

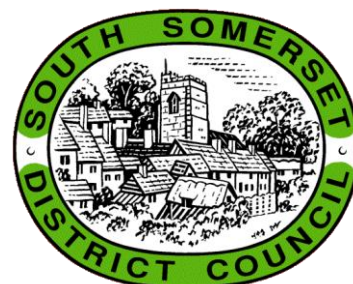
SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

(2017 – 2020)



April 2017



1. Introduction

- 1.1. A Local Development Scheme (LDS) is required under Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011). The LDS must specify (among other matters) the documents which, when prepared, will comprise the Local Plan for the area. It must be made available publically and kept up-to-date.
- 1.2. This version of the LDS covers the period 2017 – 2020 and sets out a programme and resourcing plan for various documents to be prepared and finalised. It also identifies inter-dependencies, risks and contingencies associated with their delivery.
- 1.3. In accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, the LDS is available to the public. Progress against the LDS and the authority's compliance with the timetables set out will be monitored and reported at least annually (and earlier if and where appropriate) alongside the overall Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR).

2. Context and Background

- 2.1. South Somerset District Council's (hereon 'the Council') first LDS was adopted in September 2007 and set the approach for the period 2007 – 2010. It was updated in January 2013 to cover the period 2013 – 2016 and updated again in August 2015 to cover the period 2015 - 2018.
- 2.2. In March 2015, the Council adopted the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)¹, which alters the perspective on what future evidence, strategies and documents should be produced to shape the future of South Somerset.
- 2.3. The previous intention, once the Local Plan was adopted, was to progress to a series of related 'Development Plan Documents' and 'Supplementary Planning Documents'. However, three issues altered the Council's thinking on the way forward, these were:
 - the preferred approach set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to have the various component parts needed for a development plan to be captured within one document;
 - the Council was advised to undertake an 'early review' of the local plan to clarify specific issues relating to housing and employment provision in Wincanton. The early review was to be completed within three years of the date of adoption of the local plan, i.e. by March 2018; and
 - the Council's commitment to adopting a Community Infrastructure Levy²
- 2.4. Reflecting on these changes in circumstance, the Council agreed to take the opportunity to make a transition into the 'all-in-one' local plan, *and* deliver an early review at the same time. Taking this decision dictates priorities, timescales, and resource allocation; and therefore drives the programme of work set out in this LDS.

¹ South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) was adopted at a meeting of Full Council on the 5th March 2015.

² The South Somerset Community Infrastructure Levy was approved at a meeting of Full Council on 17th November 2016

3. Delivering An Early Review of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)

Overview

- 3.1. The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) was adopted in March 2015. The Inspector, in accepting that the Local Plan was ‘sound’, set out that the Council should undertake an early review of the policies relating to housing and employment provision in Wincanton. This early review is to be completed within three years of the date of adoption, which would be no later than **March 2018**.
- 3.2. The Council previously stated that it will produce a Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) to provide the additional detail on proposals for ‘Sustainable Urban Extensions’ in Yeovil and ‘Directions of Growth’ in Market Towns.
- 3.3. It was agreed however that it would be more efficient to produce the additional site-specific detail on growth locations in parallel with the work to carry out an early review of housing and employment provision in Wincanton. Both would involve formal processes, such as:
 - the preparation and scrutiny of technical evidence;
 - undertaking statutory public consultation;
 - complying with the legislative requirements of Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment, and Equalities Analysis; and
 - Independent Examination to ratify the policies and plans.
- 3.4. To do each document in sequence would duplicate effort and result in a less than optimal allocation of resources. It would also pose the risk that whilst doing the work separately, other parts of the Council’s evidence-base would become out-of-date and no longer relevant to the challenges in South Somerset. This could mean any policy approaches prepared are vulnerable to challenge and potentially found unsound during Independent Examination.
- 3.5. Therefore, the approach advocated in the previous and in this LDS is to ‘slot-in’ the site-specific work into the early review of the local plan.
- 3.6. Whilst the 2015-2018 LDS set out a work programme to complete all aspects of the early review by March 2018 it has become clear that whilst progress has been significant the March 2018 deadline will not be met. Reasons for this include:
 - Team resources being focussed on the adoption of CIL, input into planning appeals and other strategic projects.
 - Working with partners such as the other Somerset Authorities to produce the Strategic Market Housing Market Assessment has meant the process has taken longer.
 - Production of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment has taken more time than expected due to the need to re-design the database and ensure all relevant data has been entered.

Updating the Evidence Base

- 3.7. The starting point for carrying out the early review of the local plan is to generate a robust and up-to-date evidence-base. This has constituted the majority of the work carried out in the last year or so. A number of the required evidence-based documents are inter-linked, whilst some will be required to be prepared in sequence.
- 3.8. To inform the early review of the local plan, the following documents have been prepared or will be required to be prepared / updated:
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
 - Community Infrastructure Levy (incorporating viability appraisals);
 - Strategic Housing Market Assessment (including consideration of objectively assessed housing need and functional economic market area);
 - Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment;
 - Employment Land Review;
 - Settlement Profile Analysis;
 - South Somerset Transport Strategy;
 - Retail and Town Centre Needs Assessment;
 - Landscape Strategy; and
 - Heritage Strategy.
- 3.9. At the same time, there are a number of other workstreams which require on-going and regular assessments, or technical analysis. This includes:
- Preparing and updating the Council's Five-year Housing Land Supply position;
 - Producing the Authority's Monitoring Report; and
 - Providing responses to Development Management issues, cases; including writing statements of case and providing evidence at planning appeal inquiries.
- 3.10. All together this represents a significant body of work, and will be a major undertaking in terms of the time, staff inputs, financial resources, Elected Member engagement, community engagement, and liaison with other stakeholders/organisations/agencies. Inherently, there are some evidence-base documents that should be treated as a higher priority than others. This dictates the timing of their delivery and the resources allocated to them.

Finalising the Early Review of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028)

- 3.11. As well as producing the additional evidence to inform the early review of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028), the Council is required to carry out community engagement, public consultation, discussions with other stakeholders, as well as carry out a Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Equality Analysis to meet the statutory requirements for preparing a local plan.
- 3.12. As and when consultation stages occur these will be carried out in accordance with the regulations and standards set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, and the Council's own good practice set out in the Statement of Community Involvement³.

³ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/806406/statement_of_community_involvement_final_adopted_dec_2015_.pdf

4. Timescales for Delivery

- 4.1. Having considered the desired outcome for an early review of the local plan, Table 4.1 below provides the sequence and timing for preparing the necessary evidence base documents together with an audit of progress so far against the time table set out in the 2015-2018 LDS. Where appropriate a revised completion date is included. Additional evidence base has been identified as 7a and 17.
- 4.2. As noted above, the necessary work, including formal public consultation on the early review of the local plan was due to be completed by March 2018. Table 4.1 demonstrates significant progress has been made towards completing the local plan evidence base. Whilst timescales have slipped, it is important that the Council maintains momentum and has an up to date Local Plan. The National Planning Practice Guidance expects all local plans to be reviewed in whole or in part at least every five years.

Table 4.1: Timetable for delivery of evidence base documents

| Evidence Base Document | Start Date LDS 2015-2018 | Completion Date LDS 2015-2018 | Produced | Progress | Comments / Revised Completion Date 2017-2020 |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| 1. Statement of Community Involvement | May 2015 | September 2015 | In-house | Completed Adopted December 2015 | NA |
| 2. Infrastructure Delivery Plan | January 2015 | October 2015 | In-house | Completed January 2016 ⁴ | Consideration of need to update IDP based upon progress toward preferred options stage consultation on Early Review of Local Plan. |
| 3. Confirmation of Housing Market Area and Functional Economic Area | March 2015 | September 2015 | Externally | Completed September 2015 ⁵ | NA |
| 4. Community Infrastructure Levy | March 2015 | April 2016 | In-house / Externally | Adopted November 2016 | The Charging Schedule and Regulation 123 list have been approved. The Development Manager will be taking responsibility for setting out governance arrangements. 2018 |
| 5. Settlement Profiles & Assessment | July 2015 | July 2016 | In-house | Ongoing | These documents will be used to highlight place specific issues arising from the |

⁴ <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/early-review-of-local-plan-2006-2028/evidence-base/>

⁵ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/797657/2015_09_29_somerset_hma_and_fema_final_report.pdf

| Evidence Base Document | Start Date LDS 2015-2018 | Completion Date LDS 2015-2018 | Produced | Progress | Comments / Revised Completion Date 2017-2020 | |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--|---|
| | | | | | evidence base and will be drawn together as part of the overall process as it progresses. They will be a product of the evidence base. June 2017 | |
| 6. | Full Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) | September 2015 | March 2016 | In-house / Externally | Completed October 2016 ⁶ | NA |
| 7. | Housing and Employment Land Availability & Detailed Sites Assessment (including Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople sites) (HELAA) | October 2015 | June 2016 | In-house / Externally | Completed February 2017 | Consideration of the need to update the HELAA based upon progress toward preferred options stage consultation on Early Review of Local Plan. |
| 7a. | Employment Land Review | NA | NA | In-house / Externally | On-going | Assessment work to complete the ELR process has already begun through the Employment Land Monitoring Report 2017 and the HELAA. Additional supporting economic analysis has been commissioned. April 2017 |
| 8. | Landscape Assessment & Strategy | October 2015 | October 2016 | In-house | Not required | The existing Peripheral Landscape Assessments are considered to be fit for purpose. |
| 9. | Historic Environment Strategy | October 2015 | October 2016 | In-house | Completed January 2017 | NA |
| 10. | South Somerset Transport Strategy | January 2016 | August 2016 | In-house / Externally | Not required | The need for this project has been superseded by existing transport assessments and work that has been carried out as part of the Yeovil Town Centre Refresh project. |
| 11. | Strategic | March 2016 | October | In-house / | On-going | It has been agreed to |

⁶ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/862544/somerset_final_shma_oct2016_revised.pdf

| Evidence Base Document | | Start Date LDS 2015-2018 | Completion Date LDS 2015-2018 | Produced | Progress | Comments / Revised Completion Date 2017-2020 |
|------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--|
| | Flood Risk Assessment | | 2016 | Externally | | jointly commission an update with Taunton Deane Borough Council. Spring 2017 |
| 12. | Retail and Town Centre Needs Assessment | March 2016 | October 2016 | In-house / Externally | On-going | Nathaniel Litchfield & Partners have been commissioned to undertake the assessment including Town Centre Boundaries and Primary/Secondary Shopping Frontages April 2017 |
| 13. | Annual Monitoring Report | | Every Six Months | In-house | Completed September 2016 | April 2017 |
| 14. | Five-year Housing Land Supply | | Annually | In-house | July 2016 | June 2017 |
| 15. | Processing and Liaising with Neighbourhood Plans | | On-going | In-house | On-going | South Somerset District Council currently has six designated neighbourhood areas. The Spatial Policy Team provides on-going technical advice and carries out Sustainable Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment Screening. As plans reach the later stages of preparation more input will be required. On-going |
| 16. | Development Management Responses / Preparing Proofs of Evidence / Attending Appeals | | On-going (Reviewed every six months) | In-house | On-going | On-going |
| 17. | Local Plan Viability Assessment | | NA | In-house / Externally | Not started | A plan wide viability assessment is required as part of the local plan evidence base. Work would commence as preferred options begin to emerge. 2018 |

N.B. Dates do not include time required for Council sign-off processes, or additional time required to secure approval from District Executive and/or Full Council.

- 4.3. Based upon the production of the above evidence it is expected that the formal stages of producing the early review of the local plan will commence from early-mid 2017. A revised indicative timetable is set out below in Table 4.2. Sustainability Appraisal is an on-going element of the Local Plan process and it is anticipated that external input will be required in order to fulfil the requirements of this process. Habitats Regulation Assessment and Equalities Analysis will also need to be undertaken. The timetable is subject to change depending upon a number of factors, namely: the outcome of the evidence gathering work, external influences such as changes in Government policy and Brexit as well as the Council's Transformation process and level of staff resources.
- 4.4. Given the number of uncertainties which may arise over a three-year period, the monitoring and review processes established by the Council, including the Authority's Monitoring Report will be used to track progress over the defined LDS period. Where there is a need to vary the timetable due to circumstance, this will be reported to District Executive committee and a resolution to alter the LDS timetable will be sought. This is confirmed in section 8.

Table 4.2: Indicative timetable for formal stages of delivering the early review of the local plan

| Local Plan-making stage and indicative date in LDS 2015-2018 | | Indicative Date LDS Board | Committee Process / public consultation | Examination Date |
|---|---|---|---|-------------------------|
| Public Consultation with Range of Interested Parties, including Communities on Scope and Issues (Regulation 18) Previous indicative date: March 2016 | Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Equalities Analysis: on-going | LDS Board to agree document for consultation June 2017 – NB: consultation on issues and options cannot commence until the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report has been completed. | District Executive Committee to agree document for consultation - July 2017 Public consultation September /October 2017 | N/A |
| Public Consultation on Preferred Approach (Regulation 18) Previous indicative date: October 2016 | | LDS Board to agree document for consultation September 2018 | District Executive Committee to agree document for consultation October 2018 Public consultation November / December 2018 | N/A |
| Statutory Consultation on 'Proposed Submission' / 'Publication' version of the revised Local Plan (Regulation 19) Previous indicative date: June 2017 | | LDS Board to agree document for consultation June 2019 | District Executive Committee and Full Council to agree final submission version of local plan July 2019 Public consultation on Submission Plan August /September 2019 | N/A |

| Local Plan-making stage and indicative date in LDS 2015-2018 | Indicative Date LDS Board | Committee Process / public consultation | Examination Date |
|--|---------------------------|---|------------------|
| Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22) Previous indicative date: June 2017 | March 2020 | N/A | N/A |
| Estimated Examination Previous indicative date: September 2017 | N/A | N/A | June 2020 |
| Estimated Date for Adoption Previous indicative date: March 2018 | November 2020 | District Executive and Full Council December 2020 | N/A |

5. Approach to Considering Other Work / Evidence Base Documents

Overview

- 5.1. As well as those core priorities outlined in Table 4.1, it is recognised that there are a number of subsidiary work streams which have been previously explored. The prioritisation of these issues may change over time depending upon whether they become more or less important to the critical path of achieving the early review of the local plan. However, at present, the following documents are not included in the programme of work within this LDS:
- Green Infrastructure Strategy;
 - Education Strategy; and
 - Yeovil Town Centre Strategy & Masterplan – the Yeovil Town Centres refresh has been commissioned and is being undertaken by consultants JLL.
- 5.2. As set out in Section 6, if any of these documents are requested, or determined to be necessary to ensure the robust preparation of the review of the local plan, there will likely be a requirement for additional resources beyond those currently identified.

Impact of Planning Appeals and Inquiries

- 5.3. The Spatial Policy team is mindful of the time and resource implications linked to preparing for planning appeals and presenting at appeal inquiries. As the development industry regains confidence and submits more planning applications, it is likely that more appeal situations will arise.
- 5.4. Whilst this work is identified in Table 4.1, the Council will record and monitor the impact of fulfilling this obligation every six months. If it is shown that it is having a detrimental impact on the overall objective of delivering the early review of the local plan, then a request for additional funding and/or resources will be made to the Council.

Impact of Neighbourhood Planning

- 5.5. The Council has committed to providing light touch support to those organisations/bodies that are progressing neighbourhood plans. This has an implication on resources within the service and currently support provided is not matched by the financial contributions received from central Government. Should a significant number of additional groups look to progress neighbourhood plans a separate and additional resourcing plan will be required. If this occurs, a resourcing proposal will be submitted to District Executive for review.
- 5.6. At a more general level, after neighbourhood plans are examined and come into effect, they become part of the statutory development plan for the area that they cover. They can be developed before, after or in parallel with a Local Plan, but the law requires that they must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan for the area. Neighbourhood plans are not tested against the policies in an emerging Local Plan although the reasoning and evidence informing the Local Plan process may be relevant to the consideration of the basic conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested.
- 5.7. In progressing the early review of the local plan, the Council will work positively and constructively with any qualifying body to, where appropriate, share evidence and resolve any potentially conflicting issues. Should any neighbourhood plans be made prior to the adoption of the revised local plan, the Council will take it into account its strategy and policies, and avoid duplicating policies that are in the neighbourhood plan.

6. Resources

Overview

- 6.1. As a result of the Council's 'lean review' process carried out in 2014 and other cuts, the Spatial Policy service currently has 7 posts, which equates to 6.5 full-time equivalent members of staff:
 - 1 x FT Principal Spatial Planner (post vacant⁷)
 - 1 x FT Senior Policy Planner
 - 2 x Policy Planners (1.8 FT equivalent)
 - 1x FT Technical Policy Planner
 - 1 x FT Transport Strategy Officer
 - 1 x PT Climate Change Officer (0.7 FT equivalent)
- 6.2. From an operational perspective this represents the minimum requirements to deliver on the forecast workload set out in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.
- 6.3. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 set out a challenging programme of work which has been progressed. However there is still work to be done and the level of input required to take the early review of the Local Plan through the relevant statutory stages cannot be underestimated. As such, it will not be possible to cater to additional project work over and above that set out unless further resources are made available. During the lifetime of the LDS, should requests be received for technical support outside of that defined in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, it will trigger requests for additional funding and/or resources.

⁷ The post has been advertised and it is anticipated that a replacement will be appointed by June 2017

Use of External Resources

- 6.4. To achieve the desired outcomes from delivering the project work outlined in this LDS is recognised that external support, most obviously through use of private-sector consultants, will be required throughout the LDS period. The exact budgetary requirements and financial implications will be finalised during the procurement of each piece of project work which is commissioned. However, the existing budgetary ceiling against which decisions will be made is linked to the existing Spatial Policy and Local Plan budgets and reserves.
- 6.5. During the course of delivering the work set out in the LDS that the Council will continue to collaborate with other/neighbouring local authorities to deliver required outputs. This may take the form of jointly procuring consultancy support, or it may be joint-working through officers to maximise the opportunities brought about by the requirements of the 'Duty to Co-operate'. The Council has long-standing relationships with neighbouring local authorities and has successfully procured commissions to improve the evidence-base, most recently for example on the jointly commissioned update on the extent of the Housing and Economic Market Areas and Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
- 6.6. The Council is increasingly in the position where services, data, analysis and advice which would ordinarily be forthcoming from Somerset County Council (SCC) are no longer available. This is as a result of budget and staff reductions at SCC. Where there is a requirement for professional advice and analysis to inform our position on matters of transport, education, and health, it is now the case that SSDC will have to resource and finance these technical inputs. The role of SCC has reverted to a more strategic advice giving function, with assistance providing on shaping the briefs for technical work but with little or no direct involvement.
- 6.7. The implication of this change in service delivery by SCC is a significantly increased financial burden on SSDC and the Spatial Policy service. Over the course of the LDS period this is expected to amount to between £50,000 and £100,000 of costs incurred by SSDC to help fill the gap in technical input.

Future Resources

- 6.8. During the timeframe established by the LDS it will be worth exploring what, if any, resource for producing evidence and technical reports could be available from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). At present, this appears limited, but subject to further devolved funding and an enhanced role for the LEP on matters such as spatial planning and housing, this may be a possibility.

7. Risks

- 7.1. At a project-level each individual workstream will come with specific risks that need to be scoped out and contingency arrangements established to effectively managing those risks. This will be done at the initiation of each project and documented alongside the proposed scope of works.
- 7.2. At the programme-level it is possible to identify a number of strategic risks, which require consideration and effective mitigation measures to ensure successful delivery. The current foreseen risks are set out in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Risk Assessment

| Risk | Likelihood | Effect | Proposed Mitigation |
|--|-------------------|---------------|---|
| 1. Reduced level of involvement and technical inputs provided by SCC | High | High | Maximise use of SSDC / Spatial Policy budgets and resources to procure (where necessary) alternative specialist advice to aid project delivery. |
| 2. Lack of political support and sign-off for proposed LDS. | Medium | High | Regular engagement with Portfolio Holder and Local Development Scheme Board to inform and update on progress of project work; as well as interim and final outputs. |
| 3. Change in Government policy over LDS period changes what is required in a Local Plan. | Medium | Medium | On-going review of Government policy. If necessary paper tabled to Local Development Scheme Board to identify any changes required to LDS. |
| 4. Failure to procure external consultancy support to deliver specific project-work. | Low | High | Utilise existing consultancy frameworks to secure appropriate consultants. Explore opportunities for joint commissioning with other local authorities where appropriate to share risk. |
| 5. Lack of skills, experience, and capability amongst existing staff | Medium | Medium | <p>Team is currently under resourced. The Principal Spatial Planner is left at the end of January 2017; the post has been advertised and the appointment process will need to be undertaken. It is unlikely that the post will be filled until June 2017.</p> <p>A FT Policy Planner has been appointed on an 18 month secondment to fill the gap left by an internal promotion to the Senior Policy Planner role. This means that the rate of progress will reduce in the short term.</p> <p>Once the advertised post has been filled any staff turnover / losses will be managed by Principal Spatial Planner and Associate Director for Economy to ensure consistency of resource.</p> |

| Risk | | Likelihood | Effect | Proposed Mitigation |
|------|--|------------|--------|--|
| 6. | Project-level milestones, timescales and outputs not met. | Low | Medium | Regular project-specific meetings and reviews to manage individual project milestones and outputs. Should two consecutive milestones be missed an 'update' report should be table to Local Development Scheme Boards explaining impact and identifying resolution. |
| 7. | Political make-up of the Council changes in May 2019 and members require a change of strategy. | Medium | High | The Local Development Scheme Board is comprised of members cutting cross the political spectrum. The Board's role in overseeing the process should help to ensure support for the strategy going forward. |
| 8. | The Transformation Process | High | Medium | The Council's Transformation process may have an impact on progress by diverting staff time towards the job application process. The efficient management of this stage will help to mitigate against the impacts. |

N.B. 'Likelihood' is categorised into: Low / Medium / High. 'Effect' is categorised in terms of impact on delivery into: Low / Medium / High

8. Monitoring and Review

- 8.1. The LDS schedules work, resources and financial commitments for a period of three years. Progress towards meeting the programme of work will be reviewed through the annual Authority Monitoring Report. In the meantime the Local Development Scheme Board will continue to take and overview of the process.
- 8.2. Any revisions to the LDS will be presented to District Executive Committee for their endorsement.