

Response ID ANON-8CC9-KDX5-K

Submitted to **Local Plan Issues and Options**

Submitted on **2020-03-16 12:57:11**

Your details

What is your name?

Forename:

Tracy

Surname:

Samphier

Are you making an individual response or on behalf of an organisation?

Organisation

If individual, please tell us what type:

Name of organisation:

Taunton Transition Town

Please choose one from the drop-down list:

Community Group

What is your (personal/organisational) address?

██████████
████████████████████
██████████

██████████
██████████

What is your email address?

██████████
████████████████████

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):

Particularly agree with Objective 1: to reach Carbon neutrality by 2030. We have a climate emergency and need to reach carbon neutrality as soon as we possibly can. All possible efforts should be made to reach this objective. We are concerned that objective 5 is an invitation for a road building programme which would work against sustainability. Therefore, we suggest that the phrase 'broadly carbon neutral' is inserted between essential and infrastructure. We suggest that objective 6 is widened to include car sharing and also reduced car ownership through car clubs for journeys that cannot be undertaken by public transport or active travel.

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):

On question 1a - Waiting until 2030 to require new development to be carbon neutral directly contradicts the first objective in this local plan - i.e. for the whole district to be carbon neutral by 2030. If houses built in 2029 are not carbon neutral they would need to be retrofitted (at great expense, and with a carbon cost for the new equipment) within 1 year in order to reach this objective. They need to be carbon neutral as soon as possible. Why not ask for them to be carbon neutral by 2021?

Question 1b - a combination assuming this will produce the best results.

1c/2-3-4: Where community organisations are keen to assist providing car charging points, ensure that planning policy does not unduly get in the way (eg Gr 2 listed building status).

1c/5: Best agricultural land to protect should prioritise most highly the land that is capable of being used for crops rather than cattle. (Can feed far more people from 1 acre of crops than from 1 acre of pasture, with lower emissions.)

1c/7: All new flats and homes should have full recycling facilities including food waste collections.

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):

N/A

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):

N/A

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):

The housing distribution needs to be centred on Taunton and Wellington as these are the most sustainable places, with the most jobs, the best transport services etc. We need to minimise travel between settlements to meet the carbon neutrality objective. The increase could possibly come by taking away from a combination of locations in answers b & c above. Though recognise the need for some additional housing in these other settlements.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

re iii) above. As we argued in TTT's response to SW&T's CNCR document (carbon neutrality), Taunton's highway network may well be a constraint to traffic, but unless there is constraint then SACTR (1994) shows that traffic flows will continue to grow significantly along with the emissions that they generate. Many people will not move to busses/cycles if the traffic is free flowing.

If the average home generates about 10 trips per day and if those trips are starting from a town at some distance from Taunton, then people may well use the car without considering alternatives. If the trips are starting from within Taunton and people are aware of the congestion, those who are able, are more likely to choose to walk, cycle or take the bus, especially if those facilities are good quality facilities.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

2b/1: We need to reduce the amount we travel (particularly by private car and plane) and therefore this policy approach is vital. We need get away from the current 'predict and provide' for cars with walking and cycling as highly compromised add-ons to the dominant road network. Alternative means of travel (bike, walk, bus and train) need infrastructure that is as good quality as that which is currently provided for private cars if we are to gain a significant modal shift.

How can we effectively design a network of segregated cycle/walking paths, linked into the best of what we already have, through any proposed development land, and ensure it is actually developed? It should be separate to the road network and could link people to the local shop, GP surgery, school and existing network to the town centre, preferably by a shorter, more direct route than the vehicle routes to the same places. The network needs to be open ended at the far end of the development, with opportunities to link future developments onto this existing/new network of cycle tracks. This and providing easy access to frequent, reliable public transport will give real choices for everyone.

Development in sustainable locations drives up the viability of public transport services to those locations, creating the opportunity to further improve services and living conditions. Transport considerations need to be fundamental to the Local Plan process and not retrofitted later.

re developing brownfield sites: refurbishing an old property will usually produce significantly lower CO2e emissions than knocking down and building new. (See 'How bad are bananas' by Mike Berners-Lee). An exception to this would probably be if significantly more flats/houses could be provided on the site if building new.

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):

Until we can definitely ensure that all new homes will be carbon neutral in operation (and ideally construction), then we should only provide the minimum number. (As in meeting Objective 1 in the introduction to the Local Plan.)

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):

N/A

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):

It would be nice to have this, but if we can't provide everything then this would probably be the one that has to go. Individual houses can be retrofitted more easily than trying to retrofit all houses for carbon neutrality at a later date.

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, Allow self-build plots on Rural Exception sites provided that they are secured as affordable housing for ever

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

Encourage zero carbon self builds as soon as possible.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

The news has featured one council defining affordable housing as a proportion of local incomes rather than based on local house prices. It seems like a much better definition of what is truly affordable.

Firepool presents an opportunity for the Council to build affordable houses in blocks of flats i.e. high density, as was shown on the original vision for Taunton plans some years ago.

Important to include also public buildings to hold events like produce markets, repair cafes, swap shops and health related activities. Perhaps with the communal work hubs / community centres.

What about enhancing local parks and green spaces. The Galmington streams path functions both as a transport network (cyclists and pedestrians) and a green space for people to play and walk dogs etc - it is ALWAYS in use. We definitely need more of these.

North Taunton seems to have less of these recreational spaces than other areas – this issue needs to be addressed.

Providing more allotments will also be important to assist with local sustainability and resilience.

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):

Do not agree with growth for growth's sake. But do agree with providing better jobs, particularly providing these jobs are 'green' jobs.

However, also would be good to provide training for those young people who are low achievers to be able to get jobs in professions where we are likely to see gaps from leaving the EU (eg Princes Trust work).

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 is rarely a one-size fits all approach, so flexibility is probably required (though this option doesn't give us a lot of information about what is being considered.)

However, we shouldn't be quick to give up employment sites close to new large-scale developments as these could provide local jobs and reduce the need to travel to work by car.

Where individual buildings have remained empty for some time, then converting them to housing is a good idea (as was agreed for the old Inland Revenue office). This can also be applied to empty shops no longer needed.

Is there any way we can introduce parking charges for out-of-town shopping sites in order to level up the playing field between in-town and out of town shopping? This money could potentially be used to improve/subsidise public transport / cycle links.

A workplace parking levy can certainly be introduced across the district which could assist in people making the switch to more sustainable transport modes, and again would level up the playing field, maybe making the town centre more attractive again.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

4c/1: Agreed on clean energy. Have to be a little careful with digital tech, due to the rebound effect it can lead to greater use of electricity – especially the 5G network – could lead to significant increases.

4c/4: Encouraging home working: Is it more carbon intensive to commute to work, or to heat a home for the whole day? (if it wouldn't have been heated otherwise?) Encourage zonal heating on homes with home offices.

4c/6: Would I like to see a stronger discouragement of shops outside town centres. The text says encourage comparison shops (eg TV's) in neighbourhoods. Could this mean having a Currys in a housing development? We definitely agree with having small scale convenience shops (butchers, bakers, small convenience store etc) in new developments. But the mention of comparison shops (TV's) brings to mind a shop like Currys or Halfords. Are SW&T effectively encouraging new small out of town shopping centres here?

These typically would attract a lot of vehicular traffic from around the district, thus potentially creating extra and longer car journeys. Very few people will travel to an out of town shopping centre by bus or bike. We have enough of these, if we have more of them they will kill off our town centre even more - this concerns us. The more we can encourage shops to locate together so that they can be served by good public transport systems, the more sustainable the system will become.

Some in the group feel that by increasing parking charges SW&T are discouraging motorists (not just their cars) from the centre and encouraging them to use out of town shopping centres!

re provision of employment, and dealing with closure of shops on high streets and elsewhere, provision of cheap rentable spaces (discounted for local producers) to encourage and support small start-ups distributing local produce.

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:

1

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

4

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

2

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

5a is an impossible question! Need to lobby central government for a legal requirement to make all housing carbon neutral so that it is not seen as an optional extra by developers. However, climate emergency has to come first, including public transport. There won't be any affordability or wheelchairs on a dead planet.

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):

Stop building new roads. Prioritise quality segregated cycle & walking infrastructure: e.g. Galmington Streams path. Remove cobbles in Taunton town centre. Taunton to Wellington cycle track- quality & segregated, but visible from queues. Promote electric bikes, car clubs and car sharing.

Workplace parking levy (and out of town shop parking levy) – help fund improvements to bus services. Reduce car parking on new developments: 100 spaces for a few shops on new Comeytrove development is excessive. Provide far more cycle parking.

Pedestrianize Taunton town centre (and others) but allow bikes & busses, provide LOTS of cycle parking.

Improve bus provision: Infrastructure and frequency. Improve bus stops & provide real time bus information. Keep park & ride open longer (e.g. for hospital staff).

New transport hub in Taunton, safeguarded against future loss. Possibly near railway station, for busses, quality cycle parking, cycle hire (including e-bikes), e-car hire and other shared mobility services.

Frequent central hopper bus linking centre/hub/hospital/train stn.

Transport hub at Blackbrook for Falcon bus & coaches, link to P&R + town. Secure cycle parking and bus shelters for passengers (Bus customers waiting in the rain!) Taxi rank for night time.

Further information in TTT's climate emergency framework response + by email.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

6b/1: Agree with SE's guidelines but also need to reflect new DfT guidance on cycling/walking infrastructure design.

Why do developments have a spine road? Why not have the road run around the edge and a cycle/walking track down the spine? This would create less conflict with traffic. Link the cycle tracks to the local shop etc & to wider network of cycle tracks. Plan network of segregated cycle tracks before development takes place to join with existing good quality tracks. Also allow for open ended links at the far side of the development (into the countryside) so future developments can link into cycle network without sending cyclists onto main roads. Make cycling a pleasant and safe experience and more people will do it.

6b/3: Cycle parking policy needs to be backed up with detailed assessment as is the case for car parking, where standards are clearly prescribed. There are many examples of poor or no cycle parking in new developments (e.g. the two Lidl outlets in Taunton) despite the existence of cycle parking standards.

A good start would be to significantly increase the cycle parking available at the front of SW&T's offices - make a statement - free cycle parking right at the door! And encourage your staff to use them - Surely there should be 20-30 stands there not 2-3.

Restoration of disused railway and canal corridors – Is this to protect against housing/commercial development on this land? If so, great. Disused railways make great cycle corridors (eg Swansea).

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):

7a Protect existing trees and hedgerows and plant more trees and woods The Woodland Trust advocates planting 10 trees for each house built to ensure a minimum 30% tree canopy cover. This is essential both to tackle the biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis and should be included in planning requirements.

Community woodland on each new development - and encourage the community to develop them further.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Also include agroforestry - mixing grazing with plant-based crops (silviculture) and planting forest gardens or harvestable trees such as nuts and fruit.

7b/7 Need to improve local water quality - Galmington stream is often cloudy and causes irritation to some dog's skin/sickness. Is this from agricultural run off? Encourage farmers to use smaller quantities of chemical fertilizers - this would reduce their carbon footprint and reduce chemical run off from fields. Encourage more use of natural manure instead.

7b/12 Could we establish a Taunton community woodland? Maybe encourage people to fundraise to plant the trees. Have some information boards there about climate change and what we can do about it, or even an information hub.

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):

Agreed

10. Wellbeing of our residents

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

Absolutely agree with providing active design measures. Good quality cycle tracks and walking paths can increase the amenity value of a neighbourhood, increase connectedness between communities and be a significant design feature. It would just be nice if the connections in the centre of town were a little more pleasant.

9a/3: Suggest change of wording to: 'Apply' flexibility in the design of the highway... instead of allow. Existing wording is weak.

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):

Probably a mixture of all three would be best.

This is already being done with developments of flats for retired and conversion of Inland Revenue office to flats. Could also convert more shops to 1 or 2 bed flats as was done at 10 East Reach. Council could build high rise block of council flats at Firepool.

Maybe some developments could discourage individual car ownership but have a facility for a few cars that could be jointly owned or pooled / hired out.

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

10b/4: Support more pedestrianisation. There really is no need to drive through Taunton centre anymore for most people as there are roads surrounding the town.

A discussion within the group raised the question as to whether closing streets to traffic increases congestion. However, we found an interesting EC study which you may well be aware of: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/pubs/pdf/streets_people.pdf It found that congestion usually increased initially after pedestrianisation, but then usually settled down as people found other ways to travel and other routes to take. i.e. The findings of SACTRA appear to work in reverse, in that, if you take road space away from cars for other modes, people will change their behaviour and traffic will reduce. It's a very interesting read.

10b/5: If we are consolidating parking and increasing charges, can we provide reduced charge or free parking for the disabled.

12. Policies for our places: Wellington

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

Please provide comments (250 words max):

A northern relief road will increase traffic flows in the area and therefore increase emissions. (Under Key issues for Wellington – item b)

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):

A main line rail route to Minehead is mentioned earlier – If this is developed without changing the A39 there's a good chance of a reduction in road transport on the A39. If the road is improved, traffic will increase and emissions will increase further.

Car parking is mentioned: we should be encouraging as many people as possible to come by train. & not providing too much car parking.