

The Taunton Vision

A 21st Century Town



June 2005

Delivering the Vision

Taunton is at the cross roads of the strategic road and rail networks. The recent Ministerial decision to dual the A358 between the M5 and A303 reinforces Taunton's position at the centre of the South West region.

Strategic policy support

There is substantial policy support for the growth of Taunton and significant planned change will take place over the next 20 years. Existing Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 10) identifies it as one of eleven Principle Urban Areas (PUAs) in the South West, and the South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the period up to 2026 supports Taunton's strategic importance in the region.

The wider Taunton area, incorporating Bridgwater and Wellington, has a population in excess of 100,000. A number of recent technical studies have confirmed not only the strategic role of the area but its ability to deliver on a number of wide ranging government and regional agendas, such as the Regional Assembly's "Just Connect" and the "Way Ahead - Delivering Sustainable Communities in the South West".



Delivery Framework

The reason that the Taunton Vision is generating such excitement is that the proposals are seen to be deliverable. The Vision can meet economic growth and housing needs, shared transport and infrastructure priorities and provide a range of community facilities in a balanced, planned and sustainable way for the benefit of all.

There is already a strong partnership between the County Council, the Borough Council, the South West Regional Development Agency and the Environment Agency. Detailed work by each of the partners is underway, reflecting their long-term commitment to implementing the Vision.

The momentum created is already attracting attention. If you would like more information on the detail within the Vision, or to discuss individual proposals please contact The Vision Delivery Team at East Reach House:

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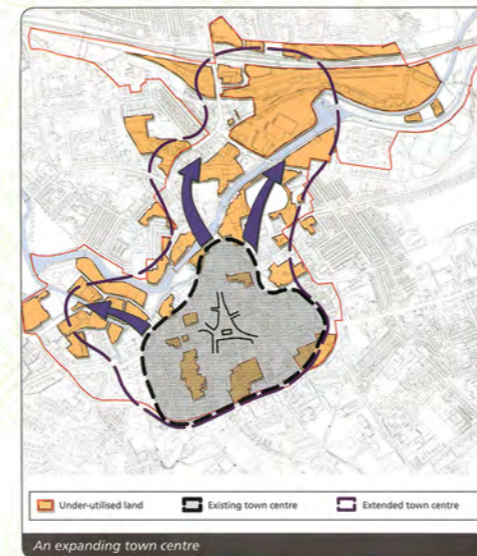
Recognising the Opportunities

Taunton has a robust economy with low unemployment and high economic activity rates. It benefits from strategic access by road and rail and will be a long-term focus for sustainable economic growth at the crossroads of the region.

Economic Potential

Taunton provides a high quality built and natural environment. Factors such as the standard of education, the "human scale" of the town and the proximity to countryside all help to create the "market town quality of life" which is so attractive to businesses and residents.

There is immediate demand for "town-centre living" and the economic forecasts demonstrate the potential for business and retail expansion. A strong economic and policy framework is therefore in place to support the growth of Taunton.



Vacant sites - Firepool

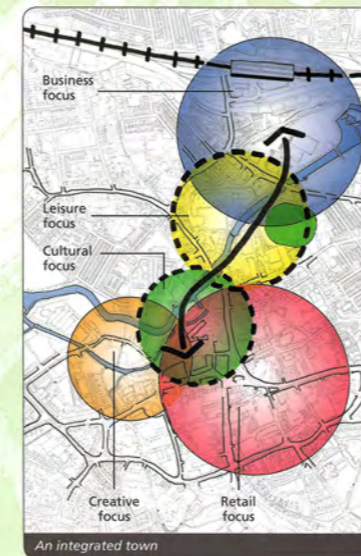


Under-utilised sites - Tangier

Physical Potential

There is over 40 hectares of "under-utilised" land in Taunton town centre. Much of this land fronts the River Tone and is a huge economic resource for the town.

These sites can create an expanded town centre extending from Vivary Park to the railway station, integrated by the River Tone. They have the potential to deliver a mix of new employment and housing, in sustainable locations with the range of retail, cultural, leisure and community facilities needed to support this level of growth.



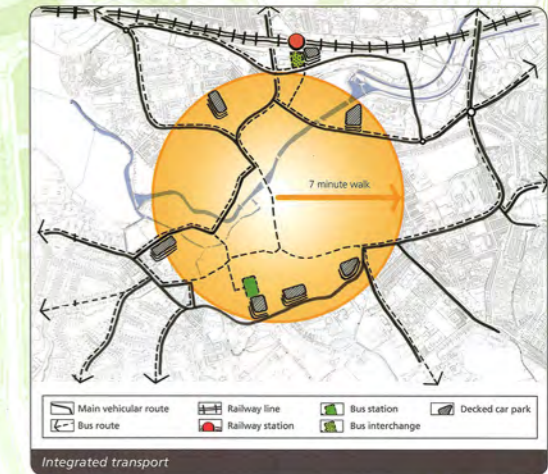
Providing Infrastructure

Transport

The Northern Inner Distributor Road provides strategic access to the Firepool site and an east-west link which will reduce cross-town traffic through the town centre. The 'Third Way' provides an additional river crossing to the west of the town centre, completing the link from Wellington Street to Bridge Street facilitating off-peak pedestrianisation of North Street.

The bus station is relocated within the heart of the new retail scheme. Together with bus priority measures into and across the town centre, enhanced interchange with the rail station, a strategic approach to new parking provision and new park & ride facilities this will help to reduce unnecessary traffic movements within the town.

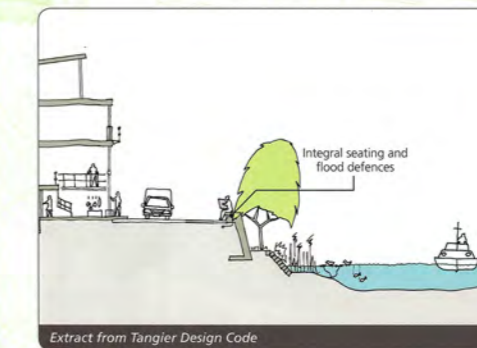
A network of enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes completes the integrated transport strategy. The riverfront is a particular focus for these improvements, along with other key approaches to the town centre.



Integrated transport

Flooding

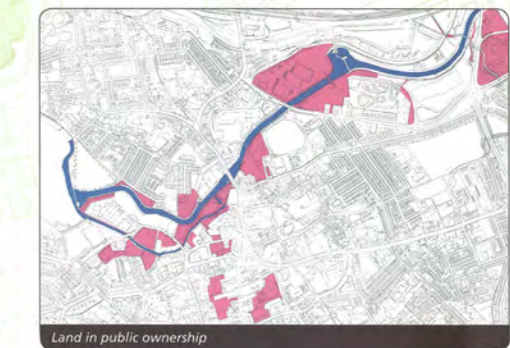
The Environment Agency is an active partner and is preparing a package of improvements for Taunton. This will include a mix of increased flood defences, a remodelled weir and upstream alleviation measures.



Extract from Tangier Design Code

Site Assembly

The delivery of employment growth at Firepool, retail expansion at High Street and an international cricket stadium can all be facilitated using extensive land in public ownership and working in partnership with developers and other landowners.



Land in public ownership

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Creating the Vision

The central message from stakeholders is to retain and respect the existing character of Taunton, and the two key elements are the River Tone and the Taunton skyline. Detailed design codes have been prepared to control the form and quality of new development across the town centre.

River Tone

The river corridor is an important green corridor within the town centre and a natural focus for speciality retailing, leisure and cultural activity. It is the missing link in an integrated town centre but is currently dominated by large warehouse-style buildings, extensive surface parking and under-utilised land. This creates a poor riverfront environment with few pedestrian connections.

A series of new routes and public spaces are created to promote pedestrian and cycle movement across the town, provide focal points for key uses and enhance the setting of existing buildings. The network will "reveal" the hidden attractions of Taunton and encourage visitors to explore the town centre.



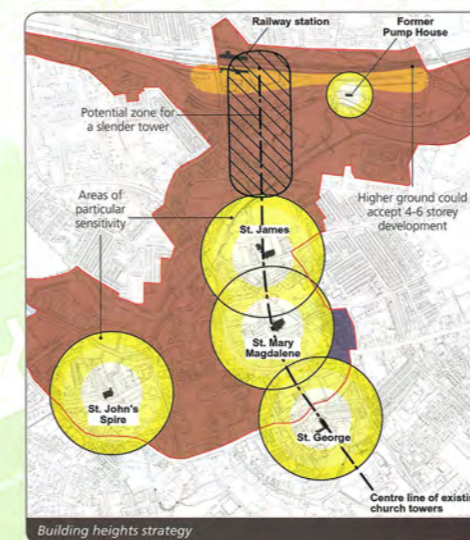
Network of streets and spaces



Distinctive skyline

Taunton Skyline

Three church towers and one church spire stand out on the skyline as major landmarks across the town. They stand well above the 2-4 storey buildings which characterise the town centre. Due to the tight urban street pattern, views of the towers within the town centre are restricted but are important features on approaches to the town. New development must not compete with these key views.



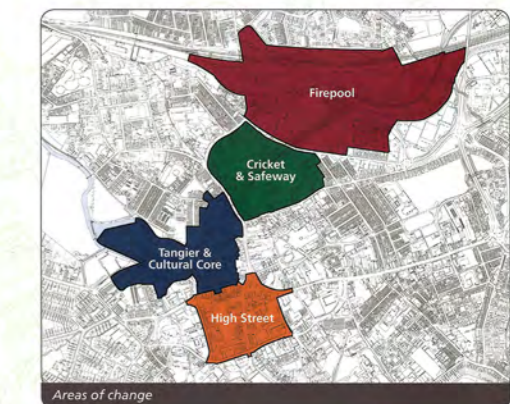
Building heights strategy

Delivering Quality

There are four key 'Areas of Change' within the town centre. A Design Code has been prepared to guide and control development within each of these areas, and to provide greater certainty as to what will be acceptable within the town centre.

Key principles include:

- mix of uses, street patterns and development block size;
- lively ground floor frontages and upper level activity;
- vehicular and pedestrian movement, servicing and access;
- parking standards and design;
- important spaces, focal points, gateways and prominent buildings;
- street design, building heights; and
- design and materials for the public realm.



Areas of change



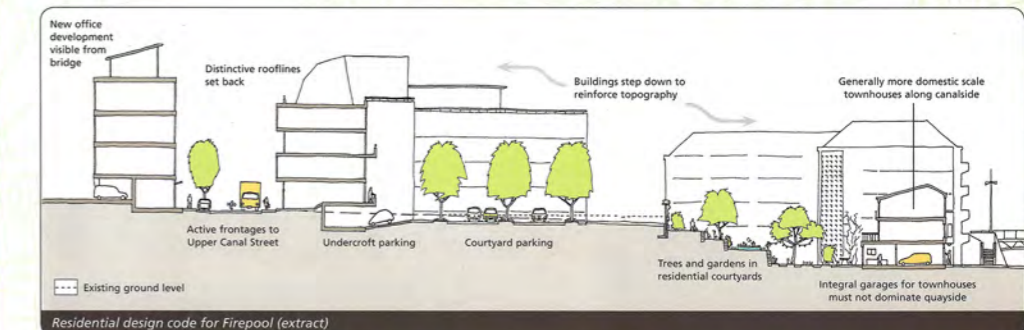
Heights, frontages, landmarks and spaces



Activity, movement patterns and gateways



Palette of materials



Residential design code for Firepool (extract)