

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Matt McCabe, Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On or after 2nd May 2026	<small>EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:</small>
		E 3655
TITLE:	Somer Valley Design Code Supplementary Planning Document	
WARD:	Midsomer North, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Paulton, Peasedown, Radstock, Westfield	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
Appendix 1 Somer Valley Design Code Supplementary Planning Document		
Appendix 2 Consultation Statement		

1 THE ISSUE

To facilitate the delivery of high-quality development in the Somer Valley, a design code has been prepared which it is proposed to adopt as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The design code sets out the design requirements for new housing within the Somer Valley which includes the wards of Midsomer Norton North, Midsomer Norton Redfield, Paulton, Peasedown, Radstock and Westfield. The code has been prepared following engagement with stakeholders including parish and town councils. Consultation was also undertaken on a draft version of the design code in autumn 2025 and the issues raised in comments have been considered in preparing the final version proposed to be adopted. It is intended that the code will be used alongside and to supplement the current adopted Development Plan and the emerging Local Plan, so as to influence the design of housing developments. This report seeks approval of the Design Code SPD for adoption. In paragraph 4 “The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 provides for transitional arrangements for the adoption of a proposed SPD, provided that the document is adopted no later than 30th June 2026.”

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The cabinet member is asked to agree that:

a. The Somer Valley Design Code Supplementary Planning Document as amended following consultation (Appendix 1) is adopted

b. The Head of Planning has delegated authority to make any necessary editorial changes, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Built Environment, Housing and Sustainable Development, prior to the adoption and publication of the Somer Valley Design Code SPD.

3. THE REPORT

3.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in the adopted Local Plan (Core Strategy, Placemaking Plan and Local Plan Partial Update).

3.2 The council's adopted Local Plan includes policies which encourage a high level of design quality (policies D1 -D10). However, these policies are district wide and the development plan does not include any area specific design-related policies.

3.3 Changes in national planning policy require councils to produce design codes. Given the varied nature of the district, area-based design codes will be beneficial so as to reflect the specific character of local sub areas. This SPD will serve as a pilot project being the first design code to be produced. It is envisaged that this approach can be replicated in other places within the district subject to the availability of resources.

3.4 In light of the changes to the NPPF and increased housing requirement, the council is anticipating proposals for major housing schemes to come forward prior to adoption of the Local Plan 2025-2043. The intention for the SPD is to ensure that new housing developments are designed to be responsive to the Somer Valley's character and to ensure high quality design.

3.5 The code has been drafted following meetings with parish and town councils, as community representatives, and internal stakeholders. It is intended that the code will reflect what is valued about the local area.

3.6 Following the Single Member decision to approve the SPD for consultation in June 2025 and in line with Our Neighbourhood Planning Protocol (the Council's Statement of Community Involvement), the council consulted on the Draft Somer Valley Design Code SPD for 6 weeks between 22nd October and 2nd December 2025.

3.7 A consultation report including, setting out who was consulted, how they were consulted and a summary of the key issues raised in comments during the consultation has been prepared, together with the Council's response (refer Appendix 2).

3.8 Proposed minor amendments have been made to the SPD in response to comments set out in the consultation report. A summary of key changes arising from the consultation are below.

- Connection to nature
 - Minor changes to text to require additional ecology measures such as swift bricks and hedgehog highways. Minor changes to text to reference traffic free routes to open space.
- Primary Streets
 - Minor change to wording to require protected bike lanes.
- Terrace property parameters
 - Following concern that terraces would not be appropriate for all of the Somer Valley the wording has been made more flexible and the block structure diagrams amended. Minor changes to wording to allow for three story homes where appropriate.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 Regulations 11 to 16 set out the requirements for preparing Supplementary Planning Documents.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

5.1 The preparation of the Somer Valley Design Code SPD, public consultation on it, consideration of the issues raised and preparing the final version of the SPD was undertaken primarily by the Planning Policy Team, supported as appropriate by other teams, and the costs covered within the existing salary budget and the Council's Local Development Framework budget.

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 Pursuant to the public sector equality duty, an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out for the Somer Valley Design Code SPD. The key findings are summarised below:

- The intention of the SPD is to improve the design quality in permitted housing developments.
- The SPD does not directly address equalities groups such as age, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion / belief, marriage/civil partnership, as the objective of the SPD is to improve design quality in permitted housing developments and have benefits for all groups in society.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 The SPD facilitates delivery of development that accords with policies in the Local Plan that address the Climate Emergency including sustainable construction, sustainable transport and the provision of green infrastructure.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 The Design Code SPD will provide detailed guidance on and supplement development plan policy requirements relating to housing development in the Somer Valley. The only alternative option that was considered was preparing and approving the design code as informal guidance and not adopting it as an SPD. However, informal guidance carries significantly less weight in decision-making on planning applications than an SPD. Therefore, this option was discounted.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The draft SPD has been subject to statutory public consultation pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 for 6 weeks. The post consultation changes have been prepared in consultation with various Council Services. The Monitoring Officer, S151 Officer and Cabinet Member have been consulted in preparing this Single Member Decision Report.

10.2 This report recommends that the proposed changes to the draft SPD are approved and the SPD is adopted.

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Background papers	Equality Impact Assessment
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	