

LDF PMB and MAG Officer Group
Core Strategy Workshop 3
Yeovil Urban Extension – Discussion Paper

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Potential Land Availability within the Existing Development Area
3. Urban Extension Potential Land Take
4. Advantages of scale; one extension or several
5. Constraints Mapping Analysis
6. Wider Planning Issues; Sustainability of Options
7. Review of Eco Town Status
8. Conclusions and Recommendation

Constraints Maps 1-6

1. Introduction

The Baker Associates report¹ presents an economic led approach to the growth of South Somerset and Yeovil consistent with household and population growth projections. The Baker Report recommends a Yeovil requirement of 7,500 dwellings until 2026 and this figure has been subsequently updated by the Consultants to 8,600 dwellings to 2028. This update reflects the requirement for the Core Strategy to present a minimum 15-year horizon for development at the point of adoption. The Baker Report notes that should there be a desire to reduce net in-commuting this split could be altered further into Yeovil's favour.

Baker Associates have tested growth scenarios against market capacity and concluded that the total deliverable supply between 2006 and 2026 at Yeovil is 7,219 dwellings. They have again subsequently updated to a figure between 2006 and 2028 to a Yeovil market capacity of 7,739 dwellings. This total supply being constrained by the single urban extension currently planned at Yeovil within the Draft Core Strategy. The report and subsequent update however advocates 8,600 dwellings as the appropriate figure required to match projections and meet the housing need associated with the expected increase in jobs specifically within Yeovil based on approx 50% of the total district growth being based in Yeovil. An increase in Yeovil's housing numbers is also considered necessary to fulfil Yeovil's ambitions set out in the Vision for the District and to achieve an appropriate critical mass within the Urban Extension.

Land availability, environmental constraints and infrastructure capacity, were not considered restrictive issues in the context of Baker's Report.

Having established the 8,600 dwelling provision figure for Yeovil this report seeks to make a recommendation on five key questions for the Yeovil Urban Extension:

- Is there sufficient market capacity to achieve the 8,600 dw provision and therefore the appropriate provision for the urban extension?
- How much growth should occur within the urban framework of Yeovil and how much in an urban extension
- Should Yeovil's growth be located in a single Urban Extension or several Urban Extensions
- What is the preferred direction for Yeovil's growth?
- Are the aspirations in the draft Core Strategy for an eco town still appropriate

The report addresses land availability within the urban frame, the potential land take of an urban extension, advantages of 1 extension against several, constraints mapping analysis, wider planning issues associated with sustainability appraisal and review of the justification for eco town status.

¹ Housing requirement for South Somerset and Yeovil, January 2011

2.Potential Land Availability with the Urban Framework

This section aims to identify the potential housing development that could be provided within Yeovil's existing development framework.

To assess this, a number of sources were considered; completions, commitments, Local Plan key sites, Yeovil Urban Village Proposal, SHLAA sites and potential windfall sites.

Completions and Commitments

The figures for the completions and commitments were taken from the District Council's own Access housing database.

The completions cover the time period April 2006 – March 2010 and show 726 dwellings were constructed during that time. The housing survey is currently being carried out for the period April 2010 – March 2011 and this will be available to update these figures shortly.

The commitments of 2906 show all extant planning permissions as of 18 May 2011.

Local Plan Key Sites

There were three Key Sites identified for development in the South Somerset Local Plan 2006:

KS/BRYM/1 – Land at Lufton provided for 620 dwellings, which were approved in outline permission 05/00931/OUT. These are already counted within the commitment figures, however the reserved matters application 10/01875/REM, which is currently under consideration, is for 717 dwellings. This potentially gives an additional 97 dwellings.

KS/YEWI/1 – Land east of Lyde Road provided for 717 dwellings of which 636 are included in the commitments. This potentially gives an additional 81 dwellings.

KS/YEWI/2 – Land at Thorne Lane provided for 830 dwellings all of which are included within the total for commitments.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Sites

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment looks at potential sites throughout the district. Using the database of sites considered for the 2010 assessment, a list of potential development sites were considered. Identified by the SHLAA panel as suitable, available and viable was a maximum yield of 233 from 4 sites. However 23 sites in total had been identified initially. Many of these sites identified were parks, gardens, allotments and open space, which were deemed as not available and therefore not included in the SHLAA report.

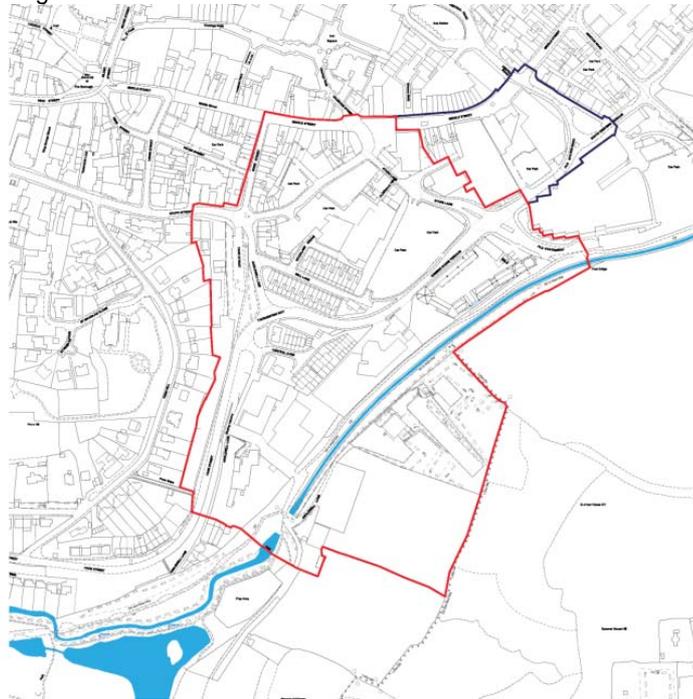
These sites could potentially accommodate a further 491 residential units within Yeovil's urban Framework. Although it is acknowledged that these sites are unlikely to come forward, as the plan period covers until 2028, the situation may change and it would be unrealistic not to give some consideration for their potential.

Yeovil Urban Village Proposal

The original 5 options put forward for development of the Yeovil Urban Village have now been reduced to 3 in ongoing master planning work within the Council's Eco town Project. The potential housing figures vary between 196 and 278 covering an area as shown in figure 1 below.

Due to a delay in obtaining the topographical study of the area the final decision on the preferred option has been delayed. For the purposes of this report both extents of the potential growth have been considered.

Figure 1.



Potential Additional Sites

In order to identify potential windfall sites within Yeovil a survey was carried out. A number of sites were identified and these were all cross-referenced with the completions, commitments and SHLAA sites, removing any of the sites already identified in the previous categories, thereby avoiding duplication.

This resulted in a possible additional 11 sites that have not already been captured in the other fields. The site areas of these were then calculated and the potential number of dwellings the sites could accommodate was calculated in line with the SHLAA density rates. This resulted in a potential gain of 90 dwellings.

However 4 of these sites already housed buildings that were worthy of retention and potentially suitable for conversion to apartments/flats. Using information provided in the Nationwide House Prices Index, the average floor area of flats within the UK is 70m². Applying this to the existing buildings results in a potential additional 140 residential units.

During the survey it was noted that Yeovil has a number (10) of off street surfaced public car parks. Whilst it is acknowledged that retention of car parking within Yeovil would be a consideration, potential decking of 2 or 3 strategic car parks could accommodate the same level of parking provision and release the other car parks for development. This could result in between 54-92 new dwellings in sustainable central locations.

Other windfall sites such as potential conversions above shops were considered. However during the survey it was noticed that many of the shops already had residential units above. It was therefore considered that any additional net gain from this type of windfall would be negligible.

Conclusion

Table 1 below shows there is a potential provision of between 4452– 5204 dwellings within the existing Development Area of Yeovil.

Table 1.

	Achievable Capacity	Theoretical Potential	Approved	Potential/ Allocated
Completions	726	726		
Commitments	2906	2906		
Key sites				
KS/BRYM/1	97	97	620 commitments	717
KS/YEWI/1	150	150	*636 commitments	**786
KS/YEWI/2			830 commitments	830
Yeovil Urban Village	196	278		
SHLAA sites	233	724		
Potential windfall sites	144	323		
Total	4452	5204		

*717 approved at outline, superseded by reserved matters applications but considered in the potential

** Increased from 717 to take consideration of land still available within the site

The achievable capacity includes sites that there is every reasonable expectation of coming forward within the plan period. The theoretical potential includes additional sites identified as potentially able to come forward, as in the case of the Urban Village, the final master plan has yet to be finalised and the range between the lowest proposal (196) and the highest proposal (278) should be considered.

This range encompasses potential development at the lower figure, of dwellings at a density of 30 dwellings per hectare. The higher figure takes into account a higher density ratio for the conversion of existing buildings as well as the re-utilisation of car parking land within the town. Whilst it may be unrealistic to expect any of the surface car parks to be released for development, as the plan period will run until 2028 it would be unreasonable to not consider their inclusion. It is also reasonable to foresee that any development of the identified sites and any other windfall sites could be brought forward at a higher density than accounted for in this report.

It is therefore judged that the higher figure is more appropriate.

It is recognised that the latter stages of the this assessment rely on professional judgement however past experience of development would suggest that other sites not identified in this exercise are likely to come forward in the Plan period. An ambitious target for development within the urban frame can therefore be justified but must be subject to continuing monitoring

3. Urban Extension Potential Land Take

The purpose of this section of the report is to estimate the total area of land required to contain the Yeovil Urban Extension(s) in light of issues raised in the Draft Core Strategy (incorporating Preferred Options). Key issues arising from objections can be summarised as:

Issues:

- Housing density within the Urban Extension
- Employment land provision in the Urban Extension
- Health & education provision within the Urban Extension
- Community facilities within the Urban Extension
- Renewable Energy generation within the Urban Extension
- Open Space provision within the Urban Extension
- Strategic landscaping & road network within the Urban Extension

Estimated Land Take

Table 1 shows the estimated land required to contain the Yeovil Urban Extension.

Land Type (3,400 Dwellings)	Estimated Land Take (Hectares)
Housing (40-50dph)	85* – 68
Employment (B1, B2 & B8)	18.37
Education	9
Health Centre	0.4
Local Centres/Community Facilities	1
Energy Centre	0.2
Strategic Road Network	5.2
Total Built Form Land Take	119.17
Strategic Landscaping	25.84
Open Space (40%)	45.59
Total Land Take (including Open Space & Strategic Landscaping)	190

* Used to calculate overall land requirement

Housing

The area of housing land has been calculated by multiplying the proposed 3,400 dwellings by a density figure of 40-50 dwellings per hectare` to give a land area of some 100 - 80.42 ha. It should be noted that the lower housing density figure of 40dph has been used throughout this report as the worse case scenario but that if the higher density target is achieved around 20ha of land could be retained.

Several representations submitted to the draft Core Strategy have questioned the need for such a high housing density figure for Yeovil noting that this could lead to poor design, cramped conditions and poor quality of life for residents. Conversely, there is also concern from respondents about the loss of countryside and a desire to maximise the use of land.

A general discussion on the pros and cons of different housing densities in South Somerset has already been considered in an earlier paper². That paper made a recommendation to follow a design lead approach to housing densities rather than a more prescriptive density target.

² South Somerset's housing, employment and miscellaneous key issues workshop discussion paper 28 April 2011 – Housing Density

Notwithstanding this recommendation there are good arguments to be prescriptive regarding a target housing density within the Urban Extension(s).

Table 2 below seeks to show the full range of housing densities that could be achieved within the Yeovil Urban Extension and the differences in anticipated land take with each option. The range of densities presented in Table 2 are based on a minimum density of 35 dph reflecting the earlier housing density report's sample of four sites in Yeovil and in the context of the previous PPS3 indicative minimum of 30 dph. The maximum density of 50 dph is based on the South West Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) that sought to achieve densities of 40-50 dph in Urban Extensions and the PPS1 expectation that LPAs promote a more efficient use of land through higher density, mixed use developments³.

Table 2: Impact of land take on housing supply at 35 - 50 dph

Housing Requirement and Density	Area of land (ha)⁴
3,400 dwellings @ 35 dph	97 (Approx 136 football pitches)
3,400 dwellings @ 40 dph	85 (Approx 119 football pitches)
3,400 dwellings @ 45 dph	75.5 (Approx 106 football pitches)
3,400 dwellings @ 50 dph	68 (Approx 95 football pitches)

The table shows that the difference between achieving the highest and lowest net densities is approximately 29 ha or the equivalent of 41 football pitches. As would be expected the overall net housing density significantly impacts on the amount of Greenfield land that would be lost to development.

As the Yeovil Urban Extension is seeking to achieve Eco-town standards and to perform to general best practice some consideration should be given to the Eco-town supplement to PPS1. The Eco-town PPS does not set down standards for a specific housing density instead the Town and Country Planning Association believe that developers should be given the freedom to innovate and to demonstrate how different densities can contribute to the achievement of zero carbon communities. The Eco-Town PPS⁵ does however set out a number of requirements which impact directly on the density of development:

- 40% of the eco-town should be open space
- Homes should be within 10 minutes walk of a) frequent public transport and b) neighbourhood services.
- There should be a maximum walking distance of 800 metres from homes to the nearest school for children under the age of 11.

The Eco-town principals, reflect best practice for sustainable transport and are particularly important in Yeovil given the high level of congestion on the existing road network.

In achieving a Zero Carbon development in the Urban Extension, some consideration should also be given to the density of buildings to maximise sunlight for Solar PV panels as incorrect orientation and alignment could lead to overshadow of adjacent buildings.

³ PPS1, Paragraph 27 (viii)

⁴ Standard football pitch = 7,140 sq m. Football pitch figures have been included to help readers who are unfamiliar with the size of a hectare to visualise the area of land concerned.

⁵ Planning Policy Statement: eco towns A supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 (2009)

Poundbury in Dorset provides an example of an urban extension that is generally regarded as succeeding in delivering a high quality, sustainable living environment and presents a range of net dwelling densities of (34 – 50 dph).

The Housing Density Paper outlines the positives and negatives of higher and lower net densities. It notes that many of the negatives of high density development such as poor quality living environment with little or no outdoor space can be overcome by good quality design e.g. scale, height, massing, orientation of buildings use of materials incorporation of amenity space and consideration of the characteristics of the local environment including landscape.

With regards to viability, research carried out for the National Housing Planning and Advice Unit⁶ has estimated the viability of different housing projects at different density levels. The study concluded that generally speaking, high-density neighbourhoods do not attract a premium, suggesting that consumers prefer lower density neighbourhoods.

In order to meet the demands of the housing market and to comply with PPS3 there is a need to provide a mix of housing types and tenures at a variety of net dwelling densities, depending on the character and location of the proposal.

Given the high importance attached to Greenfield land by the local community, local constraints that minimising land capacity, national guidance advice, the Draft South West RSS, design lessons from Poundbury, Eco-town principals, sustainable transport advice and development economics it is recommended that the area of land designated for Yeovil Urban Extension should reflect an overall net density of 40-50 dph. Whilst accepting a design led, approach with see a range of housing densities achieved on site.

Employment

With the Urban Extension following Eco Town principle's the aim is to provide sufficient land to provide jobs for all the potential economically active residents in B Use activities. Baker Associates identify that Yeovil has the economic capacity to deliver 6,250 jobs over the plan period (to 2028). If this were the case, based on 3,400 dwellings, 18.37 hectares of employment land would be required for the Urban Extension(s) and the Urban Framework would require a further 8.84 hectares of land.

Education

Education requirements have been estimated within the 'Yeovil Infrastructure Impact Assessment – Initial Assessment' report prepared by Baker Associates. This report concluded that for the 11,400 dwellings proposed in the Draft South West RSS, Yeovil will need to deliver four primary schools (1-2 ha per school) and one secondary school (4-8 ha).

Given the Yeovil housing provision has been adjusted to reflect current population projections there is now estimated to be need for 8,600 dwellings. This provision would equate to a need for three primary schools and one secondary school. A mid range estimate would mean a requirement for 9 hectares of education land (3 ha for primary education and 6 ha for a secondary school). The report considered that Post 16 and special school requirements are insufficient to generate a new facility.

Health Centre

Two new health centres are proposed for the Yeovil Urban Extension and this would generate a requirement for 0.4 ha of land at assessed at 0.2 ha per centre.

⁶ The Implications of Housing Type/Size Mix and density for the Affordability and Viability of New Housing Supply, Proff Glen Bramley et al for National Housing Planning and Advice Unit, February 2010

Health Centre requirements have been calculated using evidence submitted by the Somerset Primary Care Trust (PCT). The PCT has estimated current infrastructure capacity within four of Yeovil's existing GP practices for approximately 11,500 new patients. Given the proposed Yeovil growth figure of 8,200 new dwellings generates a need for a potential 18,040 new patients there is a calculated shortfall of 6,540 people. There is a need for new medical practices to accommodate the increased capacity.

Replacement surgeries for Penn Hill Surgery and New Branch Surgery / New Medical Practice have been approved in principle by Somerset Primary Care Trust. These projects would be able to accommodate some of the increase in population growth but not all. Both projects are timetable to commence in 2013/14. Section 106 funding will be required to allow the proposed new branch surgery / new medical practice.

Energy Centre

If Eco-town standards were to be achieved within the Urban Extension, development would be expected to be powered by renewable energy sources. A study on decentralised energy for the Urban Extension(s) by Brooks Devlin & Font Energy recommends a CHP plant to power new development. To accommodate a CHP plant the study estimates a total enclosed footprint that allows for around (0.2 ha) + Ancillary space and access roads dependent on site and infrastructure availability.

Local Centres / Community Facilities

The Yeovil Urban extensions will be expected to provide space for a Local Centre and the necessary community facilities for sustainable development to be achieved. Analysis of facilities within Yeovil's key sites and the Abbey Manor Local Centre suggests a requirement for around 1 ha of land for shops / office, public house, library, place of worship, community centre, nursery school & public parking.

Strategic Road Network

It is estimated that the Yeovil Urban Extension could need around 5.2 ha of land for strategic road infrastructure. The land required has been calculated under the assumption that 5% of built housing and employment development is taken over for the strategic road network ($103.37\text{ha}/100*5 = 5.9\text{ha}$). This calculation is based on a review of existing key sites on the edge of Yeovil, a review of other Local Authority Urban Extensions and Officer experience. This provision should be considered an approximation, as design will vary on a site-by-site basis.

Strategic Landscaping

It is estimated that the Yeovil Urban Extension could need around 26 ha of land for strategic landscaping. The land required has been calculated under the assumption that 25% of built housing and employment development will be taken over for landscaping ($103.37\text{ha}/100*25 = 25.84\text{ ha}$). This calculation is based on a review of existing key sites in the South Somerset Local Plan and Officer experience. This provision should be considered an approximation, as design will vary on a site-by-site basis.

Open Space

The eco-town PPS seeks to ensure that forty percent of the eco-towns area should be allocated to green space. Given that the total area of built development (housing, employment, community facilities, health, education and energy centre) equates to 113.9 ha the open space provision would be 45.59 ha ($113.9\text{ha}/100*40 = 45.59\text{ha}$). This calculation has excluded strategic landscaping and

road infrastructure. Public open space will include both formal and informal recreation space, be publically accessible and located within walking distance (800 metres) of residential development.

Whilst there is potential for open space and structural landscaping to be co terminous no account for this has been taken, as that can only be determined following more detailed master planning.

Conclusion

It is recommended that a total land area of 190.05 ha be identified to accommodate the proposed Urban Extension of 3,400 new homes and associated infrastructure. The land area is made up of 45.59 ha of open space provision, 25.84 ha of strategic landscaping and 119.17 ha of built development.

4. Advantages of scale; one extension or several

The purpose of this section of the report is to consider the advantages and disadvantages of placing the urban extension in one site or several. Key issues raised from objections are summarised and addressed below.

Issues:

- Accessibility standards to local facilities
- Energy Generation options
- Sustainable Transport

Assessment of merits of one large urban extension or several

Accessibility to facilities

Table 1 below shows illustrative catchment populations, homes and accessibility standards for new development. The table is based on information within 'Shaping Neighbourhoods, a guide for health, sustainability and vitality' by Barton H et al

Table 1: Local Facilities and their catchment populations and distance thresholds

Local Facility	Population	Homes	Distance Threshold
Local Shop	1,500	707	500m
Primary School	4,000	1,886	800m
Local Centre	6,000	2,830	1,000m
Health Centre	10,000	4,716	1,200m
Secondary School	8,000 – 16,000	3,773 – 7,547	1,200m
District Centre / Supercentre	24,000	11,320	1,900m
Leisure Centre	24,000	11,320	1,900m

Accessibility to jobs and facilities is an essential pre requisite of a sustainable community. The table above shows that a community of 3,400 dwellings (up to 7,500 people) could be expected to have local shopping, primary schools and a local centre and possibly, depending on availability in adjacent neighbourhoods, a GP surgery. These would not be achievable were the dwellings and population to be split amongst several sites.

Whilst the size of the proposed urban extension in itself would not merit a secondary school the overall amount of growth to come to Yeovil does. Development of the urban location as 1 site presents the opportunity to place the secondary school at the heart of this new community and promote sustainable access by the most number of people to a key social and community asset.

Accessibility to a range of jobs

Furthermore 1 site enables all the employment provision to be located within walking and cycling access to the population of the extension. Spreading employment amongst several sites is less easy to deliver economically and less likely to achieve the range of jobs in situ that would give people the choice of employment they would want locally and therefore the ability to live and work locally.

Energy Generation Options

South Somerset District Council have appointed renewable energy consultants Brooks Devlin and Font Energy to estimate the heat and power on the overall demand of the Yeovil Urban Extension along with a recommendation on the suitability of alternative solutions.

Table 2: Energy Generation Options

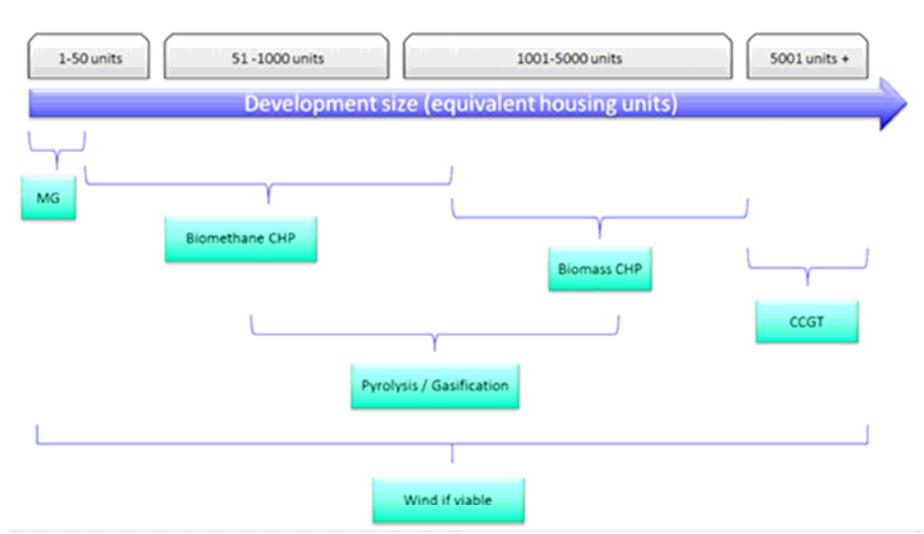


Table 2 above shows that there are various types of technologies that can be applied to new development based on the overall size of the scheme. A Biomass fuelled Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant is considered suitable for a potential Yeovil Urban Extension District Heat network (where piping takes heat generated to dwellings locally).

The report notes that there are no technical reasons why a series of smaller plants with a common district heating system could not be implemented on a phase-by-phase basis. However, to minimise operating and capital costs and for logistical reasons, an Energy Service Company (ESCo) would probably prefer a single location even if the generating capacity is installed incrementally. On the other hand, if the decision is made to choose a Biomass CHP option, multiple plant locations would be inappropriate due to economies of scale (as the size of a CHP plant increases, capital and installation costs, expressed as £/kW, both fall) and the logistics surrounding a wood fuelled CHP plant, e.g. gasification plant, lorry access, fuel storage, etc. Furthermore provision of renewable energy from a series of smaller plants would extend pipe length, increasing cost and reducing energy efficiency.

The report is clear in identifying the advantages of cheaper electricity provision for both developer and occupant and lower Carbon dioxide emissions that can be achieved by a single Urban Extension powered by a large scale CHP plant

Sustainable Transport

Planning for Sustainable Transport (2009) by the Commission for Integrated Transport provides a summary of key principles that should be met in new development if sustainable transport to be achieved. These principles include the consideration of settlement size as one key issue amongst many In particular:

- Larger scale developments provide an opportunity for greater self-containment and a mix of uses offering access to a range of shops services and employment within the built up-area, thereby reducing the need for intra-urban travel.
- Larger scale developments create higher volumes of travel demand on the main corridors making bus service provision more likely to be viable – this is especially relevant where the main corridor in question is already a public transport route.
- Larger scale developments deliver more local community facilities (e.g. local shops, schools and bank) within walking distance of all homes in a neighbourhood allowing reduced travel distances, more walking and cycling and de-incentivising car ownership.

A key consideration for the Yeovil Urban Extension in respect of development scale will be its ability to support (in passenger numbers) a viable, high quality and efficient bus service. Public transport can only attract and retain passengers if the service it offers matches requirements of travellers and are of sufficient high quality. The easiest way that a new development can achieve this aim is to integrate into an existing transport corridor. As Yeovil is well served by existing bus routes it could be expected that all the proposed direction for growth will be able to benefit from existing provision. Research carried out by SQW in behalf of DERA estimates that an Urban Extension would require between 4,000 - 6,000⁷ homes to maintain a frequent bus service defined as a 12 min service.

Cost

Generally speaking there are economies of scale in providing infrastructure for 1 large settlement rather than several smaller ones. Duplication of service provision can be avoided and the most use made either of existing capacity or of the investment provided to deliver new infrastructure. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will present more definitive evidence to inform this.

Conclusion

There are strong reasons for promoting 1 urban extension associated with

- access for residents to jobs and facilities
- better CO2 reduction performance and cheaper energy
- more sustainable transport
- and potentially a cheaper overall cost for development

⁷ Source: SQW Consulting (2007) Integration of Parish Plans into the Wider Systems of Local Government. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: London, p.14

5. Constraints Mapping Analysis

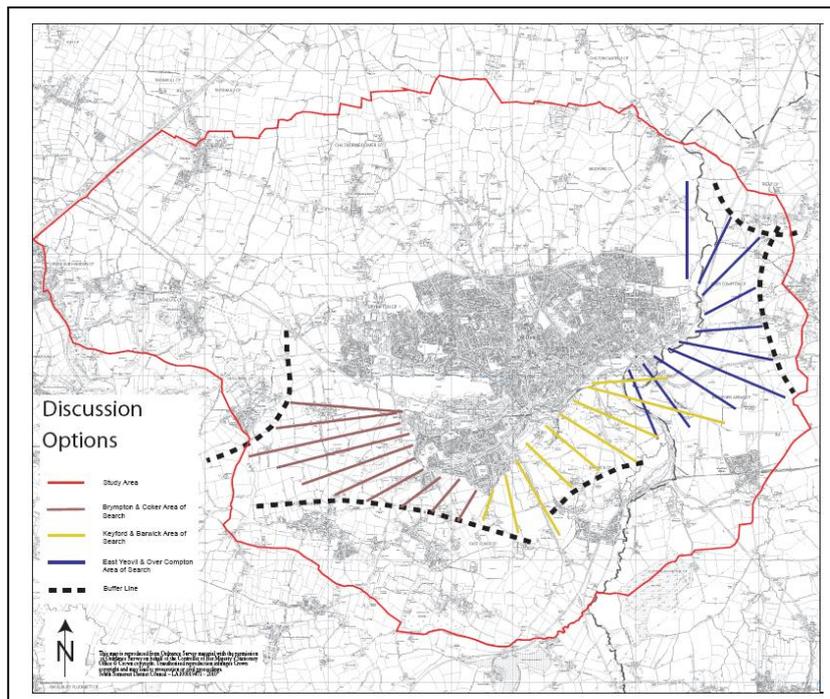
The purpose of this section of the report is to consider planning constraints on the proposed direction for growth for Yeovil taking into account representations made to the Draft Core Strategy (see map 1) The representations submitted raise a number of objections regarding the weight given to individual planning constraints and their impact on the amount of land available within each of the potential directions for growth. Some of the representations suggested alternative locations for growth as a consequence of the impact of the constraints. The key issues can be summarised as:

Issues:

- Protection of Agricultural Land (Grade 1, 2 & 3)
- Protection against Flooding (Flood Zones 2 & 3)
- Protection of the Historic Environment (Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Historic Parks & Gardens)
- Protection of Village Identity (East Coker, West Coker, Barwick & Stoford or Bradford Abbas, Chilthorne Domer, Thorne Coffin, Yeovil Marsh, Mudford, Over Compton & Odcombe)
- Protection of the AugustaWestlands Flight Path
- Protection of Environmental Designations (Local Wildlife Sites, SSSIs)
- Protection of Landscape Character (Northern and Southern Escarpments)

The Council has previously considered planning constraints within the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to the Draft Core Strategy and as such many of the issue raised have already been discussed. The earlier SA concluded that three broad directions of growth to the Southwest, South and Southeast should be consulted upon within the formal public consultation. Whilst the constraints were considered within the earlier SA they were not assessed within the context of a specific mapping exercise and nor were they assessed with as to where development might be located more specifically and whether such a broad location would work on the basis of planning principles. It is considered appropriate to do this now given the constraints prime importance in establishing potential development options and the need to confirm that a satisfactory location can be found in the strategic location preferred.

Map 1: Directions for growth consulted upon in the South Somerset Draft Core Strategy (Incorporating Preferred Options)



A summary of the prime constraints follows

Summary of Constraints to development around Yeovil

Protection of agricultural land

Constraints mapping shows that Yeovil is surrounded by high quality agricultural land. There is a large band of the highest grade of agricultural land (Grade 1) to the south of Yeovil that runs through the South Western, Southern and South Eastern options consulted upon in the Draft Core Strategy. To the north of Yeovil there is a similar band of Grade 2 agricultural land running along the northern escarpment and around the western side of Yeovil. Any contiguous development to Yeovil will inevitably result in some loss of the two highest grades of agricultural land. The highest grades of agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 & 3) are protected by national planning policy contained in PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

Protection against Flooding

Flood mapping shows that Yeovil's periphery is relatively unconstrained by flooding issues with none of the directions of growth so constrained as to entirely prevent development. The most significant areas of flooding occur on Yeovil's eastern side and in small pockets to the north of Yeovil Marsh, Mudford and south of East Coker at Pavyotts Mill. Development contiguous to Yeovil is therefore possible in all the directions around Yeovil with the exception of the South East within South Somerset where land is more constrained.

Protection of the Historic Environment

The Yeovil Historic Environment Assessment has mapped Yeovil's surrounding Historic Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) within each direction of growth including their visual envelopes. Due to the large number of historic assets in Yeovil's periphery many of the directions for Yeovil's growth are significantly constrained against any development.

To the Northwest of Yeovil the visual envelope of Montacute House and Gardens and Ham Hill Scheduled Ancient Monument constrain growth to the north and south along the A3088. Thorne Coffin Conservation Area is also located in this area. Within the South western direction of growth the visual envelope of Brympton D'Evercy House and Gardens effectively restrict development in this area up to the edge of Bunford Business Park allocation. Due South the West Coker and East Coker Conservation Area visual envelopes significantly reduce the area of unconstrained land in this direction. There are remains of two Roman Villa's protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monuments in this locality. In the Southern direction for growth there are also two Historic Parks and Gardens of Barwick House and Newton Surmaville and their visual envelopes to the east of the A30 as well as various listed buildings including Naish Priory. The South Eastern option for growth is less constrained by Historic assets with only the Conservation Area visual envelopes of Bradford Abbas and Trent reducing the unconstrained development land but as these are located some distance from the edge of Yeovil. To the north of Yeovil there are far fewer historic assets to constrain development.

The HEA has identified three areas as having potential to be designated a strategic development site, an area to the South of Yeovil between the A30 and North Coker, to the East of Yeovil either side of Babylon Hill and the entire Northern escarpment of Yeovil between Up Mudford and Thorne Coffin.

Protection of Village Identity

South Somerset District Council recognised the importance of retaining the separate identity of the villages surrounding Yeovil with the introduction in principle of a buffer zone around these villages to prevent settlement coalescence and shown on the draft Core Strategy Proposals Map; Yeovil Inset. The exact boundary around each village has not been determined at this time

To the northwest of Yeovil the hamlet of Thorne Coffin already abuts the Yeovil Development Area therefore any development in this direction would likely encompass Thorne Coffin whatever approach was taken to keep its separate identity. Further to the north Chilthorne Domer and Yeovil Marsh sit within the valley approximately 1km from the Yeovil Development limits however given the likelihood of the Northern escarpment pushing development further north to avoid the steep gradients and the lack of any visual barriers these villages would be significantly at risk should these directions be considered further.

To the northeast of Yeovil, the village of Mudford is located approximately 2km along the A359 and a significant distance from development limits making it extremely unlikely that development would harm Mudford's setting. In the Southeast direction of growth Yeovil is ringed by four West Dorset Villages of Trent, Neither Compton, Over Compton and Bradford Abbas, because of their position on the top of the eastern escarpment they are all well protected from any development in this direction which is further protected by the flood plain in the valley bottom.

In the Southern direction for growth the villages of Barwick and Stoford sit adjacent the main railway line serving Yeovil Junction Station. Given the location of Barwick beside the A37 and its relative short distance from the Yeovil Development Limits there are real difficulties in preventing settlement coalescence in this direction. Due South of Yeovil, development is restricted by the villages of North and East Coker located approximately 1km from Yeovil's edge and both would warrant a significant strategic landscape buffer.

To the South West of Yeovil along the A30 the village of West Coker presents another restriction to development in this direction and it should be protected with a landscape buffer. The village of Odcombe is located several km's to the west of Yeovil but is effectively protected from the impact of growth by the visual envelope of Brympton D'Evercy House and grounds.

Whilst not expressly addressed in the mapping analysis the need for buffers around villages has been taken into account in considering option boundaries.

Protection of the Augusta Westlands Safety Zone

Representations by AgustaWestland have expressed a concern about developments around Yeovil, particularly to the South, South West, South East and East as these will likely affect the safe operation and continued use of the airfield. The company could risk losing its aerodrome Licences (military and civil) if development takes place on main westerly and south westerly flight paths. A map of the flight Safety Zone has been supplied to South Somerset District Council. The zone has been drawn in a conical shape directly to the southwest & west of Yeovil. Given the importance placed on AgustaWestland as Yeovil's main employer it is felt appropriate that the Core Strategy presents the Safety Zone as a strategically important zone where built development is precluded. This will mean that the flight safety zone will restrict built development in a Western direction from the Airfield.

Protection of Environmental Designations

Constraints mapping shows that there are very few environmental designations around Yeovil that would restrict development in any of the proposed directions for growth. The largest cluster of local wildlife sites are found to the Southeast of Yeovil and encompass the Yeovil Country Park and Summer House Hill. There is also another large cluster to the Northwest of Yeovil at Montacute

around Ham Hill and its environs but these are located some distance from Yeovil's existing development limits.

Protection of Landscape Character

The Yeovil Landscape Character Assessment has classified Yeovil's periphery by assessing its capacity to accommodate built development. Due to the high value of Yeovil's landscape there are very few locations recorded as having a moderate-high to moderate capacity to accommodate built development. There are small pockets around the villages of Chilthorne Domer, Yeovil Marsh, Mudford and Bunford Business Park none of which are of sufficient size in themselves to accommodate the full proposed level of Yeovil's growth. There are two larger clusters of sites with capacity to accommodate built development to the South at West Coker / Keyford and to the east along the Yeo Valley.

The areas of lowest capacity to accommodate built development are found along the northern escarpment between Thorne Coffin and Mudford, to the South East in the area around Yeovil Country Park and to the West beyond Brympton D'Evercy and Montacute House and Gardens.

Constraints Mapping Analysis – stage 1 Consideration of all constraints

To identify the 190 ha of land required for an urban extension all the constraints were mapped to see where there was land contiguous with Yeovil to potentially accommodate the 190 ha required. The resultant Map, Map 1, is attached and plainly shows that there is nowhere to accommodate an 190 ha site (or anything approaching that scale)

Given the primacy to provide land for the needed development to meet Yeovil's employment, housing and associated land uses one of two courses now present themselves. Firstly one can override less important constraints in order to meet the 190 ha requirement or secondly one can compromise on its provision in 1 site to see if that will enable 190ha to be secured around and contiguous to the town

Constraints Mapping analysis – stage 2 Prioritising constraints

Taking forward the first option for meeting the 190ha land requirement by downgrading constraints primacy over development an exercise is necessary to determine which constraints are relatively more important than others. As no definitive list exists in National Guidance setting out an order of priority between different site constraints it is at the District Council's discretion to determine its own priorities. Using National Guidance, known Council priorities and local knowledge the following order of priority is suggested in table 1 below.

The top priority has been given to Flood Zones 2 & 3 as they are protected in National Guidance within PPS25. The Westland's Flight Zone has also been given the highest protection reflecting its importance in retaining Yeovil's economic potential. All the National and Local environmental and historic designations are given a second order of priority. The remaining two constraints, landscape capacity and the grade of agricultural land have been given a sliding scale of importance with the land on the highest grade of agricultural land and land with the lowest capacity to accommodate built development given the greatest protection.

Table 1: Site constraints and their priority

Priority	Constraint
1	Flood Zone 3a & 3b
1	Westland's Flight Zone
2	Historic Parks and Gardens & Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM) & visual envelopes
2	Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings & visual envelopes
2	National Wildlife sites / Geological Sites, SSSI's
3	Landscape Character Assessment (Low to Moderate Capacity to accommodate built development)
3	Agricultural Land (Grade 1)
4	Topography
5	Agricultural Land (Grade 2)
6	Landscape Character Assessment (High to Moderate Capacity to accommodate built development)
6	Agricultural Land (Grade 3 and above)

Whilst this is inevitably subjective it is felt that there is a simple and robust logic to the prioritisation. Furthermore it is clear that the agricultural land and landscape character constraints that have the lower priority gradings are in the main the land extensive constraints the removal of which would likely deliver sites of sufficient size for the urban extension.

Constraints Mapping analysis – stage 3 Removing low priority constraints from precluding development

3a) Removal of Protection of Agricultural Land constraint (up to and including Grade 1)

This scenario presumes that land currently constrained for development due to its agricultural land classification, including grades 3, 2 and 1, is no longer protected and notionally available for development.

PPS7 (paragraph 28 & 29) addresses the issue of best and most versatile agricultural land and states that it should be taken into account along side other sustainability considerations. Where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable, local planning authorities should seek to use the area of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations. National Guidance therefore allows this sacrifice to be made when suitable justification is given.

In removing the Grades 3,2 and 1 agricultural land filter on the constraints maps two new areas emerge as being large enough to support major development (see maps 2.and 4). The first location is to the east of Yeovil on land largely in West Dorset and within the River Yeo Valley.

The second location that also becomes available is the land to the South of Yeovil between the A30 (West Coker Road) and A37 (Dorchester Road).

3b) Removal of Protection of Landscape Character Areas with Low to Moderate Capacity to accommodate built development

This scenario presumes that land currently constrained for development due to its landscape character status with low to moderate capacity to accommodate growth is no longer protected and notionally available for development.

PPS7 (Paragraph 24 & 25) recognises the importance of areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas and accepts the need for their protection in local policy, based on tools such as landscape character assessments. The PPS clarifies that local planning authorities should provide sufficient protection for these areas without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins vitality of rural areas. National Guidance therefore provides the necessary flexibility to sacrifice this constraint given other sustainability considerations.

In removing all land with moderate-low capacity to accommodate built development from the filter on the constraints maps large areas to the North of Yeovil now become available (see maps 3 and 4). Given the other constraints that still remain in the form of the protection of the Historic Environment, Village Identity, and the steep topography these broad areas form two distinct locations. The first to the northwest of Yeovil constrained by the A3088 to the west avoiding the visual envelope of Montacute House and Gardens, the east by Thorne Coffin Conservation Area and the north by the settlement of Chilthorne Domer. It should be recognised that any development in this location would likely impact significantly upon Chilthorne Domer.

The second option is located due north of Yeovil and would be constrained by Yeovil Marsh to the west and Mudford to the east. Given the steep topography of the northern escarpment it would still seem prudent to locate any development at the foot of this hill to avoid the worst of the effects on the landscape. In avoiding the steepest points of the hillside, it could be argued that development is no longer technically contiguous with Yeovil although open space and strategic landscaping could be suitable in these locations. It is considered that the discontinuity to Yeovil, distance and proximity to the A303 make this site effectively a form of new settlement which is considered inappropriate for all forms of reasons focussed principally on lack of sustainability.

Constraints Mapping analysis – stage 4 Site Sizing to accommodate full size of urban extension

The sites identified in Maps 2,3 and 4 are close to but not big enough to accommodate the full 190 ha of proposed urban extension. It is considered appropriate however given that these sites are not far off being big enough that with additional review of adjacent land and the constraints affecting these areas additional land can be added to the identified sites to meet the full scale of required development. The resultant option area boundaries are set out in Map 5.

In relation to Option 1 the South West option the additional land found included land of higher landscape value between the more westerly area of land and the larger area of land massing around the A37. The two sites have a combined total area of 122 ha which are 70 ha short of the required 190 ha needed to contain the Urban Extension. To make up the shortfall it is proposed that the land located in-between the two southern options and previously excluded for landscape reasons is included in the site area. Given that the two options only emerge by removing both agricultural land constraint and landscape constraint, it is entirely reasonable to incorporate this area into the possible development area. Other possible additions to the site area include the land adjoining the Roman Villa Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and the fields due east of the A37 (Dorchester Road) excluded as being in the visual array of the Barwick County House. The expanded development option now covers an area of approximately 240 ha.

In relation to Option 2 the North West option the additional land found between the A3088 and the settlements of Thorne Coffin and Chilthorne Domer has an estimated capacity of 170 ha and 20 ha short of the required 190 ha capacity. Adjacent the site boundary the most pertinent constraint is the Roman Villa protected as a SAM, if the wider protection area is included rather than the actual location of the villa then the expanded area now totals 190 ha.

Constraints Mapping analysis – stage 5 Multi site alternative to one urban extension

As stated above the alternative to compromising on constraints in order to establish a site for the urban extension is to compromise on locating it in 1 place. Reviewing the work done above and the constraints mapping in stage 1 it is clear that even with a multi site approach being favoured enough land for the amount of housing, employment and other development cannot be found and one is back to seeking a downgrading of constraints to secure the required land.

It is logical therefore to downgrade the same constraints as above i.e. agricultural land and land with landscape value for the same reasons

Taking this approach onward five sites emerge. Not surprisingly these are the same sites as came forward from the exercise before to the south and west of Yeovil and the north west. Additionally however two other smaller but sizeable sites come forward to the north east of Yeovil adjacent the Mudford Road and in the Yeovil Valley to the east of Yeovil and across the County border (see map 6).

This approach has all the disadvantages associated with a multi site approach (see chapter 4 above) but has the advantage of not compromising constraints on land adjacent to the 1 site options core areas that were downgraded to make the site options of sufficient size. There is potential also to be more accommodating of constraints and site-specific issues when there is more land to choose from.

It is not possible at this stage to determine where the specific land uses required of the urban extension would be located between the 5 sites identified nor which sites would take more or less growth than others. A multi site approach brings in wider planning considerations about the merits of where development should go amongst the sites and particularly in terms of procuring sustainable urban extensions (small or large) and considerations relating to overall costs of developing multi sites in relation to 1 site (or indeed in relation to 2 or 5 multi sites). Put simply for good planning reasons and cost should a multi site approach mean development on two sites or five? Additionally as one of the sites is in West Dorset this would require joint working with that Council which would have to be explored.

It is possible in principle to determine at this stage whether one should choose one of the two single site options or the multi site option. Should the latter be chosen however then distinct planning exercise would be needed to work up the option in more detail to be able to present as a viable firm preferred option. This is likely to have time implications for the Core Strategy process.

Constraints Mapping Conclusion

The constraints mapping exercise has led to a review of options for development with the south and west option being an amalgamation of the draft Core Strategy preferred option and south west option and the north west option being one that was dismissed early in the Core Strategy preparation process but re introduced through the Transport Assessment undertaken by the Council following early consideration of representations received. The multi choice option represents a third choice providing more flexibility for planning for development within several sites at the expense of the loss of the ability to achieve the more sustainable urban community that a 1 site extension can deliver. Should a multi site option be chosen in principle further work would be required to bring it forward to a realisable and properly justified (in planning terms) option

These options now need to be assessed in relation to wider planning considerations through a sustainability appraisal which is pursued in the next section.