

RUISHTON AND THORNFALCON PARISH COUNCIL

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Ms Ann Rhodes
Taunton Deane Borough Council
Policy Officer (Planning & Environment)
The Deane House
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25th April 2016

Dear Ms Rhodes

APPLICATION FOR THE FORMAL DESIGNATION OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

Further to our previous correspondence I am writing to advise you that the Parishes of Ruishton and Thornfalcon hereby jointly apply for designation as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of producing a neighbourhood plan.

Ruishton and Thornfalcon Parishes (subsequently referred to as 'the parish' and shown on the attached plan) are situated three miles from the county town of Taunton in the Borough of Taunton Deane and County of Somerset. The parish lies to the East of the M5 and South of the River Tone and straddles the A358. The main settlements are Ruishton, Thornfalcon and Henlade. The population of the Ruishton Parish recorded in the 2011 Census was 1,473 and Thornfalcon Parish 119, a total of 1,592 people.

Much of the area lies within the flood-plain of the River Tone and stretches to the foot of the Blackdown Hills. Despite being predominantly agricultural there is considerable biodiversity and historic features such as the bridge and embankment of the old GWR Chard branch railway line and the bridge and embankment of the former Chard Canal. There are two historic churches; St George's (14/15th century) in Ruishton and the Church of the Holy Cross Thornfalcon (14th century). The A358 Park and Ride lies within the parish boundary on the site of a Bronze and Iron Age settlement and a Roman Farm. There are a number of listed buildings including Henlade House and Ruishton House.

The village of Ruishton is the largest settlement and has a pub, school, car sales, and hairdressing salon. Upper Henlade, in the vicinity of the A358, has a number of commercial premises including the Toby Inn, Premier Inn and Woodlands Castle. There is a Post Office and plant nursery as well as the Kijlstra Precast works. The Mount Somerset Hotel and Spa together with the Plant Centre are in

Lower Henlade. The Nags Head Pub is in Thornfalcon. Ruishton Church of England Primary School is located in Ruishton village and serves 172 children of the parish and beyond, as well as providing a children's nursery and after-school club. Ruishton also houses the Village Hall adjoining the Recreation Ground. These facilities are the focus of activity for a number of groups and societies.

The Parish Council (which acts on behalf of both parishes) formally determined to pursue the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan at its meeting of 2nd March 2016 (minute 16/03/10) and has designated a sub-committee to manage the production of the plan. The Parish Council considers that the Neighbourhood Plan process would enable the community to influence the type, quality and location of development proposed within the parish area as well as proposing and prioritising community benefits that will accrue from such development. It will conduct plan preparation in line with legislation and government advice in a participatory manner. It is anticipated that the plan will cover a 20-year period compatible with that to be covered by the Review of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy to be conducted by the Borough Council and in anticipation of the improvements planned to the A358 and M5 junction, during that same period.

The existing Core Strategy for the Borough states "the villages of.....Henlade (and) Ruishton will retain settlement boundaries, as shown on the Proposals Map insets, and have no further allocations made through the Site Allocations and Development Management DPD, but have some scope for small scale proposals within settlement limits." For the rest of the area it states "outside of the settlements identified above, proposals will be treated as being within Open Countryside."

The Core Strategy also indicated locations for investigating the possibility of strategic employment sites which include Junction 25 of the M5. However the subsequent Site Allocations and Development Management DPD does not include such a site.

The Parish Council anticipates that the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan will take place over a 24-month period, subject to progress on the Core Strategy and A358 proposals.

Yours sincerely

Heather Bryant
Parish Clerk
Ruishton and Thornfalcon Parish Council