

Response ID ANON-8CC9-KD4G-1

Submitted to **Local Plan Issues and Options**

Submitted on **2020-02-04 10:53:32**

Your details

What is your name?

Forename:

Penelope

Surname:

White

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?

Disagree

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

This is a rural area with its economy based on farming and tourism. Tourists come here for the beautiful scenery, coastline, historic buildings and villages and this provides an income for all those in the hospitality/entertainment sector ie B&Bs, hotels, pubs and restaurants. The access to Williton, Watchet, and Minehead is limited, the roads being both winding and narrow. There are frequent accidents on the A358 and delays due to heavy vehicles being unable to pass each other on the A39. More houses will mean more traffic and there is NO feasible plan for infrastructure changes to accommodate this. The A39 in particular could only be improved by demolishing historic homes and buildings, which would have a negative effect on the area. After Brexit we should prioritise local food production and reforestation to store carbon naturally. Rather than filling fields with solar panels we should grow food and trees which would enhance the area (encouraging tourism, the life blood of this area) and provide habitat for our dwindling wildlife.

2. Carbon neutrality

Question 1a: Should we aim to require that all new development 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?

Not Answered

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

I have not answered Question 1b because it is too general. Allocating sites for specific renewable energy development would cover solar farms, wind farms and

the I ke. We already have Hinkley point in this area and the last proposal for a solar farm was on land currently used to grow food and of vital importance to the sustainability of the livelihoods of the farms involved. Many, many homes in this area have solar panels and a local plan to encourage existing homeowners to add them to their properties and insistence that all new properties have this feature 'built in' would enable 'green' energy to be produced without extending and thus diminishing the 'human footprint' in this area.

3. Sustainable locations

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

Not Answered

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):

Watchet is a historic harbour town and needs to be looked at as a separate entity. What is already there needs investment to make the place more attractive. With its narrow high street and tiny pavements it is hardly suitable for a big increase in population and with the inevitability of rising sea levels, I would question the wisdom of building new homes so near to the coast. The road from Watchet to Blue Anchor is already subsiding and even if the road is moved inland as part of a proposed new housing development more intense and more frequent storms could soon see more of the land falling into the sea new developments threatened within twenty or thirty years.

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):

Taunton high street seems to be dying as more and more shops and businesses are closing down. Building new houses within easy access of the town would bring more trade to the town centre and encourage new shops and businesses to open. This would provide employment WITHOUT the need of a thirty to forty five minute commute from outlying villages and towns. There are no proper train services (the heritage railway is not a commuter train nor does it run all year) which means all commutes would have to be by car or bus leading to the production of more pollution. In addition the cost of a commute can be prohibitive to those who are on medium to low salaries. The redevelopment of the old cattle market is a great example of an area where new housing can enhance an area and provide housing with easy access to jobs and shops. Concentrating on areas like this, ie infilling existing space within the town, is far more productive than building homes far away from job opportunities.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Not every area needs to be residential. Some areas need to remain rural, both for food production and the environment. Watchet and Williton are not CLOSE to either Taunton or Bridgwater if you are on a low income. To arrive in Taunton centre for a day's work one would have to allow at least fifty minutes travel time by public transport. The journey by car can be slightly shorter but additional individual car journeys only add to pollution and the degradation of air quality. The roads to both Taunton and Bridgwater from Watchet and Williton are winding and slow and often made slower still by the many farm vehicles which must share the road. Hardly ideal routes for commuters into either Taunton or Bridgwater.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

The primary intention of any development plan must be to make use of existing brown field sites and the recycling of previously developed land. Development must also be targeted in areas that are within or immediately adjacent to areas where job opportunities can be found. Where there are no rail links, all commuting journeys increase pollution and the roads in this part of Somerset are neither designed for, nor able to accommodate, real increases in traffic.

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):

The government has presumably undertaken a study to determine that this is the appropriate number of dwellings.

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):

Gypsy/Traveller/Showpeople are by their very nature migratory and so require safe places to pitch their caravans as they move across the country. Having designated sites means they will not come into conflict with land owners and farmers.

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):

Those who have special needs are as entitled to housing as anyone else and should have homes which meet their needs.

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):

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Special attention should be given to the provision of outdoor space and landscaping so that new developments still have easy access to green spaces. Trees should be planted where ever possible and these should be made a priority and a condition of planning permission being granted for any housing development.

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?

Develop bespoke and realistic growth ambitions linked to the Council's Economic Development (Prosperity) Strategy (i.e. increase the proportion of higher value jobs within existing overall job numbers and not pursue a significant increase in job numbers overall); or

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

An increase in the proportion of higher value jobs is good for everyone. I

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):

There may be times when old retail sites might be more suitable for housing. Sometimes the character of an area changes and to try and hang on to shops when there is no one who wants to take them on may be counter productive.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

6. Infrastructure

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

IO - 5a - ranking - Affordable housing:

4

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

1

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

2

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):

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):

Provide more buses! Provide very early and very late buses so that people can start work early and get home after an evening out without having to take a taxi.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

A reliable and fast internet service is required for everyone.

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):

Grow more trees. Protect our status as an area of outstanding natural beauty. Take into consideration not just the historic buildings/monuments in the area but also their settings. A historic site in the middle of a housing estate is not suitable even if the site itself is preserved.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Bio diversity is massively important. As far as possible we should not encroach on our natural habitats or destroy existing areas of historic interest or natural beauty. Some areas need to be preserved exactly as they are.

9. Thriving coastal and rural communities

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

Have settlement boundaries across the District; or

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Do not add to housing stock in coastal areas where coastal erosion is already happening. Do not build on productive farm land, rather encourage more people into this way of life to produce locally grown food to mitigate our reliance on imported produce.

Where rural land is non productive give priority in rural/scenic areas to the planting of trees which enhance rather than detract from the beauty of the area and thus encourage tourism which is the life blood of rural Somerset.

10. Wellbeing of our residents

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

There is a desperate need for more doctors in this area. It takes weeks to get an appointment other than those appointments which are allocated 'on the day' which are supposed to be for urgent cases only. More houses in this area and thus more residents will only increase the strain on an already inadequate and failing service.

11. Policies for our places: Taunton

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

Requiring a housing mix skewed towards dwellings with fewer bedrooms; or

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

Smaller families are becoming the norm these days and single people need housing too.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Creating a more compact town centre would seem to be a good idea and providing walking or cycle paths into this centre would be both good for the environment and good for the health of the increasingly sedentary population. Adding to and protecting 'green wedges' is also very desirable.

12. Policies for our places: Wellington

Question 11a: 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):

The most important thing is to preserve the beauty of the coastal strip as much as possible. Some areas are right for industrial development and some should be preserved for the enjoyment of the population as a whole. While there are still empty spaces/buildings in existing urban settings these should be the primary choices for development.