

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING	21 st March 2024	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Local Plan Options document	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: 1 st February 2024 Cabinet Report: Local Plan Options consultation and Local Development Scheme		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Council is required to prepare a Local Plan. A Local Plan establishes a spatial strategy, site allocations and a policy framework to guide and shape change and growth within the District. The Local Plan will be a key document in delivering the Council's corporate strategy and its priorities. In February this year Cabinet approved a Local Plan Options document for public consultation. As part of this consultation the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel has an opportunity to consider, discuss and provide its views on the Options presented. These views, alongside comments received during public consultation, will help to inform the next stage of preparing the Local Plan, which is producing a Draft Local Plan.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Panel is asked to;

2.1 Consider the Local Plan Options document and provide its views, alongside wider public consultation, in order to help inform preparation of the Draft Local Plan

3 THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Council is required to prepare a Local Plan. In the UK we operate a plan-led system which means that all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan (primarily a Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans) unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This means that a Local Plan is a key document in guiding and shaping any development or use of land that requires planning permission.
- 3.2 A Local Plan establishes a spatial strategy, site allocations and a policy framework to guide and shape change and growth within the District. The Local Plan will be a key document in delivering the Corporate Strategy and its priorities, as well as other Council strategies including the recently adopted Economic Strategy.
- 3.3 Preparation of a Local Plan goes through a number of statutorily defined stages, that must encompass the consideration and testing of reasonable alternatives or options, before preparing and agreeing a proposed strategy and policy framework.
- 3.4 In February this year Cabinet approved a Local Plan Options document for public consultation. The Options document sets out the key issues affecting the District, suggested spatial priorities for the Local Plan and a range of location options for delivering needed housing and employment space, as well as policy approach options for Development Management policies that apply District-wide.
- 3.5 As part of the consultation the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider, discuss and provide its views on the Options presented. These views, alongside comments received during public consultation, will help to inform the next stage of preparing the Local Plan, which is producing a Draft Local Plan. It is at the Draft Local Plan stage that the Council will be making decisions as to which sites it proposes to allocate for development and its proposed Development Management policies. The Draft Local Plan is then subject to public consultation, before both the Draft Plan and the consultation comments received are submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by a Planning Inspector. Following examination, and if the Local Plan is found sound (or agreed) by the Inspector, it can then be adopted by the Council. Once adopted it becomes the framework for determining planning applications.
- 3.6 The current programme for the key stages is outlined below:
- Options consultation (Reg 18) – February/March 2024
 - Publication of Draft Plan for consultation (Reg 19) – December 2024/January 2025
 - Submission of the Draft Plan for Examination – March 2025
 - Inspector's Report – November 2025
 - Adoption – December 2025
- 3.7 The February Cabinet Report summarises the key elements of the Options document and it is attached to this report as attachment 1. For information the Local Plan Options document and supporting material is available on the Council's website at: <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/local-plan-options-consultation>

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The statutory considerations and framework for preparing the Local Plan are outlined in section 4 of the Cabinet Report (see attachment 1).

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 The resource implications of preparing the Local Plan Options document are outlined in section 5 of the Cabinet Report (see attachment 1).

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

7.1 The Local Plan Options document has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) which ensures that the council has considered the implications for people with protected characteristics of consultation on the Options document. The EqIA has been published alongside the Local Plan Options document. As set out in section 10 of this report consultation will be widely publicised and the Options document and supporting evidence will be available in accessible formats. Consultation also includes specific and targeted engagement with seldom heard groups and there will be a variety of opportunities to provide feedback.

7.2 The Options document represents an early stage in the preparation of the Local Plan. Throughout the preparation process the equalities impacts of the Local Plan will be carefully considered. At the Options stage the EqIA is primarily focussed on identify and referencing the opportunities for the Local Plan to address equalities issues and the needs of people with protected characteristics e.g. in terms of inclusive design or meeting the housing needs of and access to housing for groups of people with protected characteristics. At the Draft Local Plan (Reg 19) stage the Council will be setting out its proposed policies. As the Local Plan progresses towards the Draft Local Plan the equalities impacts of proposed policies will be identified and considered with reference to appropriate equalities data.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 Helping to address the climate and ecological emergencies through contributing to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 e.g. reducing carbon emissions arising from new development; and facilitating nature recovery are key spatial priorities of the Local Plan. Policy approaches or options set out in the document specifically aimed at meeting these priorities are set out, including through:

- Locating new development where it is best served by sustainable modes of travel and minimises car travel
- Policy approaches to minimise energy use or carbon emission rates in new development and ensure they are, as a minimum, zero carbon
- Options to help further reduce embodied carbon from all scales of development

- Setting out policies that are aimed at better enabling the delivery of renewable energy installations in the most appropriate locations
- Options to increase Biodiversity Net Gain in new development and working with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to maximise nature recovery opportunities/benefits

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None, given that preparation of a Local Plan covering the district is a statutory requirement.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 In preparing this Report the Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Sustainable Development has been consulted and cleared the report for publication. Preparation of the Local Plan Options document itself has entailed input from a range of stakeholders aligned with the council’s objective of giving people a bigger say, including:

- Community representatives workshops, including parish & town councils, stakeholders and ward councillors, held in January and July-September
- Working with key stakeholders including the universities, RUH and Curo (through the Future Ambitions Board) and the Integrated Care Board/NHS
- Bespoke tailored engagement with a number of seldom heard groups

10.2 Engagement and consultation on the Local Plan Options is taking place over an eight week period from 12th February to 8th April 2024 and is being undertaken in accordance with the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement. The means by which the consultation has been publicised and the various consultation and engagement activities undertaken are summarised in section 10 of the Cabinet Report (see attachment 1).

Contact person	<i>Richard Daone, Deputy Head of Planning 01225 477546</i>
Background papers	<i>Local Plan Options document and supporting information available at: https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/local-plan-options-consultation</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

Attachment 1

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Cabinet	
MEETING	1st February 2024	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3497
TITLE:	Local Plan Options consultation and Local Development Scheme	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Attachment 1: Local Plan Options Consultation Document		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 To deliver the Council's spatial priorities arising from the Corporate Strategy and Economic Strategy this report sets out the proposed Local Plan options for public consultation and the arrangements for public consultation scheduled to start in February 2024. It also seeks changes to the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) which is the Council's programme for the preparation and review of planning policies.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to;

2.1 agree the spatial priorities of the Local Plan as set out in attachment 1 for public engagement, particularly to support a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable economy and provide for more housing that is affordable

2.2 agree the policy and development location options set out in Attachment 1 (Local Plan Options Consultation Document) as the basis for public engagement

- 2.3 agree the revisions to the B&NES Local Development Scheme outlined in para 3.3 of this Report**
- 2.4 agree and authorise the Director for Sustainable Communities to carry out the approach to public engagement in Section 10 of this report**
- 2.5 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**

3 THE REPORT

Local Plan 2022-2042

- 3.1 The preparation of a Local Plan enables high quality development to be delivered in a planned and co-ordinated way that will help the council meet its priorities e.g. related to moving towards and maintaining a prosperous, greener and fairer economy, providing affordable housing, moving towards carbon neutrality and better addressing the ecological emergency. It also enables delivery of development to be aligned with infrastructure provision that can be funded or part funded by developer contributions. The council publicised its intention to prepare a new Local Plan by publishing the Local Plan 2022-2042 Launch Document in November 2022. The Launch Document outlined the proposed plan period (twenty years to 2042); scope of the Local Plan; and the arrangements for preparing it.
- 3.2 Following the WECA Mayor halting work on the Mayoral Spatial Development Strategy (SDS), the B&NES Local Plan will cover all strategic and non-strategic policies relating to the development and use of land across the district. As such it will be a full Local Plan and upon its adoption will replace the B&NES Core Strategy, Placemaking Plan and Local Plan Partial Update (LPPU).
- 3.3 The Local Plans of the three WECA Unitary Authorities will address the strategic issues that would have been addressed by the SDS. The three UAs are working closely together on our respective Local Plans. Through the Duty to Co-operate we are required to engage constructively and on an on-going basis on strategic cross boundary matters. In accordance with the Duty to Co-operate B&NES is engaging not only with Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council, but with our other neighbouring authorities of North Somerset, Somerset and Wiltshire Councils.
- 3.4 Having published the Launch Document the next stage of plan preparation is to gather evidence, formulate options (or reasonable alternatives) and to test them through public engagement. This Report outlines the key elements of the Options Document and seeks approval of the Options Document (Attachment 1) as the basis for this public engagement.
- 3.5 The Council's development plan must include strategic policies to address its priorities for the development and use of land in its area. The primary purposes of a Local Plan are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

It says strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, (to ensure outcomes support beauty and placemaking), and make sufficient provision for:

- housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
- community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and
- the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

3.6 Non-strategic policies should be used to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. This can include allocating sites, the provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level, establishing design principles, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and setting out other development management policies.

3.7 The Local Plan is a key corporate document in helping to address the Council's priorities and objectives that have a spatial or place manifestation. In order to guide the identification of options and ensure the Local Plan delivers the intended outcomes a set of draft spatial priorities are included within the Options Document for comment. These are closely aligned with the Corporate Strategy and are as follows:

Our Local Plan will plan for development in response to local needs to create attractive, healthy and sustainable places in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy.

The Plan will:

- ***Create a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable economy***
- ***Maximise the delivery of housing that is more affordable***

In doing so, our plans for development must:

- ***Enable B&NES to become carbon neutral by 2030 and deliver a climate resilient district***
- ***Protect and enhance nature through facilitating nature recovery***
- ***Improve health and well-being outcomes for all, including through planning health promoting and inclusive places and providing for cultural enrichment***
- ***Reduce the need to travel unsustainably and enable improved connectivity for all through sustainable modes of transport and facilitating locally available services and facilities***
- ***Respect, conserve and enhance our heritage assets and their landscape settings, in particular the World Heritage Site of Bath and National Landscapes***
- ***Align the timely provision of transport, health, education, social, cultural and green infrastructure with development***

- 3.8 Where there are conflicts between these priorities it will be the role of the Local Plan to balance and resolve them. These conflicts and the implications of different options are outlined in the Options Document in seeking the views of residents and other stakeholders.
- 3.9 In light of the proposed spatial priorities and the primary role of the Local Plan in helping to create a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable economy and facilitating the delivery of housing in response to local needs evidence work has been undertaken to objectively assess the district's economic and housing needs. The Options Document then proposes a range of location and policy options in response to these needs.

Economic and Employment Needs

- 3.10 The Economic Strategy (considered elsewhere on the agenda for this Cabinet meeting) establishes the strategy for shaping the District's economy and highlights a range of key actions aimed at improving economic prosperity, the sustainability of the economy and ensuring opportunities and prosperity are shared by all. Within this context assessment has been undertaken of forecast economic performance and growth during the Local Plan period, as well as the quality and suitability of existing employment land and premises and the associated requirements for new employment space to meet future needs. The assessment has been undertaken on a sectoral basis. Ensuring there is sufficient employment space of the right type in the right locations is a key role of the Local Plan, in helping to meet future needs and deliver the Economic Strategy ambition of moving towards and maintaining a prosperous, greener and fairer local economy.
- 3.11 The study concludes that there is a need to strongly protect existing employment/industrial space, particularly in Bath where there is a shortage of supply. In addition, existing office space should be protected where possible, albeit some of the poorer quality and less suitable stock can be lost (on a case by case basis). Importantly additional high quality office space, suitable for modern occupiers, should be planned for. Most of this need relates to Bath, particularly close to the city centre. Additionally, to meet the needs of key economic sectors a supply of new and replacement space is needed, including innovation and research & development space (in Bath and potentially Keynsham) and industrial premises across the district, particularly in the Somer Valley area.

Housing Needs

- 3.12 The Economic Strategy also highlights that the lack of availability and affordability of housing is a key issue affecting Bath and North East Somerset and that this also impacts on the performance of our economy and wider sustainability issues. In order to underpin the Local Plan an assessment of housing needs across the District has been undertaken. This study is known as a Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA).
- 3.13 The context for assessing local housing needs is also set by national planning policy, primarily set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The recently published revised NPPF (against which the Council's Local Plan will be examined) makes it clear that the government standard method derived figure of housing need should be seen as an advisory starting

point for establishing a housing requirement for the area. There may be exceptional circumstances, including relating to the particular demographic characteristics of an area, which justify an alternative approach to assessing housing need in which case the alternative approach should also reflect current and future demographic trends and market signals. The standard method figure of housing need is 725 homes per annum, or 14,500 over the twenty year plan period. A locally derived methodology based on the NPPF results in a very similar figure. Therefore, it is proposed to use the standard method based figure as the housing need to which the Local Plan must respond.

- 3.14 Of the overall need for 14,500 new homes more than 6,000 will be accommodated on sites (mainly brownfield sites in Bath) already committed for development via planning permission or allocated in the adopted Local Plan. A significant element of the projected population growth within Bath and North East Somerset comprises students aged 18-23 and given their accommodation requirements are different to other households should be considered separately from general needs housing.
- 3.15 Evidence in the LHNA shows that a significant element of our housing need is for affordable housing, particularly in the city of Bath. In line with the NPPF, need is identified for both affordable housing for those that cannot afford market rents or purchase, as well as households that can afford to rent but aspire to own their own home. Evidence supporting the Economic Strategy also suggests that a lack of housing that is affordable for key and other local workers is detrimental to the performance of the local economy.
- 3.16 In addition to objectively assessing Bath and North East Somerset's needs the council is required to consider and respond to any unmet needs arising in neighbouring local authorities. Through the preparation and recent publication of its Draft Local Plan (Publication of a local plan under Regulation 19 of Town and Country (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012/767) Bristol City Council has identified that it is unable to accommodate fully its objectively assessed need for housing. Bristol City Council has therefore, requested that its neighbouring authorities, including Bath and North East Somerset, consider whether they can respond positively and accommodate a proportion of their unmet needs. This Council will need to consider this request in preparing the Local Plan 2022-2042.

Location Options

- 3.17 As set out in paragraph 3.9 above an element of the housing and employment needs identified will be met on existing committed sites. In preparing the Local Plan 2022-2042 existing allocations in the adopted Local Plan that haven't yet been implemented are being reviewed. The first priority in responding to our housing and economic needs is to utilise brownfield sites, including those that are currently allocated, as well as additional opportunities. However, in order to meet the objectively assessed needs greenfield sites would also need to be brought forward for development.
- 3.18 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.
- Climate change and environmental impacts and opportunities – ensuring that options help address climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as facilitating nature recovery and the protection and enhancement of key natural and historic environment assets.
- Flood risk – ensuring that vulnerable uses are not located in the areas of highest flood risk and that future development does not make flood risk worse and is resilient to future risk.
- Green Belt – considering the impact of locations on the Green Belt. For any Green Belt options, ‘exceptional circumstances’ would need to be demonstrated to justify removing land from the Green Belt.
- Infrastructure provision – ensuring development is located in areas that can be served by supporting infrastructure in an efficient and cost effective way.

3.19 The location or site options that have been identified are set out in the Options Document. The sustainability effects and carbon impact of each of the location or site options are set out in the Sustainability Appraisal and Climate Impact Assessment that will be published as part of the Options document consultation. The District-wide strategy or distribution of development will be built up from these locations and alternative strategy scenarios are also tested in the Sustainability Appraisal.

3.20 Location options are outlined on a place basis. For each main settlement or place within the district the key issues and priorities are identified. The Local Plan will then seek to address these priorities, including through the development location and policy approach options. A short summary of the key options on a place-basis is outlined below.

Bath

3.21 Bath is recognised nationally and internationally as a double inscribed World Heritage Site (WHS). Both of the WHS inscriptions relate to the whole city. Being a WHS has significant economic benefits especially as the city is an international visitor destination and the city’s heritage also provides the inspiration for innovation and change. However, change does need to be very carefully managed in order to ensure the WHS and its outstanding universal value is not harmed. For example, this means that the height of new buildings needs to be carefully considered and guided and the sensitive landscape, including green hillsides within and surrounding the city, protected. However,

given the role of the city as the main centre of population, commercial activity and services and facilities within the District the development needs and pressures are also significant.

3.22 The substantial development needs of Bath; the highly sensitive historic environment; and the limited supply of land means that meeting some needs, over others, must be prioritised. It is proposed that meeting housing needs and those for employment space should take priority over other uses, including Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) (see options in paragraph 3.27 below). Most of the major brownfield site opportunities within the city have already been identified or delivered, however, there may be some additional development capacity. Site or area options include:

- a) For key employment/industrial areas (such as Newbridge Riverside) options to continue to protect for industrial uses or enable intensification with some flexibility to encourage creative industry/businesses.
- b) Bath Quays North – allocated in the adopted Placemaking Plan principally for much needed high quality, modern office space. Options to retain the current allocated land use mix, or partly due to delivery issues, enable greater flexibility to facilitate a broader range of innovation-based employment space and some limited housing for economically active people (specifically excluding PBSA).
- c) Review of various other allocations in terms of their land use mix/policy approach in order to better facilitate delivery of housing or employment space.
- d) Bath Recreation Ground – options relating to maintaining the existing allocation but with some amendments to site requirements for greater clarity, or removing reference to provision of a stadium in this part of the city.
- e) Review the approach at Universities' campuses to understand whether there might be scope for further development, including PBSA (see also District-wide policies section below).
- f) West of Bath – given the finite capacity of the city to accommodate development to meet its needs options for the growth of the city have been explored. An area to the west of the city in the Green Belt has been considered for a strategic level of development. The NPPF makes it clear that exceptional circumstances must exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries. As the location lies close to the city and is relatively well connected through public transport, development here would result in benefits. However, assessment by independent experts commissioned by the Council show that any development in this area would be very likely to cause substantial harm to the WHS. The NPPF makes it clear that substantial harm to the WHS should be 'wholly exceptional'. This means, at this stage, it is unlikely that this location will be identified and allocated in the Draft Local Plan. However, it will be consulted upon to test and understand whether the substantial harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm.

Keynsham/Saltford

3.23 Whilst Keynsham and Saltford suffer from traffic congestion at peak times both settlements are relatively well connected by sustainable modes of transport, as they lie in a public transport corridor served by bus and rail and

one which is proposed to be the focus of further investment and improvements. Keynsham, in particular offers a good range of services and facilities. As such a range of location or site options are proposed for consultation.

- a) Redevelopment of some brownfield sites in or close to Keynsham town centre
- b) Greenfield site options for the expansion of Keynsham and/or Saltford, some of which are very well related to the Bath to Bristol corridor, including the North Keynsham area. In addition to housing, supporting infrastructure and employment uses would need to be incorporated. These options all lie within the Green Belt. The NPPF makes it clear that exceptional circumstances must exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries. Development in this area would need to be linked to investment in Green Infrastructure provision/improvements, including retaining a green gap separating Keynsham and Saltford

Hicks Gate

The Hicks Gate area lies to the northwest of Keynsham, on the edge of Bristol. Options are proposed for residential led mixed-use development in this location. This land also lies within the Green Belt. The NPPF makes it clear that exceptional circumstances must exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries. The land in question also adjoins the Brislington area in Bristol where land is allocated in the Bristol Local Plan for residential development. Therefore, the council would need to work closely with Bristol City Council in maximising the potential for a high quality, comprehensive cross-boundary development, that may also incorporate the relocation of the Brislington Park and Ride onto land within B&NES and enable it to become a proper multi-modal transport interchange.

Whitchurch village

- 3.24 Whitchurch village lies close to the south east edge of Bristol, but is separate from the city. It is crucial that this separation is maintained. Due to its relatively good sustainable transport connectivity options are put forward for potential development (of varying scales) with the opportunity to provide different benefits to the village. All the development options lie on land currently in the Green Belt. The NPPF makes it clear that exceptional circumstances must exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries.

Somer Valley

- 3.25 The Somer Valley area comprises a network of settlements, all with their distinctive character. It lies outside the Green Belt and is relatively well connected by sustainable transport. Options are proposed at Radstock (north Radstock and East Radstock/Writhlington), Peasedown St John and Farrington Gurney for new areas of development to provide new housing, but also employment opportunities, renewable energy and delivering improved infrastructure. At Midsomer Norton opportunities for strategic levels of housing are very limited. However, a number of potential smaller site opportunities are identified adjoining the town.

Rural area

3.26 The rural areas contain villages of different character, size and sustainability. The Options document proposes that some proportionate growth (nominally 5% over twenty years) should be planned for at the villages best connected by sustainable transport and with a better range of services and facilities. Site options for development are not identified in the Options Document and it is proposed to work with the relevant communities/parish councils in assessing and identifying sites to be allocated to meet local housing and employment needs in the Draft Local Plan. Additionally, the Options Document seeks to enable local communities in villages to bring forward smaller scale community led development if they so wish.

District-wide Development Management Policies

3.27 In addition, the Local Plan will set out policies for determining planning applications across the whole district. The adopted Local Plan includes a range of policies, some of which have recently been updated through the LPPU. Many of these policies remain fit for purpose and will remain unchanged. However, options are proposed for other policies to help ensure they respond to up to date evidence and better achieve the council's corporate ambitions and the spatial priorities of the Local Plan. Some of the key areas of policy options include:

- Maximising the delivery of various types of affordable housing on qualifying sites and emphasising the role of viability established through plan-making.
- Greater flexibility in better enabling affordable housing on rural exceptions sites.
- Ensuring a mix of housing types are delivered in line with the evidence of local need.
- More strictly managing PBSA so that it is delivered only on-campus, or as an option on sites specifically allocated for PBSA (which may lie outside Bath).
- Further reducing carbon emissions associated with development through stricter energy or target emissions standards and stricter embodied carbon standards.
- Better focussing and facilitating renewable energy applications
- Facilitating greater nature recovery e.g. through increased Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.
- Requiring applicants to demonstrate their proposals reflect the principles of planning for healthier places, including requiring a health impact assessment.
- Further emphasising requirements around public transport and active travel as the basis for addressing transport impacts of development
- Strong requirements to ensure the phased provision of infrastructure required to support and mitigate the impacts of development as early as possible in the development process.

3.28 The above section of this report summarises the key options that are set out in full in the Options Document (attachment 1), which it is proposed should be published as the basis for public engagement.

3.29 Preparation of the Options document has been informed by a Sustainability Appraisal, Climate Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment. Respectively they identify the sustainability effects, carbon impacts and likely impact on the National Site Network sites (protected nature sites) of the options. Reports of all three appraisals/assessments will be published alongside and as part of the Options document consultation. All three assessments/appraisals are an iterative process applied through all stages of plan preparation and as such they will be used to inform the Local Plan as it progresses to Draft Local Plan stage.

Local Development Scheme

3.30 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the Council's planning policy work programme over a three year period to assist those who want to engage in the process of local plan preparation. In some cases, the policy changes through local plan preparation also require an associated Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to be amended and these are also shown in the LDS. The LDS must be kept up-to-date and the main changes are:

- Amendments to the preparation timetable for the Local Plan 2022-2042, as follows:
 - Options consultation (Reg 18) – February/March 2024
 - Publication of Draft Plan for consultation (Reg 19) – December 2024/January 2025
 - Submission of the Draft Plan for Examination – March 2025
 - Inspector's Report – November 2025
 - Adoption – December 2025
- Review of CIL charging schedule and Planning Obligations SPD timetables aligned with the preparation of the Local Plan 2022-2042 (it should be noted that the timetable proposed may need to be reviewed again given that the government is likely to be changing arrangements for developer contributions towards infrastructure provision)
- SPDs – under the new planning system SPDs are due to be replaced by Supplementary Plans. This change is subject to secondary legislation and therefore, there remains uncertainty as to implementation. Timetables for supplementary documents of whatever form (including design guidance/design codes) will therefore need to be kept under review

3.31 The LDS is published on the Council's website and includes a date from which it is effective. Subject to the Cabinet decision the LDS will be updated as set out above and published on the website with an effective date of 12th February 2024 (decision implementation date).

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Section 38(6) of the Planning

and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Section 70(2) Town and Country Planning Act 1990).

- 4.2 Section 19(1B) - (1E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that each local planning authority must identify their strategic priorities and have policies to address these in their development plan documents (taken as a whole). The development plan for an area is made up of the combination of strategic policies (which address the priorities for an area) and non-strategic policies (which deal with more detailed matters).
- 4.3 In light of the UK Plan-led system, Regulation 10A of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) requires that Local Planning Authorities must review local plans and the National Planning Policy Framework states that this must take place at least once every 5 years, and Plans should then be updated as necessary. This must in whole or in part be to ensure that policies remain relevant and effectively address the needs of the local community.
- 4.4 The Council updated parts of its Local Plan (comprising the Adopted Core Strategy and Placemaking Plan) through the LPPU. The LPPU was adopted in January 2023. However, a full update of the Local Plan now needs to be prepared in order to ensure that the needs for development within the district (e.g. for housing and employment space) over the longer term can be objectively assessed and responded to positively.
- 4.5 The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023 which will make some changes to plan-making. Regulations by the Secretary of State are required to bring these changes into force. The Government has said local planning authorities (LPAs) must submit their local plans for examination by 30 June 2025 (and adopt them by 31 December 2026) if they want their local plans to be adopted under the current system. If LPAs are not able to meet these deadlines (or if their local plans fail at examination), then LPAs must prepare their local plans under the new plan-making system. The Council's new Local Plan is being prepared under the current system and as will be clear from the programme set out in paragraph 3.4 of this Report it is anticipated will be submitted before the 30 June 2025 deadline.
- 4.6 The first formal stage in preparing the Council's new Local Plan is Regulation 18 of Town and Country (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012/767 which provides the opportunity to gather evidence and test options with local communities and stakeholders. The Options Document, included as Attachment 1, articulates the options that will form the basis of this engagement.
- 4.7 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all local planning authorities to prepare a Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS sets out the programme, resources and arrangements for the production and review of statutory planning documents required by the Council. The LDS must be kept up-to-date.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The Local Plan Options document has been prepared utilising existing staff resources, led by the Planning Policy team and involving various other teams across the council, and also both council and WECA funding. Council funding has been primarily from the existing Local Development Framework budget, although it has been supplemented in 2023/24 by funds via an agreed facility to draw-down from central reserves. In addition, this council successfully bid for strategic masterplanning funding from WECA and this has also been utilised in preparing the Local Plan Options document. It is currently envisaged that the remaining stages of Local Plan preparation can be funded within existing budgets.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 The Local Plan Options document is subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) which ensures that the council has considered the implications for people with protected characteristics of consultation on the Options document. As set out in section 10 of this report consultation will be widely publicised and the Options document and supporting evidence will be available in accessible formats. Consultation will also include specific and targeted engagement with seldom heard groups and there will be a variety of opportunities to provide feedback.
- 7.2 The Options document represents an early stage in the preparation of the Local Plan. Throughout the preparation process the equalities impacts of the Local Plan will be carefully considered. At the Options stage the EqIA is primarily focussed on identify and referencing the opportunities for the Local Plan to address equalities issues and the needs of people with protected characteristics e.g. in terms of inclusive design or meeting the housing needs of and access to housing for groups of people with protected characteristics. At the Draft Local Plan (Reg 19) stage the Council will be setting out its proposed policies. As the Local Plan progresses towards the Draft Local Plan the equalities impacts of proposed policies will be identified and considered with reference to appropriate equalities data. The EqIA is therefore, an iterative process that will help to ensure the Local Plan addresses equalities issues and that its policies provide opportunities to ensure development proposals properly address the needs of everyone including people with protected characteristics.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 Helping to address the climate and ecological emergencies through contributing to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 e.g. reducing carbon emissions arising from new development; and facilitating nature recovery are key spatial priorities

of the Local Plan. Policy approaches or options set out in the document specifically aimed at meeting these priorities are set out, including through:

- Locating new development where it is best served by sustainable modes of travel and minimises car travel
- Policy approaches to minimise energy use or carbon emission rates in new development and ensure they are, as a minimum, zero carbon
- Options to help further reduce embodied carbon from all scales of development
- Setting out policies that are aimed at better enabling the delivery of renewable energy installations in the most appropriate locations
- Options to increase Biodiversity Net Gain in new development and working with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to maximise nature recovery opportunities/benefits

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None, given that preparation of a Local Plan covering the district is a statutory requirement.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 In preparing this Report the Cabinet Member for Built Environment and Sustainable Development and the S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted. It has been cleared for publication by the S151 and Monitoring Officer.

10.2 Preparation of the Local Plan Options document (included as Attachment 1) has entailed input from a range of stakeholders aligned with the council's objective of giving people a bigger say, including:

- Community representatives workshops, including parish & town councils, stakeholders and ward councillors, held in January and July-September
- Working with key stakeholders including the universities, RUH and Curo (through the Future Ambitions Board) and the Integrated Care Board/NHS
- Bespoke tailored engagement with a number of seldom heard groups

10.3 Engagement and consultation on the Local Plan Options is proposed to take place over a six week period from 12th February to 25th March 2024 and will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. This consultation will be comprehensive and involve a wide range of stakeholders e.g. communities/residents, parish and town councils, statutory organisations, the voluntary sector, developers, as well as seldom heard groups (see paragraph 10.5 below). The engagement activities and consultation will be widely publicised using a range of media/communication channels and ensuring the consultation material is accessible. The Options document and supporting evidence will primarily be available on the Council's website, in accessible formats, as well as in hard copy format at various locations. Comments will be encouraged primarily on-line via a clear and easy to use web-form, but stakeholders will also be able to submit written/paper comments and, where appropriate, verbally.

- 10.4 Information on the Options and how to comment/get involved will also be provided and explained through a range of consultation events. These will include:
- In person staffed exhibitions in key locations across the District (in or close to settlements where development options are being proposed)
 - Webinars primarily relating to key policy topics
 - Short videos explaining the purpose of and key messages from the Local Plan, as well as explaining the place-based options
- 10.5 In addition it is proposed to build on previous engagement with seldom-heard groups with a range of further meetings based around what they said during previous engagement and how we have responded.
- 10.6 The proposed approach is comprehensive and aligns closely with the council's priority of giving people a bigger say. The issues raised in all of the comments received will be carefully considered in progressing towards the next stage of Local Plan preparation, which is the Draft Local Plan.

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Background papers	<i>Equalities Impact Assessment of Local Plan Options</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	