

**BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET CORE
STRATEGY**

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF
TAYLOR WIMPEY UK LTD**

ISSUE 2 SUB MATTER: SOMER VALLEY

DECEMBER 2011

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Appendix 1 – Monger Lane, Midsomer Norton, Suitability and Deliverability Statement

Appendix 2 – Midsomer Norton, Transport Context and Issues (WSP)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by **Turley Associates** on behalf of **Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd**.
- 1.2 Various objections to the submitted Core Strategy have been made on behalf of **Taylor Wimpey**; Turley Associates are instructed by **Taylor Wimpey** to progress some of these representations at this Examination.
- 1.3 This Statement is specifically concerned with **Issue 2 Sub Matter: Somer Valley**, identified by the Inspector's Main Matters and Questions document (**ID/7**). Other parties are dealing specifically with **Taylor Wimpey's** objections in relation to other issues and sub-matters.
- 1.4 Whilst Taylor Wimpey has various interests in Bath and North Somerset they have a particular interest in land at Monger Lane, Midsomer Norton (part of the Somer Valley) which is identified as site **MSN23** within the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (**CD4/H14**). A statement on the suitability and deliverability of land at Monger Lane (**MSN23**) is included at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.5 This Statement has been structured to cover the main issues and topics raised in the Inspector's Matters and Questions document (**ID/7**), specific question numbers are identified in the section headings and at relevant points within the text (within brackets).

2. General Strategy (Question 9.1)

- 2.1 (9.1) Whilst the Council's aim to better align growth in jobs and housing in the Somer Valley is not an irrelevant one, it is not one that should be pursued at the expense of the general levels of growth which are required across the District, and where the specific circumstances of the Somer Valley mean that it is well placed to make a significant contribution.
- 2.2 Growth in the Somer Valley (both new homes and new jobs) is able to take place in a way that reinforces positive growth aspirations across the District and where land is not constrained by the same range of environmental and other policy issues that exist at other locations in the District (such as at Bath and in other 'Green Belt' areas). These general points were as rehearsed by the previous BANES Local Plan inspector when considering the Somer Valley area, and the issue of overall growth across the BANES District as a whole.
- 2.3 The emerging national planning policy agenda, which seeks for planning to take a much more positive approach and to seek opportunities to allow (not inhibit) sustainable growth opportunities further reinforces this position. The restrictive nature of the Council's policy, particularly in relation to housing, does not address this and does not support the regeneration and other aims which the Council has for the future prosperity of the Somer Valley.
- 2.4 Issues of self containment and commuting are dealt with in more detail within the separate note produced by WSP at **Appendix 2** (Midsomer Norton – Transport Issues and Context). This overview sets out why levels of commuting and the circumstances of Midsomer Norton (and the rest of the Somer Valley) are relevant to the overall consideration of future growth opportunities, showing that this should not be an overriding 'constraint' to development in the area and that with a combination of improved access to local jobs, better public transport, trends towards more flexible and home working, as well as other factors, growth in the Somer Valley isn't incompatible with a move towards greater self containment.
- 2.5 This is reinforced by the fact that the picture at a District Wide and Sub-Regional (West of England) level points at the need to positively consider the contribution that the Somer Valley can make, rather than seek to restrict its growth and consequent chances of attracting inward investment and achieving the additional service provision and regeneration that is also a key element of the Council's strategy for the area.

3. Economic Development (Questions 9.2-9.4)

- 3.1 (9.2, 9.3, 9.4) The Council should be seeking to plan for ambitious levels of economic growth in the Somer Valley, as without stretching and ambitious growth targets economic growth and consequent local prosperity will fall below what could otherwise be achieved
- 3.2 In this regard the Council's spatial plan (it's Core Strategy DPD) should seek to facilitate and create the conditions to support such growth, in so far as a 'spatial plan' can achieve this. This requires allocating sufficient land (including a range of types and locations) to be attractive to investment and the wider economy, and seek to coordinate infrastructure and complementary uses and development (including but not limited to new housing), to create conditions where growth opportunities can be realised.
- 3.3 The Council should not set aside its economic strategy (**CD4/E8**) by planning to provide less than 2,500 new jobs. This would specifically be contrary to the approach set out by the government in the draft National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3.4 In many cases the protection of existing business land and premises will be appropriate but there will also be circumstances where reviews are necessary. A balanced portfolio of employment sites should be provided and maintained, as there should also be a range of housing sites to deliver the government's objectives for housing, as set out in PSS3 (and the emerging NPPF).

4. Housing (Questions 9.5- 9.10)

- 4.1 (9.5) As set out within previous representations the planned increase in 500 dwellings above existing commitments is not justified, effective or consistent with national planning policy (including the provisions within the emerging National Planning Policy Framework).
- 4.2 This approach neither effectively supports the Council's strategy for the Somer Valley (including economic development and improved town centres), nor the Council's vision and objectives for the District, including (but not limited to) meeting economic and social potential, providing opportunities for all, encouraging economic development and prosperity (Strategic Objective 3) and meeting housing needs (Strategic Objective 5).
- 4.3 The Somer Valley continues to have the potential to make a significant contribution to new housing supply for the District and in this part of the West of England sub-region. The Council's stated reasons for limiting new housing supply, even to the level's which it suggests is required, relates (amongst other things) to the loss of Green Belt land, yet there are opportunities to provide development in the Somer Valley without the loss of Green Belt and where environmental and other constraints would allow such development to be accommodated consistently with the sustainability aims of national planning policy and the Council's overarching objectives.
- 4.4 A specific query has been raised about whether planning for substantially more dwellings (in the Somer Valley) would result in increased out commuting from the area for work. This specific issue is addressed in the separate note at **Appendix 2** (Midsomer Norton – Transport Context and Issues, WSP), which discusses the various transport issues associated with self containment and considers other matters. In summary, there is shown to be a good level of existing self containment in the main town of Midsomer Norton, with further opportunities to improve this, even with additional development taking place in the area.
- 4.5 To ensure that the Council is demonstrating that it's Local Plan is 'positively prepared' and to better reflect the evidence base and existing national planning policy, more ambitious economic growth and housing growth should be planned for in the Somer Valley, where suitable development sites exist, and where development can meaningfully help contribute to better self containment, but that also where existing and improving public transport links are available to Bath, the

most popular commuting destination of those residents not employed in the immediately local area.

- 4.6 (9.6) Whilst not contesting that the majority of the committed sources of housing supply identified by the Council may well come forward during the plan period, it is clearly of concern that some sites identified by the adopted Local Plan are yet to secure planning permission (the plan's end date was 2011); this generally reflects concerns about the Council's approach to planning to only provide 'just enough' new housing (even if we were to accept that the total quantum being planned for was the most appropriate one), and the difficulty that the Council has and will continue to have identifying and securing the delivery of a five year (or six year) housing land supply, including a sufficient trajectory of new affordable housing. The Council should be making additional provision for housing, including affordable housing, throughout the District, and in particular at the Somer Valley where suitable and sustainable options exist.
- 4.7 (9.7) The constraints set out at Policy SV1_4b are not justified as additional housing development is required alongside further economic/employment growth. The pre-condition that all new housing (which the Council states in Part a) as being required) is not consistent with the Government's policy for housing set out within PPS3 and carried forward into the Draft NPPF. The Council are taking an overly restrictive approach which is not justified and unlikely to effectively deliver the required growth for the area, and meet the need and demand for new housing which is clear from the evidence base. Whilst the strategic objective of improved green infrastructure (a formal town park) is recognised this should not be a precondition of providing necessary new housing, and a clear and robust delivery mechanism needs to be identified.
- 4.8 (9.8) The existing housing development boundary at Midsomer Norton excludes sites that are suitable for the delivery of housing, this includes specifically land at Monger Lane (MSN23), although other suitable housing sites are likely to also exist. The suitability and deliverability of the Monger Lane site (**MSN23**) is discussed in further detail within the separate note included at **Appendix 1**.
- 4.9 Following on from this the Council's approach at Policy SV1_4b and Paragraph 4.15a is confused as on the one hand the Council suggests that new housing above existing commitments is to occur within the existing Housing Development Boundary, but on the other that it will be necessary for those boundaries to be reviewed. Furthermore there is further inconsistency between parts a) and b) of Policy SV1_4 as whilst more housing needs to be identified in accordance with part

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a) part b) refers to 'any' new housing. In the context of the Council's failure to plan for sufficient total new housing within the District, including new provision within the Somer Valley, this further undermines the effectiveness of the Council's strategy and policies.

- 4.10 (9.10) As above whilst Taylor Wimpey recognise that the delivery of a Town Park for Midsomer Norton (and the wider area) is a legitimate local planning policy objective, and one that should be highlighted within a Core Strategy document, a clear and robust delivery mechanism needs to be identified. This would ideally be through CIL where new development is required to contribute towards its delivery. As the Council has not yet progressed CIL the Town Park reference should be excluded from the wording of Policy SV1.

5. Infrastructure (Questions 9.11-9.12)

- 5.1 (9.11) The Council will need to provide further clarity relating to the extent to which HCA funding is committed and secure, as well as clarifying its importance for deliverability of sites at Midsomer Norton, including Nunn Mills II; however as a general point it is clear that if this funding is not secure, or is less than expected, then this will have impacts on deliverability, including timescales and possibly delivery of affordable housing (for which a substantial demand exists, as detailed in various Core Documents and dealt with earlier in this Statement). This has relevance to the Council's overall District wide strategy for growth and housing provision, where the Council is not proposing sufficient housing to meet the need and demands in the area, as identified by the evidence. The challenging existing circumstances mean that the Council is at risk of underperforming, with consequent economic and social impacts.
- 5.2 (9.12) Clearly the Council will be able to provide further detail relating to its involvement in these improvements; however, it is understood that the bus route corridor improvements relevant to the Somer Valley (the Greater Bristol Bus Network) will be complete by March 2012, in time for a 'network launch' of all GBBN corridors in the Spring of 2012. At this point it is understood that there is some infrastructure work remaining on the two routes that serve Midsomer Norton. Clearly these improvements will provide benefits in terms of public transport journeys to and from the Somer Valley, and further improvements would be possible in coming years associated with further development in the area.

6. Conclusion

6.1 To ensure that the Council has a sound Core Strategy the policies should be amended to ensure that within the Somer Valley:

- Additional development is identified and planned for to reflect the need and aspirations for sustainable growth across the District and within this area in particular;
- The Council plan for more housing that can be delivered on suitable and deliverable sites and which will meet housing needs and demands in a way that is not incompatible with greater self containment and having regard to existing and future levels of out-commuting.

**Appendix 1 – Monger Lane, Midsomer Norton, Suitability and
Deliverability Statement**

Land at Monger Lane, Midsomer Norton

SHLAA Ref. MSN23

Site Suitability and Deliverability - Summary

- 1.1 This document provides a brief assessment of the suitability and deliverability of land at Monger Lane, Midsomer Norton (SHLAA Ref. **MSN23**) for housing development.
- 1.2 The Council's current assessment of suitability is contained within the existing BANES SHLAA (**CD4/H7**), where it is concluded that the site is not suitable for housing development. Whilst the Council's document does not make explicitly clear it reasons for concluding that the site is not suitable; this seems to be (at least in part) because of the sites location outside of the existing housing development boundary defined by the adopted Local Plan and as the Council's strategy does not propose additional development in this location. This approach does not accord with the relevant practice guidance for undertaking Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment's which clearly states that the Council's assessment should not be narrowed by existing policies designed to constrain development, so that the Local Planning Authority is in the best possible position when deciding it's strategy for delivering housing (and other) objectives.
- 1.3 Other submissions made at this and previous Core Strategy stages set out Taylor Wimpey's objections to the Council's proposed strategy in terms of overall growth and new housing, as well as the specific issues associated with the Somer Valley. On this basis it is taken that the location outside of the development boundary and the Council's proposed strategy to restrict further development do not, in themselves, render the site 'unsuitable' for housing development.
- 1.4 Other issues and apparent concerns raised in the Council's SHLAA assessment relate to topography and the relationship with surrounding land, visibility and impact in the wider landscape, character and appearance. Various Highway matters are discussed but it is not apparent that these represent reasons why the Council has concluded that the site is 'unsuitable'. The land is not located in the Green Belt or an AONB and there are no specific restrictive designations that are applicable.

- 1.5 Taylor Wimpey now has an interest in the entire potential development site **MSN23** and availability does not represent a constraint to the land being brought forward for new housing.

Ecology

- 1.6 Tyler Grange have completed an extended Phase 1 habitat survey at the site, which has been augmented by further specific faunal survey's (the scope of which was previously agreed with Council Officers). All of these site surveys have now been completed and the results do not reveal any constraints to housing development taking place.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 1.7 The Council's SHLAA assessment is particularly concerned with development being open to longer views from the south.
- 1.8 As part of providing a site specific landscape assessment for the site to inform development proposals, this issue has been further reviewed. This confirms that in views from the elevated land to the south, the site is viewed in context with the existing built edge, and the western site area is set against a backdrop of residential development on the rising land towards Monger Lane to the north. Views of the central site area are heavily filtered by vegetation along the southern site boundary and internal hedgerow, as well as within the area of Public Open Space to the south of the site. Where there are open views across the field to the east of the site beyond the housing on the lower ground to the south, the site sits below the skyline in this view, set against a backdrop of tree belts and field boundary hedgerows on the rising undulating land to the north.
- 1.9 Following detailed site specific landscape assessment it is not considered that landscape impact, character or appearance would render the site unsuitable for housing development.

Highways and Transportation

- 1.10 The detailed scope of Transportation Assessment has been discussed with Council Officers and various parts of the necessary assessment work has been undertaken, including traffic counts/surveys at local roads and junctions. Detailed proposals for access via Monger Lane are well progressed as part of an overall access strategy for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. The site is well located to

access public transport, local employment opportunities and facilities/services in the town centre and elsewhere.

Ground Conditions – Historic Coal Mining

- 1.11 There is known to be historic coal mining activity in the area and therefore this issue has been investigated in detail. A Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Assessment was undertaken by WSP Environmental Limited in August 2011. This assessment identified two possible mine shafts located within the development area, a potential constraint to development. Subsequently Coal Authority Mining Records and more detailed local historical mining information has been interrogated to further understand these features and associated workings in the area. It has been confirmed that previous workings beneath the site at depths of 304-335m do not affect proposed development at the site, and whilst some further detailed intrusive work is required prior to construction, historic shafts and very old shallow workings are unlikely to be a specific constraint.

Overall Conclusions

- 1.12 In recognition of the Inspector's comments at the PHM we have not sought to provide extensive or comprehensive information relating to the merits of development specifically at the Monger Lane site (**MSN23**). However, the above information demonstrates the detailed technical work that has been undertaken to date by Taylor Wimpey, and which will continue to be supplemented and refined further in the future.
- 1.13 All of the key physical and environmental factors associated with housing development at the site have been examined and there is no reason to suggest that housing development is not feasible or viable on the land. Furthermore, contrary to the relatively brief assessment, which has been provided by the Council within the SHLAA specific issues such as landscape and visual impact have been examined by Taylor Wimpey and this more detailed work has confirmed that the site is suitable, although as always site specific design and mitigation/enhancement measures would need to be considered as appropriate.
- 1.14 There are suitable development opportunities available at Midsomer Norton, including specifically land at Monger Lane, and therefore there is scope to plan for additional growth and development at the settlement, as is discussed in other statements and representations submitted on behalf of Taylor Wimpey.

**Appendix 2 – Midsomer Norton, Transport Context and Issues
(WSP)**

MIDSOMER NORTON – TRANSPORT CONTEXT AND ISSUES

1.1 SUMMARY

Planning for substantially more dwellings, above existing commitments, could be achieved at Midsomer Norton (MSN) without resulting in increased out commuting, provided that development is located appropriately.

Monger Lane, Midsomer Norton (MSN 23) is one potential site that could be delivered, supporting a wider strategy for Midsomer Norton and neighbouring Radstock, which is consistent with the draft Core Strategy ambitions for a thriving and vibrant area focussed on the town centres. Monger Lane is located in the MSN North Ward.

This is based on the following evidence that:

- There is a good level of existing self containment in the main town of Midsomer Norton, where nearly half of residents work within Midsomer Norton North or adjacent wards.
- Planned improvements such as GBBN will further enhance opportunities for public transport trips where commuting to destinations outside Somer Valley occurs (e.g. to Bath where 17% of existing residents commute and Bristol where 7% commute).
- Commuting patterns contribute to 19% of car trips and 25% of associated carbon emissions¹. However, addressing self containment is also about access to healthcare, education, shopping and leisure facilities, which contribute a greater share of car trips and associated emissions. There are good opportunities for local journeys in and around Midsomer Norton and Radstock, which travel planning and smarter choices programmes could further encourage.
- Additional development in and around Midsomer Norton would minimise pressure on the strategic trunk road network, given that average commuting patterns show that the majority of out commuting from the area does not extend as far as the motorway network.

In conclusion, by focussing additional housing on sites in the key settlement of Midsomer Norton and Radstock as part of the Council's overall strategy for the District, there is potential to reduce the need to travel and encourage sustainable transport alongside policies to improve facilities in the town centres.

¹ Source: Carbon Pathways Analysis, DfT, 2008 – figures relate to household cars at the national level

EVIDENCE

1.2 SELF CONTAINMENT IN MIDSOMER NORTON.

It is possible to identify from the 2001 Census the broad distribution of destinations where Residents' worked during 2001 (Table 1) and hence the level of existing self containment.

Table 1: Key Travel to Work Destinations

Commuting to:	Residents commuting from:	
	Midsomer Norton North Ward	Midsomer Norton*
Midsomer Norton*	39%	40%
Bath City**	17%	17%
Mendip****	10%	11%
Remainder B&NES***	8%	8%
Chilcompton Ward & Paulton Ward	8%	8%
Bristol	7%	6%
South Gloucestershire	3%	2%
West Wiltshire	2%	2%
North Somerset	2%	2%
Keynsham****	1%	1%
Other	4%	3%
Total	101%^	100%

^Total exceeds 100 due to rounding

*Midsomer Norton North, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Westfield

**Abbey, Bathwick, Combe Down, Kinsmead, Lambridge, Lansdown, Lyncombe, Newbridge, Odd Down, Oldfield, Southdown, Twerton, Walcot, Westmoreland, Weston, Widcombe.

Excluding wards in Keynsham* & Bath City** and Paulton Ward.

****Keynsham East, Keynsham South, Keynsham North

***** Excludes Chilcompton Ward

From an analysis of key work destinations, it can be seen that almost half (47%) of residents from the ward of Midsomer Norton North work within Midsomer Norton or in the adjacent wards of Chilcompton and Paulton. This is considered to be a good level of self-containment, which is likely to be comparably higher than neighbouring rural areas. As the Core Strategy's ambition for The Somer Valley is to create a thriving and vibrant area with Midsomer Norton and Radstock as the focus, additional housing located in or near these towns (e.g. MSN 23) would be consistent with the intended strategy and maximise opportunities for self containment and sustainable local trips.

1.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUTING

Trip distribution

Table 1 identifies that the next most popular commuting destination from Midsomer Norton North ward, after Midsomer Norton, was to Bath city (17% residents) followed by a wider spread of destinations including Frome and Shepton Mallet. A significant number (7%) of residents commuted to Bristol. However, this number is significantly lower than for residents of some other locations in B&NES, for example Keynsham where in 2001 30% of residents worked in Bristol. Residents in Midsomer Norton are therefore less likely to commute into Bristol and more likely to look towards Bath.

Table 2 summarises the distances which the residential population of Midsomer Norton North (and Midsomer Norton as a whole) travelled to work in 2001.

Table 2: Distance travelled to work (2001 Census)

Distance travelled to work	Midsomer Norton North Ward	Midsomer Norton*
Works mainly from home	7%	6%
Less than 2km	29%	32%
2km to less than 5km	14%	13%
5km to less than 10km	3%	4%
10km to less than 20km	32%	30%
20km to less than 30km	6%	6%
30km to less than 40km	2%	1%
40km to less than 60km	1%	1%
60km and over	2%	1%
No fixed place of work	5%	5%
No. of people surveyed	2773	8234

*Midsomer Norton North, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Westfield

As shown in Table 2, a large proportion of residents in Midsomer Norton North ward travelled less than 5km to work (43%), which is a distance within which walking or cycling is feasible. A significant proportion (32%) travel between 10km (6 miles) and 20 km (12 miles). Destinations within this distance of Midsomer Norton include Bath, Frome, Shepton Mallet and Wells.

Opportunities for Public Transport

Both Bristol and Bath can be reached by bus with frequent services by bus from Midsomer Norton. The main services to and from the centre of Bath (178 and 179) operate approximately every 1 to 2 hours during the day and provide a typical combined frequency between Midsomer Norton and Bath from Monday to Saturday of 3 per hour, with journey times of 35 – 50 minutes. There is 1 service per hour to Bristol taking 80-90 minutes.

Accessibility from Midsomer Norton and Radstock will be further improved by the Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN) routes. This will lead to improved facilities, journey speeds and reliability. Additional development locations at Midsomer Norton will be well placed to maximise the benefits that this investment will provide and contribute to its success.

The Greater Bristol Bus Network includes 10 corridors. Those of relevance to Midsomer Norton are:

- **Corridor 6:** A37. The 376 and 379 services to the centre of Midsomer Norton use this route at present. Works have been completed on this route at the Wells Road / St Johns Road Junction including a new bus lane and signal improvements. Also, signal improvements at the Staunton Lane Junction (to prioritise buses). Further improvement works will be implemented prior to the network launch of GBBN in early 2012.
- **Corridor 10:** The A376 from Midsomer Norton to Bath. Services using this route include the 173 Wells to Bath and of particular note the 178 Bath to Bristol (which stops west of the site on Phillis Hill). To date, a new bus lane has been installed in the vicinity of the Odd Down Park and Ride site. Northbound and southbound bus lanes (and signal priority for buses) have been installed on the A367 Wellsway. This assists in journey reliability for routes into Bath when they meet the Bath urban area. In addition, a number of stops on the route have been improved, including raised kerbs and in some places new shelters. Remaining elements of the corridor (e.g. real time information displays) will be completed prior to the network launch of GBBN in early 2012.

Working from Home

Census Travel to Work Mode Share data from 2001 shows that 6-7% of residents worked from home in the Midsomer Norton area. Although this is slightly less than the average for B&NES, it is expected that incidences of home working are likely to have increased since 2001, as more organisations provide the software and hardware to enable smarter working (and may in an increasing number of cases be more culturally open to its benefits).

Opportunities for Walking / Cycling

The data from the 2001 census suggests that despite the travel to work being quite car dominated there is good potential for encouraging additional commute trips on foot (assuming that the general pattern of work locations was broadly similar for new residents as those in 2001). Almost 36% employed residents in Midsomer Norton North Ward in 2001 either worked mainly from home or lived within 2km of their workplace. Compared to the 10% who walked to work and 2% who cycled, this suggests that some additional trips could be converted to be undertaken by foot from development focussed in the town.

Minimising impact on the trunk road network

Midsomer Norton is approximately 40 km (25 miles) away from the nearest motorway junction on the M5 and 35km (22 miles) from the M4. The average commute to work from Midsomer Norton is approximately 10km (6 miles). Only 11% of commuters travelled more than 20km to work, with only 3% more than 40km. This suggests that the location of Norton Radstock and the distance from the motorway network discourages travel to work trips further afield than places such as Bristol, Bath, Frome or Shepton Mallet. Levels of out commuting as a whole are focussed on surrounding area and major towns, in turn meaning that residents are less likely to live in the area and use the trunk road network to access employment. As a result additional development is less likely to increase pressure at key points on strategic networks, a strategically important goal in the West of England.

This is supported by evidence from G-BATH, a strategic multi modal model prepared for the area as part of the Greater Bristol Modelling Framework. None of the published modelling reports provide any data of relevance to the Midsomer Norton area. Instead they focus on the existing and forecast congestion problems within Bath and Bristol and in most cases do not report on findings for other areas (e.g. South of Bristol including the Chew Valley). It is likely that this relates to the fact that the highway network typically operates within capacity in these areas at a strategic level and is forecast to continue to do so. This does not preclude the possibility of localised congestion issues. However, it does highlight that development in Midsomer Norton is likely to have less impact on the strategic highway network than developments in other parts of the West of England, except insofar as traffic is inbound to the main Bristol-Bath conurbation.

1.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCESS TO SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Nationally, commuting accounts for 19% of total trips travelled by household car and 25% of carbon emissions². Development in Midsomer Norton would also provide good opportunities for local access to education, healthcare, shopping, leisure facilities and other personal business, which combined accounts for a far higher share of car trips and associated carbon emissions (41% of car trips and 39% of emissions)³.

Midsomer Norton provides good opportunities to promote local accessibility from the site to a range of services and facilities in the area, enabling non-work travel needs to be met more locally and for these trips (and local commute trips) to be made more sustainably, by lower impact means than by car alone.

These opportunities include:

- **Healthcare** - there are GP surgeries in Paulton and in North Street Midsomer Norton which fall within the accessibility bands within Midsomer Norton (e.g. Monger Lane). The Paulton Memorial Hospital can be reached by bus or on foot from the town and provides a minor injury unit and maternity services.
- **Education** - a number of schools in B&NES (including Paulton Junior School) are part of the Bike-it project, encouraging more children to ride or scoot to school.
- **Leisure** - The Somer Valley Wheels scheme is also focussed on helping to increase cycling by adults within the area, primarily through organised rides. Since 2007, it is reported to have assisted over 250 individuals within the age range 15 to 75, leading to it becoming a popular social activity in the area.
- **Shops and services** – Ring-a-Ride services in Midsomer Norton and Radstock provide access to neighbouring villages or towns to access nursery groups, training at community centres, banks, post offices and GP surgeries. Day trips for the elderly and disabled passengers are arranged on a monthly basis and vehicles are available for group hire and journeys outside of the core hours are done by arrangement. More generally the availability of local services and facilities (particularly convenience shopping, leisure facilities and services) in Midsomer-Norton, Westfield, Radstock and Paulton should assist in reducing the need for new residents to travel further afield for non-work trips.

This demonstrates that sustainable access to services and facilities could be achieved from new development in Midsomer Norton.

² Source: Carbon Pathways Analysis, DfT, 2008

³ Source: Carbon Pathways Analysis, DfT, 2008

1.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

More dwellings in the key settlement of Midsomer Norton (e.g. at Monger Lane) would not be inconsistent with the overall strategy for greater containment and would help to maximise the potential for more sustainable transport

The spatial strategy for the Somer Valley sets out that Midsomer Norton and Radstock will function as complementary town centres, with Midsomer Norton as the primary centre providing key employment opportunities, services and leisure provision. The Core Strategy proposes that the public realm be improved in the centre. The Monger Lane site provides good opportunities for cycle access to both Midsomer Norton and to Radstock which is an additional strength.

As described above, additional dwellings located in Midsomer Norton would provide opportunities for self containment and sustainable transport for a range of journey types. These opportunities can be realised by:

- Contained and sustainable trips to the town centres of Midsomer Norton and Radstock. Local facilities include employment, healthcare, shopping and leisure. Draft Policy DW1 sets out that housing, jobs and community facilities will be focussed in centres, including Midsomer Norton.
- Further improvements to bus routes, through GBBN improvements which are due to be completed in early 2012 for the network launch.
- Minimal commuting trips extending beyond 20km and to the trunk road network, which is 35km – 40km from Midsomer Norton. Commuting trips are therefore likely to be contained within a more local area.

In summary additional development can be located to take advantage of existing and improved facilities in the key towns of Midsomer Norton and Radstock, whilst public transport improvements on key corridors (GBBN) will provide opportunities for sustainable travel, to Bath in particular. The analysis suggests there is scope to improve mode share from existing communities and maximise the number travelling relatively short distances to work. An area wide travel plan approach - promoting car sharing and home working as well as walking, cycling and public transport, would seek to take advantage of this and be consistent with the emphasis in the JLTP and Core Strategy on smarter choices.

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