



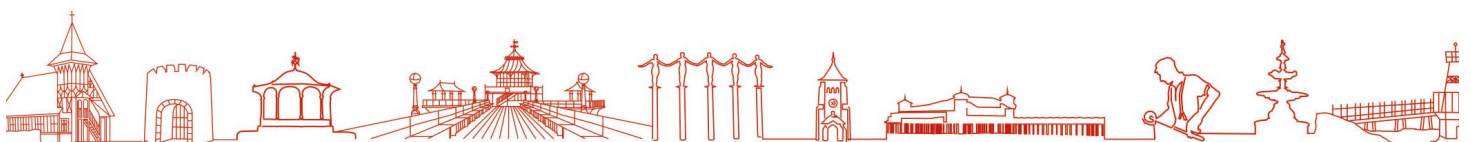
**North Somerset Local Plan 2039**

**Duty to Co-operate  
Statement of Common  
Ground:**

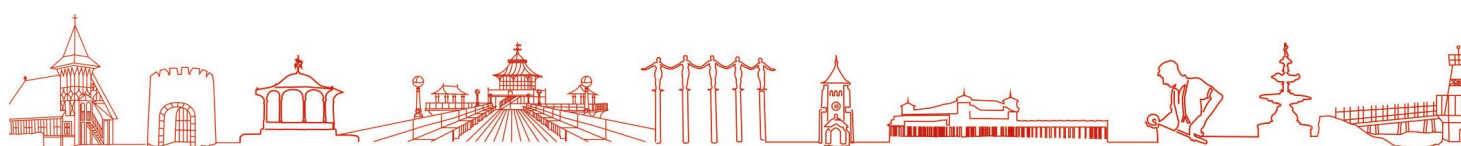
**Statement of Compliance**

**Regulation 19 Stage**

**November 2023**



1. Introduction.....	3
2. Duty to Co-operate: The North Somerset Context.....	6
Strategic Geography .....	6
Organisations Involved.....	8
Strategic Issues.....	9
3. How North Somerset has co-operated with relevant organisations in the production of its Local Plan.....	13
5. Conclusion.....	25
Appendix 1: North Somerset Duty to Co-operate letter (11 June 2020) and responses.....	26
Appendix 2: Duty to Co-operate letter: Accommodating NSCs housing need (12 October 2021).....	55

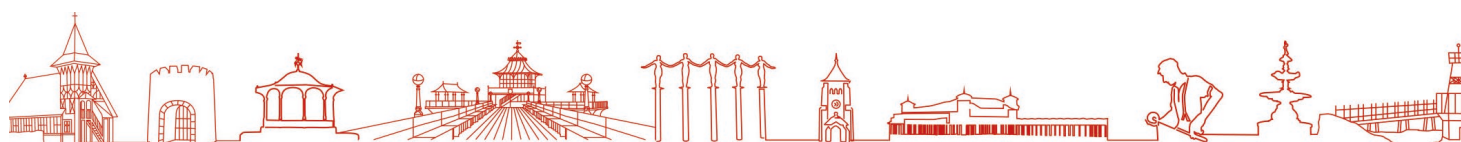


## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The duty to co-operate was introduced by the Localism Act 2011. It places a legal duty on local planning authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of local plan preparation relating to strategic cross boundary matters.
- 1.2 Guidance on how this is to be implemented is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021). The relevant paragraphs are set out below:

### *‘Maintaining effective cooperation*

24. *Local planning authorities and county councils (in two-tier areas) are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries.*
25. *Strategic policy-making authorities should collaborate to identify the relevant strategic matters which they need to address in their plans. They should also engage with their local communities and relevant bodies including Local Enterprise Partnerships, Local Nature Partnerships, the Marine Management Organisation, county councils, infrastructure providers, elected Mayors and combined authorities (in cases where Mayors or combined authorities do not have plan-making powers).*
26. *Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy. In particular, joint working should help to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary, and whether development needs that cannot be met wholly within a particular plan area could be met elsewhere.*
27. *In order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, strategic policy making authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these. These should be produced using the approach set out in national planning guidance, and be made publicly available throughout the plan-making process to provide transparency.’*
- 1.3 The NPPF states that in order to demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, strategic policy-making authorities should prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross boundary strategic matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address



these issues. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 defines 'strategic matters' for the purposes of the duty to co-operate as:

*Sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas, including (in particular) sustainable development or use of land for or in connection with infrastructure that is strategic and has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas.*

Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out the strategic issues where co-operation might be appropriate, namely:

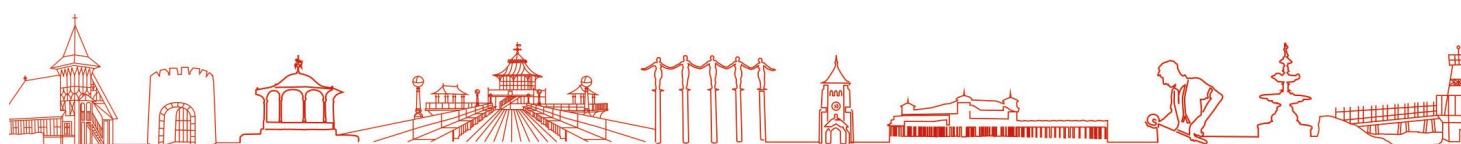
- Housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- Infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
- Community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and,
- Conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

1.4 The National Planning Policy Guidance sets out what Statements of Common Ground are expected to contain. The guidance indicates that these will include (but are not limited to):

- working together at the outset of plan-making to identify cross-boundary matters which will need addressing;
- producing or commissioning joint research and evidence to address cross-boundary matters;
- assessing impacts of emerging policies; and
- preparing joint, or agreeing, strategic policies affecting more than one authority area to ensure development is coordinated, (such as the distribution of unmet needs).

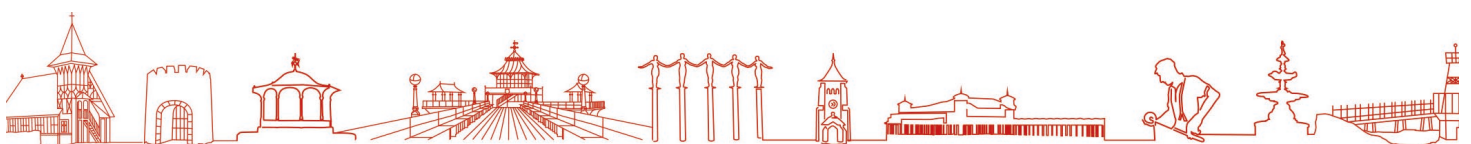
1.5 Effective co-operation enables strategic policy-making authorities and infrastructure providers to establish whether additional strategic cross-boundary infrastructure is required. The statement provides the evidence that this process has been undertaken in respect of the North Somerset Local Plan.

1.6 The North Somerset Local Plan 2039 has been prepared with full regard to the Duty to Co-operate. The North Somerset Local Plan 2039 provides the overarching spatial strategy for the district guiding the location, scale and type



of future development up until 2039, as well as providing detailed development management policies.

- 1.7 Local Planning Authorities are expected to be able to provide evidence of having successfully cooperated to plan for strategic issues with cross boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for independent examination. Demonstrating the Duty to Co-operate is necessary to ensure the soundness of a Local Plan.
- 1.8 This Statement of Compliance which accompanies the Pre-submission document (Regulation 19) sets out the overall approach taken and engagement throughout the plan preparation process. It demonstrates how the key strategic issues affecting North Somerset have been considered under the Duty to Co-operate, particularly in relation to neighbouring planning authorities and other public bodies and the engagement process.
- 1.9 The Statement of Compliance will be accompanied by more detailed Statements of Common Ground between North Somerset Council and those neighbouring authorities and other bodies where strategic cross-boundary issues have been identified.

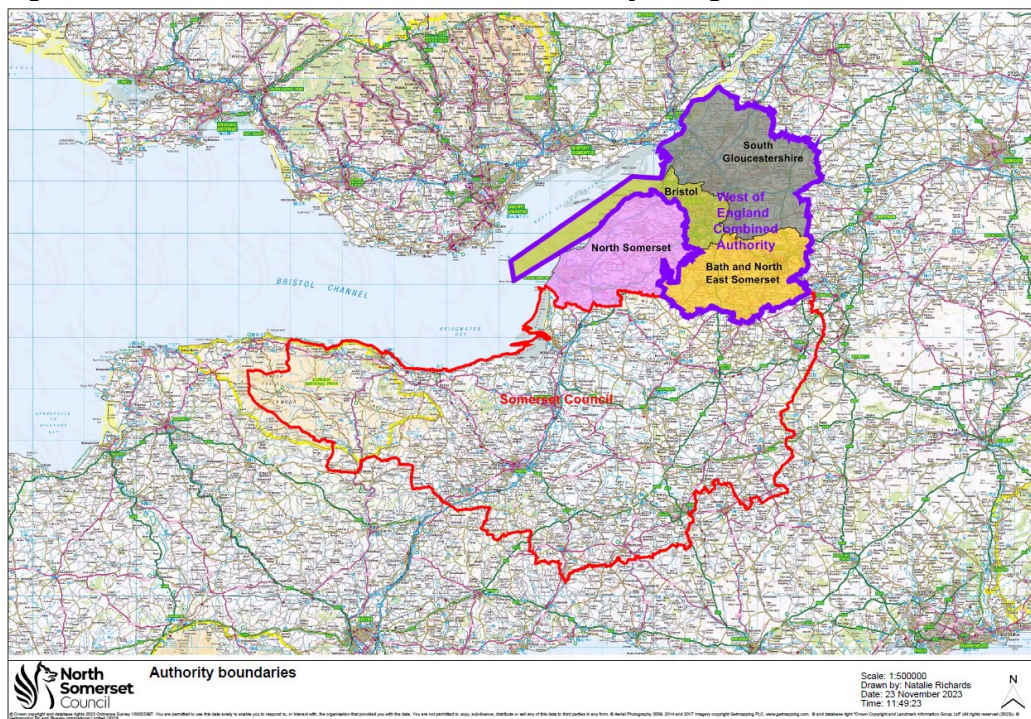


## 2. Duty to Co-operate: The North Somerset Context

### Strategic Geography

- 2.1 North Somerset Council shares administrative boundaries with Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council. The geography of the wider region within which North Somerset sits is shown on the following map. This shows the West of England Combined Authority Area and its constituent authorities to the north and Somerset Council to the south. This is the strategic area defined for the purposes of the duty to co-operate.

Figure 1: Location of North Somerset and adjoining authorities:



- 2.2 North Somerset, Bristol City and South Gloucestershire together make up the wider Bristol Housing Market Area. Somerset Council has a separate Housing Market Area, as does Bath and North East Somerset Council. The Strategic Housing Market Areas are shown on Figure 2.

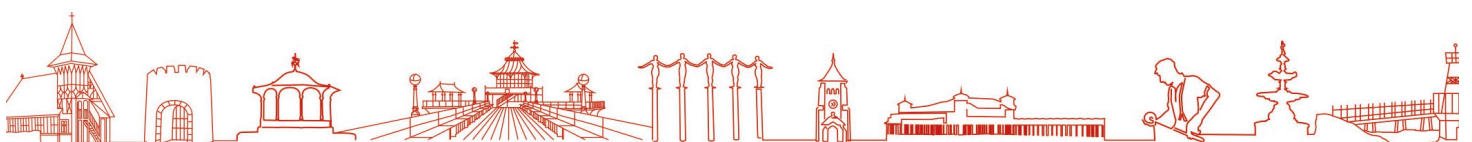
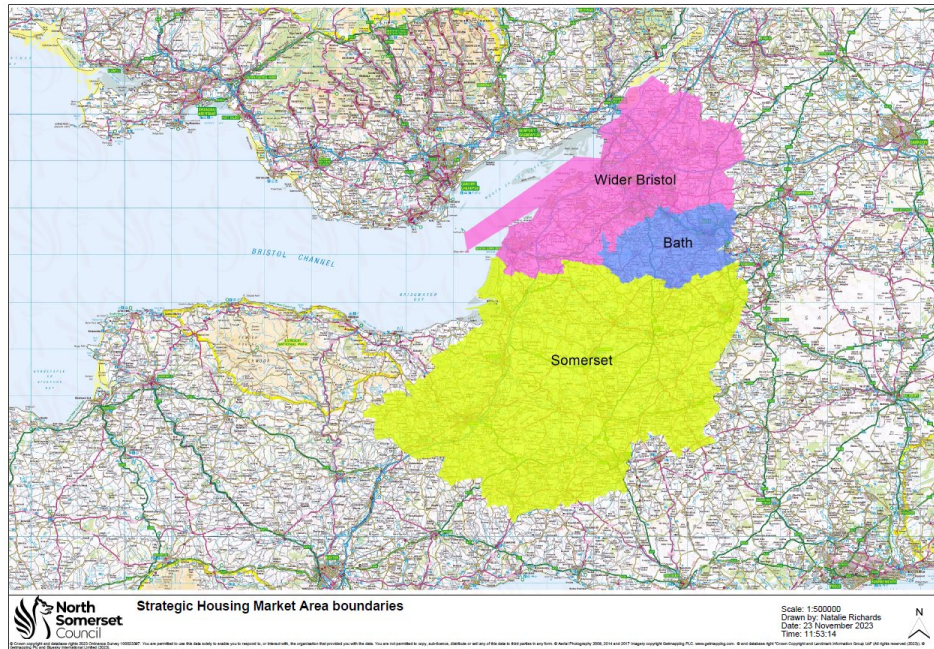
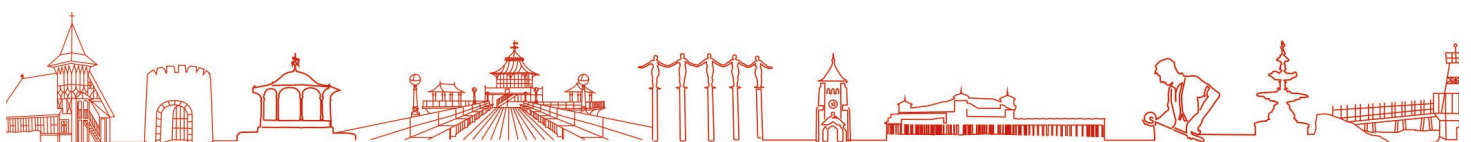
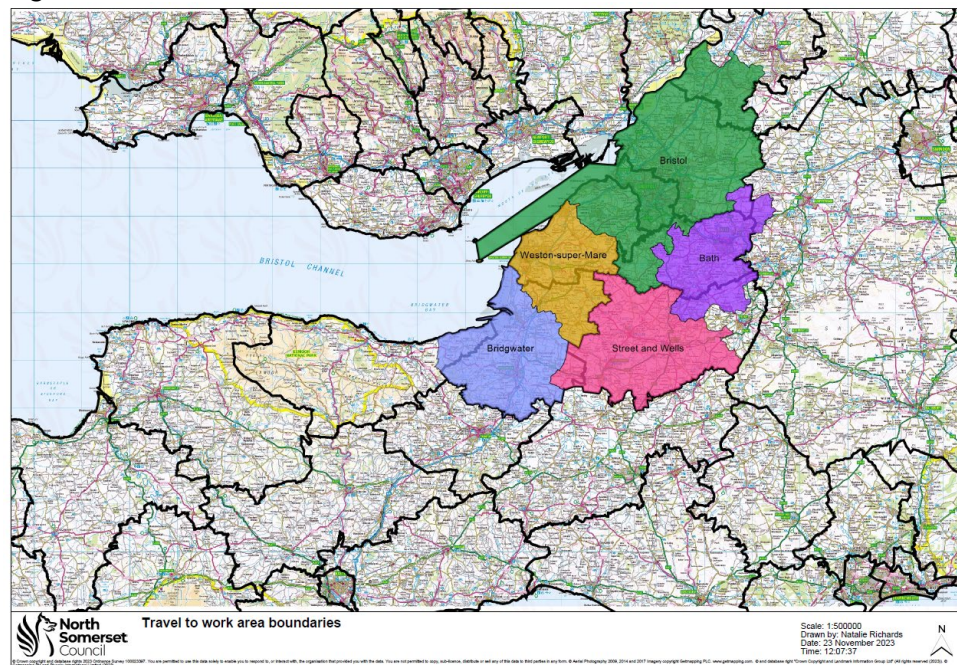


Figure 2: Strategic Housing Market Areas



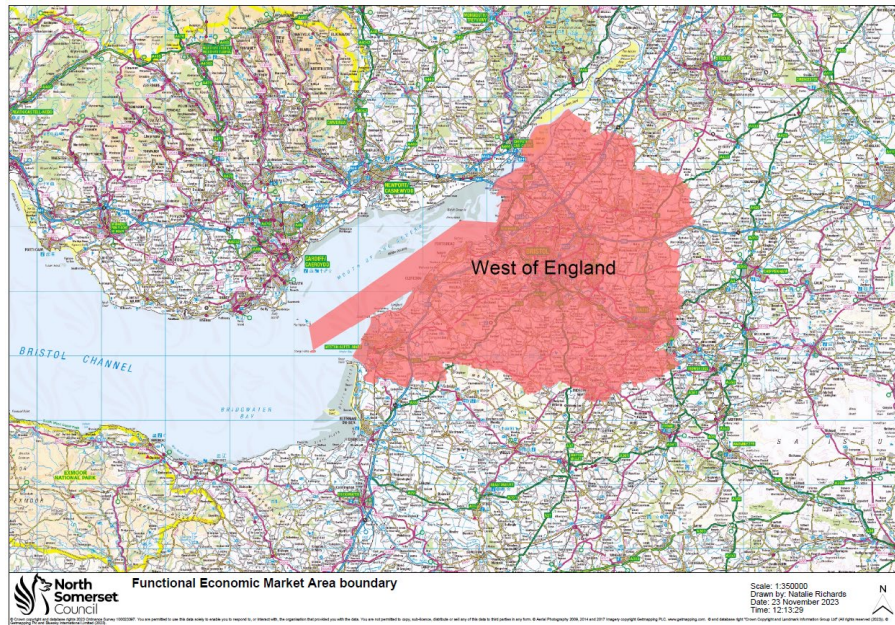
2.3 There are two Travel to Work Areas affecting North Somerset: Weston-super-Mare and Bristol. The Weston Travel to Work area extends southwards into Somerset.

Figure 3: Travel to Work Areas



- 2.4 North Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council together comprise the West of England Functional Economic Market Area as shown on figure 4.

Figure 4: Functional Economic Market Area



- 2.5 The strategic planning area for the North Somerset Local Plan Statement of Common Ground is widely drawn and in addition to including the neighbouring authorities of Bristol, B&NES and Somerset Council, includes the WECA area. These together cover the areas affected by the principal cross-boundary issues, particularly those relating to housing, employment and infrastructure.

## Organisations Involved

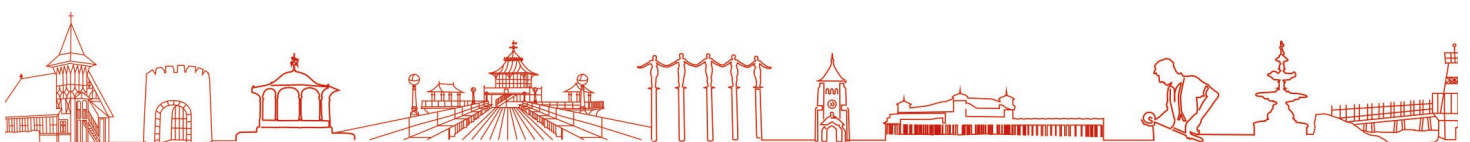
- 2.6 The North Somerset duty to co-operate process categorises the relevant organisations as follows:

### Neighbouring authorities:

- Bristol City Council
- Bath and North East Somerset Council
- Somerset Council
- West of England Combined Authority

Prescribed bodies: These are the bodies prescribed in the regulations (Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) plus the Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Nature Partnerships:

- Environment Agency





- Historic England
- Natural England
- Civil Aviation Authority
- Homes England
- Clinical Commissioning Groups
- Office of Rail Regulation
- Highways England
- Marine Management Organisation
- West of England Local Enterprise Partnership
- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
- West of England Local Nature Partnerships

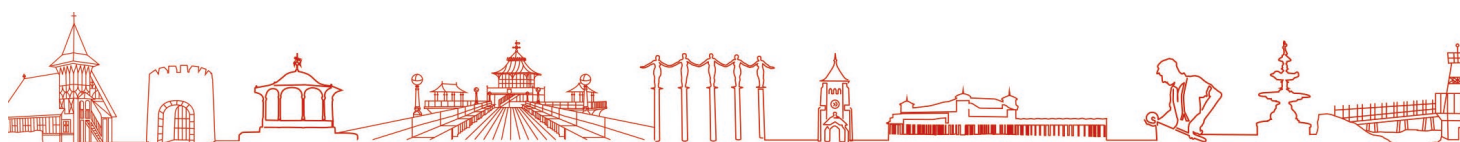
Additional bodies: Other organisations which may be involved in strategic issues and are engaged with through the duty to co-operate.

- NHS Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire CCG
- Network Rail
- National Grid (gas)
- National Grid (electricity)
- Bristol Water
- Lower Axe Internal Drainage Board
- North Somerset Levels Internal Drainage Board
- Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership
- Independent Water Networks Ltd
- Wessex Water
- UK Broadband Limited
- Mobile Operators Association
- Triangle Telecom
- The Coal Authority
- Mendip Hills AONB unit
- South West Local Aggregates Working Party

2.7 Through the plan making process and associated consultation and collaboration it has become evident that specific strategic or cross-boundary issues have emerged with only some of these stakeholders. Other issues relating to the local plan have emerged through consultation with some of the above stakeholders but these are mostly not strategic issues relevant to the Duty to Co-operate. Section 3 section sets out how the Council has engaged in co-operation with bodies where strategic issues have emerged.

## Strategic Issues

2.8 The Council has identified a number of potential cross-boundary challenges and opportunities through the development of the Local Plan and ongoing



engagement with our neighbouring authorities and other relevant bodies. These are summarised below:

### **Housing**

- Identification of any unmet need from North Somerset and neighbouring authorities and how this might be met and planned for effectively.
- Provision of affordable housing, particularly in relation to Bristol needs.
- Gypsy and Traveller accommodation provision.

### **Green Belt**

- Ensure a consistent approach to Green Belt review.
- Issues related to Green Belt release on the North Somerset/Bristol border including the identification of new Green Belt boundaries and co-ordination of development.

### **Employment**

- Implications of Bristol Airport expansion, the regional role of Royal Portbury Dock and liaising on Hinkley Point C connection project.
- Consider Travel to Work Areas and implications of cross-boundary commuting on the road network.
- Coordinated approach to meeting employment needs, particularly to the south of Bristol.

### **Transport**

- Impact of new development on the M5 Motorway and the relevant junctions within North Somerset, namely Junctions 19, 20 and 21.
- North Somerset Council is part of the West of England Joint Local Transport Plan which plans for transport infrastructure across the four West of England authorities.
- Cross boundary implications in terms of rail infrastructure.

### **Other Infrastructure**

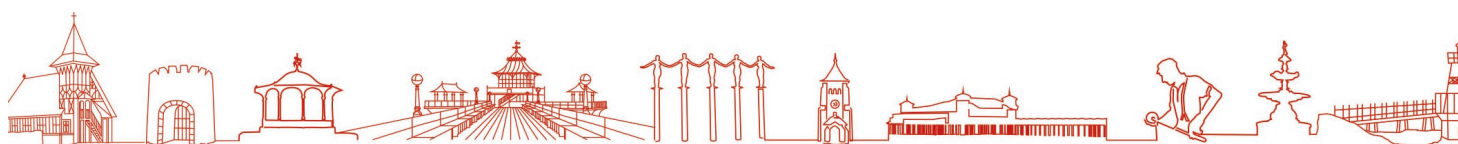
- Ensuring the necessary supporting infrastructure, in particular health and education provision, accompanies the growth proposed in the Local Plan and where this may have implications for adjacent areas.
- Hinkley Point C Connection project affects different authorities.

### **Flood Risk and Coastal Change Management**

- Strategic issues in terms of approach to flood risk, SFRA, coastal change management and reservoir flooding.

### **Natural Environment**

- Implications for key habitats and protected species where there are cross-border implications.

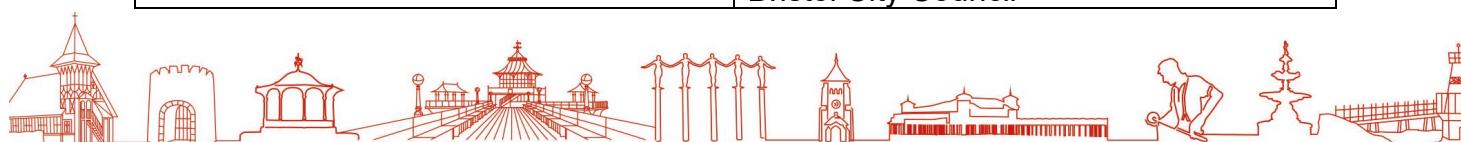


- Implications for any green infrastructure which straddles authority borders
- Consistent approach to issues within the Mendip Hills AONB.
- Natural England suggest there may be issues related to coastal squeeze.

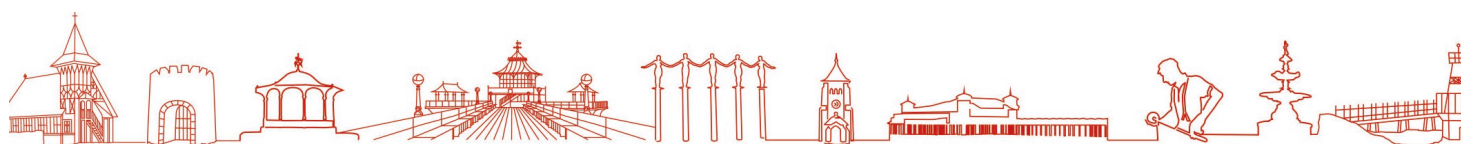
2.9 The Council has actively engaged with neighbouring local authorities, statutory bodies, infrastructure and service providers and other key stakeholders on an ongoing basis on wider strategic and cross-boundary issues relevant to the Local Plan. Section 3 of this report sets out the cooperation with prescribed bodies and other organisations in respect of the issues identified.

2.10 In addition to engagement on issues, the Council has worked specifically with a number of organisations on the preparation of key evidence base studies that are fundamental to the development of the Local Plan. The following table sets out the key elements of supporting evidence base that North Somerset Council has worked jointly on with local authorities and prescribed bodies.

Document	Organisations involved
West of England Joint Local Transport Plan	North Somerset Council Bristol City Council Bath and North East Somerset Council South Gloucestershire Council West of England Combined Authority
West of England Employment Land and Spatial Needs Assessment	North Somerset Council Bristol City Council Bath and North East Somerset Council South Gloucestershire Council West of England Combined Authority
West of England Local Housing Needs Assessment	North Somerset Council Bristol City Council Bath and North East Somerset Council South Gloucestershire Council West of England Combined Authority
West of England Green Infrastructure Strategy	North Somerset Council Bristol City Council Bath and North East Somerset Council South Gloucestershire Council West of England Combined Authority
West of England Green Belt Appraisal	North Somerset Council Bristol City Council Bath and North East Somerset Council South Gloucestershire Council West of England Combined Authority
Habitat Regulations Assessment	Natural England Bristol City Council

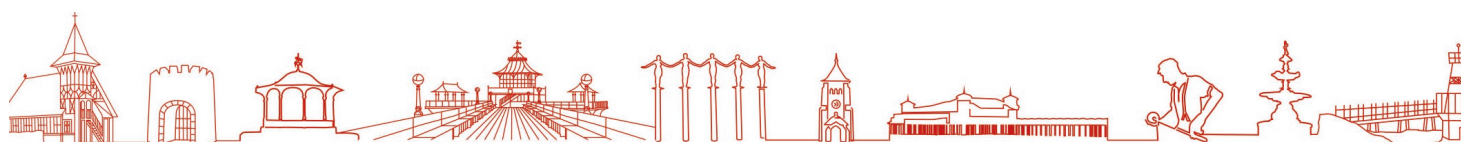


<b>Document</b>	<b>Organisations involved</b>
Renewable Energy Resource Assessment	Bath and North East Somerset Council South Gloucestershire Council
WoE joint evidence on zero carbon buildings.	North Somerset Council Bristol City Council Bath and North East Somerset Council South Gloucestershire Council West of England Combined Authority



### 3. How North Somerset has co-operated with relevant organisations in the production of its Local Plan.

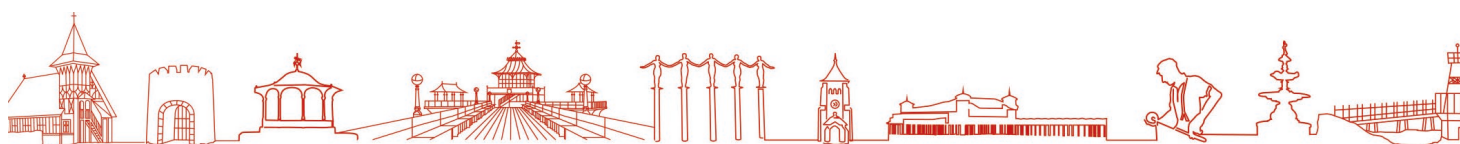
- 3.1 The North Somerset Local Plan 2039 was launched in March 2020 with a Pre-commencement document. In respect of the duty to co-operate at this early stage the emphasis was on identifying the bodies to be involved in the duty to co-operate process and the strategic issues with cross boundary implications (as set out in section 2 above).
- 3.2 An initial letter was sent out to the relevant organisations on 11 June 2020 (Appendix 1) requesting information on development plan timetables, strategic matters, evidence and governance. The information would also help to understand what evidence is available and where the gaps were and any potential timetabling issues related to plan production.
- 3.3 Responses from neighbouring authorities indicated a good deal of alignment between the various development plan processes with all authorities currently at the start of a new plan or plan review cycle which has assisted in the co-ordination of the duty to co-operate process.
- 3.4 Following the consultation on the Local Plan Pre-commencement document and the initial Duty to Co-operate letter which was sent out in June 2020, North Somerset Council embarked on the Issues and Options stage of its Local Plan preparation.
- 3.5 This involved two consultations during 2020 - [Challenges for the Future](#) (22 July to 2 September 2020) and [Choices for the Future](#) (2 November to 14 December 2020). The Challenges Consultation focused on the critical issues facing North Somerset over the plan period including the proposed vision and strategic priorities. This was followed in Autumn 2020 by the Choices for the Future document which confirmed the strategic priorities and set out four broad spatial development alternatives for discussion.
- 3.6 All of the local authorities, prescribed bodies and additional bodies identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report were consulted as part of these consultations.
- 3.7 As part of the ongoing engagement with the relevant organisations through Duty to Co-operate a range of different meetings were held through the Challenges and Choices Regulation 18 consultation periods covering a variety of issues.



- 3.8 A presentation was given to the Strategic Planning Forum Infrastructure Group (which includes WECA, Bristol City Council, BANES, English Heritage, West of England Nature Partnership, Marine Management Organisation, Highways England, Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership, Western Power Distribution, Homes England and the Department for Education) to explain the results of the consultations and how we will be moving forward with the Local Plan to identify a preferred spatial strategy. A similar update was also given to the Somerset Strategic Planning Conference which includes Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council on 27th April 2021.
- 3.9 Briefings have also taken place with Natural England and the Environment Agency prior to Executive on 28 April 2021 to keep them up to date with plan progress. Historic England were also offered a briefing.
- 3.10 Following feedback from the Challenges and Choices consultations a report was considered at Executive Committee on 28 April 2021 where a framework for the development of the local plan was agreed. This included endorsement of the strategic priorities for plan making and the spatial strategy, and an agreed approach to the sequential assessment of development opportunities.
- 3.11 As that stage it was anticipated that North Somerset was unlikely to be able to meet its own housing needs and so as part of the preparation of the Local Plan Preferred Options Reg 18 document and through the duty to cooperate all the neighbouring authorities (Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, West of England Combined Authority, Sedgemoor District Council, Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council) were formally contacted in October 2021 to request whether they were able to accommodate some of the North Somerset housing requirement within their areas.
- 3.12 The adjacent unitary authorities, districts and WECA confirmed that there was no opportunity to meet unmet needs from North Somerset in their areas. The letter sent by North Somerset and the neighbouring authorities response letters are set out at Appendix 2.

**Bristol City** referred to ongoing work on the SDS and stated that it was already apparent that SCC will be unable to meet their housing need figure and 'consequently, we are unable to meet the request for the City to accommodate unmet need arising within the North Somerset area'.

**B&NES** referred to the SDS and stated that 'the scope for B&NES to accommodate unmet housing need from North Somerset is highly unlikely'.

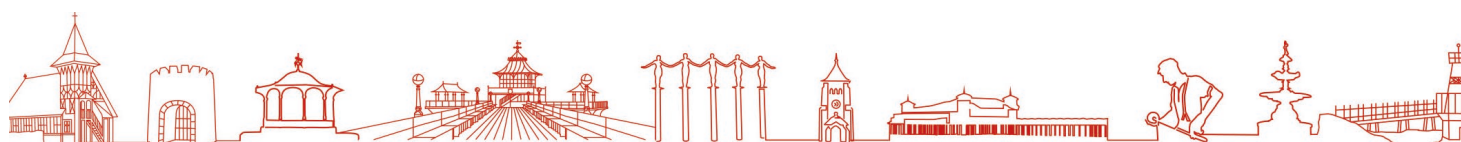


**Mendip District** set out the reasons why they 'would not be able to identify or agree a contribution to meet housing need in North Somerset'. These were an inability to demonstrate a five year supply, the current housing shortfall, limited capacity on brownfield sites, concern about green field sites in villages, water quality issues and Green Belt and AONB constraints.

**Sedgemoor District** stated that 'they would not be able to accommodate some of the North Somerset housing requirement in our area'. Their housing requirement represented a significant challenge to identify sufficient sites, there were limited opportunities at the towns in the form of urban extensions, infrastructure issues, environmental constraints (flooding and phosphates) and issues in relation to a new planning context arising from the new Somerset unitary authority.

**WECA** stated that initial technical analysis on the SDS was that they will be unable to meet the identified housing need without recourse to Green Belt and 'we are therefore unable to assist North Somerset in meeting any of their housing need'.

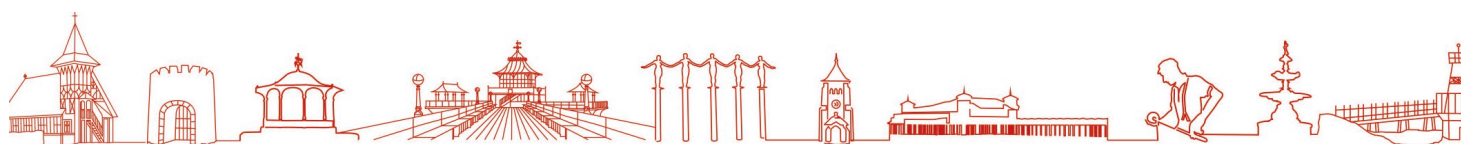
- 3.13 Ongoing engagement continued with the duty to co-operate partners through the preparation of the Preferred Options document. This included the formal duty to co-operate meeting with all partners (October 2021), as well as engagement with the WECA equivalent (Strategic Planning Forum 29 June) and the Somerset Strategic Planning Conference (27 April). In addition, there have been meetings with specific organisations including regular liaison with Sedgemoor District, and discussions with Natural England, Environment Agency, National Highways and the Clinical Commissioning Group.
- 3.14 The formal consultation on the Local Plan Preferred Options document was held in March/April 2022. This consultation on a full draft plan provided an opportunity for duty to co-operate partners to see the detail of the proposed approach and therefore to be better informed as to the potential cross-border implications. Issues raised were identified in the Consultation Statement published in August 2022.
- 3.15 The duty to co-operate arrangements continued as the Pre-submission (Reg 19) plan was developed but with a focus on the strategic cross-boundary issues identified and the relevant organisations. This was a period of uncertainty in terms of the proposed planning reforms and anticipated changes to the NPPF which were shaping the emerging approach. Critical to this was the question as to whether the government's standard method housing target was robust in terms of the scale of provision it was proposing for North Somerset. To ensure a consistent methodology, the West of



England authorities jointly commissioned ORS to consider the appropriate level of housing for each of the West of England authorities. This work led to a revised housing requirement for North Somerset which meant that the authority was no longer in the position of seeking assistance from neighbouring authorities to meet unmet needs.

- 3.16 Duty to co-operate discussions took place in Summer/Autumn 2023 to explain the revised approach and to identify any new strategic implications. In particular, discussions with Bristol City took place in respect of the implications in the revised approach to Green Belt and the proposed deletion of the strategic mixed use location at Yanley Lane and the implications for the Green Belt. The reduced housing requirement and amended spatial distribution of sites also had implications for HRA and transport issues for example, as did the proposed new employment allocation at Clevedon M5 J20.
- 3.17 The West of England Combined Authority at this time resolved not to progress with a Strategic Development Strategy. This in turn led to the constituent authorities of Bristol City, Bath and NE Somerset and South Gloucestershire deciding to bring forward individual local plans and each being responsible for strategic issues in the absence of an overarching strategic document for their combined area. This had implications for their plan making programmes with Bristol progressing their Reg 19 plan at the same time as North Somerset but the other two WECA authorities proposing a Reg 18 document in early 2024.
- 3.18 WECA confirmed in November 2023 that their organisation would prepare a combined Statement of Common Ground with Bristol City, a document which Bristol would lead on but they would sign up to.
- 3.19 In April 2023 the Somerset authorities become a new unitary authority, Somerset Council. At the time of finalising the North Somerset Reg 19 document, Somerset Council had indicated that they were commencing the preparation of a new Somerset Local Plan, but that approach of the new authority to strategic planning issues such as the scale of housing or its spatial distribution had yet to be determined.
- 3.20 The following tables summarise the position with the organisations identified as having strategic cross-boundary issues. These will form the basis for individual Statements of Common Ground to be submitted as examination documents. The identified organisations are:

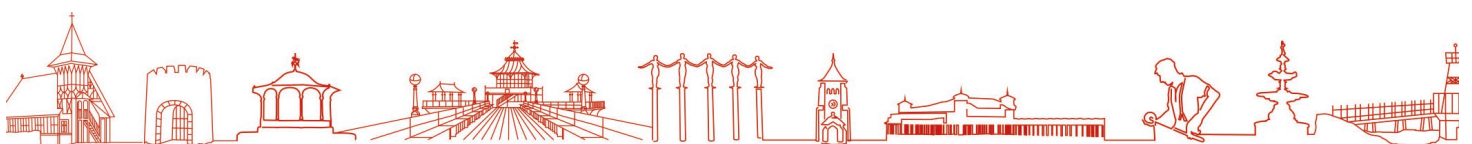
- Bristol City/West of England Combined Authority





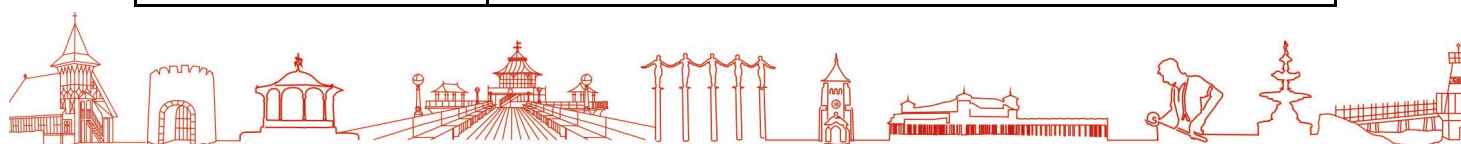
- Somerset Council
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- National Highways
- Historic England (SOCG proposed, but so specific strategic issues identified).

3.21 The duty to co-operate process will continue and the approach to strategic issues will be updated and refined, particularly in the light of any comments raised through the Reg 19 consultation.

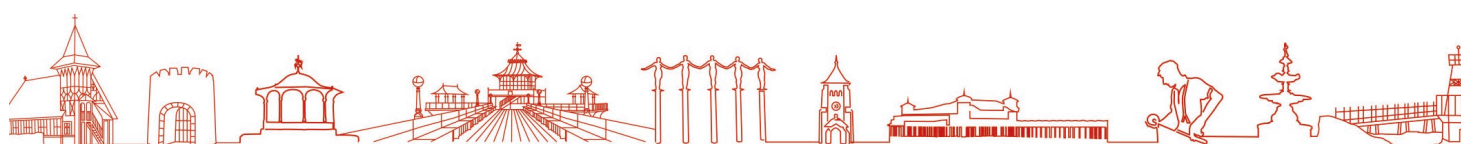


### Bristol City Council and the West of England Combined Authority

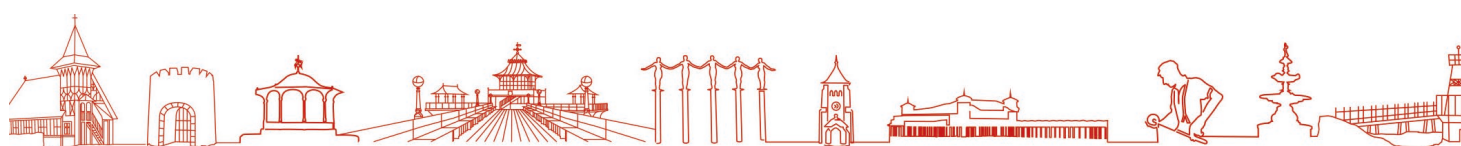
Strategic cross-boundary matter	Duty to co-operate progress
<p>Housing (quantum of housing, locations adjacent borders, unmet needs, affordable housing, Gypsy and Traveller issues)</p>	<p>The West of England authorities jointly commissioned a Local Housing Needs Assessment to ensure a consistent methodology and understanding of issues across the sub-region. The LHNA identifies the appropriate housing requirement, affordable and specialist housing needs.</p> <p>North Somerset housing requirement is 993 dwellings pa or 14,902 over the 15 year plan period. The housing supply identified in the Reg 19 plan is 15,734 dwellings, so there is no unmet need identified.</p> <p>Bristol City housing requirement is 1,925 dwellings pa or 34,650 over the plan period to 2040. The Reg 19 plan identifies an unmet need of 578 dwellings pa.</p> <p>The unmet housing need does not include the urban uplift for Bristol of 35% as identified in the Government's standard method. It is agreed that this figure applies only to Bristol and should not be exported to neighbouring authorities.</p> <p>Bristol has requested whether neighbouring authorities can accommodate some of its unmet need. The evidence supporting the local plan demonstrates that North Somerset does not have capacity to meet some of Bristol's needs particularly given the importance of retaining Green Belt.</p> <p>Two adjacent new residential allocations to the north of Colliter's Way in North Somerset and Elsbert Drive in Bristol are proposed. The two authorities will work jointly to co-ordinate the Green Belt change and the development of these sites.</p> <p>Both authorities share the ambition to maximise the amount of affordable housing delivery within their local plans.</p> <p>No cross-boundary Gypsy and Traveller issues have been identified.</p> <p>No cross-boundary issues relating to student accommodation have been identified.</p>



Strategic cross-boundary matter	Duty to co-operate progress
Green Belt	<p>Joint work has taken place across the West of England on the Green Belt Appraisal.</p> <p>The proposed future Green Belt boundary along the North Somerset/Bristol boundary has been reviewed to ensure that it remains robust and fit for purpose. The only change identified in the Reg 19 plans relates to the deletion of Green Belt to accommodate two adjacent new residential allocations to the north of Colliter's Way in North Somerset and Elsbert Drive in Bristol. The two authorities will work jointly to co-ordinate the Green Belt change and the development of these sites.</p>
Employment needs (travel to work, commuting flows, strategic locations, implications of Airport, Port).	<p>A West of England Employment Land Strategic Needs Assessment was jointly commissioned by the West of England authorities. North Somerset commissioned additional economic forecasting and analysis. Discussions have taken place to assess the combined evidence and its implications.</p> <p>North Somerset has allocated land at Clevedon for warehousing, distribution and logistics which is a sector which is difficult to accommodate within the Bristol area and provides opportunities to the south of the city.</p> <p>The authorities continue to engage on the role of the port, particularly as the port estate is both north and south of the river, and airport given their importance to the regional economy.</p>
Transport	<p>North Somerset and Bristol work jointly as part of the West of England Joint Local Transport Plan. Discussions have taken place around improved public transport infrastructure to the south of Bristol and to the airport, but no strategic issues have been identified.</p>
Flood risk	<p>Discussions have taken place in the context of SFRA and while flood risk needs to be monitored, no strategic issues are identified arising from the emerging local plans.</p>

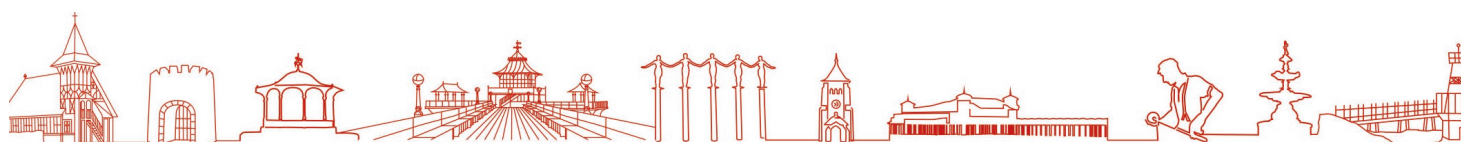


Strategic cross-boundary matter	Duty to co-operate progress
Habitat Regulations Assessment	<p>Potential adverse impacts arising from new development on international designations have been identified in relation to the Avon Gorge and Severn Estuary. This potentially arises from development proposed in both the North Somerset and Bristol Local Plans. North Somerset and Bristol City have commissioned separate consultants to advise on HRA mitigations.</p> <p>Discussions are taking place with consultants, Bristol City and Natural England on the HRA findings and potential mitigations in relation to air quality and visitor management at the Avon Gorge and visitor management pressures on the Severn Estuary with a view to co-ordinating an approach.</p>
Waste	No strategic cross-boundary issues identified.
Minerals	No strategic cross-boundary issues identified.



## Somerset Council

Strategic cross-boundary matter	Duty to co-operate progress
Housing (quantum of housing, locations adjacent borders, unmet needs, affordable housing, Gypsy and traveller issues)	<p>The West of England authorities jointly commissioned a Local Housing Needs Assessment to ensure a consistent methodology and understanding of issues across the sub-region. The LHNA identifies the appropriate housing requirement, affordable and specialist housing needs.</p> <p>North Somerset housing requirement is 993 dwellings pa or 14,902 over the 15 year plan period. The housing supply identified in the Reg 19 plan is 15,734 dwellings, so there is no unmet need identified.</p> <p>No cross-boundary Gypsy and Traveller issues have been identified.</p> <p>Somerset Council is preparing a local plan but this is at a very early stage and the approach to strategic housing issues in terms of quantity of housing and its spatial distribution has yet to be identified.</p>
Employment needs (travel to work, commuting flows, strategic locations, implications of Airport, Port, Hinkley Point).	<p>North Somerset has allocated land at Clevedon for warehousing, distribution and logistics.</p> <p>The authorities continue to liaise on issues related to the airport, port, Hinkley Point and the proposed strategic site at Gravity.</p>
Transport	Need for transport mitigations at M5 J22 and improved access to the airport have been identified.
Flood risk	Discussions have taken place in the context of SFRA and while flood risk needs to be monitored, no strategic issues are identified.
Habitat Regulations Assessment	No potential adverse impacts arising from new development on international designations have been identified in relation to sites in Somerset.
Waste	No strategic cross-boundary issues identified.
Minerals	No strategic cross-boundary issues identified.

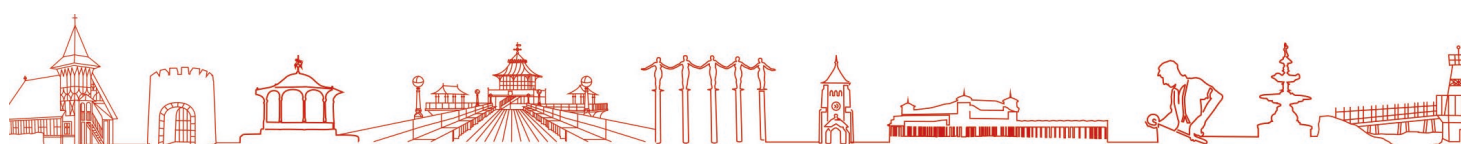


**Environment Agency**

<b>Strategic cross-boundary matter</b>	<b>Duty to co-operate progress</b>
Flood risk and coastal change management	<p>Engagement on proposed updates to SFRA. Discussions on any cross-boundary flood implications, particularly any impact on Avon catchment at Bristol.</p> <p>Engagement with the EA, including LLFA, on application of sequential test taking into account requirements for development and flood risk issues.</p>
Water supply and waste water	No strategic issues identified.

**Natural England**

<b>Strategic cross-boundary matter</b>	<b>Duty to co-operate progress</b>
Habitat Regulations Assessment	<p>Potential adverse impacts arising from new development on international designations have been identified in relation to the Avon Gorge and Severn Estuary. This potentially arises from development proposed in both the North Somerset and Bristol Local Plans. North Somerset and Bristol City have commissioned separate consultants to advise on HRA mitigations.</p> <p>Discussions are taking place with consultants, Bristol City and Natural England on the HRA findings and potential mitigations in relation to air quality and visitor management at the Avon Gorge and visitor management pressures on the Severn Estuary with a view to co-ordinating an approach.</p>



## National Highways

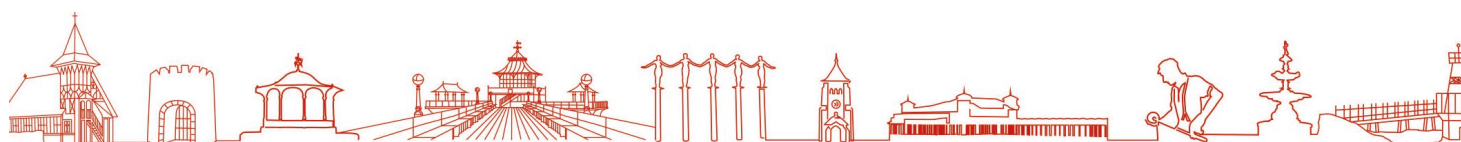
Strategic cross-boundary matter	Duty to co-operate progress
Housing (quantum of housing, locations adjacent borders, unmet needs).	Discussions taken place on the implications of the proposed housing allocations on the strategic road network, particularly the delivery of Wolverhill development and impact on M5 J21.
Employment needs (travel to work, commuting flows, strategic locations, implications of Airport, Port, Hinkley Point).	Discussions have taken place on impact of the employment particularly the proposed allocation directly off M5 J20 at Clevedon.
Infrastructure for transport	National Highways engaged in proposals for delivery of Banwell Bypass. Discussion held in respect of proposed improvements to M5 J22 at Burnham-on-Sea.

Other bodies where there are no strategic cross-boundary issues but a Statement of Common Ground is proposed.

## Historic England

There are no strategic-cross boundary issues identified with Historic England. However, Historic England did raise concerns through the Preferred Options (Reg 18) consultation regarding the lack of supporting evidence to demonstrate whether the historic environment has been appropriately considered which will help determine whether the plan has been positively prepared, is justified, effective and consistent with National Policy.

In response, a Heritage Topic Paper has been published to accompany the Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan. This will set out the context of the historic environment in North Somerset, work that North Somerset Council is doing in terms of specific heritage projects, how the historic environment has been considered in terms of the formulation of policies and allocation of sites in the Local Plan, and a heritage impact assessment of the relevant proposed sites.

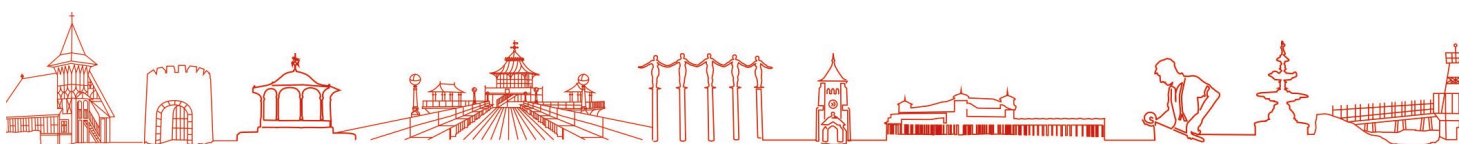


**Sport England:**

There are no cross-border strategic issues identified with Sport England. However there has been collaboration on policy formulation in terms of the policies protecting playing pitches and sports facilities. Sports England made comments on the Reg 18 plan raising concerns that the proposed policies in that plan were not clear enough in terms of differentiating between community facilities and sports pitches/facilities, and the policy didn't properly reflect para 99 of the NPPF.

As a result of these comments the policy approach was amended to have two separate policies – one for the protection of built community facilities and one for the protection of open space and recreation.

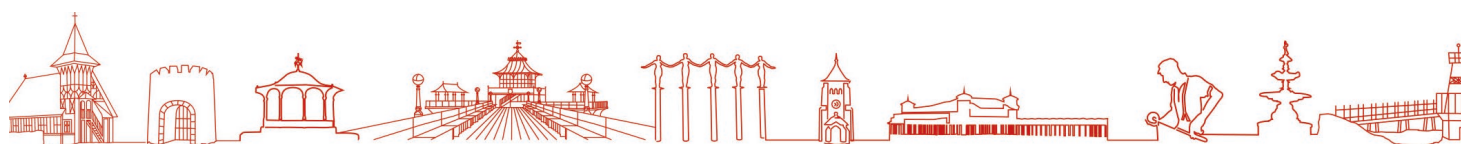
The new policies were sent to Sport England in June 2023 and they responded positively saying the new approach gives greater clarity.





## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This Duty to Co-operate Statement of Compliance sets out the steps taken by the Council to co-operate with local authorities and prescribed bodies on cross-boundary strategic matters, and the outcomes that have been achieved through this co-operation. The Council considers the engagement on strategic cross-boundary issues fulfils the statutory requirements and has been demonstrably constructive, active and undertaken on an ongoing basis.
- 5.2 The Council will continue to engage with its neighbouring authorities and other prescribed bodies on an ongoing basis in order to identify and address cross-boundary issues. This approach will help ensure that liaison with neighbouring authorities and other prescribed bodies remains fully embedded within the plan-making process at North Somerset Council.
- 5.3 The Council is currently in the process of developing a number of Statements of Common Ground which will set out the relevant strategic matters and how these have been resolved. These will continue to be progressed and developed through the Regulation 19 consultation period and will accompany the Plan for submission and examination.



## Appendix 1: North Somerset Duty to Co-operate letter (11 June 2020) and responses.

### North Somerset Local Plan 2023-2038

North Somerset is preparing a local plan for the 15 year period 2023-2038. As part of the plan-making process we are committed to effective and ongoing engagement with neighbouring authorities and other bodies on strategic cross-boundary issues through the duty to co-operate. We are writing to you at the beginning of our new local plan process to agree the principles and mechanisms for undertaking effective engagement and ensuring that our strategic policies are aligned.

As required by the National Planning Policy Framework, we will be maintaining one or more statements of common ground to document the approach as we progress through the plan making process. The initial statement(s) of common ground will be published once the area it covers has been agreed, the governance arrangements for the co-operation process defined, the substantive strategic matters to be addressed determined and which bodies will be involved and how. The document will be published on the website.

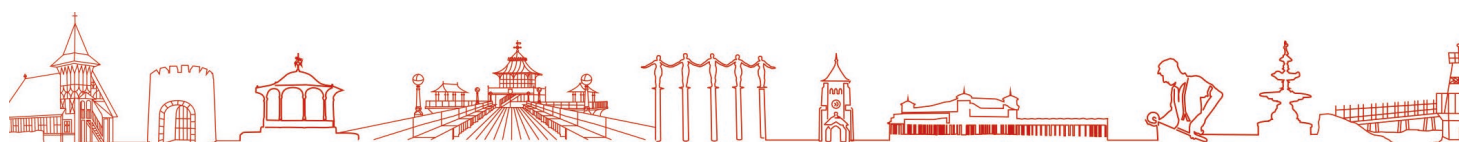
The purpose of this letter is to scope out the duty to co-operate process by identifying the strategic issues which need to be addressed and the authorities and bodies which need to be involved. This is just the start of the duty to co-operate process associated with the North Somerset Local Plan and the issues identified and participants may change as plan-making progresses. The responses received will help us to shape the most effective ways of engaging on these matters.

It would be appreciated if you could structure your response in relation to the following topics and questions. Please can you respond by **26 June 2020**.

#### 1. Development plan timetable

The North Somerset Local Plan will cover the period 2023-2038. The proposed timetable is currently as follows:

Stage	Date
Pre-commencement document	March 2020
Consultation on 'challenges'	Summer 2020
Consultation on 'choices'	Autumn 2020
Consultation on Draft Plan	Autumn 2021
Publication version.	2022



Stage	Date
Submission	2022
Examination	2023
Adoption	2023

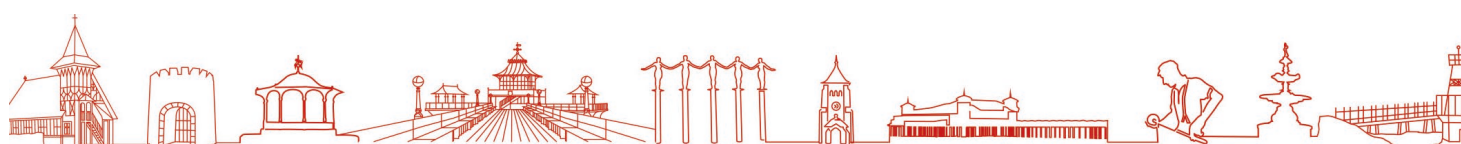
**Question:**

**For local planning authorities, what development plan documents are you preparing which we will need to take into account? Please provide a timetable and any relevant information at this stage, including in respect of adopted plans, target dates for review and monitoring.**

**2. Strategic matters**

The duty to co-operate relates to strategic matters with cross-boundary implications. At the start of the process we need to scope out what these are. National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 20 lists the strategic policy areas. The following lists those strategic matters with potential cross-boundary implications specifically identified as affecting North Somerset.

Issue	Comment
Housing	The quantum of housing, strategic locations adjacent to boundaries, any unmet needs; affordable housing; gypsy and traveller provision.
Employment	Travel to work, commuting flows, location of new employment development; implications of development at the Port, Airport, Hinkley Point.
Infrastructure	Transport, flood, community infrastructure with cross-boundary implications.
Minerals	Aggregates.
Green infrastructure	Ecological, landscape and habitat considerations impacting on cross-boundary issues.
Development locations	Aligning strategic policies and cross-border allocations.



**Question:**

**Are these the strategic matters with cross-boundary implications of relevance to North Somerset? Are there any others? Which are the cross-boundary matters with North Somerset affecting your authority or organisation?**

**3. Evidence**

Plan-making requires an up-to-date evidence base. North Somerset is working jointly with the WECA and the WECA UAs to commission a Local Housing Needs Assessment and an Employment Land and Spatial Needs Assessment and will be collaborating on other workstreams.

**Question:**

**What evidence do you have, is proposed, or could be developed jointly which is relevant to assessing the strategic issues identified? What is the scope for alignment with existing or proposed studies?**

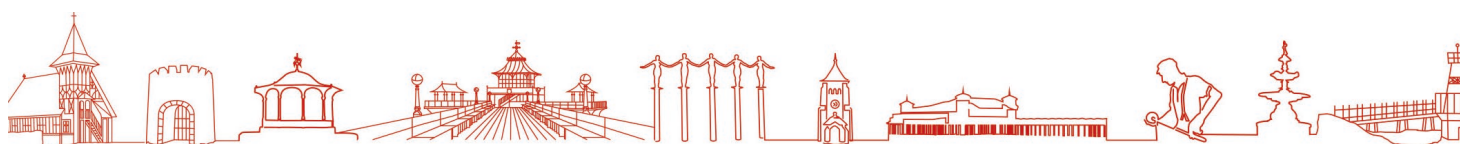
**4. Governance**

The duty to co-operate will involve joint working at different levels, and there already exist a wide range of forums addressing many of the key strategic issues. Within North Somerset the process and outcomes will be agreed through the officer Driving Growth Board which oversees the local plan process and with member sign off by the Executive Member for Planning. We would like to establish an appropriate forum for undertaking the duty to co-operate discussions and would like your views on how this might operate. For some issues this could involve a combination of authorities and/or organisations; for others it would operate more effectively on a one-to-one basis.

**Question:**

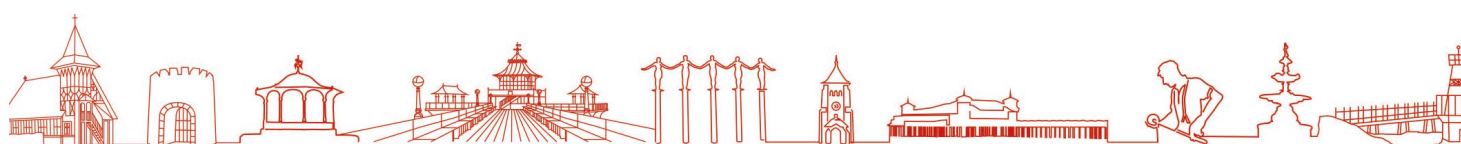
**How would your authority or organisation wish to engage with duty to co-operate issues and at what level?**

We look forward to working with you through the identification of cross-boundary issues and working together to address the implications throughout the plan-making process. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the North Somerset Local Plan and the duty to co-operate implications, please contact Michael Reep, Planning Policy Manager.

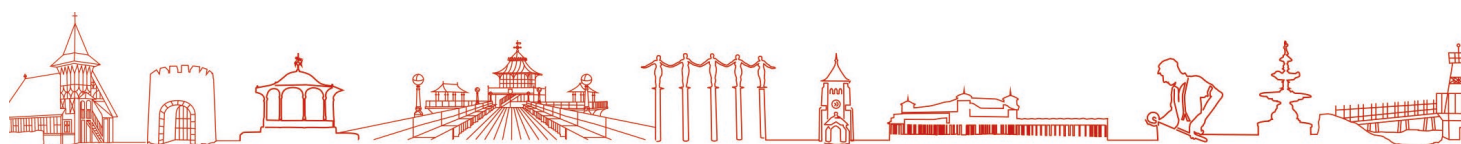


## Responses to 11 June 2020 letter

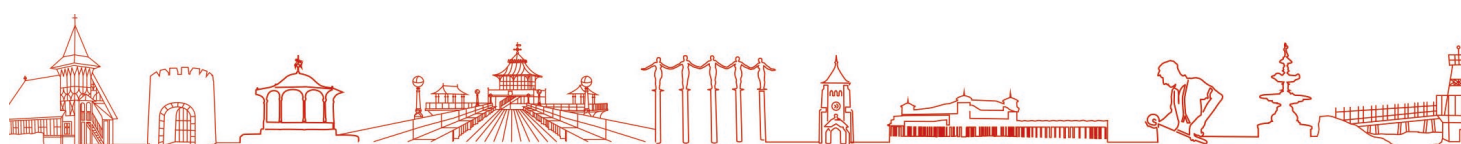
Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
West of England Combined Authority	<p>Thank you for your letter of 11 June 2020 regarding Duty to Cooperate on the North Somerset Local Plan and the invitation to work with you to identify and address the strategic and cross-boundary issues to be addressed through the plan.</p> <p>We welcome the recent commitment (in the MOU signed on 19th June) between ourselves and the 4 West of England unitary authorities including yourselves to work together on strategic planning to tackle the challenges the region faces in order to best support clean and inclusive recovery and growth across the region.</p> <p>In response to the specific questions raised in your letter, WECA's position is set out below:</p> <p><u>1. Timetable:</u></p> <p>WECA and its constituent authorities agreed on 19 June 2020 to commence preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy, which will cover Bath &amp; North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire authority areas. The anticipated timescale for the plan's delivery is outlined in the main report.</p> <p>As noted in the recent MOU signed by all authorities including NSC, in respect of the SDS and NSC Local Plan, it is important that timescales are sufficiently aligned so that respective plan-making processes can take account of each other.</p> <p><u>2. Strategic Matters:</u></p> <p>WECA agrees that North Somerset Council have identified the key strategic matters with cross-boundary implications and recognises that the detail of these issues will be understood further through the plan making process. All of the issues highlighted in the letter (with the exception of minerals) are relevant to WECA as a plan-making body and transport authority. Further to the issues as set out by North Somerset Council, WECA suggest the following issues should also be considered through joint working:</p>



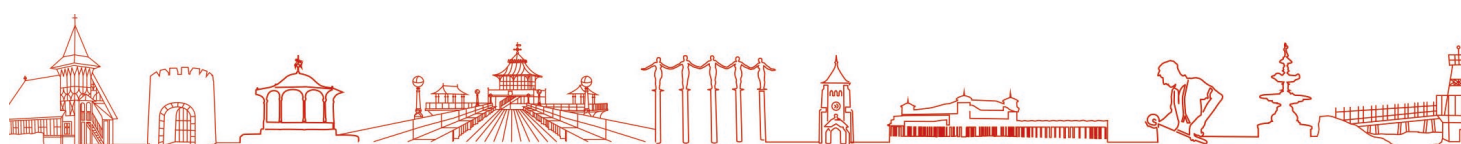
Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure should include energy and water resources in its scope, as the distribution of these assets is uneven across the West of England and the networks that support them are cross boundary in nature.</li> <li>• Employment related issues should also consider the management of existing strategic employment areas. This would include waste management locations and key retail centres which may have cross-boundary impacts in the future.</li> <li>• WECA authorities are working with North Somerset Council to develop a Placemaking Charter and support high quality design as a region. The agreed benefit of joint working on this agenda could be emphasised by considering design quality as a strategic matter through the Local Plan.</li> <li>• Whilst the adaptation and mitigation of climate change will be a running theme through all strategic issues (eg transport infrastructure, housing, green infrastructure), WECA and North Somerset will benefit from continued joint working on climate change as a strategic issue to achieve our joint ambition of carbon neutrality by 2030.</li> <li>• WECA would also seek to ensure that air quality is recognised within the scope of strategic matters, particularly in relation to strategic and cross-boundary transport infrastructure.</li> <li>• Green belt - it is noted that green belt reviews are intertwined with work on housing availability and capacity and may need to be discussed on an equivalent cross boundary basis in due course.</li> </ul> <p><u>3. Evidence</u></p> <p>The West of England Joint Committee agreed in January 2020 to jointly commission strategic evidence to inform plan-making across the West of England. North Somerset have been fully engaged in the development and delivery of these evidence base commissions, many of which are joint or otherwise aligned, through our existing cross-boundary officer meetings.</p>



Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
	<p data-bbox="528 376 751 409"><u>4. Governance</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 450 1477 837">The West of England authorities (including North Somerset and WECA) have established processes and governance for joint working on strategic planning, housing and transport issues. Through these processes, we are well placed to manage joint working (including the formal Duty to Cooperate process) for the North Somerset Local Plan as well as the WECA area Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) and the Local Plans for its constituent authorities. This reflects, amongst other things, the Functional Economic Market Area and Housing Market Areas – we note that the Bristol Housing Market Area covers North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bristol.</p> <p data-bbox="528 882 1477 1361">It is noted that WECA and North Somerset engage through a series of weekly, monthly and quarterly meetings at which strategic planning (and transport planning) are discussed and decisions taken through the agreed governance as required. It is suggested that discussions continue through these forums, with decisions made at the appropriate level based on technical recommendations. It is noted that many of these decisions will also be documented through the WECA-area Duty to Cooperate and Statement of Common Ground, which is currently in development with involvement from North Somerset Council. As such we would expect South Gloucestershire to be formally invited to partake in relevant Duty to Cooperate discussions affecting the WECA area going forward.</p>

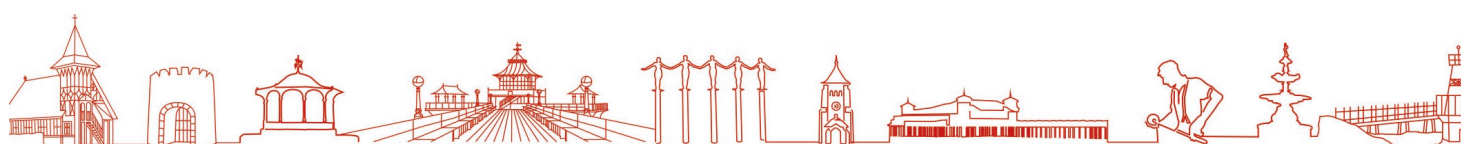


Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
Bristol City Council	<p>As we address the economic situation arising from the pandemic, tackle the need for new and affordable homes, and respond to the challenges of climate change and the ecological emergency, we look forward to working cooperatively with North Somerset Council in addressing these issues which set the context for policy development in our areas. Your letter helpfully sets out the likely strategic topics with cross boundary implications. Our observations are set out below, using the template provided by your letter.</p> <p><u>Q1. Development plan timetable</u></p> <p>Bristol City Council is preparing a new local plan which will be in general conformity with the West of England Combined Authority Spatial Development Strategy. As you are aware our local plan review began in 2017 and the process is continuing taking into account the changed strategic planning context. The broad timetable for the local plan is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2020: New studies and evidence. Call for sites continues.</li> <li>• 2021: Consultation on issues and options for development (Regulation 18).</li> <li>• 2022: Publication version to be approved and made available for comment (Regulation 19).</li> <li>• 2023: Examination by planning inspector. New local plan to be adopted (Autumn 2023).</li> </ul> <p><u>Q2. Strategic matters</u></p> <p><b>Minerals -Aggregates</b></p> <p>Matters in relation to minerals will be addressed through South West Aggregates Working Party joint response. It is agreed the approach to aggregates has cross boundary implications.</p>

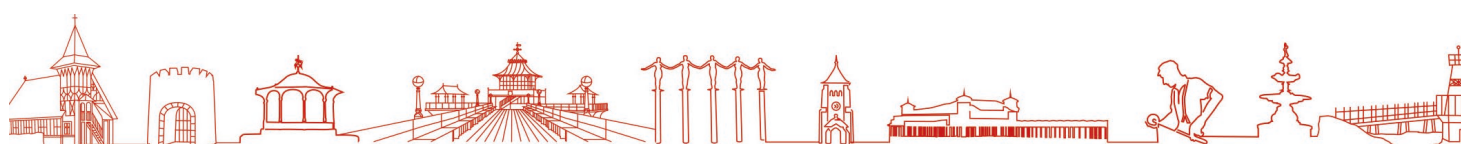




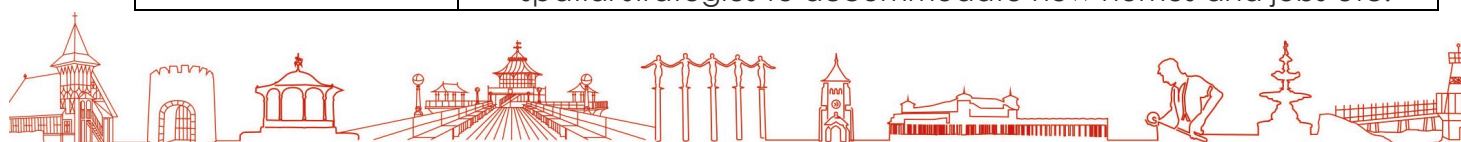
Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
	<p><b>Green infrastructure-Ecological, landscape and habitat considerations impacting on cross-boundary issues.</b> It is agreed that these are green infrastructure matters with potential cross boundary implications. There is likely to be significant scope for coordinating policy which addresses the ecological corridors that cross through our respective boundaries.</p> <p><b>Development locations- Aligning strategic policies and cross-border allocations.</b> It is agreed that alignment of these matters is a cross boundary concern, particularly in the event of any cross boundary allocations that might arise. It is noted that any consideration of cross- boundary allocations along the Bristol/North Somerset boundary would necessarily involve change to the Green Belt which is itself a strategic policy to be addressed and coordinated through our respective local plans.</p> <p>Future growth and change in the context of both the climate emergency and the ecological emergency will be relevant matters for consideration. This is strand which forms a golden thread running through a range of development issues which impact on our areas.</p> <p>In addition to the matters raised above, evidence may indicate additional cross boundary strategic matters that are appropriate to consider throughout the development plan preparation process.</p> <p><u>Q3. Evidence</u> The West of England authorities are working jointly with the WECA to commission a Local Housing Needs Assessment and an Employment Land and Spatial Needs Assessment and will be collaborating on other work streams. Bristol City Council has commissioned a gipsy and traveller and travelling showpeople needs assessment which is due to be completed shortly. We have commissioned a Bristol City Centre Retail and Leisure Study. Your team has been contacted about this study.</p>



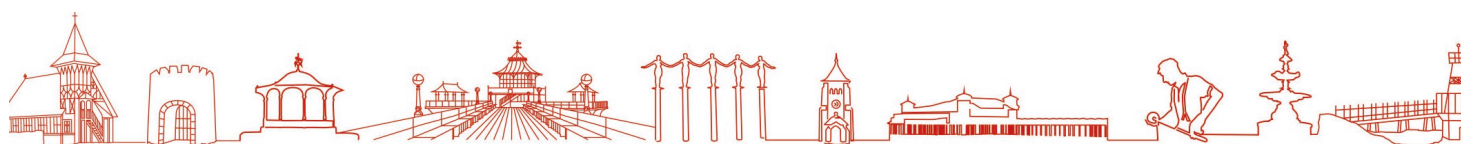
Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
	<p>There is potential for further alignment on existing and proposed studies and Bristol City Council looks forward to discussing that further through West of England and authority to authority engagement.</p> <p>Through the city's One City Plan, Bristol is guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and seeks to contribute towards meeting the aims and targets of those global goals. More information on these is available on the Bristol One City Plan web pages. We look forward to discussing our approach with you and considering how our respective plans can be coordinated in a way which assists in implementing these important cross-cutting goals.</p> <p><u>4. Governance</u></p> <p>There are a number of well-established processes and channels for engagement between the West of England authorities, the relationships with the West of England Combined Authority and direct authority contacts at political and officer level. Bristol City Council will be pleased to engage via these processes in the development of planning policies for our areas. Additional or revised processes may be established at the regional or authority to authority levels depending on the particular strategic matters which are being addressed.</p> <p>Bristol City Council will, of course, engage with all public consultation stages in the preparation of the North Somerset Local Plan and will be pleased to continue informal dialogue throughout.</p>



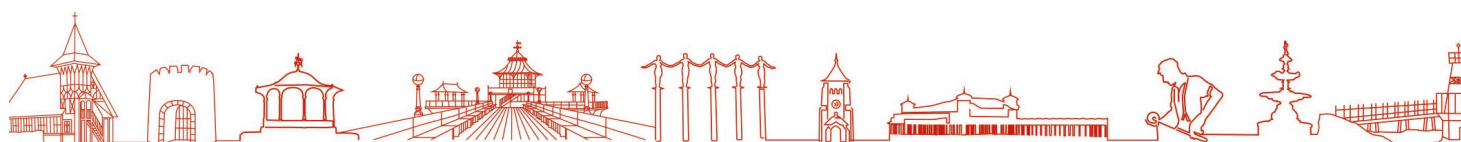
Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
Bath and North East Somerset Council	<p>B&amp;NES welcomes the opportunity to work with North Somerset Council to identify and address the strategic and cross-boundary issues to be addressed through our respective Plans. Please see below the B&amp;NES response to the 4 questions that you asked</p> <p><u>1. Timetable:</u></p> <p>The B&amp;NES <a href="#">Local Development Scheme</a> sets out the Development Plan Documents that we are preparing, their preparation arrangements and timetables.</p> <p>As you know B&amp;NES is also working with WECA and the WECA Unitary Authorities to prepare a Mayoral Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) (not a Development Plan Document but part of the Development Plan). The separate WECA response to you sets out the timetable for the SDS and related work.</p> <p>As noted in the recent Memorandum of Understanding signed by all West of England authorities, in respect of the SDS and NSC Local Plan, it is important that plan preparation timescales are sufficiently aligned so that respective plan-making processes can take account of each other. This is especially important to ensure that the Duty to Co-operate is to be properly discharged.</p> <p><u>2. Strategic matters:</u></p> <p>B&amp;NES agrees that the issues listed in the table in your letter are strategic matters with cross-boundary implications. The detail of these issues will be considered in more detail through our respective plan making processes, both the WECA SDS and the B&amp;NES Local Plan. In addition, the following are also strategic matters with cross-boundary implications;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure should include energy and water resources, as the distribution of these assets is uneven across the West of England and the networks that support them are cross-boundary in nature.</li> <li>• Employment related issues should also consider the management of existing strategic employment areas. This would include waste management locations and key retail centres which may have cross-boundary impacts in the future.</li> <li>• Joint working on climate change as a strategic issue will be necessary to achieve our joint ambition of carbon neutrality by 2030.</li> <li>• Air quality is within the scope of strategic matters, particularly in relation to strategic and cross-boundary transport infrastructure.</li> <li>• The approach to the Bristol-Bath Green Belt in plan-making is a cross boundary issue, especially in the context of work on spatial strategies to accommodate new homes and jobs etc.</li> </ul>



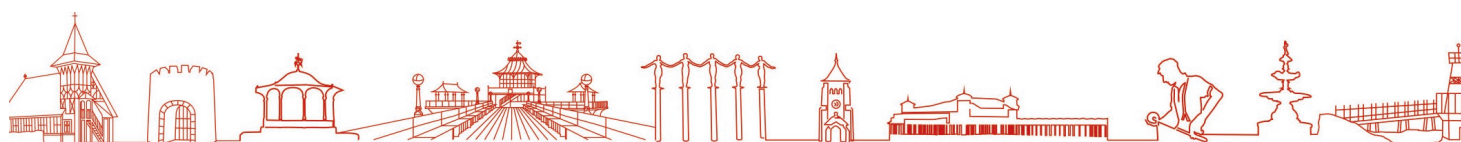
Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
	<p><u>3. Evidence:</u> The strategic issues identified above will require a co-ordinated approach between all West of England Authorities to the collation and use of evidence. This reflects the existence of shared Housing Market Areas and Functional Economic Market Areas. Key evidence to support strategic plan making was considered by the West of England Joint Committee in January 2020 when it was agreed to jointly commission strategic evidence to inform plan-making across the West of England. It is important that the evidence supporting the SDS and the North Somerset Local Plan are consistent in light of the relationship of the 2 plans.</p> <p><u>4. Governance:</u> The West of England authorities (including North Somerset and WECA) have established processes and governance for joint working on strategic planning, housing and transport issues, which are well placed to manage joint working (including the formal Duty to Cooperate process) for the North Somerset Local Plan as well as the WECA area SDS and the Local Plans for its constituent authorities.</p> <p>Furthermore, WECA and North Somerset engage through a well-established series of weekly, monthly and quarterly meetings at which strategic planning (and transport planning) are discussed and decisions taken. It is recommended that discussions continue through these forums, with decisions made at the appropriate level based on technical recommendations. It is noted that many of these decisions will also be documented through the WECA area Duty to Cooperate and Statement of Common Ground, which is currently in development with involvement from North Somerset Council. As such we would expect South Gloucestershire to be formally invited to partake in relevant Duty to Co-operate discussions affecting the WECA area going forward.</p> <p>Bi-lateral officer and or Member meetings between North Somerset and B&amp;NES can be arranged as required as part of the plan-making process.</p> <p>B&amp;NES looks forward to our continued work together on strategic plan-making. Should any of these need further discussion or clarification, I would welcome doing so through the appropriate joint meetings referenced</p>



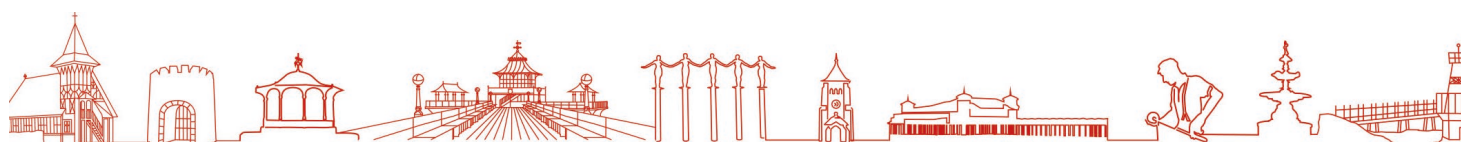
Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received																		
Sedgemoor District Council	<p>Sedgemoor District is an adjoining local authority and therefore will be an important Duty to Co-operate consultee. The two Councils have cooperated closely together on both the Sedgemoor Local Plan (2019) as well as other cross-boundary strategic issues and we look forward to engaging positively with the plan-making process.</p> <p>In terms of the specific questions you have asked, please see our response below;</p> <p><u>1. Development Plan Timetable:</u></p> <p>We will shortly commence a review of the adopted Local Plan focusing on early evidence base work from October. Our LDS envisages the following timetable:</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="528 909 639 943"><b>Activity</b></th> <th data-bbox="1011 909 1155 943"><b>Timetable</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="528 947 900 981">Early evidence base work</td> <td data-bbox="1011 947 1414 981">October 2020-October 2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="528 985 995 1093">Engagement in Plan Preparation (Issues and Options Consultation(s) Regulation 18)</td> <td data-bbox="1011 985 1390 1019">November 2021-May 2022</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="528 1097 995 1171">Publication and consultation on Submission DPD (Regulation 19)</td> <td data-bbox="1011 1097 1394 1131">August 2022-October 2022</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="528 1176 995 1249">Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22)</td> <td data-bbox="1011 1176 1203 1209">January 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="528 1254 836 1288">Examination Hearings</td> <td data-bbox="1011 1254 1305 1288">April 2023-June 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="528 1292 724 1326">Modifications</td> <td data-bbox="1011 1292 1326 1326">July 2023-August 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="528 1330 772 1364">Examiners Report</td> <td data-bbox="1011 1330 1203 1364">October 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="528 1368 660 1402">Adoption</td> <td data-bbox="1011 1368 1235 1402">December 2023</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>In addition to the local plan review we are currently undertaking an update of our Gypsy &amp; Travellers Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). This will potentially lead to an allocation development plan document. However, due to Covid-19 the GTAA has been delayed and it is unlikely therefore that Issues and Options consultation will commence until early 2021.</p>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timetable</b>	Early evidence base work	October 2020-October 2021	Engagement in Plan Preparation (Issues and Options Consultation(s) Regulation 18)	November 2021-May 2022	Publication and consultation on Submission DPD (Regulation 19)	August 2022-October 2022	Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22)	January 2023	Examination Hearings	April 2023-June 2023	Modifications	July 2023-August 2023	Examiners Report	October 2023	Adoption	December 2023
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timetable</b>																		
Early evidence base work	October 2020-October 2021																		
Engagement in Plan Preparation (Issues and Options Consultation(s) Regulation 18)	November 2021-May 2022																		
Publication and consultation on Submission DPD (Regulation 19)	August 2022-October 2022																		
Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22)	January 2023																		
Examination Hearings	April 2023-June 2023																		
Modifications	July 2023-August 2023																		
Examiners Report	October 2023																		
Adoption	December 2023																		



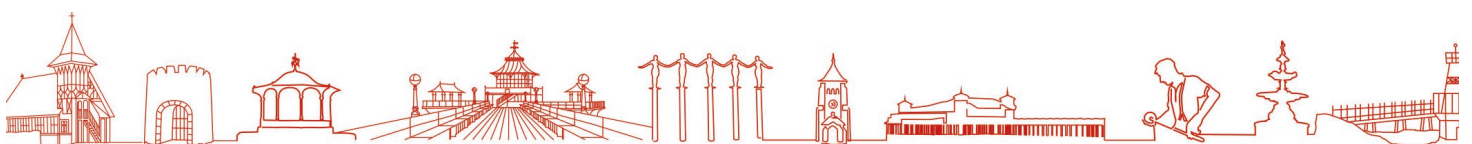
Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
	<p><u>2. Strategic Matters</u></p> <p>I believe that the strategic policy areas identified cover all relevant areas. For Sedgemoor key issues will be levels of housing growth and whether this can all be accommodated within North Somerset, strategic locations for growth, transport impacts and flood risk. In addition there may potentially be cross boundary impacts relating to green infrastructure. Through our own local plan the Councils have liaised closely on housing issues in particular and we will be pleased to continue this dialogue.</p> <p><u>3. Evidence</u></p> <p>We are currently developing a new transport model for the district that should be completed by March 2021, subject to resolving the challenges of data collection due to Covid-19. This model would potentially enable impacts of any strategic development located close to Sedgemoor to be assessed.</p> <p>We will also need to update our Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) that will require the more detailed Level 2 assessment for the area to the north of Burnham-on-Sea. As yet this has not been commissioned. There may be scope for some alignment or certainly data sharing, working collectively in partnership with the Environment Agency.</p> <p><u>4. Governance</u></p> <p>Initially at an officer level. We are able to report and discuss issues with our Local Plan Working Group that comprises a cross party member group. We would need to keep this under review depending upon the nature of any issues. If for example there was a need to consider accommodating any housing need within neighbouring districts including Sedgemoor, it is likely that discussions would need to involve Leader and Chief Executive with decisions being a matter for Council</p>



Neighbouring authorities	Summary of comments received
Mendip District Council	<p><u>1. Development plan timetable</u> Mendip is commencing work on a comprehensive review to its adopted local plan part 1. An updated LDS is due to be endorsed at Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> July. The part 1 will set out strategic policies, update DM policies and site allocations. There will also be work on a separate gypsy and traveller DPD. The time period is similar to the N Somerset plan (i.e., 2020-2040)</p> <p><u>2. Strategic Matters</u> The key matters to Mendip are likely to be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantum of housing/ un-met need Gypsies and Travellers</li> <li>• Cross-boundary issues relating to ecology/ landscape/ habitat considerations, water quality and cumulative flood risk (medium and long-term)</li> <li>• Airport development Energy capacity and infrastructure employment flows</li> <li>• Transport infrastructure</li> </ul> <p><u>3. Evidence</u> Mendip will be updating its evidence on housing and employment supply/need and environmental studies. While there is likely to be the usual stakeholder consultation no specific studies have been identified where there is likely to be a strong functional overlap/ need for alignment with North Somerset. It would be useful to engage on any studies which have implications for traffic impacts on cross-boundary routes into Mendip.</p> <p><u>4. Governance</u> Via the current officer level arrangements via the planning policy team and jointly at SSPC with collective Somerset authorities.</p>
Somerset County Council	-

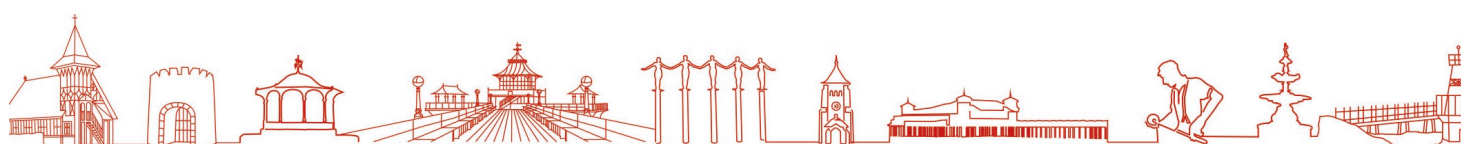


<b>Prescribed bodies</b>	<b>Summary of comments received</b>
Environment Agency	<p>I can confirm that the Environment Agency looks forward to future involvement in the Local Development Framework process.</p> <p>We responded to the Pre-commencement Document, which was received on 10 March 2020 and we concurred with the proposed content, scope and methodology of this plan. This plan should cover the strategic issues which will need to be addressed through the Local Plan process.</p> <p>We have also been involved with NSC and the emerging SFRA which should influence future allocations with respect to flood risk, and we look forward to continued working with you on this.</p>

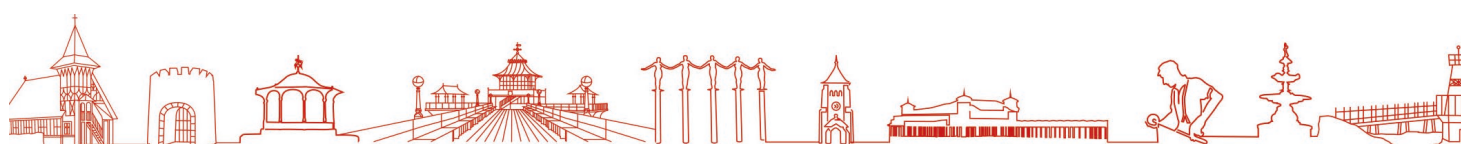




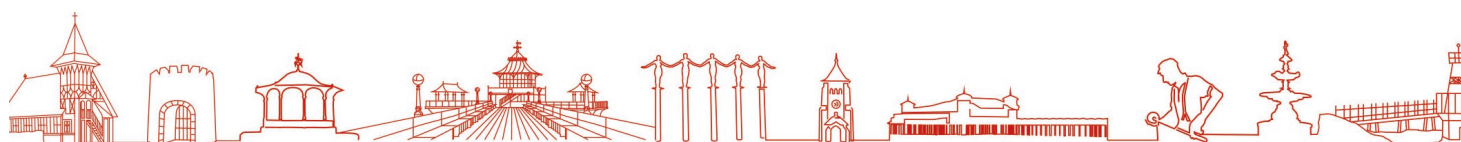
Prescribed bodies	Summary of comments received
Historic England	<p><u>Q2. Strategic matters</u></p> <p>Our historic landscapes and sizeable heritage assets such as prominent landmarks and designated parks and gardens may often span large areas and cross more than a single local authority jurisdiction. Growth and associated infrastructure may have an effect on their significance and therefore the historic environment can be treated as a potential strategic matter.</p> <p>As such it will be important for you to identify these special landscapes and places within and beyond the District as an early stage to ensure direct effects of development or indirect secondary impacts from associated infrastructure, such as new roads, can be appreciated and positively addressed.</p> <p><u>Q3. Evidence</u></p> <p>This relates to Q2 and the gathering of evidence regarding our heritage at the landscape scale. This may be separate or form a distinct 'layer' to any Green Infrastructure work.</p> <p><u>Q4 Governance: How would your authority or organisation wish to engage with duty to co-operate issues and at what level?</u></p> <p>If there is a clear commitment to both appreciating the significance of the historic environment, and responding positively to it, then I'm happy for one to one dialogue especially if cross boundary historic environment evidence is gathered by a consortium of local authority heritage and landscape officers to inform strategic growth and infrastructure decisions as required by national policy. Historic England, and other heritage sector partners, for example the National Trust might oversee and contribute to such sub regional work.</p>



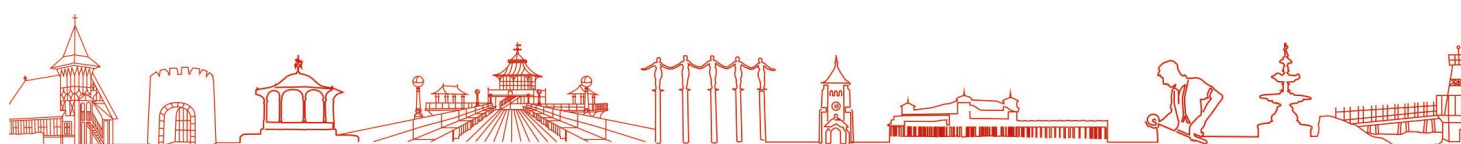
Prescribed bodies	Summary of comments received
Natural England	<p data-bbox="528 338 810 376"><u>2. Strategic Matters</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 412 1485 696">The matters identified above appear reasonable. We can confirm that alongside green infrastructure, the natural environment presents a number of issues and opportunities that are strategic matters and have cross-boundary implications. These matters include the approach taken to designated sites and factoring in the direction of travel on nature recovery and biodiversity net gain that features in the Environment Bill. Coastal squeeze could usefully be added to the list.</p> <p data-bbox="528 732 699 770"><u>3. Evidence</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 806 1485 1308">NE is working with NSC to develop evidence to underpin a strategic approach to protected sites for bats and is keen to work jointly on addressing other issues such as recreational pressure on sensitive sites. NE is also developing evidence, guidance and tools to support implementation biodiversity net gain, and mapping and implementation the nature recovery network. We have also worked with NSC and other WoE authorities to develop evidence and GI standards through the JGIS and can work with you to translate that into your district GI strategy. IN addition we are have launched district licensing for great crested newts with NSC and will be exploring other options with you for better regulatory processes and outcomes. We would expect this information will help to increase the evidence and tools for tackling a range of economic, social and environmental issues.</p> <p data-bbox="528 1344 751 1382"><u>4. Governance</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 1417 1458 1624">NE would welcome early engagement in all stages of plan preparation, recognising the opportunity the local plan process presents for establishing strategic solutions and approaches to ensure development is sustainable and contributes the Govt's 25 YEP. We have already worked with NSC on the detail of SA scoping for the new local plan.</p>



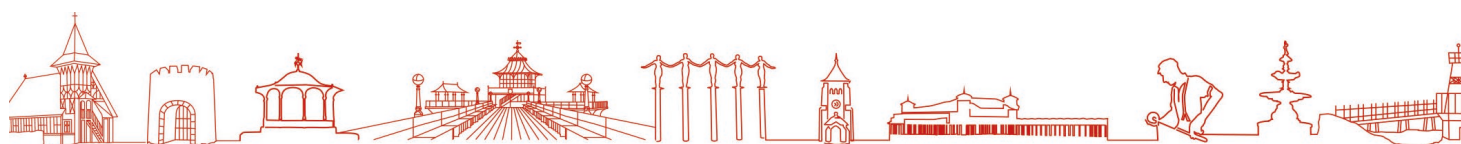
Prescribed bodies	Summary of comments received
Highways England	<p data-bbox="528 338 983 376"><u>1. Development Plan Timetable</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 412 1481 768">Whilst we recognise that this question is aimed principally at local planning authorities, we would draw attention to the Department for Transport's (DfT) Road Investment Strategy (RIS) which sets out the five year strategy for investment in and management of the SRN. RIS2 covering 2020-2025 has recently been published and the planning for RIS3 (2025-2030), which will be formally announced in 2025, is currently commencing and will be running throughout the North Somerset Local Plan preparation timetable. We would aim to ensure that the Local Plan is prepared with consideration given to RIS2 and any emerging issues in the RIS3 preparation process.</p> <p data-bbox="528 808 810 846"><u>2. Strategic Matters</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 882 1490 1200">We are pleased to see Infrastructure included in the list of strategic matters with cross-boundary implications, with the issue of transport covered under this. We would also highlight that transport related issues are relevant to a number of the other cross-boundary strategic matters identified. Overall the cross-boundary matters which are of primary interest to Highways England, given that our own boundary is the transition from the local road network to the SRN, are those which have the potential to result in additional pressure on the SRN.</p> <p data-bbox="528 1240 1458 1491">Housing – the quantum and location of new housing can have significant implications for the safe and efficient operation of the SRN. We would wish to see the Local Plan deliver new housing located in sustainable locations (i.e. close to employment opportunities and main service areas, and well located to be served by public transport, walk and cycle routes) in order to minimise increased demand on the SRN.</p> <p data-bbox="528 1532 1490 1850">Employment – travel to work is a key issue in North Somerset, with the city of Bristol and the surrounding area providing a large amount of employment opportunities. Due to Bristol employment being spread over a large area, there are challenges with providing an attractive alternative means of travel to the car, which again can result in increased pressure on the SRN. We would wish to see the Local Plan look to consolidate growth where there are reasonable alternatives available, for example making best use of transport infrastructure assets already established.</p>



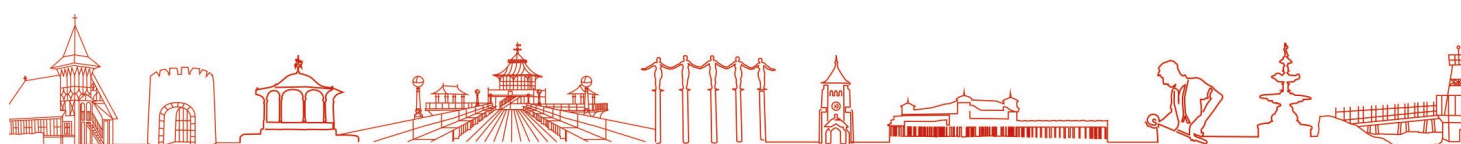
Prescribed bodies	Summary of comments received
	<p>Infrastructure – we would highlight that the transport assessment for the new Local Plan should recognise that parts of the SRN (i.e. M5 J19 and J21) experience weekday capacity issues spread over a peak period rather than just a peak hour. Also, the section of the M5 through North Somerset has a significant seasonal variation in traffic flow which needs to be considered alongside the daily variation. In relation to these issues, a new junction on the M5 south of J21 was considered during the preparation of the West of England Joint Spatial Plan (JSP).</p> <p>Overall we would highlight that there are challenges associated with any mitigation schemes which may be required on the SRN as a result of additional pressure, for example the high cost of schemes due to the limited capacity for expansion of the existing network. Hence we are keen to work with the Council in order to ensure that any additional pressure on the SRN resulting from the new Local Plan is minimised.</p> <p><u>3. Evidence</u></p> <p>We would wish to work closely with the Council to ensure the transport evidence base and transport assessment for the new Local Plan (i.e. trip rates, trip distribution, peak period/hour impacts etc.) is mutually agreed.</p> <p>Highways England is aware that North Somerset Council has commissioned a transport model for North Somerset and the surrounding area. Although we are not part of the model development team, we have been engaged in the model development process and its calibration and validation. We accept that the new North Somerset transport model is a good foundation for the Local Plan assessment. We would welcome the opportunity to refresh our understanding of the model and agree any outstanding issues. For example, for the purposes of the new Local Plan it is crucial that an acceptable peak hour assessment is derived from the peak period model and we would wish to be engaged in regard to how the impact of the development allocations will be assessed and identified.</p>



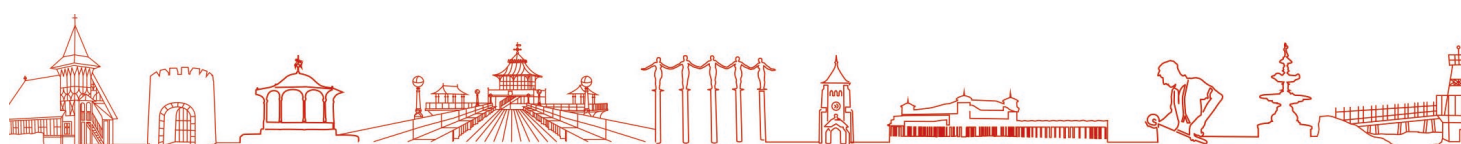
Prescribed bodies	Summary of comments received
	<p>Highways England hold a detailed model (VISSIM) of M5 J19 which can be shared with the Council to assist in the new Local Plan preparation. We are also currently looking at developing a detailed model of M5 J21 and will keep the Council updated as this work progresses.</p> <p>Depending on the location of the development allocation in the new Local Plan, consideration will need to be given as to whether a model of M5 J20 and the surrounding area is required.</p> <p><u>Q4 Governance: How would your authority or organisation wish to engage with duty to co-operate issues and at what level?</u></p> <p>Reflecting the issues highlighted above, Highways England envisages two related strands to our engagement with the Council on the new Local Plan. One strand would be at the policy level to agree the SoCG and feedback our issues regarding the impacts and any proposed mitigation relating to the SRN as per questions 1 and 2 above. The other strand would relate to the more technical level relating to the transport evidence base, modelling and assessment as per question 3 above.</p>
Civil Aviation Authority	-
Homes England	-
Office of Rail Regulator	-
NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups	-
Marine Management Organisation	-



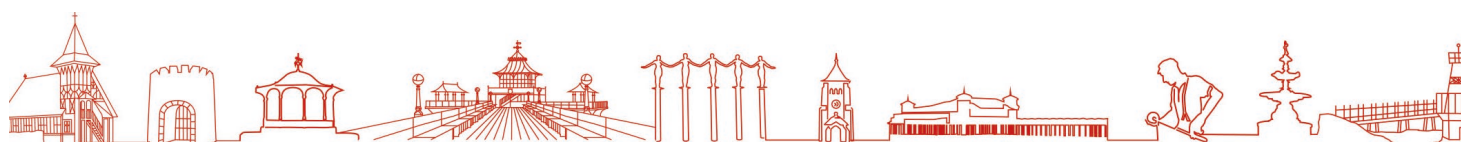
Prescribed bodies	Summary of comments received
West of England Local Enterprise Partnership	<p>As you are aware, the West of England LEP covers the four unitary authority areas of Bath &amp; North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. The LEP welcomes North Somerset bringing forward work on their Local Plan, and joint working to address strategic issues and support economic growth in the region.</p> <p>The strategic vision of the West of England LEP is contained in the West of England Local Industrial Strategy (LIS). The LEP would therefore refer North Somerset Council to this document (and any subsequent updates), and ask the Council to have regard to its implementation in the development of the North Somerset Local Plan.</p> <p>The LEP recognise that the Duty to Cooperate is an ongoing part of the plan making process. Whilst the LEP reserves the right to issue formal responses in future, in the absence of a specific response to future consultations or subsequent correspondence from the LEP, this letter can be taken as the LEP's response.</p>



Prescribed bodies	Summary of comments received
Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership	<p><u>Q1. Development Plan Timetable</u></p> <p>Not applicable as Heart of the South West LEP is not a local planning authority</p> <p><u>Q2. Strategic Matters</u></p> <p>The Heart of the South West LEP agrees with the strategic cross-boundary matters identified. Other potential matters could be around energy infrastructure</p> <p><u>Q3. Evidence</u></p> <p>An employment land study was conducted in 2019 for all districts in the Heart of the South West, including those adjoining North Somerset.</p> <p><u>Q4. Governance</u></p> <p>Engagement would need to be at a strategic level. The Heart of the South West LEP does not have a formal procedure for this. Any specific issues could be raised for discussion at the Place Group meeting however this would only be around issues that may directly affect the Heart of the South West area, eg highways, transport, infrastructure.</p>



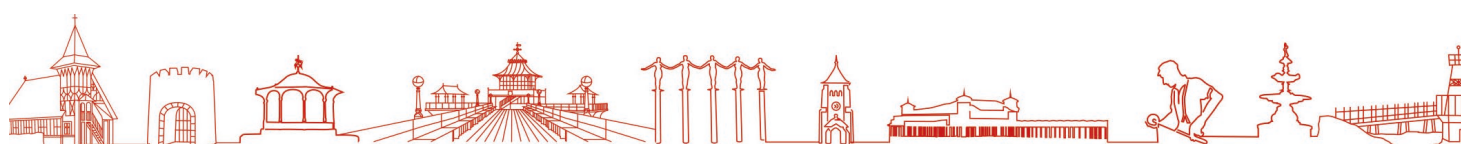
West of England Nature Partnership	<p><u>Q2. Strategic Matters</u></p> <p>We are pleased to see the recognition of ecological, landscape and habitat considerations as cross-boundary issues, which are of most relevance to WENP. A <a href="#">Nature Recovery Network for the West of England</a> has been developed through WENP, showing the West of England's key habitats and how they are functionally connected. This will be a key resource in considering the cross-boundary implications for ecology and habitat.</p> <p><u>Q3. Evidence</u></p> <p>As mentioned in Q2, the <a href="#">Nature Recovery Network for the West of England</a> is a key resource for considering the impact of proposed developments on ecological connectivity and opportunities for improving the connectivity and resilience of ecological networks.</p> <p>In addition, in 2016 WENP developed a suite of ecosystem service maps (<a href="https://www.wenp.org.uk/state-of-environment/">https://www.wenp.org.uk/state-of-environment/</a>) that show the best opportunities for habitat creation (which were used to help build the Nature Recovery Network), and areas that provide the highest levels and best opportunities for natural flood management and improvements in water quality.</p> <p>There is potentially an opportunity to expand and update this suite of ecosystem service maps to include other ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration.</p> <p>WENP has also mapped <a href="#">access to green space in the West of England</a>, using walking routes rather than 'as the crow flies' measurements. Access to green space is important for people's health and wellbeing, as the Covid-19 crisis is serving to reiterate, and this mapping could be used to help identify areas that are in need of provision of green space.</p> <p>These pieces of evidence form part of the mapped datasets used to inform the West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (listed in Appendix 1 of the JGIS), which should be available to North Somerset).</p> <p>The Forest of Avon Trust is being commissioned through WENP to produce a Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England, which is planned to be completed by the end of the year and should form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.</p>
------------------------------------	---



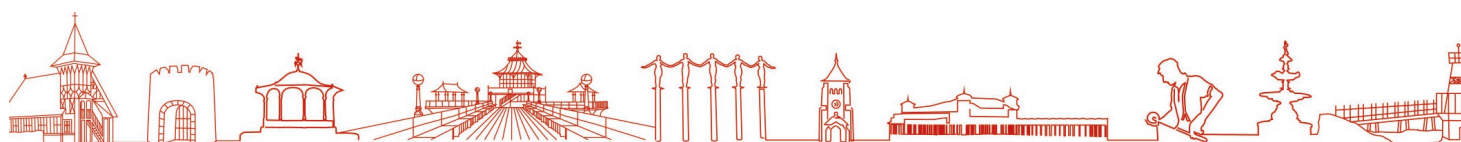


Prescribed bodies	Summary of comments received
	<p data-bbox="528 338 775 369"><u>Q4. Governance</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 412 1477 730">As WENP is a partnership consisting of organisations across the West of England with an interest in the natural environment, which includes North Somerset Council, we would expect to discuss the strategic issue of green infrastructure through the partnership. This would provide a forum for a collaborative discussion between partners in the West of England on green infrastructure in the context of the local plan, with the results of any discussions able to be fed through the North Somerset Council representative on the Board.</p> <p data-bbox="528 772 1477 947">However, we would also welcome the possibility of forming part of any dedicated forums relating to the strategic discussions outlined above, and especially for green infrastructure. This would need to be cognisant of the fact that North Somerset Council is represented on the WENP Board.</p> <p data-bbox="528 990 1414 1093">Please also note that organisations that form part of WENP will have their own mechanisms for engaging with the duty to cooperate issues.</p>

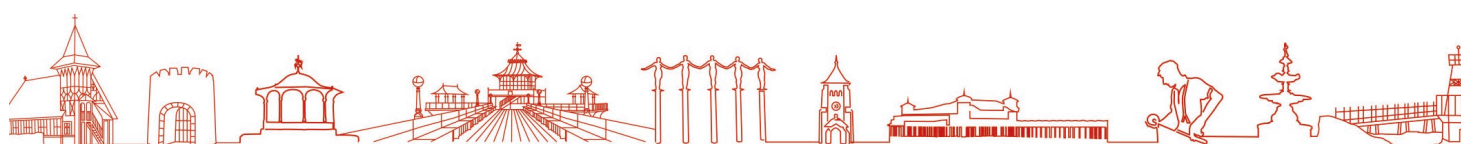
Additional bodies	Summary of comments received
Network Rail	Network Rail should be consulted on any Local Plans that may impact on railway infrastructure or include the railway within the site boundary plan.
National Grid (Gas)	-



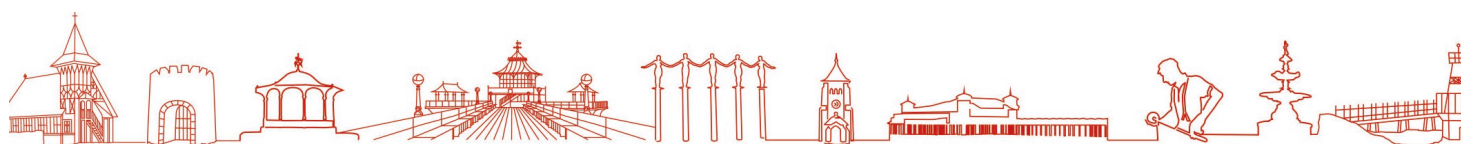
Additional bodies	Summary of comments received
National Grid – Electric	<p>National Grid has appointed Avison Young to review and respond to local planning authority Development Plan Document consultations on its behalf. We are instructed by our client to submit the following representation with regard to the current consultation on the above document.</p> <p>Avison Young responded on behalf of National Grid to North Somerset Council's Local Plan Pre-Commencement Document Consultation on 20 April 2020 and sought to outline National Grid's assets and rights under the Hinkley Point C Connection Development Consent Order. For completeness, these comments are included in the letter below.</p> <p>About National Grid National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (NGET) owns and maintains the electricity transmission system in England and Wales. The energy is then distributed to the electricity distribution network operators, so it can reach homes and businesses.</p> <p>National Grid Gas plc (NGG) owns and operates the high-pressure gas transmission system across the UK. In the UK, gas leaves the transmission system and enters the UK's four gas distribution networks where pressure is reduced for public use.</p> <p>National Grid Ventures (NGV) is separate from National Grid's core regulated businesses. NGV develop, operate and invest in energy projects, technologies, and partnerships to help accelerate the development of a clean energy future for consumers across the UK, Europe and the United States.</p> <p>National Grid assets within the Plan area: Following a review of the above Development Plan Document, we provide details of the National Grid assets below.</p> <p>Hinkley Point C Connection Development Consent Order Area In May 2014 National Grid applied for a Development Consent Order ("DCO") under the Planning Act 2008 ("PA 2008") to authorise a proposed 400,000 volt (400kV) connection between Bridgwater, Somerset and Seabank substation, north of Avonmouth together with associated development ("Hinkley Point C Connection").</p> <p>The Hinkley Point C Connection Project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project under section 14(1)(b) and s16 of the PA 2008. Its purpose is to reinforce the transmission network in the region and facilitate the connection of the proposed Hinkley Point C new nuclear power station and other proposals for low carbon generation. In January 2016, the then Secretary of State for Energy</p>



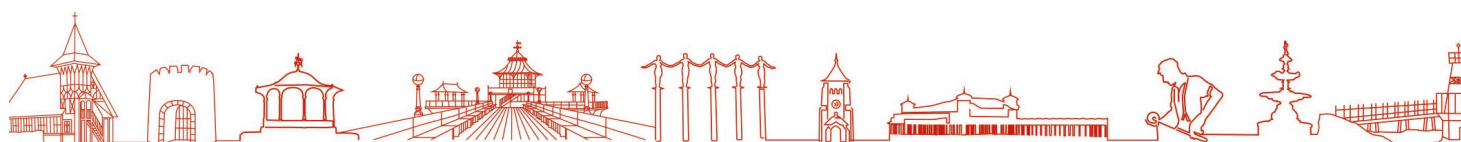
Additional bodies	Summary of comments received
	<p>and Climate Change granted consent to National Grid's DCO application and on 19 January made the National Grid (Hinkley Point C Connection Project) Order 2016 ("the Order"). The Order, which authorises National Grid to construct, operate and maintain the Hinkley Point C Connection and to acquire interests in land compulsorily for that purpose, came into force on 9 February 2016. This Order was subsequently amended by the Secretary of State as the National Grid (Hinkley Point C Connection Project) (Correction) Order 2017 on 19 October 2017.</p> <p>Under the Order, National Grid is granted both permanent and temporary compulsory acquisition powers to construct, operate and maintain the Hinkley Point C Connection. The order sets out six classes under which land or rights may be acquired permanently or land possessed temporarily. In respect of part of the Application Land, National Grid has the following rights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class 2 (Compulsory Acquisition of Rights for the Authorised Development), which also includes Classes 3 (access), 4 (construction and mitigation), 5 (dismantling of redundant infrastructure) and 6 (temporary access);</li> <li>• Class 4 (construction and mitigation); and</li> <li>• Class 5 (dismantling of redundant infrastructure).</li> </ul> <p>It is therefore imperative that any future development proposals progressed through the Local Plan do not compromise or delay National Grid's ability to deliver the Hinkley Point C Connection in accordance with its statutory and contractual duties. National Grid will continue to monitor the progress of the Local Plan and where relevant, comment on and engage with the Council and applicants on specific proposals.</p> <p>Given the scale of the project we have, at this stage, provided an overview plan of the project as it relates to the North Somerset Council area - see attached plan. We would be pleased to provide further information if that would assist the Council in the preparation of the Local Plan. For reference the approved plans and drawings are available at the following web link:</p> <p><a href="https://hinkleyconnection.co.uk/plans-and-drawings/">https://hinkleyconnection.co.uk/plans-and-drawings/</a></p>



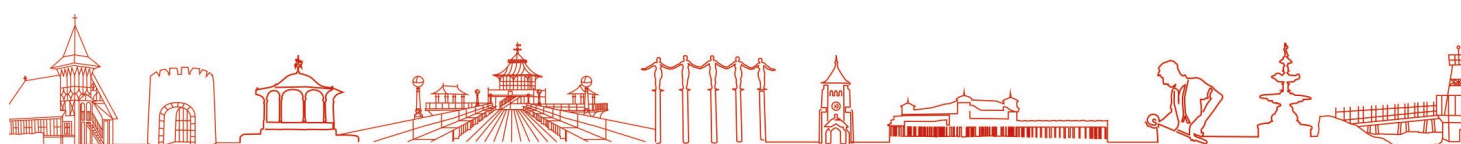
Additional bodies	Summary of comments received
	<p>Please also see attached information outlining further guidance on development close to National Grid assets.</p> <p>Further Advice National Grid is happy to provide advice and guidance to the Council concerning their networks. If we can be of any assistance to you in providing informal comments in confidence during your policy development, please do not hesitate to contact us.</p> <p>To help ensure the continued safe operation of existing sites and equipment and to facilitate future infrastructure investment, National Grid wishes to be involved in the preparation, alteration and review of plans and strategies which may affect their assets. Please remember to consult National Grid on any Development Plan Document (DPD) or site-specific proposals that could affect National Grid's assets.</p>
Water	-
Drainage Boards	-
Wessex Water – Sewerage	<p>Wessex Water will be pleased to cooperate as appropriate on strategic policy issues related to our services.</p> <p>An initial meeting will be useful to scope data and information required from Wessex Water.</p>
Telecommunications	-
Coal Authority	<p>I have reviewed the questions asked in respect of the Duty to Co-operate for the Local Plan and can confirm that the Coal Authority has no specific comments to make.</p>



Additional bodies	Summary of comments received
Mendip Hills AONB Unit	<p data-bbox="528 338 1018 376"><u>Q 1. Development Plan Timetable</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 412 1474 824">The Mendip Hills AONB Partnership produced the Mendip Hills AONB <b>Management Plan 2019-2024</b> as required by the CRoW Act on behalf of the joint local authorities and the Plan has been adopted by North Somerset Council, Bath &amp; North East Somerset Council, Somerset County Council, Sedgemoor District Council and Mendip District Council. The Management Plan under paragraph 1.4 sets out a Statement of Significance on the special qualities of the Mendip Hills AONB that create the Mendip Hills sense of place and identity and these include views from the Mendip Hills AONB, settlements of Mendip stone largely confined to the spring line, retaining dark skies and a sense of tranquillity.</p> <p data-bbox="528 869 1254 907">The Management Plan is due to be review in 2024.</p> <p data-bbox="528 943 1453 1093">In addition, <b>Monitoring Environmental Outcomes in Protected Landscapes data</b> (MEOPL data) is collected annually by Natural England and applied to AONB boundaries. This data helps to inform the Management Plan.</p> <p data-bbox="528 1128 1490 1361">The Mendip Hills AONB Unit produce <b>Nature Recovery Plans</b> that are 'live' documents, which formally help to inform the Management Plan. NRPs contribute to local authority Local Nature Recovery Strategies. Nature Recovery Plans may in future be used as part of the decision making process for the use Biodiversity Net Gain plans and levies.</p> <p data-bbox="528 1397 836 1435"><u>Q2. Strategic Matters</u></p> <p data-bbox="528 1471 1490 1585">Mendip Hills AONB Partnership agrees that the listed strategic matters with cross-boundary implications are of relevance to North Somerset.</p> <p data-bbox="528 1621 1485 1877">In addition, it should be noted that the nationally protected landscape of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 198 square kilometres from Bleadon in the west to Chewton Mendip in the east. The AONB partly lies within the North Somerset to the south-west of the wider Bristol area and south-east of Weston-Super-Mare. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are some of the UK's most cherished and outstanding landscapes.</p>



Additional bodies	Summary of comments received
	<p>The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 confirmed the significance of the AONBs and Section 85 places a statutory duty on all relevant authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty when discharging any function in relation to, or affecting land within as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Potential development proposals outside of the boundaries of AONBs that may have an impact within the designated area, are also covered by the 'duty of regard'.</p> <p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) under paragraph 172 sets out that 'great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.</p> <p>As set out in Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) profile for the Mendip Hills (141), the area is 'renowned for its tranquillity and inspirational qualities...' The NCA further recognises that 'Light pollution from development threatens the extent of the recognised dark skies and out-of-character development is a continuing risk to the essential nature of the area.' Within the NCA Statement of Environmental Opportunity under SEO1 it sets out 'Safeguard inward and outward views and to the distinctive hill line and conserve and enhance the special qualities, tranquillity, sense of remoteness and naturalness of the area'.</p>
South West Local Aggregates Working Party	Members of the Aggregates Working Party (AWP) have noted the content of the letter and welcome the involvement of the AWP in development of your Local Plan. The AWP members also consider that the supply of aggregate minerals is a strategic issue requiring a policy relationship between the AWP and North Somerset Council. The AWP would wish to be kept up to date with the Local Plan as it progresses.



## Appendix 2: Duty to Co-operate letter: Accommodating NSCs housing need (12 October 2021).

Date: 12 October 2021  
My ref: LS  
Your ref:  
Contact: Michael Reep  
Telephone: 01934 426775  
Email: michael.reep@n-  
somerset.gov.uk



Place Directorate  
North Somerset Council  
Town Hall  
Walliscote Grove Road  
Weston-super-Mare  
BS23 1UJ

[REDACTED]

VIA EMAIL

Dear [REDACTED]

### North Somerset Local Plan: Duty to Co-operate

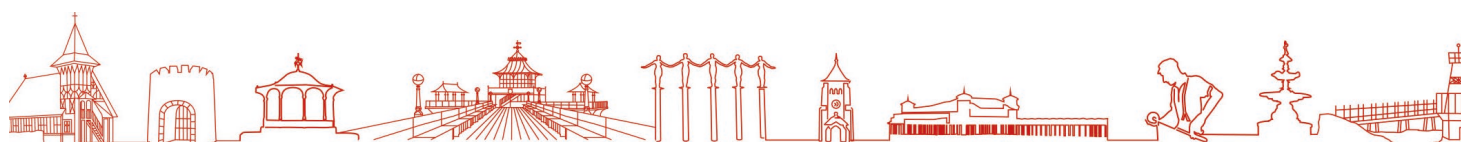
Progress is being made on the North Somerset Local Plan (2023-2038). As has been discussed in our duty to co-operate conversations, we undertook initial stages of consultation in 2020 (Challenges and Choices) and in April 2021 agreed a preferred spatial strategy and a sequential approach to the assessment of development opportunities which provides the framework for the preparation of the Consultation Draft for consultation commencing at the end of 2021.

The government's local need figure for North Somerset over the plan period is currently 20,085 dwellings. Work is in progress to determine whether there is sufficient deliverable capacity at sustainable locations to deliver the growth required in accordance with the agreed spatial strategy. The starting point for the plan making process is to consider the potential capacity outside the Green Belt.

The National Planning Policy Framework states that:

*141. Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies, which will take into account the preceding paragraph, and whether the strategy:*

- a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;*
- b) optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and*
- c) has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.*



North Somerset Council has worked through a sequential approach relating to the identification of potential development options outside the Green Belt. This has included the potential to maximise the use of previously developed and underused land through the urban capacity study (NPPF paragraph 141 a)), and optimising density particularly at transport hubs and other sustainable locations (paragraph 141 b)). The table below summarises the conclusions of that work.

Housing requirement	15 years	20,085
Existing permissions	Expected to be delivered 2023-2038	3,600
Urban capacity	Small site windfall	1,725
	Large site allocations	2,000
Town expansion	Weston-super-Mare – primarily north of A371, east of M5	3,000
	Nailsea	1,500
Other settlements	Yatton/Backwell	1,000
Rural areas	Small site windfall	900
	Large site allocations within revised settlement boundaries of larger villages – locations to be determined	
Total outside Green Belt		14,225
Residual		5,860

This indicates that the potential deliverable capacity outside the Green Belt is about 14,225 dwellings. This is some 5,860 dwellings short of the North Somerset requirement of 20,085 dwellings. This means that NPPF paragraph 141 c) is triggered which requires the local planning authority to ascertain whether some of the identified need for development could be accommodated within neighbouring authorities. These discussions need to be reported in the Statement of Common Ground.

I am therefore formally requesting you consider whether your authority is able to accommodate some of the North Somerset housing requirement within your area?

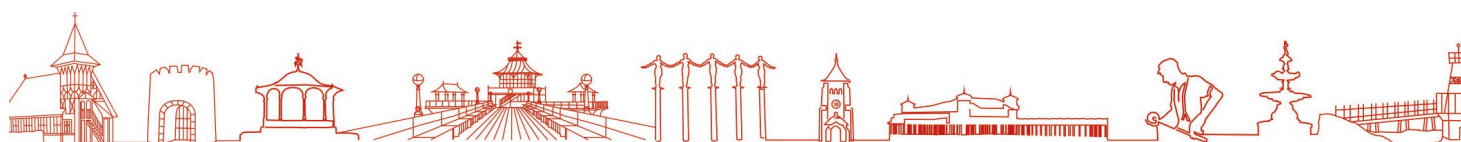
We will be setting up a joint meeting at the end of October to discuss North Somerset duty to co-operate issues and wanted to give you advance notice to consider this request. If you would like to discuss the issues on a one-to-one basis, we will be happy to arrange this.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



**Lucy Shomali**  
Director of Place





**Response from Bristol City Council (11 November 2021):**

Reply to	Nick Bryant
Telephone	01179 222942
Email	<a href="mailto:Nick.bryant@bristol.gov.uk">Nick.bryant@bristol.gov.uk</a>
Your Ref	LS
Our Ref	ZW/LTR20211118
Date	18/11/2021

Dear Lucy,

Thank you for your letter dated 12 October regarding the Duty to Co-operate and strategic planning matters affecting North Somerset and Bristol City Councils.

As you know, Bristol City Council is working with other WECA authorities on a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), this plan will establish future housing requirements for Bristol City Council. While work on the SDS is on-going, it is already apparent that BCC will be unable to meet the current Government set Local Housing Need figure of just under 64,000 new homes over the next 20 years. Consequently, we are unable to meet your request for the City to accommodate unmet need arising within the North Somerset area.

In view of challenges within Bristol and the WECA area, we will need to reserve the right to comment more formally on the North Somerset Local Plan and its accompanying evidence base in due course. Further, we will be very keen to engage with NSC on the impacts of any development proposals within North Somerset that give rise to direct or indirect impacts on the City of Bristol.

If you or your colleagues require clarification on any of the matters outlined in this letter please contact Nick Bryant, Strategic City Planning Manager: [nick.bryant@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:nick.bryant@bristol.gov.uk)

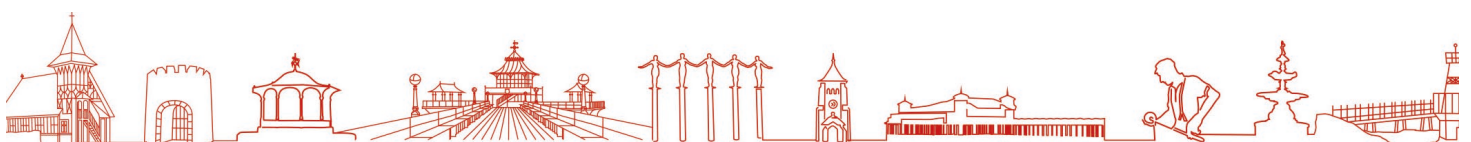
Yours Sincerely,

Zoe Willcox  
Director, Development of Place

Development of Place  
PO Box 3399  
Bristol  
BS3 9FS

Zoe Willcox  
Director, Development  
of Place

Website  
[www.bristol.gov.uk](http://www.bristol.gov.uk)



**E-mail response from Bath and North East Somerset Council (24 November 2021):**

Dear Lucy,

Thank you for your letter of 12<sup>th</sup> October regarding the Duty to Co-operate on strategic planning matters between Bath & North East Somerset and North Somerset.

In response to North Somerset's request for B&NES to consider whether it is able to accommodate some of the North Somerset housing requirement, this is a sub-regional strategic matter which is being addressed through the WECA Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). Therefore the primary response to your request will need to come from WECA.

This notwithstanding, the B&NES new Local Plan is at an early stage of preparation and based on existing evidence, the scope for B&NES to accommodate unmet housing need from North Somerset is highly unlikely. Furthermore, the majority of B&NES is in a different Housing Market Area to North Somerset.

I am happy to discuss the above if you would find it helpful.

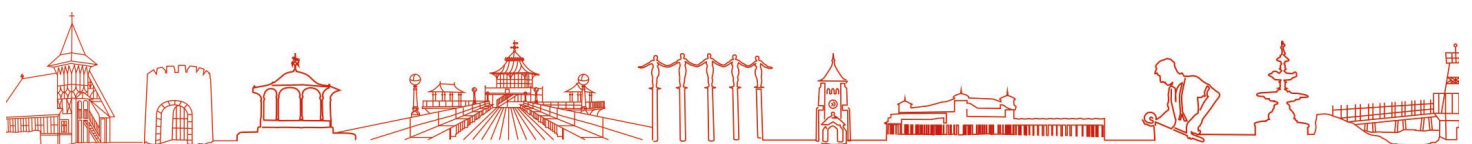
Please note that Lia Bartlett has now left B&NES and any future correspondence on such issues will need to be sent either to Sophie Broadfield (Director of Sustainable Communities) or me, Simon de Beer (Head of Planning)

Regards

Simon de Beer

Head of Planning

Bath & North East Somerset Council



## Email response from Mendip District Council (29 November 2021):

Dear Michael

### NORTH SOMERSET PLAN 2023 – 2038 – DUTY TO CO-OPERATE

I am writing in response to your letter of 12th October to from the Director of Place to Julie Reader-Sullivan regarding the emerging North Somerset Local Plan. I apologise for the delay in making a reply, which is on her behalf

The council notes your progress towards a preferred options stage for the Local Plan next year and the identification of deliverable capacity to address a 20,085 Housing requirement. The assessment of sites and options on land not designated as greenbelt is estimated at 14,225 leaving a shortfall of 5860 dwellings. This has led to a request whether neighbouring districts may be able to contribute to the housing needs of North Somerset.

Mendip Council adopted a Part 1 Local Plan (2006-2009) in 2014 and is seeking to formally adopt a Local Plan Part II with additional development sites in December 2020.

The Council have recognised there is a need for an immediate review of the Part 1 Plan as it is more than five years from adoption. Formal commencement of a single plan for Mendip is now on hold given the government decision to approve a single unitary for Somerset from April 2023.

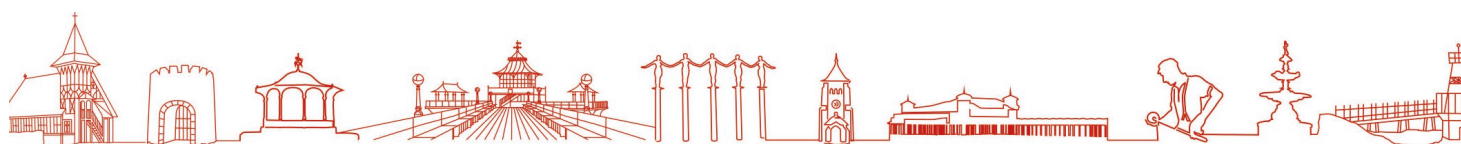
The Council expect joint working and collaboration between planning authorities in Somerset to continue which will include alignment of policy review priorities and work programmes .

However, housing requirements are likely to continue to be based on individual districts as set by the standard method for some time and not combined.

The Local Housing Need figure for Mendip is currently 571 homes a year. Looking at Mendip individually, a new review would need to provide for 8,565 dwellings over the next 15 years (2020 – 2035). This would be need to higher to take into account the years prior to adoption of a new Plan Review.

For a number of reasons as set out below, I can confirm that Mendip **would not be able** to identify or agree a contribution to meet housing need in North Somerset.

1. The Council cannot currently demonstrate a five year housing supply and this position does not change with the adoption of Local Plan Part II
2. The current housing trajectory including existing permissions and sites in local plans part 1 and 2 could only deliver 5,650 dwellings, leaving a shortfall of 2,900 dwellings from the standard method requirement at present.



3. Mendip will be updating its housing land availability, but is already aware there is limited capacity in brownfield sites and remains concerned on the extent of greenfield growth in villages.
4. 4 out of the 5 Mendip Market Towns and a significant number of villages will need to provide mitigation for housing development due to the adverse impacts on water quality around the Somerset Levels and Moors RAMSAR sites. While work is ongoing to explore solutions, it remains far from clear whether the overall capacity for development to meet national requirements in the district can be mitigated.
5. The areas where Mendip adjoins North Somerset are already constrained by Green Belt or AONB.

Irrespective of transition to a single Somerset Council, I welcome continued engagement with Mendip on the progress of the North Somerset Plan and duty to co-operate matters

Best Regards

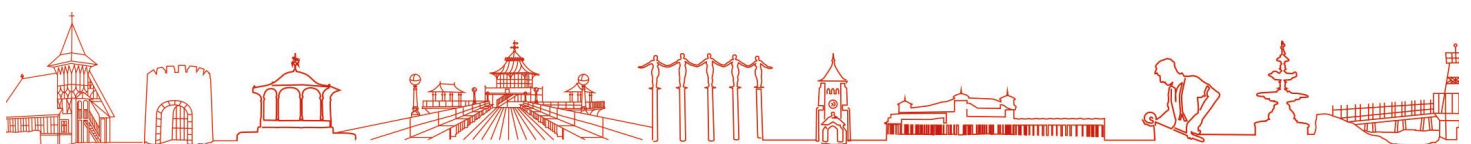
Andre Sestini

**Andre Sestini**

Principal Planning Policy Officer

Mendip District Council

Council Offices, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet,  
Somerset, BA4 5BT



**Response from Sedgemoor District Council (21 December 2021):**

Lucy Shomali  
 Director of Place  
 North Somerset Council  
 Town Hall  
 Walliscote Grove Road  
 Weston-super-Mare  
 BS23 1UJ

21 December 2021  
 Your Ref: LS

Sedgemoor District Council  
 Bridgwater House, King Square  
 Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 3AR

[www.sedgemoor.gov.uk](http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk)  
[ldf@sedgemoor.gov.uk](mailto:ldf@sedgemoor.gov.uk)  
 Direct Line: 01278 435544  
[Twitter.com/sedgemoorDC](https://twitter.com/sedgemoorDC)

Dear Lucy

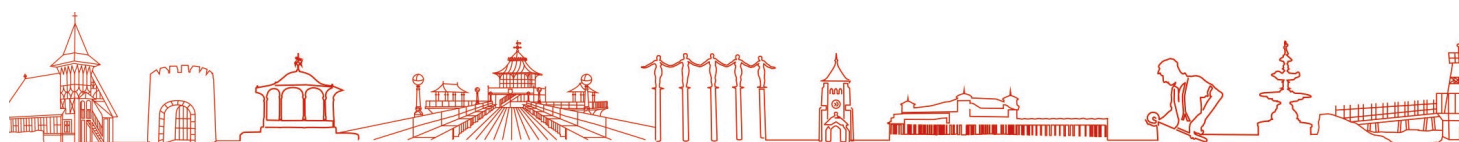
**North Somerset Local Plan 2023-2038: Duty to co-operate**

I refer to your letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> October outlining the progress made in relation to the North Somerset Local Plan (2023-2038) and formally requesting Sedgemoor LPA to consider whether we are able to accommodate some of the North Somerset housing requirement within the Sedgemoor area. This follows on from previous correspondence between the two Councils on duty to cooperate matters throughout the preparation of the North Somerset Local Plan to date.

We understand the requirements set out in relation to paragraph 141 of the NPPF in that before concluding exceptional circumstances to justify changes to the Green Belt, all other reasonable options for meeting the need for development should be examined, including being informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development (paragraph 141 c). Furthermore, we understand that your plan preparation to date indicates that potential deliverable capacity outside of the Green Belt in North Somerset falls short of North Somerset's local housing need requirement. This therefore triggers the need to consider NPPF paragraph 141c prior to North Somerset considering any potential options within the green belt.

In this context we have therefore carefully considered your request. This has included a review of current evidence available to the Council in terms of our Local Plan requirements, housing land availability, the Council's likely future housing need and other relevant infrastructure and planning constraints. Based on the best available information available at this time it is the Council's view that Sedgemoor would not be able to accommodate some of North Somerset's housing requirement within our area. Further explanation regarding how this conclusion has been reached is summarised below:

If you would like to know how we look after your personal information please see the Privacy Policy at [www.sedgemoor.gov.uk](http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk)



### Expected Future Local Housing Need Requirements

Based on the standardised method for calculating local housing need Sedgemoor is likely to see a step change in the housing requirement it will need to plan for in its next Local Plan review. Our standardised method calculation for the 2020 year indicated a figure of 746 dwellings per annum, compared to the 644 dwellings per annum set out in the Council's most recently adopted Local Plan (adopted in 2019). The adopted 644 requirement was a step change compared to previous Development Plans and is in itself proving a challenging figure to meet. Latest affordability ratios published in 2021 continue to indicate a step change in annual requirements for the next Local Plan when using the standardised method. Within this context it is expected to prove a significant challenge in the next Local Plan review to identify sufficient sites to satisfy the standardised method local housing need, particularly in terms of ensuring a sufficient housing land supply early in any new plan period. This therefore significantly constrains any opportunity to also accommodate cross-boundary housing need from North Somerset.

### Housing Land Availability Considerations

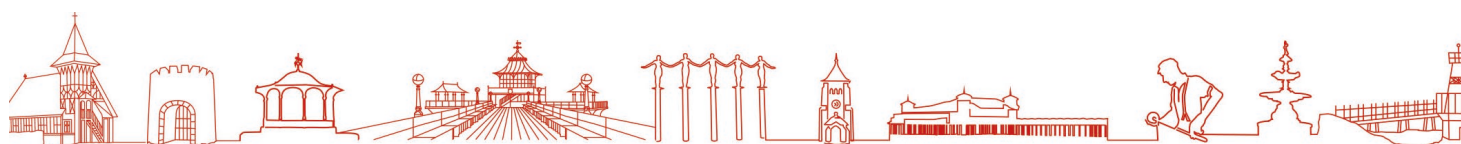
Whilst Sedgemoor will shortly be updating its Strategic Housing Land Availability evidence base it is apparent to the Council at this time that there will be key challenges as part of the next Local Plan with regard to the availability and deliverability of new strategic sites to meet any uplifted local housing need. To ensure sustainable patterns of development growth has predominately been focused at the main towns of Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. With regard to Bridgwater, compared to previous plan reviews there currently appears to be more limited future options in terms of new urban extension opportunities at the town. Any opportunities that are identified are also likely to involve significant upfront infrastructure costs.

With regard to Burnham-on-Sea an area has been identified as a potential northern extension to the town. This is as detailed in the currently adopted Local Plan and was earmarked at the time as a potential location to also accommodate any cross-boundary housing need in the future. With any uplifted local housing need figure the site will likely instead be needed as part of trying to satisfy Sedgemoor's own local housing need requirements. In any case, the North Burnham site poses significant challenges particularly with regard to identifying and securing strategic flood risk mitigation as the whole area is in FZ3a and offsite transport improvements that are likely to include M5 Junction 22. Until significant further technical work is undertaken the deliverability of a north Burnham extension cannot be confirmed.

### Existing and Emerging Constraints

Sedgemoor has a number of major existing and newly emerging environmental constraints which significantly constrain its ability to accommodate cross-boundary housing need. Flood risk in particular poses a major constraint across a large proportion of Sedgemoor's area, including its main towns. A significant proportion of Sedgemoor's strategic allocations therefore have to be subject to flood risk sequential and exception test considerations at the Local Plan stage. The longer-term acceptability of this approach is less certain in the light of the wider climate change priorities.

More recently the issue of phosphates from new development contributing to the unfavourable status of the levels and moors Ramsar site has emerged as a significant constraint on new development in the Somerset area. Whilst Sedgemoor is less affected compared to some adjacent authorities, it will



nevertheless likely have an impact on available supply from small sites in the context of a higher local housing need figure.

#### **New Unitary Council for Somerset**

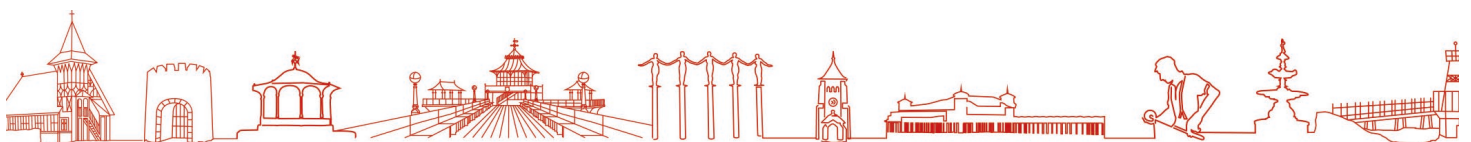
As you will be aware the four district councils and the county council are to be combined to form a new Unitary Authority, Somerset Council, in April 2023. Council elections will take place in May 2022 and it will be this new Council that will set out the wider strategic growth objectives and priorities. At some stage there will be a new Somerset wide Local Plan with revised combined housing requirements. Within this wider context it would again be premature to make any decisions regarding the ability to accommodate any cross-border housing growth when the full implications for the new Authority are yet to be understood.

I hope the above information is helpful and provides clarity on Sedgemoor's position in the context of NPPF paragraph 141c. We look forward to continuing to engage on strategic matters going forward and ensuring the considerations above are appropriately set out in the Statement of Common Ground.

Yours sincerely



**Doug Bamsey**  
Deputy Chief Executive  
Sedgemoor District Council  
Tel: 01278 435219  
Email: [doug.bamsey@sedgemoor.gov.uk](mailto:doug.bamsey@sedgemoor.gov.uk)



**Response from West of England Combined Authority (22 December 2021):**

Dear Lucy,

**North Somerset Local Plan and the West of England Spatial Development Strategy: Duty to Cooperate**

Thank you for your letter dated 12 October 2021 formally requesting confirmation as to whether the West of England Combined Authority (hereafter known as the Combined Authority) has capacity to assist in meeting North Somerset's housing need.

As you will be aware, we are progressing the Spatial Development Strategy which will set the strategic direction for growth across the Region. We are currently concluding our scenario appraisal work. The spatial strategy scenarios, as discussed at the recent Strategic Planning Forum, have looked at the extent to which capacity is available in areas outside of green belt and in locations well served by public (and other forms of sustainable) transport (as per NPPF para 141:b).

Initial technical analysis indicates that the Region will be unable to meet the identified housing need (including affordable housing need) of approx. 105,000 homes over the 20-year period in a manner compatible with our strategic objectives without recourse to green belt. We are therefore unable to assist North Somerset in meeting any of their housing need.

As set out in our published SHLAA methodology which North Somerset colleagues were involved in scoping, this analysis accounts for a wide range of sources of capacity and our region's considerable constraints, including World Heritage sites, flood risk and international biodiversity designations, whilst also applying more ambitious density assumptions than are presently typically achieved (as per NPPF para 141:b). The conclusion also reflects significant work on urban capacity and intensification as per NPPF para 141 and as discussed with North Somerset colleagues in May 2021

In turn, we are therefore formally requesting you to consider whether North Somerset Council can accommodate some of the West of England (Combined Authority area) Regional housing need, including affordable housing need, before we proceed with concluding our Green Belt 'exceptional circumstances' case. We anticipate, given the position expressed in your letter of 12 October 2021 that you will not be in a position to accommodate any of our needs but we would be grateful for your consideration and confirmation of the matter formally.

Kind regards,

Laura Ambler

Head of Regional Housing and Planning

West of England Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership

T: 07436 629 434

E: [Laura.Ambler@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:Laura.Ambler@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

W: [westofengland-ca.gov.uk](http://westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

A: 3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EW

