

**Comment ID**

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**Document Section**

- ▶ North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-s... ▶ 3. Strategic Policies
- ▶ SP6: Villages and rural areas ▶ SP6: Villages and rural settlements

**Respondent**

M7 Planning Ltd and M7 SW LLP

**Agent**

Arwel Evans - Lichfields

**Response Date**

21 Jan 2024

**Do you consider the North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan to be sound? The requirement for a plan to be sound can be found in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 35.**

No

**If you selected 'no', do you consider the North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan to be unsound because it is not:**

Positively prepared

Justified

**Do you consider the North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan to be legally compliant?**

No

**Do you consider the North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan to comply with the Duty to Cooperate?**

No

**If you consider the North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan is not sound, not legally compliant or not in compliance with the Duty to Cooperate then please provide details. Please be as precise as possible.**

Emerging Policy SP6 (Villages and Rural Areas) states:

“Outside settlement boundaries new residential development will be restricted to replacement dwellings, subdivision of existing dwellings, residential conversion of rural buildings where alternative economic use is inappropriate or unfeasible, dwellings for

essential rural workers or the redevelopment of previously developed land in suitable locations.”

Emerging Policy SP6 has not been positively prepared to meet the objectively assessed needs of the area. The policy is not effective in delivering housing in sustainable locations where there is a defined housing need. It is too restrictive to allow meaningful development to take place in villages that could suitably meet the needs of the area.

Within the context of the existing adopted Core Strategy (January 2017), Congresbury is identified as one of nine “Service Villages” (Tier 3 Settlement). The Core Strategy supports development within or adjacent to existing settlement boundaries of Service Villages, subject to proposals enhancing the overall sustainability of the settlement. Vision 6 (Service Villages Vision) of the existing Core Strategy states that Service Villages are seen as a “focal point for local housing needs, services and community facilities” and are a crucial component in the settlement hierarchy and achieving wider delivery of housing.

The aim for Service Villages within the existing Core Strategy is for them to become more self-contained in terms of providing jobs and serving the local and surrounding community for all their day-to-day needs, whilst protecting their individual character. Existing Core Strategy Policy CS14 (Distribution of New Housing) also encourages small scale development within or abutting settlement boundaries or through site allocations.

Given the restrictive nature of emerging Policy SP6, it fails to acknowledge that the form, nature, size and sustainability credentials of villages within the local authority boundary varies considerably, and this presents a step change in approach from the adopted Core Strategy (January 2017). This alternative approach contradicts the Council’s own evidence base as the Spatial Strategy and Capacity Paper (November 2023) states that the Council has split the villages into four different categories based on their sustainability. Congresbury has been categorised in Category A, which consists of:

“Villages considered to be relatively sustainable in their own right with a range of easily accessible services and facilities and good public transport links to towns.”

The Spatial Strategy and Capacity Paper (November 2023) also highlights that Congresbury has potential for small scale site allocations.

Despite Congresbury being a Category A village and having potential for small scale site allocations, the Council has decided to omit the proposed allocation of Land north of Mulberry Road for residential development. This site was a proposed allocation in the

Preferred Options version of the emerging Plan and also comprised part of the draft Publication Version presented to the Council Executive for approval. The decision to remove the proposed allocation owing to refusal of outline permission at Planning Committee (22/P/0459/OUT) against officer recommendation is in our opinion ill-informed. The evidence base demonstrating the suitability of the site is unequivocal and includes the Officers Report to planning committee recommending approval. In addition, the sustainability credentials of the site and the fact that it was considered to be an appropriate location to accommodate growth is set out within the following documentation included within the Preferred Options Evidence Base of the emerging Local Plan (2039):

- 1 The North Somerset Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA): Second Interim Report (April 2021)
- 2 The Draft Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment: Main Report (January 2022)
- 3 Spatial Strategy and Capacity Paper (February 2022)
- 4 The Rural Settlements Paper (March 2022)

It was also considered to have “potential for further consideration” within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (November 2023) included within the Pre-Submission Evidence Base.

As mentioned above, the draft version of the Publication Version of the emerging plan was presented to the North Somerset Executive Committee on Wednesday 18 October (but adjourned to 2 November) included Land North of Mulberry Road as a residential allocation for 70 dwellings.

The removal of the site from Policy LP2 does not reflect the evidence base that has informed the plan preparation process nor the evidence base that led to Officers of the Council recommending to Planning Committee that outline planning permission should be granted for up to 70 dwellings.

**Please set out any modifications you consider necessary to make the North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan legally compliant and sound in respect of any issues you have identified.**

Some of the villages such as Congresbury perform well in the sustainability assessment of settlements and therefore should accommodate a greater level of growth. Emerging Policy SP6 appears to have been drafted with the objective of suppressing supply within rural areas and doesn't take into account the fact that some of the villages are large, sustainable and thriving communities.

We believe that Policy SP6 should seek to distinguish those villages that perform a higher

function informed by the Spatial Strategy and Capacity Paper (November 2023) whereby development of up to 50 dwellings adjoining proposed settlement boundaries is supported.

**If you wish to support the soundness or legal compliance of the North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan please provide details.**

**If your representation is seeking modification to the North Somerset Local Plan 2039: Pre-submission Plan, do you consider it necessary to participate at the examination hearings?**

Yes, I wish to participate in the examinati...

**If you wish to participate in the examination hearings please outline why you consider this to be necessary.**

To discuss and explore the matters raised in the representations in more detail.

**Attachments**