

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Strategy](#)
Subject: Victoria Park Action Group - local plan response
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to Gill Littlewood

Please find these comments on coming plan issues from Roger House
Secretary of the Victoria Park Action Group
6 pages

Roger House

New Local Plan For Somerset West and Taunton Council

Additional comments from Roger House

Here are my views on the key issues and options of the new local plan, based on living in the centre of the town

Further to the questionnaire:

3.c New housing must be accessible to wheel chair users not like housing at Coal Orchard approached by stairs. Required inventive ways to create deck level access and create shelter or shading below.

4.b believe more mixed developments should will evolve where small scale employment uses are combined with housing

5.2 and 5.5 Carbon neutrality moving towards this is a number priority internationally, UK wide and here in Taunton

On low carbon houses - houses now passing through the local planning process do not meet the objectives of the future. As an emergency new national regulations must be brought in enable homes to reach close to carbon neutrality in future. A key issue with the latest Staplegrove application by Redrow Homes is the design guide fails to recognise the Climate emergency. No planning to ensure housing units are orientated to maximise solar gain via lobbies and PV cells. No dense central core to enable new heat air systems and provide comfort cooling in summer. No system to upgrade insulation without over cladding and no alternative to gas central heating.

5.6 Connecting people I have via transport strategy comments, planning application comments, garden town comments and letters to County Gazette advocating the need for SCC to move away from designing for just cars for the past three years

Items :

A new 24 hour bus and coach transport hub at the entrance to the J25 park and ride, to allow inter town express bus services to join up with rapid link to town.

New bus lanes from Junction 25 along Tone Way to and across Firepool to enable direct access to rail station (last leg current TTCAP policy)

A tunnel cycleway under M5 to Nexus 25 employment site, need to support Taunton Cycle Campaigns urban cycle grid (just now being considered by HE)

Bus and Coach Rendezvous point in North Street where through car traffic should be removed. Parking needed for drivers statutory breaks, even with bus station closure.

Better coach parking and road waiting places like at Somerset County Cricket Ground Gaining Coach friendly status for Taunton

More 20 MPH zones in narrow town centre streets

SCC forward planning are floundering to advance low carbon transport. I believe external consultants must be brought in to design a town outline for active transport, buses and coaches as part of this exercise.

The most pressing need in the local plan is to fix locations for a 24 hour bus and coach interchange at J25, then in town a bus terminal and a touring coach rendezvous point.

5.10 Policies for Taunton - height of housing should be no higher than the Viridor offices at Firepool I can see from my door step. Issues are sustainability of lifts, fire and other emergencies. At ground level these car free homes need space for shared transport hub, individual green and storage spaces.

Further local plan issues

Town Centre Shelter

1 Within Taunton Town in Victorian times many more town shops would have had retractable front canopies to protect people and their goods from heavy rain and now more intensive sunshine. Debenhams and Primark overhangs to pavements are still great examples of shelter for a future age. In the design of the modern Coal Orchard shops this facility was left out, no sheltered routes leading to the theatre. The recent rainfall has meant those outside their cars have got wet. The extent of needed pavement shelter zones must become local plan guidance issue.

Planning for an Unparished Area.

2 Taunton is unparished with no town council, a parish review has been suggested by the merger but this is pushed back to the future. The move by the leader of the County Council to form a Unitary Council for Somerset will see a town or series of parish councils imposed on the near 40,000 residents of the town. This will be without income generating assets all taken by the larger council as in the recent creation of Weymouth Town Council in Dorset last year where a band d home suddenly faced a local tax of £180 for a three million turnover for their new council . In Taunton the current local tax of £3 yields around £46,000 to spend. In proportion a town council is likely to inherit £1,500,000 expenditure, meaning a rise to £100 for a band D home. It will take time before we are functioning and can contribute as a town body to a new future.

3 If through any consultation process the unparished area is not one town council, but say five smaller parishes, how can one of these fledgling bodies perform as a County Town. Rival county town Salisbury set up 12 years ago under better arrangements has a 5 million turnover boosted by owning their own car parks, market and crematorium. They are big enough to provide promotion and to influence change across the town. Creation of a town council is a major issue with regard to those who will in-act local plan policies. Without one there is a gap in feedback on any new plan.

4 The local plan has to be relevant to all smaller towns and villages, seeking out each communities needs, but in Taunton the general planning presumption is all activities for leisure, shopping and transport are focused on the town centre. Given the climate emergency this should now be challenged. The views of different neighbourhoods should be studied to see more local focus points to support the development of local centres with community facilities that are within range of active transport means. Why should all food

markets and charity shops be located away from outlying suburban areas. Also in terms of new housing or public transport which elements are most needed by respondents.

5 Where these differing town communities have boundaries is not easy to see. In the consultation by the local boundaries commission to set up wards for 16 new district councillors, they failed to make them similar size. But in the new Taunton East County ward and Victoria District Ward the boundaries commission have at last recognised the railway line and the Chritchard Way dual carriageway as strong boundaries defining the centres edge. From the conservation map of the town by Richard Guise 50 years ago I can extend the old Victorian Taunton to include Northtown and Parkfield as far as the Hospital to provide us with a unique central Taunton area.

6 We are different to suburbs around in terms of near 24 hour economy, not planning for cars parking in new developments, air or noise quality, housing tenure, degree of active transport, residents parking zones. This is the central area where a big issues are the height of any proposed buildings and how public transport can improve rapidly for non-car owners. Also do secure gated communities of just oldies create planning blight?

7 From this the suburbs themselves are beyond the railway line with “Our Friends in the North” which have a clear local centre at the Priorswood Shops but to the west more scattered amenities. More than a third of our town population live there but the pattern is very different to a similar size town like Wellington. North of the railway line generally people have much less opulent assets in terms of parks, shops, banks, restaurants or public buildings than for the more affluent south. The local plan process should be seen to be revealing this in issues published for public comment.

8 For purposes of further zones for comment, Taunton beyond Parkfield and around Vivary Park is then Taunton West and I almost feel they are a very quiet as a community. That leaves the areas of both Halcon and Holway as again other the segments with clearly fewer assets than the centre.

9 The local plan consultation needs to fairly consult the Taunton communities by assuming a new town council will be formed in a local government review. That may prompt a series of neighbourhood plans. I realise these are traditionally enacted from local residents action. I did for our Park Group make some enquiries from Anne Rhodes TDBC about stating one here issue was finding perhaps twenty five people to follow through process.

Village Hall planing

10 Buried in the past planning aims for our town is a resolution by the old TDBC to allocate just two parish halls for the whole town, a similar population to old West Somerset who have over 30. In Victoria ward we have the Victoria Park Pavilion community room which our park group organise in line with a typical parish hall elsewhere outside Taunton. Gardening volunteers, craft club, monthly bingo and working with bigger councils to combat negative big town issues. The plan should enable the whole town to develop varying community spaces that link with neighbourhoods. Responses by the public must help build a more localised built sustainability.

Garden Town – the centre’s missing front gardens

11 Please see insert from the February 5th edition of the Somerset County Gazette Environment section written by me. The majority of actual front gardens of town terraced homes feature impervious concrete and waste bins where once beyond the natural front path they had real gardens. There needs to be a future plan policies that encourage the same degree of natural greenness planned for our emerging new housing suburbs to be retro fitted to our dense populated terraced streets. A town centre site to hold top soil for urban works should be considered, might be best site in this neighbourhood is the east end of Duke Street landscape zone to Duke Street flats

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Thursday February 6, 2022

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... wood and anemones,

GREEN FOCUS

by Roger House
Victoria Park Action Group

THE LOST Gardens of Taunton.

We bought a terraced house 45 years ago, but it had a large square shop window built off the front garden concreted over.

The whole window shook when a heavy lorry passed, so it had to come down to be replaced by a traditional bay window.

In the works we discovered the original foundations were widened brick and the main beam across the window opening was a railway sleeper. Our 1904 house was built without any concrete, so it follows all the concreted gardens happened later, perhaps when homes were “modernised”.

Around the bay window we laid Candy buff patterned paving bricks to match our historic front path. The paving laid on sand with open joints works as sustainable urban drainage.

A good thing with old terraced houses - the rain down pipes are far apart and in really heavy rain the old gutters overflow at various points down the street.

In 1904, they did not have Building Regulations that planned for climate change, just like we have today.

Around the perimeter of the paving is band of topsoil. Herbaceous plants love it, there is shelter from the



adjoining walls, they spread over the bricks, and in dry times gain moisture from under the bricks. Key plants are a Salvia Hot Lips, a bush which flowers for six months of the year, wild bees love it and for maximum impact we planted a star jasmine which climbs to the roof eaves, but this needs ladder access for pruning, carefully, as BT wires look just like stems!

In Taunton town centre there are around 700 terraced homes with small brick enclosed garden areas, perhaps with an original front door path made of stone slabs bricks or ceramic tiles, but alongside most is recent impervious concrete or slabs. Yes a few with rubbish bins too, but bins will get smaller.

Very different to the frontages shown in our garden town planning documents for new suburban housing neighbourhoods.

In the Priory area

today new houses have no real front gardens, just gravel: this does nothing for wildlife. A “garden town” does not need a “gravel town” centre.

In green field developments around Taunton just one new three bed home, with its garage, pavings and estate roads causes 80m² of lovely topsoil to be removed. Enough topsoil to transform around 20 terraced house small front gardens.

We need to capture some of this, to inspire householders and tenants.

Our council’s evolving garden town planning documents must become more inclusive in improving our oldest terraced streets.



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napb The Property Defenders

Management of urban green spaces in a more natural way

12 There are growing expectations by the public that more natural planting –wildflowers, fruit bushes native trees will take over the urban areas of our town. Drafting plan policies to gain that effect overall will be complicated. The spaces already exist but their management is varied as the following examples from the Victoria Park green strategy draft. Can the new plan guide a future greener centre?

Needed in public consultation some direction in the plan of how local peoples involvement or ownerships can achieve this. A strong element for gaining public's Attention and participation.

13 The capital letters on the map show the variations in real life today

A Wild area largely managed by Victoria Park Action Group

B park planted areas managed by SWT, shrubs cut to 1m height to deter bad lads

C new housing in Wilfred Road, front gardens just gravel.

D adjoining old terraced house front gardens some paved some nice soiled gardens

E area of protected park omitted from park interpretation plans 2008, council thought they would flog to developer, now being planted out as orchard area by park group

F centre of park biggest green area in town centre, last local plan dividing with cycleways defeated, now are maintained for varying sports, some scope for edge shrub planting.

G St James School maintained , play pitch and forest school

H environmental roadside mound, issues with rough sleepers, cleaned by park group 36 years old needs replanting in places to preserve sound absorbing qualities

I green area planted, council owned but should have been on protected open space map as arose from building Chritchard Way road across park in 1983

J Tone way road with wide verges and trees, management of grassland close to road is to mow wild plants at wrong times ie wildflowers just before 2019 crickets world cup.

Management issues here; workman working by a live highway, services under ground.

K River Tone margin key maintenance plan, regular mowing of flood plain to kill English weeds, failure to cut river edge (think by EA) Himalian Balsum spreading.

L landscaped areas related to business park, key wildlife linkage park to river

M roundabout could be modelled with centre mound as at other end of Trenchard Way

N raised verge some trees, planting could include poppies as tribute to road founder.

O wide grass verge could be a small lagoon site to drain flooding on road

P off drawing Duke Street, carpark landscaped by community group 30 years ago and east end wide green verge beyond pavement to flats, good LA owned wild planting site.

Q off drawing St Marys church green area, nice trees liked by squirrels.

