

7

Core Strategy Summary



Rural Areas



This is one of a series of 8 summary leaflets about the Core Strategy Spatial Options document. This leaflet summarises the options for Rural Areas.

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Emerging Spatial Vision for the Rural Areas

In 2026 the rural areas in Bath and North East Somerset will continue to benefit from, and will have enhanced, the distinctive character of the countryside, rich natural environments and settlements.

As the rural economy diversifies, it will retain its buoyancy and be known for local enterprise. The rural economy will be at the heart of the transition to a low carbon economy, with more local food production and renewable technologies providing a range of employment opportunities for different skill levels. As well as this, increased provision of affordable housing will improve the opportunity for the local workforce to live locally and enable a larger amount of local residents to remain in the area.

The villages and the communities that define them will work together to provide good access to facilities for everyone. Complementing this, sustainable travel options will become increasingly attractive and contribute to healthier lifestyles including increased walking and cycling. There will be reduced reliance on the private car and the impacts of rural isolation minimised.

The high quality landscape and environment will continue to be a focus for protection and enhancement; and a functional network of priority habitats that are more resilient to climate change will be supported.



Spatial Objectives

1. Maintain and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the countryside and villages
2. Improve the level, and mix, of affordable housing for local people
3. Increase easy, safe and affordable access to local facilities by maximising the potential of available resources and the way they are delivered
4. Improve sustainable travel options including high quality public transport provision which is accessible to people's homes and places of work, car sharing schemes and improved walking and cycling routes to help reduce rural isolation
5. Encourage economic diversification led by the transition to a low carbon economy
6. Increase availability of local produce and materials to support economic diversification in a more sustainable and self sufficient manner
7. Promote renewable energy developments
8. Protect and enhance the natural environment

Spatial Options

Spatial options for the rural areas surround making choices on policy direction. There are 3 policy issues pertinent to the rural areas and these include identifying the most sustainable villages, affordable housing in the rural areas and rural economic diversification.

Policy Issue Rural A: Identifying the most sustainable villages

The most sustainable villages need to be identified, as these will be the focus for:

- increased protection of existing facilities, with the village acting as a hub of facilities for surrounding villages
- some additional small scale housing to meet local need
- fostering economic activity

To identify the most sustainable villages we have looked at the existing role and function of all of the villages in the District through a community facilities audit and an analysis of public transport.

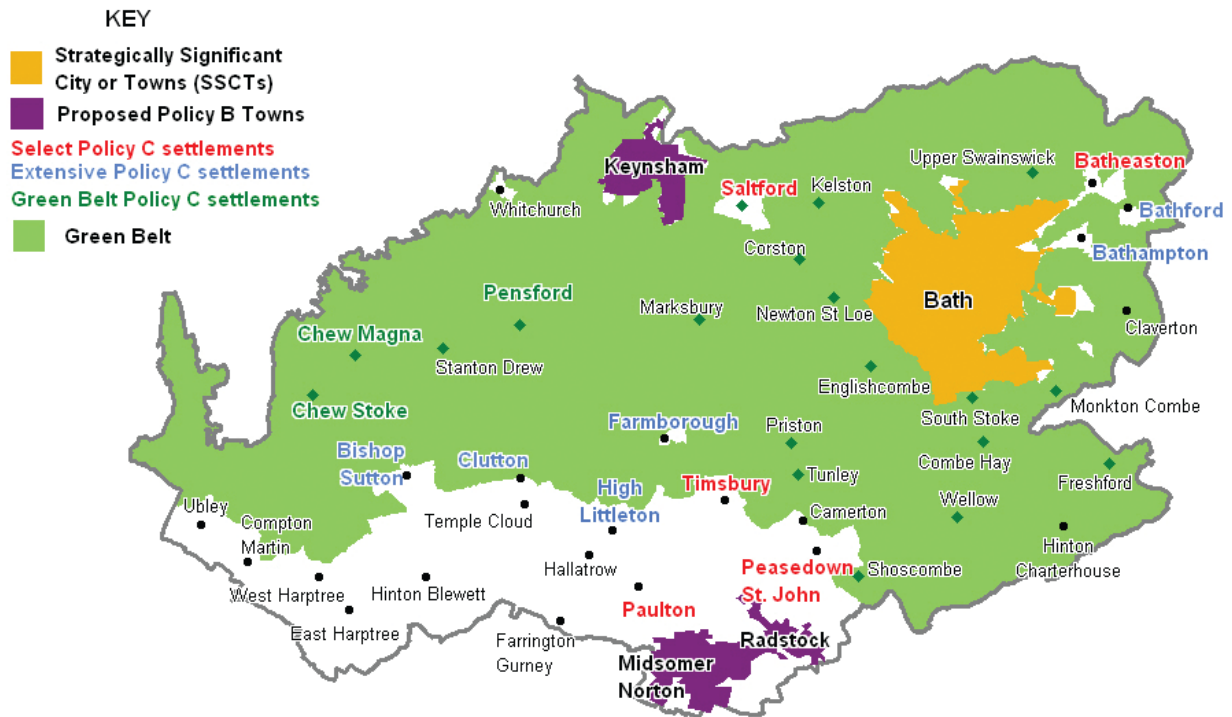
This work has identified five villages that are the very most sustainable; they have the widest range of facilities and good access to public transport. These villages have been named the 'select list' of villages (option 1). **Shown as select list on map.**

There are then a second group of villages that have a more limited range of facilities than the first group but do have most of the key facilities that are important for daily life (such as post office, primary school, shop and community meeting place). Including these villages with those in the 'select list' makes the 'extensive list' (option 2). **Shown as extensive list on map.**

These lists include some villages that are currently washed over by the Green Belt and whether or not to consider these further has been included as an additional option. **Shown as Green Belt settlements on map.**

Options for identifying the most sustainable villages

(Known as policy 'C' villages in the Regional Spatial Strategy)



NB. Farmborough, Salford, Bathampton and Claverton Down are 'holes' or 'insets' in the Green Belt

The options for selection of these villages will result in either a focussed or wider distribution of villages that act as community facility hubs, that have small scale housing allocations and that have increased opportunity for economic activity.

Option 1: Classify a select number of the very most sustainable villages as policy C villages (Batheaston, Paulton, Peasedown St John, Salford and Timsbury)

OR

Option 2: Classify a more extensive list (add following to short list: Bathford, Bathampton, Bishop Sutton, Clutton, Farmborough, High Littleton)

AND

Further choice of whether or not to add the Green Belt villages to the list selected – Chew Magna (under option 1) and in addition Chew Stoke and Pensford (under option 2).

Policy Issue Rural B: Affordable housing

Proportion of affordable housing

The core policy on affordable housing (see separate leaflet) will outline the percentage of housing that we're seeking to be affordable and the site thresholds to which this percentage will apply across the District. Whilst viability will be a key factor, it is likely that the percentage target for the rural areas could be higher than for the rest of the District to capture more affordable housing within the context of limited development.

Viability testing will be the key in setting these targets and thresholds and will ensure a well balanced development whilst at the same time generating affordable homes.

Rural Exceptions Sites

Beyond seeking a proportion of affordable housing on relevant sites, there is scope to promote 100% affordable housing where it would not normally be permitted to meet demonstrated local need (on what are known as 'exceptions sites'). This would be through continuing with a rural exceptions policy. The policy option is whether to continue with this approach and whether or not to allow a rural exceptions policy to apply only to settlements with a housing development boundary.

Policy Issue Rural C. Rural diversification

Employment retention and growth is important to the ongoing vibrancy of the rural areas as well as contributing to sustainability goals (as detailed in objective 5). To help achieve this it is suggested that a policy on rural diversification is developed. There are several elements that this could include and these are:

- actively encourage local food production, including local farm shops and farmers markets.
- prescribe that re-use of redundant buildings will be considered primarily for small scale employment purposes.
- support tourism opportunities.
- safeguard rural shops and local rural facilities.
- detail situations in which employment sites will be appropriate on green field land.
- show commitment to home working.
- support opportunities presented by new renewable energy technologies.

Other summary leaflets in this series:

[1. Vision, Objectives and Core Policies](#) [2. Locational Options for the District](#) [3. Bath](#)
[3a. New Neighbourhood in an urban extension to Bath](#) [4. Keynsham](#) [5. New Neighbourhood in an urban extension to South East Bristol](#) [6. Midsomer Norton and Radstock](#) [7. Rural Areas](#)

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