

# Response ID ANON-8CC9-KDPK-1

Submitted to **Local Plan Issues and Options**

Submitted on **2020-01-29 10:57:16**

## Your details

**What is your name?**

**Forename:**

Grahame

**Surname:**

Woodward

**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?**

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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):**

Affordable new homes is a must - speaking as a parent who has assisted a son onto the housing ladder.

Ensuring new development is supported by essential infrastructure is also a must - and I here speak as a Wellington resident sorely disappointed by the failure to do so with the new Longforth Farm housing site (the failure to secure a railway bridge for a northern link road to ease traffic pressures in the town centre); and the abject failure to prevent development of the Bagley Road fields where houses will now be built with no infrastructure support.

Objective 7 is vital to the sense of community well-being felt by all.

Objective 2 - remember, please, that Taunton has had the lion's share of expenditure - time to share further afield, especially Wellington, which has been neglected.

## 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?**

Slightly more time (e.g. by 2030)

**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):**

We must do what we can, including supporting international efforts to stop deforestation, eg Bolsonaro's bonkers forest clearing policies in Brazil. However, such is our profit first industrial development that all efforts to reduce carbon emissions amounts to 'running hard to stand still'.

### 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):**

...but placed equally with Wiveliscombe and Bishops Lydeard; to do otherwise might be to down-grade investment in these two important small towns.

**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?**

Leave housing distribution the same

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

I note massive housing distribution in Taunton and the areas to the east of Taunton, (Bathpool, Creech etc). The Deane Vale containing Taunton and these areas is perhaps a better choice than, say, Wellington, a town bounded by a river to the north, and the M5 motorway to the south, or Wiveliscombe/Bishops Lydeard, both in areas of significant natural beauty.

Wellington, however, has potential for housing to the south of Chelston, and to the east of the M5 link road from the A38. Not, though, to the west of said link road, which would destroy the visual amenity towards the Monument and Blackdown Hills to the south of the town, as well as drowning the town in new housing without the roads to cope.

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

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

A rail station in Wellington? An idea that passed with the Beeching Cuts! Where to site the station? How to deal with the increase in traffic to that station? (Other than possibly on the waste ground at the Poole/Nynehead road junction, with increased road access from the new Cades Farm roundabout). A silly idea at first sight in my view, with Tiverton Parkway a comfortable short drive west, and Taunton Station to the east.

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

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

Great approaches...but we have a massive addiction to using our cars because public transport is expensive; poorly subsidised; not open to competition, with First dropping prices and forcing out competitors as they emerge, then returning prices to where they were); and not flexible or imaginative enough, eg what about a fleet of minibuses covering areas neglected by bus routes?

### 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):**

Let's keep it within reasonable bounds...but will doing so ensure sufficient numbers of affordable housing? Shouldn't the authority be actively pushing for the building of new council house at this time and for the needs of affordable housing?

**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):**

A tricky issue, this one, for me given my thirty years in policing. I have views on certain, not all, of these folk that it is best that I keep to myself. What I would add is that under no circumstances should any sites be allowed to grow the kind of impenetrable leylandii hedge barrier that you see at the site near Thornfalcon. Such barriers perpetuate a 'them and the rest of us' outlook which needs to be avoided for the sake of social harmony between all our social groups in this area of the country.

**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?**

Do not require specific measures for adaptable, accessible and wheelchair homes.

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

This is a bit like the provision of spaces for the disabled in car parks. How many is fair? How many disabled people are THAT disabled that they should be using such spaces? Another tricky question. Where possible, access to new housing should be such that disabled access can easily be installed. It is for the government to make available the necessary subsidies for making any necessary alterations to new housing.

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

Include a positive encouragement policy, including for community-led projects, and leave the housing market to deliver plots as and when demand arises; and/or

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

How many individuals would actually seek to join a 'build your own' venture? Perhaps it is better to press national housebuilders to build houses with as few 'snaggles' because of cost-cutting shoddy workmanship as possible. Excellent build should be the norm.

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

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

Appears a pretty comprehensive list of considerations...

## 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):**

With higher educational achievements being sought by government, there needs to be a plentiful mix of job opportunities out there for all school leavers.

**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?**

Allow the loss of specific sites for alternative uses – with a high flexibility buffer (i.e. fewer sites lost); or

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

This approach might free up old employment sites for brownfield housing, promoting the development of modern employment sites in better locations.

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

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

Ambitious-looking policy approaches. Good luck!

## 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:**

2

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

4

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

1

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

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

"Our policies should be clear so that developers do not pay too much for a piece of land then calculate that they cannot afford to meet our policy requirements..." which is reasonable on the surface of it until one remembers the £70million+ paid as a bonus to the Chief Exec of Persimmon a while ago. The question needs to be asked "How much profit is a developer making across all of their developments?" I believe, perhaps wrongly, that big developers should be expected to see smaller profit margins on certain developments where the inclusion of large infrastructure work reduces their profit considerably, losses which are offset against more profitable ventures elsewhere. For example, the Longforth Farm development in Wellington was given the go-ahead after an agreement to build a bridge over the railway line was made, only for that agreement to be reneged on because the developers could not afford it. Yes they could have had they dipped into profits from other developments!

## 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):**

"How can we encourage people not to use their car when travelling into our towns for shopping and work?" I don't think you can! We, as a country, need to be heavily investing in alternative propulsion means, eg electric, hydrogen etc, with which to power cars and other vehicles. Carbon fuels, ie petrol and diesel, must be phased out as near to completely as is possible.

"How can we encourage people not to use their car when travelling into our towns for shopping and work?" The national bus service providers must have their fares 'red circled' so that when a competitor sets up business they cannot drop their fares to elbow out the new competition. Secondly, rural areas need to be serviced by minibus transport services - smaller vehicles, regular services, subsidised through council taxpayers, plus from government. (Big ask, but...)

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

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

Mobile network infrastructure upgrading is grand - but we, as a species, need to get out and talk to people, not sit behind a screen at home! One way to achieve this is to look across the sea to The Netherlands and to copy whatever it is they do to ensure cycling is given 'paramount importance' status. Our cycle ways schemes are way behind, lamentably so. For example, the footpath between Wellington and Taunton needs to be widened to allow a cycle way + pedestrian use which is separated from the A38. You try cycling to/from Taunton in the autumn/winter months on the A38 - it is NOT safe!

## 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):**

At every opportunity we should be looking to create new green spaces, particularly where these can provide a green corridor between new developments. For example, I have suggested to Wellington Town Council that they should buy the farmland which extends from near the cemetery along Hilly Head to Foxdown Hill and create a parkland space linking to footpaths to the south of the town. Wherever new build developments are being proposed, planners need to look at including green spaces for enhancing the well-being of residents.

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

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

Protecting the biodiversity of this region is necessary and right. More parking facilities for cars, the disabled, and cyclists alike are needed. Pop along to Haldon Forest outside of Exeter to see what they have achieved in giving people access to the 'great outdoors'. And do not be afraid to install parking meters, as they have done at the Wellington Monument, to help cover costs, just do not ask silly prices. A 'round pound' will do for a couple or three hours. A bit more for longer.

## 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):**

Perhaps a difficult issue...in short, there needs to be some flexibility in this area to take into account changes in local need, hence my selection of the hybrid option above. Over-arching this is the need to be able to fight off aggressive challenges by developers who, by their very nature, are more interested in turning a profit than having any real interest in the community to be affected by their plans, eg the shocking inability of planners to stop the proposed new housing development off Bagley Road, Wellington, from being bulldozed through against everyone's wishes.

## 10. Wellbeing of our residents

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

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

I think the well-being of residents is so vitally important, especially as the real effects of global warming begin to emerge in ever more waves of extreme weather events. The future is looking decidedly bleak for mankind given current projections as the planet heats up. Spaces where people can meet and share thoughts, concerns etc, are going to be vital.

## 11. Policies for our places: Taunton

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

Positively encouraging taller buildings (subject to impact upon the skyline); or

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

...but whatever you decide to do for Taunton, please do not do it to exclusion of Wellington, and smaller communities in the area which, for years now, have suffered from a disgraceful lack of investment due to the Taunton-centric spending to upgrade the county town, (something which should have been engaged in forty years ago!)

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

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

A lot of good, interesting stuff above...but, I say again, NOT at the exclusion of investing in other towns and villages, especially poor old Wellington which has been slowly ossifying for what of investment in it.

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

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

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

"Overall, the town centre is healthy and performing its role in the retail hierarchy and has a range of independent shops and restaurants..." Are you kidding me? This statement is just not true! I came to Wellington in 1979. At that time it had a far, far greater range of independent shops and was a healthy vibrant town centre. Compare this with today - a town full of charity and coffee shops, but with fewer retail outlets by far. As indicated in above answers, Wellington has been NEGLECTED by Taunton for years now, allowing it to be starved of investment, and starved of infrastructure advances which would allow it to prosper. Currently, 76% of my council tax goes out of town to SCC, West Somerset & Taunton, police fire etc. My money being spent on Taunton-centric improvements. (I see two new bridges to cross the brook from Goodlands Gardens to the bus station and the museum. Nice. Meanwhile, here in Wellington, we have two footpaths, one borderline dangerous, which need urgent work which has been needed for years now!) Time for you lovely people to take a proper look at Wellington - come on down and see for yourselves the palpable decline!

## **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):**

Sounds good to me. Thank you.