

Weston-super-Mare

PROSPECTUS FOR CHANGE



A vision for the future

A BOLD VISION

Ambitious plans for the future of Weston-super-Mare's town centre are being developed.

North Somerset Council wants to build on recent successes and help Weston become a lively university town where more people want to live, learn and spend their leisure time.

This means creating outstanding places for quality urban living, business growth and learning, and providing a range of activities for people to enjoy their free time.

A prosperous Weston will have wider benefits for the whole North Somerset area and beyond. Now is the time to help make this vision a reality.

And we need your ideas to shape it.

LIVING, LEARNING, LIFESTYLE



FOREWORD

Our vision for Weston-super-Mare town centre is characterised by ambition and economic drive.

In North Somerset we already have a strong, diverse local economy with the potential to provide more jobs.

People living and working here enjoy excellent transport links, with motorway, rail, airport and docks all on our doorstep.

We have a dynamic local workforce with sought-after skills.

We have the foundations on which to build a stronger town centre and we want it to be better equipped to deal with current and future challenges.

Developments at Weston College mean the town is now a significant provider of further and higher education.

Growth and investment is taking place in new developments on the edge of town and the Enterprise Area close to the M5.

Continued investment to improve the public realm, combined with our ambition to push for growth in the town centre, creates significant opportunities for property investment for the first time in Weston's recent history.

Local councillors are passionate about putting their time, energy and experience into this challenge. We want to listen to what people have to say, are receptive to new ideas and want to make things happen.

To realise this ambition we need the local community, regional and national businesses and investors, as well as public bodies including the council, working together.

We look forward to hearing your ideas and contributions which can help realise this vision for the future.



Nigel Ashton

Leader
North Somerset Council



Mike Jackson

Chief Executive
North Somerset Council



WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Weston-super-Mare already has a lot to offer – an outstanding seafront, a growing reputation for major events, beautiful Victorian buildings and parks, and great access to Bristol and Bath.

In recent years there has been multi-million pound investment along the seafront, in new developments on the edge of town, and the Enterprise Area close to the M5.

There is a strong local economy with a well-educated, skilled workforce and Weston College is becoming an increasingly significant provider of further and higher education.

The town has a growing population and recent hard work to encourage more employment is beginning to pay off.

The £15m Weston Package transport scheme has also proved a great success, improving traffic flow at junction 21, reducing congestion and improving public transport links.



WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

People's shopping habits are changing but town centres remain at the heart of the community, setting an identity and providing a range of activities for people to enjoy.

A radical re-think is needed to meet the challenges of the future and this new strategy outlines eight key objectives on how these will be met.

At the heart of this strategy are ambitious plans from Weston College to expand its higher and further education programme. This will create considerable benefits, both in terms of facilities for learning and bringing a greater number of people into the town centre.

Significant growth of high-quality residential developments will also provide the step change for increased social, leisure and economic activities.

Having a larger number of people living, learning, visiting and ideally working in the town centre will encourage vitality and naturally boost the demand for shops and services.

"Retaining the status quo and tinkering with small-scale ideas and plans is not an option that will serve anyone's interests in the medium and long term."

Nick Horne, chief executive, Knightstone Housing Group

SIGNIFICANT GROWTH AND INVESTMENT IN HIGH-QUALITY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

The council will promote a mixture of housing types, tenures and sizes to meet the aspirations of new and existing residents.

High-quality urban apartments will encourage more people to live in the town centre and will inject new life into the area.

This could include changing vacant shops to residential use and making greater use of space above retail units.

Contemporary urban apartments would appeal to younger people who would bring vitality and spending power to the town, supporting and improving the viability of existing and new businesses.

Modern student accommodation will be required to support the growth ambitions of Weston College.

When people live and spend locally, it helps keep money circulating in the local economy.

HOUSING-LED REGENERATION TO ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT IN VACANT OR UNDER-OCCUPIED SITES

The town is in a great location, with good transport connections, access to shops, seafront and fabulous views, making it an attractive place to live.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS

- How do we kick-start this process and encourage people to want to live in the town centre?
- Will we need different forms of tenure to cater for young professionals – high-quality owner-occupied, shared-ownership or rented?
- How do we promote the town to encourage people to want to move here?

"We are pleased to see plans emerging which link the development of quality residential areas in the town centre to support the economic growth benefits associated with the regeneration."

Richard Bonner, South West managing partner and UK cities strategy lead, EC Harris LLP



A NEW UNIVERSITY CAMPUS USED BY BOTH STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

Education and training is a key element in the future economic and community development of Weston town centre.

Weston College is proposing a new legal and professional services academy at the Winter Gardens which will provide state-of-the-art teaching and conference spaces with community use from September 2016.

The aim is to increase significantly the higher and further education provision and to support national, regional and local initiatives to address the skills gap and establish Weston as a university town.

The future of the iconic Winter Gardens building will also be secured for community use.

"Weston College recognises the need for Weston to be more reactive to business and community demand. We are supportive of a vision to create an urban-living environment and our new facilities can be a catalyst for such change."

Dr Paul Phillips OBE, principal and chief executive, Weston College

LEISURE

Tourism and leisure activities have been central to Weston's past and will continue to play a crucial role in supporting the retail environment and diversifying the evening and nighttime economy.

New residential developments will increase demand for a greater variety of leisure activities and attractions – whether sports, arts, culture, or restaurants and evening entertainment.

The focus is on increasing the range and improving the quality of existing and proposed attractions so the town becomes a year-round destination.

Tourist accommodation needs to be of a nationally recognised quality whatever the budget, from low-cost hotels to boutique stays.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS

- What should we be famous for? Whether cultural, extreme sports or retail?
- What leisure/cultural activities are missing from Weston and how might we attract them to come?





A MORE FOCUSED SHOPPING AREA

Retail has changed significantly in recent years but evidence shows Weston has fared better than many other towns in terms of its number of vacant units.

However, a higher quality, more focused shopping area is envisaged which is more closely linked to the seafront.

Weston needs to fulfill its role as a sub-regional centre, with its own unique offering.

Residential use above shops and other premises would bring more people into the town centre and stimulate the demand for shops and restaurants.

This in turn may encourage more residents from the rest of Weston and further afield to visit.

Good design and imaginative use of lighting would also improve the safety, image and attractiveness of the town in the evening.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS

- How do we get more people to shop in the town centre?
- What does the town need to offer to encourage you to visit more often?

HERITAGE AND QUALITY DESIGN

Weston has a rich heritage with many listed buildings and large parts of the town centre within designated conservation areas.

Understanding and refurbishing the best of Weston's heritage is an essential element of the regeneration programme.

The council will support and encourage conversion of historic buildings to enhance the built environment.

Mixing old with new requires sensitivity and ingenuity but offers exciting opportunities for flexible use to meet changing demands and needs.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS

- How can we encourage sensitive but sustainable use of under-used heritage buildings?
- How do we all better promote Weston's rich heritage?





TOWN CENTRE SPACE FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND ENTERPRISES

Encouraging and creating space for employment and new business start-ups is an important part of the strategy.

The university campus will stimulate demand and create opportunities.

A range of town-centre jobs will be provided by a mix of activities, businesses and office development.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS

- How/where should we encourage new start-up enterprises by those leaving education as well as others?
- What would attract employers to be based in the town?

"We welcome plans for Weston town centre to become a place for more vibrant living, learning and leisure opportunities – improving the viability of existing businesses and providing a springboard for new ones."

Angela Hicks, North Somerset Enterprise Agency



A DIGITALLY-ENABLED TOWN

Weston needs to be at the forefront of modern thinking to attract investment and to encourage a younger generation.

Embracing modern technology and staying ahead of the game can be challenging but mobile apps are becoming more useful every day – from ordering take-away food to controlling your home's heating while you are out. High-speed broadband, Wi-Fi, and latest generation mobile networks are vital to businesses, residents and visitors alike.

Ensuring state-of-the-art provision and understanding how this will impact on Weston's town centre in the future is part of the long-term plan.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS

- What are your views on the current tech provision/access in the town?
- What do you think is needed to improve it?

BETTER ACCESSIBILITY TO THE TOWN CENTRE

Creating better accessibility into Weston – whether by car, bike, bus, train or on foot – will encourage people to visit and improve their impressions of the town.

The train station is the arrival point for many people and improvements to the station itself as well as its surroundings will create a modern, welcoming entrance.

Creating a proper bus interchange in Alexandra Parade, with waiting areas, co-ordinating bus stops and better pick-up and drop-off facilities will also help make people feel welcome.

Parking provision needs to be properly planned in line with the proposed developments.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS

- What do you think should be done to encourage more people to visit and invest in the town?



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We need your ideas and comments to help make this vision a reality.

To comment on this document visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/consultplanningpolicy
For more information visit www.n-somerset.gov.uk/westonvision

Or contact:

North Somerset Council
Planning Policy, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare BS23 1UJ
01934 426 603
planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk

Your comments will help shape the development of the Weston town centre supplementary planning document (SPD).

The SPD will:

- identify potential sites for investment
- guide the preparation and consideration of planning applications for individual elements of the plan
- provide continuing support for submissions of bids for funding for elements of the strategy.

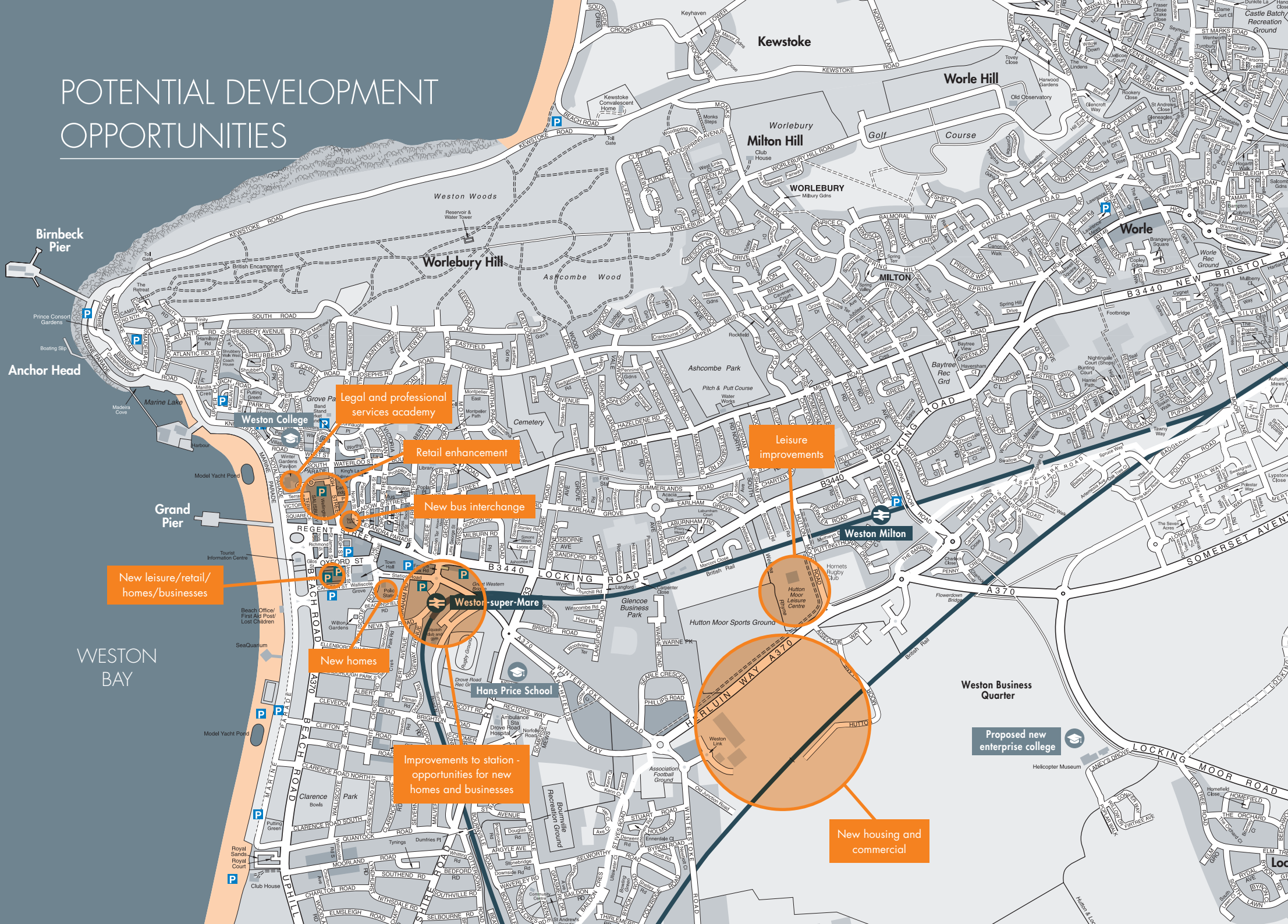
Once a draft supplementary planning document has been produced this year, further consultation will then take place with local people, businesses, investors, other public bodies, developers and interested parties.



"Weston already has its own unique identity and many attributes which it can build on to make it an even more attractive and vibrant place to live, work and do business."

Simon Price, partner, Alder King

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



Legal and professional services academy

Retail enhancement

New bus interchange

Leisure improvements

New leisure/retail/homes/businesses

New homes

Improvements to station - opportunities for new homes and businesses

New housing and commercial



North Somerset Council

Planning Policy, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ

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"The possibility exists to create a sustainable residential community within Weston town centre, and offer new business, education and leisure opportunities which can underpin the town's future as a location of choice in the West of England."

Peter Wynn, area manager for South and South West, Homes and Communities Agency