

Council Meeting – 11 December 2018

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Planning Policy and Transport Strategy

1. Tonedale Mill, Wellington

- 1.1 Following the serving of the Urgent Works Notice (UWN) for emergency measures to secure Tonedale House, due to non-compliance by the current owners, the Council are currently negotiating with the owners to undertake repairs to secure the preservation of the building. These works will allow the structural scaffolding erected for the UWN to be removed.
- 1.2 The security of the site has been updated by the owners' contractors on site. We are trying to work with the owners on several other urgent works on site at Tonedale Mill, although progress is slow, and the condition of the buildings are deteriorating with the winter approaching. We are assessing the other options available on site in line with our long-term approach to the site.
- 1.3 In addition, the Council (with Building Control) have erected a cordon in the car park at Tonedale Mill due to a fear of a collapse of one of the derelict buildings onto a public area. This has caused some tension with local business owners and we are trying to resolve the matter in a safe and appropriate way.
- 1.4 The Wellington Mills Community Interest Company (CIC), who recently incorporated as a community trust, held a public consultation to understand the wishes of the community for the building known as Block H. They had a very good attendance rate of approximately 270 visitors who commented on their plans for the building (if the CIC are able to acquire the building in the long-term). They are looking to share their findings more widely in the coming weeks.

2. Car Parks

- 2.1 The last late-night shopping evening is Thursday, 20 December, 2018 with some shops also opening late on Friday, 21 December and Saturday, 22 December.
- 2.2 The Council is once again offering free parking in its car parks on the four Saturdays before Christmas. There will be no charge from 2 pm in all Taunton Car Parks, except for Kilkenny, on Saturdays 1,8,15 and 22 December 2018.

Variable Message Signing (VMS) and Pay on Foot

- 2.3 Following extensive discussions with the various partners and service

providers delivering the Pay on Foot part of the project, it was decided to delay the go live date of 3 December 2018.

- 2.4 The primary reason for this being that the network configuration and testing has yet to be fully completed to the necessary standards, which has a knock-on effect to the final configuration and testing of the back end systems, including card payments and links back to the VMS signs. We are also concerned that any faults found in the system might disrupt the busy Christmas shopping period.
- 2.5 Go live is now set to be Monday, 14 January 2019 which will give enough time to get the system fully configured and tested and staff trained on the relevant hardware and software. Until the go live, the equipment needs to be adequately protected in the car parks for this period.

3. Neighbourhood Plans

- 3.1. In the Taunton Deane area we have one neighbourhood plan at examination. The Creech St Michael Neighbourhood Plan is progressing amid interesting changes to legislation on Habitats Regulations. This has been a challenge, but the Council is working with Natural England and the Independent Examiner to find a solution which resolves the challenges and allows the examination to progress.
- 3.2 We have three neighbourhood plans in development: Ruishton and Thornfalcon; Wiveliscombe and Oake. Wellington Town Council is also considering progressing their Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.3 Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders continue to be a tool which Government see as a way that communities can have a say in the future of the places where they live and work. It gives them the right to produce a plan with legal weight that directs development in their local area.

4. Public Space Improvements

- 4.1 Taunton becoming a Garden Town gives a real opportunity to review our town centre and look at how we can create a better environment for residents, shoppers and visitors, which will help attract investment and allow businesses to thrive.
- 4.2 This works well in other areas, and we are keen that traffic is redirected to more appropriate routes. We want to free up space for new and improved public areas that are attractive and inviting for everyone with fewer vehicles, less pollution and reduced noise.
- 4.3 The Council is moving ahead with plans to make Taunton Town Centre more user friendly, improving the area for pedestrians and cyclists in line with its status as the first Garden Town in the South West.

St James Street

- 4.4 The Traffic Regulation Order was published on 22 November 2018 with a six week period of consultation. Should it pass we will be looking to implement the closure from late January or early February next year. This is subject to discussions with the Highways Authority as there are roadworks planned on East Reach/Bridge Street in the New Year so an exact date is yet to be fixed.
- 4.5 The public space project will generate opportunities for businesses, event organisers and artists to explore creative uses of the town's most attractive areas. It forms part of a much wider plan to enhance Taunton's appeal along with the regeneration of Coal Orchard and Firepool.
- 4.6 A Web page and press release was issued on Friday, 16 November 2018. This included links to the original consultation data and feasibility reports from 2017 to ensure the public have full access to the history of the project, particularly as there has been a delay since the original consultation period.

Hammet Street

- 4.7 Design issues raised from the Somerset County Council Safety Audit have meant the original proposed date for implementation of 19 January 2019 is not achievable. Instead Hammet Street will be put back to August/September 2019 along with East Street.

East Street

- 4.8 The initial draft design will be discussed with bus providers on 10 December 2018 to consider the overall concepts.
- 4.9 Both Hammet Street and East Street will be subject to public consultation, which is scheduled for May 2019.

5. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Update

- 5.1 The CIL Governance recommendations were agreed by Scrutiny on 18 September 2018 and Full Council on 2 October 2018.
- 5.2 At the time of writing the CIL position is as follows:-

- Total CIL currently held in the Strategic Fund: £3,341,239.34;
- Total CIL passed to Parish Councils to date: £495,810.71; and
- Total passed to the Taunton Unparished Area to date: £92,402.94.

6. Garden Town Plan

- 6.1 Consultants Hyas have been commissioned to complete work on the Garden Town Plan. A workshop with the Taunton Strategic Advisory Board (TSAB)

was held on 12 November 2018. Hyas are reviewing the comment's raised by the TSAB and pulling this together in a final vision statement for the Plan.

Borough-wide Design Guide

- 6.2 Mark Pearson and Richard Guise have been commissioned to work on the Design Guide for Taunton and the Borough and will work closely with Hyas to ensure this work informs and aligns with the Garden Town Plan.

Arts and Culture Strategy

- 6.3 Arts Taunton, in partnership with the Council, held an arts and culture stakeholder event on Thursday, 22 November 2018 at Hestercombe House. This event sought to gather views and input from members of the arts and culture community to inform a cultural strategy for Taunton.

Housing Infrastructure Fund – Forward Fund

- 6.4 Officers are working closely with Somerset County Council and Sedgemoor District Council officers to progress work on the Housing Infrastructure Forward Fund bid. This is on schedule to be completed for the submission deadline in March 2019.

Employment, Retail and Leisure Study

- 6.5 This study is now available on the TDBC website:

<https://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/media/2581/employment-retail-and-leisure-study-october-2018.pdf>

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment

- 6.6 Consultants WSP have been appointed to undertake the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment to inform the plan review. This work has been commissioned in partnership with South Somerset and West Somerset districts. This project is at a very early stage with the consultants currently collating data from public bodies and organisations (Environment Agency, Somerset County Council, Water Providers, and the Local Authorities). Further updates will be provided as this work progresses.

I would like to congratulate and thank our hard working and resilient officers for their dedicated service over the past year and to those Councillor colleagues who have supported our employees and positively promoted Taunton Deane as the gem that it is.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and best wishes for 2019.

Councillor Richard Parrish

