

# Public Agenda Pack



## **EXECUTIVE**

**Wednesday, 4 October 2023**

**10.00 am**

**John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere  
Road, Taunton TA1 1HE**

### **SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA**

To: The members of the Executive

We are now able to enclose the following information which was unavailable when the agenda was published:

Agenda Item 7      Statement of Community Involvement (Pages 3 - 10)  
PowerPoint Presentation

Agenda Item 8      Local Development Scheme (Pages 11 - 16)  
PowerPoint Presentation

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# What is a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)?

- Planning policy and decisions for new development need to take into account a range of different considerations
- SCI sets out how the Local Planning Authority will engage and consult with the community and stakeholders on planning matters
- Covers both engagement on planning policy (e.g. Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans) and determination of planning applications



# The need for a new SCI for Somerset

- Each of the existing 5 Local Planning Authorities (County and Districts) have their own separate adopted SCI's. There is therefore a need to prepare a new single SCI for Somerset. A draft SCI was agreed for consultation on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 by Exec.
- Need consistent approach to how we engage with our communities on planning matters across the new unitary authority area.
- The purpose of the SCI is to act as a high-level document setting out the minimum the Council will do in terms of statutory/legal requirements for consultation. More detailed Communication and Engagement Strategies are being prepared (e.g. Local Plan).

# Consultation Undertaken

- 6 weeks public consultation undertaken earlier this year (1<sup>st</sup> February to 16<sup>th</sup> March)
- Included engagement with agents, local groups and the various planning/regulation committees of the former Councils
- 164 responses received in total, including from local residents/businesses, agents, Parish/Town Councils and civic groups
- The final draft is supported by a consultation statement which includes a review of all comments received and subsequent changes the document. Main changes are summarised on the following slides.

# Main changes made following consultation

Paragraph 1.7 (introduction)	Additional wording to refer to key importance of engaging with parish/town/city councils and other local groups in all aspects of the planning system. This was following feedback that wording in this regard should be strengthened in the document.
Paragraph 1.14 (equalities and diversity)	Amended text to be clear that information can be made available in different formats, such as large print, easy read, audio and braille. This text now better reflects the Council's wider equalities and accessibility policy.
Paragraph 2.55 (Conservations Area)	Changes to text regarding consultation to be clear that conservation area appraisals and boundary reviews will include appropriate local community consultation.

# Main changes made following consultation

<p>Paragraph 3.8 to 3.12 (Pre-Application Stage)</p>	<p>Section comprehensively amended following feedback to strengthen the expectation for pre-application engagement with local communities, including Parish, Town and City Councils. Section states this should be early enough to genuinely inform proposals. Pre-app fees details included. Examples of consultation methods also now included, and reference made to Quality Review Panel.</p>
<p>Paragraph 3.27 (How do we consult)</p>	<p>Further wording following feedback from parish Councils to be clear that where consultation periods do not align with parish meetings then case officers will be pragmatic in terms of agreeing extensions of time.</p>
<p>Paragraph 3.29 (How to comment on planning applications)</p>	<p>Wording amended to be consistent with the equalities section and be clear that comments can be made online, via email or post, with details included on site notices and notification letters.</p>

# Main changes made following consultation

Paragraph 3.39 to 3.40 (Decisions)	Section comprehensively amended to refer to the Council's constitution and make reference to the procedures set out here in terms of planning committee arrangements, public speaking and the referral processes.
Paragraph 3.47 (Enforcement)	New enforcement section added following consultation feedback. This links to the Council's published enforcement policy and how people can report a breach.
Appendices	Appendices reviewed based on comments received to improve clarity and name additional specific and general consultation bodies where required.



# Any Questions?



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# Local Development Scheme (LDS)

- The Council has a legal requirement to produce a Local Plan within 5 years of vesting day (by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2028).
- Officers were supported by a Critical Friend to identify ways in which this could be achieved. Conclusion that 5 years could be achieved but only with sufficient financial and staff resources.
- To meet this ambitious timetable requires a streamlined approach and relies upon:
  - i. one round of formal consultation at Regulation 18 stage supported by other targeted engagement activities
  - ii. the Regulation 18 consultation would be in the form of a Draft Plan not an options document.

# Local Development Scheme (LDS)

## Local Plan timetable

Milestones	Dates
Commence project planning and evidence gathering	Apr 2023
Early engagement with internal and external stakeholders and further evidence gathering	Apr 2024 – Feb 2025
Regulation 18 consultation on Draft Plan	Apr 2025 – Jun 2025
Regulation 19 publication	Oct 2026
Submission for Independent Examination	Mar 2027
Inspector's Report	Feb 2028
Adoption	March 2028

Should it be necessary, the timetable can be extended through a revised LDS at a later date.

# Local Development Scheme (LDS)

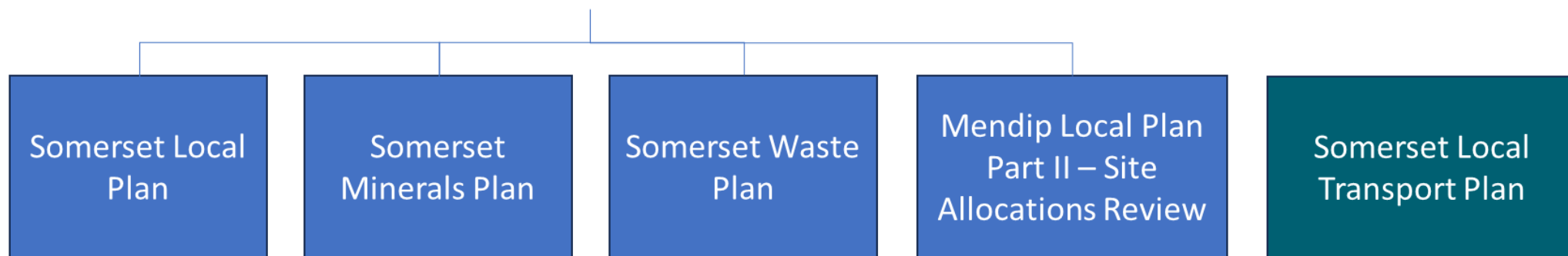
The timetable of the Local Plan is dependent on a number of factors:

- The Mendip Local Plan Part II Site Allocations Review
- Budget constraints leading to resource pressures
- The requirement for any Main Modifications where the Inspector requires further work, evidence base and consultation
- Ensuring governance and consultation processes are effective
- Potential planning reform through the implementation of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill
- Potential for changes in government and government priorities over the course of plan production
- The timing of a Phosphates Mitigation Strategy to ensure integration with Local Plan production

# Local Development Scheme (LDS)

- The timetable assumes the Local Plan is produced as a separate work strand from the Minerals and Waste Plan reviews. This ensures that if a difficult matter complicates one Plan, it does not delay or derail another.
- They will share a common evidence base and will collectively create a land use plan for Somerset. There may be potential for them to be brought together in a later iteration.
- It is critical that the LDS is approved because the High Court has ordered the Council to follow a strict timetable for the Mendip Site Allocations Review and we must demonstrate that this is what we are doing otherwise the Council could be held in contempt of court.

## Development Plan Documents



# Local Development Scheme (LDS)

## Climate Change policies

- The Local Plan is a key document that will help delivery on our Climate Emergency Strategy and its emerging policies will gain more weight as it moves through the production stages
- A separate climate change Development Plan Document is not recommended because:
  - a) It would divert resources away from the Local Plan significantly impacting the Local Plan timetable.
    - The Local Plan is a statutory requirement and the Council may face intervention by the Government if we fail to deliver a new Local Plan
    - A delayed Local Plan will mean a longer time without an up-to-date Local Plan meaning an increase in ‘planning by appeal’; reduced ability to deliver on other Council aspirations; and reduced chance of success in bidding for Government funding for projects
  - b) Considering climate change policies strategically within a Local Plan will ensure they are deliverable (viable) and that we can also deliver affordable housing and infrastructure requirements alongside
  - c) A DPD would have to follow the same production stages as a Local Plan with the added complexity of having to work within the remit of 5 adopted Local Plans

# Planning and Transport Policy Sub-Committee

- To oversee and monitor on behalf of the Council the review of the Development Plan (approve drafts for consultation)
- To make a Neighbourhood Development Plan within 8 weeks of the referendum
- Approve drafts of documents for consultation and adopt (e.g. Local Transport Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents)
- To agree infrastructure priorities and approve Community Infrastructure Levy and s106 spending priorities
- To consider and comment on documents that relate to the Development Plan and Local Transport Plan that could include policy options and draft policies