

CONSULTATION JULY 2020

# NORTH SOMERSET LOCAL PLAN 2038 CHALLENGES AND CHOICES PART 1

## Challenges for the Future



# Welcome

by Cllr Donald Davies, Leader of the Council and Cllr James Tonkin, Executive Member for Planning and Transport



**Thank you for joining our consultation on planning for North Somerset over the next 15 years.**

Thinking about what our lives will be like in future is both exciting and daunting. It is not easy to predict the future, as our recent enforced lockdown has shown, but one thing is certain there will be changes which need to be managed. We want to understand these changes and how you think we should respond to them so that we shape your area to meet your values, hopes and needs.

One thing is already clear, we will need more homes. These are needed for our children, grandchildren, and elderly relatives and we, as a community and council, need to plan for them. Climate change is shifting the council's and public's priorities. Our population is ageing, bringing issues about how we care for our older people. Financial resources are stretched and need to be carefully managed. The Covid-19 pandemic may well make us think differently about our priorities and how we plan for the future in terms of supporting communities and the economy.

Over the coming months we will be asking our residents, young and old, from a diverse range of backgrounds and from different parts of North Somerset- rural villages, those in town centres and suburbs - to think about, and join us in developing a new Local Plan. This will cover a range of issues and will determine what development will take place and where it will be located. We will work with communities, landowners, developers, agents and government to determine when and how it will be delivered.

We are starting this process by thinking about the challenges we face and what sort of vision, aims and priorities will guide us in making more detailed choices. There will be further chances to participate as the plan progresses.

Difficult choices need to be made and not everyone will approve of them. However, we want to listen to your views and plan for future generations in a responsible and sustainable way.

In this document we have tried to set out the challenges that need to be considered as clearly and honestly as possible. It's now over to you to help us to understand your hopes and fears so that we develop the right choices for our future.

If you want to be kept informed on the progress of the local plan please register with our [consultation system](#). You will receive emails informing you of upcoming events and progress. But you can also lookout for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram posts from North Somerset Council and more traditional news articles in the local press.







# Contents

Welcome	3
Introduction	5
Planning for the next 15 years	6
Why do we need a Local Plan?	7
What are the benefits of new homes and jobs?	9
<b>Section 1: The Challenges</b>	<b>11</b>
The challenges and opportunities of change	11
Challenge 1: Climate Emergency - how will addressing this influence new development?	13
Challenge 2: Supporting our economy	15
Challenge 3: Providing homes and creating communities	17
Why do we need new homes?	17
Challenge 4: Creating a sustainable future	21
Challenge 5: Protecting important green and blue spaces	24
Challenge 6: The future role of the Green Belt	26
<b>Section 2: Vision, aims and priorities</b>	<b>29</b>
What should our vision be for 2038?	29
What should be our aims?	30
What should the priorities be?	32
How can I comment?	34



# Introduction

A Local Plan sets out where developments can and cannot take place and ensures we get the right type of development in the right place with the right services and infrastructure – and avoids unplanned development.

We asked residents about some of the issues in September 2018. A lot has happened since then - the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) for the West of England has been withdrawn and the recent pandemic means we need to have a rethink. The consultation in September 2018 not only looked at places for new development but considered issues such as which types of settlements might be more suitable for development, whether settlement boundaries

need to be reviewed, the role of the airport and future detailed policies the plan might have. These issues and many others will all be covered in the consultation draft version of the plan which will be released next year.

This document sets out the challenges facing North Somerset. It explains why we need more homes and jobs and how climate change and ensuring sustainable development is influencing development.

**Whilst it is not clear how things will alter in the long-term as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic this could fundamentally change the way we live our lives, including the way we travel, where we work, changes to our town centres and high streets and the impacts on our economy.**





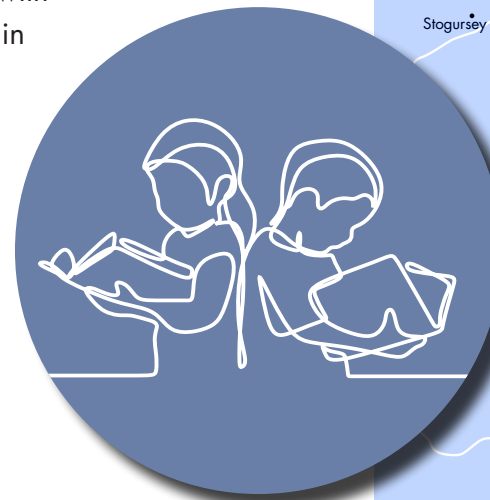
# Planning for the next 15 years

North Somerset is a popular place to live and visit. It has strong links with Bristol, an important economic base and attractive and characterful towns, villages and rural areas. Providing the right type of homes and communities we need, together with jobs, schools, open space, roads and sustainable transport whilst addressing climate change and other important issues is going to present some interesting challenges and opportunities.

We need more homes in North Somerset. This will involve intense debate and difficult decisions about where to develop especially when people fear increasing traffic congestion, high house prices and services that are struggling to cope. However, ensuring young people such as your children and grandchildren can find a home in the local area, that there are homes for people to downsize to, retirement homes or assisted living schemes is a fundamental requirement.

New housing is a controversial and complex subject; we all want homes for our families and ourselves but, let us be honest, we do not always want houses built near us.

The Council understands that concern. The prospect of more housing causes worries about traffic congestion, school places, loss of green space, difficulty getting a GP or hospital appointment and other vital issues. The only way to deal with these issues is to plan in a coordinated way. Having an up-to date Local Plan in place helps in delivering infrastructure and in rejecting demands from developers to build in unsuitable locations.





# Why do we need a Local Plan?

Local authorities must prepare up-to-date plans which set out a vision, a framework for addressing housing and other needs and a platform for local people to help shape their surroundings. This also involves working closely with adjoining local authorities to ensure that shared issues are properly addressed. In our case we will continue to work closely with Bristol and the West of England Combined Authority in the north and with Sedgemoor and Somerset to the south to discuss common issues and ensure that our plans and policies are aligned. We also work with communities

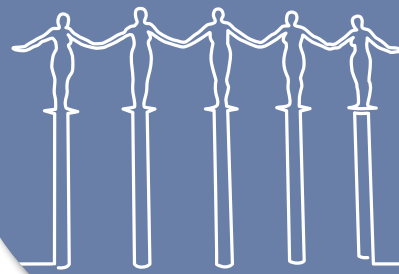
developing neighbourhood plans within North Somerset. The Local Plan will provide a new overall context within which new or updated neighbourhood plans can be progressed for towns and villages to reflect local aspirations.

Boosting housebuilding is a key government objective. The housing target is calculated using national guidance. For North Somerset this means the Government is telling us we need to build **around 1,369 homes a year**. This is significantly more than is currently being constructed.

Making planning decisions is not easy, because, in the end, it often means telling some people that new development is going to be built in or next to their town or village. Claiming that we don't need the housing or that it can go somewhere else is denying our responsibility to our children and future generations who need homes. Burying our heads in the sand or trying to employ delaying tactics will lead to significant problems in the very near future.







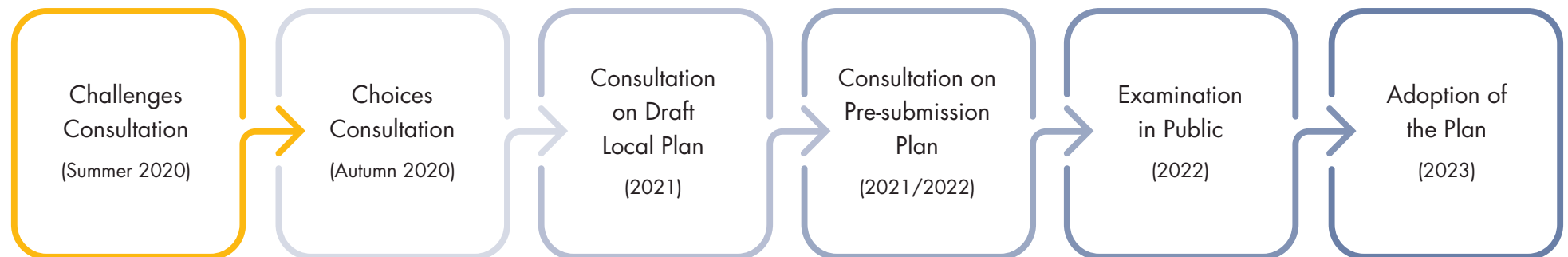
## With a Plan

- We can provide the right homes in the right places that people need while improving the quality of life that we rightly expect.
- Build homes in a way that supports climate change objectives.
- Invest in the necessary infrastructure to make sure our children have school places, our roads are not gridlocked, we continue to have access to health services and community facilities and there are jobs near where we live.
- We will be able to confidently refuse planning applications which do not meet the policies and standards set.

## Without a Plan

- We would have the lottery of developers submitting speculative planning applications.
- We would have little local influence over where or how the housing is built.
- Housing will come anyway, either through a plan imposed by government or a free-for-all of planning applications.
- There would be no certainty where development will take place which means not being able to plan properly for its impact. Development granted permission at the wrong time or in the wrong place could place huge pressure on school places, community facilities and wider transport infrastructure for which additional resources would be required.

## Stages of making a Local Plan:





# What are the benefits of new homes and jobs?

**Proposals for new growth near where people live inevitably brings with it worry and concern. We do not want to downplay any of the issues communities express, indeed understanding these help to improve designs and proposals.**

However, development can also bring considerable benefits and improvements to communities.

## **It can:**

- ✓ Deliver new facilities e.g. schools, community services, broadband and transport improvements. Our newest large housing developments at Parklands and Haywood Village near Weston-super-Mare have already seen new transport improvements, schools, shops, play areas and sports pitches, jobs, a community hall, pub, petrol station, new cycle routes and pedestrian links.
- ✓ Bring improved transport connections e.g. better or more frequent bus services, MetroBus services, enhanced walking and cycling networks and transport links.
- ✓ Provide more and better affordable housing which can be especially important for some of our communities.
- ✓ Offer various types of shared ownership for first time buyers to help young people onto the housing ladder.





- ✓ Rebalance an ageing population in certain areas or deliver smaller homes for those wishing to downsize.
- ✓ Create new jobs, not only in construction but all the service industries needed by new residents. This would be in addition to any specific sites allocated for new businesses.
- ✓ Support struggling services especially in villages and in town centres.
- ✓ Fill local schools with local children.
- ✓ Invigorate communities with new people to take on community roles.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to employ a local workforce, local products and training for young people.
- ✓ Potentially open up access to new public areas e.g. the Portishead Marina came about as a result of the redevelopment and housing development in Portishead.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to enhance biodiversity through the creation of ponds, wildlife corridors and management plans e.g. the nature reserve at Portishead was also a result of the redevelopment proposals.



**QUESTION 1: What are your hopes and fears about having new development near where you live?**



# The challenges and opportunities of change

### Dealing with uncertainty

Both Brexit and now the long-term impact of the Covid-19 outbreak cause considerable uncertainty. As we prepare this document, much of the economy has ground to a halt, with severe impacts on business and employment. Our high streets and town centres are only just reopening with the prospect of giving us a very different shopping experience when they begin to re-open. Our visitor economy will be severely impacted this year. Many people who ordinarily work in offices have now started working remotely, with a knock-on effect on commuting. Emerging trends toward online shopping are now accelerating.

We are unsure about the long-term implications as we plan for recovery and what changes that will bring. Has lockdown affected how you might behave differently in the future?

These factors will need to be understood and considered as the plan is developed. The plan will therefore need to be flexible and respond to the changing circumstances.

### Change

What sort of places do we want to be building in the next 15 years? What new ideas, values, and technologies need to be considered? How may we want or need to do things differently in the future? These are difficult concepts, but the Covid-19 experience may make us reconsider the way we do things and lead us to question what has gone before. The table below illustrates some of the change's society has experienced in the last 15 years and tries to predict some future changes to the way we live our lives and what issues will be important to us.







## What has changed

- Mobile phones, availability of computers and tablets
- Social media was created
- Online shopping and next day deliveries
- Smoking banned in restaurants
- On-line dating and meetings
- Reality TV
- 'The Cloud'
- Emojis
- Podcasts
- Recycling bins
- Solar panels

## New things we might need to consider

- Electric vehicles
- Self-driving cars
- Reliance of batteries – phones and electric cars
- WiFi availability
- Traditional retail disappearing
- Extreme weather patterns
- Other pandemics
- Ensuring everyone has equal access to digital technology
- Remote working is the norm.
- Renewable energy
- Greater emphasis on the importance of the natural environment in tackling climate change – tree planting/re-wilding etc.



**QUESTION 2: What changes over the next 15 years do you think will affect how we need to plan for residents, businesses and communities?**



# Challenge 1: Climate Emergency - how will addressing this influence new development?

North Somerset like many other local authorities has declared a climate emergency and our commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030 is a key objective. The type and location of development will need to be guided by higher sustainability standards than we have applied in the past and balanced with the need to provide homes and support the economy.

All new buildings will be expected to meet more stringent standards regarding energy use, design and construction. Buildings will need to be more resilient to climate extremes with more focus on orientation and design.



Homes with net zero carbon emissions in Portishead, North Somerset





Flooding is a major concern in North Somerset with about one third of the district currently regarded as being at risk. This is likely to increase with further climate change. The starting point must be to avoid or limit development in the areas at most risk of flooding (Flood Zones 3a and 3b). This avoids the need for expensive flood infrastructure, potentially enabling more investment in other aspects.



A large part of our carbon footprint comes from travelling. However, the response to the Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that remote working has reduced the need to travel. We must prioritise walking and cycling for those who are able and where this is not possible encourage the provision of high-quality public transport. Locating new development where more people can walk and cycle to work, school, and leisure facilities rather than commuting by car will make a significant difference and will be healthier for us and the environment. Mixing uses together so that employment, childcare, education and shops can all be easily accessed will help cut down the number of separate journeys people need to make.

Having a variety of accessible and usable green spaces in our new developments not only looks good and makes us feel better but also soaks up carbon, reduces temperatures and provides space for wildlife. Street trees and wildlife areas should be integrated into new developments. We also need to make sure rain water is managed to reduce localised flooding problems. Often this can be combined with creating ponds and ditches which are good for wildlife and add interest.



**QUESTION 3: Are you concerned that climate change may impact you or your family, business or local community in the future? And if so in what way?**



# Challenge 2: Supporting our economy

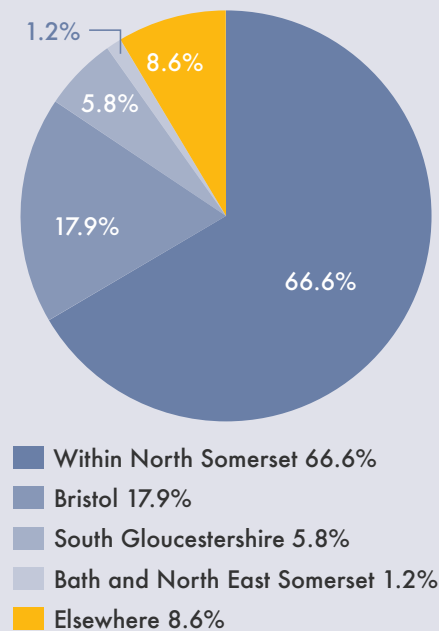
A thriving economy drives everything else - the jobs we do, how and where we do them shapes the rest of our lives. Through the Local Plan we can:

- Set out how many and what sort of jobs will be needed in North Somerset up to 2038 to support our residents and businesses.
- Help to tackle inequalities through economic growth that is inclusive and helps to improve peoples' life chances.



Whilst about a third of North Somerset's residents currently commute out of the area for work, mostly to Bristol, this means that the majority work more locally.

Where do North Somerset residents work?



There is a lot of uncertainty created by both the Brexit process and Covid-19 and the impact these will have on the economy. We'll keep this under review and collect new evidence, although it certainly seems that creating new jobs will be a priority for this plan period.



Meanwhile, the 2018 North Somerset Employment Land Review showed that we need to plan for around 13,500 new jobs over the 15 year plan period. This will mean using around 28.5ha of land for this new growth. Some employment land has also been converted to other uses and more work is being done to look at whether we need to make up for this.



Recently Weston-super-Mare has been promoted as an employment centre to support regeneration and reduce out-commuting and we've tried hard to retain the land which is already reserved for business uses. Most of the land for business growth in North Somerset is in Weston, with an emphasis on Junction 21 Enterprise Area.



Recent major housing planning permissions have all been linked with providing additional land for businesses



Planning for economic growth and jobs will need to reflect the changing nature of the economy and demand for land. We'll need to support priority sectors and local businesses that play a key role in the economy. Regenerating town centres and tourism will be important. There is likely to be more home working, digital infrastructure, and possibly more localised hubs rather than large offices. The plan will also need to address the requirements of the Port and Airport considering their wider economic role, and the jobs and benefits they generate.



**QUESTION 4: How should we plan for how you and your family will work in the future, or the future needs of your business?**





# Challenge 3: Providing homes and creating communities

## Why do we need new homes?

**Our population is growing and changing. By 2038 we expect there to be 16% more people living here than there are now. That's about 30,000 more people and there are a number of reasons for this increase in population as explained below. We will be working with our neighbouring authorities, such as Bristol on issues such as housing, jobs and infrastructure.**

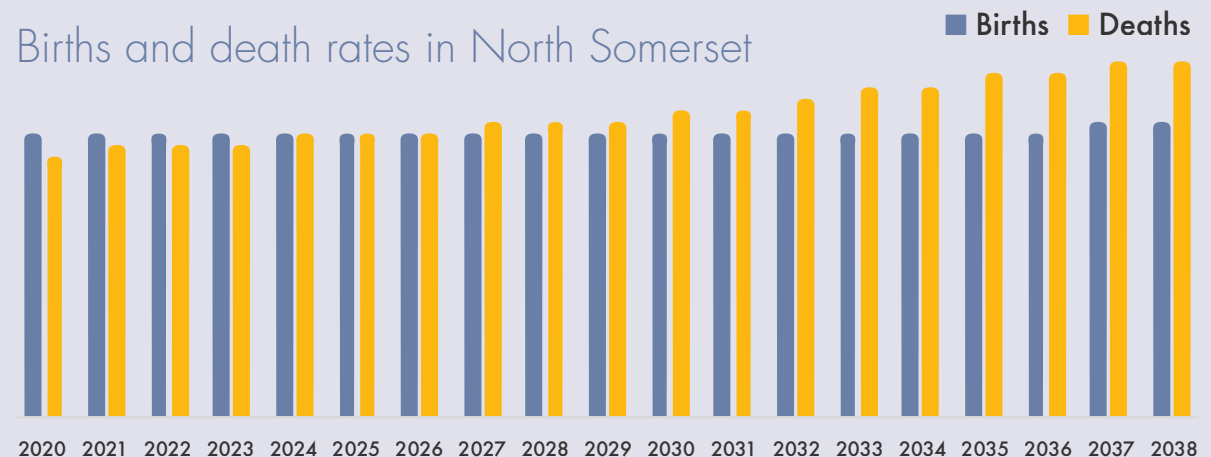


### Ageing Population:

At the moment our birth rate is higher than our death rate – last year around 2,500 babies were born, and 2,000 people died. By 2038 we predict that this trend will reverse – as our population ages the amount of deaths will exceed births.



Births and death rates in North Somerset



## Households are changing:

The number of people who live in each household is also changing. People live longer than they did before, and more people live alone. We need a range of different homes to accommodate everyone. Back in 2001 we would have needed 429 homes to house 1,000 people. In future we estimate that we will need 470 homes per 1,000 people.



## High house prices:

House prices are increasing. We need more homes that are affordable. The average house price in North Somerset is £250,000 vs the average annual income which is £25,000 meaning that the average house costs nearly ten times the average person's income.



## Moves from other parts of the UK

Account for the largest part of our population change. Each year around 8,000 people move away from North Somerset to other parts of the UK. The majority of these are young people, presumably moving away to study or for work. Conversely, each year around 10,000 people move into North Somerset from elsewhere in the UK.



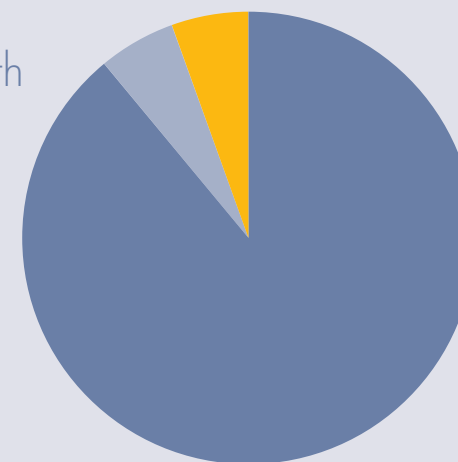
People move into North Somerset for lots of different reasons – to be near to family, to be close enough to their job to commute daily, because the house prices suit their budget, or simply because it's an attractive place to live. This means that our population grows by nearly 2,000 people each year as a result.

International migration is not a big factor in our predicted population growth. Each year around 600 people move to North Somerset from outside of the UK, whilst around 500 leave.



## Where our population growth is coming from

- Net gains from UK moves
- Natural Change
- Net gains from international moves



# How many homes do we need?

**The Government has set out a standard calculation for local councils to use when working out how many new homes they need.**

The calculation takes account of projected population and household growth and affordability. The Council will continue to assess the Government's approach to ensure that it is fair and realistic. The calculation currently gives North Somerset a minimum requirement of 1,369 homes each year, that's 20,535 homes over the fifteen-year period we are planning for which is roughly the equivalent to two more Clevedons! It will be a huge challenge to deliver this many each year, but the Local Plan is not just about delivering houses, it's about providing homes and creating communities.

In order to do this the Local Plan will need to provide a wide range of different sites, housing types and tenures including affordable family homes, apartments as part of mixed-use schemes in town centres, affordable homes for rent and sale, plots for self-build, community-led housing schemes, smaller properties for downsizers or first-time buyers and retirement accommodation.

We will also need to consider providing a range of sites from potentially large new developments to smaller sites in and around existing towns and villages.

It will also need to ensure the necessary infrastructure is provided to support new homes and make sure that sure our children have school places and places to play, we can get to the places we need to go without gridlock on our roads, we continue to have access to health services, community and sports facilities and there are jobs near where we live. Although we might want these to be in place before any homes are built this isn't always possible as they often need an established population to operate efficiently.

Funding is always going to be a challenge, but all new housing pays a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is a fee per house to fund infrastructure needed to support the new development. Over the last year each new house built in North Somerset has contributed £4,500 on average to this fund. We will continue to bid to central government for any funds which become available.

**QUESTION 5:**  
**What sort of types and sizes of houses do you think will be needed for your community in the future?**





## Infrastructure required to support new homes:



### Schools

On average every 1,000 new homes will require a 420-place primary school



### Transport

All new developments will prioritise walking, cycling and public transport which needs to be accessible and efficient. Investment in transport will depend on locations chosen.



### Parks & play areas

Access to public open space, sports facilities and play areas are an essential element of the design of new development.



### Community Facilities

Community spaces are necessary for new neighbourhoods to grow and develop, and for people to feel part of the community.



### Jobs

We need a range of job opportunities to allow people to work close to where they live.



### Local facilities

New homes can often help support local services and if enough homes are built new facilities can be secured to bring benefits to both existing and new residents.



**QUESTION 6: What do you think makes a good community?**



# Challenge 4: Creating a sustainable future

What are the main considerations?



**Sustainable development is defined at many levels. At the international level the Sustainable Development goals set out the overall principles.**

For planning, the Government sees sustainable development as a combination of environmental, economic and social objectives. We need to follow these in drawing up Local Plans and making decisions on planning applications. We must interpret what sustainable development would look like for North Somerset and use this to shape where new development is located across the district. This is called the 'spatial strategy'.

Some suggestions for what sustainable development will look like in North Somerset are set out in the table below.



## What does sustainable development mean for the Local Plan?



Building on brownfield land in towns and through the reuse of existing sites and buildings. We already prioritise this and will continue to ensure that as much housing as possible is provided on pre-developed land. However, realistically this will only provide a small amount of the land needed.



When greenfield land is needed, limiting new development to locations where it is possible to make the most use of that land and avoid sprawl. 'Greenfield' means land that has not been built on before and is different to 'Green Belt' which is an area of land surrounding Bristol and Bath which has special protection from most new development.



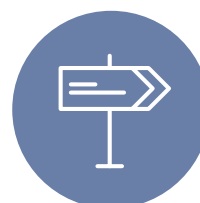
Developing in places where schools, jobs and services are accessible by foot and cycle or new neighbourhoods where walkability is central to the design and promotes exercise.



Ensuring there is access to open space.



Making sure there is effective public transport that can be enhanced or where new frequent high-quality public transport can be provided. This could also mean locations where new public transport can be provided if there were enough homes.



Developing in towns and near public transport hubs where higher densities use less land and support public transport. This not only reduces the need to travel but in turn makes meeting our day to day needs more convenient.



Ensuring there is easy access to a range of job opportunities, ideally by walking or cycling or via sustainable public transport.



Being certain that new essential transport, digital and social infrastructure can be delivered.



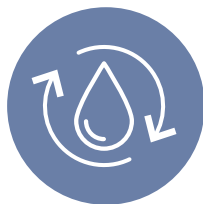




Ensuring affordable housing will be located where it meets people's needs. By ensuring a range of housing types to cater for all age ranges and needs, including affordable homes and to homes that support an ageing population.



Avoiding areas of landscape quality. Primarily this means protecting the Mendip Hills AONB which is of national importance, but there may also be other areas which may be of local importance.



Focussing on land not at a risk of flooding (Flood Zones 3a and 3b). Development should be directed away from areas at highest risk.



Avoiding the best agricultural land. Agricultural land is a finite resource. Planning decisions should consider the increasing importance placed on retaining our most productive land.



Safeguarding areas which are highly sensitive for ecology. This includes nationally protected sites as well as other habitats and species of local importance.



Designing places where people can feel safe, be part of a community and live healthily both physically and mentally and which enhance or compliment the character of existing villages and towns.



**QUESTION 7: Do you agree with these? Are there any others which are important to you?**





# Challenge 5: Protecting important green and blue spaces

North Somerset is home to a wide variety of landscapes and wildlife areas such as hills, woodlands, wetlands, rhynes and coast. Many areas or species are protected by legislation, but there are also more local areas which people value for just a bit of fresh air, to walk the dog, listen to the birds, have a picnic or kick a ball.





## Our protected areas include:

- The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding National Beauty
- European Wildlife Site (RAMSAR Severn Estuary)
- Historic Parks and gardens
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- National and local nature reserves
- Ancient woodland
- Protected species and their habitats (such as bats and newts)

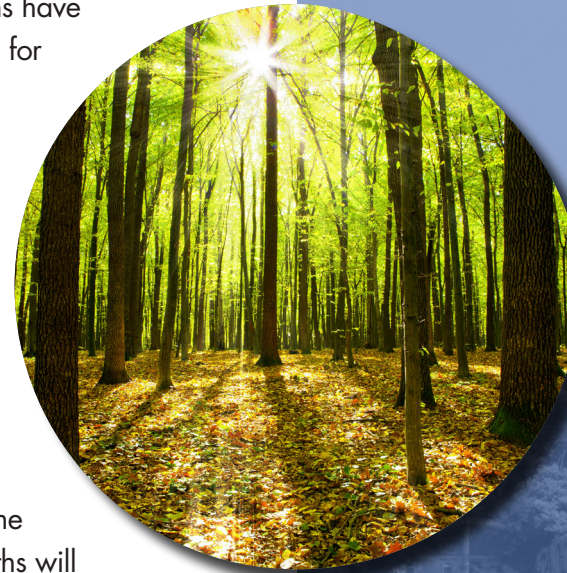
That character of our villages and towns make them attractive and sought-after places to live. Protecting and enhancing these treasured assets and features maintains these special places for future generations.

All green spaces are valued in their own right including urban parks and green spaces, as well as the protected areas listed above, for sustainability reasons, recreation and for people's health and wellbeing.

The recent Covid-19 restrictions have highlighted how important it is for us all to have safe and easy access to open green spaces for exercise and for wildlife. This includes urban parks, local footpaths, parks and countryside. Many of us have recently used Ashton Court and Leigh Woods within North Somerset for exercise in the way that Worlebury Woods, Uphill or the Mendips or other local footpaths will have been used by others.

Our coastline attracts many visitors to our resorts but walks and cycle rides along the coast are important for residents and visitors alike. Rivers and ponds and the wetland areas in North Somerset provide homes to wildlife and often provide an important recreation resource.

The challenge we face is to ensure we protect this valuable resource for future generations but also to incorporate green infrastructure into new developments and ensure we all have fair access to open green spaces.



**QUESTION 8: We have come to value our local footpaths and green spaces more since Covid-19. How can we ensure that future residents benefit from access to green spaces?**





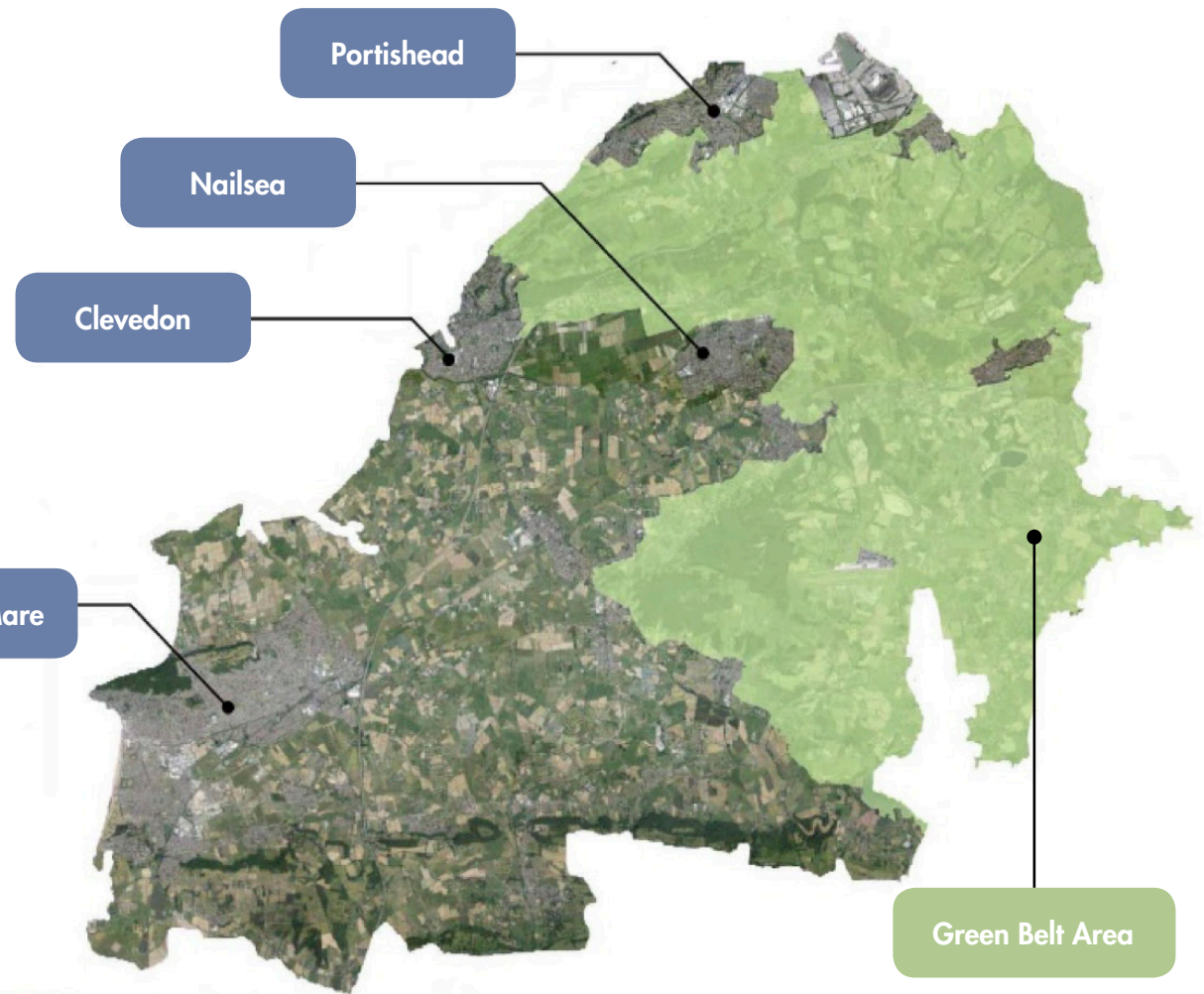
# Challenge 6: The future role of the Green Belt

North Somerset Green Belt

## Explaining the Green Belt

The Green Belt covers about 40% of North Somerset. For over 50 years it has been successful in preventing Bristol sprawling and merging with villages such as Long Ashton, Flax Bourton and Dundry, preventing villages and towns such as Easton-in-Gordano, Failand, Portbury and Tickenham, merging with other villages and the erosion of the countryside around Bristol. The aim of the Green Belt is to keep land open and undeveloped. It is not designated because of any inherent landscape or ecological quality. High quality landscapes, important habitats and open spaces used for recreation within the Green Belt or elsewhere are protected by other policies.

Changes can be made to the Green Belt through local plans although the Government says this should only be done in exceptional circumstances and when the plan is updated. The remaining Green Belt land can be enhanced in terms of its quality and accessibility, or replacement Green Belt could be identified. What is also clear from government is that we must plan in a sustainable way and so this could mean some difficult choices.



## Green field development is different from Green Belt

Green field development is just that - development on currently undeveloped green fields. It's the opposite to brownfield development which involves reusing land which has had some sort of development on it either currently or in the past.



## Impacts

People value the Green Belt for different reasons. People living within the Green Belt and close to Bristol value the open countryside which it has protected. Even if you don't live in the Green Belt you may enjoy visiting or travelling through the open landscapes within it. Whilst the Green Belt has been successful the result has also meant

- more growth in and around our villages and towns outside the Green Belt such as Yatton, Congresbury, Weston, Churchill.
- longer commutes to work for many people, congestion and reduced air quality.

The need to meet emission targets, reduce travelling and build closer to where a lot of people work and spend their leisure time are also important if we are to begin to seriously address climate change, and improve the work/life balance for many working people.

The starting point for looking at new growth is to consider whether it is possible to maintain the current Green Belt and still build the homes needed. We need to decide whether we can deliver the homes needed in a sustainable way, in line with our strategic priorities, before considering altering the Green Belt.



**QUESTION 9: Should we be thinking about adjusting the Green Belt boundary if necessary?**





**QUESTION 10: The previous sections set out the six challenges that we feel the Local Plan should address (shown below). Are there any other challenges you feel we need to address through the Local Plan?**





## SECTION 2: VISION, AIMS AND PRIORITIES

In the first part of this document we have set out the Challenges facing North Somerset that the Local Plan needs to address. The next section looks at how our vision, aims and strategic priorities can address these issues and form the basis from which to develop the policies in the Local Plan.

# What should our vision be for 2038?

The new Local Plan will be based on the new corporate values of open, fair and green and reflect the way we want to live in the future. Through this document we want to understand what you feel the vision for North Somerset should be, what are the key aims we should be looking to achieve and what should be the priorities in terms of accommodating new homes and jobs over the next fifteen years.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic we suggested a vision of what a new Local Plan should be aiming to achieve. It stated:

**By 2038 there will be a transformation in the way we live which reflects a more responsible attitude to climate change and the use of resources. New homes, buildings and communities will be highly sustainable, accessible and attractive places with higher quality standards. There will be more diversity in terms of the form and type of new development to increase variety and choice to better meet the needs of all, create jobs and to tackle inequality. Regeneration will transform and breathe new life into existing towns and valued areas will be protected. People's well-being, a strong sense of community, opportunity and fairness will be at the heart of all development in North Somerset.**



**QUESTION 11: In light of the world we now live in, is this vision still appropriate for the future?**



# What should be our aims?

The next stage is to identify the aims and objectives which will help to deliver the vision. There are many competing objectives, some of which will be more important to one person than another. We need to balance all of these to come to a decision on the best way of planning for the homes, jobs and facilities we will need in North Somerset over the next 15 years. On balance we think these are the most important issues.

## **Tackle the climate change challenge:**

We have a climate emergency. How we use and re-use resources will be very different in the future. Buildings will be carbon neutral. More renewable energy will be generated locally. Fewer journeys will be made by cars. Energy and land will be used more efficiently. More emphasis will be put on reducing flooding, sustainable drainage and ensuring development is resilient to the impacts of climate change. Walking, cycling and effective public transport will become the normal way to travel. There will be more employment in green technologies and solutions.



## **Build sustainable development:**

We have a responsibility to provide enough homes to meet the needs of our future residents. The target figure is calculated by government and for North Somerset is very challenging – it would require us to almost double the number of homes built per year from the average of around 740 per year over the past five years to just under 1,400 per year.

Sustainable and attractive communities will need to be created with homes, jobs, schools, transport, shops and all the requirements which combine to make them great places to live. They will need to be designed to be inspiring, distinctive, vibrant and beautiful as well as friendly, inclusive and caring where people can enjoy life, live healthily, participate, make choices, be safe and are proud of. But we also need homes people can afford so that we have fewer people living in crowded bedsits, sofa surfing or stuck living with their parents well into adulthood.



### **Treasure valued assets:**

Existing historical, built, natural and cultural features will be enhanced, protected and used to develop a greater sense of identity and enjoyment for local people, appeal to tourists and attract investment. The special character of existing towns and villages will be retained.

### **Raise design quality:**

People often complain about bland housing estates and poor-quality buildings. Better design approaches which meet the needs of future users and enhance local identity and character and look great are required.

### **Regenerate our towns and communities:**

Most of our town centres have been badly hit by shops shutting down. Town centres are the heart of the community and encouraging jobs, new uses and revitalising centres is essential. Enabling people to live and work in the centre and creating attractive places where people socialise and spend their leisure time are becoming increasingly important for both new and existing residents.

### **Improve the life prospects of local people:**

Quality homes with a choice of locations, tenures, sizes, affordability and suitability need to be provided where there is access to a wide variety of services and facilities. Ensuring there is a range of job opportunities for workers in places they can get to easily is also important. Designing high quality, accessible, attractive, healthy places which enable active lifestyles and encourage social interaction will contribute to improving people's quality of life.



**QUESTION 12: Do these reflect your aims, those of your family, community or business?**





# What should the priorities be?

The Local Plan needs to consider how all the challenges we have identified can set our priorities. These priorities will help shape the next stage of the Local Plan which will consider options as to where the growth proposed might take place. We'd like your opinion on ten suggested priorities for North Somerset.



**1.** To deliver the zero-carbon ambition by maximising, for example, the opportunities for low carbon development and the use of renewable energy.



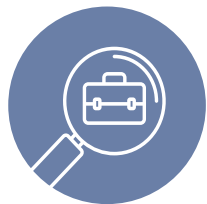
**2.** To prioritise the location of new development close to places with a wide range of services, facilities and job opportunities to encourage walking and cycling, or with easy access to high-quality and effective public transport.



**3.** To deliver a diverse range of housing in a variety of tenures, sizes and forms to meet future needs at locations where they are most needed.



**4.** To deliver essential new strategic transport infrastructure to support regeneration and job creation and significantly reduce out-commuting, particularly from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol.



**5.** To increase the number and range of job opportunities at Weston-super-Mare and in the north of the district.



**6.** To prioritise the importance of the green infrastructure network when considering new development, support priority habitats and species and safeguard areas at risk of flooding.





**7.** To provide essential infrastructure in step with development, both transport and community infrastructure such as schools.



**8.** To deliver higher residential densities through good design, particularly at town centres and transport hubs.



**9.** To address the decline in the town centres of Weston-super-Mare, Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead through supporting regeneration and place-making initiatives which revitalise these places as the focus for retailing, community uses, housing and jobs.



**10.** Developing new and existing communities in a way which enhances health and wellbeing, reduces inequalities and is child and family friendly.



**QUESTION 13: Have we identified the right priorities and are there any missing, which do you think are the most important and why?**



# How can I comment?

The most important thing you can do is get involved. The process for planning where homes and other development will take place in the future has to address many issues, but the key messages are simple, and we are determined to help as many people join the conversation as possible.

## Why get involved?

- More homes will be built in North Somerset whether we like it or not – there is no alternative because of the need.
- If we plan properly through a Local Plan, these homes will bring investment to make sure our children have school places, the transport system works, we continue to have access to health services and community facilities and there are jobs near where we live. The alternative is to not plan properly and have developers win the right to build houses wherever they want on appeal, with little infrastructure and overcrowding in existing areas.

- To plan properly, we must have your views. No decisions have been taken on where or how new homes should be built but those decisions will be taken in the next year or so – so get involved now while you can!

Consultation on the Challenges document will start on **22 July 2020** and will run for 6 weeks, closing on **2 September 2020**. As a result of the current Covid-19 pandemic this first phase of consultation will be via online consultation methods and social media. However, if you do not have access to the internet you can submit a written response to the address below. We want to hear from as wide a range of people as possible including young people, businesses, community groups, interest groups, town and parish councils, landowners, house builders, transport providers, retailers and anyone else who wants to have a say!

The feedback from the Challenges consultation will be carefully assessed and a response report produced summarising the feedback and the Council's response. The results will help to shape the next stage on consultation on the Choices, which will take place in the Autumn. For this phase we are hoping that it will be safe to hold face to face events with communities and stakeholders.





**To respond to the Challenges for the Future consultation you should use our online link whenever possible. This ensures we receive your comments straight away and can process them quickly.**

**Respond online:** [Local Plan 2038: Challenges for the Future Consultation](#)

**Comments can be e-mailed to:** [planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@n-somerset.gov.uk) but please be aware that these take longer to process.

Please only use post if you do not have access to a computer – staff are working from home and do not have immediate access to posted comments. There is no need to duplicate information submitted electronically. The postal address is **Planning Policy Team, Post Point 15, First Floor, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston super Mare BS23 1UJ**

**The closing date for this consultation is 2 September 2020 - we look forward to receiving your comments.**

**Thank you** for taking to time to read our consultation document and we look forward to receiving your views.



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 426 775

