



Public Consultation Comments on the Draft Economic Development Strategy

Priority Theme	Comments
<p>PT 1: Business Support, Retention, Innovation and Inward Investment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important that business support extends to small businesses (98% of Somerset businesses have less than 50 employees) not just larger growth businesses. They are the backbone of our local economy and if supported have the potential to expand and grow. It would be great to see a target for a number of events or businesses supported in this sector as well as the top 100 businesses. • There should be a clear point of entry for all business support. This is currently quite confusing for businesses with council, LEP and others all offering disjointed support. It is not easy for businesses to be aware of what is available. • 1.4 – is there a plan to consult local tourism businesses on plans to promote the local tourist economy? They will be the best source of info on the types of visitors currently served and the opportunities out there. • 1.6 – it would be great to see in this point support for SME's to tender for council contracts. Encouragement for them to form partnerships or consortia, tender support activities, prompt payment guarantees of 30 days or less and a regular monitoring and mapping of council procurement activity that is publically reported. • We support the Strategy's commitments to creating a supportive environment for businesses to start-up, grow and thrive. We would encourage further recognition of the role of social enterprises and ensuring a supportive environment for their development. We also believe that any local business support activities should complement existing policy and initiatives in this area, notably the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Growth Hub. Currently, the wording under Priority Theme 1 in relation to 'creation of a business support function to signpost to appropriate assistance' could potentially be interpreted as duplicating and/or competing with the existing HotSW Growth Hub service. We suggest that local business support priorities and interventions could, instead, best focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing awareness and penetration of the HotSW Growth Hub in South Somerset; and/or • Addressing local gaps in the business support offer. • In this vein, we are supportive of the Strategy's 'key business account programme' action which could clearly complement and add value to existing business support provision. Therefore, we would be keen to work with SSDC and partners to share intelligence to best benefit the economy. • We also consider the key sector support plans / propositions action to be positive and suggest that this could be expanded to also include and/or link to opportunities in relation to the 'grand challenges' set out in the national Industrial Strategy. It may also be helpful to set related inward investment activities in the context of existing national, regional and LEP initiatives and how SSDC will capitalise on these to the benefit of South Somerset. • We welcome the Strategy's vision for an innovative South Somerset economy. We agree, as noted under Priority Theme 4, that there is a need for start-up and grow on managed workspace in South Somerset, but suggest that consideration should also be given to innovation space, including capitalising on Yeovil Innovation Centre and the emerging iAero

(Yeovil) Centre as key innovation assets in South Somerset. We also suggest that action 1.5 could be refined and be clearer on the difference between investment and innovation support.

- Really good that will be engaging with 100 businesses over different sectors as lack of proactivity is still raised by my customers
 - Question is how these businesses will be selected & how this feedback will be managed both in terms of actions taken and feedback loop back to those companies?
- (we are) a key business – which also has links to aerospace industry both locally in terms of our position within Yeovilton, but also on an international scale in terms of our reach.
- Business retention – following a recent consultancy looking at possible future development locations, (we) will most be certainly staying at Yeovilton. SSDC support would help that decision to grow into a full development project. Priority Theme 1.4 secondary action/project – support attractions promote new build. We are delighted to see reference to these types of objective.
- In respect of Priority Theme 1: Business Service and specifically action 1.3, keen to avoid duplication of potentially creating a local Business Support service. His comment more given as a note of caution and suggested action along the lines of working with the LEP Growth Hub to ensure services are appropriate and right for South Somerset.
- Opportunities for increasing biodiversity and wildlife economy e.g. wildlife safaris, willow, eco-creativity.
- Diversification and research into new crops in a changing climate for South Somerset.
- Reuse and recycling opportunities for business in the district. Aiming for a zero waste economy.
- Need to ensure the younger worker generation (20-30 year olds) see the district as an attractive location, and that future development provides for their needs. A concern that there is little to retain and attract such age groups to the area, especially Yeovil in view of limited social/leisure/lifestyle facilities and a more appropriate housing mix better aligned to the age group – a more dynamic environment needed. Also, question, who are we providing housing for?
- Supportive of the promotion of more innovative workspace across the district – in part to help attract/retain younger workers.
- Need for improved marketing of the area at district and county level, which is currently missing. A message of greater confidence/buzz in the area is needed although accepts this also necessitates a sub-regional message.
- I cannot fault your priority theme on business support, retention, inward investment and innovation. By working with the Growth Support, the LEP and any other bodies will ensure our business already established here and new business continue and remain here.
- Our economy is a multitude of business and encouragement of diversification where needed through innovation and generally keeping abreast of new techniques or processes should be encouraged and supported. Our food and drink sector continues to grow and be recognised worldwide for its quality and production and should be supported where possible along with the natural marriage of our tourism off the back of such businesses.
- I don't know where we sit in the ranking of food companies in South Somerset, but I'm not aware of any contact as yet from a council member and I have been in situ since December 2018. It may be that we are not of sufficient size to merit contact – we are @15m turnover.
- It looks fairly heavily weighted towards aerospace and digital – food gets mentioned but it does feel like a slightly second

<p>PT2: Transport and Communications Infrastructure</p>	<p>rate citizen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There appears to be no mention of the serious lack of local (rural particularly) public transport. Yes, we need the rail, A303 and A358 improvements, but the decline in public transport provision that has taken place on recent years must have a huge impact on the ability of people to get to places of work, training and education. It also means that there is a far higher proportion of private vehicles on the roads, often with one occupant, than is good for almost any aspect of life you care to mention. • Where BDUK will struggle to get good broadband coverage in rural areas it is key that the council explores other methods such as Wi-Fi systems to establish connectivity for more rural businesses. • In respect of the Strategic Road Network we understand the importance of effective transport connectivity in the delivery of growth, and therefore note the key role of the A303 proposals in your strategy. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support delivery of identified future growth. • Transport section mentions infrastructure & working with rail providers – but how about bus & coach providers who are key to the area • Transport infrastructure is key, I particularly roads important for visitor access. Detail for all tourism is need for good brown signage and help in relations with Highway Agency. New A303 junctions, properly developed, can become access points to the South Somerset Countryside and attractions such as ourselves, to help us achieve the priorities identified in your proposed plan. • The future operation and interpretation techniques at the museum will make great use of digital technology. The site could also be a collaborative showcase for locally developed digital technology. The Museum and area will definitely benefit from superfast broadband, which would also support growing visitor expectations. • Flood mitigation and adaptation for the levels and surrounding areas. • New railway station in the Langport/Somerton area. Electric car infrastructure and looking towards automated electric transport. No mention of electric vehicles! No new roads should be required as automated transport will solve the issues. • Renewables particularly wind, solar and hydropower – a great opportunity for diversification from helicopters to wind turbine blades. Floating solar opportunities on flooded area. Aim to meet the zero carbon 2025/2030 in line with the UN/IPPC report https://www.ipcc.ch/ • Renewable gas – engaging with farm and food industry to divert waste to produce biomethane to green the gas network. Engage with Wessex Water to use waste for biomethane. Also hydrogen from surplus renewable energy. And coppicing for biofuel and flood mitigation. • Energy storage development through research and development of battery, hydrogen, hydro etc. Support off gas grid communities and businesses to switch to zero carbon energy solutions. • Support the increasing community energy businesses link with industry, education and housing to provide zero carbon energy for the district. • From our business interest perspective, importance of connectivity (broadband and road infrastructure) is key together with reference to iAero initiatives and linkages to government strategies. • Need to ensure testing/benchmarking with the SME community on matters such as broadband. • Whilst supportive of improvements to the A303 and A358, attention also needed to ensure the additional planned growth
---	--

along Western Corridor does not create traffic problems at local level, especially the Cartgate Link Road.

- Supportive of encouraging greater use of technology by the agricultural community to promote greater efficiency.
- As for communications infrastructure I feel continued progress is being made but there is always room for improvement and we should all continue to support and work collaboratively for the good of our residents on this and transport infrastructure.

Priority Theme	Comments
<p>PT3: Economic Inclusion – Skills, Careers and Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 3.1 and 3.3 should read ‘Somerset EBP’ and should include making links and developing practical opportunities between employers, businesses and education in order to promote jobs, careers and progression opportunities. • Success measure for 3 – Could include reduced number of NEET young people (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in South Somerset, increased numbers of apprenticeship starts (at all levels not just higher levels) • Digital skills are important but it is essential to also offer leadership and management training for example to encourage staff to develop and businesses to have the confidence to grow. • Throughout Priority Theme 3, there is, however, a focus on supporting younger people’s skills and we suggest that the framing of this priority and the supporting actions should be broadened to also clearly include (re) training and up-skilling opportunities for adults. As set out in the Strategy’s evidence base, South Somerset has an ageing population and we suggest that the Strategy should include commitments to work with partners to tackle this issue from an economic development perspective, including ideas currently being explored by the LEP, such as latent productivity. • Although evidence around limited higher education provision and participation has been included in Appendix 3, there is no specific commitment in the Strategy to seeking to increase higher-level skills in South Somerset, notably in relation to identified ‘golden opportunities’ such as aerospace, advanced engineering and manufacturing. • We also note that there is no specific reference in the draft Strategy to support for the development of leadership and management in SMEs as a key enabler of growth and suggest that this is captured under Priority Theme 1 or 3 with appropriate linkages made across the two priorities. • Tourism business training for staff in our industry particularly for leisure support/front of house/catering etc. as referred in multiple priority areas. • We can also develop in future to provide industry specific training in other areas through creation of partnerships using our collection and conservation works programme to support wider development in our region. • Learning/school engagement to promote careers – the museum hosts a number of existing events that links to a direct career route into aerospace industry. More can be achieved with support both now and in the future, it’s great to see this sort of learning opportunity feature in amongst a number of key priority themes. • Opportunities for skills and jobs in retrofitting existing buildings to make them require less heating and cooling in the summer. Jobs in renewable energy deployment. • It is widely recognised that the apprenticeship levy etc. has changed the dynamics of our skill shortages and working in both urban and rural areas is challenging because of different reasons. Whilst encouraging our younger generation to upskill and broaden their knowledge etc. we should never lose sight of our aging population who have an enormous amount to give our economy be it in voluntary work or indeed providing a depth of historical knowledge that simply cannot be gained from pure learning alone. • Availability of labour, skilled and unskilled, is probably (after Brexit) my key business concern – and I can’t see a clear strategy to lead this.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining people in the area is key as are skills shortages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With iAero, manufacture & tech focus, suggest linking into a STEM university too ○ Engaging with Yeovil College is vital, but I think we also need to look beyond Higher Education to really punch above our weight in this area ○ I know there isn't a university in the district but no harm in linking in with University of Bath or UWE for example particularly given their focus on Robotics/ sciences which links into aerospace – perhaps also via Innovate UK who I think have links with University of Bath.
<p>PT4: Land, Sites and Workspaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The link between our local plan and our economic strategy should be cohesive. Employment development sites and plans for their usage should have a dovetail between the two strategies. • The draft EDS specifically notes that it is important to identify and promote available employment sites in South Somerset in order to promote the district as a quality destination for business (priority theme 4, para 4.3) the opportunity is afforded to the council to do just that by supporting the hybrid application that delivers the strategic employment allocation in Yeovil. • The current application at the BP Site accords with the vision for South Somerset, as set out in the draft EDS. It aligns with the Priority Theme 1: Business Support, Retention, Innovation and Inward Investment and 4: Land, Sites and Workspaces, by ensuring the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The delivery of positive economic growth in western Yeovil, capable of widening the economic base of the town. ○ Creation of a major new employment hub on a long-standing strategic employment allocation ○ Provision of a viable scheme to deliver wider employment uses for the area (this matter is addressed in more detail below) ○ Provision of a fully serviced, well located, high quality business park which will be attractive to users in this sustainable location. ○ The creation of some 2,456 to 3,047 full time equivalent jobs ○ The addition of between £91 million and £112.9 million every year to the local economy going forward ○ The generation of annual business rates for the council of £3.2 million, equivalent to 18.3% of the council's revenue budget of £17.4 million on 2017/18 ○ Opportunities for training and skills improvement
<p>PT5: Supporting Urban Economies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What about helping community charities and social enterprises to help design and be a pro-active participant in the re-generation of town centres • For urban areas it is important to tackle absent landlords with empty premises, which bring down the tone of a high street. Flexibility should be put in place to achieve pop up shops and regular market days and special events in towns to attract footfall. Parking charges should also be a key part of this as provision can make or break a town. Linear, pay on exit parking should be introduced to encourage visitors to stay as long as they need to and it should be easy to pay by cash, card or mobile in all areas. Retailers are a major contributor to the local economy and major employers – looking at parking schemes for staff would also help with recruitment and retention of minimum wage staff. Business rate relief for retailers is also key. The Future High Street Fund should be considered for a key town where more investment could increase footfall.
<p>PT6: Supporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There appears to be no mention of the serious lack of local (rural particularly) public transport. Yes, we need the rail, A303 and

Rural Economies

A358 improvements, but the decline in public transport provision that has taken place on recent years must have a huge impact on the ability of people to get to places of work, training and education. It also means that there is a far higher proportion of private vehicles on the roads, often with one occupant, than is good for almost any aspect of life you care to mention. (this connects to 6.4 but also priority theme 2).

- We agree that promoting and safeguarding traditional rural businesses through provision of support to improve their productivity, growth and innovation is an important priority. Alongside this, however, we suggest that consideration be given, under Priority Theme 6, to measures to diversify the rural economy, beyond the commitments under action 6.3 to support agricultural and land-based industries to make best economic use of assets.

Section	Comments
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the introduction no reference to the role of education, schools and the college in helping to achieve your desired economic outcomes • Under other issues – it states ‘qualified at NVQ Level 4 and above yet on page 32 it states ‘improvements in levels of NVQ Level 3 and 4’ this is a contradiction • The draft EDS identifies economic issues and challenges within South Somerset, including that despite there being a range of allocated employment sites and land available to meet future employment needs, development viability remains a major challenge. The draft EDS notes that viability is particularly difficult for larger sites that will require more substantial new infrastructure to be provided upfront, in order for them to be successfully developed (page 10 of the draft EDS). • The current application at the BP site, with the inclusion of a Sainsbury’s food store, ensures a viable scheme can come forward on this long-standing strategic employment allocation, delivering positive economic growth in Yeovil and widening the economic base of Yeovil. • The BP site is an important strategic employment allocation for the council; with the majority of the site having been allocated in the last two local plans but yet to be delivered owing to the high cost of infrastructure to deliver the BP site. Specifically, there are clear council aspirations to bring it forward for a high-quality business park that will support the strategic objective to encourage high tech industries in Yeovil and deliver much needed sustainable economic growth in the area. Sources of public funding has been sought over many years to deliver this important site; an alternative source of funding is require. The Sainsbury’s will generate the enabling capacity required to fund the site infrastructure costs for the whole business park. The draft EDS should specifically address the role enabling development can play in delivering economic development in order to achieve the strategy and vision set out in the draft EDS for South Somerset.
Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the ‘we have’ section – what about Yeovil college and how it can help meet the needs of employers and our community? I think it needs to be mentioned in the ‘we have’ section as well as the ‘golden opportunities • Need for reference/recognition be made to the HotSW LEP Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) which was signed off on 25 January 2019. Keen to ensure SSDC work with the LEP to help shape the LIS. • Vision covers the key main points. • The opportunities are indeed golden, but none should be at the expense of others. The importance is across the district from the urban to the rural, one does not outshine the other nor take higher priority. • We are in general support of the draft EDS which seeks to support economic growth in South Somerset to create a strong, high performing and adaptable economy. We are also in general support of the economic vision set out in the draft EDS which is that South Somerset is a great place to do business, inter alia, an innovative, productive economy; a supportive environment for businesses to establish, grow and thrive; and prosperous and sustainable towns.
Priority Themes and Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 24 – What do the different coloured ticks mean? • Success criteria – these are not very SMART. For example when targeting additional tourism spend it would be great to see the criteria including “increased spend per head from X to Y”, or High Speed broadband increased from X% to Y% by a certain date.

	<p>The criteria in themselves are good, but not easy to measure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a key business – which also has links to aerospace industry both locally in terms of our position within Yeovilton, but also on an international scale in terms of our existing reach. • As a national Museum, it is great to see that we can benefit from and <u>contribute to</u> SSDC’s 4th ACM priority – to Promote and Develop Tourism. Tourism is one of SSDC’s EDS Key Growth sectors – we are planning to increase our business as part of our own development aspirations and build on our existing foundation of over 100,000 visitors per year to the Museum (7th ACM priority). Area East has particular priority (red tick) to attract tourist and increase their spend. • Priority Themes are appropriate with no major omissions. • Action Plan is fine with milestones logical and realistic.
<p>General Comments/Key Observations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads really well • Generally a very good document and having been involved in some of the development consultation I believe it covers most of the important issues. • To support small town centre businesses you absolutely need to sort out the parking and make it free/a lot cheaper. Please stop selling off car parks to private investors. • To support small town centre businesses discussion needs to take place with the outside investors of the Quedam regarding reducing shop unit rates – it’s ridiculous that this kind of investment controls our town’s viability. All they want is the most money they can get and it means most businesses eventually leave the Quedam, if they can afford to go in there in the first place. • Supporting different types of businesses requires some risk – i.e. putting in the kind of work units they want to use and not the usual mass-storage type industrial units that usually end up on an industrial development. Will this ever happen, I’m not sure it will. Bunford Park was meant to attract highly skilled businesses in research and development but has ended up with a Sainsbury’s and a load of warehouses. • The strength of the South Somerset economy (reflected by low levels of unemployment and high levels of working age employment) could be seen as a threat reflecting the recruitment problems for some employers, especially in engineering. This is also impacting on wage levels to address and fill vacancies. The combination of limited labour availability and higher wages could impact on future investment decisions with attention potentially focused on lower wage cost/labour availability locations to the detriment of the South Somerset economy. • Issues of public transport and broadband in the rural areas a major concern but accepts SSDC can only achieve so much and is dependent on other partners to address. • Essential need of local education providers, especially further education, to provide the right courses and skills that meet current and projected employer needs. Recognition this is being undertaken but more needs to be done and to start earlier in the schools. • Request that more is done to support the other market towns across the district and not solely concentrate on Yeovil and Chard. • Policy Linkages - We consider that housing and flood resilience are key to economic development and growth in South Somerset but recognise that these themes are picked up in the Local Plan and, hence, are not included in the draft Economic Development Strategy. It may, however, be beneficial for linkages between the Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy, beyond employment sites, to be set out more clearly.

- As well as this, there are linkages that could usefully be made between priority themes and actions within the Economic Development Strategy. For example, maximising the economic impact of actions under Priority Theme 2 to roll-out improved digital communications infrastructure relies on effective take-up and utilisation of this improved infrastructure and, hence, is clearly linked to actions under Priority Theme 3 to improve the digital skills of both businesses and the workforce. Similarly, there are connections between the business support agenda under Priority Theme 1 and actions under Priority Theme 3 to support self-employment, advice for local employers as well as access to finance.
- How will strategy be kept up-to-date & current over next 5 years, particular with unknowns around Brexit & also fast pace of developing technology?
 - Annual/ 6-monthly reviews?
- Concise & accurate overview of challenges & opportunities in the area
- The issues and challenges facing South Somerset are similar to many other areas in the South West, and therefore keen to encourage linkage and sharing of ideas/best practice with other areas to address issues.
- Read and digested. No specific comment for the consultation. There are several themes such as business support, rural businesses and digital that will be of particular interest as delivery plans further develop and actions are implemented.
- There is not a single reference to climate change mitigation in your plan. As such, it is not fit for purpose. The scientific evidence could not be clearer. If local and central government fail to act now to implement policy and taxation measures to curb human greenhouse gas emissions, your plan will fail fundamentally, not simply to deliver the envisioned economic growth and wellbeing, but to protect South Somerset residents from the life threatening impacts of climate change.
- In a recent address in Katowice at the UN climate conference – COP-24, the UN Secretary General stated that “rapid and far reaching transitions” in “all aspects of life” were needed to avert ecological and human catastrophes.
- In the light of the evidence published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it beggars belief that SSDC would propose an Economic Development Plan that does not focus on emergency measures to curb carbon emissions and reconfigure the local economy accordingly. Of course, I recognise that central government must play a leading role in this effort, but it is your duty to demand the necessary legislation from central government.
- Overall a good document covering a broad spectrum of the right issues, well presented, good mix of images and a good foreword; impression of a quality document.
- EDS needs to include an Executive Summary (especially important if reviewed by business leaders who want a brief summary of the key messages of delivery objectives for the short, medium and long term, and actions.
- I feel that there are a multitude of buzz words and very appealing combinations of text however I would like to see it all actually happen and not lose sight of certain aspects just because they may be slightly harder to achieve.
- Many conversations/discussions have been had where an overriding concern is the duplication of work. Working collaboratively on projects is not the same as double doing and nobody is a fan of wasted resources undertaking the same work as others because lines of communication are not perhaps as effective as they could be.
- It aligns very well with our strategic business plans for our site. We are developing propositions for the Templecombe Science Park, Sonar Academy, plus digital skills, all of which are under pinned by a growing and successful domestic and export business, we would like to get the Maritime Sector recognised in addition to Aerospace and Manufacturing as a key regional strength. I think it would play well to the recent Maritime 2050 strategy document released by department of Transport too.

- Our strategic propositions have good mapping to your Themes and Key Outcomes. Priority Theme 1, Priority Theme 3 and Priority Theme 4.
- The level of joined up thinking in South Somerset, between the business sector and local authority is at an all-time high, and this key relationship is critical to the success of the region. Currently representing over 110 businesses across the South Somerset area, from SMEs through the professional sector, larger employers, and other regional industry and government figures, Yeovil Chamber is widely considered as a key stakeholder by South Somerset District Council. As President of Yeovil Chamber, and passionate about where I live, work and play, I am proud to have been asked to be part of the Economic Development Strategy consultancy team. Industry and local government in South Somerset are squarely focussed on identifying and embracing change and opportunity. Under the visionary leadership of CEO Alex Parmley, the level of seed investment from South Somerset District Council is meeting the challenges, and expanding at a time when most local authorities are cutting back, and this is evidenced in the ambitious town centre regeneration and employment projects currently in delivery. Private investment is also very much in evidence, and continues to arrive, with residential and commercial property developments in progress, and more is on the way. South Somerset enjoys virtually full employment, and new businesses are attracting more people into the area, bringing a rich diversity of skill sectors ranging from tourism, across the service sectors, to hi-tech and aerospace engineering. If that were not enough, South Somerset is at the very heart of some of the finest countryside to be found anywhere in the UK. Truly a great place to do business.
- No specific comment to make; other than we note the air station being highlighted as one of the Golden Opportunity in the district. As discussed we are a significant local employer, supporting the economy and establishing ever-closer links with community organisations going forward.