



an independent force for a **better Bristol**

January 2023

Bristol Civic Society response to the 2022 consultation on the Local Plan Review

Summary of key points

The Plan is not demonstrably consistent with the national and Bristol net zero targets.

The Society believes that in five respects the emerging Local Plan does not meet the requirements of national policy and therefore may be found to fail the test of soundness at Examination:

- the Plan does not include evidence of the Plan's projected carbon implications, or justification against alternative options.
- the new NPPF requirement to treat good design as a fundamental part of how new development is planned for and places are changed is not carried through to the plan's strategic aims and policies
- the new NPPF and NMDC requirement that design policies should be developed with local communities has been omitted from the council's approach to preparing the Local Plan's design policies.
- the calculated capacity to deliver homes is predicated on the expectation of built forms that do not derive from design codes which reflect community aspirations, as required by NPPF national policy and the National Model Design Code.
- the Local Plan should contain an up-to-date assessment of whether there is sufficient open space, of the right type, in the right places. At the very least, it should refer to the known deficiency of green space in the central areas, and consider site allocations that address any deficiency.

We also think that that Plan gives insufficient guidance on managing the tension between policy aims, for example:

- density vs liveability and other policy aims
- land for housing vs other uses

Structure of this response

We start by taking a step back to consider how some of the big planning issues are covered in the emerging Local Plan as a whole, including tensions between policy objectives. We then comment on the review process and useability of the Plan. Finally, and we take a detailed look at the current consultation documents. We end by making some comments on the 2018/19

consultation, some new and some emphasizing comments we made at the time. We also include as an appendix our understanding of the review process, complex as it is.

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1 The big planning issues

Taking a step back, we look at the key issues, including tensions that the Local Plan should aim to clarify. Whilst some aims are complementary, land scarcity or net zero aims can give rise to tensions between aims: are the tensions addressed adequately? Is the Plan clear on how the tension will be managed?

1.1 Net zero aims and the housing target

A Local Plan's policies should be in line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008. This includes the 2050 net zero target, for which the Sixth Carbon Budget requires emissions to be reduced by almost 80% by 2035. Bristol has adopted a net zero target, so the necessary decline in emissions is even steeper.

The Plan is housing-led and proposes to deliver some 2000 new homes a year. The embodied carbon from building these houses will make a significant contribution to carbon emissions, thus the

Local Plan should demonstrate that the housing target is consistent with these net zero targets.

The Plan does not include evidence of the Plan's projected carbon implications, or justification against alternative options. We have to be certain that the quantum of new development proposed by the Local Plan is needed, and why it warrants the likely impact on our collective carbon ambitions. The Local Plan needs to include evidence of the actual anticipated carbon implications of the chosen strategy, and consider alternative strategies for meeting the housing need.

The Plan should for instance:

- prioritise the re-use of existing assets wherever possible.
- give design guidance on built form in order to minimise emissions. Currently the Plan contains an implied acceptance of tall buildings without any reference to emissions.
- review the housing need calculation in the light of the embodied carbon cost, for example the planned growth in student numbers.

The national planning policy that makes this requirement clear is as follows:

- NPPF para 153: "Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change taking into account ... Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure"

A footnote clarifies the first sentence: "In line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008." This has the effect of making the objective of a 100% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 relevant to the Local Plan,

- the legal duty set out in Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by the Planning Act 2008: "Development plan documents must (taken as a whole) include policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change."

1.2 Design

Insufficient emphasis on design:

One of the biggest changes to national policy has been the elevation of achieving good design. National policy has shifted thinking about good design from treating it as the (discretionary) icing on the cake to a fundamental part of how new development is planned for and places are changed. The NPPF is clear (paragraph 126) that the "creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve." This increased emphasis on beauty and good design and placemaking is reinforced in the December 2022 government paper "Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy"

There is some acknowledgment of this in paragraph 10.3 "The approach to design set out in national planning policy and guidance has changed", but this is not carried through to either the plan's strategic aims and policies. . The Foreword is where the political tone is set: it says nothing on design. There is hardly any reference to good design in the Aims.

Lack of community buy-in:

The new NPPF and NMDC requirement that design policies should be developed with local communities has been omitted from the council's approach to preparing the Local Plan's design policies.

National policy (NPPF paragraph 127) is that "design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics." Design, as set out in national planning policy and guidance, is much more than a simple concern about the aesthetics of a building.

In answer to the question "How can local communities be effectively engaged in the design of their area?", national planning practice guidance says "Communities can effectively shape both design policies and development through a collaborative process of meaningful participation. Early engagement and linking engagement activities to key stages of design decision-making and plan-making can empower people to inform the vision, design policies and the design of schemes." This critical national expectation has been omitted from the council's approach to plan preparation. The council's approach is more akin to the now discredited 'decide, announce, defend' approach to plan-making.

The Local Plan in 10.3 recognizes that community involvement is required in local design codes: "*Design guidance is to be developed in partnership with local communities.*", but then proceeds to set policy on built form that should be set in local design codes.

To comply with national guidance,

the Local Plan's design policy, including the guidance for Growth Areas, should be amended so that

it "reflects local aspirations for the development of their area" (to quote the NPPF, paragraph 129).

Policy gaps until local design codes are developed:

National policy prescribes a shift from design policy in the Local Plan to area-based design codes. Whilst we welcome the introduction of local design codes, we are concerned by the length of time it will take to develop them, and the lack of policy direction in the meantime. The Local Plan tries in Appendix 3 of the consultation document to fill the gap by listing the factors to be covered in local design guidance, but that is no substitute for the local design codes themselves. We do however acknowledge the continuing progress made by the Council on spatial frameworks for various Growth Areas.

1.3 Calculation of capacity to deliver housing

A significant if not the biggest influence on the form and shape of Bristol going forwards is the amount of new housing, where this is located and its built form. The housing number in Policy H1 is capacity-driven in the sense it arises from the council's view of the amount of new housing the city can absorb.

The December 2022 government paper “Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy” clarifies that “if housing need can be met only by building at densities which would be significantly out-of-character with the existing area, this may be an adverse impact which could outweigh the benefits of meeting need in full.” (para 9 of Chapter 4)

Built form and lack of community buy-in

In relying on policy H1, the draft Local Plan is predicated on the expectation of built forms that do not derive from design codes which reflect community aspirations, as required by government policy – see the NPPF national policy and the National Model Design Code. This undermines the soundness of the calculated capacity to deliver homes.

An influential determinant of the Council’s view of housing capacity is the council’s preferred forms of development morphology, not least the encouragement the Mayor gives to tall buildings. The council’s preference for particular building morphologies does not derive from an approach to design which reflects community aspirations. Or at least that is our view. The trouble is neither we nor the Mayor really know. The last expression of community feeling was the consultation response to the Urban Living SPD. This was largely ignored.

Assessment of capacity to deliver

The calculation of capacity to deliver in the 2018 Urban Potential Assessment [report](#) is not transparent and it is difficult to judge whether this is a reasonable view of Bristol’s capacity to absorb housing need. ‘Reasonable’ has many facets, as the discussion of various tensions in policy aims illustrates. If we could see the assumptions that have been made, it would be possible to challenge them.

1.4 Density vs liveability and other policy aims

Objectives made subservient to housing numbers:

The current Local Plan review document tries to make all design considerations subservient to achieving the highest possible number of dwellings. In 4.10, in the preamble to policy H1, it says: “*The development strategy has a focus on ensuring the delivery of new homes. This draft policy sets out a minimum target for delivery and a clear aspiration to exceed that amount where this can be achieved. It sets the tone for the local plan which aims to significantly boost housing supply by:*

Establishing a planning approach which sees development of new and affordable homes as a leading objective in development decisions; ...”

Whilst responding to the housing crisis is important, and building to higher density in the right places is right, it cannot be right to make objectives subservient to housing numbers. There has to be a more balanced way of setting planning policy.

Insufficient guidance on managing the tension between policy aims:

The Local Plan’s policy on the density balance is in Policy DC A: Delivering well-designed,

inclusive places, the Urban Living SPD, and in the policies for each Growth area (to be revised in the Publication Version). Whilst the Urban Living SPD has much good design guidance for developers, none of the policy in the Local Plan *manages* the tension with the other policy aims. The lack of guidance on appropriate built form leads to developments that are too large in the context of local character and identity, or do not work well

Balancing the efficient use of land with liveability:

Policy DC A says: “*Urban living: Development in Bristol will be expected to optimise densities, balancing the efficient use of land with liveability*”. This implies that liveability can be compromised in order to achieve target housing numbers. It is good that the tension between the two objectives is being recognised, but this clause risks harmful developments. We accept that there is often no simple standard for each dimension of liveability (eg open space, play space, communal space, people-friendly streets and spaces, sunlight, daylight, visual impact, wind and other micro-climate effects, privacy, noise, occupants’ safety and health), but there must be minimum standards. Policy DC A does not acknowledge this, even though the 2019 policy DC1 says “*Development that does not create a liveable environment for future occupiers and neighbouring development will not be permitted.*” and cites a minimum standard for one element of liveability by referring to nationally described space standards.

The 2018 Urban Living SPD suffers from the same defect: it also balances density against liveability (using the term ‘making quality homes’) and two other objectives: “*Densities are optimised by balancing the efficient and effective use of land, with aspirations for a positive response to context, successful placemaking, and making quality homes.*”

Policy outside Growth Areas:

The Local Plan gives some guidance on the density balance for Growth Areas, but guidance is also needed for suburban transport nodes and local centres. This is an important opportunity to spread the higher density around the city, and could contribute to the vitality of centres. The Urban Potential Assessment calculation of the capacity to deliver housing need assumes higher density at town centres, and this should be carried through to development management policy.

We note that this is covered by 2019 policy Policy UL1: Effective and efficient use of land
“*Locations for more intensive forms of development*

- *More intensive forms of development will be expected on suitable sites:*
- *Within Bristol City Centre, Bristol Temple Quarter and St. Philip’s Marsh;*
- *Within or close to the city’s town and district centres; and*
- *Close to major public transport routes and corridors.”*

But the degree of intensification is not quantified. And there is no reference to the 15-minute neighbourhood as an aspiration (despite WECA developing this in the aborted work on the Spatial Development Strategy). Is the policy for suburban neighbourhoods sufficiently developed ?

1.5 Tall buildings

Tall buildings vs urban character:

The Local Plan policies do not sufficiently guide where tall buildings are appropriate and how high they should go. What is needed is a townscape assessment that both assesses the quality and heritage of current environments across the city, building on Conservation Area character appraisals, and protects them from harm from a proliferation of excessively tall buildings. We would argue that this is not a minority view, but that many people in the city treasure its character, beauty and heritage, and do not want to see it transformed into an 'anywhere' place.

Tall buildings vs net zero

The Vision for 2030 (section 3.1) couples housing targets with achieving net zero: "*By 2030... .. a further 20,000 new and affordable homes will have been built since 2020 and the city will be reaching a population of 500,000 people within a growing region. Bristol will have met its zero carbon reduction targets.*" Meeting zero carbon targets will be impossible if the city continues to prioritize high rise buildings, which tend to be highly carbon-consumptive. Policy NZC3 on embodied carbon, materials and waste has lower standards for 5+ storeys, which conflict with the aim of reaching net zero by 2030. The 2019 policy DC2 on tall buildings should take account of the net zero arguments against tall buildings.

Tall buildings vs affordable homes

Tall buildings typically permit a low quotient of affordable homes because of their high expense. The recent government requirement to include a second staircase will add to the costs of tall buildings.

Tall buildings and achieving high density

Tall buildings are unnecessary for increasing density – mid-rise developments can do this with equal efficiency, at lower cost, and produce higher satisfaction for most potential occupiers. This is well-established in current planning theory and practice. Instead of building tall in a limited number of areas, high density can be achieved by well-planned mid-rise building on brownfield sites such as St Philips, and in other areas outside the currently designated Growth Areas.

1.6 Land for housing vs other uses

Housing land vs employment land

The Society observes that land accommodating industry, distribution, service and other non-retail employment-generating uses other than office development is under threat from residential development. We see this both in small planning applications and in emerging area frameworks such as Mead Street and Whitehouse Street, and in a yet-to-be-written framework for St Philips Marsh. The Whitehouse Street framework attempts to resolve the tension by aiming to accommodate the existing number of jobs across a smaller area, including upper floors, but the feasibility of this approach has yet to be fully tested.

The much-needed planning policy to resolve this tension will not emerge until the Publication

Version, with the evidence published ahead of that. This will be accompanied by revised policies applied in each Growth Area to include targets for land use for employment. We reserve our comments till this is published.

Housing land vs space for nature and accessible open space

A Local Plan document entitled 'New Protections for Open Space' was published in 2019. It designates areas across Bristol as Local Green Space (open space that is demonstrably special to a local community having unique characteristics that require safeguarding), and Reserved Open Space (other spaces of current public value which offer opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity).

There is rightly increasing pressure to protect natural habitats. The Local Plan review reflects this by removing areas allocated for housing at Western Slopes and Brislington Meadows. However, it does this without any reference to any evidence or strategy. Any land that is designated as protected green space is not available for new housing, thus increasing the pressure on other areas to accommodate housing – another tension between policy aims. A decision to remove land for housing should be backed up by evidence.

Access to green space: addressing deficiency

The 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Strategy set Bristol green space quality/distance/quantity standards for accessible green space, and [mapped](#) performance against these standards across Bristol. Local Plan draft policy GI2 (from 2019) uses this methodology. It seeks to ensure that a development does not create a deficiency of open recreational space, referring to retained policy DM16, which includes minimum standards for the quantity of 5 different types of recreational open space.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy also set a minimum quantity standard of 27.8 square metres per capita, of which the 'Locality component' – the minimum amount of green space that any area should have, before adding the 'City wide component' of Destination parks – is 18.0 square metres per capita. The Parks Strategy map showed that the city centre and inner suburbs failed to meet this minimum quantity standard.

The 2008 numbers will clearly be out-of-date, not least because of the growth in population and the residential development over the past 14 years. Developments in the last 14 years might not have met the standards in full, and significant numbers of additional homes will have come through the Permitted Development Rights route, for instance office conversions. So the deficiency in the inner areas will have worsened. Despite this, the assessment has not been updated for the Local Plan.

The NPPF policy for recreational open space requires (in paragraph 100) that "policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open

space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.”

Policy GI2 only kicks in if a development would cause a deficiency. So it does not have any effect if there is *already* a deficiency, presumably because that would block all development. That underlines the necessity to consider ways of increasing provision by other means.

The Local Plan should contain an up-to-date assessment of whether there is sufficient open space, of the right type, in the right places. At the very least, it should refer to the known deficiency of green space in the central areas, and consider site allocations that address any deficiency.

Retained policy DM16: Open Space for Recreation

Whilst DM16 seems an effective policy, we are not aware of it being referred to in planning applications or planning officer comments on planning applications. If the policy is not being used, then it is not effective.

The reasons why it is not being used are probably because:

- the Urban living SPD refers (page 7) to many DMs but not DM16. The SPD refers to *private* open space (Appendix A). It refers to space for children (Appendix A), but uses a measure based on the number of children expected in the development, not the locality measure in DM 16.
- DM16 applies space standards to a 'locality', but does not define what area to use for the 'locality'. This does not make the policy easy to apply.

1.7 Student housing

Setting a cap on new student housing

The projected housing need is intended to include provision for students. The 2019 Local Plan Review document highlights the growth in demand for purpose-built student accommodation. Paragraph 7.37 states: “This growth will create an additional need for some 6,400 bed spaces city-wide by 2028.” This is a substantial requirement. This demand competes with the demand for other residential housing. Draft Policy H7 constrains over-concentration of student housing in any one area by setting maximum numbers, but not overall numbers for Bristol.

It is acceptable to risk Bristol’s ambition to be carbon-neutral by 2030 to accommodate increases in student numbers? What is the right balance between maximising income for the universities and the externalised costs and impact on the environment. Has any consideration been given to applying a limit?

2 Practical issues

2.1 The Local Plan process

The process for renewing the Local Plan is more complicated than normal. We have included our understanding of the timeline in an appendix to this response. This is the third of four phases of consultation. The current consultation comes between consultations in 2018 and 2019 and further consultation to come in 2023. The last phase will be after the Publication Version has been approved by Cabinet.

Significant new policy will emerge to public view for the first time in the Publication Version at the time it is approved by Cabinet in summer 2023. It is only then that we will have first sight of:

- revised policies applied in each Growth Area. eg targets for land use for employment, and creation of green space
- economic development and employment land policies (policies E1 to E8), including targets for provision of different types of workspace. Building on the evidence report (see above)
- a vision statement about each of the identified centres (existing centres and the new centres identified in the current consultation), building on workshops held in 2022.
- revised approach to development and transport, taking account of expected new guidance from government and WECA work on transport decarbonisation.

There will be an opportunity to make representations on the Publication Version prior to the Examination, which could lead BCC to signal acceptance of changes to the Plan ahead of the Examination.

Comment: Whilst we understand the need to progress the Local Plan as quickly as possible, this is not an ideal process. We ask that there is full public consultation on these late-stage additions.

2.2 Useability of the suite of policies

Managing the complexity

Government has signalled that it wishes Local Plans to be simpler. To this end, it intends to move more policy to national guidance, but this will come too late for the Bristol Local Plan review, which is unfortunate. With the introduction of new areas of policy, eg net zero, biodiversity, food production, the default is that the volume of policy wording grows and grows. This makes it ever more difficult for developers, development control officers, and the public to deal with.

The following are possible ways of managing the complexity:

- cutting out excessive wording
- rationalising the content that is currently spread across the consultations since 2018 so that it reads as a coherent whole, eg the various policies on design
- making use of policy and standards that are already used successfully in other places. It is not efficient for every local authority to use different words to achieve similar policies, and it makes it harder for developers.
- enable easy navigation by embedding links to documents that are referenced in the text

Technical content

Much of the new policy content on net zero is technical, and testing compliance will require expertise. Will these skills be available to the Council's Development Management team?

Design and net zero/biodiversity policies

Securing good design means securing development that is fit for a low carbon future in a changing climate. There is a risk in having separate design and net zero policies that the two are not sufficiently integrated, for instance the relationship between built forms and net zero compliance. Recent RTPI research has warned against this.

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2022/march/cracking-the-code/>

3 Detailed comments on the current consultation

In this section we take a detailed look at the current consultation documents, and for emphasis we repeat some of the comments we made in 2018/19.

3.1 Draft Policies and Development Allocations

3.1.1 Language

The drafting does not marry with the NPPF's expectation that policies should be "clearly written and unambiguous, so it is evident how a decision maker should react to development proposals". There is too much reliance on words such as 'appropriate' (74 in the document) and 'demonstrate' (34 in the document) with too many instances of insufficient clarity as to the required threshold to be appropriate, or the whatever to have been demonstrated.

3.1.2 Comments section by section

<u>Foreword</u>
The foreword is where the political tone is set. From the long list of planning policy topics, the foreword chooses to highlight housing need, local centres, net zero and ecology. We note that it says nothing on good design, or respecting the city's heritage, or liveability including the adequacy of green space. Nor embodied carbon, or re-use or retrofit of buildings.
Ch 1: Introduction
Ch 2: About the local plan review
Ch 3: Vision

3.4 Vision
<p><i>“The delivery of new and affordable homes through urban living will enable housing needs to be met and help to secure the development of rapid transit systems which deliver sustainable, connected communities.”</i></p> <p>The single reference to transport in the Vision section is to “rapid transit systems”. This is inappropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it is highly selective: what about all the other things that “enable sustainable, connected communities”, eg active travel ? There is no reference to the 15-minute neighbourhood as an aspiration (despite WECA developing this in the aborted work on the Spatial Development Strategy). - the draft Local Plan does not deliver policy that would “help to secure the development of rapid transit systems”.
<p><i>“Looking ahead to 2050... ... a city of 550,000+ people in inclusive communities, served by a rapid transit network which connects neighbourhoods in Bristol and the wider region. The city will have world class digital connectivity and will be taking the lead in the technological innovations of that time”</i></p> <p>The references to “rapid transit network” and .world-class digital connectivity” are highly selective and do not really add anything. There is no real need for a Vision statement extending beyond the lifetime of the Local Plan.</p>
3.5/3.6 Objectives
3.7 Aims
<p><i>“Promote urban living across the city with a focus on brownfield land – encouraging developments of homes with urban character, form and design in well-designed, connected, healthy and accessible neighbourhoods which achieve a liveable environment;”</i></p> <p>What does “urban character, form and design“ mean ?</p> <p>If “promoting urban living” is “across the city”, where are the policies that apply in suburban areas?</p>
<p><i>“Allocate new sites for housing and mixed-use development and highlight sites with potential for housing development and ensure that the best use is made of existing development allocations;”</i></p> <p>“best use” is vague. Presumably the intended point is about density ?</p>
<p><i>“Protect our valued open spaces, promote food growing and increase the tree canopy to support a liveable, healthy city”</i></p> <p>The emphasis in this wording is on protecting and conserving, but what about the aim of achieving sufficient open space for the anticipated growth in population?</p>
<p>There is hardly any reference to good design in the Aims. The increased emphasis on good</p>

design in national policy should be referenced here.

Ch 4: Housing need and requirement

4.3 - "There is a clear need for new homes in Bristol: the population is rising; house prices are high; and waiting lists for affordable housing are growing. To plan for the future of the city it is necessary first to confirm, as accurately as possible, how many new homes are needed using appropriate evidence."

Delete "house prices are high". It is superfluous and its inclusion implies that supply in Bristol can affect price. It can't..

The policies seem largely geared towards numbers with little or no inclusion of policies relating to the size and tenure of new accommodation. Policy AH1 in the current consultation sets out an expectation for the split between social rent and affordable home ownership but again it is silent on size of units. Much new provision seems to be 1/2 bed accommodation. The housing need paper does indicate some further decline in average household size from 2.360 to a range from 2.264 and 2.316. There will be a much larger range of actual household sizes to produce these averages and it is important that this is catered for in new residential development if the aspiration to achieve a diverse and inclusive city is to be realised.

We understand the Council will commission a further housing needs assessment ahead of the Publication Version, which will address housing mix.

Ch 5: Affordable housing

Ch 6: Net zero and climate

We support the NZC policies subject to the following:

NZC1 - why not BREEAM 'Outstanding' rather than 'Excellent' ?

NZC2

"Provide on-site renewable electricity generation with an output equivalent to at least the annual energy consumption of the development, as calculated using an operational energy model."

Why just on-site, why not also local / near site as per the Planning and Energy Act 2008?

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/21/contents>

NZC2

Why allow offsetting? New development should be fit for a zero carbon future.

6.27 - Within the Embodied Carbon text there is this: *"Refrigerants and their associated impacts*

<p><i>should be included within the embodied carbon assessment conducted by the developer”</i></p> <p>Is the reference appropriate in this section ? Refrigerants fall in the category of ongoing carbon usage, not embodied carbon ?</p>
<p><i>“6.28 Where usability issues (as described in Part O of the Building Regulations), such as noise, are stated as the reason that a development requires active cooling, then all reasonably practicable passive means of minimising cooling requirements should be applied first and reasons why they were not sufficient provided.”</i></p> <p>In the same way as this policy in relation to cooling cross-refers to noise, the policies on noise should cross-refer to cooling. Noise at a location may affect the appropriateness of the location for passive cooling. If the location means you can't open windows then it's not suitable for residential. This should be clear. Noise can origin from various sources: vehicle and nighttime economy including passing (drunken) pedestrians.</p>
<p>6.31 - the 'Classified heat networks' definition should include the presumption that new networks are scaled to serve existing development where that development relies on a heat network to decarbonise. See https://www.cse.org.uk/downloads/reports-and-publications/policy/insulation-and-heating/energy-justice/renewables/behaviour-change/building-performance/Bristol_net_zero_by_2030_study_CSE_26_Feb_2020.pdf</p>
<p>NZC3 - this policy should be clear that development forms that have the lowest embodied carbon will be preferred. This means the embodied carbon targets should be the same irrespective of height.</p> <p>Why should tall buildings be given preferential carbon targets? See https://www.nature.com/articles/s42949-021-00034-w.pdf and https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/energy/news/2017/jun/ucl-energy-high-rise-buildings-energy-and-density-research-project-results/ / http://www.createstreets.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/UCL-Energy-Density-Essay-3-July-2017.pdf</p> <p>The standards for 5+ storeys do not get you on a trajectory for net zero by 2030 https://www.leti.uk/_files/ugd/252d09_3b0f2acf2bb24c019f5ed9173fc5d9f4.pdf</p>
<p><i>“6.47 Where the embodied carbon assessment indicates that the policy's targets cannot be feasibly met, the applicant's justification will be scrutinised for technical quality and whether the applicant has demonstrated appropriate actions have been taken throughout the project's development.”</i></p> <p>Why is such a get-out clause needed ? It should be removed.</p>
<p>NZC4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Minimising the overheating of buildings” is mentioned but no standards are referenced. Why not ? - there needs to be consideration of the implications for planning practices of vector-borne diseases in a changing climate. In particular mosquitoes and certain forms of blue / green infrastructure including those SUDs involving storage. - need to plan to avoid solar gain from solar reflection (in particular from tall buildings with

substantial glazing).
The local plan needs a policy to protect existing renewable generation from being impacted by new development. Shadowing of existing solar panels is a big one.
These complex policies will require skilled assessment of applications to enforce them. Will these skills be available?

Ch 7: Biodiversity and nature recovery
7.3 - it's wrong to assume that i) brownfield sites necessarily have less biodiversity value than greenfield sites and ii) in a heavily developed city such as Bristol the most suitable use of a brownfield site is to develop it. In some locations we should be considering greening brownfield sites as multifunctional open space.
BG1 - looking at the shopping list in the first bullet we should ask whether the carbon implications of some suggestions have been addressed, and whether the appropriateness of measures involving stagnant water has been risk assessed given the increased likelihood of vector-borne diseases in a changing climate.
BG1 – In the bullet: <i>“Take the available opportunities to deliver multifunctional benefits such as habitat creation, flood protection, water quality, recreation, food-growing, improved air and water quality and reduced urban heating;”</i> , recreation should be expanded to include active travel.
BG2 - <i>“Where loss of nature conservation value is unavoidable to enable development which is in accordance with the local plan, proposals will be expected to provide mitigation on-site, and where this is not possible...”</i> . Delete “which is in accordance with the local plan” ? What about development allowed on appeal that cuts across local plan policies?
BG3 - <i>“Only where a development proposal cannot prevent and/or minimise loss to biodiversity using avoidance measures, and this has been clearly demonstrated through a Biodiversity Gain Plan, will habitat remediation and compensation measures be appropriate.”</i> This risks exporting what biodiversity from where it is most needed in Bristol. Just what is as close as possible in “Off-site habitat compensation as close as possible to the proposed developed”. <i>“If it is demonstrated that biodiversity net gain cannot be achieved within the site, alternative measures to deliver biodiversity gain through compensation will be appropriate. These may include: Off-site habitat compensation as close as possible to the proposed developed ...”</i> Whose judgment using what criteria will decide “a development proposal cannot prevent and/or minimise loss to biodiversity using avoidance measures? Ditto that it has been “demonstrated that biodiversity net gain cannot be achieved within the site”.

BG4 - Whose judgment using what criteria will decide whether “tree loss or damage is essential to allow for appropriate development”? And why the focus on important trees (I guess this means big) in “New development should retain and integrate important existing trees.” Unimportant trees when left alone normally grow into important trees and it’s important they are considered too. And I see the policy again allows for the export of tree cover from where the loss has occurred. Welcome the commitment to ensure the long-term management and maintenance of replacement trees, but why not all new landscaping in a development?

BG5 - “*Development on or adjacent to the proposed quayside walkways shown on the Policies Map will be expected to provide or contribute appropriately towards a continuous and accessible route*”.

It would be useful here to show a link to where the Policies Map can be found - <https://maps.bristol.gov.uk/policies/>

Ch 8: Food sustainability

FS1 - “*Where a residential development creates 60 dwellings or more it will be expected to contribute one statutory allotment plot of 250 m²*”

This does not tally with the explanation in 8.11. “*Larger developments will be expected to provide proportionately more allotment space in line with this metric.*”.

We support the explanation but not the policy which sets a ceiling.

FS2 – The policy should include whether the land has been remediated to a sufficient standard to ensure it is safe to eat the food produced should be part of the policy.

<https://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/policy-areas/land-quality/papers/growing-edible-crops/>

“*Be appropriately designed to be safe, usable, accessible to all residents*”

This wording needs to be amended so that it is consistent with the exemplification in 8.20, eg rooftop gardens are not “accessible to all”.

FS3 - The policy and explanation in 8,28 are potentially at odds given the former uses “viable” and the latter uses “feasible” as in “... unable to feasibly continue ...”

Ch 9: Shopping, services and the evening economy

SSE3 - *Supporting Bristol’s evening and night-time economy*

The policy should address:

- local centres can be cheek by jowl with homes, often family homes accommodating children, in which case they are not acceptable for night time economy uses.
- disturbance can occur not just in earshot of the use but on travel routes to/from the destination - vehicular traffic and rowdy pedestrians.

SSE4 - “*The vitality and viability of the defined centres will be supported and enhanced.*”

What happens to / what is the policy for shopping parades not identified in the plan eg Cotham

Road South?
<p>9.23 - <i>“Where permission is sought for unspecified Use Class E development, an impact assessment will be required unless the specific use proposed has been identified. Uses may be restricted to the specific use applied.”</i></p> <p>How will the impact of an unspecified use be assessed ? Is it possible ?</p>
<p>SSE7 - <i>“Major developments that are open to the public should provide and secure the future management of: i. Free, publicly accessible toilets ...”</i></p> <p>- the Society supports draft Policy SSE7. We agree that the provision of public conveniences is important in enabling a safe and inclusive public realm. We support the Council in aiming to ensure that such provision is part of major public-facing developments in centres and elsewhere.</p> <p>- the term “Major developments that are open to the public” could be resisted in some development. We suggest that the Council give some indication of how they will interpret the term. This is a critical accessibility issue.</p> <p>- “open to the public”: ie any member of the public or only clientele of the premises? We suggest make it unambiguous that it should be the former.</p>
<p>A mix of retail, hospitality, leisure and other town centre activities is desirable provided there is not a concentration of uses that undermines the vitality of centres. Retained policy DM10 aims to prevent a harmful concentration of food and drink uses. Is consideration being given to preventing other concentrations from being harmful eg. night clubs and gaming venues?</p>

Ch 10: Design
<p>Policy DC A: <i>Delivering well-designed, inclusive places</i></p> <p><i>“Urban living: Development in Bristol will be expected to optimise densities, balancing the efficient use of land with liveability”</i></p> <p>This implies that liveability can be compromised in order to achieve target housing numbers. It is good that the tension between the two objectives is being recognised, but this clause risks harmful developments. We accept that there is often no simple standard for each dimension of liveability (eg open space, play space, communal space, people-friendly streets and spaces, sunlight, daylight, visual impact, wind and other micro-climate effects, privacy, noise, occupants’ safety and health), but there must be <u>minimum</u> standards. Policy DC A does not acknowledge this, even though the 2019 policy DC1 says <i>“Development that does not create a liveable environment for future occupiers and neighbouring development will not be permitted.”</i> and cites a minimum standard for one element of liveability by referring to nationally described space standards.</p> <p>We note that the 2018 Urban Living SPD suffers from the same defect: it also balances density against liveability (using the term ‘making quality homes’) and two other objectives: <i>“Densities are optimised by balancing the efficient and effective use of land, with aspirations for a positive response to context, successful placemaking, and making quality homes.”</i></p>
<p>10.11 - <i>“Mixed-use development helps to secure healthy, inclusive and safe places by promoting</i></p>

social interaction”.

Suggest changing to: “Mixed-use development promotes social interaction, which can often help to secure healthy, inclusive and safe places.” This recognizes that the link is more complicated than the draft wording implies: it depends on the uses, resident population and so on.

The draft Local Plan is predicated on the expectation of built forms that do not derive from design codes which reflect community aspirations, as required by government policy – see the NPPF national policy and the National Model Design Code. This in turn undermines the soundness of the calculated capacity to deliver homes, which is dependent on assumptions about built form.

The Local Plan in 10.3 recognizes that community involvement is required in local design codes: “*Design guidance is to be developed in partnership with local communities.*”, but then proceeds to set policy on built form that should be set in local design codes. To comply with national guidance, there are two possible remedies:

- remove such policy from the Local Plan, in particular the guidance for Growth Areas, so that the local design code process is unconstrained.
- ensure that the design guidance in the Local Plan “reflects local aspirations for the development of their area” (to quote the NPPF paragraph 129).

Policy DC B: Advertisements

The proposed policy for controlling adverts is welcome. Control of advertisements has to relate to the assessment of the potential harm of an advert upon amenity and safety. Illuminated digital displays consume a lot of energy. It would be very good if this aspect of advertising could be related to the policy test of harming amenity but this probably needs legal advice.

Ch 11: Development locations and allocations (changes only)

There is rightly increasing pressure to protect natural habitats. The Local Plan review reflects this by removing areas allocated for housing at Western Slopes and Brislington Meadows. and We are sympathetic to the proposed removal of sites for allocation for housing for nature and farm conservation purposes. However, the Plan does this without any reference to any evidence or strategy. Any land that is designated as protected green space is not available for new housing, thus increasing the pressure on other areas to accommodate housing – another tension between policy aims. A decision to remove land for housing should be backed up by evidence.

11.4 Land at Bath Road, Brislington

“Development in this location on the edge of the city has the potential to be sustainable in terms of its relationship with the services and transport connections”

The later words “the relocation of the park and ride to a suitable new location could allow for the higher end of that range” presumably implies that the land currently used for the p&r site would then be used for development? If so, that should be made clear.

3.2 Local Housing Need

Use of an evidence-based housing need assessment

Bristol's projected housing need is described in a 2022 Housing Needs evidence [paper](#), commissioned from consultants. The Council will commission a further housing needs assessment ahead of the Publication Version, which will cover housing mix. The main consultation document which explains why the government's standard method gives unreasonably high figures.

Comment: We support in principle the Local Plan's use of an evidence-based assessment, rather than the government's standard formula (to be advisory only in future), including the +35% uplift that is not evidence-based.

Size of the assessed need

The outcome is an assessed need of 2600pa. The evidence paper (paragraph 61) reports that the projected need of 2600pa is a 40% increase over the average level of 1860 over the last 20 years. The calculation is based on ONS 2018 projections. The 2600 breaks down into:

Additional households 1675
Migration uplift 640 based on the ONS "High migration" scenario
Adjustment for 20-year undersupply 285

The figures are intended to include students, and the ONS projections allow for them. 2600pa is equivalent to 52,000 dwellings over the plan period to 2040.

We note that the assessment commissioned by WECA in 2021 produced a lower requirement of 2397 (= 47940/20).

https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/LHNA_Final_Report_Sept_20211.pdf, paragraph 58

Comment: It would be possible to challenge some of the assumptions but any calculated need will be a high number that is difficult to deliver. We do not attempt to challenge the calculation ourselves, partly because the evidence paper is hard to follow. It does however feel important that it is reviewed by a third party with the requisite skills.

Assessment of capacity to deliver

The 2018 Urban Potential Assessment [report](#) calculated the capacity to deliver homes. It made use of the following density assumptions which were derived 'with reference to' the Core Strategy policy BCS20.

Area	Density (dph)
City centre	200
Inner Priority	120
Inner	100
Outer Priority	85
Outer	65

The resulting numbers were then reduced to allow for various constraints, eg heritage context,

flooding, and reasons why the sites would not come forward for development in the plan period. Further sites were identified from potential removal from the PIWA industrial designation, a review of open space and Green Belt sites, and a review of convertible office space.

The resulting calculation is:

Source	Approx potential homes
Main citywide site search	6,150
underused industrial land	1,500
undeveloped land	1,000
city centre office sites	2,150
Uplift of existing site allocations	1,600
Total	12,400

This compares with a calculated housing need of 52,000, from which an unmet demand is derived, which forms the basis of discussions between Bristol and neighbouring authorities.

Comment: The calculation is not transparent and it is difficult to judge whether this is a reasonable view of Bristol's capacity to absorb housing need. 'Reasonable' has many facets, as the discussion above of various tensions in policy aims illustrates. If we could see the assumptions that have been made, it would be possible to challenge them.

4 Comments on the 2018/19 consultation

The responses we submitted to the 2018/19 consultation continue to apply. There are a few points we would like to emphasise or add to:

4.1 Open space

The 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Strategy set Bristol green space quality/distance/quantity standards for accessible green space, and mapped performance against these standards across Bristol. Local Plan draft policy GI2 (from 2019) uses this methodology. It seeks to ensure that a development does not create a deficiency of open recreational space, referring to retained policy DM16, which includes minimum standards for the quantity of 5 different types of recreational open space.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy also set a minimum quantity standard of 27.8 square metres per capita, of which the 'Locality component' – the minimum amount of green space that any area should have, before adding the 'City wide component' of Destination parks – is 18.0 square metres per capita. The Parks Strategy map showed that the city centre and inner suburbs failed to meet this minimum quantity standard.

The 2008 numbers will clearly be out-of-date, not least because of the growth in population and the residential development over the past 14 years. Developments in the last 14 years might not have met the standards in full, and significant numbers of additional homes will have come through the Permitted Development Rights route, for instance office conversions. So the deficiency in the inner areas will have worsened. Despite this, the assessment has not been updated for the Local Plan.

The NPPF policy for recreational open space requires (in paragraph 100) that “policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.”

Policy GI2 only kicks in if a development would cause a deficiency. So it does not have any effect if there is *already* a deficiency, presumably because that would block all development. That underlines the necessity to consider ways of increasing provision by other means.

The Local Plan should contain an up-to-date assessment of whether there is sufficient open space, of the right type, in the right places. At the very least, it should refer to the known deficiency of green space in the central areas, and consider site allocations that address any deficiency.

Retained policy DM16: Open Space for Recreation

Whilst DM16 seems an effective policy, we are not aware of it being referred to in planning applications or planning officer comments on planning applications. If the policy is not being used, then it is not effective.

The reasons why it is not being used are probably because:

- the Urban living SPD refers (page 7) to many DMs but not DM16. The SPD refers to *private* open space (Appendix A). It refers to space for children (Appendix A), but uses a measure based on the number of children expected in the development, not the locality measure in DM 16.
- DM16 applies space standards to a 'locality', but does not define what area to use for the 'locality'. This does not make the policy easy to apply.

4.2 Open space at Western Harbour

Protected open space designations at Western Harbour that existed at the time of the 2008 Parks and Green Space Strategy (see [maps](#)) were wiped out in the 2019 review of protection of open space (see [maps](#)), which is referenced in the current consultation document. This seems to be because it is potentially land that could be developed as plans for Western Harbour evolve.

The Society responded in the 2019 consultation that “The riverside open spaces in particular

exhibit all of the requisite criteria for a Local Green Space and are of considerable local significance to the existing and expanding populations of Hotwells Southville and Bedminster, and there is little other Local Green Space in the vicinity.” These spaces should be regain their protected open space designation.

4.3 The link between transport and the Local Plan

Strengthening the link with transport strategies and plans:

The 2019 consultation included draft policies T1 to T5. In our response to the consultation, we commented that we thought that more was needed to provide the link between the Local Plan and Bristol’s current transport strategies and plans. And we noted that the London Plan contains a substantial section of transport policies, which could provide pointers for what should be in the Bristol Local Plan.

Transport and net zero:

We understand that In the Publication Version there will be a revised approach to development and transport, taking account of both expected new guidance from government and WECA work on transport decarbonisation. We welcome this and reserve our comments till it is published.

Transport and housing growth

The growth in population implicit in the substantial planned housing growth must have implications for transport. Is this link being made in transport plans?

Transport and densification:

We commented in our response to the 2018 consultation: “The Society feels that the documents should address the impact of densification on transport. Higher urban density will inevitably have a potentially negative impact upon space for pedestrians, cyclists, parking and public transport. The planning policy must face into the concern that densification will be delivered before public transport improvements. It is not easy to see how to address this ...”

A relevant policy is the 2019 policy T3: Car and cycle parking provision for residential development. The Parking Standards Schedule to which it refers sets maxima for numbers of car spaces for different types of development. Being maxima, they look generous. The policy then guides the extent of car spaces with the words “should be based on consideration of the following criteria: ...”. The criteria do not include “the potential impacts of development on transport networks”, which is one of the criteria cited in the NPPF national policy. Thus the policy is geared more to ensuring enough provision of car spaces, rather than aligning development management policy with the strategic transport aim of constraining the number of cars.

To this end, policy T3 could encourage car-free developments in locations which are well-served by local transport.

Transport Development Management Guide:

TDM guidance needs to be available to a detailed level to support the transport content in the Local Plan. The long-awaited TDM Guide design guidance needs to be published. The [TDM web pages](#) are live but the guidance is missing.

Appendix: the Local Plan review process

Our understanding of the chronology is as follows. Links to BCS consultation responses are included in the table.

2018	first consultation. draft Urban Living: Making Successful Places at Higher Densities SPD, now adopted. https://www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/local-plan-review-and-urban-living-spd/ Urban Potential Assessment (evidence on capacity to deliver homes)
2019	second consultation. A summary of responses is on the BCC website, but the resulting policy revisions have yet to be published. https://www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/local-plan-review-second-consultation/ Draft site allocations Proposals for protection of open space
2020	SPD - Houses in Multiple Occupation https://www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/houses-in-multiple-occupation/ Statement - Progressing Bristol's development (clarifying the approach to development, pending completion of the Local Plan review)
2021	SPD - Purpose-built student and shared living accommodation https://www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/purpose-built-student-accommodation/ .
2022	the current consultation on some new policies. Local housing need paper (evidence)
2023	Publication of: - employment land evidence, a report commissioned by the BCC Economic Development team. - a further housing needs assessment, to include housing mix - Statement of Common Ground – joint statement with neighbouring local authorities, particularly on housing numbers. In two stages: 1) set out issues, 2) resolution. (This is important given the absence of a West of England regional strategy.)
summer 2023	Publication Version approved by Full Council First sight of: - revised policies applied in each Growth Area. eg targets for land use for employment, and creation of green space - economic development and employment land policies (policies E1 to E8), including targets for provision of different types of workspace. Building on the evidence report (see above) - a vision statement about each of the identified centres (existing centres and the new centres identified in the current consultation), building on workshops held in 2022. - revised approach to development and transport, taking account of expected new guidance from government and WECA work on transport decarbonisation.
	There will be an opportunity to make representations on the Publication Version prior to the Examination, which could lead BCC to accept changes to the Plan ahead of the Examination.
2023+	local design guidance (as required by government)