

Local Plan 2011-2032

Sedgemoor
IN SOMERSET

Sedgemoor Local Plan - Adoption Version



Adopted 20th February 2019

Sedgemoor District Council • Inward Investment and Growth
February 2019 • ldf@sedgemoor.gov.uk

Contents

	Preface	ii
	List of Policies	iii
1	Introduction	1
2	Spatial Portrait	4
3	Vision and Priorities	8
4	Strategic Policies	16
5	Placemaking Policies	38
	Bridgwater	38
	Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge	57
	Rural Sedgemoor	67
	Tier 1 Settlements	67
	Tier 2 Settlements	81
	Tier 3 Settlements	84
	Tier 4 Settlements	87
	Countryside	90
6	Major Infrastructure Projects	94
7	District Wide Policies	102
	Living Sustainably	102
	Ensuring Economic Wellbeing	135
	Enjoying and Achieving	146
	Being Healthy	163
	Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans	178
	Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework	187

Preface

This document is the adoption version of the Sedgemoor Local Plan (2011-2032). As background, the Proposed Submission Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 1st August 2017 for examination. Planning Inspector Susan Heywood BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI was appointed to undertake the examination, with public hearing sessions held between 12th December 2017 and 22nd March 2018. A copy of the previously submitted Plan, as well as other relevant submission and examination documents, can be viewed on the Local Plan examination website:

<https://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/examination>

In January 2019, following hearing sessions, and consultation on the Inspector's proposed main modifications, the Council received the Inspector's final report. The Inspector concluded that with the recommended main modifications set out, the Sedgemoor Local Plan satisfies the requirements of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework. Main modifications are changes that the Inspector considers necessary to make the Local Plan sound and / or legally compliant. Following the Inspector's report, on the 20th February 2019 Full Council resolved to adopt the Local Plan, including incorporating the Inspector's recommended main modifications.

This adopted version of the Local Plan therefore incorporates the Inspector's main modifications in full. As well as the Inspector's main modifications the Council has also made additional (i.e. minor) changes to the Local Plan on adoption. These additional changes do not materially affect the Local Plan or affect its soundness, and are therefore not subject to the formal examination process. Additional changes relate to minor matters such as factual updates/corrections, policy and paragraph renumbering, and grammatical or typographical corrections.

Please note that the Council intend to prepare a final published version of the adopted Local Plan in due course. Subject to any further minor changes the text will however remain unchanged. Minor changes will be confined to the correction of any remaining typographical errors, formatting/graphical changes, and consequential cross referencing. This will be formally laid out in due course in the final published version.

List of Policies

Policy	Title	Page
Strategic Policies		
S1	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development	16
S2	Spatial Strategy for Sedgemoor	24
S3	Infrastructure Delivery	32
S4	Sustainable Development Principles	34
S5	Mitigating the Causes and Adapting to the Effects of Climate Change	36
Placemaking Policies		
B1	Bridgwater Vision Transformational Projects	39
B2	Land at west Bridgwater	41
B3	Land at east Bridgwater	42
B4	Land at Bridgwater Gateway	44
B5	Land at south Bridgwater	45
B6	Housing Renewal Areas	45
B7	Employment	47
B8	Land at Huntworth, East of J.24	47
B9	Land to the west and east of A38 Bristol Road	48
B10	Land at Dunball	49
B11	Land at Former Wellworthy's playing field	50
B12	Land at Somerset Bridge	50
B13	Enhancement of Existing Employment Areas	51
B14	Education	52
B15	Flood Defence	53
B16	Transport	53
B17	Servicing Facilities	54
B18	Town Centre	55
B19	Northgate	56
BH1	Land south of Brue Farm	58
BH2	Land east of Isleport Lane	59
BH3	Housing Renewal Areas	61
BH4	Employment	62
BH5	Land at Isleport	62

List of Policies

Policy	Title	Page
BH6	Enhancement of existing employment areas	63
BH7	Transport	64
BH8	Burnham Town Centre	64
BH9	Highbridge District Centre	65
BH10	Tourism	66
C1	Land at Round Oak Farm	69
C2	Land north of Holwell Lane, west of Upper New Road	70
C3	Land north of Hellier's Lane	71
C4	Land west of Draycott Road	73
C5	Transport	74
C6	Village Centre	75
C7	Cheddar Gorge	76
C8	Land at Sharpham Road	76
C9	Education	77
NP1	Land east of A38, west of Newton Road	78
NP2	Land to the east of Baymead Lane	79
NP3	Town Centre	80
T2a	Tier 2 Settlements - Housing	81
T2b	Tier 2 Settlements - Unmet Local Housing Need	83
T3a	Tier 3 Settlements - Housing	85
T3b	Land adjacent to St Bridget's Church, Church Road, Brean	86
T3c	Land Allocated for Educational Purposes	86
T3d	Ashcott and Walton By-Pass	87
T4	Tier 4 Settlements - Housing	88
CO1	Countryside	90
CO2	Infill Housing in the Countryside	91
CO3	Brownfield Sites in the Countryside	92
CO4	Countryside Retail Uses	93
Major Infrastructure Projects		
MIP1	Major Infrastructure Proposals	96
MIP2	Hinkley Point C: Associated and Ancillary Development	98

List of Policies

Policy	Title	Page
MIP3	Hinkley Point C: Planning Obligations and Mitigation	101
District Wide Policies		
D1	Flood Risk and Surface Water Management	104
D2	Promoting High Quality and Inclusive Design	109
D3	Sustainability and Energy in Development	111
D4	Renewable or Low Carbon Energy and Heat Generation projects	114
D5	Housing Mix	117
D6	Affordable Housing	120
D7	Care Homes and Specialist Accommodation	122
D8	Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People	123
D9	Self-build and Custom Build Homes	125
D10	Rural Workers Dwellings	128
D11	Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside	129
D12	Residential Annexes	130
D13	Sustainable Transport and Movement	132
D14	Managing the Transport Impacts of Development	133
D15	Economic Prosperity	136
D16	Safeguarding Existing Employment Land and Buildings	138
D17	Tourism	140
D18	Retail Hierarchy	143
D19	Landscape	147
D20	Biodiversity and Geodiversity	149
D21	Ecological Networks	151
D22	Trees and Woodland	152
D23	Bat Consultation Zones	154
D24	Pollution Impacts of Development	155
D25	Protecting Residential Amenity	156
D26	Historic Environment	158
D27	Education Provision	161
D28	Health and Social Care	164
D29	Protection and Enhancement of Existing Green Infrastructure Resources	167

List of Policies

Policy	Title	Page
D30	Green Infrastructure Requirements in New Developments	167
D31	Countryside around Settlements	169
D32	Open Areas Protected from Development	170
D33	Protection of Existing Public Recreational Outdoor Space	172
D34	Outdoor Public Recreational Space and New Residential Areas	172
D35	Local Services	175

Introduction 1

A New Plan for Sedgemoor

1.1 The Council's existing Local Plan (Core Strategy 2006-2027) was adopted in 2011 and has been fundamental in influencing the significant change the district has experienced since then. It now needs a review to respond to new opportunities and pressures such as a rising population, housing growth, boosting the economy and delivering infrastructure for residents and businesses. The Local Plan review also addresses changes as a result of new national legislation, including the Localism Act (2011) and new national planning policy in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.2 Planning is about making important decisions that affect the environment and character of our towns, villages and countryside and ensuring that development happens in the right place at the right time. These decisions affect how we live and work and how we feel about places. In this context local plans are at the heart of the planning system, setting out a positive strategy for delivering sustainable development.

1.3 The Sedgemoor Local Plan 2011-2032 therefore sets out how the district will grow and develop into the future. It includes the vision, priorities and policy framework for future development in the district, including addressing the requirements relating to housing, employment, retail and other facilities and infrastructure. It is a positive strategy for delivering sustainable development and the Council's priorities for new housing, boosting the economy and creating new jobs. Whilst facilitating change the Local Plan will also safeguard and enhance what is good and special about Sedgemoor. It therefore includes important policies on issues such as safeguarding the natural and historic environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design. The Local Plan is a spatial document, setting out clearly in the policies and mapping what will happen, where and when. It also sets out how development will be delivered in terms of supporting infrastructure. Together with adopted neighbourhood plans, the Local Plan will be the starting point for determining planning applications in the district.

Format and Structure of the Document

1.4 The Local Plan presents a spatial strategy, policies on major infrastructure projects, place-making policies and district wide policies.

1.5 The document is structured into six distinct sections:

- **Spatial Portrait** – describes the spatial characteristics of Sedgemoor and outlines the strategic role of Sedgemoor in the region.
- **Vision and Priorities** - sets out the high level vision and strategic priorities that have informed the policies in the plan.
- **Strategic Policies** - sets out the Spatial Strategy and core policies on infrastructure delivery and sustainable development.
- **Place-making Policies** - sets out the individual policies for different settlements across the district. These are place specific and link to delivering the spatial strategy and achieving the long-term vision for the district.
- **Major Infrastructure Projects** – sets out principles and policies for delivery of major infrastructure including development associated with the proposed new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point.
- **District Wide Policies** – sets out policies for development across the district and provides a framework for assessing future development proposals and their contribution to delivering sustainable development.

1 Introduction

1.6 It is important to note that the Local Plan must be read as a whole. District wide policies and placemaking policies for example elaborate on and add to the spatial strategy. Planning applications will be assessed against all relevant policies.

National Policy and Guidance

1.7 Councils must have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) when drawing up their plans, and it is a material consideration in decision making on planning applications. The NPPF is also supported by more detailed National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. Local Plans must be based on and reflect the presumption and include clear policies setting out how the presumption should be applied locally. The NPPF also states that Local Plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, including meeting the objectively assessed needs for housing, business and other requirements. This Local Plan has been prepared to accord with the requirements set out in the NPPF. Cross-references in this Local Plan to specific NPPF paragraph numbers refer to relevant paragraphs as they are numbered in the 2012 version of the NPPF. A revised NPPF was published July 2018. The Local Plan should therefore be read alongside the latest version of the NPPF.

Policies Map

1.8 The Local Plan is accompanied by a Policies Map (previously known as a Proposals Map). This illustrates spatially the policies in the plan on an ordnance survey base map, such as proposed allocations and designations.

1.9 The Local Plan includes allocations for new development. For the avoidance of doubt allocations identified do not grant 'Permission in Principle' (PiP) as introduced by the Housing and Planning Act 2016. Legislation implementing PiP was introduced in 2017.

Relationship to current Development Plan Documents

1.10 The previous Development Plan for the area included the adopted Core Strategy (2006-2027) and relevant saved policies of the previous Sedgemoor District Local Plan (1991-2011). The Local Plan (2011-2032) is the new Development Plan for the area and fully replaces both of these previous documents. Previous policies in the Core Strategy (2006-2027) and saved policies from the District Local Plan (1991-2011) are therefore superseded by the policies in this document. Where relevant, planning applications will continue to be considered against previously adopted Supplementary Planning Documents, taking into account other material planning considerations. A full list of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents is provided in the Local Development Scheme available on the Council website.

Preparing a proportionate evidence base

1.11 The NPPF is clear that Local Plans should be justified and positively prepared by being based on an adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence base about the economic, social and environmental characteristics of the area. Following previous consultations we have continued to develop the evidence base, including providing an up-to-date understanding of our objectively assessed needs. An extensive supporting evidence base covering a wide range of topics has informed the plan and can be viewed at <https://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/planningpolicy>

Introduction 1

Sustainability Appraisal

1.12 Development Plan Documents must be subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which is an integral part of the plan preparation process. This must also incorporate the requirements of the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Directive. This process enables the potential social, economic and environmental implications of policies to be appraised to ensure sustainability issues are identified early and inform the plan making process. It is an iterative process undertaken throughout the whole plan preparation process. The Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out by Sedgemoor District Council officers and the plan is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal Report, available on our website. It outlines the likely significant effects on the environment, social and economic factors of the alternatives for the Local Plan. It also outlines the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant effects of implementing the Local Plan.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

1.13 There are a number of sites within or near Sedgemoor District that have been designated as internationally important for wildlife. The Council therefore has a legal obligation (arising from the EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) / The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010) to carry out a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) in order to ensure that the Local Plan does not contain any policies that will have, or lead to, an adverse effect on the integrity of the designated sites. Designated sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated for habitats and animal species, Special Protection Areas (SPA) designated for bird species and 'Ramsar sites', designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands 1971.

Neighbourhood Planning

1.14 The Localism Act (2011) introduced new rights and powers for communities including the introduction of neighbourhood plans into the planning system. Neighbourhood planning is a key part of recent planning reforms and is aimed at giving people the opportunity to shape the places they live in. When adopted they form a part of the statutory Development Plan but must be in conformity with national planning policy and the Local Plan. Given the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the NPPF describes how neighbourhood plans should plan positively and support the strategic development needs set out in local plans, including policies for housing and economic development. A number of town and parish councils are progressing with preparation of neighbourhood plans for their area, and neighbourhood plans have already been adopted for the Ashcott, Cheddar, and Burnham and Highbridge areas. The Council is committed to supporting communities who choose to prepare neighbourhood plans. Where they are being developed in parallel with the Local Plan review, close collaboration will be needed between the Council and the qualifying body.

Duty to Co-operate

1.15 Sedgemoor has important relationships with neighbouring authorities and others further afield. Key strategic issues such as housing and economic growth cannot be addressed by local planning authorities working alone. With the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies strategic planning is now locally driven through the 'duty to co-operate' requirement placed on councils and other public bodies. This includes local planning authorities working together to meet development requirements which cannot wholly be met within their own areas. From an early stage in the plan-making process the Council has engaged with nearby authorities and other prescribed bodies on duty to co-operate issues. In addition to considering development requirements this has included commissioning joint evidence base work and consideration of strategic infrastructure requirements.

2 Spatial Portrait

Overview

2.1 The spatial portrait section provides the context for the rest of the Local Plan. Its aim is to set out what the district is like today and what key issues, challenges and opportunities the district is currently facing.

2.2 Set out below is therefore a snapshot of some of the key issues in the district in relation to its strategic context, demographic, economic, social and environmental conditions.

Location and Strategic Context

2.3 Sedgemoor District covers an area of 564km² and is centrally located in the South West of England and at the heart of the historic county of Somerset. It is a predominantly rural area, encompassed in the north east by the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), in the south west by the Quantock Hills AONB, and facing the Severn estuary on its western side. Set alongside its outstanding natural environment is however the industrial strength of its towns. Bridgwater accommodates the district's larger residential, commercial and industrial areas and the majority of retail and service facilities. The other key towns are Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, while the coastal strip of Berrow and Brean along with Cheddar are significant tourist destinations.

2.4 The M5 corridor and its associated functional economic market area present significant economic potential for the district. Three motorway junctions ensure substantial areas of the district are within easy access of the M5. The M5, associated A roads and the mainline railway allow access to city regions beyond the district and also ensure International airports at Bristol and Exeter are also within easy reach. The district's position equal distance from the rapidly expanding economies of Bristol and Exeter provide opportunities to capture spill out activities from these cities. Within the county there is also a complementary relationship between Bridgwater and Taunton which needs to be fostered, given the strategic significance of the two towns when considered together. Overall there are a number of important areas of inter-connectivity between Sedgemoor and the neighbouring authorities in terms of economies, labour and housing markets, highlighting the need to work jointly on strategic planning issues.

2.5 Potential major infrastructure projects within and adjacent to Sedgemoor will also be important drivers for change in the district; enabling the harnessing or regeneration of economic and social benefits in the long-term. Hinkley Point C was granted consent in 2013 and now has a final investment decision, with significant associated development due to be within Sedgemoor. The economic significance of the Hinkley Point C project cannot be overstated, at peak it will be Europe's largest construction scheme. Linked to this is the Hinkley C connection project. Other potential schemes coming forward in Sedgemoor in the future also include tidal energy projects. Managing the challenges and opportunities presented by major infrastructure projects is a key priority going forward.

2.6 A key aim for the Local Plan will be to set out a framework for the future that will best position Sedgemoor to build upon its strategic and geographical advantages and fully contribute to the competitiveness and prosperity of the region as a whole, whilst also ensuring protection of its highly valuable natural and historic environmental assets.

Population and Demographics

2.7 Sedgemoor continues to see population growth, with an estimated 120,300 residents (to the nearest 100) ⁽¹⁾. This represents an increase of 1% from the previous year. Over a longer period Sedgemoor has seen consistently higher annual increases in population when compared to other

1 ONS Mid-year population estimates, 2015

Spatial Portrait 2

areas in Somerset, with a 22% population increase since 1991, compared to the average for Somerset of 17%. This trend is expected to continue with a projected increase to 139,015 by 2032 (12% growth)⁽²⁾. Internal migration still accounts for the majority of population growth in Sedgemoor. Unlike previous years the ONS figures show that there was a positive 'natural' change in population, with births exceeding deaths. This however remains only a small component of population change.

2.8 Like other districts in Somerset Sedgemoor has an ageing population. The population is older than the national average and is becoming older. There is a net flow of 16-24 year-olds out of Somerset. This is believed to be as a result of people in this age group seeking opportunities elsewhere, particularly higher education given the absence of a university within the county.

2.9 While ethnic diversity is increasing Sedgemoor is less ethnically diverse than the rest of the country, in 2011 only 4.9% of Sedgemoor residents did not describe themselves as white British⁽³⁾, one of the lowest figures in the South West (and UK). EU migrants were also a low percentage of the population, making up only 2.7% of the district's residents. EU migration is however the fastest growing proportion of the population by scale, with numbers of residents increasing 80% during the 2001-2011 period. Given the recent vote for the UK to leave the EU it is uncertain how this pattern will change into the future.

Economy, Employment & Skills

2.10 Despite both the recession and economic restructuring, the economy of the district has proven reasonably resilient during the past decade, having grown by 6.8% in GVA terms between 2008 and 2013. Sedgemoor differs significantly from the UK average with its relative reliance on manufacturing activity (roughly 8% GVA output)⁽⁴⁾. Another notable area of difference is that there are very low levels of jobs within the financial and other business services, just 9.8% in comparison to 18.1% in the South West.

2.11 Unemployment in the district is higher than the regional average, and despite improvements in education higher level skills achievement remains lower than regional or national averages. There remains a pattern of out-commuting of Sedgemoor residents for better remunerated employment outside of the district⁽⁵⁾.

2.12 Sedgemoor continues to face challenges in its town centre in terms of adequately serving the local population in terms of leisure and shopping activities. Town centre occupancy rates fell dramatically in the 2008-2012 period, reflecting specific impacts on the retail sector. Though more recent data shows this trend is starting to turn it is likely to take several years before they return to pre-2008 levels⁽⁶⁾. There is also clearly a need to adapt to changing retail patterns and consumer demand.

2.13 There is also a need to support SME's and rural businesses through policies in the Local Plan. The Economic Development Strategy highlights the need to support small businesses, start-ups and the self-employed; and ensure they get the right help to support their new enterprise, however small and whatever the sector.

2 ONS 2014 based population projections

3 2011, Census Data

4 Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy 2015-2032

5 Annual Monitoring Report 2014-2015

6 Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy 2015-2032

2 Spatial Portrait

Housing

2.14 Sedgemoor has below average house prices, making it a more affordable place to live compared to neighbouring districts. However, the mixed adjusted average price of £192,182 (as of July 2014) is still more than 7.7 times the average full time Sedgemoor wage (£24,866 pa), meaning home ownership remains out of reach for many and demand for affordable housing remains significant. Since 2006 a considerable number of affordable homes have been built however the need remains considerable. It is indicated that an additional 6,258 affordable dwellings would need to be delivered between 2011 and 2032 if all households in need were to be housed in an affordable home ⁽⁷⁾. As well as affordable homes there is also a need to accelerate market housing numbers to address overall demographic growth in the district. The timely delivery of infrastructure (local and strategic) is critical to support this and create sustainable communities.

2.15 There is also the need to address the housing needs to specific groups, including starter homes for young persons and specialist accommodation for the ageing population, and those with disabilities. This includes both market and affordable homes, as well as residential institutions. With an ageing population ensuring a supply of homes that are appropriately accessible and adaptable is important to ensuring that people can stay in their homes for longer as their needs change.

Environment

2.16 Sedgemoor has a uniquely diverse environment both in terms of its historic and natural environment. The Mendip Hills and Quantock Hills AONBs fringe the northern and south western boundaries of the district. These are diverse and unique nationally important landscapes. The coastal strip area of Sedgemoor is also a key area for biodiversity, with important international habitat designations. The Somerset Levels and Moors area forms the largest lowland grazing marsh system in Britain and is of exceptional environmental interest. There is a need to address the development pressures on key species and designated sites from habitat loss through to recreational pressure. Waterbodies, including the Bridgwater and Taunton canal, are also important in offering multi-functional benefits for flood risk, ecology and amenity. In terms of the historic setting there are 14 conservation areas in Sedgemoor and over 1,100 listed buildings.

2.17 Due to Sedgemoor's low lying nature, much of the district is at high risk of flooding, as shown by the extensive flooding of the Somerset Levels and Moors in Winter 2013/14. Other areas at risk include large areas of Bridgwater to the east of the river Parrett, all of Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge and significant areas of the coastal tourist area at Brean and Berrow⁽⁸⁾. Flood risk from tidal, watercourses and surface water is therefore a significant issue facing the district, both today and long term. Work therefore needs to continue to ensure the appropriate provision of flood risk management measures to reduce the risk and impact of flooding on people and property.

Wellbeing

2.18 Sedgemoor is not an especially deprived district overall, however there are significant local pockets of deprivation concentrated in the district's urban areas. Bridgwater Sydenham and Highbridge are rated in the bottom 10% nationally. In Sedgemoor 17% of children are also considered to be living in poverty, the highest across all the Somerset local authorities.

2.19 In terms of other public health measures Sedgemoor presents a mixed picture compared to the rest of England. While life expectancy overall is higher compared to the average for England there are considerable inequalities across the district, with it being 5-6 years lower in the most deprived

7 Sedgemoor Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2016

8 Sedgemoor Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2015

Spatial Portrait 2

areas versus the least deprived. Obesity among adults is also considerably higher compared to the average in England, a significant cause of this being that physical activity levels among the population are too low. This is seen as a key priority locally in terms of promoting healthier lifestyle habits among adults ⁽⁹⁾.

Transport

2.20 With the M5 junctions and mainline railway, transport linkages and strategic connectivity is an area of relative strength for Sedgemoor when compared with Somerset and the South West more widely. Cycling rates for the district have also been higher than the regional and national average and there is considerable investment in seeking to address areas where the cycle and pedestrian network is fragmented. However Sedgemoor's rural nature and the limited access to public transport in some areas means there is still considerable reliance on the car for many journeys. Linking as many communities as possible and providing sustainable modes of transport is therefore important. Continued investment and prioritising cycling and walking to enable them as modes of everyday transport for commuters and also for leisure use is therefore necessary.

2.21 Whilst previously the district has benefited from comparatively low congestion this situation is however changing. There is generally increased traffic on the district's trunk roads including long peak disruption during the holiday periods (linked to tourism traffic) and a developing peak rush hour period in its main settlements. This is particularly the case along key routes into and out of Bridgwater. While there is investment in the network associated with Hinkley Point C there will still clearly be significant challenges facing the network during the planned construction period. Addressing deliverable transport infrastructure requirements for new development and continuing to enable more sustainable modes of transport will therefore be a key task for the Local Plan.

3 Vision and Priorities

Spatial Vision for Sedgemoor

3.1 The Local Plan includes a long-term spatial vision supported by strategic priorities. These inform the subsequent policies and allocations set out in subsequent sections. The previous Core Strategy includes a 20 year vision for the district and forms the basis of the visions set out below. Given that the Local Plan is a 5 year review of the previous Core Strategy the key themes have been retained and used to structure the vision, strategic priorities and policies of the plan as set out below:

- Living Sustainably;
- Ensuring Economic Wellbeing;
- Enjoying and Achieving;
- Being Healthy.

What is the Spatial Vision?

3.2 The spatial vision set out below therefore reviews and develops where appropriate the visions set out previously, taking into account local regeneration strategies, corporate priorities and development progress over the last five years.

Vision - A Spatial Vision for Sedgemoor

Spatial Strategy

By 2032 Sedgemoor will have progressed towards becoming a truly sustainable community consisting of a revitalised Bridgwater that acts as the focal point for the district, supported by thriving and prosperous towns and rural settlements where local people can access affordable housing, local employment, and community services. This will be complemented by a living and working countryside that contributes to the overall prosperity and well-being of the district and conserves and enhances its natural beauty. Where growth has occurred, essential infrastructure will have been delivered at the right time and right place to support this.

Living Sustainably

By 2032 the towns of Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge will be safe and protected from the risk of rising sea levels and flooding. Responsibility to future generations recognising the threats of climate change will be acted upon through reduced greenhouse gas emissions, increased renewable and low carbon energy generation and improved energy efficiency. This will be complemented by modern, efficient and high quality design that both respects its context and is future proofed to adapt to a changing climate, including hotter and drier summers.

The right type and tenure of housing will be provided in the towns and rural settlements to meet a range of needs for affordable and family homes. New housing will create attractive, safe and socially inclusive living environments integrated into existing communities. Homes will be balanced by job opportunities and local services supported by the appropriate infrastructure and sustainable transport options, enabling communities to become more self-contained. The reuse of brownfield land will be encouraged wherever possible, and all development will embrace the principles of sustainable construction, including maximising the efficient use of resources and minimising waste.

Ensuring Economic Wellbeing

Vision and Priorities 3

By 2032 Sedgemoor will have a thriving, diverse and resilient economy underpinned by an ambitious and skilled local labour force. The delivery of Gravity (formerly known as Huntspill Energy Park) and completion of the nearby Hinkley Point C nuclear power station will be key catalysts in enabling Sedgemoor to realise its potential as a leading centre for renewable energy and low carbon technologies. Sustainable tourism, building on the unique natural assets of Sedgemoor's countryside and coast, will be a major source of local income and employment. The district's town centres will be re-invigorated as shopping destinations that have broadened their appeal as attractive places for residents, visitors and retailers alike.

Enjoying and Achieving

By 2032 the natural beauty, biodiversity and heritage of Sedgemoor will have been protected and enhanced for its enjoyment by future generations. Its contribution to the quality of life of residents and visitors and to the positive image of the district is understood and respected. People of all ages will be able to access high quality lifelong learning opportunities to develop their skills in order to contribute positively to a dynamic local economy. Bridgwater and Taunton College will be known and celebrated nationally for its educational attainment and achievements.

Being Healthy

By 2032 the health of the people will have improved as a result of good access to a range of high quality health care facilities. More people will enjoy healthier lifestyles through sport, recreation and exercise, maximising the benefits of living within or close to a rural environment. Walking or cycling will be the first choice for local trips, encouraged by attractive, safe and convenient district wide green network links. New country parks at South Bridgwater and the Meads and the continued enhancement of Apex Park in Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge will ensure those living in the towns will have local access to important green spaces.

Bridgwater

By 2032 Bridgwater will be seen as a place that is re-energising into a confident town through well designed strong, innovative architecture, a more vibrant town centre and revitalised neighbourhoods - encouraging a greater sense of local community, well being and civic pride.

Bridgwater will have a growing reputation for successful, co-ordinated delivery of an ambitious place shaping programme building on the successful delivery of new urban extensions and employment sites. The Bridgwater Barrier will have been completed, providing long term protection from flooding and further boosting confidence and inward investment. The town will have maximised the benefits from the new nuclear build at Hinkley Point C and the delivery of Gravity.

Bridgwater will be emerging as a greener town drawing upon the uniqueness of the Somerset Levels and outstanding beauty of the Quantock Hills. The new parks at The Meads and South Bridgwater will have matured into active well used and valued green spaces.

Communities within Bridgwater will have benefited from investment in new schools and the expansion of Bridgwater and Taunton College. Apprenticeships and vocational training opportunities will have raised skill levels and provided opportunities for young people to reach their full potential without the need to leave the town. The strong sense of social unity, history and culture, reflected in the world famous Carnival, will be seen through a more focused town centre that includes new leisure and shopping provision at Northgate and improved public realm celebrating the distinctiveness of the town.

3 Vision and Priorities

Burnham-on-Sea

By 2032 Burnham-on-Sea will have understood and adapted to the threats of climate change. The town will have strengthened its tourism attraction through a more exciting seaside experience that offers high quality and active public realm, an enhanced restaurant and café offer and water based activities. This improved offer will have adapted to meet the changing needs of the tourism market and raising visitor spend by offering higher quality accommodation and new all weather tourist attractions.

The town centre will have clear and more visible links with the sea front through improved linkages between them. The needs of residents will have been recognised through improved retail, leisure and cultural offer and an all year round economy. This will have gone some way in reducing out-commuting as the town becomes a place that people want to live, work, invest in and to visit.

In short a town that balances being a 'sea side town' with being a 'town by the sea'.

Highbridge

By 2032 Highbridge will have established its role as a town providing homes, jobs and community facilities for its local and wider population. New housing development will have improved the physical appearance of the town through high quality and innovative design and the delivery of necessary infrastructure. This will have acted as a catalyst for the social and economic regeneration of the town, making it a more pleasant place to live and work.

The town centre, focused on Market Street and serving primarily the needs of the local community, will provide a better shopping environment. New and improved public realm will have been delivered focusing on the Market Street Car Park area. The existing railway station will also have been improved and additional parking provided, enhancing it as a convenient destination whether commuting to and from work or visiting the area.

The investment into and expansion of Isleport Business Park will have increased the range and diversity of jobs available that are easily accessible to Highbridge and Burnham as well as surrounding villages. This will have encouraged local working, higher wage opportunities and reduced levels of commuting to other centres to the benefit of the local economy.

Cheddar

By 2032 Cheddar will have enhanced its role as both a local centre and a nationally important tourist destination. High quality new housing will provide homes for local people whilst respecting the local environment. Improvements in local highway infrastructure, particularly at the "magic roundabout" and Upper New Road will have benefited the whole village. Additional investment into Sharpham Road Playing Fields will have provided the local community with improved recreational and sporting opportunities to complement the existing leisure centre and swimming pool.

The village centre will be an attractive and active place with a wide range of local services to support the community. Investment into the public realm will have transformed the historic core of the village. The village centre will support and complement Cheddar Gorge where new investment will have raised the quality and attractiveness of the visitor offer.

Vision and Priorities 3

North Petherton

By 2032 North Petherton will have strengthened its own identity providing a range of services to support the local community. The town will have retained its physical separation from Bridgwater but investment in highway infrastructure will have ensured that travelling between the two centres is safe and convenient by all modes of travel.

Additional parking and public realm will have been delivered in the town centre enabling proactive traffic management and a reduction in localised congestion.

Vision for other Rural Communities

By 2032 Sedgemoor's countryside will be served by a network of settlements that provide for the day to day needs of rural communities. The identified Tier 2 settlements will be thriving and vibrant places that provide jobs and facilities to serve the local and wider rural population, satisfying community and cultural needs as well as increasing self-containment. Complementing this will be a range of smaller sustainable settlements that provide a basic but essential level of community facilities, contributing to a living and working countryside.

Where new housing has occurred this will have been of high quality and sustainable design, avoided areas of high flood vulnerability and meeting the varied needs and priorities of the local community. Employment opportunities will have been provided at an appropriate scale that benefits the rural economy whilst respecting the natural environment. Where there has been change, rural communities will have retained their unique character, sense of identity and social cohesion.

Local Plan Priorities

3.3 In order to deliver the long-term vision for the district and achieve the spatial aims of the Somerset and Sedgemoor sustainable community strategies the following overarching priority has been identified:

Overall Plan Priority

To ensure development in Sedgemoor supports the principles of sustainable development and delivers sustainable communities whilst respecting the diversity in function and character of Sedgemoor's towns, villages and countryside.

3.4 Beneath this overriding plan priority a number of strategic priorities have been developed to underpin the Local Plan approach. Working towards achieving these is essential in managing the challenges Sedgemoor face now and into the future. These strategic priorities and their intended outcomes are the drivers for the policy responses to the issues that exist and provide the essential framework for monitoring the performance of the policies against the relevant targets and desired outcomes.

3 Vision and Priorities

Strategic Priority 1

LIVING SUSTAINABLY: To address the challenges of climate change and vulnerability to flood risk

Key Challenge: The district's high vulnerability to flooding and the potential impacts of climate change

Much of Sedgemoor lies within areas of high flood risk including significant parts of the towns of Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge and is vulnerable to sea level rise. In addition the threat of intense storms, wetter, warmer winters, hotter, drier summers and drought is likely to affect all areas of the district and the Local Plan will need to address these issues through policies that seek to direct development away from areas at flood risk where possible, or ensure flood defence solutions exist or can be delivered. Promoting coastal and surface water management, minimising greenhouse gas emissions, encouraging energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, sustainable construction, climate change resilience, appropriate green infrastructure and land management (e.g. tree planting), habitat compensation and adaptation will all be necessary.

Strategic Priority 2

LIVING SUSTAINABLY: To deliver development that is of high quality, sustainable, distinctive, inclusive, safe and respectful of its context

Key Challenge: Poor quality development that lacks local distinctiveness and is unsympathetic to the rural character of the district

New development in parts of Sedgemoor has sometimes been of limited design quality that has had a negative impact on the character and local distinctiveness of places. The Local Plan will need to address these issues through policies that encourage higher quality design standards, safer communities, sustainable construction and energy efficiency to improve the image of individual places and the district as a whole while addressing the threats of climate change.

Strategic Priority 3

LIVING SUSTAINABLY: To provide everyone with the opportunity to live in a decent home

Key Challenge: Lack of affordable housing and the ability of the local population to access the housing market given the disparities between wages and house prices

Housing affordability is a significant issue across the district as a result of both supply of affordable housing and lower than average wages. The Local Plan will need to address these issues through policies that seek to increase the supply of affordable housing, ensure the provision of the right type and mix of housing, address specific housing needs including elderly persons, Gypsies and Travellers and improve local earning opportunities through the provision of better quality, higher skilled jobs as well as appropriate training.

Vision and Priorities 3

Strategic Priority 4

LIVING SUSTAINABLY: To promote safe and sustainable transport options and manage congestion

Key Challenge: Traffic congestion including the capacity of motorway junctions and additional pressures placed on the road system by future development

The district suffers from specific areas of traffic congestion, particularly in the towns. Bridgwater has issues in respect of peak traffic on all major routes into the town on a daily basis. In addition seasonal congestion is an issue for Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge and there are local capacity issues on many local roads and junctions in the rural areas. The Local Plan will need to address these issues with policies that minimise the adverse impacts of traffic, enable more sustainable alternatives than the car, and ensure new development is focused in accessible locations.

Strategic Priority 5

ENSURING ECONOMIC WELLBEING: To ensure the economic wellbeing of our communities, by developing an economic blueprint to shape the restructuring of our economy and transform the workforce

Key Challenge: Low skill levels, qualifications deficit and low quality job opportunities

Despite significant employment development over recent years much of this has still been in lower wage sectors. Lower education attainment and skill levels of the workforce have made it more difficult to attract the jobs in the emerging higher value sectors, i.e. knowledge-based industries. Consequences of this include the non-retention of younger people with qualifications, loss of innovation and entrepreneurialism and an increased need for affordable housing as house prices and wages diverge. The Local Plan will need to address these issues through policies that maintain a supply of adequate employment land to meet a range of local needs and inward investment opportunities, support the development of economic activity in higher value sectors, secure opportunities for improving the skills and education of the workforce and support the diversification of both the urban and rural economy.

Strategic Priority 6

ENSURING ECONOMIC WELLBEING: To strengthen the retail competitiveness of the town centres whilst broadening their appeal as places to shop, work, live and visit

Key Challenge: Relatively poor retail offer of the district's town centres

Sedgemoor suffers from retail leakage from its town centres to other larger centres including Bristol, Taunton and Weston, nevertheless, the towns of Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea do provide a range of smaller footprint retail outlets. In Bridgwater there are new stores at edge-of-centre locations, but the number of retail businesses in the town centre has declined and vacancy rates are above the national average and as a consequence the town centre image has been affected by the decline of some shopping streets. In Burnham-on-Sea by contrast, the

3 Vision and Priorities

situation is somewhat more positive in terms of vacancy rates though the main core shopping area is heavily reliant on independent shops which, although bringing variety, does mean a significantly high level of churn. The Local Plan will need to address these issues through policies that: maintain and improve the vitality and viability of centres; protect retail cores; support complementary town centre uses and encourage public realm enhancements that improve the overall experience of those visiting as well as providing opportunities to meet new retail and leisure floorspace demands.

Strategic Priority 7

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING: To conserve and enhance the natural assets and heritage of Sedgemoor including its natural resources, wildlife habitats, landscape character and historic environment, including appropriate adaptation to climate change

Key Challenge: Threats to the district's high quality natural environment, biodiversity, natural assets and heritage

Sedgemoor is known for the quality of its natural environment and contains several sites of European conservation interest, including parts of the Somerset Levels and Moors, as well as sites of national and local interest. The district also contains parts of two AONBs as well as extensive countryside, areas of high quality farmland and coastal landscape assets. In addition the district has over 1,100 listed buildings, 14 conservation areas, a battlefield site and numerous archaeological sites. Balancing the protection of these natural and historic assets with access and development pressure is a key challenge for the future planning of the district. There is also the challenge of understanding the implications of climate change for species, habitats, landscapes and the historic environment. The Local Plan will need to address these issues through policies that seek to protect and where possible enhance the natural and historic environment, resist development that has an adverse impact on these assets and ensure where development does occur appropriate mitigation and compensation measures are in place.

Strategic Priority 8

BEING HEALTHY: To improve the health and well being of our communities by addressing inequalities and poverty, ensuring access to key services, and enabling healthy lifestyles

Key Challenge: Inequalities in health, social exclusion, poverty and access to basic services and changing demographic profiles with the likelihood of an increasingly ageing population

The district suffers from significant local pockets of deprivation in Bridgwater and Highbridge, particularly relating to health, education and skills attainment. In addition the rural character of much of the district impacts upon the ability of residents to locally access key services without reliance on car travel and this trend has been growing recently with the loss of a number of key rural services such as post offices and local shops. The Local Plan will need to address these issues through policies that encourage provision and enhancement of health, education, community facilities and other key services that will improve community well-being and increase self-containment. In addition it will be necessary to ensure new development is located in places

Vision and Priorities 3

where adequate services and facilities exist and/or development contributes to addressing current deficits, enables healthier lifestyles through opportunities for cycling and walking, and reduces social exclusion.

4 Strategic Policies

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Introduction

4.1 The presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF and acts as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-making. It emphasises that all plans should be based on this presumption and the inclusion of policies that reflect this in Local Plans is encouraged to ensure a positive approach to delivering sustainable development.

4.2 The three elements of sustainable development - social, economic and environmental - need to be considered jointly and not in isolation. Local Plans should seek to meet objectively assessed development needs unless doing so would lead to adverse social, economic or environmental impacts that outweigh the benefits.

Approach

4.3 The presumption in favour of sustainable development has informed policies and site allocations contained within this Local Plan and will guide decision-making. The policies in the plan combine to deliver a positive and flexible approach in favour of meeting the districts development needs going forward and ensure that where proposals are sustainable they are approved without delay. To emphasise a proactive approach to decision-taking and plan-making the policy below has been included.

Policy S1

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Decision-Taking

When considering development proposals the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Development that accords with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise - taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

Strategic Policies 4

Plan-Making

In preparing its Local Plan and other relevant Development Plan Documents, the Council will engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with adjacent Local Plan Authorities and other relevant Duty to Cooperate Bodies. The Council will respond proactively to any strategic planning issues as they arise, including addressing any cross boundary housing need issues that may emerge in the future between Sedgemoor and other adjacent Local Plan Authorities. Depending on the timing, nature and scale of any cross-boundary planning issues, an early or partial review of the Local Plan may be appropriate to ensure a plan led approach is maintained.

Delivery

4.4 The policy provides the overarching framework to ensure a positive approach is taken to new development except where it would compromise the key sustainability principles contained within Local Plan policies and in the NPPF. It will be delivered through the development management process alongside the place-making and district wide policies in the Local Plan.

4.5 The Local Plan covers a 21 year period and, where appropriate, policies are intended to be flexible to changing circumstances. Nevertheless there may be instances where an issue or policy in the Local Plan is silent or may have become out of date. Should this occur it will still need to be demonstrated that the benefits outweigh adverse impacts and that there is not a conflict with specific elements of the NPPF. The council will follow national guidance in ensuring the plan is reviewed either in part or in whole at regular intervals to ensure as far as possible policies remain up-to-date and relevant.

Spatial Strategy for Sedgemoor

Introduction

4.6 A key role of the Local Plan is to determine the most sustainable locations for meeting the districts different development needs. The district comprises a range of settlements, each with their own community identity. These range from the larger towns of Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge to a variety of more rural settlements. The Local Plan therefore needs to promote the vitality of its main urban areas whilst also supporting thriving rural communities. At the same time a balance needs to be struck in terms of recognising the need to respond to key assets and constraints in the district, such as protecting the beauty of the countryside and taking into account flood risk and coastal change.

4.7 Full account therefore needs to be had of the varied roles, character and constraints of the different settlements across the district. The Local Plan seeks to actively manage patterns of growth across the district to ensure that significant new development is focused in locations which are sustainable or can be made more sustainable in the future.

Approach

Role and Function

4.8 The spatial strategy presents a settlement hierarchy, the purpose of which is to provide a basis for the distribution of development across the district. The hierarchy has been informed by the Council's updated Role and Function evidence base, which aims to distinguish between the settlements based

4 Strategic Policies

on key social, economic and environmental characteristics. Among other criteria this includes consideration of accessibility and the range of retail, services, facilities and employment they offer, with the most sustainable settlements being considered the main focus for additional growth.

4.9 In determining the settlement hierarchy regard has therefore been had to a range of sustainability criteria. Balancing these competing considerations is key to ensuring that the most appropriate and sustainable pattern of development is identified. Key considerations include:

- The character, population and range of services in individual settlements;
- To what extent the settlements are self-contained in respect of the ability of the population to access essential services and facilities;
- Connectivity of settlements, including their proximity to other settlements and options for sustainable modes of transport, recognising that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary from urban to rural areas;
- Environmental constraints, including key issues such as flood risk, landscape, heritage and biodiversity;
- Availability and viability of land for development;

4.10 The table below identifies the settlement hierarchy and provides a summary of the main characteristics of the settlements within each category. More details can be viewed in the Council's Role and Function evidence base.

Table 4.1 Settlement Hierarchy

Settlement Category	Settlements	Summary
Principal Town	Bridgwater	By a significant margin Bridgwater is Sedgemoor's largest settlement with comprehensive provision of facilities, services, large scale employment and good transport links.
Market Towns	Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge	Considered jointly as a single urban area Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge provide a similar range of services and facilities, albeit not to the same depth as the Principal Town. Similarly it benefits from large scale employment and good connectivity in terms of rail and motorway access.
Tier 1	Cheddar, North Petherton	While having a more rural setting and the context of AONB's both Cheddar and North Petherton benefit from a breadth of good quality services and facilities serving not only their settlement but also the wider area.
Tier 2	Axbridge, Cannington, Nether Stowey, Puriton, Wedmore, Woolavington	These rural settlements are considered to still have a good range of services that meet the needs of both the settlement itself but also close neighbouring smaller settlements. Compared to other rural settlements further down the hierarchy they are also relatively unconstrained by key environmental constraints, such as flood risk.

Strategic Policies 4

Settlement Category	Settlements	Summary
Tier 3	Ashcott, Berrow, Brean, Brent Knoll, Combswich, East Brent & Rooksbridge, East Huntspill, Edington, Lympsham, Mark, Middlezoy, Pawlett, Shipham, Spaxton, Wembdon, West Huntspill, Westonzoyland	Smaller and more rural settlements with adequate but basic levels of key local services and facilities necessary to meet the needs of the community. A number of settlements are also more constrained by certain environmental considerations, such as flood risk and AONB.
Tier 4	Bawdrip, Blackford, Catcott, Chedzoy, Chilton Polden, Cossington, North Newton, Othery, Shapwick, Weare/Lower Weare	Rural locations with more limited services and facilities. They are not considered to have a full range of local services and are therefore more dependent on neighbouring settlements for many essential needs.
Countryside		The remainder of the district is classified as countryside where development will be appropriately controlled. Smaller villages and hamlets located in the countryside are considered to have extremely limited facilities and not considered to be sustainable locations for growth.

Scale and Distribution of Housing Growth

4.11 Following a robust assessment the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has identified an overall housing need of 13,530 dwellings over the plan period (2011-2032), 644 per annum. In line with the NPPF this Local Plan seeks to meet this need in full, boosting significantly the supply of housing in comparison to previous targets to deliver the scale and mix of homes required to meet the needs of different groups within the population.

4.12 In order to deliver the most appropriate and sustainable pattern of development the strategy seeks to focus development in the district's main towns of Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. This offers the greatest opportunity to reduce the need to use less sustainable modes of travel and protect the district's environmental assets. An appropriate amount of development (commensurate to individual settlements scale, character and constraints) has also been identified for the district's larger rural settlements (Tier 1 and 2). By taking this approach the strategy has also sought where possible to accommodate development in the most sustainable settlements located at low flood risk. It must be recognised however that some development in flood risk areas cannot be avoided without compromising wider sustainability objectives, given that significant areas of Sedgemoor's main towns lie at high flood risk. Therefore essential to delivery of the strategy will be the need to bring forward long term strategic flood defence solutions to maintain an appropriate standard of protection in the face of climate change.

4.13 Consideration also needs to be had to the issues facing rural areas in respect of housing supply and affordability and the role new development has in supporting and retaining local services and facilities. The NPPG highlights that all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas and that blanket policies restricting development should be avoided. The spatial strategy therefore also identifies a significant number of Tier 3 and 4 settlements where the

4 Strategic Policies

focus will be on local growth that supports community needs and local priorities (such as affordable housing need). Outside of this, countryside locations are not considered to be sustainable locations and as such new development will be appropriately controlled.

4.14 The Local Plan therefore retains a strong urban focus, with 75% of the district's housing growth envisaged in the towns, whilst also allowing appropriate growth in sustainable rural settlements where this can be accommodated. Bridgwater, being the most sustainable location in Sedgemoor, will accommodate about 60% of this growth with Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge accommodating 15%. Outside of the towns the eight settlements in both Tier 1 and 2 will be expected altogether to accommodate 13% of the district's growth requirements. Across the 17 Tier 3 settlements and 10 Tier 4 settlements lower percentages of the overall Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) are indicated, reflecting the focus on growth only to meet local housing needs across this range of settlements. Table 4.2 below summarises the distribution of housing growth across the different settlements. Following sustainability appraisal of realistic scenarios this is considered to be the most appropriate pattern of development:

Table 4.2 Additional Homes in District 2011-2032

Settlement Category		% of Housing Growth (Approx.)	No. Of Homes (2011-2032)
Principal Town: Bridgwater		60	8,118
Market Towns: Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge		15	2,030
Tier 1	Cheddar	5	662
	North Petherton	2	285
Tier 2		6	816
Tier 3		7	947
Tier 4		3	396
Countryside*		2	276
Total		100	13,530
* A small amount of development is assumed in the Countryside in line with monitoring. This takes into account development already completed or committed.			

4.15 In planning for housing land supply, new homes completed since 2011 (the start of the plan period) and land already committed for housing (with planning consent or under construction) needs to be taken into account. The resultant residual requirement is outlined below by settlement category and identifies a land supply requirement for approximately a further 6,850 dwellings across the remainder of the plan period.

Strategic Policies 4

Table 4.3

Settlement Category		Housing Requirement 2011-2032	Completions 2011-2015	Commitments as of 1st April 2015	Residual Requirement 2015-2032
Principal Town: Bridgwater		8,118	1,523	2,875	3,720
Market Towns: Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge		2,030	262	918	850
Tier 1	Cheddar	662	126	21	515
	North Petherton	285	23	5	257
Tier 2		816	73	167	576
Tier 3		947	141	157	649
Tier 4		396	95	20	281
Countryside		276	129	147	0
Sedgemoor Total		13,530	2,372	4,310	6,848

4.16 In identifying a deliverable supply of housing land over the plan period the intention is to maximise appropriate infill and brownfield opportunities within the existing settlement boundaries. The Council's latest Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) identified opportunities for 1,336 dwellings to be delivered within existing settlements, the majority of which are in the main urban areas of Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. A breakdown of capacity for housing within settlements is shown on the table below.

Table 4.4

Settlement Category		Residual Requirement 2015-2032	SHLAA - Identified capacity within settlements	Remaining supply to identify
Principal Town: Bridgwater		3,720	1,022	2,698
Market Towns: Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge		850	182	668
Tier 1	Cheddar	515	115	400
	North Petherton	257	0	257
Tier 2		576	6	570
Tier 3		649	11	638
Tier 4		281	0	281
Countryside		0	0	0

4 Strategic Policies

Settlement Category	Residual Requirement 2015-2032	SHLAA - Identified capacity within settlements	Remaining supply to identify
Sedgemoor Total	6,848	1,336	5,512

4.17 The identified capacity within settlement boundaries has been included in the proposed supply, as the principle of development within these settlements is acceptable and it is not considered necessary to identify them as housing allocations. This still however leaves a need to release greenfield sites outside of settlements boundaries to deliver around 5,500 new homes over the plan period to meet the full objectively assessed need for housing. This Local Plan has identified strategic allocations for Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge and Tier 1 settlements and these are discussed in further detail in the placemaking policies section. For Tier 2 settlements an interim criteria based policy is included in the plan until the Council prepare an additional Site Allocations Development Plan Document for Tier 2 settlements.

4.18 Outside of the larger settlements the SHLAA suggests more limited opportunities on appropriate infill or brownfield sites. Instead small infill sites below a 5 dwellings threshold (not included in the SHLAA) are likely to be an important contributor for the smaller rural settlements. In addition the Local Plan makes provision for the identification and release of greenfield sites well related to Tier 3 and 4 settlement boundaries for a mix of market and affordable housing where this brings demonstrable benefits to the local community, including affordable housing to meet local needs and infrastructure investment. The release of such sites on the basis of meeting local affordable housing need will need to be justified through appropriate evidence in the form of an up to date assessment of local housing need. Where the Council has not undertaken an assessment they can be prepared by other parties provided the methodology has been agreed with the Council. Whether sites are appropriately well related to settlement boundaries will be judged on a case by case basis. However sites will generally be considered to be well related where they integrate well with the existing built form of the settlement (e.g. are not visually detached or isolated) and where local services in the settlement are within an easy and safe walking distance.

4.19 For the remainder of the district, housing provision will be appropriately controlled and limited to appropriate small scale infill opportunities within the smaller villages and hamlets, or where a countryside need is essential. Unless special circumstances apply isolated homes in the countryside will be resisted, in accordance with the NPPF. For this reason no land supply for housing is identified in these areas.

4.20 To ensure development is directed to sustainable locations and to assist in the interpretation of policies in the plan, settlement boundaries have been identified in the accompanying Policies Map. These define the existing built up area of the settlements identified in the settlement hierarchy. For the avoidance of doubt new allocations for development identified in this plan which have been subsequently built out should be judged to fall within the settlement boundary until such time as the boundaries are extended through the next Local Plan review.

Five Year Land Supply

4.21 In line with the plan, monitor, manage approach the Sedgemoor Housing Trajectory will be used to annually assess progress of actual housing completions against the housing targets set out in the spatial strategy. The trajectory covers a 15 year period from the current date, identifying deliverable sites for the five-year period and developable sites for the following ten years. Where an annual assessment of housing land supply identifies an issue of under supply the Council will take

Strategic Policies 4

action to address this, including holding discussions with developers and landowners to identify any barriers to the delivery of sites included in the trajectory but not progressing as expected. Where the Council is unable to demonstrate a 5-year land supply, and there is no short-term prospect of making up any shortfall as required by NPPF, the additional release of greenfield sites may be required as a contingency. Policy S2 sets out a mechanism for the release of additional greenfield sites.

Consideration will be given to sites at Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge and Tier 1 and 2 settlements given that they have the potential to accommodate strategic levels of growth. All sites promoted as part of this contingency approach will need to satisfy the requirements of other relevant policies in the Local Plan and neighbourhood plans (where applicable). A number of policies in the Local Plan allow for the release of sites outside of settlement boundaries where specific criteria are met. Policy T2a sets out criteria to allow the release of sites in Tier 2 settlements in advance of sites being allocated. Also the release of land for housing under policies T3a and T4 are specifically identified to deliver key local priorities (e.g. local affordable housing need). Policy D9 also supports the delivery of appropriate self-build schemes outside of settlement boundaries. Therefore sites that are promoted under these specific policies could come forward at any time in the Plan period provided the relevant policy criteria are met, and would not need to rely on a shortfall in 5-year land supply.

Scale and Distribution of Employment Growth

4.22 Sedgemoor's Employment Land Review is a key part of the Council's evidence base in identifying the economic development needs and land supply requirements up to 2032. In understanding this Sedgemoor has worked closely with the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Somerset County Council. Projections and scenarios used to understand future economic developments needs have been informed by both the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan and Somerset's Growth Plan.

4.23 The Council is a pro-business authority with an ambitious economic agenda, seeking to attract inward investment into the district. Since preparation of the previous Core Strategy the district has been through a period of significant economic change and challenge following the economic downturn. Despite wider challenges Sedgemoor's economy has seen specific growth within a range of employment land intensive sectors, including distribution and logistics. Whilst slowing, manufacturing is still a significant growth sector when compared to the national average. Following the final investment decision for Hinkley Point C this also offers the potential for significant economic growth over the next decade.

4.24 The Employment Land Review has considered a range of economic forecast based on labour demand up to 2032, factoring in the effects of Hinkley Point C, consistent with the modelling used for LEP's Strategic Economic Plan. This has identified a need to plan for up to 9,795 new jobs up to 2032. Both housing and employment growth have been considered in tandem, with analysis not identifying a need to increase housing provision above 13,530 in order for there to be a sufficient labour force. Across the sectors translating job growth into floorspace and site area results in a need for 75 hectares of B class employment land between 2011-2032. Following an assessment of existing sites in Sedgemoor's employment land portfolio the Employment Land Review concludes that there is a need to identify 33 hectares of additional B class employment land over the lifetime of the plan. A breakdown is provided in the table below.

Table 4.5

B1 - Business	B2 - General Industry	B8 - Storage or Distribution	Total
4 ha	4.5 ha	24.5 ha	33 ha

4 Strategic Policies

4.25 Consistent with the approach to housing growth, in order to deliver the most sustainable pattern of development, the strategy is to focus large-scale employment growth on sites at Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. The Local Plan also needs to support a prosperous rural economy. Therefore for Tier 1 to 4 settlements employment development appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement is also supported, as well as retention, remodelling and appropriate expansion of existing businesses.

4.26 In addition to the 33 hectares described above Gravity has also been designated as an Enterprise Zone in 2015. The scale of this 90 hectare site is of wider regional significance and is therefore considered separately to the district's day to day employment land provision. This is also considered appropriate given it is designated exclusively for energy related uses. Its focus on a sector specialist in particular complicates its usage to meet generic market demand. The approach of considering Gravity separately is therefore justified to ensure there is not an over reliance on a single site, or upon a single sector in setting employment provision.

4.27 As well as identifying the quantum of development for housing and B class employment, the floor space and land requirements of other sectors has also been considered as part of the evidence base. This includes retail and other town centre uses, as well as other non B-class employment generating sectors (such as residential institutions, hotels, education establishments etc.). While there is a need for the plan to address qualitative needs, quantitative requirements in terms of land requirements for these other uses are considered to be relatively modest. Appropriate and flexible policies to facilitate the needs of these other sectors are addressed in both the placemaking and district wide policies.

Policy S2

Spatial Strategy for Sedgemoor

Scale of new development

During the plan period (2011-2032), the Council will plan, monitor and manage the delivery of a minimum of 13,530 new homes (644 per annum) and 75 hectares of land for B1, B2 and B8 uses (business, general industrial and storage and distribution) to help meet the need for new homes, support the economy and create 9,795 new jobs.

Settlement Hierarchy

New housing development will be accommodated in accordance with the settlement hierarchy below and expanded upon in Table 4.6. The broad distribution of the overall housing requirement will be a minimum of:

Category	Settlements	Minimum Housing Requirement (2011-2032)
Principal Town	Bridgwater	8,118
Market Towns	Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge	2,030
Tier 1	Cheddar	662

Strategic Policies 4

	North Petherton	285
Tier 2	Axbridge, Cannington, Nether Stowey, Puriton, Wedmore, Woolavington	816
Tier 3	Ashcott, Berrow*, Brean, Brent Knoll, Combwich, East Brent & Rooksbridge, East Huntspill, Edington, Lympsham, Mark, Middlezoy, Pawlett, Shipham, Spaxton, Wembdon*, West Huntspill, Westonzoyland	947
Tier 4	Bawdrip, Blackford, Catcott, Chedzoy, Chilton Polden, Cossington, North Newton, Othery, Shapwick, Weare/Lower Weare	396
Countryside	Remainder of District not included above	276
* Although identified in Tier 3 these settlements form part of the larger urban areas to which they join and therefore placemaking policies for Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge will also be relevant.		

Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, Tier 1, and Tier 2 settlements will accommodate the majority of the district's identified strategic growth requirements. To create the most sustainable pattern of development, Bridgwater will be the focus of the district's housing, employment and retail growth. As the principal town in the district it will accommodate the majority of new development. After Bridgwater, development will be concentrated on Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge and Tier 1 and 2 settlements, which are considered to have the greatest opportunity for appropriate sustainable development. The scale of development across these settlements will vary and reflect the differing development opportunities and sustainability considerations of individual settlements. At the smaller Tier 3 and 4 settlements the focus will instead be on delivering development that fulfils identified local housing need, supports a prosperous rural economy, and contributes to priority local infrastructure and services. Where justified based on policies in the plan this will include the release of sites outside but well related to settlement boundaries for appropriate scale housing and employment development.

As well as identified allocations and the release of sites outside of settlement boundaries to meet local needs, development opportunities within the identified settlement boundaries will be maximised where they satisfy other policies of this Local Plan and are appropriate to the scale, design and character of the existing community. The Council will seek opportunities to encourage development on previously developed land and buildings that offer the opportunity for redevelopment or re-use.

In the Countryside proposals for new development will be appropriately controlled, reflecting the challenges faced in terms of environmental constraints, accessibility to key services and sustainable transport opportunities. Development will be supported only where it accords with relevant policies in the Local Plan which provide for sustainable and appropriate scales of development in the Countryside, including where such a location is essential. To meet the needs of these communities consideration will be given to appropriate small scale residential infill opportunities within the small villages and hamlets located in the Countryside, the appropriate expansion and remodelling of existing businesses, and the appropriate reuse of brownfield sites. Unless special circumstances apply isolated homes in the countryside will be resisted, in accordance with the NPPF.

4 Strategic Policies

Managing Housing Delivery

Development proposals will be expected to support the delivery of the required infrastructure in accordance with the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Strategy (IDS). This will include flood defence, transport, community and cultural facilities, health care, education, and green infrastructure.

The Council will manage housing delivery positively and proactively through its housing trajectory, ensuring that a minimum of five years deliverable land supply for housing is maintained. The release of additional unallocated greenfield land for housing (i.e in addition to sites that can come forward under criteria based policies T2a, T3a, T4 and D9) will only be approved where through monitoring it is demonstrated that there is a shortfall in the five year supply of deliverable land supply for housing. In such circumstances, the release of sites of an appropriate scale will be considered at Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, and Tier 1 and 2 settlements, given that they have the potential to accommodate strategic levels of growth. Sites should normally be identified in the SHLAA as having 'future potential' and satisfy the requirements of other relevant policies in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan (where applicable).

Table 4.6

Category	Settlement	Associated Scale of Development
Principal Town	Bridgwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus for the majority of the district's housing, employment and retail growth; Delivery of dwellings on existing committed sites with planning permission (approximately 2,900 dwellings); Maximising development opportunities within the existing urban area through appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities; New strategic greenfield allocation(s) adjacent to the existing urban area (minimum of 2,700 dwellings).
Market Towns	Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus for housing, employment and locally significant retail opportunities; Delivery of dwellings on existing committed sites with planning permission (approximately 920 dwellings);

Strategic Policies 4

Category	Settlement	Associated Scale of Development
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximising development opportunities within the existing urban area through appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities; New strategic greenfield allocation(s) adjacent to the existing urban area (minimum of 670 dwellings).
Tier 1	Cheddar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus for housing, employment and locally significant retail opportunities appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement; Delivery of dwellings on existing committed sites with planning permission (approximately 20 dwellings); Maximising development opportunities within the existing settlement through appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities; 90 dwellings delivered on a greenfield site south of Holwell Lane, recently granted permission; New strategic greenfield allocation(s) adjacent to the settlement boundary (minimum of 310 dwellings); Releasing small scale self-build and custom build schemes well related to settlement boundaries that meet demand.
	North Petherton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus for housing, employment and locally significant retail opportunities appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement; Delivery of dwellings on existing committed sites with planning permission (5 dwellings); Maximising development opportunities within the existing settlement through appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities;

4 Strategic Policies

Category	Settlement	Associated Scale of Development
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New strategic greenfield allocation(s) adjacent to the settlement boundary (minimum of 260 dwellings); Releasing small scale self-build and custom build schemes well related to settlement boundaries that meet demand.
Tier 2	Axbridge, Cannington, Nether Stowey, Puriton, Wedmore, Woolavington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus for housing and employment growth appropriate to the settlements scale and character; Retention of existing and provision of new key local services/facilities and retention of existing employment opportunities; Delivery of dwellings on existing committed sites with planning permission (approximately 170 dwellings); Maximising development opportunities within the existing settlement through appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities; New strategic allocation(s) in sustainable locations outside but well related to settlement boundaries (minimum of 570 dwellings across all 6 settlements), to be identified through subsequent site allocations Development Plan Document or Neighbourhood Plans; Releasing small scale self-build and custom build schemes well related to settlement boundaries that meet demand.
Tier 3	Ashcott, Berrow, Brean, Brent Knoll, Combswich, East Brent & Rooksbridge, East Huntspill, Edington, Lympsham, Mark, Middlezoy, Pawlett, Shipham, Spaxton, Wembdon, West Huntspill, Westonzoyland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on meeting local housing needs and employment growth appropriate to the settlements scale and character; Retention of existing and provision of new key local services/facilities; Delivery of dwellings on existing committed sites with planning permission (approximately 160 dwellings);

Strategic Policies 4

Category	Settlement	Associated Scale of Development
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximising development opportunities within the existing settlement through appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities; Specifically releasing mixed tenure schemes outside of settlement boundaries that meet an identified local affordable housing need; Releasing small scale self-build and custom build schemes well related to settlement boundaries that meet local demand.
Tier 4	Bawdrip, Blackford, Catcott, Chedzoy, Chilton Polden, Cossington, North Newton, Othery, Shapwick, Weare/Lower Weare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on meeting local housing needs and employment growth appropriate to the settlements scale and character; Retention of existing and provision of new key local services/facilities; Delivery of dwellings on existing committed sites with planning permission (approximately 20 dwellings); Maximising development opportunities within the existing settlement through appropriate infill and redevelopment opportunities; Specifically releasing small scale mixed tenure schemes outside of settlement boundaries that meet an identified local affordable housing need; Releasing small scale self-build and custom build schemes well related to settlement boundaries that meet local demand.
Countryside	Remainder of district not included above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conversion and re-use of appropriate existing rural buildings; Supporting development that meets the needs of the agricultural industry and other sectors that require a countryside location;

4 Strategic Policies

Category	Settlement	Associated Scale of Development
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate remodelling and expansion of existing businesses; • Consideration of appropriate small scale residential infill opportunities in the small villages and hamlets that are located in the Countryside to meet local demand.

Delivery

4.28 The Spatial Strategy will be delivered through implementation of the Strategic, District Wide and Placemaking policies. In accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development the Council will work in conjunction with landowners, developers, local communities, key partners and the main service providers in seeking to implement the strategy and encourage their plans and strategies to support the delivery of the Spatial Strategy.

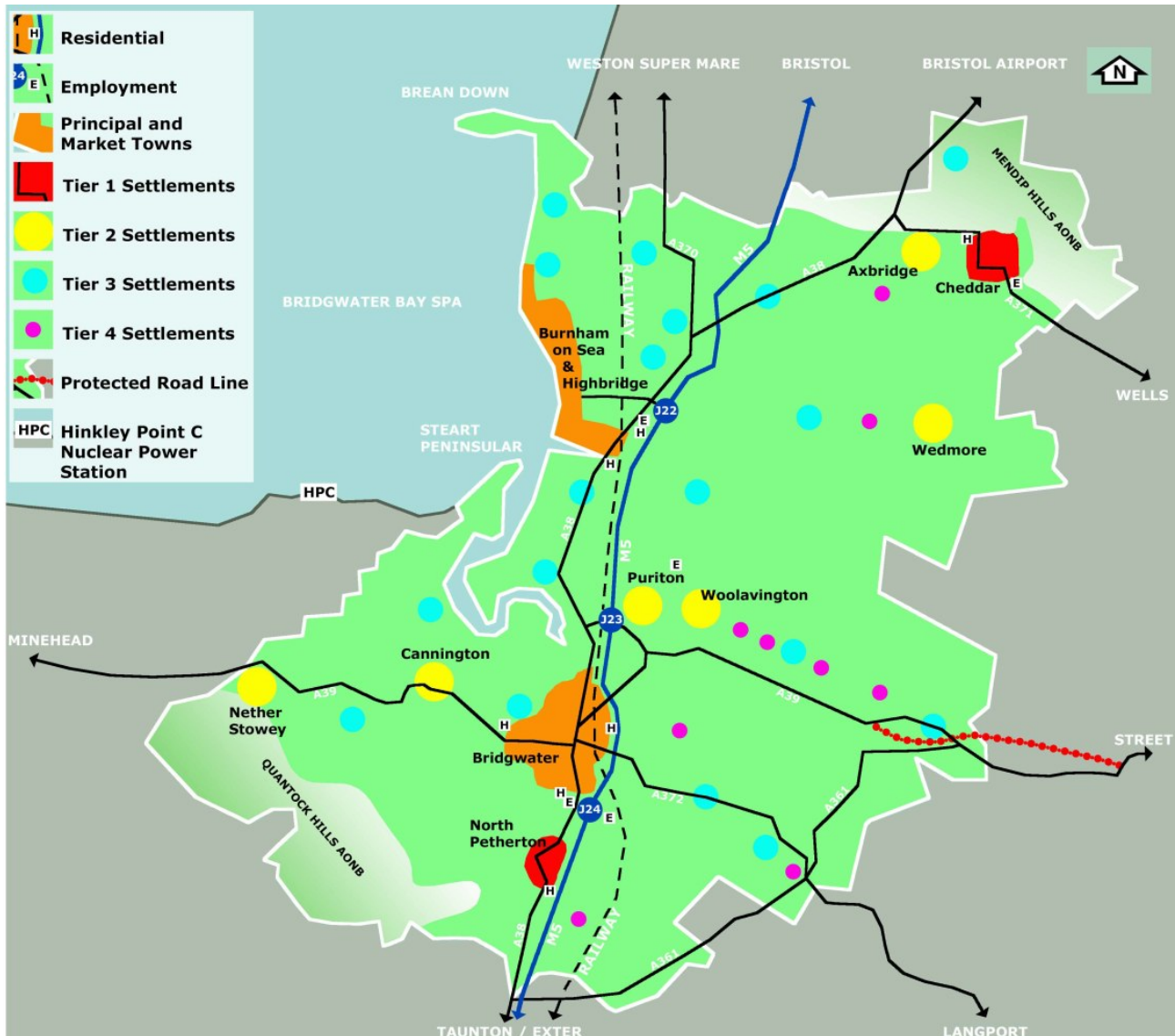
4.29 Further planning policy documents will be prepared where necessary to support the delivery of the strategy, including a Site Allocations Development Plan Documents focused on identifying housing sites at Tier 2 settlements. Allocations in this Local Plan will also be supported where necessary by specific development and design principles documents, including infrastructure delivery plan and masterplan. There will be flexibility in how these documents can be prepared for each allocation, given the priority for early delivery. Whilst they will need to be agreed and adopted by the Council document preparation can be either Council or developer led, and where appropriate can be prepared in parallel with relevant pre-application discussions and planning application submissions.

Key Diagram

4.30 The following key diagram visually displays the spatial strategy. It indicates the settlement hierarchy and broad locations for strategic development across the District. More detail on specific allocations is provided in the Place-making Policies section, indicative plans in Appendix 1 and on the accompanying Policies Map.

Strategic Policies 4

Picture 4.1 Key Diagram



Infrastructure Delivery Strategy

Introduction

4.31 Successful delivery of the Local Plan is reliant upon ensuring that development is co-ordinated with timely investment in the necessary infrastructure. Paragraph 162 of the NPPF describes how local planning authorities should work with other authorities and infrastructure providers to assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure and its ability to meet forecast demands. This can relate to both strategic infrastructure such as transport and flood risk management infrastructure relevant to the sustainability of whole settlements, or to more local provision including such things as public realm, open space, community facilities, education provision and healthcare.

Approach

4.32 To inform and support delivery of the Local Plan the Council has updated the district's Infrastructure Delivery Strategy (IDS). In line with planned growth this sets out the district wide assessment of infrastructure needs and recommendations for coordinating and managing infrastructure

4 Strategic Policies

delivery. This takes into account the role and plans of infrastructure and service providers as well as other key external agencies, businesses and communities. The IDS draws upon numerous work streams undertaken by the District Council, Somerset County Council as well as partner infrastructure and service providers to consolidate and analyse infrastructure requirements and provide a mechanism to monitor delivery.

4.33 To ensure continued contributions towards certain strategic infrastructure, since April 2015 the Council has adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), meaning certain types of development are liable to pay the levy. Full details of the CIL charging schedule and the list of infrastructure that CIL will be used to fund (called the Regulation 123 list) are set out on the Council's website. A prescribed proportion of funds raised through CIL will also be allocated to communities directly affected by new development.

4.34 In parallel with the CIL regime the Council will, on a site by site basis, continue to use appropriate planning obligations (section 106 agreements) to secure the timely delivery of the district's other infrastructure requirements not included on the Council CIL Regulation 123 list. In line with the CIL Regulations these will only be sought where they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, are directly related to the development, and are fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development.

4.35 In instances where infrastructure requirements impact on the viability of a development the Council will take a robust and positive approach in determining the nature and scale of any planning obligations, requiring appropriate viability assessment based on an 'open book' and any demonstration of viability constraints based on an agreed financial appraisal model. It should however not be assumed that development will be allowed which is unable to meet identified infrastructure requirements.

Policy S3

Infrastructure Delivery

New development will be required to provide and contribute towards the provision of services, facilities and infrastructure at a rate, scale and pace to meet the needs and requirements that are expected to arise from that development. All new development that generates a demand for infrastructure will only be permitted if the reasonable and necessary on and off-site infrastructure required to support and mitigate the impact of the development is provided. This should either already be in place or secured through a reliable mechanism (such as a legal agreement) to ensure that it will be delivered at the time and in the location it is required.

In identifying infrastructure requirements, development proposals should also demonstrate that full regard has been given, where appropriate, to implementing the requirements of the Infrastructure Delivery Strategy.

The Council will secure contributions from development in line with its CIL Charging Schedule for specific infrastructure identified on its Regulation 123 list. For other infrastructure necessary to make development acceptable the Council will seek provision of on-site or off-site infrastructure through the use of planning conditions and planning obligations (section 106 agreements) on a site by site basis.

In determining the nature and scale of any planning obligations, viability issues will be taken into account where this is clearly demonstrated through open book negotiation. Where the Council seeks independent financial advice to assess viability issues on a proposal the developer will be expected to fund this.

Strategic Policies 4

Delivery

4.36 The Council will undertake a review of its CIL Charging Schedule and Regulation 123 list as appropriate to secure appropriate contributions via this mechanism, taking into account development viability considerations. Alternative mechanisms may also be adopted depending on the outcome of the Government's review of CIL. Governance arrangements for the effective spending of CIL receipts will continue to be established.

4.37 The Council will continue to actively monitor infrastructure delivery and work with key partners, infrastructure providers and cross-border partners in understanding infrastructure deficits and meeting forecast demand. Finance available towards infrastructure through planning obligations is expected to be oversubscribed and therefore the Council will actively pursue alternative funding sources to meet any identified funding gaps.

4.38 The construction of Hinkley Point C presents a significant and unique opportunity to secure infrastructure investment with legacy benefits. These issues are dealt with in Policy MIP3: Hinkley Point C - Mitigation and Compensation.

Sustainable Development Principles

Introduction

4.39 Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. The NPPF has sustainability as the main thread running through the whole document and references the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, '*Securing the Future*' (2005), which sets out five principles of sustainable development:

- Living within the planet's environmental limits;
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- Achieving a sustainable economy;
- Promoting good governance; and
- Using sound science responsibly.

4.40 There are three dimensions to sustainable development: Economic, Social and Environmental and which require the planning system to perform the following roles:

- **Economic** - Building a strong, responsive and competitive economy through ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation further identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of appropriate infrastructure.
- **Social** - Supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities through providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations and creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs supporting its health, social and cultural well-being.
- **Environmental** - Protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment and helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

4.41 The Local Plan will play a key role in delivering sustainable development addressing Economic, Social and Environmental issues across the five themes identified in the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy, '*Securing the Future*' (2005).

4 Strategic Policies

4.42 The Local Plan is not only required to help deliver sustainable development, it is specifically subject to a Sustainability Appraisal which is reported separately in the Sustainability Appraisal Report.

Approach

4.43 Delivering sustainable development is central to the spatial strategy of this Local Plan which seeks to deliver a pattern of growth that promotes self-containment, manages the risks of climate change, maximises the reuse of land and which delivers sustainable communities.

4.44 The Council will prepare a Sustainability Guidance and Design Checklist to ensure that individual planning applications meet the requirements of sustainable development.

4.45 Building on the Core Principles set out in the NPPF an overarching policy on sustainable development principles is therefore included, focusing on the key sustainable development principles for Sedgemoor. This policy alongside the spatial strategy should be the starting point when preparing development proposals to establish that the proposal is in the right location and that it will meet the Plan objective of ensuring development in Sedgemoor supports the principles of sustainable development.

Policy S4

Sustainable Development Principles

Development proposals will be supported where they contribute to meeting the relevant following objectives:

- Mitigating the causes of climate change and adapting to those impacts that are unavoidable;
- Encouraging the reuse of previously developed land and buildings;
- Promoting greater self-containment of settlements that are supported by adequate services, cultural, sporting and leisure facilities with a diverse range of employment opportunities, physical and social infrastructure and transport options whilst taking into account flood risk;
- Improving the conditions of those settlements already regarded as sustainable locations;
- Enabling smaller communities to become more self-contained leading towards becoming sustainable in their own right;
- Minimising the need to travel and encourage any journeys by alternative modes of travel by maximising opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport;
- Providing a wider choice of housing to meet the needs of local people with improved house type designs that respond to climate change and population change;
- Creating locally distinctive, well designed, healthy, safe, and accessible neighbourhoods empowering and supporting inclusive and vibrant communities;
- Supporting a vibrant, diverse and responsive local economy that drives investment and regeneration of towns and rural settlements;
- Raising the aspirations, skills and achievements of young people and adults through accessibility to education, training, local employment and housing;
- Minimising the impact on natural resources, avoiding pollution and incorporating the principles of sustainable construction to contribute to energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste reduction and recycling, the use of sustainably sourced materials, sustainable drainage, reduced water use, water quality and soil protection;
- Maximising opportunities for local food production and farming by avoiding best and most versatile agricultural land taking into account other sustainability considerations;

Strategic Policies 4

- Protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural, built and historic environment improving their understanding, appreciation and sustainable use; and
- Creating net gains for nature, ecology and biodiversity.

Delivery

4.46 The policy provides an overarching framework for assessing the contribution of development proposals towards sustainable development. It will be delivered through the development management process alongside the district wide and placemaking policies of the Local Plan.

Climate Change

Introduction

4.47 Tackling climate change is a key aim for the Government. The Climate Change Act 2008 sets targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions in the UK of at least 80% by 2050 and at least 26% by 2020, both against a 1990 baseline.

4.48 The NPPF replaced PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, the PPS1 Supplement: Planning and Climate Change, and PPS22: Renewable Energy. It acknowledges the key role planning can play in mitigating and adapting to climate change and that local authorities should plan for new development in ways which reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It states that planning plays a key role in helping to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

4.49 Sedgemoor District Council has previously signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, a commitment to work in a way that counteracts climate change. The Council will continue to work with partners such as the Local Enterprise Partnership and neighbourhood planning groups to address the issues and opportunities offered in the low carbon sector and in addition the Council will be seeking to engage and sign into 'Climate Local', promoted by the Local Government Association⁽¹⁾ as the replacement vehicle for the Nottingham Declaration.

4.50 The Council's Draft Climate Change Strategy details nine policy theme headings that have been adopted and which will form the basis for developing the future approach.

Approach

4.51 The spatial strategy for the district will have the most significant impact on climate change locally through directing the majority of new development to the most sustainable locations and therefore helping to reduce the need to travel and provide opportunities for alternatives to the car. Through the Local Plan the Council proactively considers climate change adaptation and mitigation measures through the placemaking process and addressing issues, such as:

- Promoting and maximising energy from renewable and low carbon sources, sustainable construction, the re-use and recycling of waste, decentralised energy supplies and the zero carbon approach to new housing;
- Encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport rather than drive;
- Sustainable management of water resources, including flood control and coastal defences;
- Reducing the effects of heat islands through green infrastructure;

1 <http://www.local.gov.uk/climate-local>

4 Strategic Policies

- Facilitating and encouraging behavioural change and energy demand management;
- Using good design principles to overcome perceived incompatibilities with existing townscapes to enable high levels of sustainability;
- Identifying and utilising existing natural assets of development sites;
- Developing layouts, building orientations, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption; and
- Encourage and support energy efficiency improvements to existing properties.

4.52 The Local Plan includes an overarching policy on mitigating the causes and adapting to the effects of climate change against which individual development proposals can be assessed. This provides the key considerations that all development should take into account. This approach seeks to ensure the delivery of sustainable growth within environmental limits, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase resource efficiency.

Policy S5

Mitigating the Causes and Adapting to the Effects of Climate Change

Development should contribute to both mitigating and adapting to climate change and to meet targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Development should seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to mitigating the causes of climate change. Proposals for zero carbon development will be strongly supported. Development should contribute to all of the relevant following objectives:

- Minimising of natural resources by the use of sustainably sourced materials;
- Reuse and recycling of materials where appropriate;
- Minimising of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Incorporating energy efficiency;
- Reducing waste;
- Encouraging modes of transport other than the car; and
- Utilising renewable and low carbon energy (including decentralised energy) where appropriate, taking into account the need to safeguard amenity, the natural, built and historic environment, and landscape.

Development should adapt to the effects of climate change by contributing to all of the relevant following objectives:

- Minimising and where possible reducing the risk of flooding, including avoiding inappropriate development in flood risk areas. Where development is necessary ensuring development is safe over its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere and ensuring appropriate management of land within areas vulnerable to flooding;
- Maximising resilience to climate change through design, layout and construction;
- Providing additional measures through natural shade and cooling in the built environment and the provision of networks of green infrastructure and tree planting to compensate for CO² emissions;
- Ensuring that the ability of landscapes, habitats and species to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change is not affected with compensatory habitats provided;
- Water efficiency and other measures to improve drought-resilience, maintain water flows and quality, including the use of sustainable drainage systems;

Strategic Policies 4

- Protecting soils to ensure they are resilient to the effects of climate change;
- Providing increased opportunities to walk or cycle;
- Supporting opportunities for local food production and farming.

Delivery

4.53 Delivery will be primarily through development management, ensuring that where relevant all new development proposals meet the policy requirements set out above and in related District wide policies. The spatial strategy will ensure that as far as possible new development is located where it is most resilient to the effects of climate change and specific policies on design, sustainable construction and flood risk provide further detailed requirements.

4.54 Following Government changes regarding the implementation of zero-carbon homes, delivery in reductions in carbon output from residential development will primarily depend on the outcome of the current Government review into the Building Regulation's energy efficiency standards. In the meantime however the Council will strongly support innovative development that delivers zero carbon development.

4.55 The Council's Draft Climate Change Strategy will form the basis for developing the Council's future approach setting out how it will meet it's commitments both internally as an organisation, and externally through its wider community leader role.

5 Placemaking Policies

Bridgwater

5.1 Bridgwater has seen substantial growth since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2011 and remains the focus for inward investment and development. The North East Bridgwater site is progressing rapidly with the completion of Morrison's Regional Distribution Centre, new infrastructure including the bridge over the railway, a new school, playing pitches and several hundred new homes. Housing developments to the south of Durleigh Road identified in the Core Strategy are also under construction whilst new employment space is being delivered along the Bristol Road Corridor.

5.2 Bridgwater remains the most sustainable location for further development but it is not without challenges. Much of the town remains at risk from tidal flooding and events of 2014 as well as the earlier collapse of part of the West Quay wall have demonstrated the need to progress strategic flood defences as quickly as possible. Transport congestion is also becoming more acute and the impact of Hinkley New Nuclear build will put significant additional strains on the network. There are also acute pressures on primary and secondary school places that will need to be addressed.

5.3 Given these constraints the initial suggestion for future housing growth is that it should be broadly similar to that delivered over the past 5 years although there may be opportunities to boost this, particularly if additional outlets and locations can be brought forward that are attractive to the market. The impact of Hinkley may well further increase the demand and viability of housing in the location. This would suggest about 60% of housing growth being located at the town, less than the previous Core Strategy in percentage terms but similar in real numbers.

Placemaking Objectives

5.4 Development proposals in Bridgwater should contribute to meeting the following placemaking objectives where they are relevant:

- Meeting district growth requirements, as set out in Policy S2: Spatial Strategy;
- Ensuring that new development is of the highest quality in terms of sustainability and design and celebrates the town's past whilst signposting its new future;
- Attracting new industry and business with particular emphasis on higher skilled local jobs;
- Delivering a range of housing that meets the needs of both existing and newly forming households and inward migration;
- Delivering an integrated transport strategy with an emphasis on public transport, walking and cycling, but that also meets the needs of the motorist and delivers adequate parking provision and highway network improvements;
- Creating connections and linkages between the town centre, residential neighbourhoods, employment areas and retail parks;
- Promoting a new green network including parks, green corridors, habitat creation and tree planting and to sustain existing environmental assets within and around the town;
- Contributing where appropriate to improving or creating convivial vital public realm that includes active public spaces, recreational routes and safe and calm streets;
- Creation and improvement of facilities and spaces that support leisure, sport, cultural activities and access to natural green space; and
- Contributing to townscape character and local distinctiveness/sense of place.

Bridgwater Vision Projects

5.5 The Bridgwater Vision was originally published in 2009 and set out an ambitious framework for the longer term development of the town. It attracted considerable investment, led the way in economic recovery, delivered a substantial number of new homes and jobs and improved the quality of

Placemaking Policies 5

educational facilities across the age range of students. In 2015 the vision document was refreshed to reflect both progress and new priorities. It was adopted as a material planning consideration by the District Council in December 2015.

5.6 The revised document sets out a spatial strategy and comprehensive framework for the continued planned growth of Bridgwater. It also identified 13 character areas setting out specific objectives and design principles as well as where applicable an indication of potential housing and employment growth. The Local Plan has been developed taking into account the vision document and where appropriate specific allocations or policies are included later in this section of the plan and on the Policies Map.

5.7 The overall approach of the plan is to promote and support the delivery of the identified projects and proposals are therefore expected to demonstrate how they contribute or facilitate delivery where appropriate. Equally proposals that might prejudice future implementation would not be supported. The following projects are identified in the Bridgwater Vision and the document provides further detail:

- **TOWN CENTRE:** Celebration Mile (including Bridgwater Station), Northgate, Docks Renaissance, Westgate, The Clink, Eastover, and The River
- **STRATEGIC PROJECTS:** Hinkley Point C, Hinkley Point B Decommissioning (Initial Phase), Severn Tidal Barrier / Lagoon, and Bridgwater Tidal Barrier
- **LOCAL PROJECTS:** Colley Lane Link Road, Low Carbon Innovation Centre Phase 2 & 3, Peninsula 23 (A38 Development), Advanced Engineering Centre, Hinkley Housing Zone, former Bridgwater Hospital Regeneration, Huntspill Energy Park (now known as Gravity), The Meads and North East Bridgwater

5.8 The Celebration Mile project includes a plan to enhance frontages and provide foot and cycle paths along the banks of the River Parrett. Development should be respectful of the river's importance as a wildlife corridor for such species as migratory fish and otters and should enhance wildlife habitats and also be sensitive to protected species and other species using the river, particularly in terms of the impact of vegetation loss and increased lighting levels.

Policy B1

Bridgwater Vision Transformational Projects

Major development proposals should demonstrate how they support or facilitate the delivery of relevant projects set out in the Bridgwater Vision (2015). Proposals that would prejudice their future implementation will not be supported.

Housing

5.9 In accordance with Policy S2 the wider Bridgwater urban area will remain the focus for housing growth. New housing will be prioritised on brownfield sites and opportunity sites identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and on a range of strategic greenfield allocations. Collectively housing growth will support regeneration and the delivery of the key transformation projects.

5 Placemaking Policies

5.10 There remain significant commitments on consented sites including North East Bridgwater. Delivery is likely to be boosted through wider public sector support and investment, particularly where this delivers affordable housing. To assist with meeting the demands of Hinkley Point C, a Housing Zone has been designated that covers Sedgemoor and includes a focus on delivery at North East Bridgwater.

5.11 There is a need to allocate new greenfield allocations to accommodate at least 2,700 new homes during the plan period. Given the size of the various site options and the need for some flexibility, the identified sites below can accommodate at least 2,900 new homes.

Site Allocations

5.12 The following sites are allocated for residential development;

Land at west Bridgwater (Within Wembdon and Durleigh Parishes)

5.13 This site is located to the west of Bridgwater and comprises two distinct areas, land at Cokerhurst Farm, Wembdon, and land south of Quantock Road. An indicative masterplan below identifies the allocation and principle components of the scheme. Whilst the Local Plan does not suggest any formal phasing, it is anticipated that the Cokerhurst Farm site will commence first given that it was identified as a broad location for housing in the Council's Core Strategy.

5.14 Development as a whole will need to deliver an appropriate level of community services/facilities, a new primary school, and to facilitate the future provision of a secondary school on the adjoining Queenswood Farm site. An indicative location for the primary school within the Cokerhurst Farm site has been identified although the Council is aware of proposals by Haygrove Academy Trust to deliver a "through School" that would include primary education within the Queenswood Farm site. Should this progress it is likely that the allocated site would not be required and alternative uses including residential could be considered. Further detail on the education requirements and extent and scope of the community facilities will be developed during the planning application process in consultation with local residents, parish councils and statutory providers.

5.15 The A39 Quantock Road is the main Hinkley Point C construction traffic route and will be subject to a significant increase in traffic movements during the construction period, particularly at its peak. Necessary works to the highway to provide access to the allocations will need to take into account any impacts during the construction period and ensure that there are no significant adverse effects. The supporting transport impact assessment will therefore need to assess short and medium terms impacts in relation to the Hinkley Point C temporary construction traffic and potentially some phasing of development or temporary mitigation may be necessary.

5.16 Given the existing landscape quality that currently provides an attractive entrance to Bridgwater, the provision of appropriate green infrastructure will be essential. In particular there will be a need to provide for extensive strategic landscaping and enhancement to the western boundaries of the allocation that is also allocated as a "Countryside around Settlements" under Policy D31. Development will need to sustain and enhance the setting of designated heritage assets, including through landscaped buffers as appropriate. New development will also need to respect and respond appropriately to the local built vernacular. Development will therefore need to be supported by an approved development and design principles document and master plan. This will also include a phasing plan linked to the delivery of strategic infrastructure. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

Placemaking Policies 5

Policy B2**Land at west Bridgwater**

Land at west Bridgwater (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 1,200 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area;
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements;
- A new primary school and appropriate access to the Queenswood Farm school allocation site;
- A neighbourhood centre with appropriate facilities such as a convenience store, and community uses that might include health care if need is demonstrated in accordance with Policy D28: Health;
- Public open space, and formal and informal recreation;
- Comprehensive green infrastructure;
- Extensive structural landscaping on the western boundaries.

Development will be built in accordance with an approved development and design principles document including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan.

The main access will be from a new roundabout or signalised junction on the A39 Quantock Road with secondary access also from Quantock Road. Potential bus only access to Inwood Road will be considered. All access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council Highways Authority.

The access arrangements and/or internal road layout for the southern site will facilitate access to Queenswood Farm, allocated for education purposes.

A Transport Impact Assessment in accordance with Policy D14 will need to fully take into consideration the temporary Hinkley Point C construction traffic on the A39 and include an appropriate mitigation strategy where necessary.

A number of off-site highway works including junction improvements will be required to mitigate the impact of development. The full extent of works will be agreed with Somerset County Council Highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways. This will be through a combination of new provision and enhancement of existing rights of way.

A Heritage Statement will need to be submitted to fully understand the impacts on identified designated Heritage Assets and development will need to sustain and enhance their setting, including through landscaped buffers as appropriate.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

5 Placemaking Policies

Land at east Bridgwater (within Bridgwater Without Parish)

5.17 This site is located to the east of Bridgwater and comprises land between the existing built area and the M5 motorway. There are two areas to consider, firstly on land located south of the A372 Westonzoyland Road and secondly located north of the A372 Westonzoyland Road and south of the A39 Bath Road. An indicative masterplan (Appendix 1) identifies the allocation and principle components of the scheme. Whilst the Local Plan does not suggest any formal phasing, it is anticipated that the land to the south and immediate north of the A372 is likely to commence first. The release of land parcels will need to be linked to the delivery of strategic infrastructure, in particular an improved highway link between the A372 Westonzoyland Road and the A39 Bath Road. This will comprise a combination of on-line improvements to the existing Bower Lane and sections of new road.

5.18 Development as a whole will need to deliver a new primary school on land allocated for that purpose. The phased delivery of the school will be agreed with the Local Education Authority (LEA) taking into account any current spare capacity in the area. It is anticipated that the development would require a single form entry primary school but sufficient space would be provided to enable further expansion by the LEA in the future if required. There is also a need to provide community facilities to serve the development that could take the form of a “village” hall although joint use of the school facilities should also be investigated. Whilst the site is close to existing local facilities including convenience shops located on the Bower Estate to the west there are limited existing walking and cycling links. It will be critical that development provides appropriate walking and cycling links into the existing neighbourhoods in order to enable access to these existing facilities. Alternatively consideration should be given to reserving an appropriate serviced plot for community facilities. Detailed masterplanning of the area should therefore consider the opportunity for a community hub based around the existing school, pub and proposed open space that would form a “village” centre with opportunities to deliver an appropriate range of community facilities.

5.19 The site adjoins the M5 motorway and therefore appropriate noise mitigation measures will be required. There is also a need to provide appropriate green infrastructure within the site and to preserve the existing semi-rural tranquillity of sections of Bower Lane, particularly in the vicinity of the existing Bower Inn. Development therefore needs to be supported by an approved development and design principles document and master plan. This will also include a phasing plan linked to the delivery of strategic infrastructure. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

Policy B3

Land at east Bridgwater

Land at east Bridgwater (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 1,200 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Improved road linking the A372 Westonzoyland Road and A39 Bath Road comprising on-line and off-line upgrading of Bower Lane
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council’s requirements
- A new primary school
- Serviced site for a neighbourhood centre that could include community facilities such as a hall and/or convenience store
- Public open space, and formal and informal recreation
- Comprehensive green infrastructure

Placemaking Policies 5

Development will be built in accordance with an approved development and design principles document including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan.

A Transport Impact Assessment will be required in accordance with Policy D14.

Access on land to the north of the A372 will be directly from the new distributor road. Access to the land to the south of the A372 will be from Dunwear Lane and will include an upgraded junction with the A372.

Additional off-site highway works may be required to mitigate the impact of development. The full extent of works will be agreed with Somerset County Council Highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways. This will be through a combination of new provision and enhancement of existing rights of way. These will provide walking and cycling connectivity to existing local facilities located to the west.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

Land at Bridgwater Gateway (within North Petherton parish)

5.20 Planning permission currently exists for commercial development associated with Hinkley Point C. The main access from the A38 has been constructed and following the final investment decision, it is anticipated that there will be strong demand for floorspace. It is important that consideration of additional development in this area does not prejudice the delivery of “Phase 1”.

5.21 However, additional land has been promoted to the west of the current site that would include both additional employment land and residential development. There are clear opportunities to promote a genuine mixed use extension to the Gateway site that would also include additional public open space and landscaping that would provide additional buffering to the consented scheme. Consideration will be given to innovative housing designs that provide for flexible employment spaces on the ground floor.

5.22 There may also be opportunities to vary the existing Gateway scheme to provide improved internal circulation, higher employment densities, and community facilities but any such remodelling must not delay delivery of businesses related to Hinkley Point C. Potentially the land to the south west is most likely to benefit from such remodelling whilst land to the north east is likely to come forward first with a hotel and other commercial elements on what is the the most visible frontage.

5.23 Primary access to the site will be from the A38 via the existing junction. An additional access onto Willstock Way may also be provided as necessary and could improve separation of commercial and residential traffic although this can also be achieved through the internal layout. The delivery of housing and access strategy will be agreed with the LHA and informed by the required TIA.

5.24 Land to the west will provide formal and informal public open space as well as forming part of the wider green wedge area designated under Policy D31. Development will need to be supported by an approved development and design principles document and master plan. This will also include a detailed phasing plan linked to the delivery of strategic infrastructure. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

5 Placemaking Policies

Policy B4

Land at Bridgwater Gateway

Land at Bridgwater Gateway Phase 2 (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for mixed-use development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 400 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- 6 hectares (gross) B1 employment and other appropriate ancillary uses
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements
- A neighbourhood centre with appropriate facilities such as a convenience store, and community uses
- Public open space, and formal and informal recreation
- Comprehensive green infrastructure

Development will be built in accordance with an approved development and design principles document including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan.

A Transport Impact Assessment will be required in accordance with Policy D14.

Access to the residential element will be from the A38 via the approved internal road hierarchy. Additional access from Willstock Way may also be provided as necessary. The delivery of housing and the identified accesses will be agreed with Somerset County Council and the LPA taking account of the required TIA.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways. This will be through a combination of new provision and enhancement of existing rights of way where appropriate.

Development of Phase 2 Gateway will not prejudice the delivery of the consented Phase 1.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

Land at south Bridgwater (within North Petherton parish)

5.25 There are two distinct sites, one to the south of the existing Stockmoor Village and one to the south of Willstock Village. The sites together effectively complete the historic "South Bridgwater" urban extension and can be developed independently of each other.

5.26 The Stockmoor site is contained by existing development to the north, the A38 to the east and Willstock Way to the south west. Access will be from Willstock Way.

5.27 The Willstock site is contained by existing committed development to the north and by Rhode Lane to the west. It extends the built form into the countryside and the southern boundary in particular will need to include a substantial landscaped edge. Access will be through existing committed development.

Placemaking Policies 5

5.28 Additionally, land is allocated for a primary school adjacent to the committed Phase 3 residential site. This will provide capacity for both the additional housing at South Bridgwater as well as the mixed-use allocation at Gateway Phase 2.

Policy B5

Land at south Bridgwater

Land at south Bridgwater (two sites as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 200 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements
- Public open space
- Comprehensive green infrastructure

Access will be through the existing Stockmoor and Wilstock villages, there will be no access directly onto Rhode Lane. All access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council Highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

Housing Renewal Areas

5.29 Given the existing deficiencies in much of the housing stock, renewal areas are identified in those wards with an emphasis on partnership working to deliver environmental improvements. Homes In Sedgemoor are likely to be a key partner given their responsibility for much of the council housing stock. Opportunities will therefore be taken to improve such areas through a combination of high quality and sensitive infill, redevelopment where appropriate and targeted environmental and social improvements that might include trees and landscaping, home zones, improved pedestrian priority, and new or improved local community facilities. Such improvements have clear linkages to both improving health and reducing crime or the fear of crime.

Policy B6

Housing Renewal Areas

The Council will work with relevant partners including Homes in Sedgemoor to promote and deliver the enhancement of existing residential areas of Hamp, Newtown and Victoria, Sydenham and Eastover through appropriate environmental and social improvement. Such improvement may include: trees and landscaping, home zones, improved pedestrian priorities, new or improved community facilities, including health care, education facilities and measures to manage or reduce the fear of crime. Where development proposals for housing are promoted, these will be expected to contribute positively to the enhancement of the area.

5 Placemaking Policies

Potential for Long Term Housing Allocations

5.30 Land to north of Bridgwater (west of the River Parrett) was promoted for housing and employment development. Whilst this area does have some potential for future development, there are significant infrastructure issues to be resolved. The area is flood zone 3a and its long term potential will be influenced by the final design and delivery of strategic flood defences for Bridgwater that include a tidal barrier and improvements to existing flood banks. The area also requires a new road that crosses the River Parrett. Such a road might potentially form part of a northern by-pass should this emerge as a preferred element of the long term transport strategy for the town.

5.31 Given the need to progress technical studies and understanding of these and other issues, this area has not been allocated in the Local Plan and due to the questions on deliverability at present, is rejected in the Council's SHLAA. Its status and that of other land promoted to the north of the town will be monitored and may be revised in future SHLAA reviews if supporting studies can resolve these issues.

5.32 In line with the housing contingency under Policy S2, should progress on allocated sites fall behind the housing trajectory, consideration may need to be given to releasing additional sites identified with future potential in the SHLAA. The land to the north of Chilton Trinity would therefore be considered within this context taking into account any changes in deliverability and the strategic context at that time.

Employment

5.33 The broad approach is to focus employment opportunities at Bridgwater where in particular they provide for higher skilled jobs that support the restructuring of the local economy. Planning consent has been granted for Gravity at Puriton, which was specifically allocated for renewable or low carbon energy uses and associated green technologies. The site has also been designated as an Enterprise Zone.

5.34 Office based employment, particularly in knowledge-based industries will be prioritised within or adjoining the existing town centre unless there are specific locational requirements or associations with other businesses that would support an edge of town location.

5.35 Ensuring a steady supply of employment sites ready for investment continues to be crucial for the district into the future and the Council will continue to;

- Seek to work in partnership with relevant developers to identify strategic sites and ensure that sites are deliverable and viable during planning processes;
- Seek to work with developers to enable flexibility and a range of employment opportunities across the strategic sites and access finance to develop and unlock existing sites;
- Seek to work with developers to ensure that an appropriate level of additional deliverable employment land is brought forward;
- Seek to work with public sector partners to ensure that relevant infrastructure for key development sites is prioritised through wider processes, including utilities, digital and transport infrastructure development.

Placemaking Policies 5

Policy B7**Employment**

Employment proposals in Bridgwater will be supported where they add higher value to the economy through the provision of local employment opportunities, the promotion of higher skilled jobs and/or allow for the expansion of appropriate existing businesses.

The Council will encourage knowledge intensive sectors including Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) related manufacturing, research and development and environmental technologies including low carbon/renewable energy.

Large-scale employment proposals (over 1,000m² of gross floor space) for research & development, light industry, general industrial and distribution (B1c, B1b, B2 and B8) will be supported where they meet the requirements of Policy D15: Economic Prosperity and the policy objectives above.

5.36 The Employment Land Review sets out in detail the forecasted demands for new commercial space including traditional "B" class employment as well as opportunities within the service sector and retail. In order to provide appropriate flexibility and opportunities, a range of employment allocations are identified, some have been carried forward from previous plans following re-evaluation and an additional new site is identified at Junction 24. The following sites are therefore allocated:

Land at Huntworth, east of J.24, Bridgwater (within North Petherton Parish)

5.37 This site is located to the east of Junction 24 of the M5 and comprises approximately 32 hectares of land. It consists of two sites either side of Huntworth Lane. The site enjoys excellent access onto the strategic highway network and will be suitable for a range of commercial uses including B1, B2, B8 and ancillary supporting development. The site might also be suitable for an additional motorway service area and/or hotel should there be commercial demand for further facilities.

5.38 Access will be via an upgraded section of Huntworth Lane and improvements to junction 24 are also likely to be required. Given the existing landscape quality and currently undeveloped nature of this location, the provision of appropriate green infrastructure will be essential. The relationship of commercial development to existing residential properties in Huntworth will also require sensitive consideration. Development therefore needs to be supported by an approved development and design principles document and master plan. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

Policy B8**Land at Huntworth, East of J.24**

Land at Huntworth, East of J.24, Bridgwater (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for employment development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 32 hectares (gross) of employment land
- An agreed mix of uses including B1, B2, B8 use classes, potential motorway service area, supporting ancillary uses including hotel, commercial centre
- Comprehensive green infrastructure

5 Placemaking Policies

Development will be supported by an approved development and design principles document including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan

A Transport Impact Assessment will be required in accordance with Policy D14.

Access will be via an improved section of Huntworth Lane. Additional off-site highway works including improvements to J.24 may be required to mitigate the impact of development. The full extent of works will be agreed with Somerset County Council Highways Authority and Highways England.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways. This will be through a combination of new provision and enhancement of existing rights of way.

A Heritage Statement will need to be submitted to fully understand the impacts on identified designated Heritage Assets. Development will need to sustain and enhance their setting, including through landscaped buffers as appropriate.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

Land to the west and east of A38 Bristol Road, Bridgwater

5.39 Both sites are located adjacent to the Bristol Road A38 directly opposite each other with the A38 dual carriageway in between and bordered by the railway line to the east and River Parrett to the west. They are included within the locally adopted Bristol Road North Development and Design Principles.

5.40 The site to the west will require a new access and initial discussions indicate that a left in and left out arrangement will be suitable. The site is adjacent to one of the potential sites for the Bridgwater Barrier and therefore in accordance with Policy B15 any development that prejudices the delivery of this will not be supported. The eastern site is accessed of the existing A38 junction and comprises land to the north of the recently completed "Innovation Centre".

Policy B9

Land to the west and east of A38 Bristol Road

Land To the west and east of A38 Bristol Road, Bridgwater (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for employment development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- 9 hectares (gross) employment land
- An agreed mix of B1, B2, B8 use classes

Development will be in accordance with the approved Bristol Road North Development and Design Principles (2015).

Access to the western site will be via a new junction onto the A38, access to the eastern site will be via the existing internal road. The full detailed requirements will be agreed with Somerset County Council Highways Authority.

Placemaking Policies 5

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

Given its close proximity to the safeguarded area development must not prejudice the delivery of a strategic flood defence solution for the town.

Land at Dunball

5.41 This land comprises of two sites located to the north of Bridgwater in a highly visible location adjacent to the Dunball roundabout on the north west and north east quadrants. The land presents opportunities for innovative and eye catching architecture serving as an arrival point into the town.

5.42 Both sites are well located for access to J23 of the M5 while access into the sites is available either via a newly created access adjacent to the EDF Park and Ride facility or by a left in and left out arrangement for the second parcel. The land to the north east is suitable for B1 uses, a hotel and appropriate ancillary uses. Land to the north west is suitable for B1 and B2 uses. Further guidance is included in the Bristol North Development and Design Guide (2015).

Policy B10

Land at Dunball

Land To the North West and North East of A38 Dunball Roundabout, Bridgwater (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for employment development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- 4.5 hectares of employment land
- An agreed mix of B1 and B2 uses on the western site and B1, Hotel, and ancillary uses on the eastern site.

Development will be in accordance with the approved Bristol Road North Development and Design principles (2015).

Access to the western site will be via the existing road network serving the EDF Park and Ride site. Access to the eastern site will be via a left in left out new access. The full detailed requirements will be agreed with Somerset County Council Highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

Land at Former Wellworthy's playing field

5.43 This site is located within the Colley Lane Industrial Park. It was formally used for recreation but has been vacant for over twenty years. It is well located to existing employment uses and is one of the few remaining sites within the town.

5 Placemaking Policies

Policy B11

Land at Former Wellworthy's playing field

Land at Wellworthy's Playing Field, Salmon Parade (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for employment development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority) :

- 1.9 hectares of employment land
- An agreed mix of B1, B2 and B8 uses

Access to the site will be from Salmon Parade.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

Land at Somerset Bridge

5.44 This site (12.5ha) is bounded by the River Parrett, the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, the railway and to the west The Old Basin. Located between the existing Colley Lane and Huntworth Business Park employment areas the site is a logical location for industrial, warehouse and business use. Access to the site will be via the Colley Lane Southern Access Route (Policy B16). The site will be suitable for B1,B2 or B8 uses.

5.45 The site adjoins an identified Green Wedge and therefore a comprehensive landscaping scheme that respects this will be essential.

Policy B12

Land at Somerset Bridge

Land at Somerset Bridge, Bridgwater (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for employment development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- 12.5 hectares of employment land
- An agreed mix of B1, B2 and B8 uses

Access to the site will be from the Colley Lane Southern Access Route.

Development will safeguard important natural features with buffers as appropriate, including trees and hedgerows. A substantial landscaping screen will be required along the boundary with the Canal and River Parrett.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

Placemaking Policies 5

Gravity (formerly known as Huntspill Energy Park)

5.46 Gravity is located to the north of Bridgwater close to Puriton and occupies the site of the former Royal Ordnance factory. The site was allocated as an energy park in the Core Strategy and subsequently a Supplementary Planning Document was adopted by the Council in 2013. Outline planning consent has been issued, this includes a new access road from the A39 to the site around the south of Puriton. The site has also been designated as an Enterprise Zone, further boosting the likelihood of delivery on the site.

5.47 The site comprises approximately 90 hectares of developable land and priority will be given to renewable or low carbon energy generation and other energy-related or complementary uses, including green technologies, supply components and support services. Access will be via a new access road from the A39 Puriton Hill, safeguarded under Policy B16 below.

5.48 This is a major strategic site and identified as a Bridgwater Vision Project under Policy B1. In accordance with that policy, proposals that would prejudice the delivery of this site will not be supported.

Enhancement of Existing Employment Areas

5.49 Recognising the need to promote better quality business space the Council, working with partners, will support the enhancement of existing employment areas through refurbishment, redevelopment and local environmental improvements. It is not the intention of this approach to negatively impact on existing businesses that through their very nature are less environmentally sensitive than others. Examples include scrap metal dealers or heavy engineering. Refurbishment and improvements of other existing industrial estates identified in the Bristol Road North Development Brief and Design Principles will also be supported.

Policy B13

Enhancement of Existing Employment Areas

The Council will work with relevant partners to promote and deliver the enhancement of the existing employment areas at Colley Lane, Wylds Road and Bristol Road through refurbishment, redevelopment and environmental improvement. Such improvements will include encouraging a greater mix of modern employment accommodation, riverside frontage development and improving accessibility or associated infrastructure. Where development proposals for employment are promoted, these will be expected to contribute positively to the enhancement of the area.

Education

5.50 The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan sets out the requirements for new education provision to meet projected demands. In the immediate short term there are significant demands for primary school places and a new 7 class school has been constructed at Northgate in the town centre. This can potentially be expanded to 14 classes to meet some of the projected need. In addition, new primary school allocations are included within the eastern, western and south Bridgwater housing allocations.

5 Placemaking Policies

5.51 In terms of secondary school provision the County Council owned site at Queenswood Farm is reserved for such a use. The Council is aware of emerging proposals by the Haygrove Academy Trust to develop a new "through school" on this site. Policy B2: Land at West Bridgwater provides additional support for education provision in this area in conjunction with the proposed strategic urban extension.

5.52 The Council will continue to work with Bridgwater and Taunton College in support of attaining potential University status as part of the Somerset University initiative. The Council will seek to ensure that college expansion, in particular any new residential development for students, is integrated with the needs of the town and that there is an agreed strategy for this. It will also support integration of research and design facilities in Bridgwater to help retain newly skilled and educated workers.

Policy B14

Education

Land is allocated for educational purposes (as defined on the Policies Map) at:

- A. Queenswood Farm;
- B. West Bridgwater;
- C. East Bridgwater;
- D. South Bridgwater.

The provision of further and higher education, training initiatives and facilities will be encouraged and supported.

The role and expansion of Bridgwater and Taunton College as a focus for higher education within the district, will also be supported, especially where this integrates new facilities with the Town Centre.

Flood Defence

5.53 The Environment Agency and District Council working in partnership are committed to delivering a strategic flood defence solution to provide long term protection against the risk of tidal flooding. The preferred solution comprises a tidal surge barrier – the Bridgwater Tidal Defence Scheme and Integral Flood Defence Embankment Works. Construction of the barrier is anticipated to be completed by 2024 and is being progressed through a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo). However, until the necessary approvals are confirmed it is important that potential locations for the barrier are safeguarded so that delivery is not prejudiced.

5.54 Some external funding has been secured to assist with delivering the necessary technical studies and consents. The barrier is also included on the Council's Community Infrastructure Regulation 123 list and funds will therefore continue to be collected. This project is a key priority in order to ensure appropriate long term defences are in place, these in turn support the regeneration and continued inward investment into the area.

5.55 The assessments undertaken currently suggest that two locations upstream of King Sedgemoor Drain provide suitable flood protection and detailed assessment including ground investigations will now be undertaken before a final preferred location is identified.

Placemaking Policies 5

Policy B15**Flood Defence**

The Council will work with partners including the Environment Agency to deliver the Bridgwater Tidal Defence Scheme and integral Flood Defence Embankment Works. To ensure that this can be delivered the area shown on the Policies Map will be safeguarded for this purpose. Development proposals will not be supported if they prejudice these objectives.

Transport

5.56 Extensive transport improvements have either been delivered or are committed through the Hinkley Point C new nuclear project. These have focused on capacity improvements at key junctions and investment in walking and cycling infrastructure.

5.57 A review of the existing transport model for the town and the implications of proposed growth has been undertaken and supports the Local Plan strategy. The approach focuses on improving the efficiency of the existing network through further junction improvements as well as support for modal shift. In the longer term significant investment into new highway infrastructure including a potential Bridgwater by-pass is likely to be required and the Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the long term strategy to 2050. Future Local Plan revisions will therefore need to support the delivery of the strategies recommendations.

5.58 The Local Plan does promote the delivery of the eastern distributor road in conjunction with the eastern housing allocation as well as additional highway improvements. Highways England have identified the need for improvements to the strategic route network at J.23 (circulatory carriageway) in order to ensure the impact of planned growth can be safely accommodated and does not result in a severe impact, this is therefore identified in Policy B16 below.

5.59 As part of the wider integrated sustainable travel strategy, opportunities to increase the use of Combsich wharf will also be supported where the requirements of Policy D24: Pollution Impacts of Development are met.

Policy B16**Transport**

Proposals that provide opportunities for cycling, walking and enhanced public transport both within the town and between key destinations including Taunton and Burnham (A38 corridor), Street and Minehead (A39 corridor) and the town's surrounding rural areas will be supported.

To address the impacts of planned growth the following highway transport improvements for Bridgwater will be brought forward over the plan period:

- Improvements between the A372 Westonzoyland Road and A39 Bath Road
- Colley Lane Southern Access Road
- Leggar Link
- Improvement to Cross Rifles
- Improvement to the Wylds Rd and The Drove junction
- Improvements to the junctions of the Drove and Wylds Road with Bristol Road

5 Placemaking Policies

- Improvements to Dunball Roundabout and J.23 of the M5 (circulatory carriageway) as agreed with Local Highway Authority, Highways England and the Council
- A new access road to Gravity

The Council will support the continued operation and potential development of Bridgwater Port including Dunball Wharf and Combrich Wharf (Policy D15 applies). It will also support the re-establishment of active commercial wharfs at suitable locations elsewhere on the River Parrett. In all cases the construction or operation of new wharfs should not adversely impact upon the Severn Estuary internationally designated site.

Reinstatement of the rail head at Gravity will also be supported in order to support the delivery, growth and success of the site and its Enterprise Zone Status. Improvements to Bridgwater Train Station which in turn support an increase in rail services to the station and facilitate an improved public transport interchange will also be supported.

Development proposals that would prejudice the future implementation of these transport priorities will not be supported.

5.60 Non-residential developments, especially in Bridgwater Town Centre, require adequate servicing facilities to ensure goods vehicles do not come into conflict with pedestrians. Most of the pedestrianised shopping areas of Bridgwater are served by such facilities at present and it is important that new development does not compromise their operation.

Policy B17

Servicing Facilities

Development will not be permitted which would prejudice the operation of existing service yards in Bridgwater Town Centre (as identified on the Policies Map).

Town Centre

5.61 Bridgwater's comparison sector lacks the range of prominent, medium to high quality retailers sought by many residents and at the present time interest from national retailers is subdued. The Local Plan seeks to improve this through measures such as enhancing the public realm and increasing store sizes through supporting the conversion of existing units to attract multiple retailers. The planning consent granted on the Northgate site provides further opportunities for new retail and leisure uses that will complement the town centre as a whole and link the Docks through the Celebration Mile transformational project. The Bridgwater Retail Park is undergoing an expansion to include an additional 8,942 sqm (gross) of retail floorspace.

5.62 The Council has also adopted a Supplementary Planning Document for Eastover seeking to revitalise the secondary retail area through improvements to the public realm and creating strong links to the primary retail area and the nearby retail park.

5.63 In accordance with Policy D18: Retail Hierarchy, primary and secondary shopping areas have been identified to manage the distribution of uses and support vitality in the town centre. These facilitate the provision and retention of retail uses in the primary area and encourage other

Placemaking Policies 5

complementary non-retail uses elsewhere in the centre. Such complementary uses include leisure, financial and professional services, food and drink and other uses that support and strengthen the shopping experience of the town.

Policy B18

Town Centre

Development proposals in Bridgwater town centre will be supported which contribute to the following objectives:

- Re-establish the town centre as a key destination, through additional retail floor space (particularly comparison), leisure uses and other appropriate town centre uses;
- High quality and varied retail and leisure offer;
- Regenerate the town centre, enhance the setting of the River Parrett, and deliver high quality public realm improvements, whilst taking into account important views of and to landmarks;
- Integrate the town centre with the wider town through improved connections and linkages;
- Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport.

Existing Town Centre:

In accordance with Policy D18: Retail Hierarchy the following areas are identified as primary and secondary shopping frontages as shown on the Policies Map:

Primary

- Fore Street;
- Cornhill and
- Eastern end of High Street, including the Angel Place Shopping centre

Secondary

- Eastover;
- Western end of High Street and
- St Mary Street

Development proposals that offer opportunity to merge and/or redevelop existing town centre units in order to create larger stores that might attract national multiples to the primary shopping area will be supported. Any such opportunities will need to respect and positively contribute to the historic value of the existing town centre.

The Council will support the regeneration of Eastover through the encouragement of active uses such as cafés, restaurants, bars, local and specialist shops and services and specialist/independent retail including along the river edge as set out in the adopted Eastover Supplementary Planning Document.

5 Placemaking Policies

Northgate

5.64 The land at Northgate, jointly owned by the District and County Councils, has long been the subject of a disposal process. As part of this the Council identified the land as an extension to the town centre and prepared detailed guidance for interested parties on what would be expected from the site. Part of the land now has detailed planning consent for the provision of a primary school with outline planning consent for leisure and retail uses and parking. The primary school has since been constructed. A detailed master plan has been prepared indicating the types of uses expected in the locations required and identifying linkages to the primary area of the town centre and the docks area to the wider town. The Celebration Mile also passes through the Northgate area.

5.65 Whilst the primary school has been completed, the remainder of the site has yet to be developed. It is therefore considered appropriate to allocate this town centre development site for an appropriate range of town centre uses in order to provide additional certainty of delivery.

Policy B19

Northgate

Land at Northgate as shown on the Policies Map is allocated town centre uses that will include the following key elements:

- An appropriate mix of uses that could include convenience and comparison retail floorspace, leisure uses including a cinema, cafes, bars and restaurants.
- Appropriate office and/or residential uses on upper floors;
- Enhancement of Brewery Fields to provide multi use high quality green space;
- Provision of enhanced links between the town centre and the docks including elements of the Celebration Mile;
- Adequate parking provision.

Any proposals must be accompanied by a statement setting out they meet the objectives of this policy.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of the above objectives will not be supported.

Placemaking Policies 5

Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge

5.66 Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge is designated as a "Market Town" under Policy S2. Burnham has an extensive range of services and facilities to support both the local population and the significant numbers of tourists that visit the area.

5.67 In recent years there has only been limited new development within Burnham itself. The town is potentially vulnerable to tidal flooding in the long term and further investment in coastal defences will therefore be necessary. There are also traffic congestion issues, particularly in the summer peak but increasingly covering a longer period as the holiday season is extended and this is an issue that will need to be addressed in the longer term.

5.68 Highbridge has its own distinctive character and in recent years there has been considerable development with a focus on brownfield sites such as the Highbridge Quay, the former cattle market and Morlands Industrial Estate. There are also a number of existing commitments including the 550 new homes to be built on the Brue Farm greenfield site to the south of the town.

5.69 Significant employment opportunities exist within the Isleport area and the Council has recently adopted a Supplementary Planning Document for an expansion to the existing Isleport Business Park, identifying 25 ha of land for a broad range of potential commercial uses.

5.70 The retail function of Highbridge has retracted in recent years and there are a relatively high number of vacant units in this area. Market Street remains the main retail area but there is a need for new investment and regeneration and this ambition is reflected in the focus of the Neighbourhood Plan and it is likely that elements of this can be included within the Local Plan review in due course.

5.71 A Neighbourhood Plan for the area was adopted in October 2018 and includes the administrative area covered by the Town Council plus the part of the adjoining parish of Burnham Without which lies to the west of the M5 motorway.

5.72 The key critical issues the Local Plan seeks to address for Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge are ensuring the relative roles of the town are strengthened whether that be as a significant tourist destination, service centre or local centre; improving the towns' self-containment and reducing the need to travel; promoting regeneration that contributes to the priorities of the area; ensuring development delivers essential infrastructure; and taking into account the environmental sensitivities of the area including national and international nature conservation designations and high flood risk.

Placemaking Objectives

5.73 Development proposals in Burnham & Highbridge should contribute to meeting the following placemaking objectives where they are relevant:

- Meeting district growth requirements, as set out in Policy S2: Spatial Strategy;
- Increasing self-containment by reducing the need to travel;
- Contributing to the delivery of a long term strategic flood defence solution for the towns;
- Enhancing the service centre role of the towns and their relationship to the wider rural hinterland;
- Providing development opportunities that meet the needs of the local community including addressing known areas of deprivation and social exclusion;
- Promoting regeneration of the built environment and improvements to the public realm;
- Encouraging investment and complementary development opportunities that support and strengthen the area's role as a significant tourist destination;

5 Placemaking Policies

- Consolidating and enhancing existing local services, facilities and infrastructure including education, open space and other social infrastructure; and
- Contributing to townscape character and local distinctiveness/sense of place.

Housing

5.74 In accordance with Policy S2 the wider Burnham & Highbridge area will remain a focus for housing growth. New housing will be prioritised on brownfield sites and opportunity sites identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and on a range of strategic green field allocations.

5.75 The Local Plan therefore identifies development opportunities on deliverable green field allocations to accommodate about 670 new homes during the plan period as allocated below.

Site Allocations

5.76 The following sites are allocated for residential development;

Land south of Brue Farm (within West Huntspill parish)

5.77 This site is located to the south of the River Brue and east of the A38; it forms an extension to the consented Brue Farm housing allocation (Phase 1). Access will be via the proposed junction onto the A38. Whilst the Local Plan does not propose any formal phasing, the site will be dependent upon the completion of highway infrastructure associated with Phase 1.

5.78 Development will need to make provision for the expansion of the new primary school delivered in Phase 1 as well as appropriate new recreational and public open space. In particular there will be a need to provide extensive open space and landscaping to the south and east of the site; in part to reduce recreational impacts on sensitive bird species on the Brue Estuary. Pedestrian and cycle links both northwards to Highbridge and southwards to West Huntspill will be required. Given also the concerns identified locally through consultation regarding the availability of health care facilities, in accordance with Policy D28: Health and Social Care, should development create a need that cannot be met locally, appropriate mitigation will be required that will either be on-site provision or an off-site financial contribution.

5.79 Development therefore needs to be supported by an approved development and design principles document and master plan. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

Policy BH1

Land south of Brue Farm

Land south of Brue Farm (as identified on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 400 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements
- Public open space (which must include sufficient accessible natural greenspace)
- Comprehensive green infrastructure
- Land reserved for primary school extension
- Provision of a serviced site for health care should a need be identified in accordance with Policy D28.

Placemaking Policies 5

Development will be built in accordance with an approved development and design principles document including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan.

Access will be via the internal road network consented for Brue Farm Phase 1 and all access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council Highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

Additional off-site highway works to Edithmead Roundabout/J.22 as referred to in Policy BH7 may be required to mitigate the impact of development. The full extent of any works or contributions will be agreed with Somerset County Council Highways Authority and Highways England.

Appropriate flood risk mitigation measures and any necessary flood defence improvements to the Brue banks will need to be agreed with the Environment Agency.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

Land east of Isleport Lane

5.80 This site is located to the east of Isleport Road and north of the B3139. Access will be via a new junction to the south of Isleport Road.

5.81 The site adjoins the M5 motorway and therefore appropriate noise mitigation measures will be required. There is also a need to provide appropriate green infrastructure within the site and to preserve the existing semi-rural tranquillity of sections of Isleport Lane, particularly in the vicinity of existing properties. Development therefore needs to be supported by approved development and design principles and a comprehensive master plan. Given the concerns identified locally through consultation regarding the availability of health care facilities, in accordance with Policy D28: Health and Social Care, should development create a need that cannot be met locally, appropriate mitigation will be required. This is likely to be an off-site contribution as it is considered that the Brue Farm allocation provides a more accessible location for additional facilities should they be required.

5.82 Development therefore needs to be supported by an approved development and design principles document and master plan. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

Policy BH2

Land east of Isleport Lane

Land east of Isleport Lane (as identified on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 270 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements
- Public open space

5 Placemaking Policies

- Comprehensive green infrastructure including landscape buffers to the east (M5) and between existing properties on Isleport Road
- Appropriate treatment of Isleport Lane, including traffic management, to protect amenity of existing properties

Development will be built in accordance with approved development and design principles including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan.

Access will be via Isleport Lane and all access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council Highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

Additional off-site highway works to Edithmead Roundabout/J.22 as referred to in Policy BH7 may be required to mitigate the impact of development. The full extent of any works or contributions will be agreed with Somerset County Council Highways Authority and Highways England.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

Potential Northern Extension

5.83 As part of the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation, the Council sought views on large scale development to the north of Burnham that would provide a new access road to the Brean and Berrow area. There was a degree of support for this option and subsequently agents and land owners have submitted initial ideas for comprehensive development in this area and submitted additional representations as part of the SHLAA update. Given the district housing requirements for this plan period and the need for significant technical work to establish the extent of necessary strategic flood defences and the wider transport impacts, particularly on the strategic network that includes the M5 and A38, the Council has not progressed this option in the Local Plan. However, potentially this area provides significant future opportunities in terms of traffic relief, provision of new infrastructure including a school, health care provision and local services, investment into flood defences and extensive new green infrastructure.

5.84 Given the clear constraints for development at Burnham, any significant growth in a future plan is likely to focus on this area assuming that in particular transport and flood constraints can be appropriately addressed. These issues are significant however and it is important that the necessary investigations and flood defence proposals are progressed in the short term to establish that a long term viable and deliverable scheme is possible. It will therefore be assessed in more detail in the next 5 year Local Plan review whilst the wider transport benefits associated with improved access to the Brean and Berrow area will be assessed through the emerging district transport strategy that will also look at cross boundary issues associated with the M5 and A38 corridor.

5.85 As part of the statutory Duty to Cooperate requirements the Council has been discussing a number of cross boundary issues including transport links and housing requirements with North Somerset Council. Part of the wider Bristol housing market area (which includes North Somerset and Weston-super-Mare) includes northern Sedgemoor although for pragmatic reasons the boundaries have been 'snapped' to the existing district boundary. Discussions have focused on the high levels of housing need in the West of England generally and North Somerset particularly, and whether it is possible for the district to accommodate all of this given the significant constraints and extent of the

Placemaking Policies 5

green belt. Further consultation has taken place in the context of the West of England Joint Spatial Plan (2016-2036) which is programmed to be submitted for examination in March 2018 although the current Publication version (November 2017) proposes to accommodate the currently identified district housing requirement entirely within North Somerset. Within North Somerset significant growth is proposed in the Banwell/Churchill area on the M5 J21 to A38 corridor (4,575 dwellings by 2036) in association with strategic highway improvements that will potentially provide significantly improved access to Bristol airport. However, informal discussions have also taken place regarding the potential for any housing growth to be accommodated within Sedgemoor should the objective of accommodating North Somerset's housing requirement prove to be unachievable within the district, particularly if overall housing number are increased. These Duty to Cooperate conversations will continue and the progress of the West of England Joint Spatial Plan and associated Joint Transport Study/Local Transport Plan will be closely monitored.

5.86 Given the clear functional relationship to Weston-Super-Mare and Bristol, should in the future there be a need to accommodate a proportion of the North Somerset housing requirement, any such growth should be well related to the strategic transport network. Working with North Somerset Council, additional residential development should provide opportunities to deliver wider strategic transport improvements to the M5/A38 corridor including improved access to Bristol Airport to the north and the Brean and Berrow tourist areas. The area to the north of Burnham therefore offers one such opportunity given the proximity to the A38, M5 and mainline railway. Consideration of development in this area could therefore be brought forward if there was formal agreement between North Somerset and this Council to accommodate some of their growth. However, any such consideration would need to follow the conclusion on the West of England Spatial Strategy that will confirm overall housing needs and distribution. It would also require joint working to progress the various technical studies required to support any potential scheme.

Housing Renewal Areas

5.87 Given the existing deficiencies in some of the housing stock, a renewal area is identified in the Morland area (to the south of Burnham Road and west of Church Street), with an emphasis on partnership working to deliver environmental improvements. Homes In Sedgemoor are likely to be a key partner given their responsibility for much of the council housing stock. Opportunities will therefore be taken to improve such areas through a combination of high quality and sensitive infill, redevelopment where appropriate and targeted environmental and social improvements that might include trees and landscaping, home zones, improved pedestrian priority, and new or improved local community facilities. Such improvements have clear linkages to both improving health and reducing crime or the fear of crime.

Policy BH3

Housing Renewal Areas

The Council will work with relevant partners including Homes in Sedgemoor to promote and deliver the enhancement of the Morland area through appropriate environmental and social improvement. Such improvement may include: trees and landscaping, home zones, improved pedestrian priorities, new or improved community facilities, including health care, education facilities and measures to manage or reduce the fear of crime. Where development proposals for housing are promoted, these will be expected to contribute positively to the enhancement of the area.

5 Placemaking Policies

Employment

5.88 Previous suggestions for an office cluster at Burnham-on-Sea in the Core Strategy have largely been superseded by alternative development proposals but clearly encouragement for further employment uses within the town will be supported. Wider town centre initiatives are likely to support the creation of further jobs in the service sector and the existing approach of supporting and encouraging town centre employment opportunities will continue.

5.89 However, it is likely that the majority of new jobs will be provided for at Highbridge within the proposed extensions to Isleport Business Park and large scale inward investment will continue to be supported. The Council has adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Isleport Extension in 2016 and the Local Plan therefore treats this as a commitment.

Policy BH4

Employment

Employment proposals that encourage local employment opportunities, promote higher skilled jobs and/or allow for existing businesses to expand will be supported.

5.90 The Core strategy included a "saved" proposal for a small extension to Isleport to the east bounded by Isleport Lane. This is still considered to be an appropriate employment site and the recent commercial activity on the wider business park suggests there is now increasing demand for floor space in this area, particularly given the wider supply chain demands of Hinkley Point C.

5.91 There is a residential property to the south, as well as a number of houses on the eastern side of Isleport Road. It is important that their environment is not adversely affected by any further development. It is appropriate to restrict development to Office, Research & Development and Light Industrial (Use Class B1). It is also essential that a landscape buffer be established along the boundary with Isleport Road.

Policy BH5

Land at Isleport

2 hectares (gross) of land at Isleport Business Park, Highbridge (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for business use (B1).

- Vehicular access shall be provided from Isleport Business Park.
- The visual impact of the development when viewed from residential properties in Isleport Lane and the surrounding countryside shall be minimised.
- A substantial landscaping screen with bunding will be provided along the boundary with Isleport Lane.
- The residential amenity of neighbouring residential properties in Isleport Lane will be protected.

Placemaking Policies 5

Enhancement of existing employment areas

5.92 Whilst the Isleport Business Park provides modern commercial facilities within a well landscaped environment the older lower quality Walrow Estate has opportunities for enhancement, regeneration and redevelopment and proposals for demolition of outdated commercial premises to be replaced with more modern and up to date premises will be supported.

5.93 The Council will work with relevant partners to promote and deliver the enhancement of the existing employment area at Walrow through refurbishment, redevelopment and environmental improvement. Such improvements will include encouraging a greater mix of modern employment accommodation and improving accessibility or associated infrastructure. Where development proposals for employment are promoted, these will be expected to contribute positively to the enhancement of the area.

Policy BH6

Enhancement of existing employment areas

The Council will work with relevant partners to promote and deliver the enhancement of the existing employment area at Walrow through refurbishment, redevelopment and environmental improvement. Such improvements will include encouraging a greater mix of modern employment accommodation and improving accessibility or associated infrastructure. Where development proposals for employment are promoted, these will be expected to contribute positively to the enhancement of the area.

Transport

5.94 At the current time there are localised traffic congestion issues, particularly associated with the impact of tourist related traffic during seasonal peaks. However, congestion is increasing across the strategic network generally with particular issues arising at Junction 22 of the M5 and the Edithmead roundabout on the A39 corridor. Highways England have identified the need for improvements to the strategic route network at Edithmead Roundabout/J.22 in order to ensure the impact of planned growth can be safely accommodated and does not result in a severe impact, this is therefore identified in Policy BH7 below. Improvements to the M5 including junction 22 required to meet existing congestion and safety issues would be the responsibility of Highways England. However, Highways England is not responsible for the identification and delivery of any mitigation necessary to support planned growth, this would need to be addressed through appropriate S.106 agreements or use of CIL receipts.

5.95 Local access to the Brean and Berrow holiday areas along Coast Road is also difficult and as part of the long term transport review, investigations will be held into the practicality of providing a new access road to this area. This will be considered in more detail through joint work with North Somerset within the context of potential wider strategic improvements to the A38, including improved access to Bristol Airport, and M5 corridor. Paragraphs 5.83 - 5.86 are also relevant within this context. However, in the short term the focus will be on local improvements.

5.96 At Highbridge, there are opportunities to improve the local public realm through highway improvements. The railway station has become increasingly busy and suffers from a lack of convenient parking. There may be opportunities to provide additional spaces on surplus land to the north, possible as part of a wider redevelopment.

5 Placemaking Policies

Policy BH7

Transport

Proposals that reduce local congestion and contribute to local traffic management by managing parking and providing opportunities for cycling, walking, increased public transport or emerging transport technologies both within and between Burnham, Highbridge, Brean, Berrow and the wider countryside will be supported.

The following specific schemes will be prioritised;

- Proposals that improve pedestrian linkages between Burnham town centre and the sea front
- Enhancement and improving the accessibility and use of Highbridge railway station
- Proposals for additional car parking within or adjacent to Highbridge railway station
- Provision of a new footpath/cycle path crossing the river Brue linking Brue Farm and Market Street

To address the impacts of planned growth the following highway transport improvements for Burnham & Highbridge will be brought forward over the plan period:

- Improvements at Edithmead roundabout/J.22 of the M5 as agreed with Local Highway Authority, Highways England and the Council.

Development proposals that would prejudice the future implementation of these transport priorities will not be supported.

Burnham Town Centre

5.97 Burnham has a low vacancy rate but as with many other centres, there has been some decline in shops and an increase in cafés and restaurants within the centre. National changes to Permitted Development Rights provide increased flexibilities but it will remain important to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between shops and other town centre uses, particularly given that some of these may only be open seasonally.

5.98 In accordance with Policy D18: Retail Hierarchy, primary and secondary shopping areas have been identified to manage the distribution of uses and support vitality in the town centre. This facilitates the provision and retention of retail uses in the primary area and encourages other complementary non-retail uses elsewhere in the centre. Such complementary uses include leisure, financial and professional services, food and drink and other uses that support and strengthen the shopping experience of the town.

Policy BH8

Burnham Town Centre

Shopping proposals and other town centre uses that encourage the expansion and retention of retail uses, other complementary town centre activities and improvements in its public realm compatible with its town centre and tourism role will be supported.

Placemaking Policies 5

In accordance with Policy D18: Retail Hierarchy, the following areas in Burnham are identified as primary and secondary retail frontages as shown on the Policies Map:

Primary

- High Street, Pier Street

Secondary

- Northern end of High Street, Victoria Street, College Street, Cross Street and Adam Street

Highbridge District Centre

5.99 Highbridge centre has contracted significantly in recent years and is now concentrated on Market Street and the southern end of Church Street. The relatively new Asda supermarket located outside of the district centre boundary provides local convenience shopping but has had some impacts on the vitality of the centre as a whole. The centre also suffers from a relatively poor public realm and localised traffic congestion. However, there have been some recent improvements and a reduction in the vacancy rate.

5.100 Policies therefore seek to retain and enhance the existing district centre role extending it slightly to include the retail and other town centre uses along the southern end of Church Street. There are opportunities to enhance existing footpaths along Market Street and to rationalise the existing Bank Street car park area. Detailed enhancement projects are likely to be progressed through either neighbourhood planning or future design briefs.

Policy BH9

Highbridge District Centre

Proposals that contribute to the regeneration of the central area, enhance its role as a District centre and provide for the needs of the local community will be supported. In particular proposals to improve the existing public realm and provide enhanced facilities for pedestrians will be encouraged.

The District centre boundary is defined on the Policies Map and is focused on Market Street.

Tourism

5.101 Widening and increasing the quality of Burnham's tourism offer and providing opportunities to extend the tourist season to all year round is fundamental to improving the local economy, not just by increasing tourist spend but also in securing investment in the physical fabric of the town. To do this, the Local Plan supports proposals that improve the tourism offer overall, including the provision of new all-weather facilities and a wide range of holiday accommodation.

5.102 The coastal area at Brean and Berrow is an important element of Burnham's seaside offer. The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identifies the Brean area as being at high risk from flooding and recommends that the continued development of caravan and camping within this location will need to be carefully considered in terms of long-term sustainability, of which flood risk management will be a key issue. The long term strategy for dealing with the flood risk of the area is still emerging

5 Placemaking Policies

as part of ongoing work on the North Devon and Somerset Shoreline Management Plan (SMP), in addition to ongoing discussions between the Council and the Environment Agency. The SMP proposes further studies by 2020 to identify and appraise all long term sustainable options for managing flood and coastal erosion risk in this area.

5.103 Given the continued uncertainties of a long-term strategy, the Local Plan takes a precautionary approach and seeks to balance the need to manage the flood risk whilst allowing for appropriate or necessary further investment into existing sites. Facilitating the upgrading and remodelling of existing sites within or adjacent to their current boundaries in recognition of the importance they play in the local tourist economy and the continuing need to enhance facilities and the visual appearance of the area will be supported subject to satisfying the requirements of the sequential and exception tests set out in Policy D1: Flood Risk and Surface Water Management. To aid the interpretation of the sequential test, a tourism boundary is included that will form the appropriate area of search for this test. Please refer to Policy D17: Tourism and the Policies Map for further details.

5.104 Occupants of tourism accommodation contribute to the cumulative recreational impacts on protected habitats and species in Sedgemoor. Tourism developments will need to provide accessible natural greenspace to mitigate those impacts, in line with the requirements of Policy D30.

Policy BH10

Tourism

Tourism proposals that promote a higher quality tourist experience will be supported. This will include extending the tourism season, providing new all-weather facilities, delivering a range of good quality holiday accommodation and contributing to an enhanced seaside offer at Burnham.

Within the Brean and Berrow Tourism Boundary, proposals for improved or new holiday accommodation and associated tourist development will be supported where they do not increase the number of visitors potentially at risk from flooding and meet the requirements of Policy D1: Flood Risk and Surface Water Management and D17: Tourism.

Placemaking Policies 5

Rural Sedgemoor

Tier 1 Settlements

5.105 Cheddar and North Petherton are identified as Tier 1 rural settlements and are the most sustainable rural locations for growth. They have a wide range of local services that also meet some of the needs of surrounding communities. They also have local employment opportunities.

Placemaking Objectives

5.106 Development proposals at Tier 1 settlements should contribute to meeting the following placemaking objectives where they are relevant:

- Meeting district growth requirements, as set out in Policy S2: Spatial Strategy;
- Enhancing the service centre role of the settlements and their relationship to the wider rural hinterland;
- Providing development opportunities that meet the needs of the local community;
- Promoting regeneration of the built environment and improvements to the public realm;
- Consolidating and enhancing existing local services, facilities and infrastructure including; education, open space and other social infrastructure;
- Maintaining or increasing self-containment by reducing the need to travel;
- Improving highways infrastructure where required and when appropriate;
- Encouraging investment and complementary development opportunities that support and strengthen tourism;
- Delivering appropriate flood defence solutions that are sensitive to location;
- Protecting and enhancing ecological sensitivities.; and
- Contributing to townscape character and local distinctiveness/sense of place.

Cheddar

5.107 The spatial strategy identifies Cheddar as a Tier 1 settlement reflecting the extensive range of local services that include a secondary school, leisure centre with swimming pool, significant local employment opportunities and a range of shops and district centre services. These serve both the village and the wider Cheddar Valley area. There has been some growth in housing in recent years, predominantly affordable units, and historically new housing growth has averaged around 30 units per year. The village centre has seen some contraction but still retains a range of shops including a medium size supermarket. Permission has also been granted for a second Cheddar Reservoir although currently funding for this has been delayed.

5.108 The village is strongly associated with the nearby gorge and caves that are an important tourist attraction. As well as the acclaimed natural beauty of the gorge, there are also a host of associated tourist attractions and facilities including cafés, restaurants and shops.

5.109 There are a number of constraints to development in the village that include the proximity of the AONB, flood risk to the south and local infrastructure capacity concerns. Consultation highlighted local highway congestion concerns on the A371 through the village as well as the level of HGV traffic associated with nearby quarries. However, given the level of services and facilities the village is considered to be an appropriate location for strategic growth. Taking a more comprehensive approach to new development provides opportunities for more co-ordinated delivery of infrastructure.

5 Placemaking Policies

5.110 In June 2017 the Parish Council formally submitted their Neighbourhood Plan that covers the Parish. Following examination and a successful referendum the plan was formally made and now forms part of the Development Plan for the area. It is therefore a material consideration when considering development proposals. The plan covers the period up to 2027.

Housing

5.111 There are some opportunities for redevelopment of brownfield sites but there will be a need to allocate greenfield sites to accommodate future growth. Two of the allocated sites are also identified in the Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan and are expected therefore to be delivered before 2027.

5.112 Development as a whole will need to deliver local transport improvements, improvements and expansion to the Sharpham Road Playing Fields and contributions towards education provision. The three allocated sites will need to be supported by a transport impact assessment that will identify the full extent of off-site improvements required. Additionally, there are constraints on pupil capacity at Cheddar First School with forecasts suggesting that in the medium to long term there may be a need to increase capacity to accommodate the total new houses allocated in the Local Plan. Such capacity will be through remodelling on the existing site and funded through CIL. Whilst not suggesting a formal phasing, development will therefore need to demonstrate there are sufficient spaces available within the locality before favourable consideration can be given. Such capacity may be through appropriate contributions to deliver new spaces where this is physically achievable.

Housing and Infrastructure Objectives

5.113 All residential development should contribute towards local Cheddar infrastructure priorities. This will be achieved through the use of either site specific S.106 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levy subject to the Councils Regulation 123 List and the CIL Regulations. Infrastructure is identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and currently includes the following:

- Transport schemes detailed under Policy C5
- New and expanded recreational and public open space including that detailed under Policy C8
- Appropriate investment and expansion of local education provision detailed under Policy C9
- Investment and improvement into Cheddar Village Centre detailed under Policy C6.

5.114 The three allocated sites C1, C2, and C3 will need to be supported by transport impact assessments that will identify the full extent of off-site improvements required. Formal phasing of these allocations is not proposed but schemes will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient infrastructure capacity available or planned to be delivered before development can commence.

5.115 Given the existing landscape quality that currently provides an attractive entrance to the village and the need to provide appropriate ecological mitigation, the provision of appropriate green infrastructure will be essential. Development therefore needs to be supported by an approved development and design principles document and a comprehensive master plan. This should also include an infrastructure delivery plan demonstrating how proposals both individually and collectively will ensure the timely delivery of necessary infrastructure.

5.116 The following sites are allocated for residential development;

Land at Round Oak Farm, east of Upper New Road

5.117 The site is located to the east of Upper New Road and allocated in the Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan. There is a county wildlife site within the site boundary and it is also within the Bat Consultation Zone. These constraints mean that only around half of the site is developable.

Placemaking Policies 5

5.118 Vehicular access will be via a new junction on the A371, the design of which must not prejudice the potential development of land to the west of the A371. It is probable that a roundabout junction serving both sites would be the most appropriate solution in the long term.

5.119 The site is close to the AONB and the impact on the setting of Cheddar is an important consideration. It is also within a Bat Consultation Zone and has undergone a “test of significance” under the Habitats Regulations (Policy D23 refers). A comprehensive green infrastructure strategy will therefore be required. The Council consider that development of this site and the land to the west of the A371 should be supported by an approved development and design principles document and master plan. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

Policy C1

Land at Round Oak Farm

Land at Round Oak Farm, east of Upper New Road (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 100 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Affordable housing as per the Council’s requirements
- Public open space including contributions towards Sharpham Road Playing Field enhancement
- Appropriate pavement improvements/traffic calming/pedestrian crossings on Upper New Road
- Contribution to off-site highway improvements on Upper New Road (including “magic roundabout”)
- Comprehensive green infrastructure including replacement bat habitat to the north of the site and protection and appropriate enhancement of the valuable ecological features of Round Oak Field County Wildlife site, in accordance with Policy D20: ‘Biodiversity and Geodiversity’

Development will be built in accordance with an approved development and design principles including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan.

Access will be from A371 Upper New Road and be of a design and standard that does not prejudice access to land to the west of Upper New Road. All access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

The setting of Cheddar together with conserving the Mendip Hills AONB landscape and scenic beauty should be a key consideration in accordance with Policy D19: ‘Landscape’.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

5 Placemaking Policies

Land north of Holwell Lane, west of Upper New Road

5.120 The site is located to the west of Upper New Road. It effectively forms a second phase of development, permission for 90 dwellings having been granted consent to the south. The site is adjacent to the “Strawberry Line” that forms part of a long distance cycle path. Development will be required to enhance the existing cycle path and to retain a substantial landscaped buffer along its route.

5.121 Vehicular access will be via a new junction on the A371 the design of which must not prejudice the potential development of land to the east of the A371. It is probable that a roundabout or traffic light junction serving both sites would be the most appropriate solution in the long term. Consideration will also be given to access from the committed development to the south, crossing Holwell Lane. However, any such access would need to demonstrate it does not prejudice the enhanced use of Holwell Lane for walking and cycling and that through submission of a HRA there are no significant adverse impacts on protected species. Appropriate walking and cycling connections will be provided including a link to Holwell Lane.

5.122 A small site adjacent to the A371 is reserved for commercial development that could include a local centre or small scale starter units.

5.123 The site is close to the AONB and the impact on the setting of Cheddar is an important consideration. It is also within a Bat Consultation Zone and will require a “test of significance” under the Habitats Regulations (Policy D23 refers). There are known bat flight paths and feeding areas within or adjacent to the allocation and development will therefore be required to provide appropriate mitigation. A comprehensive green infrastructure strategy will therefore be required. The Council consider that development of this site and the land to the east of the A371 should be supported by an approved development and design principles document and master plan. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

Policy C2

Land north of Holwell Lane, west of Upper New Road

Land north of Holwell Lane, west of A371 (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 150 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council’s requirements
- Public open space including contributions towards Sharpham Road Playing Field enhancement.
- Contribution to off-site highway improvements on Upper New Road (including “magic roundabout”)
- Enhancement to the Strawberry Line
- Comprehensive green infrastructure replacement bat habitat to the north and west of the site

Development will be in accordance with an approved development and design principles document including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan

Placemaking Policies 5

Vehicular access will be from A371 Upper New Road and be of a design and standard that does not prejudice access to land to the east of Upper New Road. Consideration will also be given to access from the committed development to the south, crossing Holwell Lane. However, any such access would need to demonstrate it does not prejudice the enhanced use of Holwell Lane for walking and cycling and that through submission of a HRA there are no significant adverse impacts on protected species. All access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways including appropriate connection to Holwell Lane.

An area is reserved for small scale employment or other commercial development that could include a local convenience store or other appropriate local services subject to market demand and viability. Alternative uses will only be considered if it can be demonstrated that there is no demand after an appropriate period of marketing (18 months).

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

Land north of Hellier's Lane

5.124 The site is located to the west of existing development and originally formed part of a larger potential site. The site is allocated in the Cheddar Neighbourhood Plan. It is less well located to Cheddar and therefore appropriate pedestrian and cycle links will need to be provided, both on-site and off-site. Access will be direct from Hellier's Lane.

5.125 The site is within a Bat Consultation Zone and will require a "test of significance" under the Habitats Regulations (Policy D23 refers). The Council consider that development of this site should be supported by an appropriate approved development and design principles document and master plan. Appendix 1 illustrates the key principles.

Policy C3

Land north of Hellier's Lane

Land north of Hellier's Lane (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 60 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements
- Public open space
- Comprehensive green infrastructure including replacement bat habitat to the north and west of the site

Development will be in accordance with an approved development and design principles document including an infrastructure delivery plan and master plan.

Access will be from Hellier's Lane. All access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council highways Authority.

5 Placemaking Policies

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

5.126 Land in the vicinity of Venns Gate has been promoted for residential development and potentially there may be opportunities for an appropriate scale self build scheme. However, there are constraints in terms of the local highway access, and proximity to the AONB. The area is within a Bat Consultation Zone and will require a “test of significance” under the Habitats Regulations (Policy D23 refers). Any emerging proposals for self build housing will be considered under Policy D9: Self Build and Custom Build Homes as well as other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

Employment

5.127 There are a number of existing employment sites within or close to Cheddar as well as significant employment associated with the gorge. In order to promote self-containment the plan supports new employment proposals within or well related to the settlement boundary where they are of an appropriate scale. Additionally the redevelopment and remodelling of the existing employment sites is also supported.

5.128 A specific site has also been identified adjacent to the existing Winchester Farm employment park that will provide additional opportunities for business expansion.

5.129 Yeo Valley Farms currently operate a distribution facility at a site on the Axe Road just outside Cheddar and as part of a business rationalisation programme the site is likely to become available for development. The Council will support and encourage retention of employment uses or where appropriate a mixed-use scheme.

Employment Land Allocations

5.130 Winchester Farm to the south east of the village, west of Draycott Road, is a successful business park with a diverse range of businesses. Land adjacent to this site is available and would provide opportunities for both new firms and importantly the retention and expansion of existing businesses.

5.131 The scale of any employment use on the site would need to be decided based on careful consideration of landscape impact, in terms of views from the AONB. This is likely to influence the scale and massing of any buildings. It is also within a Bat Consultation Zone and will require a “test of significance” under the Habitats Regulations (Policy D23 refers). There are known bat flight paths and feeding areas within or adjacent to the allocation and development will therefore be required to provide appropriate mitigation.

5.132 The quantity and nature of the employment use would also need to reflect consideration of traffic impacts, given that a significant proportion of vehicle movements are likely to be through the village centre. Given this the site is considered to be most appropriate for B1 and B2 uses and future applications will need to be supported by a transport impact assessment. Access can be achieved either via a new junction onto the A371 or via Draycott Park. The latter is favoured and would also reduce the need for new street lighting and removal of some hedges. The new access from Labourham Drove crosses through an area of the flood risk and any planning application will need to demonstrate safe access/egress during times of flood.

Placemaking Policies 5

Habitats Regulations Recommendation

5.133 The HRA has raised a concern that the inclusion of street lighting within a development on the 'Land West of Draycott Road' site would form a barrier to greater horseshoe bat movements from the Mendips to feeding areas on the moors. There is also evidence that Froglands Farm may host a maternity roost of greater horseshoe bats and so it is likely that the 'Land west of Draycott Road' site is used by juveniles for foraging. Survey data for the area is currently lacking and so it will be necessary to undertake monthly surveys between April and October (to account for changes in feeding areas through the season as prey becomes available) in order to inform an Appropriate Assessment of the proposal.

5.134 It is therefore recommended that a precautionary approach is taken and that the site allocation policy should include a specific requirement that development will not be granted approval until prospective developers undertake the necessary surveys needed to inform an Appropriate Assessment of the development and then only if Natural England are satisfied that there will be no significant effect.

Policy C4**Land west of Draycott Road**

Land west of Draycott Road (adjacent to Winchester Farm) is allocated for employment development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- 3.8 hectare (gross) of employment land
- An agreed mix of uses including B1 and B2 use classes
- Comprehensive green infrastructure including replacement bat habitat to the south east of the site

Development proposals will need to be supported by approved development and design principles and master plan.

The Transport Impact Assessment will need to take particular account of the impact of additional traffic generated from proposed uses on Cheddar village.

Access will be from Labourham Drove. All access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council highways Authority.

Any planning application will need to demonstrate safe access/egress during times of flood.

Development proposals that would compromise the delivery of an identified strategic growth location will not be supported.

Development proposals will not be approved by the Council unless it can be demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority and Natural England, that there will be no significant adverse effects on protected species and their habitats.

5 Placemaking Policies

Yeo Valley

5.135 The Council is aware that the existing Yeo Valley distribution business to the north of the A371 may potentially become vacant during the plan period. Whilst the site is located outside of both Cheddar and Axbridge, it is close to both and benefits from proximity to small scale local services within walking distance from the site. Consideration of any future use of this site will be through Policy CO3: Brownfield Sites in the Countryside, where the starting presumption is for re-use for commercial purposes. Mixed-use will be considered, however, where it can be shown that commercial only is not viable or appropriate. The site is within the AONB and therefore any redevelopment will need to carefully consider the impact on this and the requirements of Policy D19: Landscape.

Transport

5.136 Cheddar experiences localised traffic congestion as a result of both specific junction capacity issues and the volume and nature of traffic using the A371 that is narrow and constricted through the centre of the village. There are additional pressures as a result of tourist traffic visiting the Gorge and the local quarry traffic. There are limited opportunities to improve the A371 in the village centre but specific improvements have been identified along Upper New Road and the junction with the B3135. In addition there are also opportunities to improve and extend pedestrian/cycle links in and around the village. Housing allocations identified in the plan will be required to deliver elements of the priority schemes identified below.

5.137 At a wider strategic level there are discussions with neighbouring Mendip District Council regarding the promotion of improvements to the A39 at Walton and Ashcott. Potentially by providing an enhanced access route into Street, Glastonbury and Wells, there may be some diversion of traffic using the A371, and therefore opportunities to provide local enhancements in Draycott and Cheddar. However, the A39 improvements are unlikely to be delivered in the short to medium term and will require significant funding.

5.138 The existing Strawberry Line long distance Sustrans cycle path forms an important local link as well as a wider tourist attraction. There are aspirations to extend this route to the south east and opportunities to deliver extensions as well as enhancement to the existing route will be supported.

Policy C5

Transport

The following specific schemes will be prioritised;

- Improvements to the junction of A371/B3135/Shiphams Road
- Improvements to pedestrian footpaths and crossings on A371 Upper New Road
- Improvements and extension to the Strawberry Line
- Improvements and extension to existing pedestrian links
- Improvements to the junction of A38/371 and Cross Lane

Placemaking Policies 5

Village Centre

5.139 The current village centre is relatively compact and includes a range of services including a supermarket, convenience stores, small retail units, a library and various cafes and restaurants. It is bisected by the A371 and also suffers from poor pedestrian facilities although there are limited opportunities to improve these within the confines of the historic core. However, there may be an opportunity to enhance the setting of the market cross and create additional public realm.

5.140 In addition to the identified district centre there are also extensive retail and service facilities in Cheddar Gorge. Whilst these primarily cater for the tourism demands, they do provide additional supporting facilities for the village. Improving the pedestrian links between the village centre and the gorge would have benefits for both commercial areas. Detailed enhancement projects are likely to be progressed through either neighbourhood planning or future design briefs.

Policy C6

Village Centre

Proposals that contribute to the regeneration of the centre, enhance its role as a District centre and provide for the needs of the local community will be supported. In particular proposals to improve the existing public realm and provide enhanced facilities for pedestrians will be encouraged.

The District centre boundary is defined on the Policies Map.

Cheddar Gorge

5.141 Cheddar Gorge and the associated caves are a major national and international tourist attraction. The lower gorge in particular is characterised by a concentration of shops, restaurants, teashops and other commercial activities which are associated with the tourism function of the area. This area is not considered to be appropriate for general retailing and the policy seeks to encourage only retail and commercial uses that are associated with tourism.

5.142 Although the area has seen a decline in visitor numbers, traffic through the gorge and the lack of parking at peak times remain important issues that detract from the wider enjoyment of the area, particularly for pedestrians. There are also a number of vacant units within the gorge. In the past there have been proposals for new investment in the form of additional attractions, as well as strategies to improve the existing visual appearance and although these proposals have not materialised the opportunities to do so remain. A more comprehensive vision, enhancement and investment strategy is required to ensure the long term viability of this important commercial area. This is likely to be led by neighbourhood planning initiatives or in partnership with local businesses.

5.143 The Cheddar Gorge Commercial Area is identified and defined on the Policies Map. This area has a concentration of tourist related offerings rather than meeting the general needs of Cheddar.

5 Placemaking Policies

Policy C7

Cheddar Gorge

Within the identified Cheddar Gorge Commercial area (as defined on the Policies Map) any new retail or commercial proposals should be associated with the tourism function of the area. The loss of existing retail or tourist facilities will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the commercial area as a whole.

Proposals for the enhancement of the existing area including improvements to pedestrian facilities, traffic management or enhancement of existing public realm will be supported provided there is no adverse effect on horseshoe or other bat species that cannot be adequately addressed under Policy D20.

Recreation

5.144 The existing Sharpham Road Playing Fields provide a focus for recreational activity but would benefit from investment and enhancement. Committed and proposed growth will lead to further demands on this facility and therefore the plan seeks to identify opportunities for additional and/or new pitches. There are opportunities to reposition existing pitches to make more efficient use of the area, particularly if the existing electricity transmission lines could be placed under ground.

5.145 The allocated sites are required to make contributions to recreational open space and potentially if required this might include additional land subject to the identified HRA issues being resolved (this includes retention or relocation of existing bat foraging areas). Additionally the Parish Council will be able to prioritise any future CIL receipts into this area.

Policy C8

Land at Sharpham Road

Proposals to remodel and enhance Sharpham Road Playing Fields will be supported.

Education

5.146 Given the levels of proposed new homes there will be increased pressure on both First, Middle and Secondary schools in the village. It is anticipated that the First School will require some remodelling and extension within the current site over the plan period and a feasibility study is currently being undertaken by the Local Education Authority. It is also likely that the Middle School will require extension and there remain ambitions to provide additional playing fields. Land adjacent to the school is therefore allocated for educational use.

5.147 In addition land has been allocated for an extension of playing fields for Kings of Wessex Community School in previous plans. Given the additional growth proposed in the Local Plan it is considered appropriate to carry this allocation forward to ensure that opportunities for future extensions to the school are retained.

Placemaking Policies 5

5.148 Development of the land allocated for educational use falls within areas used by horseshoe bats and will need to undergo a 'test of likely significant effect' under the Habitats Regulations 2010. Applications are likely to be required to provide sufficient replacement habitat to the value of that lost.

Policy C9

Education

Land is allocated for educational purposes (as defined on the Policies Map) at:

- Fairlands Middle School
- Kings of Wessex Community School

5 Placemaking Policies

North Petherton

5.149 North Petherton scores highly in the role and function work reflecting the wide range of local shops and services, good access to employment opportunities and good public transport links. It is also well related to Bridgwater, which offers extensive services including access to further education opportunities. The Quantock Hills AONB is located approximately 1.8km to the west of the settlement. It should be noted that under this policy it is the town of North Petherton that is being considered. There is significant additional growth within the wider parish and this is considered under the Bridgwater urban area placemaking policy.

Housing

5.150 The spatial strategy identifies North Petherton as a Tier 1 settlement reflecting the extensive range of local services, proximity to Bridgwater, large scale employment and accessibility. There will be a need to allocate greenfield sites to accommodate future growth, but there are infrastructure constraints including primary education and some local traffic congestion.

5.151 Consultation suggested development options that could potentially deliver a North Petherton bypass, but the responses to this were mixed. Given the difficulties as well as cost of this option, it has not been pursued although identified allocations would not prejudice this from future consideration. As an alternative, opportunities to improve traffic management through the town will be investigated.

5.152 In terms of education, additional capacity will be provided at Wilstock Village. This, in conjunction with the existing schools at Stockmoor Village and North Petherton, will collectively provide sufficient school places.

5.153 All housing allocations in North Petherton will need to provide adequate accessible natural greenspace in line with policies D30 and D34 as mitigation for the likely increase in recreational pressure on the protected species and habitats within Sedgemoor.

5.154 The following sites are allocated;

Land east of A38, west of Newton Road, North Petherton

5.155 This site is located on land between A38 and Newton Road to the south of North Petherton. Primary access will be via a new junction onto the A38 and consideration will be given to connection through to Newton Road. This would provide local benefit by diverting existing traffic from the current junction of Newton Road and the A38. Development should certainly not prejudice such a connection in the future.

5.156 The land to the south is designated Flood Zone 3b and will form part of a landscaped edge to the development. Appendix 1 illustrates the key components of the scheme.

Policy NP1

Land east of A38, west of Newton Road

Land East of A38, west of Newton Road (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 230 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area

Placemaking Policies 5

- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements
- Public open space
- Comprehensive green infrastructure

Access will be from the A38. Consideration should be given to providing a link road between the A38 and Newton Road or future provision for such a link should be retained. All access points will need to be agreed to the satisfaction of Somerset County Council highways Authority.

The development will be expected to integrate with existing developments and the wider area through provision of public footpaths and cycle ways with potential improvements and addition of footpaths to North Newton.

A Heritage Statement will need to be submitted to fully understand the impacts on identified designated Heritage Assets. House designs, layout and landscaping will need to reflect the need to sustain and enhance their setting.

Land to the east of Baymead Lane, Stafflands Farm

5.157 This site is located to the east of Baymead Lane and can be accessed directly though the existing estate.

Policy NP2

Land to the east of Baymead Lane

Land to the east of Baymead Lane, Stafflands Farm (as defined on the Policies Map) is allocated for residential development. Development will provide (unless otherwise agreed with the Local Planning Authority):

- About 40 new homes of a mixed size and type appropriate to the area
- Affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements

Town Centre and Traffic Management

5.158 The current town centre is relatively compact and includes a range of services including convenience stores, a library and various other services. The A38 runs through the centre and there are localised traffic congestion issues. Potentially some improvements might be possible through traffic management, particularly reviewing the extent of on-street parking. However, any changes to this are likely to only be practicable if some additional off-street parking opportunities can be found. It is likely that any such improvements will be progressed through neighbourhood planning. It is possible for example that through some modest changes additional parking spaces could be provided at the community centre.

5.159 A District Centre boundary is defined on the Policies Map.

5 Placemaking Policies

Policy NP3

Town Centre

Proposals that contribute to the regeneration of the centre; enhance its role as a District centre and provide for the needs of the local community will be supported. In particular proposals to improve the existing public realm and provide enhanced facilities for pedestrians will be encouraged.

Proposals to provide additional off-street car parking to serve the centre will be supported. Opportunities to introduce new traffic management on the A38 through the town will need to demonstrate that they do not have a negative impact on the vitality and viability of the centre.

The District Centre boundary is defined on the Policies Map.

Placemaking Policies 5

Tier 2 Settlements

5.160 The Tier 2 settlements represent the most sustainable rural settlements and provide a range of services both locally and for the adjoining wider area. They act as larger local centres that have a range of services, some local employment opportunities and generally reasonable public transport access. The settlements currently identified are Wedmore, Cannington, Axbridge, Nether Stowey, Puriton, and Woolavington.

5.161 In accordance with Policy S2 these settlements will accommodate a proportion of the district wide strategic housing requirements. It is anticipated that housing sites will either be identified through neighbourhood planning initiatives or a subsequent site allocations document.

Placemaking Objectives

5.162 Proposals for development in the Tier 2 Settlements should contribute to the following objectives where relevant:

- Enhance and sustain their role as service centres for local communities;
- Meet as a minimum the requirements for district growth as set out below;
- Maintain or improved self-containment of the settlement;
- Respect environmental limits;
- Maintain or improve their overall sustainability, having regard to environmental, social and economic factors;
- Meet the needs of the local community; and
- Contribute to townscape character and local distinctiveness/sense of place.

Housing

5.163 As part of the plan preparation process, consultation was undertaken on both specific development opportunities promoted through the SHLAA and the overall level of growth that might be appropriate given specific constraints and opportunities. It is intended to prepare a site allocations Development Plan Document that will identify appropriate sites at the Tier 2 settlements. As the majority of these places are embarking upon neighbourhood plans it is possible that this approach will allocate sites in advance of any subsequent DPD.

5.164 In the interim, a criteria based policy will enable the release of sites to come forward in advance of either the allocations DPD or neighbourhood plan where they are consistent with this. This will ensure that housing delivery is not unnecessarily or unreasonably delayed. Appropriate weight will also be given to relevant policies in emerging plans, consistent with the NPPF.

5.165 In order to guide interpretation of the policy or any neighbourhood plans, an indicative scale of growth appropriate for each settlement is set out based upon the detailed sustainability appraisal of options. Whilst stated as a minimum, any specific proposal or combination of proposals that significantly exceeded this would need to demonstrate there were no significant adverse impacts.

Policy T2a

Tier 2 Settlements - Housing

Housing proposals for redevelopment, infill, subdivision and conversion within existing settlement boundaries will be supported where it is appropriate to the scale, design and character of the existing community.

5 Placemaking Policies

Excluding existing commitments as at April 2015 the Tier 2 settlements should plan to accommodate the following minimum levels of growth:

Table 5.1

Settlement	Minimum housing to allocate	Total Minimum Growth 2011-2032 (including completions existing commitments and opportunities within settlement boundaries as of April 2015)
Axbridge	70	74
Cannington	150	163
Nether Stowey	50	75
Puriton	100	163
Wedmore	50	116
Woolavington	150	225
Total	570	816

In the interim until sufficient sites to meet at least the minimum levels of growth set out in Table 5.1 are either identified in a neighbourhood plan or allocated in a subsequent allocations document, proposals outside of the settlement boundaries that meet all of the following criteria will be supported:

- Sites should normally be identified as opportunity sites within the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (updated annually);
- The scale of development should be appropriate to the size, accessibility, character and physical identity of the settlement taking into account the minimum levels of growth above;
- The development should be well related to and complement the existing built form of the settlement, providing opportunities for walking and cycling to local services and facilities;
- Development that is likely to have a significant transport impact will be supported by appropriate assessments as referred to under Policy D14;
- Support where appropriate access to local job opportunities, including retention of existing local job opportunities as well as on-site provision;
- Contribute to local infrastructure including education, service provision, accessible open space and community facilities;
- Maintains and where appropriate incorporates enhancements to the local environment, landscape, and historic environment, including where appropriate habitat creation and community woodland planting;
- Provide affordable housing in accordance with the Council's requirements.

Meaningful and robust engagement and consultation with local stakeholders including Parish or Town Councils will be encouraged.

5.166 Sites either allocated or which come forward under the interim approach set out in Policy T2a will need to provide appropriate affordable housing provision in accordance with district wide requirements set out in Policy D6: Affordable Housing. They are therefore expected to make a

Placemaking Policies 5

significant contribution towards meeting affordable housing need for the settlements over the plan period. However there may be some instances where despite the levels of growth detailed in table 5.1 being delivered, there remains an unmet local need for affordable housing at a location going forward. In such circumstances the following policy should apply to allow the release of mixed tenure affordable and market housing sites after the levels of growth detailed in table 5.1 are met:

Policy T2b

Tier 2 Settlements - Unmet Local Housing Need

Where following the allocation or commitment of the minimum levels of growth set out in Policy T2a (table 5.1) there remains an unmet local affordable housing need, mixed tenure affordable and market housing proposals on sites specifically released for that purpose will be supported outside but well related to settlement boundaries only where it is demonstrated that it meets all of the following criteria:

- It fulfils an identified local housing need for affordable housing as evidenced by an up to date assessment of local housing needs agreed with the District Council;
- The affordable housing provision (notwithstanding the requirements of Policy D6: Affordable Housing) will normally be a minimum of 40% of the total number of housing units provided on the site unless provision of alternative local infrastructure priorities is agreed;
- The scale of development should be appropriate to the size, accessibility, character and physical identity of the settlement;
- The proposal is well related to and complements the existing built form of the settlement, providing opportunities for walking and cycling to local services and facilities;
- The affordable housing should form part of the overall development and be well integrated with any market housing;
- Supports where appropriate access to local job opportunities, including opportunities for on-site provision;
- The development appropriately contributes to local infrastructure priorities identified, for example, in Neighbourhood plans or in agreement with Town/Parish Councils; and
- Maintains and where appropriate incorporates enhancements to the local environment, landscape, and historic environment, including where appropriate habitat creation and community woodland planting.

Meaningful and robust engagement and consultation with the Town/Parish Council, local community and other local stakeholders will be encouraged to ensure that the planning impacts identified by the local community have been appropriately addressed as far as possible.

Any such proposal that includes affordable housing will be supported by a local lettings policy.

Exceptionally sites that deliver other local infrastructure priorities instead of affordable housing as agreed with the relevant Town/Parish Council may be acceptable subject to considerations above.

In accordance with Policy S3, local infrastructure will normally be secured through use of a S.106 agreement. Where such an agreement results in the scheme becoming unviable, the Council will consider the use of the adopted Exceptional Relief Policy subject to any application meeting the necessary regulatory requirements.

5 Placemaking Policies

Where necessary proposals will be required to include assessment under the Habitats Regulations and have been informed by its findings.

Tier 3 Settlements

5.167 The Tier 3 settlements generally have a more basic level of local services than Tier 2 settlements but still provide a local service centre function. They remain appropriate locations for local growth that will support the priorities of local communities, improve self-containment, and respect environmental limits. As set out under Policy S2 they are not expected to accommodate strategic growth, the focus will be on smaller scale housing opportunities to meet identified local needs. The following settlements are identified as Tier 3: Ashcott, Berrow, Brean, Brent Knoll, Combswich, East Brent & Rooksbridge, East Huntspill, Edington, Lymsham, Mark, Middlezoy, Pawlett, Shipham, Spaxton, Wembdon, West Huntspill, Westonzoyland.

5.168 Assessment under the Habitats Regulations has identified specific concern for Shipham in respect of bats in the area which may have an impact on development proposals (see Policy D23: Bat Consultation Zones).

Placemaking Objectives

5.169 Proposals for development in Tier 3 Settlements should contribute to the following objectives where relevant:

- Enhance and sustain their role as service centres for their local community;
- Maintain or improve self-containment of the settlement;
- Support the needs of the local community;
- Respect environmental limits;
- Maintain or improve the overall sustainability of the settlement, having regard to environmental, social and economic factors; and
- Contribute to townscape character and local distinctiveness/sense of place.

Housing

5.170 The majority of Tier 3 settlements were previously identified as “Key Rural Settlements” under the Core Strategy. The approach was to support appropriate infill, subdivision and conversions within the settlement boundary and this approach will be retained. In addition to support rural sustainability and meet local housing needs, provision was made under Policy P4 for the release of sites outside of existing settlement boundaries for a mix of market and affordable housing and other uses where this brought clear and demonstrable benefits. Such benefits have included: high standards of design and sustainable construction, environmental enhancement, improved accessibility to local services, local employment and contributions to local infrastructure.

5.171 This approach will be retained in the Local Plan as it will assist viability of schemes by enabling cross subsidy (particularly in a climate where grant funding has an uncertain future), contribution to local priorities and provide the opportunity for mixed and sustainable communities that otherwise may not be achievable through infill housing development alone. The key driver for such a scheme would be a demonstrable need for affordable housing for local people identified in an up to date assessment of local housing needs.

Placemaking Policies 5

5.172 It is generally expected that such schemes will be community-led. Promoters will be encouraged to carry out meaningful and robust engagement and consultation with Parish Councils and other local stakeholders in advance of a detailed scheme being submitted.

5.173 Given the exceptional nature of such schemes to meet existing needs, it will normally be expected that any planning applications will provide full details in order to demonstrate how it meets all of the policy requirements. Consideration will be given, where exceptionally outline proposals are accepted, to limit by condition the time for reserved matters to be submitted. Any such outline application would need to be supported by a detailed master plan and only matters such as house types, materials and detailed architectural design would normally be reserved for future consideration.

5.174 Where appropriate, sites will need to be subject to assessment under the Habitats Regulations, with the findings informing subsequent planning applications.

Policy T3a

Tier 3 Settlements - Housing

Housing proposals for redevelopment, infill, subdivision and conversion within existing settlement boundaries (as defined on the Policies Map) will be supported where it meets all of the following:

- It does not involve the loss of, or unacceptable harm to spaces or facilities (public or private) which contribute to the character and role of the settlement;
- It is appropriate to the scale, design and existing character of the settlement;
- It would not unacceptably harm the character or amenity of any nearby property.

Outside but well related to settlement boundaries, mixed tenure affordable and market housing proposals on sites specifically released for that purpose will be supported only where it is demonstrated that it meets all of the following criteria:

- It fulfils an identified local housing need for affordable housing as evidenced by an up to date assessment of local housing needs agreed with the District Council;
- The affordable housing provision (notwithstanding the requirements of Policy D6: Affordable Housing) will normally be a minimum of 40% of the total number of housing units provided on the site unless provision of alternative local infrastructure priorities is agreed;
- The scale of development should be appropriate to the size, accessibility, character and physical identity of the settlement;
- The proposal is well related to and complements the existing built form of the settlement, providing opportunities for walking and cycling to local services and facilities;
- The affordable housing should form part of the overall development and be well integrated with any market housing;
- Supports where appropriate access to local job opportunities, including opportunities for on-site provision;
- The development appropriately contributes to local infrastructure priorities identified, for example, in Neighbourhood plans or in agreement with Parish Councils; and
- Maintains and where appropriate incorporates enhancements to the local environment, landscape, and historic environment, including where appropriate habitat creation and community woodland planting.

5 Placemaking Policies

Meaningful and robust engagement and consultation with the Parish Council, local community and other local stakeholders will be encouraged to ensure that the planning impacts identified by the local community have been appropriately addressed as far as possible.

Any such proposal that includes affordable housing will be supported by a local lettings policy.

Exceptionally sites that deliver other local infrastructure priorities instead of affordable housing as agreed with the relevant Parish Council may be acceptable subject to considerations above.

In accordance with Policy S3, local infrastructure will normally be secured through use of a S.106 agreement. Where such an agreement results in the scheme becoming unviable, the Council will consider the use of the adopted Exceptional Relief Policy subject to any application meeting the necessary regulatory requirements.

Where necessary proposals will be required to include assessment under the Habitats Regulations and have been informed by its findings.

Recreation

5.175 The proposal to allocate public open space on land adjacent to St Bridget's Church in Brean is carried forward from the Burnham-on-Sea Area Local Plan but on a reduced scale, taking account of the fact that land immediately north of the church is now a car park. The Parish Council intend to provide a recreation area to meet the needs of the village, including seating, play equipment, ball games area and tree planting.

Policy T3b

Land adjacent to St Bridget's Church, Church Road, Brean

Land adjacent to St Bridget's Church, Brean is allocated for public open space (1.02 hectares as defined on the Policies Map).

Education

Policy T3c

Land Allocated for Educational Purposes

The following sites are allocated for educational purposes:

- Land south of Brent Knoll Primary School, Brent Knoll
- Land to the south of East Brent Academy, East Brent

Delivery

5.176 The existing supporting guidance technical advice for the delivery of local housing priority sites will be updated to reflect the provisions of the policy above.

Placemaking Policies 5

Ashcott and Walton By-Pass**Introduction**

5.177 There have been a number of transport strategies that have sought to improve the A39 in order to provide improved strategic access to the Mendip towns of Street, Glastonbury and Wells. In addition, improvements to this route potentially reduce the traffic levels on the A372 by providing an improved alternative route to that through Cheddar and Draycott. This would improve the local conditions and enable local highway enhancement schemes to be delivered subject to funding.

5.178 Such improvements include a by-pass for Ashcott, a Tier 3 settlement, in Sedgemoor and Walton in Mendip. The current Mendip Core Strategy includes a safeguarded corridor for the Walton by-pass that stops at the district boundary.

Approach

5.179 Under the Duty to Cooperate arrangements, Sedgemoor District Council, Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council are undertaking feasibility work into the construction of an Ashcott and Walton by-pass. This is investigating in more detail a design and feasibility based upon the previously safeguarded corridor. Although funding in the short term is not available, it is considered that by developing the feasibility study and business case, the opportunities for funding via the Local Economic Partnership will be improved. It is currently included on a long list of growth priorities.

5.180 Within Sedgemoor, given the rural nature of Ashcott, it is extremely unlikely that the by-pass would be funded through development and the current Local Plan makes no such allowances. However, it is sensible to safeguard the continuation of the protected corridor that is included in the Mendip Local Plan.

Policy T3d**Ashcott and Walton By-Pass**

Proposals for development that would prejudice the future provision of the Ashcott - Walton By-Pass (as shown on the Policies Map) will not be supported.

Tier 4 Settlements

5.181 The Tier 4 settlements have only a basic level of local services that meet some of the needs of the immediate local community. Whilst the spatial strategy envisages these smaller settlements will be the focus for only very limited growth to enhance their role as local centres, this does provide some opportunity to meet local priorities. Therefore the guiding principle in allowing development in Tier 4 Settlements is to ensure it contributes to meeting the needs of the local community, including local employment opportunities, affordable housing provision, and access to services whilst respecting the environmental, economic and social limits of these places.

5.182 The following settlements are defined as Tier 4 settlements under Policy S2; Bawdrip, Blackford, Catcott, Chedzoy, Chilton Polden, Cossington, North Newton, Othery, Shapwick, Weare/Lower Weare.

5 Placemaking Policies

Placemaking Objectives

5.183 Proposals for development in Tier 4 Settlements should contribute to the following objectives where relevant:

- Enhance and sustain their role as local centres for their existing communities;
- Maintain or improve the overall sustainability of the settlement, having regard to environmental, social and economic factors;
- Support the needs of the local community;
- Maintain or improve self-containment of the settlement;
- Respect environmental limits; and
- Contribute to townscape character and local distinctiveness/sense of place.

Housing

5.184 The majority of the Tier 4 settlements were previously identified as “Other Sustainable Settlements” under the Core Strategy. The approach was to support appropriate infill, subdivision and conversions within the settlement boundary and this approach will be retained.

5.185 In addition there was policy support for rural exception sites but due in part to the lack of public funding for such schemes; this approach has failed to deliver local affordable housing in most cases. The Local Plan therefore seeks to amend this approach to allow exceptionally, a proportion of any local housing scheme to include market housing where it is demonstrated to be necessary to make a scheme viable.

5.186 Such schemes should work from the base position of delivering 100% affordable housing, any decrease would be on the basis of achieving viability and should not exceed the number of affordable housing units unless exceptionally the scheme is delivering other locally agreed infrastructure priorities. Any such schemes would be outside but adjacent or well related to the settlement boundary and only released where there is an identified local housing need or alternative local infrastructure priority.

5.187 It is generally expected that such schemes will be community-led. Promoters will be encouraged to carry out meaningful and robust engagement and consultation with Parish Councils and other local stakeholders in advance of a detailed scheme being submitted.

5.188 Given the exceptional nature of such schemes to meet existing needs, it will normally be expected that any planning applications will provide full details in order to demonstrate how it meets all of the policy requirements. Consideration will be given, where exceptionally outline proposals are accepted, to limit by condition the time for reserved matters to be submitted. As such outline applications would need to be supported by a detailed master plan and only matters such as house types, materials and detailed architectural design would normally be reserved for future consideration.

5.189 Outside the defined settlement boundaries speculative market led schemes will not be supported in Tier 4 settlements given their limited facilities and poorer self-containment.

Policy T4

Tier 4 Settlements - Housing

Housing proposals for redevelopment, infill, subdivision and conversion within existing settlement boundaries (as defined on the Policies Map) will be supported where it meets all of the following:

Placemaking Policies 5

- It does not involve the loss of, or unacceptable harm to spaces or facilities (public or private) which contribute to the character and role of the settlement;
- It is appropriate to the scale, design and existing character of the settlement;
- It would not unacceptably harm the character or amenity of any nearby property.

Outside but well related to settlement boundaries, affordable housing proposals on sites specifically released for that purpose will be supported only where it is demonstrated that it meets all of the following criteria:

- It fulfils an identified local housing need for affordable housing as evidenced by an up to date assessment of local housing needs agreed with the District Council;
- The scale of development should be appropriate to the size, accessibility, character and physical identity of the settlement;
- The proposal is well related to and complements the existing built form of the settlement, providing opportunities for walking and cycling to local services and facilities;
- Supports where appropriate access to local job opportunities, including opportunities for on-site provision;
- The development appropriately contributes to local infrastructure priorities identified, for example, in Neighbourhood plans or in agreement with Parish Councils; and
- Maintains and where appropriate incorporates enhancements to the local environment, landscape, and historic environment, including where appropriate habitat creation and community woodland planting.

Where delivery of such schemes is not financially viable, cross subsidy by way of market housing will be considered where all the following criteria are met;

- The Council is satisfied it is essential for the successful delivery of the development demonstrated through an independent open book financial appraisal;
- Market housing does not exceed the affordable housing element unless exceptionally the proposal delivers other locally agreed infrastructure priorities; and
- The affordable housing should form part of the overall development and be well integrated with the market housing.

Meaningful and robust engagement and consultation with the Parish Council, local community and other local stakeholders will be encouraged to ensure that the planning impacts identified by the local community have been appropriately addressed as far as possible.

Any such proposal that includes affordable housing will be supported by a local lettings policy.

Exceptionally sites that deliver other local infrastructure priorities instead of affordable housing as agreed with the relevant Parish Council may be acceptable subject to considerations above.

In accordance with Policy S3, local infrastructure will normally be secured through use of a S.106 agreement. Where such an agreement results in the scheme becoming unviable, the Council will consider the use of the adopted Exceptional Relief Policy subject to any application meeting the necessary regulatory requirements.

Where necessary proposals will be required to include assessment under the Habitats Regulations and have been informed by its findings.

5 Placemaking Policies

Countryside

5.190 The spatial strategy identifies the remainder of the district - outside of the towns and Tier 1 – 4 settlements - as countryside. Within this are significant environmental designations including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, coastal/estuary areas and internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites.

5.191 In addition to providing highly valued, distinct and attractive landscapes and a diverse range of rural settlements, the countryside provides a valuable setting to the towns and villages of Sedgemoor contributing to the district's image and identity. It is also an important recreational and tourist asset for residents and visitors and acts as a resource for managing flood risk and the challenges of climate change adaptation.

Countryside

5.192 It is recognised that in some cases a countryside location is essential or represents a more sustainable option where this relates to a specific countryside need, such as those of the agricultural industry or the enhancement of the environment. This could include the following: agricultural workers dwellings; small scale employment opportunities essential to the rural economy (including schemes for rural diversification); and recreation and leisure opportunities appropriate to a rural location.

5.193 Where this is the case development proposals will be expected to contribute to the local economy, protect and maintain the environment, taking into account the potential impacts on internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites, and promote sustainable travel options where this is required to mitigate against significant transport impacts.

5.194 The spatial strategy does not identify a need for general housing within the countryside as this would represent a less sustainable form of development given the limited access to services and facilities. The NPPF sets out the special circumstances which might justify an exception for new buildings or conversions. The Council has produced local guidance for Conversion of Rural Buildings in order to clarify local interpretation of this matter including the circumstances where conversion (including for residential use) might be supported. Policy D15: Economic Prosperity and Policy D17: Tourism also provide some support for rural conversions that encourage rural enterprise and/or tourism accommodation within the countryside.

Policy CO1

Countryside

To actively manage patterns of growth and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable proposals for new development outside of identified settlements (as defined in the spatial strategy Policy S2) will be appropriately controlled in accordance with national policy. This reflects the environmental and landscape constraints, more limited local services and fewer opportunities for sustainable transport in many countryside locations. Development will be supported where it accords with other relevant policies contained in the Local Plan that provide for development in the countryside to enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities and support a prosperous rural economy. Where development proposals in the countryside are not addressed by other policies of the Local Plan, new development must demonstrate that there are specific countryside needs, such as those of the local agricultural industry and local food producers, enhancement of the environment or where a countryside location is essential or more sustainable.

Placemaking Policies 5

5.195 In the Countryside there are also a range of very small villages and hamlets. As identified in the Council's role and function evidence base these settlements are generally not considered to be sustainable locations for growth, given the extremely limited local services, job opportunities and public transport availability. For some of these small villages and hamlets the existing pattern of development is often scattered and sporadic, with in some instances no clear distinction between the edge of the settlement and open countryside. Due to these considerations settlement boundaries have not been defined for these locations and the starting point is that they are not considered sustainable locations for growth.

5.196 Nevertheless the NPPG highlights that blanket policies restricting development should be avoided and in some instances these small villages and hamlets have a clearly defined nucleus of existing dwellings, with the built up area forming a tightly knit cluster. Where a nucleus is of a reasonable scale (typically at least 10 existing dwellings) modest infill development may have limited impacts and may offer some support for local services at the settlement or in nearby villages. In such instances small infill and redevelopment for those in the community wishing to build their own home may therefore be appropriate, provided it is in character with the settlement and complies with other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

Policy CO2

Infill Housing in the Countryside

In the countryside, where a small village or hamlet has a clearly defined nucleus of existing dwellings, small scale residential infill and redevelopment (four or fewer dwellings) will be exceptionally supported only if all the following criteria are met:

- The development is a self-build or Custom Build project and meets the requirements of Policy D9;
- It amounts to infilling of the existing main built up area of the settlement;
- The development maintains or enhances sustainable patterns of development. Development which physically extends the built form of the settlement into open countryside will not normally be supported;
- The scale and nature of the development is appropriate to the size, accessibility, character and identity of the existing community;
- The development is in accordance with Policy D19: Landscape, respects the qualities of the local landscape, and is sympathetic to its character and visual quality.

To maintain or enhance the vitality of rural communities it will normally be expected that any proposals contribute to supporting existing services and, where appropriate, promote new community infrastructure. Development should improve walking and cycling to local services and facilities where there are opportunities.

Meaningful and robust consultation with the Parish Council, local community and other local stakeholders will be encouraged.

Isolated new homes in the countryside will be resisted unless the special circumstances set out in the NPPF and Policies D10: Rural Workers Dwellings and D11: Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside are met.

5 Placemaking Policies

5.197 In addition to the re-use of redundant or disused buildings referred to under paragraph 55 of the NPPF, there are a limited number of brownfield sites in the countryside that benefit from existing services and access. Generally the re-use or remodelling of such sites for employment uses will be supported but exceptionally where it can be demonstrated that such an approach is not viable or suitable, mixed-use schemes or residential only schemes may be considered. Any such mixed-use schemes would need to be well related to an identified Town or Tier 1 – 4 settlement and well related to the existing road network. Isolated and remote rural brownfield sites will not be appropriate locations for new residential development. For the purposes of Policy CO3 brownfield sites are considered to be those that satisfy the definition of previously developed land as set out in the NPPF.

5.198 Bat roosts (including night roosts used by horseshoe bats cited on SAC designations) receive legal protection under the Habitat Regulations 2010 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Destruction or damage to roosts due to demolition of or structural changes to barns and buildings or tree felling as a result of this policy must be avoided or adequately mitigated. Likewise, roosts used by barn owls, a S41 priority species, are also susceptible to damage and loss which must also be avoided or adequately mitigated as a matter of policy.

Policy CO3

Brownfield Sites in the Countryside

Outside of identified settlements in the Countryside proposals for the re-use or remodelling of existing rural brownfield sites for employment uses will be supported where it remains of an appropriate scale and character and does not result in significant adverse impacts. Where it can be demonstrated that employment use or redevelopment of such sites is not viable or suitable then consideration will be given to mixed use schemes or residential only schemes only where they are reasonably well related to an existing Town or Tier 1 – 4 settlements, have appropriate access to the primary road hierarchy, and provide opportunities to promote sustainable means of travel. For small sites of less than 5 units, mixed-use is unlikely to be viable or appropriate although opportunities to provide work from home units will be encouraged and supported.

Other than in the special circumstances as set out in the NPPF isolated and remote rural brownfield sites are unlikely to be appropriate locations for new residential development and will be assessed against Policy CO1.

In all cases development should comply with other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

5.199 Specialist retail provision may in some cases be appropriate in the countryside, examples include farm shops and some forms of garden centres. Restriction of the type and range of goods will usually be appropriate in such cases in order to ensure that they do not become centres for general retailing that should be located within the identified centres.

Placemaking Policies 5

Policy CO4**Countryside Retail Uses**

Proposals for specialist retail provision in the countryside such as farm shops and garden centres and associated extensions will be supported where there is no significant impact on the viability of existing shops within adjoining settlements and proposals meet other relevant policies in the Local Plan. In some cases it may be appropriate to limit the range or source of goods and floor space through conditions or legal agreement.

6 Major Infrastructure Projects

Major Infrastructure Projects

Introduction

6.1 For the purposes of the Local Plan, Major Infrastructure Projects (MIP's) are those infrastructure projects that would require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as set out in Schedules 1 and 2 of the EIA Regulations 1999 (except predominantly residential schemes), and include those defined as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP's) in the Planning Act 2008. Where associated or ancillary development is related to the construction or operation of a MIP, these proposals will also fall under the same definition.

6.2 The Planning Act 2008 introduced a new process for decision-making on NSIPs for energy, transport, water and waste. It introduced a new body, the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), to have responsibility for making decisions on planning applications for NSIPs. The Localism Act 2011 abolished the IPC, but has retained most of the procedures for how the decisions will be consulted on and made. The main difference is that now the Major Infrastructure Planning Unit (MIPU), which sits within the Planning Inspectorate, will administer applications before advising the relevant Minister. The Minister will then make the final decision on whether the project should go ahead or not.

6.3 Potential MIPs (with some likely to be NSIP's) which are either located within Sedgemoor or are likely to affect Sedgemoor within the Local Plan period, include:

- New Nuclear Power Station at Hinkley Point C (now under construction).
- New 400kV Electricity Transmission Circuit between Hinkley Point and Seabank (near Bristol).
- Steart Coastal Management Project (partially completed).
- Cheddar Reservoir extension (consented).
- Energy generation at Gravity.
- Bridgwater Tidal Lagoon – Bridgwater Bay in Somerset has significant energy potential. Detailed work has yet to be undertaken before a full development programme could be developed or initiated for the Bridgwater Tidal Lagoon.

6.4 Relevant National Planning Statements (NPSs) set out the national case in principle for NSIPs and provide a national policy framework for the consideration of proposals by the MIPU of the Planning Inspectorate, with the final decision to grant permission being made by Government Ministers.

6.5 In accordance with legislation, the MIPU or the Secretary of State must determine applications in accordance with any relevant NPS, except in specified circumstances. The Assessment Principles note that they should take into account national, regional and local benefits, and adverse impacts including local impacts, and that it should have regard to any local impact report submitted by a relevant local authority. In reaching a decision it is stated that if the IPC (now the MIPU/Secretary of State) is satisfied that the adverse impacts identified (including any cumulative impacts) outweigh the benefits of the proposed development (taking into account measures to avoid, reduce or compensate for those adverse impacts), consent should be refused.

6.6 Although NPSs are not part of the statutory development plan, local planning authorities will clearly need to have regard to these when preparing their plans at a local level.

6.7 Sedgemoor District Council will continue to play an important role as a statutory consultee in relation to NSIP applications, including producing a Local Impact Report when affected by the NSIP application.

Major Infrastructure Projects 6

6.8 In this section of the Local Plan, where "impacts" are referred to, these can be positive and negative impacts and where "mitigation" is referred to this can, where appropriate, include "compensation" where this is consistent extant government policy advice (currently Circular 05/05 contains the relevant policy approach to planning obligations relating to NSIPs). The completion of a Habitats Regulations Assessment will be required where a project is likely to give rise to significant effects upon a Natura 2000 site; this may give rise to mitigation or compensation requirements under the provisions of the Habitats Directive.

Approach

6.9 This chapter of the Local Plan deals both with those MIPs where Sedgemoor District Council is the local planning authority, and NSIPs, where the Council is a statutory consultee. Because NSIPs are subject to a separate planning process within the national planning regime, the Local Plan does not set any policies, tests or requirements for the MIPU/Secretary of State to apply in deciding whether any element of the development comprised in an application for development consent is acceptable, nor the basis on which any such application should be approved. Accordingly, the Local Plan does not have the same status for decision making by the MIPU as it does for decisions under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, where the Council is the determining authority. However, the Planning Act 2008 at Section 104(2)(b) and (d) states that the MIPU/Secretary of State must have regard to any Local Impact Report [LIR] together with any other matters they think are both important and relevant to their decision. This chapter of the Local Plan will inform the LIR to be submitted by the Council to the MIPU/Secretary of State in connection with the determination of any application for development consent.

6.10 In relation to NSIP's, applications for NSIP's will be examined by the MIPU and a decision made by the Secretary of State. Local authorities will only be the decision maker for any elements of associated or ancillary or related development for which applications are made to the local planning authority. NPSs will provide the national policy framework for decision making for NSIP's, but the MIPU will also take account of other matters that it thinks are both important and relevant to its decision. In this respect, the Council considers it appropriate to explain the approach that it will take in undertaking its role as planning authority when consulted upon such an application. The chapter deals with both roles of the Council in relation to MIP and with development that is associated with, ancillary to, or related to a MIP, so that the terms of this chapter therefore will help inform:

1. The promoter's understanding of how the local authority considers a NSIP should be brought forward in the local context, including in relation to any associated, ancillary or related development proposals of an NSIP project. This is to help assist a NSIP promoter when preparing a development consent order application to be made to the MIPU.
2. The preparation of a Local Impact Report by the Council in relation to the NSIP to be submitted to the MIPU by the Council. This Local Impact Report will assist the MIPU in the examination of the NSIP. The Local Impact Report will help identify potential local impacts and possible mitigation and compensation sought by the Council to address impacts of the NSIP and any associated or ancillary or related development which is part of the development consent order application. The determination of any associated or ancillary or related development proposals which are not part of a development consent order application for a NSIP but are related to the NSIP and are applied for to the Council as local planning authority.
3. The formulation of the Council's response on matters on which it is consulted by other authorities who would be host authorities for NSIP projects.

6 Major Infrastructure Projects

Policy MIP1: Major Infrastructure Proposals

6.11 Policy MIP1: Major Infrastructure Proposals, sets out the approach that the Council will take in responding to major infrastructure applications either as determining authority or as a statutory consultee:

Policy MIP1

Major Infrastructure Proposals

In responding to major infrastructure proposals as a consultee or decision maker the Council will consider applications against the relevant national planning policy and the strategy and relevant policies of the development plan. The objective from the Council's perspective is that such proposals should, where possible, contribute positively to the implementation of the spatial strategy and meet the underlying objectives of the plan. However, the Council will seek to adopt an approach which is consistent with relevant NPS and take into account operational requirements of the MIP.

For a NSIP the Council will take into account through the preparation of a Local Impact report, how proposals through their formulation and implementation, avoid or minimise adverse impacts or harm to local places, communities and businesses and maximise local benefits wherever possible. Where the Council is the decision maker, these matters will be taken into account through the planning application process. In all cases the Council will also assess where appropriate how the consideration of alternatives has informed the proposals.

The Council will consider the benefits and impacts of a proposal having regard to direct, indirect secondary and cumulative benefits and impacts, and benefits and impact interactions. This assessment will include the construction, operation and decommissioning (including restoration) stages of the project. It will also have regard to reasonably foreseeable development proposals in the local area, including other infrastructure projects and employment and residential development.

Depending upon the scale and nature of the proposals, in order to present sufficient information for the the Council to undertake the assessment it may request the preparation of delivery plans identifying measures to be taken to maximise benefits, to avoid and minimise impacts, and to mitigate and compensate for impacts, with respect to matters such as the economy, climate change, the environment, transport and movement, housing, local communities (including safety, health, leisure and general well-being) council services, and education where this is justified by reference to national policy. The management or delivery plans should identify the systems and resources that will be used to implement the proposed measures.

Delivery

6.12 The additional cost burden of MIPs on the Council will be assessed and the Council may request promoters to enter into Planning Performance Agreements and Service Level Agreements as appropriate.

6.13 Pre-application consultation by promoters with local communities in Sedgemoor, statutory consultees and the local authority will be encouraged.

Major Infrastructure Projects 6

Hinkley Point C

Introduction

6.14 In addition to the overarching MIP policy discussed above the Local Plan also includes policies relating specifically to Hinkley Point C. This includes a policy setting out the principles for any proposals for development associated with or ancillary to the Hinkley Point C project, and a further policy setting out the principles for planning obligations and mitigation for the impacts associated with the project.

6.15 The potential significance of Hinkley Point C to the local economy in particular is recognised by the Council in the Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy adopted in 2015. The Strategy states that "the development at Hinkley Point provides the potential to attract a wider range of energy related usages and companies into the area, building on the fledgling energy specialism on renewables already moving forward."

6.16 The Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy demonstrates the importance the Council attaches to energy development, and establishes a key objective for the way it discharges its role in relation to proposals connected with Hinkley Point C. The Council, the promoter of Hinkley Point C and other stakeholders worked together to produce the 'Dillington visions', which have the five headline commitments in relation to economic development, developing a low carbon future, education, employment and skills, community wellbeing and housing.

6.17 The precise impacts potentially associated with Hinkley Point C will be assessed as part of the specific proposals when applications come forward. However, on the basis of public consultation by both EDF and by the Council and on the basis of the information that is available, it is clear that this is a significant development which will have a number of significant impacts, both positive and negative. It is anticipated from the available information that construction will take place over 8 years, involving 5,600 construction workers at the peak of the construction phase. There will be significant HGV movements during the construction period, particularly on the A39 and from Cannington to the main station. When operational the facility will employ about 900 employees.

6.18 The Development Consent Order (DCO) was granted for Hinkley Point C in March 2013. Since then preparatory works at the site have been undertaken to prepare the site ahead of the main construction. The Final Investment Decision was taken in August 2016 and works on the main site are now progressing rapidly. Construction has also started on a number of the associated developments linked to the project including a bypass around Cannington, now completed, and other improvements to roads and road junctions in the area. The Core Strategy policies relating specifically to Hinkley Point C were important in establishing a set of principles for the Council to influence proposals, including the Council's Local Impact Report submitted as part of the DCO.

6.19 Whilst consent has been granted and construction underway, it is possible that changes to elements of the project, particularly to some of the associated developments will be proposed and therefore it is intended to keep the policies in place to inform the Council's representations on any future amendments.

Approach

6.20 Policies MIP2 and MIP3 identify the preferred outcomes sought by the Council in relation to the Hinkley Point C project in the context of the overall strategy of the plan.

6 Major Infrastructure Projects

6.21 The accommodation requirement that will arise during the construction of Hinkley Point C remain a particular issue for the Council in the context of the Local Plan spatial strategy. The Council considers it important that temporary or permanent accommodation is consistent with the overall plan objectives and policies and does not prejudice the delivery of the spatial strategy.

6.22 Construction workers will be housed through a combination of the use of private owner occupied and rented housing, tourism accommodation and purpose built campus development provided by the promoters of Hinkley Point C. There will be a need to increase the stock of suitable accommodation to match the additional requirements from an influx of construction workers for the project. Whilst recognising the functional needs of the promoter, in this regard the Council is concerned:

1. To ensure that the impact on the private rented housing market from the demand arising from construction workers should not unreasonably limit the access to this form of housing for others in the community who rely on this source of accommodation.
2. As part of the accommodation strategy for the Hinkley C proposals, the Council encourages wherever possible investment in schemes already allocated or identified for accommodation development in any event.
3. To ensure that there is no significantly adverse diversion of tourism accommodation from its existing purpose as that could harm the interests of others involved in the tourism industry in the area and too great a diversion might be to the detriment of this part of the local economy. It is also recognised that there may well be positive benefits in terms of additional tourism-related accommodation investment.
4. That the investment inherent in accommodating project construction workers to provide a significant long lasting benefits which help the delivery of the overall spatial strategy for Bridgwater as far as possible. This would ideally include developing sites for permanent residential and mixed use development that are already identified for these purposes.

Policy MIP2 Hinkley Point C Associated and Ancillary Development

6.23 Policy MIP2 below sets out the principles that the Council will take into account in responding (either as statutory consultee or decision maker) to the proposals for associated or ancillary or related development related to Hinkley Point C:

Policy MIP2

Hinkley Point C: Associated and Ancillary Development

In responding to proposals for development associated with or ancillary or related to the Hinkley Point C project where the Council is the decision maker, the Council will take into account through the planning application process the degree to which the proposals achieve the outcomes set out at (a) to (f) below.

In responding to proposals for development associated with, or ancillary or related to the Hinkley Point C project which are subject to an application to the Planning Inspectorate/Secretary of State for development consent as an NSIP, and the Council is not the determining authority, the Council will, subject to the influence of any overriding national imperative, or specific operational requirement, take into account the same considerations in the preparation of a Local Impact Report.

Major Infrastructure Projects 6

(a) Accommodation proposals on a range of sites, primarily at Bridgwater, where there is greater access to services and public transport and the greatest potential for integration as part of the spatial strategy.

(b) A comprehensive package of measures to avoid, minimise and then mitigate adverse impacts on the transport network arising from the movement of people, goods and services and any other associated transport movements, including multi-modal transport solutions and public realm investment that encourage travel by public transport, walking and cycling. Highway safety for all users should be maintained and where possible improved. Transport services should be inclusive and accessible to the community where practicable and proposals should also make an appropriate positive contribution towards the delivery of Somerset's Future Transport Plan 2011-26, the Future Transport Strategy for Bridgwater, Taunton and Wellington, the Sedgemoor Infrastructure Delivery Strategy and the Bridgwater Vision.

(c) Meeting the accommodation needs of the temporary workforce in a way that does not have an unreasonable adverse effect on the housing market, including the ability of those on low incomes to access the private rented sector, affordable housing and other housing services. Proposals to provide for the accommodation requirements of temporary construction workers should wherever possible make a positive contribution to the long term housing and affordable housing objectives in Sedgemoor.

(d) Appropriate community facilities, where it is necessary to meet additional demand generated by the project. These facilities such as retail outlets, and healthcare, sports and leisure facilities, should be designed and located so that, wherever possible, they serve the general community and help contribute to the achievement of cohesive and sustainable communities with long lasting benefits. Where there would be additional impacts or demands on leisure facilities the Council will seek appropriate contributions for off-site facilities consistent with extant national policy advice.

(e) The delivery of education, employment and training opportunities connected with the project for the local community. Proposals should be supported wherever possible by procurement, education, employment, training and recruitment strategies, agreed with the Council at an early stage of project development. Where proposals have an educational or training and skills long lasting benefit, the detailed design of any property asset should be agreed with the end user and details of the transfer or agreed provision mechanism included in planning or development consent obligations.

(f) The delivery of investment in infrastructure, buildings and green infrastructure that would have long lasting benefits, contributing to creating attractive, prosperous and safe communities, as well as serving the needs of the development.

Delivery

6.24 The additional cost burden of MIPs on the Council will be assessed and the Council may request promoters to enter into Planning Performance Agreements and Service Level Agreements as appropriate.

6.25 The Council may request delivery plans where appropriate to ensure action results in tangible investment and improvement for local places and communities as part of any related conditions, requirements or obligations.

6 Major Infrastructure Projects

6.26 Pre-application consultation by the HPC promoter with local communities in Sedgemoor, statutory consultees and the local authorities is encouraged. The Council will provide a full and detailed response to formal public consultation by the HPC promoter.

Hinkley Point – Planning Obligations and Mitigation

Introduction

6.27 As part of its application to the IPC/MIU the promoter of Hinkley Point C will be obliged to undertake an impact assessment which will include consideration of impacts in combination with other projects and works including:

- decommissioning of the Hinkley A station;
- works relating to the potential extension of the operational life of the Hinkley B station, outages and eventual decommissioning and restoration;
- waste storage and transportation proposals;
- National Grid reinforcement and rationalisation;
- Steart Coastal Management Project.

Approach

6.28 If negative impacts are identified, any proposals to avoid, minimise or mitigate and, where appropriate compensate for the effects of the Hinkley Point C will need to accord with national legislation including, Circular 05/2005 and any relevant NPS.

6.29 Local matters to be addressed may include:

1. Sites of international, national and local importance for landscape, ecology, geology, archaeology, environmental quality and image, and built heritage;
2. Means for reducing, reusing, recycling or disposing of waste materials;
3. Social cohesion and avoiding or minimising crime and disorder;
4. Health and wellbeing;
5. Bridgwater as a place to live, work and learn;
6. Secure social and economic benefits for local communities;
7. Cultural, leisure, recreation and religious services and facilities;
8. Emergency service resources and their resilience;
9. Educational facilities and outreach initiatives, including community development and third sector support;
10. Housing market considerations;
11. Tourism including facilities for visitors and tourists;
12. The objectives of the Local Plan.

6.30 With regard to housing market considerations the Sedgemoor SHMA (2016) concludes that it is difficult to be definitive regarding the proportion of the construction workforce which might live in different accommodation sectors (e.g. campus, tourist accommodation, private rented sector) during the different construction periods, much will depend on individual choices. In relation to pressure on the local housing market a key issue is whether additional demand generated from the construction workforce will be matched by additional growth in the private rented sector housing stock. As part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) the S106 has established formal monitoring arrangements for these issues. The Socio-Economic Advisory Group (SEAG), which monitors accommodation impacts, has oversight of the various EDFE management plans required by the DCO and informs how contingency funds should be used to address residual or unanticipated impacts. Construction

Major Infrastructure Projects 6

worker accommodation and how any unanticipated impacts are mitigated are therefore being addressed through arrangements established by the DCO, these are then also reported in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report.

6.31 Should impacts and harm resulting from the project be demonstrated, necessary and reasonable mitigation (including where appropriate compensation) will be sought in accordance with Policy MIP3 below.

Policy MIP3

Hinkley Point C: Planning Obligations and Mitigation

Subject to any overriding national imperative, or specific operational requirement, the Council will seek to ensure, wherever possible, that the Hinkley Point C proposals avoid, minimise and mitigate (including, where appropriate, compensate for) impacts during the construction, operation, decommissioning, and restoration phases of the Hinkley Point C development, consistent with extant national policy advice.

The Council will encourage the promoter to engage effectively at the pre-application stage, with the Council and with local communities (including those at Bridgwater, Cannington, Combswich and Burnham-on-Sea), consistent with the requirements of national policy and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

Delivery

6.32 Pre-application consultation by promoters with local communities in Sedgemoor, statutory consultees and the local authorities is encouraged, including compliance with the Council's requirements in relation to community involvement. The Council will provide a detailed response to formal public consultation by the HPC promoter.

6.33 The Council may request delivery plans where appropriate to ensure action results in tangible investment and improvement for local places and communities as part of any related conditions, requirements or obligations.

7 District Wide Policies

Living Sustainably

Flood risk and Surface Water Management

Introduction

7.1 The NPPF and NPPG sets out that inappropriate development in flood risk areas should be avoided by directing it away from areas at high flood risk (i.e. by applying the Sequential Test). Where this is not possible and development is considered necessary due to wider sustainability objectives, it must be demonstrated that development will be made safe throughout its lifetime, without increasing flood risk elsewhere. This should include taking into account the impacts of climate change, managing residual risk, and considering the vulnerability of the development (including applying the Exception Test as necessary). Where there are opportunities new development should reduce flood risk overall.

7.2 The water environment in the Sedgemoor area is particularly complex. Due to its coastal location and low-lying nature much of Sedgemoor is at significant risk of flooding. This includes rural communities on the Somerset Levels and Moors and large parts of the district's main urban areas of Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, which lie at predominantly tidal flood risk. When considered alongside other sustainability considerations this means it will be difficult to avoid new development in areas at flood risk. It therefore needs to be ensured that where development in flood risk areas is necessary it is made safe for its lifetime.

7.3 To support the Local Plan and help assess individual planning proposals the Council has undertaken a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). This describes the flood risk plans and strategies relevant to the Sedgemoor area, including the Levels and Moors 20 Year Flood Action Plan. The SFRA also provides detailed information on different forms of flood risk across the district, including identifying Flood Zone 3b (functional floodplain). The Level 1 (SFRA) is district wide and can be used for applying the Sequential Test and ensuring different sources of flooding are adequately considered, including for site-specific Flood Risk Assessments. The Level 2 SFRA provides more detail on tidal flood risk in Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge. The Level 2 allows comparisons between sites within these locations (sequential approach) and provides more detail for the Exception Test to be applied.

7.4 In coastal areas it is also relevant to have regard to the Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) and associated Flood Risk Management Strategies. Both the North Devon and Somerset SMP and Severn Estuary Flood Risk Management Strategy are currently draft but provide the strategic guidance for sustainable coastal defences, taking account of the dynamics of natural processes and anticipated rises in sea level over the next 100 years. Whilst on socio-economic grounds the approach to urban areas long term is to 'hold the line' the draft SMP also proposes policies that may result in some managed realignment of defences and parts of Sedgemoor's low-lying coastal farmland becoming saltmarsh or other inter-tidal habitat. Further studies are proposed in respect of fully exploring the implications of realignment options in the Parrett estuary and at Brean. The Environment Agency has already undertaken significant realignment and habitat creation on the Steart peninsula.

7.5 The emerging SMP Action Plan proposes detailed studies of the Brean area to be completed by 2020. This includes appraising all long term sustainable options for managing flood and coastal erosion along this section. Until the outcomes of these studies are known there is no basis for the designation of a Coastal Change Management Area as suggested in national policy (NPPF paragraph 106), but this situation will need to be kept under review as there could be significant implications for residential and tourism uses in the Brean area.

District Wide Policies 7

Approach

7.6 The NPPF and NPPG set out the criteria for when the Sequential and Exception Tests need to be applied for different vulnerabilities of development. It also sets out when proposals need to be supported by a site-specific flood risk assessment and what this needs to demonstrate for development to be considered acceptable. Through a risk based approach it must be demonstrated what measures will be put in place to ensure the development is safe over its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Developers should also have regard to Standing Advice and guidance issued by the Environment Agency and other flood risk management bodies (e.g. Lead Local Flood Authority, Internal Drainage Board). Early engagement with the relevant flood risk management bodies by developers is recommended.

7.7 In respect of the Sequential Test, the area of search for alternative sites could be the whole district. However, the spatial strategy sets out the preferred locations for sustainable growth and therefore the approach is to ensure that the application of the Sequential Test also supports these wider objectives. Areas of search therefore reflect the towns and the Tier 1 and 2 settlements to meet the specific growth requirements in these locations. Similarly for Tier 3 and 4 settlements the area of search for infill proposals will be restricted to the relevant settlement boundary. In other cases where specific local need can be demonstrated, the area of search should reflect this. For example, housing and employment that meets an accepted local community need would only have to assess alternatives within the specific settlement.

7.8 In terms of assessing alternative sites, these need to be able to accommodate the requirements of the proposed development and be deliverable (considered to be available at the time of consideration and with a reasonable prospect of implementation within five years). When identifying alternative sites applicants should therefore draw on the information contained in the Council's Five Year Housing Land Supply report. There is still a need for any site that meets the Sequential Test to pass the Exceptions Test where required.

7.9 The coastal strip area of Brean and Berrow includes considerable concentration of tourist related businesses. This area is also under long term threat from coastal flooding and the Shoreline Management Plan seeks to promote long term strategies to manage these risks. Policies D17 and BH10 provide a precautionary approach to further development in this area and any acceptable proposals for upgrading of existing sites will still need to meet the requirements of Policy D1: Flood Risk and Surface Water Management.

7.10 All development (including that in Flood Zone 1) should be run-off neutral as a minimum wherever possible. All greenfield sites will be required to manage surface water run-off as part of an overall strategy demonstrating that surface water is attenuated as necessary. Sustainable drainage systems as well as green infrastructure and land management measures (such as tree planting) can help to reduce the overall amount of rainfall being discharged to the drainage system from new development and help to reduce surface water flooding risks. The government has published guidance relating to the design, construction, operation and maintenance of sustainable drainage systems. In considering planning applications, the local planning authority will consult the Lead Local Flood Authority on the management of surface water including on sustainable drainage systems.

7.11 The extensive network of existing watercourses and flood defences structures across the district are of critical importance in managing flood risk. Development located in close proximity to them must not therefore prevent their ongoing function, including ensuring appropriate access and maintenance arrangements. Depending on proximity a flood risk activity permit may be required in addition to planning permission.

7 District Wide Policies

Policy D1

Flood Risk and Surface Water Management

Sequential and Exception Test

In applying the Sequential Test, Exception Test and in undertaking site-specific Flood Risk Assessments regard should be had to the sources of flooding detailed in Sedgemoor's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and any more recent mapping made available by the Environment Agency and other flood risk management bodies.

Where the Sequential and Exception Test is required it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the necessary evidence to allow the local authority to undertake the tests. For the Sequential Test this includes demonstrating that there are no reasonably available alternative sites at lower flood risk within a defined area of search where the proposed development could be located.

Allocated sites included in the Local Plan, subsequent Development Plan Documents and Neighbourhood Plan will have already been assessed in detail and therefore will be considered to have passed both the Sequential Test and the Exceptions Test. A detailed Flood Risk Assessment will still be required.

To create the most sustainable pattern of development the Spatial Strategy seeks to maximise development within sustainable settlements (Policy S2). Therefore the Sequential Test will be considered to be passed for proposals located within identified settlement boundaries, as defined on the Policies Map. Outside of the settlement boundaries, for the purposes of the Sequential Test, the area of search will be the Sedgemoor District area unless it can be demonstrated that the development has a specific locational requirement based on functional requirements or to meet a demonstrable specific local need, in which case the area of search should reflect this. For sites adjacent or well related to settlement boundaries where an identified need for that specific settlement is to be met, the search area should be limited to that settlement only.

At Brean and Berrow proposals for the improvement and remodelling of caravan and camping sites should have regard to Policy D17: Tourism, and the Brean and Berrow Tourism Boundary as defined on the Policies Map. This sets out the Sequential Test search area for such proposals.

For the purposes of the Sequential Test, reasonably available alternative sites are those that are within the relevant area of search, can accommodate the requirements of the proposed development and are deliverable. For residential proposals, alternative sites considered should be identified in the Council's 5 year Housing Land Supply Report.

Where the Sequential Test is considered to be passed the vulnerability of the development must still be compatible with the Flood Zone, including application of the Exception Test (as required). A Flood Risk Assessment must also demonstrate that the development will be safe over its lifetime and not increase flood risk elsewhere, including addressing any residual flood risk and access/egress issues.

Surface Water Drainage

Proposals should seek to reduce flood risk overall through creation of multi-functional green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems. Betterment will be sought particularly where there are known flooding issues. Where development will result in an increase in the rate of

District Wide Policies 7

surface water drainage the implications on the wider area should be considered. Sustainable drainage systems should be prioritised for proposals in areas at flood risk and are expected for all major developments (including those in Flood Zone 1). Alternatives will only be permitted where sustainable drainage is impractical or would compromise the viability of the scheme. In instances where conventional drainage systems are used it must still be demonstrated that the development will be safe and flood risk is not increased elsewhere. In all instances proposals should include clear arrangements for ongoing operation and maintenance.

Watercourse / Flood Defence Maintenance

Development proposals will only be supported where they are designed and located to enable suitable access for maintenance of watercourses and other flood risk management infrastructure.

Delivery

7.12 Delivery will principally be through the consideration of planning applications. The Environment Agency has prepared Local Flood Risk Standing Advice which takes into account the nature of flood risk in the Sedgemoor area, allowing resource to be focused on the most significant and higher risk applications.

7.13 In line with the draft SMP a beach management plan has been produced for the Berrow and Brean area. This will facilitate the management of the coastal frontage and inform future studies of the Berrow and Brean frontage by 2020.

7.14 In partnership with the Environment Agency, tidal flood defences will be delivered as part of the Council's infrastructure delivery strategy. This includes securing contributions towards the Bridgwater Barrier and strategic defences at Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge as set out in Policies S3: Infrastructure Delivery. In addition, the Council will continue working with the Environment Agency and the Internal Drainage Boards to support ongoing maintenance and improvements to existing defences.

7.15 Working with the Lead Local Flood Authority and developers, surface water management will be delivered through the creation of multi-functional green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems, for example the introduction of swales, ponds and the restoration of rhynes in line with Policies D2 (Promoting High Quality Design) and Policies D29 and D30 (Green Infrastructure).

Promoting High Quality and Inclusive Design

Introduction

7.16 Design in the built environment is a collaborative enterprise involving professionals such as planners, architects, designers, developers, land owners and infrastructure providers as well as local councils and local people. The impacts of the design process extends to those that will live and work in the buildings and those that use and interact with the spaces and public realm areas and which have a direct effect upon how places are used.

7.17 This interaction with buildings, open spaces, materials and design details are all factors in how design influences places and how it makes people feel and fundamentally affects people's lives on a day to day basis.

7.18 The NPPF places great importance to design in the built environment and the Council requires that good design should create places that;

7 District Wide Policies

- make places better for people;
- contribute to positive health outcomes;
- cater for the needs of different types of people;
- encourage walking and cycling;
- improve access to public transport;
- reflect and respect local context, character, scale and distinctiveness of place;
- are safe, secure, inclusive, convivial and visually attractive.

7.19 The Council is keen to encourage a mix of uses on both large and small sites reflecting the changes in society in respect of work and life balance, incorporating new ways of living through technological advances. This provides the potential to create places where services and facilities are readily accessible to residents, in particular through walking or cycling and sustainable methods of transport. More than ever there is a requirement to design and develop with flair, imagination and style.

Approach

7.20 The Council requires high quality, sustainable and inclusive design to improve the image of its settlements and the district as a whole and promote a good quality of life for those who live, work and visit Sedgemoor. Development should contribute positively to the character and identity of an area, respecting local distinctiveness and applying the best design practice approach.

7.21 The starting point of the design process should be an assessment of the existing assets of the development site which can generally include existing structures and landscape features. These features should always form the basis from which to proceed and wherever possible be retained, integrated into and reinforced as initial building blocks in the design process.

7.22 The size and arrangement of plots should determine the position, orientation, proportion, scale, height, massing and density of buildings. The treatment of the spaces around and between the buildings should be considered as just as important as the buildings, and the relationship to adjoining buildings and landscape features should be clear and concise. Density should be justified as part of the overall design process and not through early pre-application capacity studies to prove the concept of development.

7.23 The safety and security of development, through its design, location and layout should prevent anti-social behaviour, vulnerability to crime, the fear of crime and distinguish between spaces which are private or public.

7.24 Development should be accessible to all users using a range of transport modes including walking and cycling and be integrated into existing patterns of movement that connect to networks of parks, open spaces and other facilities that people need to use in a legible and permeable way.

7.25 The Council will expect development to consider and respond positively to the following;

- **Local character and history:** This could include references to materials, relationship to highways, orientation of dwellings on the plot, roof profiles and settlement layouts.
- **Local context:** Designs should reference the best of the past whilst designing for the future with innovative and forward thinking design taking into account location, identity, relationships to other dwellings and whether the proposal has a positive, negative or neutral impact on the immediate context.

District Wide Policies 7

- **Existing grain and street patterns:** In urban areas this can be described through the identification of character areas and design should be certain in its response to grain and pattern through density and accessibility assessments. In rural areas an 'organic' pattern of development is generally seen and design should appreciate this through ground figure studies to inform proposals.
- **Building lines:** Street enclosure or more open frontages with gardens are the two likely scenarios to consider and which infill development should respond to. Green field development or urban extensions have the opportunity to create new character area types.
- **Local building vernacular:** Materiality is generally location specific and deviation away from the vernacular can have a damaging visual impact. Careful consideration and assessment should be made to distil the best design approach.
- **Designated and non-designated heritage settings:** Heritage setting is defined within the NPPF and is in itself not a designation but design proposals should give careful consideration to the contribution the setting makes to the significance of the heritage asset.
- **Relationship between built and landscape environments:** The district is primarily rural in nature with different landscape character areas and design proposals must consider the effects upon views, topography, natural features and skylines. The Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary is relevant.
- **Urban to rural character:** Sensitive transition from urban to rural and vice versa can be difficult to achieve, it will be expected that green approaches to settlements are respected and proposals for new development should be designed sensitively at these edge of settlement locations.

Design and Access Statements

7.26 The Council expects that Design and Access Statements should serve as visible proof of the design evolution and clearly demonstrate how the technical assessments of constraints have resulted in the best design response possible. The guidance⁽¹⁾ from the Design Council should be used as the template expected with all applications.

Space Standards

7.27 The Council has considered the adoption of '*Technical Housing Standards Nationally Described Space Standard*' but has concluded that within the district it is unfeasible to demand that they are adhered to. The Council wishes to retain a flexible approach to enable developers to deliver and implement their building programmes where viability can be marginal. Nevertheless the Council will encourage applicants to take a positive approach to achieving appropriate levels of space within dwellings, with the NPPF (paragraph 17) seeking to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Proposals which would result in oppressive or harmfully cramped living conditions for future occupants would therefore be unlikely to meet the requirements of Policy D25: Protecting Residential Amenity. Applicants will also be encouraged to consider innovative ways of accommodating additional space in dwellings such as; high level storage cupboards in bedrooms and living areas, utility rooms, utilising roof spaces in dwellings and garages, reducing garden sizes, creating terrace areas on flat garage roofs attached to dwellings, enabling and offering extensions and conservatories to standard house types off-plan, additional lean-to extensions.

7 District Wide Policies

Climate Change Adaptability

7.28 In respect of adaptation to climate, design should cater for emerging technologies for heating and cooling and for buildings to be generally future proofed for maintenance through appropriate materiality and by simplifying design details for; junctions, roof detailing and water run-off systems. Buildings could be adaptable externally to accept retrofitted components such as; additional cladding or rain screens, window shading, eaves extensions, covered terracing, flood defence resilience.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

7.29 Traditionally, water runoff is seen as an after thought of development where the design response is fixed on only managing the flood risk. Many of the techniques employed have proved to be inadequate and result in additional problems. It is important to change the traditional approach to one of accepting water as a valuable resource which should be used for beneficial purposes within the design process.

7.30 There is a need to consider the amenity and aesthetic value of surface water in the urban environment alongside long term environmental and social factors in the context of climate change and urbanisation.

7.31 The SuDS Manual⁽²⁾ (produced by CIRIA in 2007) should be regarded as the starting point for considering design approaches to water management. Regard should be had to Policy D1 and the advice of the Lead Local Flood Authority in respect of managing flood risk in development through the use of SuDS.

Appearance versus architectural style

7.32 The appearance of a scheme as a result of design includes all elements together including but not limited to; buildings, open spaces, landscaping, parking, materiality and uses. Architectural style is how buildings look and opinions will always vary as to architectural style and this is a matter of taste rather than a planning matter. However the Council is seeking innovation and high quality in both appearance and architectural style and challenges designers, architects, land owners, agents and developers to produce development that is not mundane; the '*pattern book standard*' and the visually jarring will be questioned.

7.33 The appearance of a scheme incorporating the architectural style of buildings, the public realm and open spaces should all be designed in a way that is cohesive and which contributes to pedestrian friendly environments.

7.34 It is clear that the NPPF gives local planning authorities the power to refuse development of poor design that fails to take opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. The Council wants to enable high quality developments and will expect applicants to demonstrate positive approaches to scheme layouts and building designs.

7.35 Flair, innovation, style and imagination should be apparent in the application process demonstrated through;

- layouts and plans
- appearance and architectural style
- sustainability issues
- materials

2 http://www.ciria.org/Memberships/The_SuDs_Manual_C753_Chapters.aspx

District Wide Policies 7

- mix of uses
- approach to community
- connectivity and transitions

Policy D2

Promoting High Quality and Inclusive Design

The Council is committed to achieving high quality, sustainable and inclusive design for all new developments throughout the district to deliver buildings, places and spaces that are;

- Attractive and safe;
- Accessible for all;
- Enjoyable to use;
- Convivial and socially interactive;
- Environments to encourage healthy lifestyles:
- Conducive to walking and cycling;
- Designed with flair, imagination, style and innovation;
- Responsive to and reinforce local context, character, scale and distinctiveness of place.

Development will need to demonstrate how it maximises its contribution to the following relevant principles, with information provided proportionate to the nature, scale and location of proposals:

- High quality sustainable and inclusive design that responds positively to and reflects the particular local characteristics of the site and the identity of the surrounding area as well as taking into account climate change;
- Safe and attractive public open spaces and street scenes through the creation of high quality public realm using appropriate materials/surface treatments, landscaping, public art, street lighting and furniture which is appropriate for their locations;
- That it respects the amenity value of the occupiers of nearby buildings or the wider area;
- The promotion of safety and security through design, location and layout in a way that reduces the incidents of anti-social behaviour, vulnerability to crime, the fear of crime and distinguishes between spaces which are private or public;
- High quality design practice approach demonstrated through the Design and Access Statement and supporting plans and drawings using imagination, flair and innovation to create visually attractive places, spaces and buildings;
- Design solutions that make the most efficient use of land with appropriate densities justified as part of the design process with positive treatment of the spaces around and between buildings;
- Landscaping that creates new and retains and integrates existing features and assets to build a coherent structure beneficial to biodiversity and ecology and which integrates innovative and sustainable urban drainage water management techniques;
- Landscape proposals have been prepared in conjunction with the site layout as the design process evolves and take into account all site constraints and opportunities and the relationship of the site to its surrounding landscape;
- Accessibility to all users via a range of transport modes and which is integrated into existing patterns of movement in a legible and permeable way connecting to existing patterns of movement to facilities that people need to use;

7 District Wide Policies

- That consideration has been given to historic character and assets, particularly in conservation areas;
- That consideration has been given through the design process to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including good design of layout, aspect, massing and use of materials in order to reduce energy consumption and thereby minimise contributions to climate change.

Delivery

7.36 The Council will prepare a Sustainability Guidance and Design Checklist against which proposals will be assessed. This will over time be supported by a series of technical notes and guidance relating to technological changes and advances improving the performance of buildings and accommodating central Government guidance notes and changes in legislation as they emerge.

7.37 Additionally Somerset County Council are preparing a Waste Collection Supplementary Planning Document against which schemes will be assessed.

7.38 The Council will also continue to support the preparation of Village Design Statements and Neighbourhood Plans by local communities to enable robust design considerations to be included. Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans will continue to be updated as part of a rolling programme and should be given careful consideration in design proposals.

7.39 For housing schemes that propose ten or more dwellings the Council will use the Building for Life 12 guidelines (published by CABE) to assess how well development proposals are responding to the design requirements of the policy.

7.40 For relevant non-domestic schemes BREEAM or similar technical assessment systems will be agreed and used as appropriate with applicants.

Sustainability and Energy in Development

Introduction

7.41 New development can contribute significantly to climate change through the generation of carbon emissions during construction and in subsequent use. Carbon dioxide emissions account for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK (82% in 2013). It is estimated that 37% of carbon dioxide emissions are emitted from the energy sector, 25% from transport, 17% from the residential sector and 16% from the commercial sector.

7.42 Building Regulations take into account all regulated emissions arising from new residential development (heating, water heating, fixed lighting and ventilation) and the Council is therefore relying upon Building Regulations to reduce energy emissions from new housing development into the future, but will support planning applications that exceed Building Regulations requirements.

7.43 In respect of non-domestic development it is expected that a similar framework will be adopted by the government in the future and in relation to setting sustainability standards for non-domestic development the use of BREEAM standards (or equivalent alternative) is appropriate. Given the uncertainty about when national requirements may come into place it is considered necessary to require relevant new non-domestic development to achieve a minimum standard starting point BREEAM 'Very Good' standard.

District Wide Policies 7

Approach

7.44 This policy aims to ensure that sustainability principles are taken into account at all stages of development, including demolition of existing buildings, construction and long term management.

7.45 Current Building Regulations ensure that buildings perform to a certain energy standard once built but they do not consider the building process, or issues such as sustainable sourcing of materials. The Somerset Waste Core Strategy focuses on waste prevention, and this includes reference to Site Waste Management Plans and represents an important opportunity for sustainable construction.

7.46 Developers will be required to demonstrate that all aspects of their proposals meet policy objectives, including those not covered by Building Regulations. The Government is developing targets for zero carbon development that will set out reduction targets implemented through compliance with building regulations. Residential developments will therefore be expected to meet these targets. It is acknowledged that these targets may be subject to change or superseded by changes to national policy. Residential development will be assessed against Building for Life 12 and it is expected that proposals perform positively against the criteria. Relevant non-domestic development will need to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good', unless it can be demonstrated that this is not viable.

7.47 New development in certain locations can also present opportunities to draw energy supply from renewable or low carbon sources (including through decentralised energy scheme). These small scale schemes can still make a valuable contribution to meeting national carbon emission reduction targets. The development of small scale renewable energy schemes and micro-generation that provide energy for specific development proposals will therefore be encouraged where any adverse impacts can be addressed satisfactorily.

7.48 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be required for major proposals where it is considered that a development will result in significant adverse environmental effects, as identified in an Environmental Statement. This will provide the framework for which commitments made in the Environmental Statement or any requirements of planning conditions or Section 106 agreements can be realised. The CEMP outlines the contractors approach to environmental management throughout the construction phases with the primary aim of reducing any adverse impacts from construction on local sensitive receivers. The CEMP should also take into account other considerations including registration with the Considerate Constructor Scheme and the Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites.

Policy D3**Sustainability and Energy in Development**

The Council will encourage the use of sustainable construction techniques that promote the reuse and recycling of building materials, maximise opportunities for the recycling and composting of waste on all new development proposals (residential and non-residential), minimising the use of non-renewable natural resources and reduce CO² emissions.

Residential development will be assessed against Building for Life 12 criteria. Relevant non-domestic development will be expected to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Very Good' or equivalent standard, unless it can be demonstrated that this is not viable.

New buildings and converted buildings will be encouraged to be supplied by renewable (or low carbon) energy, having regard to the type of development involved, its design and whether it is feasible or viable.

7 District Wide Policies

Applications for all major development proposals (residential and non-residential) will be required to provide a statement demonstrating how sustainable construction principles have been incorporated, this should address demolition, construction and long term management. This should show how the proposal contributes towards the following relevant objectives (unless otherwise appropriately addressed through Building Regulations):

- Sustainable sourcing of materials and their efficient and appropriate use, including their durability;
- Minimising waste and maximising recycling;
- Incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems wherever feasible;
- Addressing any risk to water resources and minimising water consumption;
- Minimising energy consumption and improving energy performance;
- Minimising net greenhouse gas emissions of the proposed development;
- Maximising on-site low or zero carbon energy generation.

Where the Council consider it likely that the proposal will result in significant adverse environmental effects during the construction phase a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be required.

Delivery

7.49 Delivery will principally be through the consideration of planning applications. The Council will prepare a Sustainability Guidance and Design Checklist against which proposals will be assessed. This will over time be supported by a series of technical notes and guidance relating to technological changes and advances improving the performance of buildings and accommodating central Government guidance notes and changes in legislation as they emerge.

Renewable or Low Carbon Energy and Heat Generation

Introduction

7.50 It is recognised that increasing the use of renewable and other low carbon energy technologies will be a key means of delivering the challenging CO₂ emissions reductions targets set by the Government. As well as incorporating low and zero carbon energy production into new development, Local Authorities will need to encourage stand-alone schemes that contribute to national and regional targets for renewable energy production. This includes the target set in the UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009) for 30-35% of our electricity to come from renewable sources by 2020.

7.51 The detailed context for this policy is set out in the Renewables and Low Carbon Topic Paper published by the Council. The paper reviews national changes to policy, the impacts of appeal decisions, local progress in renewable and low carbon energy generation since the adoption of the Core Strategy. It partially updates information provided within the PPS1 study and provides preliminary mapping of the environmental constraints to identifying suitable areas for wind turbine development within Sedgemoor. The topic paper is available within the Local Plan evidence base.

7.52 The mapping identifies areas of potential for small-scale wind turbines that may be taken into consideration. The paper also provides information on the local heat map, taken from the National Heat Map produced by the Department for Business, Energy, & Industrial Strategy (formerly DECC), it identifies where there may be potential opportunities for co-locating heat customers with suppliers as part of a decentralised network.

District Wide Policies 7

7.53 The Council had previously undertaken a study to assess the potential for renewable and low carbon energy in the District (the PPS1 Supplement Study, 2011). Findings suggest that while potential for renewable or low carbon heat production is limited, there is some capacity in Sedgemoor for renewable electricity production. This potential was largely for stand-alone wind projects, however, the three projects that were expected to deliver this capacity (Black Ditch, Withy Farm and Pilrow) have all been refused planning permission and appeals on two of the sites have been dismissed.

7.54 The introduction of the feed-in tariff increased opportunities for other stand-alone technologies to come forward, for example the Council has approved the installation of 17 photo-voltaic solar parks since 2011, with a total installed capacity of over 100MW, which will make a significant contribution to the above targets if/when installations are complete.

7.55 The key change to national planning policy on wind turbine developments was introduced by a written ministerial statement released on 18th June 2015. There is now a requirement on local planning authorities to only approve onshore wind turbine developments if the site has been allocated within a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan as suitable for wind energy development and if they are satisfied that the planning impacts identified by affected local communities have been fully addressed.

Approach

7.56 The council will encourage low or zero-carbon energy and heat generating projects (including small-scale schemes) that contribute positively to the aim of reducing CO² emissions and to regional and national targets for renewable electricity production, provided that they meet the criteria set out in this policy (D4: Renewable or Low Carbon Energy and Heat Generation).

7.57 The Council will not be allocating sites for onshore wind energy generation through the Local Plan, although the Council will be supportive of community-led projects where they are promoted through subsequent Neighbourhood Plans or site allocations DPD, provided they are supported by local communities. RegenSW provide advice for neighbourhood planning teams on developing energy policies within their Neighbourhood Plans.

7.58 Developers will be required to provide information on the likely impact of proposals, including information on noise and emissions generation, a visual impact assessment and an ecological survey incorporating a biodiversity impact assessment. Wind turbines may particularly impact on bats in the Sedgemoor district. Any such proposals should therefore have specific regard to the Bats and Wind Turbines report published by Somerset County Council and the requirements of Policy D23: Bat Consultation Zones.

7.59 The Habitat Regulations Assessment identified significant concerns about the potential effect of wind turbines on the migration / movement of birds to, from and/or between designated sites of the Severn Estuary and the Somerset Levels & Moors. This is relevant in respect not only of any proposed turbine within 800m of a designated site but also in respect of any prospective wind farm located between the designated sites if that would create a barrier impact. Prospective developers should consult Natural England and the Council at an early stage to clarify the parameters of project-level Habitat Regulation Assessment. This will require studies of the proposed site and the wider area to fully assess the potential for impact on bird species.

7.60 Such studies should include a minimum 12-month field survey to determine the baseline numbers of birds present during an annual cycle. This survey should provide data on bird distribution and movements, including observations of bird numbers, intensity of movements, altitude and orientation of flight during different weather conditions and tidal cycles. For species that show significant

7 District Wide Policies

annual variation in numbers and distribution it may be necessary to undertake at least 2 years' baseline survey. Studies should also include an area around the wind farm which might be subject to displacement (up to at least 800m from the outer turbines) and the potential for barrier effects.

Policy D4

Renewable or Low Carbon Energy and Heat Generation projects

The Council will support projects that maximise the generation of energy and heat from renewable or low carbon sources, including solar, waste⁽³⁾, biomass and tides. With regard specifically to wind energy development the Council will support projects where they accord with relevant national requirements for onshore wind development, including that the concerns of the local community have been fully addressed and the site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy in the Development Plan (e.g. through a subsequent Neighbourhood Plan or Site Allocations DPD).

Projections will be supported where adverse impacts can be satisfactorily addressed taking into account the following factors:

- The impact of the scheme, together with any cumulative impact (including associated transmission lines, buildings and access roads), on landscape character, visual amenity, historic features, biodiversity, local economy (i.e. impact on tourist accommodation or good quality agricultural land) and the local transport network;
- Evidence that the scheme has been designed and sited to address adverse impacts on the surrounding area as far as is practical for its effective operation;
- Evidence (for wind energy schemes only) that pre-application consultation has been undertaken with the affected local community and that the planning impacts identified by the affected local community have been fully addressed and the proposal has their backing;
- Any unacceptable adverse impact on users and residents of the local area, including the generation of emissions, odour, vibration, shadow flicker, transmission interference, water pollution, loss of tranquillity and noise; and
- The balance between the adverse impacts and the extent of any direct benefits to the local area and community.

Where appropriate, provision should be made for the removal of the facilities and reinstatement of the site should it cease to be operational.

On land within or affecting the Mendip Hills and Quantock Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, proposals for the development of renewable energy schemes and associated infrastructure will need to be in accordance with Policy D19: Landscape. Major development within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will be refused except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.

Wind turbine proposals in the vicinity of the designated sites of international importance for nature conservation at the Severn Estuary or Somerset Levels and Moors, or within the areas between these sites, will need to be subject of rigorous assessment in respect of potential impacts on bird species.

3 Although proposals for biomass and anaerobic digestion power generation fuelled by waste materials will ultimately be determined by Somerset County Council as a County Matter.

District Wide Policies 7

In all cases development will need to demonstrate that there are no significant adverse impacts on biodiversity interests or the historic environment as set out in Policy D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity, Policy D23: Bat Consultation Zones and Policy D26: Historic Environment.

Delivery

7.61 Delivery will primarily be through private sector proposals for specific renewable energy schemes. In addition the Council has specifically allocated the former Royal Ordnance Factory site as an energy park with specific reference to accommodating renewable and low-carbon energy generation. The overall vision seeks to promote energy generation within the district.

7.62 Small scale generation will be encouraged through national support such as the feed-in tariff.

7.63 The Council's PPS1 Supplement Study: Planning and Climate Change report provides examples and details on how new development can meet the Council's CO² reduction aspirations outlined in Policy D3: Sustainability and Energy in Development. This will be a consideration in determining planning applications.

7.64 'Energy-from-Waste' proposals will be determined by Somerset County Council and should accord with their Somerset Waste Core Strategy or emerging Somerset Waste Plan.

Housing Mix

Introduction

7.65 National policy requires planning authorities to plan to deliver a wide choice of quality homes, by planning for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community. It is important that the right homes are delivered to ensure all residents in the district can be adequately housed, irrespective of their personal circumstances.

Approach

7.66 The Council will seek to deliver a range of homes that will contribute to the creation of mixed, inclusive and sustainable communities. It is important that the housing stock provides a wide range of housing and offers choice. This ensures that households at different stages in their life cycle and with differing needs or living arrangements can find a home, including families with children, couples, single person households and older people.

7.67 The Council will seek to balance communities where particular house sizes or tenures have become prevalent beyond any evidenced need. It is important to ensure future delivery does not become unbalanced when compared with the likely requirements of households driven by demographic change in the area.

7.68 At the same time it is important to maintain a flexible approach, so that the appropriate mix of dwellings at individual sites also takes into account the context and character of the location. A flexible approach is also important given the range of issues that can influence demand for different sized properties. For example in relation to particularly market housing the profile of future households does not necessarily directly transfer to sizes of property. As well as demographic changes issues such as housing affordability, growth in real earnings and households ability to save are key influences on the demand for different size homes.

7 District Wide Policies

7.69 The SHMA (2016) has undertaken a demographic driven approach to quantify demand for different sized homes over the long-term (2011-2032), where demographic changes are expected to be a key influence. This analysis concludes that the following represents an appropriate mix of sizes for new affordable and market homes across the District over the plan period:

Table 7.1

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Market	5-10%	30-35%	40-45%	15-20%
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Social/Affordable Rented	30-35%	30-35%	25-30%	5-10%
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Intermediate/Starter Homes	15-20%	50-55%	25-30%	0-5%

7.70 The analysis shows that for market housing the focus is expected to be on 2 and 3 bed dwellings. This profile reflects demand for family housing from newly forming households as well as older households downsizing. It also reflects a general trend towards smaller household sizes over the long-term.

7.71 The profile for affordable housing reflects the role delivery of larger family homes can play in releasing supply of smaller properties and also takes into account the limited flexibility of 1 bedroom properties. The need for affordable housing of different sizes will however vary by area (at a more localised level) over time. In considering the mix of homes to be provided within specific development schemes, the SHMA analysis should be brought together with details of households currently on the Housing Register in the local area and the stock and turnover of existing properties.

7.72 Demographic projections show an ageing population, resulting in an increasing need for housing that meets the needs of older persons. There is also a direct correlation between age and disability, and while only a small number of older households will become full time wheelchair users, many will experience some form of disability as they get older. Part M of the building regulations was updated in 2015 and dwelling types were separated into a number of types defined as category 1 - visitable, category 2 - accessible and adaptable, and category 3 - wheelchair user dwellings. Homes which are more adaptable and accessible will ensure that people can live safely in their homes for longer. In addition to the provisions of Policy D7, we are therefore seeking to maximise homes with high levels of accessibility and adaptability in the wider housing stock. Level access may not be possible in all circumstances, i.e. particularly where a site or plot may be on a significant slope (e.g. exceeding 1:15) or require mitigation against flood risk. Where this is demonstrated compliance with the policy will not be required.

District Wide Policies 7

Policy D5**Housing Mix**

In order to deliver sustainable, mixed and balanced communities, all housing development proposals for residential development (both market and affordable) will be expected to provide a suitable mix of different types and sizes of housing to meet the needs of the community, based on the best available evidence. The Council will seek a range of housing sizes to meet locally identified housing requirements and demands taking into account the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment and relevant local housing needs assessments.

To enable people to stay in their homes as their needs change an appropriate proportion of new homes on sites of 10 or more dwellings should meet M4(2) of the Building Regulation 2015 (accessible and adaptable dwellings). This will be determined on a site by site basis taking into consideration local demographic requirements, site specific circumstances, and the overall design requirements set out under Policy D2. Where step free access is not viable, due to flood risk, topography or other relevant site constraints this will be taken into consideration.

Dwellings that meet M4(3) (wheelchair user dwellings) will be supported and can count towards the requirement above.

The mix of housing should be appropriate to the established character and density of the neighbourhood. The characteristics of the site, design considerations and viability will also be taken into account. Proposals will be required to provide evidence, proportionate to the scale of development, to justify the mix of housing proposed.

Delivery

7.73 Discussions on housing mix as part of the negotiations on development schemes will be informed by appropriate evidence. Developers will need to demonstrate that they have undertaken a proportionate assessment of a range of housing evidence, including the latest SHMA, local housing needs assessments, the self-build and other suitable monitoring reports. Local stakeholders, including town and parish councils and community groups can also provide additional information as part of pre-application engagement to ensure locally relevant schemes are taken forward.

Affordable Housing**Introduction**

7.74 Housing affordability is a significant challenge facing Sedgemoor and increasing the supply of affordable housing is a key priority of the Council. The delivery of affordable housing to meet the current and future needs of Sedgemoor is an essential component of creating sustainable communities. The definition of affordable housing is set out in the NPPF (Annex 2: Glossary) and includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing.

7.75 The latest Sedgemoor SHMA provides the key evidence for developing the affordable housing policy and approach in the Local Plan. Compliant with Government guidance, the SHMA determines the overall need for affordable housing, as well as identifying the likely arising need for different tenures and sizes of affordable homes. New development needs to take account of the changing

7 District Wide Policies

community needs and the affordability and supply of adequate numbers of new homes. Without improving supply the affordability of housing will worsen and the longer term sustainability of Sedgemoor's communities is likely to worsen.

Approach

7.76 The SHMA's assessment of affordable housing has identified that over the plan period (2011-2032) there is expected to be a net deficit of 298 affordable homes per annum. Given that this is a significant proportion of the overall housing required the Council is therefore justified in seeking to maximise the provision of affordable housing at appropriate locations across the district. The Council has therefore set policy targets that seek to maximise the opportunities to provide as much additional affordable housing as possible as part of new housing developments. At the same time, the Council recognises that when negotiating affordable housing, the financial viability of any given development will be an important factor and will be a consideration to ensure policies are deliverable and enable affordable housing to be built and provided to those in need.

Thresholds and Policy Targets

7.77 Recent changes to the National Planning Practice Guidance have introduced national thresholds which are a material consideration when local planning authorities are seeking affordable housing provision from new developments. Affordable housing contributions should not be sought for sites of 10 units or less (and which have a maximum combined floor space of no more than 1000 square metres). However, in designated rural areas, local planning authorities may choose to apply a lower threshold of 5 units or less. Given this the Council will seek affordable housing provision on sites of 11 units or more for Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, Cheddar, North Petherton. This is on the basis that these locations are not identified as 'designated rural areas' by virtue of Statutory Instrument 1997/621: The Housing (Right to Acquire or Enfranchise) (Designated Rural Areas in the South West) Order 1997. For the remainder of the district a threshold of 6 or more will be applied given that these are listed in the statutory instrument as designated areas. The relevant site size thresholds for different locations in the District and targets at which affordable housing contributions will be sought is therefore set out below:

Table 7.2

Location	Threshold for seeking Affordable Housing
Bridgwater, Burnham, Cheddar, Highbridge, North Petherton	11 units or more (or more than 1000 square metres in total floor space)
Rest of District	6 units or more (must be commuted sum if between 6 and 10 units)

Table 7.3

Total dwellings (net)	Site Typology	% of total number of new units to be affordable
6-10	Brownfield	15%
	Greenfield	20%
11 and above	Brownfield	15%

District Wide Policies 7

Total dwellings (net)	Site Typology	% of total number of new units to be affordable
	Greenfield	30%

7.78 The National Planning Practice Guidance requires that for sites of between 6 and 10 units the affordable housing contribution should be in the form of a commuted sum. In all other instances it is expected that affordable housing will be provided on-site. Off-site provision or financial contributions of equivalent value will only be exceptionally considered where there is a clear justification that this will better meet unmet housing need, for example, where it is not possible to deliver the homes on-site, or the off-site provision will result in an enhancement of what would have been achieved on-site.

7.79 The number, type and tenure of affordable housing will be negotiated for each development. Factors such as local housing need, market and site conditions, and site specific development costs will be taken into account.

7.80 The affordable housing should normally be provided free from public subsidy unless it can be demonstrated that the addition of public grant would either increase the numbers of, or improve the mix of, the affordable housing to be provided. The Council wishes to engage in early discussions and have the opportunity to endorse any public grant application in advance of any submission.

7.81 Affordable housing provision should support the wider objective of creating sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. To this end, affordable housing will normally form part of the overall development and be well integrated with market housing. Whilst layout and design will be considered on a site by site basis in general the affordable units should not be segregated from the market units. Whilst a degree of clustering may be acceptable there should not be a dominance of any particular tenure in a specific area of a site. The affordable housing should also appear tenure neutral and be indistinguishable from the market housing.

Assessing Viability

7.82 It is important to stress that the actual amount of affordable housing to be achieved on any specific site must be assessed for that actual site, and will take into account the particular factors of developing that site at that point in time. Any such assessment will not only take into account the normal costs of developing the site (including S106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments and the availability of grants and subsidies), but also any abnormal costs (such as off-site highways works etc).

7.83 It is unreasonable to expect any policy target to be viable on all sites at all times. The Council also accepts that there are often particular viability issues associated with the development of brownfield sites and in such circumstances financial appraisals and 'open-book' negotiations will be required to clearly justify a departure from the targets set out. A similar approach demonstrating viability issues will also be appropriate for other sites such as large greenfield sites where infrastructure costs can often be significant.

7.84 Where an offer of affordable housing that does not meet the policy targets as proposed (in terms of overall numbers, tenure mix etc), the Council will seek to independently validate the developer's financial assumptions. The cost of undertaking this validation exercise will be paid for by the developer.

7 District Wide Policies

Affordable Housing Tenures

7.85 A variety of affordable housing types should be provided to meet the identified need. The SHMA has highlighted a particular need for homes to rent, concluding the following would be a reasonable tenure mix for affordable homes across the District:

- 10-15%: Intermediate Housing
- 85-90%: social and affordable rented housing

7.86 While this reflects the future requirements across the district as a whole, the Council recognises that the tenures will vary across individual sites to reflect localised unmet need. The tenure split indicated in the latest SHMA should, however, be used as the starting point. Regard should also be had to any up-to-date local evidence, including relevant local housing needs assessments. There are also Government proposals to introduce a national requirement to achieve 10% of housing across all large residential sites as specifically affordable home ownership products. If these proposals are implemented this will also have a bearing on tenure mix.

Policy D6

Affordable Housing

The Council will seek appropriate affordable housing provision in accordance with the thresholds and Policy Targets set out in Table 7.2 and 7.3. Provision will be considered on a site by site basis taking into account viability considerations.

Where it is clearly demonstrated that Policy Targets cannot be achieved on viability grounds the Council may exceptionally support a lower provision where:

- the scheme would address a housing land supply deficiency as identified in the Housing Trajectory in; and/or
- the scheme will deliver other Plan objectives that outweigh the need to provide affordable housing at the target levels.

In these cases, the schemes will need to demonstrate that they are deliverable within agreed time frames and be subject to legal agreements setting out review mechanisms to allow for a change in viability circumstances.

Where development proposals do not meet affordable housing targets, the Council will require a full development appraisal, including financial viability assessment, to demonstrate an acceptable alternative affordable housing provision. This might, in exceptional circumstances, include a financial contribution towards off-site provision.

Affordable housing provision should support the wider objective of creating sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. To this end, affordable housing should form part of the overall development and be well integrated with any market housing.

The Council will seek a range of affordable housing to meet locally identified housing requirements and demands in a manner consistent with Government Policy. This will take account of the identified needs as set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and relevant local housing needs assessment, taking into account the characteristics of the site, design considerations and viability. Currently, local circumstances indicate that the affordable housing tenure split should

District Wide Policies 7

include 85-90% of dwellings as social and affordable rented properties. Should a subsequent change in national policy prescribe national requirements, this will inform the affordable housing tenure split.

Delivery

7.87 Affordable housing will be delivered within the framework of this Local Plan and the Council's Housing Strategy. The precise details of quantities, type and mix of affordable housing on specific sites will be a matter for negotiation with the Council's Affordable Housing Delivery Unit and Planning Officers. Detailed affordable housing packages outlining tenure and type should be agreed prior to planning approval.

7.88 Developers and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) will be expected to deliver the affordable housing requirements through the planning process, the Council securing appropriate affordable housing through legal agreements.

Care Homes and Specialist Accommodation

Introduction

7.89 National policy states that local authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends and the needs of different groups of society. The number of older people living in the district is expected to continue to increase over the plan as people are living longer. At present, the population of older people in the district is relatively high when compared with other areas (particularly when compared nationally). About 22% of people were aged 65 and over in 2011. Over the plan period the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 67%, with a higher (115%) increase in the number of people aged 85 and over.

7.90 This trend will present challenges in terms of ensuring that the necessary accommodation is available in suitable locations to meet everyone's needs. Older persons proportionally experience higher levels of specific disabilities (e.g. dementia and mobility issues) in addition to a general increase in long-term health problems. Alongside this there is also a need to address the requirements of people with other specialist care needs, whatever their age.

Approach

7.91 A range of models exist to provide for the different requirements of elderly people and those with specialist care needs. In terms of specialist housing for older people these can include sheltered, enhanced sheltered and extra care housing, which provide different levels of care and support. These can fall within either C2 (residential institutions) or C3 (dwelling homes), determined usually by the amount of care available on site and whether the units are self contained. Registered Care Housing can include Residential care and Nursing care, again with different levels of care. These all fall within the C2 (residential institutions) use class. Given new models of provision (including extra care housing) there is a trend towards greater use of models that retain greater independence compared to more traditional registered care home provision. This is with the exception of particular groups such as those requiring specialist nursing or people with dementia.

7.92 Many of the considerations for specialist housing will be similar to general housing, in terms of design, materials, amenity impact. Additional issues are however raised, for example residents are less likely to have access to a car and therefore the nearby provision of shops and other services can in some cases be even more important, along with good public transport links for travel further afield.

7 District Wide Policies

7.93 Although the majority of older people will live in mainstream housing, it is likely that new specialist accommodation will therefore be required during the Local Plan period. Such provision can also be important in helping people to downsize and free up family houses for others. The precise amount and type of specialist accommodation required will depend on a range of factors including the choices of individual people and households. Analysis in the SHMA identifies that over 2011-2032 there may be need for 77 specialist units of accommodation for older people per annum. This is generally sheltered, extra care housing and open market housing that has been specifically designed to meet the needs of older persons, for example age restricted schemes with elements of on-site support. Such provision would in most cases be expected to be within the C3 use class and is a component of the objectively assessed housing need described in the Spatial Strategy section. Additionally analysis highlights a potential need for an additional 27 registered care bed spaces per annum for older people in the 2011-2032 period. These are in use class C2 and therefore additional to the housing need identified from demographic modelling.

7.94 The Local Plan therefore takes a positive and flexible approach to the delivery of appropriate accommodation, ensuring they are sustainably located either within or well related to settlements. Any such scheme should be consistent with the spatial strategy unless there are particular locational requirements related to specific needs of the occupants or care regime. In such instances alternative sites may be considered, taking into account all other relevant policies in the plan.

Policy D7

Care Homes and Specialist Accommodation

Proposals for specialist accommodation for older people, including sheltered housing, care homes and other appropriate models of accommodation for the elderly and those with particular needs, will be permitted provided that the development:

- Meets a proven need for that type of accommodation;
- Is well designed to meet the particular requirements of residents with social, physical, mental and/or health care needs; and
- Is appropriately accessible to public transport, shops, local services, community facilities and social networks for residents, carers and their visitors.

To meet the criteria above proposals will be expected to be within or well related to identified settlements. The scale of proposals should be commensurate to the size, nature and character of the relevant settlement. In exceptional circumstances, where development is proposed in a countryside location, the Council will require clear justification for its location taking into account the nature of specialist care required, transport impact and demonstration that alternative sites are unsuitable and/or unavailable.

The Council will require affordable housing on all such developments that fall within Use Class C3, in accordance with Policy D6. The presumption will be that this provision is provided on-site. Where, taking into account the particular circumstances of the site, it can be demonstrated that it would not be viable or appropriate to provide affordable accommodation on-site, a financial contribution towards off-site provision of affordable housing will be considered. Any agreements for off-site provision should be financially neutral in terms of the benefit to the applicant relative to on-site provision requirements.

District Wide Policies 7

In the case of sheltered accommodation, extra care accommodation or other similar models of provision, a mix of tenures will be encouraged where appropriate, taking into account the size, location and nature of the proposal.

The loss of existing care homes and specialist accommodation will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- There is appropriate alternative provision available locally; and
- There is no longer a demand for the use and/or it is not viable; and
- The facility is no longer fit for its intended purpose.

Delivery

7.95 Working with key partners, including care and specialist accommodation providers, the Council will encourage providers to take the Local Plan and its strategy into account when developing their own strategies and plans. This will ensure that specialist accommodation is delivered in the most appropriate locations to serve the identified needs of the local community and specific groups.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

Introduction

7.96 The Council has a commitment to support sustainable communities and address housing needs. This applies to the travelling communities as well as settled communities. The Council has undertaken an update of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) which has identified revised pitch requirements. The study suggests a need for 69 pitches over the whole plan period (2011-2032), equivalent to about 3 pitches per year. To date 24 pitches have been delivered against this requirement leaving a residual pitch requirement of 45 over the remainder of the plan period.

Approach

7.97 The identification and delivery of appropriate pitches is challenging in the Sedgemoor area in the context of national planning policy. Significant areas of the district are subject to flood risk and, given the vulnerability category of the use, the National Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites identifies such locations as inappropriate for development. National Policy now requires demonstration of a 5 year land supply of deliverable sites to meet identified need.

7.98 To address these challenges the Council plans to undertake a site allocations Development Plan Document to identify specific sites to meet the need identified in the GTAA. In the interim, and to provide appropriate policy coverage for the preparation of the site Allocations Development Plan Document, a criteria based policy is included to address site identification and assessment.

Policy D8

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

The Local Plan will enable permanent and transit pitches for Gypsy and Travellers and plots for Travelling Show people to meet identified needs in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2013) or subsequent revision. This currently equates to 45 permanent pitches, 5 transit pitches and 5 plots for travelling show people.

7 District Wide Policies

To ensure an ongoing 5 years supply of sites the Council intend to prepare an updated needs assessment by Spring 2019, followed by a development plan document that is intended to be submitted to the Secretary of State by the end of 2020. Prior to the preparation of this document the identified need will be met in the interim through a criteria based policy set out below. Proposals to meet the identified need for new residential and transit sites and extensions to existing sites will be approved where they:

- Are of appropriate size and proportionate in scale to and avoid dominating the nearest settled community in rural/semi-rural areas;
- Take account of the particular and differing needs of different groups of Gypsies and Travellers;
- Promote and facilitate access to schools and health facilities;
- Ensure that the development will not result in severe transport impacts including providing appropriately safe access:
- Provide sufficient space within the site for parking and manoeuvring of vehicles, and for transit sites, are located reasonably close to, or easily accessible from the primary or county road network;
- Provide opportunities where appropriate for travellers to live and work from the same location where this can be sensitively designed to mitigate potential impacts on the site surroundings or other residential uses near to the site; and
- The site is suitable in flood risk terms for the proposed use.

In considering planning applications for travellers sites amongst other relevant matters the Council will also take the following issues into account when applying the planning balance:

- Whether the Council can demonstrate an up-to-date 5 year supply of deliverable sites;
- The existing level of local provision and need for sites;
- The availability (or lack) of alternative accommodation for the applicant;
- Other personal circumstances of the applicant;

The loss of existing authorised Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People sites will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- There is appropriate alternative provision available locally; and
- There is no longer a demand for the use and/or it is not viable; and
- The facility is no longer fit for its intended purpose.

Delivery

7.99 As an interim approach prior to adoption of a site allocations DPD sites will be delivered through individual applications. The Council will encourage pre-application discussions in order to provide positive guidance on the suitability of potential sites. It will also review any existing unauthorised sites and consider the appropriateness of granting planning permission on a temporary basis.

District Wide Policies 7

Self Build and Custom Build Homes**Introduction**

7.100 The NPPF makes it clear the Local Planning Authorities should identify and make provision for people wishing to build their own home. Enabling self and custom building provides an important opportunity to bring more choice to the housing market and enable people to design and build homes that meet their specific needs.

7.101 Self build or custom build housing is identified as a dwellings built by (or commissioned by) someone to be occupied by them as their sole or main residence for at least three years. The three years is relevant in terms of qualifying for self build CIL exemption. The terms custom and self build are often used interchangeably. Custom Build tends to be where a person commissions a specialist developer, contractor or package company to help to deliver their own home, while self build is where a person is more directly involved in organising and constructing their home. It is important to note that for the purposes of this policy the definition of self and custom build does not include the building of a house on a plot acquired from a person who builds the house wholly or mainly to plans or specification decided or offered by that person. A key element is therefore that while in some cases the occupant may not be involved in any of the actual physical construction, they are still making the key design decisions from the start and throughout the design and build process.

Approach

7.102 The Council considers that there are a number of advantages of self build that can complement traditional mainstream developer models. These can include lower development costs, increased housing choice, increased diversity of supply, and more use of local suppliers and trades.

7.103 Following the Self Build and Custom House Building Act, the Council have a legal responsibility to keep a register of individuals or interested associations that are seeking a plot of land to construct a self-build or custom build house as a sole or main residence. We are required to have regard to this information when carrying out our planning and other functions. This is reflected in the policy below, which seeks to ensure the provision of an appropriate supply of plots to meet the need on the register, reflecting that there are limited opportunities to acquire plots within settlement boundaries. The policy will therefore contribute towards the availability of plots, enabling residents to deliver high quality homes, as well as supporting the local economy by providing work for builders and associated trades. The Council will also support the identification of appropriate local self build and custom build projects through the neighbourhood planning process.

7.104 It is expected (although not required) that sites of more than 1 plot will generally be brought forward by way of an outline planning permission, followed by details (reserved matters) for individual plots when key design considerations by the occupants have been made. Depending on the sensitivity and complexity of the site, a design code may be appropriate. Where justified, the Council may also require that layout, scale and appearance are agreed at the outline stage.

Policy D9**Self-build and Custom Build Homes****Provision on Allocated Sites**

7 District Wide Policies

The Council will support those wishing to build their own home to help meet the district's overall housing need. On land allocated for housing development the Council will encourage appropriate self-build provision and discuss with applicants through the development management process the potential for delivery of an appropriate number of dwelling plots for sale to self or custom builders. This should take into account the need identified in the area on the Local Planning Authority's Self Build and Custom Build Register (Part 1). Appropriate plot numbers will be considered on a site-by-site basis having regard to the Register and any site-specific viability or practical issues that may affect delivery of the allocation. Plots should be made available and offered at competitive rates, these rates should be fairly related to the particular site and plot costs. Where there is evidence that plots have been marketed at competitive rates for an agreed period without interest from self builders, those plots may revert to housing delivery through conventional means.

Small-scale self-build in Rural Areas

At the identified rural settlements (Tier 1 to 4) sites for 100% small-scale (9 or fewer homes) self build and custom build schemes that are outside but well related to the settlement boundary will be supported. In the Countryside 100% self build and custom build infill development (4 or fewer) which meets the requirements of Policy CO2: 'Infill Housing in the Countryside' will also be supported. Such proposals will only be supported where the following criteria are met:

- The scale and nature of the development is appropriate to the size, accessibility, character and identity of the existing community; and
- There is evidence of local need for plots on the Council's Self Build and Custom Build Register (Part 1); and
- Other than for sites well related to Tier 1 and 2 settlements, future occupants identified on the register must be able to demonstrate an appropriate local connection to the settlement or Parish; and
- That for Full or Reserved Matters applications, the applicant must be the future occupier of the unit; and
- There is evidence of the future occupiers being fully involved in the planning and design process from an early stage; and
- The proposal is of high quality design and complements the existing built form of the settlement, providing opportunities for walking and cycling to local services and facilities; and
- The proposal contributes to meeting relevant Placemaking objectives for the settlement.

Meaningful and robust consultation with the Parish Council, local community and other stakeholders will be encouraged.

Where based on the above criteria permission is granted outside of settlement boundaries for self build schemes that are subsequently not implemented, then conventional market led proposals will not be considered acceptable in their place.

District Wide Policies 7

The Council will monitor the effectiveness of this policy in meeting the demand for self build and custom build. Where there is evidence that insufficient permissions are being granted to meet identified demand the Council will consider the allocation of additional sites through a site allocations DPD.

Delivery

7.105 This policy will be delivered through the consideration of individual planning applications through the Council's Development Management team. Guidance and best practice in relation to self build is evolving at a fast pace with a variety of different business models and approaches to delivery emerging. Where justified, the Council will therefore prepare further documents in the form of Supplementary Planning Documents or Guidance notes to provide clarity on interpreting policy requirements.

7.106 As necessary, the Council will assist qualifying bodies on preparing their Neighbourhood Plans to support the identification of self build and custom build sites where there is a need identified.

Rural Workers Dwellings

Introduction

7.107 The NPPF (paragraph 55) describes how local planning authorities should avoid isolated new dwellings in the countryside, and this approach is reflected through this Local Plan spatial strategy and placemaking policies. In addition to its important environmental and landscape qualities, Sedgemoor's countryside is also a place of work. There are therefore special circumstances where exceptions need to be made, particularly where there is an essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside. Rural workers are typically involved in agriculture or forestry, however, in exceptional circumstances may be associated with some other rural based enterprise including the tourism and leisure industries.

Approach

7.108 In the majority of instances those employed on the land or in business can live in nearby towns and villages, or existing dwellings in the countryside, therefore avoiding new and potentially intrusive development in the countryside. In line with Policy CO1: 'Countryside', isolated new homes in the countryside will therefore be avoided unless there are special circumstances where the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work is justified.

7.109 In such instances, applications for rural workers dwellings will be assessed in detail against the policy criteria to ensure they are genuine proposals that are likely to be capable of being sustained for a reasonable period of time into the future. This will include the planning application demonstrating that both the functional and financial tests are met. Applications will therefore need to be accompanied by an appropriately detailed appraisal to allow the Council to undertake the assessment. Across all criteria (including dwelling size) the Council will assess the proposal based on the essential needs concerned. Regard will also be had to any other relevant policies in the Local Plan.

7.110 In addition to applying occupancy conditions, the Council may consider the removal of permitted development rights where appropriate and justified.

7 District Wide Policies

Policy D10

Rural Workers Dwellings

Outside of the identified settlement boundaries, the erection of dwellings to meet the accommodation needs of permanent workers in agriculture or other rural businesses will be acceptable, where the applicant can demonstrate that:

- The dwelling is required to satisfy a clearly established existing functional need to live at or near their place of work in the countryside, that cannot be met within the defined settlement boundaries; and
- The rural business has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one of them, is financially sound, and has a clear prospect of remaining so; and
- The functional need could not be fulfilled by an existing suitable and available dwelling either on the unit or in the area; and
- The need could not be fulfilled by another existing building capable of conversion on the unit, or any other building capable of conversion in the area; and
- The proposal is well related in relation to the rural business reflecting its functional need and wherever possible, is sited within a hamlet or existing group of buildings; and
- The dwelling should be of a size commensurate with the essential need and should be able to be supported long-term by the rural enterprise.

In the case of new businesses, where the need and location have been established, but permanence cannot be demonstrated, consideration will be given to appropriate temporary accommodation whilst the business establishes. In such instances there must be clear evidence of a firm intention to develop the enterprise concerned and demonstration that the business has been planned on a sound financial basis.

Where proposals for rural workers dwellings are permitted the Council will impose appropriate occupancy conditions to ensure the accommodation remains available for its intended purpose. Where occupancy conditions are in existence the Council will not support their removal unless it can be demonstrated there is no existing or foreseeable need on the unit or in the local area, and there has been an independent market assessment following an unsuccessful attempt to market the property at a realistic price.

Delivery

7.111 This policy will be delivered through the consideration of individual planning applications through the Council's Development Management team.

Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

Introduction

7.112 The renovation of existing dwellings is often a more sustainable and environmentally friendly approach than replacing existing dwellings. However, a flexible approach is necessary as replacement dwellings can have benefits in allowing homeowners to adapt their property to their changing needs, improving quality of life and in some instances allow them to remain within their community. In the countryside proposals for replacement dwellings do however need careful consideration in order to

District Wide Policies 7

protect its character, integrity and landscape qualities. The right balance needs to be struck between the aspirations of homeowners and protecting the amenity of neighbouring residents, the character of the area and all other material planning considerations.

Approach

7.113 Design issues and how any replacement dwelling responds sympathetically to the character and appearance of its locality is a key consideration. Applications will be expected to justify the design approach having regard to the policy criteria below. This should include consideration of scale, bulk and materials, and its siting in relation to the surrounding landscape and built form. Particular scrutiny will be given to proposals in more sensitive locations, including visually prominent sites and sites falling within Conservation Areas or AONB.

Policy D11

Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

Proposals to replace an existing permanent habitable dwelling that has been occupied in recent years with a single new dwelling will be considered acceptable where they satisfy other policies in this Local Plan and all the following criteria:

1. The existing dwelling has a lawful planning use as a dwelling and has not been abandoned or demolished prior to determination of the application for the replacement dwelling; and
2. The replacement dwelling is sited on or close to the position of the existing dwelling within the lawful curtilage, unless significant benefits would result from changing its siting, such as reduced visual impact or reduced impact on neighbouring uses; and
3. The replacement dwelling complements the built form, character and appearance of the local area and is sympathetic in terms of its scale, bulk, massing and the materials used.

Where a replacement dwelling is proposed in a Conservation Area or a visually prominent position in the landscape, or within or adjoining the AONB, the particular sensitivities of these locations will need to be addressed as part of any proposal.

Consideration of the potential to re-use material from the existing dwelling or demonstrate that the material has been disposed of responsibly will be encouraged.

Delivery

7.114 This policy will be delivered through the consideration of individual planning applications through the Council's Development Management team.

Residential Annexes

Introduction

7.115 In certain circumstances it can be desirable for additional residential accommodation to be provided alongside an existing dwelling. This may for example be for staff employed at a main dwelling, or for a dependant or elderly resident of the occupants of the main dwelling. In the latter case annexes can provide a solution that allows relatives to live with their family whilst still retaining an element of independence. This can also have other advantages, for example where the relatives were previously occupying a family-sized house it can increase the amount of available housing for others.

7 District Wide Policies

7.116 In some instances works to provide additional accommodation (attached or standalone) may fall under permitted development and therefore not require planning permission. Whether development falls under permitted development will depend on the details of what is proposed and what degree of independent living from the main dwelling is being sought, for example whether it includes primary living accommodation or is self-contained. The policy below is relevant in instances where a proposal is considered to fall outside of permitted development rights, and therefore planning permission is required. It is particularly relevant where annexes are being sought outside of the identified settlement boundaries, where development is generally strictly controlled.

Approach

7.117 A residential annex is accommodation ancillary to the main dwelling located within the residential curtilage and must therefore be used for this purpose. The annex should therefore form part of the same “planning unit” by sharing the same access, parking area and garden, with no boundary demarcation or sub division of the garden areas between the main dwelling and annex. This is to prevent an annex becoming an independent and separate residential unit at some point in the future without planning permission being applied for. This is particularly relevant as the ‘need’ for the annex may only be temporary. Proposals should be designed in such a way as to easily allow the annex to be used at a later date as an integral part of the main dwelling. Given these issues planning permissions granted for annex schemes are likely to be conditioned to ensure that the annex in question is used for its intended purpose.

7.118 The scale, layout, design and physical relationship between the main dwelling and annex will be important considerations for the Council. Applicant should demonstrate that different alternatives have been considered in establishing the most appropriate form of development for meeting the need identified (e.g. extension to the main house vs new standalone building). It is unlikely that a large annex would receive permission if its size is out of proportion to the existing dwellings or the annexes intended use.

7.119 Proposals should comply with the normal standards relating to parking, design and the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

Policy D12

Residential Annexes

Proposals for annex accommodation to existing dwellings will be supported where the following criteria are met:

- The existing dwelling is in a lawful residential use;
- A genuine need for the accommodation is demonstrated;
- The scale and appearance of the proposed annex is sympathetic and modest in proportion to the main dwellings and its curtilage, as well as the established need;
- A clear dependency and functional link is retained between the annex and main dwellings, including sharing vehicular access;
- It is designed in such a way that it can be easily (re-)incorporated as an integral part of the main dwelling if its use as an annex ceases;
- There is no boundary demarcation or sub division of garden areas between the annex and main dwelling;

District Wide Policies 7

- The siting, bulk, form and material should be compatible with the existing main dwelling.
- It includes adequate parking and amenity facilities for the needs of the annex occupants and the residents of the main dwelling.

It will generally be expected that annex accommodation is provided through adaptation or extension of the main dwelling. Where free standing annexes within the main dwelling's curtilage are proposed, it should be clearly justified why extension or adaptation of the main dwelling is not possible or desirable. Each case will be considered on its own merits.

The occupation of the accommodation will be restricted by condition.

Delivery

7.120 Delivery will be through the individual consideration of planning applications through the Development Management team.

7.121 Case law surrounding the provision of annexes is complex. We would recommend anyone considering building an annex should seek professional advice and engage with the Council at an early stage in the process.

Sustainable Transport and Movement

Introduction

7.122 The Local Plan's Spatial Strategy aims to place the majority of homes, new jobs, services and facilities where they are easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Such modes of sustainable travel have clear and direct benefits to health, and Policy D28: Health and Social Care specifically promotes walking and cycling as part of healthy and active living. However, it is considered that a specific policy is required that sets out a high-level framework to assess how travel management strategies and development proposals support improvements to the existing transport network and encourage modal shift.

7.123 The County Council published its Future Transport Plan in March 2011, which replaced the Local Transport Plan. A number of technical studies have informed the Future Transport Plan, including the Bridgwater, Taunton & Wellington Future Transport Strategy 2009 - 2026. Sedgemoor District Council are also undertaking a Sedgemoor Transport Strategy to refresh and update key transport priorities and improvements going forward.

Approach

7.124 The Future Transport Plan and emerging Sedgemoor Transport Strategy set the wider strategic context to guide transport policy. In addition to the more detailed transport schemes set out in the placemaking policies, the intention is to include broad criteria that will ensure that new development contributes to the overall objectives of promoting sustainable growth. Sustainable travel objectives for development proposals will be captured by the policy below, whilst more detailed areas will be addressed by policy D14: Managing the Transport Impacts of Development.

7 District Wide Policies

Policy D13

Sustainable Transport and Movement

Travel management schemes and development proposals that reduce congestion, encourage an improved and integrated transport network and allow for a wide choice of modes of transport as a means of access to jobs, homes, leisure and recreation, services and facilities will be encouraged and supported.

Proposals will:

- Support the travel improvements identified in the Somerset Future Transport Plan (transport policies, implementation plan and modal strategies), Infrastructure and Delivery Study and Sedgemoor Transport Strategy (when published);
- Be compatible with the existing transport infrastructure or, if not, provision shall be made where necessary for improvements to infrastructure to enable development to proceed;
- Contribute to reducing adverse environmental issues, including air, light and noise pollution, vibration and surface water run-off, through appropriate mitigation measures, including tree planting along road corridors for shade, amenity and air quality;
- Enhance road and personal safety;
- Enhance the facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, those with reduced mobility and other users;
- Develop innovative and adaptable approaches that deliver higher quality and accessible public transport options;
- Encourage efficient, safe and sustainable freight transport; and
- Be resilient to climate change.

Delivery

7.125 Delivery will be in partnership with specific developers and Somerset County Council. Policy S3: Infrastructure Delivery sets out the approach to funding transport schemes necessary for new development. Detailed consideration of individual planning proposals will ensure that they contribute to the overall objectives of the policy whilst the spatial strategy ensures that the location of new development will encourage sustainable modes of travel.

Managing the Transport Impacts of Development

Introduction

7.126 Managing the transport impacts is essential for creating sustainable communities. This policy sets out the detailed aspects of how development proposals should seek to manage the transport impacts of development, including access by all modes, traffic generation and contributions to infrastructure.

7.127 This detailed policy provides additional guidance to complement the high level framework set out in Policy D13 (Sustainable Transport and Movement).

Approach

7.128 The overall approach is to ensure that development proposals that have a significant transport impact are supported by an appropriate transport assessment consistent with national policy and guidance. The scope and requirement for this will be established through early discussion with the

District Wide Policies 7

relevant County and District officers, taking into account the policy and guidance set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Proposals will need to include an appropriate Travel Plan based on guidance included in the supplementary planning document Travel Planning in Sedgemoor, in order to demonstrate how development will manage transport impacts and encourage sustainable modes of travel. There is a need to ensure that additional traffic resulting from new development does not compromise the safe and efficient operation of the strategic route network. Any new access onto the strategic route network would therefore need to be carefully considered.

Policy D14

Managing the Transport Impacts of Development

Development proposals that will have a significant transport impact should:

- Be supported by an appropriate Transport Assessment, Air Quality Assessment, Noise and Vibration Assessment and Ecological Surveys where there are significant implications;
- Engage at an early stage with relevant bodies such as the Local Authority, Somerset County Council, Highways England and Network Rail regarding the proposal and scope of supporting information required;
- Include an appropriate Travel Plan outlining how the development will manage transport impacts and encourage more sustainable modes of travel;
- Ensure provision is made for inclusive, safe and convenient access for pedestrians, people with disabilities, cyclists and users of public transport that addresses the needs of all;
- Provide safe access to roads of adequate standard within the route hierarchy;
- Ensure that the expected nature and volume of traffic and parked vehicles generated by the development would not compromise the safety and/or function of the local or strategic road networks in terms of both volume and type of traffic generated;
- Comprehensively address the transport impact of development and appropriately contribute to the delivery of the necessary transport infrastructure;
- Not prejudice existing and new safeguarded transport infrastructure (sites and routes) as shown on the Local Plan Policies Map;
- Enhance and develop rights-of-way as a means of managing transport impacts of development and should not reduce the convenience and safety of existing rights-of-ways, bridle paths and cycle paths, unless suitable alternative routes are provided;
- Ensure car parking and vehicle servicing at levels appropriate to the development and in accordance with the parking standards detailed within the Somerset County Council Parking Strategy; and.
- Adequately assess and provide any required improvements to level crossings where development may result in a material increase in pedestrian and/or vehicular use of a level crossing, in consultation with Network Rail.

Delivery

7.129 This policy is primarily a development management tool to ensure that new developments provide for safe and appropriate means of transport and access. It will be delivered through the individual consideration of planning applications.

7 District Wide Policies

7.130 The supplementary planning document Travel Planning in Sedgemoor provides guidance to developers and landowners on how to manage transport impacts generated by their proposals and encourage sustainable modes of travel. It includes an emphasis on pre-application discussion with both Sedgemoor District Council and Somerset County Council (the Local Highways Authority) to ensure that proposed travel planning measures are acceptable and appropriate to the development.

District Wide Policies 7

Ensuring Economic Wellbeing

Economic Prosperity

Introduction

7.131 The Council is a pro-business authority with clear aims for shaping and delivering investment to achieve a prosperous economy. This has been reflected in the previous Core Strategy which took an employment led approach to growth across the district, seeking to improve economy self-containment and provide higher quality job opportunities.

7.132 Despite wider challenges, Sedgemoor's economy has grown consistently throughout the recent period, with significant development being taken forward. Future trend analysis also suggests this is due to continue, with an ongoing and increasing requirement for employment land. The past decade has seen specific growth within a range of employment land intensive sectors. These include Food and Drink manufacture and distribution, logistics and health care. Growth in each of these sectors is likely to increase over the next decade. Manufacturing in Sedgemoor, whilst slowing, is still a significant growth sector when compared with the national average. Employment land uptake for manufacturing activity is still above that found elsewhere and relevant provision is still required. In 2016, there were 4,795 businesses within Sedgemoor, of which 4,315 were classified as micro businesses (with 0 - 9 employees). SMEs in total made up 99.9% of the total business stock within the district, with only 0.1% of businesses employing over 250. This highlights the role SME's and micro businesses have in the local Sedgemoor economy.

7.133 Hinkley Point offers the potential for significant economic growth over the next decade. Modelling can partially reflect this impact, but the scale of the project means there are considerable uncertainties and opportunities linked to the development. If nothing else, the project is likely to have a significant temporary effect on employment land availability.

7.134 The Council has published an Employment Land Review (ELR) that sets out the forecast growth in jobs over the plan period and the amount of employment land required to meet these. The ELR suggests that around 64 to 75 hectares of employment land will be required during the plan period.

Approach

7.135 The Local Plan provides support for appropriate new employment within or well related to the identified settlements. Additionally specific allocations are made at Bridgwater, Highbridge and Cheddar. The policies allow for flexibility recognising that it is necessary to have a choice of available sites suitable to meet both forecast demand as well as unexpected requirements. The relatively high development costs mean that many sites are marginal, particularly if there are additional infrastructure requirements. This further supports the flexible approach set out in the Local Plan.

7.136 Retaining and enhancing local employment opportunities is critical in promoting greater self-containment. Large scale proposals should be directed to the towns in accordance with Policy D15, but employment proposals that contribute to the restructuring of the local economy to support knowledge-based industries and smaller businesses will be encouraged. These should be of an appropriate scale and will be supported both within and well related to the settlement boundary.

7.137 The impacts of Hinkley Point C are still largely unknown although there will be considerable demand for temporary space to accommodate elements of the supply chain. Such demand should be accommodated on sites included in the ELR firstly or, where this is not possible, on sites that are well related to the existing transport network and that do not have significant negative impacts.

7 District Wide Policies

7.138 The Council has adopted an Employment and Skills Charter that seeks to ensure during both construction and operation that employment proposals include an agreed proportion of local labour, training and recruitment plans; and commitment to a proportion of local procurement and supplies.

Policy D15

Economic Prosperity

Employment proposals will be supported where they contribute to the relevant following objectives:

- Encourage a diverse, robust, thriving and resilient (in terms of both climate change and economic resilience) economy;
- Enhance the image of the area as a business location;
- Provide or retain appropriate work spaces to meet local demand;
- Provide local and higher quality job opportunities;
- Improve the skills of the resident work force;
- Increase self-containment, reduce the need to travel and accessible by sustainable transport modes;
- Are compatible with the scale and character of their location.

Managing Employment Delivery

Large-scale proposals (over 1,000m² of gross floor space) for research and development, light industry, general industrial and distribution (B1b, B1c, B2 and B8) should be focused at Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge on brownfield sites through the remodelling and redevelopment of existing employment land and buildings within established industrial/business areas or allocated or committed employment sites unless there are exceptional and/or specific alternative locational requirements.

Exceptionally other greenfield sites identified in the Councils Employment Land Review (ELR) may be considered for development that is of national or regional significance and has locational requirements that could not reasonably be accommodated on brownfield sites or committed or allocated sites. Any such sites would need to meet all of the policy objectives above, taking into account operational requirements and deliverability.

Taking into account operational requirements and deliverability, proposals for office uses at Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge should be located in accordance with the following locational priorities:

- Firstly, in the existing town centres or on land already committed for this purpose;
- Secondly, where no suitable sites are available in the centres, then edge of centre; and
- Finally, out of centre.

Small-scale employment development that meets the objectives of Policy D15 will be supported within or well related to the settlement boundaries where it is appropriate to the scale and character of the community and promotes local job opportunities.

District Wide Policies 7

The retention, remodelling or appropriate expansion of existing businesses will be supported where it remains of an appropriate scale and character and dependent upon the nature of the activities involved, the character of the site and its accessibility. Priority should be given to the redevelopment, remodelling and/or enhancement of existing sites in the first instance.

Employment proposals that have a potential significant negative effect on internationally and nationally designated nature conservation sites will not be supported.

Temporary employment uses should be located where appropriate on brownfield sites and committed or allocated greenfield sites. Exceptionally where such sites are unavailable or unsuitable, consideration will be given to sites included in the ELR firstly or, where this is not possible, on sites that are well related to the existing transport network and that do not have significant negative impacts.

Skills/Local Labour

The Council will encourage partnership working between employers and local training providers to help develop the skills of the resident work force and sections of the community that are disadvantaged in the labour market. For employment developments that propose 10 or more jobs in total, the Council will seek to enter into a local labour agreement with the developer/applicant in accordance with the Council's adopted Employment and Skills Charter that sets out the following:

- An agreed % target for local labour
- A training and recruitment plan and
- Commitment to an agreed proportion of local procurement of services and supplies.

Safeguarding Existing Employment Land and Buildings

Introduction

7.139 The Council will continue to safeguard existing sites and buildings for employment uses where they continue to be sustainable for employment development, continue to meet the needs of the market and are required to maintain a local balance between housing and employment. Where retention of existing sites and buildings is not viable, encouragement for either mixed commercial uses or in some cases mixed commercial and residential schemes may be appropriate in order to retain modern employment premises that meet the needs and demands of the local economy.

7.140 In taking into account viability the Council will require a full development appraisal, including financial viability assessment to be submitted and for the site/building(s) to have been subject to appropriate marketing. Appropriate marketing includes the following:

- Through two or more local agents;
- An independent valuation of price;
- For a reasonable period of time (about 18 months).

7 District Wide Policies

7.141 Negotiations will be based on an 'open book' approach and any demonstration should be based on an agreed financial appraisal model. Where the Council are required to seek independent financial advice to assess the viability issues, this will be funded by the developer or promoter of the scheme.

Policy D16

Safeguarding Existing Employment Land and Buildings

Proposals to change the use, redevelop or convert existing employment sites and buildings to non-employment uses will be supported where:

- It can be demonstrated that there is no likelihood of a viable employment use (including redevelopment for employment use); or
- It would be preferable for the existing activity, as a result of adverse environmental impact, to be relocated to a more suitable site and its reuse for employment is not feasible or appropriate.

The same principle applies to sites with planning permission for employment uses that have not been implemented.

Applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits, having regard to market signals and the relative need for different uses to support sustainable local communities.

Tourism

Introduction

7.142 Tourism is a significant component of Sedgemoor's economy, although a high proportion of this is seasonal, accounting for about 10% of local employment (South West Research Company, 2014). It includes significant seaside based attractions and accommodation concentrated along the coastal strip north of Burnham-on-Sea, the natural attraction of the famous Cheddar Gorge, rural attractions including the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal, and walking, cycling and riding within the Quantock Hills, Mendip Hills and Levels and Moors. The annual tour of the Carnival starts with the Bridgwater Carnival in November and attracts visitors from all over the country. Sedgemoor is also an excellent centre for other tourist destinations and centres in the region, for example Glastonbury, Wells, Bath and Minehead.

7.143 Bed and breakfast accommodation and holiday parks at Burnham-on-Sea, Brean and Berrow make up a large component of Sedgemoor's tourist industry and provide employment for many people. Unfortunately, the industry has been affected by the popularity of overseas holiday destinations which has reduced the two-week summer holiday market. However, there has been an increase in shorter breaks. Tourist visits to the coastal areas remain strong and there has been significant investment in facilities in the Brean area. The Council has actively supported improvements to existing caravan and camping sites, but recognises the long term issues in respect of flood risk that make future investment plans problematic. The Council will work with stakeholders to address flood risk in order to enable future sustainable growth in the tourism industry. Updating the seaside/coastal offer as well as extending the length of the tourist season is a high priority for Sedgemoor's tourist industry.

District Wide Policies 7

7.144 Cheddar Gorge and the associated caves are the most famous tourist attractions within Sedgemoor, known both nationally and internationally, and have a substantial number of visitors. However, the Sedgemoor Economic Development Strategy (2015-2032) refers to changes in demand within the tourism sector and the potential for further enhancement in and around the Gorge. Many of the visitors to the Gorge are day visitors staying outside of the district. Increased marketing and new investment is required in order to maintain and increase visitor numbers and accordingly, the increase in the provision of high quality hotel accommodation would benefit the district.

7.145 Sedgemoor's environmental assets include parts of the Quantock Hills and Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Somerset Levels and Moors, the beaches and dunes at Brean and Berrow, and the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal. These make the district particularly attractive for more sustainable forms of tourism activity, including extensive walking, cycling and horse riding opportunities. The district also has a rich and varied historic environment that positively supports the tourism function, whilst tourism itself has the potential to provide appropriate new and sustainable uses for historic buildings.

7.146 The Economic Development Strategy has identified opportunities to develop walking and cycling opportunities that would stimulate associated economic activity such as accommodation, retail and food and drink outlets in the rural areas. It also identifies opportunities for more active outdoor pursuits such as caving, climbing and mountain biking based around the creation of a '*sustainable activity*' holiday focal point in the Cheddar area.

7.147 Broadening the tourism offer and enhancing the tourism product to include further variety and develop higher value niches will increase the sustainability and competitiveness of Sedgemoor's tourist product and will address the lack of a significant indoor offer, other than Cheddar Caves, that would support extension of the holiday season.

7.148 Over the last few years there have been a number of planning consents granted for new hotels, particularly at Bridgwater. Some of this new capacity is directly linked to Hinkley C and the need for accommodation during the construction period. However, it also reflects a general shortage of bed spaces in the district as well as the growing demand for holidays in this country.

Approach

7.149 To improve Sedgemoor's tourism offer and to extend the tourism season, support will be given to sustainable tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses, communities and visitors. Re-investment and modernisation of sites will result in the improvement in the quality and diversity of facilities.

7.150 Whilst new tourist accommodation is generally supported, where exceptionally it is granted in the countryside it is important that proposals are justified through the demonstration of viability. This will normally be through submitting a supporting business case. It is also important that where possible existing tourist accommodation is retained. Any applications to remove conditions restricting use to holiday accommodation will therefore need to be supported by marketing evidence demonstrating the use is no longer viable.

7.151 Generally there is no requirement for specific reference to managing caravan and chalet site proposals including new and extended sites as these can be considered under paragraph 28 of the NPPF. However, the coastal area focused on Brean and Berrow to the north of Burnham has a large concentration of caravan and camping sites related to the demand for seaside holidays. This area is also identified as Flood Zone 3a and whilst currently defended, there is a need to develop a long term strategy for the area. Until such a strategy has been finalised it is not appropriate to support unrestricted expansion of this area. The approach therefore is to support investment including the

7 District Wide Policies

updating and remodelling of existing sites within an identified “tourism boundary” where this does not result in an increase in the number of visitors potentially at risk from flooding. This enables investment and modernization to ensure sites remain attractive and viable in the short to medium term and in some cases will deliver improved local flood resilience. Such updating could include additional land to reflect changing occupation densities and replacement of static caravans with holiday lodges for example. The tourism boundary will also be used as the area of search when applying the sequential test under Policy D1. Sites that pass the sequential and exceptions test will need to be supported by an appropriate Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).

7.152 Tourist development has the potential to result in increased recreational pressures on sensitive habitats, including nationally and internationally designated sites. Any such proposal will need to demonstrate that there are no adverse impacts or, in exceptional circumstances if this is unavoidable, appropriate mitigation and compensation measures should be provided as outlined in Policies D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity and D23: Bat Consultation Zones.

Policy D17

Tourism

Proposals for tourism related initiatives including accommodation will be supported where they contribute to the following objectives where relevant to the proposed development:

- Improving the quality and diversity of the tourism offer and enhancing the image of the area as a tourism location;
- Improving the resilience of the local economy through the provision of higher quality local job opportunities and extending the tourism season;
- Promote education and interpretation of the natural, built and historic environment;
- Promoting sustainable tourism taking into account the impacts and effects of climate change, the production of waste and the consumption of natural resources;
- Increase accessibility to the district’s tourist assets, facilities and accommodation through sustainable modes of travel including safe cycling and walking;
- Managing visitor pressure to prevent harm to the natural and built environment and local communities; and
- Enhance social cohesion and benefit the local community through access to facilities.

Hotels

Proposals for new hotels or similar accommodation will particularly be encouraged within the towns of Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, Cheddar (including the Cheddar Gorge Commercial area, Policy C7 refers) or where there is an opportunity for the conversion and re-use of suitable existing buildings or brownfield sites.

Tourist accommodation

Small scale tourist accommodation including lodges, caravans, and pods will be supported within identified settlements where they are appropriate to their size and role and meet the requirements of Policy D1: Flood Risk and Surface Water Management.

At Brean and Berrow proposals for the remodelling of caravan and camping sites within the defined tourism boundary will be supported where they do not increase the number of visitors potentially at risk from flooding. Proposals will need to meet the requirements of D1: Flood Risk

District Wide Policies 7

and Surface Water Management. The area of search for the sequential test will be the defined tourism boundary, and any detailed Flood Risk Assessment will need to demonstrate that there is no increased risk to occupants. Until the implications of flood risk and sea level rise, and potential solutions for this area, are fully understood, proposals for new sites which increase the number of visitors potentially at risk from flooding in Flood Zone 3 will not be supported.

In the countryside new accommodation should, where possible, be provided within or close to a settlement but may be justified in other locations where the facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available to re-use. The Council will expect all such proposals to be supported by a robust business case demonstrating they are viable.

Retention of existing holiday accommodation

The change of use or removal of conditions restricting occupation to holiday use will only be allowed if:

- It can be demonstrated that the use is no longer viable, this will normally be through marketing the business for at least two years at a realistic price and supported by an independent market assessment; and
- The accommodation is suitable for residential use; and
- It is adjacent or well related to an existing settlement.

New tourism facilities

Tourism and visitor-based schemes, including those for extensions to existing visitor facilities, will be supported where they are appropriate to the size and role of the settlement and/or to the specific nature of the location. Wherever possible, tourist and visitor facilities should be located in existing or replacement buildings if they are suitable for the purpose, particularly where they are located outside settlements.

Facilities requiring new buildings in the countryside should, where possible, be provided within or close to a settlement but may be justified in other locations where the facilities are required in conjunction with a particular countryside attraction and there are no suitable existing buildings or developed sites available to re-use.

In all cases development will need to demonstrate that there are no significant adverse impacts on biodiversity, geology and landscape interests as set out in Policy D19: Landscape, Policy D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity and Policy D23: Bat Consultation Zones and be compliant with the Habitats Regulations (2010).

Delivery

7.153 Delivery will primarily be through private sector investment although the Council will support proposals through its wider economic development function.

7 District Wide Policies

Retail

Introduction

7.154 The Government provides guidance on town centres in the NPPF and paragraph 23 states that planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. Local planning authorities should recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality.

7.155 The Sedgemoor Town Centres and Retail Study (2009) provided detailed information on how the main centres functioned. The report indicated that only 42% of comparison expenditure was retained in the district, with 24% of this going to Bridgwater town centre. This is a low retention rate that reflected the draw of stronger nearby centres at Taunton, Weston-Super-Mare and Bristol. The district did however retain 84% of convenience expenditure. Although this report has not been updated, evidence from submitted retail assessments in support of planning applications as well as wider data on the health of retailing strongly suggest that this position is broadly the same in 2016.

7.156 The key retail objective of the Local Plan is therefore to retain and promote a range and mix of retail facilities within the towns and villages to meet the needs of the community and which will preserve and enhance the character and vitality of those centres.

Approach

7.157 The Spatial Strategy Policy S2: Spatial Strategy for Sedgemoor and placemaking policies provide further guidance on retail development. However, it is important to identify a retail hierarchy and set out detailed policy to control town centre uses. The Local Plan identifies Town Centres for Bridgwater and Burnham-on-Sea where it is expected that new shopping and other town centre uses will be accommodated.

7.158 The Council will therefore support proposals that improve the retail offer within any of the centres as set out below. It will do this by firstly seeking to focus development within the centre itself, or on suitable sites located at the edge of centre, followed by out of centre sites which may be appropriate in a considered sequential approach. By supporting a concentrated variety of shops and services, the vitality and viability of the Centres can be protected and enhanced.

7.159 Policy D18: Retail Hierarchy seeks to protect and enhance the primary shopping area, with the Primary Shopping Frontage being the focus for retail uses. The intention is to attract people to the towns and place a strong emphasis on the protection of the core of retail activity at the heart of the town centre. Change of use away from A1 to other complementary main town centre uses can occur within the Primary Retail Frontage. However, proposals will need to be considered on a case by case basis in terms of the impact on the retail character and function and also on the vitality and viability of the town centre. The Council considers that a robust marketing exercise is the most transparent way of demonstrating that retail facilities are no longer viable. To demonstrate that the marketing activity is proportionate and effective it should be undertaken continually for at least a 12 month period. All details of marketing activity and enquiries should be provided to the local planning authority together with full reasons why any offers have not progressed.

7.160 A more flexible approach is applied to the Secondary Retail Frontages where the proposed use maintains and enhances its vitality and viability. This could include sui generis uses such as betting shops and pay day loan shops previously considered to be A2 uses. It is important that there is not a concentration or a coalescence of certain uses that would harm the amenity of surrounding properties and uses and the overall character, vitality and viability of the town centre.

District Wide Policies 7

7.161 District Centres are identified at Cheddar, Highbridge, North Petherton and Wedmore where encouragement is given to appropriate retail and complementary uses that meet the needs of the local community. Within those areas the loss of retail units and appropriate non-retail uses shall be resisted.

7.162 Neighbourhood Centres, which include the thirteen areas listed within the Retail Hierarchy table below currently provide (or will provide in the future) valuable facilities to meet the needs of the local community and the loss of such facilities will be resisted.

7.163 Local retail provision of an appropriate scale and the retention of existing facilities in rural settlements is generally supported. Given the important role local shops have in supporting the wider community needs of rural settlements, Policy D35: Local Services provides further guidance on both new provision and resisting the loss of existing facilities.

Policy D18

Retail Hierarchy

Existing and new main town centre uses (as defined in NPPF) will be supported where they contribute to the following objectives:

- Compatible with the role and function of the centre as set out in the retail hierarchy below;
- Improve the vitality and viability of the centre (and not harm other centres in the District) including its economic resilience;
- Enhance the image of the centre;
- Encouraging convenient and accessible local shopping facilities to meet the day to day needs of residents and contribute to social inclusion;
- Compatible with the scale and character of its location;
- Encourage access by sustainable and safe transport modes;
- Consistent with the sequential test set out in NPPF (paragraph 24).

Retail Hierarchy

Town Centre:

- Bridgwater (Primary Shopping Area defined on the Policies Map)
- Burnham-on-Sea (Primary Shopping Area defined on the Policies Map)

District Centre (as defined on the Policies Map):

- Cheddar
- Highbridge
- North Petherton
- The Borough/Church Road, Wedmore

Neighbourhood Centre (as defined on the Policies Map)

- St John Street, Bridgwater
- North Street, Bridgwater
- Taunton Road, Bridgwater
- Westonzoyland Road, Bridgwater

7 District Wide Policies

- Bower Manor, Bridgwater
- Rhode Lane, Bridgwater
- Wills Road, Bridgwater
- Parkway, Bridgwater
- Stockmoor
- Community and retail uses at Land at West Bridgwater (Allocated by Policy B2)
- Community and retail uses at Land at East Bridgwater (Allocated by Policy B3)
- Community and retail uses at Land at Bridgwater Gateway (Allocated by Policy B4)
- Rosewood Farm, Burnham & Highbridge

Primary Retail Frontages

Within Primary retail frontages (as defined on the Policies Map) proposals for ground floor retail (A1) will be supported. Proposals for ground floor non-retail uses (A2 – A5) will only be allowed if the proposed use would not undermine the retail function of the town centre and maintain and enhance its viability and vitality. In determining any non-retail applications, the following factors will be considered:

- The location and prominence of the premises;
- The size and width of the premises;
- The number and distribution of other existing and committed non-A1 uses within the primary retail frontage;
- The length of vacancy and evidence of marketing for a minimum of 12 months for the current permitted use where appropriate;
- the nature and character of the proposed use; and
- the design of the shop-front.

Premises do not have to be vacant or marketed for a change of use to be acceptable. However, the length of any vacancy of the premises and evidence of unsuccessful marketing for the current permitted use may be evidence of a lack of demand and changing retail patterns.

Secondary Retail Frontages

Within Secondary retail frontages (as defined on the Policies Map), proposals for ground floor retail (A1) and non-retail uses (A2-A5, D1, D2 and appropriate sui generis uses) will be supported provided that they do not result in a concentration of single uses where the cumulative impact results in a loss of retail units damaging to the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Within the Primary and Secondary retail frontages support and encouragement will be given for mixed-use schemes that provide for office and residential accommodation above appropriate ground floor retail, leisure or other town centre uses.

Wider Town Centre Area

The Council will support retail, business, leisure, arts, cultural and tourism development within wider town centre (areas not defined by Primary Retail Frontage and Secondary Retail Frontage) provided:

- They will not harm the retail function and character of the Primary Shopping Area;
- They will not harm the vitality and viability of the Primary Shopping Area;

District Wide Policies 7

Residential development is encouraged within the Town Centre, providing it does not harm the retail function and character and its vitality and viability. For all proposals, separate access arrangements to the upper floor space, which could be used for residential, community or employment use, should not be eliminated.

District Centres

Within the district centres (as defined on the Policies Map), support will be given for appropriate retail and complementary uses that meet the needs of the local community. Retail (A1) and non-retail uses (A2-A5) at ground floor level will be supported within the defined district centre boundaries and the loss of such uses will only be allowed if an overriding justification can be demonstrated.

Neighbourhood Centres

Within Neighbourhood Centres (as defined on the Policies Map) the loss of existing services and facilities that meet the day to day needs of the local community will be resisted unless an over-riding justification can be demonstrated.

Proposals for retail and other main town centre uses outside of defined town centres (with the exception of small scale rural development) must demonstrate the application of a sequential approach to site selection.

Where the proposals exceed 2,500m² gross floor space they must be supported by an impact assessment that meets the requirements of the NPPF (paragraph 26).

Delivery

7.164 This policy primarily seeks to control the provision of new retail and associated town centre uses. Delivery will principally be through private investment and in conjunction with other policies in the Local Plan. The Council owns a significant number of retail properties within Bridgwater and will therefore contribute to the provision of appropriate new town centre uses through the use of flexible leases and rental agreements.

7.165 The Council will publish annual town centre reports identifying the mix of uses within the centres and changes that have taken place during the previous twelve months. This data will be of direct interest to potential new investors. It will also continue to support new retail investment through innovative use of new initiatives.

7 District Wide Policies

Enjoying and Achieving

Natural Environment

Landscape

Introduction

7.166 Sedgemoor's natural environment is unique. As well as having 12 miles of coastline, the District is home to significant parts of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in the Mendip Hills AONB and the Quantock Hills AONB.

7.167 Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes'. Paragraph 114 of the NPPF goes on to state that 'Local planning authorities should: maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes...and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast'. The NPPF also encourages LPA's to give great weight to conserving protected landscapes such as AONB's and National Parks.

7.168 At the national scale, the Character of England Map (produced in 1996 by the then Countryside Commission and Natural England) identified 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). Natural England has now produced updated descriptions of these NCAs, six of which fall within the district of Sedgemoor (Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes, Quantock Hills, Mid Somerset Hills, Somerset Levels and Moors and the Mendip Hills, and one coastal NCA - Bridgwater Bay). In 2003 the Council published the Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary. Working within the framework provided by the NCAs, this publication maps and describes the landscape in more detail by subdividing further into local level landscape character 'types' and 'areas'. The study describes the character of the landscape, identifies key issues and forces for change, considers the sensitivity to and capacity for development in the landscape, identifies vulnerable areas and makes policy recommendations.

7.169 The Quantock Hills Joint Advisory Committee and the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership have each published an AONB Management Plan that sets out their objectives in relation to protecting the AONB landscapes from the pressures of development. AONBs produce statutory individual Management Plans every 5 years. The aims and objectives of these Management Plans will be supported throughout the plan period to ensure due regard to AONB statutory purpose.

Approach

7.170 The policy seeks to protect and enhance the natural environment wherever possible and will resist development that may have an adverse impact on its character as well as ensure that proposals enhance and conserve the natural beauty of AONBs and the distinctive landscape features identified in the Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary. The Policy seeks to ensure that development that could result in having a significant impact on the landscape (including

District Wide Policies 7

the historic landscape) incorporates appropriate mitigation and compensation measures. Tranquillity can be a significant attribute of some landscapes and Policy D24: Pollution Impacts of Development and D25: Protecting Residential Amenity is also relevant.

Policy D19

Landscape

Development proposals within the Mendip Hills AONB, the Quantock Hills AONB or on undeveloped coast will only be supported where they conserve and enhance the natural beauty, or the exceptional character or quality of the landscape in these areas. Development within the setting of an AONB that has the potential to harm the character and visual amenity of the protected landscape will only be supported if that potential harm can be negated through appropriate and acceptable mitigation measures.

Elsewhere in the district proposals should ensure that they enhance the landscape quality wherever possible or that there is no significant adverse impact on local landscape character, historic landscape, scenic quality and distinctive landscape features as identified in the Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary. In particular through:

- Siting and landscaping that takes account of visibility from publicly accessible vantage points;
- The form, bulk and design of buildings having proper regard to their context in respect of both the immediate setting and the defining characteristics of the wider local area;
- Protecting and enhancing natural and historic features which contribute to the distinctive character of the district's landscape, such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows, soils, rivers/river corridors, ditches, open space, archaeological remains and rural buildings; and
- Taking account of the predicted long-term impacts of climate change on landscape.

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) should accompany planning applications where it is judged that the landscape and visual amenity may be adversely affected by the proposed development and it is considered necessary to understand the likely effects as part of the appraisal of the development. This is to understand both the significance of and the effects of change on the landscape (as an environmental resource) and/or on visual amenity. In undertaking LVIA's reference should be made to information in relevant National Character Area profiles and the Sedgemoor Landscape Assessment and Countryside Design Summary.

Where development is necessary and could result in significant adverse effects on the landscape and on visual amenity, appropriate mitigation measures should be provided. Where a significant adverse effect cannot be avoided or markedly reduced through mitigation, then opportunities to offset, remedy or compensate for unavoidable effects will be a requirement.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Introduction

7.171 Within the district there are 28 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) designated for biological and/or geological interests (23 for biological interests, 1 for geological interests and 4 for both interests). The Somerset Levels and Moors are designated as internationally important wetlands for nature conservation at a European level as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for its wintering and migratory birds and internationally as a Ramsar for its birds and aquatic invertebrates. The Bridgwater

7 District Wide Policies

Bay component of the Severn Estuary SPA/Special Area of Conservation (SAC)/Ramsar is designated for its wintering, migratory and breeding birds, its marine habitats and migratory fish. Also at a European level there are four Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in the district:

- Exmoor & Quantocks Oak Woodlands;
- Mendip Limestone Grasslands;
- Mendip Woodlands; and
- North Somerset and Mendip Bats.

7.172 The whole of the Local Plan will therefore also be the subject of a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

7.173 There are also over 230 locally designated Local Wildlife Sites across Sedgemoor district, some of which form part of the Ecological Network. There are three Local Nature Reserves within the district, three National Nature Reserves, nineteen Somerset Wildlife Trust sites, 1246 hectares of Ancient Woodland, 24 County geological sites and one Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Reserve.

7.174 The District Council recognises the value of our natural assets and has worked with the Somerset Biodiversity Partnership to identify species and habitats that are important in Somerset and to draw up plans to care for them and supports the Somerset Local Nature Partnership in their aim to champion the value of nature at a strategic level. '*Wild Somerset*' (Somerset Biodiversity Partnership, 2008) is the Strategy that covers the whole area of Somerset and describes how the partnership will work together and involve local communities and other agencies in activities to protect and enhance wildlife.

Approach

7.175 The policy seeks to support development which protects and delivers net gain for biodiversity and retains and enhances natural features. New development where it is reasonably likely that species and/or habitats of nature conservation significance may be impacted upon will be required to demonstrate, through an Ecological Impact Assessment, how conservation of biodiversity is taken into account in its design and implementation. In particular, such an Impact Assessment should include an assessment of how a development would affect biodiversity in a landscape setting (i.e. through the loss or changes to habitats and their effects on the viability of species populations) and show how priority species and habitats identified in the Section 41 list: Habitats and Species of Principle Importance in England will be safeguarded.

7.176 Particular regard should be had to opportunities for the protection, enhancement and management of the Ecological Network. These represent the best areas to maintain and expand wildlife habitats through their management, restoration or additional creation of habitat. The policy also seeks to ensure that development that could result in having a significant impact on nature conservation shall incorporate appropriate mitigation and compensation measures.

7.177 Somerset County Council have developed an offsetting methodology [*Somerset Habitat Evaluation Procedure (2017)*]. It is advised that developers give due regard at the pre-application stage of the development process to allow proper consideration of biodiversity in master planning a site. A copy of SHEP methodology can be obtained from the Somerset County Council website and in particular to development affecting SACs supporting bats, the relevant technical guidance.

7.178 As a '*competent authority*' under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 the District Council is responsible for undertaking assessment for ensuring that populations and distribution of European Protected Species are maintained at a '*Favourable Conservation Status*' as defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive. Applicants must provide all necessary information to

District Wide Policies 7

enable such an assessment to be conducted, including any necessary survey work, reports, avoidance and mitigation measures with the planning application. Those responsible for project-level Ecological Impact Assessments should, in respect of European sites, utilise Local Plan and Core Strategy HRA reports as context where appropriate by summarising and referencing this (rather than duplicating).

Policy D20

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Development proposals should contribute to maintaining and where appropriate enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity, taking into account climate change and the need for habitats and species to adapt to it. Particular regard should be had to:

- The NERC Act 2006 – Section 41 list: Species and Habitats of Principle Importance in England;
- The presence of, or potential impact on, European and UK Protected Species; and
- Potential impact on internationally and nationally designated sites of nature conservation importance.

Ecological Impact Assessments will be required where it is reasonably likely that species and/or habitats of nature conservation significance may be impacted on by the proposed development.

Construction Environmental Management Plans will be required where there is potential for significant environmental effects during the construction stage.

Development will be supported where:

- As well as ensuring the protection of internationally and nationally designated sites, it ensures the appropriate protection of the nature conservation interest of local sites designated for their nature conservation value;
- It retains or enhances features as appropriate, such as wetlands, watercourses, coastal features, geological interests, hedgerows, soils, trees, copses and ponds which provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones from one habitat to another; and
- It makes appropriate positive provision for wildlife through urban and rural habitat creation/restoration (having particular regard to Ecological Networks), including tree and hedgerow planting, and subsequent management.

Development should seek to avoid significant harm in the first instance. Where avoidance is demonstrated to not be possible, impacts which could result in a significant indirect or direct adverse effect on nature conservation will need to provide adequate mitigation, or, as a last resort, compensation. Replacement habitat for species as mitigation or compensation will be calculated using Somerset County Council's Habitat Evaluation Procedure methodology. Planning permission will be refused in instances where significant harm cannot be adequately avoided, mitigated or compensated for.

Soils

7 District Wide Policies

Where it is not possible to avoid the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land a development proposal should be accompanied by a Construction Soil Management Plan that sets out how soils will be protected during construction and, when appropriate, how soil resources will be recovered and/or enhanced.

Ecological Networks

Introduction

7.179 In addition to those sites of ecological value that are identified in Policy D20 a strategic approach to planning positively for biodiversity has been embedded in the NPPF to realise the aspirations of the Government White Paper on the Natural Environment, 'The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature' (June, 2011). This is also consistent with the Government's recently published 25 Year Environment Plan (January, 2018). The NPPF requires planning authorities to plan for biodiversity at a landscape scale across local authority boundaries and identify and map components of ecological networks. This is with the aim of preventing or reducing the isolation of locally, nationally and internationally designated nature conservation areas. Continuing to protect the existing fragments of priority habitats without having a strategy in place to protect the ecological value of the matrix of land between those sites does not satisfy the need to plan positively for the conservation of biodiversity as it does not make provision for the dispersal and recolonisation needs of species.

7.180 Somerset Wildlife Trust and Somerset County Council have developed a map of the ecological networks in Somerset with support from Forest Research and Somerset Environmental Records Centre. Their 2016 report (Somerset's Ecological Network: mapping the components of the ecological network in Somerset) defines these networks as follows: "An ecological network is a group of habitat patches that species can move easily between maintaining ecological function and conserving biodiversity. Through appropriate management, ecological networks can provide a connected collection of refuges for wildlife. These networks are the basic natural infrastructure that will begin to enable biodiversity to recover from recent declines, and help to protect socially and economically important ecosystem goods and services."

Approach

7.181 This policy seeks to support development proposals that will protect and enhance the components of Somerset's Ecological Network. The components of Somerset's Ecological Network have been mapped out by Somerset Wildlife Trust in partnership with the County Council and are updated annually by Somerset Wildlife Trust. Somerset Wildlife Trust or the Somerset Environmental Records Centre should be contacted for the latest information in relation to the mapping. Somerset's Ecological Network represents existing and potential strategically important ecological infrastructure located across the area. It identifies existing as well as new opportunities for biodiversity, and the linkages required to ensure connectivity between these elements. Somerset's Ecological Network does not aim to identify all resources of importance to the conservation of the natural environment and therefore the protection of specific sites remains important.

7.182 The Ecological Network is composed of Core areas, Dispersal Areas and Stepping Stones for each of the four key habitat types: Wetland (Fen, Marsh, Swamp), Priority Grassland (including calcareous and neutral grassland), Heathland & Acid Grassland and Broadleaved Woodland. Further information on the description and function of the components (and information on how the ecological network was developed) can be obtained from the Local Plan evidence base.

District Wide Policies 7

7.183 Somerset's Ecological Network can facilitate sustainable growth within Sedgemoor by:

- Avoiding negative effects (loss, damage, deterioration or disturbance) on any of the components of the network by identifying site constraints at the early stages of a project;
- Generating net gains for biodiversity through habitat enhancement, restoration or creation on the local ecological network.

Policy D21

Ecological Networks

All development proposals should protect and, where possible, enhance the coherence and resilience of Somerset's Ecological Network within the Sedgemoor District.

In the first instance proposals should avoid causing significant harm to components of Somerset's Ecological Network and where possible enhance its components. Where it is demonstrated avoidance is not possible proposals that are reasonably likely to cause significant harm to components of Somerset's Ecological Network must demonstrate how the impacts will be appropriately mitigated.

Trees and Woodland

Introduction

7.184 Trees, woodland and hedgerows are important for their intrinsic beauty, their contribution to the landscape or townscape, their role in absorbing carbon dioxide, screening or softening the appearance of new development and their value for wildlife.

7.185 It is particularly important to protect the veteran trees and ancient woodland within the district and the 'Wild Somerset - Somerset Biodiversity Strategy 2008 - 2018' strategy includes a specific key action that seeks to "Ensure the fullest possible protection of irreplaceable semi-natural habitats, such as ancient woodland" through local planning policy as these habitats do not benefit from a protective statutory designation.

7.186 The 2013 Government Forestry Policy Statement endorsed the aim of the Ancient Woodland policy (2005) to "refuse planning permission for developments that would have an adverse impact on them" when it stated "we recognise the value of our native and ancient woodland and the importance of restoring open habitats as well as the need to restore plantations on ancient woodland sites. We, therefore, confirm our commitment to the policies set out in both the Open Habitats Policy and Keepers of Time, our statement of policy for England's ancient and native woodland".

7.187 The Biodiversity Strategy for England (Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife & Ecosystem Services, Defra 2011, see 'Forestry' para 2.16) states that – "We are committed to providing appropriate protection to ancient woodlands and to more restoration of plantations on ancient woodland site".

Approach

7.188 This policy seeks to support development that protects the existing Ancient Woodland and Trees within the district and contributes to an increase in the land area of native woodland and number of native trees within the district.

7 District Wide Policies

7.189 The Council will use mapping provided by Natural England to identify the presence of ancient woodland and will assess (where applicable) planning proposals in line with the Forestry Commission's standing advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran trees. The Woodland Trust supports the absolute protection of ancient woodland and ancient trees. These semi-natural environments are habitats that have evolved over centuries, with a complex interdependency of geology, soils, hydrology, flora and fauna and it is not possible to mitigate the loss of, or replace, ancient woodland by planting a new site, or attempting trans-location.

7.190 There are currently 2068 Tree Preservation Orders within the district protecting individual trees or groups of trees and fourteen Conservation Areas within which all trees are afforded some protection by the provisions in section 211 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Policy D22

Trees and Woodland

Where possible development should seek in the first instance to avoid or minimise the loss of or damage to trees, woodland and hedgerow. Development that would result in the unacceptable loss of, or damage to, or threaten the continued well-being of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland and veteran trees will only be supported if the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss or damage. In these circumstances, if the loss or damage is deemed to constitute significant harm to biodiversity, then the developer will need to provide adequate mitigation and/or compensation in accordance with Policy D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

Adequate tree and/or ecological information (proportionate to the nature and scale of the potential impact) will be required where it is judged that development proposals may affect trees, woodland or hedgerow. Development proposals that include a planting scheme should be accompanied by a Landscape Masterplan (proportionate to the scale of development) that incorporate the planting of native tree and hedgerow species that are characteristic of the local landscape and provide benefits to local wildlife.

Development that seeks to enhance and expand the district's tree and woodland resource will be encouraged and supported where it accords with the policies in the Local Plan as a whole. Conditions and/or planning obligations will be used to secure the commensurate replacement of trees, woodland and hedgerows or their protection during the course of development.

Delivery

7.191 These policies are primarily development management tools and delivery will therefore be through the individual consideration of planning applications.

7.192 Policy D2: Promoting High Quality and Inclusive Design is relevant to the landscape policy and further design guidance will include references to minimising landscape impacts.

7.193 Policies D29 and D30 (Green Infrastructure) are also directly relevant to the landscape and the trees & woodland policies and will contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural landscape and native woodlands and trees. Policy D20 and the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy will therefore support delivery of the policy objectives.

District Wide Policies 7

7.194 Policy D34: Outdoor Public Recreational Space and New Residential Areas is relevant to the Biodiversity and Ecological Networks policies as good planning and design could ensure that the provision of high quality open space within a development could also contribute to the enhancement of local biodiversity and ecological networks.

7.195 The Council will seek to implement key actions set out in the Somerset Biodiversity Strategy and to work with key partners such as Natural England and the Environment Agency.

7.196 Prospective applicants should contact the Council's Ecologist at an early stage in the preparation of a scheme in order to establish the potential effects and implications.

Bat Consultation Zones

Introduction

7.197 The district supports two Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which have horseshoe bats as features, the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC and the Mendip Limestone Grasslands SAC.

7.198 In addition to these two SACs, Sedgemoor contains habitat used by bats from the Exmoor and Quantocks Oak Woodlands SAC, which supports Barbastelle bats, and the Hestercombe House SAC, which supports Lesser Horseshoe bats. As '*competent authority*' under the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010 (the 'Habitats Regulations') Sedgemoor District Council is required to carry out a '*test of likely significant effect*' on planning applications that potentially affect the conservation objectives of these sites.

7.199 Bats forage across wider areas of the landscape than are actually designated as SAC and it is therefore possible that development in a wider area can impact on the SAC. Bats rely on a number of features in order to maintain its population, the conservation objective of the SACs, including hedgerows and buildings used as night roosts and loss or alteration to these features from removal, change in habitat, alteration to structures and the introduction of street lighting may result in permanently reducing the amount of habitat required to maintain the population.

Approach

7.200 As advised through the Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Core Strategy, '*Bat Consultation Zones*' have been defined. The Bat Consultation Zone includes areas known to be regularly and potentially used by SAC bats for commuting and/or foraging and night roosting. The Bat Consultation Zone mapping was provided from technical guidance (available from the Local Plan evidence base) commissioned by Natural England and is drawn from radio tracking studies and other surveys of Horseshoe and Barbastelle bats.

7.201 Consultation Zones have three bands which relate to the level of survey and amount of mitigation required to replace habitat loss to SAC bats. The mapping also shows sensitive juvenile sustenance zones around maternity roosts. The Zone boundaries may be subject of revision in the light of new data; if such changes are made these will be installed on the Council's Geographic Information System and take immediate effect.

7.202 Depending on land take and the type of development, applications occurring within the Bat Consultation Zone could require the District Council, as the '*competent authority*' under the Habitats Regulations, to carry out at least a '*test of likely significant effect*' and possibly an '*Appropriate Assessment*', including consultation with Natural England. Applicants will be required to provide all necessary information required to satisfy this process. Many types of development being promoted

7 District Wide Policies

are unlikely to require such assessment. However, promoters should contact the District Council in advance of a planning application in order to establish the scope of the information (if needed) required for the Habitats Regulations Assessment.

7.203 In addition to the Bat Consultation Zones relating to SACs, British bat species are widespread in Sedgemoor and may be using habitats and roost sites anywhere in the administrative area. As a '*competent authority*' under the Habitats Regulations the District Council is responsible for ensuring that populations and distribution of bats are maintained at a 'Favourable Conservation Status' as defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive. The protection of bats and other European Protected Species is addressed further in Policy D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

Policy D23

Bat Consultation Zones

Planning Applications for development on sites within the Bat Consultation Zone could require a '*test of likely significant effect*' under the Habitats Regulations to be carried out, including consultation with Natural England. Where required, applicants must provide with the application all necessary information to enable such a test to be conducted, including any necessary survey work, reports and avoidance and mitigation measures as advised in the Technical Guidance for the Special Areas of Conservation supporting bat species.

Delivery

7.204 These policies are primarily development management tools and delivery will therefore be through the individual consideration of planning applications.

7.205 Prospective applicants should contact the Council's Ecologist at an early stage in the preparation of a scheme in order to establish the potential effects and implications.

Pollution Impacts of Development

Introduction

7.206 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should ensure new developments are appropriate for their locations, to prevent 'unacceptable risks' from pollution. Paragraphs 120-125 set out the need for local planning authorities to consider the direct and indirect impacts of potentially polluting development on health, general amenity and the environment. It also identifies that where development is proposed close to a source of potential pollution, the risk of pollution from its normal operation or its potential impacts and the extent to which the risks can be addressed will influence whether or not development should proceed.

Approach

7.207 The policy will ensure that any potential pollution impacts of development will have no adverse impact on the quality of land, air, water, human health or biodiversity. This will help to ensure that new developments do not harm existing residents, future residents or the natural environment. This includes minimising air, noise, light or water pollution (both surface and groundwater), vibration or soil contamination that would be harmful to other land uses, human health, tranquillity or the natural and built environment. Developers will be required to demonstrate the potential impact of proposals on the environment.

District Wide Policies 7

7.208 It is important that there are controls on developments which pose a risk to groundwater, to ensure an adequate and safe water supply. Groundwater feeds into both public and private water supplies. These supplies may be affected through pollution and may be depleted through surface water and drainage systems which do not allow for natural infiltration of water through soils. The most vulnerable ground water sources are designated as Groundwater Source Protection Zones. Further details are available from the Environment Agency.

7.209 Careful consideration will be given to development that is proposed close to an existing source of potential pollution, to ensure that the development proposal will not be adversely affected by the existing potential pollution source.

Policy D24

Pollution Impacts of Development

Development proposals that are likely to result in levels of air, noise, light or water pollution (including groundwater), vibration or soil contamination that would be unacceptably harmful to other land uses, human health, tranquillity, or the built and natural environment will not be supported. Where there are reasonable grounds to suggest that a development proposal may result in a significant adverse environmental impact, taking into account the sensitivity of the location, the Council will require planning applications to be supported by assessments relating to:

- Air pollution;
- Noise pollution and/or vibration;
- Light pollution;
- Carbon Emissions;
- Contaminated Land/soil;
- Waste;
- Water pollution;
- Odour; and
- Any other sources.

Where it is demonstrated that it is possible to manage the potential adverse impacts of the development proposal through its design or mitigation measures, the Council will, by means of condition or legal agreement, seek to ensure such measures are effective, for example by imposing limitations on matters including hours of operation, emission of fumes, noise and light, parking and servicing for both construction and operational stages.

In order to protect and improve water quality, potentially contaminating development proposals on aquifers or within Source Protection Zones will need to demonstrate that groundwater and surface water is adequately protected from pollution to prevent a deterioration of water quality of the water source. Development proposals adjacent to a watercourse should incorporate measures to protect the watercourse consistent with the actions of the River Basin Management Plan. The incorporation of SuDS within development proposals that protect and improve water quality will be supported.

Development in the Vicinity of Existing Sources of Pollution

Where development is proposed close to an existing source of potential pollution, the following matters should be taken into consideration:

7 District Wide Policies

- The risk of pollution from the normal operation of the potential pollution source;
- The impacts of the potential pollution source, taking into account the sensitivities of the proposal; and
- The extent to which the risks can be managed through the design of the proposal.

Where the development proposal will be adversely affected by the existing potential pollution source the proposal will not be supported.

Delivery

7.210 This is a development management policy and delivery will therefore be through the individual consideration of planning applications.

Protecting Residential Amenity

7.211 Development can have a harmful impact on the amenity enjoyed by residents and it is important that the amenity of residents is protected from ‘unneighbourly’ development proposals as these can cause problems through overshadowing/loss of light, visual domination, loss of privacy and noise and disturbance.

Approach

7.212 All development proposals ranging from large schemes to household proposals will be assessed in terms of whether the development would harm residential amenity. The extent to which potential residential amenity problems arise is usually dependent upon factors including location, separation distance, height, depth, massing and window positions. Policy D2: Promoting High Quality and Inclusive Design is also relevant.

7.213 Applications for development proposals will therefore be required to demonstrate how the development will respect the residential amenity of neighbouring dwellings. Where relevant opportunities to protect and enhance the amenity of existing residential properties should be the aim of new development. Where a proposal includes residential development, the amenity of future occupants of the new dwellings should also be taken into consideration. Applicants should ensure the living conditions for future occupants are acceptable, having regard to issues such as space, natural light and the health and safety of future occupants.

Policy D25

Protecting Residential Amenity

Development proposals that would result in the loss of land of recreational and/or amenity value, or unacceptably impact upon the residential amenity of occupants of nearby dwellings and any potential future occupants of nearby or proposed dwellings, will not be supported. Particular consideration will be given to (but not limited to) the extent that the proposal could result in unacceptable impacts relating to:

- loss of privacy and overlooking;
- overbearing and visual dominance;
- loss of light (daylight/sunlight);
- noise or disturbance;

District Wide Policies 7

- odours, fumes or vibration; and
- the living conditions of future occupants.

Delivery

7.214 This is a development management policy and delivery will therefore be through the individual consideration of planning applications.

Historic Environment

Introduction

7.215 The value of the historic environment, and the contribution it makes to our cultural, social and economic life, is set out in the Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England, 2010. The role that planning should play in conserving our heritage assets and utilising the historic environment in creating sustainable places is set out in section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paras 126-141). The "Conserving and enhancing the historic environment" section of the government's Planning Practice Guidance website has provided planning-related advice on the historic environment since its inception in 2014. Historic England also provides planning advice and technical guidance on the management and preservation of historic buildings.

7.216 In addition to over 1,100 listed building and 14 designated conservation areas, Sedgemoor contains historic landscapes, areas of high archaeological potential, ancient woodlands, historic settlements, a registered battlefield and scheduled ancient monuments; as well as a wide range of outstanding examples of industrial archaeology and buildings associated with land drainage schemes or traditional industries. The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal is also a historic feature with its associated designated assets (e.g. listed bridges) and its role in the historic development of trade in Bridgwater. The Somerset Historic Environment Record (HER) is an online source of information about heritage assets within Sedgemoor.

7.217 The richness of our history has significant tangible benefits to our local economy, attracting significant numbers of tourists and visitors annually, and should be seen as a key attribute in securing future economic prosperity for Sedgemoor. Ensuring the protection of the historic environment for current and future generations should be balanced with the delivery of other sustainability objectives.

Approach

7.218 The Council will work positively with owners and developers to ensure historic assets are maintained and enhanced. This will include preparation of appropriate guidance, identification of buildings at risk and strategies to protect them, support for communities to identify locally significant historic buildings (local lists) and preparation of conservation area appraisals and management plans.

7.219 Development proposals within conservation areas will be supported where they positively enhance their character and appearance, including the use of contemporary solutions where appropriate.

7.220 The presumption is against the demolition or total loss of listed buildings but alternative viable use will be positively encouraged where these are consistent with the historic character and features of the building. Where the loss of historic buildings or features is exceptionally permitted the Council will require the recording of features of interest as agreed with the Council's Conservation Officer.

7 District Wide Policies

7.221 Nationally designated archaeological sites are protected under existing primary legislation whilst development proposals that will affect locally designated sites of archaeological interest (including Areas of High Archaeological Potential and other sites of County Importance) will need to meet the requirements of Policy D27. Other heritage assets which may be identified in the Somerset HER should also be considered.

7.222 Knowledge of the relative importance of the sites recorded in the HER and the definition of their boundaries is often imperfect. Furthermore, the sites are so numerous that it would not be practicable to show them on the Policies Maps. Developers should consult the South West Heritage Trust for further and updated information.

7.223 Areas of High Archaeological Potential are shown on the Policies Map and cover areas where archaeological remains are likely but have not yet been identified. Most of these cover the historic cores of settlements.

7.224 It is important to ensure that, where development is proposed on these sites and in these areas, a sufficiently detailed analysis is undertaken to determine the presence, nature and character of remains. The South West Heritage Trust can advise on the need and nature of this work which shall be carried out by the developer.

7.225 As with sites of national importance, preservation of locally important sites will be the preferred option when considering applications that could affect them. However, the importance of the development should be weighed against the local significance of the remains and the amount of damage to be caused. If planning permission is granted it will be conditional on the developer to provide appropriate archaeological excavation (and/or recording) of those parts of the archaeological remains that will be damaged.

7.226 Other policies that are relevant to the Historic Environment include: S4: Sustainable Development Principles; S5: Mitigating the Causes, and adapting to the effects of Climate Change and D2: Promoting High Quality and Inclusive Design.

Policy D26

Historic Environment

General

Development proposals should avoid harm to, sustain and, where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets and their setting (including those on Local Lists), in a manner consistent with their historical significance. This will ensure a continued role in distinguishing the District's unique sense of identity and place.

The Council will require development proposals affecting heritage assets or their setting to be supported by sufficient information (proportionate to the assets importance) to understand the significance of the heritage asset and how it will be potentially affected. This should have appropriate regard to the Somerset Historic Environment Record. Development proposals affecting heritage assets or their settings will be expected to exhibit appropriately sympathetic design in terms of siting, mass, scale and use of materials.

The Council will encourage proposals that make a positive contribution to the conservation of heritage assets and their setting, including through sensitive regeneration that brings redundant or under-used buildings and areas into appropriate and viable use in a manner consistent with

District Wide Policies 7

their conservation. The Council will also encourage schemes that promote the management, interpretation and improved public access to heritage assets, or promote local skills and crafts relevant to the historic environment.

The Council will work with partners to:

- Provide relevant guidance and assistance to owners and developers on particular aspects of the historic environment and their responsibilities, including information on owning designated heritage assets, their interpretation and access by members of the public as well as advice on appropriate development schemes;
- Carry out regular surveys to identify designated heritage assets at risk that are not currently part of Historic England's surveys and develop strategies to protect them;
- Encourage and help communities to develop Local Lists within relevant Neighbourhood Plans; and
- Carry out conservation area appraisals of the conservation areas within the district and, as part of this, prepare management plans for them.

Designated Heritage Assets

Great weight will be given to the conservation of Sedgemoor's designated heritage assets. Where applicable development will be supported where it proposes:

- The repair and conservation of designated heritage assets, including the regeneration of heritage at risk or any designated heritage assets that are vacant;
- Appropriate design, form, scale and materials including contemporary solutions which positively enhance the character, appearance and significance of the designated heritage asset;
- A viable use for designated heritage assets, consistent with their historic character, with a clear presumption against their demolition;
- An emphasis on the importance of the setting of designated heritage assets, as well as important views to or from the assets themselves; and
- Appropriate energy efficiency measures where the principles of minimum intervention and reversibility are adopted and that do not harm the significance of the asset.

Any harm to the significance of a designated heritage assets must be clearly justified. Harm that is less than substantial will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal; whether it has been demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use, find new uses, or mitigate the extent of the harm to the significance of the asset; and whether the works proposed are the minimum required to secure the long term use of the asset.

Where development resulting in the loss of a designated heritage asset is exceptionally permitted, the Council will require the recording of features of interest that would be destroyed in the course of any proposed works. The recording shall be carried out in accordance with appropriate building recording and analysis standards. The results shall form part of the Somerset Historic Environment Record for that site and made publically available.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Non-designated heritage assets include buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. The weight given to the conservation of non-designated heritage assets during the determination of

7 District Wide Policies

the planning applications will be based on the assets significance and the magnitude of any harm. Harm or loss will only be permitted where it is judged that the benefits of the development outweigh the local significance of the asset and the scale of harm caused.

Non-designated heritage assets should be identified early in the design process to ensure that the impact on their significance is addressed in any development proposal. The retention, repair and re-use of non-designated heritage assets will be encouraged.

Local Archaeological Remains

Where development proposals will affect Areas of Archaeological Potential (as defined on the Policies Map) and elsewhere where there is reason to believe that there may be archaeological remains, a sufficiently detailed assessment of the nature, character and importance of the site will be sought prior to the determination of any application. A proportionate response will be taken to the detail of the assessment required. Where an initial assessment suggests a sites includes or has the potential to include archaeological remains applicants will be required to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment. Where necessary and proportionate this should be followed by a more detailed assessment (e.g. including field evaluation).

Development proposals which would damage or destroy locally important archaeological remains will not be supported, unless the benefits of the development outweigh the local significance of the remains and a suitable mitigation strategy of recording, analysis and publication is designed. Where physical preservation in situ is not possible, mitigation strategies will be required for the protection and/or recording of the site.

Delivery

7.227 This is a development management policy and delivery will therefore be through the individual consideration of planning applications. In addition the Council is committed to delivering conservation area appraisals and managements plans as well as considering any additional designations. The Council has published guidance for owners of listed buildings. Local lists could be included within neighbourhood plans, parish plans and promoted through village design statements which will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

7.228 The Council also maintains a Buildings at Risk Register specifically for any building listed as Grade II and in exceptional circumstances will be prepared to use its statutory powers to ensure that listed buildings are repaired. In addition working with partners, including Historic England and the South West Heritage Trust, the Council will prepare an assessment of the district's heritage assets to inform future decisions and actions.

Education Provision

Introduction

7.229 Housing development increases the pressure on the educational system and can increase the number of children in an area and place greater demand for pupil places in local schools and other children focused services.

District Wide Policies 7

7.230 Provision of suitable education facilities is a fundamental element of delivering truly sustainable development. Education provision includes early years (Ages 0 - 4), primary, secondary and further education. The preference for delivering pre-school facilities is to co-locate with primary schools. Maintaining existing facilities in rural areas is, however, likely to prove challenging due to falling attendance rolls.

7.231 Further education is provided at Bridgwater & Taunton College, Brymore School at Cannington, Kings of Wessex School at Cheddar, and King Alfred's School at Highbridge. Bridgwater & Taunton College is the largest provider and the Bridgwater placemaking policy on education seeks to support the continued expansion of the facility. It is also a key partner in the proposals to develop higher education provision, with University Centre Somerset launched in March 2017. Investment in skills is a key component of the Economic Strategy. Investment in new nuclear at Hinkley Point is also resulting in significant additional training needs, particularly in construction and energy sectors.

Approach

7.232 The Policy will ensure that adequate educational facilities are provided where a need is created from new development, either by the direct provision of such facilities as part of the proposal or by developer contributions via a Section 106 legal agreement or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), as set out in Policy S3: Infrastructure Delivery. Such need may be generated by both residential and commercial development. Policy D15: Economic Prosperity emphasises the need for new employment proposals to enter into local labour agreements that include commitment to support appropriate training and work based apprenticeships.

7.233 The location of any such facilities should be consistent with the overall spatial strategy unless there is a justifiable need to consider exceptional sites. Examples of such needs include small scale field study centres that require a countryside location. In all cases educational facilities should be accessible by a range of sustainable transport choices.

7.234 Support and encouragement will be given to the extended community use of educational facilities as these can provide important local community focus.

7.235 There are a number of specific allocations for educational use in the Local Plan, specifically included under the Bridgwater and Cheddar place making policies. Additional allocations are also identified at Brent Knoll and East Brent.

Policy D27

Education Provision

The Council will work with the County Council, Bridgwater & Taunton College and other partners to provide additional, extended or enhanced education facilities to address educational needs. New development that creates a need for additional educational facilities, including pre-school, that cannot be met through existing facilities will be expected to meet any identified shortfall.

Development proposals for education facilities will be supported where they are at suitable locations within or well related to Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge and identified rural settlements (Tier 1-4). Proposals will be supported where they are of high quality and sustainable design and are accessible by a range of sustainable and safe transport modes.

7 District Wide Policies

Delivery

7.236 Delivery will primarily be through Policy S3: Infrastructure Delivery. The Council will work closely with education partners and developers to ensure that necessary additional investment into education is secured.

District Wide Policies 7

Being Healthy

Health and Social Care

Introduction

7.237 Good mental and physical health is closely linked to factors such as the ability to earn a reasonable wage, good quality housing, education, access to open space, an active lifestyle, healthy food, the provision of cultural and community facilities and easy access to health care facilities. Equally, environmental factors, the design of buildings and places, and the quality and maintenance of the public realm are all recognised as factors which can have significant influences on health. These factors can be influenced through planning policy, although addressing health inequalities also requires a comprehensive approach working with a wide variety of organisations and departments such as health providers, education and housing.

7.238 The NPPF identifies that planning can have positive impacts for healthy communities and that strategies and policies should be developed to improve health and well-being, promote healthy communities and deliver health facilities.

7.239 It is a requirement under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 that top tier local authorities must establish Health and Wellbeing Boards. Somerset County Council established the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board (SHWBB) in July 2014 which comprises of health professionals, county and district councillors, local government officers and patient representatives

7.240 The SHWBB has published the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Somerset (2013–2018) at the strategic level and Sedgemoor District Council has prepared a local level Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the district.

Approach

7.241 The SHWBB board influences commissioning decisions across public health and social care in the county. The joined up commissioning process across the National Health Service, social care, county and district councils, public health and other services directly relate to health and wellbeing.

7.242 Health issues are addressed in policies throughout the Local Plan, including those on design, green infrastructure (inc. ANGst standards and ecological networks), transport, economic development, employment skills and training and provision of cultural and local services. The Local Plan encourages policies that facilitate social interaction, healthy and inclusive communities and proposals for new health facilities in sustainable locations will generally be supported.

7.243 The Council will be supportive of proposals that enable healthy lifestyles, for example by enhancing open spaces, improving access to sport and leisure facilities or by providing further opportunities for walking and cycling. Natural England have developed ambitious standards for accessible green space (Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard, or ANGst), which will be a long-term aim of the Council to achieve. This is further addressed in Policy D30: Green Infrastructure Requirements in New Developments and Policy D34: Outdoor Public Recreational Outdoor Space and New Residential Areas.

7 District Wide Policies

Policy D28

Health and Social Care

Healthy Lifestyles

All development proposals where appropriate should enable healthy and active living. Proposals which enable the following will be supported:

- Safe walking and cycling;
- Accessibility of green spaces and contributing to enhancing the green infrastructure network;
- Enhancement of the quality and quantity of recreational, sport and leisure facilities and children's play space and access to them.

To facilitate healthy lifestyles, financial contributions from development will be secured where necessary via S106 Agreement where provision relates to a site specific impact. Otherwise, CIL receipts will be used to deliver strategic provision.

Health Impact Assessments may be requested to support major planning applications.

Health Care Facilities

The Council will work with partners to provide additional, extended or enhanced health care provision to address existing health inequalities. New development that creates a need for additional health care that cannot be met through existing facilities will be expected to meet any identified shortfall.

Development proposals for health care facilities and complementary facilities will be supported where they are at suitable locations within or well related to Bridgwater, Burnham on Sea and Highbridge and Tier 1 to 4 settlements, are of high quality and sustainable design, and are accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes.

The loss of existing health infrastructure will be resisted unless sufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that they are no longer required or are obsolete and that suitable replacement provision is being provided or is located nearby.

Delivery

7.244 The spatial strategy and other policies in the Local Plan seek to enable healthy lifestyles through the appropriate location of development and the support for walking and cycling.

7.245 Health Impact Assessments may be required to support major planning applications to identify the potential health gains and potential risks to health that the development might have and to identify additional measures required to avoid such risks.

Green Infrastructure

Introduction

7.246 The term Green Infrastructure is used to describe the environmental resources within and between our towns and villages. It is a network of natural assets and spaces, including urban parks, country parks, formal gardens, informal recreation space, housing green spaces, domestic gardens,

District Wide Policies 7

village greens, urban commons, other incidental space and green roofs, woodland and scrub, grassland, heath or moor, wetlands, open and running water, wastelands, cliffs and quarries, rivers, canals, road and rail corridors, cycling routes, footpaths and public rights of way, allotments, community gardens, street trees, city farms, cemeteries and churchyards.

7.247 The purpose of this policy is to maintain and enhance a comprehensive network of these environmental resources in order to achieve the following objectives:

- Provision of an accessible network of green spaces which meet ecological needs, recreational needs, cultural needs including education and interpretation, are safe and secure, and support physical health and mental wellbeing;
- Provision of links with the surrounding countryside and opportunities for attractive walking and cycling routes and also horse riding if appropriate;
- Contributions to climate change adaptation (flood attenuation, surface water infiltration, shade, sustainable drainage systems, urban cooling etc);
- Improving biodiversity by maintaining ecological connectivity and providing contact with nature;
- Supporting essential life-support functions by providing ecosystem services such as the regulation of air and water quality, energy production and food production;
- Maintaining or enhancing amenity, landscape character and the image of the area;
- Protecting and enhancing the coastal landscape and improving public access to and enjoyment of the coast;
- Providing enhanced landscape settings for existing and proposed developments and creating pleasant and sustainable places in which to live in, work in or visit; and
- Supporting the local economy by providing an attractive environment that increases the number of visitors to the area.

7.248 Green Infrastructure is seen as part of the life-support system of an area; providing functions and environmental services to a community, such as employment, tourism, culture, recreation, physical health and mental well-being, social interaction, local food production, high quality landscapes, ecosystem services, habitat connectivity, access to the countryside, contact with nature, drainage and flood management, climate change adaptation and pollution mitigation. In Sedgemoor it is recognised that there are vast resources that can perform a green infrastructure role.

7.249 The Council has mapped the Green Infrastructure resource for Sedgemoor, as indicated on the online mapping service. The network does not automatically include designated nature conservation sites (except those within urban and urban fringe areas) as whilst they perform important ecological and recreational functions they are protected in their own right and so do not need to be identified within the GI network map. The presence of habitats and species of European importance is a very particular consideration and plans or projects that might adversely affect them are subject to close scrutiny through the Habitat Regulations Assessment.

7.250 Evidence of the important characteristics and functional uses of many of the green infrastructure sites has been provided through a number of local documents, each of which can be found within the Local Plan evidence base:

- The Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011);
- The Review of Countryside around Settlements (2016);
- An Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision in Sedgemoor (2017);
- Trees and Woodland Strategy (future publication); and
- The Open Space Study (future publication).

7 District Wide Policies

7.251 The Local Plan has a role in protecting and enhancing the green infrastructure that provides these important functions and services for communities within Sedgemoor. Planning strategically for the management of a coherent Green Infrastructure network also plays an important role in achieving the objectives of the Local Plan's Natural Environment policies (D19-D23), the Adapting to the Effects of Climate Change policy (S5), the Health and Social Care policy (D28), and the Open Space, Sport and Recreation policies (D32-D34). Green Infrastructure can enhance the natural environment by improving ecological connectivity, preventing habitat fragmentation and reducing recreational pressure on internationally designated sites. Green Infrastructure can support a healthy lifestyle by providing the green spaces needed for exercise and recreation and it can also reduce the effects of flooding by facilitating drainage and acting as a flood storage area.

Approach

7.252 Green Infrastructure planning is based on a strategic approach to ensuring that environmental assets of natural and cultural value are integrated with land development and growth management and built infrastructure planning at the earliest stage. This approach enables land management to be more proactive and better integrated with managing growth and development at a spatial planning level. To ensure that the benefits of significant growth in the district can be harnessed it is essential that the Local Plan provides a framework for an integrated approach to Green Infrastructure.

7.253 The Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) provides an overview of the drivers of change to be addressed by Green Infrastructure, existing assets, linkages, opportunities and constraints and sets out a framework of guidelines and general principles which will assist in directing future implementation of Green Infrastructure projects and integration in development proposals. All development proposals will be expected to appropriately contribute to the implementation of the Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy.

7.254 An integral part of the concept of multi-functional open space is that spaces can often perform more than one function. The functions such as sport, children's play and access to green space will still be appropriate for assessment against space standards and are the subject of a separate coverage under policies D33 and D34.

7.255 The protection of nature conservation interests in particular are subject of specific legislation and assessment requirements. Whilst also a key consideration in Green Infrastructure, biodiversity is therefore also subject to separate coverage in Policy D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity. In addition the protection of historic landscapes is dealt with under Policy D26: Historic Environment.

7.256 The provision of new Green infrastructure such as The Meads Ecology park in Bridgwater and the Country Park at South Bridgwater will serve as proposed mitigation of potential adverse effects from recreational disturbance arising from population growth in the Bridgwater area. The Meads project is currently listed as a Green Infrastructure project on the CIL Regulation 123 list. If necessary, additional projects will be added to the list as and when they are identified and the CIL policy is updated.

7.257 When identifying projects suitable for CIL funding, or when considering the appropriateness of compensatory or new green infrastructure, priority will be given to:

- The enhancement of existing and the provision of new parks and gardens, play areas, sports pitches, recreation grounds and allotments;
- The protection of trees, woodland and hedgerow, the planting of trees and hedgerow and woodland creation for public amenity and climate change mitigation;

District Wide Policies 7

- Increasing the ecosystem services delivered by existing and new public open spaces, where appropriate and achievable, through taking a more multi-functional approach to their design and management;
- The continued development of a network of green spaces, water bodies, footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes in and around the urban and rural areas, including improved or enhanced access to canal, river and other waterside locations as well as improved connections to the National Cycle Network and the creation of inter-town cycleways;
- The development of strategic green corridor routes from urban areas and coastal tourist areas to surrounding villages and countryside;
- Projects that help to meet the Woodland Trust 'Woodland Access Standard' (WAS_t);
- Projects that help to meet the Natural England 'Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard' (ANG_{St}) by reducing the area of deficiency identified in the Sedgemoor ANG_{St} analysis report; and
- Projects identified in the Green Infrastructure Strategy.

Policy D29

Protection and Enhancement of Existing Green Infrastructure Resources

Green Infrastructure (GI) will be safeguarded, maintained, improved, enhanced and added to, as appropriate. Development proposals which compromise the integrity of the Green Infrastructure network will be resisted.

The impact of new development on existing Green Infrastructure should be properly considered. Any new development which is likely to increase usage of existing green infrastructure should recognise that increased usage may result in degradation of the existing standard of provision. In addition, maintenance costs for those who own and maintain the infrastructure may increase, and any such costs or improvements necessary should be borne by the development.

Master-planning of Strategic Site Allocations on greenfield sites should make provision for a network of green spaces linking the site to the wider Green Infrastructure network.

Policy D30

Green Infrastructure Requirements in New Developments

Where appropriate the creation of Green Infrastructure in new developments should meet the following criteria:

- be of an appropriate type, size and standard and make appropriate provision for future maintenance including where appropriate a management plan agreed with the LPA;
- S106 contributions will be sought for appropriate off-site provision if on-site provision is not possible;
- the provision of green spaces (wherever possible) within new developments should have particular regard to extending the connectivity of the existing Green Infrastructure network;
- the provision of green spaces (wherever possible) within new developments should have particular regard to contributing to the enhancement and improved coherence of identified ecological networks;

7 District Wide Policies

- in the interest of reducing recreational pressure on sensitive Natura 2000 sites all residential development should be ANGst compliant⁽⁴⁾ or otherwise appropriately contribute to improving access to natural greenspace;
- make appropriate use of natural resources, encourage the use of sustainable materials and minimise the production of waste;
- should have regard for the protection of trees, woodland and hedgerow; the planting of trees and hedgerow; and woodland creation for public amenity and climate change mitigation;
- should have regard to the multi-functional benefits and roles of green infrastructure;
- if loss of existing Green Infrastructure assets is unavoidable in order to accommodate necessary development, appropriate mitigation of the loss will be required; and
- in all cases, including proposals for increased access to rural areas, development will need to demonstrate that there are no significant adverse impacts on biodiversity interests as set in Policy D20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity.

Opportunities for the development to be an exemplar of best practice and innovation in the design and management of new Green Infrastructure will be encouraged.

Countryside around Settlements

7.258 Green Wedges, Green Edges and Strategic Gaps around settlements as areas of countryside closest to our towns and villages are significant in terms of:

- maintaining a pattern of urban development which retains links with surrounding countryside, thereby having a positive, visible landscape context and enabling townspeople to enjoy reasonable countryside access;
- retaining approach routes and perceptions of a settlement;
- preventing the coalescence of adjacent settlements;
- the need to protect and enhance significant views; and
- providing natural corridors and habitats for wildlife.

7.259 The wedges, edges and gaps perform many of the important functions that are identified within the Green Infrastructure objectives listed in paragraph 7.247; additionally they perform the function of preventing the coalescence of settlements and providing the landscape setting for settlements.

7.260 "Settlement Boundaries" are the primary planning policy tool for limiting the expansion of settlements and protecting surrounding countryside. In some instances such boundaries are reinforced by factors such as floodable land, agricultural land quality and AONB boundaries, but other significant attributes of surrounding countryside have not been so explicitly stated. It is inevitable that some countryside is lost to development as settlements grow. This has consequences not only in terms of "loss of countryside" in general terms, but can also have very particular local impacts.

7.261 The NPPF does not support the blanket protection of countryside around settlements or the designation of additional Green Belt unless there are exceptional circumstances, i.e. a new settlement or major urban extension is being proposed. However, the withdrawal of "saved" Policy CNE4 entirely

⁴ *Decision-makers will be informed by the findings of the Accessible Natural Greenspace analysis report and mapping (Sedgemoor District Council, 2017) or subsequent update when identifying the ANGst compliance of a development proposal.*

District Wide Policies 7

may result in significant loss to the landscape setting of settlements and so the boundaries and functions of the previously identified areas have been reviewed to assess the appropriateness of continuing to protect these areas of countryside.

Approach

7.262 Those areas of countryside which are the most important for the landscape setting of a settlement and for preventing the coalescence of settlements are designated by Policy D31: Countryside around settlements as shown on the Policies Map. The individual importance of each area is discussed within the Review of the Countryside around Settlements (2016) in the Local Plan evidence base. The issue of increasing public access to natural green-space is addressed within Policy D30 and the issue of providing natural corridors for wildlife is addressed in Policy D29 and D21.

Policy D31

Countryside around Settlements

Areas of land which have particular importance as 'Countryside around Settlements' are defined on the Policies Map. Whatever their individual character and function, these are predominantly open areas, outside settlement boundaries, which retain a largely rural character and appearance. Development which does not have a detrimental effect on the landscape, countryside access, amenity, or nature conservation functions of these areas will be supported.

For sites not allocated within the Local Plan, development within the designated areas will be justified where the proposal is consistent with the other policies in the Local Plan and meets the following objectives:

- Provide hedgerows, trees and woodland which are important in helping to absorb the development into its surrounding landscape;
- Maintain a pattern of development which retains links with the surrounding countryside;
- Protect and enhance approach routes and perceptions of a settlement (where applicable);
- Prevent the coalescence of adjacent settlements (where applicable); and
- Protect and enhance significant views (where applicable).

For allocated sites that fall partly within areas of 'Countryside Around Settlements' the Council will consider the above objectives as part of the required Development and Design Principles documents, to ensure they are appropriately addressed.

Open Areas Protected from Development

7.263 Open and undeveloped areas within settlements can be an important element of the character and environmental quality of settlements by enhancing the setting of building groups, adding to a sense of place or identity, or helping to retain links with surrounding countryside. In some case areas which have cherished qualities are excluded from settlement boundaries, but Policy D32 is intended to provide protection to those identified areas which lie within the developed areas of certain settlements.

7 District Wide Policies

Policy D32

Open Areas Protected from Development

The following areas of open land (as identified on the Policies Map) are considered to make an important contribution to environmental quality and sense of place in their respective settlements. Development proposals will be supported provided it does not adversely affect their environmental quality and sense of place, or be harmful to their open character.

Biddisham	<i>Land south west of The Old Rectory</i>
Brent Knoll	<i>The Glebe Field, Church Lane</i>
Cannington	<i>Brook area</i>
Catcott	<i>Land north of St Peter's Church</i>
Chilton Trinity	<i>Land south west of the Holy Trinity Church</i>
East Brent	<i>Village Green at Brent Road</i>
Edington	<i>Land rear of Holywell Road and Broadmead Lane</i>
Shapwick	<i>Land between Manor House and St Mary's Church</i>
Shipham	<i>Village Green areas at The Square and land at Hillside Cottage</i>
Stone Allerton	<i>Land at Overbrook land at Manor Farm and land at Sleepy Hollow</i>
Wedmore	<i>Land at The Close and land at West End.</i>

Delivery

7.264 The Green Infrastructure Strategy identifies suggested actions for the short, medium and long term.

7.265 The provision of Green Infrastructure serving new development should be an integral part of the design process from the outset in order that features such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and the multi-functional aspects of green space provision can be fully considered.

7.266 In respect of those green space components that can be expected to meet particular standards of provision, regard should be had to any relevant standards set out in the Open Space, Sport and Recreation policies detailed below, and any associated guidance notes and strategies within the Local Plan evidence base.

7.267 The Council will work with other partners and bid for available funding opportunities to bring Green Infrastructure projects to fruition.

7.268 Modification of existing public open spaces will be largely a matter for the district and town or parish councils, including working with local community groups.

7.269 Local Green Space designations (as defined by NPPF paragraph 77) can be identified through neighbourhood planning where supported by appropriate local evidence.

District Wide Policies 7

Open Space, Sports and Recreation**Introduction**

7.270 The quality and availability of open space, sport and recreation facilities is essential to “quality of life”. Parks, play areas, playing fields, sports centres and swimming pools are important facilities. Enjoyment of the countryside and coast for a range of recreational and sporting activities is vital for the health and well-being of many people. In addition to the area’s resident population, holiday-makers clearly place demand on such facilities.

7.271 The NPPF requires planning policies for the provision of open space, sports and recreational facilities to be based on “robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities” which “should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses...in the local area” (paragraph 73).

7.272 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation policies are supported by the following documents (or any future revisions) in the Local Plan evidence base:

- The Sedgemoor Play Strategy 2007 – 2017 (2007)
- The Sedgemoor Playing Pitch Strategy (2005)
- Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge Green Space Strategy (2009)
- Bridgwater and Wembdon Green Space Strategy (2009)
- Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)
- Sports & Recreation Facilities Strategy and Delivery Plan 2013-2027 (2013)
- An Analysis of Accessible Natural Green Space Provision in Sedgemoor (2017)
- Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (forthcoming)

7.273 The methodology for the Green Space strategies published in 2009 was based on the companion guide to Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17): Planning for Open space, Sport and Recreation. Both the PPG17 and the companion guide have since been withdrawn by Government, replaced by the NPPG. The strategies are therefore in need of updating and will be superseded by the forthcoming Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study.

Approach

7.274 The Council is no longer collecting developer contributions for off-site provision of children’s play space and outdoor sport through the tariff approach of saved Local Plan Policies RLT2 and RLT3. Under the CIL regime the Council is collecting contributions for off-site outdoor sport and recreation (specific sites identified in the Sports & Recreation Facilities Strategy and Delivery Plan 2013) and off-site green infrastructure (The Meads Eco Park).

7.275 Developers will no longer be charged a tariff specifically for play space and outdoor sport but the National Playing Fields Association have historically set standards of provision that are still relevant to the requirements for on-site provision. The most recent standard, ‘Beyond the Six Acre Standard’, was published in 2015 by Fields in Trust (formerly the National Playing Fields Association). The new benchmark standard suggests quantity guidelines of 1.6 Ha of outdoor sport, 0.55 Ha of designated play areas and other outdoor provision, and 3.2 Ha of informal outdoor space per 1000 of population. Policy D34 sets out how the Council intends to achieve this standard.

7 District Wide Policies

7.276 Policy D33 sets out the approach to the protection of existing public recreational outdoor space. To aid interpretation of Policy D33 existing sites are identified on the Policies Map based on the Council's current understanding. Mapping of existing sites will be further updated in due course through the forthcoming Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, using information derived from relevant sources including surveys of parish councils, residents, and other key stakeholders.

7.277 Areas of Accessible Natural Greenspace deficiency have been mapped as part of the ANGSt analysis carried out by the Council. The results relate to the existing provision of informal outdoor space (as defined by FiT) and provide evidence for demonstrating a locational need for accessible natural greenspace. The requirement for Sedgemoor to meet the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard is mitigation for the recreational effects of development on European designated sites. Given the nature of the mapping the areas that do not meet the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard are not shown on the Policies Map, but can be viewed as part of the Local Plan evidence base. Existing Open Space, Sport and Recreational Spaces; and Open Space, Sport and Recreation site allocations are however identified on the Policies Map.

Policy D33

Protection of Existing Public Recreational Outdoor Space

Development which would result in the loss of or negatively impact on formal or informal recreational outdoor space will not be permitted unless:

- a. A replacement facility of equivalent sports and/or recreation benefit is made available; or
- b. The proposed development provides sports and/or recreation facilities of greater benefit than the long-term recreational value of the open space that would be lost; or
- c. An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the land to be surplus to requirements.

Delivery

7.278 This policy will be delivered in accordance with the forthcoming Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (and relevant subsequent strategies and delivery plans), and the Sports & Recreation Facilities Strategy and Delivery Plan 2013-2027 (2013).

Policy D34

Outdoor Public Recreational Space and New Residential Areas

All new housing developments (of 8 or more dwellings) which can potentially be occupied by households with children should include appropriate provision for children's outdoor playing space. In determining the form of facilities to be provided, account will be taken of the nature of existing facilities in the vicinity and appropriate provision or contributions made to meet the needs of the site in accordance with the following standards:

- a. increase the stock of children's play space at a rate of 13 square metres per new dwelling; and
- b. ensure a suitable range of designated or equipped play spaces are accessible as follows:
 - all new houses to be within 100 metres of a "Local Area for Play" (LAP);

District Wide Policies 7

- all new houses to be within 400 metres of a “Local Equipped Area for Play” (LEAP);
- all new houses to be within 700 metres of a “Multi-use games area” (MUGA) or other similar outdoor provision (i.e. skatepark); and
- all new houses to be within 1000 metres of a “Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP).

With the above standards taken in to consideration, developments of 8 or more dwellings will be expected to provide LAP(s) on-site, developments of 39 or more dwellings will be expected to provide LAP(s) and LEAP(s) on site, developments for 201 or more dwellings will be expected to provide LAP(s), LEAP(s) and a MUGA on-site and a development for 501+ dwellings will be expected to provide LAP(s), LEAP(s), a MUGA and a NEAP on-site. Where the requirement for play space cannot be fully met on site, the developer will be expected to make contributions for appropriate new or improved off-site facilities.

With regard to informal recreational space all new housing development should ensure appropriate provision to meet Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGst), in accordance with Policy D30: ‘Green Infrastructure Requirements in New Development’.

In the case of large development sites it may be appropriate that the space for outdoor sport is provided on-site, perhaps as an element of a local park where this contributes to the delivery of the objectives of the Playing Pitch Strategy. In most instances contributions will be sought for improvements to existing facilities or for new off-site facilities (if justified) via appropriate delivery mechanisms.

The design and master-planning of development proposals should, where appropriate, embrace the role they can play in supporting healthy lifestyles by facilitating participation in sport and physical activity. To do so they will, as far as is relevant to the specific development proposal, demonstrate consideration of Sport England’s Active Design Principles⁽⁵⁾.

Delivery

7.279 This policy will be delivered in accordance with the forthcoming Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (and relevant subsequent strategies and delivery plans), and the Sports & Recreation Facilities Strategy and Delivery Plan 2013-2027 (2013).

Local Services

7.280 Local Services include a range of community and cultural facilities that provide for the health, welfare, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community. They include a wide variety of services and facilities and may include community centres, libraries, youth facilities, village halls, child care facilities, cultural centres and venues, places of worship, educational establishments and training centres, health and social care facilities, and sport and recreation facilities. They also include commercial services including shops, banks, pubs and other leisure facilities.

7.281 The overall approach of the settlement hierarchy seeks to support the needs of communities, including the enhancement and retention of local services and facilities. In many of the districts smaller rural settlements the loss of a service may mean a total loss to the local community,

5 *Active Design: Planning for health and wellbeing through sport and physical activity (Sport England, October 2015)*

7 District Wide Policies

resulting in the need to travel even for basic services. The spatial strategy provides opportunities for growth in all of the identified settlements and this is likely to support the retention or even the new provision of local services.

7.282 The location of community infrastructure will depend upon its function and service users. Day-to-day facilities will need to be within the communities they serve and should be located within local centres. It is important that all community infrastructure is easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport, and is open to all members of the community. Where it is proposed to relocate community facilities it will be necessary to ensure that the community served is not disadvantaged by the change in location.

Approach

7.283 New development will be expected to provide or facilitate necessary community infrastructure. This should come forward either as part of the development or as a financial contribution. Infrastructure provided as an integral part of the development, should ideally be within adaptable mixed-use buildings and made available for use at an early stage.

7.284 The location of community infrastructure will depend upon its function and service users. Day-to-day facilities will need to be within the communities they serve and should be located within local centres. Higher-level infrastructure should be located within the most accessible parts of the towns.

7.285 The overall spatial strategy therefore seeks to ensure that a range of services and facilities that meet the day to day needs of communities continues to be provided in rural places. At the Tier 1 settlements of Cheddar and North Petherton there is a greater range and depth of local shops and services but given their role it is important that the loss of existing services is resisted where possible. In Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements some modest and sympathetic growth will support the viability of the existing services and facilities and enhance their local service centre role. Similarly preventing their loss from these settlements is a priority and will not be permitted unless there is an overriding justification that outweighs the loss of the service or facility to the community. This will include where an appropriate alternative service or facility has been provided or where it is demonstrated that it is no longer viable.

7.286 For the majority of the Tier 4 settlements and smaller villages and hamlets in the Countryside the loss of a service or facility will mean a total loss to the local community resulting in the need to travel even for basic services. It is therefore essential that the policy starting point is to retain such services to maintain the local centre role of these villages unless alternative provision is made. Alternative provision could include combined use, for example post office facilities integrated within an existing shop, or other innovative solutions.

7.287 In demonstrating that a use is no longer viable the Council will expect submission of a full financial appraisal for the business and for it to have been subject to appropriate marketing. Appropriate marketing includes the following:

- Through two or more local agents;
- An independent valuation of price;
- For a reasonable period of time (about 18 months).

District Wide Policies 7

7.288 Demonstration that the existing use is no longer viable will not be justification on its own to support its loss where this would be a total loss of such service to the village without appropriate alternative provision. Where the retention of community infrastructure land or buildings is found to be uneconomic, the council will consider the need for appropriate replacement infrastructure in line with the needs of the community.

7.289 The policy will ensure that adequate provision of community and cultural facilities will be provided where the need for additional facilities arises as a result of new development taking place. Furthermore, support will be given for planning applications that provide such facilities, while applications that threaten the provision of existing facilities will be discouraged.

Policy D35

Local Services

The Council will work with partners to provide additional, extended or enhanced community and cultural facilities. New development that creates a need for additional provision that cannot be met through existing facilities will be expected to meet any identified shortfall.

Development proposals to provide or enhance community and cultural facilities will be supported where they are at suitable locations within identified rural settlements, are of high quality and sustainable design, accessible by a range of safe sustainable transport modes or where there is an identified need.

The loss of existing services and facilities that meet the day to day needs of the local community will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- There is appropriate alternative provision available locally; and
- There is no longer a demand for the use and/or it is not viable; and
- The facility is no longer fit for its intended purpose;
- There is evidence of community consultation and consideration of alternative ways of delivering the service.

In order to sustain the Tier 4 settlements and smaller villages and hamlets in the Countryside, the loss of existing services and facilities will be resisted unless alternative provision can be demonstrated.

The loss of any community facility that would impact on the settlement's classification within the settlement hierarchy will be resisted.

In all cases proposals to retain local services and facilities through combined use, or other innovative solutions to service provision will be supported.

Delivery

7.290 This is primarily a development management policy and therefore delivery will be through the individual consideration of development proposals. Policy S3: Infrastructure Delivery sets out the overall approach to securing infrastructure.

7 District Wide Policies

7.291 Neighbourhood planning can play a role in safeguarding existing and identifying new community and cultural facilities and If appropriate, the Local Plan could allocate potential community facility sites through the Small Sites Allocation DPD.

Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

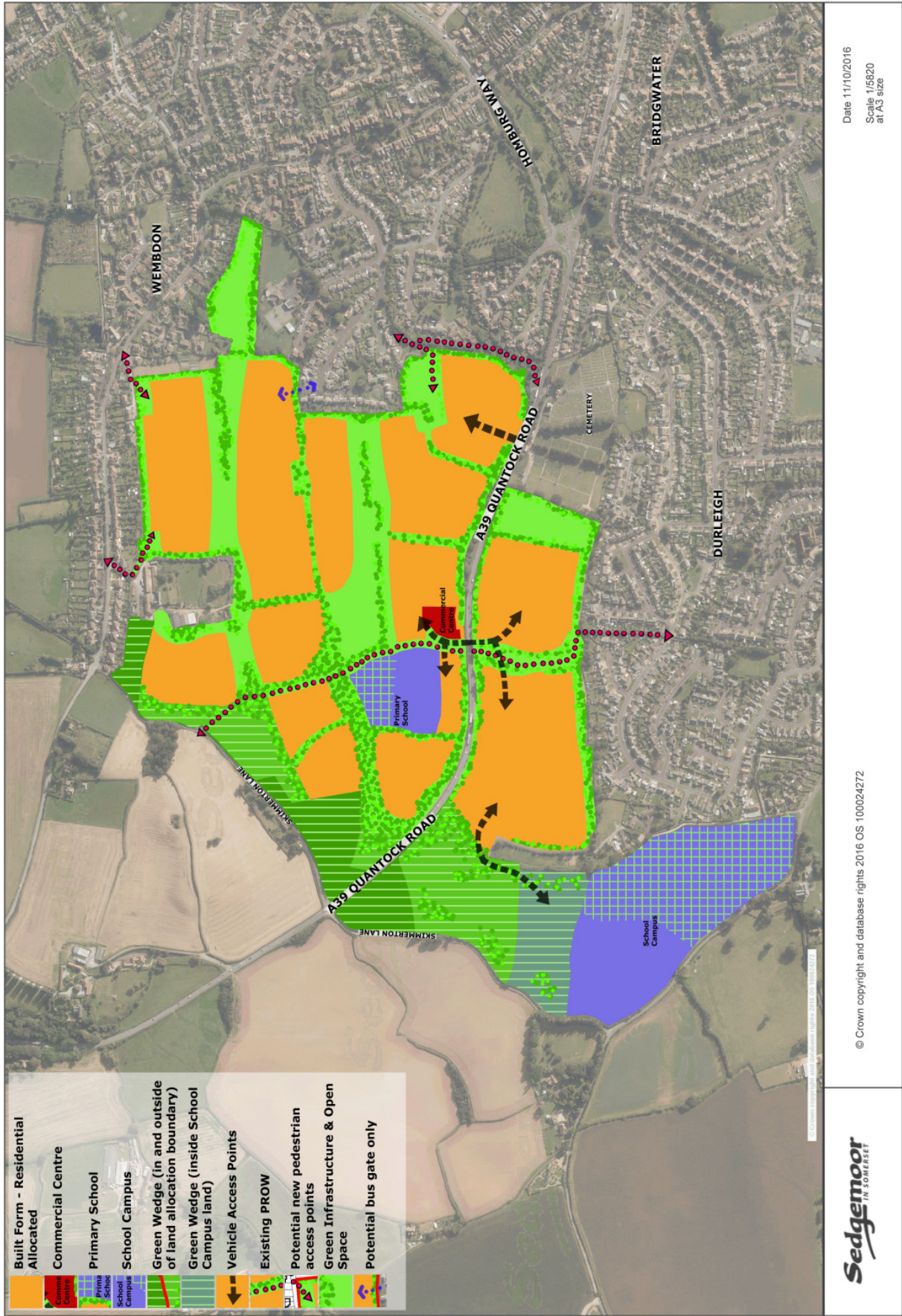
Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

Indicative Plans

- 1** The following indicative plans show visually some of the key elements of development allocations in the Local Plan. They are for illustrative purposes only.
- 2** Plans should be viewed in the context of relevant policy wording in the placemaking section of this document. Some of the indicative plans illustrate more than one allocation. To understand the spatial extent of individual allocations please refer to the accompanying Policies Map.

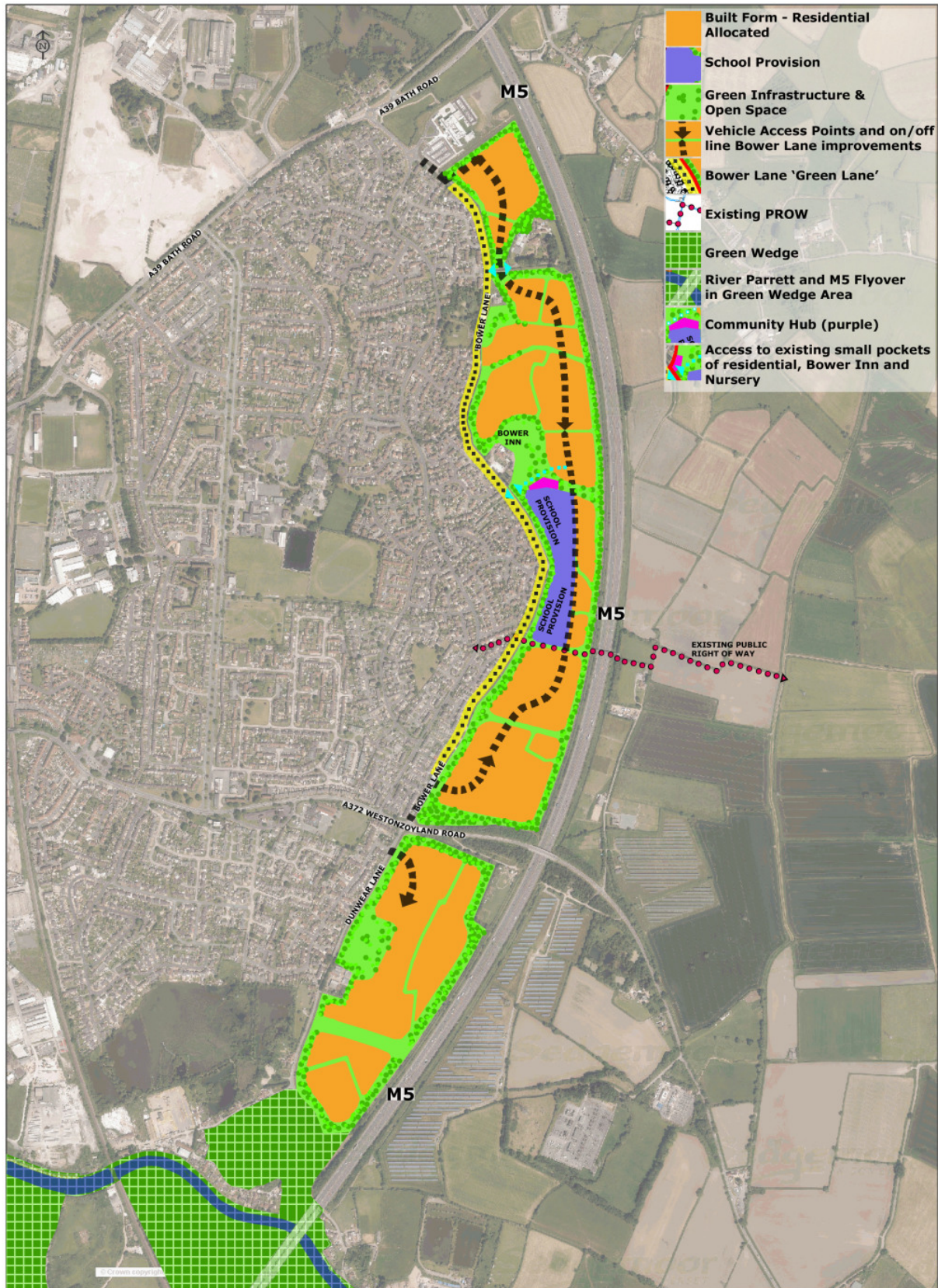
Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

Picture A1.1 West Bridgwater



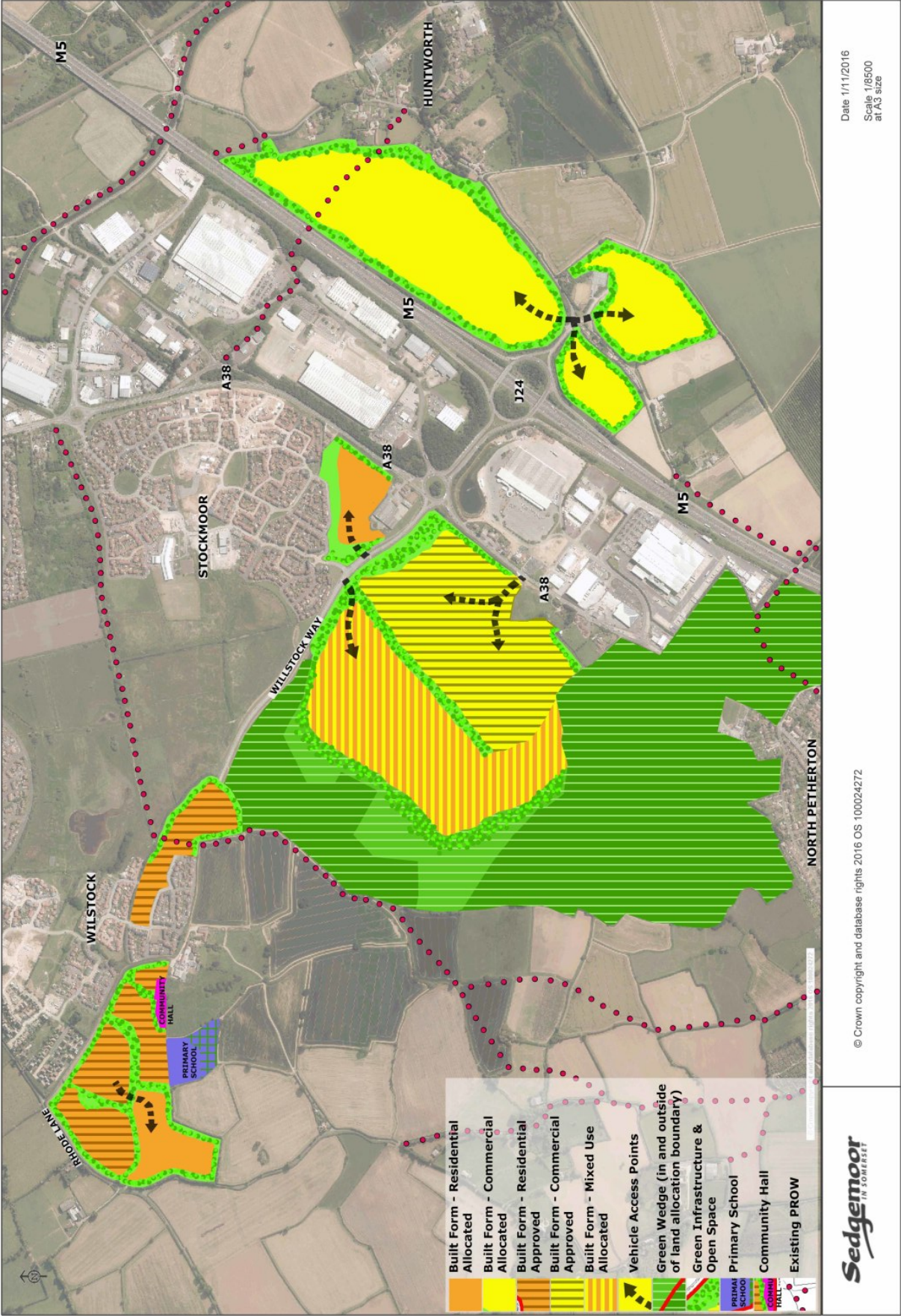
Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

Picture A1.2 East Bridgwater



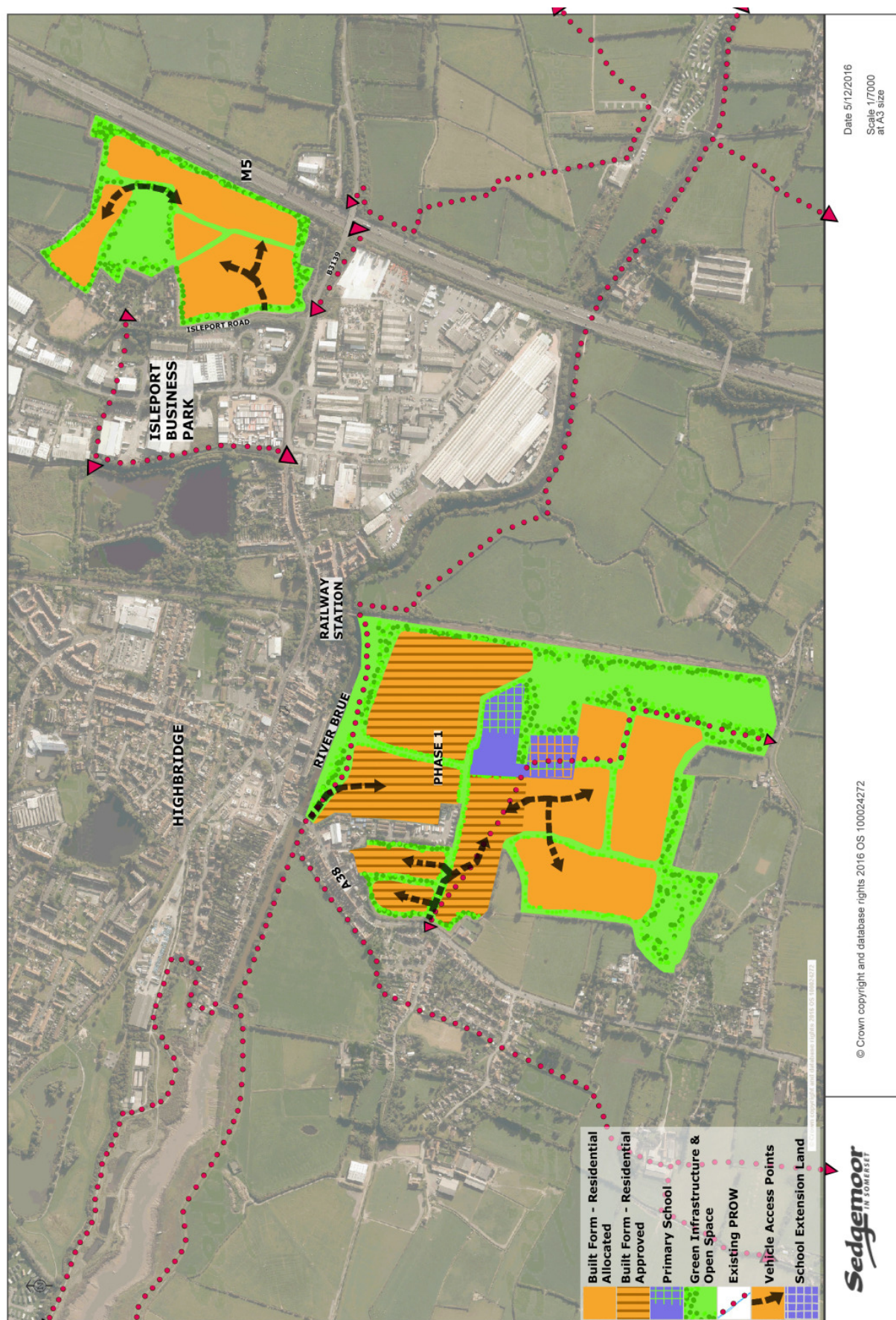
Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

Picture A1.3 South Bridgwater



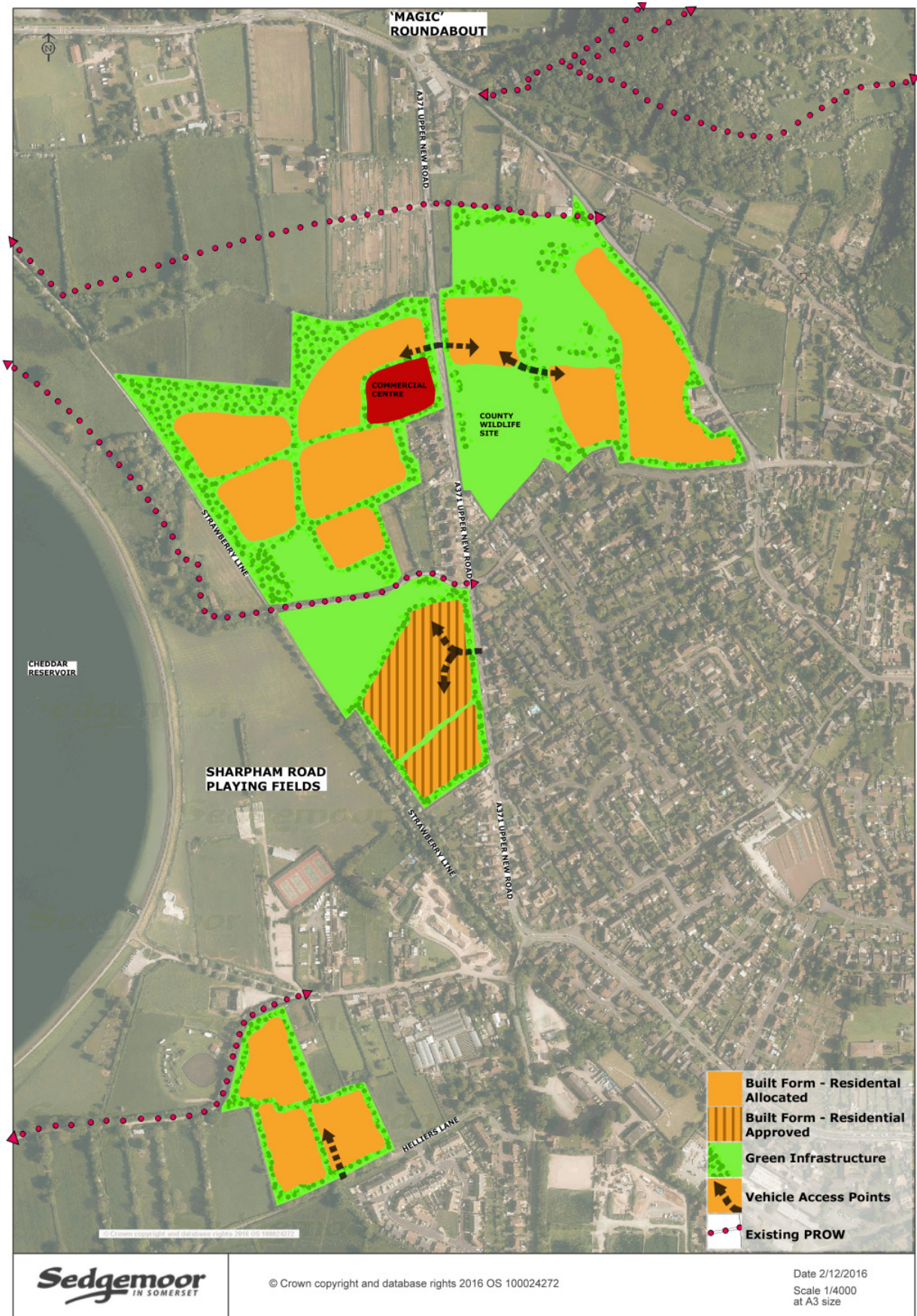
Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

Picture A1.4 Highbridge



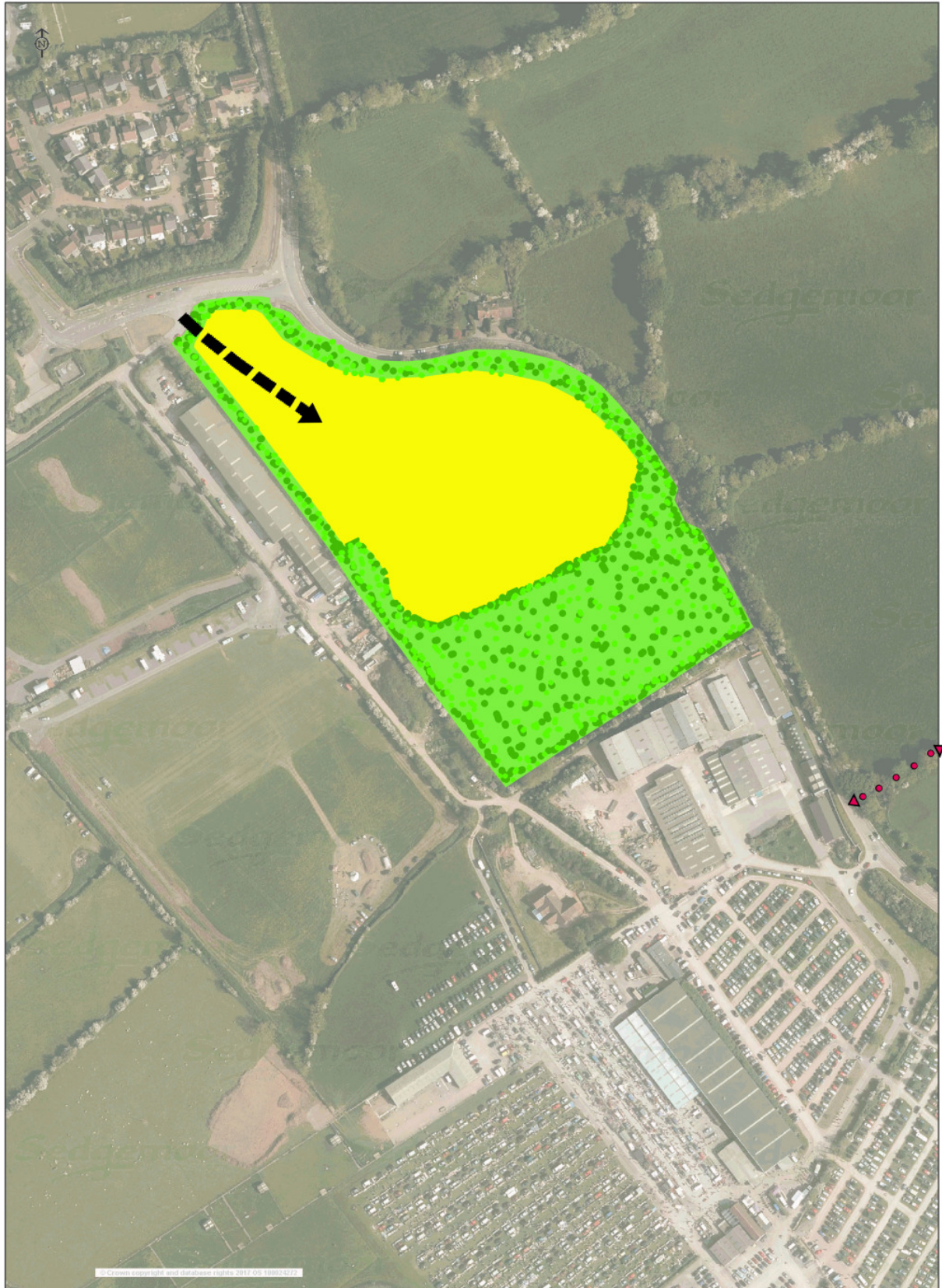
Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

Picture A1.5 Cheddar



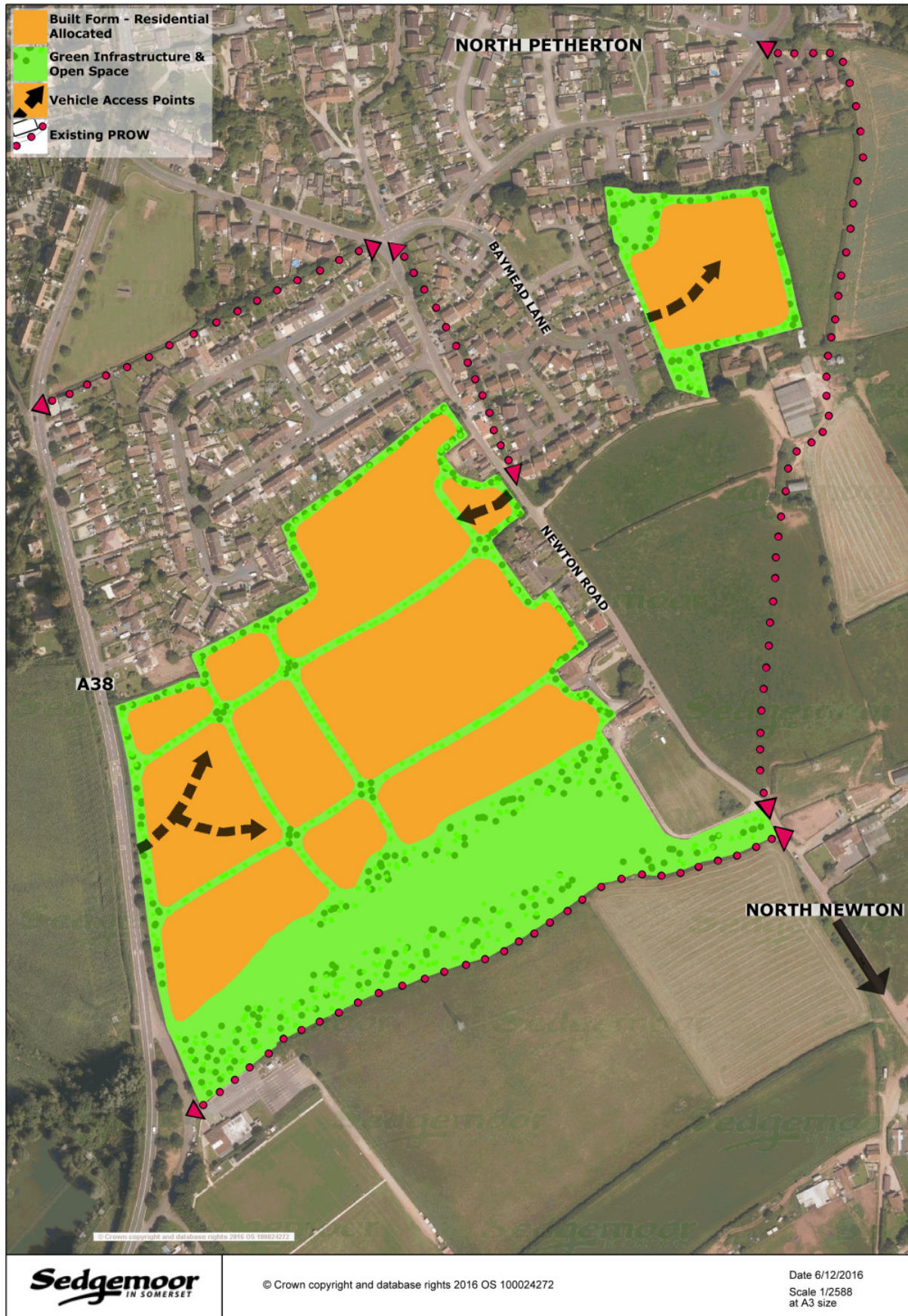
Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

Picture A1.6 Cheddar Winchester Farm area



Appendix 1 - Indicative Plans

Picture A1.7 North Petherton



Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Monitoring Framework

1 The Local Plan looks forward to 2032. Monitoring how well the Local Plan is performing and being implemented is therefore an essential element of the planning system. As well as other tools such as the housing trajectory and annual 5 year land supply report, the Council has also established a set of policy themes to monitor which are set out in the table below. This table sets out key aims, relevant triggers and actions taken by the Council as a result. This will form the basis for establishing a comprehensive set of monitoring indicators to be reported through the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Building on these policy themes the AMR will identify indicators from a range of different sources that help the Council to identify key trends and provide a means of setting specific targets to assess how well policies in the Local Plan are performing. The AMR will review and report against indicators each year. Where appropriate (e.g. if better data becomes available in the future) the AMR may include additional or revised indicators to ensure an effective monitoring going forward. Any changes will be explained in the AMR at the time.

2 Over the plan period the circumstances in which the plan has been produced may change. For example, this may include a change in economic climate or expected future demographic changes. Many of these factors may be outside of the Council's control. With this in mind the Local Plan has sought to be flexible in its approach, including identifying appropriate contingency actions in areas such as housing delivery. Nevertheless, it may be necessary to undertake a review of all or part of the Plan in order for it to remain up-to-date, for example if it becomes inconsistent with national policy or is not delivering in key policy areas. In this regard the table below is clear that an early review of the Local Plan may be needed if the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of land for housing, and contingency actions have not been successful in addressing the supply issues. In any case, current Government guidance recommends that most Local Plans will need to be reviewed in whole or in part at least every five years to ensure they remain up-to-date and effective.

Table A2.1 Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
Housing development	Deliver housing growth according to the spatial strategy	S2, B2, B3, B4, B5, BH1, BH2, C1, C2, C3, NP1, NP2, T2a, T3a, T4, CO2	Distribution of development delivered is significantly different from policy S2.	The distribution of development actually delivered should inform the next Local Plan review and the reasons for any variance from the planned distribution understood at an early stage in preparation. No earlier action is considered to be appropriate as the pattern of overall delivery will only emerge over a number of years as allocations come forward.

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
Affordable housing development	Deliver affordable housing according to the policy targets	D6	% of affordable housing delivered does not accord with policy targets.	If the % is not broadly in accordance with policy targets (taking into account policy flexibility) this should inform the next Local Plan review and any revisions to policy targets, including updating housing need and viability evidence base. No earlier action appropriate as delivery will need to be monitored over a number of years to draw any conclusions regarding policy effectiveness.
Self-build and custom build homes	Support the delivery of self-build and custom build homes in line with demand recorded on the Council's Self Build Register	D9	Insufficient self-build plots being consented to meet demand identified for the relevant base periods on the self-build register.	Provide technical advice note, promote positive policy approach through agents panel and other appropriate forums. Specifically allocate sites for self-build development through the site allocation Development Plan Document, as set out in Policy D9. Monitoring should also inform revision to Policy D9 as part of future Local Plan review.
Rural Workers Dwellings	Support the delivery of rural workers dwellings where an essential need has been established	D10, CO1	Indicators suggest difficulties in interpreting policy requirements (e.g. appeal allowed following LPA refusal).	Policy Officers to prepare practice note/guidance to assist with interpretation of Policy D10 requirements and take this into account when considering any rewording of Policy D10 in next Local Plan review to improve clarity and effectiveness.

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside	Support the delivery of replacement dwellings in the countryside where all policy requirements are satisfied	D11	Indicators suggest difficulties in interpreting policy requirements (e.g. appeal allowed following LPA refusal).	Policy Officers to prepare practice note/guidance to assist with interpretation of Policy D11 requirements and take this into account when considering any rewording of Policy D11 in next Local Plan review to improve clarity and effectiveness.
Residential Annexes	Support the delivery of residential annex accommodation where a genuine need is demonstrated	D12	Indicators suggest difficulties in interpreting policy requirements (e.g. appeal allowed following LPA refusal).	Policy Officers to prepare practice note/guidance to assist with interpretation of Policy D12 requirements and take this into account when considering any rewording of Policy D12 in next Local Plan review to improve clarity and effectiveness.
Housing mix	Deliver new homes of a size, type and tenure that correspond with the requirements identified in the current Strategic Housing Market Assessment or other local evidence	D5	Size and tenure of housing delivered varies significantly for that identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.	Officer's to investigate why the mix being delivered varies compared to the high level SHMA evidence base (.e.g. based on other local needs studies). If following this there is evidence that mix delivered to not meeting the district's needs, prepare practice/guidance note to assist in interpretation of Policy D5, in terms of sources of information officers should have regard to

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
				<p>when considering appropriate housing mix at application stage.</p> <p>Ensure any findings from the above inform the next Local Plan review in terms of revisions to the housing mix policy.</p>
Care homes and specialist accommodation	Provide care home spaces and units of specialist accommodation to adequately address local needs	D7	Development delivered is less than specialist and bed space need identified in the SHMA.	<p>Specifically allocate specialist units and/or C2 use class on appropriate sites as part of the Site Allocations DPD where there is local need/demand.</p> <p>If lower delivery is due to a significant number of proposals for specialist units or care homes being refused, policy officers to prepare practice/guidance on interpretation of D7 and consider more enabling policy through next Local Plan review.</p>
Gypsy and Traveller accommodation	Deliver additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches in accordance with the requirements identified in the current GTAA	D8	Provision delivered or consented falling below per annum need identified in GTAA.	Ensure any under provision is taken into account as part of the planned supply in the Gypsy and Traveller DPD.
Five year housing land supply and housing trajectory	Maintain a five year supply of deliverable land for housing development	S2	As part of the annual update a 5 year supply	Prepare an action plan to address housing supply, including engaging with land owners and house

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
			of land against housing requirements cannot be demonstrated.	<p>builder to address barriers to delivery on major/allocated sites.</p> <p>Identity unallocated sites in sustainable locations that would be able to contribute to the Council's five year supply.</p> <p>Expand the role of the site allocations DPD to allocate additional sites at sustainable settlements to ensure a 5 year supply going forward.</p> <p>If, despite the above contingency measures, the Council is not able to re-establish a rolling 5 year supply in future years, an early review of the Local Plan should be commenced.</p>
Employment land development	Deliver employment growth according to the spatial strategy	S2, D15, B4, B7, B8, B9, B10, B11, B12, B13, BH4, BH5, C4	Allocated employment sites not being brought forward as expected in the employment land trajectory.	Work with site owners/promoters address barrier to delivery. Work with the Council's Economic Development team and site promoters to bring forward additional employment land in the context of Policy D15.
Local Labour	Proposals creating 10+ jobs should be subject to a local labour agreement to ensure that additional	D15	Monitoring indicates no improvement in the employment prospects of the resident workforce.	Policy and Economic Development Officers to prepare practice note/guidance to assist with interpretation of Policy D15, in terms of expected local labour agreement requirements.

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
	employment land development benefits the local economy and its workforce			Local Labour market evidence to be taken into account when considering any rewording of policy D15 in next Local Plan review to improve effectiveness.
Employment	Increased levels of employment, particularly in higher value sectors	D15, D16, B4, B7, B8, B9, B10, B11, B12, B13, B17, BH4, BH6	Increased levels of unemployment in the district.	Policy and Economic Development Officers to work within the framework of Policy D15 to identify additional employment site opportunities and attract inward investment.
Infrastructure delivery	Deliver infrastructure projects in line with the current Infrastructure Delivery Plan; Collection of CIL contributions according to the Council's charging schedule	S3, B1, B15, B16, BH7, C5, T3d, MIP1, MIP2, D13, D27, D28, D29, D30, D34	Non-delivery of key infrastructure projects identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Strategy.	Work with infrastructures providers to address barriers to delivery and/or funding gaps. Consider priorities for infrastructure spending through CIL Governance.
Vacant retail premises	Minimise vacant retail floorspace to improve vitality of centres	B18, B19, BH8, BH9, C6, NP3, D18,	Increasing vacancy rates in town and district centres.	Where appropriate look to prepare/update development briefs/SPD's to encourage regeneration, investment and increase in footfall.
Retail and leisure development	Support the delivery of retail and leisure development where it accords with policy	B18, B19, BH8, BH9, C6, NP3, CO4, D18	Non-delivery of committed and allocated retail/leisure development.	Identify appropriate and deliverable sites for retail leisure development through next Local Plan review.

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
Tourism related development	Support the delivery of tourism related development where this contributes positively to the local tourism offer whilst avoiding harm to the environment and existing communities	BH10, C7, D17	Reduction in Sedgemoor's tourism offer across key indicators (e.g. hotel bedspaces, tourism's jobs).	Consider further ways to support tourism development through Local Plan review.
Health care related development	Support the delivery of health care related development to adequately address local needs	D28	Key indicators show worsening health inequalities and standard of health care provision.	Engage with CCG and NHS England regarding healthcare provision and whether availability of land for health care facilities is a constraint to adequate provision. Ensure contributions are sought as appropriate from new development to address shortfall.
Quality of design in development	Building for Life and BREEAM rating	S4, B6, BH3, D2, D3, D25,	Indicators suggest difficulties in interpreting policy requirements (e.g. appeals allowed following LPA refusal).	Policy Officers to prepare practice note/guidance to assist with interpretation of Policy D2 requirements and take this into account when considering any rewording of policy D2 in next Local Plan review to improve clarity and effectiveness.
Development at flood risk	Minimise development at flood risk.	S4, S5, D1, B15	Development granted contrary to Environment Agency maintaining an	Engage with the Environment Agency and report any cases as part of the annual monitoring report in terms of planning balance taken. Ensure any lessons learned

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
			objection on flood risk grounds.	inform Local Plan review in terms of ensuring policy effectiveness.
Re-use of brownfield land	Maximise the redevelopment of brownfield land	S4, CO3	Brownfield site identified in brownfield register/SHLAA do not come forward at the time envisaged on the Council's housing trajectory.	Work with site owners/promoters to understand barriers to delivery and explore opportunities to enable delivery (e.g. bids for grant funding, flexibility regarding obligations).
Renewable energy generation	Increase in renewable energy generation capacity installed	S4, S5, D3, D4	No further increase in renewable energy generation capacity in Sedgemoor, as required by national targets.	Identify any planning constraints to delivery of projects and through Local Plan review look to include more enabling policies where appropriate.
Renewable energy in new developments	New developments encouraged to incorporate renewable energy and heat sources	S4, S5, D3	No relevant monitoring triggers.	Policy encourages new development to be supplied by renewable or low carbon energy. Whilst there are no monitoring triggers the Council will monitor delivery through appropriate indicators to inform future plan making.
Cycle journeys	Increase in the annual number of cycling journeys in line with the current Somerset County Council Transport Plan	S4, S5, D13, B16, BH7	Key indicators identify no change or a decrease in cycling journeys	Revisit travel planning SPD with Somerset County Council and travel planning coordinator to improve effectiveness.

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
				Ensure evidence informs next Local Plan review in terms of the success in of S2 spatial strategy in encouraging modal shift.
Implementation of Travel Plans	The implementation of agreed Travel Plans should adequately manage transport impacts of new development and encourage sustainable modes of travel	D14	Indicators identify inadequate implementation of travel plans.	Revisit travel planning SPD with Somerset County Council and travel planning coordinator to improve effectiveness.
Loss of good quality agricultural land	Major development proposals should avoid the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land wherever possible	S4, D20	Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land over and above that envisaged through Policy S2.	Next Local Plan review should take into account monitoring trends and the weight to be applied to avoiding loss in amending the spatial strategy and the strength of policy wording.
Landscape impacts	No planning consents granted in cases where the Council's landscape officer objects	D19	Planning consent granted contrary to landscape officer maintaining an objection.	Engage with landscape officer and report any cases as part of the annual monitoring report in terms of planning balance taken. Ensure any lessons learned inform Local Plan review in terms of ensuring policy effectiveness.
Development in AONBs	No planning consents granted in cases where AONB	D19	Planning consent granted contrary to AONB	Engage with AONB partnership and report any cases as part of the annual monitoring report in terms of planning

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
	Partnership objection cannot be overcome		Partnership maintaining an objection.	balance taken. Ensure any lessons learned inform Local Plan review in terms of ensuring policy effectiveness.
Change in areas of biodiversity importance	There should be no losses of biodiversity habitat areas (including sites of international, national, regional, sub-regional and local significance and UK BAP priorities) due to development.	D20	Indicators show a net reduction in biodiversity habitat as a result of development.	Next Local Plan review should take into account monitoring trends and inform revision to policy, including strengthening policy requirements as appropriate.
Change in area or quality of the ecological network	Increase in land area and improved quality of the ecological network	D21	Indicators show a loss or deterioration of the Sedgemoor's ecological network.	Next Local Plan review should take into account monitoring trends and inform revision to policy, including strengthening policy requirements as appropriate.
Area of ancient woodland and native woodland	Maintain the existing land area of ancient woodland and increase the area of native woodland	D22	Indicators show a reduction in area of ancient woodland.	Next Local Plan review should take into account monitoring trends and inform revision to policy, including strengthening policy requirements as appropriate.
Planning consents within Bat Consultation Zones	No consents should be granted in cases where a Natural England objection cannot be overcome	D20, D23	Planning consent granted contrary to Natural England maintaining an objection.	Investigate circumstances of permission being granted given Sedgemoor's responsibility to maintain 'favourable conservation status' under the Habitat Regulations. Engage with Natural England and

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
				County Ecologist regarding further guidance/practice notes to ensure Habitat Regulations Assessment requirements are addressed through the planning application process.
Green Infrastructure	All new developments should incorporate an element of green infrastructure appropriate to the scale of development proposed; Existing green infrastructure should be protected	C8, T3b, D29, D30, D31, D32, D33, D34	Delay or Non-delivery of Green Infrastructure projects identified in the Council Infrastructure Delivery Strategy.	Work with lead organisation to address barriers to delivery and/or funding gaps, including considering priorities for infrastructure spending through CIL Governance. Identify alternative Green Infrastructure opportunities to address shortfall.
Access to Local Greenspace	All new developments should comply with Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) wherever possible	D30, D34	Increase in ANGst deficient areas in the district.	Next Local Plan review should take into account monitoring trends and inform revision to policy, including strengthening policy requirements as appropriate.
Water quality	Increase in the quality of bathing water along Sedgemoor coastline; No	S4, D24	Development granted contrary to Environment Agency maintaining an	Engage with Environment Agency and report any cases as part of the annual monitoring report in terms of planning balance taken. Ensure

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
	planning consents granted in cases where Environment Agency objects on water quality grounds		objection on water quality grounds.	any lessons learned inform Local Plan review in terms of ensuring policy effectiveness.
Planning Permissions granted contrary to Historic England/Conservation officer recommendation	No consents should be granted where Historic England or conservation officer objections cannot be overcome.	D26	Development granted contrary to Historic England maintaining an objection.	Engage with Historic England and report any cases as part of the annual monitoring report in terms of planning balance taken. Ensure any lessons learned inform Local Plan review in terms of ensuring policy effectiveness.
Schools capacity	Provision of sufficient number of school places to accommodate all pupils	B14, C9, T3c, D27	Key indicators forecast an inadequate number of school places to meet expected demand.	Engage with Somerset Education Authority regarding constraints to delivery and ensure contributions being sought from new development are sufficient to meet the additional demand generated.
Community facilities	Support the development of community and cultural facilities where it accords with policy	D35	Loss of a facility results in a change in the classification of a settlement within the settlement hierarchy.	Next Local Plan review should take into account monitoring trends and inform revision to policy, including strengthening policy requirements as appropriate.
Development Management Performance	Planning performance in accordance with statutory requirements	S1	Development Management Planning falls below Council's 'stretch targets'	Prepare and implement an action plan to ensure the Council does not fall below statutory requirements.

Appendix 2 - Monitoring Framework

Policy theme to be monitored?	What is the aim?	Relevant to which Local Plan Policies	Monitoring Trigger(s)	Council Action to Monitoring Trigger(s)
			for Development Management Performance.	