

LDF Project Management Board Workshop 13 – Friday 16 March 2012

Review of potential scenarios for the Yeovil urban extension – Andy Foyne, Spatial Policy Manager and Keith Lane, Policy Planner

Introduction

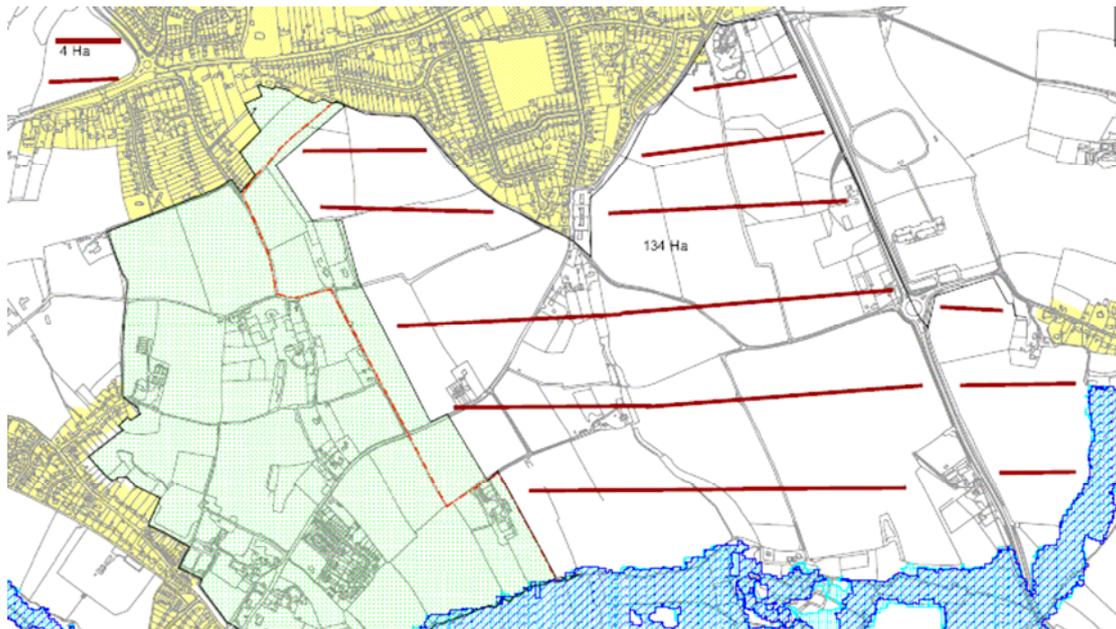
Given the issues raised at Area South Committee on March 7, it is considered prudent to review potential alternative scenarios for the Yeovil urban extension. Several options are presented for consideration below.

Option 1: Continue with recommendation to Area Committees

This approach would continue with the proposals approved at Area North and South Committees. In summary, this would mean the Core Strategy proposing:

- A Yeovil urban capacity of 6,100 dwellings.
- An urban extension of 1,875 dwellings (with the intention to build an additional 625 dwellings after the plan period – therefore a total of 2,500 dwellings), of around 133 ha.
- The urban extension would be located to the south and west of Yeovil, and include a buffer zone with North and East Coker, as shown on map 1 below.

Map 1: Core Strategy proposals to Area Committees (February/March 2012)



Option 1 pros:

- Direction of growth is evidence based e.g. supported by landscape study, historic environment assessment.
- Scale of development at Yeovil (i.e. 50% of District figure) is supported by evidence in the Housing Requirement report by Baker Associates.
- Many supporting evidence base studies have been based upon the urban extension being 2,500 dwellings e.g. Infrastructure Plan, traffic modelling.
- Enables a more 'sustainable' community to be developed, including delivery of renewable energy, a range of community facilities and services, and housing to meet community needs (particularly affordable housing).
- Avoids delaying the Core Strategy process as review of evidence is not required.

Option 1 cons:

- Does not consider recently updated urban capacity figures that indicate an additional 137 dwellings can be delivered in Yeovil's urban area (see Annex 1).
- Does not take account of the recent review of the 50/50 assumption of jobs delivered at Yeovil and elsewhere in the District, which has considered 47% and 49% of jobs being directed to Yeovil rather than 50% (explained further below).

Options 2A and 2B: Reduce the scale of the Yeovil urban extension, but continue with same broad location

Option 2A:

Recently updated urban capacity figures indicate an additional 137 dwellings can be built in Yeovil's existing urban area. Furthermore, evidence indicates that 49% of the District's jobs were created in Yeovil between 2003-10, and 51% elsewhere in South Somerset. If the Core Strategy planned for this (i.e. 49% rather than 50% of jobs in Yeovil), the urban extension would reduce to 1580 dwellings¹, and mean a consequential reduction in employment land to 7 ha. This option would mean a total of 7,816 dwellings are located at Yeovil as a whole i.e. 49% of District total of 15,950 dwellings. Option 2A would retain the broad location for the urban extension and buffer zone, shown on map 1 above, albeit with a reduced scale of development. Table 1 outlines the land required for an urban extension of 1,580 dwellings.

Table 1: Land required for the urban extension if reduced to 1,580 dwellings

Land use	Area (ha) – 1,580 dwelling size
Housing at 45 dph	35
Employment land (B uses) 1 job per economic household	7
Education (1 secondary and 2 primary schools)	9
Health centre	0.4
Local centre	1
Energy centre	0.2
Strategic roads (5% of housing/employment built form)	1.7
Total built form	54.3
Strategic landscaping (25% of housing/employment built form)	10.5
Open space (40% of all land types excluding road and strategic landscaping)	20.6
Total land take	85 ha. (approx)

Option 2B:

At the base date of the Core Strategy period (2006), 47% of jobs were in Yeovil and 53% elsewhere in South Somerset. The Baker Associates report "Housing Requirement for South Somerset & Yeovil" distributed jobs across the District on the basis of this i.e. past economic performance. If 47% is planned for in the Core Strategy, rather than the 50-50 split proposed to Area Committees, the housing figure

¹ 1,875 dwellings minus the 137 additional dwellings in the urban capacity minus 159 dwellings that represent a reduction from 50% to 49%.

required at the urban extension further reduces to 1,260 dwellings.² This option would mean a total of 7,497 dwellings are located at Yeovil as a whole. Table 2 below sets out the area required of the land uses associated with an urban extension of this size.

Table 2: Land required for the urban extension if reduced to 1,260 dwellings

Land use	Area (ha) – 1,260 dwelling size
Housing at 45 dph	28
Employment land (B uses) 1 job per economic household	5.5
Education (1 secondary and 1 primary school – Nb. IDP states 2 primary schools will be required)	9
Health centre	0.4
Local centre	1
Energy centre	0.2
Strategic roads (5% of housing/employment built form)	1.7
Total built form	45.8
Strategic landscaping (25% of housing/employment built form)	8.4
Open space (40% of all land types excluding road and strategic landscaping)	17.6
Total land take	72 ha. (approx)

Option 2 pros:

- Less development on Greenfield land/Grade 1 agricultural land.
- More flexibility to locate development within the broad 'direction', and potential to deliver more open space and strategic landscaping given the larger amount of land identified on the map.
- Likely to be less impact on the road network.
- Reflects more recent urban capacity work on the number of dwellings that can be delivered in Yeovil's existing urban area.
- More precisely reflects the proportion of jobs that could be delivered at Yeovil and elsewhere in South Somerset.
- Reduces the over provision of housing numbers in the District (i.e. the 6% excess proposed to Area Committees).

Option 2 cons:

- This lower scale of development – Option 2A is 37% lower, Option 2B is 50% lower than the 2,500 dwellings proposed to Area Committees – has not been previously considered, therefore supporting evidence is limited ('evidence base' studies have considered a 5,000, 3,700, 2,500 dwelling urban extension).
- Linked to point above, the Infrastructure Plan sets out requirements for 2,500 dw so would already be outdated (although this study did assess the worst case scenario) – would likely need to reconsider the infrastructure requirements of a smaller urban extension. Also, the Community Infrastructure Levy evidence base uses 2,500 dw urban extension.
- Less housing to meet community needs, particularly affordable housing.

² 1,875 dwellings minus the 137 additional dwellings in the urban capacity minus 436 dwellings that represent a reduction from 50% to 47%.

- Reducing the size of land required brings other locations back into consideration; e.g. NE Yeovil (around 75 ha) was previously ruled out as not enough unconstrained land was available to accommodate 2,500 dwellings – these alternatives would have to be reconsidered in the Sustainability Appraisal if Option 2B is pursued, and additional traffic modelling may be required.
- It would be more difficult to achieve a 'sustainable community' that meets eco town standards with this reduced scale of development e.g. renewable energy targets; difficult to deliver community facilities/services such as shops, education, health centre, regular bus service, walking/cycling links. Table 3 below shows illustrative catchment populations, homes and accessibility standards for new development.
- The jobs proportion in Option 2B (47%) has little validity in comparison with the 49% figure which is based on actual jobs share in Yeovil between 2003-10 (including 4 years in the plan period).

Table 3: Local Facilities/services and their catchment populations and distance thresholds³

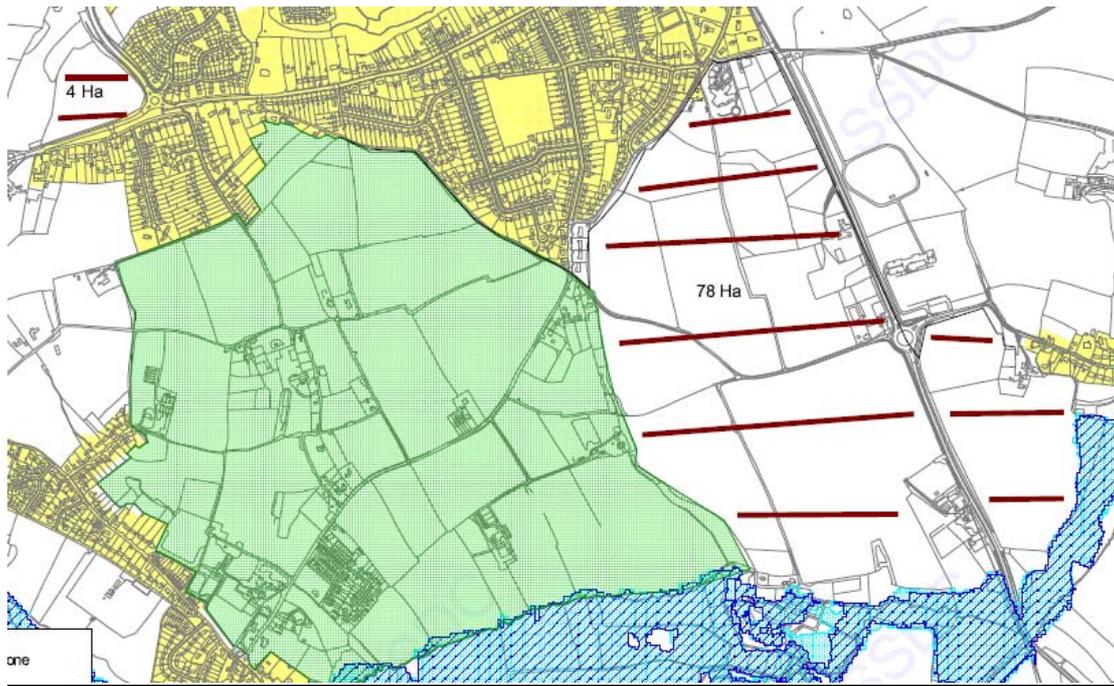
Local Facility/service	Population	Homes	Distance Threshold
Local Shop	1,500	707	500m
Primary School	4,000	1,886	800m
Local Centre	6,000	2,830	1,000m
Health Centre	10,000	4,716	1,200m
Secondary School	8,000-16,000	3,773-7,547	1,200m
District Centre / Supercentre	24,000	11,320	1,900m
Leisure Centre	24,000	11,320	1,900m
Frequent (12 min) bus service	-	4,000-6,000	-

Option 3: Reduce the scale of the Yeovil urban extension and make subsequent changes to the proposed location and buffer zone

This option would reduce the scale of the urban extension in line with Options 2A and 2B above. Under this option, the broad location identified for Yeovil's urban extension would be reduced to the "Keyford site" and area to south (of Placket Lane) and south east (near Barwick), and the (separate) West Coker Road site, as shown on the map below (also appended as 'Potential option to reduce the size of Yeovil's urban extension').

Map 2: Potential option to reduce the size of Yeovil's urban extension

³ The table is based on information within 'Shaping Neighbourhoods, a guide for health, sustainability and vitality' by Barton H et al.



Option 3 pros (in addition to reduced scale pros in Option 2 above):

- The Local Plan Inspector has already considered much of site (the “Keyford Site”) acceptable for development – see Annex 3.

Option 3 cons (in addition to reduced scale cons in Option 2 above):

- It would be difficult to justify increasing the buffer zone to this extent on landscape/historic environment grounds – the PMB have already concluded that the buffer zone in the report to Area Committees (as shown on map 1 above) is acceptable.
- Question as to whether a buffer zone of this size could be protected by the ‘Local Green Space’ designation i.e. LGS should not be “an extensive tract of land” (draft NPPF).
- Site is not of sufficient size to accommodate Option 2A development; although it is sufficient for Option 2B, strategic landscaping would be required to protect Key Farm and Pavyotts Mill, limiting built development in the vicinity of these buildings.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The evidence produced to date has led to the south and west option (Option 1 above) being identified as the most appropriate location for a Yeovil urban extension of 2,500 dwellings, along with commensurate employment land and other facilities/services. Other evidence studies (e.g. Infrastructure Plan, traffic modelling) have been based upon the emerging plans for a 2,500 dwelling urban extension. Given that evidence has informed, and been based upon, an urban extension of 2,500 dwellings to the south and west of Yeovil; there are major implications if substantial changes are made at this late stage in the process. These implications include a review of key evidence such as the Sustainability Appraisal, Infrastructure Plan, and traffic modelling.

However, it is prudent to reconsider the scale of development that should be located in Yeovil’s urban extension given recent evidence of Yeovil urban capacity figures

that indicate an additional 137 dwellings can be developed in the existing urban area, and other (minor) variations of how much jobs growth should be directed to Yeovil.

Therefore, the recommendation is Option 2A for a Yeovil urban extension of 1,580 dwellings to be built in the plan period up to 2028, but keeping the intention for a 2,500 dwelling urban extension overall in order to deliver a ‘sustainable’ community. The remaining 920 dwellings would be built after the plan period. This approach continues with the location as recommended to Area Committees that is based upon robust landscape and historic environment evidence, whilst also allowing updated urban capacity figures to be considered, and reflecting a slightly lower proportion of employment numbers at Yeovil.

On the other hand, if a significant reduction in the size of the urban extension were proposed it would be considered necessary to review key evidence such as the Sustainability Appraisal, Infrastructure Plan and traffic modelling, and consequently result in a delay to the Core Strategy preparation.

As set out in the Committee Report, the area to the south and west is recommended 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 the option to the NW are less than previously thought following a reworking of traffic modelling);
- Better environmental impact than the NW option, 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 minimise CO2 emissions.

Annex 1: Potential dwelling provision within Yeovil urban framework – update to table 6 in DX report

Yeovil land availability within development limits

	Achievable capacity	Theoretical Potential	Already Approved	Allocations
Completions	1221	1221		
Commitments	2483	2483		
Key sites				
KS/BRYM/1	97	97	620 commitments	717
KS/YEWI/1	137	137	*636 commitments	**786
KS/YEWI/2			830 commitments	830
Yeovil Urban Village	196	278		
SHLAA sites	257	724		

Potential windfall sites	1200	1200		
Flats above shops and conversion of houses (Urban Capacity Study)	84	84		
Total	5604	6237		

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

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

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Annex 2: Other issues raised at Area South Ctte:

- 'Multi-site' option (considered at PMB workshop 3, June 2011).
- Identify the Yeovil urban extension as a 'strategic site allocation.'

The 'multi-site' option for Yeovil's urban extension has previously been considered and dismissed at PMB workshop 3, June 14 2011. Although identifying the urban extension as a 'strategic site allocation' may provide greater certainty to the community as to the precise location of the development, more detailed work will need to be done to justify the site selection and master planning the site. This more detailed work has been identified (for some time) as a matter for a separate Development Plan Document to be produced after adoption of the Core Strategy.

Annex 3: Local Plan Inspector recommendation – "Keyford site" only

This 35 ha site (shown on map 3 below) was recommended for inclusion in the Local Plan by the Inspector for a mix of employment and residential development. Various development mixes were considered, with employment land varying between 6 and 15 ha, and housing between 9.5 ha (about 335 dwellings) and 17 ha (about 600 dwellings). The Local Plan Inspector recommended the site be allocated for the following:

- B1 use employment land (15 ha)
- 335 dwellings (9.6 ha)
- public open space and structural landscaping (7 ha)
- local centre (including shops and a hall), education facilities.

The number of dwellings was based upon a density of 35 dph. If 9.6 ha was built at 45 dph, there would be capacity for around 430 dwellings; whilst the higher proportion of 17 ha would deliver around 765 dwellings at 45 dph.

Map 3: "Keyford site" as recommended by the Local Plan Inspector

