

North Somerset Council

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE

DATE OF MEETING: 2 FEBRUARY 2016

SUBJECT OF REPORT: SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN

TOWN OR PARISH: ALL

OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING, HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

KEY DECISION: YES

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Consultation Draft Sites and Policies Plan Part 2: Site Allocations is approved for public consultation.

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

Following confirmation of the Core Strategy housing requirement in September 2015 progress can now be made with the site allocations part of the Sites and Policies Plan. This will identify the detailed sites proposed to meet the need for residential, employment and other uses to 2026. This will complement the Sites and Policies Plan Part 1: Development Management Policies which was progressed in advance of the Site Allocations Plan and is nearing adoption. A draft is proposed for public consultation.

2. POLICY

The Government, through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), strongly advocates a plan-led approach to development. Speeding up the preparation of local plans This is underlined in proposals in the Housing and Planning Bill to allow Secretary of State intervene where local planning authorities do not have a plan in place by mid-2017. The statutory plan making process provides the spatial 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.

The context for the detailed policies is provided by the extant Core Strategy policies and government guidance such as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. DETAILS

The Secretary of State in his letter of 18 September 2015 confirmed the Core Strategy housing requirement at 20,985 dwellings 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.”

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 it is anticipated will be adopted in early 2016. This report relates to the Part 2: Site Allocations document which can now be progressed to give confirmation of the district housing requirement as set out in Policy CS13.

The Site Allocations Plan is being progressed in parallel with the completion of the examination of the remaining Core Strategy remitted policies. Executive Committee approved the proposed changes on 20 October 2015. This identified that the shortfall in relation to the new housing requirement of 20,985 dwellings was 1,715 dwellings and indicated the anticipated distribution for this residual. The Council consulted on the proposed changes at the end of 2015 and all representations received have been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate who will hold hearings as necessary.

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

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.

At present there is no justification for amending the Green Belt as it is considered that the strategic housing requirement in the Core Strategy can be found without reviewing the Green Belt. Therefore no “ exceptional circumstances “ exist under para 83 of the NPPF.

Plan making process

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. Given the passage of time and further changes required as a result of the Core Strategy decision, a further 6 week period of consultation is necessary prior to the plan being finalised and eventually submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

After the close of consultation, all representations received (both supporting and objecting to the Site Allocations Plan), will be summarised in a Consultation Report and an

assessment taken on representations received and consideration of any amendments required. A revised plan will then be prepared. 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.

The plan then moves into the examination phase. An inspector will undertake the examination and hold hearings as appropriate before submitting his recommendations to the Council. The Council will then proceed to adoption. The revised timetable is as follows:

Stage	Date	Event
Plan-preparation	February-April 2013	<i>6 weeks consultation on Consultation Draft.</i>
	March- April 2015	<i>6 weeks further consultation on the Consultation Draft CURRENT STAGE</i>
	April – June 2015	<i>Assessment of responses; Consultation Report preparation of revised document.</i>
	Sept 2015	<i>Consultation on Publication Version</i>
Examination	Nov 2015	<i>Submission to Secretary of State.</i>
	Jan 2017	<i>Examination conducted by independent Inspector including hearings</i>
	March 2017	<i>Inspector's report issued.</i>
Adoption	April 2017	<i>Formal adoption by the Council.</i>

Plan content

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.

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.

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 copy of the proposed Consultation Draft and relevant schedules is attached as Appendix 1. Maps defining the detailed proposed allocations for each town and village are contained in Appendix 2. A summary of the main proposals is set out below.

Housing

The plan looks ahead to 2026 with a target of 20,985 dwellings to be built by that year. 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 shortfall but ensure the Council has a 5 year housing supply.

Over the period April 2006 to April 2015 7,426 dwellings have been built leaving a residual requirement of 13,559 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 (12,026 dwellings - including Weston Villages)
- other large housing sites with unimplemented planning permissions (225 dwellings)
- small sites with consent (373 dwellings)
- a windfall¹ allowance over the period 2015 – 2026 (1200 dwellings)

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.

	Completions 2006-2015	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	2,758	2914	104	121	627	6,506
Weston Villages	372	6,128	0	0	0	6,500
Clevedon	288	234	20	31	134	707

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

Nailsea	123	865	15	26	51	1,062
Portishead	2,746	409	38	46	64	3,303
Service villages	675	1,233*	17	54	139	2,118
Remainder of North Somerset	464	243	31	95	185	1,018
Total	7,426	12,026	225	373	1200	21,250

*

**The service village figure includes 510 dwellings carried forward from previous plans and with planning consent. The remaining 723 dwellings are new allocations at Yatton, Congresbury and Churchill (see below). This figure is in excess of the estimated 465 dwelling shortfall previously highlighted at the 20th Oct 2015 Executive Committee. The increase is due to the need to allocate sites that are readily available and can help meet the 5 year supply*

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. Green Belt protection is maintained in accordance with the 20th October Executive Report.

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. 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.

A full list of large housing sites is contained within Schedule 1. Completely new proposed housing allocations on land not previously developed and which have not been allocated for development in any previous plans are:

- Land at Bridgwater Rd/Bleadon Hill, Weston-super-Mare (70 dwellings)
- Land north of Oldmixon Rd, Weston-super-Mare (totally within Hutton Parish) (150 dwellings)
- North of Churchill Avenue, Clevedon (44 dwellings)
- Land at West End, Nailsea (20 dwellings)
- Land west of Engine Lane, Nailsea (180 dwellings)
- Land at The Uplands, Nailsea (100 dwellings)
- Station Rd, Nailsea (15 dwellings)
- Land at south of Downside, Portishead (23 dwellings)
- Cobthorn Way, Congresbury (54 dwellings)
- Pudding Pie Lane (West), Churchill (35 dwellings)

- Pudding Pie Lane (East), Churchill (141 dwellings) (Now granted consent subject to S106 at 13/1/16 P&R Committee)
- Says Lane, Churchill (43 dwellings)
- Land at North End, Yatton (170 dwellings)
- Arnolds Way Phase 2, Yatton (200 dwellings)
- Moor Road, Yatton (80 dwellings)

Existing sites proposed as allocations in the original 2013 consultation draft have been reviewed and, where appropriate, carried forward. This includes land at NW Nailsea (450 dwellings) and Woodborough Farm, Winscombe (175).

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

A plan of each of these sites is attached as Appendix 3

Employment

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

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. Provision for culture and community leisure is increasingly recognised as a significant factor in enhancing quality of life. An important function of the Site Allocations Plan is therefore 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 Site Allocation Plan, combined with the Part 1: Development Management Policies and the Developer Contributions SPD, seeks to ensure that there is adequate access to open space and recreational facilities and that other community needs such as schools are met. The provision of these facilities in areas of new development contributes significantly to the quality of life of residents and visitors. Justifiable criticism is received from the public if adequate community facilities are not secured and made available as development proceeds

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

Local Green Space

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.

As a result, a list of LGS sites are proposed, with a justification for each, set out in Schedule 5 and identified on the detailed proposed allocations

Strategic Gaps

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”.

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 detailed proposed allocation plan 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

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.

4. CONSULTATION

The draft Site Allocations plan will be subject to a minimum of six weeks public consultation in accordance with the Council’ Statement of Community Involvement. All comments received will be taken into account and the document revised as necessary to produce a Submission version, which will be subject to further consultation before submission to the Secretary of State for examination.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

By providing greater certainty, the Site Allocations Plan should reduce the speculative development pressures and costs of supporting appeals. 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 was 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 completion of the examination 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

North Somerset Core Strategy
Sites and Policies Plan Part 1: Development Management Policies
Secretary of State's letter confirming Policy CS13: 18 September 2015