

LDF PMB and MAG Officer Group

Core Strategy Workshop 3

Yeovil Urban Extension — Summary Report

Introduction – Yeovil’s scale of Growth

The Baker Associates report on Housing requirement for Somerset and Yeovil recommends an economic led approach to the growth of South Somerset and Yeovil, as this strategy is most closely aligned with South Somerset’s objectives. Under an economic led approach, the Baker Report recommends a District requirement for 16,000 dwellings until 2026 of which 7,500 dwellings would be directed to Yeovil. This figure has been updated to take into account the proposed extension to plan period to 2028 as a District requirement of 17,200 dwellings of which 8,600 dwellings would be directed to Yeovil, 50% of the total and corresponding to the expected 50% of job growth being achieved in the town.

Recommendation

A decision has been made to accept this requirement already at the Scale of Growth & Settlement Hierarchy Workshop 1

Potential Land Availability within the Urban Framework

An assessment of the likely development within the Urban Framework has been made on the basis of completions, commitments as at April 2010, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment sites and a subjective planning assessment of potential additional sites with development potential. As a result a range of 4,452 – 5,204 dwellings were identified. The report recommends that the higher end be accepted, as an ambitious target is considered appropriate.

Recommendation

Endorse an assessment of 5,204 dwellings within the Yeovil Urban Framework and consequently a requirement for 3,400 dwellings (rounded) in an Urban Extension(s).

Urban Extension Potential Land Take

Land take for the Urban Extension is identified in the following table and is derived from assumptions about housing density, employment land provision and expected figures for associated land uses. Attention is drawn to high open space provision reflecting eco-town aspirations and the high amount of strategic landscaping to buffer development from existing settlements.

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
---	------------

Recommendation

Endorse land take figure and use to help determine potential options for the Urban Extension (by ensuring locations have sufficient land in principle to accommodate the extension).

Advantages of scale; one extension or several

The advantages of scale have been set out and set the context to decide whether 1 urban extension or several multi sites should be pursued. Assessment undertaken of the relative merits demonstrates the case for one Urban Extension. The key benefits are:-

- 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

Recommendation

Endorse preference for one site over a multi-site option.

Constraints Mapping Analysis

Consideration of constraints has previously been considered within the draft Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal however it is worth re-visiting as a separate exercise to assist firstly as a more expansive geographical basis for decision making and secondly to confirm a satisfactory site can be found in the strategic location to be preferred for the Urban Extension.

Constraints mapping analysis has five stages of site identification. The first stage considers all constraints and gives them equal weighting but fails to identify sufficient land to accommodate development due to the high level of constraints around Yeovil. A second stage is therefore required to prioritise constraints to deliver strategic land for development on the basis of the primacy of securing development for Yeovil. A decision is then considered appropriate not to apply lower priority constraints. Furthermore as these lower priority constraints are land extensive their removal as an inhibition to growth is expected to expose sites.

On this basis, stage 3 requires the removal of agricultural land and landscape constraints and 3 general areas with potential for development present themselves, North West, South West and an option to the north of Yeovil. The northern option has been discounted on the basis of remoteness and disconnection from Yeovil. Both the North West and South West options were short of the 190 ha therefore requiring an additional site review of adjacent constraints to deliver two sites of appropriate size.

The downgrading of some constraints has produced a third multi site option. Whilst earlier analysis describes presents strong arguments against such an option it is felt appropriate to consider at this stage as the achievement of 2 options has already required compromise on constraints. This multi site option is contained on five sites and is to be assessed against other options in principal, should the multi-option be put forward then an additional planning exercise will be required to establish the appropriate site for development and relevant land uses on individual sites to ensure sustainable Urban Extension will be realised. This will have significant time implications for the Core Strategy. The multi optional constraint like the other two does require compromising land on which landscape and agricultural land constraints exist.

Recommendation

Pursue the three options for delivery through a wider planning appraisal and Sustainability Appraisal.

Wider Planning Issues: Sustainability Appraisal of Options

An assessment of the 3 emerging options against the Sustainability Assessment objectives, derived from the Sustainable Community Strategy, presents a clear case for determining a preferred location for growth. A more formal sustainability appraisal is required in due course but the initial assessment is considered robust enough to make preferences. Key determining factors relate to accessibility to services, effects of traffic (traffic congestion) and reducing the contribution to climate change (renewable energy opportunities).

Additional considerations relate to infrastructure and development costs of options, market capacity and ability to deliver 3,4000 dwellings on the urban extension up to 2028 and land availability in terms of landowner and developer intent).

The outcome of the Sustainability appraisal is a firm recommendation to develop the South West Option 1 because it:

- is more accessible and gives better opportunities for sustainable transport
- presents opportunities to rationalise education facilities across the town
- is accessible to employment opportunities
- provides the opportunity for more walking and cycling compared with car use and the cost of known traffic infrastructure is less (although the disbenefits of Option 2 to the North West are less than previously thought following a re working of the Parson Brinckerhoff modelling in response to objectors. –of which an early draft has been obtained at time of writing)
- better environmental impact than Option 2 but only if impacts on neighbouring villages are seriously mitigated and the large-scale open space proposals on the site are used to beneficial effect in this regard.
- Better opportunity to introduce combined heat and power technology and contribute to CO2 minimisation.

The third option of several sites does not perform well in the Sustainability Appraisal and furthermore raises the prospect, if chosen, of additional work not previously required to establish that sustainable communities can be delivered on 2 or up to 5 sites. There is a real prospect of the need of further consultation should this option be carried forward and the possible need to engage formally in joint working with West Dorset District Council.

It is considered that the South West Option 1 can deliver the required 3,400 dwelling urban extension provision within the plan period to 2028, and there is evidence of substantive landowner and developer in Option 1 (and more so than in Option 2).

Any decision on where growth should occur should be subject to the outcome of the final Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Recommendation

Endorse South West Option 1 as the location of the urban extension subject to final confirmation following consideration of infrastructure costs after delivery of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Review of Eco Town Status

It is felt that the Government's review of the Code 6 Zero Carbon Standard for dwellings is less onerous and cheaper to deliver standard and moves the goalpost and that there is little rationale in providing more aggressive standards in the urban extension which would be at a cost to occupiers and developers alike. However all other outputs of the Eco Town should be pursued and specifically:

- 40% greenspace – an aspiration in keeping with the Yeovil Vision and the high quality urban edge landscape of Yeovil.
- A minimum of 30% affordable housing – the Council's target is 35%.

- More options for non-car travel (50% of trips should be non-car) – the high usage levels of traffic on Yeovil’s roads throughout the network point to retention of this standard to enable maximum development and development benefits at minimum adverse traffic impact.
- 1 job per household provided on site – this enables a new sustainable community less controlled by the need to use the car.
- homes accessible to public transport – the need to promote viable public transport in Yeovil is clear.

Recommendation

Maintain aspirations to achieve Eco Town Standards in the urban extension with the exception of construction standards beyond the Government’s newly proposed Code 6.