



**Somerset
Council**

Somerset Local Plan

Draft Scope of the Local Plan

(Regulation 20 Scoping Consultation version)

19 June 2026

Draft Scope of the Somerset Local Plan

Introduction

The draft Scope of the Local Plan sets out the broad subject matters that the Local Plan policies will cover. This consultation is about whether there should be a policy on the subject, not about what those policies will say. Opportunities to comment on policy content will come at the second consultation, planned for September 2027.

This Local Plan will be quite different from our current adopted local plans because the draft national decision-making policies will now cover many issues that were traditionally left to local plans. Also, Somerset Council plans for a much larger area, following the move to a unitary authority in 2023. So the Local Plan will be more high level and strategic than previous district plans, with less detail about individual towns and villages and fewer places having their own vision or strategy.

When thinking about your responses to the consultation questions please refer to the [national decision-making policies](#) as set out in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2025 version). All of these policies will apply to Somerset.

What we can and cannot include as local policies

This guidance will help you if you are thinking about suggesting any additional policies.

National decision-making policies place limits on what we can include in our local plan so this Local Plan will be quite different from our current adopted local plans. National decision-making policies will now cover many issues that were traditionally left to local plans.

- We should not repeat national policies. National decision-making policies already cover many issues – much more than they used to. The Local Plan should only add local detail where national policy specifically says this is required. We have already included all policies in the scope where national policies say they are required.
- We can only include local policies where they are clearly needed. This might relate to a strategic Somerset issue that has not been captured in national policy. The main focus should be on giving clear guidance that helps development sites come forward successfully, rather than adding broad or general rules that don't relate to delivering sites. Examples of policy areas that we think are Somerset issues that are not included in the national policies relate to tourism and nutrient neutrality.

- We cannot include local policies that try to do something different to the national decision-making policies such as impose stricter targets on developers. This is to ensure consistency across England, maintain development viability, and provide clarity. If you do not like a national decision-making policy, we cannot seek to change it by having our own version because the national policy will always carry more weight in decision-making.
- We cannot impose tighter local standards on matters in Building Regulations except in two narrow circumstances relating to accessible homes and water efficiency. This means that we cannot have policies that try to impose higher building performance or construction specifications.
- We cannot impose standards for internal space/layout (e.g. room sizes). Local plans cannot invent stricter space or room size criteria beyond the Nationally Described Space Standard.
- Local Plans cannot seek more than the statutory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain as a blanket approach. Greater than 10% can be sought on site specific allocations but this would need to have been tested as justified and deliverable.
- Local Plan requirements for contributions should not be set too high (e.g. an unreasonably high affordable housing percentage or costly design obligations) meaning that typical developments would become unviable.
- We may choose to 'save' a limited number of adopted local plan policies but not where the matter is already covered in national policies. We will go through a process of considering which, if any, adopted local plan policies should be saved. They must be necessary, justified and not conflict with national policies. If we save any policies, these are likely to be very Somerset specific. An example could be Policy ENV6: Wellington Burgage patterns from the Taunton Deane Sites and Development Management Plan. You may have a view on which these could be.

Some things fall outside the scope of the Local Plan because they are controlled by other regulations so do not suggest policies on these matters. The Local Plan cannot include policies on:

- Building regulations issues (e.g. construction standards, energy efficiency)
- Licensing matters (e.g. sale of alcohol, gambling licenses, street trading)
- Environmental Health matters (noisy neighbours, pollution, dog fouling)

- Day-to-day highways matters (e.g. potholes, parking restrictions, roadworks)
- Detailed street scene/neighbourhood level issues (e.g. litter, drains, grass cutting, high hedges)

How this document is structured

This document acts like a contents page for the policies within the forthcoming Somerset Local Plan. It is structured to mirror the sections within the draft NPPF (Dec 2025). Under each topic area are listed different types of policies:

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| NPPF DM policy | These are national decision-making policies from the draft NPPF which apply to that section. All of these policies will apply to Somerset. |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | These are proposed policy areas that are specifically required by the NPPF that we are expected to include. These add further detail to the national decision-making policies. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | These are proposed policy areas that are Somerset local issues that we consider require a policy. This could be because they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • optional in the NPPF but considered relevant to Somerset; • a Somerset issue not covered by the NPPF; • an NPPF but requiring further detail to interpret it in the Somerset context |

In the final Local Plan, policies may be combined into fewer policies or have different titles.

The policy reference numbering for proposed Local Plan policies all start with 'D/' to indicate a draft numbering system for the purposes of the consultation.

Proposed Local Plan structure and scope

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: Achieving sustainable development | | |
| NPPF DM policy | S3: Presumption in favour of sustainable development | |
| NPPF DM policy | S4: Principle of development within settlements | |
| NPPF DM policy | S5: Principle of development outside settlements | |
| NPPF DM policy | S6: Neighbourhood plans and the presumption | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/SD1: Spatial strategy for Somerset <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern of growth • Settlement hierarchy (role and function) • Broad locations for growth | Required by NPPF Policy S2(1) |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference the site allocations Reference land to be protected or enhanced Key diagram | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/SD2: Settlement boundaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which settlements have boundaries (and ref policies map); or Clear criteria for determining boundaries | Required by NPPF Policy S2 |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/SD3: Taunton To deliver the strategy/vision for Taunton | Tier 1 town |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/SD4: Yeovil To deliver the strategy/vision for Yeovil | Tier 1 town |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/SD5: Bridgwater To deliver the strategy/vision for Bridgwater | Tier 1 town |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/SD6: Strategic development site: Gravity | A development project with wider significance but with local issues |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/SD7: Strategic development site: Hinkley Point C | A development project with wider significance but with local issues |
| SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: Meeting the challenge of climate change | | |
| NPPF DM policy | CC2: Mitigation of climate change | |
| NPPF DM policy | CC3: Adaptation to climate change | |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/CL1: Energy hierarchy | A locally important issue that is absent from the NPPF |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/CL2: Local water efficiency standards | OPTIONAL through NPPF policy (CC1 1c). These can be set where justified in accordance with NPPF policy PM13. Requires further investigation on the issue. |
| DELIVERING HOMES AND SUPPORTING GROWTH: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes | | |
| NPPF DM policy | HO7: Meeting the need for homes | |
| NPPF DM policy | HO8: Providing affordable homes | |
| NPPF DM policy | HO9: Specialist forms of accommodation | |
| NPPF DM policy | HO10: Exception Sites | |
| NPPF DM policy | HO11: Isolated homes in the countryside | |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| NPPF DM policy | HO12: Traveller Sites | |
| NPPF DM policy | HO13: Build out of residential and mixed-use development | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS1: Housing requirement | Required by NPPF policy HO2 |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS2: Affordable housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing requirements for major development (10 or more dwellings) • Type and mix of affordable housing • Minimum Social Rent requirements • Affordable housing requirements in Designated Rural Areas (optional) • Affordable housing requirements if any major development were proposed to be released from the Green Belt | Required by NPPF policy HO5 |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS3: Mix of tenures on sites of 150 homes or more | Required by NPPF policy HO5 |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS4: Large scale residential and mixed-use sites For such allocated sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference the scale of site we mean • Set clear expectations for the quality of places • Realistic expectations for the rates of delivery identifying opportunities for rapid implementation • Set expectation for mix of tenures and types to meet the needs of different groups (e.g. older persons) | Required by NPPF policy HO4 |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS5: Older Persons housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail on our expectations on location, design and M4(2)/M4(3) standards • Clarification on affordable housing requirements | Required by NPPF policy HO5 where there is an identified need |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS6: Student accommodation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail on our expectations on location, design • Clarification on affordable housing requirements | Required by NPPF policy HO5 where there is an identified need |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS7: Accessible homes Set out the proportion of new housing that should be delivered to requirement M4(2) and M4(3) of the Building Regulations | Required by NPPF policy HO5 where there is an identified need |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|---|---|--|
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS8: Custom and self-build housing | Required by NPPF policy HO5 where there is an identified need |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HS9: Gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation | Required by NPPF policy HO5 where there is an identified need |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/HS10: Essential workers housing | Indications from the NHS are that recruitment and retention of essential local workers is a local issue that may require a policy. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/HS11: Agricultural dwellings in the countryside <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary and permanent housing for rural workers • Conditions • Removal of agricultural and other occupancy conditions | As a rural area, this is a local issue may require a policy to assist in decision making. Detail is absent from the NPPF. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/HS12: Viability assessment review mechanism With threshold and trigger points | OPTIONAL suggested in NPPF policy PM12 as a mechanism, for reassessing viability over the lifetime of the development where contribution comes in below policy. To maximise policy compliance e.g. affordable housing. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/HS13: Build out rates | OPTIONAL (referenced in NPPF policy HO13) to require development begins within a timescale shorter than the relevant statutory default period, where this would expedite the development. Requires further investigation on the issue. |
| DELIVERING HOMES AND SUPPORTING GROWTH: Building a strong, effective economy | | |
| NPPF DM policy | E2: Meeting the need for business land and premises | |
| NPPF DM policy | E3: Freight and logistics | |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|---|--|---|
| NPPF DM policy | E4: Rural business development | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/EC1: Employment land requirements | Required by NPPF policy E1 |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/EC2: Flexible employment sites Including loss of employment sites | Required by NPPF policy E1 |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/EC3: Tourist attractions and accommodation | Tourism is a local issue that may require a policy in addition to tourism references in the NPPF. Requires further investigation on the issue. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/EC4: Local labour agreements | An issue that was developed in some of the former district areas of Somerset. Local issue may require a policy. Absent from the NPPF. Adds social value to new development. |
| DELIVERING HOMES AND SUPPORTING GROWTH: Ensuring the vitality of town centres | | |
| NPPF DM policy | TC2: Development in town centres | |
| NPPF DM policy | TC3: Main town centre uses outside town centres | |
| NPPF DM policy | TC4: Assessing the impact of development on town centres | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/TW1: Retail and leisure needs | Required by NPPF policy E1 |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/TW2: Town centre development and the retail hierarchy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town centre boundaries • Retail hierarchy • Locally defined threshold for impact assessment • Primary shopping areas? | Required by NPPF policy E1 and TC1 |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/TW3: Retail requirements for strategic development | If significant strategic developments are proposed this may require a local policy. Supported by NPPF policy TC1. |
| DELIVERING HOMES AND SUPPORTING GROWTH: Supporting high quality communications | | |
| NPPF DM policy | CO1: Proposals for telecommunications infrastructure | |
| NPPF DM policy | CO2: Supporting information for telecommunications infrastructure proposals | |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|--|---|---|
| DELIVERING HOMES AND SUPPORTING GROWTH: Securing clean energy and water | | |
| NPPF DM policy | W3: Renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure | |
| NPPF DM policy | W4: Water infrastructure | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/CW1: Renewable and low carbon energy developments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas which are suitable for renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure | Required by NPPF policy W2 |
| CREATING HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE PLACES: Making effective use of land | | |
| NPPF DM policy | L2: Making effective use of land | |
| NPPF DM policy | L3: Achieving appropriate densities | |
| NPPF DM policy | L4: Residential extensions | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/LA1: Efficient use of land through design codes and density standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Density standards for locations with a high level of connectivity Density standards for other locations - optional | Required by NPPF policy L1 and L3 |
| CREATING HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE PLACES: Protecting Green Belt land | | |
| NPPF DM policy | GB6: Control of development in the Green Belt | |
| NPPF DM policy | GB7: Development which is not inappropriate in the Green Belt | |
| NPPF DM policy | GB8: The Golden Rules | |
| CREATING HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE PLACES: Achieving well designed places | | |
| NPPF DM policy | DP3: Key principles for well-designed places | |
| NPPF DM policy | DP4: The design process | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/DE1: Local design codes and standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify where design guides, design codes and masterplans are necessary to deliver design and placemaking outcomes Set out locally-specific design policies or standards which are necessary to add further detail to the principles in policy DP3, in response to particular local issues which will benefit from clear design expectations Setting out in what circumstances design review and other design processes will be required | Required by NPPF policy L1 |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/DE2: Nationally Described Space Standards | OPTIONAL (referenced in NPPF policy PM13) to allow local plans to require |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|---|---|---|
| | | nationally described space standards as opposed to general policies on good design. Merits or otherwise will need to be considered further. |
| CREATING HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE PLACES: Promoting sustainable transport | | |
| NPPF DM policy | TR3: Locating development in sustainable locations | |
| NPPF DM policy | TR4: Street design, access and parking | |
| NPPF DM policy | TR5: Roadside facilities | |
| NPPF DM policy | TR6: Assessing transport impacts | |
| NPPF DM policy | TR7: Marine ports, airports and other aviation facilities | |
| NPPF DM policy | TR8: Public rights of way | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/ST1: Transport routes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and protect sites and routes which will widen transport choice and are essential to facilitate sustainable development, including networks for walking, wheeling and cycling, and public transport infrastructure • Including cycling routes along old rail corridors | Required by NPPF policy TR1 |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/ST2: Wellington Railway Station | A local issue may require a policy. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/ST3: Significant movement thresholds Set out thresholds for what constitutes a significant amount of movement arising from new development, based on the circumstances of their areas | OPTIONAL in NPPF policy TR1 for the purposes of applying policies TR3 and TR6 |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/ST4: Parking standards Set local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, across the plan area or for specific sites or sub-areas | Required by NPPF policy TR2 and PM13 |
| CREATING HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE PLACES: Promoting healthy communities | | |
| NPPF DM policy | HC3: Community facilities and public service infrastructure serving new development | |
| NPPF DM policy | HC4: Proposals for new and improved community facilities and public service infrastructure | |
| NPPF DM policy | HC5: Hot food takeaways and fast food outlets | |
| NPPF DM policy | HC6: Retention of key community facilities and public service infrastructure | |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|---|---|--|
| NPPF DM policy | HC7: Development affecting existing recreation facilities | |
| NPPF DM policy | HC8: Development affecting Local Green Space | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HL1: Contributions towards community facilities Set out the facilities and contributions expected from development, including as part of allocations for major housing and mixed-use sites | Required by NPPF policy HC1 |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/HL2: Outdoor recreational land requirements Set local standards for the provision of different types of outdoor recreational land, including for play, sport, informal recreation and allotments | Required by NPPF policy HC1 |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/HL3: Green Infrastructure standards | OPTIONAL in NPPF policy N1 and PM13 allowing for the setting of local Green Infrastructure standards if national standards not appropriate. Requires further investigation on the issue. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/HL4: Green wedges | Green Wedges and open areas of significance are included within some of the adopted Local Plans of Somerset and therefore a local issue policy may be required. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/HL5: Hot food takeaways Set out the approach to assessing hot food take aways (e.g. the reasonable walking distance of schools and other places young people congregate) | NPPF policy HC5 provides the framework but additional local detail is likely to be required to provide clarify on its implementation locally. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/HL6: Health Impact Assessments Set out when they would be required for proposed development | Formal Health Impact Assessments can be a mechanism for assessing impact on health. Absent from the NPPF so consider a local policy. |
| CREATING HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE PLACES: Pollution, public protection and security | | |
| NPPF DM policy | P2: Ground Conditions | |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|---|---|--|
| NPPF DM policy | P3: Living conditions and pollution | |
| NPPF DM policy | P4: Impact of development on existing activities | |
| NPPF DM policy | P5: Maintaining public safety and security | |
| NPPF DM policy | P6: Land and operations for defence and public protection | |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/PS1: Nutrient neutrality | A local issue that will require a policy. |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/PS2: Yeovil Airfield Flight Safety Zone | A local issue that will require a policy and an updated boundary. |
| CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT: Managing flood risk and coastal change | | |
| NPPF DM policy | F4: Assessing flood risk for decision-making | |
| NPPF DM policy | F5: The sequential test | |
| NPPF DM policy | F6: Development in areas at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea | |
| NPPF DM policy | F7: Ensuring development is safe from flooding | |
| NPPF DM policy | F8: Sustainable drainage systems and watercourses | |
| NPPF DM policy | F9: Development in Coastal Change Management Areas | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/FC1: Coastal change and management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify as a Coastal Change Management Area any area likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast, estuaries or tidal rivers, over the next century Set out what types of development will be appropriate in the Coastal Change Management Area Safeguard land that is, or is likely to be, required for current or future coastal erosion risk management, including managed realignment | Required by NPPF policy F3. Note: NPPF also refs CCMA in above section Policy P1 1(e) |
| CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment | | |
| NPPF DM policy | N2: Improving the natural environment | |
| NPPF DM policy | N3: Trees in new development | |
| NPPF DM policy | N4: Protected Landscapes | |
| NPPF DM policy | N5: Maintaining the character of the coast | |
| NPPF DM policy | N6: Areas of particular importance for biodiversity | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/NE1: Hierarchy of designated natural sites Set out the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites and areas of importance for | Required by NPPF policy N1 |

| National or local policy | Policy title | Local policy reason |
|--|---|--|
| | their landscape, geological (including soil) or biodiversity value in the plan area | |
| Local Plan policy (NPPF required) | Policy D/NE2: Conservation, enhancement and recovery of the natural environment Identify opportunities for the conservation, enhancement and recovery of landscapes, sensitive waterbodies, habitats and species of principal importance, including through habitat restoration, the use of nature-based solutions, and the creation and strengthening of ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures Incl. geodiversity | Required by NPPF policy N1 |
| Local Plan policy (locally justified issue) | Policy D/NE3: Bat and waterfowl conservation zones | A local biodiversity issue may require a policy. |
| CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment | | |
| NPPF DM policy | HE4: Securing the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets | |
| NPPF DM policy | HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets | |
| NPPF DM policy | HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets | |
| NPPF DM policy | HE7: Decisions on non-designated heritage assets | |
| NPPF DM policy | HE8: World Heritage Sites | |
| NPPF DM policy | HE9: Conservation areas | |
| NPPF DM policy | HE10: Archaeological assets | |
| NPPF DM policy | HE11: Loss or removal of heritage assets | |
| SITE ALLOCATIONS | | |
| Local Plan policies (NPPF required) | To include policies on sites allocated for development (housing, employment, other uses and infrastructure) | |
| APPENDICES | | |
| Appendix A: Planning policies to be saved and replaced A reference list indicating the status of policies in superseded Local Plan documents. Saved policies remain in force after the Somerset Plan 2045 has been adopted. This to ensure that there is no policy vacuum in relation to a small number of non-strategic policy matters which are not covered by the National Development Management Policies and which have been assessed as remaining relevant and consistent with the NPPF. | | |
| Appendix B: Monitoring framework | | |
| Appendix C: Glossary of key terms | | |

