

Key Transport Consultant Information Sheet

No: 6

Topic: **NORTH SOMERSET CORE STRATEGY CONSULTATION
DRAFT: INITIAL SUMMARY OF TRANSPORT ASPECTS**

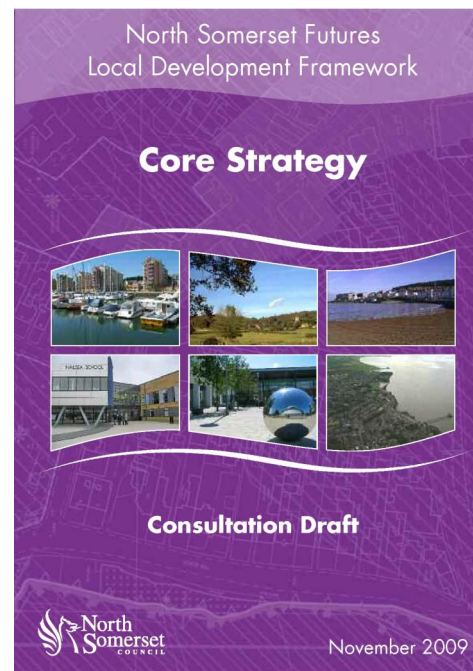
Introduction

North Somerset Council (NSC) Executive Committee has now approved the Core Strategy Consultation Draft for public consultation. Consultation continues until 19 February 2010.

This document sets out an overview of the Core Strategy and a summary of the transport related aspects of the consultation draft. It also sets out the proposed area policy for the Weston Urban Extension and the views on the South West Bristol Urban Extension.

Some initial comments include the following:

- The document is rather like an old style Structure Plan, including a key diagram, but for a relatively small area;
- The document identifies few if any alternative options to the transport policies proposed;
- The document does not deal directly with parking standards. These are for a later LDF document, the Development Management Development Plan Document;
- No development is proposed at South West Bristol, and no change to the Green Belt. Should the urban extension eventually be confirmed through an adopted Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), then further consultation will be required on any proposed policy wording and the form of any strategic allocation for SW Bristol before proceeding to the next stage of the Core Strategy. This further consultation suggests that there could be significant delay in adopting the Core Strategy.



Overview

The Core Strategy sets out the broad long-term vision, objectives and strategic planning policies for North Somerset to 2026, and provides the spatial planning context for the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Core Strategy needs to be consistent with national and regional policy but the RSS which will provide the regional context is subject to substantial objection and potential challenge, and final approval has been delayed. NSC is opposed to the proposed urban extension at South West Bristol, and no allocation is proposed, along with no change to the Green Belt. Potential changes to regional policy which could be introduced following the general election mean that NSC consider it would be irresponsible to proceed on the basis of the draft RSS requirement.

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NSC consider that this uncertainty, coupled with a need to maintain progress on a plan-led approach which delivers the Council's objectives, means that the approach to strategic housing growth in the Consultation Draft is predicated on the following principles:

- Opposition to the development of an urban extension at SW Bristol and no allocation will be made and no change proposed to the Green Belt;
- The Consultation Draft will make provision for 17,750 dwellings 2006-2026 (RSS requirement of 26,750 less 9,000 at SW Bristol);
- It is not appropriate or sustainable for housing allocated by the RSS at urban extensions to be dispersed to other locations;
- Housing land supply elsewhere (Weston urban area and the remainder of North Somerset) is sufficient so as not to require any new strategic allocations

Of the 17,750 dwellings to be provided for, the distribution is as follows:

- Weston urban area (excl Weston Urban Extension) 3,000
- Weston Urban Extension 9,000
- NSC area (existing identified sources) 5,750

The consultation draft document envisages Core Strategy adoption in July 2012.



Visions and Objectives

The Consultation Draft sets out seven proposed visions including for the area overall, the four main towns and

for smaller settlements. It then identifies a set of 10 priority objectives. The transport related objectives are as follows:

- 2. Ensure that major development proposals are delivered in tandem with the necessary improvements in physical and social infrastructure such as M5 Junction 21 improvements at Weston-super-Mare and access improvements to Bristol International Airport, and that appropriate delivery mechanisms including effective tariffs/developer contributions are in place;
- 9. Improve accessibility through the delivery of major transport schemes and local improvements to ensure that, particularly in Weston-super-Mare, Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead, people are encouraged to make more sustainable transport choices;
- 10. To ensure that sufficient parking is provided in new developments to meet the needs of users in a safe and well designed environment, while public parking in town, district and local centres contributes to their continued vitality, and provides for choice in transport modes.

Spatial Policies

Area spatial policies to deliver the identified visions and objectives are then divided into four themes (which reflect the Sustainable Community Strategy) as follows:

- living within environmental limits;
- delivering strong and inclusive communities;
- delivering a prosperous economy;
- ensuring safe and healthy communities.

The supporting text accompanying each policy includes a section on alternative options and contingency planning – are there reasonable alternative approaches and what happens if circumstances change in the future?

A number of policies have transport implications but the proposed transport policies (in italics) and partly summarised accompanying text follow below along with the area policy for the Weston Urban Extension and views on the South West Bristol Urban Extension.

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CS10: Transportation and Movement

Travel management policies and development proposals that 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, services and facilities will be encouraged and supported.

Transport schemes should:

- i) enhance the facilities for pedestrians, including those with reduced mobility, and other users such as cyclists;
- ii) deliver better local bus and rail services in partnership with operators;
- iii) develop innovative and adaptable approaches to public transport in the rural areas of the district;
- iv) improve road and personal safety and environmental conditions;
- v) reduce the adverse environmental impacts of transport;
- vi) reduce congestion;
- vii) improve connectivity within and between major towns both within and beyond North Somerset.

The following schemes will be promoted:

Major Road Schemes:

- (i) South Bristol Link;
- (ii) Cross Airfield Link Road, Weston-super-Mare;
- (iii) Junction 21 Relief Road, Banwell;
- (iv) Airfield Bridge Link Road, Weston-super-Mare;
- (v) A371 and Wolvershill Rd/Churchland Way Link, Weston-super-Mare;
- (vi) Banwell By Pass;
- (vii) Barrow Gurney By Pass;
- (viii) Herluin Way to Locking Road, Weston-super-Mare.

Rail and/or Bus Rapid Transit:

- (ix) Double tracks on the loop line to and from Weston Railway Station;
- (x) Opening of bay platform at Weston Railway Station;
- (xi) The upgrading of Worle Railway Station;
- (xii) Extended car parking facilities at Nailsea/Backwell with improved pedestrian access;
- (xiii) Re-opening of the Portishead to Bristol line for passenger services, including stations and associated facilities at Portishead, Portbury Dock and Pill, or its use for bus rapid transit;
- (xiv) Bus rapid transit from Bristol to Long Ashton Park and Ride;
- (xv) Investigation of bus rapid transit at Weston.



Park and Ride:

- (xvi) Expansion of the Park and Ride at Long Ashton;
- (xvii) A new Park and Ride site at Weston-super-Mare.

This policy contributes towards achieving Priority Objectives 2 and 9.

Core Strategy Approach

The Core Strategy's locational strategy aims to place new jobs, services and facilities where they are easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling and give existing and future residents a choice of how to travel. Where car-based movement is unavoidable the aim must be to accommodate the car but seek ways to minimise harm to the environment through good quality design and maximising car-sharing.

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It is recognised that most opportunities to reduce the reliance on the private car will be within the major towns – in particular at the Weston urban extension. However the policy approach is applicable throughout the district and innovative public transport schemes will be explored for rural areas and villages. Through the development management process planning applications will need to address how they can reduce reliance on the car and still retain a wide choice of transport modes.

Layouts and land use distributions must be based on a network of cycleways/footpaths and public transport routes that ensure safe, convenient and direct access to local services. Larger developments in particular must be within safe and direct walking distance of shops and other key services. Developers will be required to undertake a full accessibility assessment by noncar modes to determine the transport needs arising from the development and the means by which any adverse impacts should be mitigated. Developers may need, for example, to provide off-site transport network improvements or payments towards upgrading a bus service may be necessary. For larger scale developments a Travel Plan aimed at delivering sustainable transport objectives will be required.

Some funding for major transport schemes will be sought through the Department for Transport's major scheme bidding process and the remainder will be sought from developer contributions.

Alternative Options

The draft states that allowing for unrestricted growth in traffic levels would be contrary to national guidance and would potentially lead to increased noise and pollution levels and have an adverse effect on the environment. It would also have the effect of making North Somerset a less attractive location for economic investment and reduce its potential for creating jobs and becoming less reliant on other areas for employment.

For the major transport schemes the options considered are:

(i) Prioritising one mode of transport

The preferred approach is based on an integrated transport network where all modes of transport play a part in promoting a more sustainable transport solution. North Somerset is a mixture of urban and rural areas where reliance on one mode of transport e.g. rail or bus is not a viable way forward.

(ii) Rescind major transport schemes

These major schemes have been subject to previous studies which have taken into account future residential, employment and traffic growth forecasts. These studies demonstrate the need for major schemes to support growth and to maximise economic and safety benefits, whilst mitigating adverse environmental impacts; hence, their inclusion in the Core Strategy is fully justified.

CS11: Parking

Adequate parking must be provided and managed to meet the needs of anticipated users (residents, workers and visitors) in usable spaces. Overall parking provision must ensure a balance between good urban design, highway safety and residential amenity.

New developments must seek to maximise off street provision, assess where on-street provision may be appropriate, demonstrate that buses, service and emergency vehicles are not restricted, and ensure that the road network is safe for all users.

Detailed parking policy guidance for all forms of development will be provided as part of the Development Management Development Plan Document.

This policy contributes towards achieving Priority Objective 10.

Core Strategy Approach

The intention is to take a pragmatic approach to parking provision on new developments. The Council recognises that there will be a balance between good urban design, highway safety and residential amenity, but that the assessment of a development proposal must always start from the position of ensuring that adequate parking is provided. This is adequate in terms of providing enough provision for likely users, in practical spaces of an adequate size and shape.

The Core Strategy highlights the importance of the parking issue to the place making agenda, and the need for co-ordination between the formulation and interpretation of parking standards, urban design and transport policy. This is an area where further guidance will be required within the Development Management DPD.

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Research is currently examining the impact of parking on new estates at Portishead and Weston, and the recommendations from this and other evidence will be used to reassess the approach to parking within the Development Management DPD. Delivery will also be through the production of masterplans and briefs where appropriate, and the assessment of planning applications as part of the development management process.

Alternative Options

Policy could be incorporated as part of a more general transport policy, but it was felt that the importance of the issue to key objectives warranted a more specific approach.

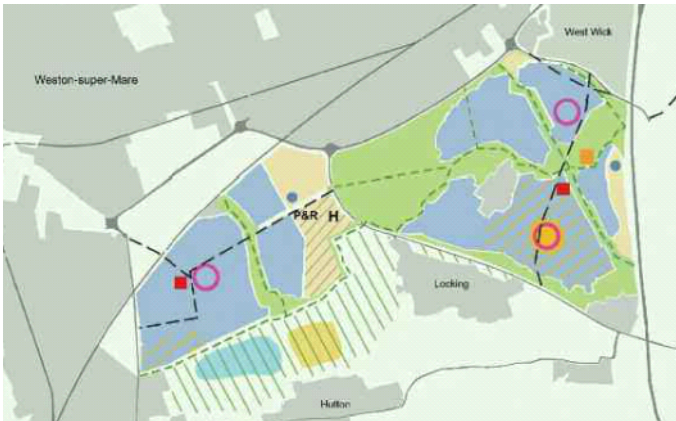
CS30: Weston urban extension

To the south east of Weston-super-Mare a major mixed-use, employment-led socially, economically and environmentally sustainable urban extension will be developed. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) including a Master Plan, Design Codes and Delivery Plan will provide the detailed guidance to support this policy and guide the development of, and decision making on proposals at the extension. The Draft Key Diagram: Weston urban extension sets out the indicative strategic development framework.

Subject to a viability assessment the development of the urban extension south-east of Weston-super-Mare must satisfy the following key requirements:

- Development within the urban extension will be employment-led with the provision of 1.5 B use class jobs per dwelling in addition to jobs from non B uses. Detailed mechanisms for delivering employment-led development will be set out in the Weston Urban Extension SPD.
- Provide 9,000 new homes in a mix of housing types, tenures, sizes and styles of which a target of 30% should be affordable. An average density of at least 40dph should be achieved across the area, with higher densities surrounding the district and local centres and lower densities on the edge of each neighbourhood.
- Provide at least 42 ha of B use class employment land located within allocated employment sites, mixed-use development areas and at local and district centres.
- Development within the urban extension will be phased prioritising the release of brownfield sites at Weston Airfield and Locking Parklands. If provision of strategic infrastructure is dependant on development on greenfield land then this will be taken into consideration as part of the phasing strategy.
- The urban extension will be characterised by linked communities on the east and western sides of the A371. Each community will be anchored by a district centre which will provide necessary retail, health, children's services and educational and community facilities to serve the new housing development.
- Site(s) for on-site renewable or low carbon energy production including associated infrastructure to facilitate site-wide renewable energy solutions will be provided.
- Provision of a site to accommodate pitches for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation.
- Provision of a network of green infrastructure across the whole urban extension including a Green Heart Park as a central feature as well as playing fields, allotments, play areas, pocket and community parks, green corridors linking through development allowing wildlife movement and access to open space, wetlands and water corridors linking through development, including the retention of existing rhynes where appropriate.
- Integrated transport infrastructure including:
 - The Cross Airfield Link
 - The Airfield Bridge Link
 - Junction 21 Relief Road
 - A371 to Wolverhill Road/Churchland Way Link
 - Potential Park and Ride subject to feasibility studies
 - Convenient and accessible bus routes
 - Accessible and safe cycle routes and public footpaths
 - Rail and bus improvements
- A clear hierarchy of roads (from distributor to home zones) producing discernable and distinctive neighbourhoods which are integrated and linked to existing areas.

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- A comprehensive flood management scheme is essential to facilitate the development of the urban extension. This will require off-site flood mitigation measures. Any development within the urban extension will be required to contribute towards these flood mitigation measures through the tariff approach.
- Interim and long-term on-site flood mitigation measures, such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, must be included as part of any development proposal. Any proposed development will need to be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment which will include a surface water drainage strategy.
- The realignment and safeguarding of safety and noise corridors associated with the helicopter flights linked with the Helicopter Museum. Employment, open-space and uses that are least sensitive to helicopter disturbance will be located around the museum.
- A development tariff approach will apply to all planning applications within the urban extension area. The tariff will contribute towards the strategic infrastructure that is necessary to achieve a comprehensive sustainable development. Details of the development tariff will be set out in a future SPD for the Weston-super-Mare urban extension and the Developer Contributions SPD.
- Development must be of a high quality and locally distinctive to Weston enhancing the existing character and qualities that contribute to the town's identity. This should include a comprehensive approach to place-making including all the elements that make up an area including land uses, parking, movement and green spaces.

- Strategic gaps between the urban extension and Hutton and Locking will protect their individual character and identity.

This policy contributes towards achieving Priority Objective 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Alternative Options

The proposed strategic framework for the delivery of the Weston urban extension has emerged as a result of discussions with landowners and stakeholders and taking account of advice prepared by Broadway Malyan on masterplanning, design codes and delivery. The principal alternative options are:

- Develop land immediately to the east of M5 to support J21 improvements and encourage employment.
- No priority phasing of brownfield sites.
- Allocate two district centres instead of three.

Increase the housing density to 50dph in accordance with the emerging RSS.

Further discussion and testing will be required before the Core Strategy diagram is confirmed.

Delivery in relation to the employment-led objective and infrastructure provision will be regularly monitored, and if necessary adjustments made to the timing or phasing of the development. If development is not going to be completed by 2026, then alternative allocations will not be made; instead development will continue post-2026.

South West Bristol Urban Extension

Chapter 5 of the document states that no development is proposed at South West Bristol, and no change to the Green Belt. Notwithstanding the Council's objection to the principle of development, given the RSS's proposed urban extension, comments are invited on options and choices related to different forms and scales of potential development.

Should the urban extension eventually be confirmed through an adopted RSS, then further consultation will be required on any proposed policy wording and the form of any strategic allocation for SW Bristol before proceeding to the next stage of the Core Strategy.