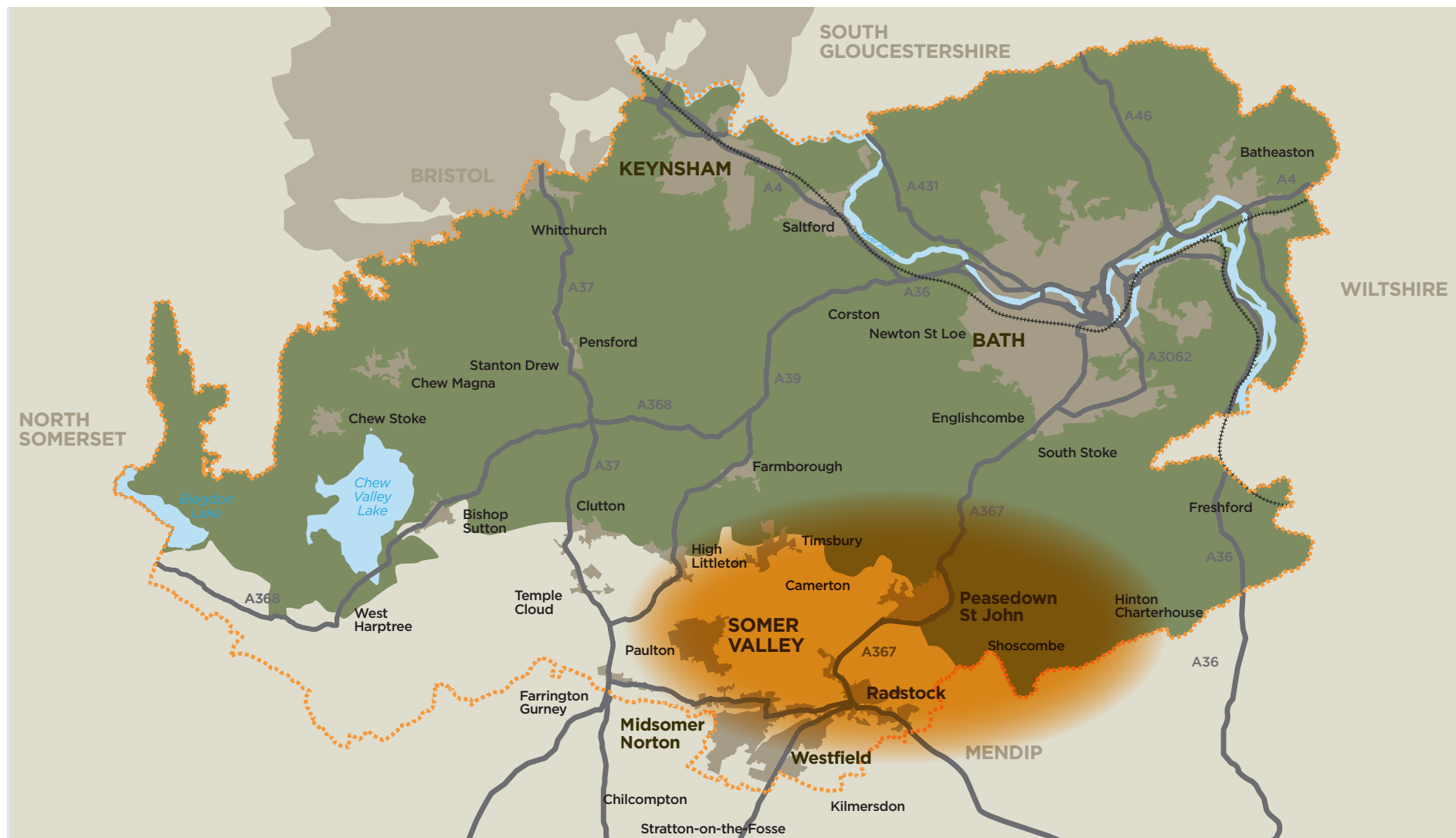


Somer Valley



The current vision for the Somer Valley is:

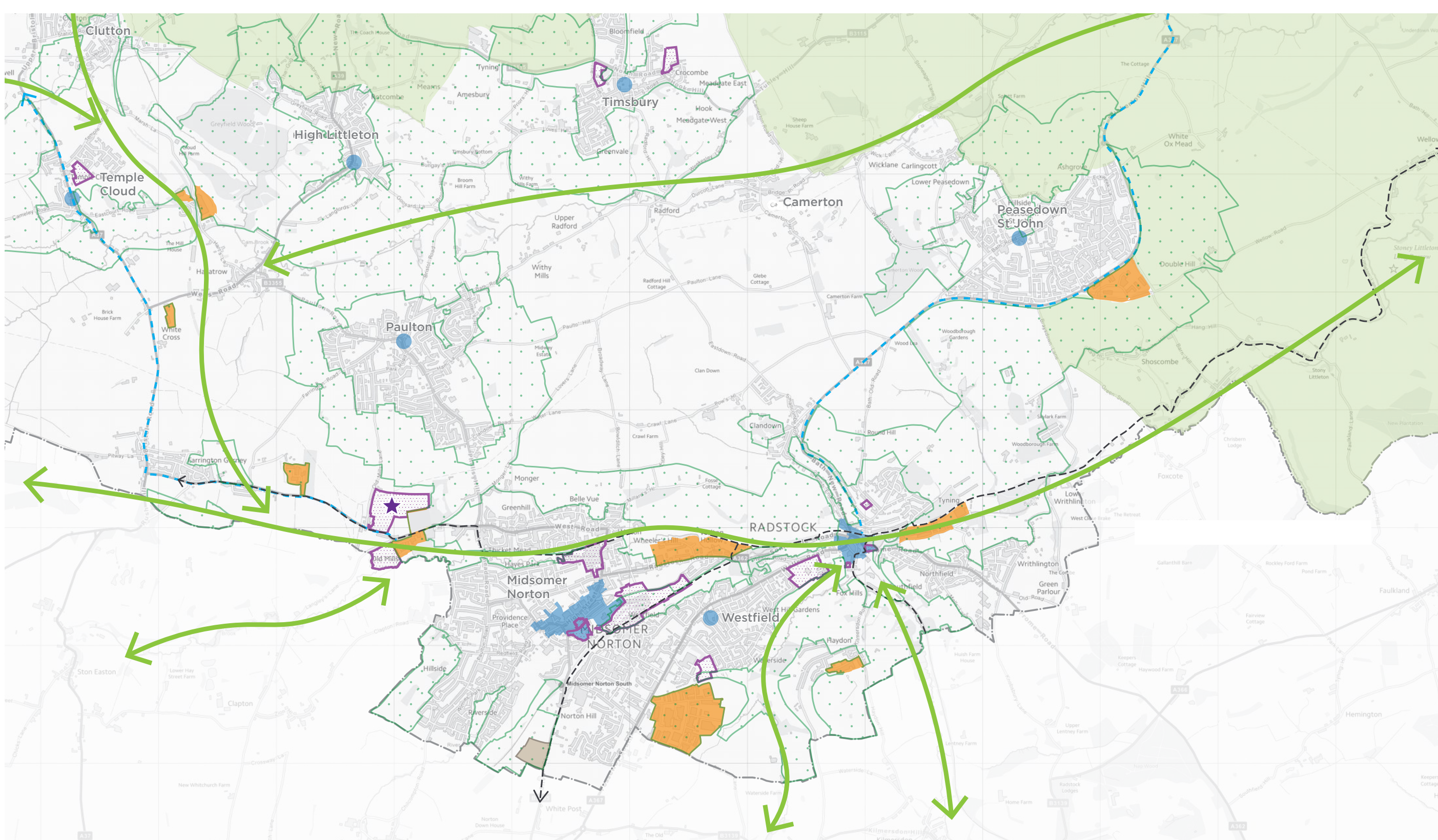
The southern part of the District will become more self-reliant, facilitated by economic led revitalisation alongside local energy generation, building on its industrial expertise and improving skill levels. Transport connections to other centres, as well as connections between settlements within the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

Context

The southern part of B&NES, with its range of distinctive history, characteristics, identities and communities makes a strong contribution to the overall character of the District.

The current planning policy framework in the Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan for the Somer Valley seeks greater self-reliance, facilitated by economic revitalisation to address the past loss of employment opportunities in the area and the resultant high levels of out-commuting. Pivotal to this is the designation of the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone to increase employment provision.

The Somer Valley Area includes Midsomer Norton, Westfield, Radstock, Peasedown St John, Paulton, Shoscombe, Camerton, Timsbury, High Littleton and Farrington Gurney.



Existing Somer Valley Spatial Strategy

- KEY**
- Strategic and Other Primary Industrial Estates
 - Cycle Route
 - Site Allocation
 - District Boundary
 - Green Belt
 - ↔ Green Infrastructure Link
 - Landscape Setting
 - Safeguarded Land (LCR 3)
 - Showcase Bus Routes
 - ★ Somer Valley Enterprise Zone
 - Town and Local Centres

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Spatial priorities for the Somer Valley

The key priorities to be addressed in the Somer Valley are set out below. These will inform a reviewed and refreshed vision and strategy.

- Increase employment opportunities by delivering the planned additional employment floorspace in the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone and provide greater protection of existing office and industrial space.
- Responding to the Joint Spatial Plan, identify potential new housing sites to accommodate between 300 and 500 new homes. This could include options in Mendip District if appropriate.
- Maintain the health of town centres for both Midsomer Norton and Radstock. Focus on the southern part of the High Street in Midsomer Norton.
- Align planning priorities with those in the Somer Valley Transport Strategy.
- Seek to ensure new housing is properly aligned with new infrastructure, both transport as well as social and community facilities.
- Enhance recreational facilities to meet the needs of the growing population.
- Provide a focus for recreational facilities through the designation of a Leisure Park in Midsomer Norton.
- Promote, conserve and where possible enhance the distinctive landscape setting and natural environment of the Somer Valley, focussing on the role of the Somer Valley area as a strategic green infrastructure link between the Mendip Hills and Cotswolds Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).
- Protect and enhance heritage assets. The built form should retain its historical and architectural value and development should attempt to integrate these features and carefully consider materials and building style appropriate to the locality.

Progress since 2011

The Local Plan Options document summarises the key changes since 2011 and updated evidence conclusions. This helps identify the key challenges and priorities that the new policies should address.

The focus will continue to be on economic revitalisation and encouraging job creation, although some additional housing will be unavoidable as set out in the options on the strategy and policy options boards.



Somer Valley

Strategy and policy options

Housing

The Joint Spatial Plan requires 14,500 dwellings to be accommodated in B&NES up to 2036. This includes a 'non-strategic' component of 700 dwellings. As the southern part of the District is not covered by the Green Belt, all three options include some level of new housing in the Somer Valley area.

'Non-strategic growth' is in addition to existing supply of 1,120 new homes. This will entail a review of existing site commitments, as well as investigation of options outside the housing development boundary. Any increase in the housing supply in the Somer Valley must be aligned with the provision of necessary infrastructure such as health facilities.

Please see 'Somer Valley and Rural Areas' panels for more information.



Town centres and retail provision

Nationally, smaller town centres, such as Midsomer Norton and Radstock, are under increasing pressure as many retailers are reducing high street presence and focussing on larger centres and strategic locations.

It is proposed to maintain the current policy approach to continue the role of **Midsomer Norton town centre** as the area's principal retail centre with a focus for investment at the southern end of the High Street, retaining the foodstore allocation at South Road Car Park. However the implications for the Draft Somer Valley Transport Strategy need to be considered in light of its requirement for no reduction in public car parking capacity.

In **Radstock town centre**, since the adoption of the Core Strategy, there has been an increase in retail floorspace in the town centre (e.g. the Railway Land, Charlton World of Wood site). Planning permission has been granted for the new health centre and there are proposals to redevelop the Radco store site for a greater mix of uses. There are also other potential town centre redevelopment opportunities such as the library site. The proposed strategy is therefore to retain the role of Radstock as a town centre, although this might entail an adjustment in its offer.

Westfield Neighbourhood Plan supports the renovation of the existing local shops at Elm Tree Avenue. The proposed strategy is to continue to maintain and enhance this area as a local centre.

Somer Valley

Employment: Somer Valley Enterprise Zone options

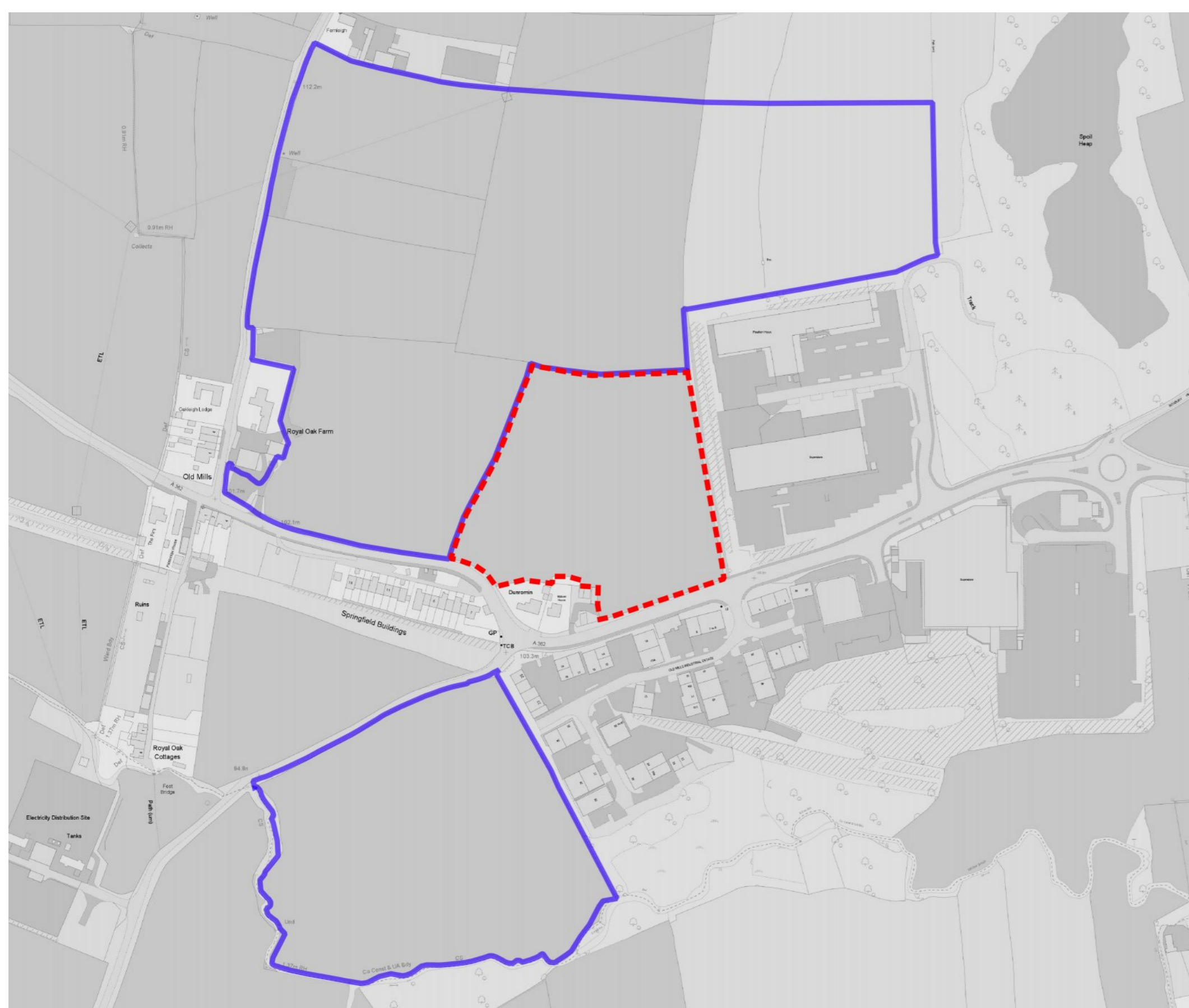
Given economic restructuring in the area and high levels of out commuting, it is important that the Local Plan maintains present levels of employment through retention of existing key employment sites and facilitates job growth through the provision of new employment sites.

The Somer Valley Enterprise Zone (EZ) is the flagship development site for promoting and delivering new business space and job growth in the local area. The current approach that focuses solely on delivering industrial uses is no longer commercially appropriate as it does not reflect the increasing trend for business parks to incorporate amenity uses.

Delivery would be facilitated through the Local Plan by testing a number of key issues including revisions to the site boundary and a wider mix of uses. In doing this, it is necessary to ensure that the EZ options sit within the context of the wider Somer Valley strategy and implications for other parts of the area.

Somer Valley EZ policy approach

- Extent of the site – land in the south eastern corner of the EZ (marked in red in the diagram below) is currently not included in the site allocation due to previous availability/deliverability concerns. It is likely that allocation of this land would help deliver sustainable transport links and improvements to the A362, which is an important transport link for the Somer Valley. This would assist in achieving full build out of the EZ.
- Land use mix – a review of the market suggests that a wider range of commercial uses on the site would have significant benefit for the site’s viability. Therefore, including higher value commercial uses, with an active road frontage, would be a helpful change to the policy - the current Placemaking Plan policy already references builders merchants/car showroom uses on the site.
- Additional land use options to be considered include large format or bulky goods retail (excluding foodstores), hotel and an element of restaurants/cafes, bars/pubs and takeaways.



Enterprise Zone location plan

Key

- Extent of the Placemaking Plan Policy SSV19 allocation
- The area proposed to be included in the site allocation

