

South Somerset

Early Review of the Local Plan

**Sustainability Appraisal
(incorporating Strategic
Environmental Assessment)**

Scoping Report

May 2017



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1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of the Local Plan. The role of SA is to promote sustainable development, which is commonly defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹ SA assesses the extent to which the Local Plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve environmental, economic and social objectives.²
- 1.2 SA is required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 19) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, paragraph 165). It incorporates the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations,³ which implement the EU SEA Directive.⁴ Through incorporating these requirements, SA ensures that potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues.
- 1.3 The Council has decided to integrate Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) into the SA process. While there is no statutory requirement for EqIA, the Council has a duty (under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to give ‘due regard’ to promoting equality of opportunity for all groups with protected characteristics when making policy decisions. ‘Protected characteristics’ are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. The outcome of this work is reflected in the SA findings.
- 1.4 SA is an iterative process, integrated into the various stages of plan-making. Stages and tasks may be revisited and updated or revised as a plan develops, in order to reflect latest evidence and consultation responses. The key stages of Local Plan preparation and their relationship with the SA process are shown in the following diagram.

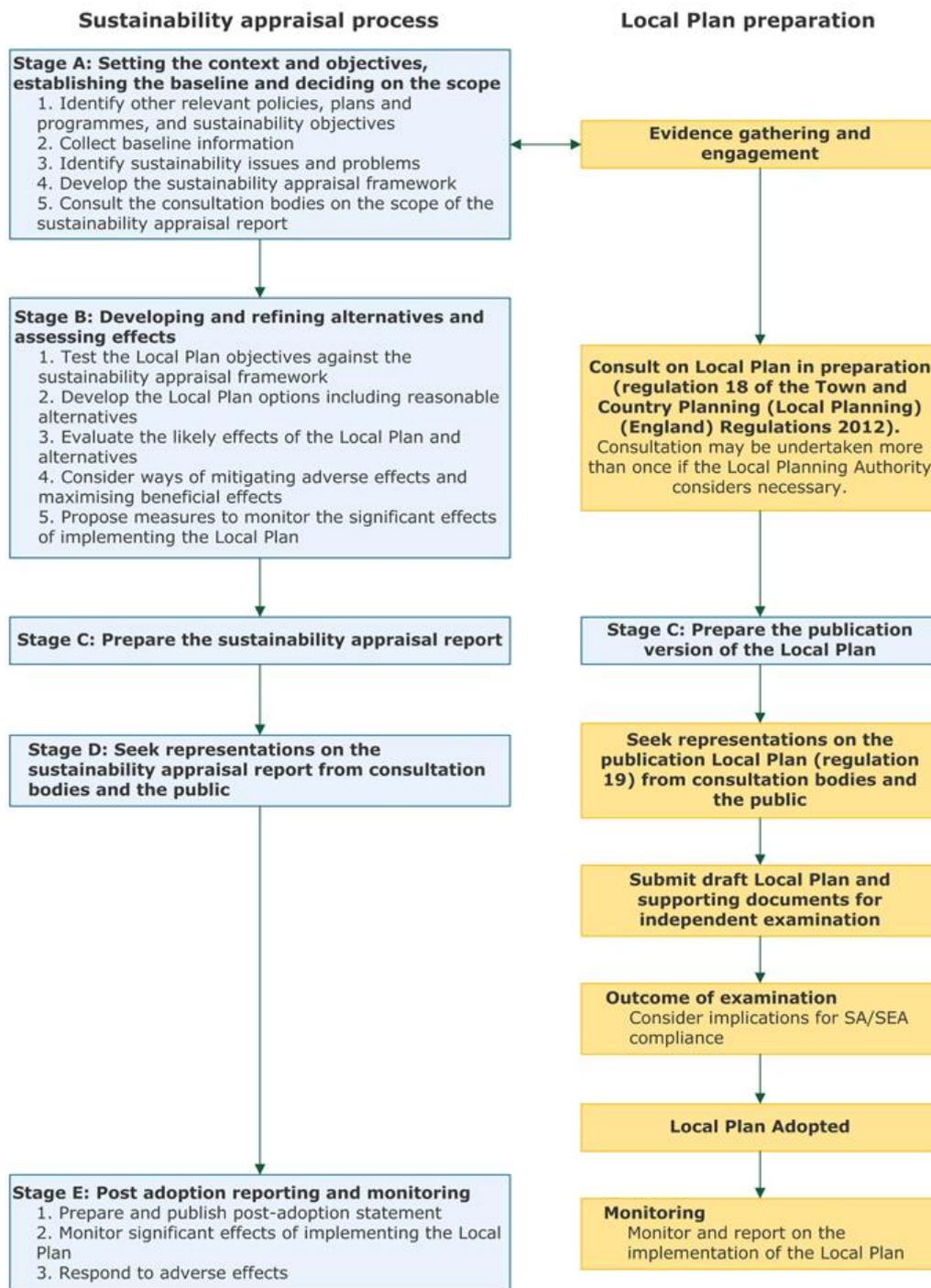
¹ Resolution 24/187 of the United Nations General Assembly.

² Planning Practice Guidance Reference ID: 11-001-20140306.

³ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

⁴ European Directive 2001/42/EC.

Figure 1.1: Key Stages of Local Plan preparation and relationship with the Sustainability Appraisal process⁵



1.5 The Council is also required to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in order to assess the impacts of the Local Plan upon European wildlife sites. The findings of the HRA should inform the SA, for example in assessing the impact of options on European sites. However, it is important to note that the HRA process has its own legislative requirements, and its methodology and findings will be reported separately.

⁵ Planning Practice Guidance Reference ID: 11-013-20140306.

Early Review of the South Somerset Local Plan

- 1.6 The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) was adopted in March 2015. The previous intention, once the Local Plan was adopted, was to progress a Site Allocations Development Plan Document to provide additional detail on proposals for the Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extensions and the ‘Directions of Growth’ at the Market Towns. However, the preferred approach set out in the NPPF (paragraph 153) is for a single ‘development plan’ within one document. The Council committed to undertake an ‘early review’ of the Local Plan relating to housing and employment provision in Wincanton then expected to be adopted by March 2018. As explained in the Councils’ latest Local Development Scheme (April 2017), the approach now advocated is to ‘slot-in’ the site-specific work into the early review of the Local Plan.
- 1.7 In light of these changes in circumstances, the Council believes there is an opportunity to make a transition into the ‘all-in-one’ local plan, *and* deliver an early review at the same time.
- 1.8 The Council are currently at the “evidence gathering and engagement” stage of the Early Review of the Local Plan (see Figure 1.1 above). This Plan will address needs for housing and economic development, supporting community facilities and other infrastructure requirements, for the period from 2014 to 2034. The Early Review will consider the settlement strategy, housing and economic growth requirements, site allocations, and a series of topic-based policies that will be used to assess planning applications. Adoption is anticipated to be at the end of 2020.

Relationship to Previous Sustainability Appraisal Work for Adopted South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)

- 1.9 It is important to recognise at this initial stage that previous SA work on the extant South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) was produced between June 2012 and November 2015.
- 1.10 As such, the Council is not starting from scratch in terms of considering the potential “significant effects” of the Local Plan policies, and whether the alternatives or options proposed are likely to pose sustainability issues.
- 1.11 As part of evolving the Local Plan policy framework within South Somerset, it is recognised that some policies are unlikely to radically change; but also that there will be brand new policies added to the Local Plan, and some existing policies will be substantially amended to reflect changes in circumstance and new evidence.
- 1.12 The SA will need to grapple with this and ensure that individually each of the amended and new policies can be appraised, and also that the cumulative effect of the new and amended policies can be assessed as a whole. In doing so, the SA will assist in refining the new and amended policies and ensure that they maximise benefits and minimise impacts on sustainability.

Purpose and Structure

1.13 This draft report represents the scoping stage (Stage A) of the SA process for the Early Review of the South Somerset Local Plan (hereafter known as “the Early Review”). It identifies the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the SA report. The remaining chapters of this report are as follows:

- **Chapter 2** outlines the policy context by identifying the key plans and programmes that are relevant to the SA of the Early Review.
- **Chapter 3** includes the baseline information, setting out the existing characteristics of South Somerset across a range of sustainability themes. Any trends from this information are also highlighted, along with the likely evolution of South Somerset without the Early Review.
- **Chapter 4** identifies the key sustainability issues in South Somerset; and contains the SA Framework that provides the basis for assessing the sustainability effects of the Early Review.
- **Chapter 5** sets out the proposed methodology for carrying out the SA of the Early Review.
- **Chapter 6** details the consultation arrangements for this Draft Scoping Report.

2. Policy Context

Introduction

- 2.1 There are a range of other plans and programmes produced at an international, European, national and regional level, which may be relevant to the Early Review of the Local Plan. It is necessary to outline the policy context within which the Plan is being prepared. This ensures that the requirements and objectives of other plans and programmes are factored into the SA of the Early Review.
- 2.2 In line with guidance, a proportionate approach has been taken,⁶ and only those plans and programmes that are up to date and relevant to the Early Review are identified. International plans and programmes are not included where these requirements have been translated into national and local documents included in the review. In light of the legal “duty to co-operate” on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, development plans that have been prepared by adjoining local authorities have been identified under a separate sub-heading.
- 2.3 This chapter identifies relevant key plans and programmes, and then provides a summary of the implications of these for the Early Review of the Local Plan and the SA.

Key Plans and Programmes

- 2.4 There are a wide range of plans and programmes relevant to the Early Review and SA process, produced at an international, national, sub-national, and local level. As highlighted above, a proportionate approach has been taken, resulting in the following key plans and programmes at the various geographic areas. The order presented below broadly follows the three roles of sustainability: social, economic and environmental.

International

- 2.5 As advocated in good practice guidance,⁷ relevant international plans and programmes have been incorporated into national plans/programmes, which are discussed below.

National

- The **National Planning Policy Framework** (DCLG, 2012) is the Government’s view of what sustainable development means in practice for the planning system. It describes the roles of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental), and makes clear that these roles are mutually dependent, and gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.
- The **Housing White Paper** (2017) “Fixing our broken housing market” sets out a broad range of reforms that government plans to introduce to help reform the housing market and increase the supply of new homes.
- The Government’s **Planning policy for traveller sites** (DCLG, 2015) aims to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and

⁶ Planning Practice Guidance Reference ID: 11-009-20140306.

⁷ Planning Advisory Service Principles of Plan Making: Chapter 6 – The Role of Sustainability Appraisal, 2013.

nomadic way of life for travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.

- The Government produced **National Policy Statements** setting out how proposals for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects should be considered. So far, six Energy NPSs have been published; along with NPSs for Ports; Hazardous Waste; Waste Water; and National Networks (road and rail).
- **Planning Practice Guidance** (DCLG) is a web-based resource launched in 2014 and updated by the Government as necessary. It provides guidance on a wide range of planning issues, including SA.
- NHS England have published a **Five Year Forward View** (2014) which articulates that the future of the health service requires a change in approach, including the need for a radical upgrade in prevention and public health to avoid preventable illness and reduce the burden on the NHS and society.
- The **Waste Management Plan for England** (DEFRA, 2013) sets out the Government's ambition to work towards a more sustainable and efficient approach to resource use and management, meeting the requirements of the Waste Framework Directive.⁸
- The **National Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016 to 2021** (Infrastructure and Projects Authority, 2016) for the first time brings together the Government's plans for economic infrastructure over the next five years with those to support delivery of housing and social infrastructure. It includes proposed improvements to the A303 / A358 in South Somerset.
- The **Department for Transport Circular 02/2013** describes how Highways England will engage with communities and developers to deliver sustainable development and economic growth, whilst safeguarding the primary function and purpose of the strategic road network as being safe and reliable and allowing for the efficient movement of people and goods.
- The Government's first **Road Investment Strategy 2015 – 2020** (Department for Transport, 2014) outlines a long-term programme to improve England's motorways and major roads, and includes two projects in South Somerset: A303 dualling from Sparkford – Ilchester, and A358 dualling from Southfields Roundabout – Taunton.
- **Historic England's Three Year Corporate Plan 2016 – 19** (2016) explains how this organisation will deliver its mission to champion and protect England's historic environment. Historic England has also published several advice notes on matters relating to Local Plans/SA and the historic environment.⁹

⁸ The National Planning Policy for Waste (DCLG, 2014) sets out detailed planning policies for waste planning authorities so is not considered directly relevant to preparing the Early Review of the South Somerset Local Plan.

⁹ Historic England advice notes include The Historic Environment in Local Plans (2015); The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans (2015); and Strategic Environmental Assessment, Sustainability Appraisal and the Historic Environment (2013; consultation draft on an update was published in July 2016).

- **Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services** (DEFRA, 2011) has a mission “to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.”
- **The Water Resources Strategy for England and Wales** (Environment Agency, 2009) highlights that the pressure on water is growing with the prospect of climate change and increasing population, and a more integrated and planned approach to water resources is required including through ensuring water is used efficiently in homes and buildings.
- The **Climate Change Act 2008** establishes a legally binding target to reduce the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels. It also requires the Government to regularly assess the risks of climate change, and adaptation objectives.

Sub-national

- The **Somerset County Plan 2016 – 2020** (Somerset County Council, 2016) has a vision for more homes and jobs in Somerset, along with better health, education, roads, rail, broadband and mobile signal. It contains an ambition for a new ‘Garden Town’ in the county.
- **The Early Years and School Place Planning Infrastructure Growth Plan for Somerset 2016** (SCC, 2016) sets out how Somerset County Council (SCC) will work to address any shortfalls in school place planning across Somerset, including the requirement for four new primary schools associated with major housing developments on the edge of Yeovil, and likely pressure on secondary places in the town from 2024.
- Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group have published the **Five Year Strategy (2014 – 2019)** which mirrors much of NHS England’s equivalent plan, whilst the **Two Year Commissioning Plan (2015 – 17)** identifies six work programmes that will drive change and deliver better patient outcomes to ensure people access the right services, in the right place, at the right time.
- The **Strategic Economic Plan 2014 – 2030** (Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), 2014) sets out how the LEP will maximise economic growth, and contains three core aims: creating the conditions for growth; maximising productivity and employment opportunities; and capitalising on distinctive assets.
- **Somerset’s Future Transport Plan 2011 – 2026** (SCC, 2011) supports sustainable travel modes, and seeks to better manage traffic and improve the most congested junctions and routes, whilst ensuring new developments do not make conditions worse.
- The **Somerset Waste Core Strategy** (SCC, 2013) encourages waste prevention and aims to ensure that unavoidable waste is managed as a valuable resource. Although sufficient capacity exists up to 2028 for recycling facilities and non-hazardous landfilling, there is a lack of inert landfill space and treatment facilities for residual

waste. A zone in the western part of Yeovil is identified as the preferred location for strategic waste sites in South Somerset.

- The **Somerset Minerals Plan** (SCC, 2015) seeks to ensure the steady and adequate supply of minerals to meet society's needs and strengthen the economic well-being of Somerset.
- The **River Basin Management Plan, South West River Basin District** (Environment Agency and DEFRA, 2011) describes the pressures facing the water environment and the actions that will address them, particularly in relation to water quality.
- There are four **Catchment Flood Management Plans**¹⁰ (Environment Agency) which cover South Somerset, the largest of which is the Parrett. These strategic planning documents provide an overview of flood risk across their respective catchments, and establish policies to deliver sustainable flood risk for the long term.
- The **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy** (SCC, 2014) focuses on limiting 'local' flood risk from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses, but also considers the interaction with 'main' river flooding. Partnership working is advocated.
- The **Somerset Levels and Moors Action Plan** was developed following the prolonged floods over the winter of 2013/14. This includes a series of actions relating to flood risk reduction and mitigation, and the creation of the Somerset Rivers Authority which seeks to fully coordinate flood risk management in Somerset.
- The **Water Resource Management Plan** (Wessex Water, 2014) sets out how Wessex Water will meet demand for water and protect the environment over the next 25 years. WW forecast a surplus of water over demand throughout this time period.
- The **Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014 – 2019** contains a range of objectives and policies relating to landscape and sustainable development in the AONB; for example, ensuring all development is of the highest quality, make appropriate affordable housing available, and restricting noise/light pollution.
- **Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019** also has a range of objectives and policies, and seeks to conserve and enhance the outstanding landscapes, promote living and working landscapes, and to make the area's special qualities understood and valued by all.
- The **Air Quality Strategy for Somerset** (Somerset local authorities, 2008) outlines that air pollution is harmful to health and ecosystems; and although quality is generally good in Somerset, there are pollution hotspots that are largely caused by traffic pollution (including the Air Quality Management Area covering Yeovil). Minimising traffic levels is advocated to improve this.

¹⁰ Parrett, North and Mid Somerset, East Devon, and Dorset Stour Catchment Flood Management Plans.

Local (district)

- The **South Somerset Local Plan 2006 – 2028** (SSDC, adopted 2015) identifies the scale, type and broad location of new development across the district. It identifies a settlement strategy that focusses new development at Yeovil, with significant growth also planned at the Primary Market Towns of Chard, Crewkerne, Wincanton and Ilminster. Less growth is proposed at the Local Market Towns, Rural Centres and Rural Settlements. The plan also contains a series of topic-based policies, covering: economic prosperity, housing, transport and accessibility, health and well-being, and environmental quality. The plan proposes a Site Allocations Development Plan Document and commits to an early review of housing and employment provision at Wincanton, to be completed within three years of adoption (i.e. March 2018). The approach now advocated¹¹ is to ‘slot-in’ the site-specific work into the Early Review of the Local Plan.
- **South Somerset District Council Plan 2016 – 2021** (SSDC, 2016) is the corporate plan which includes a vision of South Somerset being a place where businesses flourish, communities are safe, vibrant and healthy; where residents enjoy good housing and cultural, leisure and sporting activities.
- **Shaping South Somerset – A Strategy for Sustainable Communities 2008 – 2026** (SSDC, 2008) provides a positive vision for the community, comprising five overarching themes (well-being; environmentally sensitive; well run, well served and well connected; thriving economy; well designed and well built) underpinned by 12 goals.
- The South Somerset **Economic Development Strategy 2012 – 2015** (SSDC, 2012) aims to ensure that SSDC helps to create and maintain the economic conditions that will help individuals and businesses grow and prosper, and make the local economy thrive. It identifies the significant importance of employment land and infrastructure for new and existing businesses.
- The **Yeovil Air Quality Action Plan** (SSDC, 2005) contains 33 actions to address poor air quality in the town, specifically at locations in the town centre. Many of the actions relate to promoting alternatives to car travel and improved traffic management through road improvement schemes.
- South Somerset’s **Biodiversity Action Plan** (SSDC, 2008) highlights that new development should seek opportunities to protect and enhance habitats and species, ensuring that the mosaics in which they are located are retained.
- The South Somerset **Open Space Strategy 2011 – 2015** (SSDC, 2011) provides a vision and strategic framework for the future development of open space provision, seeking a network of well-managed, attractive and living open spaces for all to enjoy.
- Although now time-expired, the **Strategy for Sport and Active Leisure in South Somerset 2006-2012** (SSDC, 2006) is the most recent such strategy, and seeks at least a 1% year on year increase in sport participation levels. A wide range of

¹¹ South Somerset Local Development Scheme (August 2015).

partners should work together to create a more active and successful South Somerset.

- South Somerset's **Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy 2016 – 2021** (SSDC, 2016) includes four key aims, to: address unacceptable risks to human health and the wider environment; encourage regeneration and redevelopment; implement environmental legislation relating to contaminated land; and raise awareness and promote understanding of land contamination issues.

Key Plans and Programmes – Implications for the Early Review of the Local Plan and Sustainability Appraisal

- 2.6 With regards to the 'social' role of sustainability, Government policy to significantly boost the supply of housing means that this is an issue that the Early Review and SA should address. The delivery of new housing can support communities by meeting housing (including affordable housing) needs. The needs for traveller sites should also be met.
- 2.7 The Early Review can help to ensure that new development has a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the needs of the community. This can also help to reduce inequalities, for example through development in the vicinity of deprived areas. Large scale development offers the greatest opportunity to include new community services and facilities.
- 2.8 Health care prevention and public health improvement can be addressed through well-designed places that offer sufficient open space and play space, along with opportunities to walk and cycle. Any shortfalls in school place planning should be referenced in the Early Review, and potential options to address this can be included in the SA process.
- 2.9 The ambition for a new 'Garden Town' in Somerset may be an option that is considered through the Early Review and SA process.
- 2.10 Economic and employment plans produced at a national, sub-regional and local level all seek to maximise economic growth. The Early Review should reflect this by ensuring that sufficient land for economic development of the right type is available in appropriate locations. Ensuring the vitality of town centres is a key aspect of supporting both the economy, and services/facilities for local communities. The SA process should ensure that the potential benefits of new development are maximised through considering alternatives and assessing both negative and positive effects.
- 2.11 The provision of infrastructure should support the delivery of economic and housing development. The Early Review should consider the impacts of new development upon the transport network, including the efficient movement of people and goods on the strategic road network (i.e. the A303), and being aware where significant transport improvements are planned (e.g. Government proposals to dual the A30 Sparkford – Ilchester and the A358 Southfields – Taunton). Traffic growth will have implications for air quality, a particular consideration for the Air Quality Management Area covering Yeovil. The Early Review and SA should support sustainable travel modes, reduce the

need to travel by locating development in accessible locations, and require necessary contributions from new development.

- 2.12 There are a range of plans and programmes with an ‘environmental’ role that have implications for the Early Review and SA. Climate change mitigation can be achieved through supporting renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable travel. This will minimise greenhouse gas emissions and traffic pollution.
- 2.13 An increasing population and the prospect of climate change means that the pressure on water supply is growing. The Early Review can support water efficiency by setting targets on the level of water consumption in new development if necessary. It can also ensure that water quality is maintained by, for example, continuing to protect source protection zones. The Early Review can direct development away from areas with a medium-high flood risk, and require flood risk assessments where necessary to ensure that the risk from all sources is fully understood, and appropriate mitigation including drainage is in place. The SA process should identify and address the effects of new development upon the water environment.
- 2.14 The delivery of new development proposed in the Early Review is likely to affect biodiversity, geodiversity, landscapes and soil quality. New development should avoid the most sensitive sites of biodiversity/geodiversity value, and mitigation should be sought to ensure the protection of habitats and species, and to establish coherent ecological networks. Consideration of landscape impact will be particularly important in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The SA process will assist in avoiding significant impacts through the assessment of alternatives and the identification of mitigation measures.
- 2.15 There is also potential for new development to impact upon heritage assets, both designated and non-designated. The Early Review can ensure that development proposals should fully assess, protect and enhance the historic environment; whilst the SA process will identify any effects.
- 2.16 The Early Review and SA should support waste minimisation, and the continued identification of Mineral Safeguarding Areas in the Early Review will ensure that adequate minerals supply is given appropriate importance.

Surrounding Development Plans

- 2.17 Public bodies have a ‘duty to co-operate’ on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries. Collaborative working should ensure that strategic priorities across local authority boundaries are properly co-ordinated and reflected in individual Local Plans.¹²
- 2.18 The South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 (adopted March 2015) was informed by a report setting out how South Somerset has co-operated with other public bodies in preparing the Plan.¹³ This included cross-boundary issues with West Dorset relating to the growth of Yeovil. No requirement was identified for accommodating additional growth from adjoining authorities.

¹² National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 178, 179.

¹³ Proposed Submission South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 Duty to Co-operate Report, March 2014.

2.19 This section provides the current position of development plans for local authorities that adjoin South Somerset, and identifies if there are any key implications arising from these plans. The following table (figure 2.1) provides the current position of development plans that adjoin South Somerset:

Figure 2.1: Current position of Development Plans adjoining South Somerset

Local Authority	Development Plan and status
Taunton Deane Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan, adopted October 2008. - Core Strategy 2011 – 28, adopted September 2012. - Site Allocations and Development Management Plan, submitted to Secretary of State July 2015.
Sedgemoor District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sedgemoor Core Strategy 2006 – 27, adopted September 2011. - Review of the Core Strategy; Stage 1 Consultation – Scope and Approach, October 2015. - Review of the Core Strategy; Additional consultation, June 2016.
Mendip District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mendip Local Plan 2006-2029 Part I: Strategy and Policies, adopted December 2014. - Mendip Local Plan Part II: Sites and Policies, Issues and Options Consultation, September 2015.
Wiltshire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wiltshire Core Strategy up to 2026, adopted January 2015. - Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, submission July 2015, Proposed Modifications May 2016. - Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations DPD, informal consultation 2014/15. - Wiltshire Core Strategy Partial Review, consultation April 2015.
North Dorset District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031, adopted January 2016.
West Dorset District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted October 2015. - Joint Local Plan Review for West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland, Initial Issues and Options Consultation February 2017.
East Devon District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031, adopted January 2016. - East Devon Villages Plan, draft for consultation August 2016. - Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document, call for sites and methodology consultation November 2015.

Surrounding Development Plans – Implications for the Early Review of the Local Plan and Sustainability Appraisal

- 2.20 Evidence indicates that South Somerset district is a single housing and economic market area. Analysis of the development plans produced by surrounding local authorities does not indicate a need for South Somerset to accommodate additional housing or economic growth from these authorities at the current time. West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland's Local Plan¹⁴ identifies that it will work with South Somerset District Council in relation to issues on the edge of Yeovil.
- 2.21 South Somerset should maintain dialogue with other public bodies to ensure that strategic cross-boundary issues are identified and addressed throughout the preparation of the Early Review and SA. If additional 'cross-boundary' growth is required in South Somerset, the implications should be incorporated into the Early Review and SA. For example, whilst additional housing may bring some social and economic benefits; it may also increase pressure on the transport network, the landscape, agricultural land, water resources, air quality, biodiversity, and the historic environment.
- 2.22 The Early Review should identify and address all significant cross boundary issues. Potential opportunities that could arise should be maximised; for example, the Somerset Levels and Moors cover several districts and contain internationally protected sites, which could benefit from a 'holistic' approach to identifying and addressing issues.¹⁵ It should also be considered whether the provision of infrastructure near a local authority boundary can benefit local communities across these boundaries.

¹⁴ Paragraph 1.2.19.

¹⁵ Habitats Regulations Assessment of the internationally protected sites will provide further detail on this matter. The HRA that informed the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 was undertaken jointly between South Somerset, Sedgemoor and Mendip District Councils.

3. Baseline Information

Introduction

- 3.1 To help understand the main sustainability issues and opportunities in South Somerset, it is necessary to provide a baseline of data, information, and statistics on key themes. The issues identified will be used to inform the SA objectives, which in turn will be used to consider how policy options can improve the future of the district, and appraise the potential impacts of future development sites.
- 3.2 The SA/SEA Guidance produced by Government¹⁶ proposes a practical approach to data collection, recognising that not all information will be available and that there may be information gaps. The guidance also recognises that the collection of baseline information should be iterative and that new information can and should be added throughout the SA process of guiding and shaping local plan-making.
- 3.3 Much of the data in the baseline is taken from secondary sources of information, including Government statistical releases and approved datasets from the Office for National Statistics etc. The baseline also links to data and analysis set out in the Council's own documents, such as: the Authority Monitoring Report, and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- 3.4 Whilst some of the previous SA work prepared by the Council remains relevant, it is also true that since 2012, certain issues and trends will have evolved¹⁷. As such, and in order to be robust, the Council has explored each theme in depth. The themes explored below are based upon those defined in the SEA Directive.
- 3.5 It should also be noted that the extant South Somerset Local Plan policy framework will have had an effect on the baseline and trends. This also highlights an important reoccurring point throughout the SA process, which is that the Council will be required to "take stock" of what is happening as a result of the existing policy framework and begin to consider whether the existing policies are effective and may or may not need changing; and similarly the Council will need to examine whether current options for development have been successfully implemented, and whether they may or may not need to be looked at again.
- 3.6 For each theme discussed below, an analysis of the current situation is provided, along with an account of any trends that have emerged over time. The analysis also looks at what may happen should the Early Review of the Local Plan not take place.

¹⁶ PPG: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

¹⁷ South Somerset Sustainability Appraisal work (2012 onwards)

4. Communities (including Housing)

- 4.1 South Somerset's population of 164,982 (in 2015) is the largest of the five local authorities in Somerset. Population growth has been consistent, with South Somerset showing the largest overall increase in population across the whole of Somerset since 2001. The main cause of population growth in South Somerset is internal migration from elsewhere in the UK.

Table 4.1: Population Change in South Somerset (2001 – 2015)

Area	Population (2001)	Population (2015)	Change (2001 – 2015)	Percentage Change (%) (2001 – 2015)
South Somerset	151,059	164,982	13,923	9.22
Somerset	498,707	545,390	46,683	9.36
South West	4,943,364	5,471,180	527,816	10.68
England	49,449,746	54,786,327	5,336,581	10.79

Source: ONS – Mid-year Population Estimate (Mid-2015 release)

- 4.2 Yeovil continues to be the largest town in South Somerset, with a population of 45,339 in 2011. However, the largest population growth between 2001 and 2011 took place in Ilminster. South Somerset has a number of settlements of similar size – reflecting their historic market town status. This dispersed pattern of people and development has strengths and weaknesses. Questions about how best to support these locations whilst not overburdening them, whilst also marrying up infrastructure provision are critical to deciding on the long term future of the district.
- 4.3 In terms of projected population growth, the latest figures provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) were published in May 2016. The project population change and growth in South Somerset is set out in Table 3.2 below.

Table 4.2: Projected Population Growth (2014-2039)

Area	Population (2014)	Population (2039)	Change (2014 – 2039)	Percentage Change (%) (2014 – 2039)
South Somerset	164,569	184,611	20,042	12.2%
Somerset	541,609	623,649	82,040	15.1%
South West	5,423,303	6,311,495	888,192	16.4%
England	54,316,618	63,281,523	8,964,905	16.5%

Source: ONS – 2014-based Sub-National Population Projections (May 2016)

- 4.4 The majority of people (over 98%) in South Somerset identify themselves as 'White', with some very small proportions of other ethnic groups, such as those who identify themselves as 'Asian/Asian British' (0.87%), and 'Black/African/Caribbean/Black British' (0.22%). In 2011, there were 148 people (0.09%) who identified themselves as 'Gypsy or Irish Traveller'.
- 4.5 It is unlikely that the Census in 2011 fully captures the issues associated with the Gypsy and Traveller community. In order to address the needs of this community the Council has consistently managed to deliver residential pitches (i.e. where people can permanently stay). Since 2006, the Council has delivered 35 residential pitches. However, the Council has been less able to facilitate transit sites and sites specifically

for travelling showpeople. Looking ahead, the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment shows that over the period 2016 to 2020 the Council will need to deliver a further eight residential pitches, and therefore will still be required to take a proactive stance to continuing to meet needs.

- 4.6 Clearly this means that South Somerset is less ethnically diverse than the South West and England, albeit broadly comparable with the other surrounding Somerset local authorities.
- 4.7 South Somerset is an ageing district, with sharp growth in those aged over 60. This is twinned with recent data showing significant losses in those aged 15 to 29. If this trend is to continue over the long term, the district may face major challenges in providing a sufficiently large and competitive labour force. Table 3.3 compares the changing age profile of each of the local authorities in Somerset. Figure 3.1 shows the age profile in 2015.

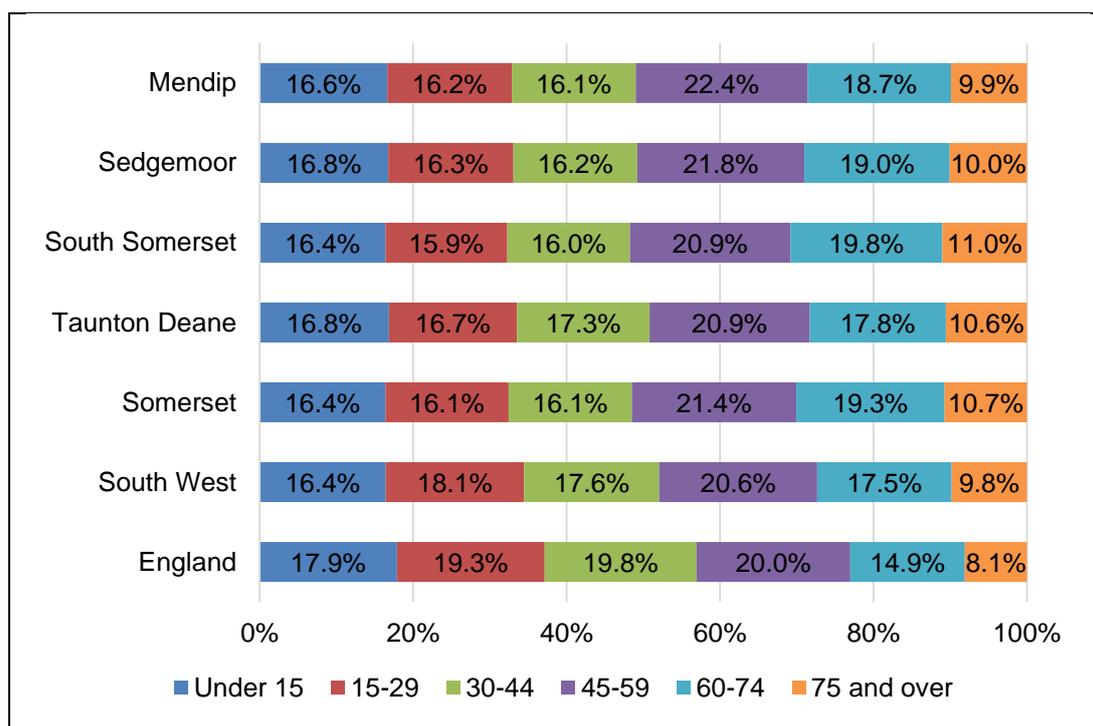
Table 4.3: Change in Age Structure (2001-2015)

Area	Under 15	15-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75 +	Total
South Somerset	-1.9%	11.6%	-15.4%	11.5%	40.3%	24.6%	9.2%
Somerset	-1.0%	12.5%	-15.4%	13.5%	38.4%	22.5%	9.4%
South West	2.2%	17.4%	-8.6%	14.2%	32.1%	17.3%	10.7%
England	5.5%	13.0%	-3.7%	17.7%	25.8%	18.9%	10.8%

Source: ONS / Mid-Year Population Estimates

- 4.8 Since 2001, South Somerset has seen a decline in both the 'Under 15' and '30-44' age groups. To some extent this is counter-balanced by growth in the '15-29', '45-59' and '60-74' age groups, but of course, the older age category includes those individuals who will have passed the state retirement age and will therefore not be economically active. Data on the state of the economy (see below) shows that there are no immediate issues linked to this loss of key segments of the workforce; however, it is something that may require a more positive policy approach in order to ensure the district caters to the future needs of a younger age group.

Figure 4.1: Population Age Profile in 2015



Source: ONS 2015 mid-year population estimates / SHMA 2016

4.9 South Somerset is not alone in facing these issues. Each of the Somerset local authorities has experienced the same shift in its age-profile. Again, in looking at the long term future of Somerset, to ensure that it continues to be economically competitive, there may need to be a joined-up policy response to ensure that younger age cohorts are retained within the county.

4.10 The Census records all residents living in households at the time of the survey. Table 3.4 sets out the overall number of households in South Somerset in both 2001 and 2011.

Table 4.4: Number of Households in South Somerset (2001 to 2011)

Households	2001	2011	Change	% Change
South Somerset	63,769	69,501	5,732	8.99

Source: Neighbourhood Statistics - Households (Census 2001 and 2011)

4.11 To help understand and shape future policy options it is possible to look at the most up-to-date household projections. These are the 2014-based CLG sub-national household projections (SNHP) published in July 2016. Those projections are underpinned by 2014-based ONS sub-national population projections (shown in table 4.2 above).

4.12 The projections show the number of households, per local authority area, from 2014 through to 2039. The projected number of households for South Somerset is shown in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: Household Change 2014 to 2039 (2014-based CLG household projections)

Area	Households 2014	Households 2039	Change in households	% change
South Somerset	71,585	84,824	13,239	18.5%
Somerset	2,334,994	2,838,543	503,549	21.6%
England	22,746,487	28,003,598	5,257,111	23.1%

Source: CLG – 2014-based Sub-National Household Projections (July 2016)

- 4.13 The data from the SNHP shows that the average household size in South Somerset in 2014 was 2.25 persons per household. As household size continues to reduce, it is likely that household formation rates will increase, which in turn will raise the overall number of households that will be created in the future.
- 4.14 As the total population *and* number of households formed increases in South Somerset, it is natural to expect the number of dwellings in South Somerset to also increase. Between 2001 and 2011, South Somerset delivered more new dwellings than any other local authority in Somerset. Indeed the rate of increase in South Somerset was higher than both the South-West and England average; and second only to Sedgemoor in Somerset.
- 4.15 Table 3.6 shows that between the period 2001 and 2011, South Somerset delivered over 7,200 new dwellings, at an annual average of 726, which represents an overall rate of change of nearly 11%.

Table 4.6: Number of Dwellings per Local Authority (2001 – 2011)

Area	2001	2011	Change	% Change
South Somerset	66,112	73,375	7,263	10.99
South West	2,180,746	2,401,289	220,543	10.11
England	21,206,804	22,976,066	1,769,262	8.34

Source: Neighbourhood Statistics – Census – All Dwellings

- 4.16 Looking at the increase in dwellings across the main settlements in South Somerset, the data shows that each of the main settlements across South Somerset saw a moderate level of growth in dwellings over the period 2001 to 2011. It is not surprising to see Yeovil and Chard experience the largest growth in number of dwellings given they are most strategically important settlements in the district. However, as per the data on population growth, it is interesting to see Ilminster recording the greatest rate of change in percentage terms, and the highest annual increase after Yeovil and Chard.

Table 4.7: Number of Dwellings per Settlement in South Somerset (2001 – 2011).

Settlement	2001	2011	Change	% Change	Annualised Average Change (2001 to 2011)
Yeovil	19,469	21,691	2,222	11.41	222
Chard	5,769*	6,962	1,193	20.68	119
Crewkerne	3,084	3,427	343	11.12	34
Ilminster	1,588*	1,994	406	25.57	41
Wincanton	2,122	2,478	356	16.78	36
Martock	1,883	2,083	200	10.62	20
Somerton	1,909	2,065	156	8.17	16
Castle Cary	1,458	1,578	120	8.23	12
Langport	1,308	1,422	114	8.72	11
South Petherton	1,213	1,339	126	10.39	13
Milborne Port	1,170	1,325	155	13.25	16
Bruton	1,073	1,141	68	6.34	7
Ilchester	789*	960	171	21.67	17
Stoke Sub Hamdon	756	787	31	4.10	3

N.B Data ordered by Number of Dwellings in 2011

Source: Neighbourhood Statistics – Census – All Dwellings

* Data for four output areas in Chard, two in Ilminster and two in Ilchester are not available from the 2001 Census, but are available in the 2011 Census. Therefore 'change' and 'percentage' change in these settlements is likely to be over-estimated, albeit not to the extent that it has a significant bearing on the overall conclusion.

- 4.17 Whilst the Census data shows a track record of delivery between 2001 and 2011, the Council also tracks the delivery of dwellings over the lifetime of the extant South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028).
- 4.18 Between 2006 and 2016, the Council's monitoring shows that 6,252 new dwellings have been delivered in South Somerset.

Table 4.8: Delivery of Dwellings against South Somerset Local Plan (2006 -2016)

Settlement	Local Plan Target to 2028	Annualised Target	Total Completions to 2016	Annualised Delivery
Yeovil	7,441	338	2,076	208
Chard	1,852	84	639	64
Crewkerne	961	44	349	35
Ilminster	496	23	263	26
Wincanton	703	32	594	59
Somerton	374	17	69	7
Langport	374	17	288	29
Castle Cary	374	17	68	7
Ilchester	141	6	1	0
South Petherton	229	10	219	22
Martock	230	10	76	8
Bruton	203	9	102	10

Settlement	Local Plan Target to 2028	Annualised Target	Total Completions to 2016	Annualised Delivery
Milborne Port	279	13	200	20
Stoke Sub Hamdon	51	2	7	1
Rural Settlements	2,242	102	1,301	130
TOTAL	15,950	725	6,252	625

Source: SSDC Monitoring Database

- 4.19 Table 4.9 and Table 4.10 set out datasets highlighting the relative affordability of housing within South Somerset. They show the ratio of average house price to average income in South Somerset and how this has evolved since 2006.
- 4.20 The ratios in both tables track the boom and bust cycle of the economy over the last decade, with ratios becoming their most extreme in 2007/2008, and dropping back considerably afterwards. However, over the last three years of the data (2013 – 2015) the ratios are beginning to rise sharply and are now approaching the levels seen when the housing market was at its peak in 2008.
- 4.21 Whilst South Somerset's ratio is amongst the lowest in the county the ratio is still over seven. The relative affordability of housing in South Somerset is probably masked due to the sheer range in values of properties across the district. It is without doubt that in certain locations within South Somerset, the ratio will be much greater, and affordability pressures much higher.

Table 4.9: Ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings in Somerset

Local Authority	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013*	2014*	2015*
Mendip	8.63	10.12	9.69	8.53	8.08	8.96	9.22	8.41	8.84	8.91
Sedgemoor	7.97	8.56	8.22	7.11	7.37	7.56	7.41	7.19	7.94	7.89
South Somerset	8.27	8.49	8.39	7.44	8.02	7.23	7.41	7.17	7.52	7.63
Taunton Deane	8.23	9.41	9.39	7.58	7.67	8.10	8.30	7.86	8.46	8.08
West Somerset	8.62	10.97	10.90	9.82	8.92	10.36	9.25	9.50	10.12	10.19
England	7.15	7.25	6.97	6.28	6.69	6.57	6.58	6.66	6.95	7.02

Source: DCLG – Live Table 576

Table 4.10: Ratio of median house prices to median earnings in Somerset

Local Authority	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013*	2014*	2015*
Mendip	7.71	8.43	8.69	8.09	7.66	7.59	8.72	8.02	8.72	9.06
Sedgemoor	7.12	8.16	8.40	7.08	8.02	7.52	7.36	7.48	7.36	7.59
South Somerset	7.47	7.98	8.04	7.27	7.73	7.07	6.99	7.19	7.39	7.79
Taunton Deane	7.59	8.13	8.06	6.94	7.53	7.53	7.67	7.46	7.73	7.87
West Somerset	7.68	.	.	.	6.27
England	6.97	7.23	6.93	6.27	7.01	6.69	6.86	6.92	7.25	7.49

Source: DCLG – Live Table 577

House Price data is sourced from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) House Price Statistics for Small Areas (HPSSA) statistical release. Earnings data is sourced from The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). House price data covers the 12 months up to September 2015. Earnings relate to the respondents place of residence rather than place of work. This means that affordability in commuter areas reflects the earning power of commuters.

* New versions of the DCLG tables have been created using a different source of House Price data - the ONS House Price Statistics for Small Areas datasets. This leads to slight differences in the distribution of affordability ratios from 2013 onwards.

4.22 Across the district there are currently six Neighbourhood Plan areas that have been formally designated. At time of writing, none of the six areas has progressed to examination, and each of the areas is at different stages in the drafting a preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

4.23 As noted in Section 1.8, the extant South Somerset Local Plan policies have influenced the district's performance in delivering what is required for its communities and residents. This particular theme will have been most significantly influenced by the following existing policies:

- Strategic Policies – SS1, SS2, SS5, SS6, EQ2; and
- Settlement-Specific Policies – YV1, YV2; PMT1 – PMT4; LMT1 – LMT3; and HG1 – HG10.

4.24 Without the early review of the local plan, or a robust policy framework, there is likely to be a more disjointed approach to tackling the housing pressures within the district and fewer opportunities to deliver necessary infrastructure.

4.25 Furthermore, market pressures would likely result in built development occurring in an un-coordinated manner, with the focus taken away from the places where development and investment is needed the most. This, in turn, could make it more difficult to balance the role and function of the various market towns and rural settlements in the district, and the possibility of these locations losing their sense of place and identity. It could also result in unsustainable development which threatens the natural and historic environment, and potential detrimental impacts on current infrastructure.

4.26 The lack of a policy framework also means that those most in need of support (older persons, young families, the Gypsy and Traveller community, and other vulnerable sections of society) are less likely to receive the help they need to live, work and enjoy

the district. The Early Review of the Local Plan provides an opportunity to set out specific policies for particularly sensitive communities that seek to address particular sustainability issues and which could include requirement for new development in and around those areas.

- 4.27 The monitoring information on the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) shows that the district is not able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. On the basis of a simple annualised average figure, the district is behind schedule in terms of net number of new dwellings delivered since 2006. The Early Review of the Local Plan offers the opportunity to help update this position and clarify the housing need and housing requirements in the district.

KEY ISSUES:

- Between 2001 and 2011 South Somerset has delivered more dwellings than any other local authority in the county (7,263 dwellings).
- Most of the main settlements saw an approximate 10% increase in the number of dwellings over the period 2001 to 2011.
- However, the district cannot currently demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.
- The number of empty homes in the district remains consistent and relatively static, although recent good work has reduced the overall number since 2012 / 2013.
- South Somerset has seen a steady rise in the number of households in the district between 2001 and 2011.
- Latest projections for future household numbers show that South Somerset will need to provide for the second highest amount in Somerset, after Sedgemoor.
- The affordability of an average house in South Somerset is around 7.5 times the average income.
- Affordable housing need in South Somerset remains high. With approximately 25% of all need in the county arising from the district.

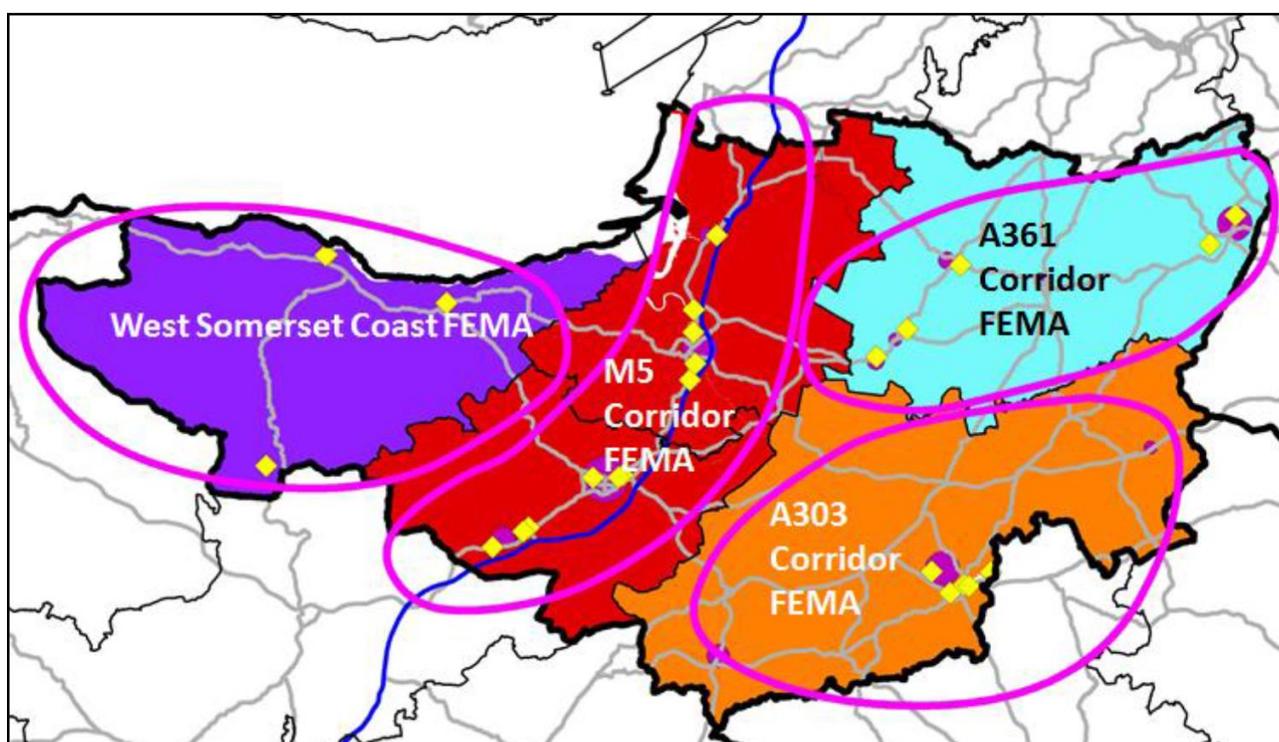
Table 4.11: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Communities (including housing)

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Communities (including Housing) SEA Directive Topic(s): Population and Human Health NPPF Paragraphs: 47-78	1. To meet the housing needs of all residents and different communities.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sufficient housing to meet the identified needs of all Communities within South Somerset? • Provide an appropriate mix of types of housing to meet the identified needs of all communities within South Somerset? • Provide an opportunity to help meet housing needs arising from outside the Plan area?
	2. To maintain and enhance community and settlement identities.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and where possible enhance the identity of a community or settlement? • Effectively integrate within the existing settlement pattern?
	3. To improve accessibility to services and facilities.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that a sufficient level of services/facilities will be delivered to meet the identified needs of all communities within South Somerset, or will development result in a net gain in the level of services/facilities? • Promote the development of a range of high quality, accessible community facilities for all, including specialist services for disabled and older people?

5. Economy and Employment

- 5.1 South Somerset's "Functional Economic Market Area" (FEMA) was recently defined and is set out in in Figure 3.2 below.
- 5.2 The work shows that South Somerset sits within the A303 Corridor FEMA, which is heavily influenced by the A303 as a strategic transport corridor connecting Somerset with the wider South West. The A303 Corridor, with Yeovil at the heart of it, provides a strong 'east-west' axis through the district, facilitating business connectivity as well as easy access to markets, labour, goods and materials. Future programmed improvements to the A303 (and the A358) therefore present an opportunity to enhance and strengthen the economy of South Somerset.

Figure 5.1: Functional Economic Market Area



Source: Housing Market Areas and Functional Economic Market Areas in Somerset (2015)

- 5.3 Of the 164,982 people living in South Somerset in 2015, 96,200 were of working age (16-64 years old). Of those capable of working, 82,500 were in employment (either as employees, self-employed, or part of Government- supported training and employment programmes).
- 5.4 The economy in South Somerset has traditionally been dominated by agriculture and manufacturing. The district's long established link with the aerospace industry also provides a locational advantage.
- 5.5 The total number of jobs in South Somerset (which includes self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces) was 82,000 in 2015. 'Public administration, education and health sector' is the largest sector by number of employees in South Somerset, although the 'manufacturing' sector is also significant employer.

- 5.6 A move away from any perceived (or real) over-reliance on manufacturing is, on the one hand, a positive. Over-specialisation can result in an area's economy becoming vulnerable to a downturn in that sector. However, it is also necessary to appreciate that service sector jobs are, on the whole, less valuable to the economy, and are often less productive. This is set out in more detail in Table 3.11 below.

Table 5.1: Gross Value Added by Industry Sector in South Somerset (2001 to 2015)

GVA (£m, 2011 prices)	2001	2006	2009	2015	% change 2001 to 2015	% in 2015
A : Agriculture, forestry and fishing	42.03	61.92	59.63	56.19	33.69	1.79
B : Mining and quarrying	1.24	7.83	3.90	6.17	397.58	0.20
C : Manufacturing	489.97	616.62	637.10	784.78	60.17	25.04
D : Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	16.04	14.63	17.68	10.29	-35.85	0.33
E : Water supply; sewage, waste management and remediation activities	13.19	50.35	24.09	17.59	33.36	0.56
F : Construction	122.32	219.84	196.23	213.05	74.17	6.80
G : Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	330.22	406.99	356.29	358.07	8.43	11.42
H : Transportation and storage	78.62	79.02	98.81	86.28	9.74	2.75
I : Accommodation and food service activities	67.18	58.77	65.21	80.13	19.28	2.56
J : Information and communication	71.64	92.83	90.73	88.95	24.16	2.84
K : Financial and insurance activities	46.28	52.14	62.48	49.45	6.85	1.58
L : Real estate activities	334.56	326.02	297.29	328.61	-1.78	10.48
M : Professional, scientific and technical activities	68.74	106.65	103.87	139.24	102.56	4.44
N : Administrative and support service activities	33.17	85.27	130.79	132.24	298.67	4.22
O : Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	258.65	262.98	248.68	223.85	-13.45	7.14
P : Education	161.45	203.48	162.31	184.12	14.04	5.87
Q : Human health and social work activities	142.06	165.17	204.47	258.61	82.04	8.25
R : Arts, entertainment and recreation	24.48	29.24	38.80	31.36	28.10	1.00
S : Other service activities	89.89	93.96	73.06	85.58	-4.79	2.73
TOTAL	2,391.72	2,933.72	2,871.41	3,134.57	31.06	100.00

Source: Oxford Economics (from Heart of the South West LEP)

- 5.7 Continuing to strengthening the higher value manufacturing sector, and in particular, nurturing the aerospace supply chain within South Somerset should remain a key objective of the Council and the business community to ensure a high value and resilient economy emerges for the long term.
- 5.8 The quality of the district's environment also supports a small but important tourism industry, with both direct and indirect jobs underpinned by tourism spending. The exact size of the tourism sector is difficult to define due to its varied and multifaceted nature. However, the data shows that approximately 3,000 to 3,500 jobs are supported by the sector in South Somerset, and that this represents around 4% of the sectoral employment.
- 5.9 Similarly, the Council is conscious that the district has a well-established and prominent agricultural sector, including farm-based employees. As at 2011, the number of South Somerset residents, aged 16-65 who were employed in "Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing", was just over 2,100.
- 5.10 The vast majority - 90% - of businesses in South Somerset are micro enterprises employing up to 9 people, a proportion that has remained broadly similar since 2010. Given this, planning policies and decisions should continue to support the development of these sized businesses in the future as being vital to the local economy.
- 5.11 At the other end of the scale, there are only 15 (or 0.2%) large enterprises that employ more than 250 people in the district, a 25% fall since 2010. In considering the future growth of businesses, it is important to be realistic about the potential to attract numerous large enterprises to the district.
- 5.12 Table 3.12 outlines the qualifications held by the resident population aged 16-64 in South Somerset in 2015.

Table 5.2: Qualification Levels in South Somerset (January 2015 to December 2015)

Individual levels	South Somerset	South Somerset (%)	South West (%)	Great Britain (%)
NVQ4 and above	34,400	36.0	37.3	37.1
NVQ3 and above	63,300	66.2	60.4	57.4
NVQ2 and above	78,800	82.5	77.6	73.6
NVQ1 and above	87,600	91.6	89.7	84.9
Other qualifications	3,300	3.5	4.8	6.5
No qualifications	4,700	4.9	5.5	8.6

Source: ONS annual population survey

- 5.13 The data highlights that South Somerset has a lower percentage of people with no qualifications than either the South West average or the Great Britain average. But it is also true, that South Somerset has a lower percentage of people with the highest level qualification, NVQ4 (degree-level equivalent), than either the South West or Great Britain.
- 5.14 The Council will need to work closely with all education institutions, but especially further and higher education departments to ensure that those achieving the highest

qualifications are not only taught here, but choose to stay here and live and work in South Somerset.

- 5.15 Analysing data looking back to 2001 shows that the number of claimants in South Somerset has been consistently lower than the regional and national.
- 5.16 Even so, South Somerset was not immune to the impact of the recession, and in 2008 the number of claimants doubled. So much so, that 2009's figures represent the highest recorded number of claimants in the last 15 years.
- 5.17 Between 2009 and 2013 the number of claimants remained high, and significantly higher than historic records. However, since 2013 the figures have reduced dramatically and are now below figures recorded back in 2001. In proportional terms, South Somerset's number of claimants now represents less than 1% and is significantly below the South West and Great Britain average.

Table 5.3: Claimant count in South Somerset (2001 to 2015)

Date	South Somerset	South Somerset	South West	Great Britain
		(%)	(%)	(%)
Aug-01	1,000	1.1	1.6	2.5
Aug-02	950	1	1.6	2.4
Aug-03	890	1	1.4	2.3
Aug-04	810	0.9	1.2	2
Aug-05	990	1	1.3	2.2
Aug-06	1,040	1.1	1.4	2.3
Aug-07	790	0.8	1.2	2
Aug-08	850	0.9	1.4	2.2
Aug-09	1,820	1.9	2.7	3.8
Aug-10	1,570	1.6	2.3	3.4
Aug-11	1,740	1.8	2.5	3.7
Aug-12	1,660	1.7	2.5	3.7
Aug-13	1,370	1.4	2.1	3.2
Aug-14	790	0.8	1.3	2.2
Aug-15	610	0.6	1	1.6
2001 - 2015	-390			
2006 - 2015	-430			

Source: ONS

- 5.18 Yeovil remains most important retail centre within the district. But the town centre faces competition from out-of-town retail estates and adjacent retail estates including in West Dorset.
- 5.19 Vacancy rates in Yeovil town centre have increased since 2006 and recessionary impacts have been felt within the town centre and Primary Shopping Area.
- 5.20 The data demonstrates that vacancy rates have increased over time. Whilst the last survey undertaken in September 2015 shows a slight improvement, the overall vacancy rate across the Town Centre of 14.17%, remains significantly above the national average of 12.5% recorded by Retail Gazette in March 2016. This is likely to

be part in due to the UK economic climate and changing shopping habits and part is due to the age, attractiveness, availability and cost of property stock.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

5.21 As noted in Section 1.8, the extant South Somerset Local Plan policies have influenced the district's performance in delivering what is required for its communities and residents. This particular theme will have been most significantly influenced by the following existing policies:

- Strategic Policies – SS1, SS2, SS3, EQ2; and
- Settlement-Specific Policies – YV1, YV2; PMT1 – PMT4; LMT1 – LMT3; and HG1 – HG10.

5.22 Without the early review of the local plan, or a robust policy framework, confidence in the development industry to invest in key employment sites and facilitate a modern economy in South Somerset will be reduced. There will be less of an opportunity to marry up residential and economic development and therefore some of the direct and indirect benefits of linking jobs to homes will be missed.

5.23 Without a robust policy framework delivering economic growth and job targets would be increasingly difficult. Question marks over the viability and deliverability of employment land would be more acute, particularly where there may be expectations that the site could come forward as a housing site (and thus offering a greater return on investment). A lack of a flexible and up-to-date policy framework would remove certainty and undermine investment decisions, and in turn reduce the overall quantum of economic development due to the preference for housing. It is likely to also yield employment land coming forward in locations that are not appropriate or sustainable.

KEY ISSUES:

- South Somerset's Functional Economic Area extends along the A303 corridor.
- Total number of economically active residents in South Somerset is 85,300 in 2015.
- Total number of jobs in South Somerset was 82,000 in 2015.
- In 2015, Manufacturing generated £785 million to the South Somerset economy. This sector's economic value has grown by over 25% since 2001.
- The number of enterprises in South Somerset has grown since 2010, but only steadily. The agricultural sector has the largest number of enterprises. Manufacturing, whilst the most valuable sector to the economy only has the third highest number of enterprises.
- In 2015, 98% of all businesses employed fewer than 50 employees. This Shows South Somerset's reliance on Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
- Gross weekly wages for both males and females are lower than the national and regional average.
- The number of claimants in South Somerset is at the lowest level since 2001.

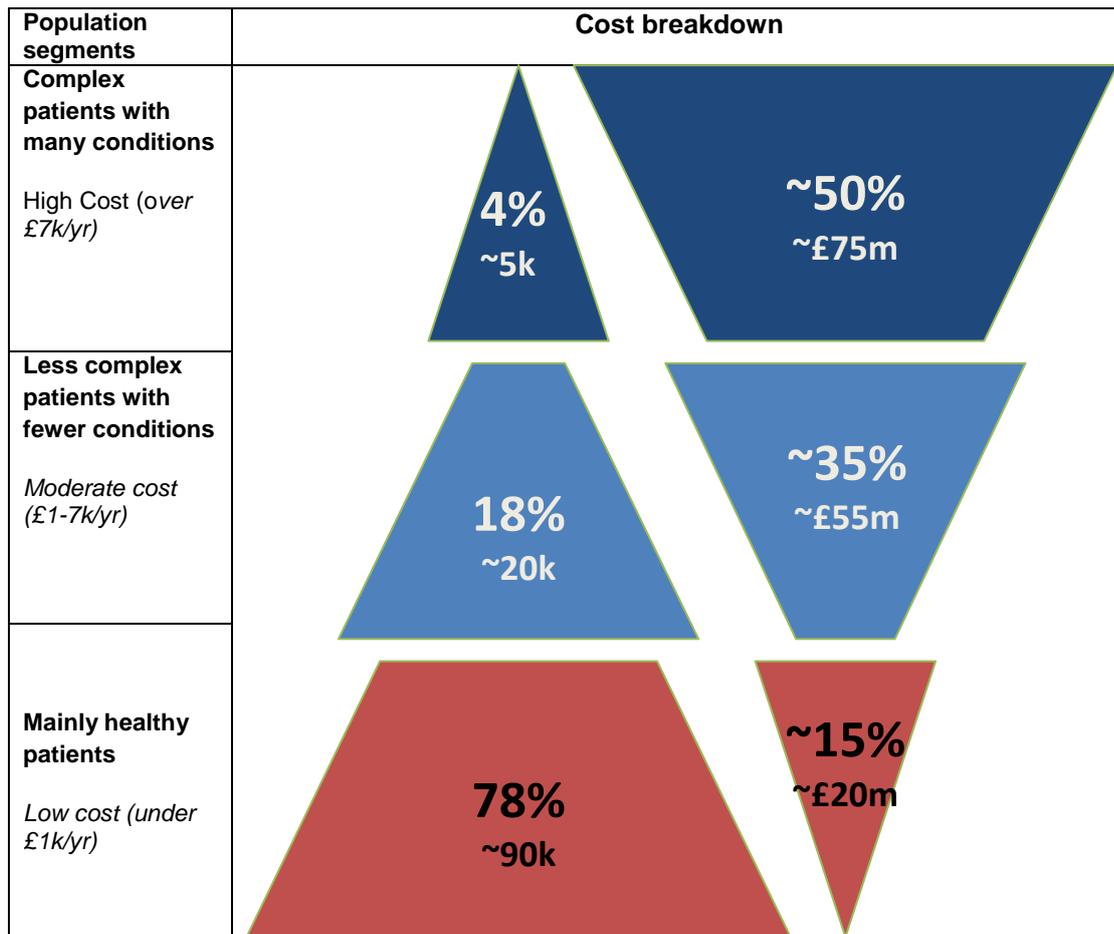
Table 5.4: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for the Economy and Employment

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Economy and Employment SEA Directive Topic(s): Population and Human Health NPPF Paragraphs: 18-22, 42 & 43	4. To support the economy and ensure that there are suitable opportunities for employment.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sufficient high quality employment land to meet the identified needs of all communities within South Somerset? • Facilitate the provision of the right type of employment land in the right place? • Safeguard existing employment land in South Somerset? • Support and enhance the vitality and viability of Town Centres, in particular Dunstable Town Centre? • Regenerate or provide employment opportunities in areas that are currently experiencing high rates of unemployment or deprivation? • Enhance the provision of education and training facilities? • Support the visitor economy? • Facilitate working from home, remote working and home-based businesses?

6. Health and Equalities

- 6.1 The Somerset JSNA (2015) identifies the key health care issues and long term priorities for Somerset. The greatest challenge across the county is the ageing nature of the population. In Somerset life expectancy is greater than the national average. This skewed demographic profile poses a challenge to the sustainability of public services, and has become a key driver for health care planning as, whilst life expectancy has increased, a healthy life expectancy (the average age at which we can expect to remain free from long-term health problems) has not increased to the same extent. Increasingly, people will spend a greater portion of their life in ill-health, placing a significant burden on health and social care services, unless healthy life expectancy is improved.
- 6.2 The ageing population has particular implications for services in Somerset as it is a key risk factor for many common health conditions. Somerset has an older population than the national average; with the 65+ age group projected to rise by a further 30% by 2021. By 2033, over half the population in Somerset will be over 65. This will increase the number of patients with cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. Projected increases for dementia and heart failure are also high. It must also be noted that smaller increases in conditions that are more common (e.g. hypertension) can have a bigger impact on the health service.
- 6.3 The major burdens of disease in Somerset, particularly resulting in long term conditions, are those that are mainly caused by lifestyles choices and are largely preventable – 40% of health is affected by lifestyle, 30% genetics, 5% environment, 15% society and 10% healthcare. The focus in Somerset is on targeting key lifestyle related health risks such as obesity, smoking and alcohol use.
- 6.4 Cancer, digestive, musculoskeletal and circulatory diseases along with maternity are the main causes of admission to hospital; while digestive, circulatory and respiratory disease are the main causes of emergency admissions. Projections show that in the future, some of the biggest increases in hospital admissions are likely to be in chronic conditions such as circulatory disease and cancers, which would increase in an ageing population.
- 6.5 The rate of mental health outpatient attendances varies quite considerably over time, but has shown a decrease in Somerset and in 2010/11 was much lower than the regional and national average. The admission rates also appear to have been decreasing in Somerset so that it is no longer higher than the national average.
- 6.6 An interesting conclusion from the recent evaluation work undertaken as part of the Symphony Project is that those patients with the most acute, complex and inter-related health issues account of just 4% of the population, but take up over 50% of the NHS' costs. The top 15% of the population requiring health care accounts for over 85% of the NHS' expenditure. This is exemplified in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Breakdown of healthcare expenditure per population segment¹⁸



6.7 Public Health England produces a Health Profile for South Somerset. The latest profile states that, in general, the health of people in South Somerset is varied compared with the England average.

¹⁸ Source: Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

Figure 6.2: Overview of Health Profile for South Somerset¹⁹

Brief overview of Federation outcomes	ENGLAND ²⁰	Somerset	Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster	S. Somerset Health care
Proportion of population aged 0-14	18%	16%	15%	16%
Proportion of population aged > 75	8%	10%	12%	10%
Index of Multiple Deprivation	17.2	16.9	15.0	14.7
Proportion of pop. living in 10% most deprived neighbourhoods SomeSomerset*	27%	10%	0%	7%
Proportion of pop. living in 20% most deprived neighbourhoods iSomerset*	37%	20%	9%	10%
All cause mortality, all ages (SMR compared to Somerset)		100%	90%	100%
Proportion of deaths occurring before 65	17%	13%	11%	12%
Proportion of those dying at home (all cases)	22%	21%	23%	19%
Smoking rate adults 16+		15.4%	17.8%	13.8%
Smoking ascertainment		73%	76%	72%
Smokers going through cessation per 1000 recorded smokers		108	96	136
Excess weight in 4-5 year olds	23%	23%	24%	24%
Excess weight in 10-11 year olds	33%	30%	29%	29%
Obese adults (16+) (per 1000 - Standardised to Somerset) Somerset	119	99	110	97
Alcohol related admissions	1,984	2,068	2,017	2,114
Drug related admissions		120	121	121
Teenage deliveries (rate per 1,000 15-17 year olds)		18.2	20.5	18.7
Chlamydia % screened of eligible (15-24 year olds)		3.3%	2.1%	4.4%
MMR coverage by 2nd birthday	92.7%	93.8%	93.1%	95.4%
Cervical cancer screening (25-49)	71.5%	74%	76.6%	73.3%
Health Checks % of eligible invited for check (an. target)		76%	100%	76%
Health Checks undertaken as % of eligible (annual target)		40%	56%	39%
Health Check as % of eligible in most deprived pop. quintile		28%	35%	23%
Self harm admissions (rate per 100,000)		223	202	243
Emergency admissions to hospital for Falls in people aged 65 and over (rate per 1000)		31	29	34

Green = better than England average, whilst Red = worst - most worthy of attention.

¹⁹ South Somerset Federation Public Health Profile (2014-15), published December 2014.

²⁰ England data shows what proportion of England's population are in areas with Indices of Multiple Deprivation above the Somerset critical value for being in the most deprived 10% or 20%

Oral Health

- 6.8 Nationally there have been substantial improvements in oral health in the past 20 years. Improving Oral Health in Somerset (2015-2018) identifies key points regarding the county's oral health. The strategy identifies that oral health in young people is better in South Somerset and Somerset than the national averages; however in adults the prevalence of tooth decay and poor oral health is higher than the national average.
- 6.9 Easy and timely access to dental services is essential to ensure that individuals are able to receive preventative interventions and advice as well as treatment when they request it.²¹ Both child access rates and adult access rates in South Somerset are above national average (77.2% and 56.6% respectively).

Equalities

- 6.10 The South Somerset Equalities Profile (2015) sets out a range of equalities related baseline information and this is summarised below.

Sex

- There are slightly more women (50.9%) in South Somerset than men (49.1%)
- South Somerset's population is aging, with below the English national average for those aged under 45, whilst having significantly higher levels of those aged between 45 and 65 and those aged over 65.
- As with elsewhere in the UK the life expectancy is slightly higher for women than men (84.4% for women and 80.9% for men), however the average life expectancy for both men and women in South Somerset is higher than other parts of the UK and the national average.
- 37.4% of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in October 2015 were female; compared to 62.7% of claimants which are men.

Race

- According to the Census, (2011):
- 98.1% of the population in South Somerset identify as White
- 95% of the population identified as being 'White British' with 2.7% identifying as 'White Other'
- South Somerset has a small Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population with 1.9% identifying as BME
- The UK is the country of birth for the vast majority of residents of South Somerset, 94%
- 3.1% put an EU member state as their country of birth, this includes children of military personnel born overseas
- 2.9% of the population said that their country of birth was 'elsewhere in the world'

²¹ Dental Public Health Report: Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset and South Gloucester (BNSSSG), October 2014. NICE guidelines recommended that the longest interval between oral reviews (for an adult) should be 24 months. Therefore dental attendance is now measured by the number and proportion of patients who have attended a dentist within the previous 24 months. Access Rates are expressed as a % of the area population and are calculated using 24 months of scheduled data.

Religion or Belief

- Christianity is the largest religion in Somerset with 65.9% of the population identifying as Christian. This is higher than the national population where 59% identify as Christian.
- 1.2% of the Somerset population stated they had a religion but were not Christian
- 25.2% said that they had no religious identity.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT)

- The Integrated Household Survey (2014) estimates that the number of people who identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual as 1.6% of the national population. If this figure is applied to South Somerset it would mean that there are 2633 Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual people in South Somerset.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

- 6.11 South Somerset is an area of contrasts in relation to deprivation. The latest data release of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is from 2015.
- 6.12 Of the 103 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) identified within the district, two fall within the 10% most deprived in the country, and five fall within the 20% most deprived within the country. Of the seven LSOAs that are the most deprived – these are located in Yeovil [Yeovil West Ward (x2) and Yeovil Central Ward, Yeovil East Ward (x3); and Chard Jocelyn Ward].
- 6.13 At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are six LSOAs that fall within the 10% least deprived in the country – these are located in: Yeovil [Yeovil South Ward, Yeovil Without Ward, and Brympton Ward (x2)], Cary Ward, and Chard Crimchard Ward.
- 6.14 It is of interest that the towns of Yeovil and Chard witness both extremes of deprivation, with areas amongst the least deprived in the country and those who are the most deprived in the country. A clear indication that policy approach in these towns need to be able to cater to a large range of needs and demands.
- 6.15 The Council has looked at domains within the overall IMD, and has identified the following localised issues:
- **Income Deprivation** – in Yeovil West, Yeovil East, and Chard Jocelyn;
 - **Education, Skills and Training** – in Yeovil West, Yeovil East, and Chard Holyrood;
 - **Health Deprivation and Disability** – in: Chard Jocelyn, Yeovil Central, Yeovil East;
 - **Crime** – in Yeovil East, Yeovil Central, Chard Jocelyn;
 - **Barriers to Housing and Services** – in Tower, Iselmoor, Burrow Hill and Windwhistle;
 - **Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)** – in Yeovil West, Yeovil East, and Yeovil Without; and

- **Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI)** – in Chard Jocelyn, Yeovil West, Yeovil East, and Crewkerne.

Education

- 6.16 In looking to raise the profile of jobs and occupations in South Somerset it will be important to attract and retain more highly skilled and qualified individuals.
- 6.17 Table 6.1 outlines the qualifications held by the resident population aged 16-64 in South Somerset in 2015.

Table 6.1: Qualification Levels in South Somerset (January 2015 to December 2015)

Individual levels	South Somerset	South Somerset (%)	South West (%)	Great Britain (%)
NVQ4 and above	34,400	36.0	37.3	37.1
NVQ3 and above	63,300	66.2	60.4	57.4
NVQ2 and above	78,800	82.5	77.6	73.6
NVQ1 and above	87,600	91.6	89.7	84.9
Other qualifications	3,300	3.5	4.8	6.5
No qualifications	4,700	4.9	5.5	8.6

Source: ONS annual population survey

- 6.18 The data highlights that South Somerset has a lower percentage of people with no qualifications than either the South West average or the Great Britain average. But it is also true, that South Somerset has a lower percentage of people with the highest level qualification, NVQ4 (degree-level equivalent), than either the South West or Great Britain.
- 6.19 The Council will need to work closely with all education institutions, but especially further and higher education departments to ensure that those achieving the highest qualifications are not only taught here, but choose to stay here and live and work in South Somerset.
- 6.20 Reductions in funding present challenges to delivering education infrastructure. There is less centralised money available from SCC for building new schools and premises. Therefore releasing additional capacity by maximising the use of existing buildings, as well as realising opportunities on site will be key to the future provision of education places.

Early Years Education (under 5 years)

- 6.21 Overall, there are currently sufficient Early Years places in the District. Extending the 2 year old offer, introducing 30 hours funded childcare to working parents of 3 and 4 year olds, and new housing developments has the potential to create shortages particularly in Yeovil, Chard and Wincanton which need to be monitored and managed.
- 6.22 In Yeovil, the increased demand for places in the short to medium term can be met through existing capacity or planned increases (co-locating on primary schools). In the long term additional capacity will be required, but there are no plans for this currently as some of the need may be addressed through the private sector.

Primary and Secondary Education (4-16 years)

- 6.23 Surplus places in schools were a strong trend until recently. Now growth in the population coupled with planned housing development is putting pressure on school places. Plans are in place to provide additional early years and primary education places in Yeovil. The County Council are working with the District Council to consider options for ensuring sufficient places in Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster, Wincanton and Castle Cary.
- 6.24 The level of development proposed through the Local Plan does not generate sufficient places to justify a new secondary school in Yeovil. SCC and SSDC will continue to review secondary provision in Yeovil and will consider all the options available for increasing capacity at any or all of the secondary school sites before consideration is given to building a new secondary school.

Further Education and Training (post 16)

- 6.25 Yeovil College have confirmed that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed Local Plan growth. Austerity cuts have impacted funding and the challenge to develop the college estate is considerable with the financial constraints that it faces. The College is aware of the need to align itself with the LEP priorities. Officers will work with Yeovil College to improve the linkages with LEP priorities and ensure its financial viability going forward.
- 6.26 Higher Education is a priority for Yeovil College, who are working with several universities to seek opportunities for growth in this area.

Special Education Needs

- 6.27 No new infrastructure is planned in light of the forthcoming review of Special Education Needs infrastructure, due to report in 2016.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

- 6.28 The local plan can shape and guide development to increase levels of sustainability and there ensure that the built environment contributes to delivering health benefits, and supports healthy, inclusive and active communities.
- 6.29 Without the Early Review of the Local Plan in place, development is less likely to deliver the type and quality of development that can positively bring about health benefits. There would also be an increased likelihood of negative effects on people's health and well-being through sporadic and unplanned development, and a fragmentation of services and facilities, with less clarity over the type of provisions expected within new development.

KEY ISSUES:

- South Somerset’s ageing population presents some challenges in terms of health and well-being, with a likelihood of greater prevalence of cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. Projected increases for dementia and heart failure are also high.
- Stark differences in levels of equality in Yeovil and Chard need to be recognised, and future development proposals should avoid an identikit or one-size-fits-all model to service and facility provision.
- The greatest levels of deprivation continue to be in Yeovil and Chard with seven areas that are amongst the most deprived in the country.
- South Somerset has fewer people with no qualifications than the regional or national average; but also has a lower percentage of people with the highest level of qualifications.
- Capacity in educational facilities is a local concern, but provision is deemed to be capable of meeting demand. However, future development should be mindful of those locations where pressure is the most acute.
- South Somerset has a small Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population with 1.9% identifying as BME.

Table 6.2: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Health and Equalities

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Health and Equalities SEA Directive Topic(s): Population and Human Health NPPF Paragraphs: 69-78	5. To improve the health and wellbeing of communities and reduce inequalities.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities for all age groups? • Encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities? • Enhance multifunctional green infrastructure networks in South Somerset and in the surrounding areas? • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to open space, green infrastructure and recreational areas? • Provide development in the most deprived areas and stimulate regeneration? • Promote equality of opportunity for all protected groups?²²

²² Under the Equality Act 2010 protected groups or characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

7. Transport and Movement

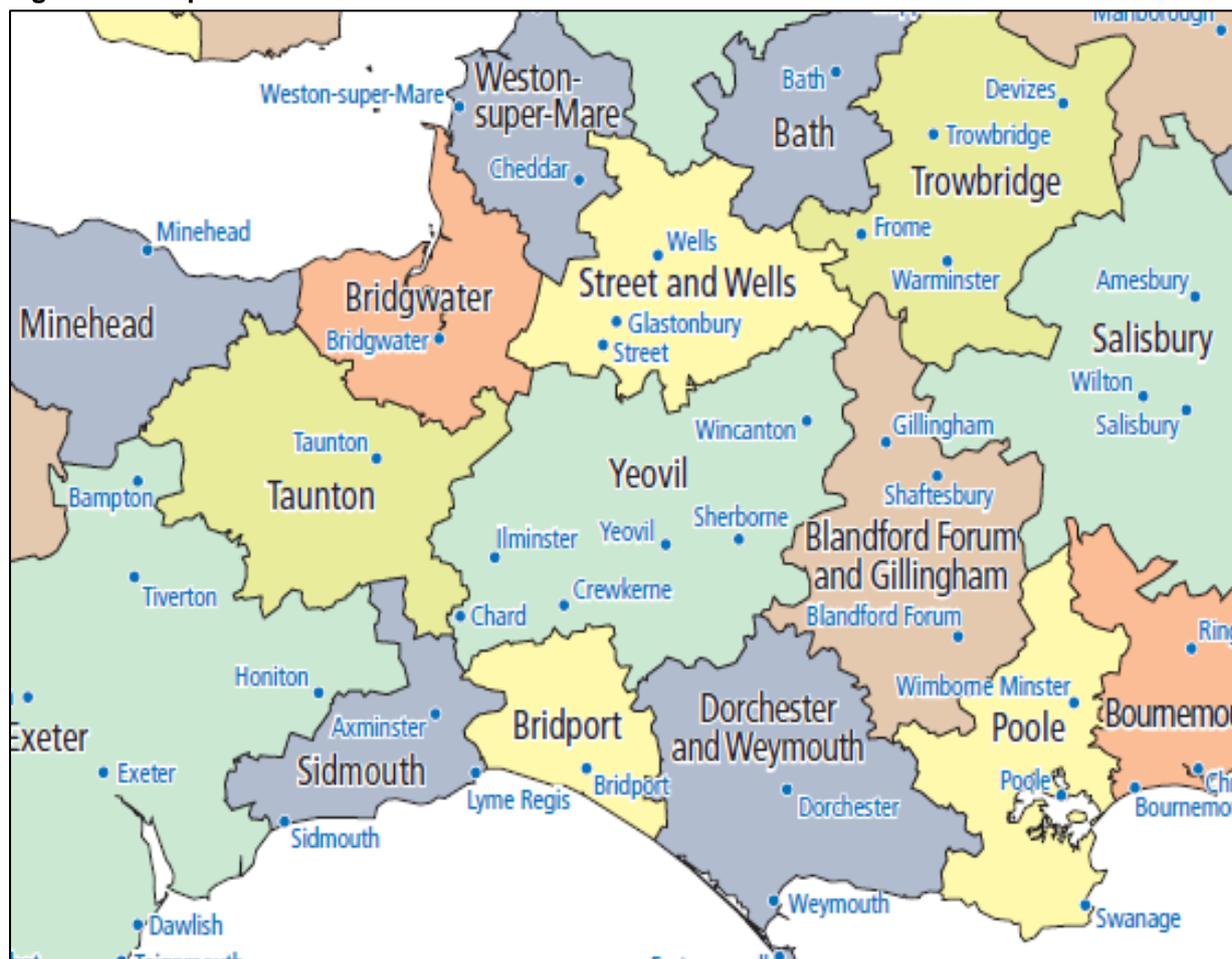
- 7.1 Existing travel patterns in South Somerset reflect its rural nature, with reliance on the car for many journeys.

Road

- 7.2 The A303, which is part of the Strategic Road Network (managed by Highways England), dissects the district from east to west. The A303 facilitates connectivity to larger centres such as Exeter in the west, and Andover in the east.
- 7.3 The A30 also runs east to west but is positioned to the south of the district. The A30 merges with the A303 in the west to provide onward connections to Devon and Exeter. The A30 heading east serves to connect South Somerset with settlements including Sherborne, Shaftsbury and Salisbury. Together these two roads provide the dominant transport corridor through South Somerset.
- 7.4 The A358 and A37 provide additional radial routes through South Somerset on a north-south axis. The A358 connects the district to the M5 motorway, opening up links to Taunton, Bridgwater and beyond; whilst the A37 links the district with the urban conurbations of Bristol and Bath.
- 7.5 The Office for National Statistics has released the 2011-based 'Travel To Work Areas'.²³ The information shows that the majority of South Somerset falls within a travel to work zone entitled "Yeovil" and concludes that the area is highly self-contained with 83% of people in employment who live in the area also work in area; and 83% of jobs in the area are fulfilled by people that live in the area.

²³ ONS (2015) 2011-based Travel To Work Areas

Figure 7.1: Map of 2011-based Travel to Work Areas



- 7.6 That being said, the road network serves as a vital link for those living in South Somerset but working elsewhere, and those businesses located in South Somerset, but whose staff live outside of the district. The strongest relationship with those living in South Somerset but choosing to work elsewhere is with West Dorset, Taunton Deane and Mendip. The strongest relationship with those working in South Somerset but living elsewhere is with Mendip, West Dorset, and North Dorset.
- 7.7 Elsewhere in South Somerset the road network is categorised by more minor ‘A’ roads and other lower classification roads. This is typical of the nature of the road network in Somerset, which is far more rural than either the regional or national average, as shown by figure 6.2 below.

Table 7.1: Urban-rural profiles of roads²⁴

	Somerset	South West	Great Britain
Urban total	11.6%	22%	36%
Rural total	88.4%	78%	64%

- 7.8 Traffic volumes in Somerset grew steadily each year from 2000 to 2008 but have fallen slightly since then. Overall traffic volumes in the county increased by around 7% in the

²⁴ DfT Road length statistics, 2011: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-network-size-and-condition>

past decade.²⁵ The following graphs show the annual average daily flow of vehicles from 2000-2014 for selected roads in South Somerset, and indicate broadly constant traffic flows over this period.

Figure 7.2: Traffic flows on selected roads within Yeovil, Chard and Crewkerne²⁶

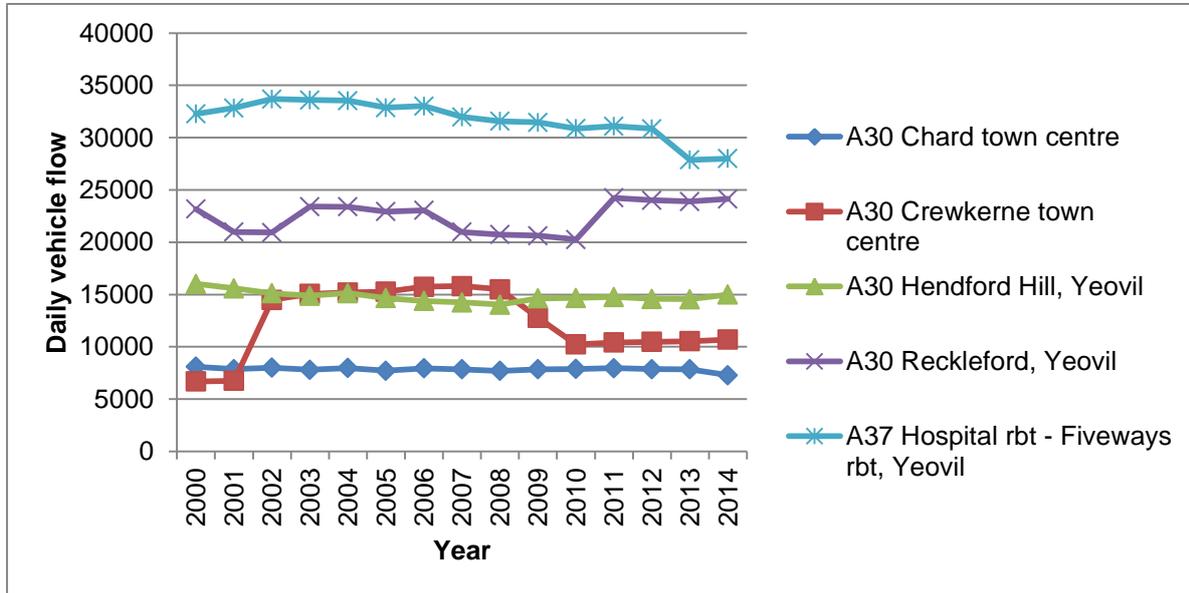
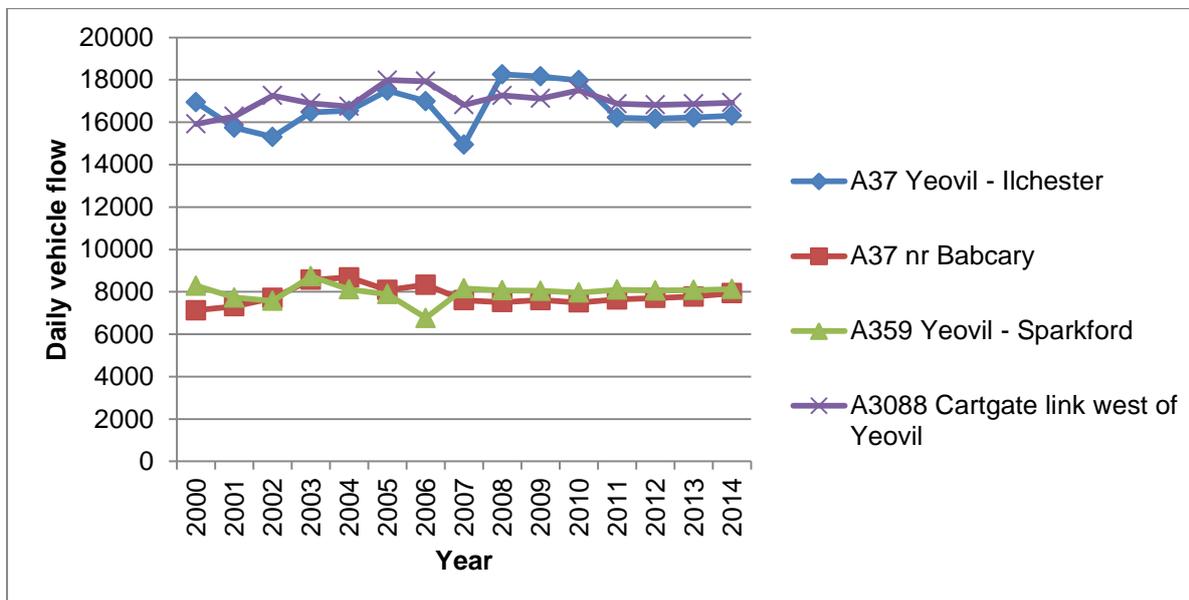


Figure 7.3: Traffic flows on selected 'rural' road links²⁷

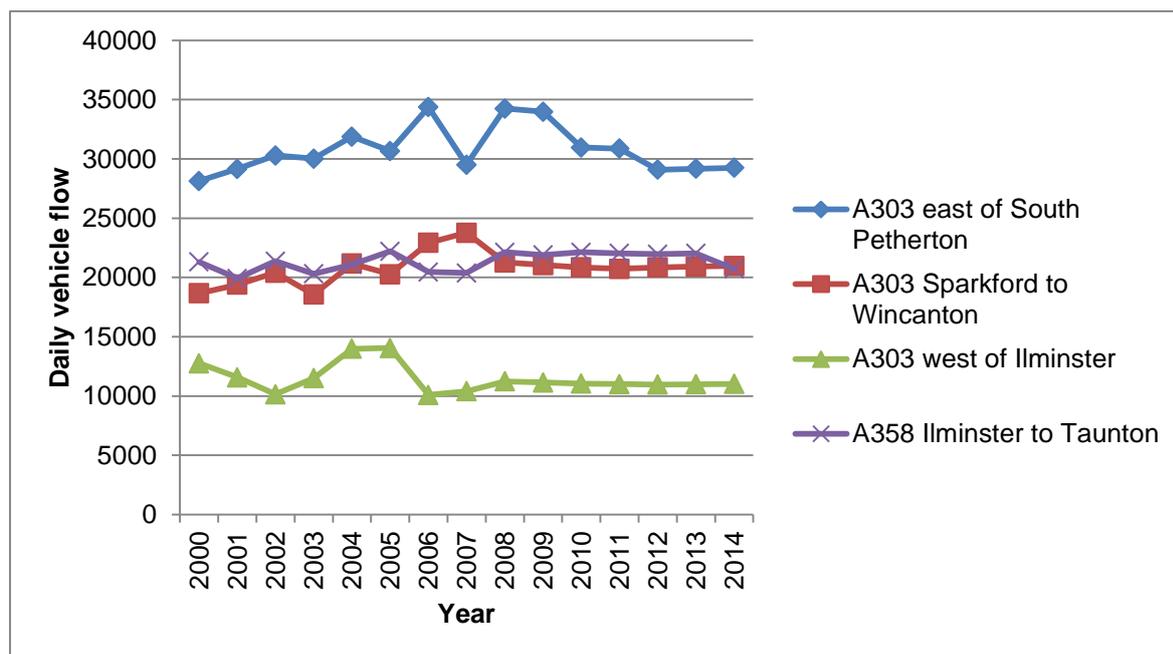


²⁵ Transport Statistics for Somerset, Somerset Intelligence, 2013.

²⁶ All motor traffic, DfT Road traffic statistics by local authority (DfT data disclaimer: traffic figures at regional and national level are robust and are reported as National Statistics. However, this is not the case for road traffic at a local level).

²⁷ All motor traffic, DfT Road traffic statistics by local authority

Figure 7.4: Traffic flows on selected points on the A303 and A358 in South Somerset²⁸



- 7.9 Generally, congestion on the road network is caused by junctions or changes in the number of lanes, rather than the number of cars travelling along a road link. Nevertheless, guidance is available on the capacity of urban roads and rural road links, which applies varying capacity levels according to road type, width, speed limit etc.²⁹ The flows highlighted in the figures above are within the daily flow range for a wide single carriageway on a rural road link, although the A358 Ilminster to Taunton (figure 7.4) is near the maximum for this type of road.
- 7.10 The A358 from Southfields Roundabout at Ilminster to the M5 along with parts of the A303 are recognised as suffering from congestion, particularly in the summer months when subject to increased flows from seasonal tourism-related traffic, and at peak times on weekends.
- 7.11 Highways England has indicated on a number of occasions that they have concerns surrounding the capacity of Southfields Roundabout to accommodate additional traffic. Whilst the Government has announced plans to improve this section³⁰ it is likely that in the short-term both residential and employment proposals at Ilminster will need to clearly show how they do not cause further capacity issues on the strategic transport network. In the case of the employment proposals in Ilminster it may be that development does not come forward until Government has concluded on its detailed plans for the improvements.
- 7.12 There are also congestion issues at some of the larger settlements, particularly at peak times in parts of Yeovil, Chard, and Crewkerne. Road improvement schemes are proposed that will help to address issues at these settlements. However, overall, as a rural county Somerset's roads are generally less congested in peak times than other

²⁸ All motor traffic, DfT Road traffic statistics by local authority.

²⁹ Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

³⁰ Road Investment Strategy: Investment Plan, DfT, 2014.

areas, with average vehicle speeds of 29.6mph being consistently above the regional (27.7mph) and national (24.3mph) averages.³¹

7.13 Devon County Council have identified concerns relating to growth at Chard leading to increased traffic travelling through Axminster and, if this impact can be demonstrated, may request contributions towards a solution.

Rail

7.14 There are three railway lines that run through South Somerset:

- London (Waterloo) to Exeter; the West of England (WoE) line, in the Wessex Franchise area operated by South West Trains;
- London (Paddington) to Taunton, Exeter and the south west. This forms part of the Great Western franchise operated by Great Western Railway (GWR); and
- Bristol to Weymouth; the Heart of Wessex (HoW) line, which again falls within the Great Western franchise.

7.15 The District is served by six railway stations at:

- Yeovil Junction (WoE);
- Yeovil Pen Mill (HoW);
- Crewkerne (WoE);
- Templecombe (WoE);
- Castle Cary (Paddington – Taunton, and HoW);
- Bruton (HoW).

7.16 Notably, several of these stations are located on the periphery of the associated settlement (e.g. Yeovil Junction, Crewkerne, Castle Cary) which presents challenges in accessing the station by sustainable travel modes.

7.17 The West of England line (which serves Crewkerne, Yeovil Junction and Templecombe) has an hourly service to Exeter and London Waterloo. There are currently no trains linking the WoE and HoW lines where they cross over at Yeovil, although the timetable from December 2015 includes services that link Yeovil Junction to Pen Mill and stations further north. However, there is no southern rail link between Yeovil Junction and the southbound line (i.e. the so-called 'South Chord' towards Dorchester). This limits both the potential to enhance services, and network resilience to extreme weather events.³² The line between Yeovil Junction and Chard Junction is the longest section of single track on the entire WoE line. The need to improve the resilience of this line is identified in the HoSW LEP Growth Deal 2015/16.³³

7.18 The Paddington to the South West line within the Greater Western franchise serves Castle Cary and offers a fast service to London Paddington in one direction, and Exeter in the other. However, the first departure from Castle Cary to Taunton (and

³¹ DfT Average vehicle speeds during the weekday morning peak, September 2014.

³² For example, flooding of the Somerset Levels and Moors in late 2013/early 2014 prevented use of the Great Western Main Line – a rail link at Yeovil could have provided an alternative route for trains from the east and north into the south west.

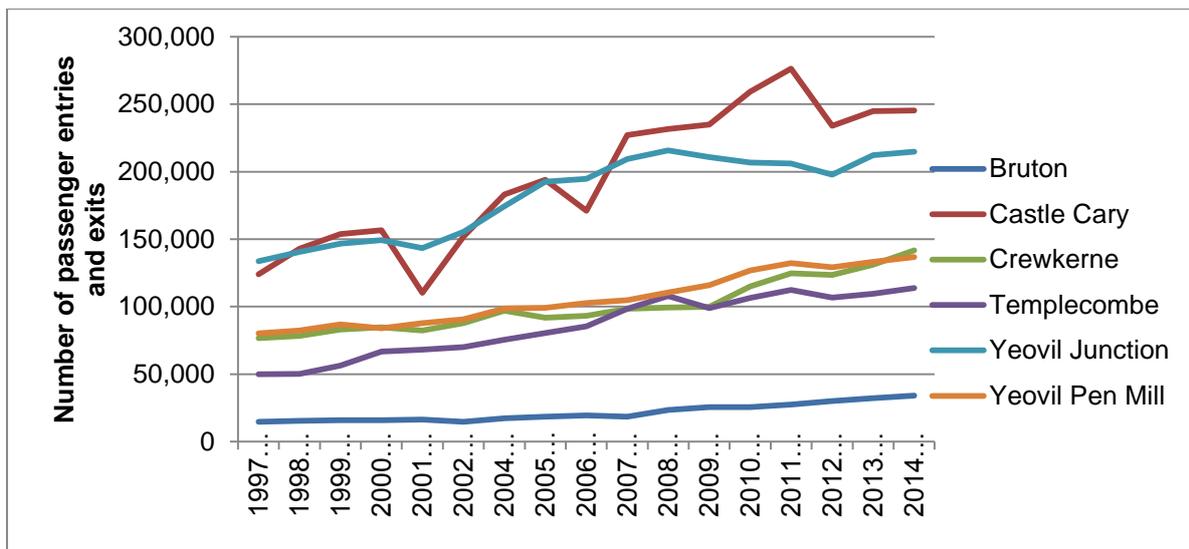
³³ Heart of the South West LEP Growth Deal 2015/16, Table 2.

further westwards) is currently 10.31am and therefore offers no realistic opportunity to commute to the urban area of Taunton by rail.

7.19 Frequency of services on the HoW line (which serves Castle Cary, Bruton and Yeovil Pen Mill) is somewhat limited, which makes journeys to destinations such as Bristol and Weymouth problematic. The timetable, which has remained virtually the same since the early 1970s, is not conducive for commuting to Yeovil from either the north or the south. However, the timetable from December 2015 does include services that link Yeovil Pen Mill with Yeovil Junction, and on to the other destinations on the WoE line.

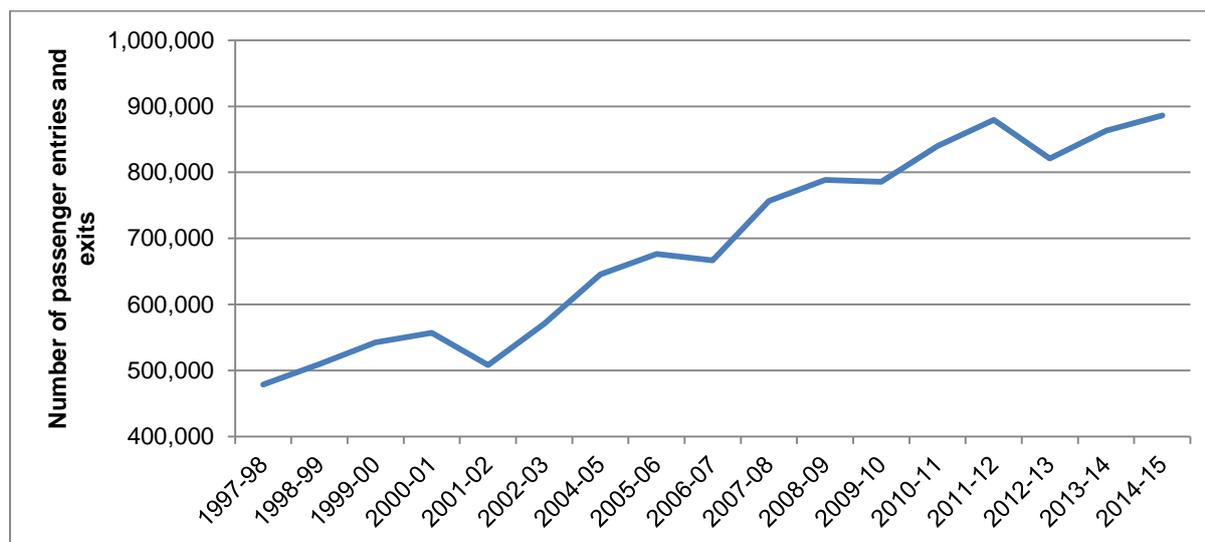
7.20 There has been a significant increase in rail travel over recent years, with all stations seeing a 50% or greater increase in passenger usage since the early 2000s. This highlights the continued importance of railway stations to the future of the district and outlines their potential to facilitate sustainable economic growth. However, in order to maximise this potential, issues such as low service frequency, unsuitable timetabling of services to meet commuting needs, and overall capacity issues need to be overcome.

Figure 7.5: Usage of railway stations in South Somerse^{t34}



³⁴ Office of Rail Regulation.

Figure 7.6: Total usage of all railway stations in South Somerset³⁵



7.21 The largest growth in passenger numbers has been at Castle Cary railway station, which serves a wide rural catchment in South Somerset and beyond, particularly for long distance commuters. The station car park is currently at capacity, and GWR consider that this is restricting demand for new passengers.

7.22 Although passenger use has grown, the station at Yeovil Pen Mill has not altered much for 40 years or more. Accessibility improvements would to provide a more attractive gateway to the town and ensure that the station supports the growth agenda for the town.

Bus/coach

7.23 Coverage of local bus services in South Somerset is not extensive, reflective of the geographically dispersed population in the district. There are several services operating in Yeovil, with other settlements in the district being linked by various routes that operate within South Somerset and beyond.

7.24 Yeovil is unusual for a settlement of its size with seven different bus operators providing services at the town, the main ones being 'First Wessex' and 'South West Coaches' who between them offer most town services in Yeovil as well providing links to other settlements. 'Damory', 'Stagecoach', 'First – The buses of Somerset', 'First – Bristol, Bath and West' and 'Nippy Bus' offer other routes across the District (including Yeovil) and beyond. 'Nippy Bus' also offer registered Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services in some of the more rural areas.

7.25 Parts of Yeovil are not well served by bus, notably the employment sites on the western side including the town's major employer AgustaWestland. This is partly because the routes have traditionally terminated in the town centre and deviating would detract from the existing customer base; and partly because, in the past, where a route is in close proximity to those sites, adequate provision for bus stops on the

³⁵ Office of Rail Regulation.

main distributor routes (e.g. the Western Relief Road and Lysander Road) has not been made.

- 7.26 Discussions with bus operators have highlighted difficulties for buses in accessing the developing Wyndham Park estate (Lyde Road Key Site allocated in the Local Plan 1991-2011).
- 7.27 Most local bus and coach routes serving Yeovil use the Yeovil Bus Station. The bus station was built in the 1960s and does not reflect the requirements of both passengers and operators to deliver a modern transport interchange. Access to information for passengers is a particular issue given the number of different operators that serve the station. The Local Plan seeks, subject to general viability, contributions to sustainable transport interchange within Yeovil and Chard.³⁶
- 7.28 The existing provision of bus services in Chard is suggested as being relatively ineffective due to significant wait times and short journey times by comparison, and high fares for the distance travelled.³⁷
- 7.29 Community transport is available in some parts of the District for those people whose needs are not met by normal public transport – these operate on a not-for-profit basis and include ‘Ring & Ride’ minibuses such as the Chard and Ilminster area ‘SLINKY’ service, and various community car schemes.
- 7.30 Long distance coach routes are provided by ‘National Express’ from Yeovil (destinations include London and Bristol) and ‘Berrys’ from Ilminster, South Petherton, Yeovil and Wincanton to London.
- 7.31 Bus passenger journeys in Somerset have fallen over the last five years (figure 7.7 below), in contrast to the upward trend being experienced in most local authorities across the south west (figure 7.8).

³⁶ Local Plan Policy TA3.

³⁷ Chard Strategic Transport Appraisal Report, 2010.

Figure 7.7: Local bus passenger journeys in Somerset 2009 – 2014³⁸

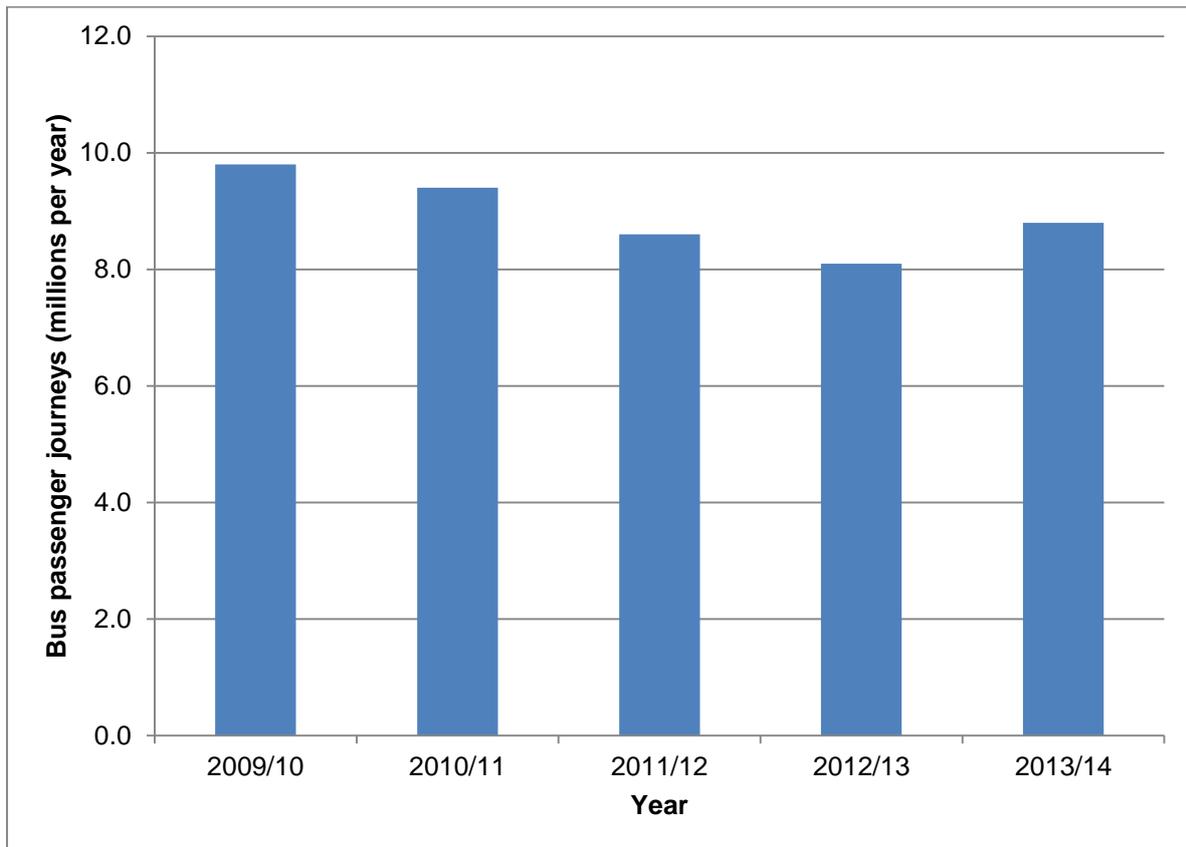
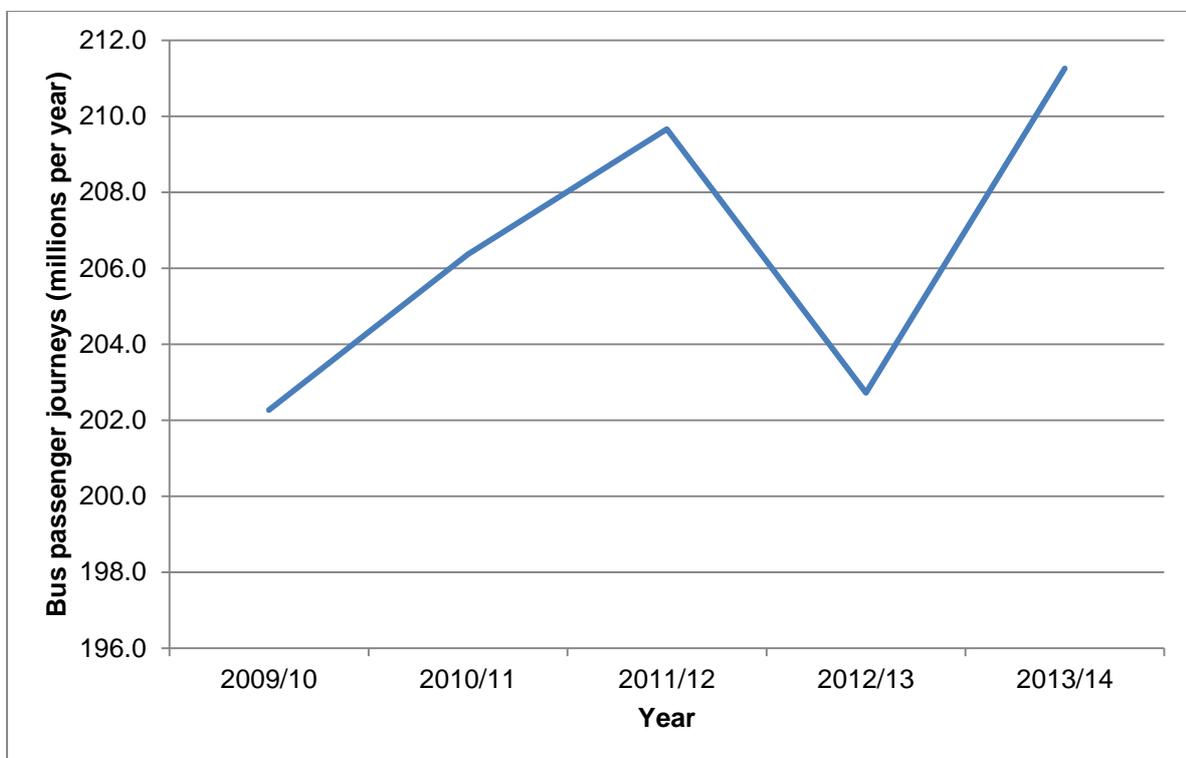


Figure 7.8: Local bus passenger journeys in the South West 2009 – 2014



³⁸ DfT: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-statistics>

- 7.32 There has been a reduction in subsidy from SCC, particularly for Sunday and evening services since 2009/2010, meaning that there are now no Sunday bus services operating within the district, and during the week services generally finish in the early evening. There are 16.4 bus passenger journeys per head of population in Somerset, which is the lowest of any highways authority in the south west and 8th lowest in England.³⁹
- 7.33 The proportion of bus services running on time has been falling over the last five years in Somerset, from 86% in 2009/10 to 76% in 2013/14. The regional and national average is higher at 82%-83% in 2013/14.⁴⁰

Cycling

- 7.34 Traffic count data indicates a fall in the total number of miles travelled by pedal cycles on major roads in Somerset from just over 5 million miles in the year 2000, to just over 3.7 million miles in 2014.⁴¹ However, data on specific roads can show a different trend; for example, cycle use along Lysander Road, Yeovil has nearly doubled over the same period.⁴²
- 7.35 Cycle use in South Somerset, as measured by the proportion of residents cycling to work, is the same as the national average at 2.8%, but slightly lower than the regional average of 3.4%.⁴³ Adjoining districts such as Sedgemoor (4.5%) and Taunton Deane (6.3%) have higher proportions of people cycling to work; although Mendip is slightly lower (2.2%).
- 7.36 National Routes 26, 30 and 33 of the National Cycle Network travel through South Somerset. There are other regional and local routes, but the cycle network does suffer from a lack of connectivity in many places.⁴⁴
- 7.37 In Yeovil, there is an existing East-West off road cycle link from Pen Mill Station through the Country Park and via Lysander Road up to Asda. Initial work on the County Council's emerging 'Network Development plan' for cycling in Yeovil has identified gaps in the cycle network. These deficiencies are also illustrated in Moving Somerset Forward's Cycle map for Yeovil. Some of the key cycling issues and potential opportunities in Yeovil are:
- The lack of a dedicated cycling link between National Routes 26 and 30 and the Yeovil cycle network.
 - Lack of a direct cycling route to the town centre from the east/north east of town, including the recent Wyndham Park development and the North East SUE.
 - A need for an improved crossing of the A30 (see Yeovil Eastern Corridor below).
 - The absence of designated cycle route to Yeovil Junction rail station.
 - Lack of a direct route east-west along the Preston Road corridor to serve the College, schools or Hospital.
 - A general need to join up cycle ways and quiet streets as opportunities arise.

³⁹ DfT: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-statistics>

⁴⁰ DfT: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/bus-statistics>

⁴¹ DfT traffic count data.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Proportion of working residents (16-74) cycling to work, Census 2011.

⁴⁴ <http://www.movingsomersetforward.co.uk/cycle-maps>

Car parking

7.38 The South Somerset Car Parking Strategy Review (2013) highlights the key car parking issues at each of the main settlements, informed by existing use and capacity, along with future demand projections. Currently (as at 2012), there is a small lack of car parking capacity at Somerton, Ilchester, Stoke-sub-Hamdon (in evenings), and short stay parking in Yeovil.

Planned Infrastructure Improvements

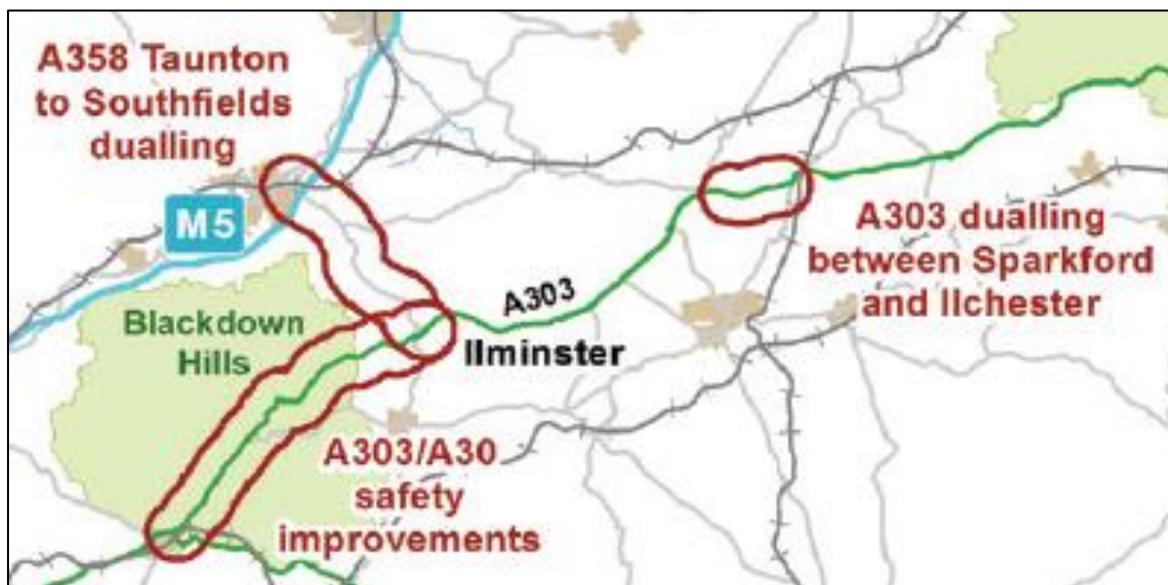
7.39 A number of transport infrastructure schemes are planned through the Somerset Local Plan, the Somerset County Plan, Highways England plans, and the investment plans of the Department for Transport.

Roads

7.40 At a national level, the Government's Road Investment Strategy⁴⁵ includes three schemes within South Somerset:

- Dualling the 3 mile single carriageway section of the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester, expected to cost £100-250m, and start by 2019/20.
- Dualling the A358 from Southfields to the M5 at Taunton, expected to cost £250-500m, and start by 2019/20.
- Funding for smaller-scale improvements to the A303/A30 section between Southfields and Honiton.

Figure 7.9: Map extract from the Road Investment Strategy



7.41 In 2012, the Highways Agency (now Highways England) announced that an improvement scheme at Cartgate roundabout would be delivered as part of the pinch point programme. However, in light of the Road Investment Strategy, the Cartgate scheme has been removed from the pinch point programme. Highways England will now re-examine the issues at this junction with a view to exploring and evaluating solutions. The Council maintains that the improvements to the Cartgate roundabout,

⁴⁵ Road Investment Strategy: Investment Plan, DfT, 2014.

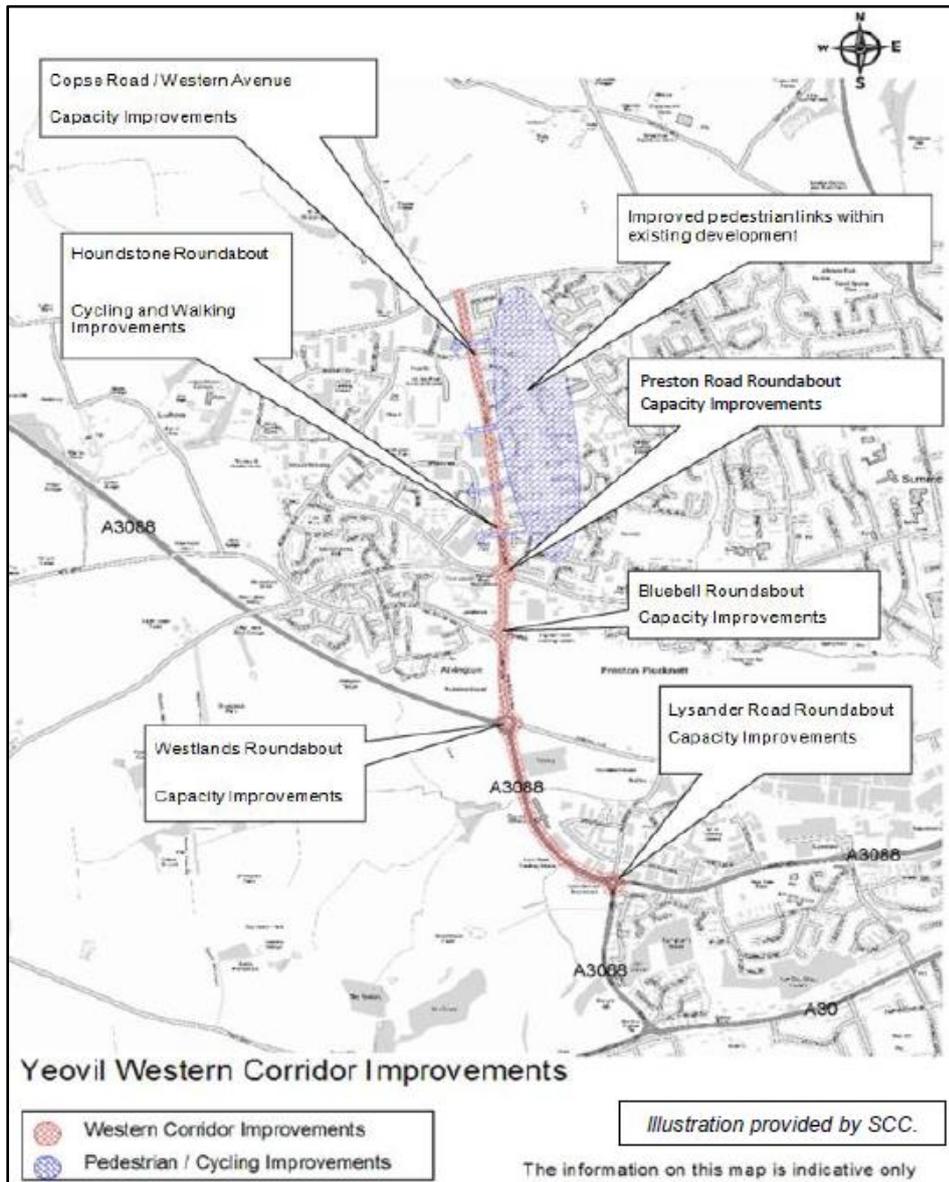
incorporating slip-roads to and from the A303 and the A3088, are necessary to unlock additional capacity on the main gateway into Yeovil.

- 7.42 With regards to another major scheme on the strategic road network in the vicinity of South Somerset, SCC has been working the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HoSW LEP) to secure funding through the Local Growth Fund for improvements to Junction 25 of the M5. The improvements will increase capacity at the junction, reducing congestion and improving access to the motorway both from South Somerset and Taunton Deane where it is located. SCC is working closely with Highways England to bring forward these improvements so that they are appropriately considered during the development of the A358 improvement scheme. It is anticipated that improvement works to Junction 25 will be completed by 2019.
- 7.43 At a local level, SCC as the highways authority secure highways schemes, but generally the developer builds them at their expense – often, SCC simply supervise and ensure the schemes are built satisfactorily. There are a number of committed and proposed highways schemes across the district, related to additional development, assisting in sustainable travel or covering safety issues.
- 7.44 The Yeovil Western Corridor is a major transport scheme (costing approximately £11m in total) benefitting from £6.49m of funding from the HotSW Local Transport Board.⁴⁶ It will deliver improvements along the A3088 (Western Relief Road), Bunford Lane, and Western Avenue, as shown on figure 7.10 below. These highway improvements should accommodate the growth on the local transport network including the residential developments at Brimsmore and Lufton; and Bunford Park and Lufton employment sites. The scheme will improve journey times, reduce congestion and provide safer links for pedestrians and cyclists. Construction is due to begin in 2016. An overview of the improvements is shown on the map below, with detailed drawings available on the SCC website.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/schemes-and-initiatives/yeovil-western-corridor/>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

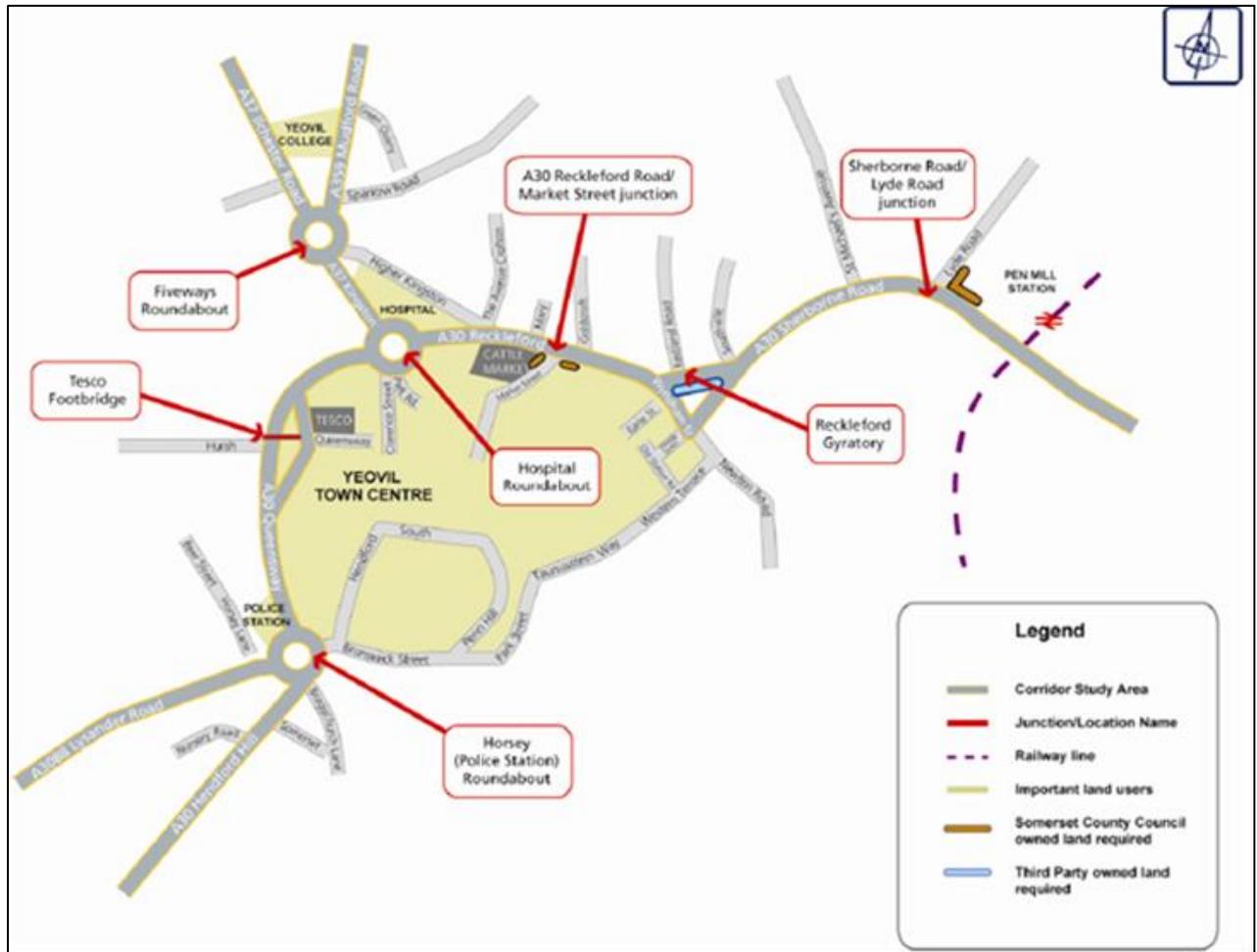
Figure 7.10: Overview of Yeovil Western Corridor improvements⁴⁸



⁴⁸ Map from Yeovil Western Corridor Business Case – Economic Assessment Report, April 2014.

7.45 The Yeovil Eastern Corridor is a scheme⁴⁹ that proposes several improvements through the town centre and eastwards, highlighted on the following map.

Figure 7.11: Overview of Yeovil Eastern Corridor improvements



7.46 The Reckleford Gyratory was delivered in 2010, jointly funded by SSDC, Yeovil Town Council and SCC. Preliminary works have been carried out on the Sherborne Road/Lyde Road junction.

7.47 In 2012, the DfT granted funding of £3.06m to SCC for the delivery of the other elements of the Yeovil Eastern Corridor, which has enabled the remaining proposals to be considered further. This has involved a reassessment of traffic impacts utilising the latest Yeovil Traffic Model, which has been updated since the original Yeovil Eastern Corridor study was undertaken. The reassessment of traffic impacts indicated that the proposals contained within the original Eastern Corridor study report may not be the most appropriate and indeed may not meet the project aims. This resulted in the proposals for Horsey, Hospital and Fiveways roundabouts, and Tesco footbridge being amended.

⁴⁹ Originally arising from the Yeovil Eastern Corridor Study, 2006.

Table 7.2: Amended proposals for the Yeovil Eastern Corridor

YEC Junction proposal	Outcome of reassessment
<p>Horsey Roundabout <i>(delivered late 2015/early 2016)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfiguration of existing roundabout. • Replacement toucan crossing on Lysander Road. • Pedestrian and cycle facilities on the south west and south east corners of Horsey roundabout including the provision of a toucan crossing on Hendford Hill. • Conversion of existing mini roundabout on Brunswick Street to a signal controlled junction incorporating toucan crossing.
<p>Hospital Roundabout</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfiguration of the existing roundabout with an enlarged central island, and reduction in circulatory lanes to two. • Reconfiguration of Queensway approach to provide segregated left turn lane and two approach lanes, one straight ahead and the second straight ahead and right. • Reconfiguration of Kingston approach, removal of Bus Lane, creation of segregated left turn, one straight ahead and right and one right turn. • Reconfiguration of Reckleford approach, creation of segregated left turn lane, and two approach lanes, one straight ahead and right and the second right turn. • Reconfiguration of Kingston exit to a dedicated exit lane from Queensway and a two-lane exit from the roundabout merging to one lane after 30m. • Reconfiguration of Reckleford exit to a dedicated exit lane from Kingston and a two-lane exit from the roundabout merging to one lane after 35m. • Reconfiguration of Park Road exit to a dedicated exit lane from A30 Reckleford and a one-lane exit from the roundabout.
<p>Fiveways Roundabout</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reappraisal of this junction has concluded that the original proposal for a signalised roundabout would not meet the project aims. A number of alternative junction layouts have been tested and to date a preferred solution which meets the aims of the project has not been identified. Further work on option testing is on-going and further pedestrian origin and destination surveys are being undertaken to identify the critical pedestrian desire lines around this junction.
<p>Tesco footbridge replaced with at grade signalised crossing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is considered more appropriate to provide improved grade separated facilities at this junction and subway crossings adjacent to the Hospital Roundabout. A potential improved footbridge is on hold pending decisions about town centre schemes, including Market Street junction.

7.48 The Yeovil Eastern Corridor is being delivered incrementally, with Horsey Roundabout being delivered in late 2015/early 2016, and Hospital Roundabout scheduled to commence in early 2016. The delivery of the A30 Market Street junction improvement is identified as a smaller scheme to tackle pinch-points and congestion, is largely dependent on nearby development proposals coming forwards, and is timetabled for

Tranche 2 (2016/17 and 2017/18) of the LEP Growth Deal submitted to the Government.⁵⁰

- 7.49 Improvements to two other junctions are proposed to help mitigate the impact of development in the town, particularly at Wyndham Park, with the creation of a mini roundabout at the Combe Street Lane/Mudford Road junction and improvements at the Lyde Road/Mudford Road junction.
- 7.50 The traffic modelling evidence that was undertaken for the two Yeovil Sustainable Urban Extensions indicate a single access point off of the A359 for the North East Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE), and two accesses for the South Yeovil SUE (one off Keyford roundabout and the second from Little Tarrat Lane). These access arrangements are reflected in the planning applications, which also propose walking, cycling and public transport links within the sites and to surrounding areas.⁵¹
- 7.51 The Chard Regeneration Framework (2010) was underpinned by a detailed Strategic Transport Assessment Report (STAR), including transport modelling to test the housing and employment growth proposals. The limited capacity of Chard's central (Convent Link) junction is identified as a key inhibitor to significant development in the town. The delivery of an alternative 'orbital' road route north to south between the A358 north, A30 and A358 south through the proposed Chard Eastern Development Area is identified to address this issue, to be delivered in phases alongside new development. The delivery of the 'Millfield Link' is particularly crucial, and is identified as a major transport scheme in Tranche 2 (2016/17 and 2017/18) of the LEP Growth Deal submitted to the Government.⁵²
- 7.52 Delivery of the major road infrastructure set out in the Chard Regeneration Framework is subject to concerns stemming from the viability of residential development to fund the proposed upgrades. The Council is aware that some sites in Chard are only marginally viable, which may place more emphasis on an incremental approach to funding and delivering the road improvements. As such, pragmatic decisions will be required on which sections of infrastructure should be prioritised and delivered to ensure progress occurs, but which also avoids creating an undue burden on development and acts as a barrier to any development occurring in the town. Decisions will be reached via the Chard Regeneration Board within the context of the comprehensive approach to growth and infrastructure provision set out in the aims of the Chard Regeneration Framework.
- 7.53 The STAR also encourages sustainable travel, through proposals for a 'hub and spoke' approach to walking and cycling routes to provide permeability across the town; creation of a central hub for public transport along with enhanced bus service frequencies and service diversions; whilst also considering the potential to re-open Chard Junction railway station.
- 7.54 A significant road scheme (yet to begin construction) is proposed at Crewkerne as part of the site allocated in the Local Plan (2006 – 2028). The scheme would provide a link

⁵⁰ Heart of the South West LEP Growth Deal 2015/16, submitted to Government 31st March 2014.

⁵¹ Proposals 14/02554/OUT (North East SUE) and 15/01000/OUT (South SUE) are both pending a decision at the time of writing.

⁵² Heart of the South West LEP Growth Deal 2015/16, submitted to Government 31st March 2014.

between the A30 and A356 to the east of the settlement. The policy intention is that the improvements will be provided by the developer in delivering the housing and employment development at the site.

- 7.55 A scheme on the site has outline planning permission⁵³ but it is currently subject to a revised application for part of the site to amend the ratio of residential and employment uses.⁵⁴ As part of the proposed revision there are concerns surrounding the viability of the site to support the cost of the proposed road. The 'middle' section of the road which would connect the proposed housing and employment development is estimated to cost £7.5m. The Council continues to maintain that the scheme can deliver the road improvements and a decision on the revised application is expected in 2016. If approved, the revised application will set out the planned timetable for the delivery of the new road.
- 7.56 Significant highways works will be required in order to deliver the large Local Plan employment land allocation (ME/ILMI/4) at Station Road, Ilminster.⁵⁵ These include highways access from Station Road to the site, and improvements to Southfields roundabout.
- 7.57 At Ansford/Castle Cary the Local Plan (Policy LMT1) expects a road to be provided between Station Road and Torbay Road, in delivering the direction of growth for the settlement. A proposal for development in this location benefits from planning permission,⁵⁶ and the road should be delivered in the medium term prior to the completion of the development, funded by the developer.
- 7.58 In Somerton, the Local Plan housing allocation at Northfield Farm requires new junction arrangements to access the site on Bancombe Road and Langport Road. This benefits from an approved planning application,⁵⁷ and should be delivered by the developer when bringing the site forward.
- 7.59 These are the current strategic highways schemes that are necessary to facilitate growth identified in the Local Plan. However, specific evidence on highways issues and potential future highways enhancements to deliver Local Plan growth at the other settlements is currently lacking. It is recommended that further evidence is gathered on transport evidence bases, consistent with Planning Practice Guidance.⁵⁸
- 7.60 The concerns from Devon County Council regarding growth at Chard impacting on traffic in Axminster are noted (see paragraph 6.32). However, SSDC currently considers that the scale of the impact from development at Chard does not justify the diversion of contributions to Axminster, particularly with regards to the planning obligations tests.⁵⁹

⁵³ Outline application 05/00661/OUT has been approved.

⁵⁴ Application 14/02141/OUT is currently pending a decision.

⁵⁵ As detailed in the outline application 09/0051/OUT, approved subject to S.106 in Sept 2010.

⁵⁶ Application 15/02347/OUT.

⁵⁷ Application 10/03704/FUL.

⁵⁸ Planning Practice Guidance ID:54: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/transport-evidence-bases-in-plan-making/>

⁵⁹ NPPF, para 204.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

7.61 The extant South Somerset Local Plan policies have influenced the district's performance in delivering an integrated transport network. This particular theme will have been most significantly influenced by the following existing policies:

- Strategic Policies – SS1, SS6, TA1, TA2, T4, T5, and T6;
- Settlement-Specific Policies – YV1, YV2, YV5; PMT1 and PMT2; and TA3.

7.62 Somerset County Council as Highway Authority also has a key role in ensuring that the impacts of new development on the transport network are mitigated and managed – and therefore to some extent this would occur with or without the Early Review of the Local Plan.

7.63 However, the Early Review of the Local Plan offers the opportunity to refine local policies so that they produce more effective responses to the impacts of development. It should also allow for a more integrated package of transport measures to be drafted and implemented. This should mean both individual effects and cumulative effects are better resolved.

7.64 In looking at development sites as part of the Early Review of the Local Plan, both the Council and Somerset County Council should be more proactive in designing solutions to encourage greater use of public transport, walking and cycling; better link housing development to economic development; and encourage more sustainable travel patterns.

KEY ISSUES:

- Transport infrastructure in South Somerset reflects the semi-rural nature of the district, with long-standing problems of poor connectivity between main settlements and rural areas; and reduced access to some key services and facilities.
- Major road and rail infrastructure provide good east-west connections for businesses and commuters linking the district with principal urban areas and centres of economic activity. North-south connections and transport corridors are more limited.
- There are existing congestion issues in some of the main settlements and at certain sections along the A303 and A358.
- However, based upon the data, traffic volumes on the district's main roads have not increased for several years.
- Government has announced major plans to improve the A303 and A358 in South Somerset. With plans to begin construction by 2019/2020, although detailed designs and permissions are yet to be agreed.
- Confirmation of Government investment at Southfields Roundabout/A358 could determine the timescale for delivery of development sites in Ilminster.
- Significant road infrastructure schemes are proposed in delivering development at Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne, Ilminster, and Ansford/Castle Cary, alongside sustainable travel measures.
- Extant plans for development and transport infrastructure indicate that there is sufficient highway capacity to meet demand.
- Delivery of transport infrastructure in Chard is subject to ongoing concerns about the viability of development to fund the improvements. Prioritisation of improvements will be required to ensure a realistic approach to funding and delivery.
- The number of passengers using rail travel has increased significantly in the district in recent years.
- Bus passenger numbers, the number of services and geographic coverage has fallen recently, leading to accessibility issues in rural areas.

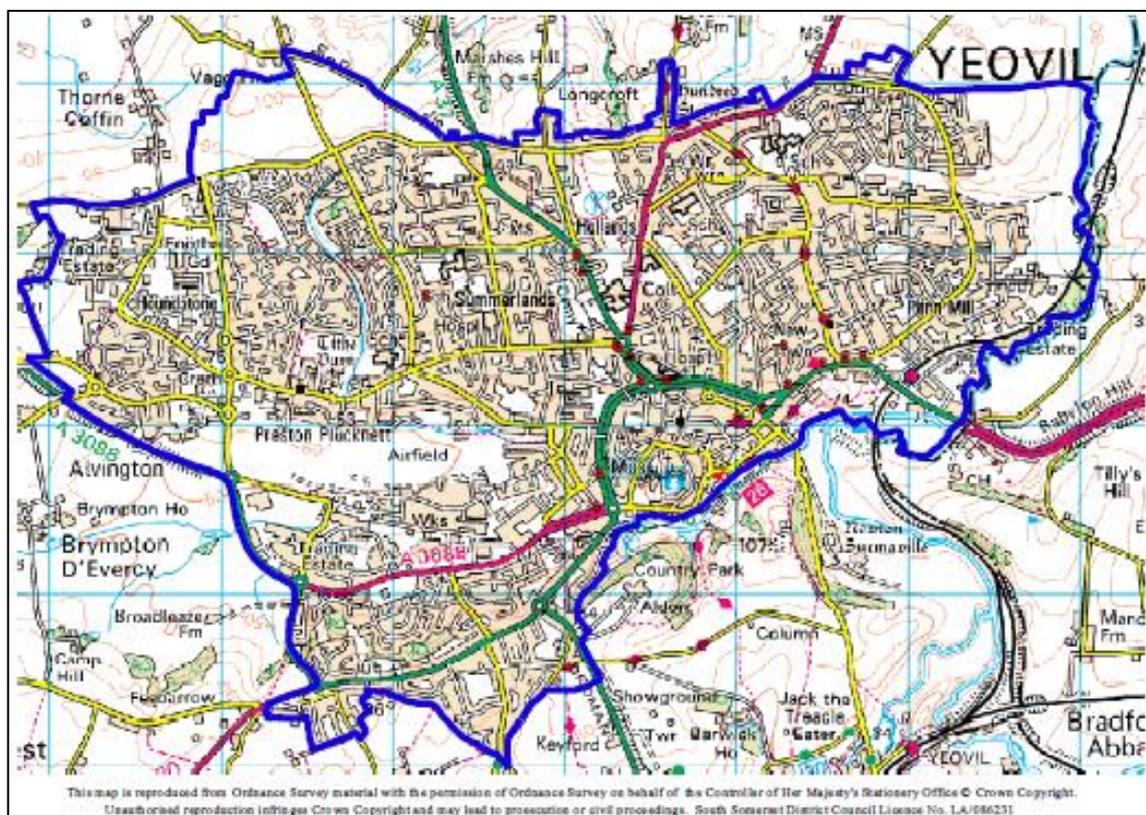
Table 7.3: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Transport and Movement

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
<p>Transport and Movement</p> <p>SEA Directive</p> <p>Topic(s):</p> <p>Population and Human Health</p> <p>NPPF</p> <p>Paragraphs: 29-41</p>	<p>6. To maintain and improve the existing highway network, encourage a demonstrable modal shift and reduce the need to travel.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the need to travel through sustainable patterns of land use and development? • Improve access to and quality of sustainable transport modes for all communities, to allow sustainable movement not only within South Somerset but into the surrounding areas? • Enable transport infrastructure improvements? • Facilitate working from home and remote working? • Provide improvements to and/ or reduce congestion on the existing highway network? • Support or enhance local ambitions for transport? • Does the option offer an opportunity to support the delivery of proposed transport infrastructure, such as the East West Rail Link?

8. Air Quality

8.1 The largely rural nature of the district means that air quality in South Somerset is generally good, with low levels of sulphur, oxides of nitrogen and particulates in comparison to the rest of England. The exception is Yeovil, where the entire urban area of Yeovil was designated as an Air Quality Management Area in 2002 due to forecast exceedance of the average annual objective for nitrogen dioxide at several locations within the urban boundary, largely from traffic emissions.⁶⁰ The whole town was declared, rather than only the areas near the A30 and A37, because a town wide action plan would be required to manage local and through traffic. Air quality is subject to regular monitoring at various locations within this area, with one automatic monitoring site located at Yeovil District Hospital, plus 18 non-automatic monitoring stations elsewhere across the town.

Figure 8.1: Map of Yeovil Air Quality Management Area



8.2 The overall trend in the concentration of nitrogen dioxide has remained stable over recent years. At the automatic monitoring station near the Hospital, both the annual and hourly mean concentrations of nitrogen dioxide measured during 2012 and 2013 were less than the objective values. In fact, the annual mean objective concentration has not been exceeded at Yeovil District Hospital since records began.⁶¹

⁶⁰ South Somerset Air Quality Action Plan Progress Report, 2007.

⁶¹ 2013 and 2014 Air Quality Progress Report for South Somerset District Council, April 2014.

- 8.3 However, monitoring data shows that the concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in excess of the objective values at three locations, Ilchester Road, Sherborne Road and Lyde Road.⁶² These are associated with road traffic sources along key transport links.
- 8.4 The progress report⁶³ recommends that the Yeovil AQMA remains in order to help reinforce policies that help maintain and enhance air quality in Yeovil. No other specified pollutant was identified as requiring further attention in South Somerset.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

- 8.5 Without the Early Review, the existing Local Plan policies will remain, as will national policy in the NPPF paragraph 124. The existing Local Plan pollution control policy (EQ7) may still be considered fit for purpose, as it seeks to mitigate adverse effects from development upon air quality. It also specifically mentions that new development should not exacerbate air quality problems in existing and potential AQMAs.
- 8.6 However, the Early Review may seek to better coordinate the delivery of new housing, employment and infrastructure, using lessons learnt in implementing the current Local Plan. Therefore, without the Early Review, there is a risk that reducing the need to travel and addressing congestion issues will be less effectively delivered.

KEY ISSUES:

- Air quality in South Somerset is generally good, apart from at Yeovil where the entire urban area is designated as an Air Quality Management Area.
- There are three specific locations in Yeovil where concentrations of nitrogen dioxide exceed objective values.
- Road traffic is the primary cause of air quality issues in Yeovil.

Table 8.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Air Quality

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Air Quality SEA Directive Topic(s): Air NPPF Paragraphs: 109-125	Air quality within South Somerset is closely linked to road traffic. This is demonstrated by the designation of the AQMA in Yeovil where the road network is more congested. Given the close relationship between traffic and air quality, it is not considered necessary to have a separate SA Objective specifically relating to air quality. For example, positive effects against SA Objectives 6 and 7 are likely to result in a positive indirect effect on air quality; equally, negative effects are likely to result in negative indirect effects on air quality. Mitigation provided through Local Plan policies and at the project level to reduce traffic impacts, such as improving access to sustainable transport modes will also help to mitigate impacts on air quality.	

⁶² Para 2.2.6, 2013 and 2014 Air Quality Progress Report for South Somerset District Council, April 2014.

⁶³ Ibid.

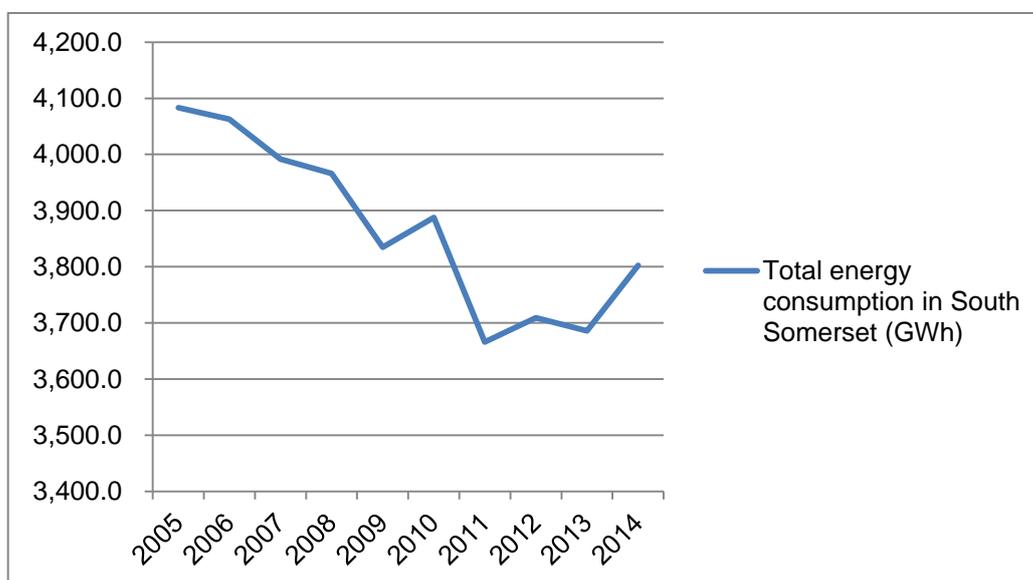
9. Energy and Climate Change

9.1 Government statistics indicate the following levels of energy consumption in South Somerset in 2014:⁶⁴

- Coal – 111 Gigawatt hours (GWh) (mainly from Industrial and Commercial sector).
- Manufactured fuels – 2 GWh (all from domestic use).
- Petroleum products – 1,750 GWh (mainly from road transport).
- Gas – 961 GWh (around 60% from domestic use and 40% from industrial and commercial use).
- Electricity – 851 GWh (around 60% from industrial and commercial use and 40% from domestic use).
- Bioenergy – 125 GWh.

9.2 The total energy consumption from all fuels in South Somerset is 3,802 GWh. As shown in the following graph, there has been a trend for steadily reducing energy consumption over the last decade. This is despite population growth, and is largely explained by falls in consumption over this period from petroleum products and gas.

Figure 9.1: Total energy consumption in South Somerset 2005 – 2014 (GWh)



9.3 Average domestic electricity usage per consumer has fallen from 5,450 kWh in 2005, to 4,550 kWh in 2014, mirroring a national trend.⁶⁵ Electricity usage in South Somerset is higher than the national average by some 600 kWh per consumer. Domestic gas use has also been falling over the last decade, more substantially than electricity, from some 16,920 kWh / consumer in 2005, to 11,350 kWh / consumer in 2014. For

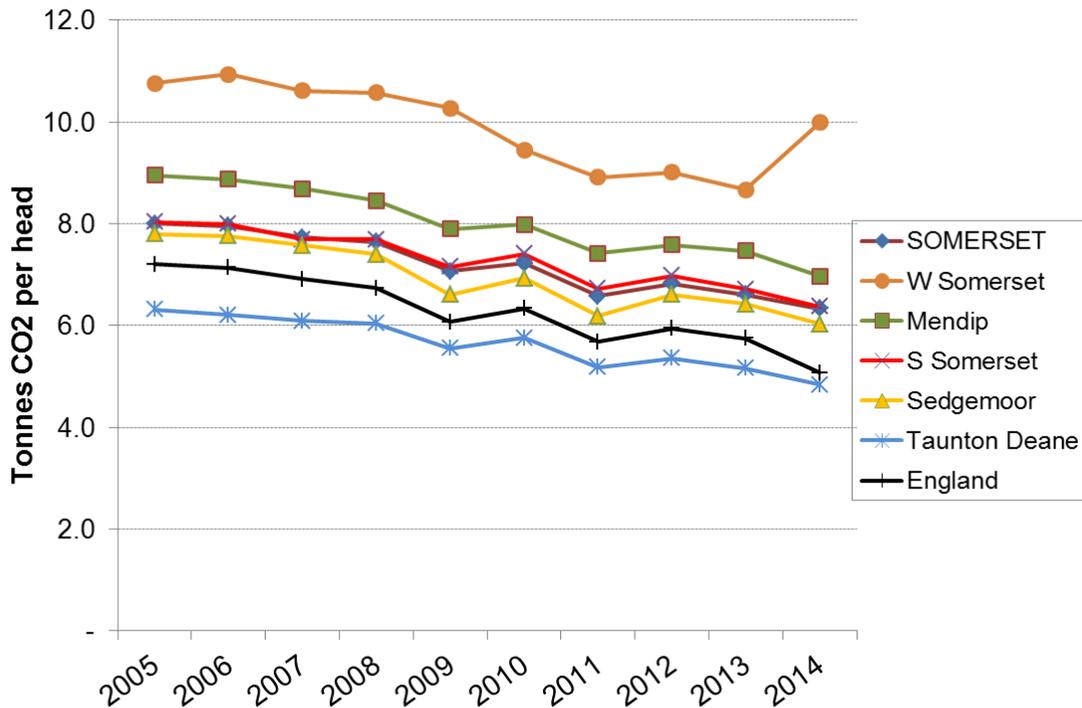
⁶⁴ Department of Energy and Climate Change, Total sub-national final energy consumption, 2014.

⁶⁵ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Gas and Electricity consumption 2005 – 2014.

domestic gas, use is lower in South Somerset than the national average by some 1,900 kWh / consumer.

9.4 The following figure shows carbon dioxide emissions per head for South Somerset, along with other local authorities in the County and the national average. This shows a trend of reducing carbon dioxide emissions over the last decade. Emissions in South Somerset are slightly higher than for England as a whole, but are the same as the average in Somerset and therefore typical of a rural area.

Figure 9.2: Carbon Dioxide Emissions per head 2005 – 2014⁶⁶



9.5 The ‘Industrial and Commercial’ sector is the highest source of carbon dioxide emissions in South Somerset, with 40% of all emissions. This is followed by ‘Transport’ with 33% of carbon dioxide emissions, and ‘Domestic’ use being 27%.⁶⁷

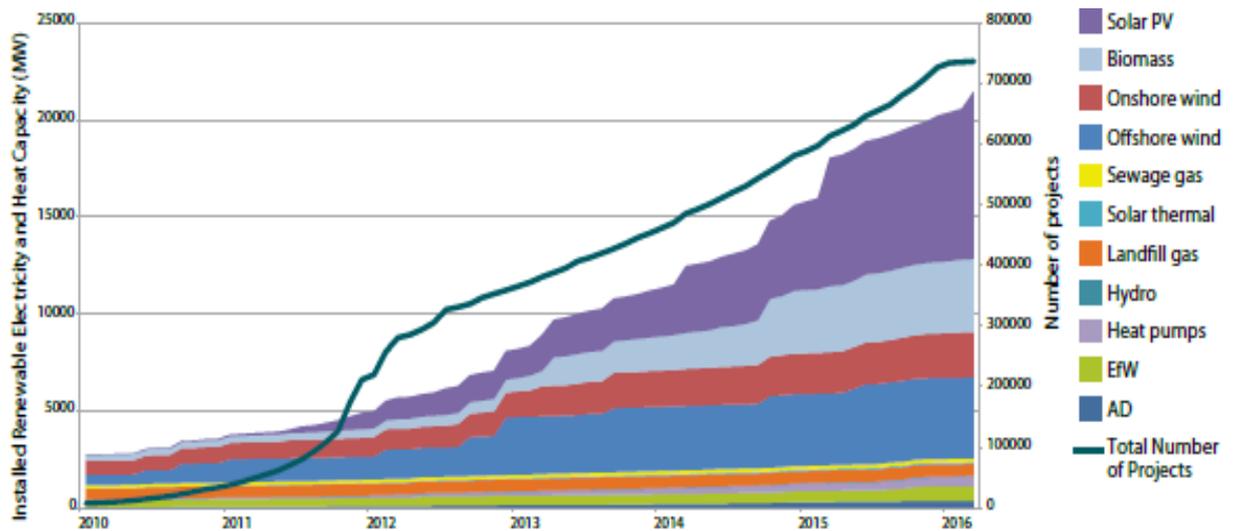
9.6 The trend for reducing energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions per head will minimise the contribution to climate change. Another key aspect in addressing climate change is the use of renewable energy to generate electricity and heat, which has grown significantly over recent years.

9.7 Some 19% of England’s total electrical demand is now being met through renewable electricity generation. The following graph shows how renewable energy capacity has grown across England over recent years.

⁶⁶ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, Estimates of carbon dioxide emissions for local authorities and regions national statistics: 2005-2014. Graph taken from Somerset Intelligence web site: <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/environment/>

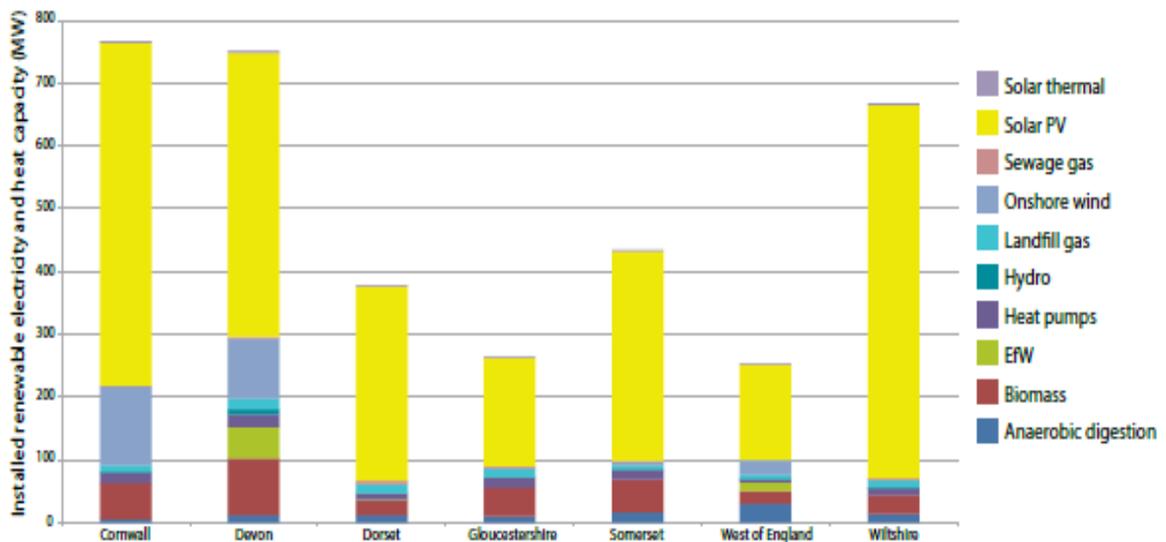
⁶⁷ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Estimates of carbon dioxide emissions for local authorities and regions national statistics: 2005-2014.

Figure 9.3: Renewable energy capacity growth across England 2010 – 2016⁶⁸



9.8 The figure below shows how much renewable energy is installed across the south west. Like other parts of the south west, solar PV has by far the largest installed capacity in Somerset, with biomass also making a notable contribution.

Figure 9.4: Geographical spread of renewable energy capacity in the south west⁶⁹



9.9 By the 2050s, climate change in South Somerset is likely to mean more extreme weather events, and:⁷⁰

- Summers being 2-3 degrees centigrade hotter, and 20-40% drier;
- Winters being 2-3 degrees warmer, and 10-20% wetter.

⁶⁸ Renewable energy – a local progress report for England, RegenSW, 2016.

⁶⁹ Renewable energy – a local progress report for England, RegenSW, 2016.

⁷⁰ Central estimate under medium emissions scenario, UK Climate Projections 2009.

9.10 Even if the world were to go 'zero-carbon' immediately, there would still likely be 30-40 years of climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions already released.⁷¹ This means that adaptation to climate change should be factored in to ensure development can cope with future changes in the climate.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

9.11 The support for energy efficiency measures in new development through improving Building Regulations and supportive national and local policy (Policy EQ1) will continue without the Early Review. This will contribute to minimising energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. The trend for the growth in renewable energy generation may slow due to a reduction in Government subsidies, although the general support of the NPPF and Local Plan Policy EQ1 would continue to apply, allowing new renewable energy generation to be developed where appropriate. Policy EQ1 also includes climate change adaptation measures through the design of new development.

9.12 The Early Review could provide further support for energy and climate change by identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon sources. Water efficiency standards can be included in the Early Review to help adapt to climate change, particularly during summer months (see following section on water resources for further detail).

KEY ISSUES:

- Petroleum products (mainly from road transport), gas, and electricity are the three largest source of energy consumption.
- There has been a trend for steadily reducing energy consumption over the last decade.
- Carbon dioxide emissions per person are higher than the national average, but are comparable to the rest of Somerset.
- There is a trend for reducing carbon dioxide emissions over the last decade.
- The Industrial and Commercial sector is the highest source of carbon dioxide emissions.
- The use of renewable energy to generate electricity and heat has grown significantly over recent years, with solar PV by far the largest source of renewable capacity.
- Climate change is likely to mean hotter, drier summers; and warmer, wetter winters.
- Adaptation to climate change should be a key consideration for new development.

⁷¹ Adapting to Climate Change: UK Climate Projections, Defra, 2009.

Table 9.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Energy and Climate Change

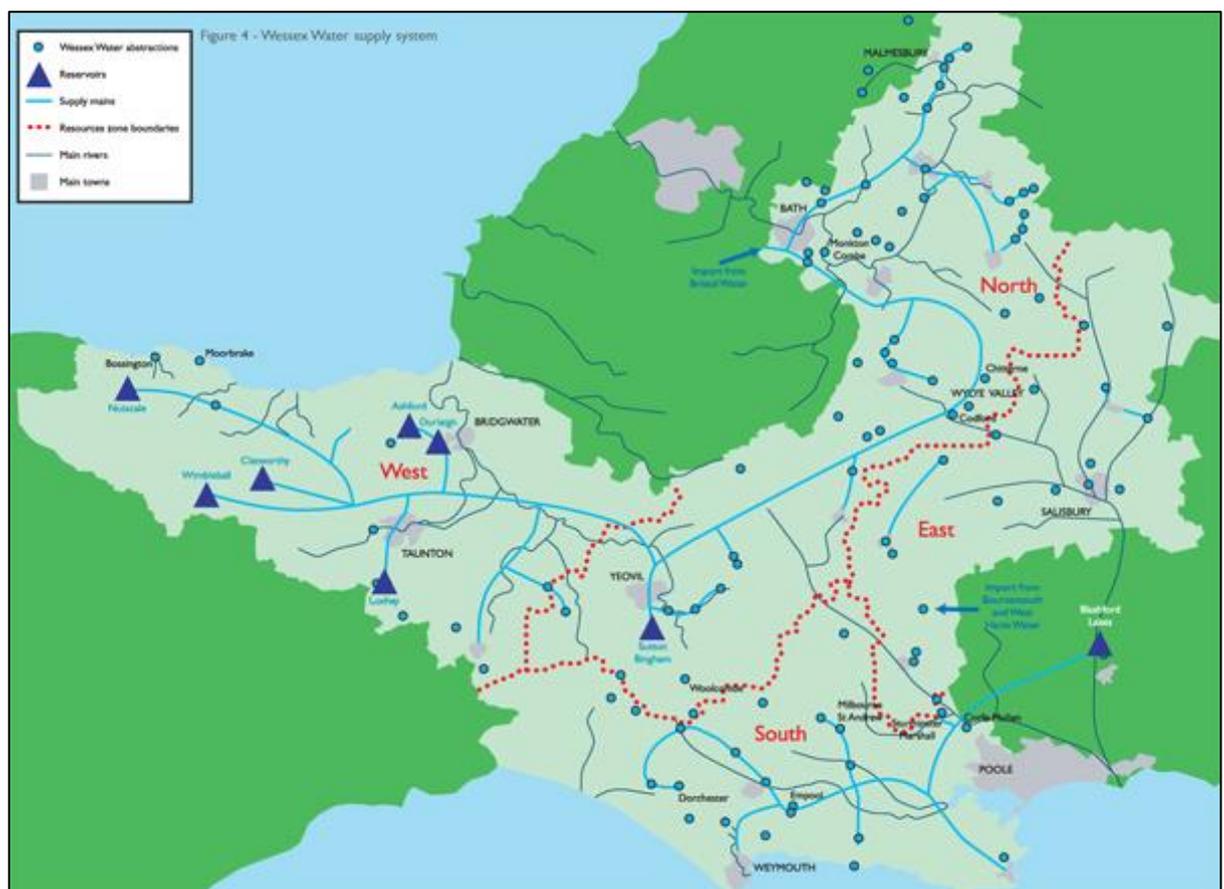
TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Energy and Climate Change SEA Directive Topic(s): Climatic Factors NPPF Paragraphs: 93-104	7. To promote climate change mitigation and support resilience to the potential effects of climate change.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce energy consumption and increase efficiency? • Promote the use of energy from low carbon sources? • Ensure that new development is resilient to the effects of climate change? • Improve green infrastructure networks in the Plan area (and beyond) to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change?

10. Water: Resources, Quality and Flooding

10.1 Water supply and the abstraction, purification, and provision of potable water in South Somerset is managed by Wessex Water (WW). This company manage a series of abstraction licenses at water courses; as well as owning and operating supply networks, water treatment works, and reservoirs to ensure that water supply is available at all times. WW are also responsible for sewerage services for most of the district.

10.2 WW divide their water supply coverage area into four zones for water resource and drought planning purposes. As can be seen on the map below, most of South Somerset in the north zone, which is supplied by groundwater services. Water in this zone can also be transferred from the Wyllye Valley to Somerset. The remainder of the district lies within the west zone, which contains all the region's impounding reservoirs that are currently used for bulk water supply. Water can also be transferred both ways between the west and north zones.

Figure 10.1: Wessex Water supply system



10.3 Nearly half of water supply is for households, with commercial demands making up nearly a third. Leakage comprises around 20% of water demand.⁷² Up until the mid-1990's, the demand for water in the WW region was steadily rising. However, since the mid-1990s, the demand for water has been falling, from around 425 million litres

⁷² Water Resources Management Plan, Wessex Water, 2014.

per day, to less than 350 million litres per day (average annual demands).⁷³ This reduction has occurred despite an overall increase in population, and can be explained by:

- Leakage reduction being halved to 69 million litres per day;
- Customers switching to a metered supply;
- More efficient use of water in homes and businesses;
- Reduced commercial demands due to the closure of some large user industrial sites.⁷⁴

10.4 Household water usage in the region has been steadily declining since the mid 2000's, and is now around 140 litres per person per day.⁷⁵ The vast majority of South Somerset is considered to have a 'low' level of water stress⁷⁶, although a small area around Yeovil is shown as having 'serious' stress.⁷⁷ WW seek to reduce average per person water consumption to 130 litres per day by 2040. Overall, WW calculate that they will have a surplus of water supply over demand for the next 25 years.

10.5 Although the majority of water that is abstracted (75% of which comes from groundwater sources) by WW is of a very good quality, there has been deterioration in recent years at some sources, particularly in relation to nitrate and pesticide concentrations at some sources. WW consider that, in many ways, issues around raw water quality currently represent a larger challenge to WW than water resource issues.⁷⁸ Treatment works can be built to address these issues, but these can be costly, high carbon, inflexible and only partially effective.

10.6 Source Protection Zones (SPZs) have been defined around groundwater sources, to highlight the risk of contamination from any activities that might cause pollution in the area. A large zone encompasses South Petherton and surrounding villages to the west and south, with smaller zones near Chard and Ansford/Castle Cary. The SPZs are shown on the map below.

⁷³ Water Resources Management Plan, Wessex Water, 2014.

⁷⁴ Water Resources Management Plan, Wessex Water, 2014.

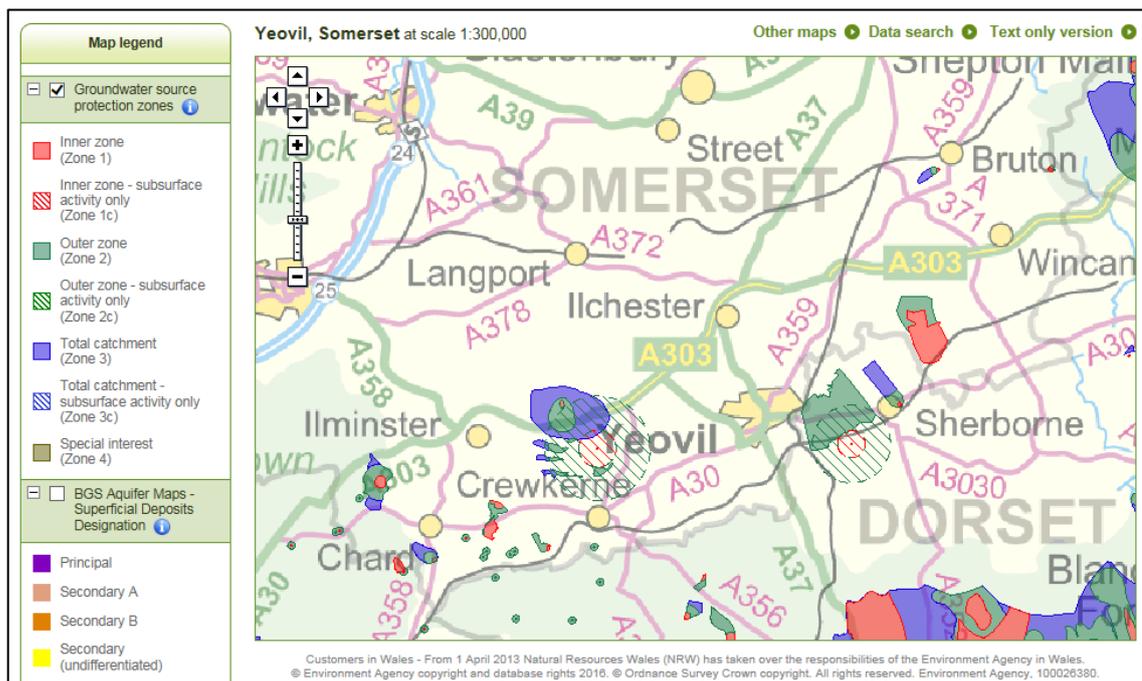
⁷⁵ Section 5.5, Water Resources Management Plan, Wessex Water, 2014.

⁷⁶ The level of stress placed on the water environment by the use of water through abstraction, discharge and management of storage.

⁷⁷ Water stressed areas – final classification, Environment Agency, July 2014.

⁷⁸ Section 4.6, Water Resources Management Plan, Wessex Water, 2014.

Figure 10.2: Groundwater Source Protection Zones in South Somerset⁷⁹

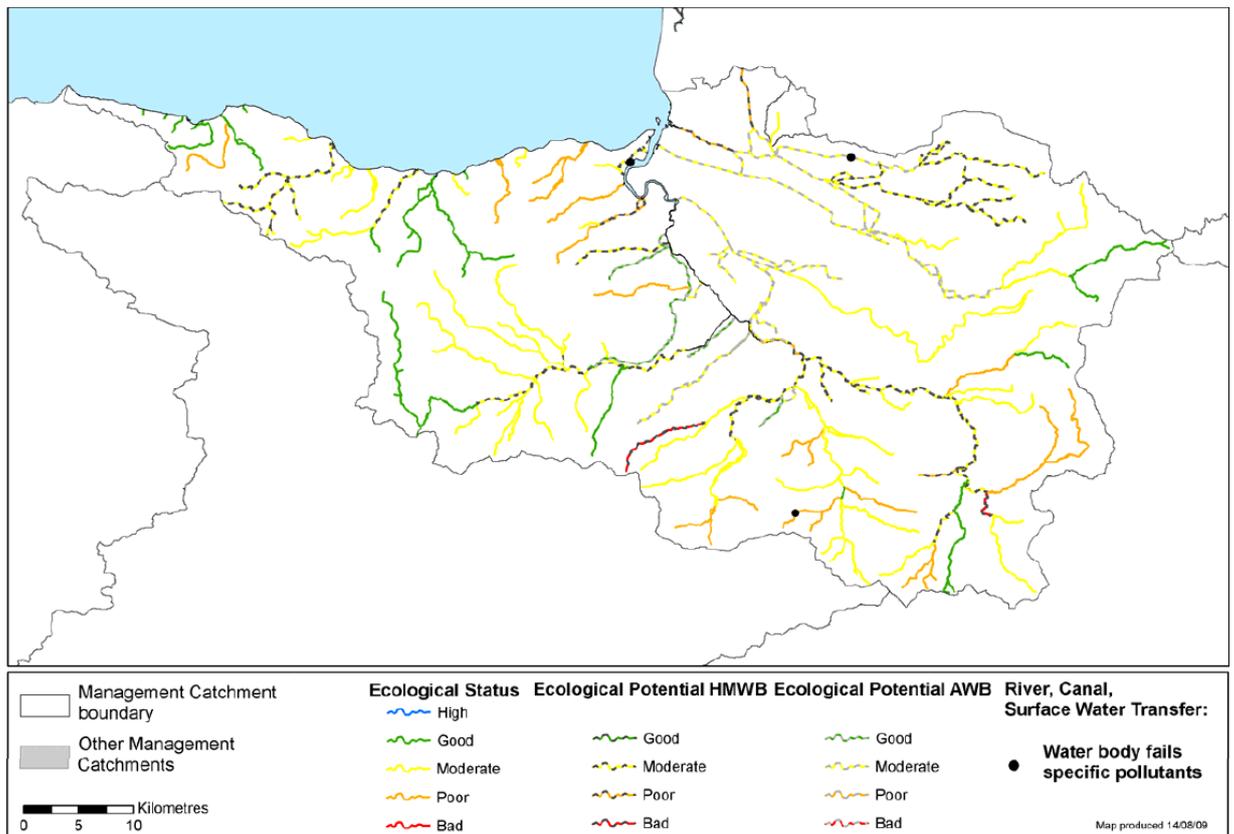


10.7 The ecological status of rivers in South Somerset is generally moderate, with some small sections of both good and poor quality. The main reason in the Parrett catchment for not achieving good status is due to agricultural and rural land management.⁸⁰ River quality in the south west of the district (River Axe) is considered to be poor.

⁷⁹ Environment Agency – What’s in Your Backyard? <http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/>

⁸⁰ Environment Agency – Catchment Data Explorer <http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/>

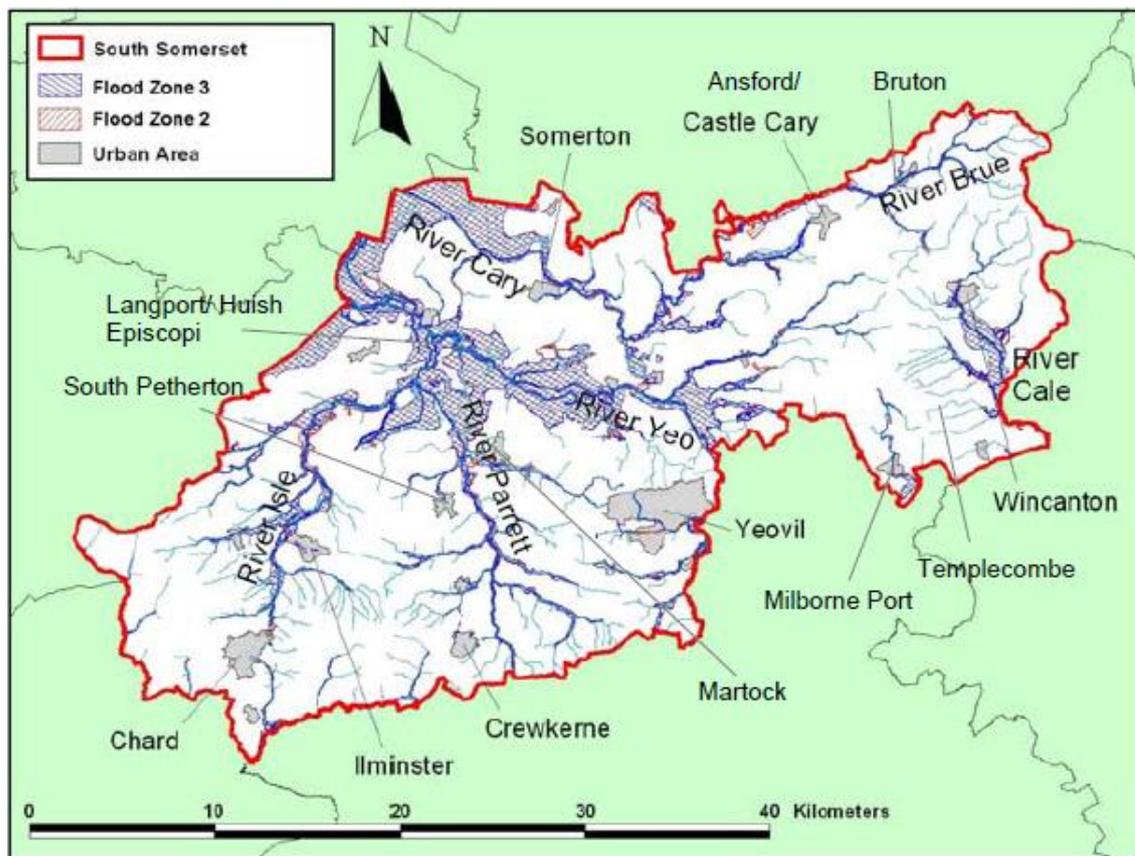
Figure 10.3: Current ecological status and potential of rivers, canals and surface water transfers in South and West Somerset catchment⁸¹



10.8 The following map shows the areas of medium (flood zone 2) and high (flood zone 3) fluvial flood risk in South Somerset. Fluvial flooding predominantly affects the Somerset Levels and Moors, although several settlements are also affected, such as parts of Langport/Huish Episcopi, Ilminster, Bruton, and Ilchester.

⁸¹ River Basin Management Plan South West River Basin District, Environment Agency, January 2011.

Figure 10.4: Flood Zones in South Somerset



10.9 Surface water flooding is an issue in parts of settlements across South Somerset, with many settlements affected by flooding incidents in the past. The following settlements have significant (300+) numbers of residential properties identified as being at risk from surface water flooding: Yeovil – 1,090; Chard – 447; Iminster – 497; Crewkerne – 300.⁸² The River Parrett catchment does not have any major aquifers so groundwater flooding is not a major risk.⁸³

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

10.10 Development proposals will continue to be required to be consistent with national and local planning policies on water resources, quality and flooding; such as Local Plan Policy EQ1 and EQ7.

10.11 The effects of climate change (drier summers and wetter winters) will mean that issues relating to water resources, quality and flooding are likely to increase in importance in future years. The Early Review can address flood risk issues by directing development towards areas of low flood risk, and including further detail on appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in the district. The trend for reducing average household water consumption is likely to continue, given that all new homes have to meet the mandatory national standard set out in the Building Regulations (of 125 litres/person/day). However, the Early Review could include a

⁸² Somerset County Council.

⁸³ Parrett Catchment Flood Management Plan, 2009.

requirement for new dwellings to meet the tighter Building Regulations optional requirement of 100 litres / person / day, where there is a clear need.⁸⁴

KEY ISSUES:

- The overall demand for water has been steadily declining in recent years, as has household water usage.
- A surplus of water supply is forecast over the next 25 years.
- Wessex Water consider that, in many ways, issues around raw water quality currently represent a larger challenge than water resource issues.
- The ecological status of rivers in South Somerset is generally moderate, with some small sections of both good and poor quality, with agricultural and rural land management being the main reason for not achieving good status.
- Fluvial flooding predominantly affects the Somerset Levels and Moors, although several settlements are also affected, such as parts of Langport/Huish Episcopi, Ilminster, Bruton, and Ilchester.
- The settlements with most residential properties at risk of surface water flooding are Yeovil, Chard, Ilminster, Crewkerne.

Table 10.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Water: Resources, Quality and Flooding

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Water: Resources, Quality and Flooding SEA Directive Topic(s): Water NPPF Paragraphs: 99-125	8. To minimise the demand for water and maintain or improve water quality. 9. To reduce the risk of flooding from all sources.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise water consumption? • Protect and improve the area's chemical and biological water quality? • Protect surface and groundwater resources? Will the option/proposal help to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct development away from areas at highest risk of flooding as per the sequential test, taking into account the likely effects of climate change? • Make development safe where it is necessary within an area of flood risk and without increasing flood risk elsewhere? • Sustainably manage water run-off, ensuring that the risk of flooding is not increased and where possible reduced? • Improve green infrastructure networks in South Somerset (and beyond) to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Safeguard land to manage flood risk?

⁸⁴ Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph:015 Reference ID: 56-015-20150327

11. Soil and Land

- 11.1 The total area covered by South Somerset is 958 square kilometres.⁸⁵ The vast majority of this area is taken up by ‘greenspace’, which accounts for 885.5 sq km or 92% of the total area. The proportion of developed land, including gardens, in South Somerset is 5.8%.⁸⁶ This proportion is lower than both the south west regional average of 7%, and the national (England) average of 9.8%.
- 11.2 The geology of South Somerset heavily influences the physical character of the district, and therefore is important to several themes – including landscape; historic environment; water resources and flooding; as well as soil and land. The underlying geology is composed mainly of Jurassic clays, sands and limestones. This has created landforms of wide clay vales or rolling lowland with occasional hilly outcrops of limestone. The central lowlands form part of the peat moor grazing lands that extend out north-westwards into the Somerset Levels with their characteristic long vistas and rectilinear drainage patterns. The Oolitic limestones of the south east part of the district form part of the limestone belt that runs away north through the Cotswolds and beyond.⁸⁷
- 11.3 South Somerset benefits from some areas of high quality agricultural land. The table below shows that the proportion of Grade 1 agricultural land in South Somerset is higher than the county, regional and national average. The overall proportion of agricultural land within grades 1 – 3 is also higher in South Somerset.

Figure 11.1: Agricultural Land Classification Grades 1 – 3⁸⁸

Geographic Area	Grade 1 Agricultural land ha (% of total land)	Grade 2 Agricultural land ha (% of total land)	Grade 3 Agricultural land ha (% of total land)
South Somerset district	4,496 ha (4.7%)	10,166 ha (10.6%)	67,431 ha (70.3%)
Somerset county	9,342 ha (2.7%)	33,366 ha (9.7%)	204,109 ha (59.3%)
South West	36,727 ha (1.5%)	180,085 ha (7.6%)	1,401,390 ha (58.9%)
England	354,562 ha (2.7%)	1,848,874 ha (14.2%)	6,290,210 ha (48.2%)

- 11.4 The following map provides an overview of agricultural land quality across South Somerset, whilst more detailed evaluation has been carried out on the edge of the main settlements.⁸⁹ The map shows a fertile area of Grade 1 agricultural land east of Ilminster and north of Crewkerne, along with a belt of Grade 1 wrapping around the southern edge of Yeovil.

⁸⁵ Areas taken from ONS Neighbourhood Statistics, Key Figures for Physical Environment.

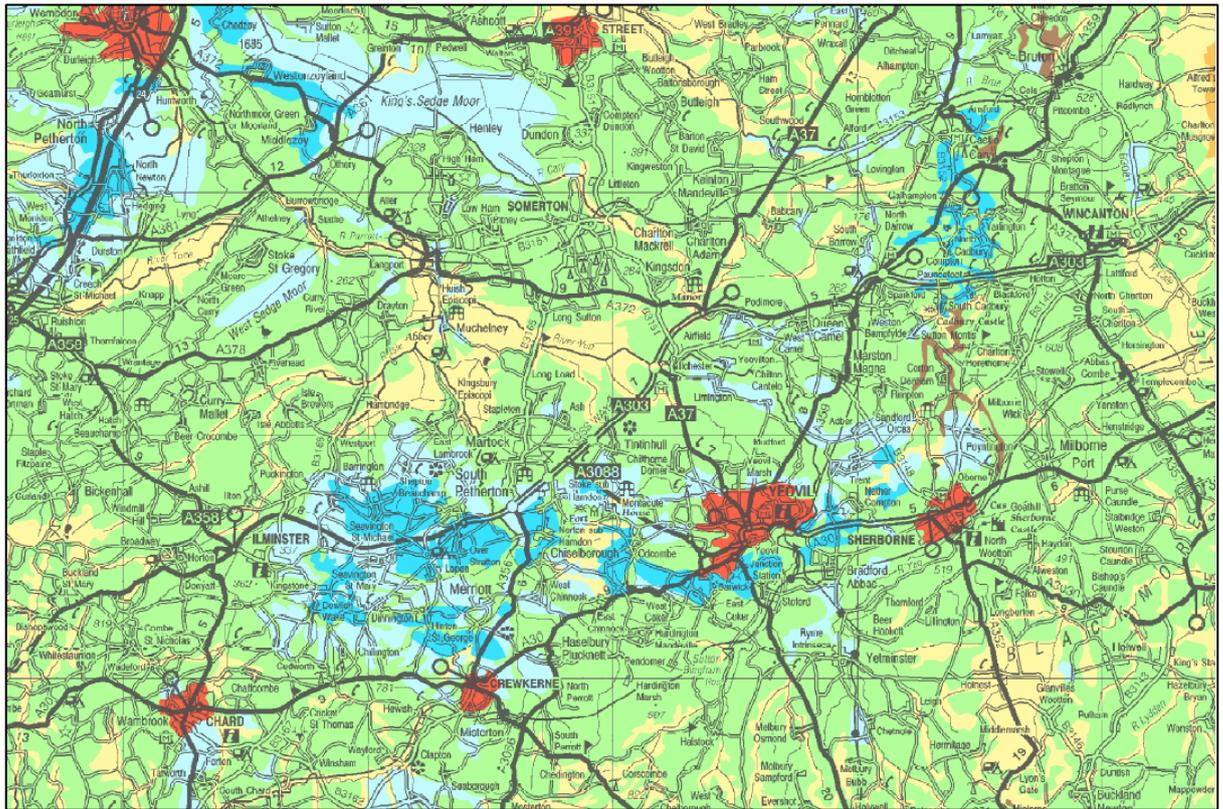
⁸⁶ ‘Developed land’ comprises domestic buildings, non-domestic buildings, road, rail, path, and other (largely hardstanding), plus domestic gardens.

⁸⁷ Geological description taken from paragraph 3.2.2 of the South Somerset Historic Environment Strategy, draft for consultation, October 2016.

⁸⁸ Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (1:250,000 scale), Natural England.

⁸⁹ Agricultural Land Classification is available at <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

Figure 11.2: Agricultural Land Classification in South Somerset⁹⁰



<u>Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	Excellent
2	Very Good
3	Good to Moderate
4	Poor
5	Very Poor
<u>Non-Agricultural Land</u>	
	Other land primarily in non-agricultural use
	Land predominantly in urban use

Source: Natural England / DEFRA

11.5 In terms of contaminated land, a diverse history of land use means that there are a number of potentially hazardous land uses throughout the district. These include abattoirs, gasworks and coke works, motor engineers/petrol stations, coal storage/distribution sites, engineering works and wood treatment processes. There are also known former landfill sites and numerous other potential “in-filled” sites at former ponds, pits and rail cuttings – often the fill material is unknown as many of the sites were in operation prior to 1974 when controls were first brought in.⁹¹ To date,

⁹⁰ Extract from Agricultural Land Classification Map South West Region, Natural England.

⁹¹ Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy 2016-2021, SSDC, 2016.

SSDC has identified 3,400 potential sites of interest, which have been filtered down to 116 ranked sites for further investigation.⁹²

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

11.6 Additional built development can lead to significant effects on soil and land through the loss of greenfield land. The existing policy context will continue to apply, such as Local Plan Policy EQ7: Pollution Control, and NPPF paragraph 112 with regards to agricultural land quality. This should ensure adequate consideration is given to these issues.

11.7 However, the Early Review can identify specific sites for development, rather than large ‘directions of growth’ in the current plan. A more ‘refined’ approach offers the opportunity to better minimise adverse impacts upon soil and land. In addition, cognisant of the larger proportion of higher quality agricultural land in South Somerset, consideration can be given to introducing a local policy on this issue.

KEY ISSUES:

- South Somerset is a largely rural district, with a lower proportion of developed land than the regional and national average.
- The underlying geology heavily influences the physical character of the district, and is composed mainly of Jurassic clays, sands and limestones.
- The proportion of Grade 1 agricultural land in South Somerset is higher than the county, regional and national average; with a large area present to the east of Ilminster and north of Crewkerne, along with a belt of wrapping around the southern edge of Yeovil.
- The overall proportion of agricultural land within grades 1 – 3 is also higher in South Somerset.
- A diverse history of land use means that there are a number of potentially hazardous land uses throughout the district, with 116 sites being subject to further investigation.

Table 11.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Land and Soil

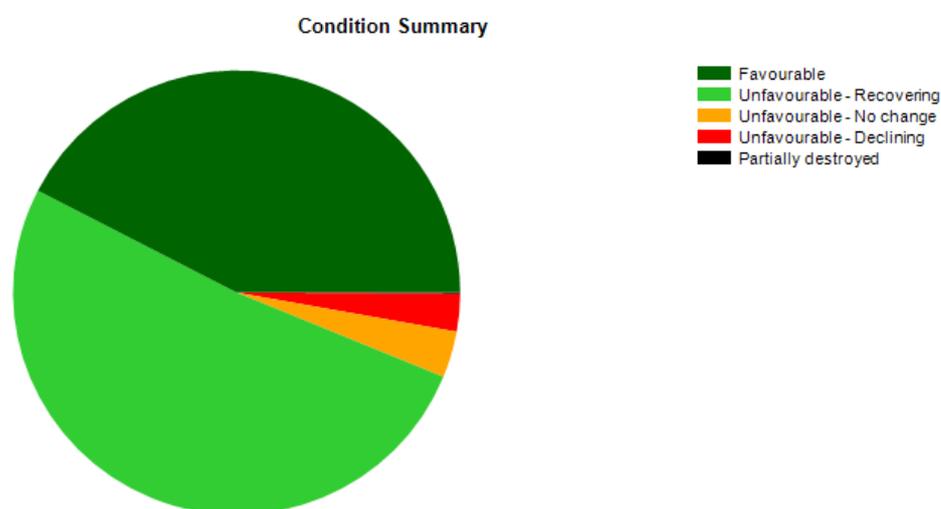
TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Soil and Land SEA Directive Topic(s): Soil NPPF Paragraphs: 79-92, 109-125	10. To protect and conserve soil.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land? • Avoid the use of land classified as best and most versatile agricultural land?

⁹² Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy 2016-2021, SSDC, 2016.

12. Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 12.1 South Somerset has many areas that are recognised for their biodiversity and geodiversity value. Parts of the Somerset Levels and Moors are internationally designated due to wetland habitat that attracts extensive bird populations – these areas are designated as a Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. In addition, the international designation at Bracket’s Coppice Special Area of Conservation is located 1.5km from South Somerset’s boundary in West Dorset, to the south east of Crewkerne. This site is noted for the presence of a colony of a rare bat species.
- 12.2 There are also a range of nationally designated sites in South Somerset, with four National Nature Reserves and 39 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The following diagram shows the vast majority of SSSIs in Somerset are ‘favourable’ or ‘unfavourable-recovering’.

Figure 12.1: SSSI Condition summary for Somerset



- 12.3 There are nearly 600 Local Wildlife Sites in South Somerset.⁹³ There are also five LNRs within South Somerset:

- Moldrams Ground near Wincanton;
- Chard Reservoir;
- Eastfield, High Ham near Langport;
- Bincombe Beeches, Crewkerne; and
- Ham Hill

- 12.4 South Somerset is also home to several fauna species which are identified as European Protected Species, and therefore afforded protection under the Habitats Directive and supporting Regulations:

- Bats

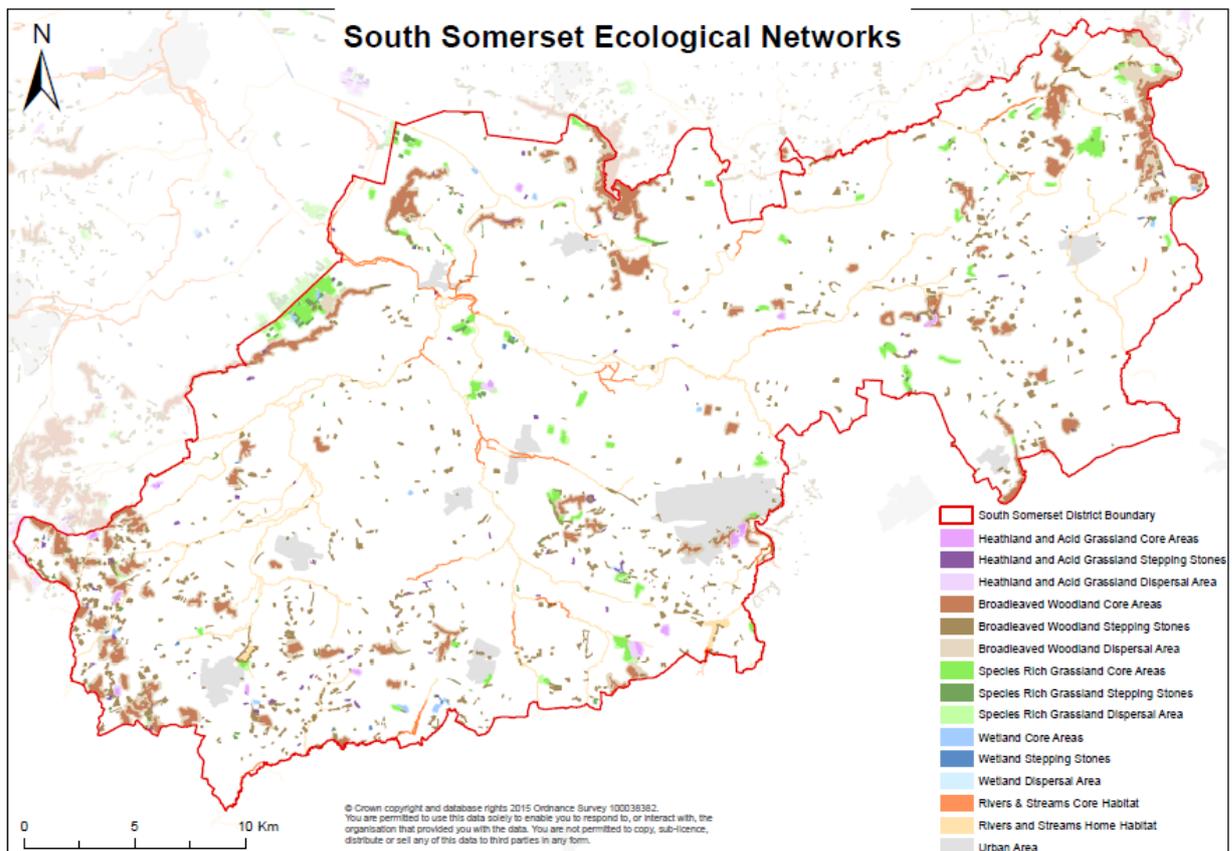
⁹³ <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/conservation/natural-environment-conservation/the-natural-environment-in-south-somerset/>

- Large blue butterfly
- Common dormouse
- Great Crested Newt
- Common Otter.

12.5 There are a large number of habitats and species of “principal importance for the purposes of conserving biodiversity”, as defined in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, present locally. Across the county, Somerset contains a total of 839 *species* of “principal importance”.⁹⁴ A variety of *habitats* of “principal importance” are also present, although a list of these has not been specifically produced for Somerset.

12.6 It is important to ensure that connectivity between sites, species and habitats is maintained and enhanced, through the promotion of ‘ecological networks’ – these are described as the infrastructure of existing and future habitat needed to allow populations of species and habitats to survive.⁹⁵ Ecological networks support the movement of individuals between populations in a connected landscape, which can help them more resilient, particularly to climate change. The ecological networks in South Somerset have recently been assessed, as shown on the map below.

Figure 12.2: South Somerset Ecological Networks



⁹⁴ Somerset Biodiversity Partnership’s Priority Species List.

⁹⁵ Somerset’s Ecological Networks, Somerset County Council, Somerset Wildlife Trust et al, 2015.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

12.7 Designated sites will continue to receive appropriate protection consistent with the level of designation (international, national, local), as set out in legislation, Local Plan policy EQ4 and the NPPF Chapter 11. The Early Review provides the opportunity to use latest evidence (such as Ecological Networks) to plan positively for biodiversity and geodiversity enhancements through site allocations, for example by improving habitat connectivity.

KEY ISSUES:

- There are many internationally, nationally, and locally designated sites for biodiversity and geodiversity in South Somerset.
- South Somerset is home to a range of important habitats and species.
- Ecological networks help populations of species and habitats to survive, particularly with the challenge of climate change.

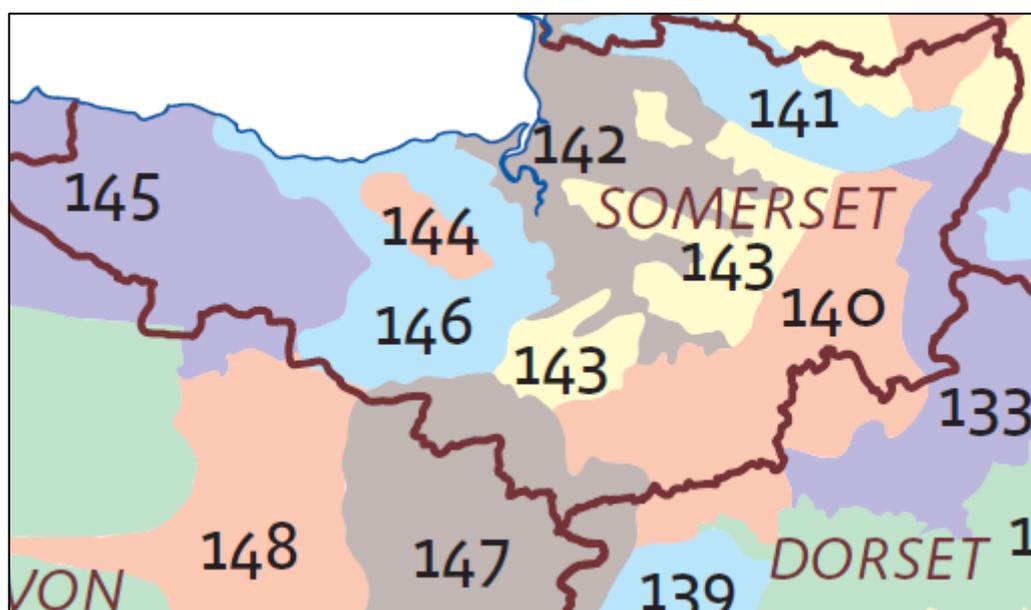
Table 12.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Biodiversity and Geodiversity

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Biodiversity and Geodiversity SEA Directive Topic(s): Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna NPPF Paragraphs: 109-125	11. To protect, enhance and manage biodiversity & geodiversity.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid, or if not minimise impacts on biodiversity, including designated sites, and provide net gains where possible? • Protect and enhance ecological networks as identified in the Nature Conservation Strategy (2015), including those that cross administrative boundaries? • Protect the important geodiversity of South Somerset?

13. Landscape and Townscape

- 13.1 South Somerset is a large, rural district, with a population distributed across a few key market towns, several smaller towns, and numerous villages. The landscape and topography is varied, with landforms of wide clay vales or rolling lowland with occasional hilly outcrops of limestone. The central lowlands form part of the peat moor grazing lands that extend out north-westwards into the Somerset Levels with their characteristic long vistas and rectilinear drainage patterns. The Oolitic limestones of the south east part of the district form part of the limestone belt that runs away north through the Cotswolds and southwards to Crewkerne. Outcrops at Ham Hill and Castle Cary have been quarried for building stone and have made a major contribution to the local distinctiveness of settlements.
- 13.2 Parts of South Somerset are nationally recognised as being particularly special landscapes, through being designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The Blackdown Hills AONB extends into the western part of the district, with Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB in the eastern fringes. In addition, the Dorset AONB runs along the southern boundary of South Somerset, from south of Chard to south of Yeovil.
- 13.3 A national study⁹⁶ identifies parts of five National Character Areas (NCAs) in South Somerset, with the majority of the district falling within NCA 140: 'Yeovil Scarplands'. The map below is an extract of the NCAs for Somerset and its immediate surrounds.

Figure 13.1: Extract from National Character Areas map



- 13.4 **NCA 140: Yeovil Scarplands** is summarised as:

"The Yeovil Scarplands run, in an arc, from the Mendip Hills around the southern edge of the Mid Somerset Hills and the Somerset Levels and Moors to the fringes of the Blackdowns. This remote, rural landscape comprises a series of broad ridges and

⁹⁶ National Character Areas, Natural England. <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/587130>

steep scarps separating sheltered clay vales. Less than 5 per cent of the area is urban, though Yeovil, lying in the south of the area, has grown to become a sizeable town with a busy industrial zone.

The area has a long history of settlement reflected through the archaeology, from Neolithic hill forts, through Roman villas, to remnant medieval open fields – along with many Listed Buildings. The area is known for its collection of fine manor houses and associated parklands. The area also boasts a variety of limestones and sandstones from which distinctive local settlement character is derived. Foremost among these is the Ham Hill stone: Stoke-sub-Hamdon, South Petherton and the notable Elizabethan Montacute House are all constructed principally from this stone.” (Source: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5731196449325056?category=587130>).

- 13.5 Small parts of the east of the district fall into **NCA 133: Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour**, which is summarised as:

“The Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour National Character Area (NCA) comprises both the large expanse of lowland clay vale and the Upper Greensand terraces and hills that mark the southern and eastern edges of the NCA, and an area extending northwards from Penselwood around the edge of the Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs NCA.

The Blackmore Vale, steeped in a long history of pastoral agriculture, is characterised by hedged fields with an abundance of hedgerow trees, many of them veteran. This is productive pastureland that is often waterlogged; it is crossed by streams and several rivers that leave the NCA at all points of the compass.” (Source: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5858996464386048?category=587130>).

- 13.6 Small parts of the north-west of the district fall into **NCA 142: Somerset Levels and Moors**, which is summarised as:

- 13.7 *“The Somerset Levels and Moors National Character Area is a flat landscape extending across parts of the north and centre of the historical county of Somerset, reaching from Clevedon near Bristol in the north to Glastonbury in the east and Ilchester and Langport in the south. The Somerset Levels and Moors NCA is dissected by the Mendip Hills NCA and the Mid Somerset Hills NCA, notably the limestone ridge of the Polden Hills. The western boundary is formed by Bridgwater Bay and the Bristol Channel beyond. The landscape blends almost seamlessly into the Vale of Taunton in the south-west and into the Yeovil scarplands to the south. This is a landscape of rivers and wetlands, artificially drained, irrigated and modified to allow productive farming. The coastal Levels were once mostly salt marsh and the meandering rhynes and irregular field patterns follow the former courses of creeks and rivers. They contrast with the open, often treeless, landscape of the inland Moors and their chequer-board-like pattern of rectilinear fields, ditches, rhynes, drains and engineered rivers, and roads. Today, the Levels and Moors have many similarities but their histories are quite distinct. The Levels landscape was probably established by the time of the Norman Conquest while the Moors remained an open waste until enclosure and*

drainage between 1750 and 1850. Water is an ever-present element in the NCA; water from a catchment area four times the size of the Levels and Moors flows through the area, often above the level of the surrounding land. Much of the area lies below the level of high spring tides in the Bristol Channel.” (Source:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/12320274?category=587130>)

- 13.8 Small parts of the south-west of the district fall into **NCA 143: Mid Somerset Hills**, which is summarised as:

“The Mid Somerset Hills form a number of low hills and ridges rising out of the Somerset Levels and Moors. They lie between the Blackdowns National Character Area (NCA) to the south and the Mendip Hills NCA to the north. The hills have a distinctive, predominantly pastoral character rich in hedgerows, farms and small villages, and often with expansive views over the flat Somerset Levels and Moors NCA to the west. Farming is now mixed, but the area was known for its sheep and leather used in connection with the shoe-making industry at Street.” (Source:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4718827694718976?category=587130>

- 13.9 Small parts of the south of the district fall into **NCA 147: Blackdowns**, which is summarised as:

“Long, dark ridges, deep valleys and dynamic cliffs are the essence of the Blackdowns National Character Area (NCA). The ridges create prominent backdrops from afar and offer far-reaching views. Flat plateaux, large, regular fields and long, straight roads create a sense of openness and uniformity on the ridges. Beech hedgerows and avenues enclose the grazed landscape, although areas of remnant common, lowland heath and scrub still exist, providing open access.

Woodland, much of semi-natural origin, dominates the steep valley tops, creating sinuous dark edges to the ridges; some conifer plantations also exist and intrude onto the plateaux. Below the wooded edge pastoral valleys feature with a medieval field pattern of small, irregular fields bounded by dense species-rich hedgebanks and hedgerow trees, creating an enclosed, tranquil setting. A myriad of springs and streams flow south through the valleys and can often be traced by semi-natural habitats: springline mires, rush pasture and carr woodland. Some valley floors widen and provide an opportunity for arable production, notably the Axe Valley which is characterised by a much wider flood plain. The entire River Axe within the NCA is designated for its biodiversity value, notably lamprey and bullhead fish.” (Source: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5233925605556224?category=587130>).

- 13.10A detailed local landscape assessment⁹⁷ identified seven visual character regions in South Somerset, described as recognisable and distinct units based on topography and geology:

- i. Fivehead and High Ham escarpments, valleys and moors;

⁹⁷ The Landscape of South Somerset, SSDC, 1993.

- ii. Blackdown Hills plateau escarpment footslopes and valleys;
- iii. Windwhistle ridge footslopes and valleys;
- iv. Ham Hill plateau, Yeovil sands escarpments and valleys;
- v. Ridges and vales south and west of Yeovil;
- vi. Escarpments, ridges and vales east of Yeovil; and
- vii. Central plain, moors and river basins.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

13.11 Without the Plan, key designated landscapes will retain a level of protection in accommodating new development.

13.12 However, the mixed and varied natural landscapes and historic townscapes are what help to define South Somerset and mark it out as unique. Without the Early Review of the Local Plan and the ability to plan and coordinate development, both statutory and non-statutory assets would be under greater pressure.

13.13 The Early Review of the Local Plan offers a tool or delivery mechanism for extended protection of these key assets, for example policy protection for non-designated assets, or protection against coalescence; thus reducing the risk of loss, or detriment to, factors affecting landscape character. The Plan can also coordinate opportunity and investment across the whole of the plan area to ensure that development delivers the best possible, high quality, and multifunctional benefits.

13.14 Without the Early Review of the Local Plan future development has an increased likelihood of resulting in negative effects on landscape character, and a decreased likelihood of delivering coordinated and prioritised improvements.

13.15 With changing agricultural practices, the Early Review of the Local Plan can also provide a flexible policy approach to agricultural land management and appropriately monitor the effects of the changes in the industry and its implications for the landscape. This includes taking account of the status of land under the terms of the Agricultural Land Classification and the notion of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.

13.16 Although Local Plan policy EQ2 provides a series of design and general development principles, there is not a policy specifically relating to landscape. Therefore the Early Review of Local can consider incorporating a policy on landscape character.

KEY ISSUES:

- Parts of South Somerset are designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Protecting appropriate landscape settings e.g. the setting of the AONBs
- Development must balance socio-economic need with the protection and enhancement of a rural landscape, and vitally important retention of a predominantly rural landscape character with important ridges, large areas of flat land, far-reaching views and high levels of tranquillity.
- Maintaining traditional field boundaries, habitats and building materials that contribute to landscape character.
- The loss of agricultural land is changing the landscape character of the Plan area.
- There are a number of settlements that are vulnerable or sensitive to changes in the landscape/ townscape identified within the Landscape Character Assessment (2016).

Table 13.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Landscape and Townscape

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Landscape and Townscape	12. To protect and enhance the landscape and townscape.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect and where possible enhance nationally and locally designated landscapes and their setting?• Protect and where possible enhance the overall rural landscape character of South Somerset?• Regenerate previously developed land or restore derelict sites such as disused market gardens, former quarries or pits?
SEA Directive Topic(s): Landscape		
NPPF Paragraphs: 109-125		

14. Historic Environment

- 14.1 South Somerset District Council has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance the historic environment. The Council recognises that the historic environment in South Somerset is one of our most important resources, and is part of what makes South Somerset unique and treasured.
- 14.2 The breadth of heritage and historic assets in the district represents both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is how best to provide appropriate protection to the large number of different assets, ensuring they are secured for the long term; the opportunity is to maximise the contribution these assets make to the economic, cultural and social make-up of South Somerset.
- 14.3 The varied landscapes of South Somerset have provided a wide range of environments which have been exploited, settled and managed by people over many thousands of years. People have left the evidence of their activities as a built and archaeological record made up of the routes and settlements, earthworks and man-made landscapes that form our present-day historic environment.
- 14.4 The physical character of the area is heavily influenced by underlying geology, composed mainly of Jurassic clays, sands and limestones; it has created landforms of wide clay vales or rolling lowland with occasional hilly outcrops of limestone. The central lowlands form part of the peat moor grazing lands that extend out north-westwards into the Somerset Levels with their characteristic long vistas and rectilinear drainage patterns. The Oolitic limestones of the south-east part of the district form part of the limestone belt that runs away north through the Cotswolds and beyond. Here the availability of good quality building stones has given us the rich legacy of fine stone buildings so distinctive to the area.
- 14.5 In terms of designated and non-designated assets, South Somerset has the following records:
- **Conservation Areas:** Over 80 Conservation Areas, with revisions and modifications occurring where appropriate as part of a rolling profile of work.
 - **Historic Parks and Gardens:** South Somerset is richly endowed with rural parks and includes 14 entries on the national register. Several other parks are of special local importance.
 - **Registered Battlefields:** The only site in South Somerset is that relating to the battle of Langport of 1645.
 - **Listed Buildings:** There are over 4,600 entries on the lists for South Somerset, covering an estimated 5,000 buildings and structures. It is estimated that 3.5% of dwellings in South Somerset are listed, a relatively high number reflecting the richness of the district's heritage.
 - **Scheduled Ancient Monuments:** There are 70 Scheduled Monuments in South Somerset along with many other areas, particularly in towns and villages, identified as being of High Archaeological Potential where investigations are required before development may take place.

14.6 There are 28 records on Historic England's "Heritage at Risk Register". These include 15 churches and religious premises, a series of former industrial sites, and domestic properties. Four of the records fall within the priority category "A", which signifies that the asset is under "*Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric; no solution agreed*". The four assets are:

- i) Church of St Nicholas, Bratton Seymour;
- ii) Church of All Saints, Isle Brewers;
- iii) Church of St Martin of Tours, Church Street, West Coker; and
- iv) Two monuments in churchyard, approximately 6 and 8 metres south of south transept, St Mary the Virgin, East Stoke, Stoke Sub Hamdon.

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

14.7 Without the Early Review of the Local Plan the historic environment in South Somerset will still retain a high level of protection, due to the statutory legislation and the adopted South Somerset Local Plan policy.

14.8 But, the Council is mindful that the nature of South Somerset is such that there are many non-designated assets, heritage settings and potential archaeology that could be more vulnerable to the impacts of development.

14.9 Perhaps more importantly, and emphasised by the Council recently approving a Supplementary Planning Document relating to the historic environment, there is a need to ensure that future development positively enhances the historic environment, and to utilise the historic assets (both designated and non-designated) to deliver higher quality development in the district.

KEY ISSUES:

- South Somerset has a large number of designated and non-designated historic assets that are of vital importance to the nature and context of the district. Protection and enhancing these assets should be of the highest importance.
- The physical character of the area is heavily influenced by underlying geology, composed mainly of Jurassic clays, sands and limestones; it has created landforms of wide clays vales or rolling lowland with occasional hilly outcrops of limestone.

Table 14.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for the Historic Environment

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Historic Environment SEA Directive Topic(s): Cultural Heritage NPPF Paragraphs: 6-10 & 126-141	13. To protect and enhance the significance of the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect, and where possible, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings? • Protect, and where possible, enhance conservation areas? • Protect, and where possible, enhance the wider historic environment? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?

15. Minerals and Waste

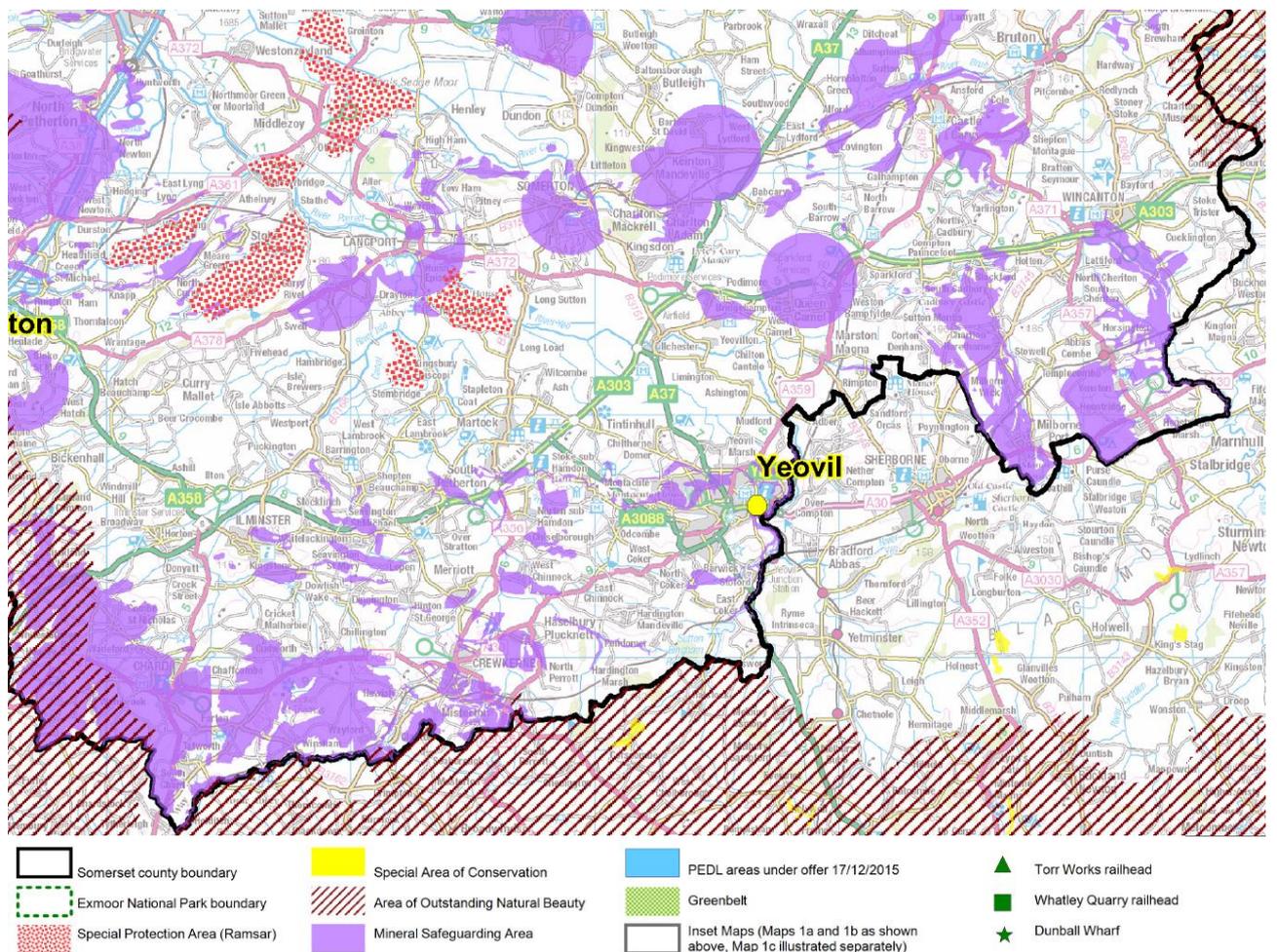
Minerals

15.1 Minerals issues are managed and planned for by Somerset County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority. The Somerset Minerals Plan (2015) sets out a policy framework for sustainable minerals development up to 2030. Figure 15.1 sets out the Mineral Safeguarded Areas identified in the Somerset Minerals Plan.

15.2 South Somerset has a number of mineral safeguarding areas. The majority of these are linked to areas of search for building stone, as well as some areas of search for sand and gravel. South Somerset is also home to a number of active, dormant, and inactive quarry sites.

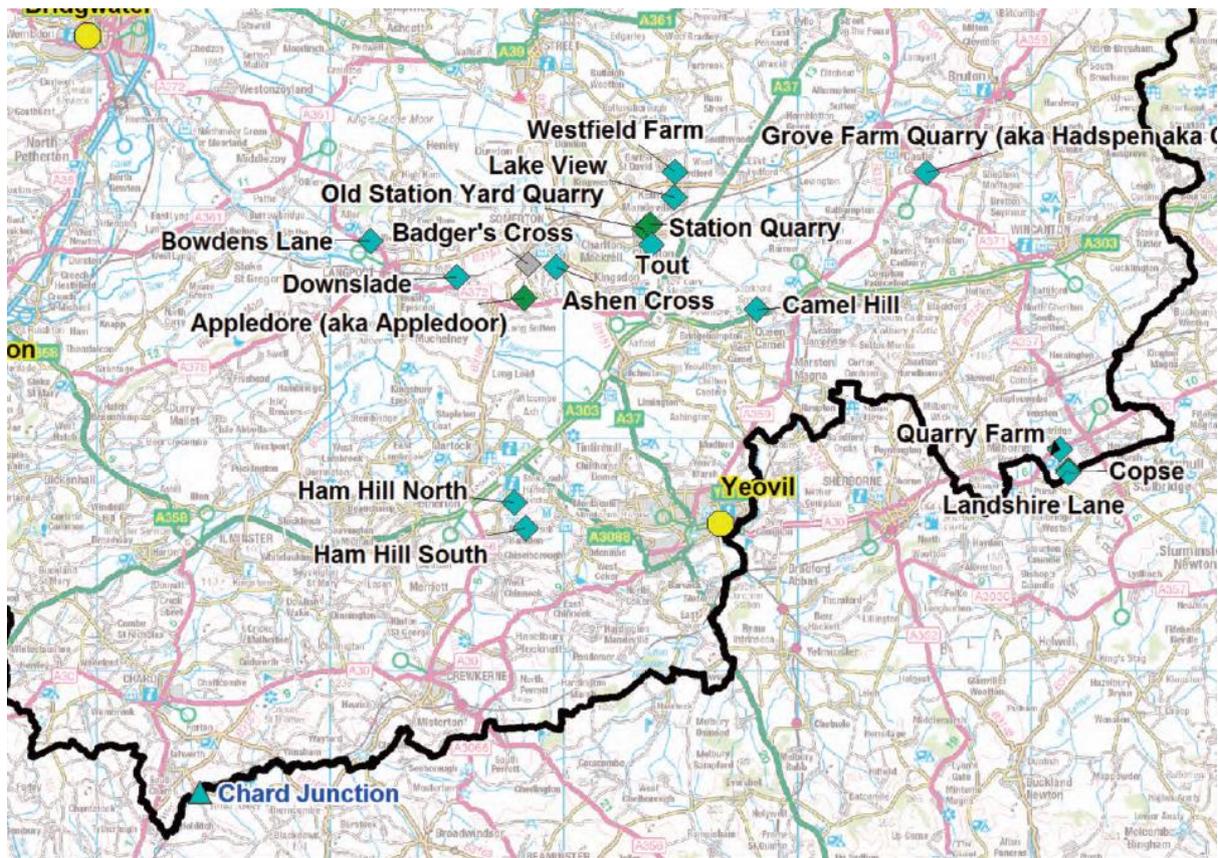
15.3 South Somerset’s active, dormant, and inactive quarry sites are set out in Figure 15.2.

Figure 15.1: Mineral Safeguarding Areas



Source: Somerset Minerals Plan (2015)

Figure 15.2: Location of Quarry Sites



AGGREGATE QUARRIES

-  Active
-  Dormant
-  Inactive

BUILDING STONE QUARRIES

-  Active
-  Dormant
-  Inactive

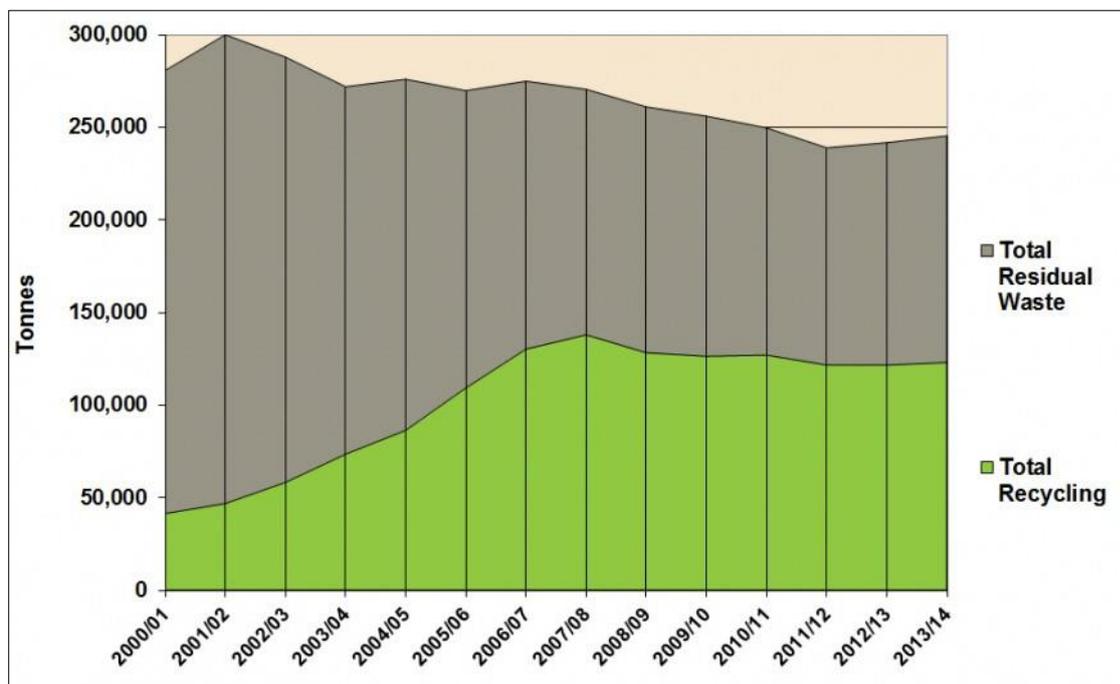
Source: Somerset Minerals Plan (2015)

Waste

15.4 Since 2000, total household waste production in Somerset has been falling despite a growing population and more households. The amount of waste being recycled increased significantly between 2000 and 2008, but has remained stable since then. Further work is required to increase recycling levels in order to achieve the ambitions in the Waste Core Strategy.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Somerset Waste Core Strategy, Table 1 states there should be capacity for recycling 62% of Municipal Solid Waste by 2016.

Figure 15.3: Household waste arisings in Somerset from 2000/01 to 2013/14⁹⁹



15.5 Somerset Waste Partnership publish an ‘end use register’ which details what happens to materials collected for recycling and reuse from Somerset residents which shows that, in 2012/13, 96% of recyclable waste was recycled in the UK, with only 4% sent overseas for recycling.¹⁰⁰ The bulk of food waste, garden waste, and wood waste collected in Somerset is also managed at facilities or locations within Somerset. Indeed, all household food waste collected for recycling in Somerset is processed at a new anaerobic digestion plant at Walpole near Bridgwater, close to junction 23 of the M5.¹⁰¹ It would be impractical and unrealistic to plan for sufficient infrastructure in Somerset to reprocess all material streams (plastic, glass etc).¹⁰²

15.6 South Somerset is home to two of the three landfill sites for disposing non-hazardous material in Somerset: at Dimmer near Castle Cary; and at Whiscombe Hill near Somerton.¹⁰³ The majority of household and commercial/industrial waste that is received at Somerset’s waste facilities goes to Walpole (outside of South Somerset) and Dimmer landfill sites.¹⁰⁴ Dimmer landfill currently accepts around 110,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) of waste (60,000 tpa of municipal and 40,000 tpa of C&I), and has capacity for approximately 20 more years.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Somerset Waste Partnership website, accessed November 2014:

<http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/about/statistics/>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/about/end-use/>

¹⁰¹ Somerset Waste Partnership: <http://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/about/ad/>

¹⁰² Somerset Waste Core Strategy adopted 2013, para 6.11.

¹⁰³ Planning permission for Whiscombe Hill has recently been extended to 2042.

¹⁰⁴ SCC Topic Paper – Waste Management Need to 2028, para 8.2.1, published in 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Dimmer WTS planning application officer report:

<http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/council/board11/Web%20upload%2003.06.15/2015%20June%2011%20Item%206%20Waste%20Transfer%20Station%20at%20Dimmer%20Waste%20disposal%20site.pdf>

- 15.7 In 2014/15, the total waste arisings in South Somerset was 740kg per household, of which the residual household waste was 406kg per household.¹⁰⁶ The amount of residual waste produced is lower than the regional and national average. The proportion of household waste being re-used, recycled or composted in South Somerset is 45%, which is broadly similar to other districts in Somerset, and the regional (49%) and national average (44%).¹⁰⁷
- 15.8 There are numerous operational waste sites in South Somerset, with the full list is set out in SCC's waste topic paper and updated in their Annual Monitoring.¹⁰⁸ The current municipal waste and recycling infrastructure facilities are set out below. The three largest settlements in the district benefit from a facility.

Table 15.1: Municipal waste infrastructure facilities in South Somerset

Municipal waste and recycling facility	Operations
Yeovil Recycling Centre	Recycling Centre for the public to dispose of household waste, organic waste, recycling.
Chard Recycling Centre	Recycling Centre for the public to dispose of household waste, organic waste, recycling.
Crewkerne Community Recycling Site	Community Recycling Site for the public to dispose of household waste, organic waste, recycling.
Somerton Recycling Centre	Recycling Centre for the public to dispose of household waste, organic waste, recycling.
Dimmer, near Castle Cary	Recycling Centre for the public to dispose of household waste, organic waste, recycling; Operational landfill; Organic composting pad; Street sweepings dewatering pad.

- 15.9 In the year 2014-15, there were just over 409,000 visits to the five Recycling Centres in South Somerset. The following table shows visitor numbers at each of the Recycling Centres in the district over recent years. This indicates that visitors halved over the year between 2010/11 and 2011/12,¹⁰⁹ but have been stable with significant increases at Yeovil and Chard since then.

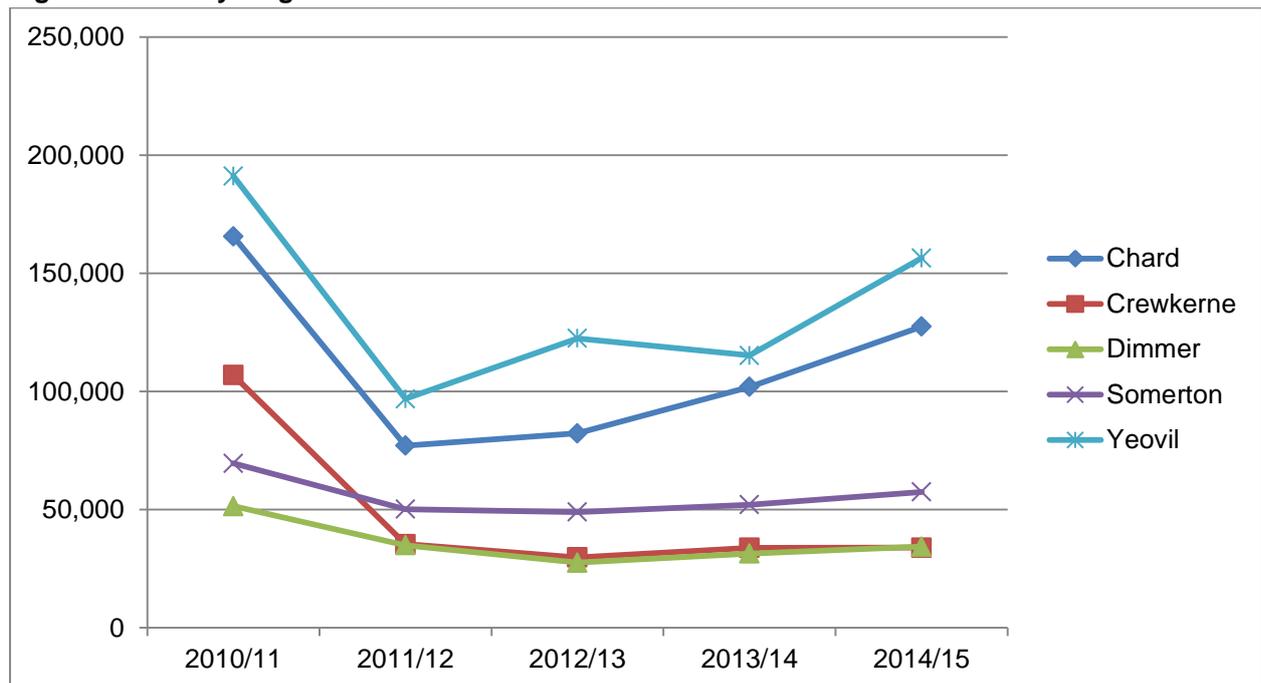
¹⁰⁶ Report for Somerset Waste Board meeting, Appendix A1, 19.06.2015.

¹⁰⁷ Report for Somerset Waste Board meeting, Appendix A1, 19.06.2015.

¹⁰⁸ SCC Topic Paper – Waste Management Need to 2028, Appendix 1, published in 2012; Somerset Annual Monitoring Report 2013/14, Appendix 5.

¹⁰⁹ This drop is assumed to be because of reduced opening hours, and the introduction of charges at Crewkerne.

Figure 15.4: Recycling Centre visits from 2010/11 to 2014/15¹¹⁰



15.10 In terms of waste collection, land at Lufton Depot, Yeovil is leased to park 13 refuse collection vehicles. Any changes to the number of vehicles supplied or increase in processing capacity are catered for within the Waste Collection Contract.

15.11 The South Somerset Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2016) indicates that the current waste and recycling facilities, and collection vehicles, are adequate in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. However, a proposal has recently been granted permission (June 2015) (subject to completing a S106 agreement) for a Waste Transfer Station at Dimmer.

15.12 The WTS will handle household waste and commercial waste, with Dimmer landfill likely to be closed for the infilling of this waste (subject to planning approval). The waste that is currently landfilled at Dimmer would be diverted to the WTS where it will be bulked up for export to treatment/processing facilities to recover energy from the waste.¹¹¹ This will divert much of the residual municipal waste produced in South Somerset away from landfill (although treatment of this waste would not occur in Somerset as it will be transported to facilities in Oxfordshire and Avonmouth). The funding of this facility will be provided by Somerset County Council and/or a private contractor once the submitted diversion strategy has been assessed, and the future model agreed with partner authorities through the Somerset Waste Board.

15.13 At present, the existing waste and recycling capacity in South Somerset is sufficient to meet the future development being proposed. If the average of 4.8 visits to recycling centres per household in 2013-14 were to be applied to projected development over the next five years, there would be an 8.3% increase in the use of recycling centres by

¹¹⁰ Report for Somerset Waste Board meeting, Appendix A1, 19.06.2015.

¹¹¹ Dimmer WTS planning application officer report:

<http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/council/board11/Web%20upload%2003.06.15/2015%20June%2011%20Item%206%20Waste%20Transfer%20Station%20at%20Dimmer%20Waste%20disposal%20site.pdf>

2019. Future housing developments should be designed to allow sufficient access to accommodate a standard waste and recycling collection vehicle.¹¹²

15.14 Capacity for waste storage in new development should comply with the Building Regulations, and preferably SWP guidance.¹¹³ The relevant considerations are also set out in the Somerset Waste Core Strategy.¹¹⁴

Evolution without the Early Review of the Local Plan

15.15 The management of waste and minerals development in South Somerset is planned by Somerset County Council through their Minerals Plan and their Waste Core Strategy. As at May 2016, Somerset County Council has set out a Minerals and Waste Development Scheme setting out the timetable for producing a joined-up development plan that addresses both topics in one document.

15.16 To this extent the Early Review of the Local Plan will only have a small bearing on SCC's plans. However, the Council will need to be mindful of the potential sterilising effect that the scale and location of homes, jobs, and development could have on minerals sites.

15.17 New housing and employment development should also consider the implications of its waster production and management, and should plan for sustainable waste management to help achieve the aims of the Waste Plan.

15.18 Minerals and waste can affect human health through noise pollution and odour, and as such the Early Review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to plan for development that minimises these effects.

KEY ISSUES:

- Minerals and Waste planning in South Somerset is the responsibility of Somerset County Council.
- The Somerset Minerals Plan (2015) and the Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013) identify the policies that will be followed to sustainable manage minerals development and waste arisings.
- Council will need to ensure that the direction of new development and proposed development sites do not conflict with the policies set out in Minerals Plan and the Waste Core Strategy.
- Council will support the policy approach in the Waste Core Strategy to ensure new development contributes towards meeting the EU target rate of 50% of waste production recycled /reused by 2020.

¹¹² Design Requirements for residential properties – recycling and waste management, Somerset Waste Partnership, 2011.

¹¹³ Design Requirements for residential properties – recycling and waste management, Somerset Waste Partnership, 2011.

¹¹⁴ Somerset Waste Core Strategy, paragraphs 6.4-6 and Policy WCS2.

Table 15.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions for Minerals and Waste

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
<p>Minerals and Waste</p> <p>SEA Directive</p> <p>Topic(s): Material Assets</p>	<p>The Minerals Plan and Waste Plan set out the strategic allocations for mineral extraction and for waste management development in South Somerset together with strategic policies which will guide the ongoing supply of minerals and development of waste management facilities. Both of the plans were subject to their own SA.</p>	
<p>NPPF</p> <p>Paragraphs: 5, 142-149</p>	<p>At this stage, it is not considered that there are any significant sustainability issues within South Somerset in relation to Minerals and Waste.</p>	<p>If and where development proposed through the Early Review of the Local Plan may affect this topic, it is considered that these effects are unlikely to be of significance. This topic is unlikely to play a significant role in the identification and refinement of alternatives. Taking the above into account, this topic has therefore been scoped out of the SA process for the Early Review of the Local Plan.</p> <p>It is important to note that SCC are in the process of preparing a joined-up Minerals and Waste Plan and as part of that process further SA work will be carried out.</p>

16. SA Framework

Introduction

16.1 Table 16.1 presents all the sustainability objectives - grouped under ten topic headings - established through scoping, i.e. in light of context/baseline review and identified key issues set out in the previous Chapters. Taken together, the sustainability topics and draft objectives provide a methodological 'framework' for appraisal of the Early Review of the Local Plan and reasonable alternatives.

Table 16.1: SA Objectives and appraisal questions

TOPIC	SA OBJECTIVES	APPRAISAL QUESTIONS
Communities (including Housing) SEA Directive Topic(s): Population and Human Health NPPF Paragraphs: 47-78	1. To meet the housing needs of all residents and different communities.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sufficient housing to meet the identified needs of all Communities within South Somerset? • Provide an appropriate mix of types of housing to meet the identified needs of all communities within South Somerset? • Provide an opportunity to help meet housing needs arising from outside the Plan area?
	2. To maintain and enhance community and settlement identities.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and where possible enhance the identity of a community or settlement? • Effectively integrate within the existing settlement pattern?
	3. To improve accessibility to services and facilities.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that a sufficient level of services/facilities will be delivered to meet the identified needs of all communities within South Somerset, or will development result in a net gain in the level of services/facilities? • Promote the development of a range of high quality, accessible community facilities for all, including specialist services for disabled and older people?
Economy and Employment SEA Directive Topic(s): Population and Human Health	4. To support the economy and ensure that there are suitable opportunities for employment.	Will the option/proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide sufficient high quality employment land to meet the identified needs of all communities within South Somerset? • Facilitate the provision of the right type of employment land in the right place?

<p>NPPF Paragraphs: 18-22, 42 & 43</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard existing employment land in South Somerset? • Support and enhance the vitality and viability of Town Centres, in particular Dunstable Town Centre? • Regenerate or provide employment opportunities in areas that are currently experiencing high rates of unemployment or deprivation? • Enhance the provision of education and training facilities? • Support the visitor economy? • Facilitate working from home, remote working and home-based businesses?
<p>Health and Equalities</p> <p>SEA Directive Topic(s): Population and Human Health</p> <p>NPPF Paragraphs: 69-78</p>	<p>5. To improve the health and wellbeing of communities and reduce inequalities.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities for all age groups? • Encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities? • Enhance multifunctional green infrastructure networks in South Somerset and in the surrounding areas? • Provide and enhance the provision of community access to open space, green infrastructure and recreational areas? • Provide development in the most deprived areas and stimulate regeneration? • Promote equality of opportunity for all protected groups?¹¹⁵
<p>Transport and Movement</p> <p>SEA Directive Topic(s): Population and Human Health</p> <p>NPPF Paragraphs: 29-41</p>	<p>6. To maintain and improve the existing highway network, encourage a demonstrable modal shift and reduce the need to travel.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the need to travel through sustainable patterns of land use and development? • Improve access to and quality of sustainable transport modes for all communities, to allow sustainable movement not only within South Somerset but into the surrounding areas? • Enable transport infrastructure improvements? • Facilitate working from home and remote working? • Provide improvements to and/ or reduce congestion on the existing

¹¹⁵ Under the Equality Act 2010 protected groups or characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

		<p>highway network?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support or enhance local ambitions for transport? • Does the option offer an opportunity to support the delivery of proposed transport infrastructure, such as the East West Rail Link?
<p>Energy and Climate Change</p> <p>SEA Directive Topic(s): Climatic Factors</p> <p>NPPF Paragraphs: 93-104</p>	<p>7. To promote climate change mitigation and support resilience to the potential effects of climate change.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce energy consumption and increase efficiency? • Promote the use of energy from low carbon sources? • Ensure that new development is resilient to the effects of climate change? • Improve green infrastructure networks in the Plan area (and beyond) to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change?
<p>Water: Resources, Quality and Flooding</p> <p>SEA Directive Topic(s): Water</p> <p>NPPF Paragraphs: 99-125</p>	<p>8. To minimise the demand for water and maintain or improve water quality.</p> <p>9. To reduce the risk of flooding from all sources.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise water consumption? • Protect and improve the area's chemical and biological water quality? • Protect surface and groundwater resources? <p>Will the option/proposal help to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct development away from areas at highest risk of flooding as per the sequential test, taking into account the likely effects of climate change? • Make development safe where it is necessary within an area of flood risk and without increasing flood risk elsewhere? • Sustainably manage water run-off, ensuring that the risk of flooding is not increased and where possible reduced? • Improve green infrastructure networks in South Somerset (and beyond) to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Safeguard land to manage flood risk?
<p>Soil and Land</p> <p>SEA Directive Topic(s): Soil</p> <p>NPPF Paragraphs: 79-92, 109-125</p>	<p>10. To protect and conserve soil.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of previously developed land? • Avoid the use of land classified as best and most versatile agricultural land?
<p>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</p> <p>SEA Directive Topic(s):</p>	<p>11. To protect, enhance and manage biodiversity & geodiversity.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid, or if not minimise impacts on biodiversity, including designated sites, and provide net gains where possible? • Protect and enhance ecological networks

<p>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</p> <p>NPPF Paragraphs: 109-125</p>		<p>as identified in the Nature Conservation Strategy (2015), including those that cross administrative boundaries?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the important geodiversity of South Somerset?
<p>Landscape and Townscape</p> <p>SEA Directive Topic(s): Landscape</p> <p>NPPF Paragraphs: 109-125</p>	<p>12. To protect and enhance the landscape and townscape.</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and where possible enhance nationally and locally designated landscapes and their setting? • Protect and where possible enhance the overall rural landscape character of South Somerset? • Regenerate previously developed land or restore derelict sites such as disused market gardens, former quarries or pits?
<p>Historic Environment</p> <p>SEA Directive Topic(s): Cultural Heritage</p> <p>NPPF Paragraphs: 6-10 & 126-141</p>	<p>13. To protect and enhance the significance of the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings</p>	<p>Will the option/proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect, and where possible, enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings? • Protect, and where possible, enhance conservation areas? • Protect, and where possible, enhance the wider historic environment? • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?

17. Next Steps

Subsequent stages for the SA process

17.1 Scoping (the current stage) is the first stage in a five-stage SA process:

- Scoping (NPPG Stage A)
- Appraise reasonable alternatives, with a view to informing preparation of the draft plan, and subsequent appraisal of the draft plan (NPPG Stage B)
- Prepare the SA Report with a view to informing consultation (NPPG Stage C)
- Consultation on the SA Report (NPPG Stage D)
- Publish a 'statement' at the time of plan adoption in order to 'tell the story' of plan-making/SA (and present 'measures decided concerning monitoring') (NPPG Stage E)

17.2 The next stage will involve appraising reasonable alternatives for the Early Review of the Local Plan. The findings of work will be fed back to the Early Review development team so that they can be taken into account in preparing the Local Plan.

17.3 It is anticipated that an Interim SA Report will accompany a Local Plan Issues and Options Document for public consultation in autumn 2017.

Consultation on the Scoping Report

17.4 In line with the SEA Regulations (12(5)) this Scoping Report should be subject to consultation with the SEA consultation bodies (i.e. the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) for a minimum period of five weeks.

17.5 Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this Scoping Report, in particular the evidence base for the SA, the identified key issues and the proposed SA Framework. Following the consultation, the Scoping Report will be updated to reflect any representations received as well as any new evidence and then be finalised.