

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Strategy](#)
Subject: Somerset Co-operative Community Land Trust
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Hello.

Please find attached my response to Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document, as a Director of Somerset Co-operative Community Land Trust, which is based in Taunton.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss further, or produce evidence, or develop the suggested amendments in partnership the Council

Kind regards
Andy Burton

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Somerset West and Taunton - Local Plan Issues and Options – Consultation Response

Q1

Overall the Council has an opportunity, with the Local Plan, to enhance the social economy, empower communities, residents and workers, enhance community cohesion, address housing need and create employment and other economic benefits by actively supporting and enabling of co-operative, community and social enterprises to play a full part in delivering the objectives. Including specific reference to that support in the Plan and supplementary guidance, would be an important first step towards growing a healthy and thriving social/community enterprise sector and realising the additional benefits that this would bring.

Below are comments and suggestions on specific objectives. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss further, or produce evidence, or develop the suggested amendments in partnership.

Objective 3 - To provide a sufficient and varied supply of high quality and affordable homes to meet the needs of all sections of our communities

Option 3d: Providing custom self-build plots

Question 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 Exceptions sites provided that they are affordable?

I recommend that this is amended to:

- A positive encouragement policy, including for custom-build* community-led projects, and specifically co-operative housing for rent, but not to leave the housing market to deliver plots as and when demand arises;

and:

- identify and allocate specific sites for custom-build* plots in locations related to where people want to live according to our self-build register; and that priority is given to community-led housing and co-operative housing for rent with an asset-lock;

and:

- Include a requirement for all housing development sites over a threshold to include a proportion of plots as custom-build* plots;

And

- Allow custom-build* plots on Rural Exception sites provided that they are secured as affordable housing in perpetuity;

And;

- Proposals for community-led housing may be permitted at the following locations: redundant community facilities land or buildings; and land or sites on employment land which is not in use, or underused, and where a mixed development will provide (over a residential threshold) employment opportunities.

* Using the definition of custom build as stated on the SW&T website:

- self-build – managing the whole building process, building yourself or commissioning various trades to build for you
- self-finish – you buy a part-built home and fit out or finish off internal works yourself
- design-only – you design your home and get other trades to do everything else
- partnership projects – working with developers or like-minded individuals to purchase land and build your home

and specifically, to include housing for rent built by a co-operative, community land trust or other community-led housing organisation and where the process involves community members and/or prospective tenants in any of the above four models

Reasons

Community-led housing is housing developed and/or managed by people in self-organised not-for-profit groups and includes self-build or custom build housebuilding, self-help housing, co-housing, co-operatives, mutual housing, tenant-controlled housing and community land trusts (CLTs). Community-led schemes require: meaningful community engagement, and; that local community groups or organisations own, manage or steward the homes and in a manner of their choosing - and can require that the benefits to the local area and/or specified community are legally protected in perpetuity

Housing co-ops and other community-led housing (CLH) can improve housing supply and providing permanently affordable housing. It can assist local housing policy by:

- Diversifying the local housebuilding market, unlocking small sites not attractive to mainstream developers
- Providing permanently affordable housing for local people, helping to reduce opposition to development (CLTs and co-ops are not subject to the Right to Buy)
- Increasing choice by producing a range of housing options for people on the housing register and for people priced out of home ownership.
- Empowering communities so they come self-sufficient, cohesive, resilient and sustainable, and more engaged in local neighbourhood activities and local democracy
- Promoting community cohesion and helping to reduce anti-social behaviour
- Providing housing options that enable people to remain in the local area and ensure schools, services and amenities remain viable
- Assisting local employers to recruit and retain their workforce
- Improving the knowledge, skills and employment prospects of CLH group members in building, property refurbishment and housing management, including a range of office, administration and communication and other inter-personal skills
- Involving residents in addressing housing need
- Developing new affordable schemes
- Addressing housing need not provided for by main stream Registered Providers (eg for single people in housing need)
- Strengthening the neighbourhood planning process

- Enabling older and vulnerable people to maintain their independence through creating local housing options for them or their support networks, creating mutually supportive communities, and developing housing where they have an active role in decision making.

Additional policy approaches to meet Objective 3

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

Amend 3e/1 or otherwise include:

- Any requirement for affordable housing, will not apply to homes developed for or community-led housing, where the land is held for the benefit of the community in perpetuity (except in the case of custom-build plots on Rural Exception sites); and/or there is another benefit such as low utility cost that offsets rent and service charged above the affordability threshold.

In “3e/5 Support for:” add:

- Co-operative housing and other community-led projects.

3e/6 add:

- Except where community-led housing either includes: an element of co-housing facilities and/or services

Objective 4 - To create a prosperous, resilient and entrepreneurial economy ensuring competitiveness across the wider sub-region and attracting the most talented workers to the District

Option 4b: Making better use of employment sites

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?

“iv) Develop flexible policy allowing for the loss of any existing/ proposed employment site subject to specific criteria.”

This option is supported.

The criteria should include:

- Where the site, or part of site, is being developed for community-led housing, and where that land will be held in perpetuity for the benefit of the community, or the site or part of the site is not economically viable to develop (for example because of land instability)

Additional policy approaches to meet Objective 4:

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

Add a new item:

- Support the development of co-operatives and other community and social enterprises through: adopting an economic policy specifically supporting the start-up and development of the sector; the allocation of land or premises for start-up units specifically for these; and flexibility in the planning policy where there is an economic and community benefit.

4c/4 Incorporate into the item:

- Encourage the development of co-operatives and other community and social enterprises to develop and/or manage communal hubs and related services

Supporting housing co-operatives and community-led housing and extending housing for rent in custom-build policy measures could help in the development of a trained and skilled workforce that could help address any shortfall in the construction sector.

Objective 5 - To ensure that new development is supported by essential infrastructure in a timely manner

Additional policy approaches to meet Objective 5

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

Add:

- Provide discretionary CIL/sec106 relief for custom-build community-led housing where the land is held in perpetuity for the benefit of the community or other community benefit is provided**

** For example, by the provision of a sustainable vehicle pooling scheme or community transport scheme

Objective 6 - To achieve a major change in travel behaviour towards walking, cycling and public transport and to reduce the need to travel

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?

Add/include:

- The active support of co-operatives and other community and social enterprises to develop and/or manage sustainable community transport options

Additional policy approaches to meet Objective 6

Question 6b

Add

- The active support of co-operatives and other community and social enterprises to develop and/or manage a sustainable vehicle pooling and community transport schemes
- Allocate S106 contributions to develop new, or enhance existing, sustainable community transport and sustainable vehicle pooling schemes

Option 10a: increase housing densities in Taunton town centre to make more efficient use of land and encourage the redevelopment of sites

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

“iii) Encouraging car-free developments (which could include allocating specific sites for car-free developments”

This option is supported.

And should be supported by the inclusion of a requirement for:

- The active support of co-operatives and other community and social enterprises to develop and/or manage a sustainable vehicle pooling scheme where viable

- A requirement of developers to assess the viability of a sustainable vehicle pooling scheme

Add:

- Support the development of co-operative co-housing schemes where the provision of communal facilities and or services can increase housing density.

Additional policy approaches for Taunton

Question 10b:

- Involve and empower communities/residents in the re-development of regeneration sites through the allocation of land for community-led housing for rent.
- Support the development of locally-led co-operatives and other community/social enterprises, in areas of deprivation, to provide community and enterprise facilities and services. Research into need and demand and consultation could itself be provided by a resident-led co-operative or community/social enterprise, suitably trained and supported.