

North Somerset Futures
Local Development Framework

Core Strategy

**Key Changes
Consultation**

Core Strategy: Key Changes Consultation 15 October – 22 November 2010

Introduction

The Core Strategy Consultation Draft (November 2009) was subject to public consultation between November 2009 and February 2010. A Consultation Response Report has been prepared which summarises the response received, and is available on the North Somerset Council website (www.n-somerset.gov.uk).

The Consultation Draft was prepared in the context of considerable uncertainty over the then emerging Regional Spatial Strategy which was proposing significant growth of 26,750 dwellings for the district to 2026, including two substantial new urban extensions one at South West Bristol in the Green Belt, and one at Weston-super-Mare. The Core Strategy made a clear statement that the Council did not support the proposal at South West Bristol or development in the Green Belt.

Following the general election the Coalition Government revoked the Regional Spatial Strategy and made it clear that in the absence of top-down housing numbers, responsibility for identifying the right level of housing provision lay with local planning authorities. This was coupled with support for the protection of the Green Belt and an emphasis given to the localism agenda.

On 20 July 2010 Executive Committee considered the implications for the Core Strategy in the light of the government's announcements and agreed that the overall strategy and approach set out in the Consultation Draft remained fit for purpose. However it was recognised that there were two key areas, namely the need to identify a new locally-derived North Somerset-wide housing requirement and the revised approach to strategic growth at Weston, which required further consultation before proceeding to the next formal stage of plan preparation (the Publication document). In addition, the opportunity is taken to consult on a proposed amendment to the settlement hierarchy as a result of the response received to consultation.

This document summarises these three proposed key changes to the Core Strategy and invites comments on the proposed approach:

1. New North Somerset-wide housing requirement of 13,400 dwellings 2006-2026.
2. Revisions to the settlement strategy to include infilling-only villages.
3. Revised approach to strategic growth at Weston-super-Mare

Comments on the Key Changes Consultation must be submitted by 12 noon Monday 22 November 2010. We would like your responses to be made via the web-based Local Development Framework consultation system. This is the most efficient way of ensuring that your comments are received and processed.

North Somerset Council

Consultation on proposed changes to key elements of the Core Strategy

October 2010

Alternatively you can download the questionnaire to complete and email this to planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk.

The responses to these Key Changes will help inform the next stage of the Core Strategy – the Publication document which will be subject to formal consultation early 2011.

Consultation on proposed changes to key elements of the Core Strategy

1. New North Somerset-wide housing requirement of 13,400 dwellings 2006-2026

1.1 The Core Strategy Consultation Draft had been prepared in parallel with the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy. The RSS had proposed 26,750 dwellings for North Somerset to 2026, including two proposed urban extensions of 9,000 dwellings at both South West Bristol (in the Green Belt) and at Weston-super-Mare. The Core Strategy Consultation Draft was prepared on the basis of a target of 26,750 less 9,000 = 17,750 dwellings, although it was recognised that the housing requirement would need to be reviewed should the RSS not be adopted.

1.2 In July 2010 the RSS was revoked. This meant that the emerging top-down housing numbers were deleted. In their place, local planning authorities were made responsible for establishing new locally-derived housing requirements. In order to inform this process North Somerset commissioned independent advice on the methodology and recommendations for a new district-wide housing requirement. This report, 'North Somerset Council: Determining a locally derived District Core Strategy housing requirement to 2026' (October 2010), is available for inspection on the website. The Council is minded to include the recommended new North Somerset-wide housing requirement of 13,400 dwellings in the next stage of the Core Strategy (the Publication document), and is inviting comment on both the approach and methodology used and the implications of introducing a lower requirement.

Approach and methodology

1.3 The report comprises two parts which together examine alternative methods of approach taking account of demographic changes, economic growth and development capacity, leading to the identification of a new North Somerset housing total for inclusion in the Core Strategy.

1.4 The study recognises that one of the main problems facing North Somerset is that owing to the combination of relatively modest rates of job growth and relatively lower house prices (compared with elsewhere in the area around Bristol), demand for housing is very strong and that its provision needs to be better phased and managed than in the past. It is the buoyancy of the economy in and around Bristol and Bath rather than local job opportunities that causes the pressure for housing growth in North Somerset.

1.5 The study also sets out some key principles for setting an appropriate level of growth which include:

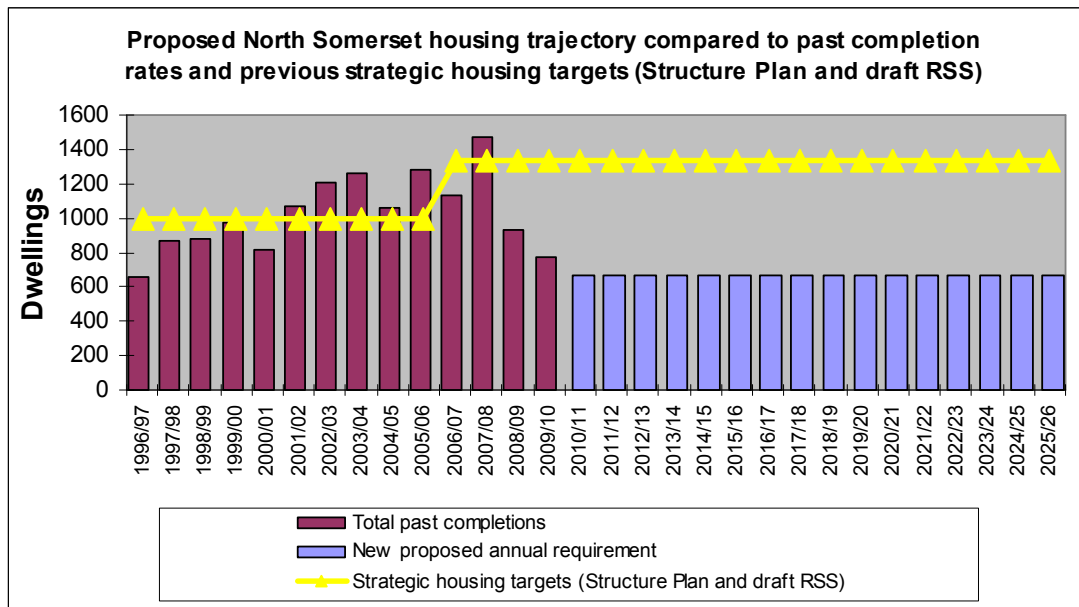
- a) Help to ensure a healthy economy by closely linking housing growth to employment (employment-led growth).
- b) Provide sufficient housing to meet local needs.

- c) Accept that market forces allow movement and freedom of choice and that people, especially those not tied to employment, may choose to move into the district.
- d) Accept that there are capacity constraints including environmental limits, infrastructure delivery and transport capacity.

1.6 Different ways of producing a housing growth figure were considered. It was concluded that although there was no 'right' answer, a method based on economic growth forecasts was favoured. Based on this, the recommended housing requirement for North Somerset for the period 2006 – 2026 was 13,400 dwellings. This level of housing growth is approximately half of that envisaged by the Regional Spatial Strategy (26,750), and less than that suggested in the Consultation Draft (17,750). The main reasons for the differences are:

- The new requirement is based on a jobs-led policy approach – a realistic assessment of how many new jobs may come forward, and how many new homes would be needed to support this job growth.
- The impact of the economic recession has been taken into account.
- The work on the RSS target took place over five years ago in very different economic circumstances.
- The previous RSS approach looked to focus development in the South West at the main urban areas - consequently North Somerset had to accommodate some of the needs of the Bristol urban area.
- Reduced levels of in-migration.

1.7 The following table illustrates the proposed housing trajectory based on 13,400 dwellings (670 pa) in relation to past completions and previous housing requirements (approved Structure Plan at 993 pa and draft RSS requirement at 1300 pa).



1.8 At 1 April 2010 the North Somerset housing land supply situation was as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Completions 2006-2010 | 4,313 dwellings |
| Remaining Local Plan allocations | 642 dwellings |
| Planning permissions | 2,398 dwellings |
| Total | 7,353 dwellings |

Based on a new North Somerset housing requirement of 13,400 dwellings this leaves 6,047 dwellings to be identified to 2026 (although it cannot be assumed that all permissions will be implemented). Most of this shortfall will be identified at Weston Villages where the indicative capacity is 5,000 – 6,000 dwellings.

Implications of the new housing requirement

1.9 A reduced North Somerset housing requirement will have a number of implications, some positive, some negative. Some of the key advantages are:

- Ensures that future housing development in North Somerset is linked to job growth, whilst acknowledging the reality that some new dwellings will be taken by people who do not work within the district.
- Reduces the strain on existing infrastructure.
- No need to build in the Green Belt.
- No need to build in unsustainable locations, or promote large scale development in and around villages.
- Allows for development to be concentrated in Weston-super-Mare on brownfield land whilst delivering employment-led objectives.
- Allows for a managed and flexible approach to the housing numbers if economic conditions change.

The disadvantages could include:

- Increasing house prices - although due to the current recession this is not happening and is dependent on a host of other factors.
- A lower number of affordable housing units – although still the same proportion of the total.
- Potentially increased levels of inadequately housed households and other negative socio-economic impacts – this would need to be monitored.
- Increased inward commuting if local employees are forced out of the area to find housing.
- Possible inadequate supply of local labour to meet employment demand.

1.10 As the recommended housing target is lower than that set out in the Consultation Draft, it is not anticipated that the revised housing target will require any significant amendment to the Core Strategy settlement strategy (but see the proposed changes to the settlement strategy set out in the second strand of this consultation). The detailed consequences of a revised housing requirement will be taken into account in the context of the preparation of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

Questions

1. Do you support the revised North Somerset housing requirement of 13,400 dwellings 2006-2026?
2. Do you support the approach and methodology used?
3. Do you have any comments on the implications of the reduced dwelling requirement?

Consultation on proposed changes to key elements of the Core Strategy

2. Revisions to the settlement strategy to include infilling-only villages

2.1 The settlement strategy proposed in the Core Strategy Consultation Draft established the following levels in the hierarchy:

- Weston-super-Mare – the primary focus for development.
- Market and Coastal Towns – Nailsea, Portishead and Clevedon.
- 12 Service Villages.
- All other villages treated in policy terms as countryside, where any existing settlement boundaries removed and a restrictive approach to further development employed.

Response to consultation

2.2 The response to consultation on the Consultation Draft revealed a high degree of support for Weston being the primary focus for development, for protection of the Green Belt and opposition to the SW Bristol urban extension. The approach to development for the three towns and the service villages was also generally supported, although there was some debate as to which settlements should be within which category, and some concern over the implications of removing existing settlement boundaries. In particular, there was a view that some limited infilling could be beneficial to some smaller communities and that redevelopment opportunities may be missed if the approach was too restrictive. Many respondents felt that a one size fits all approach was perhaps too restrictive and that local communities should be given the opportunity to influence the choice.

Revised approach

2.3 As a result of the response to consultation, the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and therefore the removal of the top down planning framework and housing numbers, and the government's commitment to the localism agenda as a means of providing more choice to local communities, a revised approach is proposed.

2.4 The Council is minded to introduce a new category in the settlement hierarchy of villages where settlement boundaries are retained but infilling only is permitted (up to two dwellings). This would be included in the next stage of the Core Strategy – the Publication document. The proposed new settlement strategy would then be as follows:

- Weston-super-Mare – the primary focus for development
- Market and Coastal Towns – Nailsea, Portishead and Clevedon
- Service Villages
- Villages - infilling only within settlement boundaries
- All other villages treated as countryside, where any existing settlement boundaries are removed and a restrictive approach to further development employed.

2.5 The new category would provide only very limited opportunities for infilling within the settlement boundaries of named villages. This would provide some scope for a very small degree of development in these locations, but is not expected to generate a large number of completions because of the limited number of remaining infill plots.

2.6 In the Core Strategy Consultation Draft twelve settlements were proposed as Service Villages. Three of these, Hutton, Locking and Uphill were included primarily because of their proximity to Weston and it is now proposed that these become infilling only villages. To this list are added other villages which were previously proposed to lose their settlement boundaries, but made representations to the effect that their settlement boundaries should be retained.

The proposed list of infill villages is:

Bleadon
Claverham
Cleeve
Dundry
Flax Bourton
Hutton
Kenn
Kewstoke
Kingston Seymour
Locking
Sandford
Uphill

2.7 The Council is seeking views on the appropriateness of including an infilling only category, and which settlements it should apply to. In particular, communities are invited to suggest the preferred approach for their village - should the settlement boundary be retained with the possibility of some limited residential development, or lose the boundary and be subject to the policy approach which applies in the countryside?

2.8 The following table sets out the broad approach proposed within each type of settlement.

Settlement category and scale of residential development proposed

| Settlement Categories | Villages without settlement boundaries and countryside | Villages with settlement boundaries | Service Villages | Market and Coastal Towns | Weston-super-Mare |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| Summary of approach to residential development | Strict control | Infilling only | Small-scale development to support local objectives | Residential development acceptable | Strategic focus for growth |
| Proposed settlements (only settlements with existing settlement boundaries are identified). | Abbots Leigh Blagdon Clapton-in-Gordano Failand Felton Leigh Woods Lower Langford Portbury Redhill Tickenham Weston-in-Gordano Winford | Bleadon Claverham Cleeve Dundry Flax Bourton Hutton Kenn Kewstoke Kingston Seymour Locking Sandford Uphill | Backwell Banwell Congresbury Churchill Long Ashton Pill/Easton-in-Gordano Winscombe Wrington Yatton | Nailsea Portishead Clevedon | Weston-super-Mare |
| Summary of categories of residential development | 1. Replacement dwellings. 2. Residential | 1+2+3+5+ 6. Infilling within the settlement boundary | 1+2+3+5+6+7+ 8. Small-scale residential development within | 10. Residential development within the settlement | 10+11+ 12. Planned new communities at Winterstoke and |

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| <p>acceptable in principle (need also to consider constraints as Green Belt, flood risk etc and other policy requirements)</p> | <p>subdivision. 3. Residential conversions of existing buildings where alternative economic use not appropriate. 4. Dwellings for farm, forestry workers and other essential rural workers. 5. Affordable housing – rural exception sites.</p> | <p>(up to two dwellings). 7. Redevelopment sites within the settlement boundary where it can be demonstrated that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if last used for economic development an economic use is not suitable; and • that the proposal is community-led with clear community and environmental benefits | <p>the settlement boundary provided that the proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fulfils an identified local housing need in respect of affordability or dwelling mix; and • does not generate a demand for local services on a scale that cannot be met; and • Supports the retention of existing services. <p>9. Small scale residential or mixed use allocations adjacent to settlement boundaries provided they are community-led and demonstrate clear local benefits such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. improved local employment opportunities, and/or | <p>boundary. If the proposal is on a site last used for economic development it must be demonstrated that an economic use is no longer suitable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11. Residential or mixed use allocations adjacent to the settlement boundary provided they are community-led and provide clear local benefits such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) improvements to the mix and tenure of local housing; and/or b) important infrastructure, community or environmental benefits which would otherwise not be provided; | <p>Parklands. 13. Sites of 10 or more dwellings must be employment led.</p> |
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| | | | <p>b. improvements to the mix and tenure of local housing; and/or c. important infrastructure, community or environmental benefits which would otherwise not be provided.</p> | <p>and c) employment opportunities to support greater self-containment.</p> | |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|

Questions

4. Do you support the introduction of a new settlement category of infilling-only villages?

5. From the information provided in the table, do you agree that the settlements are in the right categories? If not, please state your suggested changes and give your reasons.

Consultation on proposed changes to key elements of the Core Strategy

3. Strategic growth at Weston-super-Mare

3.1 This section provides a summary of the key changes in approach, and the fundamental guiding principles related to strategic growth at Weston-super-Mare. The Core Strategy Consultation Draft was based on the Regional Spatial Strategy approach which allocated 9,000 dwellings in the form of an urban extension. The revocation of the RSS provided the opportunity to reassess the size and form of strategic growth at Weston. The revised approach was outlined in the report to Council on the Core Strategy on 20 July 2010. The Council is minded to revise the existing Policy CS30 and accompanying strategic diagram to reflect this new approach in the next stage of the Core Strategy – the Publication document.

3.2 The Council is also preparing a more detailed Weston Villages Supplementary Planning Document and also a Development Contributions Supplementary Planning Document which will be subject to consultation later in the autumn. The current consultation is solely in respect of the more strategic broad-brush policy context to include in the Core Strategy.

Revised approach and key changes

3.3 The fundamental changes related to strategic growth at Weston relate to the number of proposed dwellings reducing from 9,000 (as identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy) to around 5,000-6,000 and an emphasis on place-making and community building as the key determining principles. The revised approach looks to the creation of two new villages, each with their own character and sense of community. Winterstoke Village will be focused on the former Airfield site, with Parklands Village at the former RAF Locking and adjacent land.

3.4 The move away from a large-scale urban extension to smaller development characteristic of existing villages is underpinned by a series of key principles that should be central to the development of the new villages. These principles were outlined in the Core Strategy Executive Report of 20 July 2010. The key elements were identified as follows:

- There will be two new villages each with a distinctive character reflected in its design and layout and use of place names and features.
- Development will be employment-led; housing will be phased in tranches linked to the delivery of jobs, based on a total of 2.1 jobs per dwelling (1.5 B jobs).
- Local centres to have a distinctive character through the use of high quality architecture and urban design that references the local heritage and environment.
- Local centres to be the heart of the community, providing retailing and other community services to meet day to day work, leisure, and shopping needs.

- Local centres to be flexible and adaptable, to enable other uses and buildings to develop as the community grows and to adapt to changing market conditions over time; co-location of facilities will be encouraged.
- A space for community activities and adjacent open space to be provided at the start of the development to support community integration and identity.
- First phases of residential development to be well-related to the local centres; later phases of residential to benefit from good accessibility by a range of modes.
- Residential areas to include lower density family housing, with higher densities closer to local centres and bus corridors.
- A clear road hierarchy will be provided.
- Adequate parking to be provided, integrated into well designed residential neighbourhoods.
- A bus corridor to be provided at the earliest opportunity through the sites linking to the local centre and schools.
- A network of attractive, direct segregated cycle/pedestrian corridors to be provided linking local facilities and adjacent areas.
- Green infrastructure will be a key component (rhynes, formal open space, wildlife corridors, and allotments) but no large Green Heart as originally envisaged.
- Appropriate safeguarding will be provided for helicopter flights in respect of noise and safety.
- Flood risk mitigation to be provided subject to agreement and ongoing collaboration with the Environment Agency.
- There will be a standard charge approach to development contributions (via a separate Development Contributions Supplementary Planning Document).

Key issues:

Infrastructure funding and delivery

3.5 Development at Weston requires a high level of supporting strategic infrastructure, particularly transport and flood mitigation. The reduction in housing numbers does to a degree reduce the amount of infrastructure required to serve new development and the associated costs though these remain high. The current economic situation provides a very challenging context for infrastructure delivery and this is currently being assessed through the Development Contributions SPD, a draft of which will shortly be available for consultation.

Employment-led approach

3.6 It remains a central objective to ensure the development is employment-led to ensure the current imbalance in the town between jobs and homes is addressed, and that new residential development is supported by a sustainable provision of employment opportunities.

Flood management

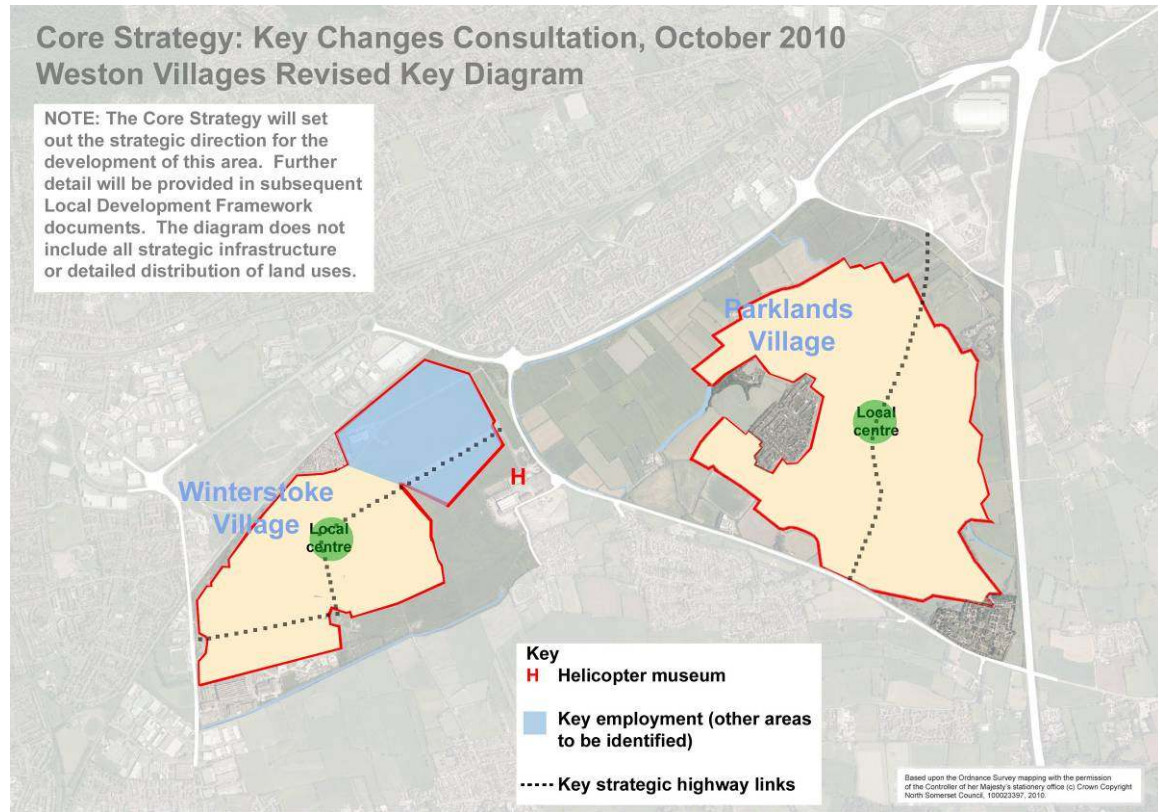
3.7 Significant work has been carried out to date exploring the necessary flood mitigation measures required to enable development in this location. Based on the RSS numbers, a preferred option was recommended including the creation of a flood storage area to the south of the Airfield in addition to the creation of a compound channel on the River Banwell. With a reduced quantum of development further work is being carried out to clarify the required strategic solution.

Helicopter safeguarding

3.8 The new development must respect safety and noise constraints related to helicopter flights to and from the Helicopter Museum. This relates to the proximity of noise sensitive uses (particularly residential), and corridors to ensure safe access (such as retaining an open corridor alongside Somerset Avenue).

Revised Key Diagram

3.9 The Core Strategy will contain a key diagram setting out the indicative distribution of land uses. This will provide the context for more detailed masterplanning. The following represents a revised draft key diagram which identifies the extent of the proposed Weston Villages, the broad location of the main employment area (although other employment areas will be identified), the local centres and the key strategic road links. This will be refined as work progresses on the Weston Villages Supplementary Planning Document, and additional detail may be added when it is included in the Core Strategy Publication document. Comments are invited on the extent of the development illustrated on the draft key diagram and how well it reflects the design and development principles outlined in the 20 July Executive report.



Questions

6. Do you agree with the principles underpinning the new approach to development at Weston-super-Mare?
7. Do you have any comments on the revised Key Diagram for the Weston Villages.

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 01934 426 816



For further information please contact

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