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To: [Strategy](#)
Subject: West Hatch Parish Council
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Sir

I attach the West Hatch Parish Council's response to the Local Plan January 2020 Issues and Options consultation.

Kind regards

Keith Read

Chairman

West Hatch Parish Council

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1. Executive Summary

- This response is written by West Hatch Parish Council to address the issues most pertinent to the local parish.
- West Hatch is a rural parish, spread out with low population.
- An increase in housing within or adjacent to the parish would have a detrimental impact on the culture and diversity of the parish resulting in increased pressure and congestion on local lanes and negative environmental impact.
- With the majority of job opportunities outside of the village (other than home working) there would seem to be little benefit in creating housing developments in or adjacent to the parish.
- The improvement of links into Taunton and potentially Wellington whilst being positive (e.g. increased bus services or dedicated cycle lanes) would we believe struggle to be economically viable.
- Support to get to the edge of Taunton would be beneficial (especially with respect of the Park and Ride at the M5). This should be run at zero net cost to the residents and should operate 7 days a week.
- From an environmental basis, with the older stock of housing, support with advice (how to increase sustainability/improve carbon reducing opportunities) and potential wider grant support would help the parish fully participate in mitigating the environmental impact.

2. Recommendation

- With Taunton having already gained Garden Town status the focus of new housing and development should be around the growth areas already identified, completing the development of brown field sites and change of use of the retail space that is no longer required.
- Taunton, within the boundary created by the M5, should be viewed as the target growth area with the current village boundaries being respected except by exception where there are clear commitments to respect environmental and local social requirements.
- Additional housing development in addition to the existing plan should be driven by economic demand from new employers – not building to encourage inward migration.
- We do not believe the strategy of housing development to drive economic growth is sustainable.
- The centre of Taunton should continue to benefit from the integration of public transport and linking of rail and bus so that residents and visitors can easily get into the town centre.
- Whilst the attraction of high level jobs is supported, the focus on encouraging new businesses should be targeted at both large organisations and smaller entrepreneur/start up opportunities. With the focus on environmental and green issues the focus on these industries/businesses is important.
- Comprehensive strategy to market the benefits of SW@T to new businesses and inward investment from the South West, UK and wider geographies.
- As stated in the report we have a number of deprived areas that should be a primary of focus for the development of affordable housing and general investment to create opportunities.
- With Taunton well placed to provide links to larger conurbations (large towns on way to London, Exeter and Bristol) a key focus should be on aiding the movement of employees to job areas (commuting – local buses/park and ride/walking and cycle ways) combined with the increased investment in Taunton centre to ensure families and individuals can appreciate local amenities after work.
- For West Hatch Parish we are keen to understand how we can aid the wider community through supporting the environmental requirements rather than through additional property developments in or adjacent to the Parish.

3. Background to West Hatch Parish

- The majority of residents are more mature, younger families who have taken a decision to relocate to a rural area to bring up families or have agricultural interests in the parish.
- There is one pub and no village shop but with an active village hall there is a feeling of a village social life; there are no schools in the parish. This is set against the fact that the community will look to Taunton/across the A358 to access retail and GP/Medical requirements.
- The parish is spread out and connected with small village lanes. Access to Taunton is primarily by the A358 or along local lanes to the B1370.
- The majority of housing is of old stock but to which there have been improvements to improve the environmental impact (solar panels, heat pumps); we see this as a continuing trend.
- There has been a sell off of Crown Estate land and there is a concern that future development of these land packages will have a detrimental impact on the culture of the village and a significant wider environmental impact.
- The parish is split by the A358 and the upgrade of this road will have an impact on the parish as we need to cross the A358.

4. Response to questions posed

Number	Question	Response
5.1 Carbon Neutrality		
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 approach, materials and suppliers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025 should be seen as the latest date. • To defer to 2030 would only see developments coming on stream that would either need to be retro fitted or add a greater burden on future developments to be more carbon reducing.
1b	Should we allocate sites for specific renewable energy development identify broad areas which we consider suitable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As highlighted in the preamble West Hatch would be keen to support opportunities in this area. This could take the route of land to be used for renewable or support to local residents to develop solar on available roofing stock. • Identifying economic opportunities for small start ups/bigger environmental advisory firms should be considered as this would bring employment opportunities into the area. • Further supporting the acquisition of land to develop forest resources and encourage increased management of existing woods/hedgerows would aid the SW@T in its desire to be carbon neutral.
1c	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save for the requirement to be 2025 (or at least demonstrating delivery by 2030). If 2030 remains the backdrop would suggest carbon neutral outcome will not be hit.

5.2 Sustainable locations		
2a	Do you agree with the tiers that identifies Taunton followed by 6 tiers covering the other settlements. If not, what changes would you make and why?	Yes
2c	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 if each other (and therefore be in a higher tier to Bishops Lydeard and Wiveliscombe)?	Not qualified to comment.
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 tree options suggested above?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference for option D that sees Taunton increase and Minor Rural Centres reducing but with some development support to support vibrancy of villages. • Caveat would be that the village development should be supportive of the village dynamics and not be a back door to damaging the culture of underlying rural villages. • Consideration should also be given to increased development in Wellington especially if a train link could be developed. • Benefits in developing around the major towns should deliver better environmental impacts and allow wider rural and village areas to focus and contribute solutions to the wider environmental challenges.
2d	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support these as good additional policies. The development of interconnectivity in public transport and the need to ensure that where not viable there is a transition solution (e.g. park and ride) that sees both the swap from private to public transport from rural areas but also aids the transition the other way so that town residence can enjoy and contribute to the more rural aspects of the county without having to utilise private vehicle transport. • Consider merit of deployment of greater charging infrastructure for non carbon fuel vehicles.

5.3 New and affordable homes		
3a	Should our housing requirement figure match the Government’s minimum figure of 702 dwellings per year or should we have a higher figure?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Garden City award there was a housing figure eg 17k (of which 7k were new developments in Monkton Healthfield, Staplegrove and Covey/Trull). • We see no reason to go above this commitment. • This can be reconsidered if additional economic investment is retained in the area and a demonstrated need for additional housing is identified. • Additional development (both including and above these levels) will have a material detrimental impact on the transport infrastructure as it stands combined with further environmental impacts.
3b	How should we proactively plan for Gypsy, Traveller and travelling Showpeople pitches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By definition the requirements of these communities need to have good access to vehicular transport links and amenities. • Developing in rural areas will have a detrimental environmental and infrastructure impact. It would make sense to look at some managed development at edge of town sites close to arterial roads.
3c	Should we require all new housing developments to make sure that a percentage of the new homes are designed to be accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes. • However the focus should be driven by demand and in light of this it may be that adaptability should be a key requirement.
3d	Should we allocate sites and/or make sure a percentage of housing developments are for self-built plots for people wanting to build their own homes? Should we allow self-build plots on Rural Exception sites provided that they are affordable?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not apparent why or how a developer would make available self build plots that could then be affordable housing. • The benefit of self build is more likely to be around the desire to have bespoke (e.g. off grid) dwellings. This should be encouraged but with strict adherence to the building requirements around sustainability. • The question of Rural Exception sites being only supportable for affordable housing again seems to be at odds with the cost/design

3e	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<p>requirements to ensure environmental sustainability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies would seem to make sense but would need to be applied to reflect the demands/requirements of specific developments (these demands/requirements would cover employment, location, transport links etc. – driven by these requirements could be a reduction in a housing type supported by an increase in another). • It is imperative that in deployment of these policies the overall delivery of affordable/elderly or accessible dwellings is sufficient to meet the requirements across the region in the desired locations.
5.4 A prosperous economy		
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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The important factor on economic growth should be sustainability. With the announcement of the retention of the Royal Marines site Taunton retains a high level employer for time being. If this was to be lost in the future there would be a negative impact on the local economy; likewise Hinckley point will go through phases of employee demand over the construction period into operation. • It would make sense to have a wide strategy to develop investment from both large and smaller start up businesses. The suggestion to focus on the environmental industry opportunities makes sense but with an ever changing world we would encourage the plan to incorporate specific strategy to build and demonstrate the benefits of the area (work force, connectivity and well being benefits from living in the area) to market the area (this could be either on own or by partnership with other areas including Somerset, West Country and wider geographies). Should we be targeting Government Agencies both UK and wider to seek investment?
4b	Should we keep all of our existing employment sites and allocations in employment use or should we allow the loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see answer to Q4a above. • Development of the economy over the period will be driven by

	<p>of some to other uses? How should we decide which ones to lose?</p>	<p>factors that we are currently not aware of - as a result we should have a dynamic strategy that sees us market the benefits and work with partners across county, region, country and potentially internationally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation should be driven by demand when assessed against the benefits – this should be able to deliver a diverse economy both in terms of size and mix of industries.
<p>4c</p>	<p>Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy approaches would seem to support the dynamic strategy alluded to in the previous questions. • An important aspect of making this a success is to ensure both local and wider located ‘investors’ understand what the areas can offer. • We should be demonstrating that we are capable of adapting to the changing economic landscape.
<p>5.5 Infrastructure</p>		
<p>5a</p>	<p>On what infrastructure should we prioritise developer contributions?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is virtually impossible to say which area of focus is a priority in all cases as the fact pattern will be different dependent on the end user requirements. • The environmental impact of development should ensure sustainability of development and the demand surrounding that development should drive the delivery of the other elements. • The question of whether a development is attractive from an economic basis should be driven by the overall development delivering the desired outcome. Would question that over spending on land banks should inhibit delivery of a successful project meeting the requirements of the dwellers. • Should we consider ensuring that developers are required to have an ongoing commitment to their developments (e.g. through retentions of profit until the schemes are sustainable – charging points in place;

5b	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<p>schools/community infrastructure in place; flooding impact/other negative climate change impacts insured against)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see responses to 5a. • The policy approaches seem to call out some of the requirements but other than with respect to water and sewerage infrastructure does not seem to address climate change requirements.
5.6 Connecting people		
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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the basis that there is a strong in town public transport network we should start to make it expensive to drive a car into out main towns (congestion charging/car parking fee increases). For this to work there has to be a good infrastructure which will include buses, integrated transport (rail onto buses/bikes/walking), hire (free) bikes, cycle and walking routes etc. It must also be competitive in terms of cost – if not people will go elsewhere. • Whilst it would be ideal to have a local rural transport infrastructure it would not be economic. • To address this we may need to accept that private car transport will remain but sustainable use should be aided through greater charging or alternative fuel infrastructure combined with an easy transition at out of town onto public transport. • This transition should be driven by demand of the traveller rather than the provision of the infrastructure (e.g. Park and Ride should be 7 days a week and available at times there is demand - should we be investing in driverless buses?) • Should we be working in partnership with local supermarkets to increase home (or village delivery to central places – Village Hall or Church)? • In rural areas we need to have better internet and digital capability.

6b	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should park and ride parking be supported by and integrated with supermarkets (this would require considerations around car parking availability and consequential water run off challenges)? • Please see responses to 6a. • Policy should support those requirements.
5.7 The natural and historic environment		
7a	Are there any specific measures that you would like to see new developments deliver to improve bio diversity locally?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a rural parish it is important that we do not see significant property development as this would change the nature of our village and landscape/infrastructure. • On this basis it would be prudent to see how the land that could be used for property development could be redesignated for environmental purposes and or sympathetic agriculture or leisure. • The sale of crown estates around the parish could have a detrimental impact on both the environment and the quality of village life if not managed correctly. • The rural environment would seem to be a positive amenity that could be used to promote carbon reduction projects (woodland creation, alternative power and hedgerow creation) linked to sympathetic agriculture methods.
7b	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These seem to be sound policies to support the environmental objectives. • Please see comments under 7a.
5.8 Thriving coastal and rural communities		
8a	Should we keep or remove settlement boundaries? Or should we have settlement boundaries in areas where there is higher pressure from development i.e. closer to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We should retain settlement boundaries unless by exception a case for development can be made set against core environmental, social and economic safeguards and supported by both central and parish councils.

	Taunton, Wellington and Wiveliscombe but remove them in our remote areas to provide more options for development?	
8b	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	Save for comments on 8a around maintaining settlement boundaries the policy approaches would seem to be acceptable.
5.9 Wellbeing of our residents		
9a	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy approaches would seem to fit with the desire to deliver a healthy and environmentally strong environment. • From a local perspective whilst we would encourage use of the parish amenities for residents outside the parish we would highlight that this should not be at the detriment of the local environment noting the limited capacity of local village lanes. • Similar to the desire to reduce private vehicular transport in town we would recommend sustainable transitional points when moving from the highways to local rural areas.
5.10 Policies for our places: Taunton		
10a	How do you think we can introduce more housing into the Taunton Town Centre?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion of brown field sites (Fire Pool, Bus Station etc) and the potential removal of car parking space to be made available for developments that address demand set against the desire to limit or remove vehicular transport from town centres. • Would question the presumption that there would be a requirement for less rooms – this should be benchmarked against actual demand which may demonstrate that 2/3 bedrooms are required. • The increase of public green spaces will also encourage and support more central town living.
10b	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy approaches make sense and fit with the desire to encourage urban living and reduce car usage. • The approaches are silent on education (from pre school upwards)

		and access to GP /minor surgery resources. Both these elements are important to encouraging a thriving urban living space and community.
5.11 Policies for our places: Wellington		
11a	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No specific comments not already covered in responses above.
5.12 Policies for our places : The Coastal Strip		
12a	Do you have any comments on these policy approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No specific comments not already covered in responses above.