

Keynsham Stakeholder Workshop Report

Bath and North East Somerset Council

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Quality information

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Council was successful in achieving a funding bid from West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to commission Strategic Planning work to assist in the formulation of its new Local Plan. AECOM has been commissioned to undertake the strategic planning commission for the Keynsham and Salford area.
- 1.2 There are two phases of the studies, the Strategic Place Assessments which are high level and cover a broad area of search looking at character and capacity issues such as ecology, landscape, transport, historic environment, and the development potential of particular locations. The second phase will produce updated or new Strategic Planning Frameworks for identified development areas. These are more detailed and place specific and provide the basis for allocating sites within the Local Plan.
- 1.3 B&NES stakeholder workshops were held in January and February 2023 to inform the Strategic Planning Frameworks for the key study areas.
- 1.4 This Stakeholder Workshop Report will outline the key findings from the workshop, broken down into themes, to ensure all views have been accurately recorded.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 A stakeholder workshop was held on the 26th of January 2023 to cover the areas of Keynsham and Salford with various stakeholders including representatives from Salford Parish Council, Keynsham Town Council and Compton Dando Parish Council.
- 2.2 The structure and purpose of this workshop was:
 - Baseline: to outline and validate the teams understanding and assumptions on the context of area.
 - Future: to share and agree on the key priorities that the strategic place assessment should focus on and establish development objectives.
 - Synthesis: to share and agree on the key priorities.
- 2.3 The session started with a welcome and introduction from B&NES, followed by area context and technical analysis.
- 2.4 The participants were asked to discuss the following questions: “what do you value about the area?”, ideas on some key questions per placemaking themes (the questions are noted below under each theme heading) and “what are the key priorities for your area?”.
- 2.5 As per B&NES request following the internal workshop, the five placemaking themes were adjusted to separate ‘Thriving, Healthy and Inclusive Homes and Communities’ into ‘Housing and Shared Prosperity’, and ‘Healthy and Inclusive Communities’. Therefore, six placemaking themes were used at the stakeholder’s workshop. Two to three questions were posed per theme:
 - Zero Carbon and Climate Resilience;
 - What changes would you like to see to support you to live low carbon lifestyle?
 - What kinds of changes could create green jobs and are there barriers to businesses becoming more sustainable?
 - Moving Around;
 - What would enable you to walk, wheel or cycle and use public transport more?

- What activities, opportunities and services does your community need to access nearby?
- Natural Spaces and Biodiversity;
 - Are there any barriers to accessing nature, public space and high-quality green space?
 - How could the natural spaces be improved for people and wildlife in this area?
- Identity and Belonging;
 - What would the future community be like in the Keynsham and Saltford area? How do they live?
 - What is the future character and identity of this area?
- Housing and Shared Prosperity;
 - What is the housing need in this area and how can this be met?
 - What are the strengths of the local economy and what could be the new economic opportunities?
 - How has Covid-19 and the shift to greater levels of homeworking affected your area? Has it affected housing demand and/or local employment?
- Healthy and Inclusive Communities
 - How can communities in Keynsham and Saltford area be supported for better health and wellbeing?
 - What would an inclusive and healthy place look and feel like in future?

2.6 The workshop participants gave feedback on their discussions and next steps were discussed.

3. Outcomes

- 3.1 The workshop structure outlined key themes and questions however sometimes the conversation swayed from these to include wider topics. Naturally, some themes and questions gained more comments and answers than others.

Key values

- 3.2 The following list of key values were identified by the workshop participants at the beginning of the workshop:

- A strong community has been highlighted as one of the key values of the area.
- The attractive countryside surrounding Keynsham and Saltford was highlighted as another key value by the participants. Abbots Wood Ecological Park and Manor Road Community Woodland are very popular green spaces, very actively used by the locals. Some concerns were raised that it is getting a bit too crowded and if there would be opportunities for it to expand.
- The Memorial Park was also highlighted as another key asset and its importance specifically at the community events.
- The River Avon and the green spaces are important assets, specifically due to the wildlife that they attract. The river corridor could be used more actively.
- The Public Right of Way network is clearly valued within the Keynsham and Saltford area. Providing better accessibility to these was highlighted as a priority.
- Being close to both Bristol and Bath is another value for this area as each of the city offers different types of experiences. Access to the main hospitals in these cities is also quite important for the residents.
- The local history and heritage are very important for the residents.

Theme 1: Zero Carbon and Climate Resilience

- 3.3 Taking steps towards a zero-carbon future should be an international requirement, and many of the workshop attendees were well aware that they **needed to offer simple solutions**, as well as major policies and plans in order to achieve this.
- 3.4 It was noted by several attendees that easy access to objective advice is important. Many people are unaware of the simple steps they can take to move towards a zero-carbon lifestyle; it was suggested that if the advice available was “bitesize” and easy to understand more people would be able to “do their bit” and make a difference. A holistic approach should be taken to give advice on energy saving.
- 3.5 Given the amount of new development throughout the country, not just Keynsham, it was suggested that all new development in the area should provide things such as **solar power** (via solar panels) and **electric vehicle charging points**. **Energy efficiency** is also important for new development. Another potential feature of new development could be **grey water capture**. However, there is no shortage of existing housing and development that has adequate roof space to offer for solar panel installation and grey-water capture.
- 3.6 It was also mentioned that there could be **potential in the area for larger scale solar and wind energy generation**, given the considerable amount of open space surrounding the towns.
- 3.7 Certain areas of Keynsham are at high risk of flooding. Due to this, emphasis was made on flood defence and flood attenuation systems throughout the town and along the river. When this point was being discussed, mentions were made of the boat dwellers along the river Avon and how important it is that, in the case of a flood, they are able to access basic amenities.

Theme 2: Moving Around

- 3.8 The A4 Keynsham Bypass is a strategically important road, providing an easy route linking Keynsham and Saltford to Bristol and Bath. **High degrees of congestion** were noted. However, it was highlighted by a number of attendees that it is not actually easy to access via public transport nor via active travel routes. It is important to **link surrounding communities to public transport corridors, including the A4 and the Railway**. Cycle ways and bus stops along this route were suggested to provide access and encourage alternative travel to cars.
- 3.9 A top priority, stated by the majority of attendees, is the need for **more reliable public transport and an integrated transport system**. This would involve actions such as the reopening of Saltford Train Station; regular buses to Keynsham Station (and Saltford if it were to reopen); easier access to the A4 Keynsham Bypass (including the addition of a cycle way); and general improvement of the buses in the area.
- 3.10 It was also highlighted that there is **very limited car parking – and currently no cycle parking – available at Keynsham Station**. This restricts the ability to access the train station, and to actively travel (via bike) to the station. It also results in an increase of cars parked on the roads surrounding the station, therefore making access difficult and increasing risk of accidents. If further parking (including for bikes) was introduced, it is believed that more people would actively travel in the area; use the trains to access Bath, Bristol and beyond; and road safety in the surrounding area could be improved.
- 3.11 The area of Hicks Gate was suggested to be an ideal location for a new Park and Ride, and the **Wellsway road**, which passes through and out of Keynsham, was noted as being “overlooked” as an opportunity for a travel corridor. It was also suggested that a link road could be implemented around the towns, taking the traffic straight to Bath and therefore resulting in less congestion in the centre.
- 3.12 Several ideas were made surrounding the idea of community transport and how it could be utilised. It was suggested to provide a community minibus for the residents to use to access the train station given the lack of buses available to them.
- 3.13 Given the topography of the area many areas have steep gradients which makes it more difficult to walk and cycle up. This then puts residents off using these routes and leads to the loss of active travel. If these routes were to be improved via **ease of access or the addition of steps or railings**, it would encourage their use and would again reduce the need for cars.
- 3.14 Saltford was recognised as having a “great” public right of way network, however accessibility is an issue as those with mobility issues often find it difficult to use the paths.
- 3.15 North East Somerset has an abundance of green space and picturesque walking routes. Priority should be given towards the creation and improvement of these. Active travel should be encouraged as much as possible through the implementation of more walkways and cycle routes – many of which could be dedicated nature or heritage trails.

Theme 3: Natural Spaces and Biodiversity

- 3.16 Within the settlement of Keynsham it is said that there is a considerable **lack of green spaces**, meaning the residents and councillors want to retain what green space remains. Hence, the enhancement and maintenance of the natural and biodiverse spaces should be a top priority.
- 3.17 It was suggested that the gap between Keynsham and Saltford could be strategically used to create a **wildlife corridor between the two towns**. Walkways and nature trails could be implemented throughout this to provide an active travel connection between the two towns, something which they currently do not have.
- 3.18 The rivers Chew and Avon were highlighted as attracting wildlife and the riverbanks are said to have potential for leisure activities.

- 3.19 Stakeholders suggested that new development – either recently completed or in the pipeline – is something that the towns do not lack. Because of this, the need for **green space to be included within new developments** was highlighted as a priority.
- 3.20 Many attendees felt that development was increasing footfall through existing green space without the **creation of any new – or extension of any existing green spaces**, therefore resulting in these spaces being overused and with their quality being diminished. Manor Road Community Woodland received several mentions within this issue as new development has been constructed nearby but the nature reserve was not expanded and is hence overcrowded. It was suggested that the easement zone surrounding the gas pipeline which travels through the area could be seen as an opportunity for expansion of the woodland area, as new development cannot be located there so the space is wasted.
- 3.21 Given the strong existing community within Keynsham and Saltford, there could be potential for **community allotments**. This would mean that the space is shared by all who contribute and hence the produce can also be shared. It would lead to a reduction in waiting lists for individual allotments and would encourage the community to work together and rely on locally grown produce over supermarket bought.
- 3.22 As well as allotments, the idea of gardening “buddies” was put forward. This would mean that residents can join up to share advice on food production and general gardening tips. It would encourage them to spend time together as well as being actively outdoors.

Theme 4: Identity and Belonging

- 3.23 Keynsham being located almost directly halfway between Bristol and Bath puts it in a good position to brand itself as a “creative corridor”, with access to four universities in the area. Additionally Keynsham is also rich in heritage.
- 3.24 Many of the stakeholders were proud to mention the variety of events and happenings that are staged within the town throughout the year, such as a Christmas market, and a music festival in the summer. However, the High Street was described as being “contentious”.
- 3.25 A key issue raised by many was the **High Street**, both in Keynsham and Saltford, of which the latter lacks entirely. Points were made surrounding the lack of independent and locally run businesses along these streets, and it was stated that those that are independent may end up closing once the owner retires and cannot find anyone to continue its management. Several suggestions were made for B&NES to bring about an “imaginative business policy” and offer a small start-up grant to encourage businesses to base themselves in Keynsham.
- 3.26 A lot of emphasis was made towards the desire for more creative industry in Keynsham and less “big warehouses” which were perceived to adversely impact the local area.
- 3.27 Ideas were put out to **pedestrianise the High Street** in Keynsham to **link with the Memorial Park**, make it more accessible, reduce congestion, and provide better opportunity for street entertainment and markets.
- 3.28 The idea was also floated for the creation of creative spaces for community initiatives, such as a community hub for local charities. A Riverside creative space has already been funded, but only for two years, and is therefore considered to be unsustainable.
- 3.29 Similar to the idea of community transport, it was suggested that some sort of vehicle sharing scheme is implemented. This could encourage community cohesion, improve transport issues, and contribute to achieving zero-carbon.

Theme 5: Housing and Shared Prosperity

- 3.30 Given Keynsham and Saltford’s excellent location between Bristol and Bath, they are considered ideal locations for **young professionals and young families** to relocate. This has led to a more diverse population settling in the area. It was recognised that efforts should be made to ensure the area is as inclusive and provides as many opportunities as possible for the whole community.

- 3.31 Since the Covid-19 pandemic, many people who used to work in offices have now begun to **work from home more frequently**. This means that new homes should be considerate of this and should make efforts to ensure there is space for at least one, if not two, home workspaces. For those who are unable to work from home but are also unable to travel to an office, the idea of a community workspace was put forward.
- 3.32 Many residents within Keynsham (almost half) do not have access to reliable broadband. Because of this they struggle to work from home, but many may be unable to travel to the city for an office if they have other commitments. The idea of a **community workspace** with reliable internet access and computers would allow these residents to work freely and efficiently.
- 3.33 Further to this, it was suggested that more effort be put into encouraging community office hubs, and it was stated that there are already cafes in the area which provide “work spots”. This idea was supported by all and should be actively encouraged and planned for.
- 3.34 Many issues were raised surrounding housing in the area. Although there is no lack of new development, there is a **lack of affordable and social housing**. Several comments were made, within all groups, over the need for a **wider variety of house types**, especially those for young families, single residents, self-build properties, shared ownership, and first homes. It was also mentioned that there is a lack of homes suitable for downsizing and later-life living.
- 3.35 An increase in the number of HMOs and AirBnB’s have caused controversy in the towns as they have an impact on those looking to downsize or move to the area as first-time-buyers. Buy-to-let issues mean that young people have less opportunity to buy their own home and may then continue renting when they really want to get on to the property ladder.
- 3.36 A key priority mentioned by several attendees was the need for **more infrastructure**. Whilst the town keeps gaining residential development, there is a perceived lack of infrastructure built to support this population increase, whether this be schools, healthcare, retail, or transport infrastructure.
- 3.37 Given Keynsham’s strategic location between the four universities in Bristol and Bath, it was suggested that there could be an opportunity to attract young people to the area through the development of student accommodation. Some students including mature students may prefer an area away from the big city (Bristol) or more affordable than Bath.
- 3.38 Whilst many issues were mentioned within this theme, it may be difficult to provide specific targeted solutions. Instead, communication between local authorities (especially as part of the West of England authorities) should be prioritised in order for the areas to work together and function efficiently without forcing development on one another.
- 3.39 It was made very clear that any future policies should be robust regarding planned new housing development and should ensure that adequate infrastructure is provided as the population increases exponentially.

Theme 6: Healthy and Inclusive Communities

- 3.40 The residents of Keynsham clearly take pride in the generosity of their communities and the number of local voluntary groups who “stepped up” during the Covid-19 pandemic to help their fellow residents. Many charities even now deliver services which local authorities can no longer provide. Community help groups should be supported further and an overarching body under which the charities can work could help sustain this strength within the community.
- 3.41 The high number of families, many with young children, in Keynsham gives rise to a number of issues surrounding health in young people. During discussions, ideas were pitched for clubs and activities focused on the youth population such as school breakfast clubs, youth clubs, support for those struggling with mental health, and those struggling academically.
- 3.42 A number of healthcare issues were also highlighted including the understaffed GP surgery and the absence of an NHS dentist. Efforts should be made to **improve the local healthcare services**.

- 3.43 As well as healthcare, there is also an issue with the provision and quality of social care. This should not be overshadowed by health care.
- 3.44 Along the River Avon there are a number of **boat dwellers**. Throughout all groups within the workshop, these residents were highlighted as a group with a variety of different needs. It was suggested that a Boat Dwellers Needs Assessment be done in order to pin-point and prioritise what can be done to ensure they receive equal opportunities and have access to infrastructure in case of floods or other issues.
- 3.45 Fundamental provisions must be made to encourage and provide further support to the communities, and, where possible, funds should be allocated to improve physical and mental wellbeing among residents.
- 3.46 Further to the final point under Theme 5, policies must be coordinated and not created in isolation.

Priorities

- 3.47 Building on the discussion under each theme above, the following list of priorities were identified at the workshop:
- A strategic and collaborative approach should be followed for planning together with the neighbouring districts.
 - Robust policies on housing development and the provision of much needed infrastructure before the addition of new development.
 - An integrated transport system and improved active travel networks. This includes better bus reliability and access to the train station.
 - Be bold when considering what the end state should be, and be prepared to make “big moves” if the outcome requires it. This is a long term plan which requires a long term outlook.
 - Advice on climate resilience.
 - Improved mitigation measures to deal with flooding.
 - Preserve the essential characteristics of the area while adapting and changing.
 - Protect and enhance green spaces and the strategic gap between the settlements.
 - More enlightened policy towards employment and more digital and creative businesses. High speed broadband is key.
 - Adequate and accessible infrastructure such as health care provision and community workspaces.
 - Avoid over promising and provide a clear agenda for change.

