

Response ID ANON-8CC9-KDQ7-E

Submitted to **Local Plan Issues and Options**

Submitted on **2020-02-28 18:00:45**

Your details

What is your name?

Forename:

Joy

Surname:

Roscoe

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):

I do agree but they are broad and fairly obvious so I hope there will be more detail available. One point : the icon depicting the over 65s is insulting. Many of us are active and able-bodied, and have the time to work voluntarily in our communities. We often fulfill tasks that SWAT no longer provides. Don't alienate us.

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):

Achieving carbon neutrality will mean that householders incur costs. To what extent will SWAT be providing not just advice but financial support?

Any renewable energy schemes should include funds to allow proper maintenance.

Legislation should be passed to ensure that developers do meet their obligations. There are banks of land which developers can currently hold on to, often controlling land for building in a way that means houses built are beyond the means of local people. This has to stop.

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)?

No - Watchet and Williton should be seen as separate settlements

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

They have very different demographics, cultures and environments. Geographically they are different and even if all the land between the two settlements were to be built on (which would be a disaster for both) they won't meld together as one place. The proximity is not that close and if you try to force this and dilute both places, you will destroy what you claim to seek to preserve.

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):

They have the road and rail infrastructure to cope with increased housing. Minehead and rural centres don't and it would be almost impossible to create given the topography and geography of the area.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

v) The benefit of Hinkley Point C is not as great as you think and wish; once built it won't need many people to run and maintain it. The roads are not fit to take increased traffic. This reads as if you want to turn Watchet and Williton into dormitory towns for Taunton and Bridgwater. Or as one of your colleagues said to me at the recent Public Consultation : "we've got to put the old people somewhere". If that is what you believe to be the case, why are you making this grandiose statement about being close to major employment areas? That doesn't stack up.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

There you go again, talking about reducing the need to travel when previously you've been talking about people travelling to Taunton and Bridgwater for work. Yes, far better to utilise. e.g. the old paper mill site in Watchet than to break into greenfield sites. Yes increase the density in towns such as Taunton, which will bring in more trade and support the already-failing town centre and lack of facilities. Several small sites won't bring in the necessary infrastructure support such as schools and surgeries because it's harder to get a reasonable number of affordable homes, and there is less of an obligation on developers to contribute to local infrastructure.

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):

Over how many years? What is the cumulative total over the life of this structure plan?

How much of the existing housing stock will be renovated and counted in this number?

What proportion will be genuinely affordable? Where I live in Watchet, one of the so-called affordable houses has been for sale for about nine months. local people can't afford it and the process is so complicated that the vendors have lost at least one buyer who simply gave up. It sounds good - Affordable Homes - but to whom? and who sets the cost?

Housing should be driven by infrastructure provision, not the other way round.

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):

Speaking from direct experience of where I used to live, local farmers and householders will need much reassurance that there will not be an increase in crime. Local schools will need to have teachers trained in the specific needs of traveller children. Local police will need to be consulted with regard to trafficking and drug dealing. I'm not writing this from prejudice, but from real concern that SWAT understands just what it takes to allow all communities to live safely and happily side by side. Prejudice against travellers can be vicious and damaging; fear in adjacent communities equally so.

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):

If this is to be done, then as much input should be given to support doctors and social services to encourage residents to stay fit and take responsibility for their health and well-being. Just providing access isn't enough, its a rather fatalistic approach.

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

Identify and allocate specific sites for self-build plots in locations related to where people want to live according to our self-build register; and/or

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

I don't know much about self-build but the response I've ticked appears logical.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

3e/4 - would be interested to see more detail.

3e/5 - there aren't that many rural workers now. first bullet point seems logical.

3e/6 - yes definitely

3e/7 - appears logical, would like to see more policy detail.

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):

The main need is for jobs for young people which will pay them enough to remain in West Somerset. At the moment the population is skewed to older people which is not conducive to a balanced society.

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):

Until local infrastructure e.g. public transport; 16-19 training provision is improved, employment sites will have to be tailored to realistic targets for each area. Watchet and Williton are radically different areas from Taunton, and have specific needs that will have to be met if the local economy is to thrive.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Those are all admirable aims but they will come to nothing if the associated infrastructure and support services are not created at the same time.

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:

3

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):

Every effort must be made to stop developers holding on to land banks and pushing up prices. Planning policy needs a complete overhaul as does legislation around developer responsibilities. More needs to be done to provide associated infrastructure for all and every development, concurrent with housing

construction. Otherwise there is a risk of new developments ending up like Cumbernauld, or a development near Burford, Oxfordshire, where the houses were beyond walking distance to the town, there was no public transport and it became a miserable place to live, almost a ghost town.

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):

Make public transport available. The 28 bus service between Minehead and Taunton is excellent but it stops running too early which prevents local people from doing evening shifts in hotels and restaurants and Butlins.

Don't allow developments such as Cleeve Hill near Watchet - the traffic will make West Street dangerous for pedestrians and discourage people. We need more joined-up thinking, more analysis into the unintended consequences of patchy developments. With the average age of the population in and around Watchet and Williton, unless there is work and housing for younger people, you won't have cyclists to make the cycle paths worth creating.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Yes OK its important to have full-fibre digital connections to enable people to work and study from home, but more thought needs to be given as to the location and mix of any new housing developments. Just adding up the numbers, looking at greenfield sites and saying "we'll put the houses there" isn't going to work. Look at the demographics, infrastructure and use some imagination.

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):

Plant trees but invest in their maintenance while they're establishing. Create flood alleviation schemes up-river and up-stream for all the watercourses in the area - those will bring in biodiversity which can ultimately be self-renewing. Biodiversity schemes don't have to be complicated. Consult deeply with Somerset Wildlife Trust - they seem to know what they're doing.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

All good objectives - they will need imagination, careful thought and investment in staff who understand the aims. Be careful about rewilding - a current buzzword and great when it works but there have been some failures. For an account of pitfalls and ultimate success, read Wilding by Isabella Tree.

7b/8 is important if flooding is to be managed. I moved here from Oxford and the recent improvements were simple and logical and have been very effective. They require continuing maintenance and that's where so many schemes fail - it's a vital investment and almost pointless in spending huge sums of money if maintenance isn't done.

9. Thriving coastal and rural communities

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

Not have settlement boundaries but instead have a criteria based policy to determine development proposals against; or

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

The criteria need to be agreed with public consultation and input, not just by the Council. They need to be adhered to, not open to exceptions which could be used to drive through developments which the community might be against. They need to incorporate strict planning criteria and ideally be used to ensure developers holding on to land banks are not holding local communities to ransom. I am deeply suspicious of criteria as they can be manipulated.

10. Wellbeing of our residents

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

How wonderfully idealistic. If all this can be achieved we will indeed have a healthy attractive and sustainable environment. How is all this to be financed? Presumably by letting developers build houses without infrastructure, and "affordable" houses which simply are not in Watchet and Williton. What guarantees can you give? Policies do not equate to action. We feel that you just want to fulfill a directive from central government to build a certain number of houses, and that little or not attention is being paid to local communities as to whether this is what we want. Refer to the Cleeve Hill development - there is tremendous local opposition but those objections were not even put before the Council. Apart from anything else, that was undemocratic and downright rude.

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):

Allow change of use for empty shops to residential which will bring life back into the town centre. If you encourage car-free developments there has to be corresponding investment into public transport. Create incentives to encourage businesses other than coffee shops to open in the town. We all know there is more online shopping but very recent research shows that consumers are getting fed up with algorithms trying to control how they shop and purchase and are going back to wanting to look at merchandise.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Please don't fall into the trap of following what was done in Oxford. The new shopping centre is a draughty, bleak place - the only good thing about it is the cinema and restaurants on the top. It has sucked the life out of the other streets, and apart from the old buildings, Oxford is now a dirty, ghettoised, crime-ridden, provincial university town which I was very relieved to leave. Taunton has great charm, I love visiting it despite its current shortcomings. It has great potential for retail and the arts which should be supported and funded.

12. Policies for our places: Wellington

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Can't comment as I don't know Wellington. Friends who live there or close by seem to enjoy it.

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):

If you want to achieve all this, finance and manage the clearing of the mud from the Marina in Watchet. This is a massive drawback to the income of the town and tourists are simply amazed that it has been allowed to become so ugly. It's also increasing the danger of flooding - the depth of the mud reduces the volume of water held at high tides and increasingly it is coming up the slipway and into the car park. Insurance companies with drones can see what is happening and they may start to refuse to provide flood insurance which will have a deleterious effect on the housing market. Not everyone here is enamoured of the Onion Collective and its plans - I have no feelings either way - but they should not be regarded as the sole spokespeople for local opinion. Yes we need more opportunities for young people so invest in education and training and affordable rental housing stock. Don't think you can turn Watchet and Minehead simply as the places where "we have to put the old people somewhere" to quote your colleague at the recent public meeting. How will all your wonderful plans be financed and the supporting infrastructure built, staffed and maintained?