



April 2022

Consultation response on draft North Somerset Local Plan Preferred Option

General approach

There is much we support in the draft Local Plan. We support the overall approach adopted by the draft Local Plan – that new residential development should be focused close to existing facilities, services, jobs, and public and active transport connections. We think that actions that recognize the climate emergency have been woven into the strategy to the extent that it is possible. We welcome the willingness to review Green Belt boundaries, so as to secure opportunities to meet development needs sustainably. We welcome the considered approach to new active travel routes. All this is a welcome change from the approach adopted in the West of England Joint Spatial Plan.

Specific comments

1) Housing target and link to sub-regional planning

We note that the Local Plan comes ahead of WECA's Spatial Development Strategy and Joint Local Transport Plan 5. Whilst the SDS does not include North Somerset as it is not in WECA, Bristol's housing requirement has been increased by 35% and it is unrealistic to accommodate it in Bristol's boundaries. There seems bound to be a request to North Somerset to accommodate growth arising from the WECA Spatial Development Strategy through the duty to cooperate. It seems odd to proceed with the Local Plan without taking account of this issue. We are concerned that effective joint working across local authority boundaries should include an overall strategy for making sufficient provision for the city-region's housing needs.

2) Meeting the housing target

We note that the draft Plan identifies capacity for about 90% of the housing requirement. No new housing numbers seem to have been allocated to smaller settlements. Whilst this is the right strategic approach, might some small allocations be made where they would meet local housing need and help improve the viability of services in a village?

3) Yanley Lane (Woodspring golf course) site allocation

This site allocation is of interest to us as it is close to Bristol. It is important that the Local Plan requires that this substantial development is designed to avoid more commuting by car into Bristol, and be fit for a zero carbon future. We suggest that consideration should be given to the following:

- we support this site allocation in principle, given its closeness to proposed public transport routes (mass transit/Metrobus), but we suggest also that a new station on the main railway line should be considered, which could serve both the new development and Long Ashton. This would be more convenient than relying on a bus connection to Parson Street station.

- on employment: we note that the draft Policy LP2 makes no reference to employment, but that this site is one of the proposed employment sites in Schedule 2. It is important to provide employment opportunities on the site, so that it is not dependent on employment in Bristol, especially South Bristol.

4) Transport links

Road links between the M5 and Bristol airport have long been an issue. The South Bristol Link has improved the situation, but traffic is still funneled along the Portway and through Western Harbour. The road through Western Harbour is both the inner and outer Bristol ring road, and the heavy traffic flows blight the area. Should there not be some consideration of road improvements in the Local Plan, taking a strategic view of addressing the issue which would seek to be more efficient and less polluting than sending the traffic along the Portway and A370?

We note the proposed new road between the A370 and A38, a Barrow Gurney bypass, which has long been planned. Is it still needed now that the South Bristol Link has been built?

5) Presentation – key diagram

We note that the draft contains polices in words only, and a detailed policy map. In the final document, a simplified map of the key proposals would help, as required by NPPF, paragraph 23: "Broad locations for development should be indicated on a key diagram, and land-use designations and allocations identified on a policies map."