

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

WELLINGTON PLACE PLAN

Consultation Statement

March 2023

Wellington Place Plan
Consultation Statement

Contents

Contents 2

1. INTRODUCTION..... 3

2. LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT 3

3. CONSULTATION SUMMARY 4

4. PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT 7

5. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES RECEIVED 8

1. INTRODUCTION

Somerset West and Taunton Council commissioned consultants Allies and Morrison, Avison Young, and LUC to prepare the Wellington Place Plan, including: a Vision, Spatial Framework, Delivery Strategy and Action Plan. The Place Plan sets out to inform future decisions about the development, regeneration and conservation of the town; and look at potential options for future growth to support housing and employment needs; retail and commercial function; transport systems; culture and heritage.

This Consultation Statement explains how Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) undertook consultation on the Wellington Place Plan. It sets out how SWT has sought participation from communities and stakeholders across the SWT area and covers:

- Which bodies and persons were invited to make comments;
- How those bodies and persons were invited to make comment;
- The material that was subject to consultation; and
- A summary and analysis of the responses received and any issues raised.

This consultation report complies with SWT's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI outlines that the Council is committed to effective community engagement and seeks to use a wide range of methods for involving the community in the plan-making process. SWT's Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in November 2019.

2. LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT

The new Somerset West and Taunton Council came into being on Monday 1 April 2019 and combined the former West Somerset Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council into a brand new District council.

Subsequently, in July 2021, the Secretary of State approved a proposal for a new single unitary council to be formed in Somerset, to replace Somerset's current five councils. The new Somerset Council will come into being on 1 April 2023.

The formation of a unitary council in Somerset will have a significant impact on the way all public services (including planning and the Local Plan) are delivered for years to come. The Local Plan (or its equivalent if changed by central government), will need to be embedded into any new structures and cover the geographical area of the new local authority. The background work and consultation so far on the Local Plan 2040 will inform the new Local Plan for a unitary authority, as will work done on the Wellington Place Plan.

Given these timescales and the numerous stages in Local, Mineral and Waste Plan preparation, the existing councils (including Somerset West and Taunton Council) will therefore no longer be progressing new plans through the statutory process based on their individual geographies. Existing county and district councils are working closely to scope the content and timescales for new Development Plan(s) to be prepared in the future as part the single unitary council. This includes ongoing work to progress and align key evidence base documents. Relevant documents, including an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the new Somerset Council will be published in due course as the councils work through the transitional arrangements.

This means that although Somerset West and Taunton Council is no longer pursuing the Local Plan Review 2040, consulted upon in 2020, the information gathered through this consultation and evidence base will inform the Development Plan(s) for the new Somerset Council. The Wellington Place Plan will also inform the evidence base for new policies and allocations in the Development Plan(s) for the new Somerset Council

3. CONSULTATION SUMMARY

The Wellington Place Plan consultation ran from 23rd January to 20 February 2023 and follows a visioning exercise with the community in October 2022. The consultation followed the methods set out in our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the minimum requirements for public participation in the preparation of a Local Plan, which are to:

Publicise the consultation on the **Council's website**, with evidence base studies and related information also available to view and download;

Make hard copies of documents available at **inspection points** at the Council's offices; and

Notify statutory bodies, stakeholders, relevant groups and other individuals or groups on our consultation database – either by email; or letters if they have specifically requested to be contacted by post.

3.1 Purpose of the consultation

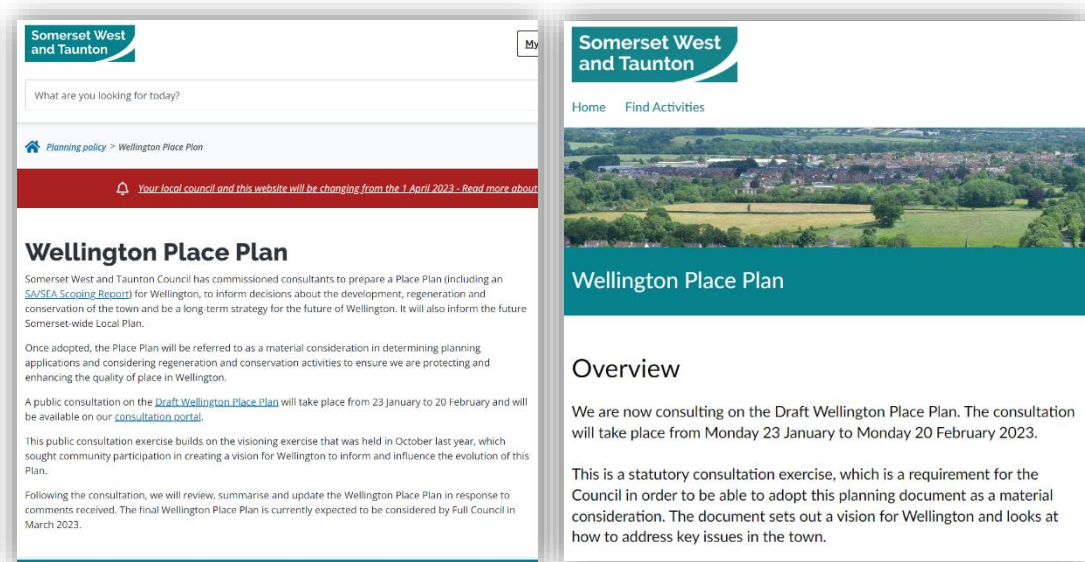
- The purpose of the Wellington Place Plan consultation was to:
- To consult formally for at least 4 weeks on the Wellington Place Plan document;
- To gain an understanding for the issues facing the local area and potential ways in which these could be addressed through the Place Plan; and
- To inform the final document.

3.2 Who was consulted?

- Statutory consultees (defined in the Regulations);
- General public (residents)
- Local businesses
- Parish/town councils
- Special interest groups and organisations
- Community/residents groups, including individuals/groups protected under the Equalities Act
- Consultee database (those who have expressed an interest previously)
- Under-represented groups – in Wellington these have been identified as being residents on low incomes, ethnic minority groups and young people (0-17 years)

3.3 Methods

- **Website** On the Planning Policy home page at: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/planning-policy/> and on our consultation portal: <https://yoursay.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk>. Baseline Report, Vision Summary, related information and questionnaire available to view and download.



- **Inspection Points** Hard copies of documents and questionnaires available to view at the Wellington Town Council's offices and Wellington Library
- **Email Notifications** sent from the generic email address strategy@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk to all statutory consultees, stakeholders and relevant groups and other individuals and organisations on our consultation database.

- **Information boards** at Wellington Library.



- **Public exhibitions** Three events at the Pop-Up Shop in Wellington

- Tuesday, 31st January, 3pm to 7pm
- Wednesday, 8th February, 3pm to 7pm
- Thursday, 16th February, 3pm to 7pm



- Social Media



4. PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT

The Place Plan has been informed by a diverse programme of engagement activities, which took place alongside our review of the evidence base, feeding into our understanding of opportunities, constraints and key priorities. This has shaped a clear set of thematic principles, projects and plans which respond to the main outcomes from a wide range of conversations with different stakeholders and members of the community.

Engagement activities were held as follows:

- Officers workshop: 11th October 2022 10am-12pm (virtual)
- Members workshop: 18th October 2022 6-8pm (virtual)
- Drop-in event: 20th October 2022 11am-3pm (in-person - Quaker Meeting House)
- Community workshop: 20th October 2022 5.30-7pm (in-person - Wellington Community Centre)
- Survey: 10th-21st October 2022 (virtual and in-person)
- Schools engagement

The big headlines to come out of these engagement sessions centred around five main themes and informed the following vision objectives:

- **Getting around** An accessible place, linking existing and new neighbourhoods with the town centre, prioritising active travel and buses. Making safe and easy connections to the railway station, community facilities, employment areas, surrounding landscape and settlements including Taunton.

5.1 Introduction

Key points from the consultation

Content and status of the Plan Comments in support of the detail and comprehensiveness of the Plan. Greater clarity suggested regarding the status of the Plan and the area in which it covers. Summary of the benefits of the Plan and how they intend to be measured should be provided.

Sustainable transport approach Support for improving sustainable links in Wellington to reduce congestion, alongside increasing residential development within the town centre to support businesses. Consideration is needed here as it was felt that implementing traffic blocking policies would decrease trade.

Facilities and services Comments related to ensuring Wellington Park is emphasised as an asset to the town in the Plan. Recognition for the convenience offerings of Asda and Lidl. Consideration for the changes to employment and retail pre and post Covid-19 pandemic. Reference to improvements needed to sporting facilities in Wellington.

Information provided in the Plan Suggestions for information to be provided regarding employment levels, commuting trends and new/recent housebuilding to balance the historical and social context provided. Reference emerging strategies such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Somerset Tree Strategy.

Growth areas and promoted sites The Plan should state clearly that the River Tone forms the northern boundary of development for the North and Tonedale Area. Several development sites shown in North and Tonedale Area should not be included as they are speculative or have been rejected. The Plan should clarify the implications for sites not previously promoted or included in the SHELAA. Several comments suggested additional sites that should be included within the Site Context Plan.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council welcomes support received for the general ambition of the Plan, in particular regarding the detail, comprehensiveness and move to improve sustainable transport links in Wellington. Some helpful comments were received about providing great clarity on the status of the Plan, the area it covers and the position relating to promoted sites.

5.2 Issues and opportunities

Out of 42 responses, 83% of respondents supported the main highlights set out for Wellington within the Place Plan and 17% did not agree with the

main highlights. 88% of respondents supported the main challenges set out for Wellington within the Place Plan and 12% did not support the main challenges.

Key points from the consultation

Reducing congestion and pollution Mixed support for reducing emissions in the town centre. Concern that limiting vehicle usage within the town to reduce emissions could cause issue. Parking charges should be low to encourage use of town centre facilities and shops. Majority of comments stated that congestion and pollution are a negative to the town. Car parking should be kept out-of-town. Emphasis should be given to reducing speed limits and providing EV charging points.

Town centre accessibility Many comments on the need to provide footways and cycleways. Wider pavements needed, for example, North Street, to enhance use and safety. Roads within the town centre present physical barriers to moving around the shops. Several comments in support of a northern bypass to connect the Station, although adapting the Longforth Road/town centre junction would be required.

Connectivity to/from Wellington Many comments received in terms of recognition for connecting Wellington to the wider area. Need for improved link road to Milverton. Cycleway between Wellington and Taunton. Bus services to Tiverton, Wiveliscombe, Exeter, Taunton Station and Wellington Station once opened. Reference potential cycle path between Wellington and Langford Budville. Mention of Grand Western Canal and associated benefits of providing an off-road cycle path.

Active travel Strong support for the need for a consistent and clear walking and cycling network across Wellington. Paths should be connected, well-maintained and increased provision of signs and wayfinding. Better accessibility by bike should be a priority.

Parks and Woodland Wellington Park should be emphasised more in the Plan. Several comments referred to the need to improve woodland connectivity and that reference should be made to Ancient Woodland.

Biodiversity and Climate Change Need to recognise the importance of wildlife corridors and protection of mature habitats that support wildlife diversity. Climate Change challenge should recognise increased rainfall and the need for 'Tree Pits', as part of SuDS to reduce surface water run-off. Several comments on the need for urban greening, particularly in the town centre, for surface water absorption and shade.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council's Climate Emergency declaration has embedded the importance of reducing the need to travel and to use more sustainable and active modes of travel, through a 'Vision and Validate' approach. The Council welcomes the support for improving walking and cycling and the need to facilitate traffic management across the town. In the long-term, removing HGVs is an aspiration and it is a priority to undertake a feasibility study to look at options for a northern relief road. Reference to connectivity to and from Wellington has been noted, such as the Grand Western Canal connection and woodland connectivity. These considerations will be taken into account in the preparation of the final draft.

5.3 *Vision and priorities*

"An accessible place" ranked as the highest priority for respondents, followed by "a welcoming town centre" and "a high bar for sustainability"

5.3.1 **An accessible place**

Key points from the consultation

Sustainable travel hierarchy The majority of respondents agreed with the objectives set out for "an accessible place", with particular comments around support for the new railway station, the sustainable travel hierarchy and reducing traffic and congestion in the town centre. It was noted that additional benefit could come from a cycle path to Taunton, a northern relief road and options for traffic calming in the town centre and Chelston roundabout particularly. There were a limited number of responses that didn't agree with the aspiration of reducing car travel.

Mobility There were a number of comments around the need to address accessibility and mobility needs, particularly in the context of an ageing population.

The 5-minute walk A couple of respondents felt that a 5-minute walk to a bus stop was an unachievable aspiration.

Railway station and modal hub Along with support for the new railway station, support was put forward for elements of a multi-modal hub with, for example, secure cycle and motorcycle parking, and that new development should be well related to this.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council is pleased that there is general support for the objectives set out for “an accessible place” and particularly ambitions for a railway station, modal hub and reducing traffic and congestion in the town centre. Work continues on the delivery of the railway station, while the accompanying Action Plan seeks to undertake a Movement and Traffic Study for Wellington. There is need to address accessibility and mobility needs, particularly in the context of an ageing population, and this will be further explored in the Movement and Traffic Study.

The Council’s Climate Emergency declaration has embedded the importance of reducing the need to travel and to use more sustainable and active modes of travel. This is a huge challenge in our predominantly rural area where the public transport network is very limited.

5.3.2 A town rooted in its setting

Key points from the consultation

General The majority of respondents to this question agreed with the objectives set out for “a town rooted in its setting”. Responses received were very positive, including comments such as: “sounds lovely”; “pretty comprehensive”; and “impressed”.

Green corridor Particular comments were received supporting the objective of retaining and preserving the green corridors and wildlife edges. References were made to the opportunities surrounding the former Grand Western Canal and river Tone.

Rural setting A number of comments were received expressing support for preserving the rural setting and the discrete separate identity of satellite villages. The difficulty of accessing nearby villages with public transport was noted.

Market town Further support was given to Wellington maintaining its identity as a market town, as well as encouraging crafts, “makers” and rural agricultural industries.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council welcomes the support received for the objectives set around “a town rooted in its setting”. There were some helpful comments around the rural setting and opportunities around the former Grand Western Canal and the river Tone.

5.3.3 Celebrating our industrial and commercial heritage

Key points from the consultation

Existing buildings Respondents were positive about the objectives set out for this theme, with particular comments about the opportunities this would give to Wellington. Responses also mentioned the need to reuse the existing buildings and explore circular economy opportunities.

Employment A number of comments received expressed a desire to celebrate more recent industries in Wellington, for example, Relyon, Pritex and Swallowfield. One commented that these objectives should “hopefully give employment and focus back to the town”.

History Mention was made of the narrative surrounding Wellington’s wider history, with views that this should extend beyond industrial and commercial aspects. One respondent mentioned the potential importance of pre-historic history, which extends beyond built heritage. There was also commentary about the former Grand Western Canal, with views put forward that this could be a heritage corridor, as well as a wildlife corridor.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The majority of respondents agreed with the objective set out for “celebrating our industrial and commercial heritage”. The Council welcomes the positive response to objectives set out, which continue to exist in other businesses and major employers in Wellington today. The Wellington Place Plan will celebrate this heritage as well as create opportunities to support existing employers in Wellington today.

5.3.4 A high bar for sustainability

78% of respondents agreed with the objectives set out for “a high bar for sustainability”; while 22% did not.

Key points from the consultation

General support Strong support for objectives and that recognition for adapting to climate change is crucial and should be a top priority. Concerns around the cost of net zero policies and that they are unachievable in the time frame of 2030, priorities should be on ensuring access to food, energy and housing for all. Further understanding needed as to how they interplay with or support new development and that examples should be provided.

Sustainable transport Mixed support for the 15-minute neighbourhood concept and concerns around a zero-tolerance approach to private journeys. Responses also suggested the need for development to incorporate EV charging points.

Zero carbon homes and energy generation Strong support for zero carbon homes and local energy generation, however it was felt that more emphasis was needed in the document. Reference to solar panels on commercial and residential development needed. Community energy generation and local energy resilience should be explicit within the Plan. Sites for community energy generation should be considered alongside industrial and residential development. Energy efficiency improvements for existing housing stock should also be recognised within the Plan. Support for the energy potential of the River Tone and that the need outweighs heritage concerns. Some concern over the affordability of zero carbon homes and how older buildings can embrace such measures without being replaced.

Food production Support for provision of allotments and community gardens. Consideration needed for investment in farming land rather than use as 'prime' building land.

Trees Differing support as some suggested the need to include an increase in tree cover to cool the town during heatwaves, which are increasing from climate change. Others raised that trees in the town won't mitigate climate change and action on a larger scale is needed.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council is pleased that there is general support for the objectives set out within "a high bar for sustainability". The Council has made a commitment to respond to the Climate Emergency and this embedded the importance of reducing the need to travel and to use more sustainable and active modes of travel through a 'Vision and Validate' approach. The Climate Emergency declaration also drives the need to increase tree cover across the town and deliver net zero housing on new and existing housing stock. Further detail on tree cover, community energy generation, allotments and gardens can be found in the spatial priorities for "a high bar for sustainability". Examples of how the objectives will be achieved will be included in an Action Plan.

5.3.5 A welcoming town and centre

Out of 40 responses to the question, "do you agree with the objectives set out for "a welcoming town and centre", 90% of respondents agreed with the objectives and 10% did not agree with the objectives set out.

Key points from the consultation

Centre facilities Agreement that there is a lack of health and essential facilities within the town. Suggested that there should be more affordable shops for clothing to remove the need to travel to Taunton. Support for events in the town such as markets. Support for encouraging independent shops, with suggestions such as offering cheaper rates and further pop-up shops. Some concern about shopping behaviour post-Covid.

Social spaces Suggestions that the town centre needs to be social centre as well as a retail centre. Support for the need to create more of a centre within the town. Suggestions received around public realm enhancements through more tree planting; and considering measures to prevent light and noise pollution.

Intergenerational sociability Strong support for creating a town that meets the needs of all ages and to further encourage intergenerational sociability. Several comments received about meeting the needs of a younger population. Suggestions included: community groups; venues; events and a well-maintained skatepark.

Centre access Support for improving town centre accessibility and prioritise pedestrians within the sustainable travel hierarchy. Suggestions made about considerations for easing congestion in the town centre.

Evening economy Support for Wellington town centre to be livelier in the evening. Mixed support for evening bus service, while some viewed it as positive, others felt it could not improve if they had to rely on buses.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council welcomes the support for the objectives set out for “a welcoming town and centre”. We acknowledge the need for affordable shops and essential services within the town centre to remove the need to travel to Taunton. Investment in the town and prioritising making Wellington a welcoming place will help achieve this. It is a top priority, with further detail shown in the Action Plan. Other suggestions have been considered in the Action Plan including the affordability of accessing the town centre; the need for a traffic study when considering a one-way system; increasing the evening economy and associated activities; and the need for recreational space for young people. The Council welcomes support for sustainable access in the town centre and is committed to a sustainable travel hierarchy.

5.3.6 A resilient town

Out of 41 responses to the question, “do you agree with the objectives set out for “a resilient town”, 76% of respondents agreed with the objectives and 24% did not agree with the objectives set out.

Key points from the consultation

Wider economic ecosystem There was a view that, with many people now working from home, independent shops might not find it sustainable to enter the high street. There were a number of comments around the need to support small and local businesses, over larger industries, and for green and non-green businesses alike.

Innovation Comments that innovation is a broad concept that is difficult to measure into the future. Support for small-scale innovation is important.

Young people Large support for a high level of education and opportunities for all age groups and opportunities for young people to gain employment in the town. Many stated that accessing skills, training and jobs for young people is a need.

Transport links Most people seemed in support for improving bus and bike links within the town to access employment sites, particularly linking the Chelston area. Support for the railway station and the opportunities for young people this brings.

Housing Suggestions that resilience currently focuses on employment, but reference should be made to addressing housing and the role it has in supporting a resilient town.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council welcomes the support for the objectives set for “a resilient town”. We acknowledge the need to recognise housing and the role it plays in supporting a resilient town. These considerations will be taken into account in the preparation of the final draft. The revised Action Plan, which supports the Wellington Place Plan, sets out the top priority of preparing a Town Centre Delivery Strategy, which will set out plans for delivering town centre projects. The Delivery Strategy sets out: how to support small scale innovation; access to skills, jobs and training for young people; and support for small and local businesses.

5.3.7 Growth scenarios: North and Tonedale

Out of 43 responses to the question, “do you agree with the constraints, challenges and opportunities set out for the North and Tonedale area”, 79% agreed and 21% disagreed.

Key points from the consultation

Development in North and Tonedale area Mixed support was received for development in this area. Comment that development north of the railway line would detract from walking routes around the River Tone, harm the landscape setting and be too remote. Suggestions that it should be made clearer that the River Tone forms the northern boundary of development. Other suggestions that the former Great Western Canal forms a natural boundary. Concerns about distance to the town centre and that new homes would require the co-location of new services and facilities.

Waste water plant Comments raised that development around the waste water plant should be avoided to protect the existing green areas and avoid congestion. Plan should highlight that the plant be safeguarded in accordance with Policy DM5 of the Somerset Minerals and Waster Core Strategy.

Wellington recycling centre Points raised around congestion issues. Development must consider costs of enhancing or providing a new site.

Heritage-led development General support for heritage-led development. Some comments that development of heritage areas should be an optional extra and priority should be given to providing attractive business facilities.

Station-led intensification General support for station-led intensification with employment opportunities and ability to build at densities to reduce energy loss. Further support due to access to Lidl and links to cycle routes.

Station accessibility Suggestions that the railway station needs free bike and motorbike parking. Support for footpath connections to the railway station from all parts of the town. Concerns that parking in North and Tonedale area will be affected by train station users.

Congestion and active travel Concern that not everyone can walk or cycle and that cars need to be able to access all areas of Wellington. Further concern that growth to the north will add pressure to roads in and around the town centre and a northern link route is needed. Issues raised regarding capacity of Chelston roundabout. Support for a park and ride to service sports facilities as a solution to car parking issues. Emphasis placed on Sustrans Route 3, which is a leisure rather than commuter route.

Other site and policy-specific comments Concern around housing development sites shown in the Tonedale area as they are either speculative or have been previously rejected. Unsupportive of reducing green corridor from its current policy provision.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council welcomes the responses around the constraints, challenges and opportunities set out for the North and Tonedale area. There were some particularly important comments around the location of the development boundary to the north of Wellington in relation to the walking routes and waterways.

5.3.8 Growth scenarios: Rockwell Green

Out of 38 responses to the question, “do you agree with the constraints, challenges and opportunities set out for Rockwell Green area?”, 68% agreed and 22% did not agree.

Key points from the consultation

Development in flood zones Comments agreed that development should not occur on flood risk areas.

Green wedge and urban sprawl Many comments in support of maintaining the green wedge between Rockwell Green and Wellington and the need to preserve the Basins. Ribbon development should be avoided and encroachment onto surrounding settlements. Support for integrating sites into existing settlements. Need to prevent urban sprawl.

Development in Rockwell Green Some responses expressed the view that Rockwell Green is over-developed and that further could add strain to traffic and local amenities. Concern was raised about the use of Popes Lane as a rat run; the impact on veiw s Blackdown Hills AONB; and distance to employment and public services, promoting car dependency.

Other Comments General support for constraints and challenges within the Plan and for development on brownfield land, although several comments weren't supportive of growth in Rockwell Green. Need for recreational space for young people and lighting noted.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council welcomes the responses around the constraints, challenges and opportunities set out for the Rockwell Green area. The Council proposes to extend and protect the 'Green Corridor' including the Basins for biodiversity and to protect the distinctiveness and separateness of Rockwell Green. These considerations will be taken into account in the preparation of the final draft.

5.3.9 Growth scenarios: South

Out of 37 responses to the question, "do you agree with the constraints, challenges and opportunities set out for the South area?", 76% agreed and 24% disagreed.

Key points from the consultation

Development south of A38 Widespread agreement that there should be no development south of the A38, which represents a natural boundary, and could exacerbate congestion issues. Land retains a rural setting for Wellington and should be retained for farming. Need to consider impacts on Blackdown Hills AONB. Some comments suggested the challenge with restricting development south of the A38 is that it has already been breached by allocations and development around Chelston. Plan should note the number of residents that identified the A38 as a boundary and the questions they were asked.

South area Suggestions that development should be restricted north of the A38. Comments that development in the southern area of Wellington is too far from the town centre and will encourage urban sprawl and car use. Suggestion that the area was an ideal location for a school and playing fields. More mention was needed to Wellington School and its potential contribution to the area. Support for development alongside Westpark.

Sustainable transport links Views that the south area has limited bus service, which should be improved to connect to the town centre and settlements outside Wellington. Consider impacts of development on congestion along A38. Improvements needed along school routes of Pyles Thorne Road and Wellesley Park, which are congested and lack pavements. Comments that the existing walking routes in this area should be protected and improved. Need for cycle route to link to the train station.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council welcomes the support shown for the constraints, challenges and opportunities set out for the South area. Some particularly noticeable comments were in relation to support for the statement that: “the area is not considered suitable for development and no growth scenarios have been suggested for this area”.

5.3.10 Growth scenarios: East and Chelston

Out of 38 responses to the question, “do you agree with the constraints, challenges and opportunities for the East/Chelston area?”, 74% agreed and 26% disagreed.

Key points from the consultation

Sustainable transport Support that local people need good, safe access by bike and bus, which should be prioritised. Support for development around Chelston due to good public transport links. Suggestion that a park and ride serving sports facilities located to the west of Wellington and in the town centre would solve parking and congestion issues. Further concerns around Chelston roundabout not able to cope with extra traffic.

Development at Chelston Mixed support for further development at Chelston. Suggestions that diversity of employment is needed for all levels. Views that development should be largely commercial, but some suggestions for mixed-use which would enable growth of the town without additional pressure on the town centre due to links with the A38 and M5. Many comments of support for positive approach taken in the Plan in relation to commercial development and the need to ensure uses do not compete with the town centre. Still some concern that land would move businesses outside the town centre making it unaffordable.

Sustainability of development Further discussion needed around carbon footprint of development. Comments around ensuring higher densities for homes to reduce land footprint. Clarity required as to whether energy generation was included in industrial expansion. Further consideration needed on impact of lighting on environmental and light pollution, the need for housing to cater to an ageing population and flood risks in the area.

General comments Evidence needed to justify expansions highlighted in the Plan. Poole area brownfield sites ideal for business development. Area around M5 should be kept free from development to avoid J27 mistakes.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

Finally, the Council welcomes the support for the constraints, challenges and opportunities set out for the East/Chelston area within the Plan. The consideration of housing densities is to be dealt with within the new Somerset-wide Local Plan. The Council also recognises the need to protect the town centre offer, however, there needs to be a balance with promoting economic growth through responding to a need for industrial space. These considerations will be taken into account in the preparation of the final draft.

5.4 Spatial Strategies

5.4.1 An accessible place

Key points from the consultation

The majority of respondents agreed with the priorities, projects and guidance set out for making an accessible place. Respondents prioritised the new railway station and bus services improvements, followed closely by an integrated cycling network and investment in footpaths.

Sustainable travel hierarchy A significant majority of respondents expressed support for the sustainable travel hierarchy, suggesting that sustainable transport needs to be made the easiest option, moving away from car-centric development. Particular comments were made about the need for investment in cycling infrastructure and public transport, to support this, along with reducing car parking in new developments. There was a view that this would help aid congestion in arterial roads and the town centre. Two respondents expressed the view that private car use should not be discouraged; and one noted the need to feel safe and secure when walking and cycling at night.

Walking and cycling The Langford Budville to Wellington cycle route was mentioned, with ongoing discussions with SCC about feasibility and funding. It was noted that Sustrans Route 3 is unsuitable for commuting and that a more direct alternative to Taunton was required to fulfil these purposes. There was wide-spread support for improving walking and cycling infrastructure, with comments particularly related to ensuring integrated provision in new developments. There were a couple of respondents who noted the need to have particular regard for accessibility, with consideration of material used to surface paths and needs of an ageing population. It was also noted that walking, cycling and bus provision needs to be provided to the existing employment area of Chelston.

Pubic transport There was a large amount of support for the new railway station. Comments were also received about providing secure motorbike/scooter parking at the station. A number of respondents expressed a desire for a reliable, regular and affordable bus service, while one respondent noted that “a 22B service was trialed in around 2010 by First, covering southern Wellington. It was not sustainable, presumably because of low density, low levels of commuting and high car ownership.” Concern was raised that a Park and Ride would be unsuccessful, given current levels of free or cheap parking in the town centre.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council welcomes the large amount of support that has been given to the priorities, projects and guidance set out for making an accessible place and particularly ambitions for a railway station, modal hub and reducing traffic and congestion in the town centre. The accompanying Action Plan seeks to undertake a Movement and Traffic Study for Wellington, which will look at particular issues to do with walking, cycling and public transport, ensuring integrated provision in new developments.

The County Council's Active Travel Team continue to look at feasibility options for the Wellington-Taunton cycle route and Langford Budville-Wellington route.

5.4.2 A town rooted in its setting

Key points from the consultation

The majority of respondents agreed with the priorities, projects and guidance set out for "a town rooted in its setting". Respondents prioritised "retaining and enhancing green corridors" and "supporting local food and craft producers"; followed closely by "preserving and enhancing landscape and views" and "identifying spaces to support local food and craft businesses".

Local setting Many positive responses were received about the priorities, projects and guidance set out for this theme; and particularly supporting local business, markets and craft stalls. It was also noted that while there is the potential for Poole to be a space for promoting food, arts and crafts, there are a number of different waste sites/businesses in the area that need to be safeguarded.

Green corridors All the comments received were supportive of retaining and enhancing green corridors. Two comments received did not want any more expansion or housing development.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The support for the principles, projects and guidance for "a town rooted in its setting" came across very strongly through the responses received. The Council notes that respondents were keen to promote and support local food, arts and crafts, and measures to deliver these priorities will be set out in the Town Centre Delivery Plan, which is a priority under the Action Plan.

5.4.3 Celebrating our industrial and commercial heritage

Key points from the consultation

The majority of respondents agreed with the projects, principles and guidance set out for “celebrating our industrial and commercial heritage”. Respondents prioritised “preserving and adapting empty town centre buildings” and “Tonedale Mill and Tone Works”; followed by “improving frontages on historic buildings” and “training for local residents in craft skills and conservation”.

The responses received on this section of the document were positive and the priorities supported. There were particular comments around wanting to save the mill, with others articulating a desire to have local workshops on traditional craft skills like spinning and weaving. One respondent questioned how relevant these projects would be to the majority of residents in Wellington.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council continues to support the restoration of Tonedale Mill and Tone Works, working alongside Heritage England and seeking further opportunities for funding. The Council is pleased to see continued support for these projects.

One element of the Action Plan will be to support the preparation of a *Somerset-wide skill strategy and action plan*, which can consider training in particular skills.

5.4.4 A high bar for sustainability

The top three priorities for “a high bar for sustainability” were to protect and enhance ecology and habitats; promote active travel and protect and expand allotments and orchards.

Out of 36 responses to the question, “do you agree with the priorities, projects and guidance set out for setting a high bar for sustainability”, 94% agreed with the priorities, projects and guidance and 6% did not agree with the priorities, projects and guidance.

Key points from the consultation

Priority order General support for the priorities, projects and guidance, but respondents felt that the priority order needs to reflect the protection of our environment rather than development and destruction of it.

New development Concerns that Wellington had massively increased in size over the last few years and could not cope in relation to services. Comments suggested EV charging points should be included in new developments and that community energy generation should go beyond hydro sources. Further comments stated that new development must be fully sustainable. Development Plans should consider the carbon impact of infrastructure provision when identifying locations for development.

Retrofitting existing buildings Support for retrofitting and reusing existing buildings rather than constructing new. Consideration should be given to space and storage designed in for recycling and waste.

Biodiversity net gain While there was support for biodiversity net gain, several comments suggested that 10% net gain will be a legal requirement soon and the Council should be ambitious and pledge 20% or aim higher.

Young people Consider young people when regenerating activity areas.

Carbon neutrality and water pollution Concern that carbon neutrality will shrink the town and cause poverty, which does not encourage innovation and social coherence. Need for phosphate, sewage and other agricultural pollution of waterways to be urgently addressed.

15 minute neighbourhoods Differing support for 15 minute policies.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council is pleased that there is general support for the priorities, projects and guidance set out within the section for “a high bar for sustainability”. Protection of our environment needs to work with development. There is a requirement to support housing and employment need. This must happen in a sustainable way and to protect the environment. Any proposals to be brought forward will be supported by a Sustainability Appraisal to ensure this. Furthermore, the need for development plans to consider the carbon impact of infrastructure provision when identifying development locations will be a consideration for the new Somerset-wide Local Plan. Somerset EV Charging Strategy will influence policy and locations of EV charge points.

5.4.5 A welcoming town centre

The top three priorities for a 'welcoming town and centre' were to improve key junctions so they are pedestrian friendly; match uses with vacant buildings; and support and expand the regular market.

Out of 35 responses to the question "do you agree with the priorities, projects and guidance for creating a welcoming town and centre", 86% agreed with the priorities, projects and guidance and 14% did not agree.

Key points from the consultation

Repurposing existing buildings Widespread support for repurposing the empty Dolphin pub building to use as a youth club. Some suggestion that it should become a community pub again and not be limited to youth, could support youth during the day, but should be enjoyed by all ages. Concern flats upstairs would not contribute to a safe, shared environment and instead could become an escape room or other games venue. Further support for empty pubs and other buildings to be used as public buildings to enhance the towns needs such as a post office, banks and community hubs. Mixed support for using empty buildings for housing with some in favour of making use of empty units and some suggesting conversion to residential would take away from the town's character.

Sports facilities and activities Prioritise fun of young people and adults to improve mental wellbeing. Pump track needed for outdoor leisure facilities. Comments in relation to need to update the skate park along with lighting to ensure safety. Concern that the rugby club would expand into the adjacent woodland as implied within the Plan.

Other concerns Too many houses being built, and that private car use should not be discouraged. Need for GP surgeries and dentists. Town centre needs an injection of ideas and renovations.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

The Council is pleased with the support for the ambition to renovate the former Dolphin pub. Comments regarding ideas for use have been noted and are to be considered within the Action Plan, along with addressing the expressed need for recreational space for young people.

Investment into the town centre is a major priority, which is recognised within the Action Plan.

5.4.6 A resilient town

The top three priorities for “a resilient town” were to support the needs of local employers; growth of green economy industries; and the regeneration of Tonedale Mill and Tone Works.

Out of 36 responses to the question, “do you agree with the priorities, projects and guidance set out for a resilient town?”, 83% agreed with the priorities, projects and guidance and 17% did not agree.

Key points from the consultation

Traffic and Tonedale Mill Variety of points raised in relation to traffic in Wellington. Point that traffic is an issue at Chelston roundabout and can back up along the A38. Mixed support for regenerating Tonedale Mill, particularly in relation to traffic – views expressed that development needs to be in conjunction with a northern link road to manage traffic volumes. Others showed support for converting the Mill into flats and micro-businesses.

Employment Support for providing jobs and encouraging employers into the town, as well as training, events and activities, but suggestions that job opportunities should be provided for all levels and there was a need to consider the financial abilities of the residents.

Town centre Concerns that inhibiting outside traffic from easy and free access to the town centre is inhibiting the town from being a diverse and specialised trade centre. Support for utilising vacant upper floors in the town centre for residential purposes to ensure people are present in the town at night. Support for encouraging small businesses into ground floors.

Green industries and waste Suggestion that reuse and recycling space be provided for green industries and encouragement given to operate circular economy principles.

Broadband speed Mixed support for improving gigabit digital connectivity with some suggesting improving internet speed should be the top priority.

Other document changes Comments relating to specific planning applications and Wellington Strategic Employment Site under Policy SS5 of the Core Strategy. Further reference should be made to physical activities other than walking or cycling, such as artistic and relaxation activities for youth, schools and higher education establishments. Further detail needed to describe a resilient town and how it is achieved.

Initial remarks from Somerset West and Taunton Council

Support received for the priorities, projects and guidance for “resilient town” is very welcome. The Action Plan sets out particular priorities for the Council going forward, including: a Town Centre Delivery Strategy; a Wellington Traffic and Movement Study; and a Somerset-wide skills strategy and action plan. These actions seek to take forward points raised about traffic; town centre investment; and skills and employment needs. Commentary on the Place Plan will be also be taken into account in the preparation of the final draft.