

Bath and North East Somerset Council

Local Plan 2022 – 2042

Options Consultation

February 2024

**Topic Paper: Identifying Strategic Development
Location Options**

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Improving People’s Lives

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Topic Paper summarises the process by which the location options for strategic development that are identified in the Local Plan Options document have been derived. As such it seeks to ensure there is a clear audit trail by outlining in one place the broad sieving process that has been undertaken. In so doing it includes links to the consideration and assessment of alternatives in other documents (e.g. Area of Search Assessments and the Sustainability Appraisal) and does not repeat those assessments here.

2.0 Local Plan Spatial Priorities and Spatial Strategy Principles

- 2.1 As set out in the Local Plan Options document it is important that the options for development (and specifically the sites that are subsequently allocated in the Draft Local Plan) work towards achieving the spatial priorities of the Local Plan. The proposed spatial priorities of the Local Plan are as follows:

Our Local Plan will plan for development in response to local needs to create attractive, healthy and sustainable places in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy.

The Plan will:

- *Create a **fairer**, more **prosperous** and **sustainable** economy*
- *Maximise the delivery of housing that is **affordable***

In doing so, our plans for development must:

- Enable Bath and North East Somerset to become **carbon neutral by 2030** and deliver a climate resilient district*
- Protect and enhance nature through facilitating **nature recovery***
- Improve **health and well-being** outcomes for all, including through planning health promoting and inclusive places and providing for cultural enrichment*
- Reduce the need to travel unsustainably and enable **improved connectivity** for all through sustainable modes of transport and facilitating locally available services and facilities*
- Respect, conserve and enhance our **heritage assets** and their landscape settings, in particular the World Heritage Site of Bath and National Landscapes*
- Align the timely provision of **transport, health, education, social, cultural and green infrastructure** with development*

- 2.2 Chapter 4 in the Local Plan Options document notes that the spatial priorities are not necessarily locationally specific and as such are not particularly useful in considering potential locational options. Therefore, in order to help facilitate this process spatial strategy principles are set out. These spatial strategy principles link back to the spatial priorities (as summarised in the table below)

and cover the main constraints and opportunities typically used in considering location or site alternatives.

Table 1: Spatial Strategy Principles relationship to Local Plan Spatial Priorities

Spatial Strategy Principle	Local Plan Spatial Priority
<i>Sustainable transport connectivity</i>	d) <i>Reduce need to travel unsustainably and improved connectivity</i>
<i>Climate change and nature: encompassing maintaining and enhancing landscape (including designated landscapes) and protecting biodiversity (including ecological designations)/facilitating nature recovery</i>	a) <i>Carbon neutral by 2030; b) nature recovery; and e) landscape settings</i>
<i>Flood Risk</i>	a) <i>Climate resilience: and c) health & well-being</i>
<i>Historic Environment: protect and enhance significance of heritage assets (designated and non-designated)</i>	e) <i>Heritage assets and landscape settings</i>
<i>Green Belt: impact on the Green Belt in terms of openness and national purposes</i>	e) <i>Landscape settings and f) green infrastructure</i>
<i>Local food production/agricultural land</i>	a) <i>Carbon neutral by 2030 and c) health and well-being</i>
<i>Infrastructure provision: infrastructure solutions and barriers</i>	f) <i>Timely provision of infrastructure</i>

2.3 It is worth noting that consideration of alternative locations/sites against the spatial strategy principles may not result in them being sieved out as potential options at this stage e.g. against Green Belt impacts. In some instances, as set out below, they will. Consideration of the remaining sites/locations included in the Options document will continue against the spatial strategy principles and other factors in progressing towards the Draft Local Plan.

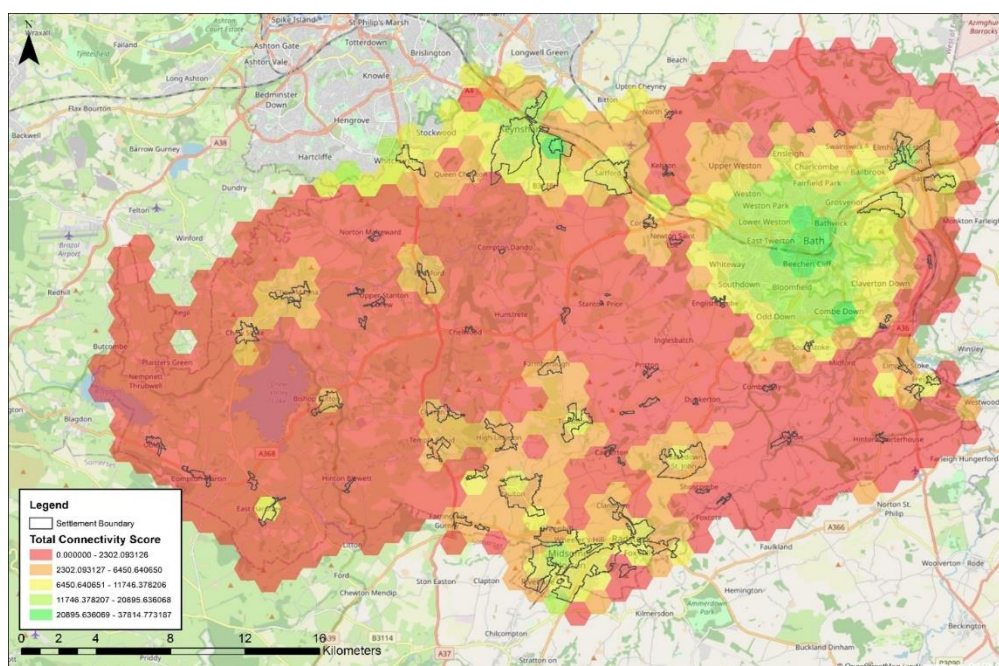
3.0 HELAA Opportunities

3.1 The starting point in identifying locations or sites to be considered is the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). The HELAA comprises sites that have been submitted to the Council by landowners/promoters, developers and communities, as well as sites proactively suggested by the Council. Proactive sites are those located close to (within 400 metres) of the edge of the relatively more sustainable settlements (see below) where they have not been submitted by third parties. The identification of potential locations for strategic development is based on HELAA sites or groupings of HELAA sites. [The Draft HELAA report will be published here](#)

- 3.2 All of the HELAA sites have been assessed as to whether they are technically suitable for housing or employment development; whether the site is available for development; and whether development is likely to be achievable during the Local Plan period. Those sites that are assessed as being not suitable or not available for housing or employment development are sieved out early in the process and have not been considered further.
- 3.3 Those HELAA sites that remain have been subject to a high-level GIS based quantitative constraints assessment through the Sustainability Appraisal. This assessment does not seek to assess the potential significance of sustainability effects for each of the sites, but rather is intended to indicate potential high-level constraints and opportunities that should be scrutinised further in assessment of growth options. As such it has informed the next stages of the process outlined below and will also inform subsequent assessment moving towards the Draft Local Plan.

4.0 Settlements Identification

- 4.1 In addition to sieving out unsuitable and unavailable HELAA sites at an early stage the spatial strategy approach of the Local Plan seeks to focus the identification and testing of options for strategic (or non-local) development on the most sustainable settlements. The most sustainable settlements are considered to be those with a range of employment opportunities, services and facilities that can be accessed through sustainable modes of transport i.e. walking, cycling, wheeling and public transport. Analysis and mapping of sustainable transport connectivity to employment and services & facilities mapping has been undertaken – the methodology is further explained in the [Overarching Transport Context evidence paper](#). The map below shows the results of the analysis, with those areas in green/yellow having the best sustainable transport connectivity, through the lighter oranges and then red having the poorest connectivity.



4.2 Those settlements with better sustainable transport connectivity are the main focus for considering location/site opportunities for strategic development i.e. Bath, Keynsham/Saltford, Whitchurch, Midsomer Norton, Radstock and Peasedown St John. In addition, improvements to sustainable transport connectivity that have been identified and are being actively progressed have also been taken into account. As set out in chapter 7 (Somerset Valley) of the options document, this results in the identification of Farrington Gurney as a settlement where strategic development opportunities should be considered. In summary this is because Farrington Gurney has a 'moderate' range of local services and facilities; lies on a public transport corridor linking it to Bristol and Wells; is subject to improvements identified through the WECA Somerset Valley Links Project; will be close to employment at the Somerset Valley Enterprise Zone; and walking and cycling links to Midsomer Norton can potentially be improved.

5.0 Identifying Strategic Development Options

5.1 Focussing on the most sustainable settlements identified above, utilising HELAA sites or groupings of HELAA sites that are not unsuitable/unavailable, land or locations surrounding and adjacent to each settlement have been assessed. The assessment process results in some areas/locations being sieved out and therefore, not considered or identified as location options within the Options document.

5.2 The assessment of land and resultant sieving out of some locations has been undertaken in the following documents:

- HELAA – the assessment of suitability and achievability has identified constraints and opportunities that inform other assessments, as well as the Options document itself
- Area of Search Assessments - for Keynsham/Saltford, Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Peasedown St John, Farrington Gurney and Whitchurch areas formed of HELAA sites/groupings of HELAA sites have been assessed. The table below outlines the criteria used in these assessments and also shows how these criteria are linked to the spatial strategy principles set out in the Options document. The Area of Search Assessments, which are [published here](#), explain why some land/locations have been sieved out at this stage and not presented as options in the Local Plan Options document
- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) – through the SA (see chapter 5 and Appendix D) land surrounding the most sustainable settlements has been assessed in relation to the likely significant effects of development against the sustainability objectives. Through the SA some areas are sieved out as not being reasonable alternatives or options.
- Bath - the assessment of land cells around Bath in terms of whether they should be progressed and considered for potential strategic development is also outlined in the Bath Topic Paper.

Table 2: Spatial strategy principles relationship to Areas of Search Assessment criteria

Spatial Strategy Principle	Areas of Search Assessment criteria
<i>Sustainable transport connectivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing levels of connectivity • Potential future levels of connectivity • Access feasibility • Potential for site to enhance sustainability
<i>Climate change and nature: encompassing maintaining and enhancing landscape and protecting biodiversity/facilitating nature recovery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape/townscape • Green and Blue Infrastructure • Presence of ecological designations • Priority habitats and significant linear features for protected species movement • Nature Recovery and BNG
<i>Flood Risk</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood Risk
<i>Historic Environment: protect and enhance significance of heritage assets</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage
<i>Green Belt: impact on the Green Belt in terms of openness and national purposes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Belt
<i>Local food production/agricultural land</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geological constraints (includes agricultural land grade)
<i>Infrastructure provision: infrastructure solutions and barriers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green and Blue Infrastructure • Utilities: gas, water sewage, drainage and electricity

5.3 It is also worth noting that a potential area for exploration as to whether a sustainable new settlement could be planned and delivered for longer term development has also been identified in the Local Plan options document. The rationale for the area south of Burnett, which lies relatively close to Bath and causes less landscape harm to other locations close to the city, is set out in chapter 5 of the Options document.