

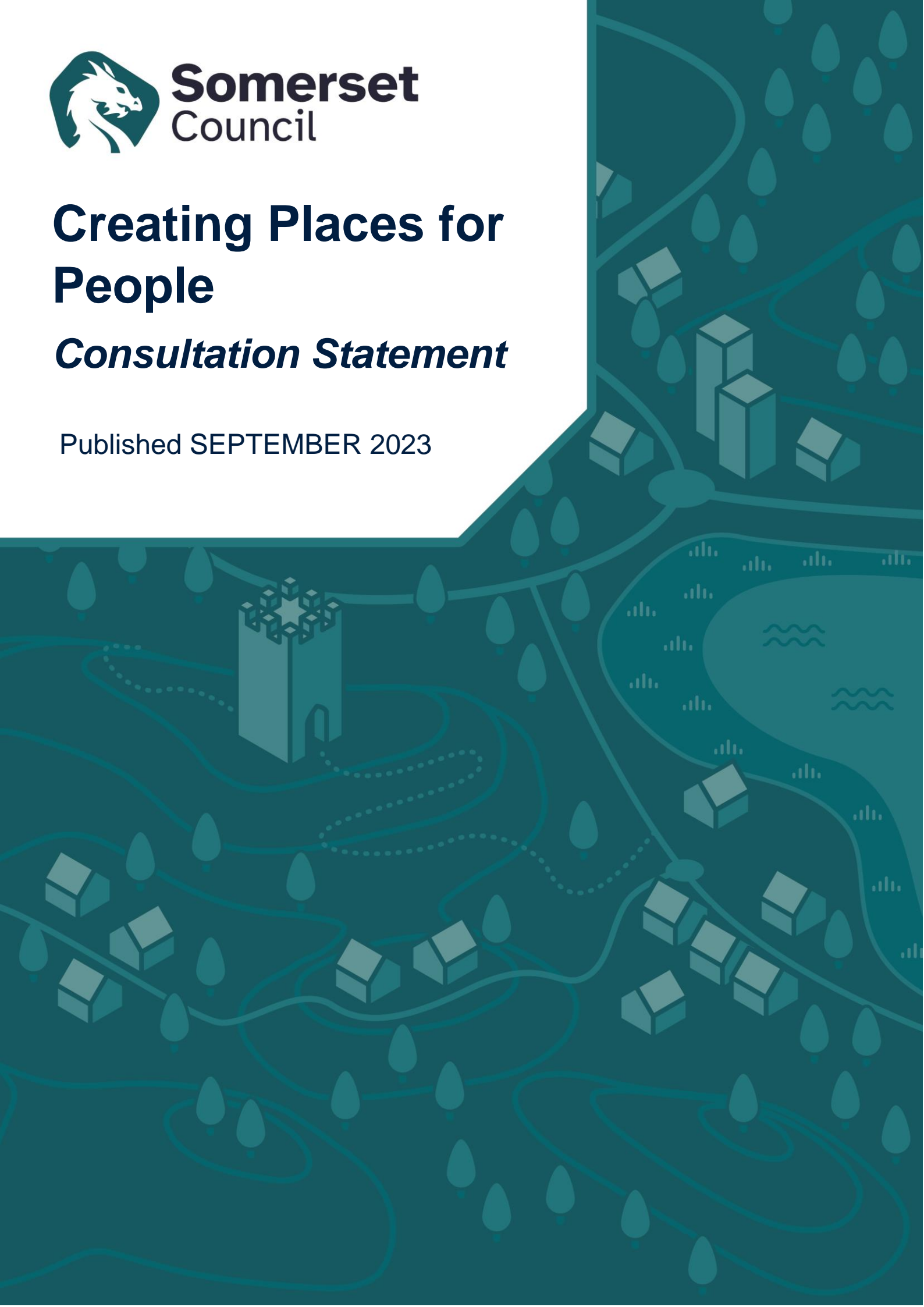


Somerset
Council

Creating Places for People

Consultation Statement

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Creating Places for People

Consultation Statement

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Introduction

Creating Places for People is a set of outline placemaking for movement design principles, which set out to ensure good street and highway design and steer new development in Somerset. Good street design is integral to designing high quality places. However, too often new developments in Somerset are failing to achieve this.

Developers have traditionally been required to design their schemes based on a system which predicts future transport movements based on past trends. This has led to an over-emphasis on ensuring the local road network and site accesses are built or upgraded to have sufficient capacity to accommodate the predicted increase in car use. Developers have been asked to consider other sustainable travel modes within their designs, and in some cases contributed towards off-site improvements. However, this has always been alongside, and often second to ensuring car-based capacity is delivered. Application of highways guidance has further contributed to this in the design of internal estate roads, which have often prioritised vehicular movements over pedestrians and the creation of great places with enhanced environments.

This approach has often created rather sterile and ‘anywheresville’ feeling developments which lack identity. It has failed to help create the environments needed to enable inclusive movement for all and failed to deliver the necessary shifts to more sustainable modes. The linkage between people’s immediate environment, air quality, and ability to live active lifestyles, and a range of physical and mental health and wellbeing concerns are becoming increasingly more obvious. Carbon emissions from transport remain stubbornly high in Somerset and the UK more widely.

The principles will look to ensure a substantial number of associated benefits can be realised through new development. By making new development more people-focused and higher quality, benefits will include enabling people to live more sustainably, feel safer and more confident, live healthy lives, save money, reduce carbon footprints and improve air quality, create safe and easy access to schools, access opportunities, and create places people feel proud of, which are attractive and resilient for the future. These can deliver major benefits for Somerset, socially, economically and environmentally. The principles should guide developers towards creating inclusive and accessible places for all, regardless of age, gender, mobility or background.

The design principles respond to the following vision:

Vision Statement: “Streets and spaces will be designed to be attractive, pleasant and inclusive places that accommodate all users and feel safe for use by all walking and wheeling users. They should prioritise active travel and

public transport, maximising connectivity, and permeability not only within development sites, but also providing wider connectivity. Crossings and junctions should always prioritise pedestrians in residential areas. Streets and spaces should also be designed to reflect a hierarchy where movement is related to land use and character.”

This Consultation Statement explains how Somerset Council are undertaking public consultation to inform how the guiding principles should be achieved and whether the vision and associated principles are sufficient in doing so. The Council would also like to know whether the principles are suitably worded in terms of leading to the anticipated benefits, and how the engagement, feedback and responses received have and will continue to influence their development.

This draft statement covers:

- Which bodies and persons were invited to make comments;
- How those bodies and persons were invited to make comment;
- The material subject to consultation;
- A summary of early engagement and how this has influenced the final set of placemaking and movement principles.

The final statement will also cover:

- A summary of the responses received; and
- A summary of how the responses influenced the final set of placemaking and movement principles.

The Council has an adopted SCI for each of the former District Councils and is currently preparing a draft SCI for adoption in October 2023. You can find the former documents [here](#) and further information about the draft being prepared [here](#).

The SCI outlines that the Council is committed to effective community engagement and seeks to use a wide range of methods for involving the community in the plan making process.

Consultation Summary

In July 2023, the Executive Board made the decision to endorse and adopt guiding principles which will inform the development of the new Local Transport Plan (LTP), new Local Plan, and the Council’s overall approach to transport planning, development management, consideration of planning proposals, and other relevant policies and plans. The draft ‘Placemaking for Movement’ principles are based upon the adopted

guiding principles and are set out within the [Decision Report](#) to Executive on 10th July 2023, which respond to a series of social, economic and environmental benefits and the vision statement. The principles will ultimately be adopted as a material planning consideration for the adoption of masterplans, pre-app advice, planning applications and development management activity, subject to consultation and taking feedback into account. Somerset Council will expect developers to respond to these principles.

The Principles are accompanied to stakeholder consultation and engagement by a short-form, six page further information document to summarise the aim of the Principles, by setting out the main issues in which they are addressing, the benefits in which they will deliver and the vision they are responding to. Consultation is focused around the use of the Council's online consultation and engagement platform Citizen Space, which presents the Principles in an interactive format. The platform hosts a short trailer-style video, setting out and explaining the Principles in an engaging way that allows stakeholders to visualise how the benefits are to be delivered through the draft Principles. The short video and associated online survey summarise the main benefits and draft Principles in a clear and more accessible way.

Policy officers have also worked with the Council's Communications Team to improve understanding of the consultation material by ensuring "plain English" language has been used throughout, including influencing the title of the project to become 'Creating Places for People'. Consultation on the outline principles will run from 4th September 2023 until 16th October 2023.

Purpose of the consultation

Stakeholder consultation and engagement on the principles is intended:

- To ensure that members, the public and other key stakeholders become fully bought in to their final form, why they are required and the benefits that can arise as a result of their application.
- To draw out both supporting and objecting comments in order to ensure the final principles are well informed by the views of stakeholders.
- To ultimately build support and understanding so that their implementation is successful and improved outcomes can be delivered across a wider range of Council objectives.
- To ensure consultation is undertaken in compliance with the Council's emerging SCI with the intention of being adopted as a material consideration for the adoption of masterplans, pre-app advice, planning applications and development management activity. Furthermore, the intention for the consultation and engagement to further inform and assist in justification for approach taken within development of the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan.

The scope of the consultation and engagement exercise is:

- To ensure the final principles are well informed, rather than question the need for/appropriateness of or general direction/purpose of the principles.
- In relation to the principles and the general benefits/implications of their application only, and not their application to specific places, the specifics of other policies or projects which may or may not be related.
- Primarily focused on the formal consultation element to support adoption as a material planning consideration, though wider engagement is recognised as necessary to build support for the principles and improve outcomes.
- To give a voice to all, including those who might not normally respond to Council consultations, rather than relying solely on 'traditional' methods which tend to drive responses from the same vocal minority.
- In relation to new development. Whilst the proposals cover the whole of the county, much of which is rural and has traditionally had less opportunity to reduce reliance upon the private car, the principles are related to consideration of new development proposals, particularly (though not exclusively) larger developments, which are focused predominantly in or adjoining existing urban areas.

In addition, we wanted to know what the public want to see from new development; what makes a high quality places; which benefits mattered the most; how we can best ensure that new development enables people to reap these benefits.

Who are we consulting?

A list of Specific Consultation Bodies, General Consultation Bodies, and other organisations and groups the Council seeks to involve in plan-making is included in the adopted SCIs and the Council's emerging SCI. As a non-statutory aim, there was no statutory list of bodies and organisations that the Council was required to consult in its preparation. Despite this, all those on this list have been included in this exercise.

In addition, the Council is committed to ensuring that local groups, organisations and individuals are provided with the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of planning policy documents.

The Council has a database of consultees, who have either commented upon, or expressed an interest in being involved with the development of local plans. This database is used to keep individuals, companies and organisations informed on the production of the Local Plan and other planning policy documents. New consultees are added to the consultation database via e-mail or letter to the Planning Policy Team requesting inclusion on to the database or through using the link or QR code to the re-subscribe webpage, which has been made available in Council offices and libraries

across Somerset. The General Data Protection Regulations are followed to ensure that personal data is only required and retained where proportionate and necessary, is only gathered where explicit consent has been provided, is kept securely and is not disclosed to others. All bodies and persons identified within this database were emailed with notification of the consultation and asking them to re-subscribe to notifications, which will be received via the Plan-it Newsletter.

In addition to the above, The Planning Policy team have a consultation database containing a wide range of consultees which are email invited to partake in any policy consultation. However, key external stakeholders specific to this consultation include:

- Local residents
- Local businesses
- Tourists and visitors
- Developers and agents
- Active Travel England
- National Highways
- Network Rail
- Great Western Rail
- Bus/coach companies
- Somerset Bus Partnership
- Peninsula Transport (includes Freight)
- Visit Somerset
- Visit Exmoor
- Road Haulage Association
- Sport England
- Somerset Integrated Care Board
- City, Town and Parish Councils
- Homes England
- Equalities, Diversity and Disability Groups
- Sustrans
- Local cycling campaigns
- Taxi Associations
- Transition Towns
- Young People – (Somerset Youth Parliament, Young Somerset)
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Canal and Rivers Trust
- Wessex Water
- National Grid Electricity Distribution

- Scottish and Southern Electricity Distribution
- Wales & West Utilities
- National Grid Transmission Network
- Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service
- Chambers of Commerce
- Avon & Somerset Police
- Somerset Energy Innovation Centre
- iAero Centre
- Centre for Digital Innovation
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Somerset Education Business Partnership
- Somerset Works (supports NEETS)
- DWP Partnership Manager
- Abri – supported employment
- Spark
- Somerset Local Access Forum
- Colleges
- Place-based boards

Internal stakeholders:

- Councillors
- Local Community Networks
- Transport Policy
- Highways
- BSIP team
- Planning Policy
- Development Management
- Public Health
- Environmental Health
- Rights of Way
- LLFA
- Economic Development
- Climate
- Assets/estates
- Housing
- Ecology
- Education
- Generally, internal colleagues as a conduit to the wider public

How we are consulting

Consultation on the placemaking and movement principles will run from 4th September 2023 until 16th October 2023. During this time, a variety of methods are planned to be employed. This section of the report details each of these methods.

Responses to the consultation can be made:

- Online via the Council's [consultation portal](#), which contains a full survey, short summary video and link to 'further information' document.
- By email to: localplanningpolicy@somerset.gov.uk
- By post to: Planning Policy Team, Somerset Council, County Hall, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4DY

To publicise the consultation, the Council is:

- Emailing notification of the consultation and engagement to all bodies and persons identified within the consultation databases for each of the former Councils;
- In the email, Somerset Council will be asking the contacts to re-subscribe to planning notifications through subscription to the Plan-It Newsletter;
- Making one copy the consultation and engagement document (further information document) and one hard copy 'subscribe to the Plan-It Newsletter' page available for inspection at each of the following locations:
 - Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, TA1 1HE (Monday – Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm)
 - West Somerset House, 20 Fore Street, Williton, TA4 4QA (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm)
 - County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY (Monday – Friday 8.00am to 6.00pm, Saturday 09:00am to 4.00pm)
 - Petters Way Council Offices, Yeovil, BA20 1AS (Monday – Tuesday and Thursday – Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm, first Wednesday of the month 11.00am to 4.00pm and every other Wednesday 9.00am to 4.00pm)
 - Bridgwater House, Bridgwater, TA6 3AR (Monday – Friday 8.45am to 5.00pm)
 - Council Offices, Cannard's Grave Road, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5BT (Monday – Friday 8.30am to 5.00pm)
 - Libraries including Taunton, Minehead, Frome, Bridgwater, Yeovil and Glastonbury.
- Publishing information of the consultation and a link to the consultation portal on the Council's [website](#) and on the [consultation portal](#). The Council's Consultation webpage [here](#) also allows people to access the consultation portal.

- Publishing a press release via the Council’s website and social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, raising interest, communicating the consultation and encouraging participation.
- Presenting to the City, Town and Parish Councils meeting to help advertise the consultation. The forthcoming consultation was also trailed briefly in the City, Town and Parish Councils newsletter in early August.
- Seeking to organise presentations to, and interactive workshops with, various transport and equalities groups with associated opportunities for feedback as part of the wider early engagement on the Local Transport Plan.
- Video running through the principles in “plain English” for use in the consultation hub, social media and engagement events.

Previous consultation and engagement

There has been no previous engagement on the guiding principles and associated placemaking and movement principles. However, they have been developed in light of current adopted local planning and highways/transport policies and guidance, national policy and guidance and the emerging direction of new policy and guidance. They have been developed through strong collaboration between officers from planning, highways, transport and public health taking account of best practice and corporate priorities and objectives.

As a result, the general direction of travel and core objectives behind the vision and principles have been agreed by the Council. The consultation is, therefore, about determining how the vision and principles should be achieved and seeking views on whether the specifics of the vision and principles are sufficient, appropriately expressed and would lead to the anticipated benefits.

The public will be able to affect the vision and principles accordingly. Further comment on the specifics of application will be expected as the vision and principles directly influence future Local Plan and Local Transport Plan policies and proposals as well as during their application in consideration of development proposals. A key element of the engagement and consultation exercises will be to raise awareness and public ownership/buy-in for the application of the principles in due course.

However, the consultation period running 4th September 2023 to 16th October 2023 will ensure early engagement with and input from people with responsibility for approvals throughout the whole planning and delivery process.