

Monkton Heathfield Development

Consisting of the current Urban Extension under the Local Plan (2004 – 2011)

and Core Strategy (2011 – 2028)

Background and Context

How we got to the current position

For the past twenty years at least, recognising Taunton's strategic position to access to the South West and areas to the north, into Gloucester and the Midlands, developers have landbanked in this area.

In the mid 90's Taunton Deane Borough Council accepted Principal Urban Authority status (PUA) from the government in anticipation of government support for growth in the area; the South West Regional Assembly having determined that growth would be focussed along the M4/M5 corridor from London to Plymouth. In the wake of this followed a considerable number of forward planning documents, covering such issues as houses, transport, infrastructure, employment land etc. The Regional Assemblies were disbanded in the two-thousands and with it went the PUA status. Nevertheless, Taunton Deane is required to pursue a growth agenda.

Principal local authorities are required to show their forward planning, (which includes a five year supply of developable land) supported by evidence. Evidence is collected by survey, consultation, displays and meetings. In Taunton the forward plan was published in the 'Local Plan' for the period 2004 to 2011; and the 'Core Strategy' covering the period 2011 to 2028, was published and adopted in 2012. Both these documents are massive and can be accessed on TD website. In the event of a shortfall in the 5-year-plus-a-percentage supply, other sites can come forward for development as proposed by developers and approved by the Secretary of State. The forward plans are necessary, otherwise developers could apply to develop anywhere which would not necessarily fit in with the overall plans for infrastructure, including provision of schools, play facilities, retail, and roads. The various forward planning reports and plans e.g. transport, road infrastructure, etc supporting the Local Plan and the Core Strategy can be found within these documents on the TD website.

The mixed use 'Monkton Heathfield Urban Extension' was granted outline planning permission in 2005 under the Local Plan, so the rules of the Local Plan apply to the first 1000 houses with associated provision for schools, retail and infrastructure. One of the Local Plan rules was for 33% social and affordable housing (agreed at the height of the housing boom).

Localism Act 2011

Added to this, there is the impact of the Localism Act 2011, which added more layers to the process. This Act has affected the rights and expectations of communities. Communities have been encouraged by government to produce Neighbourhood Plans, which, if adopted, become statutory for planning applications in the neighbourhoods to which they apply. The Neighbourhood Plan has to comply with the Principal Authority's forward planning, in Taunton Deane's case this is the Core Strategy. The benefit of a Neighbourhood Plan is that if local needs can be justified, they can become statute i.e., a requirement of the development. Also, a Parish Council with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan can claim a greater percentage of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) than

Parishes who do not have one. CIL only came into force in April 2014, and as it is new law, the interpretations of it are changing all the time.

Generally, it is considered that Neighbourhood Plans take about 2 years to get through the various stages and the referendum before they become statute.

(1) Urban Extension under the Local Plan

The time has passed to object to the Urban Extension, it had its outline permission in 2005 before the opportunity of Neighbourhood Planning.

The detailed planning applications that have come through so far can be seen in the Planning Applications Index (R=Redrow, P=Persimmon).

In addition to the Persimmon/Redrow development David Wilson Homes gained permission for 136 houses and apartments at Aginshill, the latest amendment to conditions 48/13/0074 was given conditional approval on 19/2/2014.

Each application is typically supported by comments (including Parish Council comments) and/or reports on transport, drainage, flora and fauna, landscape, archaeology etc all of which can be found on TD website under the application number.

Because the developers are primarily focussed on selling houses, from time to time applications to amend developments that have detailed permission are made: these can vary from changes in the road layout, to changes in the style of house, to alterations in the quotas of social and affordable houses. The Parish Council considers these amendments from the position of building a balanced community, designing out crime where possible, retaining hedgerows and trees, and avoiding a creep in the total number of houses.

Because building is a dynamic industry, reflecting not only current legislation but also the economic climate, the developers may try to negotiate more favourable economic ways of delivering developments. Hence negotiations are ongoing with Taunton Deane for various aspects of the Local Plan development: the 33% of social and affordable housing; the provision of certain roads; the phasing of some aspects of the infrastructure, and ongoing amendments to house styles.

(2) Master Plan under the Core Strategy

The Core Strategy has different rules which apply to the relevant applications e.g. one of the Core Strategy rules is for 25% social and affordable housing. The first outline planning application under the Core Strategy has already been submitted and is for [Hartnells Farm](#) (circa 320 houses).

These next 3200 houses, with associated schools, employment and retail are mostly in the Parish of Creech St Michael. For the houses within our Parish, a Neighbourhood Plan could be devised. In addition a review of the Core Strategy is due in 2016/2017 and we await to see what the scope of this will be.