

## Response ID ANON-8CC9-KDQY-G

Submitted to **Local Plan Issues and Options**

Submitted on **2020-02-17 15:57:06**

### Your details

**What is your name?**

**Forename:**

Fiona

**Surname:**

Miller

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

Individual

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

Resident of Somerset West and Taunton

**Name of organisation:**

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

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

██████████

██████████

██████████

**What is your email address?**

██████████

████████████████████

### 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):**

### 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?**

A combination of both of the above

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

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

Renewable energy schemes are going to be important but need to be integrated into all new developments on a micro level so that the area is not blighted by huge facilities. The policy must ensure that landowners do not see this as a way of making easy money to the detriment of the environment and wildlife. Future proofing of developments is vital. We should start to insist that all developments from now on have the aspiration of zero carbon. The more time that is given the more will be taken by developers so the requirement sooner rather than later with a pragmatic approach if there is not 100% compliance immediately.

### 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)?**

Not Answered

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

I agree that Watchet and Williton should be considered together so that there is a joined up approach to services, transport etc. but I do not agree that this means they should be in a higher tier to Bishops Lydeard and Wiveliscombe. Apart from the combined size, there seems no logical reason for a higher tier when other constraints/considerations remain the same.

**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 Wellington; and reduce in Minehead and Rural Centres

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

There is need to ensure that people working in rural and coastal communities have affordable and attractive housing but there is no need to increase the number of large 'executive-style' homes when these are most likely to be bought by retired people or those working outside the area (e.g. working in Bristol/London and using as weekend home). New housing development should be prioritised according to the needs of the working population (including the ability to attract high quality medical and education professionals) in those areas where there are the best employment opportunities with good transport and communication options. The maps show the rail line from Minehead but it is not a practical option for people travelling to work so should be depicted in a different way from the mainline trains until such time as the West Somerset Railway does connect full time to Taunton and runs some faster trains.

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

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

No comments

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

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

Agree.

#### **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):**

It is rather artificial putting a figure on it to take us through to 2040. It may be that less than the Government's figure is required and it should be determined on the basis of economic strategies and infrastructure developments. We should not have a higher figure at this stage that could then result in more housing than is needed. The right mix is of more importance than the number.

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

Apply rural exceptions criteria for small scale residential sites where pitches which would be affordable in perpetuity; and/or, Allocate sites specifically for pitches.

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

I think that a combination could be required. I don't know the scale of what is being proposed, the number of pitches needed, what a rural exception is or the implications for a rural location of a pitch. Environmental considerations need to be taken into account at all times.

**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):**

Whether every development needs all the measures, I don't know. Ability to adapt is probably more important than full wheelchair accessibility at the outset but making properties accessible does help a wide range of residents, not just those with disabilities e.g. parents with pushchairs/young children where ramps could be easier than steps, wider doors are easier for moving furniture etc.

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

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

Have no strong opinion. Community led is good but whether the housing market would deliver the plots? Important to look at the self-build register and encourage people to register interest.

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

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

Sensible.

## 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?**

Not Answered

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

This is not an either/or question. There needs to be job creation and these should be high tech, high skill, high value, well paid jobs. There continues to be the need for the lower skilled and lower paid jobs within, for instance, the retail, hospitality and care industries so the ambition should be for growth but in the high value sector. It is important that there is ambition that existing residents are able to build their skills and that our children are well educated and there are skilled and well paid jobs available for them in the area.

**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):**

Growth in jobs is most likely to come from sole traders, micro or small businesses and these will all need to be able to work flexibly therefore there needs to be a flexible approach to employment sites within given criteria. That doesn't mean having small industrial units in a residential area but does give the flexibility for an innovative new business to develop in an entrepreneur's house or in conjunction with an existing enterprise such as shared office space.

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

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

Agree.

## 6. Infrastructure

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

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

3

**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):**

2

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

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

no comments

## 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):**

The very rural nature of West Somerset means that people often have no option but to use their cars. It is important that people who work in towns like Taunton and Bridgwater are encouraged by good quality housing near their place of work so that they are not obliged to travel distances. Any new housing outside the main centres needs to be managed properly with respect to any work opportunities i.e. don't build a housing estate where there is no work. To provide more opportunities for using public transport means first providing the public transport. More effort could be put into the rail link direct to Taunton from Minehead. Car share schemes could be encouraged.

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

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

Agree particularly with the need for good digital and mobile connections. Cost for the users is a factor since many in West Somerset cannot afford broadband in their homes.

**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):**

No development to involve the felling of trees or interfering with natural habitats for declining species including birds, insects and mammals. All developments to include green spaces (could include allotments or communal gardens) and trees. Consideration to be given to provide habitats within the fabric of new builds e.g. swift nest 'bricks'. Urban trees to be managed properly to provide connections for wildlife and carbon capture.

More consideration needs to be given to the general landscape with sensitivity to the environs and context e.g. North Hill in Minehead where further development would undermine the whole setting of Minehead and its natural and historic character to the detriment of the town and its visitors.

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

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

No cutting down of trees, woodland or hedgerow. A developer's promise of planting trees cannot be a replacement for removing existing habitats that have taken decades to grow.

**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):**

As one size does not fit all within the overall rural nature of the area, a flexible approach is beneficial. However there needs to be well defined criteria to ensure that applications within a settlement limit are not automatically agreed nor are those near villages without a settlement limit. For villages where a settlement limit is considered to be a useful guide and protect open countryside and good agricultural land, the local community should be consulted to see where the boundaries should lie. It would be useful to define areas that are out of bounds for development to protect wildlife, best agricultural land, character of villages/countryside, or protect against flood risk or erosion.

**10. Wellbeing of our residents**

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

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

Agree.

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

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

Not Answered

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

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

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

**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):**

Where new employment sites are being encouraged, these should be focused on generating high value, high skill and higher paid jobs not more of the low paid seasonal work that prevails. There is real potential for the area to be a hub for digital entrepreneurs who are able to work from home or small community/shared work spaces. Policy approaches need to be joined up with education and skills policies as well as tourism.