

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Executive Committee – 23 October 2019

Taunton Garden Town Charter and Checklist

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mike Rigby

Report Author: Fiona Webb - Placemaking Specialist

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Taunton Garden Town Charter and Checklist extend from the Garden Town Vision adopted by Executive and Full Council in July 2019. They also link to the National Design Guide and the Council district-wide Design Guide that is being produced, to be available in early 2020 which will illustrate the aims and requirements regarding the general quality of design expected across the whole of the new combined area. It is intended that the Design Guide will be a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 1.2 In the interim, the Checklist and associated Charter provides a concise summary of both the Vision and Design Guide. They have been prepared to help the Local Planning Authority assess the quality of proposed developments and to clearly set out the standard expected for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. These have been produced as a 'stop-gap' in the short-term ahead of the Design Guide being adopted, this is important with a number of major developments coming forward. The topics and requirements will set an agenda for discussion between applicants and planning officers and will form the basis for assessment of emerging development proposals.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive resolves to:
 - a) Recommend that Full Council formally adopts the Taunton Garden Town Charter and Checklist as Council policy and technical guidance for development control purposes to help the Local Planning Authority assess the quality of proposed developments and to clearly set out the standard expected for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods in the Garden Town area.
 - b) Authorise the Head of Strategy, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to make any necessary editorial corrections and minor amendments to the document, and to agree the final publication style.

3. Risk Assessment

Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
Failure to adopt the Garden Town Charter and Checklist may reduce the certainty for developers of the standard expected for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods and reduce the Local Planning Authority effectiveness in negotiating and assessing the quality of proposed developments in the Garden Town.	4	5	20
The mitigations for this are the proposed changes as set out in the report	4	4	4

Risk Scoring Matrix

Likelihood	5	Almost Certain	Low (5)	Medium (10)	High (15)	Very High (20)	Very High (25)
	4	Likely	Low (4)	Medium (8)	Medium (12)	High (16)	Very High (20)
	3	Possible	Low (3)	Low (6)	Medium (9)	Medium (12)	High (15)
	2	Unlikely	Low (2)	Low (4)	Low (6)	Medium (8)	Medium (10)
	1	Rare	Low (1)	Low (2)	Low (3)	Low (4)	Low (5)
			1	2	3	4	5
			Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastrophic
			Impact				

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

4. Background and Full details of the Report

Taunton is one of the designated Garden Towns in England. As such, the Council is committed to ensuring that new development should contribute towards a carbon neutral future through sustainable forms of development, healthy neighbourhoods and distinctive places.

The document, 'The Vision for Our Garden Town' (approved by Executive and Full Council in July 2019) expands on these aims and should be consulted by all those wishing to undertake development projects within the Garden Town area.

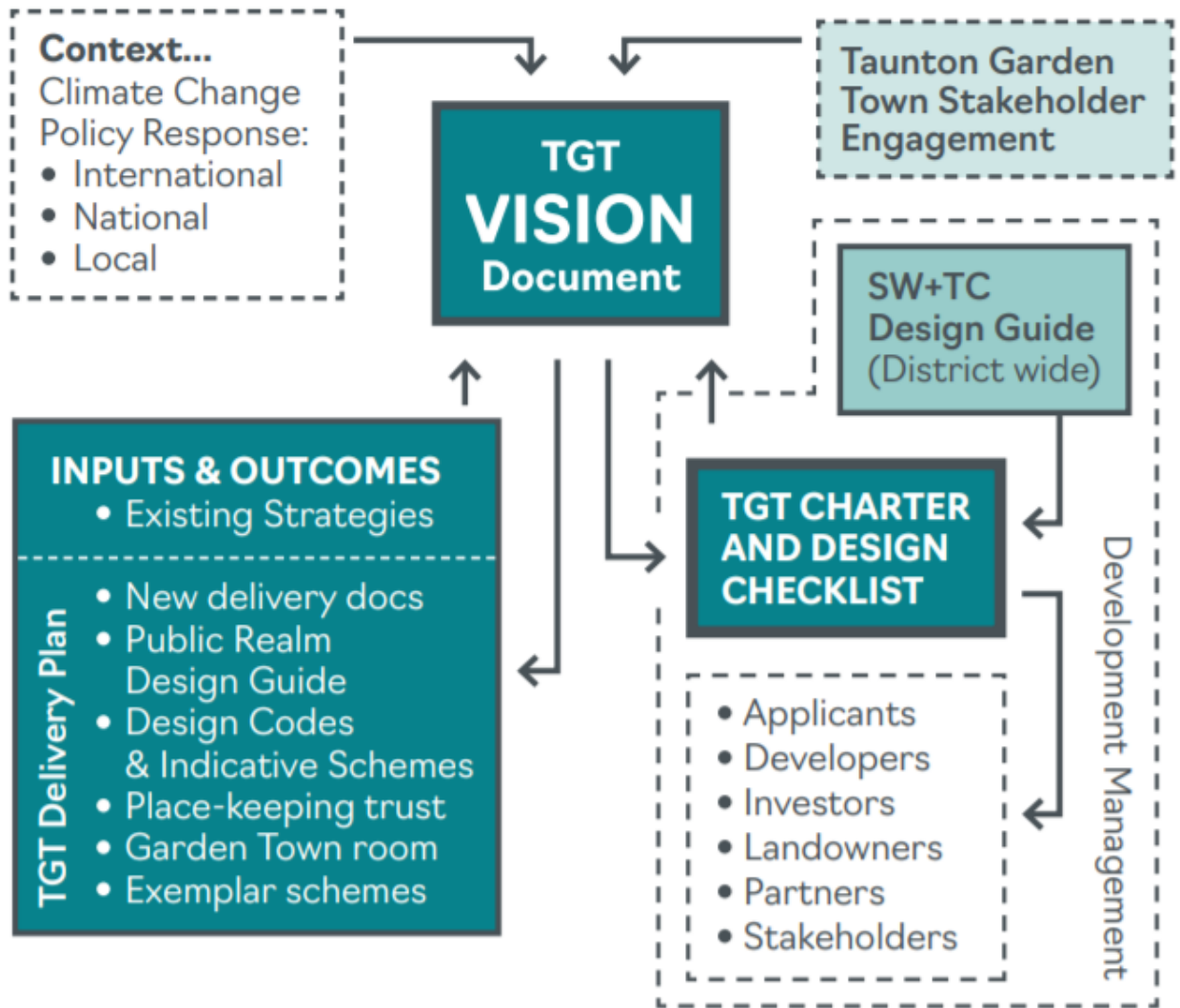
Additionally, a district-wide Design Guide is being produced (draft to be reported to Executive in early 2020 for approval for the purposes of public consultation). This will illustrate the Council's aims and requirements regarding the quality of design expected and will indicate how these aims can be achieved. The purpose of the guide will be to encourage developers and designers to be creative and responsive in the achievement of the Taunton Garden Town Vision. It is intended that the Design Guide will be a Supplementary Planning Document.

In the interim, the Charter and associated Checklist (shown in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of this report) have been prepared to help the Local Planning Authority assess the quality of proposed developments and to clearly set out the standard expected for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. It is intended that the Garden Town Charter and Checklist will be technical guidance for development control purposes by the council and as such provide an agenda for discussions between applicants and planning officers for assessment of major development proposals which are coming forward ahead of the Design Guide. The diagram on the next page shows the relationship between the Vision for Our Garden Town, Design Guide, Charter and Checklist and proposed Garden Town Delivery Plan. During the preparation of the Charter and Checklist a 'soft testing' workshop was carried out with developers and their agents to encourage buy-in and support for the documents.

The Checklist and Charter provide a concise summary of both the Vision and Design Guide. The documents will be applicable to all Garden Town neighbourhoods, but will be particularly important within those places that are being newly-created. The Checklist and Charter have been produced as a 'stop-gap' in the short-term ahead of the Design Guide being adopted due to the number of major development sites coming forward. Local communities, architects, agents and developers will be encouraged to use the Checklist and sign up to the Charter in order to guide discussions about creating good places to live.

The Charter and Checklist have been based on the Building for Life 12 framework, and its methodology in use, which is a government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed places and has been tailored for the Garden Town. They reflect the National Planning Policy Framework's commitment not only to build more homes, but better homes, such as can be achieved in the place-making process, they will also help identify how development can be shaped to accommodate both new and existing communities. Officers have also added a strand of objectives for good development around 'Planet Positive': planning for the climate emergency.

The Charter and Checklist are the sign of a good (or better) place to live and the ambition of the Council to encourage developments built in Taunton Garden Town to use this standard for their design. It is envisaged that those exemplary developments that are then delivered will be conferred with a local 'Garden Town Quality-Mark' award – allowing projects to demonstrate a commitment to the Garden Town initiative and celebrate their achievement to potential purchasers and other key audiences.



5. Links to Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 The new Corporate Strategy was adopted by Full Council on 8th October. Theme One of the Corporate Strategy: Our Environment and Economy includes the objective of ‘Shape and protect our built and neutral environment, supported by a refreshed Local Plan and develop our heritage, cultural and leisure offer including a clear vision and delivery plan for the Taunton Garden Town’.

6. Finance / Resource Implications

- 6.1 An Earmarked Reserve for ‘Garden Town’ work has been established following receipt of external Government funding through its Garden Town Capacity Fund. This funding provides budgets for ongoing work on the Garden Town programme, such as:
- Masterplanning alongside detailed design and delivery work, to inform the updated Taunton Garden Town Plan
 - Specialist support/officer roles to inform/assist a Garden Town Delivery Team e.g. urban design, community engagement, expertise/assistance with legal, acquisition, financing and land assembly issues. This support will also need to explore and outline the options for ensuring long term stewardship of the Taunton Garden Town programme.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 None at this stage.

8. Climate and Sustainability Implications

8.1 The Garden Town Charter and Checklist are predicated on the need to mitigate climate change through the creation of quality sustainable places and neighbourhoods. This is based on the adopted Garden Town Vision and is the first deliver step in making this happen through the decision making process of the Local Planning Authority. The Design Charter and Checklist provides more detail on the standards of design and sustainability aimed for within the Garden Town area through the following themes:

- Grow our town greener – giving our town a green makeover, joining up our green spaces, waterways, parks and play spaces, planting more street trees and woodlands and managing our water more imaginatively with wetlands and rain gardens
- Moving cleaner and smarter – integrating our transport network with much improved bus and appropriate vehicle links to our main destinations and make much better prioritised provision for walkers and cyclists encouraging healthier and more sustainable journey choices as attractive alternatives to travelling by car
- Creating a quality town centre, new and existing neighbourhoods - delivering an outstanding built environment focused on places and spaces with high quality neighbourhoods, green streets and public spaces and with homes and buildings that are distinctly local in appearance. Our houses, offices, employment areas, public services and road infrastructure will embrace innovation, will be energy efficient and will exploit the latest sustainable technologies.
- Providing a dynamic and prosperous community - nourishing partnership, prosperity and growth in social value, germinating and growing sustainable arts and cultural venues as hubs that foster excellence. Pursuing low carbon and digital infrastructure that connects businesses and markets well, drawing on our University Centre and growth industries in digital, land, marine informatics, health and nuclear.

9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

9.1 The Garden Town Charter and Checklist are guidelines for the design of new development as well as the refurbishment of existing places. Designing for community safety is integral to the Garden Town Charter and Checklist since these requirements need to be considered at the beginning of the design process to achieve well designed buildings and places that minimises the opportunity for crime. The checklist adheres 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 None at this stage, however as projects and initiatives are developed and implemented, full consideration to Equality and Diversity impact will be given at that time.

11. Social Value Implications

11.1 The Garden Town Charter and Checklist 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 development and preparation of the Garden Town Charter and Checklist 'soft testing' has taken place with a sample of developers and agents in order to ensure that these documents are fit for purpose.

13. Health and Wellbeing Implications

13.1 The Garden Town Charter and Checklist is intended to have a positive influence on the quality of life, resulting in health and wellbeing 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 the Garden Town Vision.

15. Data Protection Implications

15.1 None at this stage.

16. Consultation Implications (if any)

16.1 As part of the development and preparation of the Garden Town Charter and Checklist 'soft testing' has taken place with a sample of developers and agents in order to ensure that these documents are fit for purpose.

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

17.1 Not applicable.

Democratic Path:

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

Reporting Frequency: **Once only** **Ad-hoc** **Quarterly**
 Twice-yearly **Annually**

List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)

Appendix A	Taunton Garden Town Charter
Appendix B	Taunton Garden Town Checklist
Appendix C	

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