

This regeneration masterplan was prepared for:



Network Rail



Project Taunton

The masterplanning was undertaken by the following team:



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Above: The Masterplan Area

1.0 Introduction

Introduction

Network Rail and Project Taunton have jointly funded a masterplan for Taunton Railway Station with the principle aim of creating the template for an exciting new gateway into the town that promotes its role as a major centre and focus for development activity in the region.

The masterplanning has involved a detailed review of the opportunities and constraints associated with the land surrounding the existing railway station.

The area is seen as having a huge potential for both the redevelopment of the station itself, and the opportunities presented by the existing under utilised land to both the north and south of the station, together with the increased commercial opportunities directly associated with the business of running of the station / ancillary uses. This is particularly pertinent in the light of the imminent construction of the new Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR) due to be completed during Autumn 2013, and the adjacent Firepool regeneration site which is of regional significance. The masterplanning involved:

- Review of the current land ownerships within the study area (illustrated opposite) and a review of the future development opportunities within the study area (and links to areas beyond).
- A comprehensive review of the existing Taunton Railway Station public realm / environs.
- Review of the current passenger arrangements/ facilities, provision for interchange with other modes of transport, and design.
- Design of a new layout for the station approaches and related land uses that significantly raises the profile and economic performance of the area and that creates a quality public realm environment that will stand the test of time and not become dated. The brief required that particular attention should be paid to the choice of quality and low maintenance materials.

The masterplanning work specifically excluded any work in relation to the operational working of the station, the track and operations themselves.

Existing Context

In summary, the station public realm and facilities, in their current form do not engage effectively with forthcoming adjacent development within the town centre and do not present as positive a first impression of Taunton as they could, i.e. as a busy and successful County town which is moving forward.

Of particular relevance to future development within and around the railway station are the new commercial developments which are being taken forward on both the key land ownerships within the Firepool site. These will ultimately create around 5,575 sq m / 60,000 sq ft of commercial space, retail, and approximately 600 new homes. St Modwen, the Borough Council's development partner for the site, has started construction of the first phase, an HQ for Viridor Waste Management.

Also adjacent to the station, on the site of the former East Goods Yard, a significant residential development for Knightstone Housing is nearing completion whilst Crest Nicholson has recently obtained planning permission for the remainder of the site to provide circa 240 high quality houses and apartments.



Above: Planning Documents

1.0 Introduction

Planning Context

'Project Taunton' is a multi-million pound social and economic regeneration programme for Taunton. The key objectives of the programme are to boost business opportunities, improve transport infrastructure, initiate high quality developments, foster sustainable communities, nurture Taunton's green areas and make the most of the river. Taunton Railway Station & Firepool is one of four key development areas for Project Taunton.

The importance of Taunton Railway Station and the large area of under utilised land around it has been identified as a key focus for regeneration by key planning policies and strategic plans such as:

- Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan adopted October 2008
- Taunton Town Centre Urban Design Framework

Other planning guidance that has informed the master planning of Taunton Railway Station area includes

- Taunton Town Centre Design Code
- Taunton Protocol
- Public Art Code

Masterplanning process

The masterplanning has been developed out of consultation with key stakeholders and representatives from the following organisations:

- Project Taunton
- Network Rail(various teams)
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- Somerset County Council
- First Great Western (including station managers)
- St Modwen Developments
- Abbey Manor Group
- First Bus



Above: Vision images from other station investments that capture the feeling of the potential new gateway into Taunton...

"...research provides strong evidence that station investment can have a major impact in terms of urban regeneration and transformation"

The Value of Station Investment Research on Regenerative Impacts Steer Davies Gleave, November 2011

Station investment as a catalyst for wider regeneration

The research by Steer Davies Gleave (November 2011) suggests that station investment will generally generate substantial benefits through one or more of three key mechanisms

- Removing physical barriers to movement in and around the station.
- Improving the image of a station and hence perceptions of the town or city that it serves, thereby encouraging greater investment and making it more attractive as a place to live and work; and
- Leveraging wider development for providing a focus for investment in the surrounding area and increasing confidence among investors.

All three key mechanisms of regeneration are possible opportunities at Taunton Railway Station.



2.0 The Vision

Core principles

The masterplan vision for Taunton Railway Station has seven core principles for regeneration

1. Improved Connectivity

The masterplan proposals substantially improve the connectivity of more sustainable modes of movement to the national and local rail network, these include pedestrian, cyclist and public transportation movements such as buses, coaches and taxis.

The masterplan proposes a generous and high quality public realm in and around the station connected to the surrounding area.

A major new crossing across the NIDR to Firepool Boulevard providing a safe and attractive gateway alongside then into this exciting new employment quarter and beyond alongside the river to the town centre and Somerset County Cricket ground.

A major new bus and coach interchange is proposed on the south side adjacent to the new

station entrance and visitor concourse providing sufficient capacity and improved connectivity for both frequent local bus services and special events such as rail replacement services (during line closures and emerging works) and intensive leisure traffic to special events such as Butlins, Minehead, Glastonbury Festival and T4 On The Beach.

Taxi services, passenger drop off and short time parking (20 minutes maximum stay) facilities have been reorganised too, improving capacity, convenience of use, legibility and connectivity for rail users.

2. Greater Capacity for Growth in Rail Use

The masterplan proposals have incorporated several key elements to increase the capacity of the station to accommodate and stimulate anticipated increases in rail use.

• Major new bus and coach interchanges especially south side.

- New station concourse increasing station space on the south side with new booking hall, ticket gates, new café and retail facilities for passengers
- New multi-storey station car park increasing the capacity from 213 to 400 spaces
- Much improved footpath and cycle path connections to surrounding areas and town centre

3. Sustainable Economic Growth

The masterplan proposals will support sustainable economic growth by helping to accommodate increased rail travel demand from high density urban developments in the vicinity of the site such as Firepool and East Yard but also other regeneration areas with the town centre that are promoting lower dependency on private car use.



2.0 The Vision

4. Act as a Gateway

Taunton Railway Station is a key point of arrival and departure for many business travellers and visitors to the town or other destinations in the area. The current station facilities and environs create a poor impression for Taunton, the major county town and centre for growth in the region. The masterplan proposes a major new gateway into Taunton with high quality public realm within new station forecourts enclosed by significant new landmark developments with street level shops, cafes and restaurant, hotel office and business enterprise facilities.

The new gateways will greatly improve the image of Taunton and the regeneration areas of Firepool and East Yard, making it more attractive as a place to live, work and invest.

5. Wider Development Opportunities

Major investment in the station proposed by the Masterplan will encourage and stimulate development on utilised railway land such as Oldbridge Yard and the substantial adjacent regeneration sites of Firepool and East Yard. Development within these key new regeneration areas for Taunton will be stimulated by improved accessibility and high quality of the station environment and facilities proposed.

6. Act as a Commercial Centre

The range of commercial uses proposed for the new station and gateway developments will offer a range of facilities that will cater not only for rail and bus passengers but also for the wider community. This will be of particular benefit to the new workers and residents of the surrounding mixed-use development of Firepool, East Yard and Oldbridge Yard (the new mixed residential neighbourhood on rail land).

7. Remove the Barriers to Growth

The current economic conditions have had a significant impact on economic development nationally however, the poor quality of Taunton Railway Station and its environs may have also contributed to constrained economic development within Firepool and the town centre.

The research by Steer Davies Gleave commissioned by Network Rail has identified the following three links between poor station condition and the economy of the surrounding area.

"Stations can restrict physical access across an urban area...

- A poor quality environment in and around a station discourages investment...
- A poor station environment creates a poor impression of a town or city".

As outlined above, the masterplan proposals address these three key barriers to growth.

3.0 Strategic Masterplan

Strategic Masterplan

- 1 New station entrance and booking hall
- 2 New station concourse, cafe and visitor facilities
- 3 New station gateway south side
- 4 Bus / coach interchange
- 5 Commercial development with retail, café restaurant at street level
- 6 Station multi-storey car park
- 7 Station surface long stay car park
- 8 Relocated Network Rail Maintenance Depot and potential parking for rail users
- 9 Work Hub
- 10 Pocket park
- 11 New station forecourt north side
- 12 Walk up office units (or mixed residential development
- 13 Rationalised Kilkenny car park
- 14 Sheltered housing or retirement / starter apartments
- 15 New terraced housing
- 16 Relocated allotments







Access

The complex nature of transport demand at rail stations invariably leads to competition for the limited space that is available to provide an appropriate level of service for all modes. One of the guiding principles that has underpinned the development of the masterplan is the desire to create a much enhanced 'gateway' into Taunton town centre which has led to a focus of customer facilities and public transport interchange on the southern side of the station, particularly with its link to the Firepool pedestrianised Boulevard that provides direct access down to the river and into the town centre and County Cricket Ground.

The rail line provides an artificial barrier between the north and south sides of the masterplan area and broadly bisects the area. The north and south are linked by Station Road however different access options exist for each side of the rail line. The area to the south of the rail line is most affected by:

- 1. The proposed route of the NIDR
- 2. The proposed signalised junctions into the Firepool Regeneration Area

3. The proposed pedestrian crossing to the pedestrainised Boulevard in Firepool

Options for the north of the rail line are more constrainted and are summarised below.

- 1. Utilise the existing access via Station Road. There is an existing (narrow) right-turn lane on Station Road which will provide some capacity at this junction.
- 2. Create an access via Malvern Terrace, an existing residential street. The street does not have parking restrictions and is parked on both sides, however, some of this parking could be by rail commuters. The parking in this location could be managed through implementation of a residents parking scheme. The junction with St Andrew's Road does not have scope for widening if this is required for capacity reasons. The fact that the two junctions to the east have right-turn lanes would indicate that this approach would be required here. One option for utilising Malvern Terrace could be to provide access to a limited number of properties by extending the cul-de-sac southwards.
- 3. Create an access via Heavitree Way, an existing residential street. The street does not have parking restrictions and can be parked on both sides. There

is an existing pedestrian/ cycle link from Heavitree Way to the footway/ cycleway that runs along the northern side of the site. It is understood that the section of land that links to the site is in private ownership. The junction with St Andrew's Road includes a right-turn facility.

4. Create an access via Oldbridge Lane. The width here is restricted and vehicular access will be difficult to achieve without taking third party land.

There are a number of access options for the land north of the site that make development here deliverable. The development of masterplan has considered the opportunities for access and a preferred route is via the existing road leading to Kilkenny car park.



Public Transport Integration

Bus and Coach Integration

There are a number of policies and reports that have been considered in the formulation of the approach to better integrating the buses with the station, including:

- Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington Future Transport Strategy 2011-2026 (published November 2011)
- Taunton Area Action Plan
- Monkton Heathfield bus route options

The Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington Future Transport Strategy 2011-20296 (published November 2011) presents the approach to addressing growth in the area through transport interventions. Ideas and options considered that have a direct relationship with Taunton Rail Station include:

- PT1 New or improved bus priority route from Monkton Heathfield along A3259 to Taunton town centre via Taunton Railway Station
- PT8 Improved interchange facilities and better integration of bus and rail services at Taunton Railway Station

• CY25 New foot/ cycle bridge over railway linking Taunton town centre and Lyngford

The adopted Taunton Area Action Plan also contains a positive commentary on projects intended to improve public transport in the area:

Bus services from locations south of Taunton need to be extended northwards across the town centre to serve the strategic employment site at Firepool. To deliver a more integrated public transport system, they also need to serve the railway station. At the same time, buses from the north need to continue past the station area to serve the retail core. A high-quality bus/rail interchange is therefore needed at the railway station, together with a terminus for bus services close to the main shopping area.

It is intended that the proposed development at Monkton Heathfield be served by a high quality bus link that accesses the rail station on a route into the town centre. At the time of publishing this report, it is understood that the preferred option has not yet been committed to. However, to access the rail station it is likely that the Monkton Heathfield service will stop on the north side of the rail line and this assumption has been carried through in the masterplanning. Careful consideration has been given to the most appropriate location for the buses in relation to the station. Currently, there are bus stops located on Station Road for northbound services and bus stops located outside the northern station entrance for southbound services. The bus stops on Station Road are of a particularly poor quality and access to them from the station is less than ideal. A number of factors have been taken into consideration in determining the most appropriate arrangement for the bus services as reported below. When using the term 'legibility' in the following table this refers to how easy it is for a passenger to find a bus; if all services are in one area, for example, then this presents good 'legibility' to passengers as they have a clear point at which they can access the bus network.





Above: Potential for high quality public transport facilities.

	All Services North	All Services South	Service Split North and South
Positives	 Locates all bus services (including potential Monkton Heathfield route) in one place which significantly improves legibility for passengers Removes large vehicles from the station frontage Utilises the existing arrangements which provides priority for south bound bus services 	 Locates the majority of bus services in one place for improved legibility for passengers Provides good link with Firepool and maximises the use of the proposed bus gate at Priory Road/ Station Road Enhances the proposed new southern entrance to station (gateway to Taunton) Efficient links with Firepool 	 Shares the demand for space between the north and south of the station Provides flexibility in the provision of services
Negatives	 Services are located away from the proposed main entrance to the south Less efficient links with Firepool Large space requirement to accommodate services 	 Northbound buses are required to deviate from their route into the station (via three sets of traffic signals) Large space requirement to accommodate services 	Reduced legibility for passengers

Upon consideration, locating all the existing services south of the station meets with the overall vision and clearly improves the legibility of the bus network for passengers. This is with the exception of the Monkton Heathfield service which is likely to locate north of the station. This enables the removal of the bus stops on station road as all services will call into the southern station entrance.

Taxis

Taxis are an important part of the operation of the station. Accordingly, it is proposed that taxis are able to access the new southern station frontage directly to provide them with visibility to the travelling public.



- Off road cycle path - Proposed off road cycle path - On road cycle lane - Signed (on road) cycle route - Proposed on road cycle route \leftrightarrow Cycle crossing facilities

Walking and Cycling

Pedestrian and cyclist access into the station provides important provision for sustainable travel options into the station. There is an existing and proposed (on the NIDR) network of routes in and around the station. Opportunities to cross the rail line exist via Station Road which passes under the railway and also via Winckworth Way which is a traffic free route further east (approximately 750 metres east of Station Road). In addition, associated with the NIDR is a new bridge crossing to the west of rail line.

The masterplan provides the opportunity to complete the east-west link to the north of the station that is currently severed from the west by a short section of footpath upon which cycling is prohibited. The residential development in this area provides the opportunity for either an on-street route (the street should be quiet) or provision of a shared facility on one of the footways. This can be linked to the Station Road route by either:

- providing a facility as part of changes to the Station Road/ station access junction or,
- directing cyclists across the crossing facilities at the Kingston Road/ Cheddon Road

The Taunton Area Action Plan identifies improvements for cyclists in the location of the station providing a new pedestrian and cycle crossing of the rail line east of the station in the period 2012 – 2013:

• CY25 New foot/ cycle bridge over railway linking Taunton town centre and Lyngford

It is not proposed, as part of the masterplan, to promote a new bridge crossing over the rail line as identified in the Taunton Area Action Plan. It is considered that for the following reasons this policy requirement may not be appropriate:

- There are three crossing points of the rail line (if you include the proposed bridge as part of the NIDR) in a distance of 1,200 metres, which equates to one every 400 metres. This is considered a good level of provision.
- Providing a bridge across the rail line will require that users encounter a significant level change which they may not find attractive.
- The existing crossing points (Station Road and Winckworth Way) do not require significant level change and both provide links to existing networks that cover the north – south demand.

Parking

Short Stay Parking and Drop Off

Short stay parking (20 minutes and less) and drop off facilities for private vehicles are an important part of the operation and incorporated within the masterplanning.

Public Car Parking

The Taunton Area Action Plan considers public car parking and identifies the provision of a multi-storey car park catering for 600 spaces is located on Kilkenny, opening in 2017.

Parking Standards

The location of development close to the rail station with its function as a transport hub due to its connection with bus services and strategic cycle routes would suggest that it is a good location to reduce car parking standards associated with development at the site. Additionally, there are a number of public car parks in the area.

The masterplan area falls within the area covered by the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) which

presents car and cycle parking standards. Reference has also been made, where land uses are not covered by the AAP, to the October 2011 Consultation Draft of the Somerset County Council Transport Policies Parking Strategy as the emerging guidance on parking. The car and cycle parking standards are summarised in the following tables.

Land Use	Standard	Comment			
Taunton Area Action Plan					
Offices B1(a)	1 space per 100 sqm				
Retail stores < 1,000 sqm	None	Provision for servicing only			
Non Food Retail stores > 1,000 sqm	1 space per 40 sqm				
Food retail store > 1,000 sqm	1 space per 28 sqm				
Residential flats	Maximum 1 space per unit				
October 2011 Consultation Draft of the Somerset County Council Transport Policies Parking Strategy					
Residential Development 1 bedroom	1 space	Visitor parking:			
Residential Development 2 bedrooms	1 space	 Where half of parking is allocated, none Where less than half is allocated, 			
Residential Development 3 bedrooms	2 spaces				
Residential Development 4 bedrooms	3 spaces	0.2 spaces per dwelling			
Hotels	1 space per 3 bedrooms				

Cycle parking to be provided in accordance with the following standards:

Land Use	Standard	Comment			
Taunton Area Action Plan					
Offices B1(a)	1 space per 80 sqm				
Other B1 uses, B2 – B7	1 space per 130 sqm				
Retail stores < 1,000 sqm	1 space per 70 sqm				
Retail stores > 1,000 sqm	1 space per 80 sqm				
General warehouses and distribution (B8)	1 space per 250 sqm				
Residential flats	1 space per bedroom				
Residential houses	1.5 spaces per unit				
October 2011 Consultation Draft of the Somerset County Council Transport Policies Parking Strategy					
Bus and train stations	1 space per 20 peak period passengers				
Hotels	1 space per 10 bedrooms				

Disabled parking (minimum provision)

- Development with 24 or fewer parking spaces: 2 spaces
- Development with 25 or more parking spaces: 5% of total capacity, plus 2 spaces



Above: Phasing diagram

3.4 Delivering the Vision: Potential Phasing

The following phasing is proposed to develop a viable regeneration.

Phase 1

Construction and completion of the new distributor road (NIDR).

Oldbridge Yard is prepared for redevelopment:

- The existing Network Rail maintenance facilities are relocated to a new location within West Yard.
- The existing businesses within the Old Workshops relocate to more suitable industrial locations with improved access and commercial prominence.
- The existing non-statutory allotments are relocated to the undeveloped area at the east end.

The main part of Oldbridge Yard is brought forward for residential development consisting of mainly family sized houses.

During the first stage the former Great Western Hotel could be brought forward for development as a Work Hub / small business enterprise centre subject to viability.

Phase 2

Existing parking from the south side station car park is relocated to a temporary car park at the west end of Oldbridge Yard, close to the north side station.

West Yard is developed as a replacement Network Rail maintenance depot and rail commuter parking on site areas not required by the depot.

Phase 3

A new bus / coach interchange and link road linking into a new junction onto the NIDR at the eastern end of the existing south side car park.

Phase 4

With the bus interchange and all the temporary station parking in place, the new station gateway developments are brought forward.

- The west end of the existing south side station car park is developed for commercial uses including street level retail units and cafe / restaurant fronting the new station forecourt and a range of commercial office units or hotel at upper levels.
- The east end of the site is developed for a multistorey station car park

Phase 5

The temporary car park site on the north side in Oldbridge Yard is developed out as a high quality small unit residential development. This could include sheltered housing, retirement village or starter apartment development with cycle storage and some non residential social space or facilities at street level.

Phase 6

Funds from the commercial developments provide financial support to a major refurbishment of the station buildings and customer facilities, and the public realm outside the south and north station entrances.

Phases 4-7

Kilkenny car park is fully or partly developed as a high quality mixed-use development.

Option A could comprise offices fronting the new station forecourt and a rationalized surface car park on the existing site.

Option B could comprise offices fronting the new station forecourt and a mix of apartments and houses on the remainder of the site. The existing car park spaces would be replaced by the public car parking decks proposed as part of the multi–storey car park within Firepool.

4.1 The Gateway (station forecourts)

Detailed Masterplanning Proposals

Station forecourt constraints

The key constraints are:

Within the south side station forecourt parking / queuing space is needed for a significant number of taxis (28 licensed).

Minimum space needed for 4 - 6 buses during engineering works that require a replacement bus service - typically twice a year.

The ramped footpath link to Station Road, currently the main pedestrian route into town, is narrow, steep and uninviting. It is also slippery in icy conditions and snow and has poor street lighting.

The bus turning area within the main station car park south side is too tight. Illegal parking in the bus turning area causes real issues for the bus operators.

The south side car park provides convenient parking for station users and will need to be replaced nearby to help promote rail use.

On the north side the road down from Kilkenny Court is steep and on a tight curve. It is dangerous in freezing conditions due to ice and snow and buses do slide in such conditions.



















Above: Photographs showing the constraints of the existing station

Opportunities

The key opportunities are:

To significantly improve the functionality in terms of better planned; pedestrian and cyclist access, taxi rank facilities, passenger drop off and short term parking. Equally important is the opportunity to greatly upgrade the quality of the public realm. (1)

Major new pedestrian route into Taunton town centre and the County Cricket Ground via the new station 'gateway' and the Firepool regeneration area. (2)

New landmark development enclosing the proposed station 'gateway' space with retail, cafes or restaurants at street level fronting the main public space. The development can also terminate the northern end of the new Boulevard through the Firepool regeneration area. (3)

The site can also provide a new multistorey car park with increased capacity to accommodate and promote future growth in rail use. (4)

Refurbishment and redevelopment of the former Great Western Hotel maximising its prime location adjacent to the new station gateway. (5)

The current ramped footpath down to Station Rd improved with better lighting and surfacing to improve safety. (6)



4.1 The Gateway (station forecourts)

Masterplan proposals

The current station forecourts on both the north and south sides of the station are in need of major improvement and currently present a very poor impression of Taunton. Nor do they function particularly well, especially during special events and rail replacement when bus and coach parking and movements are difficult to manage.

Major investment in these station forecourts in terms of high quality public realm and much improved transport and pedestrian planning, will significantly improve the image of the gateway into Taunton helping to stimulate regeneration in Firepool and elsewhere across the town.

The masterplan vision includes several key strategies for major improvements to the gateway.

1. Well planned public transport interchange.

Significant improvements to the forecourt planning with major new bus/coach interchange, improved taxi waiting and drop off, wide and safe pedestrian routes into Firepool and town centre, more legible short term passenger parking and drop off areas.

2. Create a sense of place

Commercial and business developments enclosing the station forecourts creating a greater sense of place and providing more activity at street level with shops, cafes and business facilities

3. High quality public realm

Significant upgrading of the current tarmac areas with shared surface, high quality paving, trees, landscaping and seating & clear legible signage.

Details of these proposals are illustrated on the strategic master plans overleaf.



Above: The new station gateway south side


Masterplan for the new station gateway south side

- 1. New booking hall, visitor concourse
- 2. Existing station buildings refurbished
- 3. Work Hub circa new wing of flexible space enclosing the 'Gateway'
- 4. Commercial development circa enclosing the 'gateway' and terminating the Firepool Boulevard
- 5. Multi-storey station car park circa 350 400 spaces Potential for an extensive array of photo-voltaics at roof level
- 6. Bus gate (bus only access)
- 7. Bus and coach interchange (8 no. spaces)
- 8. Taxi waiting / queueing
- 9. Taxi drop off only
- 10. Passenger drop off only (No waiting)
- 11. Passenger 20 minute parking
- 12. High quality new public realm
- 13. Firepool Boulevard pedestrianised
- 14. Wide signalised crossing over the NIDR

- 15. Improved existing ramped footpath down to station
- 16. Two way street to car park
- 17. New junction onto NIDR
- 18. Long stay parking (surface)



Above: The new station gateway north side

4.1 The Gateway (station forecourts)

Masterplan for the new station gateway north side

- 1. New glazed entrance lobby ticket gates into the underpass
- 2. Existing station buildings refurbished
- 3. Bus interchange
- 4. Taxi drop off
- 5. Passenger 20 minute parking
- 6. Station deliveries and access to passenger parking
- 7. Remodelled road levels to shallower / safer gradients
- 8. Bus and taxi only access
- 9. Wide crossing
- 10. High quality shared surface public realm



Above: Station Area Masterplan



Above: View looking up the Firepool Regeneration Boulevard towards the new station 'gateway'

Above: Views

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Above: View looking into the new station 'gateway'





Above: View looking into the new station 'gateway'





Above: Artist's Impression looking at the new station forecourt on the northside



4.2 Station Facilities

Detailed Masterplanning Proposals

Station Constraints

The key constraints are:

The existing entrances into the station are narrow, uninviting and partially concealed. They do not convey the status of Taunton as a major centre in the region.

There is an absence of refreshment facilities on the south side for passengers.

Access to the ticket office and the north side station entrance from Kilkenny car park is via steep external steps.

The existing station buildings are listed. and although in good decorative order externally, the building fabric and some internal spaces are currently in need of major refurbishment and investment.

The existing accommodation includes important customer information equipment for the station some of which will be expensive to relocate.

Electronic ticket gates need to be introduced.



















Above: Photographs showing the constraints of the existing station

Opportunities

The key opportunities are:

To reorientate the main passenger arrivals and departures to the south side, with more direct and dynamic access into the town centre and Somerset County Cricket Ground. (1)

To create a major new station entrance, booking hall and passenger concourse on the south side linked directly to much improved pedestrian, bus and taxi provision. (2)

Improved passenger facilities on the south side including cafe, retail and new toilets etc. (3)

More legible and inviting station entrance on the north side. (4)

A more inviting platform underpass (currently a fully enclosed space) through a fully glazed entrance on the north side creating a visual connection with the outside. (5)

Rationalisation, consolidation and refurbishment of the station operators accommodation and the historic building fabric. (6)





4.2 Station Facilities

Masterplan proposals

For a major centre in the region the railway station has limited facilities for passengers and is inadequate particularly on the south side. Both entrances are narrow and awkwardly located such that they are partially concealed. They present a poor impression for Taunton.

The previously mentioned research by Steer Davies Gleave, concluded that improving the image of a station and hence perceptions of the town that it serves, acts as a catalyst and encourages greater investment in the area. It also identified evidence of a "...'ripple effect' whereby initial development prompted partly by station improvements increases investor confidence and encourages further development across the city."

The station facilities and internal environment are a gateway into the town for visitors arriving as much as the station forecourts outside.

Currently the main ticket office and station entrance is on the north side facing away from the town centre and on the wrong side of the track. The proposals to re-orientate the main station entrance to the south side directly opposite Firepool, the cricket ground and town centre, will greatly improve the 'gateway' into Taunton.

The comprehensive redevelopment of the underutilised and vacant land around the station will provide the stimulus and financial support to invest in the station facilities. The development of Oldbridge Yard as a new residential neighbourhood is particularly key in this regard as employment development on this site is unlikely to generate significant capital to reinvest in the station environs.

Effective exploitation of retail and other commercial opportunities in and around the station will also generally have a beneficial impact upon the economic activity in the area it services, helping to stimulate investment and create jobs.

The masterplan proposes a new booking hall and visitor concourse on the south side with opportunities for much improved facilities such as retail units, café, new toilets, cafe seating, waiting area and booking and information hall located within an attractive well lit glazed concourse.

On the northside, the masterplan proposes the removal of the current ticket office that will become redundant

as it significantly impinges upon passengers and pedestrian flows in this already constrained forecourt. The entrance is also awkwardly tucked in the corner facing away from the station forecourt. The vision is to replace this building with a light glazed concourse with ticket machines, providing natural daylight and views out from the station underpass.

It is also proposed that major vacant spaces within the station buildings be refurbished to provide upgraded office space and mess facilities for the station operators and train crews.



4.3 West Yard

Detailed Masterplanning Proposals

West Yard Constraints

The key constraints are:

Southern edge of the West Yard site is subject to a compulsory purchase order to deliver the NIDR.

A substantial portion of the West Yard site is needed for new OTM sidings, aggregate store and the new head shunt (relocated due to the NIDR)

The site is a former goods yard and so there is a potential contamination, underground structures, services infrastructure and turntable well.

Security fencing will be needed to the new operational sidings and head shunt.

The site is elevated with a substantial existing retaining wall to the eastern edge onto Station Rd and a steep bank with mature trees onto Whitehall.

The site includes an awkward cutting down onto Station Rd.



















Above: Photographs showing the site constraints

Opportunities

The key opportunities are:

Potential relocation of the Network Rail maintenance depot from its current site within Oldbridge Yard to West Yard that has much more direct vehilcular access off the new NIDR and excellent access to the track. This releases the current depot site for more appropriate devlopment. (1)

The former stream 'roundhouse' is a potential site for relocation of some station parking with direct gated access to the down platform for regular commuters. (2)

Creation of landmark landscape feature on the NIDR, marking the former railway engineering heritage. (3)

Regeneration, repair and cleaning of existing historic railway structures such as the retaining walls either side of the Station Rd plus better and more attractive lighting. (4)





Above: Masterplan proposals

4.3 West Yard

Masterplan for the West Yard

- 1. New head shunt
- 2. New OTM sidings
- 3. Large vehicle turning (60 foot trombone trailer)
- 4. New 9.2m entrance of the NIDR
- 5. Network Rail maintenance depot facilities (mess and toilet / change facilities ground floor / offices first floor)
- 6. Double height secure internal storage space
- 7. Parking for plant and depot vehicles
- 8. Former 'roundhouse' car park and turntable landscape feature
- 9. Landmark pocket park
- 10. Potential ticket gate access to down platform for regular commuters
- 11. Cleaning and lighting of retaining walls

Masterplan proposals

West Yard is heavily constrained by the former engineering structures and the significant level difference above Station Road. The relocation of the goods yard head shunt and new OTM sidings place further constraints on the site and significantly limit its access. The yard is thus surrounded on western and northern sides by operational rail lines to the south by the new NIDR and the rear face of old industrial buildings and to the east by the former 'roundhouse' retaining wall down to Station Road.

Rail related uses are the most viable for this site and thus the masterplan proposes that West Yard is developed for two such key uses:

- Relocation site for the Network Rail maintenance depot
- Rail commuter parking on the former steam roundhouse and direct ticket gated access onto Platform 2.

The southern corner of the site drops awkwardly and steeply down to Station Road. This site is proposed as a landmark pocket park with rail heritage theme and opportunities for large scale public art on the prominent NIDR.

4.4 Oldbridge Yard

Detailed Masterplanning Proposals

Oldbridge Yard Constraints

The key constraints are:

The southern edge of Kilkenny car park is currently leased to Taunton Deane Council as part of the car park.

Delivery access needed to the station platform and Pumpkin (via gates to eastern end)

Allotments currently on the site but these are non statutory.

Malvern Terrace is an existing residential street with limited capacity. Plais Street is very narrow and not suitable for vehicular access. Access to Heavitree Way is restricted due to land ownership.

The former Engineer's Workshops on site are currently occupied by a number of tenants / small businesses on temporary short term leases. The buildings have been significantly altered over the years but are shown for potential retention by Taunton Deane Council's Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan.

Network Rail's maintenance depot is currently located within the yard area.

Well used public footpath and cycle path along the northern edge.

Any development needs to be minimum 6.5 metres from edge of nearest running line.



















Above: Photographs showing the site constraints of the existing station

Opportunities

The key opportunities are:

Southern edge of Kilkenny car park has the potential for future redevelopment to create a better and more active frontage to the north side station entrance forecourt (subject to sufficient re-provision of replacement parking nearby). (1)

Relocation of the existing allotments to the eastern end of Oldbridge Yard and redevelopment of the adjacent delapidated GWRSA buildings to create a very useful and sustainable redevelopment site close to the station. (2)

The rest of Oldbridge Yard has the potential to create an attractive and sustainable residential neighbourhood close to the station and town centre. (3)

Improved pedestrian and cyclist access to the surrounding residential streets and neighbourhood (not vehicular access). (4)

Rationalisation and relocation of the maintenance depot facilities to a more secure site with improved access to the strategic road network. (5)

Relocation of the existing light industrial uses to more suitable locations that have improved access to the road network. (6)





Above: Masterplan proposals

4.4 Oldbridge Yard

- 1. Office development fronting and enclosing the northside station forecourt
- 2. Kilkenny car park is developed as a high quality mixed-use development.
- 3. High quality small unit residential development. This could include sheltered housing, retirement village or starter apartment development with cycling storage and some non residential social space or facilities at street level.
- 4. Residential development of mainly family type housing with gardens
- 5. Relocated allotments
- 6. New street access cut across the contours to reduce the current steep gradient
- 7. Potential future bus only access route to Monkton Heathfield
- 8. Existing footpaths
- 9. Proposed new on street cyclepath
- 10. New street access into Oldbridge Yard based on manual for streets design

Masterplan proposals

Oldbridge Yard is a massively underutilised site with buildings in a very poor condition that are no longer fit for purpose. The current Network Rail maintenance depot on site is sprawling and not secure. The site is in close proximity to an extensive residential neighbourhood along the whole of its northern boundary and has very poor connections to the main trunk road network with little or no commercial frontage or prominence. The site therefore is a poor location for businesses, especially light industrial and warehouses that require direct and easy HGV access to trunk roads and the M5.

The adjacent regeneration area of Firepool offers a far better location for new office based businesses to locate, with close proximity to the town centre and river as well as the new station gateway and NIDR. New business development on Oldbridge Yard will undermine the impetus to regenerate Firepool.

Although the site is currently zoned as an employment area, the former Oldbridge Yard would make a desirable and sustainable new area for housing within close proximity of the town centre, river, new employment opportunities within Firepool and the rail / bus network. The masterplan vision proposes Oldbridge Yard be developed as a new neighbourhood of mainly family style housing with gardens and good footpath / cycle path links to the station and town centre. The former GWRSA site next to the station and the rail and bus transport links, is proposed as an apartment type development to suit low car users such as retired couples, young couples without children or those in need of care.

The masterplan proposes re-providing employment space in more suitable locations such as the former GWR Hotel and station gateway frontage sites, that will help to stimulate investment in Firepool.



Above: Masterplan proposals



4.5 East Yard

Detailed Masterplanning Proposals

East Yard Constraints

The key constraints are:

The Network Rail land retained within East Yard is a thin site close to the running lines and any development needs to be minimum 6.5m from the edge of the nearest line.

The thin site contains operational cables for signalling.













 Former watertower

Above: Photographs showing the site constraints

Opportunities

The key opportunities are:

Joint venture with the developers of East Yard, Abbey Manor Group, to provide extra land to the north of the NIDR that would help to make the sites for the employment buildings within the northern edge of this key regeneration area, a more developable size and shape. (1)

Option for long stay parking, within the thin strip of land along the northern edge of the former East Yard, subject to access arrangements. (2)



Masterplan proposals

The thin strip of rail land along the northern boundary will be difficult to develop on its own because it is too narrow; however, the masterplan proposals are for a holistic development approach with the adjoining land owner to create more functional development plots along the northern edge of East Yard that can deliver a mix of potential uses. These could include long stay station car parking to help accommodate future growth in rail use or the development of suitable employment uses.



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