

5 Strategic Sites and Broad Locations

5.1 Monkton Heathfield

Policy SS 1

MONKTON HEATHFIELD

Within the area identified at Monkton Heathfield, a new sustainable neighbourhood will be delivered through a coordinated and comprehensive approach, including:

- Phased delivery of around 4,500 new homes at an overall average of 35-40 dwellings per hectare;
- 25% of new homes to be affordable homes in line with Policy CP4: Housing;
- A new mixed-use district centre comprising a 4,400m² (gross) food store, 8,000m² (gross) of other convenience and comparison retail (A1), financial and professional services (A2), restaurants and cafes (A3), drinking establishments (A4) and hot food take-aways (A5), 1,000m² (gross) offices (B1) which could be on upper floors of buildings and multi-functional community facilities around a village green including land for a range of opportunities including places of worship, community hall, health facilities and care and residential accommodation for the elderly;
- 22.5 hectares of additional employment land for research and development (B1 (b)), light industrial (B1 (c)), general industrial (B2) and storage and distribution (B8) to be provided in the first phase of development, of which, 3 ha to be at and adjacent to The Hatcheries and 19.5 hectares south of Langaller. A further 10 ha shall be reserved for longer term release around Walford Cross;
- 3 new primary schools and a new secondary school;
- A country park within the green wedge between Monkton Heathfield and Priorswood;
- New homes will be energy efficient and should be built to government guidelines to reduce carbon emissions;
- Relocation of West Monkton Cricket Club;
- A suitably located energy centre to provide locally generated electricity to the new development;
- Provision of a 'park and ride' site south of the A38, west of Walford Cross;
- Implementation of the A3259 corridor strategy;
- Improvements to the A38 to transform it into an urban street;
- A new 'western development spine' to connect the A38 and the A3259 to the south-west of Monkton Heathfield;

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- A new 'eastern development spine' to the south and parallel to the A38;
- Infrastructure for bus rapid transit;
- Strategic SUDS infrastructure;
- A multi-purpose 'green necklace' of landscape and public open space surrounding the settlement providing allotments, outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat. This will also include:
 - A 20m wide buffer of woodland planting around the boundaries facing bat activity from Hestercombe House SAC;
 - Off-site offset woodland habitat in accordance with the recommendations of Hestercombe House SAC Appropriate Assessment to compensate for the loss of habitat of lesser horseshoe bats. The off-site offset habitat should be functional prior to the commencement of any development north of the A3259; and
 - A belt of landscaping between the motorway and the development areas.

The development form and layout for Monkton Heathfield should provide;

- A variety of character areas which reflect the existing landscape character and the opportunities and constraints provided by natural features to create a place that is distinctive and memorable;
- An accessible district centre with a mix of uses and facilities;
- A connected street network which accommodates pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles and promotes a viable public transport system;
- Well designed public open spaces which are enclosed and overlooked by new development;
- A positive relationship between new housing and existing communities; and
- A well defined green edge to the urban area that protects views from Hestercombe House and the Quantock Hills.

The preparation and adoption of SPD will be required to further guide development, incorporating a masterplan and design codes to ensure a coordinated approach to the delivery of this site.

Justification

5.5 Taunton has set an agenda for growth to enable it to retain and enhance its status as a sub-regional centre and a self-contained settlement. Monkton Heathfield has long been recognised for its potential as a site for growth and had a Major Site allocation in the Taunton Deane Local Plan 2004-2011 (Policies T8 to T12) for mixed use development, including 1,000 homes. Supplementary Planning Guidance was also prepared and subsequently outline planning permission has been

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granted for 900 homes. The 25% target for affordable homes in Policy SS1 does not apply to the 1,000 homes allocated in the Local Plan, but it applies to the further 3,500 homes allocated in this Core Strategy at Monkton Heathfield.

5.6 The Monkton Heathfield urban extension comprises a number of sites under different ownerships. These ownerships are under options to a number of developers including Redrow / Persimmon who have an outline permission for 900 homes (part of the 4,500 new homes set out in this policy).

5.7 The Taunton Urban Extension Study (Terence O'Rourke, November 2004) concluded that Monkton Heathfield was the most sustainable location for a strategic urban extension for Taunton. The Taunton Sub Area Study (Baker Associates, March 2005) which informed the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) also identified Monkton Heathfield as the most appropriate area of search for a strategic urban extension. The RSS sub-regional policy on Taunton Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCT) allocated 4,000 homes in this area.

5.8 The conclusion of these previous studies has been confirmed by further work being carried out for the Urban Extensions SPD (Urban Initiatives, 2011). Monkton Heathfield is identified as the most sustainable and deliverable option to meet the majority of Taunton's housing, community and employment needs over the plan period.

5.9 In total the area allocated for development is approximately 220 hectares. This does not include the 'green necklace' of landscape which will include both the 20m wide buffer of structural landscaping and the offset woodland planting in accordance with the Hestercombe House SAC Appropriate Assessment. The requirement for these woodlands to be established before the commencement of development on sites north of the A3259 dictates that these sites may be in the later phases of development. The allocated site area is considered sufficient to provide the number of new homes, employment, mixed-use district centre, schools and other uses as specified in the policy.

5.10 Monkton Heathfield is accessible to the strategic road network (both the A38 and the M5) and compact development of this scale will have a further benefit of supporting a bus rapid transit link from Bridgwater to Wellington along the A38, which will improve public transport accessibility along with a new park and ride facility. Improvements to the A38 and A3259 will also be a prerequisite of development of the urban extension, to enable quality access to employment sites and appropriate street character through the new settlement.

5.11 There is also the long term opportunity for a limited motorway junction (Walford Cross) as part of a future plan review which could also assist development potential. Improving motorway access into the town is a corporate objective.

5.12 The new eastern spine road will be designed as a street that balances traffic capacity with the needs of development access, walking, cycling and public transport.

5.13 As well as accommodating new housing and associated social infrastructure, the site is able to provide 22.5 ha of employment land in the short/medium term in close proximity to the strategic road network and centres of population, capable of attracting a range of employment types. An additional area of around 10 ha is reserved at Langaller for longer term employment release. An agreed marketing strategy for development of the employment areas will be required to provide local employment opportunities in line with housing growth, reducing the need to travel and assisting self containment. The quantum and compact form of development proposed is sufficient to support a new district centre comprising retail, community and office uses to support the daily needs of the new settlement without competing with larger centres such as Taunton town centre. The proposed district centre may require the relocation of West Monkton Cricket Club.

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5.14 Developer contributions will be required for community infrastructure in accordance with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and will be further detailed in the CIL. These will include education, transport, health, community facilities and green infrastructure including the Country Park and woodland planting, in accordance with Policy CP7: Infrastructure.

5.15 In allocating this site the impact on landscape and the ecological value of the site have been carefully considered to ensure that impacts on protected species known or expected to be present on the site is minimised and mitigated where appropriate. Of particular note, are the foraging areas and routes of Lesser Horseshoe Bats from the Hestercombe House SAC and provision of compensatory habitat for this species, and possibly others, will be a prerequisite of development. This should be done in accordance with the recommendations in the Hestercombe House SAC Appropriate Assessment (2009) and Core Strategy Policy CP8. It should be noted that the area of off-site offset planting has been recalculated since the 2009 report according to revised site allocation boundaries and the latest survey data.

5.16 It is also important to protect views southward from the Quantock Hills AONB from overly intrusive urban development and therefore a 'green necklace' of open landscape and open spaces around the site is proposed. A belt of landscaping will also be required in the green necklace next to the M5 motorway. Development of this site will involve building on high grade agricultural land, but the other benefits of the site are deemed to outweigh the resultant loss of this land use.

5.17 The concept plan for Monkton Heathfield is evolving and further engagement will take place as the Masterplan and SPD is progressed to guide the submission of planning applications. The plan must be viable and deliverable and result in a coordinated approach to development. The justification for the distribution of land uses will be supported by the evidence base for the development of Monkton Heathfield.

Delivery

5.18 Lead Delivery Body: Taunton Deane Borough Council as Local Planning Authority together with Project Taunton, in cooperation with partners including Community Engagement Panel, Parish Councils, developers and statutory undertakers such as Environment Agency and Wessex Water.

5.19 Delivery Mechanisms: Development Management process with reference to Urban Extensions SPD on development principles, masterplanning and design codes, etc.

5.20 Funding Mechanism: Developer contributions to schemes identified in the Urban Extensions SPD and CIL; potential funding opportunities through Regional Growth Fund and Somerset's Local Investment Plan.

5.21 Key Delivery Dates: Commencement of Phase 1 of Local Plan allocation 2011; Urban Extensions SPD to be adopted 2013; CIL to be in place by 2013; initial five-year programme of schemes identified in the IDP to be delivered by 2016; Core Strategy review 2016.

Table 5.1 Implementation and Monitoring

Targets	Monitoring Indicators
Land uses	
Deliver approx. 1,000 new homes by 2016	The number of new homes delivered in Monkton Heathfield
Deliver a further 1,600 (approx) new homes by 2021	

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Targets	Monitoring Indicators
Deliver a further 1,900 (approx) new homes by 2028	
Have made provision for infrastructure to enable delivery of 22.5 hectares of employment land by 2016.	The amount of new employment space delivered in Monkton Heathfield
Deliver a mixed use district centre by 2028	Amount and proportion of retail, community use, offices and residential delivered
Deliver 3 new primary schools – appropriately phased to support development within each of the three phasing bands	Number of primary school places delivered relative to homes delivered
A new secondary school	Number of secondary school places delivered relative to homes delivered
A new energy centre	Completed, as part of the new development
Open space	
A new Country Park to be provided through both strategic allocations at Monkton Heathfield and Priorswood Nerrols by 2021.	Amount of Country Park created
Compensatory off-site offset habitat established by 2016 in accordance with the recommendations of Hestercombe House SAC Appropriate Assessment	Amount of new woodland created Evidence of woodland being used by target species
A network of open space delivered in accordance with masterplan	Amount of new open space created relative to number of homes created. % satisfaction with open spaces
Movement	
New park and ride facility created by 2021	Number of park and ride bays created Use of park and ride
Implementation of Phase 1 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) infrastructure by 2016 and Phase 2 by 2021	Bus stops implemented at 1 at every 400-600m through the built up area of Monkton Heathfield. Bus priority measures implemented throughout the Monkton Heathfield area (A38 / A3259)
Running of BRT services at a frequency of 1 every 15 minutes by 2016 and 1 every 10 minutes by 2021	Bus patronage levels
100% of new homes within 800m of BRT stop. 100% of new homes within 400m of other bus routes	% of homes within 800m of BRT stop
Encourage walking and cycling as an alternative to the private car	% of trips made by walking and bicycle Length of designated cycle routes