved. They should not be driven by 'process' to the exclusion of common sense and flexibility.</p>	<p>Agreed. A programme of training of Development Management staff on the content and use of the SWT Design Guide was undertaken in Spring 2020. It is proposed that further training will be carried out after adoption of the document.</p>
28. Individual Submission		<p>-Agrees with in Section 5.2 Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction especially regarding the need to prioritise the retrofitting of existing buildings.</p> <p>-Regarding Section 5.10 – Taller Buildings, the storey height of buildings within Taunton’s historic core should be restricted to 4 storeys since above this height they do not make a positive contribution. Taller buildings will not contribute to placemaking on our high density historic areas. E.g. proposals to demolish lower buildings and replace with taller buildings will have a disruptive impact on the pattern of main streets and the skyline of historic areas and reduce their visitor image. The inner residential areas of Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing would also be overlooked by taller buildings. Replacement of high density housing with taller buildings means the loss of embodied carbon. Space should be reserved around tall buildings should be reserved for maintenance access and retrofitting cladding throughout the life of the building.</p> <p>-Regarding Making a Planning Application and the use of Design &amp; Access Statements, he considers that ‘Access’ should include provision for maintenance access without the need to gain access to neighbouring properties.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>The Tall Building guidance in 5.10 sets out criteria for the assessment of the visual impact of a tall building regarding distant and streetscape views, amongst other key factors. This advice is based on Historic England guidance which is concerned with the relationship of historic areas and taller buildings. This has been changed in the document.</p> <p>Noted. This will be considered.</p>

		<p>-Beyond access issues, we will need personal space to store mobility carts and bike trailers</p>	<p>Noted. There is some guidance regarding storage in 5.7 and to some extent 5.3.</p>
<p>29. Individual Submission</p>		<p>-Planning policies at application approval stage and for any subsequent variations do not ensure developments are low carbon or zero carbon. What is required is closer coordination between the LPA and the Building Control/Approved Inspectors.</p> <p>-Building Regulations currently are the only ways to ensure zero carbon, yet these are minimum standards and not the ultimate. It is hoped that the forthcoming amendments to the Building Regulations will address this.</p> <p>-5.15 Residential Extensions and Alterations – the guidance is of some benefit although in light of increased permitted development rights, these can be detrimental to the aesthetics and the amenity of a locality. Extensions can mean the loss of on-plot parking spaces resulting in vehicles parked on front gardens or the highway.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted. Where planning permission is required, these considerations are taken into account.</p>



		<p>-5.8 Boundary treatments – the design of boundaries is an important issue and the problem is their replacement with inappropriate design, height and materials which can have a negative impact.</p> <p>-Section 3 Local materials – supports the use of local materials however cites the loss of local brick manufacturers and closure of quarries as well as insufficient recycling of local materials. The LPA should provide a register of suppliers of local materials.</p>	<p>Noted and agreed. Often such structures do not need planning permission.</p> <p>Noted and agreed. Subject to the LPA having the necessary staff resource, a register of suppliers of local materials could be compiled. Alternatively, this could be suggested to the South West Heritage Trust.</p>
Internal Staff			
30. Internal Staff		<p>-Has found the draft design guide very useful, especially the character areas section</p> <p>-The design guide is less useful for smaller infill and extension sites, when dealing with non-architects. It is difficult to make individual judgements at this scale.</p> <p>-Section 6.5 Design Review – in my opinion this will involve DM officers in much more work in providing background information.</p> <p>Questions whether this is the right time to introduce Design Review since there is a delay in processing planning applications due to phosphates and pending local government reorganisation.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted. Additional training on the use and contents of the Design Guide is proposed once the document is adopted.</p> <p>Noted. However, the total number of cases going to review will be approximately 20/year and the case officer will only be required to produce a briefing sheet with issues that he or she would require clarification. The DRP decision letter should assist the case officer in writing the recommendations.</p> <p>Noted.</p>
31. Internal Staff		<p>-5.16.11 Shop Front – do we need to add something on advertisement guidance from existing TDBC policy guidance</p> <p>-Section 6.5 Design Review – Questions what happens when an applicant doesn't agree to the procedure to attend DRP and who can request what schemes are to be invited to design review.</p>	<p>Noted and agreed. Will consider inclusion of this guidance.</p> <p>Noted. However, the LPA cannot require an applicant to attend DRP. A request for a scheme to be considered by DRP can come from an officer, Member or member of the</p>

			public. If a scheme fulfils the criteria for requiring DRP, it should automatically trigger a consultation.
32. Internal Staff		<p>-5.2 Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction – should the adopted policy for TDBC be included in this chapter</p> <p>-5.5 Infill and Intensification – the illustrations could include guidance regarding questions of access, the appearance of blank gable walls facing rear gardens and acceptable windows on boundaries.</p> <p>-5.7 Storage for Cycles and Recycling – agree that this type of storage ought to be a covered structure. Can this be more explicitly stated.</p> <p>-5.10 Taller Buildings – Prefers a more restrained approach to the indicative illustration of the tall building to reflect the likely heights expected in the urban areas. Suggests buildings of approximately 6 storeys and points out that there is a considerable difference in character between 6 and 8 storeys. The existing illustration of a 10-storey building may suggest that this height will be generally acceptable.</p> <p>5.12 New Agricultural Buildings – sloping sites can be problematic and there is often insufficient information regarding the relationship of the proposed building to the sloping site.</p> <p>-Requests that the design guide sets out information required regarding finished level related to slope and that a section be provided. Additionally, the gradient of earth re-profiling should also be included to ensure blending with surrounding topography.</p>	<p>Noted. All relevant policy references are included in the introduction to the design guide. The Climate Positive Strategy (2021) incorporates the most up to date thinking. Noted and agreed.</p> <p>Noted and agreed.</p> <p>Noted. A more diagrammatic and lower building illustration will be considered.</p> <p>Noted and agreed</p> <p>Noted and agreed</p>

		<p>-Requests that the design guide discourages light grey roofs as they are more intrusive, should encourage more explicitly dark colours such as 'anthracite'. -Requests addition stating that 'permission for agricultural buildings will often be conditional on a landscape scheme being carried out'.</p>	<p>Noted and agreed</p> <p>Noted and agreed</p>
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## **CONSULTATION STATEMENT**

### **Somerset West and Taunton Council: District Wide Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

#### **Introduction**

Somerset West and Taunton Council (the Council) has produced a Districtwide Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which seeks a step change in the quality of new development in the district and provides additional guidance on how relevant policies of the adopted development plan should be responded to in relation to securing high quality design. A draft Design Guide SPD was considered by the Council's Executive meeting on 28 January 2020 and approved for public consultation. Following consultation in spring 2020, winter 2020/21 on an expanded 'Streets, Parking and Placemaking' section and in summer 2021, the Council has made several amendments across the document in response to comments received. The Council has now finalised the document in anticipation of adoption as an SPD.

This Consultation Report explains how the Council has undertaken public consultation to inform the development of the SPD, and how the engagement, feedback and responses received have influenced its development. The report covers: Which bodies and persons were invited to make comments; How those bodies and persons were invited to make comment; The material that was subject to consultation; A summary of the responses received; and A summary of how the responses influenced the development of the SPD.

The Council has an adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI outlines that the Council is committed to effective community engagement and seeks to use a wide range of methods for involving the community in the plan making process. SWT's Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in November 2019. In relation to plan preparation, the SCI relates to the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPDs), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Neighbourhood Plans. As such, the SPD is required to comply with the SCI.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out what is required in terms of public participation and the making of representations in relation to the production of SPDs. In response to Regulation 12(b), a Draft Consultation Statement was made available for public consultation alongside the SPD itself in the final round of consultation. This final Statement complies with the requirements of Regulation 12(a).

## **Consultation Summary**

The Districtwide Design Guide SPD has been subject to three separate periods of consultation:

- Spring 2020 (3 February 2020 to 30 March 2020) – First draft Design Guide
- Winter 2020/21 (11 December 2020 to 5 February 2021) – Expanded 'Streets, Parking and Placemaking' section
- Summer 2021 (5 July 2021 to 16 August 2021) – Updated Draft Design Guide

## **Summer 2021 Consultation**

Consultation on an updated Districtwide Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) took place from 05 July 2021 until Monday 16 August 2021 (six weeks). In accordance with Regulation 12(b)(i) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, consultation responses had to be submitted within this time period in order to be taken into consideration.

The documents available as part of this consultation included the following:

- Updated Draft Districtwide Design Guide SPD;
- Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment / Habitat Regulations Assessment (SEA/HRA) Screening Report; and
- Draft Consultation Statement

## **Purpose of the Consultation**

The Updated Draft Districtwide Design Guide SPD was produced as a response to a number of the issues raised in the previous rounds of consultation, particularly in relation to the climate emergency and how this is integral to high quality design.

As such, the purpose of the consultation was four-fold:

- To seek views of stakeholders and raise awareness in relation to the proposed amended design guidance,
- To ensure that the final SPD has been informed by a demonstrable level of public engagement and input as expected by the Planning Practice Guidance
- To ensure legal compliance with relevant Regulations and to ensure statutory consultee consultation in relation to the Draft SEA/HRA Screening; and
- To provide notice to the development industry, of the Council's design guidance and that as SPD it will influence planning decisions where it is a material consideration.

## **Who We Consulted**

A list of Specific Consultation Bodies, General Consultation Bodies, and other organisations and groups the Council seeks to involve in plan-making is included in the SCI. As a non-statutory plan, there is no statutory list of bodies and organisations that the Council was required to consult in preparation of the SPD. However, in accordance with Regulation 13(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012, any person may make representations about an SPD. As such, all those on this list were consulted at this stage.

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA

Regulations) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (Habitat Regulations) set out that Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England are statutory consultees in relation to the Draft SEA/HRA Screening Report and as such these bodies were specifically invited to respond to this element.

The Council is committed to ensuring that local groups, organisations, and individuals are provided with the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of planning policy documents.

The Council has a database of consultees, who have either commented upon, or expressed an interest in being involved with the development of local plans. This database is used to keep individuals, companies and organisations informed on the production of the Local Plan and other planning policy documents. New consultees are added to the consultation database via e-mail or letter to the Strategy Team requesting inclusion on to the database. The General Data Protection Regulations are followed to ensure that personal data is only required and retained where proportionate and necessary, is only gathered where explicit consent has been provided, is kept securely and is not disclosed to others. All bodies and persons identified within this database were emailed with notification of the consultation.

### **How We Consulted**

Consultation on the updated Draft Districtwide Design Guide SPD ran from 05 July 2021 until Monday 16 August 2021 (six weeks). During this time a variety of methods were employed, though the full range of methods was limited by definitive restrictions and a cautiously proportionate approach due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and gradual loosening of lockdown restrictions.

Responses to the consultation were invited:

- Online via the Council's consultation portal at <https://yoursay.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/design-guide/districtwide-design-guide03/>
- By email: [strategy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:strategy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)
- By writing to the Council at: Placemaking Specialist, Planning and Development, Somerset West and Taunton Council, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE;

To publicise the consultation, the Council:

- Emailed notification of the consultation to all bodies and persons identified within the consultation database.
- Made the above consultation documents available for inspection at the Council's principal offices at:
  - Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE (Monday – Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)
  - West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, TA4 4QA (Monday – Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)
- Published the documents on the Council's website at <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning-policy/districtwide-design-guide-spd/>
- Published a press release via the Council's website and social media posts via Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in order to raise interest and encourage

participation, at <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/swt-announces-further-design-guide-consultations/>

- Presented to a virtual meeting of the Agents Forum – 12 July 2021
- Presented to a virtual meeting of the Taunton Design Circle – 28 July 2021
- Presented to a virtual meeting of the Somerset Affordable Housing Group – 22 July 2021
- Hosted a virtual Town and Parish Councils Event – 13 July 2021
- Held a virtual General Question & Answer Session for Members of the Public – 14 July 2021 between 12.30 – 4.30pm

In light of the covid restrictions, it was decided not to arrange any in-person consultation events as would normally take place.

The consultation documents could also be viewed online at all libraries in Somerset West and Taunton.

### **Level of Response**

Overall, there were 31 responses to the consultation. Of the 31 respondents, 28 submitted their representation by email, 1 by post and the remaining 12 respondents responded online.

### **Summary of Responses Received**

The results of the consultation were representative of a wide spectrum of respondents, including Members, statutory consultees, community groups, parish and town councils, developers, housing associations and internal staff. In total 31 responses were received.

There was an overwhelming positive response to the revised draft design guide, with comments such as 'Overall, I was much impressed by the draft. It is refreshing to see a well thought out and logical document', 'Commends the draft Design Guide for being ambitious in scope and clearly communicating best practice for the design process, 'Strongly supports and welcomes the production of the Design Guide SPD and supports the Forward by Cllr Rigby as 'entirely laudable objectives which would assist in delivering good design outcomes' and 'Welcomes the preparation of the Guide as it is timely given the new NPPF etc. They commend its comprehensiveness and the design process and that it is clearly laid out, attractive to look at with many useful illustrations and signposts to useful information'.

The responses covered a wide variety of points, which is to be expected given the range of respondents' interests. The comments relating to the volume house builders are treated separately as their range, emphasis and depth was more substantial. Responses received from other parties can be broadly summarised under the following headings – a) Local Distinctiveness; b) Zero Carbon and Sustainable Development; c) Street Trees and EV Charging; d) Public Art; and e) Taller Buildings.

- a) Local Distinctiveness – The coverage by the design guide of the need to respond to local distinctiveness was welcomed by the majority of respondents, but it was recognised that this could also be achieved by contemporary design. – In response it has been emphasised that contemporary solutions that respond to local distinctiveness are welcomed. The recent update of the NPPF which requires that buildings are designed beautifully has been also been addressed.
- b) Zero Carbon and Sustainable Development – A number of respondents were keen



that the zero carbon agenda is afforded the highest consideration given the climate emergency. – In response the existing topic (5.2) has been expanded and emphasis is given in the introduction and in guidance on flood resilience.

- c) Street Trees and EV Charging – A number of respondents were keen to ensure that electric vehicle charging provision was catered in an appropriate manner related to context. Many respondents wanted to be assured that street trees would be included in new developments. – In response both EV charging and street trees were the subject of detailed discussions with SCC Highways to agree adoption and detailed design matters.
- d) Public Art – A member raised the issue of a lack of guidance regarding public art. – In response this has been addressed in the creation of a new design topic on public art (5.17)
- e) Taller Buildings – There were a few respondents who raised points regarding the need for increased guidance on the impact of taller buildings both on the landscape and townscape of main settlements in the district. – In response the guidance has been amended and strengthened on this matter and replacement diagrams provided.

Of the 31 respondents to the third consultation, 8 received were from volume house builders. A number of the comments from the volume house builders were broadly similar to those expressed in the previous consultations, particularly on issues of the level of prescription and local distinctiveness. These comments can broadly be summarised under the following headings – a) Over Prescriptive, Stifling Innovation and Document Too Lengthy; b) Local Distinctiveness; c) Requirements of SCC Highways and EV Charging; d) Zero Carbon and Future Homes Standards; and d) Design Review.

- a) Over Prescriptive, Stifling Innovation and Document Too Lengthy – Some of the house builders considered that the draft Design Guide was too prescriptive, would stifle innovative contemporary design and that the document was too lengthy. The issue of prescription was raised in the previous consultations. – In response, it was considered important for the design guide to strike a balance between policy requirements and to demonstrate through examples how these could be achieved in practise. The diagrams were considered illustrative, and the guidance made clear that if an applicant can demonstrate that other solutions would achieve the stated requirements, then other such solutions may be considered a valid approach.
- b) Local Distinctiveness – this was mentioned by a minority of the developers as being an issue and was also raised in the previous consultations. The house builder's concerns related to interwar suburban development not being recognised within the design guide as locally distinctive, that the distinctiveness of Taunton's vernacular was not sufficiently defined and that the section on distinctiveness over emphasises traditional built forms. – In response, interwar suburban development is universal throughout the whole country due to the standardisation of house types, layouts, road standards and density. These factors have resulted in uniform 'anywhere' character which is often at odds with the townscape and landscape of existing traditional settlements within the district. Furthermore, there is a need to make settlements walkable and to raise densities in areas which are most sustainable and nearest to facilities; this means that suburban low-density development is far less applicable than two generations ago. In regard to Taunton's vernacular not being sufficiently defined, much of

Taunton built form is 19 Century development with many characteristics that are common with building forms in other towns. There is however a palette of materials and a limited number of building details which are common to Taunton. On this point the house builders did not appear to appreciate that the guidance sets out pointers for applicants to make their own character appraisal of their site and its context. Regarding traditional building forms, the guidance does not suggest that an applicant slavishly copies historic buildings found in the district. The Design Guide advocates that traditional buildings provide a sense of place and identity, through establishing a scale, form, layout, and palette of materials which should be recognised and used as a springboard for design interpretation in new development.

- c) Relationship with SCC Highways Guidance – A number of the house builders raised the issue of the relationship of the Highway Authority and those of Planning and Placemaking. – In response, a series of workshop meetings were held with SCC Highways to attempt to resolve differing approaches to streetmaking. Substantial progress was made as shown in section 4.4.
- d) Working Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction – Several of the house builders raised the question of the degree to which the guidance on Towards Zero Carbon Construction (section 5.2) was mandatory. In addition, some house builders raised the question of the design guide's relationship to the Future Homes Standard. – In response, the design topic 'Towards Zero Carbon Design and Construction' sets out a design process to help move development towards delivering zero carbon buildings. Tackling carbon emissions and climate impact via such a design process is integral to good design and aligns with existing planning policies. The topic clearly differentiates between what is policy requirement and what is aspirational/illustrative as the document does throughout. Additional text was prepared to clarify the relationship with the Government's proposed interim update to Building Regulations Part L (due December 2021) and the Future Homes Standard (due 2025). However, it was considered reasonable to illustrate how new development could and should be looking to push ambition in this regard in advance of and beyond these standards in order to deliver on the adopted target of working towards carbon neutrality by 2030. In response to the house builder's concerns at how to mitigate the effects of overheating in residential buildings, an additional illustrative diagram was provided in the design guide.
- e) Design Review – Several of the house builders expressed concern at the status and need for Design Review (to be renamed Quality Review) – In response, Design Review Panels are a well-established feature of the planning process, and their use is advocated in the NPPF and Policy D7 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The design guide advocates that they offer independent critical friend advice. The criteria for triggering the need for design review related to the significance of a proposal as well as its size. The number of likely applications received per year, triggering the need for design review, was considered small in comparison to the total number of applications received.

## **You Said, We Did**

As a result of the 31 responses received during the third consultation, the following substantial revisions and additions were carried out to the document:

- The Design Guide was updated to take account of the new NPPF guidance on achieving 'Beauty' in new development as well as high quality and sustainability. Section 6.5 – Quality Review has been amended to clearly set out the Local Planning Authority's criteria for schemes where Design Review will be strongly encouraged as part of the authority's consideration of a development proposal. A bespoke Quality Review Panel has been set up for SWT district area and it is hoped that this will assist in making judgements on whether a scheme achieves high quality, beauty, and sustainability.
- Throughout the Design Guide, references and photographs were expanded on to encourage the use of contemporary design solutions as well as traditional. The Design Guide emphasises that the guidance should be treated as a springboard for good design rather than a straitjacket for development.
- Design guidance for flood resilience was expanded on in relation to the need for sustainable urban drainage, this was particularly in relation to guidance from the Construction Industry Research and Information Association. This publication has also been included in the References section.
- A new Design Topic on Public Art was included in the guidance. This subject was considered too light touch in the previous consultation drafts. This guidance corresponds to that contained in the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town. It emphasises that public art should not just be thought of as individual pieces of art but should also be integral to building design. It also emphasises the importance of achieving beauty in the built environment.
- The design guidance for achieving the urban block in a layout was also expanded upon to reflect the density requirements and variations shown in the National Model Design Code.

Other Minor Changes included:

- The context and local distinctiveness of the architectural character of Taunton was expanded upon to better reflect the predominant vernacular house types in the settlement.
- The guidance for shopfronts was expanded to include more guidance for signage and advertisements.
- Guidance on Taller Buildings was expanded upon particularly to include SWT's requirements for assessing such proposals and to include latest reference to Historic England guidance.
- Greater guidance was provided for agricultural buildings with their landscape setting, particularly regarding topography and the land profile of a site.
- The section on house types was amended and clarified to show the range and type of house types which are necessary as components to make successful streets and places.
- Greater reference was made to security and safety within layouts and the need to consult the Police Crime Prevention Officer.
- Guidance was also expanded on for the preparation of Heritage Statements in accordance with comments from Historic England.

## **Previous Consultations**

The Design Guide was initially subject to consultation from 3 February to 30 March 2020. Due to the covid pandemic, several consultations were significantly delayed including Somerset County Council (SCC). Following an objection from SCC Highways, detailed discussions took place in a series of workshop sessions between Somerset West and

Taunton and SCC as the Highway Authority.

As a result, on discussions with the Highway Authority, a second formal consultation was carried out on the Design Guide from 11 December to 5 February 2021 on an expanded section in the Design Guide 'Streets, Parking and Placemaking'.

During both previous consultations a number of methods were employed - the Council's consultation portal survey, by email and by post. All organisations, groups and individuals on the Council's Local Plan data base were notified of the consultation by the Strategy Team. In addition, press releases were issued by the Council's Communication Team and the consultations promoted on social media. The Design Guide was available on the Council's website and a copy was also available for inspection at the Council's office at Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

In addition, presentations on the Design Guide were carried out on 12 February 2020 at a CPD event for built environment professionals in Taunton, and for housing enabling providers on 27 February 2020. Also, a presentation on the Design Guide was also given to the Council's Agents Panel on 11 December 2020.

Most of the consultees welcomed the Design Guide SPD and were impressed with its attractive layout, illustrative material and its ambition to improve the standard of design. It was particularly welcomed as some consultees considered that the standard of design in the district was generally mediocre and lack local distinctiveness.

Of the 36 respondents to the first consultation and 7 respondents to the second consultation, 4 were from volume house builders already developing major sites in Taunton. The detailed comments from the volume house builders (which often overlap) and SWT's responses to them are show in detail in the summary of consultations in Appendix 1. These can broadly be summarised under the following headings - a) Viability; b) Level of Prescription; c) Local Distinctiveness; and d) Relationship with SCC Highways and parking.

Others comments received from residents, parish councils, amenity bodies etc, can broadly be summarised under the following headings - a) Importance of local distinctiveness; b) Need for active travel and well connected places; c) Need for new development to be as low carbon as possible and d) support for the Design Process.

In addition to comments from external respondents, other specialist officers from the Council provided consultation comments. Representations requested greater emphasis on a) zero carbon in the form of an extra topic, b) the development of smaller sites in order to expand the existing guidance in this area to smaller scale developments, c) agricultural buildings to reflect the rural character of the district.

A number of changes were made following the first and second rounds of consultation, responding to issues raised. Some of these changes were substantial revisions and additions, whilst others were of a smaller nature. For these reasons, the Council published an updated draft for a third round of public consultation before preparing the final draft SPD for adoption.



## **ADOPTION STATEMENT**

### **Somerset West and Taunton Council: Districtwide Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

#### **The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012**

In accordance with Regulations 14 & 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, notice is given that Somerset West and Taunton Council adopted the Districtwide Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on 7 December 2021.

The SPD contains guidance on Somerset West and Taunton Council's approach in relation to securing high quality design in the district. It supplements policies within the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan and the West Somerset Local Plan and forms a material consideration to be taken into account when determining planning applications.

Modifications have been made to the SPD as a result of public consultation. These can be viewed in the consultation statement published on the Council's website.

Any person aggrieved by the decision of the council to adopt the Supplementary Planning Document may apply to the High Court for permission to apply for Judicial Review of the decision. Any such application must be made promptly and in any event not later than 3 months after the adoption of the document, as required by Regulation 11 (2(c and d)) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

#### Location of SPD for Inspection

A copy of the adopted Districtwide Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is available to view free of charge on the Council's website:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning-policy/districtwide-design-guide-spd/>

In addition a hard copy of the document is available to view in the Council's Offices:

- Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE (Monday – Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)
- West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, TA4 4QA (Monday – Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)

For any viewing of the document at Deane House or West Somerset House, due to Covid restrictions, please call to make an appointment 0300 3048000.

The consultation documents can also be viewed online at all libraries in Somerset West and Taunton (please check with the library in question for their opening times).

# **Districtwide Design Guide**

## **SPD**

### ***Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment***

### ***Screening Report***

<b>Version</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	For internal consultation with Legal	15/03/2021
2	For consultation with Statutory Consultees	04/05/2021
3	To accompany final DWDG to adoption	05/10/2021



# ***Districtwide Design Guide SPD***

## ***SEA/HRA Screening Report***

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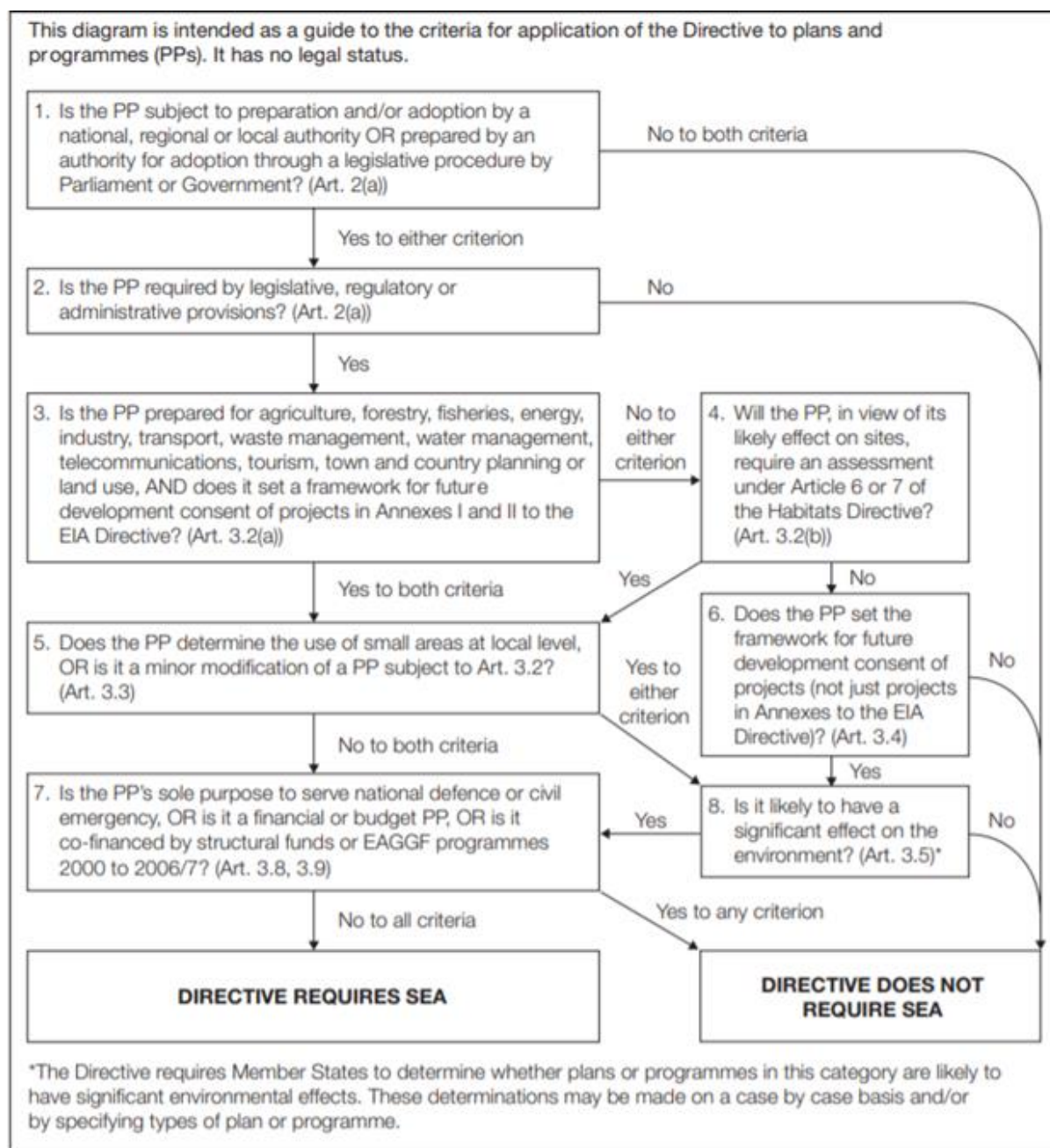
# 1. Introduction and Summary

- 1.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council has produced a Districtwide Design Guide which it intends to adopt as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The purpose of the SPD is to guide planning applications and decisions towards the successful implementation of policies DM4 (Design) of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, D7 (Design Quality) of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, and NH13 (Securing High Standards of Design) of the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032. The SPD seeks a step change in the quality of new development in the district and provides additional guidance on how these and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan should be responded to in relation to securing high quality design.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Report is to determine whether the Districtwide Design Guide SPD (herein referred to as “the SPD”) should be subject to:
- a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations); or
  - a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- 1.3 Under the above pieces of legislation, an SEA is required for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment; and an HRA is required when it is deemed that the implementation of the plan is likely to cause significant negative effects upon protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites).
- 1.4 The conclusion of the assessment is that the SPD does not require full SEA or HRA to be conducted.**
- 1.5 A Draft Screening Report was sent to the three statutory consultees designated in the regulations (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) for their views. This final report has been informed by comments received.

## 2. SEA Screening

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive), transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Detailed guidance on these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005).
- 2.2 The objective of SEA is *"to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of development plans... with a view to promoting sustainable development"* EU Directive 2001/42/EC (Article 1).
- 2.3 Under Article 2(a) of the SEA Directive, a plan or programme requires an SEA to be conducted where it is:
- *"subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, and*
  - *required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions."*
- According to the ODPM guidance, "administrative provisions" are *"likely to be that they are publicly available, prepared in a formal way, probably involving consultation with interested parties. The administrative provision must have sufficient formality such that it counts as a "provision" and it must also use language that plainly requires rather than just encourages a plan or programme to be prepared"*.
- 2.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance states that *"In exceptional circumstances a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be required when producing a Supplementary Planning Document"* (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 61-008-20190315). Therefore, the Council is legally obliged to advise on whether it is their opinion that an SEA is required or not.
- 2.5 In order to determine whether or not an SEA is required, a "screening" exercise has been undertaken by the Council. The screening evaluates the contents of the SPD against the criteria set out in the SEA Directive. These criteria are presented over the page in Figure 1.
- 2.6 Should the screening conclude that the SPD is applicable and will have a "significant impact on the environment", then a full SEA will be required. Should the conclusion be that an SEA is not required, then any future significant variations or additions to the SPD will need to be subject to further screening.

Figure 1 – Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



### ***The Districtwide Design Guide SPD***

2.7 The SPD builds on and has been produced pursuant to adopted policies DM4 (Design) of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, D7 (Design Quality) of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, and NH13 (Securing High Standards of Design) of the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032. The purpose of the SPD is to seek a step change in the quality of new development in the district and guide planning applications and decisions towards the successful implementation of the above and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan, providing additional guidance as to how they should be responded to in relation to securing high quality design.

- 2.8 The SPD illustrates how the council's aspirations for maintaining and improving the quality of design can be achieved. It explains some key principles, such as placemaking and illustrates examples through indicative drawings. It demonstrates that many measures to reduce the harmful effects of climate change can be addressed within the context of good design and placemaking. It also attempts to show how current principles of highway design and layout can be incorporated into good placemaking.
- 2.9 The SPD is predominantly focussed on the range of new build residential development at all scales. However, the main recommendations and suggested design process are relevant to the majority of development types. The Guide also addresses the conversion and extension of existing buildings, whether heritage assets or not.
- 2.10 The SPD covers the area of the Local Planning Authority, which covers the Somerset West and Taunton Council area excluding areas within Exmoor National Park (which is its own Local Planning Authority).
- 2.11 The SPD has been compiled with the intention of being a springboard for good design, sensitive to its context, not a straitjacket requiring strict adherence to a particular aesthetic. The processes, principles, diagrams, illustrations, topics and associated advice and guidance included within seek to amplify existing requirements of adopted planning policies and provide guidance on how these requirements can be successfully responded to. Therefore, and by definition, the SPD sits as supplementary to these adopted plans. The SPD includes no policies and does not allocate any land for development.
- 2.12 The Districtwide Design Guide will be adopted as SPD and as such become a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications. This means that the SPD will carry weight in the decision-making process, although it will not in itself be part of the adopted development plan. Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Provided regard is had to all material considerations, it is for the decision maker to decide what weight is to be given to the material considerations in each case.

### **The SEA Screening Assessment**

- 2.13 Table 1, below contains the criteria from Figure 1, above. It identifies whether the Council considers the answer to each criterion to be Yes or No, and gives the reason for this conclusion.

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Plan or Programme (PP) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority <b>OR</b> prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The SPD has been prepared and will be adopted as SPD by Somerset West and Taunton Council in line with the procedure set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Plans)(England) Regulations 2012.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The SPD is not formally <i>required</i> by any legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. However, Paragraph 128 of the NPPF states that " <i>To provide maximum</i>

		<p><i>clarity about design expectations at an early stage, all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design”, paragraph 129 states that “to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents” and the national Planning Practice Guidance suggests that “to be given as much weight as possible in the decision-making process, Design Guides should be adopted as SPDs”. So, whilst a design guide is not required, it is recommended/encouraged. The SPD will be publicly available and has been prepared in accordance with the above mentioned legislative and regulatory processes.</i></p>
<p>3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, <b>AND</b> does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))</p>	N	<p>The SPD has been prepared for the purposes of town and country planning and informing consideration of development proposals which may include those associated with forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and other land uses, including potentially in relation to some of the projects referred to in Annex I and/or II of the EIA Directive. However, the SPD does not set the framework for future development consent of such projects as this is already set by the existing adopted local plans covering the SWT district. The SPD merely provides additional guidance in relation to the design of such development proposals, and how specific adopted planning policies might be responded to in relation to securing high quality design.</p>
<p>4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))</p>	N	<p>See section 3 of this Screening Report in relation to HRA Screening.</p>
<p>6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)</p>	N	<p>The SPD does not set the framework for future development consent of such projects as this is already set by the existing adopted local plans covering the SWT district. The SPD merely provides</p>



		additional guidance in relation to the design of such development proposals, and how specific adopted planning policies might be responded to in relation to securing high quality design. The SPD does contain specific criteria and conditions designed to guide development proposals in responding to adopted planning policies, which the Council as the Local Planning Authority would take account of as a material consideration in determining an application for planning permission. However this is pursuant to the already adopted planning policies which have previously been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). In addition, the SPD will influence the production of a new Local Plan, the policies of which will be subject to SA/SEA as a matter of course in the development of that Plan.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	See screening assessment for environmental effects in Table 2 of this report, below.

2.14 Criterion 8 requires an assessment of whether the SPD is likely to have a significant effect on the environment in reference to Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive. Schedule 1, Annex II of the SEA Regulations contains the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. Table 2, below contains the criteria from Schedule 1 Annex II of the SEA Regulations and an assessment of whether the Plan would likely have a significant environmental effect or not.

Table 2 – Environmental impact screening assessment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Schedule 1 of SEA regulations)	Is the strategy likely to have a significant environmental effect?	Justification for Screening Assessment
The characteristics of plans and programmes:		
a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating	N	The SPD has been produced in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and influenced by the Planning Practice Guidance and National Design Guide. The SPD provides guidance as to how development proposals should respond to existing adopted planning policies including with regards to their detailed location (within

<p>conditions or by allocating resources;</p>		<p>a site rather than where the site is) and the nature of the development's design which may include the size and influence the operation conditions of the prospective development. However, the framework is set by the adopted development plan policies. The SPD will not influence the spatial distribution, scale or type of development that may come forward across the district, or suggest how appropriate or otherwise a development might be in relation to these factors, which are set by the development plan. The SPD does not allocate any resources. The overall intent of the SPD is to encourage and guide development towards delivering on the positive environmental and sustainable design requirements of adopted planning policy.</p>
<p>b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The SPD has been produced in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and influenced by the Planning Practice Guidance and National Design Guide. It will influence the development of site-specific masterplans, design codes and other design processes which would be prepared by planning applicants in order to respond to existing adopted planning policies. The SPD will influence policy development for a new Local Plan, however, the new Local Plan will, once prepared and adopted sit above the SPD in the hierarchy and will be subject to its own Assessment. In this way, the SPD will influence the production of other plans and programmes. However, it is considered that the degree of influence of the SPD is limited in relation to these plans and programmes which will be influenced by a wide range of factors. With regards to influence of site-specific design processes the SPD is intended to influence these to a high degree, and it should therefore result in positive environmental effects, particularly with regards to the immediate built (including historic) and natural environment in and around a site. However, as just one factor influencing development proposals, and as a material consideration only, it is unlikely that the SPD would have a significant effect on proposals, or any environmental effects which may arise from a specific development proposal which will be far more influenced by site context, developer intentions, adopted</p>



		<p>planning policy, and national policy and guidance. Furthermore, the illustrative nature of much of the guidance contained within is intended to provide examples of how developments might respond to particular topics in responding to adopted planning policy and in some cases aspiring to higher standards, but do not set requirements in themselves. With regards to a new Local Plan, the degree of influence is much less, and the new Plan would have the freedom to choose to take a different path on issues covered by the SPD if so wished as it will be subject to a separate Assessment.</p>
<p>c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;</p>	N	<p>The SPD is specifically aimed at promoting sustainable development, but has a particular focus on design. The high quality design that the SPD promotes is integral to sustainable development and will result in environmental (e.g. visual impact), social (e.g. health and wellbeing improvement) and economic (e.g. encouraging inward investment) benefits to the area. The SPD does not cover all aspects of sustainable development, however, this is not its intention or place. The integration of a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors has already been assessed and achieved via the existing adopted development plans. The relevance and influence of the SPD will be balanced in decision making alongside all relevant policies of the development plan and other material considerations with a view to promoting sustainable development in the round. Therefore, the SPD has relevance to the integration of environmental considerations as part of promoting sustainable development. However, the effects of the SPD in this regard are unlikely to be significant as the balance of different social, economic and environmental factors is already determined at a strategic level by the adopted development plan and will be balanced on a case-by-case basis in determination of planning applications.</p>
<p>d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;</p>	N	<p>The SPD addresses environmental problems associated with the design of places, buildings and the spaces in between, specifically aiming to result in development which avoids and minimises and mitigates negative design-associated environmental impacts. This includes promoting positive</p>

		<p>strategies for the avoidance, minimising and mitigation of environmental problems such as landscape and visual impact, impacts upon designated and non-designated heritage assets, air quality, flood risk, health and wellbeing, carbon emissions and resilience to climate change amongst others. The SPD will not be the only factor informing the design response of development proposals in relation to these environmental problems. Therefore, it is difficult to quantify the contribution of the SPD as a part of this. The SPD is designed to encourage positive responses, building on local and national policies and guidance, resulting in positive impacts and effects upon the environment. However, the effects of the SPD in this regard are unlikely to be significant as the adopted development plan is the primary driver for how developments will respond to these issues. The SPD provides additional guidance to help clarify how development proposals can meet with existing policy requirements in this regard.</p>
e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	N	The SPD is not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation including the Water Framework Directive.
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected:</b>		
a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	N	The SPD is intended to encourage development proposals which deliver positive environmental effects. The likelihood of these effects occurring is unknown as this is dependent on consideration and determination of individual planning applications where the full range of planning policies and material considerations must be taken into account. However, the intention would be that the SPD generally influences development proposals to deliver positive environmental effects in every case, and once implemented, these effects would generally be permanent. However, the environmental effects resulting from application of the SPD are unlikely to be significant.

b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	N	The SPD will in combination with other plans, policies and guidance of this nature locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, have a positive effect on the environment, and the strength of these plans, policies and guidance is amplified when consistent and considered together. However, in isolation, its effects will be more limited and are unlikely to be significant whether alone or cumulatively.
c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	N	There would be no transboundary effects.
d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	N	The SPD promotes high quality sustainable design which would contribute towards the mitigation of risks to human health and the environment, including in relation to health and wellbeing (for instance through placemaking and street design which encourages walking and cycling which may result in reduced air quality concerns and improved physical and mental health for individuals). However, the specific impacts of the SPD guidance in relation to specific development proposals, and the effects these result in are not clear at this stage. However, the effects are likely to be positive although unlikely to be significant.
e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	N	The SPD covers the extent of the Somerset West and Taunton Local Planning Authority area (i.e. the district minus those areas within Exmoor National Park). The SPD will influence development proposals, and as such will therefore only be relevant to specific areas and populations within the district where development takes place. Generally, the effects are likely to be positive and unlikely to be significant.
f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to – i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii) intensive land-use; and	N	The district of Somerset West and Taunton has a number of special natural, cultural and heritage characteristics which are specific to the district or wider area, including a relatively high concentration of historical assets including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The SPD identifies these characteristics and provides guidance on how development proposals should respond to these in different cases and locations across the district. As such the SPD should contribute towards positive effects on these areas of the district, which may otherwise be adversely impacted by development proposals. The district includes natural areas particularly vulnerable

		<p>to exceedance of environmental quality standards, including in relation to phosphate loading of the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site. The SPD is unlikely to directly influence or impact upon this vulnerability or the unfavourable status of this protected site, However, strategies for mitigating impacts upon the site may be able to build upon objectives for Green Infrastructure and sustainable drainage solutions advocated by the SPD. The district hosts two Air Quality Management Zones. Successful implementation of the SPD may help to reduce air quality impacts of new development on these and other areas through the creation of streets and places which foster sustainable movement. The SPD encourages development proposals to make best use of land, including through appropriate intensification of the urban area and development of infill plots, however, the high quality design it seeks to deliver would avoid inappropriately intensive land use.</p>
<p>g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The SPD is intended to promote design solutions which respond effectively and appropriately to the contexts in which they are sited, including in relation to protected and valued landscapes. The SPD covers the parts of the Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills AONBs which fall within the district as well as areas which fall outside these designations but would impact upon their settings. The setting of Exmoor National Park is also a key consideration in parts of the district covered by the SPD. The environmental effects upon these designations resulting from this SPD are likely to be positive and unlikely to be significant.</p>

**SEA Screening Conclusion**

2.15 It is the opinion of the Council that the Districtwide Design Guide SPD does not require Strategic Environmental Assessment. However, it is important that as relevant individual development proposals are developed, they are subject to project level Environmental Assessment as appropriate, in order to understand whether significant effects may arise.

### 3. HRA Screening

- 3.1 The basis for Habitat Regulations Assessment legislation is the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive), transposed into English law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitat Regulations).
- 3.2 The Habitats Directive and Regulations afford protection to plants, animals and habitats that are rare and vulnerable in a European context. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a systematic process through which plans or projects are assessed for likely impact on the integrity of European Sites. European Sites, (also referred to as Natura 2000 sites), consist of Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); Potential Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (pSPA and cSAC); and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.
- 3.3 There are seven Natura 2000 sites within the Somerset West and Taunton district, as set out in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – European Sites / Natura 2000 sites within Somerset West and Taunton district.

European Sites / Natura 2000 sites
Exmoor and Quantock Oak Woodlands SAC
Hestercombe House SAC
Holme and Clean Moor SAC
Quants SAC
Severn Estuary SPA/SAC/Ramsar
Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar
Exmoor Heaths SAC

- 3.4 Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that:  
*“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives”.*
- 3.5 Under the Habitat Regulations, the Council is considered to be a “competent authority”. Regulation 63(1) of the Habitat Regulations states that:  
*“A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which –*  
*a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and*  
*b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site,*  
*must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site’s conservation objectives.”*
- 3.6 The first stage of the HRA process is to establish whether a “*significant effect*” is likely. This is referred to as screening. If the screening assessment concludes that a significant effect is not likely then no further action is required. If the screening assessment identifies potential effects and deems them to be significant, then further “*Appropriate Assessment*” is required.

- 3.7 In order to establish whether the SPD is likely to have any significant effects upon the European Sites, this Screening assessment considers the SPD in relation to four steps based around the Screening methodology set out in the Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission 2001) as set out in Table 4, below.

Table 4 – Screening steps and responses

Question	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the PP directly connected with, or necessary to the management of a European site for nature conservation?	N	The SPD provides detailed guidance on the implementation of existing planning policies relating to the design of new development. In theory, new development proposals connected with or necessary to the management of a European site could come forward and in which case the SPD would be a material consideration in the determination of any related planning application. However, this is unlikely and the SPD does not directly influence or set policy necessary to the management of any European Site.
2. Are there any other PPs that could in combination with this PP have potential to have significant effects upon a European Site?	Y	The SPD has been produced pursuant to existing adopted planning policies in the adopted development plan, the comprising plans of which and the specific policies off of which this SPD hangs have been all been subject to Appropriate Assessment. As a result of this, the adopted plans include policies and mitigations to ensure that significant effects do not arise in relation to the European Sites. Subsequent to adoption of these existing adopted development plans, an issue has arisen whereby it has been identified that new development is contributing towards unacceptable phosphate levels in the Somerset Levels and Moors. The result of this is that the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site is considered to be in an 'unfavourable state' and as such there is currently a constraint on the consent of new development which may result in further raising of phosphate levels until such point when a suitable mitigation solution has been identified and developed through a Phosphates Strategy. The effect of the SPD in combination with current adopted planning policies and the emerging Phosphates Strategy and other material considerations is that there are multiple, sometimes competing factors which new development has to try and respond to / satisfy. In some cases, development viability may result in a need to prioritise different elements whilst retaining the need to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. In this case, mitigating phosphate impacts upon the Somerset Levels and Moors and any other potential significant effects of a proposed development upon European Sites would need to take priority over compliance with the SPD. It's status as an SPD and material consideration in the determination of planning applications means that where necessary and



		appropriate there can be flexibility for development proposals in their responses. There may be synergies between the implementation of the SPD and ensuring no significant effects arise from new development, particularly in relation to Green Infrastructure and sustainable drainage solutions advocated by the SPD. A new Local Plan (the production of which will be influenced by the SPD) may have potential to have significant effects upon a European Site. However, these effects are not yet known and the Local Plan process will be subject to Appropriate Assessment as a matter of course. The HRA published alongside the Local Plan 2040 Issues and Options document earlier in 2020 describes the characteristics and potential issues of relevance for each of the European Sites and assesses the Local Plan policy options for likely effects upon the Sites.
3. Are there likely to be any potential effects upon the identified European Site(s)?	N	The SPD has been produced pursuant to existing adopted planning policies in the adopted development plan, the comprising plans of which and the specific policies off of which this SPD hangs have been all been subject to Appropriate Assessment. As a result of this, the adopted plans include policies and mitigations to ensure that significant effects do not arise in relation to the European Sites. The SPD will not result in development itself, rather guide development in relation to high quality design and responding to these existing adopted planning policies. As such, there are not anticipated to be any likely potential effects upon the identified European Sites as a result of the SPD.
4. What is the significance of the effects upon the identified European Site(s)?	N/A	No likely potential effects are anticipated as a result of the SPD.

### ***HRA Screening Conclusion***

**3.8 It is the opinion of the Council that the Districtwide Design Guide SPD does not require Appropriate Assessment under HRA legislation. However, it is important that as the detail of relevant individual projects developed, they are screened so that it can be understood whether significant effects may arise.**





# Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

The [EIA guidance notes](#) will help you complete this assessment.

If you need help or advice please contact Paul Harding. [P.harding@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:P.harding@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

**Organisation prepared for**

**Somerset West and Taunton Council**

**Version**

**1**

**Date Completed**

**30 September 2021**

## Description of what proposed change or policy is being impact assessed

The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide is a new planning policy guidance document under the adopted Local Plan and is proposed to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Once adopted the SPD would be a material consideration when considering any planning applications. The Design Guide sets out the Council's aspirations for improving the quality of design in all types of new development and provides guidance for creating resilient and sustainable built environments which are responsive to everyone, regardless of age, ability, gender and income.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code advocate that local authorities produce design guides as a means to achieve a higher quality of development which addresses the aims above. The NPPF recommends Design Guides should be adopted as SPD's in order they are given as much weight as possible in the decision making process.

The document has been subject to three separate public consultations over an 18-month period (minimum of 6 weeks each) and has involved consultation with an extensive range of stakeholders, including all those shown in Appendix A of the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

This SPD provides clear guidance for the creation of high quality buildings and places. Para 124 of the NPPF states that 'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities'. The Council places equal importance on the creation of sustainable placemaking as well as accessibility for all, particularly for those people from the disabled community.

As part of the preparation of the document several workshops took place with SCC Highways to inform its preparation, particularly on the section Streets, Places and Parking. This has involved SCC officers also updating their own highways guidance.

## Evidence

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide has been reviewed.

This design guide document builds upon advice set out in NHCLG's National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code.

It also builds on work undertaken in the development and approval of other 'live' strategies:

- SWT Corporate Strategy;
- Taunton Garden Town Vision;
- Taunton Garden Town Charter and Checklist
- SWT Economic Development strategy;
- Improving Lives in Somerset (Health & Wellbeing) 2019-2028,
- Somerset Housing Strategy -2019-2023,
- Somerset Growth Plan 2017-2030

Each of the above which have been evidence-based using such sources as Office of National Statistics, Somerset Intelligence Partnership, Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA).

**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

Officers within the Council with an overview of the Equalities function, who have experience of identifying impacts on those with protected characteristics have been consulted for this initial identification of potential impacts.

The SPD document has been subject to three separate public consultations (for a minimum of 6 weeks each consultation). These consultations have included the relevant community and interest groups and individuals associated with protected characteristics.

The groups consulted in the consultation events have included the below organisations:

- i) Disability groups – Action on Disability and Development, Alzheimer's Society – Somerset, Autism Somerset, Bridgwater & Taunton Deane Deaf Club, Compass Disability Services, ESCAPE Support Groups, Maggie's Centre (Cancer Care),

- Mind in Taunton & West Somerset, RNID (Action on Hearing Loss), Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Somerset Sight, Taunton and District Mencap Society.
- ii) Diversity groups – Avatar Indian Dance Somerset, British Bangladeshi Association Somerset, CHARIS, Devon and Somerset Anglo-Scandinavian Society, Diversity Voice, Johnny Mars Foundations, Minehead and District Refugee Support Group, Minehead Methodist Church- Little Fishes Toddler Group, Multicultural Parents Group, Oakwood Church, Philippine International Neighbourhood Association of Somerset (PINAS), Polish Association Taunton, Polish Voice TV, RAISE (Racial Awareness Inclusion Support and Education CIC, Somerset Art Works, Somerset Film, Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Somerset Portuguese Association, South Somerset Filipinos and Friends Association (SSFFA), Syrian Women’s Group, Taunton Malayali Prayer Group, Taunton Welcomes Refugees, Under One Sun, West Somerset Inter-Cultural Friendship Society, YMCA Somerset Coast
- iii) Multicultural groups – Anglo Chinese Society, Equality & Human Rights Commission, Ethnic Minority Achievement and Traveller Education Service, Friends Families and Travellers, Somerset Multicultural Association, Taunton Deane Polish Association, The Diversity Trust.
- iv) Religious Groups – Bahai Community, Catholic Church Clifton Diocese, Diocese of Bath and Wells, Diocese of Bath and Wells – Community Cohesion, Humanists, Jewish Community of Somerset, Minehead Baptist Church, Somerset Churches Together, Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor Methodist Circuit.
- v) Other Voluntary Groups – 10 Parishes, Age UK Somerset, Arc Inspire (Taunton Association for the Homeless), Campaign to Protect Rural England (Somerset), Citizens Advice Bureau (Taunton), Citizens Advice Bureau (West Somerset), Community Council for Somerset, Creating Learning Opportunities in Western Somerset (CLOWNS), Cycle Somerset, Engage West Somerset, Forum 21, FWAG South West England Office, Home Builders Federation, Minehead Conservation Society, Onion Collective CIC, People Plus, Quantock Eco, RSPB South West England, Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership, Somerset Association of Local Council’s, Somerset County Federation of Women’s Institutes, Somerset Gay Health, Somerset Lesbian Network (SLN), Somerset Playing Field’s Association, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset Youth Partnership, South West Seniors Forum, Sparkle Somerset, SUSTRANS, Taunton Area Cycling Campaign, Taunton Deane Tenants Forum, Taunton Open Door, Taunton Ramblers, Taunton Women’s Aid, The Exmoor Society, Transition Minehead and Alcombe, Transition Town Taunton, Taunton Deane Village Agent (East), Wellington & District Sports Federation, West Somerset Village Agent 1, West Somerset Village Agent 2, West Somerset and Exmoor Bridleways, West Somerset LETS Group, Wivey Action on Climate and Environment, Women’s Equality Network Somerset (WENS), YMCA – Taunton.

No representations were received from any of the above groups as part of the consultations carried out. Similarly, no representations were received from individuals suggesting that any changes be made to the draft document.

It is important to understand that where a planning application is brought forward it would be subject to additional public consultation on the details of the particular scheme and its impact on the community, including people with Protected Characteristics.

**Analysis of impact on protected groups**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p> <p>The aim is to create streets and places for everyone, walkers, cyclists, drivers and all ages/abilities.</p> <p>A principle of the guidance is to encourage the provision of life time homes.</p> <p>The guidance shows how developing safe environments and active frontages may improve the safety of places and the feeling of safety.</p> <p>The guidance advocates that seating should be provided in main places.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	<p>The guidance advocates that Design &amp; Access Statement should ensure that development proposals will be equally accessible to all users, residents and visitors.</p>			
<b>Disability</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p> <p>The aim is to create streets and places for everyone, walkers, cyclists, drivers and all ages/abilities.</p> <p>A principle of the guidance is to encourage the provision of life time homes, this includes wheelchair accessible dwellings.</p> <p>The guidance shows how developing safe environments and active frontages may improve the safety of places and the feeling of safety.</p> <p>The guidance advocates that Design &amp; Access Statement should ensure that development proposals will be equally accessible to all users, residents and visitors.</p>	□	□	☒
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p>	□	□	☒

	<p>The guidance shows how developing safe environments and active frontages may improve the safety of places and the feeling of safety.</p> <p>The guidance advocates that Design &amp; Access Statement should ensure that development proposals will be equally accessible to all users, residents and visitors.</p>			
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p> <p>The guidance shows how developing safe environments and active frontages may improve the safety of places and the feeling of safety.</p> <p>The aim is to create streets and places for everyone, walkers, cyclists, drivers and all ages/abilities. This would include mothers with pushchairs and buggies.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>Race and ethnicity</b></p>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p> <p>The guidance shows how developing safe environments and active frontages may improve the safety of places and the feeling of safety.</p>	□	□	☒
<p><b>Religion or belief</b></p>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p> <p>The guidance shows how developing safe environments and active frontages may improve the safety of places and the feeling of safety.</p>	□	□	☒
<p><b>Sex</b></p>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p>	□	□	☒

	<p>The guidance shows how developing safe environments and active frontages may improve the safety of places and the feeling of safety. This can be of particular importance to lone women at night.</p> <p>The guidance advocates that Design &amp; Access Statement should ensure that development proposals will be equally accessible to all users, residents and visitors.</p>			
<p><b>Sexual orientation</b></p>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p> <p>The guidance shows how developing safe environments and active frontages may improve the safety of places and the feeling of safety.</p>	□	□	☒
<p><b>Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b></p>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in The Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, since this guidance will help improve the quality of design in the district by creating sustainable locally distinctive development and better places in which to live and work.</p> <p>The aim is to create streets and places for everyone, walkers, cyclists, drivers and all ages/abilities. This would include carers assisting people in wheelchairs, pushchairs and buggies.</p>	□	□	☒



<b>Negative outcomes action plan</b>				
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.				
<b>Action taken/to be taken</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>How will it be monitored?</b>	<b>Action complete</b>
N/A	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.</b>				
<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>Fiona Webb, Placemaking Specialist</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>30/09/2021</b>			
<b>Signed off by:</b>				

<b>Date</b>	
<b>Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:</b>	
<b>To be reviewed by: (officer name)</b>	
<b>Review date:</b>	

# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Full Council – 7 December 2021**

### **Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Review of Public Consultation and Adoption as Supplementary Planning Document**

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Mike Rigby**

**Report Author: Fiona Webb - Placemaking Specialist**

#### Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town for formal adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (“SPD”). The SPD has been produced pursuant to policies DM4 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy and D7 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, to provide additional guidance on how these and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan should be responded to in relation to securing high quality public realm design in Taunton Garden Town.
- 1.2 The Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town was subject to technical stakeholder consultation from 3 February to 30 March 2020, since it was initially proposed to adopt this document as a material technical consideration. With the government’s significant agenda to increase local walking and cycling capacity and the public’s much heightened awareness of the importance of public open space since Covid, it was considered that full public consultation would be beneficial in order to adopt the document as SPD and provide greater weight to the importance of this matter. As a result, formal consultation was carried out for the Public Realm Design Guide from 11 December to 5 February 2021. Following on from SWT’s approval of its Climate Positive Planning guidance, there were several responses that considered that the Council was not going far enough in its response on climate change. As a result it was further updated to provide a greater focus on the climate and ecological emergency. This also coincided with the release by government of the National Design Guide 2021 and the National Model Design Code which also required an update of the draft Public Realm Design Guide. For this reason, and to ensure that the draft Public Realm Design Guide could be adopted as SPD, it was considered appropriate to carry out a third consultation between 5 July and 16 August 2021.
- 1.3. Following receipt of the comments on the draft document and consideration of the points received changes proposed to the draft document have now been prepared and the draft amended. The emerging Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town is now brought forward as an SPD and adopted as a material planning consideration for the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes that result in proposals for works in public open space.

## Recommendations

### 2.1. Recommendations are that Full Council resolves to:

- 1) Approve the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document and a material planning consideration in the preparation of masterplans, pre-application advice, assessing planning applications and any other development management purposes within Taunton Garden Town.
- 2) Having considered the consultation responses, note the outcomes of the consultations on the draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town, undertaken 3 February to 30 March 2020, 11 December to 5 February 2021 and 5 July to Monday 16 August 2021 as set out in the consultation statement in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 3) Agree that the Director of Development and Place in consultation with the Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder be authorised to approve and make minor amendments to the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town Supplementary Planning Document prior to the final publication

## Risk Assessment

- 3.1 SPD's must be consistent with national planning policy, must undergo consultation and must be in conformity with policies contained within an adopted Local Plan. Potential risks that might impact on the preparation and timely delivery of the Local Plan and other Development Plan documents are set out the "Risk Assessment" section of the Local Development Scheme. It is not foreseen that any legal, financial, reputation or other risks will arise if the recommendations of this report are accepted.
- 3.2 This SPD provides clear policy guidance for the local planning authority, developers, statutory bodies and utilities which will support the delivery of sustainable public realm enhancement. The SPD will assist on the deliverability of public realm proposals since it clearly sets out guidance on the requirements of the Local Planning Authority and this can then be taken into account in any proposals. Similarly, the SPD clearly sets out Local Planning Authority's requirements for good design which will assist in officers making a balanced judgement against other policy and Council objectives.

## Background and Full Report

- 4.1 The purpose of the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town is to raise the standard of the public realm and streetworks consistently across the Garden Town. The guidance is aimed at guiding the design of public realm and street works by the highway authority, developers, utility companies and their agents and contractors. It also attempts to show how current principles of highway design and layout can be incorporated into good placemaking. If adopted by Somerset West and Taunton Council the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) it will be a material planning consideration when determining relevant development proposals and applications. It will also inform discussions with our statutory consultees.
- 4.2 This means that the SPD will hold significant weight in the decision-making process.

## Policy Context

- 4.3 National planning and design policy underline the need for local authorities to ensure that the quality of the design of new development is both sensitive to the positive aspects of the character of local areas and to incorporate the principles of placemaking, to achieve viable resilient neighbourhoods. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code advocate that local authorities produce design guides and design codes as a means to achieve a higher quality of development which addresses the aims above. The NPPF recommends Design Guides should be adopted as Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) in order they are given as much weight as possible in the decision-making process,
- 4.4 Section 12 of the NPPF – Achieving Well Designed Places sets out the government's agenda for good design. Paragraph 126 states that ‘The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this’.
- 4.5 It should be noted that the NPPF was updated in July 2021. This now places the additional requirement for development to be ‘beautiful’ as well as high quality and sustainable. This update also emphasises the importance of guidance contained in the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. In addition, there is new guidance for the requirement of street trees in Paragraph 131 which states ‘Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.’ These new requirements align with the government setting up a new Office for Place and significantly highlight the attention afforded to high quality design in national policy and weight afforded to local design guidance such as this SPD.
- 4.6 The draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town SPD (see Appendix 2) has been produced pursuant to policies DM4 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy and D7 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, which aim to promote high quality design.
- 4.7 Regarding public art, existing adopted planning policies in the former Taunton Deane area set out requirements for public art in policies D13 and D7 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (SADMP), policies ED1 and ED2 of the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) and DM4 of the Core Strategy. The policies all either refer to the Public Art and Design Policy adopted by the Council in 2007, the Public Art Code adopted in 2010, or otherwise refer to public art being provided at 1% of development costs either via commissioning and integrating public art into the design of buildings and the public realm, or by a commuted sum. Additionally, in the case of Taunton, they refer to the Town Centre Design Code SPD which includes specific codes relating to public art and which identifies specific art and design sites relating to the public realm areas. The Public Realm Design Guide and Districtwide Design Guide refer to this

existing policy context and recommend that public art is primarily integrated into the design of buildings and the public realm and is part of what constitutes good design.

## Consultation

- 4.8 A draft Design Guide was considered by Members at their Executive meeting on 28 January 2020 and approved for key stakeholder consultation. Key stakeholder consultation took place between Monday 3 February to Monday 30 March 2020. Due to the covid pandemic, a number of consultations were significantly delayed including that with Somerset County Council (SCC).
- 4.9 As a result of comments from SCC Highways about the highway principles set out in the overall Districtwide Design Guide, a series of workshops took place between officers which resulted in an expanded section in the Districtwide Design Guide on Streets, Parking and Placemaking. As a second round of public consultation was necessary for this expanded section, it was decided by officers to take the opportunity to also take the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town out to public consultation (rather than just key stakeholders). The public consultation on the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town was carried out from 11 December to 5 February 2021.
- 4.10 As a result of SWT approving the final version of Climate Positive Planning, there were a number of responses to this consultation that commented that the Council was not going further in its response on climate change. To address these the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town was updated to provide a greater focus on the climate emergency. This also coincided with the release by government of the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code which also required an update of the draft Public Realm Design Guide. For this reason, and in order to ensure that the Public Realm Design Guides for Taunton Garden Town could be adopted as SPD, it was considered appropriate to carry out a third consultation from 5 July to Monday 16 August 2021.
- 4.11 During the three consultations, the majority of the consultees welcomed the Public Realm Design Guide SPD and saw the document as an opportunity to provide an emphasis on high quality public open space, giving greater emphasis to people and less to cars.
- 4.12 A total of seven representations were received during the first consultation on the draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town SPD, three during the second consultation and nineteen during the third consultation. These consultation responses were from members of the public, amenity bodies, police, Environment Agency, Historic England, SCC Highways and internal staff. A table showing all representations received is set out in the table in Appendix 1 of this report together with SWT's responses and proposed amendments to the guidance.
- 4.13 Consideration of representations received during the three public consultations on the Design Guide has resulted in proposed changes within the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town, as summarised below:
- 4.14 First and Second Consultations (3 February to 30 March 2020 and 11 December to 5 February 2021)

Substantial Revisions and Additions:

- Section 1 Introduction - Clarity on its intention for use by competent professional public realm/ highway designers – i.e., the guide is to steer the design approach being tailored towards different parts of the urban area and enhance the Garden Town street environment for walking and cycling particularly. It is not a design manual and requires interpretation by designers, whether public highway authority or private developers.
- Section 2.3 General Standard Conservation Areas – add to map and explain that Town or Core Standard may be applied by Conservation Officer in these areas.
- Section 2.20 Conservation Area lighting – amended lighting to all standards after detailed additional consultation with SCC lighting engineer and heritage advisor.

Other Changes:

- SCC will not adopt setts laid in carriageways and require imprinted asphalt instead. This has been altered and described.
- Cycle track colours – colours amended to CORE terracotta, TOWN terracotta, GENERAL red, GREEN – red
- Blue street name plates traditional to Taunton will be applied to Core Standard Area.
- Minor changes to layout of Outer Gateway design illustrative exemplar to show more traditional cycle junction on a re-engineered A38 section as a new gateway to Monkton Heathfield.
- References added to recent or more explicit guidance:
  - National Planning Policy Framework 2021
  - Gear Change A bold vision for cycling and walking, DfT 2020
  - Local Transport Note 1/20, Cycling Infrastructure Design, DfT 2020
  - Beyond the Bicycle - An introduction to inclusive cycling, SWECO 2020
  - Inclusive Mobility, A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure, DfT, 2005. and
  - DfT Minister's letter September 2018 on Shared Space schemes
  - SCC Commuted Sum policy – SCC require commuted sums from private developers when including non-tarmac surfaces, street tree planting<sup>i</sup>
  - Local Transport Note 2/09, Pedestrian Guardrail, DfT, 2009

4.15 One house builder commented and agreed with the main content and need to raise standard of street works. They commented that street lighting suggestions were too utilitarian in appearance. We have worked to refine the proposals in light of what SCC Street Lighting are able to deliver.

4.16 Third consultation - 5 July to Monday 16 August 2021

Substantial Revisions and Additions:

- Additional section on public art added, cross referencing the Public Life for Public Space, Public Art Code SPD, 2006.

Other Changes:

- Highlighted in section 1.1.8 the need to conserve historic paving in the Garden Town and strengthen the wording on potential for streetworks to affect the historic environment and need to conserve existing historic materials and furniture, including lighting.
- Equalities and inclusion section 1.1.9, has noted DfT advice in LTN 1/20 that cycles must be treated as vehicles and not as pedestrians. We will though ensure



our streets are accessible for disabled cycle users to access all areas. On urban streets, cyclists must be physically separated from pedestrians and should not share space with pedestrians.

- Added guidance note to this section on need for public spaces to be designed to enhance community safety. We will add that designers shall take into consideration Secure by Design principles and minimize opportunities for crime.
- Additional note section 2.4 and 2.20.21. that materials and components at river and canal side locations may be subject to a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) from the Environment Agency. Signs on the canal may need to comply with Canal & River Trust design standards.
- 2.18 tree planting - Notes added on consideration to be given to tree planting potential size at maturity and potential to affect nearby buildings, structures or underground utilities and not obstruct walking and cycling routes. Care to be taken to avoid impacts on heritage assets. Tree planting shall be supported by a management plan. Sourcing of trees should be from UKISG endorsed nurseries to reduce the risk of introducing pests and diseases.
- Notes added to River and Canal corridor section 3.5 that riparian planting should not damage the riverbank. Nature conservation enhancements shall have a long-term management plan approved prior to implementation.
- References added:
  - Active Design, Planning for health and wellbeing through sport and physical activity, Sport England, 2015
  - Designing for Physical Activity, Routes and Wayfinding, Sport England, 2019
  - Streets for All, Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places. Historic England, 2018
  - Streets for All South West, Historic England, 2018
  - External lighting of historic buildings, Historic England, 2020
  - Designing, Installing and Maintaining an External Lighting Scheme, Historic England, 2020
  - Secure Stations Scheme, British Transport Police Authority and DfT. 2018
  - Cycle Rail Toolkit 2, Cycle Rail Working Group, Rail Delivery Group 2016
  - Secured by Design, Design guides, Police Crime Prevention Initiatives, various

4.17 Of the nineteen respondents to the third consultation, five comments were received from developers, four of whom sent very similar responses. All supported the production and aims of the Public Realm Design Guide, which they agreed should be a valuable and helpful tool to raise design standards within Taunton's public realm but were concerned with the availability and cost of materials in some situations. They suggested that the Design Guide needs to recognise that in some cases a lesser design approach or other materials will or may be equally acceptable and that the materials and specifications requested might not be available and (or) better solutions for paving could materialise in the future. – In response, SWT has produced the design guide as ad hoc materials selections have led to poor quality public spaces. We acknowledge that materials or specifications may need to change in future, but this does not prevent us from addressing what is required now. The guide will need to be revisited in future to maintain its relevance to current standards and availability of materials and furnishings.

Developers also expressed concern over any conflict between what SWT and SCC require on highways, such as road materials, street trees, street furniture and sustainable urban drainage measures in the public realm and suggests the Guide does



not offer further clarification as to how this would be addressed. They wish the implications of requiring enhanced materials on future commuted sums to be clear. - In response, a note to clarify the role of the planning officer to negotiate highway designs has been included in the document.

One developer suggested the guide was not for SWT to require but for the highway authority. – In response, this is noted but SWT as planning authority is responsible for determining applications that involve place making, urban design for health, environment, and movement on and off the highway network often before the highway authority get involved. This is the opportunity to raise design standards.

#### Adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

4.18 In order to be legally compliant, an SPD must be prepared, consulted upon, and adopted by resolution of Full Council in line with certain regulations as set out in the Town and County Planning (Local Plans) (England) Regulations 2012. Appended to this Report is a draft Adoption Statement (Appendix 4) and Consultation Statement (Appendix 3). Together, these documents set out how the SPD is legally compliant and comply with key regulations.

#### Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/ Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

4.19 Under the European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations), an SEA is required for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment. In addition to this, under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 an HRA is required when it is deemed that the implementation of the plan is likely to cause significant negative effects upon protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites).

4.20 An SEA/HRA Screening Assessment has been undertaken to ascertain whether or not significant effects are considered likely to arise as a result of the district-wide Design Guide SPD, requiring full SEA/HRA. A draft Screening Assessment was consulted on with the statutory consultees, and the final report (see Appendix 5) takes account of comments received. The conclusion of the assessment is that the SPD does not require full SEA or HRA to be conducted.

#### 5. Links to Corporate Strategy

5.1 Theme 1 – objectives towards the District **Carbon neutral by 2030**; clear vision and delivery plan for the Taunton Garden Town; 'Provide and maintain green open spaces and parks, enhanced public spaces, as well as additional opportunities to safely walk or cycle in order to encourage active and healthy lifestyles'. This theme is highly relevant as the main purpose of the design guide is to raise the standard of the public realm and streetworks consistently across the Garden Town and encourage active travel.

5.2 Theme 3 – objectives to 'Increase the number of affordable and social homes in our urban towns, rural and coastal communities; Facilitate the development of the residential blocks at Firepool, Taunton, in order to deliver new homes and public open spaces'; and 'Seek additional funding for new strategic infrastructure and regeneration projects from developers, investors, Government and other funders, which support or enable existing or new communities within our district.' This theme is relevant as the main purpose of

the design guide is to raise the standard of the public realm and streetworks consistently across the Garden Town and encourage active travel. Firepool is a strategic regeneration site at the heart of the town and a high quality public realm will be an important consideration in any proposal.

## 6. Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 The cost of preparing the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town has been funded from the Local Plan Reserves. The cost of public consultation on the guide has also been funded by Local Plan Reserves.

## 7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The preparation of the draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town and the period of public consultation is in compliance with relevant legislation and guidance regarding supplementary planning documents including the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 and the government's Planning Practice Guidance. Appended to this Report is a draft Adoption Statement (Appendix 4) and Consultation Statement (Appendix 3). Together, these documents set out how the SPD is legally compliant and comply with key regulations.

The final draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town has been prepared in line with the relevant planning regulations. The draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town SPD (see Appendix 2) is clearly identified as having been produced pursuant to policies DM4 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy and D7 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations, which aim to promote high quality design in the district.

The final draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town SPD has been subject to consultation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Following consultation and adoption by Full Council, the SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of all relevant planning applications. However, the SPD will be without any prejudice to any decisions that the Council may take as Local Planning Authority in respect of individual site/s and any future planning applications.

## 8. Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 Completion, adoption and implementation of the Public Realm Design Guide and the Districtwide Design Guide are identified in the Council's Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Action Plan as key actions. The Public Realm Design Guide recognises that sustainable, energy efficient and climate resilient design is integral to what constitutes good design. It is considered that the Public Realm Design Guide will have positive implications in terms of sustainability through guidance including the integration of placemaking and sustainability principles. This includes the following:

- Green Streets – requires streets to be designed to be greener which could include more street trees, swales, and planting/hedgerows for garden boundaries.
- Water – requires that priority is given to sustainable drainage processes and that a drainage strategy should help to shape the design of the open space, landscape and streets.
- Biodiversity – identifies how development can provide a net gain in biodiversity by including design features at the scales of neighbourhood, street and individual

house.

- Air Quality – the issue of air quality is addressed throughout the document through requiring that developments: - Prioritise active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport. - Incorporate street trees, planting, open spaces and landscape. - Include EV charging points for vehicles.
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions - The draft design guide should help to reduce greenhouse gas emission impacts through prioritising active travel and public transport over the car, making developments greener with more trees and landscape, requiring the provision of electric vehicle charging points and encouraging better energy efficiency in homes.

## 9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

9.1 A priority of the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town is to create safe access and movement for all with direct routes, choice of routes, clear routes, and permeability.

## 10. Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is appended to the report at Appendix 6. Additionally extensive public consultation has taken place in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. No representations were received from the community or from groups representing people with Protected Characteristics suggesting or requesting changes be made to the design guide.

## 11. Social Value Implications

11.1 The Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town Design Guide is intended to have a positive influence on the quality of life, resulting in economic, social value and environmental benefits for the community.

## 12. Partnership Implications

12.1 As part of the Duty to Co-operate requirement (Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012), we will be expected to work with other public bodies, particularly neighbouring planning authorities and the County Council on any cross-boundary issues. Close working has particularly taken place with SCC Highways through a number of workshop meetings.

## 13. Health and Wellbeing Implications

13.1 The Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town is intended to have a positive influence on the quality of life, resulting in economic, social value and environmental benefits for the community. A key aim is to encourage active travel, cycling and walking have a positive benefit for health and wellbeing.

## 14. Asset Management Implications

14.1 None at this stage, however the Council will consider opportunities for use of its assets to contribute to the delivery and promotion of high quality and sustainable built environments.

15. Data Protection Implications

15.1 None at this stage.

16. Consultation Implications

16.1 The consultations on this document have been in line with the SWT's Statement of Community Involvement and the Council's legal obligations. Following the consultation exercises, this report considers what modifications need to be made to the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town.

17. Executive Recommendation(s)

17.1 The Executive unanimously supported the recommendations of this report.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

**Reporting Frequency: X Once only**

**List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)**

Appendix 1	Schedule of Responses to Consultations
Appendix 2	Taunton Public Realm Design Guide - <a href="#">Appendix 2 - Taunton Public Realm Design Guide Part One</a> and <a href="#">Appendix 2 - Taunton Public Realm Design Guide Part Two</a>
Appendix 3	Consultation Statement
Appendix 4	Adoption Statement SPD
Appendix 5	Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment
Appendix 6	Equality Impact Assessment

**Contact Officers**

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Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
<p><b>COMMUNITY &amp; BUSINESS</b></p>			
<p>1. <b>Member of Cycle Somerset</b></p>	<p>Agree that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide to raise the standard of the street works and coordinate works by multi agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std,</li> <li>b. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS COMMENTS -Most of what you are hoping to achieve in trying keep as many of Taunton's residents happy has already been achieved elsewhere. My Mum was from Holland and I've been back forth for the last 58 years visiting family, friends and holidays. Some holidays specifically for leisurely, family cycling.</li> <li>c. Think this organisation could have some interesting ideas and assistance. <a href="https://dutchcycling.nl/">https://dutchcycling.nl/</a> Just maybe some of your planners would interested in seeing what has already been successful.</li> <li>d. PAVING MATERIALS - Avoid the high initial costs of paving and subsequent upkeep and maintenance. As with the pavements recently upgraded, tarmac with brick or block borders is great, good for water ingress and reduced flooding.</li> <li>e. Good clear "Share and Care" signage on joint pedestrian and cycle paths.</li> <li>f. Adequate, good UNDERCOVER, secure parking for cyclists. Would you want to sit a saddle that was soaking wet?</li> <li>g. Restrict traffic to buses, Blue Badge Holders and a limited number of taxis.</li> <li>h. Since 1969, if your dog fouled the pavement you could be prosecuted for not collecting it.</li> <li>i. It's time car drivers through the town paid for the collection of there emissions and for those that increasingly want to drive through the town centre showing off how loud there exhaust system or music system is, let's say a £10.00 charge per drive-through.</li> <li>j. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std,</li> <li>k. PAVING LAYOUT DETAILS - Avoid high upfront costs of all types of paving and then the ongoing charges as well, as many can attest having had fancy coloured driveways paved. They now regret it whilst the companies that sell the idea are doing very nicely, thank you.</li> <li>l. SIGNAGE - Agree</li> <li>m. STREET FURNITURE - agree</li> <li>n. STREET PLANTING - agree</li> <li>o. LIGHTING -</li> <li>p. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS AGREED- Town Centre; Gateways and Approaches.</li> <li>q. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS COMMENTS - Taunton firstly needs to be sympathetic to pedestrians, it's only pedestrians that walk into shops, cafe's, bars, pubs, hairdressers, nail bars, vaping parlours, tattoo studios, it's pedestrians that send money and buy the various goods and services.</li> <li>r. Keep car, lorries and delivery out of the centre. Timed rise and fall bollards lowering from say between 6.30 pm and rising at 8.30 am allowing plenty of time for planned deliveries. Look at what has been achieved already for many years in Holland. <a href="https://dutchcycling.nl/">https://dutchcycling.nl/</a>. Absolutely nothing to stop Taunton doing something similar. It will ensure happiness for shop keepers, business owners, customers and pedestrians happy. Cyclist's with families and friends will be able to access the town in safety.</li> </ul>	<p>CS pick up on many of the Go Dutch references in the Draft. The desire to see less money spent on expensive paving and more on standard but good cycle and pedestrian infrastructure is noted. The guide seeks to apply the higher standards only in some areas e.g where shops and walking are at their highest and where we want to encourage cycling. CS wants car free town centre - the guide doesn't deliver this, but the proposed public realm treatment doesn't prejudice this either.</p>
<p>2. <b>Taunton Area Cycling Campaign</b></p>	<p>Agree that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide to raise the standard of the street works and coordinate works by multi agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</li> <li>b. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS COMMENTS - As there isn't a space for other comments, we have used these boxes. We wish to express strong support for the general principles of the draft guidance-to give much greater emphasis to people and places in the design of streets and public spaces. We agree that street design is currently dominated by the desire to facilitate car use and that this is often detrimental in terms of quality of public realm. We agree in general with the emphasis on high quality materials but are mindful that resources for walking and cycling</li> </ul>	<p>TACC's strong support for principles are noted and their request that money isn't wasted on too high a quality of materials at the expense of good smooth surface cycle infrastructure also appreciated. The guide is aimed at targeting spending appropriately.</p>

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
		<p>infrastructure are limited. Keeping designs simple with less signing (compared with the over signing currently used) will hopefully minimise costs.</p> <p>c. TACC made a statement at the recent planning committee which gave approval to the strategic infrastructure for Comeytrove, in which we referred to the fact that the spine road design is out of step with the draft Public Realm guidance. Neither the planning officer nor the committee members made any reference to the guidance, let alone gave it weight in making their decision. This is despite the fact that it has been considered by the full council. It is clear to us that a programme of training will be essential for officers and committee members, if the guidance is going to count for anything.</p> <p>d. Please note that the draft LCWIP is only a first phase of network improvements and is not an overall network plan. Please refer to TACC's 'Turn the network blue' and petition presented to the full SWTC council. Can we please discuss this?</p> <p>e. Support for as wide a use of 20mph as possible</p> <p>f. Guidance needs to distinguish between cycle lanes in carriageway and non carriageway provision ('cycletrack') and their application. Make ref to new DfT design advice (about to be published)</p> <p>g. Support for street gardens idea.</p> <p>h. Suggest that there is guidance for experimental traffic management schemes (DIY) with use of temporary street planters and seating. Experiments can lead to permanent changes to favour street activity.</p> <p>i. Fig 76 and 77 show cycle provision at mouth of junctions, which is an area of conflict. Needs further consideration.</p> <p>j. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p> <p>k. PAVING MATERIALS - Need to ensure that material are smooth and have adequate skid resistance.</p> <p>l. Need to set up a system so that utilities can easily source materials for re-instatements following maintenance work (cf with Market House cobbles with black top re-instatements)</p> <p>m. Pedestrian streets. In some cases there will be cycle access. Needs subtle signing to show cycling ok. pedestrian priority, that cyclists can be expected.</p> <p>n. Strongly support efforts to minimise use of guardrail. Please include the advice against use of 'sheep pens' in this. The SCC highway safety audit will need to be adapted to be able to balance pure highway and theoretical risk against public realm</p> <p>o. PAVING LAYOUT DETAILS -</p> <p>p. SIGNAGE - Agree. Need to advise against over dependence on illuminated signs (reflective can be effective). Please advise against use of lit 'end of cycle route' and 'cyclist dismount' signs.</p> <p>q. You will already know that we are keen to develop a cycle network signing system based on the Dutch approach, using a node numbering system.</p> <p>r. STREET FURNITURE - Agree with bollards, cycle furniture and Play. Use of cycle bollards. These should be positioned at the side of paths and not in the middle (as is currently the case) due to conflict that they cause</p> <p>s. STREET PLANTING - Planting needs to be positioned to ensure that its future growth wont interfere with site lines and widths on cycle path and footpaths</p> <p>t. LIGHTING - Lower level lighting proposed for green standard might be appropriate in other contexts-e.g. Corkscrew Lane (bats)</p> <p>u. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS AGREED- Town Centre; Gateways and Approaches; Neighbourhood Centres, River &amp; Canal Corridors</p> <p>v. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS COMMENTS -</p> <p>w. STREET FURNITURE - Use of cycle bollards. These should be positioned at the side of paths and not in the middle (as is currently the case) due to conflict that they cause.</p> <p>x. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS AGREED- Town Centre; Gateways and Approaches; Neighbourhood Centres, River &amp; Canal Corridors</p>	<p>TACC note clarity required in guide on difference between cycle lanes and tracks. We will amend to make this clear.</p> <p>Pedestrian streets need cycle signage too - and a track may need cycle tactile. We will add note to drawing.</p> <p>Guide to mention retroreflective signs where regs permitted.</p> <p>The node guidance system is noted for cycle network - this is a specialist area that probably needs its own appendix to follow later as part of the guidance suite.</p> <p>We will add note to position cycle track signs to side of paths.</p>

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		<p>y. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS COMMENTS - We suggest that there are at least two additional gateways. One on the north side (Cheddon Road and possibly also Kingston Road) and one on the south approach (Honiton Road /Trull, The latter to reflect the impact of the Comeytrove spine road connection). These could be secondary gateways. We think that there is a mistake on page 72 with the Kingston Gap being shown as existing woodland-should this be shown in buff?</p> <p>z. Some difficulty in following how the application works on the dual example. Cycle provision is rather sketchy and geometry needs more consideration.</p> <p>aa. Strong support for suggested treatments at side road junctions and use of tight radii (as MfS).</p> <p>bb. More needed on design at large junctions, which are favoured by SCC</p> <p>cc. Strong support for remodelling of gyratories with space given back to public realm e.g. Park Street, Clifton Terrace</p> <p>dd. Note new Ch6 of Traffic Signs Manual</p> <p>ee. Strong support for Dutch style treatment where large roundabouts are considered essential</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> CONSULTATION ADDENDUM</p> <p>ff. The document should be updated on active travel infrastructure design to reflect Local Transport Note 1/20 and Gear Change. Shared use footways and now far less appropriate and LTN 1/20 needs to be at the top of the lists of refs (pgs 20 and 22).</p>	<p>Gateways noted - the guidance for gateways could be applied at Kingston Road entrance to the town. The smaller space on this route might suggest a more modest approach. To be reviewed.</p> <p>Drawing amended to standard layout.</p> <p>The guide reflects as far as possible LTN1/20</p>
3. Individual submission	Agree that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide to raise the standard of the street works and coordinate works by multi agencies	<p>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p> <p>b. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS COMMENTS - I welcome the Design Guide and the Public Realm Design Guide - it is an opportunity to have a better quality built and natural environment giving greater emphasis to people and less to cars. I look forward to it being used by planning officers and councillors in decision making in planning applications. This is urgently needed as Councillors seem to be unaware of the contents of the Design Guide and need training in it for it to be effective.</p> <p>c. Developers also need to be strongly urged to follow it.</p> <p>d. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p> <p>e. PAVING MATERIALS - The proposed surfaces seem to be appropriate for the various settings but all surfaces need to be smooth and skid resistant. Cyclists hate the current cobbles in the town centre because it is such an uncomfortable ride on a roundabout. Some of the towpath surface further out of town is also too rough and uncomfortable.</p> <p>f. PAVING LAYOUT DETAILS -</p> <p>g. SIGNAGE - Agree. There are currently too many cycling signs particularly the end of cycle route signs (often illuminated) which are completely pointless. I support the minimal use of signs but shop boards in pedestrian areas need to be controlled particularly in St James St. Signs attached to buildings could be a better alternative. I support high quality crossings giving cyclists and pedestrians priority over vehicles and the signing of the chief cycle routes not just those in LCWIP. 20mph in the centre would be great.</p> <p>h. STREET FURNITURE - Agree with bollards, litter bins, seats, cycle furniture, bus shelters, play, street name plates,</p> <p>i. STREET PLANTING - Agree. Be more adventurous with tree planting in new developments. I hope to see a lot of trees on Firepool. I support the E charging proposals to include bikes as well as cars. I like the paving around the trees if it is big enough to allow the trunk to grow.</p> <p>j. LIGHTING - Agree with Core St, Town Std, General Std, Green Std. Good to have some lighting along the Firepool Lock path where it is currently dark and also good to be able to do LED lighting to protect bats and other wildlife. It is a safe night time alternative to Station Road and its takeaway traffic if you don't mind the dark stretch and would be more used if some lighting is provided so you don't run into people walking dogs.</p> <p>k. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS AGREED- Town Centre; Gateways and Approaches; Neighbourhood Centres, River &amp; Canal Corridors</p>	<p>The use of setts is being limited to specific crossings - but suggestion from SCC to use imprint so will amend to this.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>Tree planting often down to committed sum policy by SCC dissuading street planting. Where SWTC has control of land the Council would expect to see more planting. Tree species list selected as guide - not definitive.</p>



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		<p>l. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS COMMENTS - I am not overly keen on the cycle lane around the roundabout as it brings you close to traffic waiting to pull out and needs to be designed with care .I like the 2.5m cycle lane in the bus only streets.</p>	
4. Individual resident	Agree that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide to raise the standard of the street works and coordinate works by multi agencies	<p>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS - Strongly agree</p> <p>b. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED: Strongly agree with all proposed standards and proposals for paving, street furniture, signage, lighting, and illustrative layouts.</p>	
5. Individual Resident		<p>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS AGREED - Agree with Core town and General Standards, strongly agrees with Green Standard.</p> <p>b. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED: - Agree with Core town and General Standards, strongly agrees with Green Standard.</p> <p>c. STREET FURNITURE - Agree with bollards, litter bins, seats, cycle furniture, bus shelters, play, street name plates</p> <p>d. STREET PLANTING: disagree. Think this duty will transfer to new town council they should set specification important to link every possible water run off opportunity with sustaining planting. important for voluntary groups who maintain green infrastructure without access to water supply Lead community effort 30 years ago for Duke St Car Park landscaping scheme with imported topsoil and plants, the car park has no road gullies, with a slope the edge planting thrives.</p> <p>e. SIGNAGE: page 74 signage conservation areas, there is a need to consider cast iron white enamel signs which are a feature of street corners</p> <p>f. LIGHTING - Agree with General Std, Green Std. Neutral about Core St, Town Std,</p> <p>g. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS: Disagree with town centre. Agree Neighbourhood Centres, Gateway and Approaches and River and Canal Corridors.</p> <p>h. I have concern of a major omission regards page 56 section 3.1 showing intended treatment of town centre Market House to further down North Street. North Street should have through car traffic reduction measures before trying to close three parallel streets St James, Hammet and East Street key reason is to allow all bus services and touring coach companies prime access to centre.</p> <p>i. 3 Key issues, keep centre roundabout by Market house as a turning point for large vehicles. British parking standards 26m diameter for large bus and coaches. The bus stop shown castle bow is too small for both buses and coaches, create instead a rendezvous point for touring coaches using the fine canopy to the Debenhams building which will be retained but with in some new uses.</p>	<p>Note the possible devolvement with new town council arrangements if they are completed. Add note</p> <p>The cast iron street name plates are of a later date than the original blue and white of the St Marys and St James Conservation Area and the streets to the east off East Reach. The design guide proposes the blue and white only in the Conservation Areas of the town in order to highlight their significance and distinction. Others will follow the SWTC Street Name and Numbering guidance.</p> <p>Consultee concerned that touring coaches should be able to turn on a 26m roundabout and have rendezvous in bays on North Street. It is not the role of the design guide to allocate space but to steer design to provide for sustainable modes as priority. Coach management requires a visitor strategy and place for layover and drop off/rendezvous but should not prejudice walking and cycling and public transport first.</p>
6. Cherwyn Developments Limited	Agree that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide to raise the standard of the street works and coordinate works by multi agencies	<p>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p> <p>b. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS COMMENTS -</p> <p>c. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p> <p>d. PAVING MATERIALS -</p> <p>e. PAVING LAYOUT DETAILS -</p> <p>f. SIGNAGE - Agree. Whilst design is important, location and what it says must be considered</p> <p>g. STREET FURNITURE - Agree cycle furniture, litter bins, bus shelters, seats, play</p> <p>h. STREET PLANTING - agree</p> <p>i. LIGHTING - AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std: Street lighting looks poor in quality and utilitarian, not inspiring</p>	<p>The street lighting is selected to fit to the wider county needs too as economies of scale are required. This leads to selecting standard types that SCC who own and manage them are happy with and where conservation areas require more</p>



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		<p>j. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS AGREED- Town Centre; Gateways and Approaches; Neighbourhood Centres, River &amp; Canal Corridors</p> <p>k. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS COMMENTS -</p>	stringent consideration of heritage, the guidance seeks to meet that too. The aim is to make the street lighting less eye catching during daylight, rather than more.
7. Abbey Manor Group Ltd (developer)	Agree that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide	<p>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS - DISAGREE Core and Town Stds. Neutral on General and Green Stds.</p> <p>b. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS COMMENTS - I think the role of approving the design of these public highways should rest with the current organisation which has a statutory duty to do so i.e. the Local Highway Authority, rather than create yet another layer of confusing and duplicating bureaucracy which undoubtedly will be in conflict with the statutory requirements and be expensive to deliver.</p> <p>c. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED - DISAGREE Core and Town Stds. Neutral on General and Green Stds.</p> <p>d. PAVING MATERIALS - You have stated in the Key Characteristics paragraph 2.1.2 that the paving "can be supplied from regional or national sources" and then specified granite kerbs. As far as I am aware there are now very few operational granite quarries in the UK, the largest supplier is China which is not a regional or national source and can hardly be sustainable once the transportation has been included.</p> <p>e. PAVING LAYOUT DETAILS -</p> <p>f. SIGNAGE - Disagree</p> <p>There is a general theme throughout this document which is that employment or commercial uses are bad and should either not exist in the garden town, or be hidden away and discouraged.</p> <p>examples of this are paragraph 2.6.1 fingerposts must not be used for commercial purposes paragraph 3.2.2 "nowhere land of employment" paragraph 3.4 neighbourhood centre should be based around social space not shop and car park.</p> <p>Employment and commercial uses provide jobs and income for people. Without Jobs and income people are generally poorer and whilst they may have the time to spend in the social spaces, won't have the ability to pay taxes which in turn pay for public expenditure on the social spaces.</p> <p>if Taunton's aim is discourage employment and Jobs it will quickly become a place that no one wishes to live in or visit.</p> <p>g. STREET FURNITURE - no comments</p> <p>h. STREET PLANTING - no comments</p> <p>i. LIGHTING - Street lighting is a statutory requirement. you should not set additional standards which duplicate or conflict with them. the additional lighting suggested may look pretty until it is vandalised but does nothing for the dark skies initiative and encouragement of wildlife</p> <p>j. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS - strongly disagree with all</p> <p>the drawings are of poor quality and not sufficiently clear as to be of any use as guidance.</p>	<p>The comment refers to paving rather than kerbing and the guidance will be amended to make this clear. Chinese/ Portuguese granite costs more in transport and CO2 emissions however its lifespan and low wastage due to reusability offsets this cost compared to concrete items and is warranted in the highest class standard areas. Recycled concrete is used in the other specified kerbs. Chinese granite environmental cost can be offset through the contribution to the Ethical Trading Initiative or similar.</p> <p>There is no anti-business bias in the guide. The guide seeks to enhance the public realm environment which is known to increase business, through footfall and attractiveness to inward investment.</p> <p>The lighting guide has been agreed with the statutory authority.</p>
8. The Canal & River Trust	Agree that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide to raise the standard of the street works and coordinate works by multi agencies	<p>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p> <p>b. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS COMMENTS - The Canal &amp; River Trust believe that good design plays a key role in creating attractive waterside places that will enhance and protect the waterway. We welcome the inclusion of the canal &amp; river Corridor and wish to work together to ensure any new waterside development enhance the wider waterway corridor and protects the intrinsic qualities that waterways offer. This can be achieved in a number of ways and is dependent on many factors.</p> <p>c. Measures and designs that enhance waterways help to promote the utilisation of our waterways by new and existing communities. This has the potential to enhance the wellbeing of people who live and work close to our network.</p> <p>d. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p>	

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		<p>e. PAVING MATERIALS - The Canal &amp; River Trust own the towpath of the Bridgwater &amp; Taunton canal. We publish a towpath design guide which provides more information on the type of materials and towpath width suitable for a range of locations. It is noted that the Public Realm document advocates resin bound gravel closest to the town and then a bitmac sealed surface to Creech St Michael, but it is not clear if an unbound gravel surface as shown on page 33 is the acceptable standard beyond this..</p> <p>f. The Trust wish to ensure that the towpath is suitable for its location, fit for purpose and to the highest quality possible. The type of surfacing chosen will be based on location, anticipated usage and funding available. As funding opportunities come forward further discussions should take place with the Trust to determine the most appropriate surfacing.</p> <p>g. Whilst the Canal &amp; River Trust agree that the range of surfacing materials specified for the Green Standard are broadly suitable the type of surfacing to be used on the canal towpath must vary from length to length depending on location, character and likely volume of usage. We are pleased to note that it is recognised that unbound surfaces causes on-going maintenance issues and are only suitable for areas of low usage as otherwise they can quickly development pot holes and erosion. In edge of town locations, or other high traffic areas, we suggest that a resin bound gravel surface material should be used, particularly where the towpath is likely to be used for commuter or recreational cycling.</p> <p>h. We do not normally promote the use of black bituman surfacing, unless a spray and chip layer of more appropriate colour is overlaid. Plain bitmac it is not considered appropriate in most towpath locations. The Trust often use centrac, which is more resilient than plain hoggin.</p> <p>i. The Canal &amp; River Trust will advise on individual proposals, which must align with our Towpath Design Guide. As previously mentioned the towpath is not suitable for use as a bridleway due to its restricted width and thus conflict with other users. Bridge parapets are not normally high enough to meet horse riding safety standards.</p> <p>j. PAVING LAYOUT DETAILS -</p> <p>k. SIGNAGE- generally agree. Signage on the canal towpath should be in line with the Canal &amp; River Trust's own standards and not result in visual or physical clutter. Wayfinding should consider the opportunity to incorporate other information via QR codes and can promote 'Step by Step' health initiatives using distance markers etc. It may also be necessary to consider ' traffic calming measures at certain locations to prevent conflict as a result of overly fast cycling. The Trust can advise on a range of initiatives, again based on a length by length upgrading programme.</p> <p>l. 2.6 Signage pedestrian wayfaring: The Canal &amp; River Trust advocate the Step by Step approach, as used successfully on the Monmouthshire &amp; Brecon canal.</p> <p>m. Step by Step includes simple marker posts at key lengths on the canal to build confidence and the activity range of new users wanting to gradually increase their walk length for health reasons (preventative/ chronic condition management/ recovery). The Trust can provide more information on this if required.</p> <p>n. STREET FURNITURE - Agree with Seats. 'Places to perch' can greatly extend the length and duration of walks by the aged and mobility impaired. We encourage the installation of a series of simple benches/perches at regular intervals (inc. along the Canal) as this will greatly enhance the utilisation of accessible routes.</p> <p>o. STREET PLANTING -</p> <p>p. LIGHTING - The Canal &amp; River Trust do not normally advocate the lighting of our canal corridor due to ecological impact, preferring that the canal remain a dark corridor, particularly for foraging bats. The lighting details provided appear to take account of these issues but if lighting is required for safety reasons along the canal towpath this should be discussed and agreed in advance with the Trust and must be designed so that there is no light spill over the water itself. There should be no lightspill at all over the waterspace of the canal, and whilst this may be achieved in the ways suggested within the Green standard, the Canal &amp; River Trust do not normally advocate lighting along the canal towpath, except in very urban areas. As mentioned elsewhere, improvements should be discussed with the Trust and considered on a length by length basis, considering impact on wildlife and other canal users, safety concerns as well as precedent.</p> <p>q. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS AGREED - River and Canal Corridor</p> <p>r. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS COMMENTS - - Whilst the Trust recognise the challenges identified in the River and Canal Corridor chapter we advocate good waterside design and are supportive of most of the ingredients of success and look forward to working with the council to ensure that they are delivered</p>	<p>The Canal &amp; River Trust own the towpath of the Bridgwater &amp; Taunton canal and revisions to the Guide will make that clear and will clarify where the unbound surfacing is to be encouraged.</p> <p>The step by step distance marking for wayfinding accords with Sport England Active Design advice a note will be added to refer to this and their Wayfinding guide. In addition a note will be added that signage on the canal towpath should be in line with the C&amp;RT's own standards</p> <p>The guide will make it clear that no light spill over the water is a requirement. The design guide covers an urban area where lighting is needed to improve walking and cycling.</p>

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		<p>as part of any new development, or if alternative funding sources become available. We do not normally advocate the lighting of our canal corridors due to ecological impact.</p> <p>s. The river and canal may need to be considered individually, with no single design approach being appropriate in all locations, however the details shown in the green standard are broadly suitable and in line with our own aspirations. The Council may find some of the specialist guidance including on our website of assistance, covering matters such as environmental issues and good waterside planning and design. <a href="https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams">https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/specialist-teams</a></p> <p>t. The Trust would welcome the opportunity to discuss the matters with the council, either in general terms or more specifically in relation to development proposals. The Trust offers a free pre-application consultation process and we welcome engagement to ensure that the benefits a waterside location brings to development is maximised. The Planning team can be contacted by email at <a href="mailto:NationalPlanning.Function@canalrivertrust.org.uk">NationalPlanning.Function@canalrivertrust.org.uk</a></p> <p>Please note that the Canal &amp; River Trust is written with an ampersand not 'and'. This needs correcting in several locations.</p> <p>Thank you for consulting the Canal &amp; River Trust (the Trust) in respect of this document and for recognising both the importance of the waterway corridors within the town but also their need for specific treatment.</p> <p>We are the charity who look after and bring to life 2000 miles of canals &amp; rivers and within Somerset West and Taunton District we own and maintain the Bridgwater &amp; Taunton Canal. Our waterways contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities and economies, creating attractive and connected places to live, work, volunteer and spend leisure time.</p> <p>These historic, natural and cultural assets form part of the strategic and local green-blue infrastructure network, linking urban and rural communities as well as habitats. By caring for our waterways and promoting their use we believe we can improve the wellbeing of our nation. The Bridgwater &amp; Taunton Canal is as valued multi-functional green infrastructure asset within Taunton Garden Town. Improvements to the towpath to facilitate connectivity is welcomed but each section needs to reflect its surroundings and future level of usage. Bitmac and lighting may not be acceptable and these aspects should be discussed at the earliest opportunity. Interpretation should be incorporated into signage and any proposed improvement projects should be agreed with the Trust and we look forward to working with you on this.</p>	
9. Arts Taunton	Agree with some reservations on styles of some selected paving and furniture. Asked for a big bold idea - like a cherry walk along the whole riverside - to be included.	<p>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p> <p>b. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS COMMENTS -none</p> <p>c. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green St</p> <p>d. PAVING MATERIALS - Arts Taunton supports the additional comments made by the SW Heritage Trust in this area (in which they have expertise). i.e use of more local paving stone types)</p> <p>e. PAVING LAYOUT DETAILS - none</p> <p>f. SIGNAGE - Agree. In general, stainless steel signage tends to sit less well in a historic neighbourhood</p> <p>g. STREET FURNITURE - Bollard design is uneven. The cricket ball and apple designs look too small and vulnerable. The square, black bollards are look rather hostile. The seats/benches with no back are always less popular. Wooden benches are much warmer, and more friendly to the touch and in overall 'tone'. There are no 'traditional' bench designs, which is a shame. The cycle stores are not attractive and the litter bins hostile and joyless</p> <p>h. STREET PLANTING - The list of approved trees for street planting is very modest and could include a richer range. Somerset and the SW has a long tradition of exciting planting and the garden town should extend and promote that.</p> <p>i. LIGHTING - NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE - There is no specific mention of light pollution. Given how problematic it can be (in terms of impacts on wildlife), its high energy usage and its disruptive effect on place-making, this should be a priority. Minimising light pollution should be a core part of light design and choice</p> <p>j. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS - AGREED- Town Centre; Gateways and Approaches; Neighbourhood Centres, River &amp; Canal Corridors.</p> <p>k. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS COMMENTS - More information as to how some of these good proposals can be 'retro-fitted' to existing settlements would be helpful. It would be good to have a really</p>	<p>Noted observation about the small scale of the bollard apple and ball specials. The guide will add a traditional bench.</p> <p>The tree list is not definitive - but selected for disease resistant, growing habit suitable to public streets and spaces, etc. There are opportunities in green spaces to be far more adventurous as AT suggest. This will be made clearer.</p> <p>Light pollution outside of the river corridor is implicit in the guidance documents referenced. The guidance will make it clear that light pollution is a core part of the light design and choice.</p>

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		<p>exciting 'branding' of some of the planting/greening areas. How about planting 30,000 cherry trees all along the river, from Firepool to Hangeridge? It would give that area a sense of place and purpose and for a month of the year it would look sensational - and become a destination in its own right. This is the sort of imaginative thinking needed.</p> <p>l. 2<sup>nd</sup> CONSULTATION - additional comments</p> <p>m. A general comment on the entire document is that it contains much first rate work. Arts Taunton is delighted at the depth of commitment to the public realm shown by SWT. We urge the Council to ensure that there is a logistical and legal framework for these standards to be enforceable - else the entire purpose of it is wasted.</p> <p>n. STREET PLANTING - There is a pre-occupation nationally with 'native' tree species, a concept that is often hard to define. Better to pick a tree that will do the job that it is meant to do for the site in question (i.e. look beautiful/screen a building/provide a focus/stabilise ground/help air pollution/provide biodiversity etc.). The notion that a tree is always a good thing needs to be challenged - trees can sometimes disrupt, clog or interrupt a streetscape, can make it gloomy or overshadow fine buildings. Not all trees are good news.</p> <p>o. NIGHTSCAPE &amp; LIGHTING - Light pollution is an acute problem in outer town areas. This has a detrimental effect on the wider environment and should be taken seriously.</p> <p>p. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS - AGREED- Town Centre; Gateways and Approaches; Neighbourhood Centres, River &amp; Canal Corridors.</p>	<p>all of the illustrated schemes are retrofits of one sort or another.</p> <p>It is agreed that tree species should be appropriate to the site - the list has been drawn up in consultation with SCC and SWTC arboriculturists. This has taken into account maintenance costs, underground utilities etc. There are clear climate change, as well as Garden Town imperatives, to try to increase tree cover and if the only place for this is in a street, it can be both a beautiful and functional addition.</p>
10. Design Circle	Design Circle promotes and fosters high quality, sustainable urban and landscape design in Taunton and surrounding area and welcomes the approach foregrounding street making and public realm.	<p>a. More advice and certainty about how who to use when? Up front narrative about who should use this when. For example - the council will use for its own projects, in development brief for sites and to asses applications and negotiate contributions? For development on private land?</p> <p>b. In the face of reduced local consultation, it seems we need a way to enforce good design not just mention it as a 'nice to have'. I will read with a view of how this can be achieved, maybe it is a written policy statement that accompanies the guidance. i.e. Developers will demonstrate how they have met the design guidance within their plans including 1. Solar design, 2. Connected streets, 3. Key buildings and focal points, ... this will be demonstrated at all levels of consent (outline, reserved matters etc.)</p> <p>c. Advice about how to respond in Design and Access statements.</p> <p>d. Give more priority to tree planting as a key feature of the greener garden town?</p> <p>e. Ability to prioritise projects for example new tree planning o make visible 'garden town' in Town Centre.</p>	
11. Sport England		<p>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green St</p> <p>b. PAVING MATERIAL STANDARDS AGREED - Core Std, Town Std, General Std, Green Std</p> <p>c. SIGNAGE: agreed. At the bottom of this link <a href="https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design">https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design</a> is a document called 'Routes &amp; Wayfinding' which you may find useful.</p> <p>d. STREET FURNITURE: agreed all</p> <p>e. STREET PLANTING - agreed. Asked that guide suggests awareness that street planting should not hinder walking and cycling</p> <p>f. NIGHTSCAPE &amp; LIGHTING - agreed all standards</p> <p>g. ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS - AGREED- Town Centre; Gateways and Approaches; Neighbourhood Centres, River &amp; Canal Corridors.</p> <p>a. GENERAL COMMENT - Sport England along with Public Health England have published revised guidance 'Active Design' which we consider has considerable synergy the Plan. It may therefore be useful to provide a cross-reference (and perhaps a hyperlink) to <a href="https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design">https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design</a> .</p> <p>b. Sport England believes that being active should be an intrinsic part of everyone's life pattern.</p> <p>i. The guidance is aimed at planners, urban designers, developers and health professionals.</p>	<p>Add reference to Sport England Wayfinding guidance.</p> <p>Add note that street planting should not hinder walking and cycling</p> <p>Will add 'Active Design' into the references</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii. The guidance looks to support the creation of healthy communities through the land use planning system by encouraging people to be more physically active through their everyday lives.</li> <li>iii. The guidance builds on the original Active Designs objectives of Improving Accessibility, Enhancing Amenity and Increasing Awareness (the '3A's'), and sets out the Ten Principles of Active Design.</li> <li>iv. Then Ten Active Design Principles have been developed to inspire and inform the design and layout of cities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods, buildings, streets and open spaces, to promote sport and physical activity and active lifestyles.</li> <li>v. The guide includes a series of case studies that set out practical real-life examples of the Active Design Principles in action. These case studies are set out to inspire and encourage those engaged in the planning, design and management of our environments to deliver more active and healthier environments.</li> <li>vi. The Ten Active Design Principles are aimed at contributing towards the Governments desire for the planning system to promote healthy communities through good urban design.</li> <li>c. The developer's checklist (Appendix 1) has been revised and can also be accessed via the website.</li> <li>d. Sport England would encourage development in the plan area be designed in line with the Active Design principles to secure sustainable design. This could be evidenced by use of the Active Design checklist.</li> </ul>	
<p>12. Historic England</p>		<p>We support the intent of this Design Guide to raise the standard of public realm and street works in Taunton Garden Town, noting that streets, pavements and associated public realm features may be heritage assets, may form their settings and positively contribute to historic townscape, local character and distinctiveness.</p> <p>particularly welcome paragraph 1.1.8 Respecting character and heritage. While we agree with its contents, we consider it should also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide links to conservation area character appraisals and to Streets for All (2018) and Streets for All South West (2018);</li> <li>• acknowledge that public realm and street works have the potential to affect heritage assets of archaeological interest, both designated (scheduled monuments) and non-designated;</li> <li>• highlight the potential for well-designated public realm and streetworks to enhance the settings and significance of heritage assets and increase the public's understanding and enjoyment of, and access, to local heritage, e.g. through signage, interpretation and/or making in-situ remains visible where appropriate. The latter options could be usefully covered in this Design Guide;</li> <li>• explain that public realm and street work proposals need will need careful planning, sensitive design and to be informed by research including checking the National Heritage List for England and the Somerset Historic Environment Record;</li> <li>• clarify that bespoke designs are required in some heritage sensitive locations despite the standards in this Design Guide;</li> <li>• recognise the potential need for scheduled monument and listed building consents as well as planning permission and the need for statements of heritage significance;</li> <li>• mention the potential need for recording; and</li> <li>• refer to draft Districtwide Design Guide for further information. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality and inclusive mobility (paragraph 1.1.9): you may find this publication worth referencing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Improving Access to Historic Buildings and Streetscapes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS (section 1.2): while we note palettes of materials for the four areas, we consider that the Council's conservation and archaeology advisers should be able to agree the quality of materials wherever these affect heritage assets and historic townscape.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paving (section 2.1-5): we would welcome clearer messaging that surviving historic paving and related features will be retained and conserved.</li> </ul>	<p>Add these comments into 1.1.8 Add ref to Streets for All guides</p> <p>Add this to 1.1.9</p>



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		<p>SIGNAGE AND STREET FURNITURE (sections 2.5-2.6): the retention and conservation of historic signs and street furniture should be encouraged as well as the sensitive design and siting of new works.</p> <p>TREE PLANTING AND STREET GARDENS (sections 2.18-19): further information on the historic environment issues associated with tree planting and gardens needs to be included. While we note the intention to increase tree planting and street gardens, care needs to be taken in the choice of places, species and sizes to avoid and/or minimise any negative impacts on the significance of heritage assets, either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o directly, e.g. damage or destroy buried heritage assets or affect foundations of buildings or other structures; and/or</li> <li>o indirectly, e.g. affect the setting of historic buildings, disrupt important views in historic streetscapes and within and through towns and affect the character of wider townscapes.</li> </ul> <p>HE Want more said on The maintenance needs of street trees and planting</p> <p>Care about historic and/or Registered Parks and Gardens and cemeteries and churchyards planting and rewilding.</p> <p>NIGHTSCAPE AND LIGHTING (2.20): in addition to the Streets for All already mentioned, you may find the following information on lighting useful to refer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o External lighting of historic buildings</li> <li>o Designing, Installing and Maintaining an External Lighting Scheme</li> </ul> <p>We welcome the assurance at paragraph 2.20.17 that listed lamp column in Fore Street are to be retained. We consider that this should be broadened to encourage the retention of all historic lighting.</p> <p>ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS - AGREED In respect of section 3 (Application to Places), we note the purpose of these illustrated examples for different urban conditions and welcome the assurance that designs will need to go through their own design process including survey, analysis, assessments and approvals. We are also pleased to see that some examples include reference to the need for special consideration to be given to siting, materials and visibility in designing works near to heritage assets.</p>	<p>Add re, to consideration for historic parks, gardens, cemeteries etc</p> <p>Add note to this effect</p>
<p>13. Environment Agency</p>		<p><b>1.1 Our public realm</b></p> <p>1.1.4 - Growth and climate change - We support the carbon sequestration opportunities, flood resilience and biodiversity net gain outcomes sought by the guide.</p> <p>The opportunity for carbon sequestration through wetlands, improved floodplain connection, wet woodlands, etc is encouraged and supports the approach for carbon net zero development. Our soils are one of the biggest carbon sinks available to reduce climate change therefore we suggest the concept of building soil depth and quality should be included within the Design Guide. The prevention of further soil depletion through runoff, at the very least, should be included. Sustainable land management practices will play a large role in this.</p> <p>1.1.5 - People first public realm - We note the 'green and clean' objective, which aligns well with the Environment Agency Corporate Plan 2020-25, and look forward to working more closely in partnership with some of this design guidance in practice.</p> <p><b>2.0 Materials and components</b></p> <p>Please note that any materials and components which apply to river and canal side locations through Taunton may be subject to a FRAP from the Agency, in addition to compliance with the design guide document as indicated within the design guide.</p> <p>It should also be noted that any materials or components will be required to be located so as not to obstruct riparian access for channel maintenance and/or planned improvement works, nor placed in such a manner that could impede flood flows in times of high flow. There should be no raising of land within flood zones 2 or 3.</p> <p>PAVING:</p>	<p>Note added</p> <p>Note added</p>

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		<p>2.4 Green standard paving - Any paths alongside watercourses may be subject to tracked vehicles crossing / travelling along the access to carry out maintenance or bank repair work. All paths should therefore be designed to ensure they would not be damaged by these tracked vehicles.</p> <p>2.4.7 - Water access slips, steps - Gabion cages - Please can softer more natural options be used wherever possible / appropriate instead of gabions.</p> <p>PLANTING:</p> <p>2.18. - The Garden Urboretum - trees for Taunton - Please note the tree planting strategy aligns to the DEFRA 25 year Environment plan and some of the Agency's local greener Wessex agenda.</p> <p>Native species of tree should be planted where possible especially in more rural areas and the riparian zone.</p> <p>We also support planting native trees and wetland creation on our land whilst allowing for flood risk maintenance activities.</p> <p>2.19 - Street gardens - As a form of SuDs they should be referred to Somerset County Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, for comment, although we are supportive in principle where appropriate.</p> <p>LIGHTING:</p> <p>2.20 - Street and path lighting - Along riversides there should be kept a solid dark corridor and a buffer zone where possible, to avoid negative impacts on bats, birds, otters, invertebrates etc.</p> <p>Up lighting of trees - We are not in favour of this, as there is negative impacts on birds, bats, invertebrates and even the tree health itself.</p> <p>Any work within 8 metres will need careful consideration and design and should only be installed after prior consultation and/or FRAP from the Agency.</p> <p>3.5 - River and canal corridor - Please keep footpaths and cycle routes away from all watercourses, or have a buffer zone to minimise disturbance on riparian and aquatic wildlife. Please keep any lighting away from the water e.g. down lit, directional.</p> <p>RIVER AND CANAL CORRIDOR</p> <p>River edges - Please keep soft wherever possible. Avoid gabions or hard engineering, there are lots of soft and natural solutions available nowadays and should be possible in most areas.</p> <p>Scrub - Marginal vegetation and trees should be encouraged wherever possible.</p> <p>Possible enhancements - Bird boxes, bat boxes, kingfisher perches and nest boxes, otter holts, bug hotels, pollinator species. Please ensure they have a long term care and maintenance plan.</p> <p>Carefully managed wild and publicly inaccessible areas should be developed as part of this plan, this is where wildlife will thrive as it will offer havens free from urban litter, noise, light, and visual disturbance.</p> <p>Environment Agency specific consultation should be encouraged here in the guide, as many items may require FRAP from us on a site by site basis, and to ensure that proposals do not contradict with other strategies e.g. TSFAIS project delivery or routine maintenance activities.</p> <p>SEA / HRA</p> <p>It is noted that Somerset West and Taunton Council have applied the SEA/HRA Directive, and the Environment Agency can agree with their draft outcome.</p>	<p>Note added</p> <p>Noted preference below illustration. Urban areas and boat launch areas with more wear may require gabions though.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted in paving section</p> <p>Note added to require management plan.</p>
14. Natural England		We have no specific comments to make on the design guides.	
15. Vistry Group (Developer)		<p><b>Section 2.3 General Standard - paving</b></p> <p><b>Again, this section is too prescriptive and should not be requesting the size and colour nor material of paving. This needs to be flexible and acknowledge that those materials and specifications requested</b></p>	The guide is there to avoid the multiple different surfaces and specifications used in development that lead to a large cost to the public purse in maintenance, difficulty in sourcing spares/replacements and no build up of knowledge of

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		<p>might not be available and (or) better solutions for paving could materialise in the future. Material choice could have an impact on viability, therefore a blanket approach is unreasonable.</p> <p><b>Section 2.6- Street Furniture and 2.20 Nightscape and lighting</b> Please see the comments above. The specifications are far too prescriptive, and lighting needs to be compatible with nature strategies. The specification does not allow for flexibility or innovation in the future and will become out of date quickly.</p>	<p>particular material by either contractors or the highway authority locally. The guide is permitted to codify this under NPPF and local Plan policies.</p> <p>See above. Lighting is compatible with nature strategies and has been agreed with county and EA. Flexibility is problematic for planning long term maintenance and consistency in appearance of the environment so restriction on the pallet of materials is required. The guide can be updated quickly.</p>
16. WessexWater		Street trees can have adverse impacts on underground utilities infrastructure. We suggest that an additional consideration is inserted into Section 2.18.2 'Tree Pit Location' to identify that consideration should be given to street tree location to ensure that they do not have an adverse effect on utilities infrastructure.	Note added
17. Taylor Wimpey (developer)		<p>Taylor Wimpey supports the production and aims of the Public Realm Design Guide, which should be a valuable and helpful tool to raise design standards within Taunton's public realm. The format and structure are considered clear and accessible, providing useful guidance to the approach and treatments to the different character areas</p> <p>It is important however that the SPD does not seek to make and implement new planning policy, for example in respect of the delivery of renewable energy solutions as part of new housing development. It must be recognised that the SPD can only implement policy that already forms part of the development plan.</p> <p>The only concern we would identify is if the detail set out in the Design Guide becomes too prescriptive and therefore risks becomes a 'tick box' tool stifling alternative design and treatments which may be appropriate. For example, Sections 2.1 - 2.4 and 2.7 - 2.13 respectively set out specific paving and street furniture requirements for the different standard areas, but other materials and treatment may be equally acceptable.</p> <p>There also needs to be specific recognition that issues of site-specific circumstance, technical feasibility, and viability may influence the design approach in a way that may not necessarily deliver the specific outcomes sought. While certain design treatments may not be the optimum outcome, in some cases there will be compelling technical reasons why the 'preferred' design solution cannot be followed or where it would make an otherwise desirably scheme unviable - a good example being the availability and cost of materials or particular brands and specifications of street furniture. The Design Guide needs to recognise that in some cases an alternative design approach or treatment will be acceptable.</p> <p>It is also crucial that the advocated design measures are deliverable. Where design measures impact on highways and/or have implications for adoption and maintenance these need to adhere to the relevant standards and guidance - this is specifically acknowledged at paragraph 2.17.1 in respect of Electric Vehicle Charging but this applies to other measures. A conflict between the standards specified in the Design Guide and the standards the Highway's Authority will accept would create additional burdens for applicants and will not facilitate a positive outcome. This is particularly relevant for road materials, street trees, street furniture, and sustainable urban drainage measures in the public realm both in terms of determining applications and longer-term adoption and maintenance implications. The implications of requiring enhanced materials on future commuted sums also needs to be clear. This is acknowledged at paragraph 2.1.3 but the Guide does not offer further clarification as to how this would be addressed.</p> <p>Overall, our client supports the aims and objectives of the draft Public Realm Design Guide SPD and consider it will be helpful in raising standards for the public realm in Taunton. However, as set out in the opening comments, it is important that the Council uses it as a guide and does not seek to apply it rigidly so that it stifles good creative design.</p> <p>Subject to further consideration of these points we offer broad support for the draft document.</p>	<p>The guide is there to avoid the multiple different surfaces and specifications used in development that lead to a large cost to the public purse in maintenance, difficulty in sourcing spares/replacements and no build up of knowledge of particular material by either contractors or the highway authority locally. The guide is permitted to codify this under NPPF and local Plan policies. Other specifications may be adequate functionally but will not be acceptable to the planning authority who must decide on suitability of appearance, scale, long term adequacy, maintenance and environmental performance.</p>
18. Burrington Estates		Burrington Estates supports the production and aims of the Public Realm Design Guide, which should be a valuable and helpful tool to raise design standards within Taunton's public realm. The format and	letter repeating text from Taylor Wimpey letter. See above comments.



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		<p>structure are considered clear and accessible, providing useful guidance to the approach and treatments to the different character areas.</p> <p>It is important however that the SPD does not seek to make and implement new planning policy, for example in respect of the delivery of renewable energy solutions as part of new housing development. It must be recognised that the SPD can only implement policy that already forms part of the development plan.</p> <p>The only concern we would identify is if the detail set out in the Design Guide becomes too prescriptive and therefore risks becomes a 'tick box' tool stifling alternative design and treatments which may be appropriate.</p> <p>There also needs to be specific recognition that issues of site-specific circumstance, technical feasibility, and viability may influence the design approach in a way that may not necessarily deliver the specific outcomes sought. While certain design treatments may not be the optimum outcome, in some cases there will be compelling technical reasons why the 'preferred' design solution cannot be followed or where it would make an otherwise desirably scheme unviable - a good example being the availability and cost of materials. The Design Guide needs to recognise that in some cases a lesser design approach will be acceptable.</p> <p>It is also crucial that the advocated design measures are deliverable. Where design measures impact on highways and/or have implications for adoption these need to adhere to the relevant standards and guidance - this is specifically acknowledged at paragraph 2.17.1 in respect of Electric Vehicle Charging but would apply to other measures. A conflict between the Design Guide and the Highway's Authority as to what will be acceptable will not be helpful to anyone and will not facilitate a positive outcome. This is particularly relevant for road materials, street trees, street furniture and sustainable urban drainage measures in the public realm. The implications of requiring enhanced materials on future commuted sums also needs to be clear. This is acknowledged at paragraph 2.1.3 but the Guide does not offer further clarification as to how this would be addressed.</p> <p>Overall, our client supports the aims and objectives of the draft Public Realm Design Guide SPD and consider it will be helpful in raising standards for the public realm in Taunton. However, as set out in the opening comments, it is important that the Council uses it as a guide and does not seek to apply it rigidly so that it stifles good creative design.</p>	
<p>19. Woodland Trust</p>		<p><b>DOCUMENT LEGIBILITY/ ACCESSIBILITY</b></p> <p>The format and layout of the document make it quite difficult to read online and it doesn't lend itself well to being zoomed in on to read the text. Please could some further consideration be given to the ease of reading this document and others which your team produces to ensure that they are fully accessible</p> <p><b>PLANTING</b></p> <p>The tree chapter seems well thought through and is to be commended</p> <p>The provision and design of tree planting in urban areas is to be commended. It is excellent to see that trees will play such a key role in the making of the garden town. The paragraphs in 2.18.1 - 5 are excellent, taking due care for tree health and the species categorised according to size will contribute well to ensuring that the right tree is planted in the right place. It is also good to see that you have considered the services to urban environments that trees can provide in regulating temperature and air quality.</p> <p>We welcome the commitment to a target of 30% tree cover by 2050 The target to increase tree cover to 30% in Taunton by 2050 is both ambitious and excellent to see. The Woodland Trust would welcome the opportunity to work with Somerset West and Taunton Council on the development of the Taunton Garden Town Tree Planting Strategy. We have schemes available to provide trees for planting on local authority land including MORE woods and community tree packs. We can work with you to develop a plan and move to delivery of this ambition. It is excellent to see that you have considered the local conditions and environments of the area and are including trees for wetlands, wet woodlands and withy beds, and orchards as well as mixed broadleaved woodland planting.</p> <p>It is excellent to see the Woodland Trust listed in your list of possible partners, and this is something we would certainly like to meet with you to take forward. We have experts in tree planting in urban and wilder settings, policy experts and can provide advice on matters relating to managing trees. Please connect with me to arrange an initial meeting.</p> <p>Ensuring trees thrive well into the future</p>	<p>We are not aware of any accessibility issues. The web version may pixellate when zooming in on some illustrations. A high resolution version should also be made available on the website for users who need the detail.</p> <p>Noted and have drawn partnering offer to attention of GT</p>

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		<p>We have identified two small gaps in the SPD which could be improved with some small modifications.</p> <p>Firstly, we would like to ask Somerset West and Taunton Council to consider how the Design Guide can ensure that new development takes account of the size of trees when they have reached maturity, and not at the time of planting. This will safeguard the trees in the future so that they are able to thrive.</p> <p>Secondly, although we advocate the planting of native trees, we understand the value of ornamental trees in urban environments. We would urge Somerset West and Taunton Councils to source trees from nurseries with the tightest plant health controls in place, that are UK sourced and grown and are UKISG endorsed. This will help to ensure that our native trees are protected from new pests and disease, but also that species are not selected which could threaten our native trees which are already showing signs of stress through pressures of climate change and existing diseases.</p> <p>Finally, we welcome the opportunity to work with you to achieve these ambitions and ensure that trees and woodlands thrive in Somerset West and Taunton for the benefit of people, biodiversity, and climate change</p>	<p>Note to be added to tree selection text</p> <p>Note to be added to tree selection text</p>
20. Network Rail		<p><b>ILLUSTRATIVE LAYOUTS: Section 3.2.3 Station - Inner gateway vision</b></p> <p>This section highlights improvements to the station area at Taunton in order to provide a high quality space for the public. As Network Rail is a publicly funded organisation with a regulated remit it would not be reasonable to require Network Rail to fund rail improvements necessitated by commercial development. It is therefore appropriate to require developer contributions to fund such improvements.</p>	<p>Comments noted. The guidance is for design not a scheme proposal or an expectation of funding. It is to show how a scheme might be designed should funding for instance from planning obligations, become available.</p>
21. Avon and Somerset Police		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The physical security of a building alone does not necessarily make it secure, instead, it is a by-product of well thought out, inconspicuous crime prevention measures that are incorporated within the whole design.</li> <li>2. When considering future developments, it is imperative to achieve sustainable reductions in crime to help people live and work in a safer society. Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI) are a police-owned organisation working on behalf of the police service to deliver a wide range of crime prevention initiatives of which they promote Secured by Design (SBD).</li> <li>3. Supported by Crime Prevention Design Advisors (CPDA's), SBD provide a series of design guides that enable CPDA's to work closely with architects, developers and local authority planners at the design stage. This enables the CPDA to assist developers to 'design out crime' by improving the layout and physical security of buildings at conception through to construction.</li> <li>4. Upon meeting the necessary requirements as stated within the SBD Design Guides e. g. Homes 2019 &amp; Commercial 2015, developers may achieve an SBD award. This achievement illustrates that the developer has incorporated crime prevention techniques in the layout, landscaping &amp; planting, provision of communal/play areas and parking in the immediate surroundings plus the physical security of buildings. In addition to the Design Guides listed on the SBD website – <a href="http://www.securedbydesign.com">www.securedbydesign.com</a> –there is a list of accredited products which have been independently third party tested. This ensures the physical security standards of products and services are guaranteed.</li> <li>5. Crime Prevention Design Advisors are trained members of the police service who specialise in crime prevention and designing out crime. Their role is to provide impartial, expert advice on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to a wide range of design and build professionals including architects, builders and developers, local authority planners and many others. Considering CPTED principles at the conception and planning stages is pivotal to the sustainability of future developments ranging from building new, large scale developments to major refurbishment projects. This encompasses a wide range of building sectors including residential, business, education, health, transport, retail and sport/leisure facilities.</li> <li>6. The government has placed obligations on police and local government to work together in the strategies for dealing with crime and ASB, which has firmly placed the CPDA role in the planning process. In addition, local planning policy, design codes, BREEAM and the Crime &amp; Disorder Act 1998 (Section 17) influence and address the need to design out crime and deliver safe and secure communities.</li> </ol> <p>I request that the above comments (or an appropriate version of them) be included in the above Design Guides.</p>	<p>Secured by Design is covered by SADMP 2016 Policy D8: Safety</p> <p>SBD tends to focus on development of sites in the planning system whereas the design guide is trying to also cover provision and reengineering /improvement of existing public space in highways and green spaces. Some of SBD guidance may also conflict with some sustainable design practice e.g. Low Traffic Neighbourhoods creation, so needs careful interpretation.</p> <p>A note to be added that the Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor can usefully advise on public realm design safety aspects.</p>

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22. Highways England		Whilst we have no specific comments on the draft guidance contained within the Design Guides, we welcome the Council's intention to deliver sustainable development across the district by encouraging the development of sustainable transport opportunities, thereby reducing the reliance on the private car	noted
23. Office for Nuclear Regulation		For developments we will require: confirmation from relevant Council emergency planners that developments can be accommodated within any emergency plan required under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019; and that the developments do not pose an external hazard to the site.	No developments proposed

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL			
24. Highways		<p>...strong concerns about the documents as currently drafted and would suggest that we arrange some collaborative sessions to work through your objectives and proposed changes to current practice; to agree an appropriate set of guidance that this Authority can sign up to.</p> <p>...broad concern is that the documents (in particular the public realm document) do not take sufficient account of the fundamental principles that underly most of the existing guidance and statutory requirements for the design, maintenance and operation of highway and transport networks.</p> <p>I note that the public realm guide is aimed at guiding design of public realm and street works by the highway authority, by developers, utility companies and by their agents and contractors. There is a wealth of existing guidance, much of it embedded in statutory regulation that does not appear to be compatible with many of the proposals in your draft guidance.</p> <p>The provision of a safe network with appropriate capacity to keep traffic moving is at the heart of current highway guidance and is not reflected sufficiently in your proposed approach. We need to ensure that the design standard, layout and materials used are appropriate to the role, function and strategic nature of the routes. Proposals for the A38 as an example do not appear to be appropriate...</p>	<p>The Guide takes into account all the current guidance and statutory regulations and the Council will continue to work with the Highways Authority.</p> <p>The guide is aimed at designing the appearance of public space to accord with Garden Town and our joint sustainability commitments - it is not meant to replace highways manual. All diagrams of application are illustrative of principles - not detailed engineering designs.</p> <p>The premise of keeping traffic moving here is that all streets and roads are treated equally with vehicle priority as the primary goal. Whilst the Traffic Management Act suggests this, such an approach is a blunt instrument and all streets must be treated according to their context - particularly their required (not necessarily existing) pedestrian and cycle activity level.</p>
		<b>1.1.1 Purpose of this Guide</b>	
24.1.		The Highway Authority require further clarification is required on the meaning of Public Realm and Streetworks. Is this guide intended to only apply to the existing highway network or will it also apply to internal estate roads within a housing development	Both - its area related - not new and existing related
		<b>1.1.7 Respecting Character and Heritage</b>	
24.2.		Please note there are spelling mistakes in the text which is associated with figure 3.	Noted.
		<b>1.1.8 Equality and Inclusive access</b>	
24.3.		From reviewing these paragraphs, they do not directly mention pedestrians with a visual impairment or the current pause on shared spaces. It is our opinion that this section needs to be carefully considered to ensure it adequately caters for all those with equality and inclusive access needs. In addition, you may wish to consider disabled parking and accessibility to public transport	<p>This introductory statement is about our Equalities Act duties. Visually impaired people are only one of the protected characteristics under the Equalities Act duties. Our duty is to eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations. It requires local authorities to make a 'reasonable' adjustment to ensure the equal provision of services.</p> <p>We deliberately do not use the term shared space in accordance with CIHT - nor show any. DPTAC more accurately state "Those involved in shared space schemes need to be cognisant of the need to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty</p>

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			<p>and the duty to implement reasonable adjustments”. So it is carefully considered.</p> <p>We also understand the shared space pause is not blanket but conditional. We draw your attention to the Minister’s statement of 28/9/2018 which states “<i>the focus of the pause is on level-surface schemes in areas with relatively large amounts of pedestrian and vehicular movement, such as high streets and town centres (outside of pedestrian zones). The pause does not apply to streets within new residential areas, or the redesign of existing residential streets with very low levels of traffic, such as appropriately designed mews and cul-de-sacs, which take into account the relevant aspects of the National Planning Policy Framework and associated guidance.</i>”</p> <p>And  “Features often included in a shared space scheme, such as the minimal use of traffic signs and other traffic management related street furniture, removing traffic signals, removing/modifying formal and informal crossings, raised side road entry treatments, continuous footways, table junctions and shared use routes for pedestrians and cyclists are often integral parts of other traffic management schemes. The use of these features in traffic management schemes is not included in the request to pause level surface shared space schemes. The availability of formal crossings is particularly important for visually impaired people. Local authorities should consider how this need can be met in all schemes, including shared space.”</p> <p>See also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">DPTAC position on ‘shared space’ 2018</a></li> <li>• Access for blind people in towns. SS1401 The National Federation of the Blind of the UK, 2013.</li> <li>• ‘Creating better streets: Inclusive and accessible places. Reviewing shared space’, CIHT, 2018</li> </ul>
24.4.		You will also need to include the following document in the reference section: “A Guide to Best Practice on Access to Pedestrian and Transport Infrastructure” - Inclusive Mobility (DfT) document.	Noted - will add ref. here. (Already mentioned in other parts of Guide and references at end)
		<b>1.1.9 Format of the Design Guide</b>	
24.5.		It is noted that several references have been listed but this does not cover all the documents likely to be referenced by the Highway Authority. The County Council’s Declared Standards are likely to extend beyond those listed. For example, there is no reference to the Traffic Signs Manuals, The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), which covers design & specific infrastructure not covered by MfS. There is also no reference to relevant legislation including Construction (Design and Management) Regs 2015, which is fundamental to ensure it is safe and fit for purpose. Whilst new DfT documents relating to Walking, Cycling and Horse riding must be considered to ensure the latest design ideals are adopted.	<p>It is not meant to cover every document likely to be referenced by the Highway Authority - it is those needed for public realm design in the Garden Town - not all highway design. The Highway Authority may need to update their guides in some areas</p> <p>TSM and DMRB are mentioned where these are relevant - see p.47 and 136</p> <p>“The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) is a suite of documents which contains requirements and advice relating to works on motorway and all-purpose trunk roads for which one of the Overseeing Organisations is highway or road authority” (GG101, DMRB). It is not designed for local streets.</p> <p>The guide does not mention CDM as it is a statutory duty and doing so is a distraction from the main purposes of the document. The guide is aimed at professional and competent designers of public realm/highway works. The applicability of certain of the CDM regulations is anyway dependent on whether the project is notifiable, i.e. those projects for which the construction phase is likely to involve more than 30 working days or more than 500 person days of construction works.</p> <p>LTN1/20 has been followed as far as possible. Not sure what other DfT documents are being referred to? Recent CD 195 Designing for cycle traffic (DMRB) is mentioned.</p>
		<b>2.1.1 Core Standard</b>	

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
24.6.		There is no specific reference made to conservation areas within the town. Do core standards only relate to conversation areas?	<p>No all the standards relate to more than just Conservation Areas. The Core Standard, which includes several Conservation Areas and many Listed Buildings. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, is to also take account of the setting of these and other non-designated heritage assets (local listing/buildings, structures and fabric of historic importance) - not just the designated boundaries to conservation areas. See Fig 6 p13 and fig 7 p19.</p> <p>All the Core Area and part of the Town Standard area are environmentally sensitive and are lined by Listed Buildings as well as Conservation Areas most of which, but not all, adjoin. There are Conservation Areas in parts of the General Standard Area also. Note that Historic England guidance on planning also relates to the setting of Heritage Assets, which includes non-designated heritage assets (The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) 2015. Their Streets for All South West guidance also applies.</p> <p>The Conservation Area boundaries will be shown on the overall Area Standards plan but the quality and specification of materials is not solely based on this designation.</p>
		<b>2.1.2 Key Characteristics</b>	
24.7.		Regarding this paragraph clarification with DfT mobility and local disabled groups about new tactile guidelines. Please ensure adequate consideration is given to those with a visual impairment. Please note that sandstone cycleways and sandstone set for crossovers and contrast might be confusing. There are other questions relating to tactile delineation, flame textured contrast areas and colour of natural stone blister slabs at controlled crossings.	<p>Suggest the following insertion is made 'The public realm design process must consider the needs of blind and partially sighted people from the outset of a scheme, within an integrated and genuinely inclusive design process, that reflects the public sector obligations under the Equalities Act'.</p> <p>There is a cycle divider kerb as contrast and setts are in contrast jointing so appear darker. Design would as policy, be subject to consultation with disabled groups. Vehicle crossovers are in setts to allow for more vehicle use and also to provide indication of potential vehicle use. This is traditional over much of the country - not sure why it would cause confusion.</p> <p>We note the tactile contrasts issue- see 2.5.7 for suggested changes to colour to black in Core Standard area.</p>
24.8.		Where materials for carriageway construction differ from those outlined in SCC's standard construction materials then commuted sums will be sought by the local highway authority to secure the future maintenance of the assets.	SCC do not appear to have published standard construction materials but any information on this will be taken into account. The use of higher quality materials will be sought where appropriate. The town centre already has bespoke higher quality paving as is fitting to the centre of the county town.
24.9.		As an aside to the above it may be prudent to provide a link to SCC's commuted sum policy document. So, it will mean developers are under no illusion what is expected of them.	SCC commuted sum policy will be added for developer reference.
		<b>2.1.3 Specials</b>	
24.10.		Concerns that tactile natural stone blister slabs (grey) will not provide the contrast required for the visually impaired pedestrians. Off-road segregation of cyclists using cycle granite demarcation edge (Charcon) will again cause a colour contrast issue for the partially sighted pedestrians.	<p>The DfT guidance on tactile doesn't require contrast - it is advised. It is also accepted that "Where there are conservation considerations an alternative colour for the tactile surface may be appropriate" - design would be subject to consultation with disabled user groups as SCC policy.</p> <p>Proposed to insert 'The public realm design process must considers the needs of blind and partially sighted people from the outset of a scheme, within an integrated and genuinely inclusive design process, that reflects the public sector obligations under the Equalities Act'</p>
24.11.		Cycle drop kerbs in granite (Charcon) raise several questions i.e. are these too narrow and can cause a slip hazard for cyclists.	Cycle drop kerbs are available in a number of widths (450, 600, 750mm) to suit slope needed and meet BS EN1340 requirements for SRV.
24.12.		Finally, please can you clarify what a courtesy crossing, is this the same thing as an Uncontrolled Crossing facility.	Courtesy crossings are uncontrolled crossings, typically provided in more enhanced slow speed street environments, with no statutory requirement for



Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
			drivers to give way to pedestrians, but many do out of courtesy as is required in UK law where the pedestrian has equal right of use of the highway as the vehicle.
		<b>2.1.4 Paving Slabs - smooth</b>	
24.13.		Is the Slip Resistance Value sufficient?	Yes - meets BS 1341 - surface should be greater than 35 in the wet. Note - DMRB CD 239 Footway and cycleway pavement design also states "Natural stone flags or setts shall have a minimum unpolished skid resistance value (USRV) of 35 determined in accordance with BS EN 14231 [Ref 21.N] in wet conditions"
		<b>2.1.5 Paving setts - footways and cycle paths</b>	
24.14.		Colour contrasts to enable pedestrians (especially visually impaired) to decide what is a footway, i.e. a right of way on foot only, and a Segregated or shared-use footway/cycleway NMU route? As with the paving slabs, is Slip Resistance Value sufficient?	The specification is for setts. Sometimes these are used in cycle track and sometimes in footways - not saying same would be used in same place - see application diagrams. The layout design would seek to create suitable contrast. See also 2.5.7 response.
		<b>2.1.6 Paving slabs - textured</b>	
24.15.		No mention of tonal (or other type) of contrast between a footway and cycleway.	Para. numbering to be amended. Yes - meets BS 1341 - surface SRV should be greater than 35 in the wet
		<b>2.1.7 Paving Setts - carriageways</b>	
24.16.		No mention of tonal (or other type) of contrast between a footway and cycleway.	This section is for individual materials specification - not layout section. Contrast in layout is designer's responsibility using materials shown.
24.17.		Is the Slip Resistance Value sufficient?	Setts meet BS EN 1341 - surface SRV should be greater than 35 in the wet.
24.18.		With regard to materials, if these are nonstandard materials usually the Highway Authority would require a commuted sum. However, considering that this will be for the garden town has there been a discussion between SCC and SW&T over a change in policy because of this.	The use of higher quality materials on the areas shown is subject to agreement on a case by case basis. The town centre already has bespoke higher quality paving as is fitting to the centre of the county town. A ref. to commuted sum SCC policy for developers will be added.
24.19.		Please note that granite setts are not currently permitted for adoption within the SCC design palette.	Propose to change this to 'imprint asphalt' - setts can have problems where buses and HGVs access regularly though regularly used in high quality schemes.
		<b>2.1.8 Cycle demarcation edge</b>	
24.20.		We have not seen this approach used before, looks like potential for trip hazards if this is segregating cyclists and pedestrians. Drainage design will need careful consideration.	The shape is prescribed in 'Guidance on the use of tactile paving surfaces' for use to separate the pedestrian and cyclist sides of a segregated shared use cycle path See uses as kerb at Sauchiehall St Glasgow, and at Newarke Street, Leicester. Could use half batter kerb laid on side as alternative.  A max 1in4 to 1in7 slope is not found to cause a trip hazard. See also UCL PAMELA research "Testing proposed delineators to demarcate pedestrian paths in a shared space environment" 2008
		<b>2.1.9 Cycle edge kerb</b>	
24.21.		Raised kerb height - Problems experienced in Bridgwater of elderly pedestrians tripping up the kerbs when crossing. There is no colour contrast. No safety lines. Chamfered kerbs are a potential hazard. Drainage, thresholds, footway levels and transitions will need to be carefully considered and detailed and again is the slip resistance value sufficient.	This cycle kerb is designed to be more forgiving for a cyclist by avoiding pedal clipping kerb and causing and cyclist to fall into path of a vehicle. It is prescribed in TfL Streetscape Design Guide and sold commercially by Charcon. It is to be used in the right place - i.e. for a divider strip between carriageway and cycle lane, not to edge of footway. Kerb meets BS EN 1341 for SRV - see Charcon technical sheet. A competent designer would know how to use it. The colour contrasts the same as any other kerb so is no greater trip hazard.

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
		<b>2.1.10 Cycle drop kerb</b>	
24.22.		Is the Slip Resistance Value sufficient?	Kerb meets BS EN 1341 for SRV
		<b>2.1.11 Kerbs</b>	
24.23.		Any materials use in a Conservation area will require prior approval by the District and County Conservation Officers.	We have consulted SCC's Conservation Officer. See SWHT comments. SWT is the District Conservation Officer and is the promoter of the design guide and its requirements.
		<b>2.1.12 Resin bound gravel</b>	
24.24.		No slip resistance value has been provided. It should be restricted to locations out of pedestrian areas - tree pits and surrounding street furniture.	A note re resin bonded gravel would be required to have SRV >40 (wet) measured in accordance with BS 598-105 : 2000 and BS EN 13036-4 : 2003 and have BBA Certificate .
		<b>2.2.2 Key characteristics</b>	
24.25.		Please note that gold resin bound gravel is unsuitable to use for cycle lanes. Where carriageway construction/materials proposed for use differ from those outlined in SCC's standard construction materials then commuted sums will be sought by the Highway Authority to secure future maintenance assets.	In light of SCC comment on consistency of cycle paths across the town, a change is proposed to a Terracotta self coloured asphalt binder surface for the Core and Town Standard area. The concern is that the red should be less bold within the historic town centre and its immediate margins.  The proposals show cycle lanes (in carriageway) as using asphalt colour binder surface as SCC standard - again in Terracotta colour.  The Council is now aware of any published SCC standards for construction materials since the Green Book was withdrawn. The use of higher quality materials on the areas shown will be considered on a case by case basis. The town centre already has bespoke paving as is fitting to our county town's prime shopping and civic area.  A ref. to the SCC commuted sum policy will be added for developer reference.
		<b>2.2.8 Cycle demarcation edge</b>	
24.26.		Firstly, there is a spelling mistake in the text for the photo. With regards to the demarcation will these be clearly visible during the hours of darkness? Drainage would also need to be detailed. Many of these features are not included in the core section of the report, which is likely to have a greater number of ped/visually impaired and cyclists.	The demarcation is for use in town centre (Core and Town Standard Areas) so will be illuminated. Drainage breaks are a detail issue but are deliberately shown in the illustration.  The guide is to establish principles of material use in each area- not to show every occurrence as it is not a plan.
		<b>2.2.11 Resin bound gravel</b>	
24.27.		Gold Resin bound gravel is unsuitable to use for cycle lanes.	Cycle tracks and lanes have been amended to a Terracotta self coloured asphalt binder surface for the Core and Town Standard area, in order to maintain the red tone for consistency. The Council seeks to ensure that the red used should be less bold within the historic town centre and its immediate margins.  RBG use confined to footway areas where there is less foot traffic (outside 'Clear Zone') and where colour contrast for visually impaired is required - i.e. around street furniture clusters, cycle racks etc
24.28.		Where carriageway construction / materials proposed for use differ from those outlined in SCC's standard construction materials then commuted sums will be sought by the local highway authority to secure the future maintenance of the assets. A link to the Commuted Sum Policy document would be useful here.	The Council is not aware of any published SCC standards for construction materials since the Green Book was withdrawn. The use of higher quality materials on the areas identified will be subject to discussion on a case by case basis. The town centre already has bespoke paving as is fitting to our main county town's prime shopping and civic area.  A ref. to the SCC commuted sum policy will be added for developer reference.
24.29.		Is the Slip Resistance Value sufficient?	A note will be added that resin bonded gravel would be required to have SRV >40 (wet) measured in accordance with BS 598-105 : 2000 and BS EN 13036-4 : 2003 and have BBA Certificate .
		<b>Missing Section</b>	

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
24.30.		There is no reference to cycle path surfacing. Please note that red surface for cycle lanes and where clear segregation is required. No mention of shared areas. The colour contrast is to assist the partially sighted, to provide warning and raise awareness that they can expect cyclists. Red shared areas combined with signing also help inform motorists of the presence of a cycleway where cyclists are likely to be joining the carriageway	Cycle tracks are shown as RBG in 2.2.11 - see amendment to Terracotta asphalt proposed above. Shared cycle/footways not shown here as these are a layout issue - this section is only dealing with materials.
		<b>2.3.8 Resin bound gravel</b>	
24.31.		The paragraph numbering is incorrect	noted and will be amended
		<b>2.3.10 Cycle demarcation line</b>	
24.32.		The paragraph numbering is incorrect	noted and will be amended
		<b>2.3.11 Cycle path surface</b>	
24.33.		Red surface for cycle lanes and where clear segregation is required. No mention of shared areas. The colour contrast is to assist the partially sighted, to provide warning and raise awareness that they can expect cyclists. Red shared areas combined with signing also help inform motorists of the presence of a cycleway where cyclists are likely to be joining the carriageway.	Red surface is shown for cycle lanes in the General Standard area in this section.  Shared areas are a layout issue (and dealt with in LTN 1/12). This section is only a materials specification for specific areas.  LTN 1/12 also states "Coloured surfacing is not generally recommended for shared use" and "On shared use routes, coloured surfacing can be very detrimental to the streetscape". We also note SCC practice varies across Taunton, with many shared tracks uncoloured.
		<b>2.4.4 Sealed surface cycle paths: town centre area</b>	
24.34.		Any features or materials which are not part of the SCC palette or considered standard construction will attract a commuted sum.	These are not on highways land (i.e. cycle tracks under the RTRA) so do not strictly require SCC standard materials - A note to be added to make this clear
		<b>2.4.5 Sealed surface cycle paths: outer area</b>	
24.35.		It is recommended that a single binder/surface course material similar to that used as part of the Cannington-Combwich cycle route.	This is for largely off highway cycle tracks. The material shown is similar to that laid in Longrun Meadow recently by SCC (which includes a good proportion of recycled materials).
		<b>2.4.6 Unsealed surface cycle paths</b>	
24.36.		We would recommend that you consult SCC Public Rights of Way Team.	Noted
		<b>2.5.2 Controlled crossings</b>	
24.37.		Fig 15 has no guard rail as such kerbing will be a trip hazard. There is evidence of this on the Taunton Third Way.	This is used in busy pedestrian locations in London and is a successful design detail shown in the TfL Streetscape Design Guide having been used first in Kensington High Street (completed 2004 and reduced RTAs by 44%). A note will be added that disabled groups must be consulted during design stages. Removing guardrail in the right circumstances assists multiple different types of people abilities in crossing, assist physical distancing, aids pedestrian movement and removes clutter.
24.38.		High friction surfacing to be self-coloured. Currently we use buff coloured surfacing.	The performance is not different and SWT as planning authority require self coloured grey in the Garden Town centre.
24.39.		Tactile paving at controlled crossings should be red in accordance with the DfT's Guidance on the Use of Tactile Paving Surfaces unless it is in a conservation area.	The DfT guidance is not as binary (i.e. in and out of a CA as suggested). The Tactile guidance states "Where the blister surface is provided at crossing points in conservation areas or in the vicinity of a listed building, some relaxation of the colour requirements may be acceptable". It relates to environmentally sensitive areas - not just designated Conservation Areas.



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			<p>All the Core Area is an environmentally sensitive area and is lined by Listed Buildings as well as Conservation Areas most of which, but not all, adjoin. Historic England guidance on planning also relates to the setting of Heritage Assets. See 'The Setting of Heritage Assets Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning' Note 3 (Second Edition) 2015. Their Streets for All South West guidance also applies.</p> <p>The Tactile Guidance states the duty is to consult with local visual impairment groups which is made clear that this is a requirement for design teams.</p>
24.40.		SCC Traffic Signal Specification document sets out the county's standards for such locations including the use guard railing and colour of HFS on the approaches. The SCC Traffic Signals team should be consulted.	<p>The SCC STAN 11/17 Traffic Signals does not preclude this design approach - it is a detail the Council would like in the Garden Town to improve pedestrian comfort and visual amenity. The SCC guide says "We have alternative designs for islands some of which incorporate pedestrian guardrail and others safety kerbing as a way of both protecting vulnerable users and a way of guiding them". With speed reduction enabled and ISA coming in in 2022, we expect to see a more barrier free approach to public realm design.</p> <p>.</p>
		<b>2.5.3 Side Road Entry Treatments</b>	
24.41.		Will need to conform to Road Hump Regs, with humps being no higher than 100mm and 75mm on bus routes.	<p>The design to comply with TAL 2/94 and accords with SCC's own details STAN 08/18 Traffic Calming (section 7.18). Only need white hump arrows if table exceeds 100mm. Aim would be to design out a 100mm rise by tapering the carriageway surface up to the table. A competent designer would apply the regulations. Not proposed to use on bus routes.</p>
24.42.		In line crossing three rows deep on the tactile. Assume blister tactile? Consider layout for segregated route going into shared area at crossing.	<p>Tactile would seek to follow Guidance on Tactile Paving, 1998 Fig 16 (or if amended, any new guidance or the new cycle LTN).</p>
24.43.		Consider new design standard for cycling, with respect to these indented crossings. No drainage details. Illumination of crossing is an important safety feature.	<p>New LTN1/20 has been followed as far as possible. Drainage details are outside the scope of the guide. All use would be in the Garden Town urban area which is illuminated.</p>
24.44.		No detail of junction radius kerbing. Swept paths required to ensure overrun does not conflict with tactile paving, pedestrians, street furniture, exiting vehicle.	<p>Agreed, noting MfS 6.3.13 also allows for swept path to cross centre line. It is important not to design geometry solely based on occasional use by large vehicles, such as refuse or removal trucks. Junction radius is not shown deliberately - to be as small as possible to assist pedestrian and cyclists (MfS shows junctions with no radius - only quadrants) and based on local context, width of side street, volume of HGV movements etc.</p>
24.45.		No road hump triangles, warning signs etc	<p>The matter of whether it is a hump or not depends on height of table. We would suggest tapering adjoining blacktop surfaces to avoid the need to make it road hump. Road humps at entry points will need to be signed other than when used as an entry (LTN 1/07 Traffic Calming).</p>
24.46.		Are Dutch kerbs type approved in the UK? What is the evidence that they are work well for motorcyclists and cyclists?	<p>Yes - meet BS EN 1340. (Under cross compliance of EU Standards required by DMRB). See Charcon technical sheet. Used in Netherlands by 17 million people. Detailed in CROW design guide.</p>
24.47.		A Powered two-wheeled vehicle (PTW) turning into the junction will be leaning, no reference to skid resistance etc.	<p>They are BS EN 1340 i.e. &gt;40 USRV</p>
24.48.		If undertaking a Road Safety Audit (RSA), there is a concern that pedestrians assume priority and step out in front of a vehicle turning into the junction, exacerbated during the hours of darkness. PTW loss of control negotiating the junction.	<p>Hence need to design in context and understand the speeds, volume of peds etc. Accords in principle with SCC's own details STAN 08/18 Traffic Calming (section 7.18). The aim is to increase pedestrian access, provide more equitable public space for mobility impaired, reduce vehicle priority and decarbonise transport and of course, increase cycling by 100% by 2030. RSA Stages would be carried out as per adoption or highway asset management plans as usual. Consultation with local disability groups should be undertaken when designing schemes</p>

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
24.49.		Conflict with cyclists (Fig 17), cyclists approaching crossing at speed and assuming priority, tactile paving does not appear to extend across the cycle route, visually impaired pedestrians who may stray onto the cycle path are given no warning that they are stepping out into the carriageway.	<p>Entry treatments are less used in Somerset but it does accord with the principles of the treatments in SCC Traffic Calming STAN 08/18 and complies with LTN1/20. Its purpose is to reinforce the appearance that a vehicle is no longer at this point on a 'live carriageway' (an emotive term) but on a pedestrian and cycle space that they are permitted to travel across where vehicle are at low speed. To the pedestrian the continuous footway shows the priority clearly that they already have in law and in the Highway Code. This accords with LTN 1/07 Traffic Calming and other advice.</p> <p>The tactile layout can be further refined but this is current thinking and would accord with Guidance on Tactile Paving 2008 Fig. 16 with 3 rows (the diagram is necessarily simplified to indicate principles). Visually impaired pedestrians would know if they stray onto the cycle track due to the demarcation kerb edge.</p>
24.50.		Not confident that the layouts shown, adequately cater for people who are visually or mobility impaired, which was the reason the government halted shared space schemes.	<p>This is not a shared space scheme but good practice in side road entry traffic calming in busy urban areas. It complies with SCC Traffic Calming STAN 08/18 and the Highway Code where vehicles are required to give way to people walking and on cycles at the side road exit/entry (Rules 170 and 183). Used successfully in many cities, it is acknowledged as better than the status quo at prioritising movement for visually impaired and all pedestrian people with disabilities and people on cycles by a long margin. This is in order to achieve the objectives of modal shift, higher cycling rates, physical distancing and better and more equitable walking environment. Following the status quo and not providing good continuous footways in the Garden Town core would really be overlooking our community's equality needs.</p> <p>See earlier comment on Minister's comment on Shared Space - which is not 'halted'.</p> <p>We will add note that 'Detail design would be subject to consultation with local disability groups' as suggested above,</p>
24.51.		Assumed 750mm is an error and should read 75mm?	No - this is one of the widths of a Charcon standard Dutch entrance 'inritbanden' kerb (Dutch standards also come in 450 and 600mm width)
		<b>2.5.5 Crossovers</b>	
24.52.		Fig 19 show the use of quadrant kerbs at dropped crossings these need to be carefully assess gradients for wheelchair users. In additional construction detail for southbound pedestrians and wheelchair users need to be considered.	Any design would of course be subject to scrutiny for compliance with disability access and we will add a general note to the guide saying how consultation with local disability groups should be undertaken when designing schemes. May need to adjust footway levels locally to achieve gradients and flush kerb.
24.53.		Fig 20 is similar to the above for Fig 19, but consideration must also be given to construction details to avoid trips, vertical faces or excessive gradients for east-west pedestrians. The proposed details at the back edge of the footway are not clear, potential for trip hazards.	Any design would of course be subject to scrutiny for compliance with disability access. May need to adjust footway levels locally to achieve gradients and flush kerb.
		<b>2.5.6 On footway loading and cargo bike bays</b>	
24.54.		With regard to Fig 23 consideration needs to be given to visual and mobility impaired pedestrians. The quadrant kerb, and associate kerb that runs perpendicular to the channel and may present a trip hazard. There appears to be a considerable length of drop kerb (assume flush, if cycles are crossing it at an acute angle). No tactile show to warn visually impaired pedestrians that they are stepping into live carriageway. Recessed lock rings may have potential to fill with detritus and become a trip hazard, regular maintenance liability. Finally paving will need to be laid to the manufacturer's requirements.	<p>A quadrant is shown (and would not be a trip hazard any more than a vehicle crossover elsewhere) but a simple drop kerb would also work too. The guide is a principle of providing segregated time limited loading that does not disrupt normal pedestrian flow when not in use.</p> <p>This is footway with loading specifically permitted (as S.19 of the Road Traffic Act 1988). They are not stepping into a live carriageway - this is a time limited loading or cargo bike bay shared on the footway. Currently these are present on North Street as unregulated areas. This is a clearer layout for visually impaired due to the tone contrast in the paving. It also returns to pedestrian use when not in use for loading. If a bay is solely for cargo bike parking the bay could use contrast resin bound gravel in lieu of setts.</p> <p>The bike parking rings are flush with the footway. Minor detritus would be picked up by normal mechanical sweepers used in Taunton.</p>

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
			The design guide is not meant to be a construction specification (though we would envisage paving is laid to BS EN 7533-13).
		<b>2.5.7 Tactile paving</b>	
24.55.		Controlled crossings should have red coloured tactile paving unless it is in a conservation area. Interim changes to the Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving surfaces was a consultation that concluded and was not taken further.	This is not so. Tactile guidance includes “or in the vicinity of a listed building, some relaxation of the colour requirements may be acceptable”. The Core Area is both CA and vicinity of listed buildings.
24.56.			DfT Tactile review (TRL Studies) - still ongoing as Feb 2020
24.57.		SCC Traffic Signal Specification document sets out the county's standards for such locations including the use guard railing and colour of HFS on the approaches. The SCC Traffic Signals team should be consulted.	All signals design would require sign off by SCC as the highway authority. This document is a guide.
		<b>References</b>	
24.58.		Noted that a number of references have been listed but this does not cover all the document which are likely to be referenced by the Highway Authority with SCC's declared standards likely to extend beyond those listed. For example, there is no mention of the Traffic Signs Manuals, Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) which provide detailed design advice for specific infrastructure not covered by MfS.	It is not the purpose of the guide to list every policy and standard. These are SWT requirements.  DMRB is not relevant to non-trunk roads. DMRB does not cover infrastructure not covered by MfS - this is the role of local guidance. GG101 states “DMRB is a suite of documents which contains requirements and advice relating to works on <u>motorway and all-purpose trunk roads</u> for which one of the Overseeing Organisations is highway or road authority.”  This guide is a public realm guide - not a highway design technical guide. It is aimed at the Garden Town public face to meet Garden Town objectives.
24.59.		In addition, no reference is made to relevant legislation including Construction (Design & Management) Regs 2015. It is fundamental that any design is safe and fit for purpose. New DfT documents for Walking, Cycling, Horse-riding must be considered.	We have referred to CDM Regulations and other guidance including LTN1/20 that is relevant to the purposes of the guide.  We would value details of any recent DfT documents that we should include.
		<b>2.6 Signs and road markings</b>	
24.60.		Must comply with legislation i.e. Road Traffic Regulation Act and the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions. Should follow the guidance set out in the Traffic Signs Manuals.	The guidance does not contradict the TSRGD or TSM. Relevant TSM references are shown where there are choices within them that SWT wish to utilise - such as yellow line colours.  The guidance has flexibilities within it and our Guide suggests how it should be applied in Taunton.
		<b>2.6.1 Clutter awareness</b>	
24.61.		With regard to signs on buildings what are the legalities of this in terms of maintenance? Where signs are proposed to be located on lamp columns Highway Lighting must be consulted as there are limits to size of sign that can be mounted on a column.	No amendment necessary. Sections 64 and 65 of the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847 and power to alter or renew in Public Health Act 1925, Section 19. We have made clear that all lighting must be agreed with the Highway Authority Lighting Engineer.
		<b>2.6.2 Marketing</b>	
24.62.		Hanging baskets proposed to be located on lamp columns. Highway lighting should be consulted.	Noted.
		<b>2.6.3 Cycle signage and road infrastructure</b>	
24.63.		Paving insets to be used where road markings are considered to be intrusive. In addition, they don't appear to be considerate of shared space concerns raised by disabled groups.	The photo used will be replaced with an alternative. Paving insets showing cycle route are suggested as ways of reducing sign clutter and obstruction to visually impaired and people on cycles that vertical poles incur. Only one repeater is required by TSRGD but this is often ignored and sign clutter, some historic, is allowed to aggregate.

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
		<b>2.6.4 Parking Restricted zone</b>	
24.64.		Parking Restricted Zones - no road markings required. Consultation required with the Traffic Management team.	Noted.
		<b>2.6.5 Colour consistency</b>	
24.65.		Painted posts and columns hide defects such as corrosion and present an ongoing maintenance issue for the county hence why we currently galvanised. In addition, commuted sums may be required.	Noted.
24.66.		Please note that our Highways Lighting Team have responded stating that the Highway Lighting specification document should be consulted. We will provide this once it has been approved. The Somerset County Council Conservation Officer will also need to be consulted on any lighting requirements in a Conservation Area.	Noted. Somerset Technical Advice Note 22/20 is referred to in the document.
24.67.		We are still awaiting comment from our Traffic Engineering Team once this has been received, we will provide you with a copy of their observations.	Noted
		<b>2.6.6 Cycle Lanes</b>	
24.68.		Colour contrast for cycle routes is for the benefit of visually impaired pedestrians as well as enabling the cyclist to identify routes dedicated for them reducing the potential conflict with pedestrians. Red colour routes also help inform motorists to the likely presence of cyclists.	<p>This section is to be amended to 'Cycle lanes and tracks' and will show a clear colour for lanes and tracks for each area standard as follows:</p> <p>Colours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core standard - terracotta</li> <li>• Town Standard - terracotta</li> <li>• General standard - red</li> </ul> <p>Delineator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core standard - demarcation kerb</li> <li>• Town Standard - white line profile</li> <li>• General standard - white line profile</li> </ul> <p>A note will be added that drainage breaks are required.</p>
24.69.		May not be relevant in 20mph speed limits/zones when taking into consideration the factors associated with use of red surfaced cycle routes. Likely to be more important in areas where pedestrian is prevalent. Light grey for cycleways is unlikely to provide sufficient colour contrast against the grey granite. Finally raised profile longitudinal line will require drainage breaks.	See response above
		<b>2.6.8 Centre lines</b>	
24.70.		'In the town centre... centre line markings will not be used' - Where road markings are required by legislation or for the purposes of road safety they will need to be provided (Unless otherwise approved by Sec. of State).	Centre line road markings are not required by legislation. When they are used, they are to be used in compliance with legislation (TSRGD). A 20mph zone is proposed in the town centre so centre lines will not generally be required for safety reasons. (Also ref. MfS 9.3). The guide is showing the need to design out unnecessary engineering infrastructure to improve amenity and reduce vehicle dominance of the street environment, particularly in the Core Standard and Town Standard areas, but equally in other areas of the Garden Town. We want to use what is permitted to achieve this. Secretary of State approval is only required for installing non standard signing, not omitting something that is not required.
		<b>2.6.9 Zig zags at crossings</b>	
24.71.		Zig-zag markings may be extended or reasons for of road safety. Each location will be assessed on its own merits and subject to road safety audit process.	Yes - TSRGD is quoted in the guide i.e. 'depends on visibility on the approach to the crossing'. The guide is for professional highway and public realm designers and any design would require SCC approval. It will be made clear that 'local context, required vehicle speeds, traffic calming, volumes and vehicle mix type will be considered in RSA'.

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
		<b>2.7 Bollards</b>	
24.72.		This section is currently being reviewed by our Traffic Management and Network Management Teams, once this has been completed, we will provide you with their comments under separate cover.	Noted
		<b>2.8 Seats and benches</b>	
24.73.		Licences will be required for the placement of seats and benches on the highway. Asset Ownership will need to be clearly identified.	Noted. SWT have powers under the s14 of the Public Health Act 1925 and Parishes powers under the Parish Councils Act 1957, and for bus shelters under Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1953
24.74.		<b>2.9 Cycle furniture</b>	
24.75.		Licences will be required for the placement of seats and benches on the highway.	Noted. Notwithstanding any SWT powers, if any, under s63 Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (and as amended) to erect cycle parking and motorcycle parking stands
24.76.		Asset Ownership will need to be clearly identified.	Noted - but a detail beyond the scope of the guide
24.77.		<b>2.10 Litter/recycle bins</b>	
24.78.		Any security issues, that might affect public safety? London streets apply clear plastic bags bins.	We are not aware of any - all existing bins in town centre are currently steel and have been since 1996 when last town centre streetscape scheme installed.
24.79.		Licences will be required for the placement of seats and benches on the highway.	Notwithstanding SWT's powers under the s14 of the Public Health Act 1925 and Parishes powers under the Parish Councils Act 1957, and to erect bus shelters under Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1953.
24.80.		Asset Ownership will need to be clearly identified.	Noted - but a detail beyond the scope of the guide
		<b>2.11 Parklets</b>	
24.81.		Licences will be required for the placement of seats and benches on the highway.	Notwithstanding SWT's powers under the s14 of the Public Health Act 1925 and Parishes powers under the Parish Councils Act 1957, and for bus shelters under Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1953
		<b>2.12.1 Pedestrian guardrail</b>	
24.82.		There is a spelling mistake in 'pedestrians and cyclist on al streets'	Noted - we will amend
24.83.		On the subject of guard rails and road safety a number of reports have been produced both for an against. There have been instances where not providing rails on islands has resulted in several incidents and safety concerns particularly for the elderly and the visually impaired. This has resulted in the need to retrofit guard barriers. This is often a difficult as it is necessary to ensure minimum lateral clearance is achieved.	STAN 11/17 Traffic Signals does not preclude this design approach - it is a detail we seek in the Garden Town. SCC guide says "We have alternative designs for islands some of which incorporate pedestrian guardrail and others safety kerbing as a way of both protecting vulnerable users and a way of guiding them". Guardrails prejudice against pedestrians and the guide seeks to design out the need for them.
24.84.		Careful considering must be given to road safety on a site by site basis. Risks must be carefully assessed, in accordance with CDM legislation, and principles of prevention applied to the design in accordance with CDM legislation, and principles of prevention applied to the design in accordance with legislation.	Further explanatory text is proposed. "Each location will be assessed on its own merits and subject to road safety and Equalities audit process. The use of the principles of prevention should (a) avoid risks where possible; (b) evaluate those risks that cannot be avoided; and (c) put in place proportionate measures that control them at source. Designers are expected to do more than the minimum in order to design out the need for guardrails. This means in appropriate locations reviewing altering signal timings to all reds or diagonal crossings, not staggering crossings, reducing approach speeds, etc."  The guide is aimed at professional and competent designers who are fully aware of their CDM responsibilities.

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
24.85.		SCC Traffic Signal Specification document outlines the county's policy on the use of guard railing at controlled crossing points.	STAN 11/17 Traffic Signals does not preclude this design approach
24.86.		The network management team should be consulted on the use of painted street furniture as it presents an additional maintenance liability.	Noted (as with lighting columns and natural stone paving).
		<b>2.13.1 Shelter types and ownership</b>	
24.87.		Positioning of bus stops to be mindful of visibility splays. No reference is made to Low floor bus access kerbs, tactile, safety markings, bus stop clearway markings and signs.	The section is about the shelters in the district and parish control. We will add a note to paving details section 2.5 re. Kassell kerbs for stops
24.88.		Please note that the Highway Authority only maintain stops that are made up of the raised kerb and flag. In terms of shelters the maintenance falls either with the district council or the parish councils.	noted
		<b>2.14.1 Clear zones</b>	
24.89.		Stating minimum widths allows designers to use them. Better not to mention minimum widths.	Noted, however not showing a minimum means clear zones can be insufficient as designers comply with total width minima. The indication to a designer at concept stage would allow this to be addressed.
		<b>2.15.1 Activity for health</b>	
24.90.		Licences will be required for the placement of seats and benches on the highway.	Noted notwithstanding SWT's powers under the s14 of the Public Health Act 1925
24.91.			Proposed to add more explanatory text. "Each location will be assessed on its own merits and subject to road safety and Equalities audit process. The use of the principles of prevention should (a) avoid risks where possible; (b) evaluate those risks that cannot be avoided; and (c) put in place proportionate measures that control them at source. Designers are expected to do more than the minimum in order to design out the need for guardrail. This means in appropriate locations reviewing altering signal timings to all reds or diagonal crossings, not staggering crossings, reducing approach speeds, etc." (It is assumed the guide is aimed at professional and competent designers who are fully aware of their CDM responsibilities).
24.92.		Asset Ownership will need to be clearly identified.	Noted
		<b>2.15.2 Doorstep play</b>	
24.93.		Licences will be required for the placement of seats and benches on the highway.	Noted notwithstanding SWT's powers under the s14 of the Public Health Act 1925
24.94.		Asset Ownership will need to be clearly identified.	Noted
		<b>2.16 Street name plates</b>	
24.95.		Agreements required with property owners to have plates fixed to walls. Highway Authority / District Council to consider future maintenance responsibilities.	SWT has powers under the Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847, Public Health Act 1925 and the Local Government Act 1972 to erect, maintain and require signs to be retained.
		<b>2.17 Electric vehicle chargers</b>	
24.96.		The ECI Programmes Manager should comment on this matter.	The EV charger position was agreed at early consultation stage.
		<b>2.18.1 Tree selection</b>	
24.97.		Asset ownership would need to be confirmed. Where SCC are adopting a commuted sum will be secured to cover the future maintenance of the asset.	Noted - SWT would plant trees by agreement under S.96(4) of the Highways Act. The principle is about providing the trees to assist in combatting climate change



Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
			and poor air quality and improving wellbeing and biodiversity, all also objectives of SCC. We will make a general note to refer to SCC commuted sum policy where planting in adopted highway land is provided by developers
		<b>2.18.2 Tree pits and trenches</b>	
24.98.		SCC has a standard construction detail relating to tree pits	SWT would be pleased to see SCC standard detail and its suitability for a range of tree sizes.
24.99.		Please note for section 2.18 there is a need to consult with the SCC Arboriculturalist. The document will be passed to them for comment and a separate response will be provided. Please note this is for sections 2.18.3 to 2.18.8.	There was consultation with SCC Arboriculturalist prior to drafting and all comments incorporated.
		<b>2.18.9 Increasing tree cover</b>	
24.100.		Careful consideration must be given to tree planting plans to ensure they do not have an adverse impact on other highway safety matters i.e. visibility splays.	Noted - we will add note to make this clear
		<b>2.19.3 Growing edible places</b>	
24.101.		Careful consideration should be given to safety factors associated with planters etc such as positioning in relation to visibility and the safety of volunteers if they are to be working at on or near the highway.	noted - we will add note to make this clear
		<b>2.19.4 Green gyms</b>	
24.102.		Asset ownership to be confirmed. Where SCC are adopting a commuted sum will be secured to cover the future maintenance of the asset.	Likely to be outside adopted highway areas - we will add note to make this clear
		<b>2.20.1 Street lighting</b>	
24.103.		Highway Lighting have responded by saying that the Highway Lighting specification document should be consulted. This will be forwarded when it has been approved.	This was agreed with SCC Senior Lighting Engineer.
		<b>2.20.2 Core Standard lighting</b>	
24.104.		Highway Lighting have indicated that the specification document should be consulted. This will be provided once it has been approved. The conservation officer should be consulted regarding any lighting requirements within a Conservation Area.	The Council is not aware of a published SCC specification but will consider this in any final designs.
		<b>2.20.3 Town Standing lighting</b>	
24.105.		Highway Lighting have responded by saying that the Highway Lighting specification document should be consulted. This will be forwarded when it has been approved.	The Council is not aware of a published SCC specification but will consider this in any final designs.
		<b>2.20.4 General Standard Lighting</b>	
24.106.		Highway Lighting have responded by saying that the Highway Lighting specification document should be consulted. This will be forwarded when it has been approved.	The Council is not aware of a published SCC specification but will consider this in any final designs.
		<b>2.20.5 Green Standard lighting</b>	
24.107.		Highway Lighting have responded by saying that the Highway Lighting specification document should be consulted. This will be forwarded when it has been approved.	The Council is not aware of a published SCC specification but will consider this in any final designs. Much of the Green Standard area is not highway, (though some cycle tracks may be adopted?).
		<b>2.20.6 Taunton illuminart</b>	

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
24.108.		Careful consideration to be given to the safety aspects of lighting schemes this should include:	noted - planning issue - we will add note on need to consult highway authority
24.109.		Distractions;	noted - planning issue - we will add note on need to consult highway authority
24.110.		See through effects (coloured lights dominating background;	noted - planning issue - we will add note on need to consult highway authority
24.111.		Taking emphasis away from foreground traffic/crossing lights	noted - planning issue - we will add note on need to consult highway authority
24.112.		Ownership will need to be confirmed. Where SCC are adopting a commuted sum will be required.	noted - planning issue - we will add a note with reference to SCC commuted sum policy if any features shown here are to be adopted
		<b>2.20.7 Gateway art and lighting</b>	
24.113.		Highway Lighting have responded by saying that the Highway Lighting specification document should be consulted. This will be forwarded when it has been approved.	These are not intended as highway lighting features but public art and is not for adoption by the highway authority. This may need planning and highway authority approval (for glare etc) as above.
24.114.		Where SCC are adopting a commuted sum will be secured to cover the future maintenance of the asset.	We will make a general note to refer to SCC commuted sum policy where any lighting or public art is provided by developers in adopted highway land.
		<b>3.1.1 Illustrated examples</b>	
24.115.		Fig 80 consideration should be given to emergency vehicle access.	Noted - will add note
24.116.		Fig 77 item 4 - all vehicle street raised granite sett paved crossing, careful consideration must be given to the materials used on crossings to ensure they are pedestrian friendly i.e. non slip/trip and the sensitivities of pedestrians with mobility impairments. Colour is also important for the partially sighted. Currant granite slabs can be slippery. Sets & blocks have the potential to move causing rutting and damage which requires regular maintenance, hence why the town centre crossings have been replaced with imprinted slabs.	We appreciate your concerns re. schannelisation and potential maintenance and will amend the specification to use a sliver grey imprint for bus and heavy vehicle over run areas. Well laid setts (fine picked so suitable for visually and mobility impaired) are not a slip hazard and are used extensively in contemporary public realm schemes. Trips are very unusual and caused by poor construction and heavy point loading causing structural failures, not by the setts.
24.117.		Item 6 - Potential for conflict between buses and cycles.	Noted - though this is what the layout is at present so the design is no worse. The alternative would be a floating bus stop - this is a busy pedestrian setting. What we want to achieve is a wider cycle lane that shows bus drivers the cycle presence more boldly than currently and gives more space and prominence to cycling. See also TACC comments.
24.118.		Item 9 - PTWs liable to clip granite set islands causing loss of control type incidents.	Risk is no different to other islands in the proposed 20mph zone. The danger is obvious so volenti non fit injuria applies. We will show a #610 hoop sign to emphasise the island but this is only an illustrative concept visualisation, not a finished design, and would be subject to usual highway design approval process.
24.119.		Fig 80 LGV and service vehicles require access. By making the through route pedestrian only effectively creates a no through road, that will need to cater for service vehicle turning movements within the highway limits.	Hammet Street closure is an SCC Public Space Improvement Scheme in partnership with SWT. This is illustrative design showing principles - i.e. a clearly marked way for pedestrians and cyclists, seating, planting that would not obscure the church view etc. A detailed scheme would of course have to work through all the details of turning, servicing etc. There are no service intensive uses on the street.
		<b>3.1.3 Amenity not clutter</b>	
24.120.		Discussions with disability groups, with regard to mind mapping etc would be of benefit at planning stage.	Noted - we will add note as stated. Will apply to all designs as recommended by DfT Inclusive Mobility and Tactile Paving Guidance.
		<b>3.1.5 Urban squares</b>	
24.121.		Shared spaces should not be provided in accordance with the DfTs Inclusive Transport Strategy.	See previous note on Ministers clarification letter Sep 2019. There is no moratorium on shared surface areas in the right location.



Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
		<b>3.2.6 Ingredients for success</b>	
24.122.		Road safety, measures have previously been implemented to address highway safety matters, particularly conflict between cyclists and motor vehicles at junctions. An assessment of NMU routes and potential conflicts should be carefully considered at the planning and feasibility stage.	The plan is highly conceptual as the area is still subject to change with potential major new development at Firepool. The crossing to Firepool needs to accommodate levels of service/ cricket test match crowds - with very high footfall and greater appearance of a major pedestrian crossing. The plan just indicates the need to consider the design here holistically.
		<b>3.2.7 Ingredients for success</b>	
24.123.		Fig 89 will require careful consideration in association with future planning & development works. The illustration appears to show an on-carriageway cycle lane that sweeps across two lanes of dual carriageway on the main A38. This is a complex junction where high traffic volume; vehicle speeds; overtaking manoeuvres and visibility constraints may be contributory factors in conflicts between cyclists and motor vehicles.	<p>Illustration is a concept derived from some assumptions that would require more detail than the guide is meant to provide. It shows a reduction in scale of the existing priority junction (designed for high speed prior to the M5 existing). This would also involve moving the existing 40mph limit 350m north (and perhaps the 30mph limit), as the urban area is moving north in this district and it no longer needs to have a rural inter-urban road form. This would allow narrower lanes, tighter junction SSDs, safer crossings etc. Speed reduction from north and south approaches may well have to be started further away. The road is not a particularly high volume traffic road at 18k AADT (2018) but lacks good safe cycle links to North Petherton. This is no more than the flows at A38 Stonegallows or Rumwell Green which has single carriageway (and is also M5 diversion route).</p> <p>The illustration is a concept aimed at achieving a slowing of traffic, a gateway to the town where there is none as this area has until now been rural. It seeks to add an excellent cycle right turn infrastructure and amend the road design to achieve this. It is possible do this in other ways of course -the illustration is conceptual. For instance a roundabout may be an alternative with a CD195 design or a signalised junction.</p> <p>We are suggesting in effect that the area is one where DMRB standards would give way to urban standards. This could be done in a number of ways and perhaps further into Monkton Heathfield if not here. The illustration is not a completed scheme and would require a whole range of factors to be addressed that it is not in the scope of the guide to do more than point to.</p> <p>We have a duty to improve cycle use and signal the Garden Town entrance. We do not see the status quo to achieve this and are happy to discuss alternatives. The guide is to be used to suggest where developer contributions from growth areas might be used.</p>
24.124.		Lit totem signs adjacent to high speed roads, may cause distraction and are unlikely to be a passively safe feature. Apple trees and totem poles in visibility splays. Designers must apply the principles of prevention and heed advice from road safety professionals.	We do not see that lit totems are unusual next to roads - every petrol station and MacDonalds has one. See also above re. suggestion that this no longer be high speed at this point. Any design would have to take all the criteria in hand and be in accordance with required standards, audit processes etc We do not accept the status quo is adequate in reducing speeds on approaching the town, making clear to road users they are entering the Garden Town and demonstrating our clear commitment to improving cycle use substantially.
24.125.		Significant overrun will cause coloured surfacing to fade thus losing its impact.	Noted.
		<b>3.2.8 Challenges</b>	
24.126.		Incorrect numbering	noted
		<b>3.2.9 Design solutions</b>	
24.127.		Incorrect numbering	noted
		<b>3.3.2 Ingredients for success</b>	

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
24.128.		Asset ownership to be confirmed. Where SCC are adopting a commuted sum will be secured to cover the future maintenance of the asset.	We would expect this to be part of any improvement, design and SCC adoption process. We will make a general note to refer to SCC adoption and commuted sum policy where assets are provided by developers.
		<b>3.3.3 Illustrated examples</b>	
24.129.		Illustrations for location 1 do not appear to be in kilter with imminent plans/proposals for this area. No evidence has been provided to substantiate concepts based on actual and predicted traffic flows and volumes. No NMU assessment has been provided to determine desire lines.	It is clearly shown that the plans and drawings are illustrative concepts only (as are all plans). We have not been notified of any highway plans for this area, though that is not the point of the guide. It is to show a design approach to be taken in the Garden Town on all approaches to the town centre - it is to show how an approach road changes in nature as it engages the core urban streets. It is not a detailed design. It does however show a high priority approach to improve facilities and flow for people walking and cycling (NMs of your prefer) getting home, work and school while negotiation major roads. The traffic counts go from 37k AADT to 10k AADT from east to west hereabouts and the street needs to be designed to show vehicles they are entering a more restricted and friction-lined area, and allow for easier transition by pedestrians and people on bicycles.
24.130.		Several fundamental road safety implications which include the following:	
24.131.		Crossing locations;	Not clear what is being addressed here
24.132.		Access;	Not clear what is being addressed here
24.133.		At-grade crossings across dual carriageways	This is quite normal close to a junction and allowed for in DMRB. Subway crossings are unattractive and discriminate against women, elderly, young children and other vulnerable people.
24.134.		Location 2 show the severing of major roads, no information on traffic modelling have been provided.	It is an illustration of de-gyratoring the gateway and reallocating road space to improve walking and cycle access and permeability. It is not meant to be a fully designed scheme but an indication of what can and should be achieved. Gyratories on all our town centre approaches are anti-pedestrian. They make our town centre approaches threatening with fast moving vehicles that dissuades people arriving on foot or by bicycle. Which then encourages more car traffic.  No major roads are severed; the A38 is shown as two way.  The design approach the guide seeks is to reduce the over generous road space left over from the pre-M5 era and make access to the town centre safer, more convenient and comfortable.
24.135.		Cycle lanes running through traffic signal junction, may encourage cyclists to proceed against traffic control resulting in conflict. Designer will need to apply principles of preventions and heed advice from road safety professionals.	This again is showing a design approach - not a developed detail design scheme. The text note makes this clear. The purpose is to show a more developed cycle infrastructure to make the junction less intimidating for people on bicycles. The junction has no adequate cycle infrastructure at present, with road space prioritised to vehicles - yet it provides a major approach to school, college and hospital for residents from all over Taunton. Of course alternatives exist such as pre-green for cyclists etc. and we can show a note. We are not clear on why a waymarking through a junction would make a cyclist carry out a reckless manoeuvre but such details would be subject to scrutiny at detail design. The issue is the junction could be vastly improved for people walking and cycling.
		<b>3.4.2 Ingredients for success</b>	
24.136.		Rumble strips in urban areas will generate noise pollution. Low kerb heights may present difficulties and hazards for mobility and visually impaired pedestrians.	The rumble strip suggestion is shown as one alternative and of course noise is a consideration. Imprint asphalt or block paving may be appropriate. Fast traffic creates noise pollution too and is more aggravating and unsafe for adjoining properties. The design is generic for neighbourhood centres and is suggestive of ways of slowing traffic, and improving pedestrian comfort, use by all generations and abilities. All designs would again be subject to consultation with local disability groups.

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
25. Ecology		It is disappointing that the Green Standard section makes no reference to habitat requirements. As with comments made in relation to the SWT Design Guide, this should be considered.	This is beyond the scope of the guide.
25.1.		Page 72 - this does not appear to show all of the woodland that is required to mitigate the effects on lesser horseshoe bats from the Hestercombe House SAC. It is recommended that this is amended/included.	have indicated area shown by SCC and EJP - plan only indicative
25.2.		2.20.5 - it is recommended that this section on lighting and bats, needs to include use of techniques to keep areas used by bats dark including distance buffers and the use of red lamps. The following links may assist: <a href="http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Environment/ba306_bath_bats_and_lighting_guide_10_june_2018.pdf">http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Environment/ba306_bath_bats_and_lighting_guide_10_june_2018.pdf</a> and <a href="http://wiltshire.objective.co.uk/portal/spatial_planning/spds/trowbridge_bat_mitigation_strategy_spd/the_trowbridge_bat_mitigation_strategy_spd?tab=files">http://wiltshire.objective.co.uk/portal/spatial_planning/spds/trowbridge_bat_mitigation_strategy_spd/the_trowbridge_bat_mitigation_strategy_spd?tab=files</a> These links could be included on p137 under lighting.	BANES guide is shown. We note the Trowbridge guide is still out to consultation so think it premature to include as reference.
25.3.		3.5.3 - this section should include reference to sensitive lighting and the prevention of light spill from buildings, to minimize impacts.	Noted - we will add a note.
25.4.		Page 130 - please be aware that only one bank should have a hard edge, given that this is a significant strategic wildlife corridor. The section appears to omit reference to planting and minimum buffers to built development, which should be included.	no the bank treatment is urban transect related. Soft banks to edge of town, harder to centre of town (with mosaic of soft/hard treatments). One bank should preferably have a softer edge to allow for wildlife.
26. Flood (LLFA)		None	
27. Heritage (SWHT)	support the use of a Restricted Zone. Would like more local geologies used in paving selection.		
27.1.		Section 1.0 References: Historic England's publication "Streets for All" (2018) and "Streets for All: South West" (2018) would	We will add these references.
27.2.		Paragraph 1.2.2: A caveat or new standard type is required for the historic core and conservation areas of the neighbourhood centres. Some parts of these areas will require high quality materials to maintain their character and appearance [in line with section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990]. The same principle will apply to parts of the conservation areas outside of the Core or Town Standard areas, however, the Design Guide allows for the Council to individually specify the appropriate standard for unspecified areas.	Conservation Area treatments are not shown as the designation boundaries do not always follow the street functions and place status of a neighbourhood. In fact the guide seeks to take account of the wider setting of the heritage assets - not just the designated area. We note there are a few conservation areas in the Neighbourhood Centres and are amending the area standards map to show these. If it seems appropriate to then raise the standard in those from General to Town or Core Standard, we will show that.
27.3.		Paragraph 2.1.2 to 2.1.5: The Design Guide should encourage the use of traditional local paving stones over nationally available natural stones that have no local connection	The suggestions made by SWHT were considered at early stages in the preparation of this guide and consulted with highway engineering colleagues. The connection is important - the geologies selected are from further afield but are and have been used in towns in the south west since C19.
27.4.		Lias Limestone is inexplicably omitted from the Guide despite being a hardwearing paving stone, which was by far the most widely used paving stone across Somerset, and historically quarried east of Taunton. It gained an unfortunate reputation for being slippery, however, this has been overcome in recent years with surface treatment, including the flame texturing of a sawn face. Other treatments include bush hammering, although our experience is that this over- lightens the stone.	We note the desire to use local lias and the flame treatment (though we have seen no SRV test results to confirm). SCC are concerned with the wearing of surfaces causing polishing and therefore slip risks. The SRV wet must exceed 55. Forest Pennant and Scoutmoor York stone and are extremely similar in appearance, and petrographic characteristics including hardness and slip resistance. They are also available from several large quarries (Scoutmoor from at least 2 and Forest Pennant from one) under several ownerships with excellent quality controlled production meaning replacement and consistency across a

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
		<p>Furthermore, modern Lias slabs are normally supplied sawn on all sides, avoiding the finer grained natural bedding planes, and many of the problematic areas of historic Lias paving were polished over time by hobnail boots and survived, algae covered and untrod, in forgotten corners.</p> <p>Lias paving slabs are available from at least three of the central Somerset Lias quarries. We know that one of the quarries has commissioned a slip resistance test for its sawn slabs, which achieved an acceptable SRV.</p> <p>Scoutmoor is the best colour match of the York stones for Pennant sandstone but York stone has no traditional in Somerset. It only appears in the late 20th century with the development of townscape enhancement schemes at a time before Pennant sandstone was again readily available. Scoutmoor should only be used as a substitute for Pennant sandstone when the latter is not available.</p> <p>Pennant sandstone is a Somerset paving stone but came from the now closed quarries around Clevedon, Nailsea, east Bristol, Keynsham, Temple Cloud, etc. It is very much as stone associated with north Somerset and Bristol, with occasional use in the rest of the county; probably following the introduction of the railways.</p> <p>Another source of Pennant sandstone is the Gwrhyd Pennant Stone Quarry near Swansea.</p>	<p>period of installations on different schemes would be achievable and reliable. Pennant is used in Castle Green already, and in Bath at the station public realm. We suggest Scoutmoor York stone is only used if Pennant is not available.</p> <p>Relying on local smaller specialist or artisan quarries is much harder to achieve quality control and leaves a risk of becoming hostage to single suppliers on price and business fortune.</p>
27.5.		<p>Buff clay stable bricks were a common paving material in the early-to-mid 20th century, as manufactures by Candy of Newton Abbot. The last extensive area of buff stable block paving was removed from Richmond Road in the early 2000s. A few remnants survive in the public realm (Station Road forecourt, Harveys Court and Union Gate) and below bitumen macadam pavements (Wilton Street). Further examples survive in Watchet and Minehead and more extensively in other south- west towns (Dartmouth, Torquay). They are a useful and uplifting paving material that would enrich the palette of materials for the Garden Town.</p>	<p>The guide has not specified the buff stable paviers seen in some old forecourts primarily due to their association with a single period of architecture and their very limited use does not seem to be enough to set a precedent. This does not preclude their use in the public realm, just that the guide will not promote them.</p>
27.6.		<p>Paragraph 2.1.7 to 2.1.11: Granite is an unfamiliar paving stone for Taunton and a peculiar choice in a county with a rich variety of historic paving stones (Lias, Pennant and Forest Marble) and open quarries. Its current application is in the fanned setts of the 1990s Parade town scheme. The use of granite for carriageway paving, edge paving, drop kerbs and kerbs is not supported when these items can be supplied in Lias or Pennant stone.</p>	<p>Granite is used throughout the town centre now. It is selected, as it is in most of the country, for its hardness and durability in highly exposed street environments. We see it as an improvement in the use of a generous wide kerb rather than the ubiquitous and domestic standard bull nose 125mm concrete predominant beyond the Market House area now. We appreciate the softer sandstone pennant and oolitic limestone Forest Marble have been used - including the kerbs on the (listed) Tone Bridge. Our experience though is the hardness can be variable and can lead to failures (especially on radii and specials like droppers) and this then leads to maintenance operatives using ugly concrete replacements. Granite also has a good reuse potential with redressing, which is perhaps less easy with the softer stones.</p>
27.7.		<p>Paragraph 2.3: Please refer to comments on paragraphs 1.2.2.</p>	<p>See note</p>
27.8.		<p>Paragraph 2.6.4: Somerset County Council was applying Primrose yellow for all yellow waiting restricting lines in and outside conservation areas, which brought a significant benefit to the public realm. We would encourage the continuation of this practice.</p>	<p>This has been shown for use in a potential Restricted Zone (which avoids yellow lines generally). The proposal is encourage its use in all the Core Standard area and environmentally sensitive areas. 100mm yellow will be used elsewhere except in environmentally sensitive areas.</p>
27.9.		<p>Paragraph 2.6.4: We support the use of a Restricted Zone as a means to minimise the use of highway signage and road markings in the town centre.</p>	<p>noted</p>
27.10.		<p>Paragraph 2.6.5: We support the painting of highway lighting columns and sign posts, and for the finish to be in Raven. This is the colour we have for a considerable time recommended to the Highway Authority.</p>	<p>noted</p>
27.11.		<p>Paragraph 2.7: The 'Manchester' is a large and ubiquitous bollard that is more suitable for large cities. Its use would be a missed an opportunity to bring local character to the streetscene. Historic photos and the paintings of Harry Frier depict a round topped bollard with a double band in Taunton. Examples of this survive in Hammet's Walk and Castle Bow. Hammet's Walk has another local bollard design, cast by Taunton foundry C. Allen &amp; Sons. Either of these could form a pattern for a Taunton bollard, cast in iron or for enhanced highway safety in polyurethane with a steel tube core in the same way the Great British Bollard Company produced the Somerset lamp column.</p>	<p>The selection is of a Durapol® budget plastic bollard of deliberately unassuming style for use where a heavier looking budget bollard is required is very exposed to knock downs e.g. traffic calming build outs etc -the more contemporary Retford type is available in as an alternative. At the moment there are about 5 or 6 different budget bollards used around the town and neighbourhoods.</p> <p>We are not aware of the local designs nor have drawings/photos. We would need to know they can be replicated at appropriate material, quality and cost by a reputable manufacturer.</p>

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
27.12.		Paragraph 2.13: The high quality glass and stainless steel town centre bus shelters were installed on our advice. They were chosen for their inherent quality and transparency, in order to allow views through and minimise their impact on the streetscene. None of the proposed shelters in the Design Guide are of the same quality and transparency and would be a retrograde step for the town centre. A higher quality shelter is required for the town centre.	Bus shelters are SWTC property and planning approval is by SWTC. The design guide is balancing the needs of contracted bus shelters with associated sponsorship funding across the whole Garden Town. The current bus shelters in the town centre are of multiple types and shapes, with the stainless steel doing little to reduce their visual impact. We are looking for consistent high quality across the whole town and have selected simple black (or possibly Raven - subject to agreement with manufacturer/supplier) coloured shelters to match other street furniture.
27.13.		Paragraph 2.16: The enamel street name plates are an important feature of Taunton. The Design Guide should encourage their retention and repair in all streets. For new name plates, the Guide is unclear where white-on-cobalt blue is to be used; town centre or conservation areas, or both. Replacement enamel street signs are still available and should be considering for town centre streets given their impact in enhancing the streetscene.	We will be more specific on location - i.e. all Core Standard area streets
27.14.		Paragraph 2.18.1: Pleached Plane trees were a common feature of the town centre, as surviving in Corporation Street, and their reintroduction would make a significant contribution to the Garden Town.	Noted - the guide doesn't go into detail of pleaching but pleached or espalier trees are certainly a possibility where space is restricted and we will add a note to that effect.
27.15.		Paragraph 2.18.9: We would encourage the introduction of street trees in Taunton, including the replacement of those lost to age, disease, storms or development, the introduction of pleached trees in the town centre and strong avenues on the main approach roads.	noted
27.16.		Paragraph 2.20.1: The lamp columns in the Crescent are reproduction columns from a pattern by the Edward Cockey & Sons foundry of Frome, now known as the 'Somerset' column and currently cast in polyurethane with a steel tube core.	We will add a note to the caption.
27.17.		There are six listed lamp columns/standards in Fore Street (NHLE entry number 1233500) although one is missing.	We will amend the note. (Presumably one lost in the 1996 street improvement works)
27.18.		In the LED lamp caption states that the paint finish should be Black rather than Raven.	Noted - we will amend
27.19.		We strongly support the use of wall mounted units where high buildings are available, the use of minimalist equipment, and the painting of columns and brackets in Raven. We would also support the use of warm light lamps as technology develops.	Noted
27.20.		Post top stirrup brackets are proposed for pedestrian and conservation areas with embellished columns, as currently used in Woodstock Road and The Elms in Taunton. We have not recommended this configuration of highway light for many years as the units are ill proportioned. Nor have we recommended ornate square arm brackets and embellishment kits specifically for conservation areas as the units are generally too tall and fussy for historic areas. Painted tapered columns with swan-neck brackets and Albany tear-drop lanterns are often a good solution depending on the location and highway specification. We would be pleased to discuss this further.	We can change to standard tapered column with Albany on swan neck bracket (presumably where the square bracket Albany ornate columns are not used). <i>(check with again SCC lighting engineer.)</i>
27.21.		Figure 79: Bullet point 6 states that all street furniture is to be painted Black rather than Raven.	Noted - we will amend
27.22.		Figure 80: Whilst illustrative only, this road is Hammet Street where the inclusion of parklets and other structures in the highway has previously been resisted as they would obscure the deliberate late 18th century vista of the church tower of Mary Magdalene. As would banners on lamp columns, although there are currently none in Hammet Street due to the use of wall mounted units.	Noted - no tree planting proposed, nor banners or lamp columns if this type layout used in Hammet Street - it is as you say, illustrative.
27.23.		Paragraph 3.2 and Figures 84 & 95: The current Junction 25 improvement works includes a substantial hard central reservation for the A358 Tone Way rather than an attractive soft reservation. It's regrettable that this important approach to Taunton will be degraded by this aspect of the new works and that current works are not being influenced by the good design principles in the Design Guide.	We are not aware of an alternative scheme but this is illustrative of the treatments for major roads approaching and transitioning in form as they enter the tighter scale of the town centre edge.
27.24.		Acknowledgements: "Somerset Heritage Trust" should read "South West Heritage Trust".	Noted - we will amend
28. Traffic Engineering		None	



Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
29. Street Lighting		None	
30. Climate resilience		None	
31. Traffic Signals		None	
32. Public Right of Way		None	
33. Traffic Management		None	
34. Estates	General agreement	Agree that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide, Agree all area public realm Standards and strongly agree with Town Standard. Agree with all General paving standards and strongly agree with all others. Strongly agree with all furniture standards. Strongly agree with lighting suggestions and suggested maybe using more heritage special lighting in the town centre to improve the character of the town. For are illustrations, agree to Town Centre, strongly agree to Neighbourhood Centres and River/Canal corridors and neutral on approaches. Suggested Traffic Assessment should be considered for alterations.	The matter for Traffic Assessments of schemes is for the highway authority to decide. The PRDG does not either require or preclude this so no amendment to be made.
SWTC			
35. Garden Town Manager			
35.1.		it's not clear whether this is SPD or 'just' a Guide - what's it's status/purpose? -	this will be SWTC Technical Guidance and a material consideration for any planning application
35.2.		under references and throughout the document there is no reference our adopted Planning Policies like Core Strategy, SADMP and most importantly the AAP (plenty of Core Standard but not a single Core strategy...); - and thus how it can be implemented as a document for DM? It needs clear policy references to our documents and/or National Guidance.	Noted - we are adding a section in the introduction on NPPF and Local plan policies including the TTCAAP that are relevant.
35.3.		I think the plans showing Firepool need to be checked for consistency with the emerging BDP work which was consulted on in November; and	The guide was produced prior to this commission and seeks not to prejudice it but shows the standards and principles for public realm connections.
35.4.		Worth checking the station references/plans. Doesn't appear to reference the multi-storey car park on the south side. There are detailed plans for the south side	This is private Network Rail land. The guide shows the standards and principles for public realm connection to the Firepool development and boulevard.
36. Street cleansing		consideration to the paving material and whether this is suitable for a mechanical sweeper who will own the asset once completed?	Resilience to sweepers will be a detail design issue (sub-base and jointing)
36.1.		Current bins are 240L, so equivalent size bins will be required the replacement cost of bins would need to be considered.	<a href="#">Bins shown</a> are 100, 140 and 200 litres or wall mounted (25 and 100 litres). The award winning design is modular and can be purchased in dual or triple back to back units for the busier situations in the town centre where large volume may be required. Single smaller units may be more appropriate in narrower streets.
36.2.		The tree grilles look very neat Castle Tree Grille preferred - less litter and detritus would become trapped.	The Monza tree grille would be laid with washed gravel beneath, so litter would not accumulate. We will add a note
36.3.		With the proposal for new avenues of trees, SWT would probably require additional street sweeping during leafing season, which will require budgeting.	Noted.
36.4.		Street furniture - consider the ease of graffiti removal.	Noted. All products are coated.
37. Landscape and Green		Comments received 13/12/19 and incorporated into consultation draft.	

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
Infrastructure Specialist			
38. Trees Specialist	Generally it all looks very positive and encouraging. I really hope that its aspirations come to fruition over the next few years	In terms of the tree species, I've commented previously that I don't think we should limit ourselves too much, as I think that variety is good for several reasons - visual interest, biodiversity, pest and disease resilience etc. It will also help to emphasise the 'garden town' arboretum character, rather than standard street tree planting. (Can I coin a new word - 'Urboretum'?). Also, species choice will be influenced by each specific site, its buildings, character and constraints. So I'm pleased to see that the species lists have grown, and that they are not definitive, but are suggested and can be added and agreed to when specific projects are being designed. This will also help when trying to source particular species, as some will not be available, or might not be available at the desired size	Noted - we like it. We will add urboretum to the section name
38.1.		With regards to the lists themselves, you've got Quercus 'Green Pillar' twice. If you wanted to add any, try: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Betula ermanii (medium)</li> <li>o Betula pendula 'Dalecarlica' (medium)</li> <li>o Gelditsia triacanthos varieties (medium)</li> <li>o Add cordata to Alnus incana, so 'Alnus incana and cordata'</li> <li>o Sorbus aucuparia 'Asplenifolia' (medium')</li> <li>o Tilia cordata 'Mongolica' (medium)</li> <li>o Corylus collurna</li> <li>o Liquidambar styraciflua 'Worplesdon' (medium)</li> </ul>	We will amend to accord with suggestions.
38.2.		A minor point - you are missing some apostrophies at the ends of the cultivar names	Noted - we will amend
38.3.		There's a typo in paragraph 2.18.3 I think.	Noted - we will amend
39. Active Travel Specialist	Agrees that Taunton Garden Town needs a Public Realm Design Guide to raise the standard of the street works and coordinate works by multi agencies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. PUBLIC REALM AREA STANDARDS - agree all areas</li> <li>b. In reference to 1.1.8: 'We will help ensure that pedestrians and cycle users of all types, ages and abilities, and all with mobility or cognitive impairments, are able to move around freely through the pedestrian environment, and use it to access other modes of transport.' Please note that the DfT's LTN 1.20 1.6.1 'cycles must be treated as vehicles and not as pedestrians. On urban streets, cyclists must be physically separated from pedestrians and should not share space with pedestrians.'</li> <li>c. PAVING MATERIALS -agree</li> <li>d. SIGNAGE - agree</li> <li>e. STREET FURNITURE - Agree. Bollards, seats, cycle furniture, litter bins, bus shelters, street name plates.</li> <li>f. Play- Strongly Agree</li> <li>g. STREET FURNITURE AREA STANDARDS - Strongly Agree 'Cycle racks should be provided with seating where possible. In reference to 2.13 Bus shelters: To encourage cycling to become the natural choice for short journeys or to form part of longer journeys, I would recommend the inclusion of cycle racks within close proximity to bus shelters where possible.'</li> <li>h. STREET PLANTING - Agree</li> <li>i. NIGHTSCAPE &amp; LIGHTING - Agree all area standards</li> <li>j. ILLSUTRATIVE LAYOUTS - Agree all standards.</li> <li>k. In reference to Fig 76 and 77 : No clarity on how cyclists would exit the cycle lane and access bike racks on the footway adjacent to the roundabout junction.</li> </ul>	<p>We have noted the LTN 1/20 desire to segregate cycle users and pedestrians, and the recommendations in 6.5 Shared Use and 7.4 Vehicle Restricted Areas that notes that segregation can lead to higher cycle speed and greater potential for conflict with pedestrians and that careful urban design is required as well.</p> <p>We note too the 'Beyond the Bicycle' An introduction to inclusive cycling 2020 guidance that highlights the need to ensure our designs are accessible for disabled cycle users to access all areas</p> <p>We will add a note.</p> <p>Noted - we would expect a drop kerb might be suitable but would depend on a number of other detail design issues (drainage, other street furniture etc) but we can add a note that it should be considered.</p>
Environment Agency			
40.	do not have any major concerns or objections to the draft design guide document, in principle		

Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
40.1.		1.1.3 Growth and climate change - We would support the carbon sequestration opportunities mentioned but also suggest that flood resilience outcomes are also sought by the guide.	We will add a note regarding that public realm “can also have major influence on flood resilience outcomes”
40.2.		1.1.4 - People first public realm - We note the 'green and clean' objective aligns well with the emerging Environment Agency Corporate Plan 2020-25, so there may be opportunities to work more closely in partnership with some of this design guidance in practice.	noted
40.3.		1.2 - Public realm area standards - Please note that Green Standards apply to the river and canal side locations through Taunton and are applicable to the Environment Agency. The guide should mention that potential works in these areas may be subject to FRAP from the Agency, in addition to compliance with the design guide document.	We will add notes that ‘works in these areas may be subject to Flood Risk Activity Permit from the Environment Agency in addition to compliance with the design guide document.’
40.4.		2.4 - Green standards - Should be assessed for their flood resilience and Climate Change adaptation potential, and if any of the measures promoted in the guide are found sub-standard, then the guidance should be revised and/or amended to suit.  Green standards should also be noted that they are required to be located so as not to obstruct riparian access for channel maintenance and/or planned improvement works, nor placed in such a manner that could impede flood flows in times of high flow.	Noted - We have selected the Green Standards materials to meet multiple criteria including flood resilience and climate adaptation (carbon cost, vandal resistance, slip resistance, cost, appearance etc).  This section is on materials rather than locational guidance. We can add a note that “works that may impede flood flows and alteration to riparian access may require statutory approval or permit from the EA.”
40.5.		2.4.7 - Water access slips, steps - Gabion cages - Please can softer more natural options be used wherever possible/appropriate instead of gabions.	We have suggested gabions as we see these as a softer option than solid walling for where higher wear access might be required to the water i.e. slips for boat access and amenity/recreation steps, where soft options would perhaps get eroded too much. We can add some bio- retention alternatives too.
40.6.		2.18.10 - Tree planting strategy - Please note the tree planting strategy aligns to the DEFRA 25 year Environment plan and some of the Agency’s local greener Wessex agenda. Could the EA be listed as a potential partner?  Native species of tree should be planted where possible especially in more rural areas and the riparian zone.  We also support planting native trees and wetland creation on Environment Agency land whilst allowing for flood risk maintenance activities.	We would be delighted to add the EA as a potential partner in a tree planting strategy. The strategy development is beyond the scope of this guide but will be developed further in other documents from SWTC.  Noted.  Noted
40.7.		2.19 - Street gardens - This is a SuDs design guide concept for all intents and purposes so should be referred to Somerset County Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, for comment, although we are supportive in principle where appropriate.	Noted - SCC have been consulted. No
40.8.		2.20.5 - Green standard lighting - Along riverside there should be kept a solid dark corridor and a buffer zone where possible, to avoid negative impacts on bats, birds, otters, invertebrates etc. Up lighting of trees - We are not in favour of this, as there is negative impacts on birds, bats, invertebrates and even the tree health itself. See following report:  Chapter 4: <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690846/CMO_Annual_Report_2017_Health_Impacts_of_All_Pollution_what_do_we_know.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690846/CMO_Annual_Report_2017_Health_Impacts_of_All_Pollution_what_do_we_know.pdf</a>  Any work within 8 metres will need careful consideration and design and should only be installed after prior consultation and/or FRAP from the Agency.	
40.9.		3.5 - River and canal corridor - Please keep footpaths and cycle routes away from all watercourses, or have a buffer zone to minimise disturbance on riparian and aquatic wildlife. Please keep any lighting away from the water e.g. down lit, directional.  Any paths alongside watercourses may be subject to tracked vehicles crossing/travelling along to access and carry out maintenance or bank repair work. All paths should therefore be designed to ensure they would not be damaged by these tracked vehicles.  River edges - Please keep soft wherever possible. Avoid gabions or hard engineering, there are lots of soft and natural solutions available no	We will add “footpaths and cycle routes should be directed away from watercourse edges where feasible, or have a buffer zone to minimise disturbance ton riparian and aquatic wildlife. Keep any lighting away from the water edge and avoid directional down lights, than can disturb wildlife.  We will add to 2.4.1 “Note riparian paths may require water access by tracked vehicle and should therefore be designed to support weight and reasonable wear. Consult with EA/Canal and River Trust”



Consultee	General agreement/ disagreement	Detail comment received	SWTC response
		<p>wadays and should be possible in most areas.</p> <p>Scrub - Marginal vegetation and trees should be encouraged wherever possible.</p> <p>Possible enhancements - Bird boxes, bat boxes, kingfisher perches and nest boxes, otter holts, bug hotels, pollinator species. Please ensure they have a long term care and maintenance plan.</p> <p>Carefully managed wild and publicly inaccessible areas should be developed as part of this plan, this is where wildlife will thrive as it will offer havens free from urban litter, noise, light, and visual disturbance.</p> <p>Environment Agency specific consultation should be encouraged here in the guide, as many items may require FRAP from us on a site by site basis, and to ensure that proposals do not contradict with other strategies e.g. TSFAIS project delivery or routine maintenance activities. See 1.2 comments above.</p>	<p>We have tailored guidance with soft/hard treatments appropriate to the urban/rural transect and have coded this by saying hard edges permitted. We will add note that 'soft bioengineering retention treatments will be preferred to harder surfaces depending on level of use.'</p> <p>We will add these. Thank you.</p> <p>We will add footnote - "Works to riparian areas may require Flood Risk Activity Permit on a site by site basis - consult with the Environment Agency". We note the ongoing. Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Improvements Scheme project</p>





## CONSULTATION STATEMENT

### **Somerset West and Taunton Council: Taunton Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

#### **Introduction**

Somerset West and Taunton Council (the Council) has produced a Taunton Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which seeks to raise the standard of the public realm and streetworks consistently across our Garden Town. The guide is aimed at guiding the design of public realm and street works by the highway authority, developers, utility companies and their agents and contractors. It also shows how current principles of highway design and layout can be incorporated into good placemaking. A draft Public Realm Design Guide SPD was considered by the Council's Executive meeting on 28 January 2020 and approved for key stakeholder consultation. Following key stakeholder consultation in spring 2020, public consultation took place in winter 2020/21 and summer 2021. The Council has made a number of amendments across the document in response to comments received. The Council has now finalised the document in anticipation of adoption as an SPD.

This Consultation Report explains how the Council has undertaken public consultation to inform the development of the SPD, and how the engagement, feedback and responses received have influenced its development. The report covers: which bodies and persons were invited to make comment; how those bodies and persons were invited to make comment; the material that was subject to consultation; a summary of the responses received; and a summary of how the responses influenced the development of the SPD.

The Council has an adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI outlines that the Council is committed to effective community engagement, and seeks to use a wide range of methods for involving the community in the plan making process. SWT's Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in November 2019. In relation to plan preparation, the SCI relates to the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPDs), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA), Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Neighbourhood Plans. As such, the SPD is required to comply with the SCI.

The Town and Country Planning (local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out what is required in terms of public participation and making of representations in relation to the production of SPD's. In response to Regulation 12(b), a Draft Consultation Statement was made available for public consultation alongside the SPD itself in the final round of consultation. This final Statement complies with the requirements of Regulation 12(a).

## **Consultation Summary**

The Taunton Public Realm Design Guide SPD has been subject to three separate periods of consultation:

- Spring 2020 (3 February to 30 March 2020) – first draft Design Guide (technical stakeholder only)
- Winter 2020/21 (11 December 2020 to 5 February 2021)
- Summer 2021 (5 July 2021 to 16 August 2021) – Updated draft Design Guide

### **Summer 2021 Consultation**

Consultation on an updated Taunton Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) took place from 05 July 2021 until Monday 16 August 2021 (six weeks). In accordance with Regulation 12(b)(i) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, consultation responses had to be submitted within this time period in order to be taken into consideration.

The documents available to comment on as part of this consultation included the following:

- Updated Draft Taunton Public Realm Design Guide SPD;
- Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment / Habitat Regulations Assessment (SEA/HRA) Screening Report; and
- Draft Consultation Statement

### **Purpose of the Consultation**

This updated draft Taunton Public Realm Design Guide SPD was produced as a response to a number of the issues raised in the previous rounds of consultations, particularly in relation to updated government guidance on cycling and active travel, standards in conservation areas and SCC adoption and how this is integral to high quality design. Links across to existing adopted planning policies as well as the Council's Climate Emergency declaration were also strengthened.

As such, the purpose of the consultations was four-fold:

- To seek views of stakeholders and raise awareness in relation to the proposed amended design guidance,
- To ensure that the final SPD has been informed by a demonstrable level of public engagement and input as expected by the Planning Practice Guidance
- To ensure legal compliance with relevant Regulations and to ensure statutory consultee consultation in relation to the Draft SEA/HRA Screening; and
- To provide notice to the development industry, of the Council's design guidance and that as SPD it will influence planning decisions where it is a material consideration.

### **Who We Consulted**

A list of Specific Consultation Bodies, General Consultation Bodies, and other organisations and groups the Council seeks to involve in plan-making is included in the SCI. As a non-statutory plan, there is no statutory list of bodies and organisations that the Council was required to consult in preparation of the SPD. However, in accordance with Regulation 13(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations

2012, any person may make representations about an SPD. As such, all those on this list were consulted at this stage.

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (Habitat Regulations) set out that Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England are statutory consultees in relation to the Draft SEA/HRA Screening Report and as such these bodies were specifically invited to respond to this element.

The Council is committed to ensuring that local groups, organisations and individuals are provided with the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of planning policy documents.

The Council has a database of consultees, who have either commented upon, or expressed an interest in being involved with the development of local plans. This database is used to keep individuals, companies and organisations informed on the production of the Local Plan and other planning policy documents. New consultees are added to the consultation database via e-mail or letter to the Strategy Team requesting inclusion on to the database. The General Data Protection Regulations are followed to ensure that personal data is only required and retained where proportionate and necessary, is only gathered where explicit consent has been provided, is kept securely and is not disclosed to others. All bodies and persons identified within this database were emailed with notification of the consultation.

## **How We Consulted**

Consultation on the updated Draft Taunton Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) ran from 05 July 2021 until Monday 16 August 2021 (six weeks). During this time a variety of methods were employed, though the full range of methods was limited by definitive restrictions and a cautiously proportionate approach due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic and gradual loosening of lockdown restrictions.

Responses to the consultation were invited:

- Online via the Council's consultation portal at <https://yoursay.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/public-realm/prdgtfortgt/>
- By email: [strategy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:strategy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)
- By writing to the Council at: Placemaking Specialist, Planning and Development, Somerset West and Taunton Council, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE;

To publicise the consultation, the Council:

- Emailed notification of the consultation to all bodies and persons identified within the consultation database.
- Made the above consultation documents available for inspection at the Council's principal offices at:
  - Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE (Monday – Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)
  - West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, TA4 4QA (Monday – Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)
- Publishing the documents on the Council's website at <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning-policy/taunton-garden->

[town-public-realm-design-guide-spd/](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/swt-announces-further-design-guide-consultations/)

- Published a press release via the Council's website and social media posts via Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in order to raise interest, and encourage participation, at <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/news/swt-announces-further-design-guide-consultations/>
- Presented to a virtual meeting of the Agents Forum – 12 July 2021
- Presented to a virtual meeting of the Taunton Design Circle – 28 July 2021
- Presented to a virtual meeting of the Somerset Affordable Housing Group – 22 July 2021
- Hosted a virtual Town and Parish Councils Event – 13 July 2021
- Held a virtual General Question & Answer Session for Members of the Public – 14 July 2021 between 12.30 – 4.30pm

In light of the covid restrictions, it was decided not to arrange any in-person consultation events as would normally take place.

The consultation documents could also be viewed online at all libraries in Somerset West and Taunton.

### **Level of Response**

Overall, there were 19 responses to the consultation. Of the 19 respondents, 14 submitted their representation by email, 0 by post, 0 by social media and the remaining 5 respondents responded online.

### **Summary of Responses Received**

The results of the consultation were representative of a wide spectrum of respondents, including statutory consultees, community and amenity groups, developers and internal staff. In total 19 responses were received.

There was a positive response to the revised draft design guide, with comments such as 'We support the intent of this Design Guide to raise the standard of public realm and street works in Taunton Garden Town', 'The guidance supports the creation of healthy communities through the land use planning system by encouraging people to be more physically active through their everyday lives', and 'We strongly support the overarching principle that all works in the public realm should seek to be flood resilient, adaptable to any climate change impacts, and where possible, contribute towards net carbon zero outcomes'.

The responses covered a wide variety of points, which is to be expected given the range of respondents' interests. The comments relating to the volume house builders are treated separately as their range, emphasis and depth was more substantial. Responses received from other parties can be broadly summarised under the following headings – a) People First Public Realm; b) Flood resilient, adaptable to climate change and contribute towards net carbon zero outcomes; c) Street Trees; and d) Public Art.

- a) People First Public Realm – The green and clean' objective and people first public realm was welcomed by a number of respondents. New guidance on cycling was mentioned and the need for cycles to be treated as vehicles and not as pedestrians. It was also stressed that we need to ensure that our streets are accessible for disabled cycle users to access all areas. It was also emphasised that

on urban streets, cyclists must be physically separated from pedestrians and should not share space with pedestrians. – In response all comments have been incorporated into the design guide and appropriate guidance included. The recent update of the NPPF which requires that buildings are designed beautifully has been also been addressed.

- b) Flood resilient, adaptable to climate change and contribute towards net carbon zero outcomes – A number of respondents were keen to support the carbon sequestration opportunities, flood resilience and biodiversity net gain outcomes sought by the guide. – In response this topic has been emphasised in guidance.
- c) Street Trees – Many respondents wanted to be assured that street trees would be included in the public realm. However issues were raised concerning regard to be given to tree planting potential size at maturity and potential to affect nearby buildings, structures or underground utilities and not to obstruct walking and cycling routes. Further comments were given on care to be taken to avoid impacts on heritage assets and that sourcing of trees should be from UK endorsed nurseries to reduce the risk of introducing pests and diseases. – In response these points have been emphasised in the guide.
- d) Public Art – A member raised the issue of a lack of guidance regarding public art. – In response this has been addressed in the creation of a new design topic on public art.

Of the 19 respondents to the third consultation, 5 comments were received from developers, 4 of whom sent very similar responses. All supported the production and aims of the Public Realm Design Guide, which they agreed would be a valuable and helpful tool for raising design standards within Taunton's public realm but were concerned with the availability and cost of materials in some situations. They suggested that the Design Guide needed to recognise that in some cases a lesser design approach or other materials will or may be equally acceptable and that the materials and specifications requested might not be available and (or) better solutions for paving could materialise in the future. – In response to this, SWT produced the design guide since ad hoc materials selections in the past have led to poor quality public spaces. We acknowledge that materials or specifications may need to change in future, but this does not prevent us from addressing what is required now. As such it is recognised that the guide may need to be revisited in future to maintain its relevance to current standards and availability of materials and furnishings.

Developers also expressed concerns over any conflict between what SWT and SCC require on highways, such as road materials, street trees, street furniture and sustainable urban drainage measures in the public realm and they suggested that the Guide does not offer further clarification as to how this would be addressed. They requested that the implications of requiring enhanced materials on future commuted sums be clearer - In response, a note to clarify the role of the planning officer to negotiate highways designs was added.

One developer suggested the guide was not for SWT to require but for the highway authority. – In response, this was noted but SWT as planning authority is intricately involved in approving applications that involve place making, urban design for health,

environment, and movement on and off the highway network often before the highway authority get involved. As such this is the opportunity to raise design standards.

## **You Said, We Did**

As a result of the 19 responses received during the third consultation, the following substantial addition was carried out to the document:

- Additional section on public art added, cross referencing the Public Life for Public Space, Public Art Code SPD, 2006.

Other smaller changes included:

- Highlighting in section 1.1.8 the need to conserve historic paving in the Garden Town and the wording was strengthened on potential for streetworks to affect the historic environment and the need to conserve existing historic materials and furniture, including lighting.
- The Equalities and Inclusion section 1.1.9 noted DfT advice in LTN 1/20 that cycles must be treated as vehicles and not as pedestrians. However, it was also stressed that we need to ensure that our streets are accessible for disabled cycle users to access all areas. It was also emphasised that on urban streets, cyclists must be physically separated from pedestrians and should not share space with pedestrians.
- Guidance was added in the Equalities and Inclusion section on the need for public spaces to be designed to enhance community safety. It was also added that designers must take into consideration Secure by Design principles and minimize opportunities for crime.
- An additional note was also included in section 2.4 and 2.20.21. that materials and components at river and canal side locations may be subject to a Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP) from the Environment Agency. It was also added that signs on the canal may need to comply with Canal & River Trust design standards.
- In section 2.18 - Tree Planting - Notes were added on consideration to be given to tree planting potential size at maturity and potential to affect nearby buildings, structures or underground utilities and not obstructing walking and cycling routes. Also, further comments were included on care to be taken to avoid impacts on heritage assets. In addition, further comments were added to ensure that tree planting is supported by a management plan and that sourcing of trees should be from UKISG endorsed nurseries to reduce the risk of introducing pests and diseases.
- Notes were added to River and Canal corridor section 3.5 that riparian planting should not damage the riverbank. Nature conservation enhancements shall have a long-term management plan approved prior to implementation.
- The following References were also added:
  - Active Design, Planning for health and wellbeing through sport and physical activity, Sport England, 2015
  - Designing for Physical Activity, Routes and Wayfinding, Sport England, 2019
  - Streets for All, Advice for Highway and Public Realm Works in Historic Places. Historic England, 2018
  - Streets for All South West, Historic England, 2018



- External lighting of historic buildings, Historic England, 2020
- Designing, Installing and Maintaining an External Lighting Scheme, Historic England, 2020
- Secure Stations Scheme, British Transport Police Authority and DfT. 2018
- Cycle Rail Toolkit 2, Cycle Rail Working Group, Rail Delivery Group 2016
- Secured by Design, Design guides, Police Crime Prevention Initiatives, various

## **Previous Consultations**

The Taunton Public Realm Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Design Guide was initially subject to key stakeholder consultation from 3 February to 30 March 2020. Due to the covid pandemic, a number of consultations were significantly delayed including Somerset County Council (SCC). Following an objection from SCC Highways on the Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide, detailed discussions took place in a series of workshop sessions between Somerset West and Taunton and SCC as the Highway Authority.

As a result on discussions with the Highway Authority, an expanded section in the Districtwide Design Guide was prepared - 'Streets, Parking and Placemaking'. As a second round of public consultation was necessary for this expanded section, it was decided by officers to take the opportunity to also take the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town out to public consultation (rather than just key stakeholders). The public consultation on the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town was carried out from 11 December to 5 February 2021.

During both previous consultations a number of methods were employed - the Council's consultation portal survey; by email and by post. All organisations, groups and individual's on the Council's Local Plan data base were notified of the consultation by the Strategy Team. In addition, press releases were issued by the Council's Communication Team and the consultations promoted on social media. The Design Guide was available on the Council's website and a copy was also available for inspection at the Council's office at Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

In addition, presentations on the Taunton Public Realm Design Guide were carried out on 12 February 2020 at a CPD event for built environment professionals in Taunton, and for housing enabling providers on 27 February 2020. Also, a presentation on the Taunton Public Realm Design Guide was also given to the Council's Agents Panel on 11 December 2020.

Specialist workshops were held in the scoping of the design guide with heritage, tree care, wildlife, and flood, river and canal water management stakeholders.

SW Heritage Trust, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, Canal & River Trust, Somerset County Council highways Traffic Management, Road Safety and Parking, Service Commissioning Manager Transport Policy, Assistant Highway Service Manager, arboriculture, flood risk, street lighting, ecologist, and Taunton Strategic Flood Alleviation Project. In addition, officers of SWTC Conservation, Landscape and Green Infrastructure and arboriculture and Programme Manager Town Centre Regeneration were also involved with workshops.

Further meetings were held after consultations on the initial draft guide with SCC Highways Local Cycling and Walking project manager (Sep 2019), and with street lighting engineer and SCC's conservation adviser (July 2020).

All of the consultees agreed that Taunton Garden Town needed a Public Realm Design Guide to raise the standard of the street works and coordinate works by multi agencies. There were many who welcomed the Public Realm Design Guide SPD and liked its method of designating quality standards to areas of public realm in the town and for its use by both councils and developers. Some stated how they saw the guide as making the Garden Town visible. Some expressed strong support for the general principles of the guidance to give much greater emphasis to people and places in the design of streets and public spaces. There was delight by some at the depth of commitment to the public realm shown by SWT in the document.

A total of 20 representations from members of the public, government bodies, amenity and local transport bodies, developers and internal staff were received during the consultations on the Public Realm Design Guide. 6 representations were submitted via the Council's consultation portal and 13 via email. 6 county departments elected not to comment.

Other comments received from residents, county council, amenity bodies etc, can broadly be summarised under the following headings

- Standards: strong agreement on the four standards and their proposed areas
- Paving materials: agreement to the use of high quality materials to suit prestige and premium streets and places within those streets like local centres.
- Signage: Cycle signing by step by step /node points was suggested.
- Street furniture: agreement on most street furniture with some call for more covered areas for cycle parking. The location of furniture to not obstruct cyclists or pedestrians was a common comment. Some suggested a traditional bench be included.
- Lighting: low levels of lighting needed in wildlife sensitive sites like the riverside that still allowed its use as a vehicle free route after dark. Use of lighting styles suited to the historic settings in the town, not solely to Conservation Areas as present.

Illustrative Layouts: there was desire by county council highways to highlight a need for provision of a safe road network with appropriate capacity to keep traffic moving, though the requirement applies to pedestrians and cyclists too.

A number of changes were made following the first and second rounds of consultation, responding to issues raised. Some of these changes were substantial revisions and additions, whilst others were of a smaller nature. For these reasons, the Council published an updated draft for a third round of public consultation before preparing the final draft SPD for adoption.



## **ADOPTION STATEMENT**

### **Somerset West and Taunton Council: Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**

#### **The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012**

In accordance with Regulations 14 & 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, notice is given that Somerset West and Taunton Council adopted the Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town Taunton Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on 7 December 2021.

The SPD contains guidance on Somerset West and Taunton Council's approach in relation to securing high quality public realm in Taunton Garden Town. It supplements policies within the Taunton Deane Core Strategy and the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan and forms a material consideration to be taken into account when determining planning applications and guidance when considering and undertaking any works within the public realm that wouldn't require planning permission.

Modifications have been made to the SPD as a result of public consultation. These can be viewed in the consultation statement published on the Council's website.

Any person aggrieved by the decision of the council to adopt the Supplementary Planning Document may apply to the High Court for permission to apply for Judicial Review of the decision. Any such application must be made promptly and, in any event, not later than 3 months after the adoption of the document, as required by Regulation 11 (2(c and d)) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

#### Location of SPD for Inspection

A copy of the adopted Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is available to view free of charge on the Council's website:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning-policy/taunton-garden-town-public-realm-design-guide-spd/>

In addition a hard copy of the document is available to view in the Council's Offices:

- Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE (Monday – Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)
- West Somerset House, Killick Way, Williton, TA4 4QA (Monday – Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)

For any viewing of the document at Deane House or West Somerset House, due to Covid restrictions, please call to make an appointment 0300 3048000.

The consultation documents can also be viewed online at all libraries in Somerset West and Taunton (please check with the library in question for their opening times).

# **Taunton Garden Town Public Realm Design Guide SPD**

***Strategic Environmental Assessment and  
Habitat Regulations Assessment***

***Screening Report***

<b>Version</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	For internal consultation with Legal	18/03/2021
2	For consultation with Statutory Consultees	04/05/2021
3	To accompany final PRDG to adoption	05/10/2021

***Taunton Garden Town Public Realm  
Design Guide SPD***

***SEA/HRA Screening Report***

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# 1. Introduction and Summary

- 1.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council has produced a Taunton Garden Town Public Realm Design Guide which it intends to adopt as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The purpose of the SPD is to raise the standard of the public realm and streetworks consistently across Taunton Garden Town. It provides guidance to support the successful implementation of policies of the adopted development plan, particularly DM4 (Design) of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, D7 (Design Quality) and D9 (A Co-ordinated approach to development and highway planning) of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan and ED1 (Design), ED6 (Off-site Public Realm Enhancements), Hs2 (High Street Design Principles), Hs3 (East Street) Hs4 (Whirligig Lane Area) and Tr8 (North Street, The Parade, The Bridge and Bridge Street) of the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan. The SPD seeks a step change in the quality of new development in the district and provides additional guidance on how these and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan should be responded to in relation to securing high quality design. The SPD is aimed at guiding the design of public realm and street works by the highway authority, developers, utility companies and their agents and contractors. It also attempts to show how current principles of highway design and layout can be incorporated into good placemaking and provides additional guidance on how these and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan should be responded to in relation to securing high quality design of the public realm in Taunton Garden Town
- 1.2 The purpose of this Report is to determine whether the Taunton Garden Town Public Realm Design Guide SPD (herein referred to as “the SPD”) should be subject to:
- a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive) and associated Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations); or
  - a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive and with Regulation 61 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- 1.3 Under the above pieces of legislation, an SEA is required for all plans which may have a significant effect on the environment; and an HRA is required when it is deemed that the implementation of the plan is likely to cause significant negative effects upon protected European Sites (Natura 2000 sites).
- 1.4 The conclusion of the assessment is that the SPD does not require full SEA or HRA to be conducted.**
- 1.5 A Draft Screening Report was sent to the three statutory consultees designated in the regulations (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) for their views. This final report has been informed by comments received.



## 2. SEA Screening

- 2.1 The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive), transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Detailed guidance on these regulations can be found in the Government publication 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM 2005).
- 2.2 The objective of SEA is *"to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of development plans... with a view to promoting sustainable development"* EU Directive 2001/42/EC (Article 1).
- 2.3 Under Article 2(a) of the SEA Directive, a plan or programme requires an SEA to be conducted where it is:
- *"subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, and*
  - *required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions."*
- According to the ODPM guidance, "administrative provisions" are *"likely to be that they are publicly available, prepared in a formal way, probably involving consultation with interested parties. The administrative provision must have sufficient formality such that it counts as a "provision" and it must also use language that plainly requires rather than just encourages a plan or programme to be prepared"*.
- 2.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance states that *"In exceptional circumstances a Strategic Environmental Assessment may be required when producing a Supplementary Planning Document"* (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 61-008-20190315). Therefore, the Council is legally obliged to advise on whether it is their opinion that an SEA is required or not.
- 2.5 In order to determine whether or not an SEA is required, a "screening" exercise has been undertaken by the Council. The screening evaluates the contents of the SPD against the criteria set out in the SEA Directive. These criteria are presented over the page in Figure 1.
- 2.6 Should the screening conclude that the SPD is applicable and will have a "significant impact on the environment", then a full SEA will be required. Should the conclusion be that an SEA is not required, then any future significant variations or additions to the SPD will need to be subject to further screening.



implementation of the above and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan, providing additional guidance as to how they should be responded to in relation to securing high quality design in the public realm.

- 2.8 The SPD is aimed at guiding the design of public realm and street works by the highway authority, developers, utility companies and their agents and contractors. It also attempts to show how current principles of highway design and layout can be incorporated into good placemaking and provides additional guidance on how these and other relevant policies of the adopted development plan should be responded to in relation to securing high quality design of the public realm in Taunton Garden Town.
- 2.9 The main aspiration of the SPD is to accommodate people well, maximising the efficient use of limited space by designing our public realm primarily for people rather than for vehicles. As a result, the aim is for the Garden Town's public realm to be:
- Healthy and well – streets and public space will promote social resilience by prioritising activity, and making comfortable and convenient movement
  - Quiet and slow – we will reduce noise and rapid movement and so increase the enjoyment of public space
  - Green and clean – we want clean air, clean pavements, and a green environment for shade, biodiversity, water management and beauty

The SPD accommodates vehicles and gives only appropriate priority to through movement in the right places. This is our response to the climate change emergency and will bring social, health and economic benefits to all our town.

- 2.10 The SPD covers just the area designated as Taunton Garden Town and identified by Figure 5 in the SPD, which lies entirely within the Somerset West and Taunton Local Planning Authority area.
- 2.11 The SPD includes “core”, “town”, “general” and “green” standards relating to different materials and components, and illustrated examples of places, streets, gateways, centres and the river and canal corridor together with associated advice and guidance. These seek to amplify existing requirements of adopted planning policies and provide guidance on how these requirements can be successfully responded to as well as providing an element of aspiration for the general public realm to inform discussions with our statutory consultees and emerging policies within the new Local Plan to 2040. Therefore, and by definition, the SPD sits as supplementary to these adopted plans. The SPD includes no policies and does not allocate any land for development.
- 2.12 The Taunton Garden Town Public Realm Design Guide will be adopted as SPD and as such become a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications. This means that the SPD will carry weight in the decision-making process, although it will not in itself be part of the adopted development plan. Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Provided regard is had to all material considerations, it is for the decision maker to decide what weight is to be given to the material considerations in each case.

## The SEA Screening Assessment

2.13 Table 1, below contains the criteria from Figure 1, above. It identifies whether the Council considers the answer to each criterion to be Yes or No, and gives the reason for this conclusion.

Stage	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the Plan or Programme (PP) subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority <b>OR</b> prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The SPD has been prepared and will be adopted as SPD by Somerset West and Taunton Council in line with the procedure set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Plans)(England) Regulations 2012.
2. Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Art. 2(a))	Y	The SPD is not formally <i>required</i> by any legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions. However, Paragraph 128 of the NPPF states that “ <i>To provide maximum clarity about design expectations at an early stage, all local planning authorities should prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, and which reflect local character and design</i> ”, paragraph 129 states that “ <i>to carry weight in decision-making should be produced either as part of a plan or as supplementary planning documents</i> ” and the national Planning Practice Guidance suggests that “ <i>to be given as much weight as possible in the decision-making process, Design Guides should be adopted as SPDs</i> ”. So, whilst a design guide is not <i>required</i> , it is recommended/encouraged. The SPD will be publicly available and has been prepared in accordance with the above mentioned legislative and regulatory processes.
3. Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, <b>AND</b> does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Art 3.2(a))	N	The SPD has been prepared for the purposes of town and country planning and informing consideration of development proposals relating to land use, including potentially in relation to some of the projects referred to in Annex I and/or II of the EIA Directive, particularly Infrastructure (Urban development projects) and (Construction of roads). However, the SPD does not set the framework for future development consent of such projects as this is already set by the existing adopted local plans covering the Taunton Garden Town area within

		SWT district as well as adopted plans of Somerset County Council as the Local Transport Authority and Local Highways Authority. The SPD merely provides additional guidance in relation to the design of such development proposals, and how specific adopted planning policies might be responded to in relation to securing high quality design for the public realm.
4. Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Art. 3.2(b))	N	See section 3 of this Screening Report in relation to HRA Screening.
6. Does the PP set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Art. 3.4)	N	The SPD does not set the framework for future development consent of such projects as this is already set by the existing adopted local plans covering the Taunton Garden Town area within SWT district as well as adopted plans of Somerset County Council as the Local Transport Authority and Local Highways Authority. The SPD merely provides additional guidance in relation to the design of such development proposals, and how specific adopted planning policies might be responded to in relation to securing high quality design. The SPD does contain specific standards and which are intended to express the expectations of the Council in relation to specific issues/materials/components and designed to guide development proposals in responding to adopted planning policies, which the Council as the Local Planning Authority would take account of as a material consideration in determining an application for planning permission. However this is pursuant to the already adopted planning policies which have previously been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). In addition, the SPD will influence the production of a new Local Plan, the policies of which will be subject to SA/SEA as a matter of course in the development of that Plan.
8. Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment? (Art. 3.5)	N	See screening assessment for environmental effects in Table 2 of this report, below.



2.14 Criterion 8 requires an assessment of whether the SPD is likely to have a significant effect on the environment in reference to Article 3.5 of the SEA Directive. Schedule 1, Annex II of the SEA Regulations contains the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment. Table 2, below contains the criteria from Schedule 1 Annex II of the SEA Regulations and an assessment of whether the Plan would likely have a significant environmental effect or not.

Table 2 – Environmental impact screening assessment

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Schedule 1 of SEA regulations)	Is the strategy likely to have a significant environmental effect?	Justification for Screening Assessment
The characteristics of plans and programmes:		
a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;	N	The SPD has been produced in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and influenced by the Planning Practice Guidance, National Design Guide, and the Manual for Streets 1 and 2. The SPD provides guidance as to how development proposals should respond to existing adopted planning policies including with regards to materials and components for paving, signage, street furniture, planting and lighting. It provides illustrated examples of how this might be applied to places, streets, gateways, centres and the river and canal corridor. However, the framework is set by the adopted development plan policies and policies and guidance of the Local Transport Authority and Local Highways Authority. The SPD will not influence the spatial distribution, scale or type of development that may come forward across the district, or suggest how appropriate or otherwise a development might be in relation to these factors, which are set by the development plan. The SPD does not allocate any resources. The overall intent of the SPD is to encourage and guide development towards delivering on the positive environmental and sustainable design requirements for the public realm of adopted planning policy.
b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes	N	The SPD has been produced in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework and influenced by the Planning Practice Guidance and National Design Guide. It will

including those in a hierarchy;		influence the development of site-specific masterplans, design codes and other design processes which would be prepared by planning applicants in order to respond to existing adopted planning policies. The SPD will influence policy development for a new Local Plan, however, a new Local Plan will, once prepared and adopted sit above the SPD in the hierarchy and will be subject to its own Assessment. The SPD will also inform discussions with our statutory consultees including Somerset County Council as the Local Transport Authority and Local Highways Authority. In this vein it is hoped that the content and direction of the SPD (much of which has its roots in the Manual for Streets 1 and 2) will help to inform future review of SCC's own transport and highways policies and guidance. In this way, the SPD will influence the production of other plans and programmes. With regards to the extent of any influence on site-specific design processes the SPD is intended to influence these to a high degree, and it should therefore result in positive environmental effects, particularly with regards to highways design and public spaces within and around a site. However, as just one factor influencing development proposals, and as a material consideration only, it is unlikely that the SPD would have a significant effect on proposals, or any environmental effects which may arise from a specific development proposal which will be far more influenced by site context, developer intentions, adopted planning policy, SCC highways guidance, and national policy and guidance. Furthermore, the illustrative nature of much of the guidance contained within is intended to provide examples of how developments might respond to particular issues in responding to adopted planning policy and in some cases aspiring to higher standards, but do not set requirements in themselves. With regards to a new Local Plan and SCC policy and guidance documents, the degree of influence is much less, and these documents would have the freedom to choose to take a different path on issues covered by the SPD if so wished.
c) the relevance of the plan or programme for	N	The SPD is specifically aimed at promoting sustainable development in relation to the

<p>the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;</p>		<p>public realm, but has a particular focus on design and ensuring the public realm contributes towards the mitigation of and adaptation to the climate emergency. The high quality design that the SPD promotes is integral to sustainable development and will result in environmental (e.g. sustainable movement and visual impact), social (e.g. health and wellbeing improvements and creating more sociable spaces) and economic (e.g. encouraging dwell time – increased visitor spend and creating investable places) benefits to the area. The SPD does not cover all aspects of sustainable development, however, this is not its intention or place. The integration of a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors has already been assessed and achieved via the existing adopted development plans. The relevance and influence of the SPD will be balanced in decision making alongside all relevant policies of the development plan and other material considerations with a view to promoting sustainable development in the round. Therefore, the SPD has relevance to the integration of environmental considerations as part of promoting sustainable development. However, the effects of the SPD in this regard are unlikely to be significant as the balance of different social, economic and environmental factors is already determined at a strategic level by the adopted development plan and will be balanced on a case-by-case basis in determination of planning applications.</p>
<p>d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme;</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>The SPD addresses environmental problems associated with the design of places, streets and public spaces, specifically aiming to result in development which avoids and minimises and mitigates negative design-associated environmental impacts. This includes promoting positive choices of materials and components and strategies for the avoidance, minimising and mitigation of environmental problems such as landscape and visual impact, impacts upon designated and non-designated heritage assets, air quality, flood risk, health and wellbeing, carbon emissions and resilience to climate change amongst others. The SPD will not be the only factor informing the design response</p>



		of development proposals in relation to these environmental problems. Therefore, it is difficult to quantify the contribution of the SPD as a part of this. The SPD is designed to encourage positive responses, building on local and national policies and guidance, resulting in positive impacts and effects upon the environment. However, the effects of the SPD in this regard are unlikely to be significant as the adopted development plan is the primary driver for how developments will respond to these issues. The SPD provides additional guidance to help clarify how development proposals can meet with existing policy requirements in this regard.
e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	N	The SPD is not directly relevant to the implementation of European legislation including the Water Framework Directive.
<b>Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected:</b>		
a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;	N	The SPD is intended to encourage development proposals which deliver positive environmental effects. The likelihood of these effects occurring is unknown as this is dependent on consideration and determination of individual planning applications where the full range of planning policies and material considerations must be taken into account. However, the intention would be that the SPD generally influences development proposals to deliver positive environmental effects in every case, and once implemented, these effects would generally be permanent. However, the environmental effects resulting from application of the SPD are unlikely to be significant.
b) the cumulative nature of the effects;	N	The SPD will in combination with other plans, policies and guidance of this nature locally, regionally, nationally and internationally, have a positive effect on the environment, and the strength of these plans, policies and guidance is amplified when consistent and considered together. However, in isolation, its effects will be more limited and are unlikely to be significant whether alone or cumulatively.

c) the transboundary nature of the effects;	N	There would be no transboundary effects.
d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents);	N	The SPD promotes high quality sustainable design which would contribute towards the mitigation of risks to human health and the environment, including in relation to health and wellbeing (for instance through placemaking and street design which encourages walking and cycling which may result in reduced air quality concerns and improved physical and mental health for individuals). However, the specific impacts of the SPD guidance in relation to specific development proposals, and the effects these result in are not clear at this stage. However, the effects are likely to be positive although unlikely to be significant.
e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);	N	The SPD covers the extent of Taunton Garden Town which is home to approximately 70,000 people, and ambitious housing development plans which if realised would significantly increase this further. The SPD will influence development proposals across this area, but to different degrees based on their identification as “core”, “town”, “standard” or “green” areas. Proposals in the “core” and “town” areas are more likely to affect more people as they are used by the majority of the population of the town as well as people directly local to those locations and people from outside the area covered by the SPD. Generally, the effects are likely to be positive and unlikely to be significant.
f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to – i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii) intensive land-use; and	N	Taunton Garden Town has a number of special natural, cultural and heritage characteristics which are specific to it or the wider area, including a high concentration of historical assets including Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Ancient Monuments, particularly in the town centre. The SPD is designed to respond to these characteristics and provides guidance on how the public realm should be designed to respond to these in different cases across the town. The establishment of the different area standards within the SPD is a specific response to the different levels of significance and settings of these special characteristics. As such the SPD should contribute towards positive effects on these characteristics, which may otherwise be adversely impacted by development proposals. Taunton Garden

		<p>Town includes green spaces, some of which include Local Wildlife Sites and Local Nature Reserves, which are covered by the “green” standard in the SPD, intended to protect and enhance their special characteristics.</p> <p>Development in Taunton Garden Town has been identified by Natural England as relevant to the exceedance of environmental quality standards in relation to phosphate loading of the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site (which exists outside the boundaries of the SPD but downstream of the town). The SPD is unlikely to directly influence or impact upon this vulnerability or the unfavourable status of this protected site. However, strategies for mitigating impacts upon the site may be able to build upon some of the proposals included within the SPD including the aspiration to grow a “Garden Town Forest” and incorporate sustainable drainage solutions as a “Sponge Town”.</p> <p>Taunton Garden Town includes one Air Quality Management Zone (AQMZ) along East Reach, and has a large degree of relevance to the district’s only other AQMZ in Henlade, just to the east of the town. Taken in isolation, there may be some concerns associated with the slowing of vehicular traffic flow through the town centre and the knock-on effect this might have on the AQMZs as well as the re-routing of traffic from certain town centre routes proposed to be pedestrianised. However, taken in combination with other local and national initiatives to drive modal shift in the town and more widely as well as the shift to electric vehicles, the effects are unlikely to be significant. In addition, the wider benefits of these proposals are likely to significantly outweigh any such concerns. The SPD encourages the best use of constrained land resource within the town in order to accommodate sustainable movement and placemaking to support appropriate intensification of the urban area through high quality design.</p>
g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.	N	<p>The SPD is intended to promote design solutions which respond effectively and appropriately to the contexts in which they are sited. There are no areas or landscapes within the Garden Town benefiting from protection at a national, Community or</p>

		<p>international scale. Despite this, developments within the Garden Town has the potential to impact upon such areas and landscapes which lie nearby including the Quantock Hills and Blackdown Hills AONBs. The environmental effects upon these designations resulting from this SPD are likely to be minimal, though positive in nature and unlikely to be significant.</p>
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***SEA Screening Conclusion***

2.15 **It is the opinion of the Council that the Taunton Garden Town Public Realm Design Guide SPD does not require Strategic Environmental Assessment. However, it is important that relevant as individual development proposals are developed, they are subject to project level Environmental Assessment as appropriate, in order to understand whether significant effects may arise.**

### 3. HRA Screening

- 3.1 The basis for Habitat Regulations Assessment legislation is the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive), transposed into English law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitat Regulations).
- 3.2 The Habitats Directive and Regulations afford protection to plants, animals and habitats that are rare and vulnerable in a European context. Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a systematic process through which plans or projects are assessed for likely impact on the integrity of European Sites. European Sites, (also referred to as Natura 2000 sites), consist of Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); Potential Special Protection Areas and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (pSPA and cSAC); and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.
- 3.3 There are seven Natura 2000 sites within the Somerset West and Taunton district, as set out in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – European Sites / Natura 2000 sites within Somerset West and Taunton district.

European Sites / Natura 2000 sites
Exmoor and Quantock Oak Woodlands SAC
Hestercombe House SAC
Holme and Clean Moor SAC
Quants SAC
Severn Estuary SPA/SAC/Ramsar
Somerset Levels and Moors SPA/Ramsar
Exmoor Heaths SAC

- 3.4 None of the above are within the Taunton Garden Town area covered by the SPD, though there is a relationship between development and activities within the Garden Town and certain European Sites which is explored in the assessment below.
- 3.5 Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that:  
*“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives”.*
- 3.6 Under the Habitat Regulations, the Council is considered to be a “competent authority”. Regulation 63(1) of the Habitat Regulations states that:  
*“A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which –*  
*a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), and*  
*b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site,*  
*must make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the plan or project for that site in view of that site’s conservation objectives.”*
- 3.7 The first stage of the HRA process is to establish whether a “*significant effect*” is likely. This is referred to as screening. If the screening assessment concludes that a

significant effect is not likely then no further action is required. If the screening assessment identifies potential effects and deems them to be significant, then further “*Appropriate Assessment*” is required.

- 3.8 In order to establish whether the SPD is likely to have any significant effects upon the European Sites, this Screening assessment considers the SPD in relation to four steps based around the Screening methodology set out in the Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission 2001) as set out in Table 4, below.

Table 4 – Screening steps and responses

Question	Y/N	Reason
1. Is the PP directly connected with, or necessary to the management of a European site for nature conservation?	N	The SPD is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European Sites which are all located beyond the boundaries of Taunton Garden Town and as such this SPD.
2. Are there any other PPs that could in combination with this PP have potential to have significant effects upon a European Site?	Y	The SPD has been produced pursuant to existing adopted planning policies in the adopted development plan, the comprising plans of which and the specific policies off of which this SPD hangs have been all been subject to Appropriate Assessment. As a result of this, the adopted plans include policies and mitigations to ensure that significant effects do not arise in relation to the European Sites. Subsequent to adoption of these existing adopted development plans, an issue has arisen whereby it has been identified that new development including that within the Garden Town is contributing towards unacceptable phosphate levels in the Somerset Levels and Moors. The result of this is that the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar site is considered to be in an ‘unfavourable state’ and as such there is currently a constraint on the consent of new development which may result in further raising of phosphate levels until such point when a suitable mitigation solution has been identified and developed through a Phosphates Strategy. The effect of the SPD in combination with current adopted planning policies and the emerging Phosphates Strategy and other material considerations is that there are multiple, sometimes competing factors which new development has to try and respond to / satisfy. In some cases, development viability may result in a need to prioritise different elements whilst retaining the need to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. In this case, mitigating phosphate impacts upon the Somerset Levels and Moors and any other potential significant effects of a proposed development upon European Sites would need to take priority over compliance with the SPD. It’s status as an SPD and material consideration in the determination of

		<p>planning applications means that where necessary and appropriate there can be flexibility for development proposals in their responses. There may be synergies between the implementation of the SPD and ensuring no significant effects arise from new development, particularly in relation to Green Infrastructure and sustainable drainage solutions advocated by the SPD. A new Local Plan (the production of which will be influenced by the SPD) may have potential to have significant effects upon a European Site. However, these effects are not yet known and the Local Plan process will be subject to Appropriate Assessment as a matter of course. The HRA published alongside the Local Plan 2040 Issues and Options document earlier in 2020 describes the characteristics and potential issues of relevance for each of the European Sites and assesses the Local Plan policy options for likely effects upon the Sites.</p>
3. Are there likely to be any potential effects upon the identified European Site(s)?	N	<p>The SPD has been produced pursuant to existing adopted planning policies in the adopted development plan, the comprising plans of which and the specific policies off of which this SPD hangs have been all been subject to Appropriate Assessment. As a result of this, the adopted plans include policies and mitigations to ensure that significant effects do not arise in relation to the European Sites. The SPD will not result in development itself, rather guide development in relation to high quality design of public realm and responding to these existing adopted planning policies. As such, there are not anticipated to be any likely potential effects upon the identified European Sites as a result of the SPD.</p>
4. What is the significance of the effects upon the identified European Site(s)?	N/A	<p>No likely potential effects are anticipated as a result of the SPD.</p>

### ***HRA Screening Conclusion***

**3.9 It is the opinion of the Council that the Taunton Garden Town Public Realm Design Guide SPD does not require Appropriate Assessment under HRA legislation. However, it is important that as the detail of relevant individual projects are developed, they are screened so that it can be understood whether significant effects may arise.**





# Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

The [EIA guidance notes](#) will help you complete this assessment.

If you need help or advice please contact Paul Harding. [P.harding@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:P.harding@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

**Organisation prepared for**

**Somerset West and Taunton Council**

**Version**

**1**

**Date Completed**

**30 September 2021**

## Description of what proposed change or policy is being impact assessed

The Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town is a new planning policy guidance document under the adopted Local Plan and is proposed to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document. Once adopted the SPD would be a material consideration when considering any planning applications. The Design Guide sets out the Council’s aspirations for improving the public realm and public spaces in Taunton Garden Town and sets out a materials and street furniture palette for these areas.

The document has been subject to three separate consultations over an 18-month period (minimum of 6 weeks each) and has involved consultation with an extensive range of stakeholders, including all those shown in Appendix of the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

This SPD provides clear policy guidance for the local planning authority, developers, statutory bodies and utilities which will support the delivery of sustainable public realm enhancement. The SPD will assist on the deliverability of public realm proposals, since it clearly sets out guidance on the requirements of the Local Planning Authority and this can then be taken into account in any proposals. Similarly, the SPD clearly sets out Local Planning Authority’s requirements for good design which will assist in officers making a balanced judgement against other policy and Council objectives.

As part of the preparation of the document a number of workshops took place to inform its preparation, this involved officers and statutory consultees from a range of disciplines - planning, landscape, ecology, trees, heritage and highways. This has enabled an insight into many issues affecting statutory consultees and different user groups.

## Evidence

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

The Council's draft Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town has been reviewed.

This design guide document builds upon advice set out in NHCLG's National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code.

It also builds on work undertaken in the development and approval of other 'live' strategies:

- SWT Corporate Strategy;
- Taunton Garden Town Vision;
- Taunton Garden Town Charter and Checklist
- SWT Economic Development strategy;
- Improving Lives in Somerset (Health & Wellbeing) 2019-2028,
- Somerset Housing Strategy -2019-2023,
- Somerset Growth Plan 2017-2030

Each of the above which have been evidence-based using such sources as Office of National Statistics, Somerset Intelligence Partnership, Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA).

**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

Officers within the Council with an overview of the Equalities function, who have experience of identifying impacts on those with protected characteristics have been consulted for this initial identification of potential impacts.

The SPD document has been subject to three separate consultations (for a minimum of 6 weeks each consultation). These consultations have included the relevant community and interest groups and individuals associated with protected characteristics.

The groups consulted in the consultation events have included the below organisations:

- i) Disability groups – Action on Disability and Development, Alzheimer's Society – Somerset, Autism Somerset, Bridgwater & Taunton Deane Deaf Club, Compass Disability Services, ESCAPE Support Groups, Maggie's Centre (Cancer Care),

- Mind in Taunton & West Somerset, RNID (Action on Hearing Loss), Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Somerset Sight, Taunton and District Mencap Society.
- ii) Diversity groups – Avatar Indian Dance Somerset, British Bangladeshi Association Somerset, CHARIS, Devon and Somerset Anglo-Scandinavian Society, Diversity Voice, Johnny Mars Foundations, Minehead and District Refugee Support Group, Minehead Methodist Church- Little Fishes Toddler Group, Multicultural Parents Group, Oakwood Church, Philippine International Neighbourhood Association of Somerset (PINAS), Polish Association Taunton, Polish Voice TV, RAISE (Racial Awareness Inclusion Support and Education CIC, Somerset Art Works, Somerset Film, Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Forum, Somerset Portuguese Association, South Somerset Filipinos and Friends Association (SSFFA), Syrian Women’s Group, Taunton Malayali Prayer Group, Taunton Welcomes Refugees, Under One Sun, West Somerset Inter-Cultural Friendship Society, YMCA Somerset Coast
- iii) Multicultural groups – Anglo Chinese Society, Equality & Human Rights Commission, Ethnic Minority Achievement and Traveller Education Service, Friends Families and Travellers, Somerset Multicultural Association, Taunton Deane Polish Association, The Diversity Trust.
- iv) Religious Groups – Bahai Community, Catholic Church Clifton Diocese, Diocese of Bath and Wells, Diocese of Bath and Wells – Community Cohesion, Humanists, Jewish Community of Somerset, Minehead Baptist Church, Somerset Churches Together, Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor Methodist Circuit.
- v) Other Voluntary Groups – 10 Parishes, Age UK Somerset, Arc Inspire (Taunton Association for the Homeless), Campaign to Protect Rural England (Somerset), Citizens Advice Bureau (Taunton), Citizens Advice Bureau (West Somerset), Community Council for Somerset, Creating Learning Opportunities in Western Somerset (CLOWNS), Cycle Somerset, Engage West Somerset, Forum 21, FWAG South West England Office, Home Builders Federation, Minehead Conservation Society, Onion Collective CIC, People Plus, Quantock Eco, RSPB South West England, Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership, Somerset Association of Local Council’s, Somerset County Federation of Women’s Institutes, Somerset Gay Health, Somerset Lesbian Network (SLN), Somerset Playing Field’s Association, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset Youth Partnership, South West Seniors Forum, Sparkle Somerset, SUSTRANS, Taunton Area Cycling Campaign, Taunton Deane Tenants Forum, Taunton Open Door, Taunton Ramblers, Taunton Women’s Aid, The Exmoor Society, Transition Minehead and Alcombe, Transition Town Taunton, Taunton Deane Village Agent (East), Wellington & District Sports Federation, West Somerset Village Agent 1, West Somerset Village Agent 2, West Somerset and Exmoor Bridleways, West Somerset LETS Group, Wivey Action on Climate and Environment, Women’s Equality Network Somerset (WENS), YMCA – Taunton.

No representations were received from any of the above groups as part of the consultations carried out. Similarly, no representations were received from individuals suggesting that any changes be made to the draft document.

It is important to understand that where a planning application is brought forward it would be subject to additional public consultation on the details of the particular scheme and its impact on the community, including people with Protected Characteristics.

**Analysis of impact on protected groups**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located. Spaces will also be well lit and overlooked with natural surveillance. The guide also recommends the provision of seating which will be on particularly benefit to older people who may need to rest.</p>	□	□	☒
Disability	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located. Spaces will also be well lit and overlooked with natural surveillance. The guidance includes a specification for the use of tactile paving and highlight strips for street</p>	□	□	☒

	<p>furniture in order to assist blind and partially sighted persons. This accords with national highway design guidance.</p> <p>The guidance advocates in section 1.1.9 equality and inclusive mobility through design and engagement.</p> <p>The guide also recommends the provision of seating which will be on particularly benefit to people with restricted mobility who may need to rest.</p>			
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located. These spaces will be fully accessible by mothers with babies in pushchairs and buggies.</p> <p>The guide also recommends the provision of seating which will be on particularly benefit to women who may need to sit to feed their baby or pregnant women who may need to rest whilst in the public realm.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sex</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located. The guidance also addresses lighting of public realm in order to create safe environments. This can be of particular importance to lone women at night.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b></p>	<p>No negative impacts identified.</p> <p>All members of the community, including the protected groups, should benefit from the guidance set out in the Public Realm Design Guide, since this would create high quality spaces without trip hazards and with attractive street furniture well located.</p> <p>The aim is to create streets and places for everyone, walkers, cyclists, drivers and all ages/abilities. This would include carers assisting people in wheelchairs, pushchairs and buggies.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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**Negative outcomes action plan**  
 Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
N/A	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

**If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.**

<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>Fiona Webb, Placemaking Specialist</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>30/09/2021</b>
<b>Signed off by:</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:</b>	
<b>To be reviewed by: (officer name)</b>	
<b>Review date:</b>	



# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Full Council – 7 December 2021**

### **Local Government Reorganisation: Joint Scrutiny Committee**

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts – Leader of the Council**

**Report Author: Kevin Williams – Deputy Monitoring Officer**

#### **1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

On 21 July 2021 the Secretary of State announced his decision to implement, subject to parliamentary approval, a proposal submitted by Somerset County Council for a single unitary council covering the whole of the administrative county of Somerset.

Following the Secretary of State's decision, the Executive of this Council together with the Cabinet/Executives of Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council, South Somerset District Council and Sedgemoor District Council ("the Constituent Councils") agreed the need for a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Joint Committee to be established to provide collaborative democratic oversight for the implementation of the new Unitary Council and the first meeting of that Committee took place on 5 November 2021.

The Terms of Reference for the LGR Joint Committee provided for the setting up of a Joint Scrutiny Committee (JSC) to scrutinise the work of the LGR Joint Committee. This report therefore outlines the proposals for the Joint Scrutiny Committee and attaches at Appendix 1 the proposed Terms of Reference for members consideration.

#### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Council approves the establishment of a Joint Scrutiny Committee together with the County Council and three other District Councils in Somerset constituted in accordance with and having the roles and responsibilities set out in the Terms of Reference attached at Appendix 1 ("Terms of Reference").
- 2.2 That the Council nominates two (Districts) Members of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee onto the Joint Scrutiny Committee such nominations to be politically proportionate and based upon the political makeup of this council (this would mean at Somerset West and Taunton - 1 Liberal Democrat and 1 Independent Group nominee, as set out in section 4 of the report).

### 3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

What are the negative impacts/risks in this report	What are the positive impacts/risks in this report	What are you going to do about the impacts? What actions will be put into place?	Outcome Low risk – Green Moderate to high risk – Amber High/very high risk - Red
That the LGR Joint Committee will not be effectively scrutinised.	Ability to scrutinise the work of the LGR Joint Committee in an agile way without creating additional work and duplication	Creation of one Joint Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the LGR Joint Committee in accordance with the Terms of Reference at Appendix 1	Green – Low Risk

### 4 Background and Full details of the Report

Following the Secretary of State’s decision, extensive collaborative work has been undertaken by the five councils to support the implementation of the single unitary council in April 2023. Through partnership the programme governance arrangements have been jointly established with oversight and direction from the Somerset leaders and chief executives. The Executives have agreed the Terms of Reference for the LGR Joint Committee and included provision for the creation of a JSC in those Terms of Reference.

In the circumstances the Monitoring Officers of the Constituent Councils have together prepared the draft Terms of Reference at Appendix 1 for Members consideration and approval. These Terms of Reference set out the various functions that the JSC will exercise on behalf of the Constituent Councils, together with the proposed membership of the JSC and its meeting and voting arrangements.

#### Current Position

The establishment of the JSC will create a collaborative democratic mechanism which will establish a countywide scrutiny framework allowing the Constituent Councils to scrutinise the LGR Joint Committee in an effective and timely manner in relation to the preparation for the establishment of the unitary council in Somerset.

The proposals set out in this report will also positively respond to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities expectations for collaborative arrangements to be established as early as possible in the implementation programme.

Joint scrutiny committee arrangements are already well established by the five councils such as the Heart of the South West Joint Committee and the Somerset Waste Board.

The Terms of Reference propose a JSC of sixteen members drawn from the relevant overview and scrutiny committees of the Constituent Councils, eight from the County Council and two from each of the District Councils (eight in total) with the Chair being

appointed from the District membership and the Vice Chair from the County membership. The JSC to be politically proportionate as follows:-

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Independent	Green	No Party	Other	
Somerset County Council	33	3	14		2	2	1	55
Seat allocation	5	1	2					
Mendip	12	0	23		1	10	1	47
Seat allocation	1		1					
Somerset West & Taunton	10	3	31		13	2	0	59
Seat allocation			1	1				
South Somerset	14	0	40		5	1	0	60
Seat allocation			2					
Sedgemoor	29	11	7		1	0	0	48
Seat allocation	2	0	0	0	0	0		
<b>Tota</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>			

Allocation of the above seats has been based on individual councils. This ensures the political make up of each constituent council is represented and is reflective of the fact that the Constituent Councils are currently individual sovereign councils.

The above calculation in respect of Somerset West and Taunton Council is based on the following premise. A notice was served prior to the Annual Council meeting in 2019. This notice recorded that the Independent and Green Councillors had formed a joint group on the Council.

Any 5 members of the Constituent Councils, to include members from at least 3 of the Constituent Councils, may request a call-in of a decision of the LGR Joint Committee. The Chair and the Vice Chair of the JSC will consider call-in requests and will reach a conclusion as to whether to accept or reject the call-in in accordance with the criteria set out in the Terms of Reference and after taking advice from the Scrutiny Officer and Monitoring Officer of Somerset County Council.

The establishment of the JSC will both promote the timely and effective overview and scrutiny of the implementation process and ensure that all Councils can play an important role in helping shape the direction of the implementation process but without leading to duplication and delay.

The JSC will also be consulted and have an opportunity to make representations to the LGR Joint Committee in relation to budget setting for the new Unitary and any medium-term financial plans.

The JSC meetings will be open to all elected members of the five councils, the public, partners and press to attend in venues around the county. Agendas, reports and minutes of the Committee will be published on the County Council's website along with details of meeting locations and times. The District Councils will publish a link to agendas on their website.

A joint scrutiny committee may only be established following each of the Constituent

Council's considering that decision at their full council meetings in November/December. Subject to approval, the first meeting of the JSC would take place in late December or early January.

## **5 Links to Corporate Strategy**

The establishment of the JSC will assist in promoting the timely and effective implementation of the proposal approved by the Government and in ensuring that the work of the LGR Joint Committee is appropriately scrutinised.

## **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

Under the Terms of Reference Somerset County Council will act as the Administering Authority for the JSC during the months between its establishment and the creation of the Implementation Executive under the Structural Change Order. The District Council Scrutiny Officers will work closely with the County Scrutiny Officer in developing the work programme and supporting the JSC. The associated costs of supporting the JSC will be met from approved budgets made available for implementation of the unitary council business case.

## **7 Legal Implications**

The JSC will act as a Joint Committee under s 101 and s 102 Local Government Act 1972 and as an overview and scrutiny committee under s 21 Local Government Act 2000 (as amended). This will be to the exclusion of the Constituent Councils own overview and scrutiny arrangements as far as the work of the LGR Joint Committee is concerned.

Each of the partners' legal teams and Monitoring Officers have been involved in the development of the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference set out the membership, role, duties and responsibilities of the JSC and the requirements upon the Constituent Councils in supporting it.

S15 and S16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 impose a duty to allocate seats on committees in accordance with political balance requirements. S17 allows an exception to be made to the political balance requirements but only where no member of the authority votes against such a proposal.

## **8 Climate and Sustainability Implications**

*N/a*

## **9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications**

*N/a*

## **10 Equality and Diversity Implications**

Analysis undertaken for:	Creation of Joint Scrutiny Committee	Date undertaken: 10 November 2021
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Scope	<i>Draft report and Terms of Reference reviewed by the County and District Monitoring Officers</i>
Evidence used	<i>Consultation with the Leaders and Chief Executives</i>
Key findings and impacts	<i>None</i>
Conclusion drawn	<i>No impacts identified</i>
Actions	<i>Not applicable</i>
Signed off by	<i>Melanie Wellman, Monitoring Officer</i>

**11 Social Value Implications**

*N/a*

**12 Partnership Implications**

To approve the Terms of reference for the JSC.

Not to approve the Terms of Reference for the JSC. This would mean that the Constituent Councils would scrutinise the Joint Committee individually. Such an approach would create additional work, duplication and inevitably slow progress.

**13 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

There are no direct health and wellbeing implications to the recommendations in this report

**14 Asset Management Implications**

*N/a*

**15 Data Protection Implications**

*N/a*

**16 Consultation Implications**

The Terms of Reference have been considered by the Leaders and Chief Executives of the five councils.

**17 Conclusion**

Members are invited to consider the recommendations in this report to create a joint scrutiny function to oversee the LGR Joint Committee.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny – No**
- **Executive – No**
- **Full Council – Yes – 7 December 2021**

**Reporting Frequency: Ad-Hoc**

## List of Appendices (background papers to the report)

Appendix 1	Draft JSC Terms of Reference
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## Contact Officers

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# **Local Government Reorganisation**

## **Joint Scrutiny Committee**

### **Draft Terms of Reference**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and South Somerset District Council (“the Constituent Councils”) have formed a Joint Committee, known as the Local Government Reorganisation Joint Committee (“LGR Joint Committee”) in relation to the implementation of the Secretary of State’s decision to implement a single tier of local government in Somerset (“LGR”).
- 1.2 Paragraph 18 of the LGR Joint Committee Terms of Reference state that “The Councils will separately constitute a joint scrutiny committee or panel, the purpose of which will be to scrutinise the work of the LGR Joint Committee”. The Constituent Councils have therefore agreed to form the Local Government Reorganisation Joint Scrutiny Committee (“JSC”) which will provide overview and scrutiny of the LGR Implementation Plan and the activities of the LGR Joint Committee.

#### **2. Governance**

- 2.1 The JSC will act as a Joint Committee under s 101 and s 102 Local Government Act 1972 and as an overview and scrutiny committee under s 21 Local Government Act 2000 (as amended).

#### **3. Scrutiny Function**

- 3.1 The JSC will provide the joint overview and scrutiny function for LGR and the Constituent Councils will be asked to delegate the overview of the LGR Joint Committee functions to the JSC. This will be to the exclusion of the Constituent Councils own overview and scrutiny arrangements.

#### **4. Roles, Duties and Responsibilities**

4.1 The role of the JSC will be to exercise the overview of the LGR Joint Committee functions on behalf of the Constituent Councils in accordance with the powers outlined in S21 Local Government Act 2000 to include:-

- Developing a forward work programme of activities.
- Reviewing or scrutinising decisions made, or other action taken by the LGR Joint Committee.
- Seeking reassurance and considering whether the LGR Joint Committee is operating in accordance with the implementation plan for LGR and is being managed effectively.
- Holding the LGR Joint Committee to account by providing critical challenge to ensure that it provides the high-level strategic direction for the implementation of the new unitary Council.
- Reviewing progress in relation to the implementation plan and identifying to the LGR Joint Committee barriers to progress, best practice and possible improvements.
- Scrutinising the level of requests to be made to each Constituent Council for allocation from their revenue and capital allocations to support delivery of the implementation plan.
- Scrutinising the form, function, and constitution of local community networks.
- Scrutinising the development of the constitution and schemes of delegation for the new unitary Council.
- Scrutinising the plans to align existing change activities cross the Councils.
- Scrutinising the development of the unitary council's annual budget 2023/24 and the associated medium term financial plan.
- Scrutinising the development of policies and protocols for the unitary Council and across the Constituent Councils for use during the transition period.

## **5. Membership / Substitute Members**

5.1 The JSC will be made up of 16 members drawn from the overview and scrutiny members of the Constituent Councils as follows:

- Somerset County Council (8 members)
- Somerset West and Taunton Council (2 members)
- South Somerset District Council (2 members)
- Sedgemoor District Council (2 members)



- Mendip District Council (2 members)

It is proposed that the relevant overview and scrutiny committee of each Constituent Council nominates members from their membership to the JSC. Any subsequent appointments or nomination of substitutes is a matter for the Chair of the respective overview and scrutiny committee of each Constituent Council.

- 5.2 Political proportionality will apply to those appointments (and to that of any substitute) and the political representation should represent the political make up of each of the Constituent Councils.
- 5.3 Each member will have one vote.
- 5.4 Members of the LGR Joint Committee or executive members of the Constituent Councils are precluded from sitting as members of the JSC.
- 5.5 The Chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee of each Constituent Council may appoint an overview and scrutiny member to act as a substitute where one of their members is unable to attend a meeting of the JSC. Substitutions may only be made on a meeting by meeting basis and if the appointed member(s) is unable to attend a meeting of the JSC. Any substitutions must be notified to the Scrutiny Officer of the Administering Council (as defined in Paragraph 9.1. below) ("the Scrutiny Officer") by 9.00am on the day of the relevant meeting.
- 5.6 Reflecting the importance of engaging with stakeholders across Somerset, the JSC will be able to invite representatives to meetings where it considers that they will contribute to the delivery of an effective scrutiny function.

## **6. Term**

- 6.1 The Term of the JSC shall be co-terminus with the duration of the LGR Joint Committee or earlier in the event of a decision of the five Constituent Councils to end the joint scrutiny arrangements.

## **7. Work Programme**

- 7.1 The JSC will maintain a work programme of activities. Constituent Council scrutiny committees may ask the JSC to consider matters for inclusion in the work programme. The final decision will be a matter for the JSC.

## **8. Reporting Arrangements**

- 8.1 The work and recommendations of the JSC will be regularly reported to the LGR Joint Committee. Members of the JSC may make reports to their own Constituent Councils in accordance with their own governance procedures.

## **9. Meetings, agendas, reports and minutes**

- 9.1 The administering Constituent Council shall be Somerset County Council (“the Administering Council”).
- 9.2 The Administering Council shall appoint a statutory scrutiny officer (“the Statutory Scrutiny Officer”) as defined in S9FB Local Government Act 2000. The scrutiny officers from the other Constituent Councils shall work with the Statutory Scrutiny Officer in supporting the JSC.
- 9.2 The overview and scrutiny process will be open and transparent in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 and meetings will be held in public and accessible online to ensure increased transparency.
- 9.3 The agenda and supporting papers will be published by the Administering Council and circulated at least five clear working days in advance of meetings.
- 9.4 The minutes of any meetings will be published on the Administering Council’s website and circulated to the other Constituent Councils as soon as practicable. The JSC will operate in accordance with the constitution of the Administering Council. The Constituent Councils (with the exception of the Administering Council) will each provide a link to the agendas and minutes of the JSC on its website.

## **10. Frequency of meetings**

10.1 The date, time and venue of meetings will be fixed in advance by the JSC, and a schedule of meetings agreed at its inaugural and/or subsequent meetings. The JSC will meet every 8 weeks. Dates will be published on the website of the Administering Council. Additional meetings may be convened at the request of the Chair or Vice Chair.

## **11. Venue**

11.1 Meetings of the JSC will take place in a number of locations across the County of Somerset and will be rotated around the Constituent Councils.

## **12. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

12.1 The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected at the first meeting of the Committee by members of the JSC. The Chair will be appointed from the District Council membership and the Vice Chair shall be a County Council member. In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, the meeting will elect a chair for that meeting.

## **13. Quorum**

13.1 The quorum of the JSC shall be 9, including members from at least four of the five Constituent Councils.

## **14. Declarations of interest**

14.1 JSC members are subject to the Code of Conduct for elected members adopted by the Constituent Council that nominated them including the requirement to declare relevant interests at formal meetings of the JSC.

## **15. Voting**

- 15.1 Recommendations will generally be reached by consensus, but if a vote is required it will be by a simple majority of all members present. Where there are equal votes the Chair of the meeting will have a second or casting vote.

## **16. Duty to attend, cooperate and respond**

- 16.1 The JSC may require by invitation the Chair of the LGR Joint Committee and/or the Chief Executive Chair of the Implementation Team to appear before it to explain (in relation to all aspects of the JSC's work) any particular decision or series of decisions. The Chair and Chief Executive have agreed to attend if so required, unless they have a legitimate reason for not doing so.
- 16.2 Following each meeting of the JSC, the JSC's recommendations (if any) will be submitted to the LGR Joint Committee for consideration. The LGR Joint Committee will be required to consider those recommendations at its next meeting and respond to the JSC indicating what (if any) action the LGR Joint Committee proposes to take. The response should be made within 7 days of the LGR Joint Committee meeting and will be published on the website of the Administering Council.

## **17. Call-in**

- 17.1 Any 5 members of the Constituent Councils, to include members from at least 4 of the Constituent Councils, may request a call-in of a decision of the LGR Joint Committee. The call-in must be submitted in writing or by email to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, indicating its support by all relevant parties along with the reasons for the call-in and proposed outcome(s). The Statutory Scrutiny Officer must notify the Monitoring Officer that administer's the LGR Joint Committee of the call-in request.
- 17.2 "Call-in" is a facility which members can use to challenge Key Decisions where the JSC has not been involved prior to the decision being taken or where a member believes a decision has been taken without the proper process having been followed.

A key decision is defined as:

(a) Resulting in the local authority incurring expenditure\*\* which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; and / or

(b) Significant in terms of their effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.

\*\*There is no definition in the legislation of the word 'significant' in (a) above. Therefore, for the purposes of LGR key decisions the financial threshold at or above which a financial decision is significant (and a Key Decision) will be a total value of £500,000 for capital / revenue expenditure or savings.

Call-in of Key Decisions is subject to the following rules:

**(a) General provisions:**

(i) Call-in should be used on an exception basis and not to unnecessarily delay delivery of the Structural Changes Order and / or the implementation plan for the unitary council;

(ii) An individual Key Decision should normally only be subject to scrutiny once, whether pre or post decision;

(iii) Key Decisions cannot be called in where the decision requires urgent implementation. Urgent implementation requires the approval of the Chair of the LGR Joint Committee and the Chair of the JSC and their approval shall be recorded in the relevant report;

(iv) Call-in only applies to decisions. Recommendations (for example, made by the LGR Joint Committee to any of the Constituent Councils) cannot be called-in.

**(b) Scrutiny of Key Decisions before they are taken:**

This should focus on ensuring that the decision-maker has all the necessary information, to take a fully informed decision and that any procedures have been properly followed.

Any scrutiny review at this stage should not pre-empt the decision. The decision-maker must take the views of the JSC into account before taking the decision.

**(c) Scrutiny of Key Decisions after they are taken but before they are implemented:**

(i) Key Decisions are published to all members and the public (via the website) within 2 working days of the decision date;

(ii) Key Decisions (unless urgency is agreed) must be called-in (following the process outlined in 17.1 above) within 5 working days of publication or the decision will be implemented automatically.

(iii) The Chair and the Vice Chair of the JSC will consider call-in requests against the principles of good decision-making and will either agree the request or detail their reasons for rejecting the request in a report to the next available meeting of the JSC. In reaching their conclusion they will take advice from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer and the Monitoring Officer and a summary of that advice will be included in the report to the JSC;

(iv) A call-in must specify the subject matter, the reason(s) for it, information required to enable full consideration and the preferred outcome;

(v) Each call-in will be considered at the next meeting of the JSC unless an alternative is agreed with the decision-maker;

(vi) The JSC having considered a call-in will report to the decision-maker;

(vii) Where an item has been subject to pre-decision scrutiny of the process, post decision call-in should normally only relate to the decision itself;

(viii) If there is no pre-decision scrutiny of an item then the process and/or the decision may be the subject of call-in.

**(d) Scrutiny of Key Decisions after implementation:**

This should only occur where the decision-maker was required to make a decision that was time critical or at a later stage to gauge the effect of the decision. Scrutiny in these circumstances is not part of the call-in process.

## **18. Code of Conduct**

18.1 Members of the JSC are expected to observe the “Seven Principles of Public Life” (the ‘Nolan’ principles) and shall be bound by their Constituent Council’s Code of Conduct in their work on the JSC. Members are expected to act in the interests of the JSC, except where this would result in a breach of a statutory or other duty to their Constituent Authority or would be in breach of their Constituent Council’s Code of Conduct.

## **19. Access to information**

19.1 JSC meetings are regarded as a council committee for the purposes of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. Meetings will be open to the press and public unless it is necessary to exclude the public in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972. All agendas, reports, and minutes of the JSC will be made publicly available, unless deemed exempt or confidential in accordance with the above Act. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provisions shall apply to all business of the JSC.

## **20. Rules of Procedure**

20.1 Save as outlined in this Terms of Reference the procedures followed at the JSC meetings shall be in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rules of the Administering Council. In the event of any conflict between this Terms of Reference and the relevant overview and scrutiny procedure rules, the provisions of these Terms of Reference shall prevail.





Report Number: SWT 108/21

# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Full Council – 7 December 2021**

### **North Taunton Woolaway Project - Authorisation to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in relation to the North Taunton Woolaway Project**

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Francesca Smith

Report Author: Jane Windebank – Development Manager, Development and  
Regeneration

Chris Brown – Assistant Director, Development and  
Regeneration

#### **1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1. To reinforce the Council's willingness to progress a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to achieve vacant possession of the North Taunton Woolaway Project (the Project) development area to achieve the successful regeneration of North Taunton. The Council throughout the CPO process enthusiastically attempt to purchase by mutual consent wherever possible.
- 1.2. To ensure a smooth transition between all future phases and to ensure vacant possession by the date at which demolition needs to commence, this Report seeks a resolution to make a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to assist with the site assembly required to facilitate the implementation of the regeneration proposals of the North Taunton Woolaway Project as edged red on the plan at Appendix 1. The Report is also asking for authorisation for officers to make the CPO and to carry out all necessary steps in conjunction with the CPO to secure its confirmation and subsequent implementation.
- 1.3. The Project is the flagship regeneration project of the Council's housing development programme and tackles some of the Council's worst performing homes in one of the most socially deprived areas in our County.
- 1.4. The Project will deliver two hundred and twenty-seven (227) new Council homes and comprehensively refurbish twenty-seven (27) Council homes in five (5) phases over an eight and a half (8.5) year period, a phasing plan is attached at Appendix 2. The Project will also provide a community facility/project office in the first phase which can be converted into 2 homes should a sustainable business plan not be achieved at the end of the Project. This would increase the number of new homes to 229.
- 1.5. The Project is an essential part of the Council's commitment to offer a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those in need. The proposals identified in this Report will assist the progression of the remaining Phases (B–D) in a timely manner and provide certainty and security to the North Taunton Woolaway Project tenants.

#### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To resolve, subject to consideration of the matters set out in this Report, to make a Compulsory Purchase Order pursuant to powers under section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 and section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 and all other enabling powers as deemed necessary for the acquisition of the private properties in Phases B – D and any new rights for the purposes of securing both a quantitative and qualitative gain in housing by the delivery of the comprehensive redevelopment of the Woolaway properties on the land.
- 2.2 To delegate authority of all matter relating to this CPO activity to the Director of Housing and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Section 151 Officer. Matters include:
  - 2.2.1 To take all steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Compulsory Purchase Order (“Order”) including the publication and service of all notices and the promotion of the council’s case at any written representations procedure, public hearing or public inquiry.
  - 2.2.2 To approve the draft Statement of Reasons for making the Compulsory Purchase Order as set out in Appendix 3 in consultation with the Solicitors acting for the Council.
  - 2.2.3 To amend the Statement of Reasons referred to in paragraph 2.3.2 above as required in consultation with the Solicitors acting for the Council.
  - 2.2.4 To make any amendments, deletions or additions to the land identified in this Report to be subject to the Order (“Order Land”) as to include and describe all interests in land and rights required to facilitate the carrying out of the redevelopment and regeneration of the Project and surrounding area;
  - 2.2.5 To identify and acquire interests and new rights required to facilitate delivery of the redevelopment and regeneration of the Project and surrounding area either by agreement or compulsorily pursuant to the Order (including pursuant to any blight notices as appropriate) including conduct of negotiations and making provision for the payment of compensation;
  - 2.2.6 To negotiate, agree terms and enter into agreements with interested parties including agreements for the withdrawal of blight notices and/or the withdrawal of objections to the Order and/or undertakings not to enforce the Order on specified terms, including where appropriate removing land or rights from the Order, making provision for the payment of compensation and/or relocation;
  - 2.2.7 If the Order is confirmed by the Secretary of State, to advertise and give notice of confirmation and thereafter to take all steps to implement the Order including, executing General Vesting Declarations and/or to serve Notices to Treat and Notices of Entry in respect of the acquisition of interests in and rights over the Order Land;
  - 2.2.8 To take all steps in relation to any legal proceedings relating to the Order including defending or settling claims referred to the Lands Tribunal and/or applications to the courts and any appeals; and
  - 2.2.9 To retain and/or appoint external professional advisers and consultants to

assist in facilitating the promotion, confirmation and implementation of the Order, the settlement of compensation and any other claims or disputes.

- 2.3 To approve the service of a Final Demolition Notice and the demolition of the buildings and structures in Phase B and C(i) as shown in Appendix 2.

### 3 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 A risk assessment can be found at Confidential Appendix 6 however the main risks in relation to vacant possession are set out in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Main Scheme Risks**

Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
SWT fail to achieve the purchase of the remaining privately owned dwellings in NTWP phases B, C & D	10 (probability 2 x impact 5)	To date 15 of the 22 privately owned properties have been purchased and 2 properties are in final stages of negotiation. SWT provides an enhanced offer to owners to encourage purchase by mutual consent, the Council have introduced an equity share loan removing barriers to owners purchasing an alternative home from the market, the Council apply all statutory compensations as outlined in SWTs Decant Policy and in accordance with current legislation governing the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the payment of compensation in accordance with the Land Compensation Act 1973 and the Planning and Compensation Act 1991. SWT resource the NTWP and staff are equipped to negotiate with private owners.
SWT fail to gain vacant possession of NTWP private dwellings in a timely manner.	8 (probability 2 x impact 4)	There remains one single private dwelling in Phase B, 2 in Phase Ci, one in Cii, none in Ciii and 3 in Phase D. SWT encourages negotiation with private owners at any time regardless of phase. The request to commence a CPO allows a parallel approach to gain vacant possession.
The CPO is contested	8 (probability 2 x impact 4)	A contested case could delay the progress of one or more phases. The impact of delays in the delivery of phases impacts on the potential contract costs (as the contractor will be less able to deliver contract efficiencies by remaining on site) and the Council's HRA account would extend the period of rent loss due to new homes not

		being let in a timely way.
SWT fail to be awarded possession of the dwellings through CPO activity.	5 (probability 1 x impact 5)	SWT believes the rationale for CPO activity is proportionate to allow much needed regeneration of the area and the required investment in the properties. SWT believe that there is a compelling case in the public interest. SWT has appointed expert advice to guide SWT through this process, SWT has involved residents over a long period of time in developing the regeneration plans and has appointed contractors to deliver a new offer in the area which reflects the consultation, SWT has followed policy when negotiating with private owners and has provided a generous offer to encourage private owners to sell by mutual agreement, The council has approved the funds to deliver the new scheme.

#### 4 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 In February 2019 the Shadow Full Council approved the redevelopment of the North Taunton Woolaway Project area and approved the principle of using Compulsory Purchase Powers set out in Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985, should vacant possession not progress to acquire the properties under the regeneration initiative detailed in the Report. It delegating such decision making to the Executive.
- 4.2 The existing site comprises of 212 Woolaway homes of which the Council retain ownership of 162 and 45 have been purchased through the Right to Buy and are now in private ownership.
- 4.3 In total the Council have decanted eighty-three (83) out of the one hundred and sixty-seven (167) tenants and purchased fifteen (15) of the twenty-two (22) private homes within the Project area. A breakdown of the properties is set out below in Table 2:

**Table 2: Tenure of North Taunton Woolaway Project Area**

Phase	No. of Existing homes	No. of Tenants	No. of Private Home	No of Private homes left to purchase
Phase A	26	23	3	0
Phase B	22	21	1	1
Phase Ci	16	12	4	2
Phase Cii	18	17	1	1
Phase Ciii	22	20	2	0
Phase D	58	47	11	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>REFURBISHMENT ONLY</b>				
Phase E –	50	27	23	0 – none to

				purchase
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>7</b>

4.4 Detailed planning permission for Phase A has been granted. The Council's Planning Committee has resolved to grant outline planning permission for Phases B–E (in March 2019 and again in November 2019). Phase A will deliver 47 new social rented homes and a community facility. The outline planning permission for Phases B–E will deliver up to 180 new build Council homes and refurbish 27 existing Woolway Council homes. The indicative scheme will provide a net increase of 65 affordable Council homes.

4.5 The Outline Planning Permission for the redevelopment of Phase B – E is being held pending phosphates mitigation. In the meantime, a full detailed planning application has been submitted for Phase B – D to ensure the development is not affected by the current phosphate mitigation delays as there is no increase in housing numbers. A separate planning application for the refurbishment of SWT properties in Phase E will be submitted.

4.6 **NTWP Update**

4.7 The contract for the construction of Phase A has been signed and Engie took possession of the site on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The programme is on track with the site set up complete and Welfare Offices are situated in Durham Place. The enabling groundworks have been completed and the new road in Wells Close installed, foundations have been poured in Bodmin Road. Site signage is being installed.

4.8 The Project is currently in five phases, A – E with delegation to the Director of Housing and Communities and the Portfolio Holder for Housing granted on 3 December 2020 to agree the timely decanting of Phases C - E. Table 3 (4.10) is an indicative timeline for the five phases, however once the sequence of refurbishment is known Phase E will be sub divided into smaller phases to allow timely decanting in line with the required refurbishment sequence.

4.9 Phase C has been sub divided to enable the development of M4(3) adapted properties to ensure vulnerable tenants only have to decant once.

4.10 **Table 3: Indicative Timeline by Phases**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Estimated Date of Decanting Priority</b>	<b>Estimated Start on site</b>	<b>Estimated Practical completion</b>
A	Complete	<p><b>ACTUAL</b></p> <p>February 2020 – Hoarding</p> <p>July 2020 – demolition</p> <p>June 2021 - construction</p>	June / July 2023

B	<b>ACTUAL</b> December 2020	Apr 2022	July /August 2023
C(i)	October/November 2021	May 2022	December 2023
C(ii)	March 2022	August 2023	July 2025
C (iii)	June 2022	Sept 2023	April 2026
*D	January 2024	February 2025	November 2027
E	Phased Comprehensive Refurbishment	November 2021	**November 2025

*\* Estimated as pending outcome of phosphate mitigation.*

*\*\* Refurbishment could run into Phase D timeline depending on the number of owner occupiers who wish to participate.*

- 4.11 Negotiations are continuing to purchase the remaining private properties which are not held in Council ownership. It is the aim of the Council to make sure all private owners are made suitable offers based on their requirements and within a reasonable timescale to enable the regeneration works to proceed. The remaining private owners are being advised of the revised phasing schedule and being encouraged to enter into negotiations to sell their homes by mutual agreement to the Council.
- 4.12 Negotiations are entered into sensitively and taking each individual owner's circumstances into account. Owners may be given assistance to find alternative accommodation, the options available to them are dependent on their individual circumstances and the equity available to them. Where an owner agrees to sell their property to the Council, the Council will offer support with the process to help the owner to purchase their new home. In addition to the Home Loss Payment and Disturbance Compensation, the Council can provide additional financial assistance to owner/occupiers looking to purchase a new home. The Council operates an equity loan scheme which can be made available to qualifying households to provide financial assistance to help an owner/occupier purchase an alternative property. Additional services are offered for any vulnerable private owner such as assisted packing service and reinstallation of any disabled adaptations.
- 4.13 Under Homefinder Somerset policy, a home owner who has significant difficulties in meeting their ongoing housing need through their own means, can apply for rehousing. The home owner's application will be considered against the eligibility criteria for Council housing.
- 4.14 To ensure the redevelopment of the Project can be guaranteed within the timeframes set out above in Table 3, it is necessary for authority to be obtained for a Compulsory Purchase Order to enable the acquisition by the Council of any remaining properties.

#### **4.15 Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)**

- 4.16 If the Council pursues a CPO, then subject to the projected dates for the phases to obtain planning permission it should incorporate into the CPO all interests it believes it will need to complete the whole development.
- 4.17 Whilst there is no absolute legal bar to making a CPO without having planning permission in place, the lack of planning permission is considered to be an impediment to delivery. It is therefore recommended that, at the latest, planning permission is in place by the time of any consideration of the Secretary of State as to whether to confirm the Order. If it is not, then the Council will need to show that there is no reason that it is aware of as to why planning permission should not be granted.
- 4.18 If a CPO is confirmed over future phases, the Council does not have to exercise it if it is no longer needed (for example because negotiations eventually lead to a negotiated settlement). Negotiations can continue and provided they move in the right direction the CPO may not be needed. However, national guidance on CPO in the form of 'Guidance on compulsory purchase process and the Crichel Down Rules' (MHCLG, July 2019) ('the Guidance') recognises the benefit of beginning the CPO process and securing a CPO even if in slightly speculative circumstances in terms of its use.

*“Compulsory purchase is intended as a last resort to secure the assembly of all the land needed for the implementation of projects. However, if an acquiring authority waits for negotiations to break down before starting the compulsory purchase process, valuable time will be lost. Therefore, depending on when the land is required, it may often be sensible, given the amount of time required to complete the compulsory purchase process, for the acquiring authority to:*

- plan a compulsory purchase timetable as a contingency measure; and*
- initiate formal procedures This will also help to make the seriousness of the authority’s intentions clear from the outset, which in turn might encourage those whose land is affected to enter more readily into meaningful negotiations.”*

There is therefore recognition that the CPO process can be begun as a contingency measure.

#### **4.19 Factors for Granting CPO**

- 4.20 The Shadow Council resolved to support in principle the use of CPO powers, with further decision making delegated to the Executive. That in principle decision did not consider in full the various tests and requirements that need to be met to secure a confirmed CPO. In general terms, before pursuing a CPO, the Council should consider the case for using the powers, and then those matters which the Secretary of State will wish to be satisfied of before confirming a CPO. The issues include:

:

- What power will it use.
- How is the particular power used justified in these circumstances?
- The general requirements for using CPO powers, including whether there is a compelling case in the public interest;
- What land and interests are required, and do any rights need to be created?
- The relevant power for the compulsory acquisition of land or buildings for the provision of housing requires a qualitative or quantitative gain;
- the scheme should be deliverable and have funding in place for such delivery;

- there should be no impediments (other than the need for a CPO) to delivery of the scheme.

4.21 The draft Statement of Reasons appended to this Report addresses each of the above in full. Brief detail on each is included in the following paragraphs.

**4.22 What power should be used**

4.23 The in principle resolution already identifies the most appropriate power that can be used in this case, which is section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 which allows an authority to acquire land, houses or other properties for the provision of housing accommodation. There must be a qualitative or quantitative gain (the gain of one dwelling is sufficient). The draft Statement of Reasons expands on the remit of this power.

**4.24 How is the particular power used justified in these circumstances, including there is a compelling case in the public interest.**

4.25 The Guidance sets out what information must be compiled by way of evidence regarding the need for further housing accommodation. This includes matters such as: the total number of dwellings in the district; the total number of substandard dwellings, the total number of households for which provision needs to be made, and information on the authority's housing stock. This information set out in the Statement of Reasons – the document that justifies the use of CPO powers.

4.26 Note also that the Guidance provides that for housing development acquisitions, the CPO will not be confirmed unless the land is likely to be required within 10 years from when the CPO is confirmed. In this case the land will be required within 10 years.

4.27 The draft Statement of Reasons for making the Compulsory Purchase Order at set out in Appendix 3. This will be amended as appropriate by the Solicitor acting for the Council in accordance with the recommendations above.

**4.28 The general requirements for using CPO powers, including whether there is a compelling case in the public interest.**

4.29 Putting aside the specific Housing Act requirements, there are also a series of general tests or requirements that the Secretary of State will consider when deciding whether to confirm a CPO. These are set out in the Guidance under Tier 1 General Overview.

4.30 The first is that the Council should only use its CPO powers when there is a compelling case in the public interest. Satisfying that includes demonstrating that all reasonable steps have been taken to acquire the interests by agreement. The compelling case test also requires the Council to consider interference with human rights (in particular the Article 1 right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions and the Article 8 right to respect for private and family life and home) and whether that is justified. It must also carry out an equality impact assessment (or similar), to show that it has taken into account the public sector equality duty.

4.31 Other considerations are:



- Does the Council have a clear idea of how it intends to use the land and interests acquired? In this case, given the ongoing development and the existence of planning permission and planning applications, this would not be difficult to satisfy; and
- Are all necessary resources available within a reasonable timeframe? Again, given the progress of the development this should not be difficult to demonstrate, though it is always crucial to show that a scheme has funding (which in turn helps show deliverability).

#### **4.32 Are there any impediments to delivery**

- 4.33 It is important to demonstrate that should a CPO be confirmed and the Council use those powers, that there is no reason thereafter why the scheme should not go ahead, i.e. there are no impediments. Examples of impediments include the need to obtain planning permission, highway diversions or closures, habitat licenses, etc.
- 4.34 Planning is in place to an extent, but the outline planning application for the phases after Phase A is yet to be granted despite benefitting from a resolution to approve due to the phosphate mitigation.
- 4.35 A new detailed planning application has been submitted for Phases B – D which does not increase housing numbers and should not be affected by the phosphate mitigation. Before starting a CPO process a review would need to take place to consider what matters might need to be settled before a spade can go into the ground on the relevant phase, and whether those can be seen as impediments to delivery.
- 4.36 As above, it is not an absolute requirement, and a CPO can be made without a planning permission in place, but justifying the CPO with a planning permission granted by the time of an inquiry (or by the time the Secretary of State considers the CPO) significantly de-risks the process and it is not recommended to seek the confirmation of a CPO without planning permission.

#### **4.37 What land and interests are required, and do any rights need to be created.**

- 4.38 A detailed exercise of scoping what land and rights are needed for the development is current being carried out, albeit in this case there is a relatively limited number of properties outstanding. New rights, such as crane oversailing, would need to be considered, and indeed any other rights felt necessary for the development to be delivered.

#### **4.39 Timescale**

- 4.40 It is difficult to accurately predict how long the CPO process will take, from start to vesting of title in the Council. Please refer to Appendix 4 which estimates a period of 8 months should there be no need for a public inquiry, and 15 months if an inquiry is required.
- 4.41 The table shows the specific steps and time periods for each so overall timescales can be extrapolated.
- 4.42 It concludes that if no public inquiry is needed and assuming the preparation process begins in earnest in October 2021, the process from starting to vesting title

in the Council would be circa 8 months (to June 2022), and with a public inquiry circa 15 months (to January 2023). Note that 3 months (minimum) of this are the post confirmation steps. Even with a confirmed CPO, that period is required to allow the challenge period to expire and allow for the relevant notice periods.

- 4.43 The period of 8 months could be shortened, in the sense that it assumes that some work needs to be done before objections are withdrawn and that period is unknown. However, any time saving at that time is likely to be limited.
- 4.44 The Phase C properties in Phase Ci in the new phasing plan (meaning it is required by May 2022), then if a CPO is not contested it could be acquired in time. However, if contested our estimate is January 2023. Whilst time savings could possibly be made, it is noted that CPOs tend to take longer than expected, rather than be quicker. The Phase C (ii) and Phase D properties (start on site August 2021 and February 2025) do not pose a problem timing wise.
- 4.45 If a CPO that includes the Property (Phase B) is objected to and objections are not negotiated away, the inquiry process begins and the timescale to secure title is pushed out to January 2023. That would mean the deadlines for securing any property in Phase Ci would also be difficult to meet.
- 4.46 For phases Cii onwards, even if a CPO is contested and an inquiry held, we would expect that process to be completed circa January 2023, which would be before the time those properties are needed.
- 4.47 Once a CPO is confirmed:
- the time it takes to secure ownership of the land acquired is now relatively fixed.
  - a legal challenge period of 6 weeks will begin.

## 5. Links to Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 The scheme compliments the Council's Corporate Strategy 2020 - 2024 - Homes and Communities – to offer a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those in need.
- 5.2 The Project significantly increases the number of affordable and social homes in Taunton and will be built by the Council including a range of housing types to cater for single person, family, vulnerable and elderly households.
- 5.3 The Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan sets out the financial model for the Housing Service over a 30 year period. The Council has agreed a number of priorities in its updated Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2020-2050, which are included in the vision statement "*Great Homes for Local Communities*" that accompanies the business plan ('the **Action Plan**'). Its overarching mission statement is: "*Our homes will be safe and secure and we will build many more in which our tenants will thrive. To do this we will develop a great team to provide excellent and modern services...*" The Project compliments these strategy objectives;
- 5.4 **Deliver more new homes** – including a commitment that the Council will deliver 1000 new homes over the next 30 years; build new homes that help combat climate change; and implement exemplar regeneration in North Taunton (including the

Scheme). The Action Plan also explains that when having their community regenerated, customers will have the opportunity to relocate or move back into new homes that will be more comfortable and cheaper to run.

5.5 **Provide great customer service** – the Council is committed to ensuring that the voices of their customers are heard and they influence the services offered, and also to improving how customers are kept up to date on what is happening.

5.6 **Improve our existing homes and neighbourhoods** – the Council will continue to invest in the safety of its homes, investigate ways to increase investment in the energy efficiency of its stock, and look after the Council's estates. This will mean customers can expect: to live in good quality homes where they feel safe, warm, and secure and where they can thrive; that their communities can be attractive places to live, work and stay; and to live in homes that are cheaper to run and that reduce environmental impacts.

5.7 Engaging and listening to our residents has been the primary driver and embedded in the Project principles established at the initiation of this project. The key Project principles are:-

5.7.1 Existing SWT residents within the scheme will be given the opportunity to remain on a social rent level.

5.7.2 Existing SWT residents within the scheme will be supported to downsize through the scheme design but retain the right to return to an equivalent size property within the new scheme.

5.7.3 The Project is underpinned by the SWT development aspirations and provide new, high quality and energy efficient homes.

5.7.4 The new development compliments The Vision for Taunton as a Garden Town, specifically the themes:

5.7.5 Growing our town greener – quality of the environment. The scheme incorporates green spaces and play spaces and provides more street trees.

5.7.6 Growing Quality Places – quality of our places and neighbourhoods. The design of the scheme focuses on places and spaces with high quality homes, green streets and public spaces. The homes will be energy efficient and aim to incorporate sustainable technologies.

## 6. **Unitary Authority Considerations**

6.1 The Report has reflected on the potential consequences of the impact of unitary authority status when considering its recommendations. The following statements provide comfort that the recommendations of the Report are appropriate:

- The increased supply of affordable housing is a district priority and a Somerset wide priority. This is evidenced in the Somerset wide Housing Strategy and through the demand recorded through the Somerset wide Homefinder Somerset lettings system.
- The HRA Business Plan is a thirty (30) year Business Plan approved in February and set out an ambition to build homes to increase the supply of affordable homes in the district and in the county. The HRA Business Plan is

ring fenced and therefore applies HRA rules and the Council's HRA Business Plan discipline.

- The four District authorities have different structures to manage their housing responsibilities including stock transfer organisations, ALMO and SWT has retained its stock. It is difficult at this moment to make assumptions of how a unitary authority(s) would manage its housing duties or the emphasis it would place on new development. We therefore consider the Business Plan is a relevant guide to support the Council's decision making.
- All authorities within the unitary proposal are subject to the government climate change policies and targets including net carbon zero by 2050.

## **7. Finance / Resource Implications**

7.1 The cost of staff time will be met from existing resources or charged to the capital scheme as appropriate.

## **8. Legal implications**

8.1 Statutory Home Loss and Disturbance Payments will be made in line with legislative guidance and the North Taunton Woolaway Decant Policy. As properties are anticipated to be purchased under, or 'under the threat of' the exercise of CPO powers there is scope for utilisation of the HMG guidance on compensation payments.

8.2 Whilst the Council intends to work closely with each household and seek agreement to achieve vacant possession in the event an acceptable agreement cannot be sought the contingency of a CPO is beneficial. In recommending the making of a CPO the rights of third parties that may be affected (including the property rights of the current property owners of the sites) have been balanced against the public interest in acquiring the land.

8.3 It is recommended that the Council can be satisfied that the proposed CPO is necessary and proportionate having regard to the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and is in the public interest having regard to the both the need to provide good quality, energy efficient homes in areas where people wish to reside now and in the future and the need to regenerate the Project area.

8.4 If vacant possession cannot be provided to a contractor by the long stop date in the build contract, the Council will be at risk of litigation for specific performance under the contract and this will potentially have associated financial implications.

8.5 Section 11 (6) of the Local Government Act 2003 relates to the Council's ability to retain and use Right to Buy receipts to fund affordable housing.

## **9. Climate and Sustainability Implications**

9.1 New build homes will be constructed to a minimum of Part L of the Building Regulations which will substantially improve the thermal performance of the dwellings compared to the existing dwellings. In addition, the contracted specification for phase A has increased insulation, air tightness and reduced cold bridging. The units will also have Air Source Heat Pumps, PV, Batteries, and water reduction measures. The properties will have no gas and are zero carbon 2050 ready. The carbon and fuel efficiency is 12 times better than the Woolaway homes being demolished. On the first let carbon saving and tenant fuel costs are

anticipated to be 70%-80% less than current Woolaway homes.

- 9.2 The new development has been designed to take advantage of biodiversity opportunities in the neighbourhood such as planting trees and creating a new public open space.
- 9.3 The Project has enabled the Council to embrace and design a new garden community to incorporate the Garden Town Principles and safeguard the natural environment, providing areas of planting and open space whilst ensuring residents have access to suitable homes and facilities.
- 9.4 Phosphates and housing development within the hydrological catchment of the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site - This scheme falls within the water catchment area of the Somerset Levels and Moors Ramsar Site. The new planning application for Phases B, C and demolition of Phase D assumes a mitigation strategy is not required. However, a mitigation strategy is required to build homes in phase D and the HRA and council are exploring options for mitigation. Phase D planning permission is not required until 2025 which allows significant time for a phosphate mitigation strategy to be agreed.

## 10. **Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications**

- 10.1 Through the design of the Project, tenants and residents will feel safe in the public realm and feelings of safety and security in the home due to the adoption of crime prevention measures in the new development.
- 10.2 Consultation with Police and other statutory authorities has already been undertaken as part of the planning application process. No implications arose thanks to the meticulous design and resident consultation that was undertaken to achieve planning permission.

## 11. **Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was first undertaken in relation to the regeneration of the Project in February 2019 (Appendix 5). That assessment concluded that there would either be a positive or neutral effect on any protected groups.
- 11.2 An Equality Impact Assessment ("EIA") has been undertaken to assess the impact on any protected groups of the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order and implementation of the Development, in line with the Equality Act 2010. The assessment concludes that there would either be a positive or neutral effect on any protected groups. Please refer to Appendix 3 – draft Statement of Reasons.
- 11.3 The owners and occupiers of the remaining private homes within the Order Land are likely to be the most affected by the Order. Three of these properties are investments and rented out to tenants. One owner/occupier of one property is considered to have protected characteristics but it is hoped that current negotiations can be concluded shortly to purchase this property by agreement.
- 11.4 In respect of the remaining three owner/occupied properties and the tenants of the investment properties, they are not considered or known to have any protected characteristics.
- 11.5 The public sector equalities duty is a continuing duty and the impacts on any

protected groups will be kept under review should any new information come to light or circumstances change.

## 12. **Social Value Implications**

- 12.1 The resident consultation phase of the Project has delivered social value through providing the opportunity for residents to be actively involved in the scheme design process and provide valued and informed contributions.
- 12.2 Social Value formed part of the selection criteria for the procurement of Phase A main contractor and for future phases.

## 13. **Partnership Implications**

- 13.1 Any Project opportunities for partnership working with different organisations and agencies that enhance the benefits of the scheme will be explored as they arise. For example, NHS Talking Therapies and MIND have worked in partnership with us to provide a local presence for resident mental health and well-being. This has improved our tenant access to services, enabling them to receive support that they might not have otherwise accessed if not for the regeneration of the scheme.

## 14. **Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 14.1 The Project as a whole has been designed to Nationally Described Space Standards to ensure properties are future-proofed and residents can benefit from some of the principles of lifetime homes and will contribute to the improve health and wellbeing of the residents.
- 14.2 Phase A includes a new community building to provide a focal point for local people to meet and enhance community spirit and interactions.
- 14.3 The new detailed Planning Application for Phases B–D illustrates the provision of public open space for community use which has been informed by public consultation.

## 15. **Asset Management Implications**

- 15.1 The Housing (HRA) Asset Management Strategy 2016 reflects the challenges the Council faces and improving its focus on value for money for the Council and for our residents:
  - 15.1.1 To promote sustainable local communities through coordinated capital investment and housing management.
  - 15.1.2 To work closely with residents to ensure that their homes meet their needs and aspirations.
  - 15.1.3 To invest in stock, to achieve good quality and environmental standards and to ensure that all statutory obligations are met.
  - 15.1.4 To ensure that stock secures and strengthens the financial viability of the business plan and safeguards its long term future and the income stream it generates.
  - 15.1.5 Deliver Value for Money through targeting investment where it will have the

best financial and social return.

15.1.6 To carry out options appraisals on stock that does not meet the above criteria, exploring the widest range of alternative options to improve outcomes for residents and for our Business Plan.

15.1.7 To deliver investment programmes in an effective way, achieving agreed quality and value for money.

15.2 Through the evaluation, the asset management model identified 4% of the total stock with an average Net Present Value which is negative. These were exclusively for the Council's Woolaway constructed properties, reflecting the anticipated need for major works to these properties in the medium term.

15.3 The HRA Asset Strategy 2016 recognised the Woolaway house type as the Council's lowest performing stock with a limited life expectancy and high future maintenance costs. Unless action is taken to address the structural defects, the properties will continue to deteriorate, increasing the problems of a poorly performing dwelling.

15.4 Providing new energy efficient, affordable homes with a range of property sizes will improve the living standards for residents to create a sustainable community of high quality homes. In addition, increasing the scheme density will generate greater income and make best use of the Council's assets.

## **16 Data Protection Implications**

16.1 All personal data is held in accordance with GDPR and Data Protection Act requirements.

## **17 Consultation Implications**

17.1 Community Engagement and supporting the residents affected by the scheme, have been at the forefront of the Project's ethos to regenerate the area.

17.2 Home owners have been consulted regarding the new detailed planning application for Phases B – D. Negotiations will continue with the remaining home owners to agree terms throughout the CPO process.

## **18 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendation(s)**

18.1 The Report was considered by Community Scrutiny Committee on 28 October 2021. There was unanimous support for the measures outlined in this Report, but that the Community Scrutiny Committee highlighted and wished to feedback to the Executive especial concern for supporting individuals who unfortunately found themselves in these circumstances, notwithstanding the fact this was felt to be largely a precautionary measure and it was hoped that the Council would ultimately do the right thing when faced with such a situation.

### **Democratic Path:**

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – Yes / No** (delete as appropriate) **28 October 2021**

- **Cabinet/Executive – Yes / ~~No~~** (delete as appropriate) **17 November 2021**
- **Full Council – Yes / ~~No~~** (delete as appropriate) **7 December 2021**

Reporting Frequency:  **Once only**     **Ad-hoc**     **Quarterly**  
 **Twice-yearly**     **Annually**

**List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)**

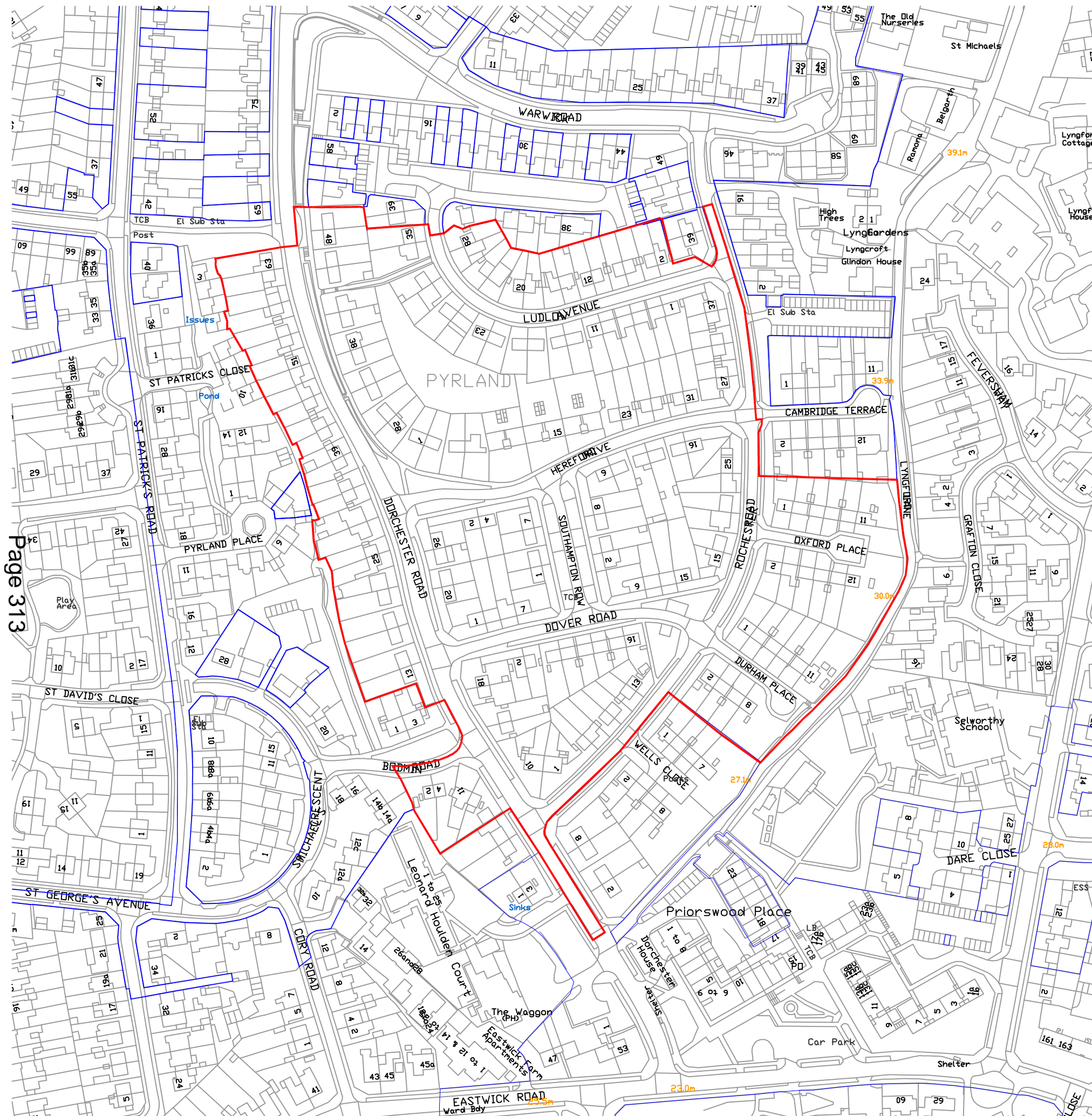
Appendix 1	Plan of NTWP CPO area
Appendix 2	Phasing Plan for NTWP
Appendix 3	<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b> CPO - Statement of Reasons
Appendix 4	CPO - Timescales
Appendix 5	Equality Impact Assessment October 2021
Appendix 6	<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b> Risk Assessment

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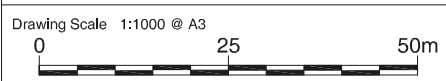
— Site

— TDBC Ownership

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Rev.	Date	Notes	Int.
A	06.11.18	Draft Application Issue	LM
B	11.12.18	Outline Planning	LM

CDM Regulations  
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**PRELIMINARY**

Job Number	Drawing Number	Revision
17025	L005	B

Project  
North Taunton Woolaway Project

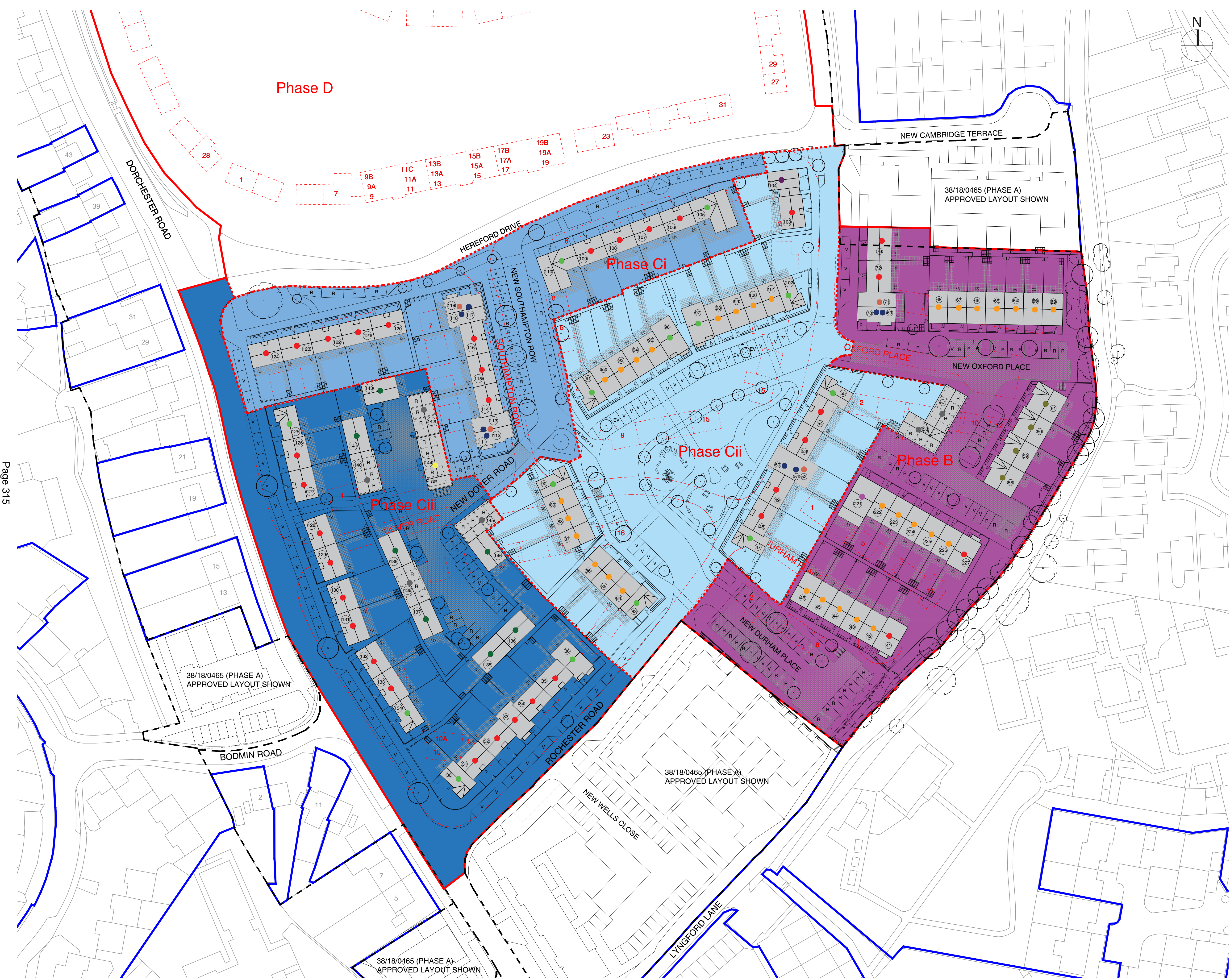
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Existing Site Plan

Drawn by	Project Manager
LM	AT

Scale	Date created
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Rev.	Date	Notes	Init.
1	30.06.21	For Planning	RB

CDM Regulations  
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File Name: 20060-NP-02-XX-DR-A-1205

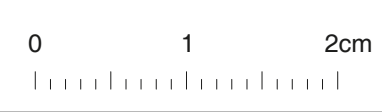
**FOR PLANNING**

Job Number	Originator	Zone	Level
20060	NP	02	XX
Type	Role	Drawing Number	Revision
DR	A	1205	1

Project  
North Taunton Woolaway Project

Title  
Phases BCD  
Proposed Sub-phasing 1 to 500

Drawn by	Project Manager	Scale
RB	PM	1:500 @ A1







By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted



**Key stages and timescales in relation to the compulsory purchase of land – Woolaway Project**

Scope of work	Projected timescale for completion
<b>Start of CPO preparation in earnest (December 2021)<sup>1</sup></b>	
Service of request for information (RFI) notices	December 2021 RFI notices must give recipients 14 days to respond
Collating and review of existing title information into table format to produce CPO schedule, and production of CPO plot plans	December 2021 - January 2022
Finalising statement of reasons (SoR) and preparing and reviewing first draft CPO documents (order, schedule and plans)	December 2021 – January 2022
Gathering and collating of supporting documents to be submitted to PCU and placed on deposit once CPO made, and drafting statutory certificates to be submitted with the CPO.	December 2021 This can also take place while RFI responses are awaited
Review of final form CPO documents and SoR once RFI responses received.	January 2022
Submission of draft CPO papers to Planning Casework Unit (PCU) for checking pre formal submission (a technical check encouraged by guidance).	February 2022 Estimated turnaround by Planning Casework Unit of about 2 weeks
Preparing notice of making of the CPO for publication in local newspapers (which is also the site notice) and notices for service upon those with an interest in the CPO land, including cover letters.	February 2022

<sup>1</sup> Note: we have assumed these workstreams beginning in earnest once final approval is obtained from Full Council

Scope of work	Projected timescale for completion
Making of the CPO (by application of the Council's seal) followed by service of CPO notices, erecting of site notices and putting notices in local newspapers.	February - March 2022  The newspaper notice must be published in two successive weeks  Objection period of 21 days runs from date of first publication of notice
Expiry of objection period	March – April 2022
<b>SCENARIO 1: CONFIRMATION BY THE COUNCIL - NO PUBLIC INQUIRY<sup>2</sup></b>	
Liaison with objectors with a view to closing deals to have objectors withdrawn. Deals to be conditional on them writing a pro forma letter to PINS <sup>3</sup> withdrawing their objection.  Particular focus on statutory undertaker objections if they are affected.	From February - March 2022 onwards (up to withdrawal of objection).
Preparation of statement of case, including letters of service, and collating additional supporting documents <sup>4</sup>	March - April 2022  The statement of case must be submitted within 6 weeks of start date letter from PINS.
Liaison with PINS regarding authorisation to confirm order as unopposed, and confirmation then authorised by Secretary of State. This will occur if we secure deals with all outstanding objectors.	Assume that by end <b>April 2022</b> we have secured deals for the outstanding interests, for the sake of this scenario.
<b>SCENARIO 2: IF OBJECTIONS RECEIVED AND NOT WITHDRAWN – PUBLIC INQUIRY<sup>5</sup></b>	

<sup>2</sup> If no objections at all are received, confirmation by the Council can occur as soon as the PCU issues authorisation (about two weeks usually).

<sup>3</sup> Note the Planning Casework Unit (PCU) hands the matter over to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS)

<sup>4</sup> Note if objections are not withdrawn quickly, we have to continue with the statutory procedures which require a statement of case to be prepared 6 weeks from receipt of the "start date" letter from PINS (which arrives relatively shortly after the end of the objection period)

<sup>5</sup> Other procedures are now available including hearings, but most CPOs are dealt with by public inquiry.



Scope of work	Projected timescale for completion	
Consideration of issues raised in the objections, and negotiations with objectors for withdrawal.	March/April 2022 – date of inquiry	
Preparation of statement of case, including letters of service, and collating additional supporting documents	March - April 2022 The statement of case must be submitted within 6 weeks of start date letter from PINS.	
Inquiry preparation including instructing Counsel, conferences with Counsel and preparation and service of evidence	March/April 2022 – date of inquiry	
Public inquiry  Inquiries must now be held with 22 weeks of 'relevant date', which is in a letter to be issued by SoS at the start of the process.	Entirely dependant on inspector availability, but assume July 2022	
Secretary of State's decision	October 2022	
<b>ACQUISITION OF INTERESTS SUBJECT TO THE CPO (IE POST CPO CONFIRMATION)</b>		
	Scenario 1: No inquiry	Scenario 2: Inquiry
Preparation of newspaper confirmation notice, site notice and notice to be served on those with interests in the land subject to the CPO, and service of same.  A 6 week legal challenge applies. This schedule assumes no further steps are taken until that period has passed. However, it can run alongside the next stage.	May 2022  Assuming we had to deal with some objectors and to allow for notice period.	October 2022

Scope of work	Projected timescale for completion	
Drafting and execution of general vesting declaration and notice of same, and service of same.  From service of the notice of the GVD, at least 3 months must pass before land vests.	June 2022	January 2023
<u>Land subject to the GVD vests in the Council</u> – advice in relation to registration and/or transfer of land/granting of rights once vested in the Council.  Note: there may be outstanding compensation disputes, but those does not impact on Council's ability to vest legal title in itself.	September 2022	April 2023

### Summary

Total estimated time to complete the CPO process and vest land in the Council assuming no public inquiry <sup>6</sup>	Total estimated time to complete the CPO process and vest land in Council assuming public inquiry
9 Months	16 months

<sup>6</sup> Note: as per the schedule this assumes some delay caused by objections needing to be negotiated away. If no objections are submitted, because all deals have been done, then this period will be 2 months or so shorter.

# Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

<b>Organisation prepared for</b>	<b>Somerset West and Taunton Council</b>		
<b>Version</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>	<b>19 October 2021</b>

## Description of what is being impact assessed

### North Taunton Woolaway Project (NTWP) - Compulsory Purchase Order and implementation of the Development in line with the Equality Act 2010

The NTWP will make a significant contribution toward delivering quality housing to meet the needs of SWT residents. The Project will provide a significant contribution towards:

- Resolving severe structural matters in relation to 162 defective Woolaway Homes through demolition and replacement with up to 230 new low carbon homes and 27 defective Woolaway properties with better insulated and structurally sound refurbished homes.
- Affordable Housing supply; with 227 – 230 new homes for rent
- Healthier homes and community; well-designed green space and road layout and efficient to heat homes
- Low carbon homes; a significant step toward zero carbon with a fabric first approach and a fund for renewable heat and power
- Accessible housing; a major contribution towards meeting the councils demand for wheelchair accessible homes
- Garden Town; the scheme adopts many principles of the Garden town design guide
- Larger accommodation; national space standards have been maintained throughout the scheme including the design of larger family accommodation (4 / 5 bed).
- The community building and open space will be accessible for all groups in the community reflecting the diversity of the local population, helping to bring people together and foster good relations between different groups.

## Evidence

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#),, should be detailed here

Through the extensive resident consultation undertaken, a detailed understanding and demographic profile of the existing community and its potential future needs has been created.

The consultation in 2018 included four public consultation events in a venue selected for its close proximity and accessibility to the affected residents, the opportunity for home visits from the project team alongside the project team being based in an office hub to provide a 'drop in' facility for the residents.

The scheme proposals have evolved in consultation with a project Design Group. The Design Group consisted of residents, both SWT tenants and homeowners, with a range of housing and lifestyle requirements.

In addition to information gathered through the resident consultation, the community profile has been further populated through information held by the Somerset Intelligence Partnership, specifically the area Indices of Multiple Deprivation results.

Housing needs have been further informed by data held within the Choice Based Lettings System 'Homefinder Somerset'.

All affected home owners have been contacted during the consultation phase and kept up to date with the project progress and phasing plans via newsletters, letters and meetings. Negotiations are preferred option and will continue throughout the CPO process.

**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

The demographic profiles includes every single household within the projects redline area. The information gathered, particularly through 1-2-1 home visits included completing questionnaires to help identify vulnerable and protected groups.

The project team have worked across a range of agencies and partners within the Priorswood 'One Team' area.

To assist with Skills and Learning, Somerset Academy and Skills and Learning Council have been invited to discussions. The local primary school and doctors surgery have been provided with progress updates.

SWT Tenants Forum and Tenant Services Management Board have received regular feedback on the project and provided views and considerations.

SWT Ward Councillors have been briefed on the report requesting approval to progress the Compulsory Purchase Order.

### Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.







Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options for all age groups.</li> <li>For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group</li> </ul>	□	□	☒

<b>Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific provision for a range of adapted properties has been made within the scheme proposal to provide a housing choice for those with a disability</li> <li>• For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>• For owner occupiers with disabled adaptations or aids, these will be replicated at their new homes and costs covered by the Disbursement Compensation as set out in the Compulsory Purchase and Compensation Guide (Compulsory Purchase and Compensation, Compensation Guide to Residential Owners and Occupiers: Communities and Local Government, April 2010)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> <li>• For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>• For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> <li>• For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>• For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> </ul>	□	□	☒
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> <li>• For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>• For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group</li> </ul>	□	□	☒
<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> <li>• For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has</li> </ul>	□	□	☒

	<p>equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group</li> </ul>			
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> <li>For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group</li> </ul>	□	□	☒
<b>Sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> <li>For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group</li> </ul>	□	□	☒



<p><b>Sexual orientation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> <li>• For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>• For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The increased choice of affordable housing type, size and tenure provides housing options that will not negatively impact on this protected group.</li> <li>• For rented properties Lettings will be taken from the choice based lettings system 'Homefinder Somerset' which has equality and diversity policies in place to ensure protected groups are not disadvantaged.</li> <li>• For private owners there is choice of housing type, size, tenure and location that will not negatively impact on this protected group</li> </ul>			

<b>Negative outcomes action plan</b>				
Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.				
<b>Action taken/to be taken</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>How will it be monitored?</b>	<b>Action complete</b>
No adverse equality impact identified. These have been mitigated through an extensive resident consultation process and the resultant scheme design.  Any negative outcomes which may emerge during the implementation of the development will be addressed through strong project management and identifiable workstreams.	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.</b>				
<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>Jane Windebank, Development Manager</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>19 October 2021</b>			
<b>Signed off by:</b>				
<b>Date</b>				
<b>Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:</b>				

<b>To be reviewed by:</b> (officer name)	
<b>Review date:</b>	

DRAFT



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted



## **Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021**

### **Report of Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts – Leader of the Council and Communications**

#### **11 November – Poppies to Paddington**

On 11 November I was invited by Great Western Railways to help mark Remembrance Day and put a wreath on the train from Taunton to Paddington Station on behalf of the communities of Somerset West and Taunton. The wreaths were put on the train from Taunton Station at 0722 and were then carefully carried to London and placed at the war memorial on platform 1, creating a display of remembrance for all the communities served by our intercity trains.

#### **Armistice Day – Two minutes' silence**

I attended to observe the two-minute silence in Taunton Town Centre. It was positive to see so many people paying their respects and ensuring we never forgot and educate our children on the sacrifices that have been made.

#### **Appointment of new CEO**

At the Full Council meeting of Somerset West and Taunton on 16 November the appointment of the new CEO was approved.

The previous CEO, James Hassett, left SWT at the end of Oct, having joined the Council when it was formed in 2019. James steered the new council through the wide-reaching transformation programme started by the former Taunton Deane Borough and West Somerset Councils.

He also spearheaded the Council's regeneration programmes for Coal Orchard and Firepool, rebooted the Garden Town vision and kick-started the commercial investment programme generating additional income for the authority. All this and more while ensuring there were no cuts to services, and that staff and communities were supported through the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have now appointed Andrew Pritchard as our new CEO after a competitive recruitment process and he will look to guide us through the challenging months ahead balancing our ambitious plans and local government reorganisation.

#### **Local Government Reorganisation**

Since my last report the Local Government Reorganisation programme is making good progress continuing to work very collaboratively across all the councils building the programme workstreams and plans to ensure that all councils come together safely and legally on 1 April 2023.

The first Joint Committee has been held at Mendip District Council where we considered and signed off the Terms of Reference amongst other actions. All five Council Leaders were present with some good engagement and questions for Councillors across the whole of Somerset, joining either virtually or on site. Some elements of the draft Structural Change Order were also considered and, at the time

of writing this report, we still await the Secretary of State's decision on whether the election date will be 2022 or 2023. We are also waiting for final confirmation if the Unitary Council will be a Continuing Authority. All Group Leaders have provided their group's position to the Secretary of State on these two important matters.

### **External Operations Highlights**

Two new 50kw EV charge points have been installed at Deane House. The chargers are available 24/7 and are in addition to 50kw points installed by the Council in Minehead, Dulverton and Blackbrook. These chargers were used over 1500 times between July and October.

The installation of 7kw charge points in the Belvedere Road car park is also underway.

The Asset Management team have completed an easement and land transfer at Norton Fitzwarren, which will enable SWT to deliver a new playing field for the village next year.

The Marine Management Organisation have started the statutory 28-day consultation period for the permanent coastal defence scheme at Blue Anchor. The scheme is funded by SCC, but as the Coastal Protection Authority, SWT will be undertaking repair work to the cliff next spring to prevent future loss of sections of the B3191 as well as nearby local businesses.

### **District Councils Network Conference – 21/22 October**

On 21 and 22 October I attended this year's DCN conference which was held in Kenilworth, Warwickshire. It was good to listen to the keynote speakers talk about differing issues that are affecting district councils across the country. I particularly found the seminar on local government organisation useful listening to how Cumbria and Yorkshire District councils are coping with reorganisation and their experience.

### **Communications**

We have been keeping our communities informed of Council decisions and initiatives through a range of channels including our own newsletters and social media, as well as through press releases to the regional media and in local radio and television interviews.

Among the news items highlighting the Council's strategic priorities and services since July we have demonstrated that we are an organisation that –

Values its staff with a highly commended place at this year's MJ Achievement Awards in recognition of work to support neurodiversity in the workplace.

- Looks after its customers, setting up a dedicated project team to help customers out of Council Tax and Business Rate debt.
- Supports businesses with Business Revitalisation Grants of up to £10,000 available as a boost for key businesses that have been directly or indirectly impacted by Covid restrictions
- Cares for the community with Community Employment Hubs providing support to people both in and out of work, including long-term job seekers,



employees at risk of redundancy or those seeking new skills or a career change.

- Boosts local charitable and voluntary organisations through a range of grants including the Taunton Youth and Community Centre fund to support youth projects; our Small Grants Fund providing a lifeline for charities, voluntary and community groups; and our Somerset West Lottery initiatives to raise money for registered good causes.
- Is delivering major schemes - welcoming the first residents to the Coal Orchard development; consulting on detailed plans for our flagship site at Firepool while accommodating the new NHS vaccination centre relocated from Taunton Racecourse; and moving a step closer to developing railway stations in Wellington and Cullompton with the announcement of funding in the Government's autumn budget.
- Considers climate change - providing free tap water refilling stations in Taunton, Minehead and Wellington in partnership with Wessex Water and Somerset County Council to help reduce plastic consumption; working with industry leaders to save water by converting a number of gents' urinals to waterless systems; accelerating the roll-out of Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points in council-owned car parks, introducing electric pool cars and working with partners to help people make the switch to electric vehicles; and offering free trees to town and parish councils, including unparished areas.
- Takes pride in its open spaces – receiving awards in Minehead, Taunton and Wellington in this year's South West in Bloom competition; and retaining seven Green Flag Awards at our parks and open spaces.
- Provides housing for all – starting delivery of a major redevelopment scheme under the North Taunton Woolaway Project; consulting on planning for zero-carbon homes in Taunton; and adopting an accommodation strategy and delivery plan to support single homeless people and end rough sleeping in the district by 2027.
- Protects our heritage - working with the new owners of Sandhill Park to ensure the historic Grade II\* listed building is preserved after years of neglect: working with Historic England, the South West Heritage Trust and Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council to protect Norton Hillfort- a nationally important scheduled ancient monument; working in partnership with the National Trust, Historic England and other stakeholders on a major restoration project to save Wellington's landmark memorial; and taking major step towards the preservation of the historic Tone Works site in Wellington.
- Builds up our coastal communities – completing work to replace a section of the wall at East Quay, Watchet: marking the official opening of the new Snazaroo building on commercial premises delivered by the Council at Rainbow Way, Minehead; adopting an innovative beach safety app to safeguard visitors and residents to Minehead; expanding the e-scooter trial to Minehead.

There have also been some significant changes for our communications team to keep our residents and business informed of – not least the departure of James Hassett as CEO followed by the recent appointment of Andrew Pritchard to the role; and the Government decision to opt for one unitary council and subsequent arrangements being put in place to create a new council for Somerset.

All press releases issued by the Council are also followed up with social media posts and we share content from partner organisations including the district and county councils, the Somerset Waste Partnership, the NHS and Public Health.

Our social media specialist has been working with teams throughout the council to support a range of projects, helping to create content for sharing externally and internally. Social media also plays a key role in supporting and promoting civic events.

The Civic Office has been supporting the Mayor of Taunton and the Chair of SWT with a variety of public engagements and events. These have included organising our own annual ceremonies to mark Emergency Services Day and Remembrance.

Most recently the Mayor, accompanied by the Deputy Mayor, attended the Christmas lights switch on in Taunton signalling the start of a programme of festive events and activities.

There have been some changes in the way that the organisation communicates internally with staff; shifting from daily emails to a bi-weekly email combining messages – emails are now limited to urgent messages and staff are self-serving their information on the new intranet.

From the earliest planning stages of the project back in May, the new Intranet was successfully launched in September. Internal Comms played a huge part in this and since the launch has maintained and updated daily the content on the Home page, Communications Site, Unitary Site and the News Portal as well as supporting other editors with their sites.

Internal Comms has also engaged with staff during the project stage and since the launch; running a competition to encourage people to try out the new intranet giving their feedback which was then acted upon and responded to.

Another change has been taking on the creation of weekly screen savers to promote internal comms (these were previously out-sourced to a graphic design company), and with a new video-making tool, Internal Comms has been able to produce engaging videos to share with staff.

Some recent campaigns Internal Comms has helped with include the Nutrition Programme for Internal Ops staff, launch of Microsoft Spotlight Sessions and HR campaigns such as Organisational Health Check, induction for new staff and various wellbeing campaigns. Internal Comms is currently working on raising awareness of the Cultural Development Team.

# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Derek Perry – Deputy Leader and Sports, Parks and Leisure

### ***Green Flag Awards***

1. In my last update report the results of the Green Flag Awards were still awaited. Since then, as members will probably be aware, Somerset West and Taunton was successful in receiving Green Flag Awards for Blenheim, Wellington, Vivary, Victoria and French Weir and Comeytrove parks, as well as Swains Lane Nature Reserve. The gaining / retaining of these awards does not come lightly and the judges are rightly scrupulous and searching when making their assessments. Accordingly, to have retained such status is a credit to our parks an open spaces team but also to the various friends' groups, and indeed to other members of the community, who play such a vital role in keeping these parks and open spaces at a standard which merits such an award.

### ***Britain in Bloom Awards***

2. Following judging which took place in the summer for the Britain in Bloom awards we have been awarded a silver award for Minehead and Wellington, and Taunton was awarded a silver gilt. As with the green flag awards, credit is due to our team and to community groups and individuals who have made this happen.

### ***Grounds maintenance and planting***

3. The summer grounds maintenance programme having been completed, the winter programme of works is well underway. 70,000 winter bedding plants and 25,000 bulbs have been planted across parks, open spaces and housing land. The winter stream clearance works are underway started having started a few weeks earlier than in previous years.

### ***Play Areas***

3. All play area inspections have been completed to schedule. The replacement programme plan for 2021/22 has been started with the works to be completed in January.

### ***Pathway Repairs***

4. A series of pathway repairs in parks have been undertaken but with further work still to be carried out. As is the case in many sectors, supply issues have caused delays in some instances. However, after some further delay I am pleased to say that the resurfacing of Ash Meadows, which provides vehicular and pedestrian access to Vivary Park and which is been in a poor state for some time, has now taken place. Credit is of course due to the officers who were able to get this done but also to my predecessor in role Cllr Richard Lees and to Cllr Danny Wedderkopp who were pushing for this to be done not only before my becoming portfolio holder but before my election as a councillor.

***Leisure (Everyone Active)***

5. Clearly Covid-19 has had impact on the business. Like others within the leisure industry, the clear focus is for EA trade themselves out of the global pandemic as quickly and safely as possible. As regards Leisure centres, the primary areas of focus for this period and the remainder of 2021 will see the following strategies applied:

- Return 'Health & Fitness' memberships to pre-Covid levels (February 2020);
- Return swimming lessons to pre-Covid levels (February 2020)

Overall, the centres have received very positive feedback from customers since going through a phased reopening. Customer confidence remains high with the measures taken and we continue to build this confidence and retain members

6. The Golf Course was the first facility to resume business, with the golf course reopening for the first time on 29th March 2021. Golf has been the number one sport to have benefited from Covid-19; with a significant increase in participation, this coupled with customers on furlough, the country on 'staycation' mode, and the relatively dry weather, has seen this national trend flourish.
7. By way of sport development and community update, on the last Sunday in September, Blackbrook Leisure Centre & Spa also hosted the annual Taunton 10K event with seven hundred runners and hundreds of spectators and well-wishers arriving at the centre to watch a very well organised event. Great to see such events taking place and congratulations to all those who took part.
8. EA were very pleased to receive notification that they reached the national finals of the UK Active Community Awards for their Health Walk programme, as well as to attend the virtual presentation. This achievement really recognises

the dedication that the volunteer Walk Leaders put into the programme and how they go above and beyond for their local communities. We have also run virtual Health Walk Leader training throughout the lockdown period; this is something that EA will now continue as an option for those that are happy to do this in the more rural parts of our district.

***Minehead Pool***

9. Progression continues in relation to this important objective with a constructive meeting having recently taken place between senior officers and representatives of the Community Benefit Society and further discussion as to the potential site.



# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Chris Booth - Community

### Website

SWT funded community grants are now available to view on the SWT website under “Community Grants Awarded” see link below:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/community-and-living/community-grants-awarded>

This is the first time that we have been able to make SWT awarded grants visible to the public and also have a matching spreadsheet on the intranet available for colleagues to check before making new awards.

### Voluntary and Community Sector Grants

Having now gone through Community Scrutiny and Executive, this item will now be discussed at Full Council, but I would again like to thank the efforts of staff and councillors on the working group, not to mention those from the groups we fund for giving such detailed accounts of the work they do to ensure our communities are better places. I have no hesitation in supporting the recommendations of the working group to bring resources back in house and increasing funding to four organisations.

### One Team Updates

#### Wellington

Following on from events that took place in the summer Wellington One Team organised a further Wacky Wednesday at Wellington Park on 27 October continuing them of being “Nuts 4 Nature” from 11.00 – 12.45.

The event had been meticulously planned with a booking system put in place and Covid secure guidelines adhered to. We were able to continue to use funding which enabled us to put on the event free of charge. The aim of the event was to provide those families with young children with the opportunity to enjoy activities in the Outdoors in a Covid secure environment. Food was provided, again free of charge.

Many agencies contributed to the planning and execution of the day. Many thanks SWAT, Police, a large contingent from Churches Together, Street Pastors, Parent and Family Support Advisors, Waterloo Road preschool, Live West, Public Health, SASP, Growing Minds, Library Services, Reminiscence Learning and St Johns Ambulance service.

In total over 150 people registered at the event along with 25 helpers. The families were able to enjoy food and refreshments, Sports Activities, Messy Play, Numerous craft activities, Mini Golf, Splat the Rat and access to a Police Car.

Many thanks to everyone involved in making this event so successful.

#### Halcon

Halcon One Team – Multi agency case management continues to meet weekly via Microsoft teams. Violent crime and ‘gang’ behaviour continues to be a big concern for

communities and agencies. I am part of a multi-agency group that are meeting regularly to share information and develop strategies to respond to these issues.

Next week I am meeting the PPC office to discuss a project to address vulnerability and exploitation in communities. Halcon will be a pilot and so I see this as a great opportunity to influence strategic development in this area.

### **Halcon Skateboarding group**

I ran a very well received pilot session for young skaters with the Campus Skate park team from Bristol. From this I have developed a project with a local skate instructor and local talented skaters to develop a 'club' that meets regularly, gets instruction and ultimately progress on the Hamilton Skate park. I am also supporting the re-surfacing of the lower part of the Hamilton skate park so that club sessions can be held there for beginner and developing skaters

### **Young Mums dance group**

In collaboration with the Prism project and All Saints church we are putting on a series of sessions for young mums to get involved in movement and dance and bring their young children if they want to.

### **Hestercombe House**

Further development has taken place with Hestercombe to build practical skills for gardening, creative arts projects and health and wellbeing visits to the gardens for pensioner groups and volunteers.

### **Building thriving communities (Barclays bank/Link Centre)**

The Taunton East development trust have been awarded a grant funding project to support vulnerable people in our community with grant funding to help them with council tax arrears, utility bills and other essential items. I have agreed to manage the applications through my work with the one team partners to ensure the most vulnerable people are able to apply. In the last few weeks I have obtained awards of over £11,000 to 15 families. The overall fund is targeted at the Taunton Deane area and amounts to £100,000 in total.

### **Section 106 Grant fund Application- YMCA**

I have recently supported the YMCA in applying for funding to develop a music and recording studio at the Lisieux way site. The YMCA manager Clare has been able to submit a really strong bid, demonstrating community support and great collaboration for what would be a fantastic community asset that is not replicated anywhere else in Taunton.

### **Health and Wellbeing Board**

Across Somerset there is a vast programme of improvement work, collaboration, and integration underway. There are a huge number of highly committed people who have and continue to work tirelessly. This is despite the system managing extremely high, unprecedented levels of pressure which have resulted from: the COVID-19 pandemic, the vaccination and booster programmes, high levels of demand and backlog (e.g.



40/72 people waiting for surgery responding to a survey by Healthwatch Somerset said they'd waited over 40 weeks for their surgery and many had experience poor communication in the interim), workforce and staffing shortages, instability across a number of sectors and the impact of wider political, environmental and financial conditions.

There is some interesting news that social indicators that points towards problems like domestic abuse and ASB seem to have shown little changed across Somerset, in even have reduced since the beginning of the pandemic - potentially linked to 'pulling together' as a society or perhaps a lack of reporting during the lockdowns. Where there have been increases, they've actually been greater outside of poorer areas.

There has been a greater emphasis on the importance of mental health, particularly around young people, and therefore there is a drive to increase those in the mental health service which is being led by the Somerset CCG and partners, such as schools. There are also major organisational changes in progress including the bringing together of our Councils, the merger of our Hospital Foundation Trusts and the establishment of the Integrated Care System. For these reasons it is important that we maintain our ambition for better, more personalised care and acknowledge that we are managing in exceptional circumstances and forging ahead with our improvement plans.

The focus on our populations' health and wellbeing, both from a preventative and reactive perspective, and the bringing together of key partners is fundamental and continues to be enabled by mechanisms like the Better Care Fund (BCF). This encourages public bodies to work together, to collaborate, to manage resources, to share expertise and integrate services where this is in the public interest. It also helps us look beyond the demands of today and take a more preventative approach, reducing demand and poor health in the future.

Here are for important points worth reminding members:

- Each month in Somerset, the Intermediate Care Teams support over 50% of people to safely return home from intermediate care. This is only possible thanks to the dedication, commitment, expertise, and collaborative working by these teams.
- The 4 District Councils have the statutory duty to manage the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). In doing so they ensure that home adaptations are made available to people who qualify and enable them to remain living in their own homes. They also ensure that existing housing stock (across all sectors) is of a standard which promotes health and wellbeing and enables independent living for those with a range of physical and mental health conditions
- Significant differences can occur between the health experienced by some social groups when compared with others, these differences are inherently unfair. Such inequalities can be found between many types of community or social groups such as geographical areas, socio-economic status, ethnicity age, gender, and disability. This is true for both morbidity and mortality; the aim of the BCF is to narrow the gap in health and social inequalities, ensuring that the health and wellbeing of the worst off in society is improved at a faster rate than those who are the most advantaged.



# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Dixie Darch – Climate Change

### Overview

Jonathan Stevens, previously the Open Spaces manager has taken over the role of Assistant Director with a responsibility for Climate Change following Chris Hall's move to Director of Development and Place.

In the light of the unitary decision to go for One Somerset, we are reviewing the CNCR plan to identify priority actions we can deliver in the time left. Many of the existing CNCR actions are long term and involve the support of County or central government. We will retain these within the plan, but they will be carried over to the Unitary council.

### EV charge points

The Instavolt charge points at Deane House went live on 11 November. These 50kw charge points are available 24/7 and are in addition to the previously installed chargers at Blackbrook Leisure Centre in Taunton, Alexandra Road in Minehead and Exmoor House car park in Dulverton. Between July and October these chargers have been used a total 1504 times.

Our successful OZEV bid means we have received £136,000 to offset the installation of our SWARCO charge points, in car parks across the district. SWARCO are currently finalising installation dates with Western Power. Groundwork and installation for the charge points at Belvedere Road car park is underway.

### Escooter trial

The Escooter trial continues to be successful in both Taunton and Minehead.

### Taunton Weekly Insights

14/11/2021 – 21/11/2021

	This Week	Last week	Cumulative
Total Number of rides	1,397	1,285	63,344
Total distance travelled	2,189 miles	1,853 miles	137,437 miles
Average trip length	1.57 miles	1.44 miles	2.45 miles
Average trip duration	0:12:55	0:13:15	0:16:56
Average Speed	7.27 mph	6.53 mph	8.68 mph
Total time spent on scooters	300 hours	283 hours	17876 hours
New users	84	150	10,120

## Minehead Weekly Insights

15/11/2021 - 21/11/2021

### This week:

	This Week	Last week	Cumulative
Total Number of rides	160	214	13,418
Total distance travelled	219 miles	278 miles	22,591 miles
Average trip length	1.37 miles	1.3 miles	1.84 miles
Average trip duration	0:10:35	0:07:55	0:16:55
Average Speed	7.74 mph	9.83 mph	6.52 mph
Total time spent on scooters	28 hours	28 hours	3783 hours
New users	43	72	5,060

### Free trees for parishes and unparished area

This year 22 parish councils took advantage of our free tree give away, where communities were offered up to £50 worth of trees for community planting. As a result, we have successfully funded 156 trees which will be planted for National Tree Week, 27<sup>th</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

### Queen's Green Canopy Project

A review has been carried out by our Planning, Open Spaces and Climate Team on potential sites for the Queen's Green Canopy Project with sites selected in Taunton, Wellington and Minehead. In Taunton the most suitable site identified was Upper Holway open space. The proposal is to plant 85 trees in 5 separate clusters to include an area with conifers and a fruit orchard. There is scope to extend planting in the future and maintenance and information boards have been included in the budget. In Minehead a site has been selected at Culvercliffe, a large section of land that is the start of the coastal walk at the end of the harbour. There are currently a few trees there and these will be extended to create an avenue of 105 trees.

In Wellington we are collaborating with Wellington Transition Town and contributing to their plans for planting at Foxes Field. They will plant and maintain the trees as a community initiative.

This winter there will also be 450 trees planted in in our open spaces, some of which are replacing the 50 trees felled, as part of the 3 for 1 strategy.

### Water Refill stations

Free water refill stations have been installed in Minehead (Warren Road) and Taunton (outside Clarke's shoe shop in High Street) as a collaborative initiative with Wessex Water and Somerset County Council. This is part of the *Refill not Landfill, Say No to Plastic* campaign. Wellington (outside the post office in High Street) will be installed in the New Year. All three stations must undergo rigorous drinking water compliance tests before being made available for the public. The station at Minehead is now live for public use.

### Climate Change Partnership with Sedgemoor District Council.

The first member-led Consultation Panel meeting of this partnership was held on 25 October. The group will serve as non-decision-making panel and sounding board which can make recommendations to the Portfolio Holders of both councils. Cllr

Sarah Wakefield and Cllr Dave Mansell are serving as SWT's representatives. This partnership has enabled us to extend the team working on climate change actions, including a Project Manager for our Ecological Strategy/Action Plan, part funded by Sedgemoor and other Project Manager posts fully funded by Sedgemoor. Both councils will retain their sovereignty.

### **Implementation Board**

The first meeting of the Climate Strategy Implementation Board (CSIB) is on 23 November. This is the county-wide strategy involving all five Somerset councils.

### **Waterless Urinals**

Following the successful roll out of waterless urinals in our SWT owned public toilets, we offered all parish and town councils which have previously taken over the maintenance of public toilets in their areas, the opportunity of funding towards the installation of waterless urinals, as requested at Scrutiny earlier in the year. Following site visits to identify suitable locations where retrofit might be possible, we have been unable to convert any further facilities at this time.

### **Recycling on the Go**

Working with our colleagues in Commercial Services and the Somerset Waste Partnership, we are rolling out segregated bins to encourage the recycling of more waste. As part of this project, we commissioned a waste audit on a selection of bins in Taunton, Minehead and Dulverton, the results of which showed that 34% of waste in those bins could have been recycled. The new bins will have segregation for general waste, plastic bottles, and cans. To support the rollout of these bins we have invited all SWT secondary schools to take part in a poster competition, to design a promotional poster promoting the new bins and encourage their proper use.

Link to the Support Services for Education webpage - [Recycling on the go – poster competition! | Support Services for Education](#)



# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Caroline Ellis - Culture

### **New Cultural Development Team**

We have successfully recruited for a new, short term (to April 2023) post of Cultural Development Specialist to ensure that we deliver the best we can against the Cultural Strategy in the short time left to us. The Cultural Development team has been created to support and deliver the Cultural Strategy - which aligns with the SWT Corporate Strategy - which firmly states the intention to raise the importance of Arts and Culture within our District. The team is:

- **Dan Webb - Strategic Lead (Arts, Culture and Creative)**  
Dan is moving over to take on another key council project for 4 days a week for a period of 6 months - we retain him for 1 day a week (pew), to oversee the Cultural Development Programme as a whole and provide strategic vision and direction for the team
- **Andrew Knutt – Cultural Development Specialist**  
Andrew joined us on Monday 1 November. He has a wealth of experience in delivering arts projects, running a successful venue as well as capacity building in and establishing partnerships across the creative sector. Andrew is responsible for ensuring the Cultural Strategy is developed into a tangible delivery programme. He is responsible for funding identification and bids and offers a wealth of knowledge in business support from being in the arts and culture sector for more than 25 years. He is also the lead for all external stakeholder and partner engagement.
- **Chloe Gamblin - Cultural Project Delivery Lead**  
Chloe has been temporarily redeployed from the 'People' function to back-fill Dan (see above). Chloe is highly respected among colleagues, passionate about arts and culture and brings a fresh and vital perspective, a wealth of creative ideas and many transferable skills. Chloe is responsible for programme delivery and works alongside Andrew in ensuring objectives in the Cultural Strategy are delivered. Chloe is the lead for all internal engagement across Somerset West and Taunton and mainstream Communications.

### **Cultural Strategy Delivery Plan**

The team are currently working on the following priorities:

- Cultural strategy delivery programme planning and implementation including emerging projects/activities from "Creative People" workstream. This is currently underway – we have a new working group (run by CICCIC) looking at 3 specific areas – Health and Wellbeing, Equality of Access and Activity for Young People.
- Developing both internal and external communication plans to ensure the cultural strategy profile and actions are raised across the district.
- Identifying alternative internal and external funding streams.
- Establishing and encouraging positive working relationships with our trusted partners, agencies and organisations.

## Cultural Sector liaison

- **Cultural Forum** - With the new Cultural Development team in place, we are delighted to be re-launching the SWT Cultural Forum on Thursday 2nd December 2021 (4pm – 5.30pm). We aim to hold these quarterly, with the first one being an initial “welcome back” meeting held virtually via Microsoft TEAMS. The Cultural Forum is an arena and opportunity for our trusted stakeholders and partners to come together to network, support and ensure that Arts and Culture is firmly on the agenda for our district going forward. The forum presents the space to collaborate, share ideas as well as giving SWT the opportunity to present essential updates and information relating to the sector.
- **Arts Council England** - Dan Webb and I met Phil Gibby, South West Regional Director for Arts Council England at the end of October. They are keen to work with us to: embed culture and the creative industries at heart of the new unitary’s objectives; preserve and build on our existing solid cultural infrastructure and define and maximise growth potential across SWT.
- **Take Art** – Liaison meeting On 23rd October - Dan Webb, Strategy Specialist and I visited Take Art’s HQ in South Petherton for a catch up session and to meet their new rural touring manager, Danny Pedler who is taking over from the renowned and awesome Sarah Peterkin who is retiring. SWT provide grant support to Take Art’s Rural Touring service - a very well-established and successful scheme with an exemplary track record in bringing professional, high quality music, theatre, dance and performance to local venues and communities across Somerset, working in partnership with local promoters in villages/small towns such as Churchinford, Dulverton, Hatch-Beauchamp, Holford, Porlock and Roadwater. These events are memorable social as well as cultural events, playing a vital role in keeping villages alive and vibrant, strengthening communities and improving health and wellbeing. We discussed their autumn/spring touring programme and the importance of continuing local authority funding – which among other things enables reduced price shows in our district. <https://takeart.org/rural-touring/promoters>
- **Wellington Film Festival** – local councillors working with Somerset Film and backed by Wellington Town Council are planning a brilliant Film Festival for autumn 2022 with a programme that offers ‘something for everyone’ and lots of opportunities for local creatives and young people to develop and showcase their skills. It will be important for us to do what we can to help facilitate this project as it will be a great thing for the town and the wider District.
- **Minehead Museum** have been in touch with us as they are looking to expand. Currently they have two rooms at the Beach Hotel but have hopefully an option to move to bigger premises. There is clearly huge potential here given the amazing stories Minehead has to tell, the expertise of Julian and his team and the need for cultural growth in our second biggest town.
- We are currently liaising with Luke Jerram’s team to see about bringing the **Museum of the Moon** to Taunton, hopefully in the new year.



## Recognition for the Regal Theatre Volunteers

I heartily congratulate The Regal Theatre on receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK and well-earned indeed. Regal volunteers work a total of 70,000 hours a year – equating to a contribution worth around £200,000 – in pursuit of their ethos 'For the Community, By the Community'. Their work enables the Regal to present 150 events to audiences (totalling some 25,000 a year), in a varied programme including drama, ballet, opera, concerts, films and live screenings. clashed with full council.

## Cultural Events

The autumn has seen an amazing programme of cultural events across the District. Some of the events I have attended include:

- **Sound of the Streets** - a very successful one day street band festival on 25 September on Castle Green in Taunton with funding from the High Street Emergency Fund. This is a precursor to a bigger three-year programme which has won Arts Council backing.
- **Welly Welcome Weekend** I would like to congratulate Wellington Town Council and the Friends of Wellington park on their very successful Welly Welcome Weekend at the of September. I didn't manage to get to the Saturday Street Fair which looked awesome, but I did make it to the Proms in the Park to enjoy Welly Operatic Society and the Silver Band. I look forward to the Christmas lights switch on and entertainment next weekend and to catching one of the amazing shows on the Wellington Arts Centre programme.
- **East Quay, Watchet exhibitions** Along with many other councillors I made a beeline for East Quay once it opened in September. WOW! What an achievement. They have had a number of spreads in national media – most recently the Guardian. It opened with open studios (the range of artists there is awesome) and an excellent exhibition.
- **Black History Month** Taunton Brewhouse marked Black History Month with a series of events at the beginning of October in partnership with Black Artists on the Move. I caught one of the events – Part 1 of 'History is Now! A Black History month extravaganza' which was livestreamed so had an audience from all over the world. It was an amazing event with Jamaican Folk Culture Group, Tan Teddy performing, a link up with acclaimed jazz pianist Guy Marc Vadeleux at his studio in Martinique followed by a talk from acclaimed writer Lemn Sissay MBE with extracts from his incredible autobiography (totally gripping, moving, quite an experience).
- **Museum of Somerset Town History Tours** –I did the society and architecture tour on 16 October with very knowledgeable tour guides Jill and Jacqui - an eye-opening experience! So much fascinating history! I left a glowing review to help promote the tours. Highly recommend. Watchet, Porlock and other towns also have awesome looking tours – looking forward to experiencing and promoting those too come the spring.
- **Taunton Carnival Day** On 16 October I attended Taunton Carnival Day where the Carnival Cttee and Mayor of Taunton were helping to raise vital

funds for the return of Carnival proper next year. A highlight was to see Bootstrap Border Morris in action – I made myself useful and filmed one of their dances and shared on social media which I think they appreciated, they are an enthusiastic and energetic Border Morris side based in Wellington.

- **Guys and Dolls by The Space Somerset** I was thrilled to experience The Space Somerset's outstanding performance of Guys and Dolls at Tacchi Morris to packed houses in mid-October – highlights just how brilliant a Level 3 performing arts course and experience they provide.
- **Inclusive theatre for people with PMLD** Cllr Mark Blaker was kind enough to invite me up to Hestercombe to see an outdoor performance by Frozen Light Theatre who specialise in devising and performing original, multi-sensory theatre for people with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. As you know, Mark is a Director of Reflect PMLD which has a fantastic base up at Hestercombe, from which they provide specialist one-to-one support to clients. In keeping with their approach to bring great inclusive and creative experiences to their clients and others with PMLD, they had arranged three days of performances and invited small groups of people with PMLD from across the district and further afield to come along with their carers. Each performance – an awesome, immersive multi-sensory experience - was for a small group and socially distanced. This kind of inclusive theatre is now firmly imprinted on me as something we need more of for the future.
- **Louisa – Pleasure Dome Theatre on tour** - I was really thrilled to see this amazing production telling an inspiring local story of courage and community at Holford & District Village Hall – the village hall team did a brilliant job welcoming audiences back to their first theatrical event since the pandemic began creating a safe environment in a lovely setting. It was also a chance to meet the head of the Buddhist group that has taken on nearby Alfoxton House which they have begun restoring (no mean feat) and hosting cultural retreats at with a view to hosting cultural events next summer.
- **Making Marks: Mark-making in the 21st Century** – running till 26<sup>th</sup> November this is a superb, 'must see' exhibition at the Creative Innovation Centre curated by Adam Grose featuring six amazing local artists.
- **Taunton Thespians' 'The Hollow'**. The Thespians were on top form as ever for this acclaimed production at the Brewhouse – fantastic to see them perform again.

### **Taunton Youth Culture and Arts Festival**

Thursday 23 October 2021 should have seen the start of TYCA Taunton Youth Culture & Arts Festival with an array of performances lined up at Tacchi Morris and the Brewhouse over two consecutive weekends. This is a Festival we support with a £10K grant. This year's theme is 'Empowerment'. A crew of young people were recruited back in the summer and they have been out and about engaging and encouraging others to get involved. Covid unfortunately intervened. With so many events premised on showcases by young performers and so many unable to perform due to rising cases and schools' concerns to stem transmission it was decided the best thing to do would be to POSTPONE and look for dates in the New Year. This decision affected the Spoken Word, Music, Dance, Film and Drama Festivals and

the music/animation/Popera House workshops. As soon as we have new dates I will let you know. However, the TYCA visual arts competition exhibition involving students and young people up to the age of 25 at CICCIC went ahead as planned as did the awesome Tyca Art and Fashion exhibition at the Taunton Brewhouse Gallery from 1 – 6 November. This was a collaboration with Bridgwater and Taunton College Level 3 Art and Design Students. The ONwords and UPwords Online Showcase (the product of brilliant workshops delivered by Clementines Live Arts) premiered on 15 November – I watched live and you can catch it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lepHPaOQ86w&t=148s>

On the subject of young people and access to culture, the home education group I am involved in has started a programme of outdoor theatre events, taking advantage of tours planned by Tall Tails Theatre (Makaton accredited) and Wassail Theatre and subsidised by the Arts Council. We will be ensuring schools, home ed and other children/young people's groups in the district know about the opportunities to have theatre groups visit and encourage them to take advantage of this.

### **Marketing and Communications**

On 20 October I gave a presentation at Government Events' 'The Supporting Local Tourism and Hospitality Conference'. My presentation was entitled 'Supporting the Local Creative Economy to Boost Tourism and Local Business' and highlighted how we at SWT are harnessing the power of arts, culture and heritage to reshape the district around a creative economy to deliver prosperity and enhance wellbeing post Covid and highlight the amazing contributions and achievements of the culture sector to the district. I am told it was well-received. I was sure to give delegates a good flavour of how amazing a holiday/visit to our district would be and the cultural riches that await and encouraged them to come!

I responded to a letter in the gazette bemoaning the lack of a major arts festival in Taunton to highlight the amazing festivals that take place across the district thanks to the creativity and ingenuity of so many creatives and communities and our ambition to build on this. <https://www.somersetcountygazette.co.uk/news/19678273.tauntons-amazing-arts-culture-offering--like-see/>

Chloe Gamblin has produced a new brochure introducing the Cultural Development team with FAQs about our work supporting arts and culture which I have circulated to all councillors and which you can find online here: [Introducing the Cultural Development Team \(somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk\)](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/Introducing-the-Cultural-Development-Team)

At the time of writing I am doing radio interviews to promote Winterfest 2021 and we have just uploaded the first of what is likely to be many videos on our cultural development work to our You Tube channel.



# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Ross Henley – Corporate Resources

### Customer

#### Benefits

- The Revs & Bens system integration exercise was successfully completed in October 2021. This means that all of the former West Somerset & TDBC data has been integrated into a single database, which enables quicker and easier system admin, report running etc.
- We have successfully implemented automated processing for circa 50% of change notifications received from the DWP. We receive around 50,000 of these per annum so being able to process half automatically has a significant impact.
- Day-to-day processing is up to date enabling us to actively increase the number of claim reviews – these enable us to identify incorrect payments, potential fraud and to maximise our subsidy payment.
- Ongoing administration of the Test & Trace payments scheme. The scheme will now continue until 31 March 2022.
- Planning has now commenced for the year-end / new year billing processes in March 2022.

#### Business Intelligence, Performance & Programme Management Office

- Our corporate performance management processes have recently been audited and the auditors reported a finding of 'substantial assurance'. This reflects the significant improvement in our performance management processes over the past 18 months and the hard work of the team.
- The quarter 2 performance report has been produced and will go to Scrutiny & the Executive in Dec 2021.
- Work is ongoing to further improve & refine our corporate performance and risk processes.
- Ongoing support for the business grants reconciliation, data provision & post payment assurance work.
- We will in the near future be starting to produce and share data with the other authorities to assist in the transition to unitary.

#### Customer Services & Deane Helpline

- The Deane Helpline continues to function as normal.
- We have continued to see ongoing high volumes of calls in the Customer Contact Team, which is impacting on our key performance indicators.
- We have added additional resource to the team in anticipation of an increase in calls resulting from the launch of Recycle More. This is paying dividends and, whilst calls have increased, we are coping with the calls and are not experiencing some of the issues faced by the other districts.
- The team are working closely with the Housing Service to develop and implement a plan to improve our responses to calls from tenants. Additional training has been provided to our Customer Champions.

- Our Taunton and Williton hubs have been open since July, but footfall continues to remain low – as a result of Covid the majority of customers have ‘channel shifted’ to the phone or online.
- A number of staff within the Customer Contact Team are moving onto other roles within the organisation. This is normal, as the team is very much an entry point into the council, but will potentially mean some disruption whilst we recruit and train new staff.

### **Income**

- Day-to-day processing continues as normal with no issues (i.e. direct debits for Council Tax, Business Rates, Rents & Miscellaneous income, the transmission of BACS payments, the issue of invoices, the administration of ‘right to buy’) continues as normal.
- The enforcement arrears project has now commenced. This will focus on dealing with a backlog of Council Tax and Business Rate arrears. The approach taken will focus on encouraging contact from people or businesses in debt so that we can agree realistic payment arrangements with them. Essentially the aim is to help ‘get people out of debt and not to just debt out of people’.
- The team continue to provide vital support in the development and implementation of the new Housing system.
- We’re actively looking to increase e-invoicing in order to reduce costs & reduce paper usage.

### **Operational Support**

- Day-to-day work and processing continues as normal and the team are continuing to provide support across the organisation for procuring goods and services, the digital mailroom, paying suppliers, ad hoc support as required.
- We are continuing to exceed our target for supplier payments and are currently paying 97% within payment terms.
- We have implemented changes to our outgoing mail processes to reduce costs, but this has increased the workload within the digital mailroom.

### **Revenues**

- The Revs & Bens system integration exercise was successfully completed in October 2021. This means that all of the former West Somerset & TDBC data has been integrated into a single database, which enables quicker and easier system admin, report running etc.
- Good progress is being made with tackling a processing backlog.
- The Team have commenced planning for the year-end / new year billing processes in March 2022. As part of this process we will need to implement the further business rate reliefs announced in the budget.

### **Strategy**

- A progress update in respect of the Annual Plan actions has been included with the Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring report.
- Work is ongoing to support the development of directorate plans for next year.
- We are starting to look at the development of next year’s annual plan.

## Finance and Procurement

The procurement function continues to support core purchasing activity for and with services across the Council. Recent areas include;

- Development & Place – Construction and Repair of Tonedale Mill
- Housing & Communities – Supply and installation of new Kitchens and Bathrooms
- Housing & Communities – Supply and installation of new Central Heating Systems
- External Operations – Repair of Watchet Marina East Quay Wall

We are also supporting improvements in the Council's health and safety arrangements including, for example, ensuring our key suppliers can demonstrate compliance with necessary health and safety requirements, and updating our contract tendering documents to ensure contractors and suppliers who are awarded contracts hold and conform to current H&S regulations to in turn provide assurance regarding health and safety.

I am delighted that on 27 September the Audit and Governance Committee approved our audited Statement of Accounts for 2020/21. A huge effort undertaken by the Finance team and other colleagues in supporting the very extensive audit completed by Grant Thornton UK LLP, who issued an unqualified Opinion endorsing that our accounts provide a 'true and fair view' of our financial position and performance for the year. Even more pleasing to note that we are among only 9% of local authorities that were able to publish audited accounts by the 30 September deadline. A significant achievement!

The Finance team continues to manage the day to day banking, investment and borrowing arrangements – known as Treasury Management – of the Council. A report on performance for the first half of this financial year and the mid-year position regarding investment and borrowing is included on the Audit and Governance Committee agenda on 13 December 2021.

Mid-year Financial Performance Reports will be considered by the Executive on 15 December (following review by Scrutiny committees). The financial climate and external factors such as regulatory compliance requirements, supply chain and inflationary cost pressures, continue to impact on both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA). We continue to forecast various pressures including a significant drop in parking income compared to pre-COVID levels which is mitigated through one-off COVID grant funding, reallocation of in-year underspends and planned use of budget contingency earmarked reserve. The HRA is reporting a forecast overspend for the year (currently forecast c£0.5m), with the housing management team and portfolio holder focussing efforts on containing costs to minimise the deficit for the year.

Focus also continues finalising our budget plans for 2022/23. An update report is also going to the Executive on 15 December which highlights increasing financial pressures. We await with interest the Provisional Finance Settlement for next year to provide important clarity on our funding, which will influence final budget options and plans for the General Fund that come forward to Council in February. Housing Revenue Account cost pressures are challenging next year with work ongoing to finalise plans to mitigate these and present a balanced budget for next year.

## Corporate

### People Team Update

#### Recruitment

During the last quarter, SWT budget was for 660 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff. The actual average for the period was 581 FTE with 76 FTE vacancies.

	Starters	Leavers	Turnover
August	3	6	1.04%
September	9	3	0.52%
October	7	2	0.34%

### Sickness Absence

The level of reported sickness absence during the quarter was 3.89% compared to 3.34% in the previous quarter:

Personal and work-related stress continues to account for the largest amount of absence, making up 30% of all sickness, an increase from 25.43% last quarter. Following sessions with MIND, Wellness action plans have been rolled out and we have re-engaged MIND for further support.

### Service Development - People, Projects & Key Achievements

- A new Job matching process has been implemented to resolve legacy JE queries and a market factor review is under way.
- A new DBS process has been implemented and embedded as BAU
- IR35 status determinations are underway and the process agreed
- An updated OH process has been agreed and implemented
- A new recruitment approval process and induction process has been agreed
- All policies and guidance have been reviewed to go live on the new intranet by the end of November

## ICT Services

### Infrastructure Team - People, Projects & Key Achievements

Achieved Public Services Network (PSN) compliance.

Core Infrastructure refresh project completed.

Implemented a secure backup and recovery Cloud based solution, protecting our Office 365 platform.

### Service Desk Team - People, Projects & Key Achievements

Upgraded iTop IT Service Desk system now in place, supporting Service Level Agreements, with initial data now flowing through.

Performance indicators to be reported on a monthly basis.

### Applications Team - People, Projects & Key Achievements

#### Projects

- Housing Open Assets project now live.
- Open Housing project ongoing
- Open Revenues data merge project completed.
- Digital Modernisation project onboarded.
- Intranet project involvement



## Upgrades

- Mod.gov
- DRS
- Bank Wizard
- Data cleanse from Open Revenues system achieving the removal of 1.6 million documents no longer required.

## Governance Team

The Community Governance Review for Taunton is progressing at pace and is now out for public consultation on the first stage, running until 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

This is a key corporate priority for the Council in 2021/22 and since April of this year, Somerset West and Taunton Council (through the Community Governance Review Working Group) has been preparing the ground for a Community Governance Review for Taunton, and at the Full Council meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021 members formally resolved that a community governance review be undertaken of the unparished area of Taunton and surrounding parishes (Trull, Bishop's Hull, Comeytrove, Norton Fitzwarren, Staplegrove, Kingston St.Mary, Cheddon Fitzpaine, West Monkton) with a view to the creation of a parish or parishes and council(s) to serve all or part of that area.

Comments are encouraged via an online survey on the council's [consultation portal](#)

## Change Projects

Current projects and achievements

- Information Management
- Information and Records Manager representing SWT at the IRMS (Information and Records Management Society) conference in November on 'Records Management in Office 365 made painless'.
- Information Management Internal Intranet site live
- SWHT (South West Heritage Trust) SWT visit on site to kick off preservation process
- Corporate FilePlan change request process live

## Firmstep Review

- Review of our digital platform complete with changes made to reflect customer and staff feedback. New case viewer implemented, which makes the management of cases much easier. There are now 72 live processes in use by customers, with 360,000 transactions and service requests undertaken since Firmstep was launched, with a current average of 11,700 customer interactions per month.

## New Intranet for staff

- Work has taken place across the summer to replace the ageing OTIS intranet with a new intranet for all staff accessible on all corporate devices. This will enable access to the latest corporate and work-related information through an easy-to-use system built using SharePoint Online. By building this on an existing platform project expenditure has been reduced and the project has been progressed at pace. The initial launch was October with further content being added through the autumn.

## Power Platform

- Following our investment in Microsoft 365, which has been fundamental to our ability to continue to work from home during the pandemic, we are exploiting the investment further by starting to utilise functionality provided by a range of apps that combined are known as the Power Platform, this provides the opportunity to solve business related problems and provide efficiencies by automating manual tasks, connecting data from different systems, analysing and reporting large amounts of data to provide better business intelligence and even answering common questions for staff and customers. The first examples (flowing from the pilot series) will show how the Power Platform can benefit the organisation and updates will be provided in the next report.

### **Health and Safety**

H&S Strategy – Work Continues to define all aspects of the H&S strategy following both internal and external audits. The initial focus is on Governance, action planning, resource and technology.

### Organisational Development

#### Current Projects

- Organisational Health Check is now complete – data is now live and organisational overview has been presented to SMT. Data now with the PBPs to work on with Directorate SMTs. Data directing phase 3 of People Plan.
- Leadership Development Programme – we have now begun work on this, starting with some sessions with SMT. Wider programme, provider has been chosen and we are designing the programme for delivery to begin in NY 2022.
- Continue to monitor the uptake of the new approach to performance management. Health check highlighted some areas still of concern and these are being supported to improve.
- We continue to monitor the situation regarding COVID19 and the impact on our working processes. Our offices remain quiet, and we have not been made aware of any significant issues. We will continue to monitor the situation locally and nationally, especially over winter.
- Digital Eagles recruited and launch session on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov. Training between now and early January.

#### New Projects

- Supporting Sophie Morvany to launch the Excellence Framework in January 2022
- We are expanding the Corporate Team Employee Awards out to the whole Internal Operations Directorate.

#### Key Achievements

- Using data to build leadership programme.
- Digital Eagles programme recruited and officially launched.

# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Marcus Kravis – Asset Management and Economic Development

### Major and Special Projects Update

#### Coal Orchard

Good progress is again being made at Coal Orchard to complete buildings and public realm areas. Block A – The Quay – which faces onto St. James St is now complete and was handed over to the Council during the week of 15 November 2021. The Wharf which faces onto the car park area should be complete in early December, whilst The Jetty and remaining public realm areas are currently planned for completion in February 2022.

Following nationwide materials and labour shortages, which caused delays to progress on site, things are gradually returning to normal, but uncertainty remains within supply chains and the contractor Midas are constantly reviewing availability of site labour, logistics and deliveries. There are plans to create a temporary fenced off footpath through the site from early December and through the Christmas period to help support local traders in the Independent Quarter. Lights, Christmas trees, maps and signage are all being put in place to help encourage footfall to all areas.

Marketing of the residential properties and commercial units began in the Summer and at the time of writing 27 of the 40 apartments are either reserved or let. With the handover of The Quay contracts can now be exchanged, and we hope to see the first owners moving in early in the New Year. Work is progressing to increase interest in the 8 commercial units, with a renewed emphasis on promoting the units as the scheme nears completion

#### Firepool

NHS Vaccination Centre move to Firepool

The NHS have now commenced vaccinations from the Firepool site, having successfully mobilised and assembled modular buildings in August and September. The site is expected to be used until March 2022.

GWR building / cycle path

The GWR Building is now being used as a site office by the Innovation Centre contractor site management team. As significant civil works are now underway, the temporary cycle path has been closed in order to maintain safe working distances from machinery and material movements. The path will be re-opened whenever it is possible to do so for significant periods.

#### Digital Innovation Centre

SWT are continuing to work in collaboration with SCC on delivery of a 2400m<sup>2</sup> Digital Innovation centre on the Firepool site, with construction activity now in progress. Civil and decontamination works started in October 2021, with a delivery programme of circa 18 months.

#### Special Purpose Vehicle

SWT have been exploring the most efficient delivery route for large projects such as Firepool and a dedicated development arm which will be solely focussed on delivery

of key regeneration projects was approved by Full Council on 3 November 2020. The detailed work on this key component has progressed but the impact of phosphates on the ability to commence construction of residential units limits the scope and efficiency of a separate delivery arm at this time, therefore any formation will be delayed until a resolution is available.

### **Infrastructure, Utilities and Flood work**

In response to the constraints of the Phosphate issue on submission of a site wide LDO, officers have agreed a Planning Performance Agreement (a project management tool) between the Council as Local Planning Authority and the Council as Developer to progress a masterplan which will be subject to public consultation and approval as a material planning consideration. This will set out the proposals for delivering the Firepool scheme.

Detailed applications for access and infrastructure have been submitted, with the aim of works starting on site as soon as the NHS Vaccination Centre has demobilised. Ecological surveys continue on the green space between the canal and river up to Obridge, which will feed into any design work on the flood mitigation works, which will seek to find the appropriate balance between flood mitigation, existing habitat retention and opportunities for enhancement and promotion of wildlife.

### **Future High Streets Fund**

The first payment of £4.75m was made to the Council in June 2021. £1m has been used to support the Coal Orchard project. £3m has been allocated for Firepool and £750k to cycling improvement schemes in Taunton. Procurement work has started on the cycling and walking schemes, that will see the creation of a continuous route from Taunton Train Station to Vivary Park, via Firepool, Coal Orchard and the High Street. The project has also secured £1.13m in match funding from CIL and SCC, which provides an overall budget of £3.43m including Future High Street contributions. The work involves making improvements to junctions at North St. High St, St James St, and bridge development work across the river. The contract will be in place to begin work in Spring 22

### **Bus Station**

Work is continuing to build a business case for re-developing the Bus Station site. Surveys to identify key issues and work to understand the costs of refurbishing the buildings have been completed. Proposals have been submitted for pre-application advice has been submitted for a change of use for the hard standing area of the site, for the Council to turn it into a temporary car park, which will inform any future planning application in the future. The Major Projects Team are engaging with the Somerset County Council bid to the Department of Transport for grant funding to improve bus services in the County. This includes a proposal for bringing at least part of the current site back into use as a bus station. The proposals also allow for SWT plans for utilising some of the buildings for commercial uses and providing support for key local services, including a Changing Places facility

### **West Somerset Employment Land Sites**

A feasibility Study was carried out in Summer 2021 to review demand and assess a range of potential sites for Employment Land use in the West Somerset area. Three sites were identified as potentially being viable for the Council to invest in and develop. Since September, more work has been carried to assess each site in more

detail. This has included looking at access and engineering issues, reviewing all potential costs, starting talks with prospective tenants and landowners, and developing concept drawings. This work is leading to the development of development appraisals being carried out on three options for two different sites. One of these appraisals has now been completed, revealing that we have one good financially viable option in the centre of Minehead. A Council report is now being put together, which will be presented to Scrutiny on 5 January 2022, Executive on 19 January 2022 and Full Council on 8 February 2022.

## **Heritage**

### **Tonedale Mill**

The S48 Repairs notices have been served and discussions continue with the owners on their response to the notices and the emergency works required on site.

### **Toneworks**

Following completion of the first phase of repair works, SWT have been successful in securing further grant funding from Historic England to enable the next stage of targeted works that will bring Toneworks back into use for community and cultural purposes. Procurement for the contractors to carry out these works is underway and it is anticipated that works will begin in the new year.

### **Fox's Field**

Lease discussions have progressed with the WMCIC for the site at Fox's Field to deliver community amenity space as a community forest garden. The WMCIC have already undertaken some work on the field to cut the grass and create a better walking space for the community as well as planning and securing trees for the forest garden, which they will start planting from December.

### **Dulverton Weir**

SWT continues to work with the Dulverton Weir and Leat Conservation Trust and other stakeholders to investigate future options for the repair and long-term future of the site. We received SRA funding for technical work and the Trust have organised and number of community events including an archaeological dig and garden party.

### **Norton Hillfort**

The site has now been transferred to the South West Heritage Trust for long term guardianship. The site was formally removed from the Heritage at Risk Register at the start of November and was featured prominently in Historic England's press release. A number of successful volunteer events have already taken place.

### **Hinkley Point C**

Of the £22.5m that the Councils have received via S106 agreements approximately £19.5m is left to spend. All these funds are committed to specific projects or areas of work. Under the current agreement the funding for the majority of posts will end in March 2023, with some funds remaining to maintain planning posts in 2023/24 and 2024/25. However due to the HPC project being behind time and EDF wishing to increase its workforce by 55%, the Councils have now secured some additional funding (£250k plus inflation) for specific posts past March 2023. This includes

additional support for Economic Development and finance roles until 2024/25, and planning and project management until 2025/26.

In addition to this the Councils have now reached agreement with EDF on a comprehensive package of mitigation measures to manage the impacts of the workforce uplift. This includes an additional payment of £390k to the Council to extend some of the Hinkley Housing initiatives and the Housing post. It also includes funding for the joint Community Safety Officer with Sedgemoor District Council until 2026. The whole package also includes significant spend on measures by EDF and support to the other local authorities involved.

Overall, and although a good package of measures has been agreed, there remains concern about whether all activity can successfully be delivered in the next 12 months before the new peak of construction in early 2023. Significant management and monitoring plans are required to stay on top of issues. Members and communities were given briefings on the uplift situation on 15 November and 18 November 2021. Agreements will be finalised in the coming weeks and new management plans put in place by February 2022.

## **Economic Development update**

### **Town Centre Resilience and Transformation**

The Economic Development team continue to work with Town and Neighbourhood Centre working groups across the District to distribute the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Welcome Back Fund allocated to SWT, and the SWT Town Centre Recovery Fund. The projects funded are achieving the aims of drawing people to our high streets, improving the vibrancy in the public realm, providing events and attractions, and increasing footfall.

- 52 projects are planned across the District of which 28 have been actioned and are in progress.
- Over the summer the Towns and Neighbourhood Centres had a wide variety of events, activities, festivals, and street entertainment. More is planned to encourage shoppers and visitors over the festive period.
- Equipment such as additional benches and bins have been installed with additional cleaning.
- Streets have been lined with flags, bunting, hanging baskets and colourful window displays in empty units.
- Regular engagement with Town and Neighbourhood Working Groups have ensured that the projects are community designed and led, and a forum is in place for the groups to share their ideas and best practise.

Winterfest in Taunton Town Centre is planned and the Christmas tree was ready for the 21 November light switch on, with a packed programme of activities to delight the community and to ensure the businesses in the Town Centre benefit from a wide range of customers over the festive season. During the Christmas period there will be street entertainment, log cabins and markets to encourage visitor numbers to the Town.

### **Visitor Economy Recovery and Growth**

Phase 2 of the county wide Visitor Economy Support Programme (VESP) to aid the recovery of the visitor economy continues with ongoing activity planned until end of 2022.

The Hinkley Tourism Action Partnership (HTAP) continues to support the Visitor economy with activity including:

- HTAP Tourism Innovation Grant Scheme (supporting SMEs) has awarded grants to support 14 businesses projects across the Western area of SWT and Sedgemoor as most impacted from the Hinkley Point C development. 9 projects were supported within Somerset West, 1 joint project covers both areas and 4 projects are within Sedgemoor District.
- Free Digital online business support workshops (supporting SMEs) –
  - 6 'BOOST' Tourism Toolkit workshops running Oct – Dec 2021 with 126 businesses booked to date
  - 6 England Coast Path and walking workshops running Oct – Dec 2021 with 70 businesses booked to date

The contract to refresh the Minehead Economic Plan on behalf of Minehead & Coast Development Trust (MCDT) has been delivered and the 'Minehead Plan - Inspiring People and Place' final plan has been published. Delivery of the plan will see the MCDT, Minehead Town Council, Minehead Bid, Training and Education Providers, SWT, SCC and various other agencies working together to deliver activity that supports the vibrancy of Minehead.

Through the ERDF Welcome Back Fund contracts have been issued to deliver:

- A sustainable central event web portal (one stop shop) that will enable local people and visitors to find out about the events, what's on and things to do in the district, and for organisers to promote their events.
- A Marketing Campaign including the development of a suite of marketing products to market and promote the area as a whole to local people and visitors, this will develop and promote the work of the Town Centre Working Groups to boost visits to our Town Centre.

### **Additional Restrictions Grant Funds**

A further £184,000 of ARG funding was distributed in early November which targeted funds toward businesses which support a significant number of employees. Of the £5.76m of ARG funding received by the Council, £696k remains to be distributed. With the remainder of the funds, the focus is now on steering support toward future business resilience and schemes are being worked up which incorporate innovation and carbon reduction criteria.

### **West Somerset Employment Site Feasibility complete**

The initial feasibility study has identified two potentially viable sites in the Minehead area (see above). A proposal is scheduled to be presented to Council in February 2022.

### **Inward Investment**

A Marketing and Communications plan for Inward Investment has been drafted. A key piece of work will focus on developing content for a campaign to launch next year aimed at greater engagement of potential investors.

### **A358 consultation**

The Strategic Economic Development Lead has been involved in the business working group with the National Highways alongside Business West and the HoSWLEP as well as ensuring that Taunton Chamber of Commerce been

involved in the current round of consultation. The Economic Development perspective, including impacts and opportunities for local business have been included in SWTs consultation response.

### **Community Renewal Funds**

Somerset has recently had some success in the Community Renewal Fund bid process with £700k secured for a programme linked to further development of the innovation ecosystem through establishing a further round of a high growth bootcamp for businesses looking to secure investment. The programme also includes AI/Big data training from Exeter University which will help support digital business in Somerset. There was positive news from the Autumn statement that there will be a £200m regional investment fund established for the South West for businesses looking to secure early stage investment.

### **Innovation District**

The team continue to progress activity that will secure SWT as a key location for Innovation and Digital sector growth, the team are working closely with County and district colleagues to join up and align the growth sectors and assets linked to the knowledge economy.

### **Nuclear Decommissioning Agency**

The team are working to secure project funding, resources and expertise from the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency as a result of the decommissioning of Hinkley Point B. Working with Sedgemoor District Council and SCC to work up proposals for investment in the area.

### **Employment and Skills**

#### **SWT Community Employment Hubs**

The new SWT Community Employment Hub volunteer policy has been approved by Full Council. The volunteer handbook has been completed along with the volunteer application form to enable recruitment of volunteers who will perform an intrinsic role in the delivery of employment and skills advice at the community hubs across the District. Training is now being delivered to newly recruited and existing volunteers by the 2 Hub Co-ordinators in preparations for the hub openings. A professional volunteer training orientation plan/manual has been developed to support this work. A bespoke client management system is nearing completion. This will greatly enhance the reporting capabilities of the Hubs and provide evidence to support further funding bids.

Virtual support through the Employment Hubs continues via teams/zoom and phone calls. Referrals to partner organisations continue ensuring robust and bespoke individual support for those looking for education, training or work.

The following provides a breakdown of the achievements of the hubs between January and November 2021:

**Total of clients contacting the service: 65**

**Live cases: 34**



## Current status of the Hubs

Hub	Venue	Day	Time	Operation	Update status
Watchet	The Sanctuary, Swain St, Watchet	Thursday	10:00 – 1:00	Weekly	Open
Minehead Youth Hub	Minehead Eye	Thursday	13:00 – 15:00	Weekly	Open
Minehead Hub	@The Hub, Alcombe, Minehead	Tuesday	10:00 – 12:00	Weekly	Volunteers recruited/training in progress
Williton	Williton Children's centre	Tuesday	10:00 – 12:00	Weekly	Recruiting volunteers
Stogursey	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	Recruiting volunteers
Dulverton	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC	Recruiting volunteers
Taunton	United reformed Church	Wednesday	10:00 – 12:00	Weekly	Volunteers recruited/training in progress
Taunton	Halcon, Links Power	TBC	TBC	TBC	Recruiting volunteers
Taunton	Priorswood Community Centre	TBC	TBC	TBC	Recruiting volunteers
Taunton youth Hub	Bold & Brave	TBC	TBC	TBC	Recruiting volunteers
Wellington	Where Centre	TBC	TBC	TBC	Recruiting volunteers

## West Coast 360

West Coast 360 is a partnership of local businesses and employers, training providers, statutory agencies, community organisations and the local community college. The Partnership has come together to provide skills and development opportunities for the hospitality and leisure industry, with the aim of raising skills levels and prospects for individuals.

We are currently looking at commissioning a short film to promote different careers paths and **inspire** both young people and adults in **West Somerset** to work in the **hospitality and leisure sectors**. This video would then be used across various digital platforms

Linked with Skill Up and Secro – skills for the workforce to enhance training opportunities for this sector: [Training support for business and individuals | West Coast 360 - Your pathway to Hospitality & Leisure excellence](#)

In partnership with Skill Up, WC360 offers free training to anyone connected to the hospitality and leisure industry. Currently 221 short online courses have been delivered.

## Support for those Not In Education Training or Employment (NEETS)

A contract has recently been signed with the Quantocks AONB to deliver a range of practical land management courses to NEETS. The programme will commence early in 2022.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

Two 'Meet the Employer' events have been held with SUEZ, along with bimonthly HPC Virtual Drop In recruitment events.

The Skills and Employment team have worked in partnership with other district local authorities and SCC to create a 'Step into Jobs' event (local jobs for local people). The team have also created a 'Guide to good recruitment and employment practices' to help local businesses to attract and retain employees in response to local labour shortages in key sectors. The team are also working with NHS Foundation Trust to support crisis in the Care sector.

### **Business Communications**

The team continue to send out frequent newsletters to businesses across the District, sharing news, information on support and training available, signposting to grants and providing opportunities for feedback. Subscription to these emails is available on the SWT website.

# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Mike Rigby – Planning and Transportation

### Quality Review Panel

As set out in the Districtwide Design Guide SPD due to be adopted at Full Council on 7 December 2021 the Council has established a Quality Review Panel to be externally managed. The Panel has been established to support the achievement of high quality, innovative and sustainable placemaking.

Applicants are encouraged to make use of the panel at an early stage in the design process to identify and test the proposed design's key objectives and assumptions. The Council will generally expect schemes of more than 50 homes or 5,000 sq metres of commercial/other floorspace to be informed by review. Other smaller complex schemes may also be appropriate for review.

The panel's advice to the applicants and to the Local Planning Authority will support sound planning decisions in respect of design quality and the advice provided will be a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. It is intended to assist Council officers and applicants to achieve design improvements and support planning committee decisions, where design quality is a key consideration.

The Quality Review Panel provides independent, objective, expert advice on development proposals. Generally, schemes benefit most if they are referred to the panel at an early stage to identify and consider the key assumptions of the proposed design as the advice given by the panel is likely to be most effective when given before a scheme becomes too fixed. Early engagement with the Quality Review Panel should reduce the risk of delay at application stage by ensuring that designs reach an acceptable standard. The panel brings together leading professionals with a broad range of expertise so that its remit is much wider than pure 'design'. More details can be found at

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning/quality-review-panel/>

### A358 Taunton to Southfields dualling scheme National Highways Consultation

The Council has submitted its formal response to the recent 6 week public consultation exercise (deadline for comments was 22 November 2021) undertaken by National Highways on their proposal to improve and dual the A358 between the Southfields Roundabout in Ilminster and junction 25 of the M5 motorway.

The Council continues to support improvements to the A358 between Taunton and Southfields. The Council's existing statutory planning policy, Taunton Deane Core Strategy Policy SP2 (Realising the Vision for Taunton), supports the provision of: "...a Henlade Bypass, traffic calming and improved junctions as part of A303/A358 improvement package..." as part of the infrastructure provision which would help the town to realise its potential.

It is recognised that the economic benefit for the wider south west peninsula remains well established and the Council continues to welcome the fact that National Highways is bringing forward plans for improvements following Government's announcements in 2014. The improvement of the A358 should provide important improvements to the accessibility of Taunton as a high quality multifunctional sub-regional service centre and thereby further enhance its attractiveness and success.

It is the Council's view that the scheme does not adequately demonstrate how it is responding to the climate emergency and the Climate Change Act and further consideration should be given to opportunities to reduce, mitigate and offset emissions; as well as deliver a fast and direct strategic cycle route.

The public consultation documents are not the final version. The plans and the detail are likely to be altered in the light of public comment and there will be a public inquiry into the proposals later next year.

### **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan**

The Taunton Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has now been published on the Somerset County Council website. It is intended to be regularly updated. SWT continue to work with colleagues in Somerset County Council on refining and prioritising schemes within the LCWIP with the intention of developing detailed project delivery proposals. Work is now beginning to scope out how the garden communities will link into the strategic routes prioritised in the LCWIP and how other missing links can be delivered.

### **Phosphates Budget Calculator**

The Phosphate Budget Calculator is complete and is available on the Councils website, it has been approved by Natural England. It is a tool that can be used by developers across Somerset to provide a standardised and transparent decision-making tool for the Local Authority and developers. It will be updated shortly.

### **Strategic Solution to Phosphates**

The wider project is being led by policy officers in SWT on behalf of the Somerset authorities and in collaboration with other partners. As previously advised, consultants were appointed in March 2021 to support the work there are a number of elements to this project.

The complexities of water movement on the Levels have led to delays on producing a definitive map. It affects land north east of Bridgwater and land around Glastonbury (i.e. land beyond SWT). The consultants are awaiting a response from the Internal Drainage Board before sending the final boundary to Natural England for sign off. Along with addressing a number of other matters raised during the stakeholder briefing events in August, this has caused delay in the production of the strategy document. This work is expected to be completed by January 2022.

In the meantime, as Members are aware, on 5 October 2021, Full Council approved a [Phosphorus Mitigation Programme of Interim Measures](#) which includes: a £2million budget for the creation of phosphate credits on a financially recoverable basis. This interim programme aims to unlock between 700 to 1,350 homes in the River Tone Catchment area and a planning phosphates sub-committee is presently being set up to manage this programme. The Council sought to recruit a phosphates planner and nutrient neutrality officer but was unsuccessful. Additional resource and expertise has therefore been seconded into the team from Arup to assist with moving forward the work programme.

### **Neighbourhood Planning**

West Monkton & Cheddon Fitzpaine (WM&CF) parishes have submitted a revised Neighbourhood Plan to the Council. This has been published for consultation from 5 November until 17 December 2021 and is an update to their current Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan is scheduled to go to examination in early 2022 and revises a

number of policies in the Plan with the aim of: increasing the climate and ecological robustness, conforming with Taunton Garden Town Vision, supporting the Declarations of Climate and Ecological Emergency, and updating Local Green Space designations.

## **Planning Policy Updates**

### **Recruitment**

The following roles have been filled to provide additional capacity for planning policy and implementation including:

Garden Town Implementation Manager - Jenny Clifford

Green Infrastructure Officer – Omri Ben-Chetrit

Infrastructure Planner - James Holbrook

Planning Policy Officer - Sophie Jones

## **SWT Local Plan 2040**

In light of the timetable for the new unitary proposals, the Council has not progressed work which could be abortive or a waste of money. The focus has therefore been on evidence-based studies and elements of the future preparation of the Local Plan which will also help inform a new Unitary Development Plan. The timetable and future progress of any new Unitary Plan will need to be considered as part of the transitional arrangements for the new unitary council and the structural changes order which will set out the timescale. The new Unitary Plan will also need to be considered in the context of the forthcoming Planning Bill.

The team has been focussing on the implementation of a number of placed based and other priority projects including phosphates work, Wellington Station project, Firepool, climate change and funding bids. The team has also been reviewing where each of the Somerset district councils are in terms of their existing and in-progress evidence base.

## **Current work areas**

- Site assessments (~128 no.) these are considered essential to improve our evidence base for maintaining a 5-year housing land supply. This has become a more critical issue because of the impact of phosphate requirements on sites coming through the planning system. The site assessment work should support our 5-year housing land supply as well as being critical for the preparation of a new Local Plan (regardless of geographical scope following the Unitary authority decision).
- Progress Conservation Area Appraisals from SW Heritage Trust.
- Local Housing Need Assessment – Completed. Published October 2021.
- Economic Development Needs Assessment – Completed. Published October 2021.
- Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment - commissioned jointly with Somerset Authorities. Due for completion during 2021.
- Renewable Energy Feasibility Study - Council priority project hoping to be commissioned jointly with SCC and Somerset Authorities.

## **Town Centres health check**

To provide evidence for Plan making, we will be going out to tender during November 2021 for consultants to produce:

A report on Town Centre Health Checks, Retail Area Boundary Reviews and consideration as to whether an Article 4 Direction should be made. This commission will comprise:

- Town Centre Health Checks for Taunton, Wellington, Minehead, Williton and Watchet
- Retail Area Boundary Reviews for the town centres of Taunton, Wellington, Minehead, Williton and Watchet
- A Recommendation Report on whether an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights regarding the change of use from class E use (commercial, business and service uses) to C3 use (dwelling houses) should be made by the Council for any or parts of Taunton, Wellington, Minehead, Williton and Watchet town centres and define its extent

Should the Council decide following the report to make an Article 4 Direction (s) for any of the town centres, the consultants would lead on the public consultation process.

### **Taunton Garden Town Infrastructure Delivery Plan**

Following procurement Ove Arup and partners were commissioned in October 2021 to produce three outputs:

1. The Production of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan for Taunton Garden Town - The IDP will explain how the Council will deliver on its 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 the Garden Town Vision. It will also establish the mechanisms by which the progress and success of the Garden Town can be measured. It will be designed as a living document.
2. The Production of a Stewardship Report - The report is to advise on options for the ongoing long-term management and maintenance of community facilities and open space within Taunton Garden Town.
3. The delivery of an Online Infrastructure Engagement Platform - The online infrastructure engagement platform is seeking to provide up-to-date information about strategies, projects and activities and allow the public to identify, suggest and comment upon new infrastructure.

Completion is anticipated for March 2022.

### **Wellington Station**

The Government's autumn budget sets out £5 million of funding to develop new railway stations at Wellington and Cullompton. This funding will enable the project to advance to the next stage of development and follows the submission of a business case to the Department for Transport earlier in the year.

The funding announcement is preceded by months of hard work, research and partnership building to develop the case for the proposed new train stations at Wellington and Cullompton by the Steering Group and WSP Consulting.

### **Firepool**

The Planning Performance Agreement for Firepool has now been signed between the Council as Local Planning Authority and the Council as Developer, in the interests of improving transparency and certainty and moving the project forwards. It is intended that this will lead to public consultation on a well-evidenced and justified Draft Firepool Masterplan and Design Guidance document in spring 2022, and subsequent approval by the LPA as a material consideration in the assessment and determination of relevant planning applications. The LPA and Developer teams are meeting regularly to resolve key issues and move things forward. A series of workshops with key stakeholders are currently in train to help support refinement of the Draft Masterplan which will be reported to members in due course ahead of public consultation. Planning applications for Block 3, levels and drainage across the site, and for the Trenchard Way access have now been validated and planning officers are considering them.

### **5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS)**

On 23 November 2021 SWT will publish an addendum to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) stating the former West Somerset Council area has a 10.1 years of housing land supply.

On 23 November 2021 the West Somerset Local Plan to 2032 (WSC LP) will be five years old. From this date the Council can use the Governments Standard Method (SM) for calculating the housing requirement instead of the housing figures in WSC LP. Under the SM, which is calculated annually, the local housing requirement will be 99dw per annum (94dw + 5% buffer) as opposed to 199dw per annum (155dw WSCLP + previous years shortfall + 5% buffer). The buffer figure is set by the Housing Delivery Test Measurement (HDT) published in February; in 2021 it was a "pass" at 107% so a 5% buffer is added. Information on the large sites (10+ dwellings) that SWT consider to be deliverable and developable has been updated for the addendum. The total supply of deliverable plots is 1,000 over 5 years providing 10.1 years housing land supply.

These figures will be recalculated in March 2022. It is proposed to keep the calculations separate for the two former authorities. We currently estimate that the former West Somerset area will have in excess of 5 years, but the former Taunton Deane area may drop below 5 years. A factor will be the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) figures due to be published by DLUHC in February 2022. A HDT Measurement above 85% is a 5% buffer on the local housing need figure; below 85% is a 20% buffer and below 75% is presumption in favour of sustainable development. The past three years have seen a significant decline in delivery of sites across SWT primarily as a result of the phosphates issue and there is therefore a risk that the next HDT Measurement will be below the 75% threshold.

### **Net Zero Carbon Toolkit**

Work has begun on adapting a Net Zero Carbon Toolkit originally published by Cotswold, West Oxfordshire and Forest of Deane Councils for use as an SWT document. The Toolkit is intended to help communicate what is entailed in both delivering new net zero compliant buildings and retrofitting existing buildings in striving towards Net Zero and make knowledge on these issues more accessible. It is aspirational and a guidance and communication tool, rather than a policy position. The new build element aligns well with and would neatly complement the aspirational standards included in the Districtwide Design Guide SPD due to be adopted by Full Council on 7 December 2021. Retrofit is an area where we have far less influence

(beyond our own stock). The Toolkit could help us in responding to community retrofit and communication actions in the CNCR Action Plan. It is intended that the Toolkit will be ready for publishing in early 2022 alongside potential updates to Climate Positive Planning.

## Development Management Update

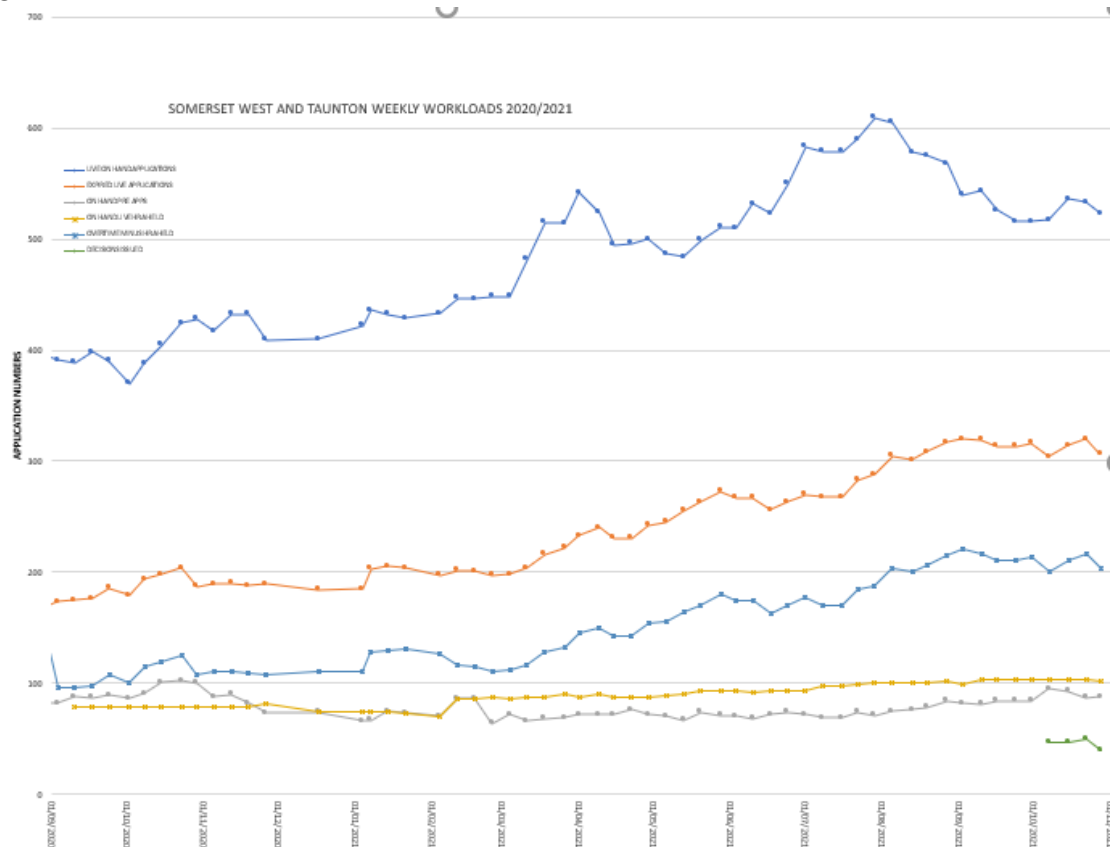
### Recruitment

The Planning Specialist vacant post has been filled and a new officer will join the team in January 2022. However, another Planning Specialist has recently handed their notice in and their role is currently being advertised.

Planning Enforcement Officers have been appointed and both will be in post by mid December 2021. There will be a short handover period from the current contractors before they leave to ensure that the new officers are fully briefed on existing cases. A Phosphate Planning Specialist and a Nutrient Neutrality Officer have joined the team on secondment.

### Performance

Workloads remain high due to the change in officers and increased amount of applications being submitted. An agency planning officer will be recruited to help reduce backlogs.



The graph above provides an overview of applications and pre-apps on hand.



# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Fran Smith – Housing

The report is to update Members on work being undertaken and progress made by Housing Development and Regeneration Team

### HRA New Homes

- NTWP Phase A is progressing with brickwork well underway on site. Some permissions are still required to support the creation of the new highway and progress the completion of foundations for two of the five Phase A sites. Equans/Engie are reprofiling works to minimise delays. Discussions have started with phase Ci tenants, preparing them for decant and to receive Gold Band Homefinder status. Phase Ci will be placed in the second contract package for the NTWP which is timetabled for demolition and then construction to commence in May 2022. A delivery programme for Phase E refurbishment is being finalised and a Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund grant application has been submitted which if successful will help support the costs. The fabric and external appearance of the retrofit will mirror closely the NTWP. The current proposal is not to introduce renewable onsite heat and power on the retrofit dwellings however this will remain under review until the contract is let in Spring 2022.
- The pre-contract agreement for the zero-carbon development at Seaward Way, Minehead, has been signed. There are challenges discharging planning conditions relating to highways works. Discussions are taking place to resolve this matter however works cannot start until the condition is discharged due to the significant earth works to raise the site in line with agreed flood measures.
- Planning applications for the zero carbon affordable housing schemes, on various sites in Taunton, have been submitted to the local planning authority. These schemes include a phosphate mitigation strategy which has also been submitted to Natural England.
- The Directorate has recently presented SWTs zero carbon affordable housing schemes at three national and regional events. SWT works on zero carbon new build are being showcased in a series of best practice guides produced by the Good Homes Alliance.

### Housing Strategy and Enabling

- The Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy and delivery plan was approved by Full Council in October. Several opportunities are emerging including successfully gaining a new grant, funding from Homes England and DLUHC (Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities), for 18 units of accommodation.
- The service is leading the thinking of the Council's HRA low carbon retrofit strategy. Over the next 18 months a financial and delivery plan will emerge. SWT has submitted (as part of a consortium bid), a grant request under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. We will hear back in December if successful.
- New affordable housing in the district is set to see a higher-than-average number of properties completed this financial year. The pipeline of new units

is currently at its strongest in the west of the district, which is unaffected by the phosphate mitigation planning requirements.

- The Housing Enabling team are also preparing the District for the impact of First Homes which is a Government initiative to increase low-cost home ownership.
- The service has completed a study of housing demand, having assessed a range of data and intelligence. Seven broad conclusions emerged, together with 17 specific recommendations primarily requiring consideration and progression through existing partnership arrangements.
- The next meeting of the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board is due to take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2021 and will consider the Better Care Fund and a more flexible use of spend as far as it relates to housing.
- The service continues to provide strategic direction to the work of the Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board, as well as the programme management function to the delivery of the Better Futures programme
- We continue to deliver the HPC Housing Programme, working with partners to drive forward 11 key areas of work, providing new bed space and support to vulnerable customers. Currently we are supporting a housing needs assessment within the parish of Stogursey, and are tendering for a contract for the provision of a debt and money management service for those who are struggling with their housing circumstances.

## **Housing Property Team**

### **Responsive Repairs and Void Repairs**

- Emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs are being undertaken.
- Emergency jobs are being delivered within our defined timescale (24 hours from logging).
- There is a backlog of non-emergency jobs. This is however, reducing following the use of external contractors.
- Void repairs are also being undertaken, although returning the properties back to our Lettings team promptly remains a challenge. This is primarily due to ongoing difficulties in the recruitment of skilled tradespersons in-house, delays in asbestos surveys and works, and the availability of electricians.

### **Property Safety Compliance**

- All property safety compliance checks and works continue to be undertaken. These include gas safety checks (LGSR's), water risk assessments and remedial works, electrical inspections (EICR's), asbestos surveys and re-inspections, fire risk assessment and remedial works, fire safety checks, and lift and stair-lift checks and remedial works.
- Weekly review meetings are being held to carefully monitor and manage these safety critical areas.

### **Capital Programmes**

- Capital Work programmes continue to be undertaken; with recent contracts commencing including kitchen and bathroom replacements, emergency lighting, additional electrical testing, and door entry systems.

- Procurement activities remain at a high level; with recent tenders including roofing, estate improvement works, and a consultancy review of our materials supply chain.
- A number of staff changes have recently taken place in the team, and recruitment for replacement staff is now underway.

### **Asset Management**

- The implementation of the Open Assets module of our Capita software system has now successfully gone live. Post 'go-live' work is now underway, including the development of a suite of bespoke reports and further data-loading from stock condition and energy surveys.
- Accelerated programmes of Stock Condition Surveys and Energy Assessments continue to take place.
- Capital work programme planning (for both the 2022/23 financial year and forward plans) is actively being undertaken, as well as a review of their impact on our Business Plan.

### **Housing and Communities Team**

#### **Extra Care Housing**

- Extra Care Housing has returned to 'business as usual'. Somerset West and Taunton staff are looking to engage some local volunteers in litter picks on the scheme.

#### **Sheltered Housing**

- Sheltered Housing is also back to 'business as usual', with tenants having the option to complete reviews in person or by telephone. Some tenants are still feeling anxious about the risks associated with Covid.
- Staff are working with some of the Health and Wellbeing Service Health Coaches. This will allow them to use the meeting halls to link in with our sheltered tenants on general and mental health matters.
- Staff are planning some skip days on schemes which are located some distance from the tip facilities for older tenants to dispose of unwanted items. This will be supported by LINK Power.

#### **Lettings**

- The Lettable Standard document has now been to HSMT and the Tenant Strategic Group for consideration. Feedback has been received and responded to.
- The Lettable Standard and the Leaving Well process will be discussed at the Tenant Action Group on 2<sup>nd</sup> December.
- 209 properties have been re-let year to date (April to October). This is a year-to-date average of 29 properties per month.
- Customer satisfaction (year to date) is running at 98%. Recent comments on the process and properties include *"I am over the moon – I now have a home not just somewhere to live"*.
- The Home Moves Plus project is still on course to achieve the target figures, well in advance of the target date. To date, a total of 35 households have been assisted in downsizing to a more appropriate property for their housing

need. This has freed up a total of 87 bed spaces, helping to ensure that we are making the best use of our housing stock.

- Void property turn-around times are still being adversely affected by shortages of trades staff and supply chain issues within the construction industry.

### **Income**

- Tenant arrears as of 17th November 2021 were £617,552.82 with 1541 tenants in arrears. The team will continue to work in accordance with the “Lean Process” to reduce the arrears whilst continuing to support our tenants.
- Our level of arrears is lower than at this point last year, however our year-end target of £464k is going to be extremely challenging to meet. Additional in-year challenges including introducing the new Capita ‘Open’ Housing system, changes in staff and government Covid rules disallowing us applying notice to seek possession, means that this challenging target may not be met.
- We had two agency members of staff started with the team on 8<sup>th</sup> November who are currently being trained on the Lean process and our ways of working. We are hoping that they will be working at full capacity within the next couple of weeks. In the meantime, the team have worked hard to cover the work and help and support our tenants.
- The Open Housing project continues to present challenges with workload, but we are making progress with our modules.
- We are currently working on a plan to rent more of our garages as well as updating the current garage Tenancy Agreement. We are also putting in place a new lean process, for the rent recovery of garages.
- We are also commencing a “deep dive” into rent arrears with Homes in Sedgemoor, to gain an insight into our different ways of working and to look at any improvements we can take from their practices.

### **Housing Options**

- Housing Options are moving homeless applications online. This was well received when we trialled it with supporting agencies. We have launched new webpages where customers can access advice and assistance and complete an online form to report homelessness. This will enable the team to be more responsive to customers with specific advice on the first phone call. This flexible service will mean that we are able to respond with minimal delay to customers who cannot use the online service and contact us by phone. We have recruited an additional Private Rented Sector Officer, Sustainment Officer and Finance Officer who will add valuable capacity to our prevention services and help support the team. We are looking to “lean” our processes to make things clearer and easier for our customers, this is on-going work involving the whole team.

### **Rough Sleeper Provision**

- The Rough Sleeper team has an agreed action plan with DLUCH (formerly MCHLG) to endeavour to have no more than 5 people sleeping rough in our district. Our Outreach team is working hard to meet this figure and we are close to achieving this with a current number of 6. We have planned winter provisions and we will be making offers of accommodation to anyone found to be rough sleeping in the district between December and March.

- The Rough Sleeper team have also just started to use a new database, “rise” which will allow them to better record and report on information which will help inform the service in the future.

### **Homefinder**

- The team are getting to grips with the new system and are tackling the backlog of work. Response times are down to a month (maximum) in all workflows which is a great achievement in addition to the delivery of a new system; and is in-line with wait-times in the other districts.
- We are integrating the work of Homefinder much more in prevention work in the Housing Options team. We have recruited a Senior Homefinder/Sustainment Officer who will be tasked with ensuring that we have intervened in cases at the earliest opportunity and to engage with prevention work to try to sustain any tenancies wherever possible.

### **Somerset Independence Plus (SIP)**

- Since April 2021, the team have received 528 referrals which range from DFG’s feasibilities, minor works, prevention grants and private work. The team have processed 84 DFG’s and 229 minor works and prevention grants. The team have been suffering with staff resources against the ratio of referrals when the decision was made to clear the waiting lists with Adult Social Care using temporary staff. SIP has since employed two additional Technical Officers and is in the process of employing a third, on temporary contracts. SIP has also employed an architect’s service.
- Including Mendip, the waiting list is currently at 79 cases, down from 130 two months ago. Of the 79, 18 are feasibilities and 2 Decent Homes Grant applications. Waiting times from first visit to completion of the works remains at 12 weeks, despite the workloads.
- The Independent Living Officers were extremely busy throughout the first two quarters receiving and responding to 156 requests for service. The majority being hoarding (76) referred by Mental Health colleagues in Adult Social Care and the Fires Service. Half of the hoarding cases are in the SW&T area. The next largest being home safety checks, referred in the main via the Fire Service or the Village Agents. It is envisaged that the hoarding picture will not improve as further work by mental health teams are exposing increasing numbers of individuals and households living in very poor conditions and suffering with mental health problems as a result of the pandemic. Hoarding cases take up to 2 years to resolve. The team have recruited an additional ILO on a temporary 18-month contract to assist with relieving the pressures. The Officer comes with extensive experience from the NHS working in mental health.

### **Housing Performance Team**

- The Customer Service training reported on previously has been running throughout September, October and November 2021. To date 157 members of staff have been trained with a mop up session planned for on 17<sup>th</sup> November.
- The arranged complaints training through HQN has taken place for managers and those within the directorate who deal with complaints. All sessions have been undertaken and 74 members of staff were trained.

- A Senior Complaints Case Manager has been appointed to assist with improving complaints responses and outcomes.
- The Annual Report to tenants has been published on the website.
- We have produced an Autumn newsletter to tenants and leaseholders, which was delivered to doorsteps on or around the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.
- We have started to develop a “reporting a repair” online form. Currently in the draft stages with our business analysts.
- Submitted 2020-21 Housemark data and continue to submit Pulse data so that we can benchmark with other housing providers.
- Setting up of a “damp and mould” working group with engaged tenants. First meeting scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021.
- A review of our Housing Policies has commenced with the HQN (Housing Quality Network), the review will include rewrite and introduction of new policies where required.

# Full Council Meeting – 7 December 2021

## Report of Councillor Andy Sully – Environmental Services

It gives me great pleasure to present my report to Full Council on the varied activities of the Environmental Services Portfolio.

### Parks and Open Spaces

Programme of work

- The summer grounds maintenance programme has been completed and the winter programme of works started.
- 70,000 winter bedding plants and 25,000 bulbs have been planted across parks, open spaces and housing land.
- The winter stream clearance works has now started, which is a few weeks earlier than previous years.

### Street Cleansing

Town Centre Pavement Cleaning

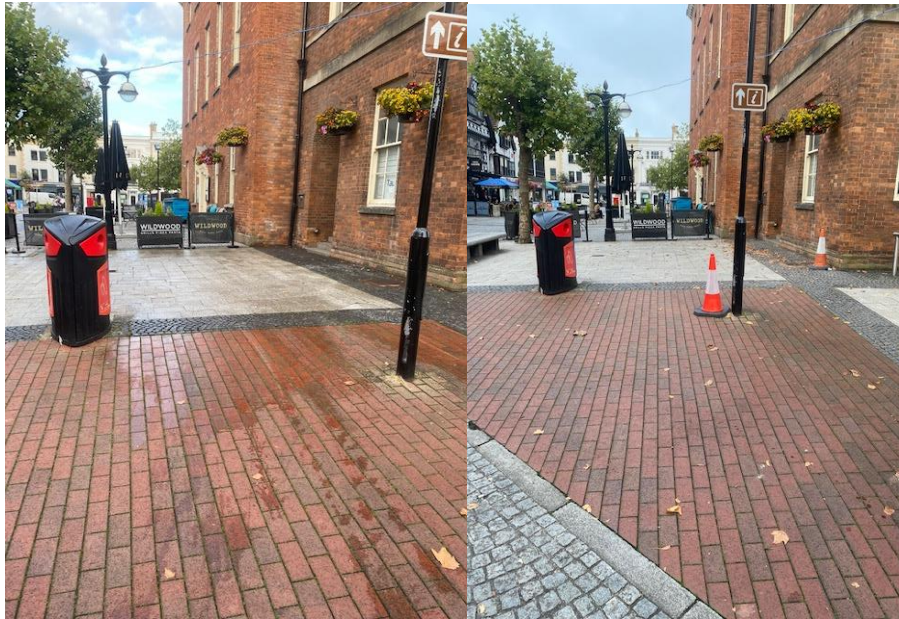
- Through our cleansing contractor, Idverde, we have invested in the use of an Aquazuura Street Washing Machine and Operator, for a three-month period from September to November. A programme of works was agreed, to include areas in Taunton, Wellington and Minehead. The programme has been successful, with both paved areas and street furniture cleansed in the listed areas.

The photos below show some of the progress that has been made.



North St, Taunton





Market House, Taunton before and After

### Litter and Dog Bins Replacement

- 130 of our new litter / dog waste / recycling bins have been ordered with the initial batch of 30 bins, bought using the WRAP grant, due to be installed in December. It is expected the remainder of the order to be installed in January and February.
- Some parishes have shown an interest in purchasing additional new bins for their areas. We have currently ordered nine, smaller, multi-purpose bins so far and one of the larger units.
- The Supplier has experienced significant issues with obtaining steel for manufacture of the bins and coupled with very high levels of orders, this has increased lead times from seven to fifteen weeks.



### Refuse (Somerset Waste Partnership)

#### RecycleMore

- The new RecycleMore service commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 in the Taunton area. The remaining roll out is due to take place in early 2022 to incorporate the old West Somerset area and Sedgemoor.



- The new blue bags were delivered to households on schedule, with, so far, minor reports of customers not having a delivery.
- There were some delays in the final leaflet, containing a new collection calendar, being delivered to homes. This has been reported as a failure on the part of Royal Mail, but, again, it is believed that the vast majority of households did receive the correspondence, all be it slightly later than planned.
- Early indications are showing good completion of collections and participation, but it is anticipated that there may be minor issues due to the large volumes of material presented for collection caused by day changes to the collection schedule.
- Two extra refuse collections were deployed on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October and Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November, to ensure that no household went beyond the new three weekly collection service for refuse.
- The new Transfer Station at Walford Cross, Taunton, is now operational and is currently dealing with the vehicles involved in the Recycle More roll out.
- Planning for Phase 4 (West Somerset and Sedegmoor) of the service roll out is underway.

### **Licensing**

- The team have been busy with a number of complex cases involving taxi drivers which have resulted in licences being revoked and suspended.
- Enforcement notices were served at West Bay caravan site following slippage of the cliff which was directly impacting on a number of the park homes on the site. This remains under review.
- There was a change to the legislation around caravan site licensing and site managers/owners to be 'fit and proper persons'. This change has been successfully implemented and applicants can apply online with no fee until April 2022 when we will start to charge for this service.
- The trade had requested a review of taxi fees, that they can charge the customers. A paper has been drafted and will be going out to consultation very soon, harmonising the charges across the previous West Somerset and Taunton Deane areas.
- There are currently two 'tables' of maximum fares for the areas that were formerly the districts of West Somerset and Taunton Deane. Neither table of fares has been increased for over 9 years. As part of the proposal, fares would be increased, and a single table would be introduced for the whole district. A public consultation is taking place between the 18<sup>th</sup> of November and 6<sup>th</sup> of December.

### **Private Sector Housing**

- A new Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) application form has gone live on SWT's website which will improve the experience for the customer and the team. It requires payment to be made at the time of the application and for all relevant supporting documentation to be submitted such as property plans, electrical, gas and fire certificates etc.
- We are started work on the HMO project and are engaging with landlord and tenants to establish the current use and condition of properties and identify any unlicensed HMOs.

## Environmental Protection

- The statutory DEFRA Air Quality report will be submitted w/c 14<sup>th</sup> November.
- The team have had a busy summer with increased neighbourhood complaints following the lifting of Covid restrictions.

## Food Safety

- 8 weeks over the summer we employed an Environmental Health 1<sup>st</sup> year student to undertake a project funded by the FSA focusing on new food businesses. 127 businesses were contacted, and food safety advice was given and further information was gathered regarding their activities to help us focus resources and priorities inspections.
- The team have been busy with a number of complex cases dealing with issues such as illegal slaughter, food fraud, rat infestations and overall poor conditions in food premises. This has resulted in a significant increase in improvement notices being served, PACE interviews being undertaken and the emergency closure of a food business. Prosecution action is being considered.
- Two new Firmstep forms have been launched online, the first allowing food business operators to register their businesses online and this information being shared with the FSA and Trading Standards automatically and the second form allowing a food business operator to request a revisit following a food hygiene inspection. This is a chargeable service and payment is now made-up front at the time of application meaning the team are not chasing payments and requests and revisits can be made more quickly.

## Coastal Protection

- Blue Anchor  
The Marine Management Organisation have started the 28-day consultation period for the permanent coastal defence scheme at Blue Anchor. We are expecting the MMO to grant permission for the scheme by the end of the year. Contractors have been appointed for the design process and this will be completed during winter 2021 with work on site scheduled to start in June 2022.



I would like to give my personal thanks to all the officers in the various teams that make up the portfolio who are delivering exceptional services and are always very helpful to me in my role on the Executive.