

## Response ID ANON-8CC9-KDQ1-8

Submitted to **Local Plan Issues and Options**

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### Your details

**What is your name?**

**Forename:**

Tracy

**Surname:**

Samphier

**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:**

Individual

**Please choose one from the drop-down list:**

**What is your (personal/organisational) address?**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**What is your email address?**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### 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 the objective to reach Carbon neutrality by 2030. We have a climate emergency and need to reach carbon neutrality as soon as we possibly can.

### 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 - there is no point waiting until 2030 to require new development to be carbon neutral as it 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. Why not ask for them to be carbon neutral by 2021?

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

Qu 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):**

**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):**

If being in a higher tier would mean more development in these settlements then I don't think they should be seen as associated settlements, as development here would be less sustainable than development in larger communities, meaning more car journeys etc.

They may be closer to Hinkley Point, but once construction is complete there, there will be less employment on the site and we could be left with a lot of unsustainable housing in a rural location.

Is there not a concern about coastal erosion at Watchet? If there is, this would not be a good place to build more houses.

**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.

Hinkley point will provide a lot of jobs during construction but the number of jobs will reduce once it's in operation and we don't want to end up with unsustainable housing stock outside Taunton.

**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 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, they 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.

Could we design a network of segregated cycle/walking paths to link into the best of what we already have, through any proposed development land before the development takes place? It should be separate to the road network and could link people to the local shop, GP surgery and existing network to the town centre, preferably by a shorter 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 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.

**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):**

**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):**

Heard on the news of 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.

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.

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.

However, 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.

4c/4: Communal work hubs would be a useful addition.

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 like to see a stronger discouragement of shops outside town centres. The text says encourage comparison shops (eg TV's) in neighbourhoods – I hope that doesn't mean having a currys in a housing development.

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 legal requirement to make all housing carbon neutral so that this is not seen as an optional extra by developers. However, Climate emergency has to come first (that includes transport though). Other options are harder to choose between.

## **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. Introduce a workplace parking levy (and out of town shop parking levy eg for shops with > 10 spaces). Increase parking charges in town. Use the money to fund subsidies on busses and to increase frequency of busses. Improve bus stops & provide real time bus information. Keep park & ride open for longer hours (eg for hospital staff).

Prioritise spending on quality cycle & walking infrastructure, segregated cycle routes, eg like Galmington Streams cycle path - every community should have one - walking path / cycle path / green space / dog walking.

Get rid of the cobbles in Taunton town centre - horrible to cycle on!

Does new Comeytrowe development link to this cycle path? If not, it is a badly missed opportunity.

Promote car clubs and car sharing, promote electric bikes for hire.

Press for Taunton to Wellington cycle path - quality & segregated, but visible from road so drivers see the cyclists riding by when they are stuck in the queues.

Pedestrianize Taunton town centre (and others).

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

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

b/1 Sport England's design guidelines but also needs to reflect DfT's new 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? Then there would be less

conflict with traffic. Link the cycle track to the neighbourhood shop etc & to wider network of cycle tracks. We could be planning a network of segregated cycle tracks before development takes place on this land so that it joins up with existing good quality tracks. Eg Comeytrowe – Are there cycle tracks in the new development that link into the cycle track that runs alongside the Galmington stream? If not, why not? There also could be open ended links at the far side of the development (into the countryside) so that future developments can also link into these tracks without having to send 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 and 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 10-20 stands there not 2-3.

Restoration of disused railway and canal corridors – to what aim? If they are used for something else, they can't then be restored as railways or canals. (Has been a problem in some places). Fine if used for cycle corridors.

## 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):**

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.

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

**Please provide comments (250 words max):**

as far as rewilding, there is also 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 - our local stream is often cloudy and causes irritation to my dog's skin. 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 community woodland? Maybe encourage people to fundraise to plant the trees (communities coming together to fight climate change). Maybe 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. I live by the cycle track (already mentioned) by the Galmington stream. This was a significant feature in our decision to buy this house (with a young child at the time and the prospect of many years of cycling to school), it is also often mentioned with a notable jealousy by friends and family who wish they had such good facilities nearby! It has saved a huge number of car journeys as it's just as easy and quick to jump on a bike to get to the local shops.

- Every development should have a facility as good as this one.

- It would just be nice if the connections in the centre of town were a little more pleasant.

## 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):**

Possibly a mix of fewer bedrooms and car-free developments could be helpful. 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):**

Support pedestrianisation. There is really no need to drive through Taunton centre anymore for most people.

**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):**

12a/2: 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.