

Adoption of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)

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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To consider the conclusions of the Inspector's Report, and note how the 12 Main Modifications¹ and Additional Modifications² amend the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028).
- 1.2. To request that the final version of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) is formally adopted.

2. Public Interest

- 2.1. An adopted local plan provides the mechanism to guide the development industry and inform the public about the future strategy for growth in South Somerset. The local plan is the principal planning tool for South Somerset District Council to encourage investment, protect the environment, create jobs, and deliver sustainable development.

Recommendation(s)

That Council agree:

1. To accept the conclusions of the Inspector's Report and approve the necessary Main Modifications to make the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) sound (**Appendix A**); and
2. To adopt the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) (**Appendix B**).

N.B. In the event that the Council does not recommend adoption, the Council would need to withdraw the current local plan and prepare a new local plan from the beginning of the process.

3. To approve the Additional Modifications (**Appendix C**);
4. To approve the Adoption Statement (**Appendix D**), Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement (**Appendix E**), and revised Policies Maps (**Appendix F**); and
5. To delegate responsibility to the Assistant Director for Economy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning to make any final minor text amendments which may be necessary to enable the Adopted South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) and Policies Map to be published.

¹ Inspector's Report into the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) and Main Modifications: https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/700388/south_somerset_lp_final_report.pdf

² Additional Modifications to the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028): <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-2006-2028/adopted-south-somerset-local-plan/>

3. Background

- 3.1. The Government through both legislation and policy has reiterated that the planning system should be genuinely 'plan-led'. To achieve this, each local authority is required to prepare, have examined, and then adopt a local plan which sets out policies for growth and regeneration.
- 3.2. The South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in January 2013. During May and June 2013 the plan was subject to an Independent Examination. The examination process was suspended in July 2013 to allow for additional work to be carried out and overcome some identified shortcomings relating to whether the plan was 'sound'. On completion of this work, the examination resumed with further Hearing Sessions held in June 2014.
- 3.3. As a result of the examination process, a series of Main Modifications to the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) were proposed and consulted upon in March 2014³ and also in November 2014⁴. The Council has formally asked the Inspector to consider the Main Modifications in reaching a conclusion on whether the local plan is 'sound' and capable of being adopted.
- 3.4. The Inspector, in reaching his conclusion, has considered all of the evidence put forward by the Council and stakeholders; and on the 8th January 2015 formally wrote to the Council setting out his final Inspector's Report. His principal conclusion is that the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) is 'sound' subject to 12 Main Modifications.
- 3.5. The Main Modifications to the local plan recommended by the Inspector have been made to create the final version of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028). These changes have been considered by the Council's Project Management Board on the 2nd March 2015.

4. Report

- 4.1. The adoption of the local plan represents the final stage in the process of creating a statutory document that will shape the future growth and development in the district.
- 4.2. Having an adopted plan brings a number of advantages:
 - Future decisions on planning applications will be made in accordance with the policies in the plan, and those policies will be given full weight;
 - It provides greater certainty for communities and developers as to where development will be delivered;
 - It focuses investment into South Somerset and supports sustainable growth of our towns and villages; and
 - It provides a framework to prepare and confirm future work, including: a Community Infrastructure Levy and Charging Schedule, Site Allocation / Masterplanning work, and other development plan documents.

³ South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) – Proposed Main Modifications (March 2014):
https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/648229/south_somerset_local_plan_proposed_main_modifications_submission_to_pins.pdf

⁴ South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) – Further Main Modifications (November 2014):
https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/693581/south_somerset_local_plan_further_main_modifications_issue_version_november_2014_final_issue_to_pins.pdf

- 4.3. The receipt of the Inspector's Report on the 8th January 2015 marked the end of the examination process into the local plan. The report concluded that the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) is 'sound', subject to 12 Main Modifications. It is these Main Modifications which make-up the important, substantive changes to the local plan; and it is these changes that need to be considered when reaching a decision on whether, or not, to adopt the local plan.
- 4.4. The 12 Main Modifications are set out alongside the Inspector's Report in Appendix B. They can be summarised as:
- Clarifying that housing growth figures in the plan are minimum targets;
 - Updating the overall housing figure for Yeovil and revising the approach to delivery, including providing for two sustainable urban extensions;
 - Confirming the location and breakdown of growth in each of the two sustainable urban extensions in Yeovil, and a revision to the targets for sustainable travel;
 - Adding detailed wording on structural landscaping for the sustainable urban extension to the north-east of Yeovil;
 - Removing the policy relating to a buffer zone for East Coker and North Coker;
 - Revising the strategy for Ilminster by identifying a direction of growth to the south-west of the town;
 - Revising the amount of jobs and employment land to be delivered in South Somerset;
 - Removing a specific figure for employment land required in Rural Settlements;
 - Confirming the permissive approach to housing proposals adjacent to the development areas at Crewkerne, Wincanton, and Rural Centres (prior to Site Allocations DPD work);
 - Confirming the permissive approach to employment proposals adjacent to the development areas at Crewkerne, Wincanton, and Rural Centres (prior to Site Allocations DPD work);
 - Confirming that the Council will carry out an 'early review' of policy for delivering housing and employment provision in Wincanton within three years of the date of adoption; and
 - Updating the policy requirements for the provision of sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- 4.5. In addition, the Main Modifications are supported by a series of Additional Modifications, which do not represent fundamental changes to the plan, but which aid comprehension and provide additional clarifications to the plan. These are minor text and grammatical changes necessary to bring the document up-to-date and clarify wording, but crucially do not have a material effect on whether the plan is sound. The Additional Modifications are set out in full in **Appendix C**.
- 4.6. To meet the legal requirements, the adoption version of the local plan is also accompanied by Adoption Statement (**see Appendix D**), Sustainability Appraisal and Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement (**see Appendix E**), and revised Policies Maps (**see Appendix F**).

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. It is important that the findings of the Inspector's Report and the recommended Main Modifications are read and understood. It is the changes brought about by the Main Modifications which make the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) 'sound'.

- 5.2. The Council can only adopt the local plan if these changes are made. If it is decided that the recommended Main Modifications are not accepted, then the local plan cannot be adopted. In this scenario the Council would then need to withdraw the local plan and begin the preparation and plan-making process from the beginning.
- 5.3. If the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) is adopted it will formally become part of the statutory 'development plan' for the district. It will then be a legal document that must be taken into account when reaching decisions on planning applications and development proposals in South Somerset.
- 5.4. If the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) is adopted it will be publicised as per the Council's usual procedures, and according to Planning And Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Regulation 26 of the Town And Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. If the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) is adopted it will help to shape investment decisions in the district and encourage growth. It will also provide a policy framework to prepare further work, including the Community Infrastructure Levy. The resources required to prepare further work have been included in current and future budgets.
- 6.2. If the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) is not adopted, the Council will need to withdraw the document. If this course of action was taken, the Council would face significant financial implications as a result of needing to begin the plan-making process again, from the beginning. Costs linked to generating new evidence, carrying out public consultation, and paying for further examination costs from the Planning Inspectorate would all be incurred.

7. Risk

- 7.1. Some major risks would arise if Members decide not to recommend that the local plan is adopted. If that decision is taken, the impacts would include:
 - Work will need to start again on preparing evidence, carrying out public consultation, suggesting growth options, and examining the policies. This will come with significant financial and staff resource implications, and result in a further 2 – 3 years' worth of time, funding and work before a new local plan was capable of being adopted.
 - The Council will fail to meet one of its Corporate Plan Priorities and will be unlikely to do so for 2-3 years.
 - From a reputational point of view the Council will be in a position where it has to start the process again, and will be the only Local Planning Authority in Somerset without an adopted local plan
 - Decision-making on planning applications will be less certain, with decisions made on out-of-date policies, which are more open to challenge by appeal, opening up a greater risk of inappropriate development;
 - The community and development industry will have no clear strategy for how development should proceed in the district;
 - There would be no strategy framework to inform future work, such as the Community Infrastructure Levy and Charging Schedule, Site Allocation / Masterplanning work, Neighbourhood Planning, and other development plan documents.

8. Corporate Priority Implications

- 8.1. Adopting the Local Plan is a high priority in the Council Plan “Our Plan - Your Future 2012 to 2015”. The progress of the Local Plan is important, principally to achieve adopted policies that will assist in realising the Council’s Corporate Aims relating to economic vitality and prosperity, improvement in the health and well-being of citizens, creation of safe, sustainable and cohesive communities and the promotion of a balanced natural and built environment.

9. Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

- 9.1. None.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1. The adoption version of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) has been prepared in accordance with the legislative and statutory requirements of an Equality Analysis, Habitats Regulations Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.

11. Background Papers

Appendix A – Inspector’s Report and Main Modifications

Appendix B – South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)

Appendix C – Additional Modifications

Appendix D – Adoption Statement

Appendix E – Sustainability Appraisal and Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement

Appendix F – Policies Maps

Project Management Board – Workshop 34: [http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-2006-2028/local-plan-\(formerly-core-strategy\)-project-management-board-reports/pmb-34-2nd-march/](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan-2006-2028/local-plan-(formerly-core-strategy)-project-management-board-reports/pmb-34-2nd-march/)