

# **BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

## **CABINET**

These minutes are draft until confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting.

Thursday, 1st February, 2024

### **Present:**

Councillor Kevin Guy (Ch)	Leader of the Council, LD Group Leader, Member Advocate for Armed Forces and Veterans
Councillor Tim Ball	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Alison Born	Cabinet Member for Adult Services
Councillor Mark Elliott	Cabinet Member for Resources
Councillor Paul May	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Councillor Matt McCabe	Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Sustainable Development
Councillor Manda Rigby	Cabinet Member for Highways
Councillor Paul Roper	Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development
Councillor Sarah Warren	Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel

### **46 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **47 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

### **48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dave Wood.

### **49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Democratic Services Officer stated that Cllr Dave Wood had declared a disclosable pecuniary interest for all items on the agenda for this meeting. This was due to his employment as Chief Executive of Avon Needs Trees. Cllr Wood did not attend the meeting or the pre-meeting and did not take part in any decisions relating to the items on the agenda.

### **50 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

There was no urgent business.

## 51 QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

There were 12 questions from Councillors and 2 questions from members of the public.

*[Copies of the questions and responses, including supplementary questions and responses if any, have been placed on the Minute book as Appendix 1 and are available on the Council's website.]*

## 52 STATEMENTS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

Members of the public and Councillors made statements as follows:

- Mr and Mrs Flower – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone *(copy attached as an appendix to these minutes)*
- Angharad Barber – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone. Ms Barber spoke against the SVEZ development pointing out that 600 objections have been received from a variety of organisations and individuals. She expressed concern about the proposed compulsory purchase order, harm to small businesses and increased traffic volumes. She queried whether this was the right decision in the current financial climate and urged the Council to work with and listen to the local community.
- Mrs Anne Huckle – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone *(copy attached as an appendix to these minutes)*
- Margaret Heffernan – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone *(copy attached as an appendix to these minutes)*
- Andy Jeffery – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone. Mr Jeffery spoke against the Enterprise Zone and expressed concern at the loss of Grade 1 agricultural land. He said that government policy is to protect this land. He also spoke about the adverse effect on local businesses including the pub trade and local retailers and stressed that the Enterprise Zone should be for industrial use and not retail use.
- James Wellman (on behalf of Cllr Ann Morgan) – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone *(copy attached as an appendix to these minutes)*
- Jim Plunkett-Cole – Economic Outlook for Jobs in B&NES *(copy attached as an appendix to these minutes)*
- Allison Herbert (Bath BID) – Economic Strategy *(copy attached as an appendix to these minutes)*
- Robbie Bentley – The Local Plan – Risk and Equalities *(copy attached as an appendix to these minutes)*
- Cllr Shaun Hughes – Local Plan and Economic Strategy. Cllr Hughes spoke about the lack of engagement on the SVEZ leading to confusion for local residents. He stated that the price is being paid for poor decisions in the past. Houses have been built on former industrial space. Job creation is needed due to more building in the area and local jobs are needed. On balance he

supported the SVEZ for economic reasons but would not support the use of a compulsory purchase order.

- Cllr Duncan Hounsell – The Local Plan (*copy attached as an appendix to these minutes*)
- Cllr Bharat Pankhania – The Local Plan – Combe Down Allotments. Cllr Pankhania spoke regarding the potential loss of the allotments in Combe Down. He stressed the importance of outdoor activity and the health benefits for the allotment community. He presented a petition containing 4,700 signatures and hoped that the issue can be resolved.
- Dewi Willcox – The Local Plan. Mr Willcox spoke regarding the need for the Council to do more for young people in the area who are finding it difficult to afford somewhere to live and to find well-paid local jobs. They are being forced to move away or to commute long distances to work and cannot afford the high private rents in the area.

### **53 MATTERS REFERRED BY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY BODIES**

No matters were referred by Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels.

### **54 BUILDING A FAIR, GREEN, CREATIVE AND CONNECTED BATH WITH NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

Cllr Paul Roper introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation, and made the following statement:

“We have before cabinet an ambitious new Economic Strategy which, with your support, will enable us to strengthen and diversify our local economy over the next ten years.

I feel privileged to propose the recommendations in this paper.

Despite the harsh funding restraints placed on us by central government, our administration is taking matters into its own hands to develop our local economy and communities by launching this strategy.

With this strategy, our administration is setting out our stall with a far-reaching plan to Build a Fair, Green, Creative and Connected Bath with North East Somerset.

We have worked closely with our key stakeholders over the last 18 months to shape our shared vision for our local area. We are all singing from the same hymn sheet. Together we recognise that we all have a stake in ensuring that our economy and our communities thrive.

The Economic Strategy spans the decade to 2034 and contains six pillars:

- Creating a Greener Economy that is Net Zero and Nature positive
- Supporting our residents to access Good Work
- Establishing B&NES as a centre of Inclusive innovation and creativity

- Creating Resilient Businesses by building a diverse, creative and sustainable base
- Addressing Housing Affordability and ensuring residents have access to high quality homes
- Supporting Stronger Places, building resilience and sharing prosperity more fairly

The strategy further outlines a 10-point Delivery Plan, some of which we are already delivering, for example Bath Quays and the wider Milsom Quarter Masterplan, which will be a flagship for sustainable development.

Why is this strategy so important?

It is the platform from which we can move to a fairer, sustainable and thriving future for our local area.

It forms an integral part of our larger plan. It is the blueprint we need to demonstrate that our vision is robust. The Economic Strategy opens the doors for our local authority to attract the vital funding – both private and public – that is essential to enable us to implement our plans.

There is a time-honoured saying in the business world: failing to plan is planning to fail. Now that we have the strategy and the delivery plan, we can start working on the implementation – bringing it to life.

In our local authority, we are very fortunate to have valuable Council assets like the Roman Baths. We are blessed with two outstanding universities, the Royal United Hospital, a double World Heritage classification, historic market towns, and significant businesses all in a wonderful, unique setting. For the most part, our residents are highly qualified, and unemployment is relatively low.

But not everyone in Bath and North East Somerset is sharing in our overall prosperity.

Economic growth in our area over the last ten years has been sluggish. Wages here are below the national average. Many residents are struggling with rising housing costs.

Inequalities in health and employment are growing, creating a two-tier economy.

I would like to draw particular attention to gaps in educational attainment in our area. Education is fundamental to improving young people's life chances. Unless we act, we risk consigning generations of young people to futures in which their opportunities are reduced. Cllr May will shortly be addressing this point.

Some of our residents, then, are being left behind. We cannot allow this cycle to continue.

Overshadowing everything is the climate emergency which is at the forefront of our administration's attention. Our council declared a climate emergency in 2019. We are serious about our commitment to sustainability. We must reach our carbon objectives of net zero. We are acutely aware that we must respond to the

climate emergency and do so now. Our climate emergency goals are woven into this strategy.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this and particularly our Future Ambition Board partners, who are our key stakeholders and who have worked so hard to develop this ground-breaking strategy. It is the fundamental pre-requisite to a fairer, sustainable and thriving future for our local area.”

Cllr Manda Rigby seconded the motion and made the following statement:

“The council has many responsibilities, and touches people's lives in different ways at different times. Three strands which are more or less continuous through all the middle years are where people live, where they work, and how they get between the two.

We have heard a lot recently about the councils plans for housing, and we are working very hard on future transport plans, so to add to the right homes in the right places, and enabling choice on transport, we now have in front of us an economic strategy to agree and to implement.

Bath and North East Somerset is a rich and varied landscape with historical and present links to many industries. This economic strategy balances our legacy, whilst being very forward looking, and future proofing against changing trends. As an example, the lockdown periods showed us that we had a reliance on tourists and students within the City of Bath. Absolutely we need to ensure our offer to visitors and those who choose to make Bath their home whilst studying is sustainable, appropriate and flexible to changing needs.

But we also need to ensure we also have other compelling offers and focus on other areas within the authority so that there are employment opportunities near where people live, and there are affordable housing solutions near to where the jobs are, and to minimise unnecessary travel between the two.

I welcome this strategy in front of us, as it sets out a roadmap for our economic future. Even having this plan adopted would be a good step forward. A good friend sent me a link to an article published over the weekend about the Horizon scheme, something we used to enjoy free and unfettered access to in the good old PB, pre-Brexit days, which it looks like we might be able to access again in the future. The key word here is might. The council will never have the sort of money to invest in everything needed to drive the economy, our job is to make us an attractive a place as possible to do business, ensure we focus on sustainability, stand in and correct any market failures and, if by having this policy in front of us this evening, it makes it easier for businesses to apply for grant funding, that in and of itself has to be a good thing.

I am in no doubt that Paul and his officers have worked incredibly hard on this document and are to be very highly commended, and I am very happy to second it.”

Cllr Paul May welcomed the strategy and stated that children are an essential part of our future economic drive. He noted that the report highlights the issue that whilst we have one of the most highly performing local education authority areas in the country this creates a significant issue of the size of attainment gap

for a small proportion of our children. It was important to think about our strengths within our economy to address this group of students including practical work experience, apprenticeships and working with families.

He hoped that the strategy addressing this inequality means that the Council and its partners' strengths would be used to engage effectively moving forward as a key issue within the delivery plans.

Cllr Sarah Warren stated that the council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 committing it to provide the leadership to enable the district to reach carbon neutrality, followed by an ecological emergency declaration in 2020. The package of measures we are bringing forward this evening shows how we are embedding Net Zero, Nature Positive systemically throughout our work as a Council. This agenda builds upon our Corporate Strategy embedding sustainability into all Council decision making.

She noted that the new Economic Strategy delivers on that, it is designed using the principle of doughnut economics, which aim to meet the needs of all within the means of the planet. This approach would be embedded with our partners across the district and would inform delivery across council services. The new Economic Strategy has sustainability at its heart. As success measures it focused partly on household disposable income, a measure of how the economy is working for people, as well as on carbon emissions, air quality and biodiversity.

She stated that the Strategy also sets out specific action for a greener economy including the investigation of Green Bonds, green skills development, training and apprenticeships, local green jobs and supporting businesses who want to become "net zero, nature positive" in their operations. It will promote Bath with North East Somerset as a testbed for the development of novel green technologies across transport, energy and the built environment. The Council will continue to support real choice in transport, will explore nature-based solutions to increase biodiversity and to encourage sustainable tourism and will develop a local food strategy and support the adoption of regenerative farming whilst providing support to rural businesses with diversification.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously):

- (1) To approve the Economic Strategy.
- (2) To sign off the partnership approach to implementation and delivery of the economic strategy.

## **55 LOCAL PLAN OPTIONS CONSULTATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME**

Cllr Matt McCabe introduced the report, moved the officer recommendation, and made the following statement:

"Every 20 years a Local Authority gets to set a new Local Plan. This sets out the policies by which all planning decisions will be made. It also sets out where new housing will be built, what type it will be and where land will be designated for other needs, such as employment.

Today we are considering the Options Document. This primarily sets out the potential areas that could be allocated for house building, employment and renewable energy, as well as many areas of development management policy. This marks a considerable amount of effort on behalf of officers over the past year, for which I am very grateful.

It is also informed by, and will help to deliver, our Corporate Strategy and our Economic Strategy.

This huge piece of work began over a year ago, when we began talking to residents and stakeholders. It has been going through our all-party Local Development Framework Steering Group. It is worth noting that many Council Administrations do not bother to consult with other parties on the development of a new Local Plan, So, it is to the credit of all administrations here in BANES that we, as a Council, do. It is something that I am keen to maintain.

What this means is that all political groups have had the opportunity to take part in the drafting of this material, albeit on a confidential basis. So, all groups have been able to submit their initial thoughts, in advance of the public consultation.

This options document is what we are intending to put out for consultation to residents and other parties. The results of this consultation will inform the draft of our New Local Plan, and we will put that out for consultation later in the year.

There is also another timing element to consider. One of the key factors locally is the Strategic lead taken by the West of England Combined Authority, in terms of Planning for the Economy, Transport and Housing right across our region. Unfortunately, in an effort to seemingly qualify as the worst Mayor in the country, Mayor Dan Norris pulled WECA out of this regionally significant role.

This has left the four authorities rushing to complete new Local Plans, because that strategic overview is now missing. We are having to work closely with each other to try and achieve this regional co-ordination. Remember - not having a valid Local Plan in place, creates a free for all for developers. Hence the urgency. Luckily for BANES we prepared our partial update, which we completed a year ago, and it has given us a more up to date plan than our neighbouring authorities. However, this has also left us slightly behind them in preparing a new Local Plan, covering the longer term.

So, what have been our main drivers?

Well, we want to create a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable economy. We want to maximise the delivery of housing that is more affordable.

Clearly the government asking us to build 14,500 new homes in the authority area is a huge challenge, so this work presents sites put forward by various parties, all assessed for their suitability and sustainability.

Touching on a comment that was made earlier about that 14,500 homes – luckily for us we have some 6,000 in the pipeline and we expect over this time period to get a windfall of about 2,000 homes that we weren't expecting – that's just normal – which means we have to find 6,500 homes over the next 20 years, which is far more achievable than if we were going straight in at 14,500.

We have to respond to both the housing crisis and the affordability challenges. Our suggested, possible sites and their uses will be available for residents to have their say.

The other big driver is the Climate and Ecological Emergencies. So, we are proposing that our enhanced requirement for Net Zero in terms of energy use in new builds, now be accompanied by a new and tougher consideration for carbon neutrality in construction materials as well. We will also be testing a Biodiversity Net Gain of 20% on new builds and seeing how close we can get.

In all these matters we are treading a fine line between our aspirations and what the final planning inspector will say is viable for developers. Evidence is key, and the results of our consultations with residents, count as evidence.

In order to facilitate a robust consultation, we are creating a 'web book' approach so that participants can view the part of the plan they are interested in and indicate their stance on a matter, provide additional evidence or just make general comments, but in a way that their contributions are correctly allocated to a particular item.

There will also be hard copies in our libraries, and officers have made considerable efforts to engage with often hard to reach groups to secure their participation as well.

There is one small change to the document in front of you. As some of the supporting evidence to the Local Plan won't be published until shortly after the launch, and in order to give people a bigger say, we are going to be extending the consultation period to 8 weeks, meaning that comments can be submitted up to the 8<sup>th</sup> of April.

So, with thanks to our Planning Policy Officers, and the members of the LDF Steering Group from all parties, I ask Cabinet to approve this document for consultation."

Cllr Tim Ball seconded the motion and stated that the Local Plan is there to ensure that houses and businesses are provided in the right locations. He noted that it is important not to have political interference in this process and that cross-party support is needed. It is also important to fully consult local residents.

Cllr Sarah Warren stated that the Local Plan is an absolutely key document in ensuring that a planning authority can require sustainable, green construction and development, in sustainable locations. The options document informed by our economic strategy, and a rare opportunity that only comes along once a decade or so to set the parameters of the place that we live in for a generation. After ratifying a Local Plan Update only last January that put Bath & North East Somerset on the map with the leading net zero new build policy in England at the time, as well as ground breaking biodiversity requirements, it's exciting to have an opportunity now to take that ambition still further.

She noted that the Green Transformation Team has been working closely with their Planning Policy colleagues to develop a policy framework that will drive forward our Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration and support



development enabling Bath and North East Somerset to become carbon neutral, nature positive.

She welcomed the proposal to increase the requirement for biodiversity net gain from 10% to 20% and was particularly please with the proposed requirements around renewables. She noted that the Council continues to lead the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the West of England and Natural England have been so impressed with our leadership on green infrastructure projects including Bathscape, Waterspace, Somer Valley Rediscovered and Chew Valley Reconnected, that they have chosen to undertake further work with us.

Cllr Paul May noted the importance of working with all political parties and stressed the importance of making access to the report as easy and clear as possible.

Cllr Kevin Guy encouraged everyone to take participate in the consultation.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously):

- (1) To agree the spatial priorities of the Local Plan as set out in Appendix 1 of the report for public engagement, particularly to support a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable economy and provide for more housing that is affordable.
- (2) To agree the policy and development location options set out in Appendix 1 of the report (Local Plan Options Consultation Document) as the basis for public engagement.
- (3) To agree the revisions to the B&NES Local Development Scheme outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report.
- (4) To agree and authorise the Director for Sustainable Communities to carry out the approach to public engagement in Section 10 of the report.
- (5) To delegate authority to the Director for Sustainable Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Sustainable Development, to agree textual changes in finalising the Local Plan Options consultation document and the revised Local Development Scheme.

## **56 SOMER VALLEY ENTERPRISE ZONE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER - COMMITMENTS**

Cllr Paul Roper introduced the reports for all three items relating to the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone and moved the officer recommendation in respect of the LDO commitments.

Cllr Roper made the following points:

- The Somer Valley Enterprise Zone is an important part of the delivery of the new Economic Strategy and is also a manifesto commitment for this administration.
- The Somer Valley Enterprise Zone is intended create around 1,300 jobs of exactly the type we aspire to. Good quality, secure, well-paid, local jobs giving residents meaningful and fulfilling employment.

- It will provide 1,300 local jobs for the towns and villages and hamlets around Paulton, Westfield, Radstock and Midsomer Norton, a population in the region of 30,000 people.
- Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s nearly all of the employment in the Somer Valley was local. Many local businesses have been lost including Great Mills DIY/Focus, Welton Bibby Bag Manufacturing and Purnells & Sons Printers which, at its height, provided 2,000 jobs. Well over 1,000 jobs have been lost in comparatively recent times.
- The consequence of this is that people now commute, census statistics from 2021 suggest that 30-50% of the economically active population in this area commute over six miles to work.
- Out-commuting means that families need at least one car and that is a huge barrier to young people and the less affluent and this limits their opportunities. More houses are also being built in the area.
- The Council needs to create opportunities and aspiration for both current and future generations in these communities.
- This authority recognised in 2007 that jobs lost needed to be replaced. This is when it originally allocated the land we are considering today as employment land. It was left to the free market to bring the development forward and it failed to do so. It is probable that delivery was seen as too complex and too expensive.
- This administration has now stepped in and what we have before us today is the mechanism by which we can deliver this pioneering project – a green business park.
- The LDO paper enables adoption of the LDO by cabinet and addresses the market failure in delivering SVEZ. It is a planning framework that, by way of compliance applications, prospective developers and businesses can seek planning permission on a de-risked basis. It gives them more certainty that an application will be approved, provided it meets with the strict criteria enshrined in the LDO. The LDO does not remove planning restrictions - it defines them in advance, giving businesses certainty as to what they need to do to make a successful application.
- To enable the LDO to be brought forward to approval today, there has been a process that the planning authority has been through to ensure the scheme is compliant with all local and national policies.
- These policies and statutory consultees include an environmental impact assessment, Ecology, Arboriculture, Air quality, Conservation, Archaeology, Highways, Drainage and Flood Risk and many more. The list of hurdles this scheme has had to pass is extensive and the Local Planning Authority report has confirmed policy compliance.
- The administration believe that it has addressed the environmental issues to the best of our abilities and to a high standard whilst keeping the site commercially viable for occupiers and delivering the number of jobs that are needed.
- Employment – the aim is to create 1,300 jobs and to recreate the local, stable, high-quality employment that used to be provided by the now-defunct employers in this area. People will be able to walk, cycle or take the bus to work, reducing traffic volumes and reducing commuting hours.
- Business - one of the key factors that businesses consider in deciding whether to locate to a particular area is the proximity to a substantial workforce. With over 30,000 people living within just a few miles of this site, one of the primary attractions will be the local workforce.

- The LDO will provide certainty for businesses. Employees will also want to come because the facilities will be modern and up to date. There is significant evidence that demand for A1 Class accommodation is strong and there is a huge shortage of that in our authority.
- The sort of businesses we want to attract to the site are those vital to the green economy, working in renewables, heat pumps, battery technology, power management systems and carbon reduction.
- Midsomer Norton High Street – To regenerate our high streets we have to somehow stimulate demand for the goods and services provided there and creating 1,300 new jobs will be a good way to do this.
- Transport - It is a commitment of this administration to promote active travel and public transport and reduce car travel. With so many employees living locally and with provision of suitable infrastructure, we expect a real modal shift in transport methods. People will be able to walk to work.
- The enabling works of the scheme that include road improvements, active travel routes and infrastructure development of the entire site will come at a cost of circa £30m and this is being funded by grant funding from various sources.

Cllr Roper thanked officers for their work to enable the local authority to reach this point. It is probably going to take 3 - 4 years to deliver the first jobs on site and 7-10 years to get the site fully occupied. He stated that we need to create the environment to enable reductions in carbon emissions and improve sustainability. There are schoolchildren now who will be of employment age when the jobs are being created. They need something to aspire to, something to look forward to, somewhere to work – jobs like their grandparents had. Our community needs these 1,300 jobs.

Cllr Sarah Warren seconded the motion and made the following points:

- The Council has set out an economic strategy that aims to support real choice in transport, support for greener businesses, as well as training opportunities in green industries for local people.
- The development will give Somer Valley residents the opportunity to reduce their carbon emissions from commuting. We know that the vast majority of Somer Valley residents currently commute out by car, often to Bath and Bristol, and we know that there are likely to be further housing developments coming forward in the valley, but this development will provide for local jobs.
- The LDO structure by which we are now progressing this green business park, along with the intention that the council should act as landowner and developer, mean that we retain control over the types of business who can occupy the site, the standard of energy efficiency to which buildings are constructed, and the biodiversity accommodated on site. The LDO ensures the development will be fully compliant with planning policy.
- As the developer, the council has the power to insist upon greater ambition, and in the coming years, as our green business park takes shape, local residents can hold future B&NES administrations to account for the quality of the environment that is created on site, and the quality of local green jobs that it provides.
- Funding was approved by the West of England Combined Authority last week to progress the active travel route between Farrington Gurney and Old Mills Lane along the north side of the A362. At that point the route will connect with

infrastructure proposed through this scheme to provide a fully off-road route between Farrington Gurney and Midsomer Norton and on to connect with the Norton Radstock Greenway, giving local people a safe route to walk, wheel or cycle to work or school between the conurbations of the valley. We are committed to ensuring this infrastructure is in place before the site is occupied and have a plan to extend the cycle route on to Bristol. We are also committed to providing bus services along the route before occupation.

- We are also committed to ensuring the site is nature positive, not only through on-site measures, but additionally through off-site contributions to further enhance wild nature in Somer Valley.
- We are currently planning 10 acres, about 7 football pitches, of green infrastructure on site, as well as 10,000 trees and creating sustainable drainage ponds on site that will generate new wetland habitats.
- We are also committed to minimising the impact on air quality of the development, with modelling projecting nitrogen dioxide at well below legal limits over all locations in the vicinity.
- We are committed to creating an exemplar, net zero, green business park for new business and employment, that will contribute to the development of a diverse, creative and sustainable local business base. It will provide a location to grow our green economy, seeking to attract established businesses as well as start-ups.
- The energy efficient premises will provide businesses with a renewably powered, net zero home, of which they can feel proud, and from which they can maximise their contribution to tackling our environmental emergencies – and the council is committed to supporting them in this.

Cllr Tim Ball welcomed the proposed noting that it is a bold and ambitious plan to regenerate the Somer Valley area. More housing will be built in the area and so additional jobs will be needed.

Cllr Matt McCabe stated that the proposal offers security for businesses and especially for start-ups. This provides new opportunities for young people in the area so that they will not have to move away to seek employment.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously):

- (1) To adopt the eight aims defined within the report that set the Council's commitments for the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone.
- (2) To review progress on the Enterprise Zone regularly and to agree any further interventions required to ensure that these ambitions are being met.

## **57 SOMER VALLEY ENTERPRISE ZONE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER**

Cllr Paul Roper introduced the report and moved the officer recommendation.

Cllr Paul May seconded the motion and made the following statement:

“The presentation this evening has been inspirational. This is an example of how we can use this opportunity to work with Bath College to create apprenticeships during and after construction and offer job experience options for young people in the area.

This report provides a sensible process to move the scheme forward, bearing in mind that progress has already been protracted. You mentioned about 2007 – talks have been going on since Wansdyke District Council.

Of course, we have listened to the speakers and written submissions, and this is reflected in the previous paper, but because of the site complications we need to have the powers to deliver a vital employment site set amongst the already commercial area that has been built up around the former Great Mills office and sales warehouse.

There has been considerable consultation and changes made to deliver the master plan that moves towards the many concerns expressed.

We have a responsibility to provide local jobs in the area and clearly this will not happen unless we adopt this high intervention approach. I fully support the recommendations.”

**RESOLVED** (unanimously):

- (1) To adopt the Local Development Order for the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone (SVEZ) site recommended by the Local Planning Authority, and to meet the aims of policy SSV9.
- (2) To delegate to the Director of Regeneration and Housing and the Director of Sustainable Communities (or [the Monitoring Officer / Executive Member] for payments of over £500,000) in consultation with the S151 Officer, authority to take all necessary steps to acquire by agreement land and/or rights required for the SVEZ Scheme and to negotiate and settle all necessary compensation and professional fees (including interim payments) as agreed with landowners, where compensation is within the SVEZ Scheme budget. This will be subject to full due diligence and financial evaluation to ensure value for money and that commitments are in line with approved scheme budgets.
- (3) To delegate the approval to the Director of Regeneration and Housing and the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the s151 Chief Finance Officer to:
  - Accept the Investment Fund grants from the West of England Combined Authority, subject to WECA approval at Committee.
  - On grant acceptance to move from provisional to approved budget for £9.3m continue with land assembly and infrastructure design.

## **58 SOMER VALLEY ENTERPRISE ZONE IN PRINCIPLE STATUTORY MECHANISMS**

Cllr Paul Roper introduced the report and moved the officer recommendation.

Cllr Matt McCabe seconded the motion.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously):

- (1) To note the ongoing progress which has been made towards the acquisition of land required to develop the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone (SVEZ) Scheme.
- (2) To authorise the carrying out of formal land referencing (including the procurement of a land referencing agent and the issue requisitions for information under the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 and/or any relevant or associated statutes) across the area being considered for the SVEZ Scheme in order to identify landowners, their interests and to gather as much information as possible about the land. This will include full due diligence and financial evaluation to ensure value for money.
- (3) To authorise the entry into negotiations by the Council (and on behalf of the Council) with landowners and others with an interest in the relevant land required for the delivery of the SVEZ Scheme in order to acquire land and rights by agreement where possible.
- (4) To authorise the acquisition of land or rights required for the SVEZ Scheme subject to relevant financial limits, whereby the decision to proceed with any purchase in excess of the SVEZ Scheme budget would be referred to [Cabinet /Single Member Decision] for authorisation.
- (5) To delegate to the Director of Regeneration and Housing and the Director of Sustainable Communities (or [the Monitoring Officer / Executive Member] for payments of over £500,000), in consultation with the S151 Officer, authority to take all necessary steps to acquire by agreement land and/or rights required for the SVEZ Scheme and to negotiate and settle all necessary compensation and professional fees (including interim payments) as agreed with landowners, where compensation is within the SVEZ Scheme budget. This will be subject to full due diligence and financial evaluation to ensure value for money and that commitments are in line with approved scheme budgets.
- (6) To authorise the taking of all steps (including the drafting of a CPO and related documentation) necessary to prepare for a subsequent report to Cabinet to determine the use of compulsory purchase powers to acquire the land and rights in land required for the SVEZ Scheme.

The meeting ended at 8.31 pm

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date Confirmed and Signed \_\_\_\_\_

**Prepared by Democratic Services**

## SPECIAL CABINET MEETING – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

### STATEMENTS FROM PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS

1. Mr and Mrs Flower – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone
2. Angharad Barber – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone
3. Mrs Anne Huckle – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone
4. Margaret Heffernan – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone
5. Andy Jeffery – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone
6. James Wellman (on behalf of Cllr Ann Morgan) – Somer Valley Enterprise Zone
7. Jim Plunkett-Cole – Economic Outlook for Jobs in B&NES
8. Allison Herbert (Bath BID) – Economic Strategy
9. Robbie Bentley – The Local Plan – Risk and Equalities
10. Cllr Shaun Hughes – Local Plan and Economic Strategy
11. Cllr Duncan Hounsell – The Local Plan
12. Cllr Bharat Pankhania – The Local Plan – Combe Down Allotments
13. Dewi Willcox – The Local Plan

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - COUNCILLORS

<b>M</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Eleanor Jackson
<p>How much of the Local Plan is honestly deliverable, given the understaffing in the Planning department where consultants and agency staff regularly have to be employed, and given that the planning department's own data suggest an economic downturn is coming?</p>			
<b>Answer from:</b>			Cllr Matt McCabe
<p><i>The Planning service has recently had to keep a small number of posts vacant as part of the Council's strategy to meet in-year budget pressures, however the service has recently successfully recruited to some key posts and hopes to fill the remaining vacant posts soon. The service budget will also benefit from the recent long-awaited increase in nationally set planning application fees.</i></p> <p><i>The Local Plan options document is the latest stage in producing a Local Plan that meets the Council's objectives including delivering growth. The Local Plan sets policies that will apply across various stages of the economic cycle, and it is acknowledged that a suitably resourced Planning service is necessary for the effective delivery of the strategy set out by the Local Plan.</i></p>			
<b>Supplementary Question:</b>			
<p>I would like to compliment Cllr McCabe on successful recruitment to the essential posts in planning and planning policy, not to mention the team most residents care most about in Radstock/Westfield, namely enforcement. Obviously for reasons of confidentiality, this could not be revealed when I submitted my question. However, my first question remains, to what extent has the Local Plan and its delivery, especially with regard to the SVEZ been future proofed with contingency plans B should the predicted economic downturn take place? As I would say if</p> <p>Secondly taken as a whole, are you convinced that provision for the elderly (without smart phones or internet) and the disabled is sufficient?</p>			



*Answer: The Local Plan covers a long period of time (20 years) during which there are likely to be both economic downturns and buoyancy. There are regular updates to the Plan and built in timescales for review. The Plan will also be responsive to demand, enabling economic uses to come forward at different times and the options document supports opportunities for reskilling and training as required. The consultation process will involve in-person meetings and paper copies of the options document will be available in libraries. An equality impact assessment will also be undertaken and there will be opportunities to take account of the needs of protected groups. The Plan itself will also address the requirements of an aging population to provide communities in which people can thrive.*

<b>M</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Liz Hardman
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Whilst I welcome the principle of high-quality jobs in our area, I still have some concerns about the SVEZ. Surely the acquisition of the land on which the Enterprise Zone is going to be built is key to the development. So why has the land not been acquired by B&NES! Why have negotiations been almost non-existent with the landowners for the past two years? We now hear that the negotiations have been resumed, but these are being done alongside compulsory order options. Surely this is not the best way forward?

<b>Answer from:</b>	Cllr Paul Roper
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*In order to construct the SVEZ Scheme, it is necessary to acquire the land and rights required for the commercial development, together with several small parcels of land outside of the existing highway boundary required for the associated highway improvements (such as cycle and pedestrian path connectivity). Discussions and negotiations for the acquisition of the land and rights needed for the delivery of the SVEZ Scheme have commenced and will continue should the LDO be adopted. To ensure certainty of delivery and timescales for delivery officers are now contemplating the use of additional statutory mechanisms to support land assembly.*

#### Supplementary Question

Whilst I welcome the principle of high-value jobs in the area. Is it true that discussions and negotiations with the landowners have commence as I understand these have not taken place for some time?

*Answer: Negotiations first took place back in 2019, all the landowners have property agents and have been taking advice on the matter. Negotiations have gone relatively quiet at this point, so I don't believe there has been very recent communication, but discussions have been*

*taking place.*

<b>M</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Liz Hardman
<p>My second question concerns the transport infrastructure around the Thicketmead roundabout at the bottom of Phyllis Hill, Paulton. A kidney shaped roundabout has been planned to manage the extra traffic generated by the Enterprise Zone. Highway modelling (VISSIM) was done some years ago. This is not up to date and does not take into consideration the extra housing developments in the area. How confident can we be that there will not be massive hold ups and extra congestion at this junction?</p>			
<b>Answer from:</b>		Cllr Paul Roper	
<p><i>The design of Thicket Mead does take account of the traffic flows at SVEZ and all committed development. Traffic modelling has taken a prudent approach using data agreed with Highways Development Control who have approved the highways mitigations proposed by the project through the Statutory Consultation; therefore, there is confidence that the proposed design is fit for purpose for the SVEZ project and committed development in the area.</i></p>			
<b>Supplementary Question:</b>			
<p>When was the traffic modelling data collected? Is it up to date and fit for purpose?</p>			
<p><i>Answer: The traffic modelling was undertaken in November 2021. The Transport Assessment makes an allowance for background traffic growth between the base year of 2021 and the future assessment year of 2027. The Council is confident that a robust assessment has been undertaken through the inclusion of background traffic growth forecasts and the use of sophisticated modelling tools. Highways Development Control have provided no objection to the traffic modelling via the Statutory Consultation.</i></p> <p><i>(The response was provided within five working days of the meeting).</i></p>			

<b>M</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Saskia Heijltjes
Community green bonds can be a great way to engage with the local community, however, the initiative will take a great deal of officer time to put in place. Is the key aim to build community visibility from these Green Bonds or to raise funds for council initiatives?			
<b>Answer from:</b>			Cllr Paul Roper
<i>By declaring Climate and Ecological Emergencies and setting an ambition for the area to be net zero carbon and nature positive by 2030, our economy must be a green economy. As part of this we have committed to look at how community green bonds could help local residents invest in local projects across our city, town and rural centres. We are the start of scoping this out.</i>			
<b>M</b>	<b>05</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Saskia Heijltjes
Regarding my previous question, and the goal of raising community visibility - what outcomes will these bonds achieve for the Climate Emergency across B&NES when community-owned organisations, like “Bath and West Community Energy”, are already successfully implementing Green initiatives and raising funds in ways that align with the Doughnut Economic model advocated in the Local Plan launch document?			
<b>Answer from:</b>			Cllr Paul Roper
<i>The council is starting to scope out the detail of green bonds this exercise will include assessing demand. I am aware of the great work Bath and West Community Energy do and my officials will continue to engage with them.</i>			
<b>M</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Saskia Heijltjes
What will be the cost to the Council to set up these Green Bonds and has the Council spoken to the councils in Hammersmith, London, and			

West Berkshire where these bonds have been created?			
<b>Answer from:</b>		Cllr Paul Roper	
<i>In assessing the viability of green bonds, we will also consider costs and benefits and engage with other authorities who have looked at implementing them.</i>			
<b>M</b>	<b>07</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Joanna Wright
<p>Number 10 of the Economic Strategy ten-point delivery plan says: “Secure connectivity improvements through the development of a Transport Action Plan that provides accessible, affordable and active options for all areas of the district.”</p> <p>Since the University of Bath being a key partner in the Economic Strategy for 2024-2034, will the Transport Action Plan include an active travel route from the city centre to the University’s campus on Claverton Down, enabling more staff and students to travel to campus by walking, wheeling or cycling?</p>			
<b>Answer from:</b>		Cllr Sarah Warren	
<i>The Transport Action Plan (TAP) is currently being developed and will include active and sustainable travel schemes which have been identified as priority schemes to be delivered, based on current available funding. It is not anticipated that the TAP will include any specific schemes relating to improved active travel routes to the Claverton Down campus. However, the Active Travel Masterplan, which is also currently in development, is a longer-term strategy for the delivery of a network of active travel routes across the entirety of B&amp;NES. This will include aspirations for active travel improvements between all major centres of employment and education.</i>			
<b>M</b>	<b>08</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Joanna Wright

In 3.18 of the E3497 Local Plan Options consultation and Local Development Scheme

<https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s80251/E3497%20-%20Local%20Plan%20Options%20Consultation%20and%20Local%20Development%20Scheme.pdf>

It states in 3.19 that: *A range of new location or site options is identified in the Options Document that could contribute towards meeting the needs for additional housing and employment space, along with the necessary supporting infrastructure. These location or site options are drawn from sites in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), which comprise both those submitted by landowners, developers and communities, as well as those identified by the council for consideration, location options have been identified. The wide Range of HELAA sites has been filtered down to those locations that are considered to be sustainable alternatives or options for potential allocation.*

This process has been underpinned by the Sustainability Appraisal (that will be published as part of the Options document consultation) and based around key principles, including:

- Sustainable transport connectivity - to minimise the need to travel by car and enable the use of public transport and active travel. This will also minimise carbon impact”

As the sustainable transport connectivity is outlined “to minimise the need to travel by car and enable the use of public transport and active travel”, what will be the date that the Council publishes the circulation plan for Bath and for North East Somerset? A transport circulation plan has been promised repeatedly, but with no delivery date in place.

**Answer from:**

Cllr Matt McCabe

*Emissions from transport are a significant source of carbon within Bath and North East Somerset accounting for 29% of all carbon emissions in the district. Most of these emissions arise from surface transport, particularly cars, taxis, Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) and vans. Unlike other sectors which have decarbonised in recent years, emissions from transport have remained high. The continued reliance on cars*

*continues to deteriorate our climate but also impacts the health and wellbeing of our residents, contribute to poor air quality, and continues to exacerbate other societal issues, including equity of access to sustainable transport, and the continued impact of transport on our cultural and natural heritage.*

*The Local Plan provides an opportunity to join development and transport, ensuring new development is considered in a way that will genuinely reduce the need to travel by locating developments in accessible locations, facilitating the provision of more locally available services and facilities, and providing improved connectivity and access to more sustainable transport modes providing our residents with genuine choice in how they make their journeys, enabling those who can to choose lower carbon options.*

*The Journey to Net Zero sets out how the Council will seek to achieve a net-zero transport system in Bath. Many other schemes, including through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) are in development that will help to facilitate low-carbon travel across the rest of Bath and North East Somerset. The Circulation Plan for the city of Bath was highlighted in the Journey to Net Zero to “identify the main roads where arterial bus routes are prioritised and car traffic is expected to remain” and, at the time, was identified as a ‘future’ project. In 2023, B&NES appointed AtkinsRéalis to develop a transport evidence base to identify how the existing transport network in the city was used and to identify opportunities to change this. Work is currently ongoing to develop the Circulation Plan since this date in light of this evidence.*

<b>M</b>	<b>09</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Joanna Wright
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On page 407 of E3497 with reference to Green Spaces see <https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s80252/E3497%20-%20Appendix%201%20-%20Local%20Plan%20Options%20Consultation%20Document.pdf>

It lists only three Proposed Local Green Spaces in Lambridge when ten were submitted including a request for a Green Space at Lambridge Training Ground, where Lidl are proposing delivering a supermarket. Could you clarify why the Lambridge Training ground and other submissions from Lambridge Ward members were not included in this appendix for proposed Local Green Spaces, as outlined in the Council's Corporate Strategy aimed at safeguarding and improving nature by facilitating nature recovery?

**Answer from:**

Cllr Matt McCabe

*The nominated Local Green Spaces have been assessed against the criteria set out in national policy and guidance (National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance). With regards to the Lambridge Ward submissions it is noted that eight nominations have been made. The land listed as the Deadmill Lane Allotments has been nominated twice by Cllrs and community groups. Of the eight sites nominated three have been recommended for inclusion as local green space designations at this stage. Of the nominations not taken forward the following is noted:*

- **Bath Rugby Playing Fields / Lambridge Wildlife Haven** - *The land is subject to a planning application currently under consideration. Planning Practice Guidance notes amongst other things that it will rarely be appropriate to designate Local Green Space where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented. Until such time as the planning application has been determined it is not appropriate to designate it as a Local Green Space. Dependent on the outcome of the planning application process this position can be reviewed in preparing the Draft Local Plan which is due to be considered by Council later this year.*
- **Bailbrook Lane** - *The nomination had not provided sufficient information concerning its value to the local community.*
- **Claremont Allotments** – *The nomination is already a local green space designation and will continue to hold such a designation.*
- **Charlcombe Valley** – *The nomination is considered an extensive tract of land contrary to NPPF paragraph 106 c).*
- **Deadmill Lane Allotments site** - *The land is situated to the edge of Bath within the Green Belt and AONB. Over and above the existing designations no further benefit would be secured through designating the land as a Local Green Space.*

*Noted that a further site had been nominated by Lambridge Ward Cllrs and Bath community groups however, the nomination is situated within the Charlcombe Parish. This nomination had not been taken forward for the following reasons:*

- **Valley View Allotments** - *This land is situated to the edge of Bath within the Green Belt, Cotswold AONB and is already designated allotment land. Over and above the existing designations no further benefit would be secured through designating the land as LGS.*

*A supporting assessment further detailing the above, and of all nominated sites will be published alongside the Options document. The*

*Options document will be subject to consultation giving residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to comment. The comments received will be carefully considered in preparing the Draft Local Plan (later this year) when the Council will make the decision as to which sites to designate as Local Green Space.*

<b>M</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Sam Ross
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In a climate and nature emergency, why are we still considering building a business park away from where people live on green belt agricultural land that is currently used to provide local food, especially when industrial units and brownfield sites previously earmarked for employment have been sold or given permission for more housing and shops and industrial sites stand empty across Midsomer Norton and Radstock?

<b>Answer from:</b>	Cllr Paul Roper
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*The site is adjacent to a substantial local population of circa 30,000. The delivery of the green commercial park at Old Mills is a long-held objective to support the sustainable economy of the district and Somer Valley; helping to reduce out-commuting through the walking and cycling infrastructure proposed. Brownfield sites within the Somer Valley are also allocated and alongside the Old Mills site will assist in providing jobs locally that will help support the local economy, including the local high streets. These brownfield sites are not in their own right of sufficient scale to secure the number of jobs that the project is seeking to deliver.*

**Supplementary Question:**

The quality of this land is very rare in B&NES and should be protected for our future food security. Have any considerations been given to the fact that the plot is prime Grade 1 agricultural land that grows high-quality produce for the local area and is also Potentially Irreplaceable Priority Grassland Habitat (BRERC)? As once it's gone, it's gone forever.

*Answer: Records held indicate that the information held by the BRERC, which date back to 1995 and 2000, is inaccurate. They had indicated that some of the fields within the SVEZ had the potential to be prime Grade 1 agricultural land. The Council has undertaken further survey work confirming that the fields are modified grassland in poor condition, habitats that are not a priority or irreplaceable. The maps*



*have now been updated to provide clarity. The provisional maps show a large swathe of Grade 1 grassland running through the West of the Somer Valley and Natural England, as a statutory consultee, have not objected to the LDO proposal subject to conditions set out in the statement of reasons.*

**M**

**11**

**Question from:**

Cllr Sam Ross

What data is there to support access to the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone (SVEZ) will only be via foot, bicycle and public transport, when there is currently poor provision along the A362 and the plans to improve connectivity rely on WECA for financial input, which cannot be assured?

**Answer from:**

Cllr Paul Roper

*Access to the SVEZ by walking and cycling routes is a key objective of the proposal and will be put in place before initial occupations of accommodation. Ensuring the infrastructure is in place at day one will provide people the choice to walk or cycle and enable habits to be changed. The Combined Authority has approved the business case to allow the walking and cycling route from Farrington Gurney to be progressed. The business case for SVEZ will enable the delivery of the route from Old Mills to the Norton Radstock Greenway, providing access to the Somer Valley network of walking and cycling routes.*

**Supplementary Question:**

While providing choice is a good thing, there appears to be little incentive for anyone to do so. How does the limited provision from Old Mills to the Norton Radstock Greenway benefit residents who live in the farther areas of the Somer Valley such as Farmborough?

*Answer: I would refer you to the response to question M07 from Cllr Warren regarding the active travel network. The Authority is committed to developing active travel. If the SVEZ site is brought forward the Council will be looking at additional active travel routes and will investigate further CRSTS funding. We will promote active travel and look at extending cycle routes in the area.*

<b>M</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Cllr Sam Ross
<p>The data used for jobs provision in the Somer Valley and wider BANES area is currently based on an out-of-date evidence base for labour supply. Would it not be prudent to wait for the Local Plan evidence base before making a decision as to whether the Somer Valle Enterprise Zone (SVEZ) is required in this area?</p>			
<b>Answer from:</b>			Cllr Paul Roper
<p><i>The evidence base that underpins the new Economic Strategy reinforces the economic importance of delivering the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone. This evidence is also being used to support the new Local Plan.</i></p>			

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PUBLIC

<b>P</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Nicolette Boater
<p>Whilst some 100 named individuals from anchor organisations actively contributed ideas to a number of events and conversations informing the 'Ambitious Together for a Fair, Green, Creative and Connected City Region', members of the public, were only digitally engaged, and none of the contributions of the 74 reported as engaging in this way were attributed. How can assembling a vision for the future on the basis of such an exclusive set of views and perspectives be a solid foundation for "create pathways to a fairer future", "a connected city region" or "enabling all to be Ambitious Together"?</p>			
<b>Answer from:</b>			Cllr Paul Roper

*We are proud of our work with partner organisations to create our One Shared Vision for Bath with North East Somerset. This Vision was one element of work to shape the future of our region. Our engagement work is an ongoing process which has continued since the publication of our Vision, and our conversations with stakeholders, communities and members of the public will continue to shape our work in the months and years to come.*

<b>P</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>Question from:</b>	Nicolette Boater
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Whilst the Future Ambition Board seems to have dismissed Kate Rayworth's Doughnut Economics vision and framing as inferior to its own, the current Council administration claims to embrace in its 2020-24 Corporate Strategy, Local Plan update and Economic Strategy. However, the 60 individuals attended 3.10.23 Doughnut Economics Workshop in Bath Abbey, "were predominantly public sector, third sector and community actors", making the connection and building common purpose with the Market sector of a Doughnut Economy at that event challenging. So, what, when and how will the Council to do make sure that its core strategies are shaped by all of the diverse communities, organisations and businesses in our district?

<b>Answer from:</b>	Cllr Paul Roper
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*We are still considering all aspects of the Doughnut Economics model. Respecting social foundations and environmental limits is critical to the work of the council and a fundamental part of our sustainable Economic Strategy. However, these elements cannot be considered in isolation of our businesses. To inform the development of the Economic Strategy and reflect the important role of the market, we held dedicated business workshops with organisations from across the district.*

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Royal Oak Farm has been in the Flower family since 1956. Barrie took over the running of it at the age of 21. We have farmed and looked after this land for the last 54 years . We raised a family here and have a grandson of 18 who wishes to carry on the tradition of farming on the farm he has grown up on. The Somer Valley Enterprise Zone and its Local Development Order tears apart our plans and aspirations for the future of our farm especially our Grandsons.

Royal Oak Farm is classed as grade 1 agricultural land we understand that it is government policy to protect the best and most versatile ( BMV ) land from significant inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals. So how can it be that BANES are going to tear up this prime agricultural land that is used for food consumption to build an Industrial park that the majority of the local people do not want or see the need for.

The long period of uncertainty and limited information has caused us untold stress and anxiety as we have found it very hard to get clear information from the council over the last 7 years. The dialogue has been irregular with long gaps of non communication.

We have tried to engage with the council, we have commented on plans tabled but even with some revisions the plans will have a detrimental effect on our home and significantly harm our farming business cutting our yearly income in half

Our main concerns which we have already raised with the council are as follows :

1. Royal Oak Farm is our land. The Council wants to take some of our land for SVEZ and we have not consented to this. The Council must justify the huge impacts on us and we do not see the Council has done so. We do not believe a demand for the scheme exists.
2. Secondly, the size, scale, height and character of the development, along with the traffic and flow of people it will bring, will completely change the look and feel of our home, our land and surrounding area. It is not an appropriate development for this area.
3. One building nearly touches our boundary with no tree screening and the office block will completely overshadow our home.

4. This will have a hugely detrimental impact on our enjoyment of the property and our general wellbeing. The council has repeatedly failed to acknowledge this.
5. The proposed development will sever our land to the north of the site. We have not been given any clarity on how we will access our fields. Who will control access, what limits on access might there be, who keeps the access route clear and who maintains it? Will it be designed to be fit for our use? If we can't easily access this part of the farmland we will not be able to continue what will be left of our farming business and it will be destroyed.

In summary, we stand firmly against the LDO being granted and the development being allowed to go ahead. We do not consent to the use of our land as part of SVEZ and we do not believe this speculative development is in the right place or is necessary.

## **STATEMENT FROM ANNE HUCKLE - SOMER VALLEY ENTERPRISE ZONE**

As resident of Clapton on the edge of the Enterprise Zone (EZ) and member of Ston Easton Parish council I have grave concerns with regard to the EZ.

My understanding is that there is a high probability that a distribution centre will form part of the development. In addition to EZ commuter traffic this will bring a huge increase in lorry traffic and delivery vans which is unsustainable for the local road network, including known bottle necks on the A37 at Pensford and Temple Cloud, and also in the immediate EZ area despite the proposed road improvements.

My greatest concern is for the hamlet of Clapton just a mile from the EZ. Whilst traffic surveys may have been done, they did not cover all impacted areas, nor do they reflect the reality where drivers take the most direct route to a destination. This means traffic heading to & from the EZ will drive along Clapton's unclassified lanes since they lead directly to the new roundabout which is part of the EZ road development. Recent roadworks in MSN, Chilcompton, Paulton and Radstock have proved that drivers use Langleys Lane, Greenditch Lane, and Clapton Road as rat runs to the A362 at Farrington Gurney.

Thus we in Clapton have lived with the danger of a constant stream of additional traffic along our single track lanes making walking, cycling and horse riding not pleasurable but life threatening ....I do not exaggerate here I promise you. Even driving to work, to medical appointments, or to the shops has proved difficult, requiring planning to ensure travel outside peak school and commuter travel times. Not something to be expected in a hamlet of around 60 homes.

BANES has created low emission zones in Bath but seems content that extra heavy traffic is directed to Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Paulton, Farrington Gurney, Clapton and other surrounding villages.

From Clapton's perspective if this ill thought out scheme proceeds BANES have a moral responsibility to consult with Somerset Highways and also to make financial provision to ensure measures are put in place that will prevent the single track Langleys Lane, Clapton Road and the centre of Clapton becoming dangerous rat runs to and from the EZ.

The Somer Valley has progressed from its industrial mining past and developed into a unique balance of working farms, green space, fields and woodland on the edges of its small communities, providing residents with a valuable green environment.

People have chosen to live in this rural area and want it to remain. Our countryside must not be torn up by BANES to create a soulless industrial park that could be anywhere in the UK, nor our villages and farmland blighted by the consequence of increased industrial and commuter traffic.

I urge you to be brave in your decision making. Do not go backwards with a soulless development, but instead maintain our heritage by supporting the development of empty property to bring jobs to the area, thus persevere both our heritage and countryside for future generations.

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## STATEMENT FROM MARGARET HEFFERNAN – SOMER VALLEY ENTERPRISE ZONE

My name is Margaret Heffernan. I'm a professor at the School of Management at the University of Bath, I've run 2 businesses in the UK and 3 in the US and published 6 business books. I say this not to big myself up but to suggest I have some experience and understanding of business. I've also been a parish councillor for Farrington Gurney for over 5 years.

In the business world, there is a mantra, cited often: Build it and they will come. It's not a strategy, it is a warning: because it isn't true. Entrepreneurs and organizations who build new stuff thinking that the sheer wonder of it will attract customers and wild success, they mostly fail. Too many listening, too little insight and understanding, and a dream turns into a nightmare.

I quote it because that, to me, is the strategy behind the SVEZ. It might or might not have a hotel. It might or might not have a food outlet – which might or might not be fast food. Maybe offices, maybe not. Maybe tech, probably not. Somehow, the strategy goes, it'll all be alright. Once we've built it, companies will come. We might need to pay them big incentives....

But there is no single attracting factor, no unique selling point at the heart of the project. Why would a business want to come to the SVEZ? Asked at scrutiny, nobody had a good answer.

Farrington Gurney is squeezed between the A37 and A362. Last night I spent in London with my sister in Hackney. It was quieter there than in our village.

But what concerns my neighbours is what **will** come: yet more construction traffic, pollution (in an age where pollution kills more people than smoking) and if it ever does lure customers, a bunch of LOVAL businesses - already successful in their community -- undermined by fast food and the cheap prices that only big businesses can afford. Whether that is an economic net gain – losing existing businesses to gain new ones?? – remains to be seen.

Huge amounts of time and money have gone into developing this project and still it has come to nothing compelling or critical. I agree with Angharad that the so-called consultation has been poor: eroding public trust where it should have built it. At a time when public funds are sorely needed -for schools, hospitals, the arts and public safety – I can't believe that so poor a project takes priority. Let's not throw our good money after bad.

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## **CLLR ANN MORGAN**

### **STATEMENT TO CABINET – SOMER VALLEY ENTERPRISE ZONE**

As a new ward Councillor, I feel it's important for me to highlight my ward residents' concerns to Cabinet – particularly the concerns from Farrington Gurney, which adjoins the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone site – as well as my own concerns and hopes.

The biggest worry I am hearing from residents is that the proposals are for an outmoded development design which would increase pollution, both environmental and from traffic. Since before my election I have made it clear that I did not support the SVEZ in its original form and felt it should be RADICALLY redesigned.

My understanding is that alternative sites are unsuitable but there is great concern that this Enterprise zone, first mooted in 2007, is out of date NOW in terms of working practices and jobs.

None of us has a crystal ball of course but one thing is certain. The SVEZ in its originally presented form would have created more traffic pollution and have a detrimental effect on the very environment it is MY party's mission to protect.

I could quote you some of the statistics on land and employment etc but I'd like to take it down to the very basics - jobs, people and housing. Part of what is being proposed is that there is a need in the area for the more industrial types of employment. To balance this there is a need for housing, as seen in the Local Plan document and it's believed that those two will perfectly marry up.

Housing in the village most affected (which is Farrington Gurney) will be of such high value that any purchaser would probably have to work in Bristol or Bath to afford them. There is concern that this would increase traffic even more on already saturated arterial routes in entirely unsuitable villages.

Someone working in an industrial unit in the Enterprise Zone may struggle to afford housing locally. I imagine a 3-4 bed new build in Farrington Gurney is already expensive and 70% of expensive is still expensive.

I have read the commitments paper and welcome the change of tone to reflect that this could be a better, greener enterprise zone.

I note the commitment to ensure that active travel and public transport options would be available from the start of the development to ensure workplaces are accessible to everyone – not just those who can afford a car.

So I ask Cabinet to stay strong on these commitments. Cabinet should remain aware that residents will be paying close attention at every step. We need greener, we need better.

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## A 'Critical Friend Analysis' of the employment prospects of the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone- Briefing Statement



February 2024

An Evidence-Based Insight from Smart Growth Analytics Limited

Economic Intelligence and Data Research Consultancy

[jpc@smartgrowthanalytics.co.uk](mailto:jpc@smartgrowthanalytics.co.uk)  
<https://www.sga-ltd.co.uk>

I'm here to talk about the employment prospects of the proposed Somer Valley Enterprise Zone.

According to the Masterplan, somewhere between 700 to 1,000 office and R&D jobs are expected to be located at SVEZ. This is at least more than half of its jobs and therefore a major part of its overall viability.

However, SVEZ be in direct competition with Bath Quays and Bristol's Temple Quays developments for workers and historical patterns of commuting suggest it's highly unlikely that the Somer Valley will attract office workers from Bristol or Bath. For example, 5X more people commute out of the Somer Valley to Bath than commute into the Somer Valley from Bath.

If the Somer Valley and Bath and Bristol all have a plentiful supply of labour going forward, then this might not be a problem. However, the two B&NES EZs, between them, are expected to account for almost all B&NES total employment and labour supply growth forecast, leaving almost nothing for non-employment land sectors such as education and health, retail and tourism and leisure.

Even if the forecasts are wrong and there is a plentiful supply of labour going forward, SVEZ would still suffer from skill shortages as there is a complete mismatch between the skills profile of the residents of the Somer Valley and the office and R&D jobs at the Enterprise Zone.

Which means that SVEZ would have to get way more office and R&D workers from the West of England to fill these jobs, who would have to travel by car. Which is completely out-of-step with the SVEZ principles of design and the Council's Decision Wheel.

These issues would make 'selling' SVEZ to any major office-based employers and/or R&D businesses an incredibly hard sell.

The main reason why these issues have not been flagged previously is because an out-of-date evidence base is being used to inform the Council's decision-making. For example, B&NES has 3,000 fewer workers than were planned into the Council's current Economic Strategy as a result of Brexit and Covid. That's about £125m per annum of B&NES' output.

Moving on to the issue of homeworking and the SVEZ evidence base, it is clear that the pandemic inspired a homeworking revolution in the UK that has serious implications for the future of traditional offices and new office developments. Many parts of B&NES are now akin to Hidden Business Parks in that they have such high concentrations of workers in home offices.

Entirely related to homeworking, there are around 10 often inter-related key drivers of the Future of Work which have implications for new office developments. They include such issues as the ageing workforce, sustainability and Artificial Intelligence.

To what extent does the B&NES forthcoming Local Plan look to be considering these issues? A quick look at the 300+ pages of the Local Plan Options Document reveals very few mentions of homeworking or hybrid working and no mentions whatsoever of the future of work, Artificial Intelligence, coworking or an ageing workforce. However, there is still time to address these issues.

When all the above is considered, my one single recommendation to B&NES Council is to wait for the Draft Local Plan which is due out this year. As I am pretty sure that by then all of the above issues will have been evidenced, explored and considered.

Thank you for listening



Thank you for inviting me to come and speak about the Council's new Economic strategy.

I am here representing Bath Business Improvement District (BID). We work with over 650 businesses in the city centre who collectively invest in our work which seeks to create a successful business environment.

You will have seen our team out and about, we deliver cleansing, security, partnership and promotional services to the city centre businesses of Bath.

It is clear that this economic strategy is tackling some wicked problems and bringing businesses with you will be essential for progress to be made.

The challenge is to build on what we have, to create sustainable new businesses and to provide opportunities for people to work and study locally. How do we build on a 2000+ year history of hospitality and manage the imminent challenges of flooding, increased temperatures, an ageing demographic and new technology which will change the world of work forever?

The BID works with the businesses who are already here, so I have picked out the issues which come up most often in our conversations with our members:

1. Infrastructure. We welcome the proposed focus on infrastructure improvements. Good internet and even more fundamentally actual phone signal is having an impact on the city's reputation as a place to do business. The need for new business spaces is likely to be driven by new technology – hybrid working and new last mile delivery warehousing for example.
2. Transport and access is a pressing issue often raised by our business members. It links to the wider issue of recruitment and skills, the cost of housing in the city centre where the average house price is significantly higher than the B&NES average of £356,000, and also to the challenge of adapting to new logistical arrangements for delivery and trade waste collection.

Housing affordability is covered by this strategy alongside the acknowledgement that 78% of rural residents travel to work by car. Both these factors contribute to the recruitment challenges for city centre businesses, where key workers and people playing important operational roles are financially obliged to live beyond walking and

cycling distance and are unable to identify viable public transport options.

With regards to the high street and the wider tourism economy, it is great to see the importance of this part of Bath's commercial profile highlighted. The impact of the visitor economy in Bath is felt across the entire region, well beyond both the boundaries of B&NES and the scope of our local high street businesses and it merits attention.

Focussing on the city centre user experience (resident, worker or visitor), making the right choice also the most enjoyable one is a good place to start, and businesses will be pleased that a time and movement study has been committed to.

Moving forward, the BID would be pleased to support the inclusive and positive engagement of existing businesses. The strategy's stated aim to work with businesses more closely is welcome and I am here today to express Bath BID's enthusiasm for collaborative strategic partnership work.



**STATEMENT FROM ROBBIE BENTLEY – SPECIAL CABINET MEETING 1<sup>ST</sup>**  
**FEBRUARY 2024**

I am speaking with regard to the lack of easily accessible public transport in, across and through B&NES' area.

This is a very serious issue, one that has been well documented recently. On many occasions it has been difficult to see how we can put meaningful provision in place but too often the people have gotten in the way. In addition, it is abundantly clear that the current, privately owned and operated, public transport model we have to use is simply incapable of providing the service we seek. This has resulted in the waste of Public Funds to try and ensure that socially necessary services are preserved. This is clearly unsustainable.

What we need is a new mindset.

This is mine. I am an academic, studying a Social Sciences Degree (Politics, Philosophy & Economic BA) at the Open University, an institution with a Global reputation for this field of study. What I see is the lack of our political leadership to provide the clear alternative of ensuring we are responsible, not just for ensuring that services, whether privately or publicly owned (and operated), are able to be operated in such a fashion that they require little to no input of scarce financial resources other than those they are capable of generating themselves. We need to ensure that communities are connected, but also that they are designed for interconnectivity. Only when we get both of these can we be satisfied that people moving to these areas will have the infrastructure THEY need to be able to live in comfort.

Far too many instances of doing the opposite to this exist across our region. I could point out what was widely regarded as the first great example of this, but I will decline as it is well known. But I will ask for you to think about *that* example when asking whether the decision you are taking is the right one, or whether it is not right to rush to this decision in this manner. I therefore ask you to strongly consider that if it is merely due to the posture others are taking, whether or not another way might exist.

If it does, please do. Consider all your options carefully.

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Good evening. I have three points on the Local Plan consultation.

First point - The Local Plan consultation papers page 61 addresses a location described as West of Bath. The text includes the sentence *“Therefore it is considered to be **unlikely** that an allocation for development in this location will be capable of inclusion in the draft plan.”* Similar wording is on page 76. No location map has been provided in your agenda papers. What member of the public would spend anytime giving an opinion or submitting evidence on this West of Bath option knowing that the outcome has in effect been pre-determined? Why is this site presented differently to every other strategic site in North East Somerset? The whole section requires a rewrite.

Second point - In 2014, a lady spoke to me in the street asking if I could help her. Notices had gone up around local farmland stating that permissive footpaths were to be closed because of the withdrawal of DEFRA funds for public access. This lady explained that she walked with her young son across the fields from Saltford to school in Keynsham. I contacted the farmer who kindly granted this lady special access and he agreed to allow me to try to find a solution to the withdrawal of funds for public access to the paths. The outcome was an imaginative scheme whereby the Saltford Community Association collects £3000 in donations annually to compensate the farmer for loss of land and other costs. In return over 3000 metres of footpath have remained open for the last ten years for members of the public to enjoy. No-one checks if users of the paths have donated. The paths are used by Saltford residents and can be used by visitors from other areas including Keynsham and Bath freely at any time.

This scheme demonstrates a classic liberal approach of enabling a community to solve a problem for itself, a scheme not dependent on Councils or taxation. It reflects Saltford at its best – enterprising, community minded, and inclusive. Where are these paths? On the site “options”: Saltford South and Saltford West.

As Crispin Truman, CEO of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England said *“People deserve countryside on their doorstep where there is space for nature that everyone can explore and enjoy and which is accessible to all. Green Belt can provide essential ecological functions and recreational benefits which are fundamental to health and well-being.”*

Third point - B&NES has a 6-year land supply. There will be non-controversial options for housing such as at Hicks Gate that will come forward that do not change the essential character of villages like Saltford. This gives B&NES time in the plan period up to 2042 to create a new community in North East Somerset from scratch. Imagine the excitement and prestige of developing a showcase village with the very best of design, energy conservation, and community facilities. B&NES can demonstrate excellence in planning that can be a showcase to the whole country. There is a landowner who would be willing and eager to support this.

Summing up.

- The Local Plan consultation needs to capture all views and not pre-determine any outcome.
- The Local Plan should seek to preserve the essential character of existing settlements.
- The Local Plan has to be bold and inspiring.