

Local Plan Options Document 2025

Executive Summary

Consultation from 3rd October to 14th November 2025

Introduction

This executive summary provides an overview of the **Local Plan Options Document (Reset)**. It is part of the options consultation stage of preparing Bath and North East Somerset Council's (B&NES) new Local Plan (2025-2043).

What is the local plan?

The local plan establishes a long-term planning framework for managing growth and change in B&NES over the next 15-20 years. It sets out planning policies that shape development that requires planning permission. It guides where and how development will take place and identifies the need for new homes (including affordable housing) and jobs, as well as the necessary infrastructure and public services to support development. It also seeks to help address the climate emergency and facilitate nature recovery. Its overarching aim is to deliver sustainable, vibrant, healthy and inclusive communities, whilst protecting and enhancing the area's heritage assets.

Why prepare a local plan?

By having a local plan, we can better facilitate planned high-quality development and infrastructure provision and protect what makes B&NES special, including its renowned built and natural environments, whilst guiding future growth in a sustainable way. Without a local plan, speculative development will take place, in less sustainable areas and in an unplanned way, with inadequate infrastructure support.

The local plan plays a key role in addressing the climate emergency and facilitating nature recovery whilst helping deliver the Council's aim to be carbon neutral and nature positive by 2030. It also helps deliver other council strategies and plans, including the Council's Economic Strategy, Housing Plan, and Transport Strategies/Plans.

What is the Options Document?

The Options Document sets out options, or 'reasonable alternatives' for addressing identified needs and to help deliver healthy and sustainable places. These are set out as follows:

- **Site Options** to set out potential sites in our area for new development to meet our housing and employment needs with green space and supporting infrastructure.
- **Policy Options** to describe how we propose to address issues such as climate change, building vibrant, well-connected communities and protecting our heritage.

Its purpose is to encourage comment and discussion around these options and to engage local communities, stakeholders and developers in the plan making process.

Comments received will inform the development of the Draft Local Plan, which will set out the Council's proposed site allocations and policies to shape and guide change and development that require planning permission. More information on how the local plan is prepared can be found at <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/emerging-local-plan-development-timeline>.

We are encouraging more people to engage with the preparation of the new Local Plan to ensure it reflects the needs of our diverse communities and helps get the best possible outcomes from future development. This is a major opportunity to **have your say** and help positively influence future change.

What's changed recently?

In spring 2024, B&NES consulted on a previous [Options Document \(Spring 2024\)](#). However, since then, the government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in late 2024, which set out important changes to national planning policy aimed at achieving sustainable growth through the planning system. This included revised mandatory housing targets, aimed at building 1.5 million new homes nationwide to stimulate economic growth and help tackle the country's acute housing crisis.

As a result, the amount of housing that B&NES is required to plan for through the local plan has more than doubled – an increase from a little over 700 homes per year to around 1,500, equating to approximately 27,000 new homes over an 18-year plan period. Due to the scale of change and significant implications of the revised NPPF, the council reset the previous work it was doing on the local plan to allow further evidence work and assessment of further options to try and meet the increased levels of development now required.

What is the purpose of this Options Document (2025)?

This Options Document builds on the previous consultation in spring 2024. It primarily focuses on site or location options for providing the additional development now required as a result of national policy changes. Both the site options consulted on in spring 2024 and new options are presented so that a comprehensive picture of possible areas of change and growth is presented. Previous comments received in response to the 2024 consultation remain valid and will continue to be carefully considered by the council in preparing the Draft Local Plan, alongside new comments received in this consultation period and ongoing engagement with communities and stakeholders. However, we are not responding to the issues raised in the previous consultation at this stage.

What are the goals of the new local plan?

The local plan is not simply about planning for new housing. The Council's key purpose is to improve people's lives. We have ambitious aims to deliver for local residents, by maximising the delivery of housing that is affordable, and to prepare for the future, by fostering a prosperous, greener and fairer economy. Therefore, to help meet these aims the local plan needs to facilitate high quality housing and economic development.

The scale of development we are required to plan for to deliver the government's targets for new homes and employment space presents a challenge – but also an opportunity to plan proactively to tackle housing affordability and to bring new investment for local communities, supporting infrastructure, services and green spaces. The need to plan for substantial growth is an opportunity to deliver the local plan's central vision to create attractive, healthy, and sustainable places, aligned with the spatial priorities for the local plan, as set out below.

The Plan will:

- Create a **fairer**, more **prosperous** and **sustainable** economy
- Maximise the delivery of housing that is **affordable**

In doing so, our plans for development must:

- Enable Bath and North East Somerset to become **carbon neutral by 2030** and deliver a climate resilient district
- Protect and enhance nature through facilitating **nature recovery**
- Improve **health and well-being** outcomes for all, through planning for health, promoting inclusive places, and providing for cultural enrichment
- Reduce the need to travel unsustainably and enable **improved connectivity** for all through sustainable modes of transport and facilitating locally available services and facilities
- Respect, conserve and enhance our **heritage assets** and their landscape settings, in particular the World Heritage Sites of Bath and National Landscapes
- Align the timely provision of **transport, health, education, social, cultural and green infrastructure** with development

What development is being proposed and where?

In response to meeting identified needs across Bath and North East Somerset and local priorities and issues, decisions must be made on the location and form of various types of development. The Options Document identifies sub-areas of the district and the places within them, their key challenges and opportunities, and explores their potential roles in helping to meet overall development needs. Potential site options or 'reasonable alternatives' for addressing the increased identified needs are set out in the Options Document.

Potential options are identified primarily in areas that are or can be better connected to jobs, services and facilities through public transport, walking, cycling and wheeling. This is in line with our transport vision which focusses on sustainable movement, reducing the need to travel by car and carbon emissions. Other opportunities and constraints to possible development have also been taken into account. Not all of the options will be taken forward for allocation for development in the Draft Local Plan.

It is clear that substantial infrastructure investment will be needed to enable potential development in some locations to come forward. Through the local plan and other mechanisms, the council will seek to secure investment from the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WECA) and central government to ensure the up-front delivery of infrastructure. This can unlock new housing and employment development with improved sustainable transport connectivity. At this stage, the cumulative impact of development and identification of infrastructure investment and provision required has not been undertaken because the decision for which development locations will be progressed has not yet been made. This work is being and will continue to be done in collaboration with key infrastructure providers and agencies. It will influence whether and how the need for additional development can be met.

Bath

There is substantial pressure for development arising from housing and economic needs within the City of Bath, as such it is the driver for a significant element of the housing needed in B&NES and will continue to be a focus for economic or employment space.

The land supply in Bath is limited and at a premium. Brownfield sites need to be re-developed where possible and at optimum densities to ensure land is used efficiently. However, as many major brownfield sites have been developed in recent years relatively few new brownfield sites are available for development in the city. Therefore, the council needs to carefully manage the land that is available and prioritise it for general housing and employment over other needs.

Moreover, residents in nearby settlements in key transport corridors linking to Bath will look to the city as their main urban centre and employment destination. The quality of sustainable transport connections to these settlements needs to be enhanced to enable sustainable movement into and out of the city.

Opportunities for outward expansion of the city for both housing and employment space also need to be explored. Assessment evidence shows that Bath's ability to expand outwards into the setting of the World Heritage Sites without causing substantial harm is limited. However, options for outward expansion are included in this Local Plan Options Document to help ascertain whether substantial public benefits from strategic scale development can be identified that might outweigh this harm. The council will continue to facilitate continued engagement with central government on growing the city.

Potential options include refining and reviewing existing site allocations within the City which are yet to be delivered, identifying options for more economic development by exploring areas like the Production Quarter and land to the south west of the existing Odd Down Park and Ride, and considering areas on the edge of Bath, such as Sulis Club and land to the west of Bath.

Bristol to Bath Corridor

B&NES has worked with the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority to prepare a Growth Strategy for the West of England. This sets out the strong investment potential in distinct areas across the West of England, where investment in development could support economic prosperity across the region.

Bath and Bristol are currently two separate and distinct economic areas, and yet they are only 15 minutes apart by rail. If these economies were combined, they would become the 7th largest in England. The Corridor between these two thriving centres provides opportunities to better join the economies of our two cities.

Whilst well-connected by rail and bus, the A4 corridor between Bristol and Bath, together with the A37 through Whitchurch Village, are characterised by persistent transport challenges, including traffic congestion, fragmented active travel routes, and unreliable bus services. Further investment and development in this area provides the opportunity for exceptional connectivity by public transport and active travel into Bath, Bristol and beyond, offering sustainable and affordable access to work, education and recreation for both new and existing communities.

The Bristol to Bath Corridor offers an opportunity to do things differently, building a network of connected communities within the valley landscape, with improvements to social and cultural infrastructure, all within a nature positive setting. Specific options are outlined for Keynsham, Saltford village, Hicks Gate and Whitchurch village.

Somer Valley

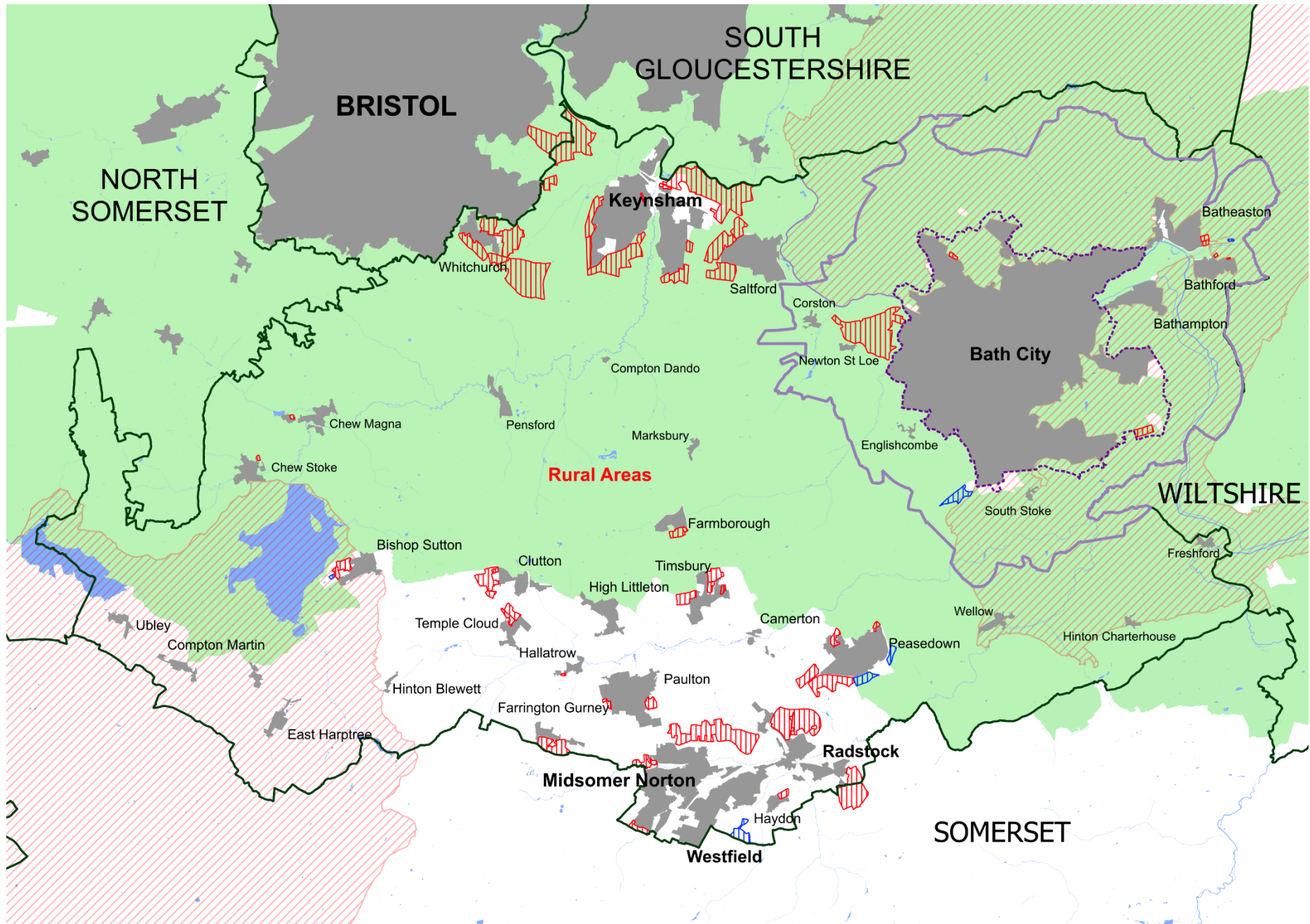
The Somer Valley area has had significant housing development over the current adopted local plan period from 2011. However, this has been delivered on an incremental basis with insufficient infrastructure provision to serve development. This has resulted in a lack of integrated high quality sustainable and active travel links in the area. Moreover, a restructuring of the local economy has resulted in some businesses closing and a subsequent increase in out-commuting and car dependency.

The strategy for the Somer Valley focusses on boosting the economic role of the area and providing additional housing to help address needs (including for affordable housing). It aims to unlock development through substantial investment in improving sustainable transport connectivity to and from and within the Somer Valley. As an identified growth zone by WECA, potential location options are presented for development for housing and business uses at Peasedown, North Radstock, Writhlington, the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone, Farrington Gurney, as well as a number of smaller non-strategic sites.

Rural Areas

This section introduces growth pathways for better-connected and more sustainable villages. Under a community-led growth pathway, local communities take the lead in shaping and advancing their growth initiatives.

The second pathway focusses on a local plan-led approach that provides a clear direction for growth and change, adhering to the NPPF's principles of sustainable development. This approach is essential in helping to meet our overall housing, job, and infrastructure requirements and provides certainty for both communities and developers. The increased housing pressures across the district, including in rural areas, mean that there is now a need to consider whether some rural locations may be suitable for local plan-led larger-scale development. Where possible, we have worked with parish councils as community representatives to identify site options within these areas and present the most appropriate locations and scales of Local-Plan led growth.



Development Management Policies

Development Management policies set out local standards and criteria which are used to assess and decide planning applications for the development and use of land and buildings. The government intend to prepare National Development Management Policies (NDMP). NDMPs are being introduced to deal with nationally important matters and enable local plans to be more streamlined and focus on genuinely local matters. Once NDMPs have been approved by government, they do not need to be duplicated in local plans. However, uncertainty remains around the scope of NDMPs, including preparation timescales, coverage and the scope for local planning authorities to define local standards that differ from those in some NDMPs. Therefore, the council is continuing to prepare and consult on options for Development Management policies.

In the Options Document (Spring 2024) we set out options for the introduction of new policies and proposed updates for many existing Development Management policies. This included policy options relating to: the approach towards securing affordable housing in different types of residential development, purpose-built student accommodation, protecting employment uses, facilitating Biodiversity Net Gain, and better helping us achieve carbon neutrality.

The comments received continue to be carefully considered by the council in progressing towards the Draft Local Plan. We are not reconsulting on the previously presented policy options through this document. This Options Document presents a more limited range of Development Management policy options and approaches. It focusses only on new policy areas not presented previously and entirely new or updated options proposed in light of updated evidence or in response to the government's revised NPPF.

New or updated policy approaches/areas that are addressed in this Options Document are as follows.

- **Housing**
 - Including: Affordable Housing; Co-living Schemes; Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs); Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA); Gypsies, Roma, Travellers and Travelling Show People; and Housing Development Boundaries (HDBs).
- **Climate Change**
 - Including: Climate Adaptation and Resilience; Retrofit First; District Heating; Renewable Energy; and Low Impact Farming
- **Nature and Ecosystem Services**
 - Including: Biodiversity Net Gain; Green Infrastructure; and Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape Character
- **Green Belt**
- **Jobs and Economy**
 - Undesignated Industrial Sites Policy
- **Healthy and Vibrant Communities**
 - Including: Town Centre Retail Hierarchy and Development; Cultural Infrastructure; Local Green Spaces; and Somersetshire Coal Canal and the Wansdyke
- **Minerals and Waste**
 - Waste

However, given current updates and potential further changes to national policy and guidance (including proposed National Development Management Policies), alongside comments received in respect of the Options Document (Spring 2024), all relevant policies within the adopted Local Plan will be reviewed and may be amended as we progress towards the Draft Local Plan.

Consultation from 3rd October to 14th November 2025

All comments must be received by 14th November.

How can I participate in the Local plan Options Consultation?

There are many ways you can participate in the consultation of the Local Plan Options Document. From in person drop in events, to local roadshows (pop-up events) and online engagement. We have taken a new innovative engagement approach with the intention of expanding our outreach.

In-person drop-in events are being held at several locations around the district where you can learn more about the Options Document and potential site options, as well as speak to Officers. Starting on the 7th October, we will also be launching a consultation roadshow which will take place over 20 days at 60 different locations across the district. The roadshow will be formed of pop-up events, drop-ins and workshops to give variety and to be as inclusive as possible.

Stay up to date with the latest engagement events via our dedicated consultation website: www.bathnesplaces.co.uk/localplan

How do I provide comments and feedback?

We will be accepting comments between 3rd October and 14th November 2025.

You are encouraged to submit your comments online at <https://bathnesplaces.co.uk/localplan/> or, if this is not possible, by post:

**Planning Policy Team, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Lewis House,
Manvers Street, Bath, BA1 1JG**

If you are responding by post, please clearly indicate which site/policy option you are commenting on.

Please note: we will not be accepting comments via email. All online comments should be submitted via the consultation website.

Alternative formats

There is an option to download a PDF version on the consultation website. Alternatively, you can access copies of the Options Document at One Stop Shops or read the easy read version which will be made available.

Assistance and Queries:

If you encounter challenges with the online consultation platform or have queries related to the Local Plan Options Consultation, we are here to assist. The Planning Policy team contact details are outlined below.

Phone Number: 01225 39 40 41

Email: local_plan@bathnes.gov.uk

All comments must be received by 14th November 2025.