

Publication Version December 2010

**Bath and North  
East Somerset  
Draft Core Strategy**

# Executive Summary

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The full document can also be viewed on our website:  
**[www.bathnes.gov.uk/corestrategy](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/corestrategy)**

The Core Strategy can be made available in a range of languages, large print, Braille, on tape, electronic and accessible formats by contacting Planning Policy on:  
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**Bath in Time**

p5 & 7

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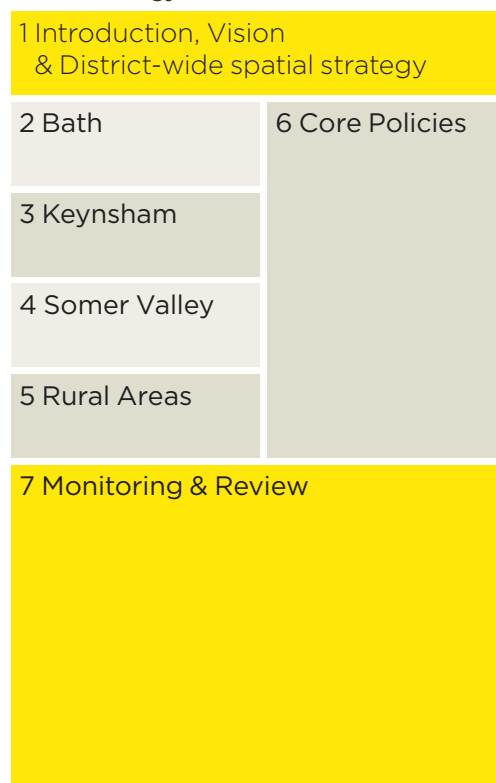
# Introduction

The Core Strategy is a key policy document for Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) that puts in place a strategic planning framework to guide change and development in the District over the next 20 years and beyond.

The Core Strategy is the spatial expression of the Bath & North East Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy, and is shaped by the challenges that are specific to the district and the aspirations of its communities. It addresses a number of local concerns, notably the health and wellbeing, community safety, and stronger communities agendas. Also of particular significance is the 'Futures for Bath, Keynsham and the Somer Valley' work which set out the Council's long-term regeneration aspirations for the main urban centres within the District.

The Core Strategy does not set out site-specific proposals; instead it looks at the broad locations for delivering new development. Policies in the Core Strategy do not overlap with each other and therefore, the Core Strategy should be read as a whole. The Core Strategy is the primary document in the Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF includes other documents, some of which are under preparation. Of note are the Placemaking Plan which will cover site allocations, detailed development management policies as well as local designations for the different places within the district. The structure of the Core Strategy is illustrated in the diagram below.

## *Structure of the Core Strategy document*



# 1

## Core Strategy Principles



Proposals to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) has necessitated a move away from regionally imposed targets and enabled B&NES to prepare a strategy more appropriately suited to local circumstances. Formulation of this new overarching policy framework for the District has entailed analysis of up-to-date evidence, assessment of different options to meet the objectives, engaging with local communities, consideration of environmental impacts, assessing deliverability and co-ordination with neighbouring authorities. It must implement local ambitions as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Underpinning principles for the preparation of the Core Strategy have been to;

- prioritise brownfield land as far as possible
- align new development with the necessary infrastructure
- begin to address the jobs homes imbalance across the district

### **Development land supply:**

A detailed review has been undertaken of the capacity of the District's settlements for delivery of new housing, jobs and community facilities. This has included identifying suitable and deliverable development sites, understanding the environmental constraints, assessing the appropriate mix of uses and densities and ensuring the necessary infrastructure is in place or can be secured to deliver mixed and balanced communities. Deliverability takes into account viability. It has also looked at the opportunities to re-use empty homes and under-used properties. This analysis is set out in, in part, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

### **Infrastructure**

An underlying principle in the preparation of the Core Strategy has been the need for new development to be well aligned with the necessary infrastructure, including transport, schools, recreational need and green infrastructure. The Infrastructure Delivery Programme provides an assessment of the infrastructure provision to underpin the spatial strategy.

### **Environment**

The district is renowned for its outstanding environment. The environmental impact of various policy proposals and alternative options have been assessed through the sustainability appraisal, the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) and locational studies.

### **Climate Change**

The Council has assessed planning measures needed in response to climate change. This includes an assessment of renewable energy generation potential and a flood mitigation strategy.

### **The Local communities**

National policy requires that the results of public engagement should be treated as evidence. The preparation of the Core Strategy has therefore entailed close working with local groups and communities in order to understand local priorities. This has included various economic, environment and community groups in Bath, the Somer Valley partnership, the Keynsham Development Advisory Group as well as parish and town councils and interest groups. Development must be inspired by the characters and values of each place within the District.

### Development need

The Council has also undertaken assessments of development need within the district during the plan-period. This includes assessing the space needed for economic growth, housing, retail provision and social needs. This takes account of the Council's objective of promotion of a higher value economy rather than only volume growth. In terms of housing need, the Council has assessed the post recession likely need for new housing, both market and affordable housing, over the plan period up to 2026 based on:

- Projected population change arising from births over deaths and increasing life expectancy
- The likely housing requirement this entails, including rapid decline in household size and increased separation rates
- The need for housing generated by economic growth (net migration), taking into account likely economic growth rate, productivity changes and sectoral changes
- Provision for non-economically active migrants

In terms of affordable housing need, Bath has one of the widest house price to earnings ratios outside of London but affordability varies across the district. The Council has therefore undertaken a viability study to inform a new policy framework on securing affordable housing through the planning system.

### Sub-regional context

The Spatial strategy for B&NES must be consistent with the strategies and programmes of neighbouring authorities, especially in the West of England.







# 2

## Spatial Strategy for Bath



### Key Challenges for Bath include:

- Bath's World Heritage Site status can make a positive contribution in driving growth and development. It can act as an incentive to and enabler of growth - however it does require that change is managed sensitively and high quality design is pursued.
- The need to diversify the economy to avoid over-reliance on a few sectors and the need for modern office space and other workspaces within and adjoining the city centre to accommodate growing enterprises and attract higher value jobs.
- Increasing the contribution of the universities to the economy as sources of creativity, innovation and labour.
- Provide for industrial enterprise to sustain a mixed economy for a multi skilled workforce.
- The high cost of housing relative to average wages, high levels of in-commuting, and significant need for affordable housing
- There is a significant imbalance between the resident workforce and jobs. The main place of employment for about 30% of the resident workforce is outside Bath.
- Areas of derelict or underperforming land within the city
- Need for city centre public realm improvements and a better relationship between the city and its river.
- Various factors, including climate change, the price of energy, congestion and pollution on key radial routes, mean that planning and transport policies must enable people to travel around the city with less environment impact.
- Bats are protected under European and UK legislation and care must be taken to ensure that the impact on bats of change and development is taken into account.



## The Vision for Bath

Bath's natural, historic and cultural assets, which combine to create a unique sense of place, of international significance, will be secured and enhanced to maintain the city's key competitive advantage and unique selling point as a high quality environment in which to reside, locate and grow a business, visit and invest.

The scope to further improve Bath's environmental quality will form the foundation of efforts to boost the city's profile as a more competitive and low carbon economic centre. The realisation of a range of development opportunities within the Central Area and Western Corridor will greatly improve the city aesthetically and also enable Bath to position itself as a more entrepreneurial, innovative, creative and business friendly place. Economic development and productivity will therefore be stimulated and facilitated, whilst simultaneously upgrading the inherited townscape.

Alongside measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, the diversification and growth of a low carbon economy are the key changes that are sought for Bath.

The delivery of new housing on brownfield sites will help to create a more sustainable relationship between the city's labour and jobs markets and support Bath's economic potential whilst retaining the integrity of its landscape. Parallel investment in public transport infrastructure and walking and cycling will keep the city moving and enable more sustainable travel choices to be made.

Bath's already strong identity as a therapeutic place will be enhanced by boosting its performance as an enjoyable city for leisure, recreation and shopping with a vivacious cultural scene and a highly valued green infrastructure network.

## Summary of the strategy for Bath

### Overview

The spatial strategy for the city is depicted on the adjacent diagram and shows that change will occur primarily in the Central Area and Western Corridor. There will be no strategic change to the Green Belt surrounding the City. The strategy plans for growth of about 5,700 jobs and 6,000 new homes.

### Central Area and Western Corridor

The strategy will enable the expansion of key employment sectors through the development of modern office space within and adjoining the city centre. Industrial land is retained in the Newbridge Riverside area to sustain a mixed economy to support Bath's multi skilled workforce. The strategy does not vary the principles that have been established to enable the residential-led regeneration of Western Riverside.

The Strategy seeks to achieve a better balance between the overall number of jobs in the city and the resident workforce. An uplift in housing and the associated growth of the labour force could reduce the need for labour to commute inwards. Economic diversification could reduce the need for a significant minority of workers to out-commute to other areas.

The approach to comparison retail is to ensure that Southgate is absorbed into the trading patterns by only allowing for small to medium sized retail development that can demonstrate a complementary role. In line with national planning policy, convenience retail floorspace (beyond existing commitments) will be focussed within and on the edge of existing centres before considering out-of-centre sites.

The Central area includes the city centre and adjoining locations such as South Quays, Western Riverside East, and the Rec. Within this broad zone, the Core Strategy provides for new hotel space, a new rugby stadium and a cultural/performance/arts venue. This will entail the change of use of sites within the central area such as existing car parks and will be accompanied by improvements to the public realm.





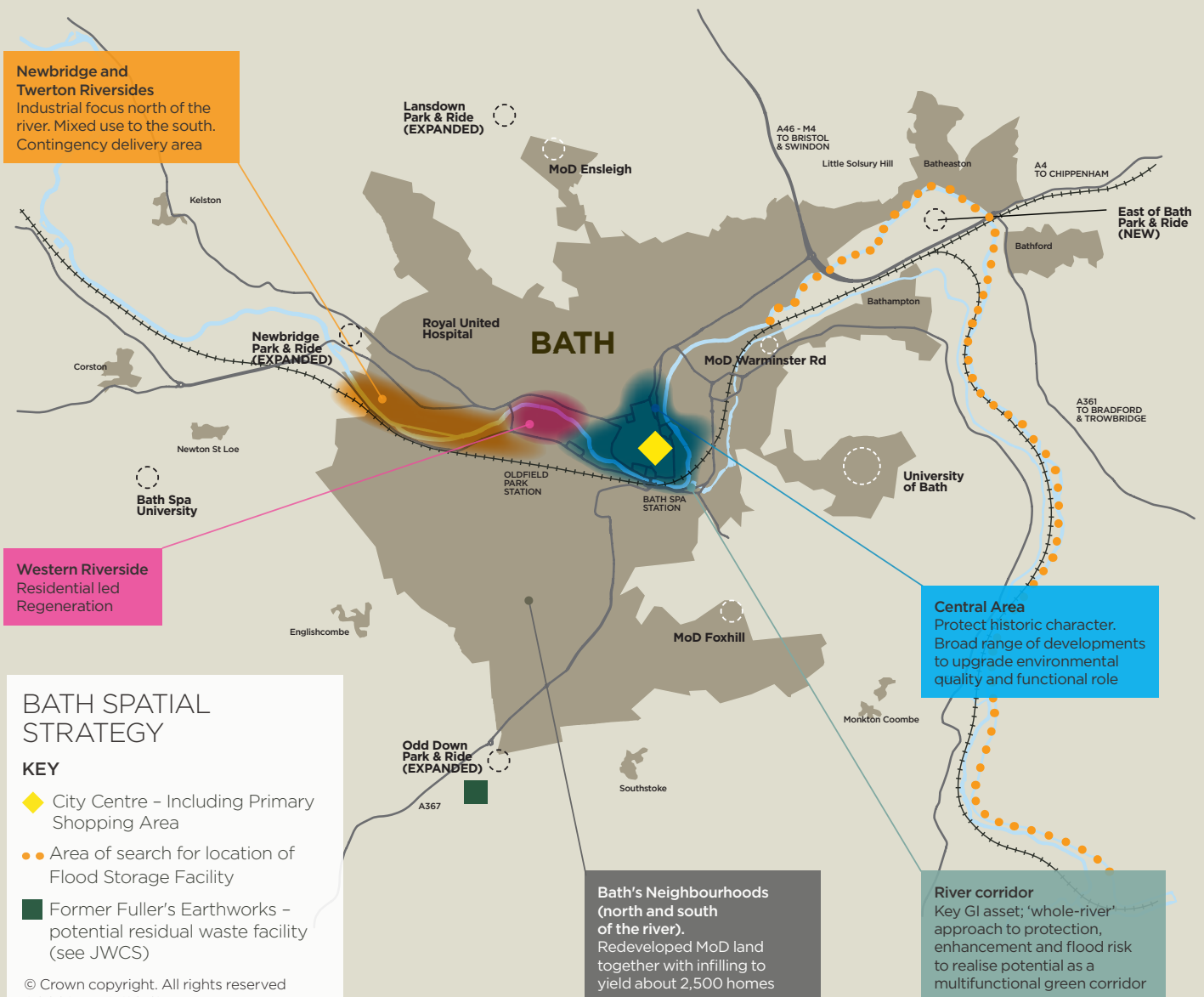
In light of the fact that some of Bath's key development locations lie within the river corridor, the Council has demonstrated that there are no reasonably available locations with a lower probability of flooding appropriate to the type of development proposed. The spatial strategy is also underpinned by a flood risk management strategy which entails an upstream flood storage area and also on-site flood defence measures.

### Bath's Neighborhoods

In the outer Bath neighbourhoods, the Core Strategy does not plan for significant change other than redevelopment of large sites such as surplus Ministry of Defence land. District and local centres will be protected. In relation to Further Education, the policy framework enables the growth of on campus and in-city teaching and research space and also the provision for additional on-campus student bed spaces, enabling growth in the overall number of students. This approach seeks to limit future losses of family accommodation to student housing and facilitate the stabilisation and potential shrinkage of the private lettings market.

### Infrastructure and Delivery

The strategy for Bath requires the implementation of necessary transport and other infrastructure including a rejuvenated public transport interchange and improvements to Bath Spa Rail Station. The delivery programme and funding arrangements are set out in more detail in the Infrastructure Delivery Programme.



# 3

## Spatial Strategy for Keynsham



### Key Issues in Keynsham;

Previous consultation has highlighted a number of key issues facing the town:

- Recent and future job losses
- Desire for town centre regeneration
- Affordable housing shortage
- Ageing population
- Traffic congestion & unreliable public transport
- Lack of allotments
- Insufficient emphasis to protecting Keynsham's heritage
- Sewage and stormwater capacity issues
- Desire to retain the separate identity of Keynsham & protect the Green Belt



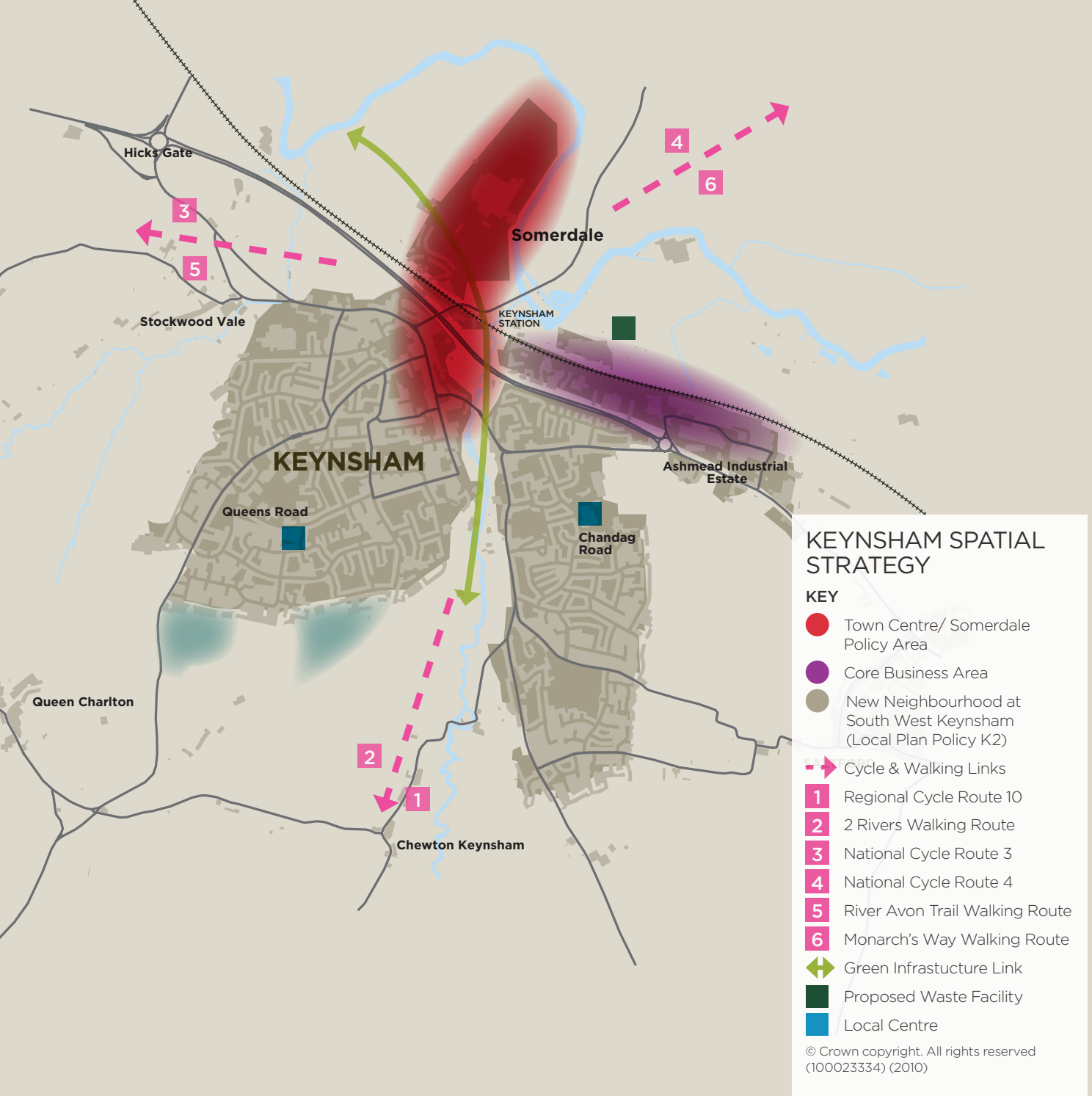
### The Vision for Keynsham

Keynsham is a historic town that occupies a strategically important location between Bristol and Bath and is therefore well placed to improve and attract investment. It will continue to act as a market town and service centre for the surrounding area. In responding to the loss of a major employer, it will evolve as a more significant business location. Keynsham will retain its independence and its separate identity within an attractive rural setting. It will become a more sustainable, desirable and well connected place in which to live and work, with an enhanced town centre inspired by its heritage, cherished rivers, park and green spaces.

### Summary of the strategy for Keynsham

The spatial strategy for Keynsham, as depicted on the adjacent diagram, focuses change in the Town Centre and Somerdale. No changes are proposed to the Green Belt boundary around the town. The Core Strategy seeks to address the significant in and out-commuting by promoting the type of employment growth which matches the needs of the resident workers. To achieve this, business space is made available within the town to enable it to become a more significant business location.

The Core Strategy makes provision for around 1,500 new homes of which around 800 homes are already committed. The remaining 700 dwellings are directed towards the town centre and Somerdale. Provision is made for around 1,500 net additional jobs and the Broadmead/Ashmead/Pixash Industrial Estate will be retained as an area for business activity complementing the role of the town centre and enabling its intensification through higher density business development. Somerdale is key to the realisation of the strategy for Keynsham and its redevelopment should provide a new high quality, exemplar, mixed-use quarter providing significant employment floorspace and new homes.



The Strategy provides for larger retail units in the town centre to attract a more varied mix of retailers and protects Queens Road and Chandag Road as local centres because they offer an important range of essential day-to-day goods and services for their local neighbourhoods.

Infrastructure required at Keynsham to support this strategy includes;

- Flood protection measures at Somerdale
- Major improvements to improve sewerage capacity
- Secondary road access to the Somerdale site
- Improvements to Keynsham Train Station and Enhanced Service Frequency
- Improvements to public transport and enhanced connectivity between cycling, public transport and walking routes.



# 4

## Spatial Strategy for Somer Valley



The Somer Valley Area includes Midsomer Norton, Westfield, Radstock, Peasedown St John, Paulton, Shoscombe, Camerton, Timsbury, High Littleton and Farrington Gurney. The rural areas section also contains policies which also apply to the villages in the Somer Valley.

Engagement with local communities and research has highlighted a number of key issues facing the town:

### Key Challenges

- Vulnerable local economy dependent on a narrow range of industries and a few large employers
- A number of large vacant, underused or ageing factory sites
- High levels of out-commuting due to lack of local employment opportunities
- Perceived difficulty in attracting economic investment in the area
- Transport congestion and limited opportunities for large scale transport intervention & poor public transport in rural areas

- Competition with neighbouring towns – mixed quality of Midsomer Norton town centre, dominance of road network in Radstock town centre
- Access to community facilities – maintaining and enhancing local village centres services
- High level of existing housing commitments i.e. 2,200 dwellings exacerbating imbalance of housing over jobs.
- Lack of formal open space.
- Poor town centre environments and insufficient retail offer

### Strengths

- Outstanding natural environment within & surrounding the towns
- Mining heritage provides a basis for recreation (disused rail lines) & tourism (especially Radstock)
- Critical mass of a combined Somer Valley area offers greater potential than towns and villages individually
- Active local communities and existing community networks
- A local hospital and good schools
- Relative lower cost of housing compared to elsewhere in the district
- Basis of a good cycle network

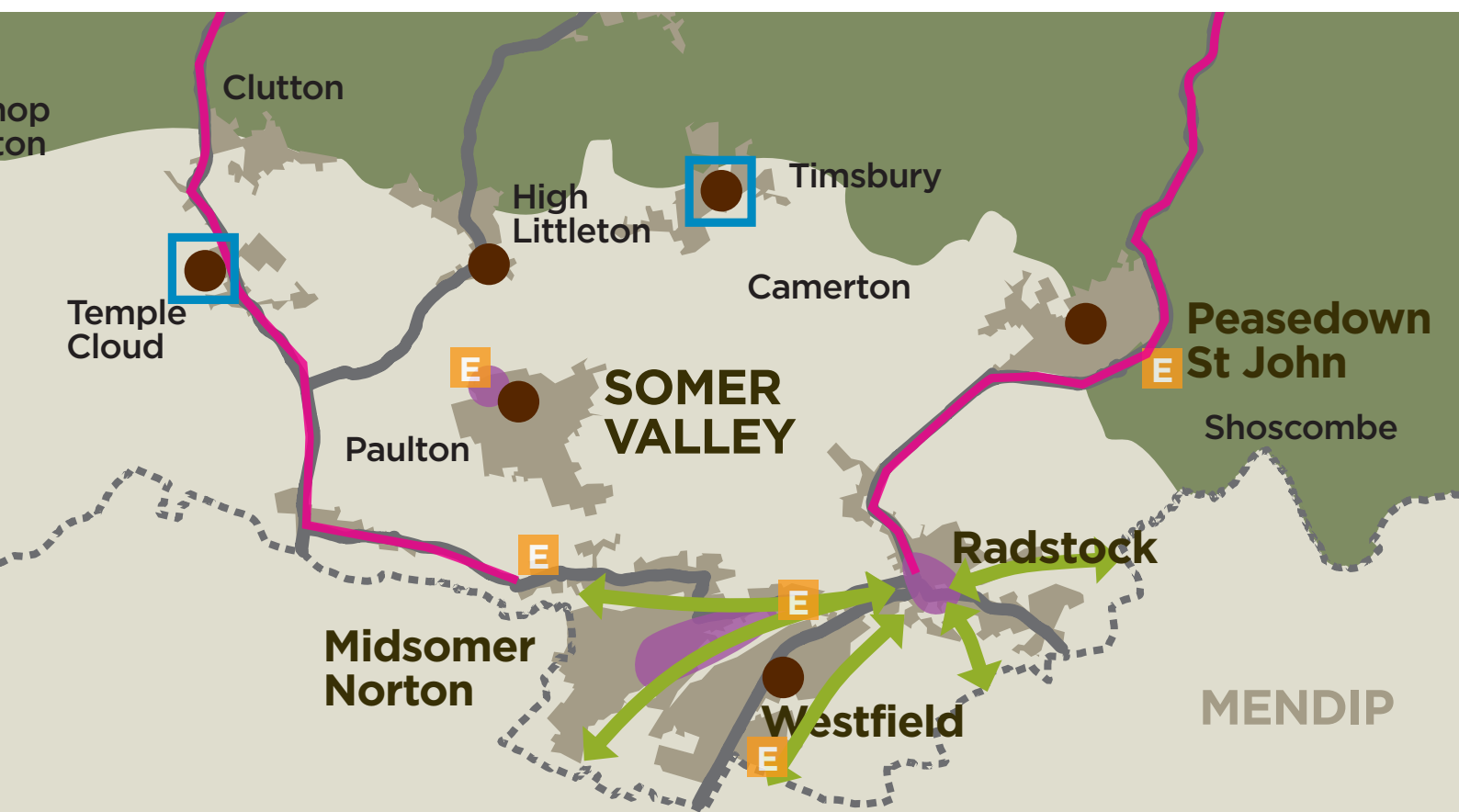
## Summary of the strategy for Somer Valley

### Overview

The spatial strategy for the Somer Valley, as depicted on the adjacent diagram, is to prioritise development on brownfield sites and focus on Midsomer Norton and Radstock Centres and the redevelopment of vacant and underused industrial land. Greenfield development above existing employment and housing commitments will be limited.

The strategy enables up to 2,700 new homes to be built within the Somer Valley but any new housing over and above the 2,200 existing commitments must have employment benefit or facilitate the implementation of the Town Park. New housing provision in Paulton and Peasedown St. John is limited in light of significant level of housing development committed in these villages.





**SOMER VALLEY STRATEGY**

**KEY**

- Green Belt
- Built Up Areas
- Local Centres
- Significant Change
- Policy RA1 Village
- E New Employment
- Green Infrastructure Link
- Showcase Bus Routes

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## The Vision for the Somer Valley

'The southern part of the District will become more self reliant, facilitated by economic led revitalisation alongside local energy generation, building on its industrial expertise and improving skill levels. Transport connections to other centres, as well as connections between settlements within the Somer Valley area will continue to be improved.

The roles of Midsomer Norton and Radstock Town Centres will be complementary, providing key employment opportunities, services and leisure provision to the communities in the Somer Valley area. Midsomer Norton town centre will continue to be the principal centre with an improved public realm and enhanced townscape and a Town Park. Radstock will continue to provide a focal point for local communities and realise its potential for tourism based on its green infrastructure, mining heritage cycle ways and attractive rural hinterland.

Villages of the Somer Valley will continue to provide for the needs of their local communities.

The Strategy enables the delivery of around 1,000 new jobs through the completion of existing industrial estates and the implementation of the large allocation at Old Mills. Existing business land will be protected and alternative uses are only allowed where there is employment benefit or which contributes to improvements to the town centres and does not lead to an unacceptable loss of employment land.

Improvements of the public realm in the town centres and strengthening the shopping offer in Midsomer Norton town centre will have economic benefits. Out of town shopping proposals will be resisted and the retail role of local centres in Westfield, Paulton and Peasedown St John and elsewhere will be protected.

A key aspect of the strategy for the area is the implementation of the Town Park which may require limited housing development to realise the scheme. Proposals to improve the cycle network will continue.

Key Infrastructure includes the Greater Bristol Bus Network A37 Bristol to Midsomer Norton and Bath and Bath to Midsomer Norton & Radstock. The Core Strategy recognises the limited opportunity for significant transport interventions. Therefore there is a reliance on encouraging "Smarter choices" to facilitate increased movement by sustainable modes of transport. These measures include Travel Plans, Community transport; implementation of Sustainable Transport Routes





# 5

## Policy Framework for the Rural Areas



Rural Bath & North East Somerset is made up of a wide variety of settlements with locally distinctive character but there are a number of common strategic issues across the rural areas such as:

- Lack of affordable housing to meet local needs
- Poor access to public transport affecting the functionality of the rural economy and leads to isolation
- Access to facilities, services and shops
- Reliance of the rural economy on farming, the self employed and small businesses that require support to flourish
- Opportunities to diversify the rural economy e.g. centred around local food production or renewable energy

### Vision for the Rural Areas

The district's rich and diverse countryside will be maintained. Locally identified needs will be met whilst maintaining the individual character of villages. The rural economy will evolve and new types of jobs and ways of working will provide more locally based employment opportunities. The potential for the rural area to play an important role in local food production will be encouraged. Community involvement will help facilitate improvement in the provision of community facilities and public transport.

### Summary of the strategy for rural areas

In line with a national policy of restraint the Core Strategy allows for only limited development in the rural areas and this is emphasized by the fact that around 2/3rds of the District lies within the Green Belt. The Core Strategy directs small scale housing and employment development to the most sustainable villages. Outside these villages development is more restricted. However, the need for local affordable housing and employment can also be met through the exceptions policy and Local Plan Policy ET.8 on rural diversification as well as the emerging 'Right to Build' proposals.

Community facilities and shops are generally acceptable within villages. This approach provides for the development of around 800 homes and 500 jobs in the rural areas, including an additional 250 dwellings over existing commitments. In particular, the Core Strategy;

- Focuses development in those villages with a good range of local facilities, good public transport access, development capacity and with local community support
- Protects the character of the open countryside
- Maintains the openness of the Green Belt in line with national policy
- Protects Community Facilities and shops
- Extends the remit of the affordable housing exceptions site policy to more villages and, where viability is a problem, allows for an element of market housing
- Facilitates economic diversification

# 5

## Core Policies



In addition to the place based sections, there are a number of district-wide issues which need to be addressed in order to ensure implementation of the vision and spatial objectives.

### Climate change

In the context of national targets the Sustainable Community Strategy commits the Council to providing leadership for a reduction of the area's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 45% by 2026. The CO<sub>2</sub> reductions should be achieved by application of the energy hierarchy:

- Reduce use of energy
- Use energy more efficiently
- Promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources

In addition to the locational strategy which seeks a more sustainable pattern of development and minimising the use of greenfield land, the Core Strategy contains a number of policies to address Climate Change:

### Retrofitting existing buildings

As 41% of Bath & North East Somerset's carbon emissions come from domestic properties, the Council is seeking to encourage retrofitting measures in existing building to reduce the demand for energy and resources. The Core Strategy does not set onerous requirements but seeks to encourage retrofitting and adaptability.

However, major developments should demonstrate that opportunities for the retention and retrofitting of existing buildings have been considered. The Core Strategy will be subject to an early review to take account of changing circumstances and available technology.

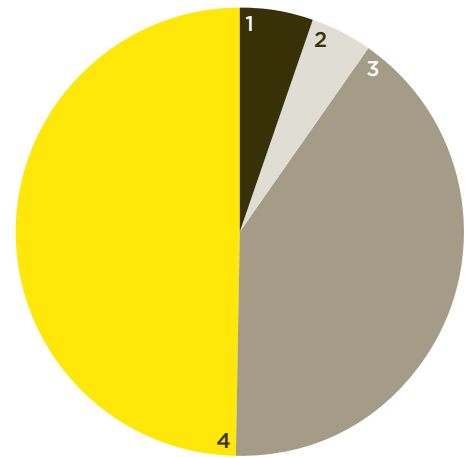
### Sustainable Construction

National standards for assessing sustainable construction in new buildings are set out in the Code for Sustainable Homes (CfSH) and Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). Some of these standards are enforced through Building Regulations. Taking account of viability the Core Strategy requires new development to meet those aspects of the national targets not covered by Building Regulations.

### Renewable Energy Targets

The UK Renewable Energy Strategy sets out to achieve 15% of energy to be generated from renewable sources by 2020. In 2007, the District's electricity supply from renewable sources was less than 0.1% of energy demand. The Core Strategy seeks to achieve an increase in the level of renewable energy generation in the district by setting a target. Proposals for renewable energy schemes will be assessed against this target and the other policies in the Core Strategy.

### CO<sub>2</sub> reduction required to meet 2026 renewable energy target

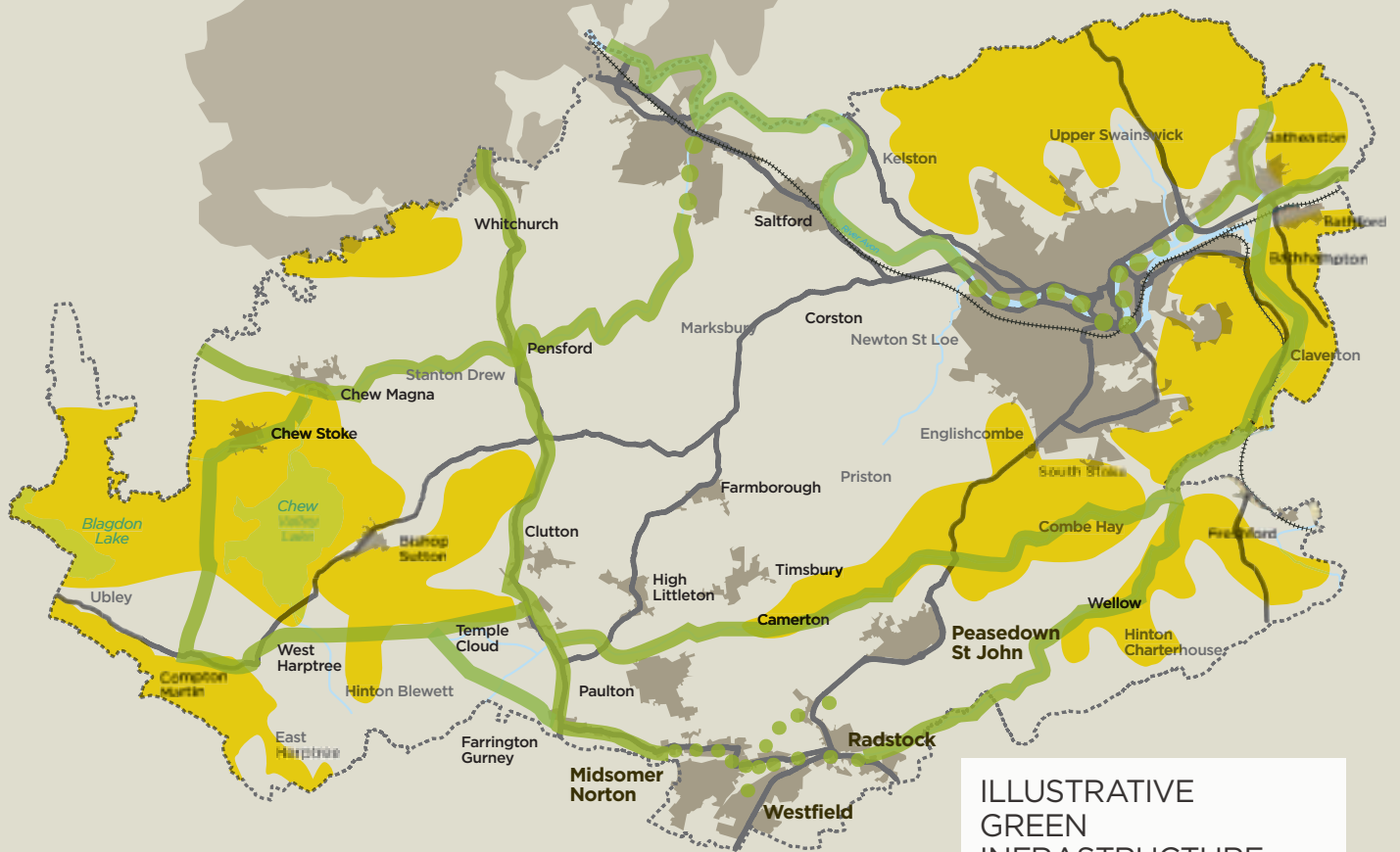


- 1 Renewable electricity
- 2 Renewable heat
- 3 FURTHER CUT NEEDED TO MEET 45%
- 4 Remaining B&NES CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

### District heating

District Heating provides heat and hot water to multiple buildings from a local plant. District Heating (including CHP/CCHP) is currently one of the most low cost ways to meet zero carbon objectives, particularly on brownfield sites where the efficiency/appropriateness of other technologies may be constrained. The Core Strategy encourages District Heating in locations with the greatest opportunity such as town and City centres and at large institutions.





**ILLUSTRATIVE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK**

**KEY**

- Built Up Areas
- Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors through Rural Areas
- Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors through Urban Areas
- Strategic Nature Areas

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## Environmental quality

### Natural & Built Environment

In addition to bespoke policies protecting the distinctive attributes of the place-based section, the Core Strategy also contains a policy safeguarding the districts distinctive character and diversity. In particular it refers to High Quality Design, (including seeking to ensure that all housing schemes meet CABE's Building for Life good standard) Historic Environment; Landscape and Nature Conservation.

### Green Belt

The Green Belt will be maintained and its openness protected from inappropriate development.

### Waste

The emerging West of England Joint Waste Core Strategy is currently being prepared and will set out the approach the provision of waste management infrastructure.

### Minerals

Minerals are a finite and important resource both nationally and locally.

Unlike most other forms of development mineral extraction can take place only where the mineral is found. Therefore it is important to protect areas where it is known or suspected, that commercially valuable minerals exist.

### Green infrastructure

The Core Strategy seeks to protect and enhance the integrity, multi-functionality, quality and connectivity of the strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) network. Specific opportunities are identified in the place-based sections.

## **Affordable housing**

The Core Strategy seeks to secure at least an average of 35% of all large housing sites for affordable housing. However the evidence reveals that in some parts of the District, development viability could contribute a higher proportion. Likewise, where a scheme is insufficiently viable to meet the 35% target, then the developer can negotiate a lower element where justified by evidence.

### **Tenure**

The tenure of the affordable housing will typically be based on a 75/25 split between social rent and intermediate housing.

### **Mix of housing**

A policy is included aimed at ensuring that new residential development provides a range of housing types and needs, to help support mixed and inclusive communities and to respond to demographic change.

### **Gypsies & Travellers**

The Core Strategy sets out the criteria for considering planning applications for sites relating to the Gypsies and Travellers.

## **A prosperous economy**

### **Economic Development**

The Core Strategy will support and deliver elements of the Council's Economic Strategy, which aims to create the conditions for jobs growth throughout the district, leading to a more diverse, productive and resilient economy which provides better opportunities for all. In particular the Council is pursuing smart growth i.e. promotion of a higher value economy rather than only volume growth.

### **Centres and Retailing**

Along with Bath City Centre, the district is served by a diverse network of town, district and local centres of varying size. In addition to providing facilities like shops, cafés, pubs, post office and banks, centres also include varying levels of community facilities, work places and leisure facilities. Many centres are a focus for transport services and most offer a chance to access essential facilities close to people's homes. This policy therefore aims to support this network of accessible centres as key focuses for development and as the principal locations for shopping and community facilities as well as offices, local entertainment, art and cultural facilities.

The retail function of the centres within the hierarchy will be maintained and enhanced.

### **Transport and movement**

The Core Strategy policy framework continues the Council's approach of reducing car dependency and working towards making walking, cycling and use of public transport the more attractive options for travel. This approach is embodied in the strategic objectives of the Core Strategy, the locational strategy and the place based strategies.

However the B&NES highway network remains heavily trafficked highlighting the need to undertake transport and access improvements and major infrastructure projects to facilitate growth in housing numbers and jobs, to minimise the adverse effect of traffic, and to enable environmental improvement to be made to existing centres.

## **Delivery & contingency**

### **Delivery**

The scale of new homes entails a significant uplift in past rates of delivery from an average of around 480 to around 550 per annum although as set out in the SHLAA, the overall trajectory of provision will vary year by year. The provision of new jobs is dependent on objectives and interventions in the Council's Economic Strategy being realised.

The Infrastructure Delivery Programme, published alongside the Core Strategy, outlines the infrastructure that is needed to ensure the alignment of infrastructure with new development and these are summarised in the place-based sections. It focuses particularly on funding sources and delivery mechanisms in the first 5 years of the Plan period.

### **Contingency**

The Core Strategy recognises the need for contingency in light of future uncertainty. There is the scope for flexibility in the mix of uses and density of some of the large redevelopment sites such as at Somerdale in Keynsham and the MoD sites in Bath. In addition, there is scope in the western corridor in Bath to vary the mix of uses to respond to needs for development. This flexibility maintains the overall strategy of a priority on urban focussed brownfield opportunities. The Council will monitor delivery rates in the plan period which will influence decisions on development proposals. A review of the Core Strategy is also programmed for around 2016 in order to respond to changing circumstances. The Core Strategy includes a monitoring framework in order to assist this process.



