

**North Somerset Council  
Local Development Framework**

# **Core Strategy**

**Sustainability Appraisal and  
Habitat Regulations Assessment:  
Supplementary Statement on  
Proposed Changes and  
Modifications**



## **1. Introduction, Purpose and Summary**

1.1 This statement has been prepared to supplement the main Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) documents which accompany the North Somerset Core Strategy Publication Version.

1.2 It provides a formal record of the consideration given to Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulation Assessment in respect of Proposed Changes (July 2011, revised November 2011), Main Modifications (January 2012) and Additional Modifications (January 2012) to the Core Strategy, i.e. those changes to the Publication Version (January 2011) which the Council, having considered submitted representations and matters discussed at the hearings, is willing to make and therefore recommends to the Inspector.

1.3 Having duly considered the Changes and Modifications, it is concluded that these do not raise issues from an SA or HRA perspective that would require further work at this stage and there are therefore no suggestions or recommendations for additional alterations or further assessment.

## **2. Background**

2.1 The North Somerset Core Strategy Publication Version was the subject of SA (which incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment) and HRA (screening to consider whether significant effects on nature conservation sites of European importance are likely). The SA and HRA reports were both published in February 2011.

2.2 The Changes/Modifications need to be reviewed for their potential to raise SA or HRA issues. This has been done and is documented below. The Proposed Changes, Main Modifications and Additional Modifications are set out in full in separate documents. They do not fundamentally alter the spatial strategy or introduce totally new policies.

## **3. Sustainability Appraisal**

3.1 The following tables outline the nature of the substantive alterations (excluding clarification and factual updating), in the left hand column. Consequential alterations are not separately identified. The right hand column shows potential effects on SA objectives.

*Proposed Changes – July/November 2011  
(excluding those subsequently superseded)*

<b>Alteration</b>	<b>Effect on SA objectives</b>
Additional aim of enhancing as well as protecting valued environmental features (objectives/CS1/CS9)	Positive on environmental objectives, neutral on others. No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.

Promotion of public transport as well as walking and cycling (CS1)	Positive on environmental objectives, neutral on others. No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Additional policy content on water efficiency (CS1)	Positive on environmental objectives, neutral on others. Could have significant positive effect on water resource depletion and therefore on other issues such as aquatic biodiversity and landtake for new reservoirs. Rainwater recycling reduces flood risk from surface water run-off.
Quantification of crushed rock apportionment (CS8)	Neutral – figures relate to unchanged policy approach
Addition of references to affordable rent to reflect national policy change (CS16)	Neutral – re-states national policy
Addition of Banwell as Local Centre (CS21)	Positive on economic and social objectives, neutral on environmental. No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Updated approach to infrastructure contributions (CIL and local factors) (CS30/CS34)	Neutral
Allowance of development (mixed use schemes) adjacent to Nailsea (CS31)	Positive on economic and social objectives, negative on environmental (greenfield land). No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising. Arguably this is no more than a clarification since policy already allowed development “at” Nailsea.
Allowance for community facilities outside settlement boundaries (CS32/CS33)	Positive on economic and social objectives, negative on environmental (greenfield land). No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.

*Main Modifications – January 2012*

<b>Alteration</b>	<b>Effect on SA objectives</b>
Addition of commitment to five-yearly review, including housing requirement (introduction/CS13/CS30)	Neutral – procedural matter only
Housing requirement raised from 13,400 to 14,000 and new distribution given (objectives/CS13/CS14)	Positive on economic and social objectives, negative on environmental (greenfield land). No significant

	effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising. An additional 600 households will produce additional environmental impacts, especially in terms of resource use, though many of these would occur wherever the housing is located. Because the new number is distributed broadly in accordance with the same spatial strategy as before, specific local impacts will not vary greatly either, though smaller settlements take proportionately more of the increase than Weston.
Addition of support for rail freight (CS10)	Positive on environmental, neutral on others. JLTP3 supports rail freight on economic grounds, as part of a wider package of efficiencies. No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Additional wording on viability of affordable housing (CS16)	Positive on economic and social objectives, neutral on environmental. No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Allowance of rural exception schemes adjoining any non-Green Belt village, including those without settlement boundaries (CS17/CS33)	Positive on social objectives, neutral on economic, negative on environmental (accessibility, greenfield land). No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Addition of 3% compound annual growth in requirements for gypsy and traveller accommodation (CS18)	Positive on social objectives, neutral on economic, uncertain on environmental (dependent on location of pitches). No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Removal of sole emphasis on B jobs and on-site provision and less prescriptive approach to employment delivery (CS20/CS30)	Neutral on economic and social objectives, uncertain on environmental (dependent on effectiveness of employment-led approach)
Additional retail requirement for Portishead (CS21/CS31)	Positive on all objectives: alternative would be a need to travel outside Portishead for these goods. No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.

Additional scope for retail improvements (CS21)	Positive on economic and social objectives, neutral on environmental. No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Relaxation of brownfield priority at Weston Villages, etc. (CS28/CS30)	Neutral on economic and social objectives, negative on environmental (greenfield land). No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Allowance of bulky goods retail in the Weston Town Centre Gateway Area (CS29)	Positive on all objectives: alternative would be a need to travel outside Weston for these goods. No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising.
Allowance of small-scale development outside Service Villages and removal of size limit for developments within them (CS32)	Positive on economic and social objectives, negative on environmental (accessibility, greenfield land). No significant effects identified – dependent on development opportunities arising. Arguably the first element is no more than a clarification since policy already allowed village extensions as site allocations and still limits them in this way.
Allowance of affordable housing and employment development in the Green Belt where consistent with PPG2 (CS32/CS33)	Neutral – re-states national policy

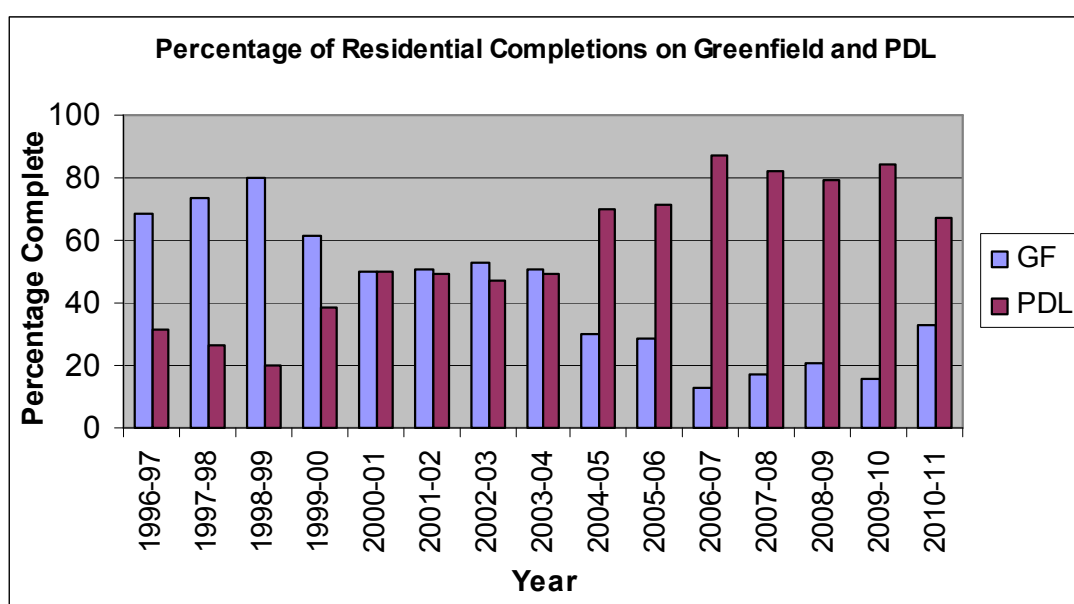
*Additional Modifications – January 2012*

<b>Alteration</b>	<b>Effect on SA objectives</b>
Addition of (18) Weston Southern Rail Chord to the list of transport schemes (CS10)	Positive on economic objectives, mixed on environmental (sustainable transport versus loss of allotment land and footpath links, though could be mitigated by replacement), negative on social (additional noise close to housing, though could be mitigated). No significant effects identified – mitigation measures are a matter for more detailed policy documents or for a planning application. The area is in flood zone 3a and development would need to respect the drainage function of the Cross Rhyne.

## 4. SA Commentary

4.1 The Changes/Modifications generally result in positive or neutral effects on SA objectives. Negative effects result from relaxation of the approach to housing in the rural area (because it leads to more dispersed development, without a corresponding range of facilities) and from all relaxations that potentially lead to greater loss of greenfield land. Premature loss of greenfield land is also counted as a negative effect, because the subsequent development of brownfield alternatives cannot be guaranteed. Some Modifications have uncertain effects. These are either because the location of the resultant development is unknown, or, in the case of planned growth at Weston-super-Mare, because the revised policies are less prescriptive, with more reliance placed on good working relationships with developers and less on detailed policy requirements, as the means to deliver the employment-led objective.

4.2 No fundamental alterations are proposed that would require (or benefit from) additional appraisal to examine likely significant effects in more detail. Potential cumulative effects are those relating to loss of greenfield land. Until 2003/4, greenfield land accounted for over half of housing completions in North Somerset, since when the proportion has dropped to as low as one-eighth (2006/7) but has since climbed again (see table below). The Changes/Modifications have the potential effect of increasing greenfield land loss as compared to the Core Strategy Publication Version. It is too early to quantify this and there is no certainty that such loss will occur, given that the policies require the submission of supporting evidence and in some cases a specific site allocation, which will enable alternatives to be tested. While a detailed trajectory of the split between greenfield and previously developed land is not practical, it can be said that the emphasis placed on the Weston Villages will ensure that most new housing continues to be on previously developed land.



## 5. Habitat Regulations Assessment

5.1 Tables in a similar format to those used above on SA have been used for HRA (to see if the Changes/Modifications would be likely to have significant effects regarding European Sites.) The resultant tables are shown below.

*Proposed Changes – July/November 2011  
(excluding those subsequently superseded)*

<b>Alteration</b>	<b>Implications: Do Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) for European Sites result from the changes?</b>
Additional aim of enhancing as well as protecting valued environmental features (objectives/CS1/CS9)	No LSEs; likely positive effect on biodiversity
Promotion of public transport as well as walking and cycling (CS1)	No LSEs; likely positive effect on biodiversity by helping to promote a switch from use of private vehicles
Additional policy content on water efficiency (CS1)	No LSEs; likely positive effect on biodiversity from promotion of rainwater recycling, etc.
Quantification of crushed rock apportionment (CS8)	No LSEs: policy also refers to need for apportionment to be environmentally acceptable
Addition of references to affordable rent to reflect national policy change (CS16)	No LSEs
Addition of Banwell as Local Centre (CS21)	No LSEs. This is just a designation being applied to an existing area of shops and other facilities in Banwell village, the vitality and viability of which will be maintained and enhanced.
Updated approach to infrastructure contributions (CIL and local factors) (CS30/CS34)	No LSEs. These changes concern mechanisms for funding of infrastructure.
Allowance of development (mixed use schemes) adjacent to Nailsea (CS31)	No LSEs. Land immediately around Nailsea does not include any of the European Sites. There is no significant change since the policy previously supported mixed use schemes at Nailsea anyway. Any necessary site allocations will be addressed in the Sites and Policies DPD which is likely to be subject to its own HRA.
Allowance for community facilities outside settlement boundaries (CS32/CS33)	No LSEs. The policy requires that the facilities are well related to the community they are intended to



	serve. The change does not alter the fact that the Core Strategy already allowed community facilities in safe and accessible locations anyway (Policy CS27).
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*Main Modifications – January 2012*

<b>Alteration</b>	<b>Implications: Do Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) for European Sites result from the changes?</b>
Addition of commitment to five-yearly review, including housing requirement (introduction/CS13/CS30)	No LSEs
Housing requirement raised from 13,400 to 14,000 and new distribution given (objectives/CS13/CS14)	No LSEs. This increase of 600 dwellings over the twenty year period 2006-2026 only amounts to 30 dwellings per year, so is not likely to have a significant effect.
Addition of support for rail freight (CS10)	No LSEs. Support for movement of freight by rail (as opposed to road) is likely to have beneficial environmental effects.
Additional wording on viability of affordable housing (CS16)	No LSEs
Allowance of rural exception schemes adjoining any non-Green Belt village, including those without settlement boundaries (CS17/CS33)	No LSEs. The change simply allows rural exception schemes (affordable housing) to occur adjacent to the limits of villages other than Service or Infill villages, outside the Green Belt. There are few such settlements which adjoin a European site, and rural exception schemes are unlikely to have significant effects anyway.
Addition of 3% compound annual growth in requirements for gypsy and traveller accommodation (CS18)	No LSEs. The rise is not significant, particularly given the fact that policy CS18 already includes criteria which would tend to steer the accommodation away from European Sites (such as preference for brownfield, proximity to local facilities, etc.). The policy refers to identification of sites in the Sites and Policies DPD, and that is likely to have its own HRA.
Removal of sole emphasis on B jobs and on-site provision and less prescriptive approach to employment delivery (CS20/CS30)	No LSEs

Additional retail requirement for Portishead (CS21/CS31)	No LSEs. Further retail development at Portishead would be likely to be focussed in/near the town centre, so unlikely to affect European Sites.
Additional scope for retail improvements (CS21)	No LSEs
Relaxation of brownfield priority at Weston Villages, etc. (CS28/CS30)	No LSEs. This relates to phasing only. More detailed proposals for development at Weston Villages is likely to be set out in the emerging Sites and Policies DPD and Weston Villages SPD, which are likely to be subject to separate HRA.
Allowance of bulky goods retail in the Weston Town Centre Gateway Area (CS29)	No LSEs. Such development would be unlikely to impact on European Sites any more than the other proposals for development in that area (mixed uses including offices and housing), considered in the HRA of the Publication Version.
Allowance of small-scale development outside Service Villages and removal of size limit for developments within them (CS32)	No LSEs. The development outside settlement limits would need to be small scale, demonstrate clear local benefits, be supported by the local community, show that it cannot be accommodated within the settlement, and brought forward as an allocation in the Sites and Policies DPD. This narrows the scope significantly, and the Sites and Policies DPD would be likely to be subject to its own HRA.
Allowance of affordable housing and employment development in the Green Belt where consistent with PPG2 (CS32/CS33)	No LSEs. The changes state that affordable housing will only be permitted in the Green Belt in very special circumstances, and employment development there only where it involves reuse of existing buildings in line with PPG2.

*Additional Modifications – January 2012*

<b>Alteration</b>	<b>Implications: Do Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) for European Sites result from the changes?</b>
Addition of (18) Weston Southern Rail Chord to the list of transport schemes (CS10)	No LSEs. The Weston Southern Rail Chord is a proposed link between the main line and the loop line, south of Bournville, well within the limits of the town of Weston. It would allow a continuous train service to be run

	between Weston and Bristol, whereas trains currently have to reverse at Weston. This is likely to improve train services which may encourage a switch from car use, to the benefit of the environment.
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## **6. HRA Commentary**

6.1 The above assessment suggests that no likely significant effects on European Sites would result from the Changes/Modifications to the Core Strategy. However, it points to a likely need for HRA of other more detailed Development Plan Documents, such as the Sites and Policies DPD.

## **7. Overall Conclusion**

7.1 Having duly considered the Changes/Modifications, it is concluded that these do not raise issues from an SA or HRA perspective that would require further work at this stage and there are therefore no suggestions or recommendations for additional alterations or further assessment.