

# **North Somerset Council**

## **REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**DATE OF MEETING: 2 FEBRUARY 2022**

**SUBJECT OF REPORT: NORTH SOMERSET LOCAL PLAN**

**TOWN OR PARISH: ALL**

**OFFICER/MEMBER PRESENTING: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR  
PLACEMAKING AND ECONOMY**

**KEY: YES**

**REASON: IT AFFECTS MORE THAN ONE WARD IN NORTH SOMERSET**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To approve the Local Plan Preferred Options document for the purposes of public consultation.
2. To delegate any subsequent changes to the document required prior to consultation to the Executive Member for Placemaking and Economy and the Director of Place.

### **1. SUMMARY OF REPORT**

1.1 The North Somerset Local Plan will cover the period 2023-2038. Upon adoption it will set out the Council's policies and proposals to address housing and employment needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities. One of the principal issues to address is the scale of the housing challenge. The government's standard method (March 2021 update) sets the housing requirement at 1,339 dwellings per annum (pa), a significant increase on previous delivery rates within North Somerset. This equates to 20,085 dwellings over a 15 year period.

1.2 The Council undertook consultation on the initial stages of the Local Plan in 2020 with Challenges for the Future and Choices for the Future consultations. The feedback from these was considered at Executive Committee 28 April 2021 where a framework for the development of the local plan was agreed, subject to further assessment and testing. 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.

1.3 The Preferred Options document (Appendix A) represents the next stage of the plan making process. It provides the opportunity for communities, businesses, the development industry and other stakeholders to comment on the Council's overall approach in relation to

the proposed allocated sites and development management policies. We will seek the views of a wide range of residents from different areas, ages, sex and race. The plan at this point is still in draft and is still evolving.

1.4 The response received from this consultation will help shape the next version of the local plan. That version will be the document which the Council proposes to submit for examination to the Planning Inspectorate and will be the subject of a further round of consultation prior to its submission. Consultation on the Pre-submission document is anticipated to commence at the end of 2022.

1.5 The proposed Preferred Options document is attached at Appendix A. Sites are identified to accommodate some 18,046 dwellings and 70.6 ha of employment land, along with the supporting transport, community and other infrastructure. Given the scale of the housing requirement and the lack of sustainable locations outside the Green Belt which conform to the spatial strategy, the Preferred Options suggests the need to allocate Green Belt land.

1.6 The 18,046 dwellings proposed comprises 90% of the government's housing target for North Somerset of 20,085 dwellings. The consultation process will enable us to receive views not only on the proposed approach, but how any shortfall might be addressed. The Preferred Options identifies the deliverable supply of houses as being made up as follows:

Sites with existing planning permission: 7,417.  
 Allocations carried forward from the current plan: 1,705.  
 Urban intensification sites: 981.  
 New allocations: 7,943.  
 Total: 18,046 dwellings.

Urban intensification relates to potential opportunities within the towns which are mainly previously developed or under used sites. These sites are often referred to as brownfield and while we have sought to maximise their contribution, there will still be a need for a large number of dwellings on greenfield sites to meet the housing requirement.

1.6 Two new strategic growth locations are identified. One at Wolvershill (north of Banwell) for up to around 2,800 dwellings and 11.5 ha employment and a second at Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course) for up to around 2,500 dwellings and 10.2 ha employment and all with associated infrastructure. The other focussed area of growth is at Nailsea and Backwell where there are a number of allocated sites for housing and mixed use which need to be co-ordinated in relation to the delivery of transport and other infrastructure.

1.7 The proposed new allocations (excluding sites with planning permission, existing allocations carried forward from the existing local plan or sites in built up areas) are set out in the following table. The locations are shown on the Policies Map (Appendix B).

Wolvershill (north of Banwell)	2,800
West of Hutton	100
Elm Grove Nursery, Locking	50
South of Nailsea	600
Grove Farm, Backwell	600
Yatton Rugby Club	100
Purn Way, Bleadon	14
East of Ladymead Lane, Langford	70
North of Pudding Pie Lane, Langford	65

South of Jubilee Lane, Langford	21
Pineapple Farm, Congresbury	90
Woodhill Nurseries, Congresbury	60
Mead Farm, Sandford	30
West of Sandford	18
West of Hill Road, Winscombe	30
East of Backwell: Green Belt	500
South of Clevedon Road, Portishead: Green Belt	80
Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course): Green Belt	2,500
North of Colliters Way: Green Belt	215
Total of new allocations	7,943

1.8 The Preferred Options also sets out the proposed policies against which future development proposals will be assessed. The plan contains 12 strategic policies (SP) setting out the overall strategy and providing the framework for the detailed policies. The non-strategic policies comprise 17 locational policies (LP) which relate to allocations and other designations defined on the Policies Map and 64 development policies (DP) for development management.

## **2. POLICY**

2.1 The Local Plan will provide the land use framework for the delivery of the key priorities and objectives of the Corporate Plan, including measures to help address the climate emergency and nature emergency.

## **3. DETAILS**

3.1 The purpose of the Local Plan is to provide a positive vision for the future of North Somerset through a framework for addressing housing needs, employment requirements and other priorities as well as a mechanism through which local communities can help shape their surroundings. The heart of the planning system is the delivery of sustainable development which comprises interdependent economic, social and environmental objectives. The local plan provides the local expression of what sustainable development means for North Somerset. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that it must be positively prepared (to address objectively assessed needs), justified (an appropriate strategy based on reasonable evidence), effective (deliverable over the plan period) and consistent with national policy. It is subject to several stages of consultation and tested through independent examination.

3.2 Government guidance states that 'plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures' (NPPF paragraph 149). The Council has declared a climate emergency and a nature emergency. The local plan should respond to this and demonstrate how this has helped to shape our objectives and proposals.

3.3 One of the principal issues facing North Somerset is the scale of the housing challenge. The Core Strategy housing requirement is 1,049 dwellings pa over the plan period 2006-2026. However, average completions over the plan period have been 818 dwellings pa, resulting in five-year supply difficulties for the authority. The government's standard method (March 2021) now requires North Somerset to increase this to 1,339 dwellings pa,

a significant increase on previous delivery rates, particularly given the land use constraints affecting the authority. This equates to 20,085 dwellings over the 15 year plan period 2023-2038. The local planning authority is expected to demonstrate how this growth can be accommodated. This figure is the starting point as there will be pressure to ensure there is sufficient supply over and above this figure to provide flexibility and choice. As well as the quantum of housing required, the plan must also address demographic change and future needs such housing for younger people, affordable housing and providing appropriate accommodation for older people with the aim of creating vibrant and sustainable communities.

3.4 The amount of employment land required and sites proposed reflects the evidence contained in the Employment Land and Spatial Needs Assessment (ELSNA) (2021) prepared jointly with the West of England, and the 2018 North Somerset Employment Land Review. While there remains uncertainty about the scale and type of employment provision required in the future following Brexit and in the light of the pandemic, ELSNA indicated a reduced rate of economic growth for North Somerset and a predicted shift in the share of future jobs growth to the Bristol area. However, in line with national policy, it is important that the plan provides flexibility to meet future business demands, including needs that may emerge in future, while at the same time reducing the need for commuting by car. The figure of about 70 ha of employment land reflects this evidence but includes an uplift in the event that economic recovery is stronger than anticipated over the plan period.

3.5 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. A Sustainability Appraisal is being prepared alongside the local plan and this is used to assess the sustainability implications of both the emerging policies and allocations.

3.6 Consultation on the critical issues facing North Somerset over the plan period took place in Summer 2020 through the Challenges for the future document and including the proposed vision and strategic priorities. This was followed in Autumn 2020 by the Choices for the future document which confirmed our priorities and set out four broad spatial development alternatives for discussion. Links to the consultation statements are contained in the background papers.

3.7 The Executive Committee meeting on 28 April 2021 considered the response received and endorsed the strategic priorities for plan making and the spatial strategy and agreed the approach to the sequential assessment of development opportunities. This provided the framework for the preparation of the Preferred Options document.

3.8 The agreed spatial strategy is:

*Priority will be given to locating new residential and mixed use development in or close to urban areas where there is an existing or proposed wide range of facilities, services and jobs, and there are opportunities to encourage active travel, particularly at locations which are currently, or have the potential to be, well served by public transport. Employment opportunities will be encouraged at accessible locations well-related to the urban areas and where sustainable transport opportunities can be maximised. Residential development in areas at risk of flooding will be minimised outside the towns. The amount of development at villages and in the countryside will relate to local community needs.*

3.9 The spatial strategy forms the starting point for the assessment of the broad locations for future growth. The following diagram indicates the broad steps which were followed. This process is both sequential and iterative. Steps 3 to 6 relate to new development opportunities outside the Green Belt.



3.10 Work has progressed since the April Executive to test, refine and challenge the framework set out at that stage. The outcome of this work is presented in the Preferred Options document (Appendix A) which is recommended for consultation.

3.11 When considering possible allocations, the starting point is an understanding of the potential opportunities being promoted by developers and landowners. This is undertaken through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which considers the suitability, availability and economic viability of potential sites. The plan making process then uses this evidence to inform the selection of potential sites taking account of, in particular, the sustainability appraisal, strategic priorities and the spatial strategy.

3.12 In order to reflect the agreed framework for local plan preparation the focus for potential opportunities was on 'broad locations' at Weston-super-Mare, Clevedon, Nailsea, Portishead, Yatton, Backwell and around the edge of Bristol. The area of search within each of these broad locations was widely drawn and informed by the SHLAA sites so that all reasonable alternatives were assessed.

#### Applying the sequential approach

3.13 The potential opportunities were considered in the framework of the sequential approach to the assessment of broad locations set out above. The following sections summarise the conclusions in respect of each of the steps. Feedback will be encouraged from the consultation on the approach that has been taken and any alternative options which should be considered, including the need to provide additional capacity to allow for flexibility and choice. The approach doesn't currently take account of unplanned windfall which is currently estimated to be 176 dwellings pa. This will be factored in at the next stage of plan making.

#### Step 1: Planning permissions

3.14 The first step in the sequential approach is to take account of sites with planning permission which are expected to be completed over the plan period 2023-2038. This is estimated to be 7,417 dwellings.

#### Step 2: Urban capacity

3.15 Urban capacity relates to the potential development which is anticipated to take place within the towns, taking into account the use of previously developed or underused land

and opportunities to increase density. This evidence indicates that there are likely to be some 98+1 dwellings delivered at the four towns over the plan period. The majority of this is at Weston-super-Mare, but there are opportunities elsewhere, most notably in central Portishead around Old Mill Road. The delivery of urban sites is often difficult, but the study has taken a pragmatic approach to what might come forward. This also includes consideration of the relaxation of planning regulations related to the conversion of, for example, offices to residential, and an emphasis on intensifying opportunities in urban areas ('building up') particularly close to town centres and transport hubs.

### Step 3: Town expansion (outside the Green Belt)

3.16 The spatial strategy emphasises the importance of maximising opportunities well related to the towns where there are opportunities to walk and cycle to a good range of local services, facilities and jobs and access to public transport.

3.17 As part of the review of the approach to development, the new local plan will not retain the Core Strategy approach which supported the principle of development of an appropriate scale adjacent to but outside settlement boundaries at the towns. Existing local plan allocations have been reviewed and, where appropriate, carried forward.

3.18 Weston-super-Mare is the principal settlement but given the topography and flood issues, opportunities are relatively limited. The work has looked at a range of sites in the broad location which includes villages close to Weston and has recommended the inclusion of two locations at West of Hutton (100) and Elm Grove Locking (50).

3.19 A strategic growth location well-related to the Weston urban area has been identified at Wolverhill (north of Banwell). This is located to the north of the proposed Banwell bypass and is allocated for a mixed-use development of up to around 2,800 dwellings, around 11 ha employment, a local centre and other community facilities and services. In order to retain the separate identity and character of Banwell a new Strategic Gap is proposed between the existing village and the new development area.

3.20 Land South of Nailsea is proposed for 600 dwellings. This is adjacent to, and east of, the site won on appeal for 450 dwellings and will be located inside Youngwood Lane and include walking and cycling links to the station. This would involve development on part of the land currently designated as Strategic Gap. To mitigate the impact of this and other proposals it is proposed to replace the existing Strategic Gap between Nailsea and Backwell with a new extension to the existing Green Belt to ensure its long-term protection.

### Step 4: Other sustainable settlements (outside the Green Belt)

3.21 In addition to the towns, Yatton and Backwell were specially identified as being relatively more sustainable and therefore potential broad locations for development opportunities. These are large villages with a relatively good range of facilities and services and main line rail stations.

3.22 At Yatton a new allocation is proposed at Yatton rugby club for 100 dwellings. This site would be combined with the existing local plan allocation at Moor Road with access via North End.

3.23 The Green Belt wraps around the northern and eastern sides of Backwell. Grove Farm, to the west of Backwell, is not located in the Green Belt and is proposed for allocation (600).

### Step 5: Rural areas outside the Green Belt

3.24 The new local plan has reviewed the Core Strategy approach to development and will no longer distinguish between service and infill villages or include a policy which enables development adjacent to but outside the settlement boundaries of current service villages.

3.25 The overall spatial strategy of the plan and its strategic priorities requires a less dispersed pattern of development. While there will be opportunities for some growth in villages this must be limited and focused on the more sustainable villages. An assessment of North Somerset villages identified seven relatively more sustainable settlements for further investigation of development opportunities (in addition to Yatton and Backwell). These were Banwell, Bleadon, Churchill (Langford), Congresbury, Sandford, Winscombe and Wrington. This identified the following proposed locations:

Purn Way, Bleadon (14).

East of Ladymead Lane, Langford (70).

North of Pudding Pie Lane, Langford (65).

South of Jubilee Lane, Langford (21).

Pineapple Farm, Congresbury (90).

Woodhill Nurseries, Congresbury (60).

Mead Farm, Sandford (30).

West of Sandford (18).

West of Hill Road, Winscombe (30).

#### Step 6: Other opportunities

3.26 Before considering Green Belt it is necessary to assess all other opportunities. These fall into three categories.

##### (i) Areas at risk of flooding

3.27 There are development locations being promoted by landowners and developers (such as at Weston and Clevedon) which are identified as being at risk of flooding as set out in the North Somerset Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2020). Given national advice about the need to direct development away from areas at the highest risk of flooding and to plan for the effects of a changing climate, it is not recommended that flood risk areas are proposed for development as there are considered to be sequentially preferable locations to accommodate development in areas at reduced risk. Furthermore, the essential mitigation required to ensure development in areas at risk of flooding remain safe over its lifetime is expensive and would reduce the potential contributions which could be made to other infrastructure including affordable housing. At a plan-wide level, the sequential test for allocating such sites is not met as there are sites available with a lower risk of flooding. A site east of Clevedon was proposed as a contingency site in the former Joint Spatial Plan (which was subsequently abandoned). This has been reviewed in the light of the climate emergency and is no longer recommended as a growth location. A road link between Nailsea and Clevedon which would have been partly funded by that development is no longer proposed and further reduces the justification for development at that location.

3.28 The Preferred Options takes the approach that outside the built-up areas of the towns, the presumption should be against using new green field locations at risk of flooding for housing or employment development. Within urban areas, a sequential and exceptions test assessment would be required if any sites are proposed within areas at risk of flooding and

which would need to demonstrate wider community benefits and that the development would be safe over its lifetime.

3.29 The Preferred Options concludes that flood risk areas (a physical constraint) should be protected in preference to Green Belt (a policy constraint), and that the flood risk status of those sites contributes to the exceptional circumstances case for considering Green Belt.

(ii) New settlements

3.30 A new settlement at Mendip Spring (north of Langford) was proposed in the Joint Spatial Plan. This too has been reviewed and given the agreed spatial strategy, climate emergency and zero carbon objectives has been discounted. It is not well-related to an existing urban area, is likely to be predominantly car-based, with more limited scope for effective investment in public transport. It is not therefore recommended for inclusion.

(iii) More growth in the rural areas

3.31 There are a large number of sites being promoted at a range of village and rural locations, largely on the basis that they are deliverable and can increase housing supply. However, a more dispersed approach to development would undermine the sustainability objectives of the plan and be likely to increase car trips to services, facilities and jobs.

3.32 Government advice in the NPPF is that before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, local planning authorities need to examine fully all reasonable options. This includes whether the strategy has made as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land, density of development is optimised and discussions have taken place with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need through the duty to co-operate.

3.33 Under the duty to co-operate, all the neighbouring authorities were contacted in October 2021 and all confirmed that there was no opportunity to meet unmet needs from North Somerset in adjacent areas. The response is recorded in the Duty to Co-operate Statement of Common Ground.

3.34 The following table summarises the capacity identified at locations outside the Green Belt.

<b>Dwellings (excluding Green Belt)</b>					
Location	Sites with planning permission	Allocations carried forward	Urban intensification sites	New allocations	<b>Total</b>
Weston-super-Mare	5,576	812	592	0	<b>6,980</b>
Strategic location: Wolverhill	0	0	0	2,800	<b>2,800</b>
Clevedon	73	114	39	0	<b>226</b>
Nailsea	651	530	0	600	<b>1,781</b>
Portishead	119	23	350	0	<b>492</b>
Yatton	231	60	0	100	<b>391</b>
Backwell	20	0	0	600	<b>620</b>
Other villages and rural area	747	166	0	548	<b>1,461</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,417</b>	<b>1,705</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>4,648</b>	<b>14,751</b>



The total of opportunities identified outside the Green Belt is 14,751 dwellings. This is 5,334 dwellings less than the housing requirement of 20,085 dwellings. Having considered all reasonable options for meeting the need for development, the scale of this shortfall indicates that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries.

### Green Belt

3.35 National planning policy in the NPPF attaches great importance to Green Belts. It makes clear that the essential characteristics are their openness and permanence. Once established, their boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances.

3.36 The housing requirement and lack of sustainable alternative locations provides the exceptional circumstances to consider Green Belt. The NPPF advises that 'when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account'. It goes on to state that 'where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously developed and/or is well-served by public transport' (paragraph 142).

3.37 The locations proposed in the Preferred Options reflect government advice on the importance of Green Belts and that where, exceptionally, it is concluded that Green Belt land should be considered, the locations chosen will be required to demonstrate a high level of sustainability. They will also be required to show how they comply with the plan's spatial strategy which seeks to locate growth at the urban areas where there is good access to a wide range of facilities, services, jobs and public transport opportunities. In this respect, the proposed locations identified avoid the most damaging locations in terms of meeting Green Belt purposes and are very well located in relation to the towns and urban areas. The exceptional circumstances apply to the most sustainable locations within the Green Belt, not the Green Belt as a whole. Villages within the Green Belt such as Pill/Easton-in-Gordano or Failand are not appropriate locations for development.

3.38 There are four specific locations where it is considered that exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated and new development areas proposed. Each of these are well related to the towns and urban areas in accordance with the spatial strategy and sustainability principles.

- East of Backwell (500 plus employment land). In order to unlock growth at Nailsea, this will enable a road link crossing the railway linking to the Nailsea side of Station Road, improving access to Nailsea and access for buses and reducing congestion at Backwell crossroads. A potential road link to the west of Backwell is also being investigated. The transport improvements will require further investigation but will require contributions from all development sites in the area.
- South of Clevedon Road, Portishead (80). A location on the edge of the built-up area, close to the secondary school.
- North of Colliters Way (215). Land location on the Bristol side of Colliters Way (South Bristol Link).
- A mixed-use strategic site at Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course) to accommodate 2,500 dwellings, around 10 ha employment, a local centre and other facilities. This will be a distinct community located to the north of the A38 and south of the railway development to a high level of sustainability with an emphasis on walking and cycling to local facilities and benefitting from high quality public transport into Bristol.

The total amount of growth proposed in the Green Belt over the plan period is 3,295 dwellings.

### Summary

3.39 Overall, sites are proposed in the Preferred Options which could accommodate some 14,751 dwellings outside the Green Belt plus 3,295 dwellings on Green Belt sites making a total of 18,046 dwellings over the plan period.

3.40 The housing capacity identified in the Preferred Options is however insufficient to meet the government’s housing requirement for North Somerset over the plan period. This is a critical issue and the local planning authority will be expected to identify how it is proposing to meet the requirement in full in the next version of the local plan to be prepared prior to submission for examination. Failing that, the Council will need robust evidence to explain why the housing requirement cannot be accommodated. The consultation process will enable feedback from communities, developers and other interested parties on the proposed approach and how the shortfall might be addressed.

3.41 The Preferred Options is accompanied by a Transport Assessment [TA] that is at an appropriate level of detail for the current stage of plan making. The TA considers potential growth at Wolverhill (north of Banwell), Nailsea, Backwell and Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course). The TA compares the relative merits of each area in terms of reducing the need to travel and access to existing public transport and active travel facilities, with the intention of informing the choice of areas for allocation. It also provides a proposed Access and Movement Framework for each area (for the purposes of master planning and delivering sustainable development) and identifies where strategic improvements to existing public transport and active travel facilities can be made beyond each opportunity area.

3.42 Whilst the TA considers the larger proposed allocations, assessments have been made of all proposed allocations by the Council’s Highways and Transport service to ensure there are no localised transport ‘showstoppers’ that would prevent these sites being allocated.

3.43 Other infrastructure such as drainage, education, leisure and community uses are required in order to help create sustainable communities and will need to be provided in step with development. The plan contains a delivery policy which sets out the approach and the use of CIL and S106, and also the detailed requirements for specific site allocations.

#### Local plan policies

3.44 The plan identifies the proposed policies which will be used to assess planning applications and other development proposals. The NPPF requires plans to identify a set of strategic policies which should set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design of places and make sufficient provision for housing, employment and other uses, infrastructure, community facilities and conservation, enhancement of the built and historic environment and address climate change and mitigation. The local plan proposes 12 strategic policies. These are high level policies which provide the framework for the more detailed policies and also for neighbourhood plans.

Strategic policies (SP)		
SP1	Sustainable development	The sustainable development principles for North Somerset – address climate emergency, active travel, economic development, housing needs, create communities and reduce inequalities, infrastructure, prioritise previously developed land.
SP2	Climate change	Principles of climate change mitigation and adaptation – net zero, reduce energy, renewable energy, reduce flooding risk, reduce emissions from travel, active travel, green infrastructure.
SP3	Spatial strategy	Approach to where development should be located.

SP4	Placemaking	High quality design and creating communities.
SP5	Towns	Development within the towns and approach to town centres.
SP6	Villages & rural areas	Development within and beyond settlement boundaries.
SP7	Green Belt	Changes to the Green Belt – allocated sites, new GB at Nailsea/Backwell, new insets for GB villages.
SP8	Housing	Housing requirement 20,085 and its broad distribution, affordable housing – increase from 30% to 35% AH.
SP9	Employment	Employment target 70.6 ha and its distribution – primarily at strategic sites.
SP10	Transport	Minimise carbon impact through prioritising active travel and public transport.
SP11	Green infrastructure & historic environment	Protect and enhance valued landscapes, priority habitats, biodiversity net gain. Proposed North Somerset Nature Parks.
SP12	Minerals	Protect supply of minerals – limestone aggregates.

3.45 Non-strategic policies set out the more detailed policies for specific areas and types of development and are defined in the plan as either locational or development policies.

Locational policies (LP) comprise allocations and other designations which are identified on the Policies Map. This includes the allocation of the mixed-use strategic development locations at Wolverhill (north of Banwell) and Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course), the housing, employment and other land use allocations, including transport and other infrastructure. It also identifies the revised settlement boundaries, including villages with new settlement boundaries, and town centre and primary shopping areas. Policies define the proposed changes to the Green Belt in respect of accommodating development and the insets within settlement boundaries of Green Belt villages, and the extension to the Green Belt at Nailsea/Backwell, and the Strategic Gaps (including a new Strategic Gap between Banwell and the strategic development area). In respect of minerals, potential expansion of quarries and safeguarding areas are identified.

The plan will include schedules of allocated sites, including, in respect of the housing sites, any development requirements and infrastructure requirements.

Development policies (DP) are the detailed development management policies which cover a wide range of issues including design, residential infilling, climate change, net zero construction, renewable energy, drainage, transport, economic development, town centres, green infrastructure, affordable housing, rural development and infrastructure delivery.

3.46 The Preferred Options broadly retains the current approach to the assessment of development proposals at Bristol Airport and Royal Portbury Dock where no changes are proposed to the Green Belt. At the airport the approach will be reviewed once the outcome of the ongoing appeal is known. At the port the sensitive Green Belt and ecological constraints suggests that the focus should continue to be on the intensification of the port estate rather than outward expansion into the sensitive area of Green Belt which separates the port from Portishead and Pill/Easton-in-Gordano.

### Next steps

3.47 The Preferred Options document will be consulted upon and the response received used to inform the next stage of plan preparation. That will be the Pre-submission document which is the Council's finalised plan which it intends to submit for examination by the Planning Inspectorate. It is intended that the Pre-submission document will be finalised for approval by members at the end of 2022. The Pre-submission plan is subject to a

further round of public consultation with any outstanding objections forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration at the examination anticipated in 2023. Subject to the outcome of the examination process, adoption of the plan is expected at the end of 2023.

Consultation on Preferred Options (Consultation Draft)	March/April 2022
Consultation on pre-submission plan	November 2022
Submission to Secretary of State	January 2023
Examination	April 2023
Inspector's Report	October 2023
Adoption	December 2023

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

4.1 Consultation and engagement will be undertaken throughout the plan-making process in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. A consultation statement is prepared at each stage (see background papers for statements relating to Challenges and Choices).

4.2 Informal member engagement has been undertaken in parallel to the plan-making process which has been open to all members and with a Place Scrutiny working group established to consider and advise on the emerging approach. In particular, members emphasised the importance of high-quality design and placemaking, the importance of protecting the character and setting of existing villages and the need for effective engagement.

4.3 Public consultation on the Preferred Options will take place for six weeks in March/April 2022. This is an early stage of plan making and provides an opportunity to discuss the emerging approach with communities, businesses, developers and other stakeholders. It is intended that the public consultation will involve a mix of virtual and face to face meetings, but this will need to be reviewed in the context of any covid guidance in place at the time. We will work to target those groups who are not usually engaged in the planning process.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Local Plan will be progressed using existing budgets.

#### **6. LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The North Somerset Local Plan is a statutory development plan. Local plans are prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Preferred Options is a draft document is prepared in accordance with Regulation 18.

#### **7. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The Local Plan plays a central role in terms of supporting the Council's climate change objectives. The Strategic Priorities support the North Somerset Climate Emergency Action

Plan key principles of creating an energy efficient built environment, replenishing our carbon stores, adapting to climate change, increasing renewable energy generation and reducing emissions from transport. It will set out the approach to climate change and environmental issues in terms of, for example, the location and form of development, renewable energy, minimising car use, encouraging green infrastructure and biodiversity, avoiding sensitive areas such as areas at flood risk and minimising waste. The construction industry generated approximately 3% of UK greenhouse gas emissions and has an important role to play in reaching UK net zero commitments.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT**

8.1 The absence of an up-to-date development plan incurs risks related to the uncertainty of future investment decisions and speculative planning applications potentially leading to an increase in planning appeals. Failure to adequately respond to the climate emergency could lead to adverse impacts such as increased flood risk.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The local plan will be subject to an equalities impact assessment.

## **10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The new planning framework will aid the delivery of the spatial elements of the Corporate Plan and has significant implications for a wide range of Council services in terms of, for example, the future location of population, jobs and infrastructure.

## **11. OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

11.1 It is not essential to clarify the preferred spatial strategy at this stage in the plan-making process but this will provide a clear framework for future work.

## **AUTHOR**

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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The supporting documents for the Local Plan can be accessed via [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/newlocalplan](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/newlocalplan).

Challenges for the future consultation document.

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/Local%20Plan%202038%20-%20Challenges%20for%20the%20Future.pdf>

Challenges for the future consultation statement.

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North Somerset Economic Plan 2020-2025

<https://innorthsomerset.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/North-Somerset-Economic-Plan.pdf>

Transport Assessment (AECOM) January 2021

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment April 2021

Sustainability Appraisal January 2021

Equalities Impact Assessment 2022

Duty to Co-operate Statement of Common Ground – January 2022 Update

Appendix A: Proposed North Somerset Local Plan Preferred Options document.

Appendix B: Preferred Options Policies Map.