

## Response ID ANON-8CC9-KDD3-W

Submitted to **Local Plan Issues and Options**

Submitted on **2020-03-11 10:39:23**

### Your details

**What is your name?**

**Forename:**

Brenda

**Surname:**

Weston

**Are you making an individual response or on behalf of an organisation?**

Individual

**If individual, please tell us what type:**

Elected Member

**Name of organisation:**

Somerset West and Taunton Council

**Please choose one from the drop-down list:**

Other

**What is your (personal/organisational) address?**

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**What is your email address?**

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### 1. Overview and objectives

**Do you agree that these are the right Objectives for the Local Plan?**

Agree

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

I obviously agree in the main, but in reviewing the 'Community' objective I would like to see an emphasis on safety as an explicit key consideration for future developments. As a councillor for Priorswood Ward it's noticeable from recent community meetings that among more vulnerable tenants/residents, issues around feelings of safety and security are emerging, particularly in respect of lighting, design and conflicting lifestyles within formerly older/disabled tenant targeted areas.

### 2. Carbon neutrality

**Question 1a: Should we aim to require that all newdevelopment is 'zero carbon' by as soon as possible (e.g. by 2025) or give slightly more time (e.g. by 2030) for developers to adapt their design approaches, materials and suppliers?**

As soon as possible (e.g. by 2025)

**Question 1b: Should we allocate sites for specific renewable energy development or identify broad areas which we consider suitable?**

Identify suitable areas through criteria based policies

**Question 1c: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

I have concerns about future substantial housing developments in the Williton/ Watchet areas. There are already serious concerns that the road network is overloaded, whilst public transport is seen as inadequate and unlikely, at its present level and cost, to encourage commuters to leave cars at home. Also

concerns about coastal erosion and the inclusion of unsuitable sites within the previous West Somerset LP. Another concern is what I regard as a somewhat relaxed approach on the part of the Highways Authority, to cycling safety in granting planning permissions in the area (based on a report relating to a recent Williton site planning decision)

### 3. Sustainable locations

**Question 2a: Do you agree with the tiers that identifies Taunton followed by 6 tiers covering the other settlements?**

Yes

**If not, what changes would you make and why? (200 words max):**

**Question 2b: Do you think Watchet and Williton should be seen as associated settlements for the purposes of the Local Plan due to their close proximity and in complementing the services of each other (and therefore be in a higher tier to Bishops Lydeard and Wiveliscombe)?**

Yes - Watchet and Williton should be seen as associated settlements

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

**Question 2c: Do you think we should carry on with the way housing is currently distributed across our area (see pie chart) or should we be doing something different, such as one of the three options suggested below?**

Increase housing in Taunton; and reduce in Minor Rural Settlements

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

I may be wrong, but it feels like this may make more sense in terms of any more enlightened and better financed public transport, especially bus, policy.

**What else do you think about housing distribution in our area?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

**Question 2d: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

1. Can we do more to protect good agricultural land in view of our need to be more self-sufficient in food?
2. Is there any way to ensure that the Highways Authority can be persuaded to take a more holistic view of the cumulative highways impacts of separate planning proposals and existing residential areas? (examples in mind are existing and proposed developments around Cheddon Fitzpaine/Monkton Heathfield, Staplegrove and the residential areas they border)
3. Do we have any potential powers to restrict second/holiday home developments?

### 4. New and affordable homes

**Question 3a: Should our housing requirement figure match the Government's minimum figure of 702 dwellings per year or should we have a higher figure?**

The housing requirement should be the Government's minimum figure of 702 dwellings per year

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

Setting it higher seems to be based on assumed levels of economic growth and physical infrastructure 'improvements' etc. How can we be confident that these will materialise? Would we be stuck with self-imposed targets that are unsustainable?

**Question 3b: How should we proactively plan for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople pitches?**

Allocate sites specifically for pitches.

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

It seems that encampments sometimes occur when particular celebrations or events are taking place, and involve larger numbers of traveller vehicles. Sites located remotely in relation to key public and other services would not seem to be good practice.

Ideally pitches would be determined following consultations with traveller representatives who can advise on material concerns for their communities and understand council constraints in meeting the needs.

**Question 3c: Should we require that all new housing developments include a percentage of new homes that are designed to be accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible?**

Require a proportion of dwellings to meet the category standard as set out in Building Regulations Part M.

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

Equality legislation requires public bodies to promote equality as well as eliminating discrimination in the development of their policies. We should seek to apply such requirements in relation to local needs if these can be evidenced.

**Question 3d: How should we provide for custom self-build plots? Should we:**

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

**Question 3e: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

## **5. A prosperous economy**

**Question 4a: Should we ensure the growth of our local economy through an increase in the proportion of higher value jobs (with limited increase of jobs overall) or through a significant increase in the number of jobs?**

Align with the Heart of the South West growth ambitions (deliver a shift towards a significant increase in overall job numbers including higher value jobs)

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

Although we're moving towards more HE provision, which is good, we need to, perhaps working more closely with the B&T College, seek to provide opportunities across a spectrum that includes skilled and semi-skilled occupations for local young people and second career seekers.

**Question 4b: Should we keep all of our existing employment sites and allocations in employment use or should we allow the loss of some to other uses? How should we decide which ones to lose?**

Develop flexible policy allowing for the loss of any existing/ proposed employment site subject to specific criteria

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

The future profile of the employment market may be difficult to predict accurately, given the not-fully-known impacts of leaving the EU, Technological developments, migration restrictions, climate change etc.

**Question 4c: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

A councillor remarked at a recent meeting that where possible we should be looking to encourage employment that aligns with our district's natural resources, which seems sensible.

It would be good to see a productive partnership established with the colleges and to encourage real apprenticeships in any way we can.

## **6. Infrastructure**

**Question 5a: On what infrastructure should we prioritise developer contributions? (Please rank in order of priority)**

**IO - 5a - ranking - Affordable housing:**

2

**IO - 5a - ranking - Designing for the Climate Change Emergency:**

1

**IO - 5a - ranking - Accessible, Adaptable and Wheelchair Accessible homes:**

4

**IO - 5a - ranking - Strategic Infrastructure (schools, transport, community facilities):**

3

**Question 5b: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

Almost impossible to prioritise! I would hope that designing for climate change would be incorporated into strategic infrastructure, and accessibility into an appropriate proportion of affordable homes.

I would reiterate the importance of consciously designing in community safety features along with the ecological and environmental etc.

## **7. Connecting people**

**Question 6a: How can we encourage people not to use their car when travelling into our towns for shopping and work? How can we provide more opportunities for using public transport in rural areas?**

**Please provide comments (200 words max):**

Is there no way that Somerset councils combined could take advantage of the franchising powers provided for in the (fairly) recent Buses Bill?

I would dearly like to see a quest for an alternative, green provider to replace First Bus, which puts service to the public last, and for many people, rules public transport out as a viable option.

Also, I believe that in some rural authorities community transport is a commissioned service that can be used by anyone, not restricted to particular user groups. This could be an integral part of an overall public transport service.

We should also look to provide (vandal-proof) bus shelters, develop an Oyster card system and make transport information considerably more accessible to those who are not online.

**Question 6b: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

**8. The natural and historic environment**

**Question 7a: Are there any specific measures that you would like to see new developments deliver to improve biodiversity locally?**

**Please provide comments (200 words max):**

Planning Committee has been presented with an application to develop on a site which is included in the West Somerset Local Plan, but which is proving controversial in respect of its status in terms of its stability and historic value. (Planning ref 3/37/18/015). The outcome will be decided shortly but my concern is whether sites such as this will be protected within the scope of the new Local Development Plan.

**Question 7b: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

Perhaps SWT as a Council could consider ways to facilitate our AONBs becoming more accessible to visiting tourists via special (electric) bus services, perhaps running from the Park and Ride sites?

I'm very keen to see greater emphasis/ reference in public spaces to Taunton and Wellington's history for example in terms of its various former industries and its role in the Monmouth rebellion. Watchet has statues celebrating its fishing industry, while ex-Taunton Deane has nothing of the kind in our county town!

**9. Thriving coastal and rural communities**

**Question 8a: How should we manage development in rural areas? Should we:**

Have a policy which is a hybrid of (i) and (ii) where there are settlement boundaries only in areas of greater development pressure i.e. parts of the District that are more accessible - closer to the M5, Taunton and Wellington areas.

**Question 8b: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

In some areas that suffer from house price inflation and housing problems for local people, I believe authorities have found ways of restricting properties being bought for use as second and holiday homes. If we cannot prevent this under current legislation we should lobby for change to protect communities from this practice.

Under the proposed closer relationship with SCC I would like to see serious exploration, with PCs and existing community transport providers, of the potential for commissioning joined-up, reliable, accessible and sustainable transport services to enable rural and coastal populations to commute into centres of employment. The Transport Plan could incorporate community transport services to serve rural populations as a whole, not just specific groups.

**10. Wellbeing of our residents**

**Question 9a: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

I believe our social housing for older people should, as with some private sector provision, be preserved as development for people above a certain age, and where appropriate, adults with physical and/or learning disabilities. We have examples in North Taunton of latterly-introduced 'mixing' where younger people with conflicting lifestyles are allocated tenancies, and where this is causing persistent distress.

Such settlements should ideally provide communal space, such as that in Wellesley Street, but additionally equipped also with computer access for those that are unable to afford, and manage the security and other maintenance issues involved. This could attract volunteers to facilitate residents in using IT for communicating with the council as well as friends and relatives.

We should be seeking to provide shelters for bus users, as well as bus stops. I see many older Ward residents and young parents waiting in all weathers for buses.

I hope we can introduce the idea of small-scale sensory garden areas into developments as part of building positive inclusion into our future garden town and general settlement design.

**11. Policies for our places: Taunton**

**Question 10a: How do you think we could introduce more housing into Taunton Town centre?**

Encouraging car-free developments (which could include allocating specific sites for car-free developments).

**Please provide reasons for your answers (200 words max):**

Car free areas are much more restful, conducive to a more enjoyable experience and capable of being populated with attractive features - public arts, small social events etc.

This would only work if the bus services were improved and residents parking were introduced across the Inner town areas in streets where houses do not have off-street parking facilities. The erection of flats without allocated parking provision has demonstrated the impact on surrounding neighbourhoods!

If this cannot be achieved I would favour the first option.

**Question 10b: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

Super. I hope we can achieve many of these things within the next ten years!

**12. Policies for our places: Wellington**

**Question 11a: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

No comments, except to agree and note that Wellington is fortunate to have very active Town Council to help shape developments - unlike Taunton!

**13. Policies for our places: the Coastal Strip**

**Question 12a: Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?**

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

There is an urgent need to improve the interchange experience of visitors arriving by train to catch the 28 bus to Minehead. There is no safe crossing from the station to the bus stop in Station Road, and the bus stop is sited in the narrow pedestrian area, with just one small bus shelter, leaving travellers and their luggage exposed to the weather and jostled by pedestrians. Not a great welcome!

From a planning perspective, the cumulative effect of potential traffic generated from existing planning permissions in the Williton/Watchet area, and the lack of appropriate bus and cycle access in narrow lanes are issues that need serious, strategic attention.