

# Chapter 2

## LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY

The South Somerset Local Plan (SSLP) was adopted on 27 April 2006 and “saved” until 26 April 2009 pending the preparation of replacement Local Development Framework (LDF) documents.

The Government Office for the South West have agreed to extend most Policies and Proposals beyond the 3 year saved period”.

**Policies** that have not been extended are struck through in the text. For ease of reference these are:

Chapter 6: Utilities	Policy EU1	Renewable Energy
	Policy EU2	Wind Turbines
	Policy EU5	Flooding
Chapter 10: Housing	Policy HG5	Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside
	Policy HG13	Sites for Travelling Show People
	Policy HG14	Sites for Travelling Show People

A number of **Proposals** have also not been extended as they have already been implemented or have Planning Permission and are under construction. These are:

Chapter 12: Area East	Proposal ME/CACA/3(ii)	Torbay Road, Castle Cary
Chapter 13: Area North	Proposal HG/SOME/4	The Mill House, Sutton Road, Somerton
	Proposal HG/SOPE/2	Land at Lightgate Lane, South Petherton
	Proposal TP/SOME/5	Widening of Cartway Lane, Somerton
	Proposal TP/SOME/6	Pedestrian Priority in West Street, Somerton
	Proposal CR/FIVE/1	Land at existing playing field, Fivehead
Chapter 14: Area South	Proposal HG/YEOV/2	Former Factory site, west of Larkhill Road, Yeovil
	Proposal HG/YEOV/3	Former Jewsons Yard, Newton Road, Yeovil
	Proposal ME/YEOV/6	Land east of Buckland Road, Pen Mill, Yeovil
	Proposal CR/BRYM/3	Land at Abbey Farm, Yeovil
Chapter 15: Area West	Proposal HG/CHAR/2	Land off Lower Touches, Chard
	Proposal HG/ILMI/1	Land north of Summervale Medical Centre, Wharf Lane, Ilminster
	Proposal MU/ILMI/2	Land off Shudrick Lane, Ilminster



## CHAPTER 2: LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY

### INTRODUCTION

2.1 The overall planning strategy for any Plan area must provide a balance between the many competing claims on the use of land, which is a finite resource, sensitive to change in many instances. For it to have greatest value, the strategy must clearly indicate the respective weight to be given to various considerations, so that a clear direction for the future is defined. This Chapter, therefore, establishes the framework for the rest of the Local Plan and, in particular, defines the 'guiding principles' which underlie all the Local Plan's policies and proposals.

#### The Planning Context

2.2 The Local Plan for South Somerset does not, of course, operate in a policy vacuum but needs to have regard to the strategic policies contained in both the Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10, published by the Government) and the Joint Structure Plan Review (published by Somerset County Council and Exmoor National Park). It also needs to take into consideration national Government planning advice such as that set out in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs).

2.3 Revised Regional Planning Guidance for the South West was published in September 2001 and provides a regional spatial strategy within which development plans and Local Transport Plans should be prepared. It also sets out a broad development strategy for the period to 2016 and beyond, and provides the spatial framework for other strategies and programmes. The RPG has four underlying aims expressing, at the regional level, the four objectives of sustainable development set out by the government:

- Protection of the environment;
- Prosperity for communities and the regional and national economy;
- Progress in meeting society's needs and aspirations;

- Prudence in the use and management of resources.

2.4 In broad terms, the Regional Development Strategy of the Regional Planning Guidance promotes more sustainable patterns of development. In particular, it aims to concentrate most development at the regions Principal Urban Areas (PUA's), included in which is Taunton. Elsewhere, other designated centres for growth (ODCG's) could provide for sustainable and balanced growth to meet other identified sub-regional growth. Yeovil is identified as a potential candidate for such sustainable growth but it is acknowledged that further work is needed to inform decisions. These are significant policy changes requiring consideration in the Joint Structure Plan Review before they can be implemented through Local Plans in Somerset. In the meantime, the adopted Joint Structure Plan Review remains the strategic context for the South Somerset Local Plan.

2.5 The Joint Structure Plan Review for the period 1991 to 2011 has been prepared by Somerset County Council and Exmoor National Park and was adopted in April 2000. This Local Plan has been reviewed on the basis of the adopted Joint Structure Plan Review.

2.6 The Joint Structure Plan Review sets out principles and aims for the future of Somerset. The key elements of the Joint Structure Plan Review's strategy for development are to:

- Focus a higher proportion of development on the towns;
- Provide for development well related to existing urban areas and to public transport facilities;
- Strictly control development in the countryside, outside settlements, with the aim of protecting the wide range of environmental assets found in the County;
- Emphasise the key role of established centres, particularly town centres, as locations for shopping and other purposes;

- Permit some development in rural settlements to enable diversification of the rural economy and to permit local needs housing; and
- Encourage the evolution of a balanced and integrated transport system which emphasises alternatives to the private car, where practical.

2.7 The land bordering South Somerset falls within four Counties (Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Devon) and seven Districts (Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor, Mendip, Salisbury, North Dorset, West Dorset and East Devon). All the adjoining land is the subject of existing Structure Plan and Local Plans with some replacements in hand. Account has been taken of existing and emerging policies for these neighbouring areas.

#### THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF SOUTH SOMERSET

2.8 South Somerset is a large and diverse area, extending nearly 65 kilometres (40 miles) from east to west, with an area of 960 square kilometres (370 square miles) and an estimated total population in 2001 of 151,100. Despite its diversity, a number of distinguishing features can be identified.

##### a) Population Pattern and Structure

2.9 The District is predominantly an area of small communities: some 45% of the population lives in settlements of fewer than 2,500 people and only two towns have more than 10,000 inhabitants. The population of the Yeovil built-up area in 2001 was estimated to be 42,140, while Chard's population was 11,700. At the other extreme, there were four parishes with fewer than 100 people. The generally small size of settlements can be beneficial in encouraging a sense of community and enabling participation in local affairs but it also poses challenges in terms of the economic provision of services and facilities.

2.10 By 2011, South Somerset's population may rise by over 10,000 to 161,900. The geographical pattern of population will be determined largely by Structure and Local Plan strategy, but it needs to be borne in mind

that, although the population changes will lead to an overall requirement of some 13,700 extra dwellings, the Local Plan will guide the location of only the 4,169 or so dwellings which are not already built, allocated in existing Plans, or with planning permission (as at October 1999) – this is equivalent to only 7% of the total number of dwellings in 1991.

##### b) Economic Structure

2.11 Despite its rural image and unlike many other parts of the country, the District is characterised by its high reliance on manufacturing industry for employment. The proportion of jobs in manufacturing in South Somerset was about 25% in 2001, compared with about 13% in Somerset and also England/Wales. The manufacturing base has historic origins in sailcloth, tanning and gloving (the latter two remaining significant) but today metal manufacturing is important and the GKN Westland Group of companies dominates employment in the Yeovil area. The District is particularly dependent on the defence employment sector.

##### c) Environmental Quality

2.12 South Somerset's residents and visitors are able to enjoy a richness and variety of landscape of largely unspoilt countryside. Nationally recognised Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty can be found at the western and eastern ends of the District (the Blackdown Hills and Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs), and adjoin its south side. The Fivehead, High Ham and Somerton escarpments form the northern rim of the District. Between these areas of higher ground lie extensive areas of rolling lowland and, in the north-west, parts of the distinctive Somerset Levels and Moors area, noted not just for its wetland landscape but also for its importance as a rich wildlife habitat.

2.13 Much of South Somerset's built environment is also of a high quality, as is indicated by the presence of about 6,000 listed buildings and over 80 conservation areas. Many settlements have a distinctive character arising from the use of local building stones such as blue lias limestone and warm, golden Ham Hill limestone.

2.14 The District's environment is, consequently, a finite resource to be treasured and it contributes greatly to the quality of life. Future pressures for development will need to be accommodated in ways which do not detract from the environment.

2.15 The distinguishing features of South Somerset, therefore, provide a vital link with the past and a basis for the future. The policies and proposals of the Local Plan will need to support the following strategic aim, which is expressed as a *Statement of Intent*:

- *The District Council will appreciate and respect the distinctive characteristics of South Somerset and build on their strengths for the future.*

d) Sustainable Development

2.16 The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, better known as the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, asked Governments to prepare national strategies for sustainable development. A widely accepted definition of sustainable development is:

*'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.*

2.17 The request to Governments was set out in Agenda 21, which also highlighted the important role of local government in implementing sustainable development. This is being done through Local Agenda 21, which the District Council is actively pursuing. The Council has published a Local Agenda 21 Strategy, in which several themes have a direct bearing on the Local Plan, e.g. sustainable building, protecting the countryside.

2.18 In practical terms, the pursuit of sustainable development means that the effects of development on the environment must be considered not just in the short term but over a much longer timescale, and not just on the immediate locality but in the wider, global sense. Although development may change the environment, the overall quality and richness of the environment should be protected.

Sustainable development, therefore, means maintaining and enhancing the quality of human life (social, economic and environmental), while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems and the resource base.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.19 In addition to its Local Agenda 21 work, South Somerset District Council has already adopted an Environmental Charter to reflect its concerns for the local environment and to recognise the need to conserve the finite resources of the planet.

2.20 Underlying the aims of this charter is the desire to maintain and improve the quality of life for all people in the District. Quality of life includes those features which provide for, or encourage, personal well being and would include availability of, or access to, housing, employment, welfare, etc. The impact of a Local Plan will, of course, be limited as many of these features are outside the powers or direct influence of the District Council as a Local Planning Authority.

2.21 A Local Plan can, however, contribute to a framework for sustainable development. The preparation of a land use and development plan is the prime opportunity to consider ways in which conserving the environment can maintain and improve the quality of life in the area. In a predominantly rural area like South Somerset, the aim of planning should therefore be to maintain an attractive, diverse, accessible, thriving and environmentally healthy countryside. Reflecting this aim, the conservation of the man-made and, most importantly, the natural environment is, therefore, a fundamental principle guiding the preparation of this Local Plan.

2.22 Similar aims should also be applied to urban areas, but with particular emphasis on greater attention to urban design, in order to improve the quality of the living environment, on encouraging mixed-use developments in areas accessible by public transport, and making the maximum use of existing urban land in order to keep the loss of "greenfield" land to the minimum achievable.

2.23 There is, however, also a continuing need for new development in both urban and rural areas which should be provided for in this Local Plan, in accordance with the strategic context. The District Council recognises the importance of such development in satisfying some of the community needs, on matters such as housing, employment and transport. Where appropriate, the District Council has its own development strategy to meet such needs, such as the Economic Development & Tourism Strategy. To maintain a healthy economy, the District Council will continue to support the roles of Rural Centres and itself has a role in promoting their vitality. For the District's communities, particularly those in rural areas, it is important to pay special attention to the inter-relationships of development with the environment and quality of life. Although there is need for additional new development in the District to 2011, it is important to ensure that such development should further the aims of environmental and community improvements.

2.24 While recognising that the Local Plan should seek to satisfy the legitimate development needs of existing and future inhabitants of South Somerset, it is intended to develop policies and proposals which support a number of basic 'Guiding Principles'; the most important of which is to achieve sustainable development. The Local Plan's Guiding Principles are:

- To achieve sustainable development, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- To maintain and enhance the social and economic well being of the area;
- To locate development where it does not encourage additional car borne travel, particularly taking advantage of locations well served by public transport;
- To make efficient use of resources, particularly by giving priority to the re-use of previously developed sites, and achieving the maximum benefits from the land that is used;

- To conserve and enhance the distinctive character and quality of the urban and rural landscape and townscape;
- To conserve and enhance the architectural and historic heritage of the area;
- To protect and enhance the natural environment, including biodiversity;
- To seek to make sustainable design and building practice normal rather than exceptional throughout South Somerset by the year 2010 through education awareness raising, the provision of exemplar projects, co-operation with Registered Social Landlords and the implementation of the policies in this local plan.

2.25 All development proposals will be expected to assist in achieving these Guiding Principles. However, in order to do so, it is necessary to define more detailed objectives which Local Plan policies and proposals should seek to achieve. These objectives are set out at the beginning of the following chapters. It may sometimes be necessary to compromise environmental and other principles, but this should not be at the expense of environmental capital. The approach to identifying development sites has been wherever possible to use previously developed (or "brownfield") land, but it needs to be recognised that the stock of this land in a District such as South Somerset is very limited. Further details are given in the Employment & Tourism and Housing chapters.

#### The Approach to Distribution of Development

2.26 The Local Plan strategy aims to meet the development requirements of the Joint Structure Plan Review by putting forward proposals which will provide the necessary land up to 2011. In order to find land for new development, there are two broad alternative approaches: to spread development thinly over a number of locations, or to concentrate development on a relatively small number of large sites.

- 2.27 Until now, the District's three largest towns (Yeovil, Chard and Crewkerne) have accommodated substantial amounts of new development but the pattern of development otherwise has tended to be more in the form of a thin spread of development rather than concentration. As a result, a number of disadvantages of this approach have become apparent and it is regarded as incompatible with the guiding principles of this Local Plan and with the strategy of the Joint Structure Plan Review. The disadvantages are that:
- Greater burdens are placed on the local physical and social infrastructure, without any one development being big enough to 'trigger' infrastructure improvements;
  - There are very few opportunities to provide significant amounts of social or 'affordable' housing;
  - Almost all towns, rural centres and villages have to accommodate significant amounts of new development, regardless of their suitability;
  - Rural settlements' character is damaged by continuing 'infilling'; and
  - Population is dispersed more widely, making it more difficult to provide services and more likely to encourage wasteful and environmentally damaging travel.
- 2.28 On the other hand, concentrating most of the new development on appropriate sites in selected settlements means that a number of advantages can be gained:
- the environment of most of the District and most settlements remains undamaged and services/facilities in them are not stretched further;
  - each major development is of sufficient size to require the provision of infrastructure such as road links and community facilities;
  - balanced developments including houses (both open market and social or 'affordable'), employment and social facilities can be planned; and
  - The need for additional travel can be minimised.
- 2.29 There are some disadvantages of concentrating development in this way: it may be difficult to assimilate and may put pressure on facilities, to the detriment of quality of life and character. Taken to an extreme, a lack of development elsewhere might inhibit the viability of other settlements. On balance, however, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages and, in any event, there will still be at least some development in many other settlements.
- 2.30 The principle of concentrating development has been given added justification by Government and Joint Structure Plan Review advice. PPG1 (General Policy and Principles) and PPG13 (Transport) both encourage patterns of development which are integrated with transport provision and encourage walking, cycling and public transport use. Development should be promoted in urban areas and existing local centres should be strengthened. Similarly, RPG10 (Regional Planning Guidance for the South West) encourages providing for the bulk of new development in the Region's cities and larger towns. The Joint Structure Plan Review also has a strategy of 'focusing' development (as its policies for Towns and Rural Centres indicate), developing a pattern of land use which minimises the length of journeys and the need for travel (Policy STR1).
- 2.31 The publication of revised Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing, in March of 2000, has significantly strengthened the Government policy that existing towns and cities should be the focus for additional housing to promote more sustainable patterns of development. Local Planning Authorities are now exhorted to follow a search sequence in identifying sites to be allocated for housing. This sequence starts with the re-use of previously developed land and buildings within urban areas identified by an urban capacity study, then urban extensions and then new development around nodes in good public transport corridors. Only sufficient land to meet the identified strategic housing requirement should be allocated and Local Planning Authorities should not extend the search further than required to achieve the District housing requirement. The Guidance makes clear that sites identified in existing

adopted Plans should be reviewed in the light of the new guidance.

- 2.32 The Deposit Plan housing allocations have been reviewed in the light of this policy guidance and approach. The search sequence has been applied after allowance has been made for planning commitments (both built and with planning permission) and a realistic estimate of "windfall sites" (those not specifically identified as available in the Local Plan which have unexpectedly become available and which accord with current policy). An urban capacity study has been undertaken to seek to identify more urban housing opportunities.
- 2.33 The consequence of this review has been in general terms the confirmation of urban town allocations, the identification of other town sites from the Urban Capacity assessment and confirmation of the town key sites (urban extensions) apart from one. The anticipated housing yield from all these sources (taking into account increased densities sought by Government) has resulted in a significantly reduced requirement for housing to be met in the Rural Centres and other villages. The requirement has been met in the Rural Centres and in consequence the village allocations set out in the Deposit Plan are now proposed for deletion.
- 2.34 The result of this process is a settlement strategy focussing housing growth in South Somerset's towns but with some provision in the Rural Centres. This strategy reflects the new Government Guidance and the application of the sequential search approach.
- 2.35 The Local Plan has adopted the settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy set out in the Joint Structure Plan Review, whereby the five Towns are to be the main centres for development and provision should be made for development necessary to sustain the roles of Rural Centres. The largest amount of development is envisaged as taking place in the largest town, Yeovil, with lesser amounts in the other towns. Development in villages, on the other hand, is to be limited to that compatible with local need, their individual roles, characteristics and physical identities.

Development outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages is to be strictly controlled.

## POLICIES

- 2.36 The remainder of this chapter sets out a number of general policies which relate to all forms of development. They should always be taken into consideration when assessing and determining development proposals, even though they are not repeated in each of the other, subject or site-based chapters of the Local Plan.

### Pattern of Development

- 2.37 The Government's Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10) and the Joint Structure Plan Review both give advice on the broad location of new development. However, it is one of the Local Plan's main functions to give detailed advice on the distribution of new development within South Somerset. In doing so, it must also take into account Agenda 21, the aim of sustainable development, and the Local Plan's own 'guiding principles'.

### Towns

- 2.38 Yeovil is identified in the Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) for the South West as a Potential Designated Centre for Growth. The RPG exhorts Local Planning Authorities to provide for balanced growth at these designated centres to meet sub-regional growth needs whilst maintaining and enhancing the range of employment, housing and other facilities in the area (Policy SS6). The RPG goes on to say in Policy SS7 that Development Plans should identify, where appropriate, towns to accommodate smaller scale development to serve local needs and make services available to the wider rural area of the region.
- 2.39 The Joint Structure Plan Review identifies Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne, Wincanton and Ilminster in South Somerset as towns providing a general service and employment function. They are expected to be the primary locations for future development with growth taking place in a balanced way taking into account the need for additional and associated

- facilities and infrastructure that meet the needs of development. The Joint Structure Plan Review recognises Yeovil's distinctive sub-regional role.
- 2.40 The Joint Structure Plan Review makes clear that new development should be focussed in the towns in accordance with their role, function, characteristics and constraints with priority being given to re-use of previously developed land and mixed use development. In support of this objective, the Plan proposes 82% of the housing allocations and 90% of employment allocations in the District's five designated Towns.
- 2.41 Within these Towns, Yeovil has a status significantly higher than the other four and is the main focus for development; the housing allocations in Yeovil represent approximately 46% of total allocations and about 56% of allocations in Towns. Yeovil will therefore have more growth than any other individual town and is anticipated to provide about 37% of all the dwellings built between 1991 - 2011. In comparison Yeovil had about 28% of South Somerset's dwellings at the start of the plan period in 1991.
- 2.42 Chard as the next largest settlement is set to accommodate the next highest amount of growth with about 17% of total allocations (21% of allocations to Towns). The growth at Chard is balanced with significant employment provision. The constraint to significant growth, presented by the existing road network, requires a large peripheral extension that can provide the opportunity to access such growth without undue impact on the existing town traffic network.
- 2.43 Crewkerne and Wincanton are both set to accommodate a more moderate amount of growth reflecting their smaller scale (respectively about 13% and 6% of total housing allocations) - Ilminster, as the smallest market town, provides for the least amount of growth relative to the other towns and this is provided on a recently permitted site. Both Crewkerne and Wincanton key sites contain employment land provision (and there are significant employment allocations proposed for Ilminster in recognition of its strategic location close to the A303 and A358 junction).
- 2.44 By providing growth in all the identified towns of South Somerset, the Local Plan ensures that the opportunity exists to provide affordable housing for people in need in the main concentrations of population in the District.
- Rural Centres
- 2.45 The next tier of settlements envisaged by the Joint Structure Plan Review comprises 'Rural Centres'. These are places which act as focal points for local employment and shopping, social and community activity in their areas (Joint Structure Plan Review Policy STR3). In them, provision is to be made for development necessary to sustain their roles and be commensurate with their size and accessibility, and appropriate to their character and physical identity.
- 2.46 The Joint Structure Plan Review no longer names Rural Centres, although its predecessor (Alteration No. 2) listed these as being Bruton, Castle Cary, Ilminster, Langport, Martock, Milborne Port, Somerton, South Petherton and Wincanton. Ilminster and Wincanton are now defined in the Joint Structure Plan Review as towns. All the other former Rural Centres can be distinguished from smaller villages by having populations of around 2,500 or more, a good range of shops and services (including financial services), medical facilities (at least a doctor's surgery), a public library, and daily bus services. In these ways, they are able to act as providers of services to other small settlements nearby, although the extent of this role varies. Certain of the places listed above are physically combined with parts of adjoining parishes, and so their definition should reflect this association.
- 2.47 The Joint Structure Plan Review makes clear that Rural Centres should be those settlements that act as focal points for local employment and shopping, social and community activity. Their identification should encourage investment to maintain their local function and thereby make an important contribution to limiting the overall need for

people to travel. Development in Rural Centres should be sufficient to sustain and enhance their role and be commensurate with their size and accessibility and appropriate to their character and physical identity. The Plan proposes about 14% of total housing allocations in rural centres and some 10% of total employment allocations.

2.48 Development in Rural Areas has been proposed on the basis that:

- Priority be given to identifying sites within the Rural Centres.

Because of their generally superior service provision, better accessibility, generally better employment opportunities and their capacity in terms of both physical and community infrastructure to absorb further development compared to villages. This reflects guidance in PPG3 and in the Joint Structure Plan Review.

- Within the Rural Centres, priority be given firstly to previously developed sites.

To minimise greenfield land take.

- Sites be allocated in all the Rural Centres

To ensure a reasonable spatial distribution for the residual housing requirement and to provide some opportunity for affordable housing to meet needs across the District.

2.49 Rural Centres provide the opportunity for affordable housing to be planned to meet need throughout the rural area of South Somerset as these communities are better able to accommodate new development in a more sustainable way.

#### Policy ST1

The settlements of Bruton, Castle Cary/Ansford, Langport/Huish Episcopi, Martock, Milborne Port, Somerton and South Petherton are identified as Rural Centres

2.50 The amount of development in each Rural Centre will vary according to the opportunities

for and constraints on development in each place. The Inset Maps and proposals in Chapters 12-15 show in detail how much development is to take place, and in which locations, by means of defining development areas and allocating sites for housing, employment or other development, as well as indicating where sites or features should be protected from development.

#### Key Sites

2.51 The most appropriate approach to locating much of the required new development is considered to be concentrating development in the form of 'key sites'. These are the relatively large sites which are most appropriate in terms of their planning merits and where community benefits such as infrastructure improvements can be brought forward. Such sites need to be suitably located on the transport network and to be environmentally acceptable.

2.52 The key sites are identified on the basis that existing commitments, a comprehensive review of the potential for previously developed sites for housing in Towns and Rural Centres, and a realistic assessment of likely future windfall developments have all failed to provide for South Somerset's housing need. In accordance with Government Guidance in PPG3, the District Council has allocated land to provide for most of the remaining housing requirement on urban extensions. These are at Yeovil (Lufton, Thorne Lane and Lyde Road), Chard, Crewkerne ('CLR' site) and Wincanton.

2.53 The major urban extension sites are essential to the implementation of the Plan Strategy because of their scale, their contribution to the total amount of land allocated for housing and the opportunities they present to achieve planned mixed use development, mixed communities and affordable housing. They present the opportunity to build on past investment and utilise the capacity of existing infrastructure (both physical and social). They also enable the Authority to promote new physical and social infrastructure that will be of benefit to the new communities to be developed and the existing adjacent ones. By providing sufficient demand it is anticipated

that existing services and facilities can be maintained and enhanced. The key sites have provided the opportunity to take public transport into account in shaping the pattern of development and offer the likely prospect of making public transport services more viable.

- 2.54 The key sites will enable the Council to plan on a comprehensive basis with its existing communities towards a shared vision of the future urban environment within which they will live. They offer the chance to achieve progressive layouts and designs that will make the best use of land and help meet community aspirations.
- 2.55 The focus on key site urban extensions for future development in South Somerset relates well to the achievement of the Council's overall Guiding Principles. The Government recognise, in PPG3, that planned urban extensions are likely to prove the most sustainable option after building on appropriate sites within urban areas, especially where
- i) it is possible to utilise existing physical and social infrastructure:
  - ii) Where there is good access to public transport or where new public transport provision can be planned into development.
  - iii) Where there is good access to jobs, schools, shopping and leisure.
- 2.56 Through maintaining and developing social infrastructure and providing employment opportunities (in most cases) the key sites should maintain and enhance social and economic well-being. The key sites will support public transport, make effective use of land and thereby minimise unnecessary greenfield land-take. The positive opportunities for comprehensive planning with community involvement afforded by the key sites should help significantly in achieving an enhanced landscape with progressive design, including "sustainable" design and construction.
- 2.57 'Key sites' are being proposed at Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne and Wincanton and represent the main areas for development in

the District where development is to be focused in accordance with national, regional and county strategy.

#### Villages

- 2.58 The remaining category of defined settlements comprises 'Villages', described in Policy STR3 of the Joint Structure Plan Review as places which provide limited local services. Policy STR5 of the Joint Structure Plan Review states that development in Villages, as with Rural Centres, should be such to sustain and enhance their role and be commensurate with their size and accessibility, and appropriate to their character and physical identity.
- 2.59 PPG3 states that "only a limited amount of housing can be expected in expanded villages ...most proposals for additional housing will involve in-fill or peripheral development." Villages will only be suitable for significant additional housing where "it can be demonstrated that additional housing will support local services, or meet local needs such as affordable housing." The Government is concerned, however, that there should be adequate housing.
- 2.60 PPG7 seeks promotion of living communities in existing villages with a reasonable mix of age, income and occupation and which offer a suitable scale of employment, affordable housing and market housing, community facilities and other opportunities. New housing will continue to be required to sustain healthy economic activity and viability of villages. Development should be well related in scale and location to existing development. A shortage of affordable housing in rural areas is recognised and the use of exception policy to meet it is referred to.
- 2.61 The Regional Planning Guidance states that Local Plans should avoid allocating land for development in villages except where a specific local need has been identified.
- 2.62 The Joint Structure Plan Review differentiates between Rural Centres and settlements which provide limited local services which should be identified as Villages. Village designation is appropriate where the level of services is not expected to increase to form a comprehensive

range but where it is considered locally important for the current function of the settlement to continue. Development in Villages should be commensurate with their size and accessibility and appropriate to their character and physical identity.

2.63 The housing requirement for South Somerset has been met in the urban centres with some small but significant provision in the Rural Centres.

2.64 The Government expresses its concern in PPG3, however that there should be "adequate housing provision" in rural areas to meet the needs of local people. PPG7 clearly envisages some housing development in villages especially those offering employment opportunities. New housing needs to be well related in scale and location to existing development. The Joint Structure Plan Review differentiates between Rural Centres and Villages and seeks growth compatible with their size, accessibility, character and physical identity. It is felt appropriate to identify most of the villages of South Somerset as Villages that are in principle appropriate locations for development. In practice this development will be in-fill or groups of housing within the identified Development Areas of villages. Generally speaking the larger the Village, the larger the Development Area and the greater the scope for some development reflecting the likelihood of a better service base in such settlements.

2.65 The anticipated growth in Villages for the rest of the Local Plan period from October 1999 is about 928 dwellings (deriving from existing commitments, anticipated windfalls and proposed allocations). This represents only about 10% of the total growth across the District in that period but is considered to offer some opportunity for growth without undermining the Plan strategy of focussed development nor unduly compromising the objective of seeking to minimise use of the private car. This level of growth is considered to be achievable in the District's Villages without compromising their characters.

2.66 Affordable housing need is to be met mainly in the Market Towns and Rural Centres. There will however be some provision in the villages

through opportunities for Registered Social Landlords to buy existing dwellings on the open market and the existence of the rural exception policy to allow affordable housing development. There may also be opportunities occasionally for a windfall development in a village in excess of the 15 dwelling threshold to allow for provision of affordable housing. Provision for affordable housing in the villages will not be large in absolute numbers but it will be of a scale more in keeping with the smaller localised needs of the rural settlements. The defined Development Areas serve to provide locational guidance for the implementation of the affordable housing exception policy by physically identifying the village and those areas adjoining it.

2.67 Places defined as Villages have fewer facilities than Rural Centres but usually have services such as a single shop and/or post office, primary school or community hall. In assessing the appropriate amount of development in each place, regard has also been had to local employment opportunities and public transport services (bus or rail).

#### Policy ST2

The following places are defined as villages which are, in principle, appropriate locations for development:

##### Area East

Barton St. David  
Bayford  
Charlton Adam  
Charlton Horethorne  
Charlton Mackrell  
Galhampton  
Henstridge  
Holton  
Keinton Mandeville  
Kingsdon  
North Cadbury  
Queen Camel  
South Brewham  
South Cadbury  
South Cheriton  
Sparkford  
Templecombe  
West Camel

Area North

Ash  
 Barrington  
 Compton Dundon  
 Curry Rivel  
 Ilton  
 Kingsbury Episcopi  
 Long Load  
 Long Sutton  
 Norton-sub-Hamdon  
 Seavington St. Mary  
 Seavington St. Michael  
 Shepton Beauchamp  
 Stoke-sub-Hamdon  
 Tintinhull

Area South

Barwick/Stoford  
 Hardington Mandeville  
 Higher Odcombe  
 North Coker  
 West Coker

Area West

Ashill  
 Broadway  
 Combe St. Nicholas  
 East Chinnock  
 Haselbury Plucknett  
 Horton  
 Merriott  
 Misterton  
 Tatworth/South Chard  
 West Chinnock  
 Winsham

Development Areas

- 2.68 For all defined Towns, Rural Centres and Villages which are, in principle, generally suitable locations for development, it is necessary to define the areas within which the proposed amount of development should be contained. By doing so, the character and setting of these places can be protected, countryside can be safeguarded, the loss of agricultural land can be minimised, and the spread of development around the edges of settlements can be prevented.
- 2.69 Development areas are not simply policy areas shown on a map. They are defined specifically to show where, in principle,

development is normally to be permitted, provided that it is in accordance with other Local Plan policies and proposals. In view of their purpose, the boundaries of the development areas may not always follow existing property boundaries.

- 2.70 The District Council defines development areas as a means of implementing the Local Plan's strategy for development. Outside the development areas (shown on the Proposals Map), Joint Structure Plan Review policies and current Government guidance for the control of development will apply. Policy STR6 of the Joint Structure Plan Review states 'Development outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages should be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster the need to travel'.

- 2.71 It must be stressed that the presence or absence of a defined development area does not reflect the status of settlements for anything other than planning purposes. Even some villages which are relatively large or have some services or facilities may not have a defined development area if, in planning policy terms, it would be inappropriate to define such an area. For example, Ilchester is a medium-sized village with a range of facilities but it is so heavily constrained by aircraft noise, flooding and archaeological policies that it does not have a development area.

**Policy ST3**

**Outside the defined development areas of towns, rural centres and villages, development will be strictly controlled and restricted to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel.**

- 2.72 There will be cases of exceptional local housing need, such as for agricultural workers' dwellings, but otherwise development opportunities outside development areas are extremely restricted. PPG7 (The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development) restates the

Government's policy that the countryside should be protected for its own sake, and that new housebuilding or other new development away from established settlements or from areas allocated for development should be strictly controlled. It does allow that sensitive infilling or minor extensions of small groups of houses may be acceptable, depending on the character of the area, and that a truly outstanding isolated house of extraordinary high quality may also exceptionally be justified.

#### Extensions and Alterations to Buildings in the Countryside

2.73 One of the main functions of policies controlling development in the countryside is to protect the landscape from unacceptable new buildings and from the introduction of new uses which would generate high levels of activity to the detriment of the rural character of the area. Planning permission is only given to the conversion of some rural buildings to dwellings or for employment use, where the building is suitable for conversion without excessive alteration, rebuilding and/or extension and where the criteria of Structure and Local Plan policies are met. Conversions for employment purposes tend to have substantially less impact on the character and appearance of buildings than residential conversions, and are dealt with by Policy ME5 of this Local Plan. Changes of use to residential and other uses are addressed by Policies EH7 and EH8. Care must be taken when considering conversion of buildings in the countryside, particularly barns, as there may be a need to conserve protected species, notably bats and barn owls.

2.74 Once a building is converted to a new use, it is important that its external appearance and setting are maintained, in order to protect the amenity and character of the rural area. Harm to buildings' appearance may arise from the addition of extensions which are out of scale or character. There is a risk that even minor alterations, e.g. porches, which may be allowed under permitted development rights, or domestic paraphernalia can spoil an otherwise careful conversion. As a result, the District Council may consider the removal of permitted development rights on granting

permission for a change of use, when it considers that further development would have an unacceptable effect on the character of a building or its setting.

#### Policy ST4

Where changes of use or conversion of a building outside defined development areas is to be allowed, further alteration or extension of the buildings or development within the curtilage will be permitted if it is demonstrated that the development would not have an adverse effect on its character or setting. The district council will consider the removal of permitted development rights only where it is clear that further development would be likely to have an adverse effect on the character or setting of the development.

#### General Principles of Development

2.75 As well as satisfying the overall strategy for the pattern of development, the principle of new development will also be considered against a set of criteria intended to ensure that basic planning objectives are met and the overall quality of life and environment of the District is maintained, whilst allowing for necessary development. Policy ST5 below sets out the range of criteria which need to be given appropriate weight in making planning decisions. This policy provides the strategic context for more detailed policies in subsequent chapters of the Plan which should be read in conjunction with it. When considering proposals, regard will be had to any associated mitigation or compensatory measures that satisfactorily address impacts arising from the development.

#### Policy ST5

Proposals for development will be considered against the following criteria:

1. The proposal promotes a pattern of land use and transport which reduces the need to travel, minimises the length of journeys and provides accessibility by a choice of means of transport;
2. The proposal makes efficient use of land and give priority to the use of

recycled land and other appropriate sites within urban areas first;

3. The proposal conserves the biodiversity and environmental assets, particularly nationally and internationally designated areas, and the historic heritage of the district;
4. The proposal respects the form, character and setting of the locality;
5. The proposal makes provision for a satisfactory means of access into and within the site and traffic resulting from development can be accommodated on the local transport network;
6. The proposal avoids placing people and property at risk from flooding, ground instability, contaminated land, pollution or hazardous substances; and
7. The proposal makes provision for the infrastructure necessary to service the development.

When considering development proposals, regard will be had to any associated mitigation or compensatory measures that satisfactorily address impacts arising from the development.

#### The Quality of Development

- 2.76 National advice (as set out in PPG1: General Policy and Principles) emphasises the significant effect new development can have on the character and quality of an area. Further design advice is contained in the revised version of PPG3 (Housing) and a joint DETR and Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) publication entitled "By Design". The advice centres on the need for improved urban design in a sustainable framework.
- 2.77 South Somerset is fortunate to be an attractive area, both in terms of its countryside and its towns and villages. Many areas and buildings are already protected by means of specific statutory designations, and so it is important that any new development should be of a standard which conserves or enhances their attractiveness. However, it is also desirable to

achieve higher standards of design for built development elsewhere, so that the overall environmental quality of the District is enhanced.

- 2.78 It is important, therefore, to achieve high standards of landscape and architectural design in all new development, even in respect of buildings which are neither 'listed' nor within conservation areas. The aim of the planning authority and developers should be to raise the quality of the built and natural environment. The District Council will encourage applicants for planning permission to achieve a good standard of design.
- 2.79 The design should always integrate a development into its surroundings and this can be facilitated by landscape design. Landscape provision can make a major contribution to the quality of the environment, in both rural and urban areas: it can enhance the appearance of (and provide the context for) development. It can also ensure that developments respond to and enhance the character and distinctiveness of a locality. Planting and the formation of landscape features can be utilised to screen unsightly land use and built form, define and buffer settlement outline and assist the biodiversity of life and its habitat.
- 2.80 Applications for planning permission should be accompanied by a survey drawing clearly indicating the nature and extent of all notable man-made and natural features. Site analysis should demonstrate how these have been taken into account in developing a proposal. Major development proposals should be accompanied by a landscape impact assessment. In all cases, the aim for any development should be that it results in environmental landscape benefit.
- 2.81 Sites proposed for development in this Local Plan have been the subject of landscape assessments and particular requirements arising from these are referred to under each proposal. Appendix A.1 sets out the landscape guidelines for all new developments, not just those specifically allocated.
- 2.82 The opportunity is being taken in this district-wide local plan to set out the comprehensive range of design criteria to be met where the principle of development is acceptable.

### Policy ST6

Proposals for new development, otherwise acceptable in principle, will be permitted where the following design criteria are met:

1. The architectural and landscape design satisfactorily respects the form, character and setting of the settlement or local environment.
2. They preserve and complement the key characteristics of the location, to maintain its local distinctiveness.
3. They do not result in the unavoidable loss of open spaces (including gaps and frontages) with visual or environmental value.
4. They do not cause unavoidable harm to the natural and built environment of the locality and the broader landscape.
5. Their density, form, scale, mass, height and proportions respect and relate to the character of their surroundings.
6. They do not unacceptably harm the residential amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties by disturbing, interfering with or overlooking such properties. Where necessary, the district council may impose conditions on any permission regarding hours of opening, operation and servicing.
7. They will not adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, land stability in or around the location.
8. They retain and integrate and/or enhance, where desirable, attractive site features and natural characteristics within the scheme.

### Design Statements

- 2.83 PPG1, Annex A states that planning applications should be accompanied by a short written statement setting out the design principles adopted and illustrative material in plan and elevation. Such statements will be particularly important in relation to complex or large-scale developments or sensitive sites.

For smaller scale proposals a design statement might simply comprise a short statement accompanied by photographs of the site and its surroundings. The level of detail requested by the LPA will depend on the type of application and the nature of the proposed development. Design Statements will be important in showing how the requirements of Policy ST6 are to be met.

### Urban Space

- 2.84 Both the Council's own supplementary design guidance contained in the publications "Landscape Design" and "The Design of Residential Areas", and national advice in PPG3 and "By Design", all advocate improving the quality of urban design through the careful treatment of streets and spaces as an integral part of any proposed development. Where appropriate, urban space (that is space enclosed by building structures and landscape and including street space) should form part of a design statement requested by the Local Planning Authority. This should show how urban space has been positively planned for and designed.

### Public Space

- 2.85 Public spaces are those parts of towns and villages, which are freely available for use by everyone. Care should be taken to ensure that public space fulfils its purpose and function and to prevent the creation of unusable and unmaintained areas. In order to maximise the amenity provided it may be necessary to co-ordinate the provision of public space with those in adjacent development phases. To create successful public spaces attention should be given to form, size, layout, natural surveillance, paving, planting, lighting, shelter, permeability, efficiency of land uses and the uses of surrounding buildings.

### Policy ST7

Where proposed development includes outdoor areas available for use by the general public, these areas must be shown to be attractive and carefully designed to safely fulfil their purpose and to be easily maintained.

- 2.86 The District Council will prepare design guides on a range of subjects, to explain and illustrate the standard of landscape and architectural design which it advocates for new development. It has already published, for example, 'The Design of Residential Areas' and 'Landscape Design – A Guide to Good Practice', which indicate the Council's expectations for the design of good quality development. It has also prepared landscape impact assessments for the major sites allocated in this Local Plan. The District Council will continue to assist communities to prepare Village Design Statements and to support neighbourhood planning initiatives. As part of its approach to a quality built environment the Council welcomes innovative approach to design.
- 2.87 Such guides will form 'supplementary planning guidance', which may be taken into account as a material consideration in determining planning applications. Government advice is that supplementary planning guidance should be issued separately from the plan and made publicly available. The weight given to it will be increased if it has been prepared in consultation with the public and has been the subject of a Council resolution.
- 2.88 Harm to residential amenity can arise in a variety of ways, including smells from food retailers or the noise of customers arriving at or leaving premises. Where necessary, the District Council may impose conditions regarding matters such as hours of opening or operation and servicing.

Land Stability of Minerals Workings and Tips in Relation to Development

- 2.89 Minerals Planning Guidance Note 5 (MPG5) advises of the need to consider the land stability of mineral workings and tips in relation to development in, on or near them. The stability of slopes associated with mineral workings and tips can be affected directly or indirectly by other development with potentially adverse and sometimes dangerous effects. Whilst South Somerset does not have a great tradition of extensive quarrying, there are numerous small workings, borrow pits and tips throughout the district.

Sustainable Forms of Development

- 2.90 Good planning and design can significantly reduce inputs of natural resources and outputs of pollution. Although the town and country planning system cannot control forms of construction or the internal layout of buildings, it can help to achieve more sustainable forms of development by influencing the form and layout of development. For example, buildings can be arranged to maximise solar gain and to provide shelter from prevailing winds. Various measures can be used to reduce surface water run-off from sites (or to collect water for re-use).
- 2.91 Buildings themselves, and their associated facilities, can also be designed to minimise resource use, in terms of energy or water consumption or raw materials. Their appearance may be non-conventional, eg 'green roofs' – a shallow covering of earth and vegetation, or space may need to be set aside for water butts or composting.
- 2.92 The Council is committed to the concept of sustainable construction and development and this is embodied in the Guiding Principles of the plan. PPG3, paragraph 56, underlines the Government's commitment to sustainable development and advises that local planning authorities should adopt policies which "promote the energy efficiency of new housing where possible. This advice is also reflected in RPG, Policy RE 6 where it is advised that local plan policies should "promote energy conservation measures through policies guiding the design, layout and construction techniques of new development proposals". Energy and resource conservation are key issues in reducing environmental problems such as global warming, and the policy below, in combination with other plan policies relating to renewable energy sources and the use of sustainable drainage systems (SUDS), attempts to address this issue.
- 2.93 Where a design statement is produced as part of a planning application, issues such as design, including construction, orientation to maximise passive solar gain, layout, siting to reduce wind chill and the incorporation of energy saving measures should be included. Such measures may include, amongst others,

the use of SUDS, water conservation techniques such as rainwater harvesting, the use of energy from renewable sources such as solar panels or photovoltaic cells and the provision of space to encourage composting. Advice and information is available from the District Council.

#### Sustainable Construction

##### Policy ST8

Development will be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that energy conservation has been fully considered in the design, orientation, layout and siting of the proposal and that all measures which are practicable are included as part of the scheme.

- 2.94 An information leaflet on the subject of sustainable construction will be produced and handed out with planning application forms.

#### Development Briefs

- 2.95 It has been the District Council's practice to prepare development briefs for development sites allocated in Local Plans, and to require developers to prepare such guides for other significant sites which are the subject of planning applications. The preparation of development briefs enables the public to appreciate more easily the likely form of development. It also enables the Council as planning authority to secure a high quality of development and to exercise the appropriate degree of control over development. Such briefs need to take into consideration a site's relationship to its surroundings.
- 2.96 So that development briefs can carry weight as supplementary planning guidance, they will be prepared with full public participation (including developers, interest groups and local councils) and will be subject of approval by the Council. Any subsequent revisions or alterations will also be the subject of public consultation before approval.
- 2.97 Development briefs will normally be required for sites of 1 hectare (2.5 acres) or over where development is proposed. Development briefs may also be prepared for smaller sites where

the circumstances of the site and its surroundings warrant it. Development briefs for sites allocated in the Local Plan will normally be prepared by the District Council. But for some allocated sites, plus others which may come forward through the planning application process, development briefs may be prepared by the prospective developers. So that a common approach to development briefs can be followed by both the Council and prospective developers, the District Council will prepare advice on the briefing process and content of briefs.

#### Environmental Assessment

- 2.98 The statutory requirement for an Environmental Assessment is detailed in the Government's Assessment of Environmental Effects Regulations 1988 and accompanying Department of the Environment Circular 15/88. In particular, an Environmental Assessment is required in all cases when a proposal falls within the criteria of Schedule 1 of the Regulations. This only applies to a limited number of significant types of development, such as oil refineries, which are most unlikely to be proposed in the District. In the case of Schedule 2 projects, Environmental Assessment is required if they are likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to factors such as their nature, size or location. The District Council will give prompt advice on the need for environmental assessment and the recommended scope of its coverage. If a developer is unsure as to whether or not a proposal falls within the scope of the Regulations, he can apply to the District Council for an opinion. If the developer is dissatisfied with the Council's opinion that environmental assessment is required, he may refer the matter to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.
- 2.99 In the case of proposals which do not fall within the scope of formal environmental assessment, but are nevertheless considered to have adverse environmental impact, the District Council may request that further information be submitted to assess fully the likely impact of the development on its surrounds.

Crime Prevention

- 2.100 Reducing crime and the fear of crime is of growing concern. The Government is pursuing a number of 'community safety' initiatives in which local authorities can be expected to play an important role. Existing Government advice, in PPG1 (General Policy and Principles), PPG12 (Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance) and Department of the Environment Circular 5/94 (Planning Out Crime), encourages the consideration of crime prevention measures in the design of new development. Crime prevention may be a material consideration when planning applications are being determined. The careful layout and design of development can reduce the risk of criminal activity, and Circular 5/94 contains useful design advice and a bibliography on crime prevention.

**Policy ST9**

**Proposals for new development will be required to be designed to take into account the need for security and crime prevention.**

Planning Obligations

- 2.101 The Government advises (in PPG12 and Department of the Environment Circular 05/2005) that, where planning obligations are normally to be sought in respect of certain forms of development, the local planning authority's policy on obligations should be set out in the Local Plan.
- 2.102 The District Council will expect developers to meet or contribute to meeting all the on-site infrastructure requirements of proposed development necessary to enable the development to go ahead. Such requirements include cycleways, footpaths, roads, open spaces (for amenity or recreation), structural planting and landscape provision, foul and surface water drainage, water supply, gas and/or electricity supply, telecommunications and other services. They may also include

measures needed to offset impacts on resources present on the site (e.g. woodland) before development. Developers should also meet or contribute to meeting the needs generated by the development which may also be met off-site, e.g. health or community facilities including sports and recreation), schools, public transport. Planning obligations will also be sought to secure matters such as a range of house types, including affordable housing, and an appropriate phasing of development. To ensure that development is properly phased in relation to the provision of infrastructure and to prevent the fragmentation of new neighbourhoods, the District Council will resist piecemeal development, i.e. development of parts of a larger site in an uncoordinated manner, unrelated to the provision of the necessary services and facilities.

- 2.103 In negotiating with prospective developers, the District Council will have regard to the detailed provisions of Circular 05/2005 and any other relevant advice. Specific, known requirements arising from allocated development sites are listed under the respective proposals in this Local Plan. All are considered to pass the Government's tests that they are necessary, relevant to planning, directly related to the proposal, fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposal, and reasonable in all other respects.

**Policy ST10**

**Where, as a direct consequence of a proposed development, additional infrastructure or mitigation measures are required within the development site or elsewhere, the local planning authority will seek planning obligations to secure or contribute to the provision of infrastructure, mitigation measures, community facilities, a range of house types and appropriate phasing of development. Piecemeal development will not be permitted.**

