

North Somerset Council

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE

DATE OF MEETING: TUESDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2016

SUBJECT OF REPORT: SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL OF DISTRICT

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: CLLR AP REES EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING, HIGHWAYS, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

KEY DECISION: YES

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- i) the Publication version of the Site Allocations Plan is approved for public consultation followed by submission to the Secretary of State;
- ii) the Publication version of the Site Allocations Plan is given weight in assessing development proposals;
- iii) any further minor typographical amendments or changes required prior to submission are agreed by the Director of Development and Environment in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

1.1 The Consultation Draft of the Site Allocations Plan was published for consultation in March 2016. The consultation ran from Thursday March 10th 2016 until Thursday 28th April 2016. There were 264 respondents to the consultation who made 785 individual comments.

1.2 The next stage of the plan-making process is to formally consider the responses received and any other relevant information and to approve the Publication version of the document. This is the document which the local planning authority considers is ready for examination. The regulations require a further period of consultation on the Publication version prior to submission to the Secretary of State for examination.

1.3 Various changes are proposed to the Site Allocations Plan (Written Statement and Schedules) and these can be viewed at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. The revised plan showing the site allocations can be viewed at Appendix 3. A summary of the comments made and the recommended Council response (the Consultation Statement) can be seen at Appendix 4 In the Consultation Statement where **bold text** indicates where it is recommended that the plan be changed as a result of comments made.

The following appendices list and show the changes in more detail:

Appendix 1: Revised Written Statement of the Site Allocations Plan

Appendix 2: Revised Schedules of Allocated Sites with changes highlighted.

Appendix 3: Revised Policies Map.

Appendix 4: Summary of Comments made on the March 2016 Consultation Draft of the Site Allocations Plan and the Council's response (Consultation Statement).

Appendix 5: Plans showing significant changes to the Policies Map. There are a number minor changes not shown e.g. where sites have been completed and can be deleted from the Policies Map

Appendix 6: List of changes to Local Green Space designations.

2. POLICY

2.1 The Government, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), strongly advocates a plan-led approach to development. This is underlined in proposals in the Housing and Planning Bill to allow the Secretary of State to intervene where local planning authorities do not have a plan in place by mid-2017. The statutory plan making process provides the context for the delivery of the Council's key objectives of promoting lifelong learning opportunities, enhancing health and wellbeing, protecting and improving the environment, building safer and stronger communities and increasing prosperity. This report supports the D&E Directorate Annual Statement key commitment to adopt the Core Strategy and associated development documents to guide development and regeneration and underlines the Council's commitment to a speedy, plan led approach.

2.2 The context for the detailed policies is provided by the extant Core Strategy policies, the remaining remitted Core Strategy policies which have reached an advanced stage in the plan preparation process and government guidance such as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.3 The September 2015 letter from the Secretary of State approving the CS13 housing requirement urged the Council to maintain progress on finalising the local plan for the district.

3. DETAILS

3.1 The Secretary of State in his letter of 18 September 2015 confirmed the Core Strategy housing requirement at 20,985 dwellings over the period 2006-2026. This is now part of the development plan. The final paragraph of his letter set out the expectation that the Council should now make progress with the remaining parts of the local plan:

"The Government now expects North Somerset Council to move forward with the other elements of its Local Plan and to deliver the homes its communities need."

3.2 Following the original adoption of the Core Strategy in April 2012, the Council published and consulted upon a Consultation Draft Sites and Policies Plan in Spring 2013. Further

progress was delayed pending the outcome of the reassessment of the Core Strategy housing requirement. Given the circumstances, the decision was taken to progress the development management policies separate from the site allocations.

- Part 1: Development Management Policies has been through the examination process and was adopted in July 2016.
- Part 2: Site Allocations document which can now be progressed to define how the district housing requirement as set out in Policy CS13 and other allocations will be delivered.

3.3 The Site Allocations Plan is being progressed in parallel with the completion of the examination of the remaining Core Strategy remitted policies. This is awaiting the Inspector's Report and is therefore at an advanced stage of plan preparation.

3.4 The principal task of the Site Allocations Plan is to identify the new residential allocations necessary to deliver the Core Strategy requirement, taking into account the need to provide deliverable sites to ensure the Council can maintain a five year housing land supply.

3.5 The site allocations are to address the existing Core Strategy period to 2026. This document included a commitment to plan review by the end of 2018. The strategic requirements for the West of England to 2036 are currently being assessed through the Joint Spatial Plan which is expected to be adopted in 2018. The adoption of a new strategic planning context will require the reassessment and rolling forward of the existing development plans into a new North Somerset Local Plan to 2036.

Plan making process

3.6 Now that the Core Strategy housing target has been confirmed as 20,985 dwellings for the period 2006-2026 it is important that the Council now proceeds towards adopting the Sites and Policies Part 2: Site Allocations Plan.

The revised timetable is as follows:

Stage	Date	Event
Plan-preparation	February-April 2013	<i>6 weeks consultation on Consultation Draft.</i>
	March- April 2016	<i>6 weeks further consultation on the Consultation Draft</i>
	April –Sept 2016	<i>Assessment of responses; Consultation Report preparation of revised document.</i>
	Nov 2016	<i>Consultation on Publication Version</i>
Examination	Jan 2017	<i>Submission to Secretary of State .</i>
	April 2017	<i>Examination conducted by independent Inspector including hearings</i>
	May 2017	<i>Inspector's report issued.</i>
Adoption	June 2017	<i>Formal adoption by the Council.</i>

Plan content

3.7 The North Somerset Council Sites and Policies Part 2: Site Allocation Plan (SAP) is a Local Plan prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Local Planning (England) Regulations 2012 (Section 6). Once adopted it will be a development plan document. Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.8 The purpose of the Site Allocations Plan is to identify the detailed allocations required to deliver the North Somerset Core Strategy, consistent with government guidance. This will include a review of existing and the identification of new allocations covering, for example, residential and employment uses, as well as designations to safeguard or protect particular areas such as local green space or strategic gaps.

3.9 Development on these sites will need to conform to the Core Strategy, Sites and Policies Plan Part 1: Development Management Policies, relevant Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans.

A summary of the main proposals is set out below.

Housing

3.10 The plan looks ahead to 2026 with a target of 20,985 dwellings to be built over the plan period. A considerable number of dwellings currently have planning permission and many allocated sites remain available from the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan and the 2013 Consultation Draft of the Site Allocation Plan. However additional sites need to be allocated in order to meet not only the identified Core Strategy requirement but ensure the Council has a 5 year housing supply.

3.11 Over the period April 2006 to April 2016 7,995 dwellings have been built leaving a residual requirement of 12,990 dwellings to be identified to 2026. This residual requirement is slightly exceeded and is made up of the following:

- proposed new allocations, unimplemented housing allocations carried forward from the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan and large unimplemented housing sites (11,625 dwellings - including Weston Villages)
- other large housing sites with unimplemented planning permissions 161 dwellings)
- small sites with consent (473 dwellings)
- a windfall¹ allowance over the period 2016 – 2026 (897 dwellings)

3.12 The table below sets out the broad distribution of the residual requirement. The table shows a small surplus over the Core Strategy target of 20,985 which allows for a small amount of flexibility.

¹Windfall Sites are sites which have not been specifically identified as available but based on past building rates will come forward over the remainder of the plan period

	Completions 2006-2016	Proposed allocations and large sites with planning permission	Other large sites with consent (not proposed to be allocated)	Small sites with consent	Windfall allowance (based on past rates)	Total commitments
Weston urban area	2,895	2,707	89	140	422	6,253
Weston Villages	567	5,933	0	0	0	6,500
Clevedon	320	221	0	64	90	695
Nailsea	143	815	15	28	45	1,046
Portishead	2,788	453	16	47	63	3,367
Service villages	706	1,275	10	53	119	2,163
Remainder of North Somerset	576	221	31	141	158	1,127
Total	7,995	11,625	161	473	897	21,151

*

3.13 The distribution of new housing proposals is based on the North Somerset Core Strategy settlement hierarchy. This approach, subject to detailed planning constraints and key sustainable development principles, focuses the search for the majority of new development at Weston-super-Mare (in particular the town centre), followed by the towns of Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead and then the nine service villages. Infill villages are less sustainable locations for the location of additional housing development.

3.14 There is no justification for amending the Green Belt as it is considered that the strategic housing requirement in the Core Strategy can be delivered in sustainable locations without reviewing the Green Belt. Therefore no “exceptional circumstances” exist under para 83 of the NPPF.

3.15 However, due to the need to identify sufficient land that is readily available and capable of being delivered within five years, a number of greenfield sites on the edge of the service villages of Congresbury, Churchill and Yatton have been identified for residential development. Many of these sites already have planning consent. Although additional land is identified at Weston-super-Mare, in order to provide a range and choice of sites, other locations need to be identified. Portishead and Clevedon and to a certain extent Nailsea are also very much constrained by Green Belt, flood risk and other environmental constraints.

3.16 A full list of large housing sites is contained within Schedule 1 of the plan

Many of the above sites have been subject to planning applications or pre-application discussions which is an indication of their availability and, where appropriate, the contribution they can make to the 5 year housing supply position

Employment

3.17 In order to ensure balanced growth there are a number of sites in the main towns where mixed use (residential, employment, retail, community use) is encouraged and the plan overall allocates over 86 hectares of employment land (Schedule 2). The plan also safeguards a large number of well-established employment areas from alternative uses (Schedule 3)

Local Infrastructure

3.18 In conjunction with Part 1 of the Plan which provides the detailed planning policies, and the Developer Contributions SPD, the Site Allocations Plan addresses local infrastructure requirements. An important function of the Site Allocations Plan is to make adequate provision for community uses such as organised sport and more informal recreation whether provided by the local authority, voluntary agencies or the private sector. The objective is to ensure that adequate community facilities are secured and made available as development proceeds

3.19 Schedule 4 and the requirements associated with new housing sites (Schedule 1) identifies land safeguarded for community uses.

Local Green Space

3.20 The Government, in its National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of March 2012, introduced a new designation called “Local Green Space” (LGS) enabling local communities, through local and neighbourhood plans, to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them.

Paragraph 77 of the NPPF states that the designation “*will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space*” and should only be used where specified criteria would be met. It states that the designation should only be used where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife, and is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

3.21 Taking this guidance into account and considering responses received to the previous consultation, a list of LGS sites is proposed, with a justification for each, set out in Schedule 5 and identified on the detailed proposed allocations.

Strategic Gaps

3.22 Core Strategy Policy CS19 establishes the principle of strategic gaps. It states that “the council will protect strategic gaps to help retain the separate identity, character and/or landscape setting of settlements and distinct parts of settlements”.

3.23 Strategic gaps are needed because reliance on countryside policies alone would be unlikely to provide sufficient protection against development which would harm the separate

identity, character and/or landscape setting of settlements or distinct parts of settlements. Strategic gaps, with detailed boundaries, are identified on the Policies Map between the following places:

- Weston-super-Mare, Hutton, Locking and Parklands Village
- Weston-super-Mare and Uphill
- Weston-super-Mare and St Georges
- Congresbury and Yatton
- Nailsea and Backwell

Weston Regeneration

3.24 There are a number of policies supporting the regeneration of Weston Town Centre, the need to enhance the A370 corridor and provide a park and ride site. A Weston Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will soon be published which will set out in more detail how the housing allocations are to be brought forward and what design guidelines need to be pursued. The contribution that Weston Town Centre makes towards the Core Strategy housing requirement is critical and this SPD will assist delivery.

Summary of main issues raised

3.25 The consultation ran from Thursday March 10th 2016 until Thursday 28th April 2016. There were 264 respondents to the consultation who made 785 individual comments. A summary of these comments and the recommended Council response (the Consultation Statement) can be seen at Appendix 4 . In the Consultation Statement where **bold text** indicates where it is recommended that the plan be changed as a result of comments made

3.26 Set out below is a further summary of the major issues raised by the public, developers, organisations and landowners:

-a total of 94 additional sites were put forward. The majority for residential development. Many of these sites are in the Green Belt or have been considered before either as a planning application or through the “call for sites”;

-it was suggested that the housing sites put forward are undeliverable within the 5 year period and that the surplus in the housing figures is insufficient to allow for delay;

- the majority of housing sites allocated already have planning consent;

- the cumulative impact of development proposed has not been assessed in particular at Nailsea and Yatton;

- development of the Nailsea sites (Engine Lane, Uplands and North West Nailsea) objected to on the basis of poor access to the town centre, lack of services, green field site loss of open spaces , minimal employment opportunities, poor road network, landscape impact, loss of high quality agricultural land, loss of biodiversity and flood risk;

- development at Yatton (Arnolds Way, Moor Road) objected to on the grounds of loss of playing pitches, congestion in the High Street, loss of biodiversity, lack of community facilities and landscape impact.

- suggested new sites for Local Green Space designation and some objections to those proposed;

- suggested additions to and reductions to the Strategic Gap designations;

- an inconsistent approach to the Sustainability Appraisal in particular the justification for designating residential sites.

Significant changes to the plan

3.27 On the whole there are relatively few changes proposed to the plan as previously consulted upon. In relation to the need for new housing sites, it is considered that there is sufficient residential land identified without the need to propose a significant number of new sites. The proposed relaxation of Core Strategy policies in relation to development opportunities abutting settlement boundaries introduces an element of flexibility and will boost housing supply provided detailed matters e.g. landscape impact, access etc are acceptable.

3.28 Opposition to development at Yatton and Nailsea (see above) was considerable but in view of the need to retain a 5 year housing supply at all times it is critical that these sites remain in the plan. Many of the sites in Yatton already have a resolution to grant planning consent and the sites in Nailsea although some distance from the town centre can be developed without significant harm to the landscape

3.29 The opportunity has been taken as part of the overall review of the housing requirement, to include two new housing sites. These will support the delivery of the overall housing requirement. The proposed additional sites are at:

- Land west of the M5 and south of Wolvershill Rd (250 dwelling extension to Locking Parklands). Through the submission of a planning application technical objections relating to noise and landscape impact have been overcome and given the sustainable location of the site the benefits of additional housing clearly outweigh the harm.
- Land east of Wolvershill Rd Banwell (44 dwellings) where the site is in a sustainable location, landscape objections are minimal and can be overcome by careful design and layout.

3.30 It is proposed that the proposed extent of the Strategic Gaps remain unaltered with the exception of the Weston-super-Mare /Hutton gap in the vicinity of Oldmixon Rd where this is extended to cover the whole area between these settlements.

3.31 A number of additional Local Green Spaces are proposed in Clevedon and Nailsea. (See Appendix 6).

3.32 Set out below are the recommended significant changes to the publication version of the plan which, following consultation, it is intended will be submitted to the Secretary of State. The plan proposed to be submitted can be viewed at Appendices 1, 2, and 3 and shows the various amendments made to the earlier consultation draft.

Settlement Boundaries

- Change to the Settlement Boundary policy (SA1) to make reference to the revised Core Strategy policies which permit development adjoining settlement boundaries in the towns and service villages.
- Confirmation that the settlement boundary as shown in the North Somerset Replacement Plan for Sandford will be retained and not exclude employment buildings (Thatchers) on the road frontage as proposed in the draft plan. (see Appendix 5).

Housing Allocations

Proposed changes:

- Housing figures and completions (Table 1) to be updated to reflect April 2016 survey.
- West Acre Caravan Park (West Wick WsM) – capacity increased from 100 to 130 dwellings to reflect housing density in surrounding area (see Appendices 2 and 5).
- Land south of Uplands Nailsea – capacity reduced from 100 to 50 dwellings owing to a covenant on the site restricting development and to ensure that development is more in line with surrounding densities (see Appendices 2 and 5)
- Land at Station Rd, Nailsea – deletion of this small housing site (15 dwellings) due to environmental and access constraints. The site is within the settlement boundary for Nailsea and any development proposed will be subject to normal Development Management policies (see Appendices 2 and 5).
- Increased capacity of Old Mill Rd Portishead from 20 to 100 residential units and allocated area extended. Sufficient land will still remain for retail, leisure and employment opportunities. To reflect developer aspirations for the comprehensive development of the site for mixed use (see Appendices 2 and 5).
- Deletion of housing site in Kenn due to the village having limited facilities and the allocation raising sustainability issues (see Appendices 2 and 5). Site could still come forward as development within the settlement boundary of an infill village.
- Inclusion of land at Parklands immediately west of M5 and south of Wolvershill Rd (250 dwellings). Noise and landscape technical issues overcome (see Appendix 5).
- Inclusion of site to the east of Wolvershill Rd Banwell (44 dwellings). Sustainable site close to village centre and landscape issues overcome through submission of planning application (see Appendices 2 and 5).
- Add reference to Coal Mining Assessments in the site specific requirements.
- It will be made clear that all sites in Flood Zone 2 and 3 will require a flood risk assessment, sequential and exception test.

Employment

- Small employment site by the proposed Portishead Railway Station to be deleted but retained within the settlement boundary and suitable for development. Provides greater flexibility for this site which is next to the new Portishead Railway Station Car Park (see Appendices 2 and 5).

Local Green Space

- Additional Local Green Space designations at Clevedon, Congresbury, Nailsea, Tickenham, and Yatton (see Appendices 2 and 6).
- Deletion of Local Green Space designations at Clevedon and Winscombe (see Appendices 2 and 6).

Strategic Gaps

- Extend Strategic Gap between Weston and Hutton in the vicinity of Oldmixon Rd to ensure that the proposed designation is more effective (see Appendix 5).

Community Facilities

- Reserve site for a new primary school at the North West Nailsea site (see Appendix 2).
- Deletion of proposed allotments in Banwell. No longer required by local community.

4. CONSULTATION

The Consultation Draft of the Site Allocations Plan was published for consultation in March 2016. The following were invited to take part in the consultation:

- North Somerset residents: Press Release and Advert
- Town and Parish Councils: workshop held on 10th March 2016
- Agents, landowners and developers who had previously expressed an interest
- Statutory Undertakers
- Adjoining Local Authorities

Consultees were informed about the consultation via:

- E-mail or letters to a database of participants in previous Local Development Framework documents
- Distribution of posters to local councils and libraries and used as an advert in the local press
- Local press
- Social media
- Exhibitions

Staffed exhibitions were held at:

- Weston Library, Monday 21 March, 4pm-7pm
- Nailsea Library, Tuesday 22 March, 4pm-7pm
- Churchill Primary School, Wednesday 23 March, 4.30pm-7pm
- Portishead Library, Thursday 24 March, 4pm-7pm
- Clevedon Library, Tuesday 29 March, 4pm-7pm
- Congresbury School Rooms, Wednesday 30 March, 4pm-7pm
- Yatton Library, Thursday 31 March, 4pm-7pm
- Winscombe Community Centre, Monday 4 April, 4pm-7pm.

Consultation on the Publication Version

4.1 All representations received (both supporting and objecting to the Site Allocations Plan), have been summarised in the Consultation Report (Appendix 4) and an assessment taken on representations received and consideration of any amendments required. A revised plan has been prepared and is recommended for approval by this committee (Appendices 1, 2 and 3). This is the Publication Version and will be the plan that the Council intends to submit to the Secretary of State for examination. This will be consulted upon and all comments received forwarded for consideration at the independent examination. It is anticipated that this consultation will commence in November 2016.

4.2 The plan then moves into the examination phase. An inspector will undertake the examination and hold hearings as appropriate before submitting recommendations to the Council. The Council will then proceed to adoption

4.3 The consultation exercise will need to be carefully managed and explained as it will coincide with consultation on the Joint Spatial Plan which looks ahead to 2036 and could

lead to potential confusion. However given the need to demonstrate a plan led approach it is essential that there is no delay in progressing the Site Allocations Plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

By providing greater certainty, the Site Allocations Plan should reduce the speculative development pressures and costs of supporting appeals, and greater clarity to service providers. The new allocations will bring financial benefits such as through New Homes Bonus.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

The absence of a clear development plan will increase the risk of speculative development proposals.

7. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The Sites and Policies Plan has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. A range of sites is proposed to deliver identified needs.

8. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

An up-to-date adopted development plan will support service delivery. |

9. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

One option would be to wait until the adoption of the remaining Core Strategy policies before progressing the Site Allocations Plan. This would cause delay, resulting in a policy vacuum and potentially increase speculative development pressures. It would also increase the potential overlap with the new local plan to be prepared in parallel with the Joint Spatial Plan.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

2nd February 2016 Executive Committee Report
Site Allocation Plan (Consultation Draft) March 2016.