

North Somerset Futures Local Development Framework

Core Strategy



**Issues and options
for consultation**

Introduction

The **Core Strategy** will become the main planning document for North Somerset. It sets out the long term vision for North Somerset from now until 2026 and the broad locations for new housing, jobs and other strategic developments in order to implement the proposals as laid down by the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (plan for the South West). It is of particular importance because all the other policy documents will be based on it.

At the same time as work on the Core Strategy is progressing **Area Action Plans (AAPs)** will provide the planning framework, detailed policies and site allocations at Weston Town Centre and the part of Weston known as Weston Regeneration Area (former airfield, RAF Locking and West Wick). This will be followed by an AAP for South West Bristol.

Core Strategy issues and alternative options

In March 2007 we produced a brief which set out what we believed to be the key challenges to be addressed in the Core Strategy. It also outlined the process that we would go through to produce the Core Strategy.

We have since assessed those national, regional and local strategies and initiatives which affect development decisions in North Somerset (such as health, housing, environmental change) and published this in the form of 'The Strategies and Initiatives document'. We have also gathered together the main information available into a series of topic papers which look at what we think are all of the main issues and whether any additional research is needed in order to make decisions. The topic papers cover:

- Demography, health, social inclusion and deprivation
- Housing
- Economy

- Retail
- Culture, leisure and tourism
- Settlement function and hierarchy – the future of our towns and villages
- Resources (including minerals, waste, and energy)
- Natural environment (including climate change, biodiversity, green infrastructure, countryside, natural environment and flooding)
- Transport and communications
- Sustainable construction / design quality including heritage
- Spatial portrait (summary of the main characteristics of North Somerset)

The topic papers form part of the issues and options process and provide more detail than can be covered in this leaflet.

This Issues and Options consultation has two main purposes:

- to agree the main issues facing North Somerset from now up to 2026
- to consider the different options for tackling them.

We want you to help us by letting us know what your views are on the vision, strategic objectives and options. To start this process we have set out our thoughts so far and asked a number of questions. As well as answering these, you can also submit additional comments on any other points you wish to make.

A series of exhibitions is also being held to publicise the issues and options, see back cover for details.

Please send us your comments by **30 November 2007**:

via our website www.n-somerset.gov.uk

by email to planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk

by post to our Local Planning Team (address on back cover).



Preparing the Core Strategy

Planning for North Somerset cannot be done in isolation.

The Core Strategy is being prepared at the same time as the North Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy. Many issues will overlap and the Core Strategy will help to put in place the services and priorities highlighted in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

We must also take on board the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). This document was prepared by the Regional Assembly and will be approved by Government in 2008. This covers an area from Gloucester and Swindon down to Cornwall, including North Somerset and co-ordinates planning and development across the South West. It sets out the nature, location, scope and speed of development to 2026. For North Somerset the RSS is likely to require at least:

- 26,000 new homes to be built by 2026 (these are draft numbers which may be amended as the RSS is progressed)
- Between 8,500 and 10,000 jobs in the Weston-super-Mare travel to work area
- Major development to take place in two main areas, 9,000 homes on the edge of Weston- super-Mare, and another 10,500 on the south west edge of Bristol (9,000 in the North Somerset area)
- 3,000 homes within the existing built up area of Weston-super-Mare
- 5,000 houses elsewhere – most of the 5,000 homes which the RSS says should be provided outside Weston-super-Mare



and south west Bristol can be built on sites which already have planning permission or which are already allocated for housing in the existing North Somerset Replacement Local Plan, but we will still need to find sites for approximately 1,400 homes. This may rise, however, if the RSS is amended.

- Green Belt protection of the open countryside should be extended in the Nailsea and Clevedon areas and removed to the south west of Bristol
- We should decide what sort of development should take place in our towns and villages.

We need your help to decide how this should be done.



The vision

By 2026 Weston-super-Mare will be established as a major economic centre south of Bristol catering for the employment, social and leisure needs of its population whilst attracting visitors to support this role. Urban extensions to the south west of Bristol and at Weston-super-Mare will be established mixed communities valued for their high standards of sustainability, quality of life and inspired design. The smaller towns will increasingly support their populations and play less of a dormitory role. The rural villages will cater for rural needs with their character and that of the open countryside protected from intrusive development.

Question.

1) Do you agree with this vision for North Somerset over the next 20 years?

Strategic objectives

What?

To make provision for the RSS proposal for 26,000 new homes, between 8,500 and 10,000 jobs in the Weston-super-Mare travel to work area and associated facilities; but in a way that:

- protects and increases the distinctive natural and cultural heritage of North Somerset
- can adapt to long-term environmental, economic and social changes, especially climate change and the need for better management of resources and waste
- improves the quality of life of residents
- secures high standards of design and gives new communities a sense of place and pride
- provides jobs with housing

Where?

- To focus growth at Weston-super-Mare and to the south west of Bristol principally as two sustainable urban extensions
- To develop elsewhere only for local needs
- To achieve employment-led growth at Weston-super-Mare

When?

- To phase development to give a better balance between homes, jobs and services
- To give priority to meeting affordable housing needs

How?

- To ensure co-ordination between all stakeholders
- To ensure the timely delivery of essential infrastructure

Question

2) Are these the right strategic objectives?



Main issues

Listed below are the main spatial planning issues that have been identified in the Topic Papers, Sustainable Community Strategy and Weston AAP work.

General:

- **Population growth** – at least a 17% increase by 2026
- **Growth concentrated in specific areas** – Two urban extensions of 9,000 houses at either end of the district
- **Coping with an older/ageing population** – and specific health issues
- **High levels of localised deprivation** – particularly in Weston-super-Mare
- **Huge range of inequality within the district** (health, access, housing)
- **Creating sustainable new communities** with a sense of place, purpose and local distinctiveness which are well designed but which also relate well to the wider urban area
- **Lack of local identity** – assist in promoting the distinctiveness of North Somerset in design, support for local employment, local markets, produce, events and cultural experiences.

Economy:

- **Achieving employment-led growth at Weston-super-Mare** – promoting economic development and regeneration in the regeneration areas and the town centre, addressing the dominance of the service sector, providing more high quality office accommodation and skilled employment
- **The imbalance between housing and employment in the towns and villages across North Somerset** which results in out-commuting to other areas for work
- **Ensuring the South West Bristol urban extension relates to the wider Bristol urban area** particularly the regeneration of South Bristol
- **Establishing the quantity and type of employment floor space required for the South West Bristol urban extension**
- **Safeguarding enough land** of the right type to accommodate business growth and inward investment particularly in the key employment sectors for North Somerset
- **Restructuring in the tourism market** – need to support the tourism sector as a key employment base especially in Weston-super-Mare
- **Balancing the needs of the large businesses in the district** including the Port and Bristol International Airport, with local communities, sustainability and the environment

- **Ensuring rural enterprises contribute effectively to the economy**, whilst minimising the environmental impacts (how people and places may be affected).

Housing

- **Building the allocated number of homes within the required timescale** without compromising on quality
- **Lack of affordable housing** – both generally and for rural affordable housing, and for other specific housing needs
- **Locating the remaining housing growth** – outside the urban extensions
- **Phasing housing growth** particularly in relation to employment especially at Weston-super-Mare
- **Ensuring efficient use of land to increase overall densities of homes** but providing flexibility to achieve high quality environments and to respond to differing characteristics across the district
- **Identifying locations for additional pitches for Travellers and Gypsies.**

Settlement role and function

- **Establishing which towns, if any, outside Weston-super-Mare should be the focus for locally significant development** – and establish what local objectives could be pursued which would not worsen their dormitory status
- **Establishing the rural settlements where development to meet local needs would improve their vitality and viability**
- **Determining the Green Belt boundary extension.**

Transport

- **Congestion, high levels of commuting and increasing use of cars** – worsened by free workplace and retail parking
- **Local traffic using the M5** for example, improvements needed at Junction 21
- **Growth which could make problems worse but could also contribute to delivering improvements to the transport network**
- **Ensuring accessibility for all to education, health and employment**
- **Obtaining funding, prioritising and safeguarding transport schemes and facilities to 2026** for example, South Bristol Link Road, second River Avon crossing, Banwell improvements
- **Poor public transport usage**
- **Local road, rail and cycling constraints**



- **CO₂ and pollution from transport**
- **Accommodating the need for parking** – particularly in high density developments
- **Increased passengers at the Airport.**

Culture leisure and recreation

- **Improvements to quality and quantity of leisure, recreation and cultural facilities especially in Weston-super-Mare**
- **Lack of regionally significant sporting, leisure and cultural facilities**
- **The need to protect existing cultural and community facilities from alternative development**

- **Enabling appropriately located new facilities** to meet the needs of existing and future communities including any new open spaces or sports facilities identified in the emerging Sports Pitch, Built Facilities and Green Space strategies
- **Ensuring new development contributes towards the provision of facilities**
- **Ensuring new facilities in the urban extensions act as a focus for community life and are phased with the development.**



Retail

- **Establishing which centres should grow or where new shopping facilities should be situated** such as within the new urban extensions.

Biodiversity and landscape

- **Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity** in the context of pressure for development and climate change
- **Ensuring development reflects and supports the local landscape character.**

Design

- **The need for increased quality of design** throughout North Somerset including sustainable eco-friendly development, innovation and design that responds appropriately to its context

- **Ensuring effective 'place making'** (giving places their own special identity), **prevent mediocre design** by providing a more robust design framework
- **Ensuring the opportunity is taken to deliver excellent standards of design and sustainable construction at the urban extensions**
- **Poor local identity throughout some of the towns and villages** with poor urban fabric and built environment.

Infrastructure

- **Ensuring appropriate infrastructure** (for example, schools, play areas and roads) **is delivered in a timely way to enable new development and upgrade deficiencies in existing provision.**

Flood risk

- **Ensuring that new development takes into account the increased risks of flooding as a result of changes to the climate and how this affects North Somerset**
- **Protecting vulnerable areas from sea and river flooding.**

Energy

- **Improving energy efficiency, the smarter use of new energy techniques and the reduction in energy demand to help communities move towards being carbon neutral**
- **Balancing the advantages that can be gained from the use of new energy technologies with the possible effects on the environment, ranging from micro-generators to making use of tidal power resources of the Severn estuary.**

Waste

- **Securing the promotion of sustainable waste management in the provision of waste treatment facilities.**

Minerals

- **Balancing the protection of unworked mineral resources with a strategy to ensure the continued supply for development and industrial purposes.**

Question

3) Have we identified all the main issues?



The Options

The rest of this document considers the main areas of strategic change in North Somerset and the different options for addressing some of the issues. We would like to hear your views on these or alternative suggestions.

Green Belt

The draft Regional Spatial Strategy (Policy SR3) proposes that we must extend the Green Belt to the south east of Clevedon and to the south west of Nailsea and remove land from the Green Belt to allow for the South West Bristol Urban Extension.

Three broad options are being considered for the new outer boundary. These are shown by the lines A, B, and C on the map below.

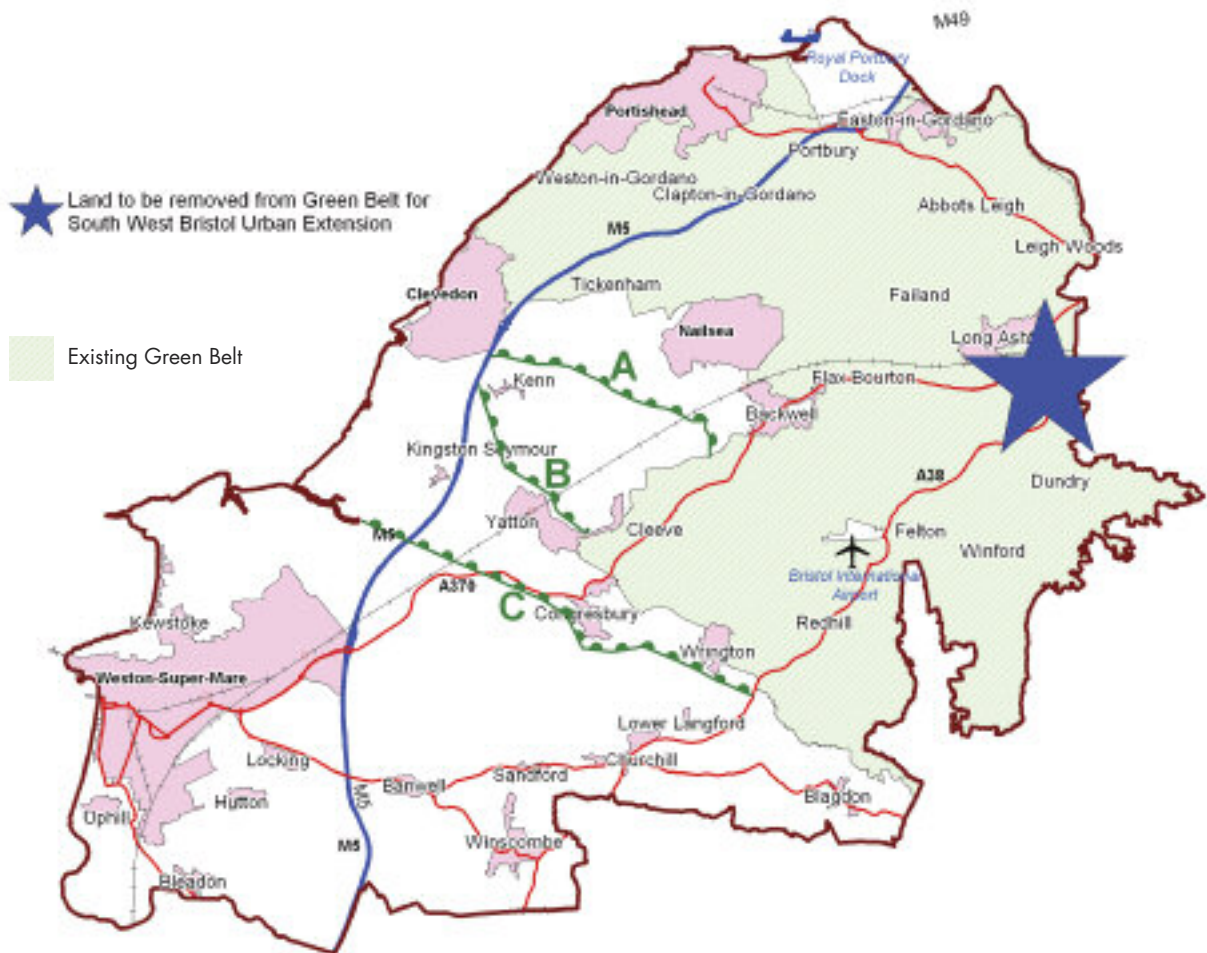
All options require decisions on how those communities encompassed by the new Green Belt should be treated as either 'inset' or 'washed over'. The Green Belt applies to washed over areas but not to inset areas. If inset, whether any land should be safeguarded for long-term development associated with the potential expansion of those communities.

The detailed inner boundary of the Green Belt to the south

west of Bristol will be established as the detailed work on the urban expansion is carried out. Decisions will also need to be made whether land should be safeguarded for development after 2026.

Question:

4) Which option do you prefer? A, B, or C?



The future of our towns and villages

North Somerset contains a wide variety of different sizes and types of towns and villages. We need to look at how they work and whether any sort of development of homes (including affordable housing), jobs, shops or services would be of benefit.

The draft Regional Spatial Strategy provides the broad framework for this. To help with future decisions on development proposals we need to 'sort' out towns and villages into four main categories. These are set out below:

1. Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCT) (Policy A)

Weston-super-Mare is the largest town and is specifically defined in the RSS, (along with Bristol) as an SSCT. It is a sub-regional shopping centre and an attractive seaside location, but with regeneration issues. Development at Weston, including the proposed urban extension, will be employment-led, phased in relation to job creation in order to provide a better balance of homes, jobs and services.

2. Market towns (Policy B)

These are to be the focal points for locally significant development ensuring the availability of jobs and services for themselves and for surrounding communities. All towns in North Somerset have high levels of out-commuting and any development which reinforces their dormitory nature would be discouraged. Encouraging local employment provision may help to stem the flow of commuters. This could be one of the main objectives for designating towns for locally significant development.

A recent retail study showed that there was no need to expand town centres to provide additional shopping facilities (except at Nailsea). Regeneration opportunities to improve the urban fabric however need to be harnessed in some centres. We are suggesting that Clevedon and Portishead are appropriate for locally significant

development. However, due to the dormitory nature of all our towns an alternative option would be not to designate any towns within this category.

3. Small towns and villages (Policy C)

These are places where small amounts of development (particularly economic activity or that which extends the range of services available) may be appropriate. Setting a framework to allow rural enterprises and local employers to flourish and increase sustainability are important issues. Small scale housing for local/affordable needs may be appropriate where need is demonstrated. It may even be advantageous to designate sites specifically for affordable housing in some communities. In the current planning framework only Yatton and Winscombe are designated as having local shopping centres, but in order to provide basic local services, one option would be to identify a designated local shopping centre within each of the communities identified in this category.

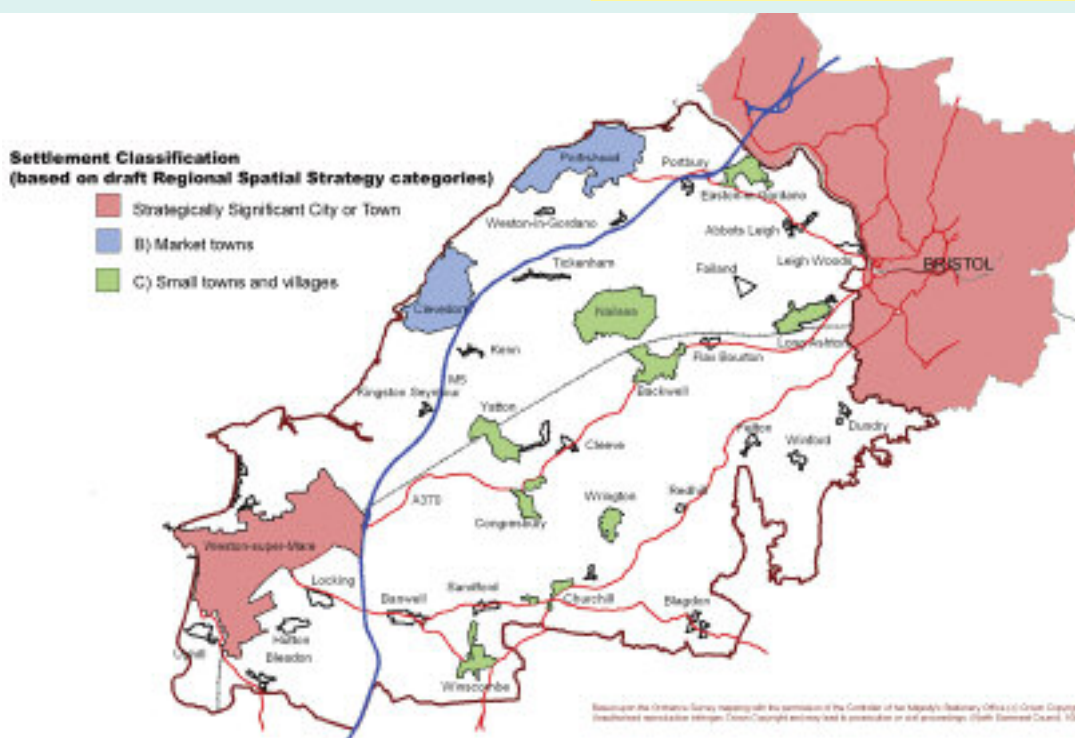
The diagram illustrated suggests that Nailsea, Backwell, Easton-in-Gordano/Pill, Long Ashton, Yatton, Wrington, Churchill, Winscombe and Congresbury could fall into this category.

4. Elsewhere, outside these villages and towns, development would be very strictly controlled. Settlement boundaries would be removed to emphasise that no new housing or significant development would be appropriate.

Questions:

5) Which towns and villages are appropriate locations for development as set out in the draft RSS hierarchy, and what form should the development take? You could think of your own village or town as an example.

6) Should we specify sites for affordable housing in these communities?



Gypsy and Travellers accommodation issues

An independent assessment of the accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers in North Somerset indicates a requirement for 36 additional residential and 10 transit caravan pitches by 2011.

Questions

- 7) Should new residential sites be located:
- (a) adjacent to existing Gypsy and Travellers sites,
 - (b) on the edge of existing towns and villages or
 - (c) as part of the proposed urban extensions to the south west of Bristol and at Weston-super-Mare?
- 8) Do you have specific suggestions for the location of new residential sites?
- 9) Where should a new Gypsy and Travellers transit site be established?

Employment

The proximity of communities in North Somerset to Bristol,

access to the M5 Motorway, the loss of manufacturing and tourism related employment and significant housing development, particularly in Weston-super-Mare has resulted in high numbers of people commuting out of our towns and villages. This puts pressure on the road network and has created an increasingly unsustainable pattern of development.

Addressing the imbalance between jobs and homes is central to the existing and emerging strategy for Weston-super-Mare. In order to address the current imbalance at Weston-super-Mare the council will use a ratio of 1.5 jobs per new home on large sites. This will ensure all new housing development is led by enough employment opportunities as well as reducing the current imbalance.

Questions

- 10) What level of self-containment (currently 64%) should we be aiming for in Weston-super-Mare by 2026?
- 11) Should a ratio of 1.5 jobs per home in Weston-super-Mare be applied to all new developments? Should a similar figure be used elsewhere in the district?
- 12) How do we assess the amount of additional employment required in our other towns and for the South-West Bristol extension?



Urban Extensions – creating sustainable communities:

A major challenge for the Core Strategy is to provide a framework for the successful development of the new communities at south west Bristol and Weston-super-Mare. In the widest sense this means ‘place making’ (giving new communities and places their own special identity). It includes:

- The location and layout of development and links to other communities and places
- Encouraging the most appropriate mix and location of services and facilities
- The look and ‘feel’ of the places we will be creating; as well as . . .
- Achieving this in the context of climate change and the need for sustainable construction and energy use
- Ensuring adequate parking and access provision
- Creating an appropriate mix of density and housing type to reflect local character and needs.

South West Bristol

The draft Regional Spatial Strategy sets out a requirement for an urban extension to the south west of Bristol, to accommodate around 9,000 homes. The broad form and function of this extension needs to be determined in the Core Strategy.

All new development will have to conform to the principles of sustainable development, high quality design and environmental standards and minimum density

requirements. The urban extension will be expected to provide an excellent example of design and construction.

At this stage however it is important to identify the more local principles for development. We would therefore like to hear your views on the following:

Question:

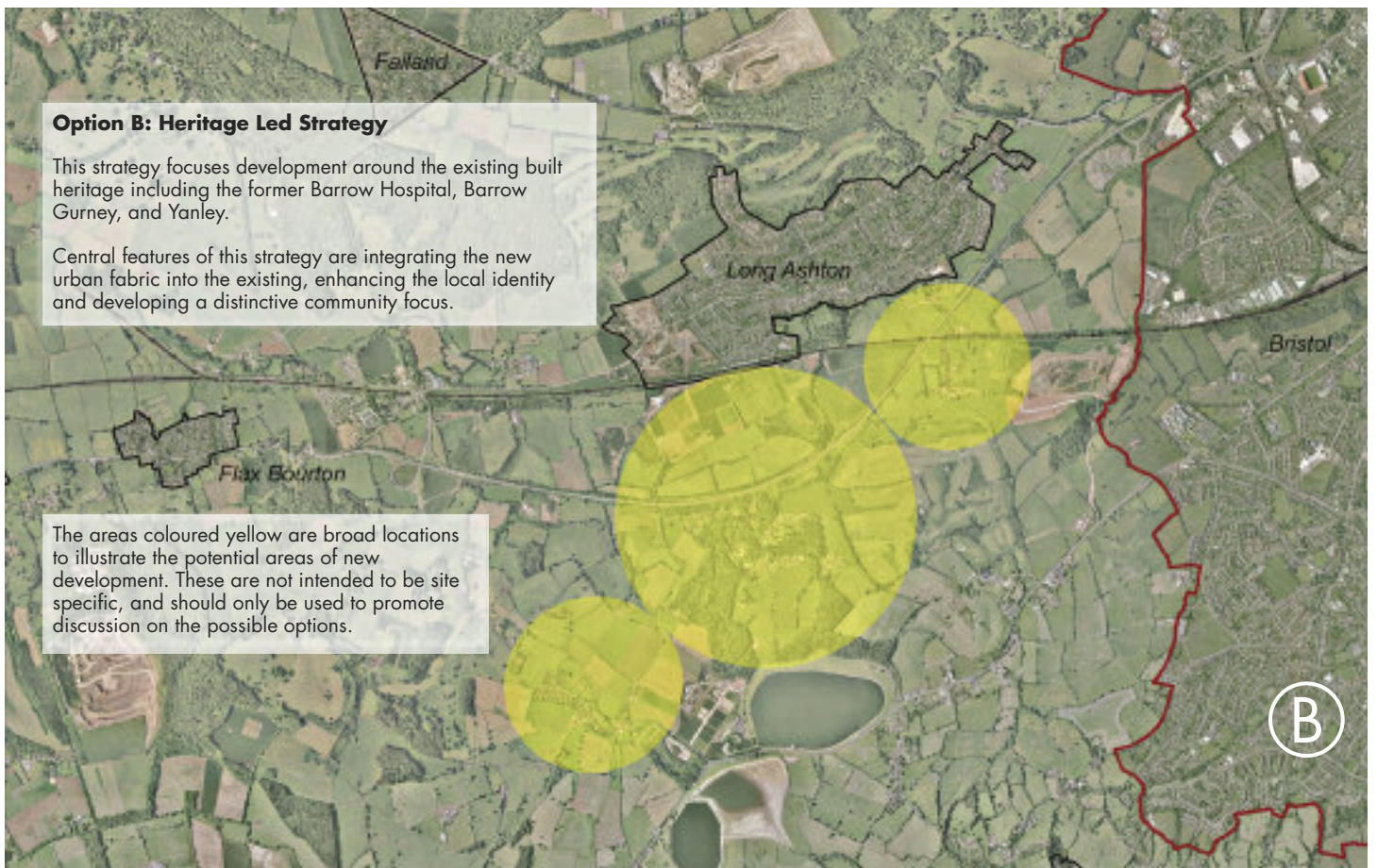
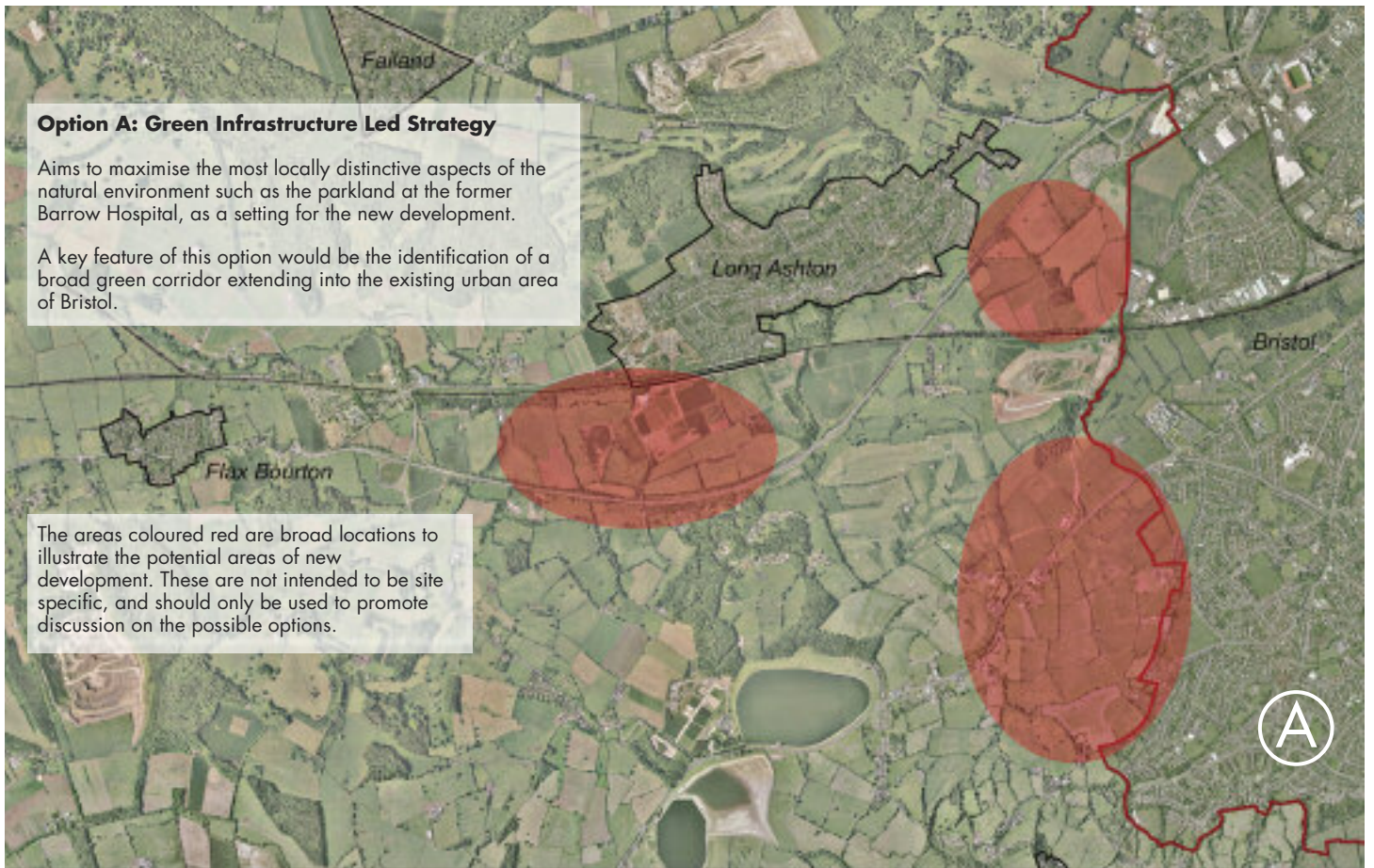
- 13) What aspects of North Somerset’s or Bristol’s character should be incorporated into the design to ensure that it is local to our area and distinctive from other towns in the UK?
- 14) What sort of density are we aiming for? Are we aiming at urban, suburban or a more spreadout form of living, or a combination of all three?
- 15) Are there any particular service or infrastructure requirements required for the new and existing communities which would enhance the quality of life for residents, for example, leisure, transport, parking and other facilities?
- 16) What mix of uses is required? How much affordable housing? What types of housing and in what proportions, for example, high rise or low rise?
- 17) What existing green space should be incorporated into the design and what new areas should be provided?

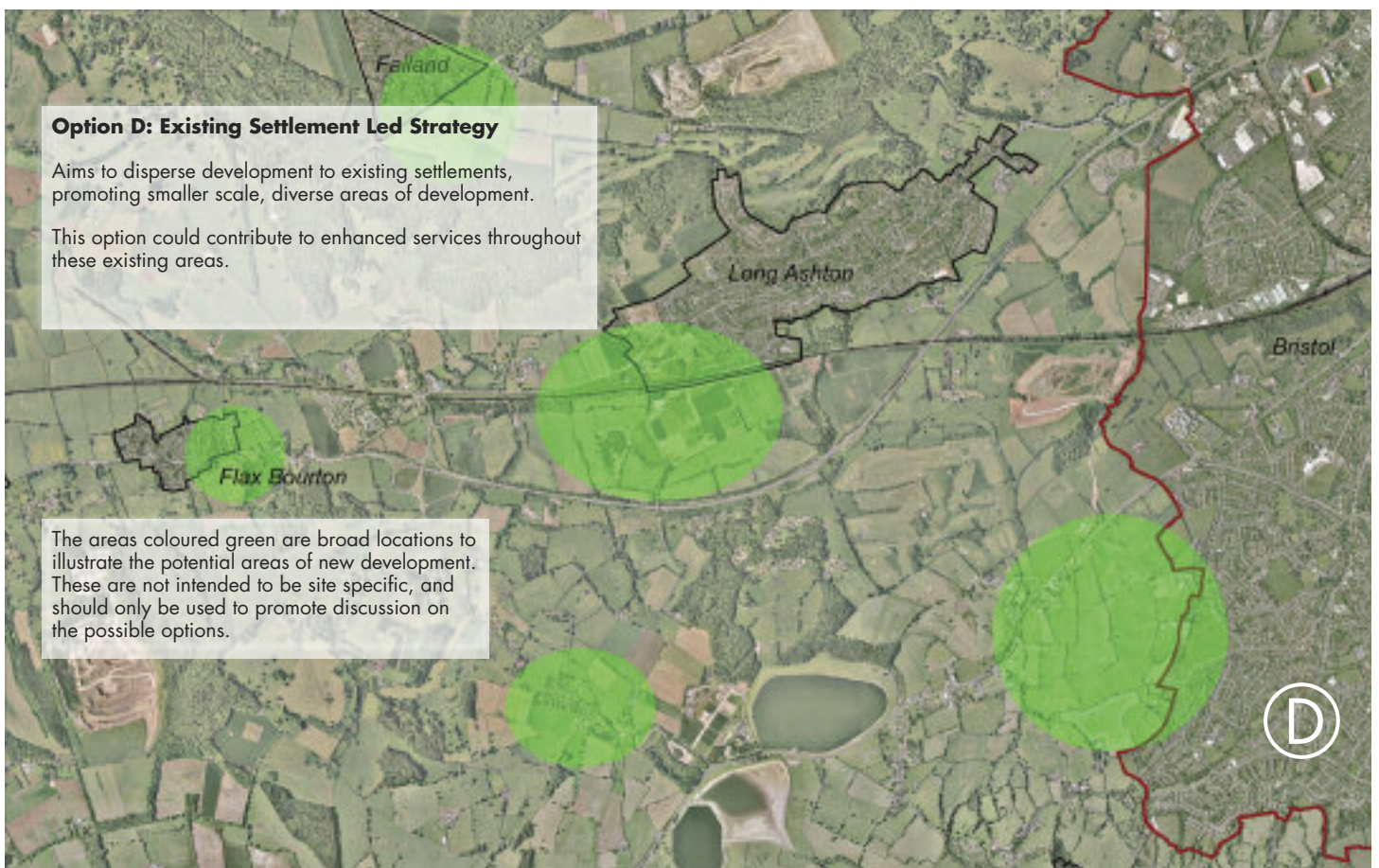
Four possible approaches to the location of the development are suggested below. At this stage none of the options show precise boundaries, they should be viewed as only general locations and broad principles.

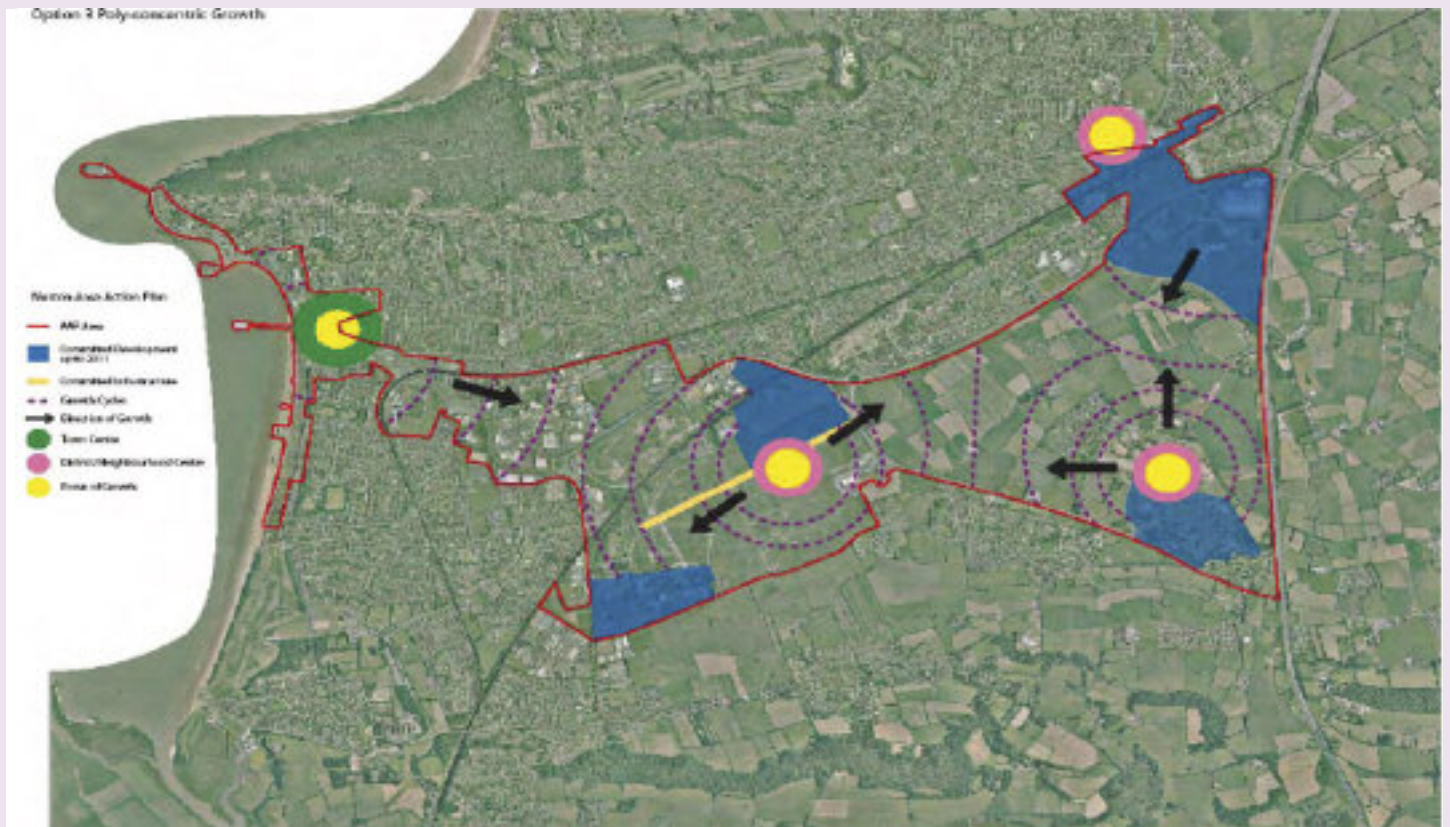
Question:

- 18) Which option do you prefer? A, B, C, or D and why?









Weston – The story so far

Following (see right) the publication of the Weston Area Development Framework in June 2005 we commissioned consultants to start the first stages in the preparation of the Weston Area Action Plan in Autumn 2005. The Area Action Plan covered all the areas identified for regeneration and major new development including an urban extension of up to 9,000 homes, within the wider Weston area including Weston Airfield and RAF Locking. The Weston Area Action Plan Issues and Options document considered four strategic options for growth:

- 1) **Eastwards Growth** where growth starts at the town centre and continues outwards towards Weston Airfield, then to RAF Locking.
- 2) **Westward Growth** where the principal direction of growth was westwards towards the town from a new district/neighbourhood centre at RAF Locking.
- 3) **Polycentric Growth (or Four Centres Growth)** where growth builds out from the four centres simultaneously: the town centre, West Wick and Worle, a new centre at Weston Airfield and a new centre at RAF Locking.
- 4) **Dual Centre Growth** where growth occurs simultaneously from the town centre eastward and RAF Locking westwards.

The preferred option that emerged from the Issues and Options consultation was Option 3: 'Four Centres' Growth as shown on above diagram. The results of this consultation can be viewed on our website: www.n-somerset.gov.uk

Strategic spatial option 3 – four centres growth:

During the preparation of and consultation on this document it became apparent that because it covered such a large area different issues were emerging within the Weston town centre compared to the Weston Regeneration Area. We have therefore decided to produce two separate Area Action Plans, firstly, one for **Weston Regeneration Area**, covering the areas of future major employment and residential growth, such as Weston Airfield, RAF Locking and West Wick/Worle. Secondly, the **Town Centre AAP**, covering the seafront, the town centre and the gateway area, which are built up areas in need of regeneration and which require a site-by-site approach to accommodate future retail and leisure provision for the resident and visitor population. The two Area Action Plans are separated by the main railway line as an easily recognisable physical divide.



Weston Regeneration Area Action Plan

The preferred option that emerged from the Weston Area Action Plan Issues and Options consultation will now be carried forward and included in the Core Strategy as the Weston Regeneration Area Area Action Plan which will address the strategic growth options for Weston-super-Mare.

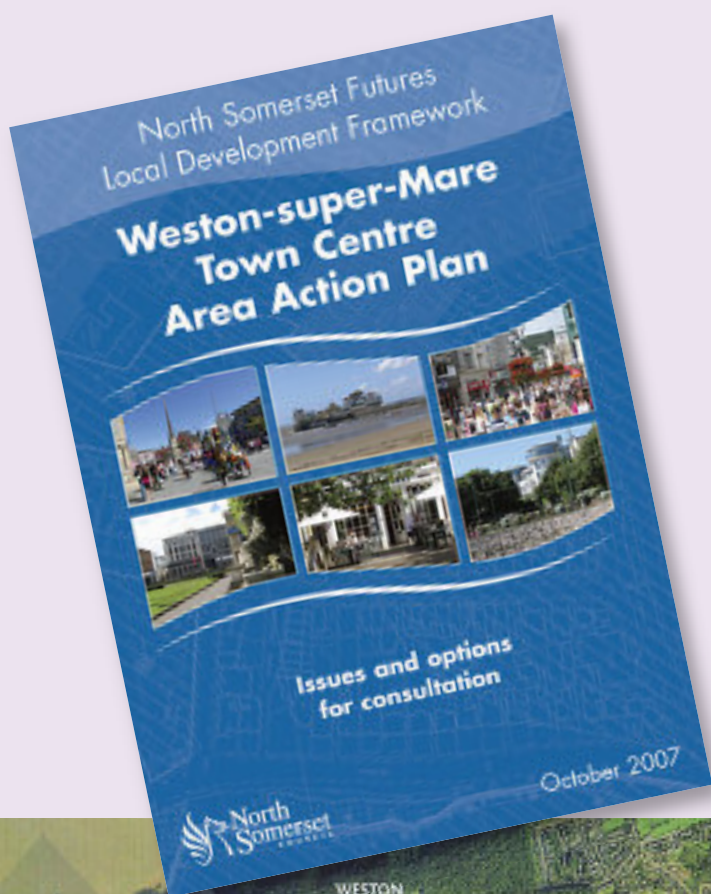
The next stage in the consultation on the Weston Regeneration Area AAP will be the Preferred Options stage in Summer/Autumn 2008.

Weston Town Centre Area Action Plan

Following the Weston Area Action Plan consultation it became evident that the town centre issues needed to be examined in more detail. The town centre is very different in terms of its form and function from the Regeneration Area. It is an existing built up environment, with a large mix of uses, a variety of architectural styles, important natural features and multiple land ownerships.

Therefore a *further* Issues and Options consultation for the emerging Weston Town Centre Area Action Plan has been produced and is being consulted upon alongside the Core Strategy and you are welcome to comment on this too. It is available on our website at www.n-somerset.gov.uk or from Somerset House, Oxford Street, Weston-super-Mare (Tel: 01275 884 599). It can also be viewed at all local libraries in North Somerset.

The Preferred Options consultation on the Weston Town Centre Area Action Plan will take place in the Summer/Autumn 2008.



Location plan from Weston Area Framework 2005





Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure is the name given to networks of accessible, multipurpose sites such as parks, woodland, informal open spaces, nature reserves, wildlife corridors, rivers, streams and historic sites. It contributes to sustainability and the quality of life of North Somerset residents and will be a valuable asset to the new residents living in the two urban extensions.

The draft Regional Spatial Strategy (Policy G11) expects local authorities and partners to develop Green Infrastructure policies. The proposed urban extension in Weston-super-Mare includes the development of a "Green Heart". Providing for Green Infrastructure will also be a central component of the South West Bristol Urban Extension.

Weston's Green Heart

The Green Heart is a strategic green public open space which will primarily be located within the future urban extension on Weston Airfield. The concept of having a Green Heart has been identified in the Weston Area Development Framework to ensure the Green Infrastructure network is maintained and strengthened in Weston as part of the development of Weston Regeneration Area. The details of the Green Heart are still to be decided.

Location and function of the Green Heart

The general location of Green Heart has broadly been decided as running through Weston Airfield.

However, how far it extends, its shape, and general configuration are still up for debate, for example, should it:

- be one large area of green open space?
- be a series of open spaces interspersed with development?
- run from north to south or east to west?

Should the Green Heart be:

- laid out as parkland?
- left as a wildlife area?
- a large open park, which can also be used as an events space?
- an area for sporting facilities linking it with Hutton Moor?
- a combination of some or all of the above?

Question

19) What are your views on the location, design and function of the Green Heart?



Further information

You can find out more about the issues and options on the **North Somerset Core Strategy** document by going to the exhibitions being held around the district at:

■ Long Ashton Library

Core Strategy

Saturday 6 October Thursday 11 October

Staffed: Saturday 6, 9.30am 12.30pm

■ Weston super Mare,

Winter Gardens (Clarence Suite)

Core Strategy and Weston Town Centre Area Action Plan

Monday 8 October, 2 7pm

Staffed: 2 7pm

■ Weston super Mare, Town Hall

Core Strategy and Weston Town Centre Area Action Plan

Tuesday 9 October Friday 19 October

■ Clevedon Library

Core Strategy

Friday 12 October Tuesday 16 October

Staffed: Tuesday 16, 9.30am 7pm

■ Nailsea, Somerfield supermarket

Core Strategy

Wednesday 17 October Monday 22 October

Last day closing time 5pm

Staffed: Wednesday 17, 9.30am 7pm

■ Weston super Mare

Sovereign Centre

Core Strategy and Weston Town Centre Area Action Plan

Saturday 20 October Sunday 28 October

Staffed: Saturday 20, 9am 5.30pm

■ Portishead, Waitrose supermarket

Core Strategy

Tuesday 23 October Friday 26 October

Last day closing time 5pm

Staffed: Tuesday 23, 9.30am 7pm

■ Weston super Mare, The Campus

Core Strategy and Weston Town Centre Area Action Plan

Monday 29 October

Friday 30 November

Available to view during venue opening hours.

Contact details

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e mail: planning.policy@n.somerset.gov.uk

web site: www.n.somerset.gov.uk

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This publication is available in large print, Braille or audio formats on request.

Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

Please contact **01275 884 599**