

Council Meeting – 20 March 2019

Report of Councillor Richard Parrish – Planning Policy and Transport Strategy

1. Car Parks Pay on Foot

- 1.1 Six out of the seven Pay on Foot (PoF) Car Parks went live on the 4 February 2019. Since going live approximately 75,000 vehicles have used the car parks. Operations are settling down and new processes for reporting faults and issues are bedding in. A review of the work delivered has taken place and customer feedback has been sought and being assessed to ensure the changes and their benefits are clear to customers.
- 1.2 The variable message signs are in use and providing customers with greater information on which car park has capacity. Additional signage is yet to be delivered to provide better information for both residents and visitors to Taunton.
- 1.3 The management system will provide rich data on usage, payment types and other data that will give a new insight into parking habits of customers so further informing any future parking strategies. The new PoF ticket system will provide the opportunity for traders in town to offer parking incentives. This feature will be rolled out after the project is handed over to the operational Parking Team.

2. Public Space Improvement Project

- 2.1 Since the new year, responding to feedback received from town centre traders, the Public Space Improvement Project (PSIP) team have convened a stakeholder working group to review the strategic goals and proposed solutions of the project. This group included the Chamber of Commerce, Avon and Somerset Police, Somerset County Council Highways, Compass Disability, First Buses, Taunton Area Cycling Campaign, Taunton Transition Town, Taxi Association and Taunton Visitors Centre. The meeting was attended by myself and was constructive and appreciated by those who attended.
- 2.2 It is planned to have three such meetings. The final session is due to meet During the week commencing 11 March 2019 where the group will agree on a joint statement on the way forward and any changes agreed to the goals and deliverables of the project.

3. Planning Appeal - Gladman Developments

- 3.1 Members will be aware that public concerns existed that the success of an appeal by Gladman Developments in Wellington would lead to other successes by an imagined weakness in the Council's Planning Policies.
- 3.2 A recent planning appeal by that developer relating to a site in Creech St. Michael has been rejected by the Planning Inspector on various grounds all relating to the strength of our policies. This is a good decision for us and, seems to be particularly useful in its support for the settlement policy/plan led system and land supply/planning balance.
- 3.3 The Inspector stated that the development would not be acceptable having regard to the development plan's strategy, being contrary to Policies CP4, SP1 and SP4 of the CS. These policies, when read together, seek to create balanced and sustainable mixed-use communities, with growth in the rural areas being more limited, reflecting rural character and sustainability considerations. The harm that would arise is that development would come forward outside this plan-led approach to addressing housing needs. Whether or not development is genuinely plan-led is an important facet of sustainability.
- 3.4 Policy CP8 refers to protection of unallocated greenfield land outside settlement boundaries and Policies SP1 and SB1 place limitations on the location of new housing development. Therefore, these policies could be read as being more restrictive than paragraph 170 of the Framework. However, the Core Strategy and Site Allocations and Development Management Plan were adopted after the publication of the 2012 Framework. There is nothing in the Framework which suggests that settlement boundaries are not a legitimate planning tool. Policies CP8, SP1 and SB1, when taken and in the context of the development plan that supports economic growth and the housing land supply position is consistent with the Framework and is not out of date.
- 3.5 The Inspector concluded that the planning system should be plan-led. Land should generally be brought forward through the development plan to address housing needs and boost supply. Such a process allows options for sustainable growth to be considered, the relative merits of sites in terms of their various impacts and benefits to be assessed and infrastructure requirements to be properly planned. Moreover, the plan-led approach provides certainty for communities. There are no overriding reasons such as the lack of a five-year supply of housing that suggest that the development plan should not be followed. Overall, the conflict with the development plan would not be outweighed by other material considerations, even though the benefits of the scheme would be substantial. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

4. Cornhill, Wellington

- 4.1 Officers have been working on this potential heritage risk site as part of the Project Team over the last year with the applicants to bring a scheme forward

for the site.

- 4.2 The Cornhill and Fore Street application was recommended for approval for both planning permission and listed building consent. This scheme is likely to bring back to life two listed buildings and buildings of merit at risk within the Conservation Area. The scheme will contribute to the enhancement of the neglected back land site to the rear of Fore Street and a number of important heritage assets within the town.

5. Taunton Garden Town Vision

- 5.1 The Garden Town vision was published on the website (details below) in February 2019. The Vision is the start of work on Taunton Garden Town. It will be supported by a Delivery Plan to be prepared over the coming months which will provide detail to the individual strategies, projects and activities which will deliver the Vision.
- 5.2 Importantly, this Delivery Plan will not be a fixed document which will date but over time will develop into an online platform providing up-to-date information about strategies, projects and activities. The Vision is also an important tool in informing some specific pieces of work for the Council. It will influence work on the emerging Local Plan as well as more detailed design guidance which will come through a new Urban Development Framework and Design Guide.
- 5.3 This Vision framework will therefore influence all plan-making and development management decisions. Supporting strategies and plans will be needed in some areas to bring to life some of the concepts and ideas expressed in this document. These will include the Taunton Waterways Action Plan and Taunton Cultural Strategy.
- 5.4 Most importantly of all, the Council is committed to giving its communities and stakeholders an active role in realising the vision from project identification through to delivery. Somerset West and Taunton Council will work to establish new governance arrangements for the Garden Town which will incorporate new and innovative ways to encourage community participation.
- 5.5 The Council looks forward to receiving feedback on the ideas that have been set out – this document will then be revised and adopted by the Council. The Project Delivery Plan will then be drafted and consulted upon. The more detailed Urban Design Framework and Design Guidance that follow will also be subject to public consultation and will be given influence and weight within the planning system by being adopted as part of the Local Plan. As we move forward, further engagement and strong participation with individual citizens, local communities and representatives from key sectors of society within Taunton will be vital.
- 5.6 To read the full document which give details how to make comment on the Vision go to - <https://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/media/2692/taunton-garden->

[town-vision-document-web-optimised.pdf](#)

Councillor Richard Parrish